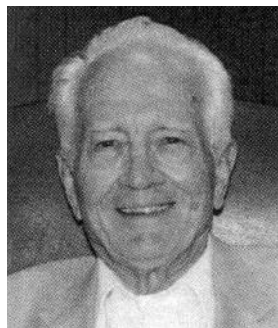




CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

Fall, 2011 Editor, Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039
phone: (817) 540-1068 **email:** aphp@tx.rr.com **website:** www.awardphp.com



Message from the President

**By Carl A. Barr (743),
President, 455th BG Assoc.**

It's the tenth anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The war against terror continues.

Several years ago, Senator John Kerry stood before the American people and said, "This morning we all woke up as Americans, a privilege beyond comparison anywhere else in the world." That we have that privilege is in large measure due to the willingness of so many of our young people to offer themselves in military service to this nation; to place their lives at risk in that service.

In our 235 year history, more than a million of those lives have been taken. Fighting and dying have always been the

work of the young.

Think about our own service during WWII. 147 lives were lost, and 268 men were missing in action --- just within the 455th Bomb Group in a period of fourteen months. In the WWII Memorial in Washington, there is a display of more than 4,000 stars, each representing one hundred American deaths. Very few of those who died had lived long enough to celebrate their 30th birthday.

When victory and peace finally came, we could recall the words of Francis Scott Key "May this heaven-rescued land praise the Power that has made and preserved us a nation."

As our young men and women are still engaged in the hazards of war, may they be protected, and may they be able to continue to serve with courage and honor. May God hasten the day of our victory in this war against terror.

On Memorial Day, I was privileged to be in Arlington Cemetery and participated in laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown, an unforgettable spiritual experience. Being there among the graves of so many of our nation's heroes is a

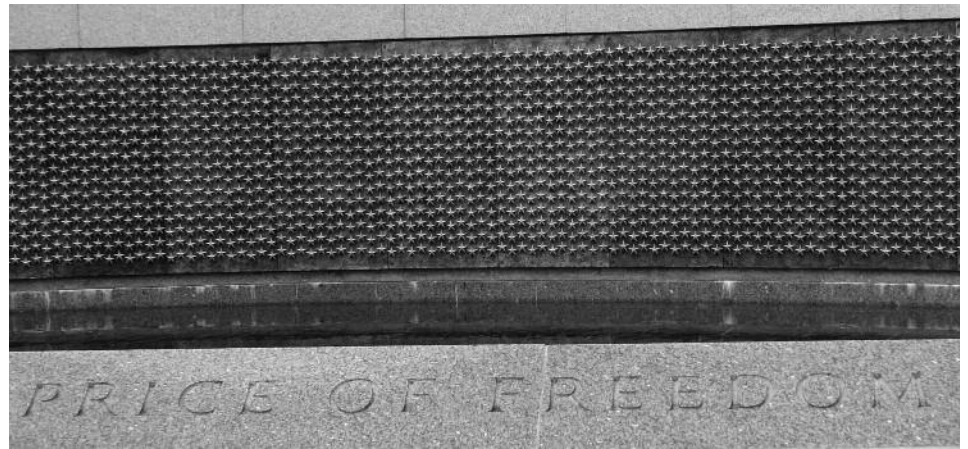
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grim reminder of the many sacrifices that have been made for our benefit.

Carl A. Barr

President, 455th BG Assoc.



FINAL FLIGHT

Dear Editor,

I am the son of Fred Hamilton (740), AKA "*Fast Freddy*". My father passed away August 4th, 2011, after a battle with prostate cancer.

He was becoming more comfortable talking about his part of the war effort over the past few years. He heard from many people who asked about his service, and how much they appreciated and honored him.

At this year's Armed Forces Day parade in Torrance, CA, he was honored in a much different way. He got to be a part of the parade sitting in a WWII-era Jeep adorned with signs highlighting his service to the country. He commented that this was the first time he got to be in a parade after coming back from the war. It took a long time, but he finally got his parade! He was even more proud because he had his grandson riding with him.

