



# CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

**455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter**

**Fall, 2013** Editor: Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039  
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## Message from the President

By  
Norman Crum

I'm pleased to once again offer a few words for this edition of the *Cerignola Connection*.

We talk here mostly about the men who flew and maintained the aircraft of the 15th Air Force. We focus less on the aircraft themselves.

I'm reminded of how complicated life was in the cockpit of what was then a very high-tech piece of equipment. Personally, I can barely reset the clock on the microwave in our kitchen; I can't imagine what it must have been like to monitor and react to all the various demands of a WWII bomber.

There were over 150 switches, dials, cranks, handles and gauges on the flight deck.

In the days before onboard computers, the pilots themselves had to constantly monitor engine rpm's, manifold and fuel pressures, aerodynamics, barometric pressure, altitude, wind drift, airspeed, ground speed, formation position and direction - all amid the deafening roar of engines, machine guns, flak and excited radio chatter.

What mental focus that must have taken! And, of course, the rest of the air crew had their duties, and the ground crews had to make sure all of the on-board technological marvels were working properly before take-off.

When equipment and technology were combined with human training, skill and bravery, the heavy bombers of WWII were marvelous strategic weapons. Operating out of Italy, the 455th primarily flew Consolidated B-24 *Liberators*. Admittedly, the Africa/Italy-based B-24 isn't as famous as the better-known, England-based Boeing B-17 *Flying Fortress*, but it wound-up being the most-produced American aircraft of WWII: about 50% more B-24s were built than B-17s.

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*Liberators* could fly faster, farther, and carry a heavier bomb-load than the Boeing B-17 *Flying Fortresses*.

Unfortunately, and perhaps because of the famous high-tech "Davis Wing" employed on the B-24, they had a lower operational ceiling, were harder to fly, and were less maneuverable than the B-17 - allegedly earning the nickname "*Flying Brick*" among detractors.

A few years ago, I had the privilege of climbing through the Collings Foundation's restored B-24. Although slightly larger than the B-17 alongside, I was surprised at just how small both planes were. All of my own flying experience has been in modern passenger jets. Compared to the size of a 747, or other large trans-continental or trans-oceanic aircraft, the size and payload of a B-24 is modest indeed. *But that's an unfair comparison.*

With sports figures, one must compare an athlete's accomplishments against his peers, and against the competition of the era he played in. (I don't know how Wilt Chamberlain would fare on a modern NBA basketball court, but in his day, he was fearsomely dominant. Will anyone ever again score 100 points in an NBA game like he did?)

Similarly, compared to the competition, the B-24s you gentlemen flew were fearsome engines of destruction, brilliantly designed and superbly flown. They were as good as, or better than, anything in the sky.

As conveyed in the articles that follow, you and your aircraft were among the best: "Champions" in your day.

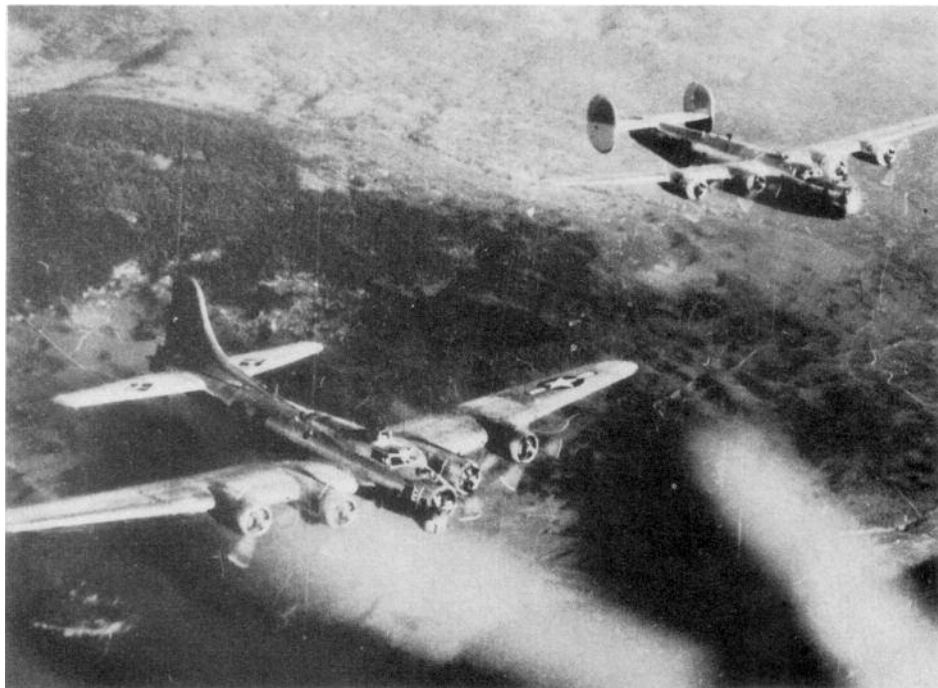
We all salute you and your great accomplishments.

- Norm Crum

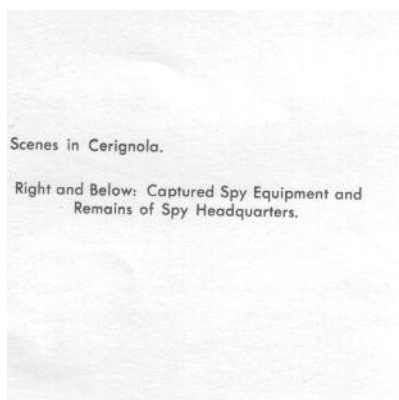
### One of the reasons to love golf

It takes longer to learn to be a good golfer than it does to become a brain surgeon.

However, you don't get to ride around on a cart, drink beer, and eat hot dogs when you are performing brain surgery.



It Can Happen! B-17 and B-24 in formation.



Scenes in Cerignola.

Right and Below: Captured Spy Equipment and Remains of Spy Headquarters.



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**The 455th Bomb Group Association, Inc. would like  
to thank the following Association members for their  
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May we publish your e-mail address in the newsletter? \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No

Current members may retain this form and use it to report a future change of address or other contact information. The form can also be given to anyone interested in membership. Please return completed forms to: 455th Bomb Group Association, P. O. Box 93095, Austin, Texas 78709-3095.



## **Final Flights**

### **Lorne Willis (742)**

This is to inform the 455th BG Association that my dear husband of 69 years, Lorne Willis (742), of Utica, NY, passed away on April 21, 2013.

Please know how much Lorne looked forward to receiving and reading your newsletter.

Sincerely,  
Patricia Willis

### **James Moreland (743)**

James "Jim" Harold Moreland, 91, passed away on February 1, 2012.