Steve Hamilton

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Photo, Courtesy of Chuck Ridgway

See Page 23 for Chuck's Final Flight tribute
to his Grandfather, John Darrel Tolbert (742)

(Mr. Tolbert took this photo from a Brownie camera.)

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Name: _____ Squadron: _____

Spouse's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone: (____) _____

E-Mail Address: _____

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.

The NEW 455th !

Dear Editor,

I wanted the folks in the 455th BG Association to know that the 455th is still doing great things out of Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, as the photos on the next page attest to!

It is definitely NOT your father's 455th, as we have a composite of eight flying squadrons, and ten support squadrons in four groups!

The current flying squadrons in the 455th Expeditionary Ops Gp are:

389th Fighter Squadron "Thunderbolts" from Mountain Home AFB Idaho, with the F-15E Strike Eagle, which carries one GBU-31 2000lb bomb, three GBU-38s and three GBU-54s (laser guided), which are all 500 pounders, one AIM-9 and one AIM-120 for air-to-air (but there is no air threat here - we are strictly close air support for ground troops), and 510 PGU-28 20mm HE (high explosive) rounds. We have 18 jets in the squadron with about 80 personnel here (active duty).

555th Fighter Squadron "Triple Nickels" from Aviano AB Italy, with the F-16CM Fighting Falcon, which carries two GBU-38s and two GBU-54s (laser guided), two AIM-120s, and 510 PGU-28 20mm HE rounds.

Interestingly, twelve of their planes got delayed coming out here and made air strikes in Libya, but the six already here were making strikes here. This has to be one of the first times, if not

THE first time, that planes from the same squadron have dropped bombs in two different air campaigns, in two different theaters of operation, on the SAME day!

The Triple Nickels have 18 jets and about 50 personnel here (active duty).

The 774 Expeditionary Airlift Squadron is a composite of Air National Guard crews, and planes that rotate about every 60-90 days. Right now our crews and 15 C-130Hs are from Delaware, Texas, Wyoming, and two active duty planes from Pope AFB NC. There is a total of about 220 in the squadron.

The 4th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron is a new squadron just formed in 2009 for ISR (Intel, Surveillance and Recon) and flies twelve MC-12 Liberty a/c - same as Beechcraft 350 - but with a lot of electronics, cameras and sensors for spying on bad guys. There are 205 personnel in the squadron and interestingly, this is made up of pilots from all a/c that train in Atlanta, and then deploy for six months and then go back to their original squadron.

The 41st Expeditionary Electronic Combat Squadron flies three EC-130H planes to "deny, degrade, and disrupt enemy communications". They have electronics, radars and sensors with four flight crew and four mission crew. They have about 65 active duty personnel in the squadron from Davis-Monthan AFB AZ. This squadron has a heritage back to a 1917 observation squadron

with balloons!

The 322d Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron has one EC-130H from the Air National Guard (currently personnel from Puerto Rico and plane from Nevada) that does a recon mission to find IEDs and bad guys, and they have about 80 personnel from ANG.

The 83d Expeditionary Rescue Squadron has three HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters for Search and Rescue, Medevac and has two 50 cal's to make it a gunship. They have 42 active duty personnel, currently from Kadena AB, Okinawa.

While not attached, the VMAQ-3 Marine's four EA-6B Prowlers are co-located at Bagram and report to the wing. They fly electronic attack missions to disrupt enemy comms. There are 200 active-duty Marines in the squadron.

While not a squadron, the **455th Exped. Aeromedical Evacuation Flight** has 45 personnel who evac wounded on C-130s, KC-135s, or C-17s out of the country to Bagram's hospital and then some on to Germany. They have a tough job as there have been mounting casualties as everyone knows.

The 455th Exped. Operations Support Squadron has 34 personnel who do what their name says basically.

Then we have **The 455th Exped. Maintenance Group** with an aviation maintenance squadron (600 personnel) and regular maintenance squadron (300 personnel) that do amazing

things on the planes and equipment.

The 455th Exped. Mission Support Gp has 1200 personnel in six squadrons:

Aerial Port Squadron (load thousands of pax and supplies daily at the world's busiest military airfield), **Logistics Squadron** (supply the fight), **Communications Squadron**, **Security Forces Squadron**, **Force Support Squadron** and **Civil Engineering Squadron**.

Then we have **The 455th Exped. Medical Group** with over 300 personnel in an operations squadron and support squadron with over 100 doctors and nurses alone.

This makes a total of about 3,500 in the wing for one of the largest wings in the world.

As I mentioned, we support the ground forces in close air support, and basically drop bombs on the bad guys. We strafe some, but the A-10s in the south do most of that. This is one of the most rugged areas of the world, and obviously is a challenge with a rugged, tribal culture like Afghanistan.

Tribal leaders and elders have all the power here, and democracy is not in their vocabulary. There is less infrastructure here than just about anywhere else in the world, which adds to it being a dangerous place.

Plus, there are the 7 to 10 million mines the Soviets left from the 1980s. But we have some of the best warriors in the world here, and this is by far the busiest and best wing in the

U.S. Air Force, so we can all be proud.

Let me add that we are very proud of the 455th "Vulture" heritage and our commander, Brigadier General Jack Briggs, is very knowledgeable of the 455th's past, back to the B-24 heroes of WWII.

We have a change of command this week, and I will brief our new general BG Darryl Roberson on the proud 455th history.

We are still making history!

I hope this will give your association a good idea of what is going on today with the 455th. I will send additional things along as I can.

Take care, and keep us in your prayers.

Sincerely,
Ken Tilley, Lt Col
455 AEW Historian
Bagram Airfield
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Hirohito surrender speech to the Japanese people, August 15, 1945

Editor's comment:

The 70th anniversary of the "Day of Infamy" attack on Pearl Harbor is December 7, 2011. Since there will be many stories and documentaries commemorating this anniversary of the START of the war for the USA, I thought you might be interested in the text of the speech by Japanese Emperor Hirohito that ENDED the Pacific war.

While the speech is filled with duplicity, distortions, lies, understatements, and pure propaganda, at least it DID convince even the hard-line Japanese fighters to lay down their arms and surrender.

The bloodbath that would have been the Allied invasion of the Japanese home islands was thus avoided.

To our good and loyal subjects:

After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions obtaining in our Empire today, we have decided to effect a settlement of the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure.

We have ordered our Government to communicate to the Governments of the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union that our Empire accepts the provisions of their joint declaration.

To strive for the common prosperity and happiness of all nations, as well as the security and well-being of our subjects, is the solemn obligation that has been handed down by our

Imperial Ancestors, and we lay it close to the heart.

Indeed, we declared war on America and Britain out of our sincere desire to ensure Japan's self-preservation and the stabilization of East Asia, it being far from our thought either to infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations or to embark upon territorial aggrandizement.

But now the war has lasted for nearly four years. Despite the best that has been done by everyone, the gallant fighting of the military and naval forces, the diligence and assiduity of our servants of the state, and the devoted service of our 100 million people, the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest.

Moreover, the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is, indeed, incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives. Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization.

Such being the case, how are we to save the millions of our subjects, or to atone ourselves before the hallowed spirits of our Imperial Ancestors? This is the reason why we have ordered the acceptance of the provisions of the joint declaration of the powers.

We cannot but express

the deepest sense of regret to our allied nations of East Asia, who have consistently cooperated with the Empire toward the emancipation of East Asia.

The thought of those officers and men, as well as others who have fallen in the fields of battle, those who died at their posts of duty, and those who met with death and all their bereaved families, pains our heart night and day.

The welfare of the wounded and the war sufferers, and of those who have lost their homes and livelihood is the object of our profound solicitude. The hardships and suffering to which our nation is to be subjected hereafter will be certainly great.