Jim was born on January 31, 1921, in Osborn, Mo. He was a 1939 graduate of Osborn High School. He was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, serving as M/Sgt. and flight crew chief of the B-24's stationed in Italy during WWII.

He was also a 65 year member of the American Legion Post No.33; lifetime member of the 455th Bomb Group, and the American Angus Association; Adult Leader for the West Grand Junior Angus Assoc. and the 4-H Club; Service Representative for New Holland Machine Co. and Schreiber Mills of St. Joseph; and partner in Clark and Moreland Registered Angus. In 1977, Jim became part owner and manager of Red X Oil Company until his retirement in 1989.

On September 5, 1948, Jim married Arlene Gross in Osborn, Mo.

Survivors: wife of 63

years, Arlene Moreland of the home; son, Dr. Steven (Susan) Moreland, Oregon, Wis; grandsons: Christopher, Washington, Ill; and Jeffrey, Oregon, Wis.; sister Winifred Gross, Cameron, Mo.; sister-in-law, Ruby Moreland, Overland Park, Kan.; and Louise Pollnow, Oberlin, Kan.

He loved his family, his home, and entertaining. He will be remembered for his dry sense of humor and one-liners.

### **Frances Hansen**

wife of the late Col. Louie O. Hansen (743), passed away July 26, 2013. Frances was active in the 455th Bomb Group Association for many years.

She assisted Louie with his responsibilities concerning the *Cerignola Connection*, helped to plan and carry out 455th Bomb Group Reunions, and assisted with the organization of Bomb Group trips to Italy to visit locations where the men were stationed during WWII.

She was pre-deceased by Louie in 2003.

**Note from Mr. and Mrs. Hansen's daughter:**

**I personally attended one of the reunions in Ohio, after my dad had a stroke and couldn't help my mother with the implementation of the reunion plans.**

**It was a wonderful experience. I was deeply touched by the bonds which have lasted through the years amongst the men, and I know how important these gatherings were to my parents.**

Sincerely,  
Barbara Hansen  
barbandgail@optonline.net

### **Dear Editor,**

I am the son of a 455th BG veteran, Daniel P. Durkee (742). My father was one of that special generation that answered the call in WWII to help keep our country free, and defeat the Nazis and the Japanese.

Several years ago, we made a trip back to Italy. Dad took me to where the base was, outside of Cerignola. He showed me the building that was called "The Castle", where the headquarters building was.

At that time, you could still see some of the writing on the buildings, showing what they were used for during the war. My father was an ambulance driver in the 455th BG. Cerignola is where he met my mother.

I am a Vietnam veteran. As one veteran to another, I would like to thank all the men and women who served back then in the service of our country.

Dad passed away on May 29, 2013. He was 89.

Thank you again.

Daniel J. Durkee  
rcnutie@sbcglobal.net

LIFE IS LIKE A COIN,  
YOU CAN CHOOSE TO  
SPEND IT ANY WAY YOU  
WISH, BUT YOU CAN ONLY  
SPEND IT ONCE.



**Left To Right Top Row:**

Hans Von Schults, which was the name he flew under. ***His real name was Hans Schwartz. Monitored German radio transmissions. He gave info he gleaned from those transmissions to the 455th BG Commander. He was not a member of our crew, but flew with us several times.***

Charles E. Glaeser Jr., Nose Gunner. The only crew member awarded the Purple Heart.

Paul T. Peters, Assistant Engineer, Right Waist Gunner, Aerial Photographer (see note below).

James E Henderson, Engineer, Top Turret Gunner

John B. Coyle, Radio Operator, Left Waist Gunner

**Left to Right Front Row:**

Eacy A. Craven, Tail Gunner

Philip W. Root, Co-Pilot

"Red" Mead, Bombardier

Lester G. Pinkley, First Pilot

Theodore "Ted" F. Skrobach, Ball Turret Gunner

Our plane's name, **Big Gas Bird, #22**. You can see the nose art (elephant holding a bomb in it's trunk), just over Paul Peters' back, in the photo above.

**Editor's Note:** I recently had the pleasure of speaking to Paul Peters (741) regarding one of their more "interesting" missions. After suffering damage to their bomber, they flew over the Russian lines and landed the crippled aircraft. Three of the crew had Italian & German-sounding last names (Polando, Messina, Junkers). **THE RUSSIANS THOUGHT THEY WERE SPIES !**

After several nervous days, the Russians helped the crew get to Turkey, then to Cairo, and eventually back to Cerignola.





Dear Editor,

Just a note to tell you what a “kick” it is to read every word of our outstanding *Cerignola Connection*. I’m 92 years old, and the newsletter stories takes a whole bunch of years off.

Thank you for the effort you put into this publication.

Sincerely,  
Irv Rubin (743)

(See photo above of Irv Rubin in his “work clothes”.)

Show me a man with both feet firmly on the ground, and I'll show you a man who can't get his pants off ...



David Asch holds a flag and helps his father, World War II U.S. Air Force veteran Col. Alfred Asch, hold an award signed by Gov. Bill Haslam honoring the elder Asch's military service. SUBMITTED

## World War II bomber pilot gets state recognition

From staff reports

**BRENTWOOD** — Col. Alfred Asch, a World War II U.S. Air Force veteran, was recently honored with a Tennessee flag that was flown over the State Capitol.

State Rep. Jeremy Durham presented the flag and an award of recognition signed by Gov. Bill Haslam during a special ceremony arranged by The Heritage of Brentwood, where Asch lives.

Asch joined the U.S. Air Force in September 1941 as a combat bomber pilot, flying 28 combat missions in England and 42 over Nazi Germany.

Throughout the course of his career, Asch accepted countless honors, including the Legion of Merit, Purple Heart, American Defense Service Medal, World War II Victory Medal, United Nations Service Medal and more.

The ceremony was led by his son, David Asch, who spoke of his father, reminiscing on his life growing up as a colonel's son.

Musical renditions of the “White Cliffs of Dover” and “We’ll Meet Again,” were performed by the community’s choir.

**Editor's Note:** My lovely bride, Marsha, attended Refugio (Texas) High School, Class of 1969. She attended the same high school as the hero described below, Lt. Lloyd Hughes, Refugio High School, Class of 1939, Medal of Honor Recipient.

### **Distinguished Alumnus of Refugio High School**

Nominator: Andrew "Andy" Pate, Jr, RHS '52

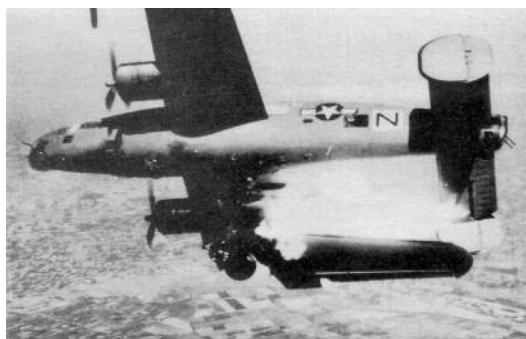
Nominee: Lloyd Herbert Hughes, Jr, RHS '39, Texas A&M '43

Date of Nomination: July 8, 2013

**Lloyd, or "Pete" as he was nicknamed, is one of six Medal of Honor winners featured in the Texas A&M Memorial Student Center. Photo on the right hangs in the Center along with those of the five other Aggie M of H winners. He also has an on-campus dormitory named after him.**

Lloyd was born in Alexandria, Louisiana, on July 12, 1921, the son of Lloyd Senior and Mildred Rae (nee Rainey) Hughes. The family moved to Texas (Mildred's home state) when Lloyd was young. He is a 1939 graduate of Refugio High, after which he attended A&M and Del Mar College for short periods (I believe in that order; John Borglund may be able to confirm the order.) prior to his enlistment for service in WW II. His official Medal of Honor citation(under the photo)reads, in part (note: in place of sic, put 1 below, for August 1, 1943):

For conspicuous gallantry in action and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. On August (sic) 1943, 2d Lt. Hughes served in the capacity of pilot of a heavy bombardment aircraft participating in a long and hazardous minimum-altitude attack against the Axis oil refineries of Ploesti, Rumania, launched from the northern shores of Africa. Flying in the last formation to attack the target, he arrived in the target area after previous flights had thoroughly alerted the enemy defenses. Approaching the target through intense and accurate antiaircraft fire and dense balloon barrages at dangerously low altitude, his plane received several direct hits from both large and small caliber antiaircraft guns which seriously damaged his aircraft, causing sheets of escaping gasoline to stream from the bomb bay and from the left wing. This damage was inflicted at a time prior to reaching the target when 2d Lt. Hughes could have made a forced landing in any of the grain fields readily available at that time. The target area was blazing with burning oil tanks and damaged refinery installations from which flames leaped high above the bombing level of the formation. With full knowledge of the consequences of entering this blazing inferno when his airplane was profusely leaking gasoline in two separate locations, 2d Lt. Hughes, motivated only by his high conception of duty which called for the destruction of his assigned target at any cost, did not elect to make a forced landing or turn back from the attack. Instead, rather than jeopardize the formation and the success of the attack, he unhesitatingly entered the blazing area and dropped his bomb load with great precision. After successfully bombing the objective, his aircraft emerged from the conflagration with the left wing aflame. Only then did he attempt a forced landing, but because of the advanced stage of the fire enveloping his aircraft the plane crashed and was consumed. By 2d Lt. Hughes' heroic decision to complete his mission regardless of the consequences in utter disregard of his own life, and by his gallant and valorous execution of this decision, he has rendered a service to our country in the defeat of our enemies which will everlastingly be outstanding in the annals of our Nation's history.[5]



This B-24 Didn't Make It — Two men bailed out before she hit the ground.



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#### Final Flights

##### **Cloyd Glen Carringer (740)**

It with great regret that I inform you of the passing of my father, Cloyd Glen Carringer.

He passed away on January 12, 2013 at the age of 91, and will be laid to rest at the Idaho Veterans Cemetery in Boise, ID.

Glenda Susan Stubblefield  
glndstubblefield@yahoo.com

##### **Charles V. Van Doren (743)**

of Perryville, Missouri, passed away May 8, 2013, age 90.

He was a nose gunner on the Robert Helbig crew, stationed in San Giovanni from October 1944 to June 1945.

One of his favorite planes he flew was *Tee Pee Time Gal*.

After the war, Charlie attended the University of Missouri. He graduated in 1949, and became a representative in the shoe industry for many years.

He married Leona Johnson on March 9, 1943, and they enjoyed fifty years of marriage until her passing on July 8, 1993. The couple is survived by three children.

His eight grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren brought him special joy.

Charlie was a life member of the 455 Bomb Group Association, and attended several of the reunions over the years.

We give thanks to him and all of the men and women who served our country in WWII.

Tim Van Doren (son)

## Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am writing in hopes you can help me with some research, as I have already found some of the information in your newsletter.

My brother-in-law's grandfather, Raymond Pittman (742), was the navigator for James Counsilman (742). I have been trying to track down information, after my brother-in-law handed me the patches from Ray's jacket. Ray is currently in Ely, Minnesota, and I am trying to get any and all pictures and information to preserve for my nephew, who is only five years old.

I was able to track down that he was part of Counsilman's crew, through the 376th BG website. After doing a search, I saw that a picture of the crew showed up in one of your *Cerignola Connection* newsletters in 2008.

Can anyone help me get more information, and perhaps pictures of the crew and the airplane(s) that they flew as part of the 455th? Another question: Would they have transferred as a crew to the 455th from the 376th, or from the 455th to the 376th?

Lastly, the 455th patch he has does not seem to match the color of the bomb from the pictures you have posted. Any information on that?

Thank you in advance for your replies.

Best Regards,

Jim Maloney

[captjimmy@integra.net](mailto:captjimmy@integra.net)

612-290-9566

## Can You Help? Response, from Dave Ungemach

Dear Jim,

**(See crew photo and patch photos, next page.)**

S/Sgt Holler has a 376th BG patch on his jacket. As the 376th BG started to stand down near the end of the war, some of the crews were transferred into the 455th BG in the spring of 1945.

Ray and the crew arrived at San Giovanni on 16 April 45. They had at least 15 missions with the 376th BG before they transferred. It also turns out that Counsilman was piloting an aircraft on a mission to Linz, Austria on 25 April, 1945. He lost two engines, with a third cutting out on him. He managed to land in Zara, Yugoslavia, and the crew was returned to base via C-47 that same day (arriving at 1730, probably in time for dinner). I'm guessing Ray may have been on that flight. It was the group's last mission of the war. Since the crew was recovered, there are no additional reports.

What bomb color is on the patch? I assume this is the Vulgar Vulture patch, with the vulture riding the bomb. The 742nd bomb was black, but sometimes the bomb colors didn't always match the usual squadron patch bomb colors (yellow for the 740th, green for the 741st, and red for the 743rd... I think). Some patches were locally made, had the squadron number sewn onto the bomb, etc., so it was a mixed bag sometimes.