We are keenly aware of the inmost feelings of all you, our subjects. However, it is according to the dictates of time and fate that we have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come, by enduring the unendurable, and suffering what is insufferable. Having been able to save and maintain the structure of the Imperial State, we are always with you, our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity.

Beware most strictly of any outbursts of emotion that may engender needless complications, and of any fraternal contention and strife that may create confusion, lead you astray, and cause you to lose the confidence of the world.

Let the entire nation continue as one family from

generation to generation, ever firm in its faith in the imperishableness of its divine land, and mindful of its heavy burden of responsibilities, and the long road before it.

Unite your total strength to be devoted to the construction for the future. Cultivate the ways of rectitude, nobility of spirit, and work with resolution so that you may enhance the innate glory of the Imperial State and keep pace with the progress of the world.

All you, our subjects, we command you to act in accordance with our wishes.

"Can You Help?" **Response**

Dear Sherry and James Wallace,

I just read the latest *Cerignola Connection*, and saw your letter (Spring, 2011, page 6).

I am the Richard J. Haney who signed the Short Snorter for Edward C. Atwell (743). His picture looks familiar, but I honestly do not remember him.

I joined the 743rd in Salt Lake City, and went with them to Langley Field, Va., and then over to Cerignola, Italy.

After a crash in late April, I got my own crew and finished my 50 in November, 1944. I have checked all of my old orders and did not find Ed's name anywhere.

I really wish I could be of some help. I will keep looking, and I promise that if I find

anything about him, I will contact you.

My first duty was as a co-pilot on Bob Cook's crew. His email address is:

guppycook@austin.rr.com.

I wish you good luck in your search. Hope you find a connection real soon.

All the best,
Lt. Col. Richard J Haney (743)
USAF (Ret.)
haneyrj@comcast.net

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am attempting to get a copy of the book *"The 455th Bombardment Group; Flight of the Vulgar Vultures."*

If you know where I might get a copy, or any information about the book, such as the publisher, I would appreciate hearing from you.

I am hoping to get this book for a veteran of the 455th who had a copy, and someone lost it.

I would also like to know how I might be able to acquire group pins. Are they still available?

Thank you for any help you can give.

Sincerely,
Brenda Georgius
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440-829-5215

Editor's Note:

You can access the 455th BG History Book, as well as all the previous editions of the Cerignola Connection, at the following website:

www.awardphp.com

Dear Editor,

My grandfather is Maj. Richard K. Graham, 455th Bomb Group, 741st Bomb Squadron.

He died before I was born, and I have been searching for information regarding his service. With the help of the fine folks at the Army Air Forces website, they directed me to the *Cerignola Connection*.

I would like to reach out to anybody who might have served with him, or the family members of those who did, in the hopes of finding some knowledge into his service and the man he was.

My grandmother was a great source, but had limited information.

Any advice or suggestions are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Ken Graham
Austin, Texas
kgraham512@gmail.com

Navy SEALS **The Strong Silent Type!**

Dana Perino (Fox News) describing an interview she recently had with a Navy SEAL:

After discussing all the countries he had been sent to, she asked if they had to learn several languages?

His reply:

"No ma'am, we don't go there to talk."

MERRY CHRISTMAS ... 1945





Christmas 1945

THIS NEW WORLD is
your world, God bless
you for making it beau-
tiful once again ...
Season's best wishes.
— Bing Crosby.

BING





Christmas 1945

MERRY CHRISTMAS ...
I've got a Million of
'em ... Jimmy Durante.

JIMMY





Christmas 1945

ACROSS the thou-
sands of miles of open
sea I send you my
heart, my smiles, my
tears. Merry Christmas
from — Dinah Shore.

DINAH





Christmas 1945

THE PEACE you've
fought for is finally
here, but the happiness
we long for won't be
here until you are all
home again. — Frances
Langford.

FRANCES

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am the grandson of 1st Lieutenant Daniel Linder (740), who served with the 455th BG from April, 1944 through June, 1945. His AF serial number was 0-926-011, and he was a copilot on B-24 Liberators, one of which was shot down over Yugoslavia.

I would love to be able to collect any information you would have on the Group, the Squadron, or my grandfather. I have only been able to find two pages of records from the Air Force, as most of them were burned in the fire at St. Louis in the 1970s.

As I am a Captain in the USAF Reserve, it has added meaning to me if I could find more information on the wartime record of the unit and my relative. Thanks so much for your service and any assistance you can provide!

Jarred A. Fishman, Esq., Counsel, Export Controls
CPT, USAF Reserve Command
Hamilton Sundstrand
One Hamilton Road, Mailstop 1-M-2
Windsor Locks, CT 06096
860.654.5898

Dear Captain Sundstrand,

Go to: www.awardphp.com for the 455th BG history book, and all archived Cerignola Connection newsletters.
Your Editor.

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Sports Quotes

"After you retire, there's only one big event left... and I ain't ready for that."
Bobby Bowden / Florida State

"The man who complains about the way the ball bounces is likely to be the one who dropped it."
Lou Holtz / Arkansas

"There's nothing that cleanses your soul like getting the hell kicked out of you."
Woody Hayes / Ohio State

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My name is Jeanne (Salerno) O'Sullivan, daughter of Diego S. Salerno (known to most as Danny).

I just recently located my Dad's military discharge papers and I am so anxious to learn something about what role my Dad had, and what he did during the war.

Unfortunately, Dad took his "Final Flight" suddenly in January, 1987, when he collapsed on a NYC street on his way to work. He died right there on the street all alone from heart failure.

It was so sad to lose him at such a young age, and I am very sorry that I never had the chance to speak to him about what he did as a Corporal in WWII. I was so busy taking care of my children, and although I did see my Dad often, he never spoke about the war.

I had the privilege of being invited to attend the WWII Memorial Dedication. It was such an honor to be seated next to two Pearl Harbor survivors. How I wish now that I written down their names!

I did enroll my Dad in the WWII Memorial, but I had very little information to give. All I was ever told was that he was a Navigator, but I am not sure that is totally accurate.

I now know that he was a Corporal in the 740th Bomb Squadron. He was honorably discharged on Oct. 10, 1945 from Ft. Dix, New Jersey. Major J.H. Gunter, signed the

discharge papers.

Does anyone reading this remember my Dad? I would be so grateful and thankful if anyone has any memories / pictures to share so that I may know more about my Dad through some of you, and further pass on to my children and grandchildren to preserve whatever memories we can gather. Here is his photo:



God Bless All of You,
and Thank You.

Jeanne O'Sullivan
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josullivan@pentland.com

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My father, Hipolis P. Kosinski (742), passed away in 1978.

I have been trying to find out more about the mission in which he was shot down over the Ploesti oil fields.

I know he was S/sgt. with the 455th BG (742nd sq.). Any ideas on were to find this out?

Thank you for your help.

Sgt. Paul Kosinski
DAV Vet (1964-1971)
330-221-9019
pkosinski@neo.rr.com

Can You Help? Response

Dear Paul Kosinski,

Our Group History showed two possible missions to Ploesti that may have involved your father's crew.

On May 5, 1944, one aircraft was lost, and on July 15, 1944, two aircraft were lost.

I found your father's picture on page 237, the 742nd Bomb Squadron, with the crew of James Bush, pilot; Dayton Starnes, co-pilot; Harold Dale, Raymond Kieffer, Russell Eddingfield, George Frank, Herbert Vochatzer, Victor Karstens, Charles Morris.

Your father is listed as tail turret gunner. I do not know whether any of his former crewmembers are active members of the Association.

You can access the full text of the History (pdf) on the web at www.awardphp.com.

Archived digital copies of the Association's newsletter *Cerignola Connection* are also on that link.

I hope this may be of some help to you. Please feel free to download and read the newsletters and the history. You may hear from others in our Association as a result of this exchange.