I'm not sure what aircraft they may have flown with the 455th BG, but I probably have a few photos of aircraft that were with the squadron at the time.

P.S.: Interesting note about James Counsilman. He later went on to coach in the Olympics, including multiple gold medal winner Mark Spitz. See more on him at these two web addresses:

[http://www.b24bestweb.com/b24bestweb-Famous.htm#JAMES\\_E.\\_COUNSILMAN](http://www.b24bestweb.com/b24bestweb-Famous.htm#JAMES_E._COUNSILMAN)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_E.\\_Counsleman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_E._Counsleman)

Sincerely,

Dave Ungemach

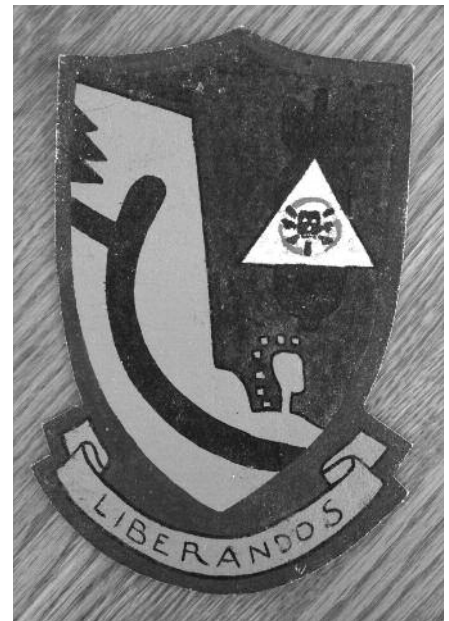
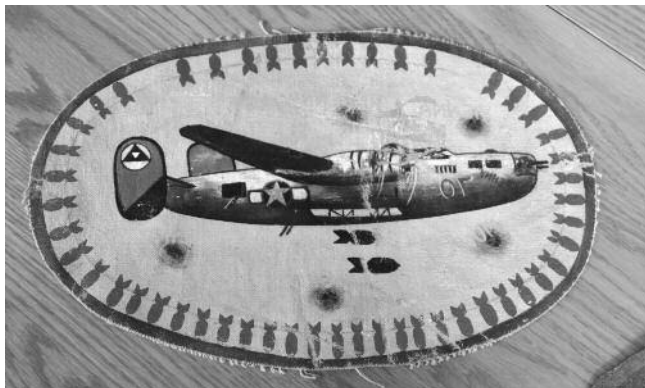
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**455th BG (H), 742nd BS**

**Back row, left to right:** S/Sgt Leonard S. Skotleski, S/Sgt Emil R. Sagagese, T/Sgt Robert I. Gibbs, T/Sgt Donald W. Johnson, and S/Sgt Henry T. Holler Jr.

**Front row left to right:** 1st Lt James E. Counsilman, 1st Lt Raymond L. Pittman, 2nd Lt William H. Casey Jr., and S/Sgt Louis F. Mortillaro.





### Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

Here attached is a picture of a B24 hit over Germany in 1944.

I do not believe I have ever seen this fascinating, but gruesome, photo before. The Liberators were notorious for dangerous gasoline fumes in the bomb bay due to the placement of the fuel tanks.

This photo demonstrates this fact. If I remember correctly, the only way out of this plane was through the bomb bay? It would appear that the entire crew of this plane were probably KIA.

Best regards.

Carmine Casale

c\_casale@hotmail.com

### Can You Help? Response

Dear Carmine,

I have NEVER seen this picture. How heart-breaking. You have to assume all those heroic Americans aboard were killed. The cost of freedom is enormous.

Regarding the escape route from a crippled B24, my dad (Lt. J.T. Ward, pilot, 740) has said there were only two ways to quickly exit a crippled B24 ... the waist-gunner windows, or the bomb bay. The officers up front, and the gunners in the tail, ball-turret, and upper turret, were generally in severe trouble if the plane started going down.

Tragic.

### Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My father, John T. Wright (741), served in the same bomber crew with Cpt Charles Painter. He was the engineer on the B-24 named Yo Yo.

Unfortunately, I did not learn much about this until after my father passed away. I was wondering if you have any information or photos that would include him.

My mother thought they were shot down once, parachuted out, and were helped by the local people to get back to base. Do you know anything about this? Any information you might have would be greatly appreciated.

Peggy (Wright) Lemons  
plemons1209@embarqmail.com



**Dear Editor,**

In the village of Torbicki Vagan, Croatia (Yugoslavia), I saw several pieces of a crashed aircraft from WWII --- a few pieces of aluminum sheet, and two oxygen tanks.

They are obviously parts of a B-24. Witnesses told me that this aircraft crashed in late 1944. They brought parts of the aircraft to the village, and used them for different purposes --- building material, water container, etc..

I analyzed MACRs and the only one that fits this crash site is MACR no. 8349 for aircraft B-24H, serial # 42-52239, lost on September 13, 1944.

It belongs to the 455th Bombardment Group. I still don't know the exact crash site, but one witness promised me that he will take me there.

That is a mountain area, and I hope he will be able to do that trip. He is 77 years old. It is about 4 km in the mountains from the village.

I will write a scientific report on the subject. Do you have any details of the aircraft, other than those contained in the MACR? Is someone from the crew still alive?

I had interesting interviews with Charles Oltarzewski and Joe Parkin, but I would like to know more. I hope you can help.

Sincerely,  
Marko Sinobad,  
Ph.D, Ministry of Culture,  
Republic of Croatia.  
Marko.Sinobad@min-kulture.hr



## Can You Help ?

Dear Editor,

Since joining the 455th Bomb Group Association, I have enjoyed reading the newsletters very much.

In the Spring, 2013 edition, your list of Ploesti missions included two that matched my dad's flight record (28 July, 1944, and 18 August, 1944).

I also read the final flight notice for Col. David Bellemere. My dad's "Individual Combat Record" was certified by then-Major David Bellemere in December, 1944.

I would like to please make two requests:

1) Could you add my email address to the 455th BG email roster?

2) Even though my dad died back in 1998, would you be willing to publish a short "*Final Flight*" for him if I write one up?

I don't have much documentation on his service, and I would like to know more about his time at Cerignola (the crew he flew with, the name of their plane, etc.).

I'm hoping that putting something in the next newsletter might spark a recognition by someone.

Thank You.

William E. Fredrickson  
Son, Elwood Fredrickson (743)  
1521 Woodgate Way  
Tallahassee, FL 32308  
wfredrickson@fsu.edu

(See *Final Flight*, next column)

## Final Flight

**Elwood H. "Freddy"  
Fredrickson (743)**

Freddy was born on October 8, 1917, and grew up in Zion, Illinois. His family moved to New York in 1936, where he followed in his father's footsteps and became an apprentice lace weaver.

He was drafted into the Army's 5th Armored Division, transferred to the Army Air Corps, completed bombardier training, and was assigned to the 455th Bomb Group, 743rd squadron. After his 35 missions (June to December, 1944), he rotated stateside and was honorably discharged.

He attended Cornell University, where he met his wife, Dorothy Jane Marshman. After a full and productive life in upstate New York (teaching, farming, etc.), he lost his final battle, against ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease), on June 3, 1998 at the age of 81.

## Golf Trivia

A recent study found that the average golfer walks about 900 miles a year.

Another study found that golfers drink, on average, 22 gallons of alcohol a year.

This means that, on average, golfers get about 41 miles to the gallon.

Makes you want to give your car golf lessons, doesn't it?

## Can You Help ? Response

Dear Editor,

Below is my father's reply to the inquiry from Barbara Rhodes regarding the name, *Leakin' Deacon*, and whether the D-Day glider and B-24 bomber of the same name were connected in any way:

In December, 1943, we received our new airplane, a B-24-H model. One of the engines had an oil leak and the crew decided to call the plane *Leakin' Deacon*.

Lt. Wiley Smith painted the picture on the plane. After 35 missions, our crew went on R&R on the Isle of Capri. *Leakin' Deacon* went down over northern Italy on June 9, 1944.

I am the only surviving member of our crew.

E. J. Ledbetter (743)

P.S.: Dad doubts that the name passed down from the bomber to the glider, or vice-versa. I found the following on page 258 in the book *A Green Light: A Troop Carrier Squadron's War From Normandy to the Rhine* by Martin Wolfe, Air Force Historical Studies Office, Washington, DC:

*Sawell was assigned to Number 2 glider on our 436th TCG glider serial. He had a major on board, a chaplain who the night before had named his glider Leakin' Deacon.*

*Perhaps the glider's name was a reference to that chaplain ?*

Best Regards,

Brenda Rayman  
Daughter, E.J. Ledbetter (743)  
blayman@gmail.com



## Dear American Friends,

I have just returned to Canada after being on a Pacific cruise that went to Honolulu. The trip to Honolulu gave me the opportunity of going to Pearl Harbor, where I was able to do some research for the chapter of my book about two veterans who survived ordeals at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

Authors can learn a lot from reading reports about the attack, but seeing Ford Island and Hickam Field provided me with a deeper understanding of what happened. On Ford Island, I saw where Jim Landis, a naval airman who now lives in Pensacola, climbed into an aircraft even though he was badly injured and fired from the ground at the Japanese planes. At Hickam Field, I saw where Harold "Bunky" Snider of Phoenix landed during the attack. Mr. Snider was the navigator of one of the B-17s that flew to Hawaii from Hamilton Field near San Francisco.

I was amazed that I was able to see bullet holes that were made during the attack. I took a photo of holes that are still in a window at Hangar 79. Anyone interested in the photo may see it on my website,

**[www.amazingairmen.com](http://www.amazingairmen.com)**. It is in the American Photos section.

I couldn't have learned as much as I did without the help of a lot of people at Pearl Harbor. I particularly want to thank Ken DeHoff, executor director of the Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor, and Jim Neuman, a

Navy historian, for helping me.

Shortly before going to Hawaii I went to Detroit to talk again to Alex Jefferson, a Tuskegee Airman who was shot down in France. Mr. Jefferson also gave me a tour of the Tuskegee Airmen National Historical Museum. It is a charming museum that tells the story of African-American airmen who served their country at a time when they were judged more by the color of their skin than by their ability. Any American interested in military history would enjoy seeing the museum.

As a Canadian, I am impressed by the way Americans have preserved, and are preserving, their history. Americans may be divided on many issues today, but I think they are united in their desire to respect their veterans and remember what the veterans accomplished.

I would like to end this newsletter article by saying that my Canadian friends are chuckling at me, because they have noticed that I do my research in states such as Hawaii, Florida and Arizona in the winter. They call me a "fair-weather" Canadian. How could they say that? They just don't believe me when I say I didn't know until I went to these states that they are warmer than Canada in January, February and March. :)

Cheers from Canada,  
Ian Darling, Author  
*Amazing Airmen: Canadian Flyers in the Second World War*  
[www.amazingairmen.com](http://www.amazingairmen.com)

## From a Marine Corps Colonel in Afghanistan.....

May I give this one piece of advice to the next pop star who is asked to sing the national anthem at a sporting event?

Please save the vocal gymnastics and the physical gyrations for your concerts. Just sing this song the way you were taught to sing it in kindergarten ... straight up, no styling.

Sing it with the constant awareness that there are soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines watching you from bases and outposts all over the world. Don't make them cringe with your self-centered ego gratification.

Sing it as if you are standing before a row of 86 year-old WWII vets wearing their Purple Hearts, Silver Stars and flag pins on their cardigan. Sing it as if you want them to be proud of you for honoring them and the country they love ... not because you want them to think you are a superstar musician. (They could see that from your costume, makeup and your entourage.)

Sing *The Star Spangled Banner* with the courtesy and humility that tells the audience that it is about America, and NOT you. Please remember, not everything has to be sung as a pop song. We're getting very weary of that.

***Francis Scott Key does not need any help.***

Semper Fi ...

**Editor's Note:**

***This is the second entry in a series from the first Cerignola Connection newsletter, published at the San Giovanni airbase in early 1945, before the war was even over!***

***As editor of this publication, I usually try to make the spelling, punctuation, and grammar of all content as correct as possible. (My English teacher at Haltom High School would have had it no other way!)***

***However, in this case, I will include the text and flow of the content, just as it appeared in the publication in Italy in 1945 ... enjoy !***

Remember our hunt for food those days? We had no equipment. We sometimes have chicken served by the mess sergeant. Yes, even chicken by an occasional officer or a ranking non-com now and then. Remember, no mess halls, no kitchen, little equipment. Sitting out in the weather on the cold ground eating your stew...that damn stew...garnished with hail stones...and your coffee, ough...those bitter winds and rain in your face as you ate...no heated tents...mess halls decorated by Italian artists...hot and cold showers.

Movies....clubs...yes, our leadership has been good, hasn't it...New crews to replace the old ones...we grumbled they will never be like the old boys, our squadron is shot...then we discovered they were the same

American boys...wanting to be accepted...willing to share...a natural hesitancy on the part of the old timer and the new arrival...now we find ourselves sweating out the return of our new friends in just the same manner that we did the guys who have gone.

Yes, this year has wrought many changes. The other day, I sat meditating upon my favorite seat in probably the most highly patronized sanctums in the outfit, when a high ranking officer stuck his head in the door and advised us that a good soldier would keep the door closed...and I remembered a few short month's ago when I had a favorite olive tree that I would hide behind and veer leeward or to the port side to keep the hail stones from pounding against my sensitive spine.

Why? Remember, we had no buildings...certainly no covering could be spared for that sort of thing at first.

A year of combat experiences...a new life. New problems. New friends. Discipline.

Completed duties...and the display of loyalty which can only exist among freedom-loving people. Efficiency evidenced itself through the complete cooperation of every man in the outfit, on his particular job, we have been awarded the highest honor which can be bestowed upon.

Wonder what another year will bring forth...I wonder...

**SGT. WYNFIELD S. CLAYTON**

While journeying about for the journal one morning, at the crack of dawn; I stopped at the "wine cellar" (the briefing room and local cinema). Suddenly, the heavy wooden doors were thrown open, and out came the "fair weather" good time Joe's. Caps on the back of their heads, some with leather jackets zipped part-way up and others with light green jackets with fur collars.

As I stood there, leaning against a pillar, which supports "Maggie's Doughnut Shack", puffing away on a pipe filled with dry tobacco, I watched the figures come staggering up the stairs, and out of the shadowed cellar.

They looked, strangely, like blind wanderers who, suddenly, after having stumbled about in the darkness, saw the light of day.

Shafts of warm bright sunlight streamed across the cellar door, eyes were squinted by it's brilliancy, as the figures moved up the stairs. Their faces were lighted, and shadows were trapped in shallow cheeks.

They were young people, most of them, who are always ready to give those who are older than themselves the full benefit of their experiences. The Steyr-Walzlagewerke raid was of great importance, because a vital enemy industrial plant was destroyed and also because we gave the Luftwaffe a severe beating that day.

It was a fine job done by the 455th Bomb Group, and I

am very glad to have been one of you.

It seems fitting that the 455th BG has dedicated the first issue of *The 455th Journal* to the Steyr-Walzlagerwerke mission, and I hope that all of you, every officer and enlisted man, will give the publication your enthusiastic cooperation and support in making it successful and permanent.

### **COLONEL KENNETH COOL**

If time permits, our base at San Giovanni will emerge from the rock and rubble of a sadly neglected monestary to the flower and beauty of a modern community.

For months, construction of all sorts has been in progress. A mess hall resembling the Waldorf Empire Room, a dispensary embodying all the finer points of the Cornell Medical Center, an E. M. Club that one might think to be the Union League, a War Room that the Pentagon Building can't out-strip, an Officers Club with all the warmth and decoration of the Persian Room. Not to mention, the General Offices which are comparable to any found in Rockefeller Center.

The construction gang, however, has met it's challenge in "The Pit". For centuries upon end, "The Pit" was exactly what the name signified. Deep, dark, dank, sub-terranean dungeon, abandoned as a wine cellar when the rats, snakes and spiders collectively attacked the works at press no. 2 on Bastille Day, 1652.

It's fathom had never been penetrated since. Until one day last February, our American Air Forces (ground and under-ground crews) were commanded to enter at all cost.

A forty foot depth had to be descended by means of a ramp, a former stairway worn slick by the snakes. there were spider webs that Hollywood engineers, with all of their high-powered equipment, couldn't begin to simulate.

Rat holes and droppings were predominant. There were great scars of time and scars of the battle of 1652. But time is also a great healer. Since February, "The Pit" has yielded to the hand of man, and will be kept by him until American Forces evacuate this Theater of operations.

Today, "The Pit" is in the throes of re-construction, and already boasts of a 500 seating capacity. A stage has been constructed which can accommodate anything from a minstrel show to a Follies production. When "The Pit" is finally completed, we will be proud to have as our guests the numerous USO shows, name bands, and famous personages we intend to have visit us.

### **"YE OLDE POOP FROM GROUP" BY GODFREY**

Our new Deputy CO, Lt. Col. E.V. Robnett, didn't have to wait long for his baptism of fire. On his 3rd combat mission, heavy flak over the target conked out #4 engine, and

about 4 feet of the wing.

Another burst in the bomb bay killed the radio operator. Finally #2 went out, and it was either bail out in enemy territory, or make a desperate run for home with only two engines.

With the rugged veteran Major Jack Reeder, who was flying as Group Leader on his last mission, they decided to make the run.

After a harrowing trip over un-inviting waters of the Adriatic, they reached northern Italy. With controls so badly shot up that a landing would be suicidal, they hit the silk over friendly territory, shaken up, but otherwise okay.

Also aboard, besides the crack 741st crew, were Captain Bowin Harris, Group Gunnery Officer, and Lt. Carlos Baralt, popular PFF Operator.

You many think the average Italian home is a pretty overcrowded place, but S-3 sets a new record with nine Officers and eight enlisted men working in two small offices. As such times as when Lt Colonial Showden and Keefer are holding critiques with box liquors after missions, or when Capt. McCord is briefing crews for night flights, Grand Central Station during the rush hour is a quiet spot in comparison.

Plans for enlargement are now under the watchful eye of Provost Marshal Bergman, the man who speaks Italiano so multe buono he is teaching the natives some words that they never realized their language



contained.

While on the subject of building...Major Alvin Coon's War Planning Room is rapidly taking shape. Swell job by S-2.

## **HEADQUARTERS TIMETABLES**

### **Takoff and arrivals**

Fond farewells were said to Major James Moeller, Major Jack Horner and Capt. Howard Hall who left for "overseas" upon completing their tours of duty in this theater. Their successors are Capt. George McCord as Asst. Operations Officer; Capt. Richard Carona as GP Bombardier and Lt. Nathan White as GP Navigator.

Captain Joseph Martin becomes GP Radar Operator vs Capt. George Hojer, promoted to the Wing A-3 staff of our former Comm Officer, Colonel Cool.

**STOPOVER:** Capt Carl Higginbotham, who has finished his 50 sorties and still has a hunk of flak in his carcass that he can feel when he sits down has been appointed GP Personnel Equipment Officer.

**OTHER ARRIVALS:** Capt Richard Vicenti, now CP Adjutant and CO HQ Det, vs Major Olson. Capt. Charles Hilgenberg as Special Services Officer. Capt Billie Taylor as Supply Officer. Lt. Harry Horn as Unit Personnel O and Asst Adjutant. Lt. Vincent Damiano as Tech Inspector. Pfc Izzy Borman as Ping Pong Champ.

## **Final Flight**

### **David Gray Bellemere (743)**

Colonel, retired, U.S. Air Force, passed away peacefully in his sleep at the age of 93, on March 27, 2013.

David was born Aug. 21, 1919, and spent most of his youth growing up on the family farm, and in Kansas City. He eventually graduated from Kansas State College with a degree in engineering.

When World War II broke out, David joined the Army Air Corps, and was a member of the 743rd Bomb Squadron, 455th Bomb Group, 304th Bomb Wing, 15th Air Force, where as a B-24 Liberator pilot, he deployed to operational bases in North Africa and Italy. While there, because of his ingenious ideas, he earned the nickname "Rube" (after the comic strip MacGyver-like character, Rube Goldberg).

The living conditions were primitive, but David's resourcefulness converted nearby running streams, scrounged parts, and materials into hot showers and marble tile-floored tents, with fireplaces and running water.

David participated in many bombing missions over Europe during the war, including the raid on Ploesti, Romania, in 1943. On a later mission in the skies over Budapest, Hungary, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross award for his extraordinary achievement.

On his last mission, David had a near-death experience, when his plane stalled and started to fall like an elevator. The crew was getting ready to bail when David was finally able to stabilize the plane. Upon landing, everyone kissed the ground.

Besides many of his other accomplishments, David was most proud of having been a command pilot for most of his military career. Following World War II, David joined the newly formed U.S. Air Force, was a pilot in the Korean War from 1950-53, and was assigned to the Strategic Air Command for most of the remainder of his career.

Before retirement, and after 22 years of military service, he was the deputy base commander in Bangor, Maine, Sculthorpe, England, and Chaumont, France.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Jeanenne Tietge  
(David Bellemere's daughter)



**Col. David Bellemere (743)**

**Dear Editor,**

I am interested in having some artwork done regarding the nose art of my revered uncle's 741st Squadron B-24 # 42-51332, *Multa Bona*.

My uncle, Raymond A. LaFazia, was a ball turret gunner, and flew 38 missions, from July 7, 1944 to November 5, 1944.

Here are two pictures of the ship. Unfortunately, I do not know the color scheme. Apparently, the female's hair and dress are black, but I have no clue about the headband color, or the color of the "aura" background.

I am writing to see if the group has any old decals or patches that would reveal the colors? Perhaps someone that saw the ship and can remember the colors?

If you can recommend someone that may be able to help me, it would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Paul Deion  
Cranston, RI  
401-413-4849  
wayback110@cox.net

### **POW Profundity**

A prisoner of war is a man who tries to kill you and fails, and then asks you not to kill him.

~Sir Winston Churchill





**Dear Editor,**

My father is John T. Hartman (741), Tech Sgt., top Turret gunner / Flight Engineer.

He flew with the crew of Capt. Norgard in the aircraft "*The Captain and his Kids*".

They were shot down over Bucharest, Romania on April 24, 1944. They all survived, but were POWs in Romania for over four months (as Romanians switched sides).

Dad was flown back to Italy in the nose of a B-17. He is 89 years old and living in Murray, Utah.

How can I find out if any members of his crew are still alive? *See crew list below.*

Sincerely,

Thomas Hartman

TKH1747@AOL.COM

**Here is a list of the crew  
from the MACR  
(courtesy, John  
Rohrer, Historian,  
455th BG Assoc.):**

Pilot:

Capt. Norgard, Clifford D

Co-Pilot:

2nd Lt. Stiner, Theodore J.

Navigator:

2nd Lt. Evenson, Melvin

Bombardier:

2nd Lt. Demas, William

Eng Gun:

T/Sgt. Hartman, John T.

Eng Gun:

S/Sgt. Jenkins, Harold V.

Eng Gun:

S/Sgt. Myrick, Troy E.

Radio/Gun:

T/Sgt. Bantz, Clinton D.

Arm Gun:

S/Sgt. Bergmann, Arthur E.

Arm Gun:

S/Sgt. Cratch, Albert E.

**Christmas  
1944  
near  
Cerignola**



B-24's Dropping Bombs — One bomber is in trouble.

### **Sports Quotes**

"I have a lifetime contract. That means I can't be fired during the third quarter if we're ahead and moving the ball." ... Lou Holtz, Arkansas football coach

"I won't know until my barber tells me on Monday." ... Knute Rockne, when asked why Notre Dame had lost a game



## Can You Help ?

**Dear Editor,**

I am the son of Lloyd M. Griffin (742). I have started scanning color slides that my father took in Italy, and a couple of them are labeled John Ward. Are you related to John Ward?

It appears our fathers arrived at the 740th together.

Sincerely,

Wayne Griffin

Wayne.Griffin@att.net

**Dear Wayne,**

My dad, John T. Ward, flew to N. Africa with the first 455th BG units, in December, 1943. They didn't actually get to Cerignola for several weeks, as they were waiting for the Allied armies to liberate southern Italy so they could take over the previously held German airfields.

The person listed on your attachment is John "N" Ward. My dad was John "T" Ward.

Thanks for your question.

Best Regards,

Craig N. Ward

Editor, *Cerignola Connection*

**Dear Editor,**

Do you know how I could find out the name or number of my father's plane? In one of the photos I have seen, he is in a group photo with Virgil Epperson. I also have several photos of him standing in front of a plane called *Cherrie*.

Wayne Griffin



Photo Courtesy Lloyd Griffin



Maj. Lloyd M. Griffin (742)

**Dear Editor,**

My mother says that *Cherrie* was my dad's plane, but I am not 100% confident.

Is there any way to determine which plane he flew? Where may I find the flight log books? I am referencing the books with recon photos and mission descriptions.

Best Regards,

Wayne Griffin

Wayne.Griffin@att.net

**Dear Wayne,**

From what I understand, most crews flew different aircraft during their tour. I've seen exceptions (Lt. King's crew and *The Cowtown Blonde* for example... all 50 missions), but most crews moved around due to combat losses, aircraft down time due to battle damage repair, routine maintenance, etc.

I'm guessing he flew on several different planes, but there may have been one that

he and the crew called their own (possibly *Cherrie*, for example). That's only speculation, though.

*Cherrie* was B-24J-5-DT serial number 42-51332. It made it through the war and was salvaged.

It seems like the best chance of a crew flying the same plane, all or most of the time, was hit-and-miss. Early in the group history they would refer to planes by pilot (i.e.: "570 Lt. Archibald"). Later, they would refer to them as group or squadron "favorites."

I don't know of any flight log books, but there are several different resources. The published group history and the *Cerignola Connection* newsletters have a wealth of information.

The group records from "back in the day" are available from the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), and I have those on CD. I'm still trying to make sense of them.

There is also microfilm available, which I actually prefer in some ways over the scanned documents (better indexed).

As far as trying to determine missions/aircraft that Maj. Griffin may have flown, the only hope might be the mythical "loading lists" that the engineers prepared for each plane on each mission. These would show tail number, bomb load, pilot, crew/passenger list, etc.

The problem is that I've never been able to find them for the 455th BG. They may exist at the NARA in College Park, MD, but they also may have been lost to the ages (some say they

were sent to St. Louis, and lost in the great fire).

I've been told by more seasoned researchers that the only way to find out is to spend a week at the NARA digging through the files and microfilm (or hire someone to do it).

Just asking them doesn't seem to work. I mailed the question to NARA some years back, and they sent me a nice picture of a B-17 and a list of researchers for hire. Not very helpful.

I'll try to find out more information about Maj. Griffin.

Best Regards,  
Dave Ungemach  
davetw1@cox.net

#### **Dear Wayne,**

Good grief! I must be slipping! I thought your dad's name sounded familiar. He took over as 742nd BS commander from Lt. Col. Ambrosen in December, 1944.

I wanted to say that your dad was piloting an aircraft in July, 1944. It lost hydraulics on landing, and he had the crew use three parachutes to slow the aircraft on landing.

There is some dispute, but it may have been an aircraft named *RAID HOT*, which normally flew with the 740th.

Maj. Griffin was one of the first to use this emergency parachute procedure successfully. Later that month, Lt. Col. Ambrosen tried it in *THE VIRGINIA PRINCESS* alias *FLAK ALLEY SALLY*, but he ended up crashing in a field at the end of the runway.

Dave Ungemach

#### **Dear Dave,**

Thank you for the information. My dad would never talk about the war, so we know very little. I did know that he was the 742nd commander.

I wonder if the Luftwaffe knew that the squadron commander was in the lead airplane? Daaah !

Wayne Griffin

#### **Dear Editor,**

I want to comment on John N. Ward, since Dave, with his extensive research on the airplanes of the 455th, has already added considerably to this series of correspondence.

My primary focus has been on the men who made up the cadre of the 455th, combat airmen as well as the ground support personnel.

John N. Ward O-708974 has been identified as Lloyd Griffin's bombardier, and his home of record was Louisville, Ky. He is not listed in the 455th BG history book, but his picture and the rest of the Griffin crew can be found in the Fall 1997 issue of the *Cerignola Connection*, on page 20 (upper right-hand photo).

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

They were a 740th crew, and all awards (except Lloyd Griffin's third oak leaf cluster to the Air Medal) identified them as 740th. The third oak leaf cluster was awarded after he took command of the 742nd, and it is so noted in the General Order.

Lloyd Griffin flew his first mission with the 455th on 9 Jun 1944, and John N. Ward flew his first mission on 10 Jun 1944.

This was normal since a replacement first pilot needed to see combat from the right seat before he took command of his crew as the command pilot.

Ward filled in with the Richard Huber crew on the 12 Sep 1944 mission to Lechfield, Austria as navigator. They were hit by flak and forced to divert to Switzerland, thus ending Ward's tenure with the 455th. (MACR 8352)

Regards,  
John Rohrer  
jrohrer@spartacpa.com

#### **Dear Editor,**

I have just one tidbit to contribute, concerning whether or not pilots had "their own" planes.

My dad (Ed Riggs, 740) actually signed his bomber out on a hand receipt. I think I still have it somewhere among his papers. He was one of the original crews in one of the original planes, *Sky Wolf*.

He flew 49 of his 50 missions in the *Sky Wolf*. The exception was when he substituted for an ill pilot in another plane with another crew. Somehow, he and his crew still ended up finishing their 50th mission together (in the *Sky Wolf*, the plane at the top of 455 Bomb Group Association letterhead).

According to him, only the original crews truly had their own plane, and that quickly started to fall apart with attrition of the aircraft, either failure to return, or severe enough damage that they became a parts supply source.

If you look closely on the letterhead picture, each vertical stabilizer has a different serial number. His right one had been replaced. At the time that my dad finished his 50th mission, his was one of only two of the original planes still flying combat missions.

*Sky Wolf* was involved in a ground mishap after dad's 50th mission, but before he even got out of Italy. He didn't know if they restored it to combat status or not.

The heavy loss of aircraft explains why few crews really had their own plane.

Sincerely,  
Greg Riggs  
Exec. Director, 455th BG Assoc

**Dear Editor,**

I'm not sure what the questions are. I was MIA twice, and have copies of my MACRs. They list the names of crew members, next of kin, the serial numbers of the aircraft, and all machine guns and engines.

Graves registration teams used the serial numbers to assist the identification of remains recovered in their search. (One of my crew member is still MIA).

DPMO/JPAC reopened the search for our remaining unrecovered MIA about six years ago, and contacted me for possible assistance. Does anyone have the MACR ?

Regarding crews having their own plane: The 455th BG was pooling all of the B-24s. No plane was used exclusively by any single crew. Aircraft were assigned at the time of the mission .

Best Regards,  
Frank Lashinsky  
flashinsky@comcast.net



Mechanics giving Liberator final check



Ordnance Crew Loading 1,000 lb. Bomb in Liberator



Briefing



Synchronizing Watches — "Hack"



455th Bomb Group Assoc., Inc.  
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Austin, TX 78709-3095

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**A MESSAGE FROM GREG RIGGS,**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE 455TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION, INC.**

As I write this, the joint reunion of several 15th Air Force bomb groups is underway in Tempe, Arizona. I was unable to attend, but I hope we can get some photos of the event into the next newsletter. We were slated to have over two dozen people representing the 455th.

If you attended and would like to share photos with the Association, email them or mail them to Editor Craig Ward at the addresses provided in this newsletter.

Our finances are such that we have enough for four more editions of the *Cerignola Connection* after this one. We deeply appreciate those who have contributed to extend the number of editions we can provide. Their names are listed on page 3 of this newsletter.

Don't forget to check out the interesting sites on the internet that address our bomb group. Craig Ward includes a web address in the newsletter ([www.awardphp.com](http://www.awardphp.com)), or you can search Google.com for "455th Bomb Group."

If you pay your Association dues annually, don't forget that dues for 2014 are due by December 31, 2013.

Every day, I enjoy life in a free nation. Thank you for helping keep it that way!



Putting on the Fur for High Altitude — Liberator Crew



NO ENGINEERS NEEDED HERE