Sincerely,
Carl A. Barr
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CERIGNOLA CONNECTION
455TH Bomb Group—743rd Squadron

By

Jim Thiel—Ball Turret Gunner on George O. Keahy's Crew
Name on nose of B-24 Plane "Minnie Ha Cha"
Plane Serial Number 4252184

My story begins about one week before leaving Morrison Field, Florida on Christmas Eve 1943.—Destination DeJedda North Africa. We had some time during our final week to see if we could find a mascot (dog) to take with us on our Flight to Europe. Some of us enlisted men went to the Base Chaplain and asked if he knew someone in the community had a puppy that we could adopt as a mascot for our crew. He made a few calls and found a part English Bull Dog. It was love at first sight, just what we were looking for. We went to the Base and had him fitted some flight equipment—Parachute, Mae West, Oxygen Mask and Goggles. We decide to name him "Wahoo". He didn't turn out to be a great flyer it seemed like he always got air sick, his pink nose would turn white as we tried to comfort him. Once back on the ground he was OK. When we arrived in Italy he must have thought he was in "Dog Heaven" especially when it was chow time. The chow line was long and he got a lot of attention and he also was fed well. When we were scheduled to go on a mission we would take him to the tar mac where our B-24 was being checked before take-off. After take-off our Crew Chief Bob Denton would take care of Wahoo and bring to the tar mac and wait for us to return from the mission. Wahoo slept on my cot, right at my side. We took him to town several times and one evening as we decided to go back to the base, he was nowhere to be found. We really don't know what happened to him. After completing our 50 missions we returned to the States with fond memories of our faithful friend.

P.S. Our Squadron the 743rd went over seas with the original group of the 455th Bomb Group.

Jim Thiel----Phone (219) 365-8550



Dear Editor,

The ocelot above went by *Kitty*, even though the full name was *Kitty Mutton*.

They got her in Brazil, enroute to Italy via North Africa. She stayed in the tent for the *Sky Wolf* enlisted men. They had no trouble with either rats or dogs!

Rushmore brought her back to the United States with him. She remained his pet until she died. She used to perch up on his refrigerator and pounce on people as they came into the kitchen.

When she died, Rushmore had her stuffed and brought her to at least one of the reunions.

Sincerely,
Greg Riggs, Col., USAF (Ret.)
Executive Director
455th BG Association



Jim Thiel & "Wahoo"

Can You Help? Responses

Dear Editor,

The ground collision pictured below was taken just after Dad (Col. Ed Riggs, 740th) and his crew finished their 50th mission. They had come back from town, or a short R&R.

The new pilot in the *Sky Wolf* had shut down the engine which provided hydraulic power, so they had no brakes. They coasted right into the "mystery plane", and there was nothing to be done about it. Pilot error!

Dad arrived back on base right after it happened. He said it was all he could do not to cry. *Sky Wolf* had carried him through 49 of his 50 missions (one mission was flown as a replacement for an ill pilot on another crew, but the *Sky Wolf* crew still managed to finish their 50 missions together).

The photo I use now for our letterhead was taken as the crew returned from the 50th mission. At the time Dad came home, *Sky Wolf* was one of only two of the original planes still flying combat. A third was used for admin hops but no combat.

Apparently, they got *Sky Wolf* back in the air again. George McKnight, their flight engineer, saw it back in the States after the war before it was scrapped.

Submitted by:

Greg Riggs

Executive Dir., 455th BG Assoc.

Dear Editor,

I am so sorry to hear of Ed Riggs' passing. My dad always said he was the best!

Concerning your question and picture in the Spring, 2011 edition of the *Cerignola Connection*:

The name of the aircraft that collided with the *Sky Wolf* was *Gremlin's Gripe*. My dad knew the crew. It was their second aircraft, as the first *Gremlin's Gripe* went into the Adriatic.

The crash you see in the picture was the result of the hydraulics being shot out of the *Sky Wolf*.

The *Sky Wolf* was repaired, but *Gremlin's Gripe* was written off.

Submitted by:

Craig Johnston

Son of *Sky Wolf* tail-gunner

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

Please see the logbook entry below.

1) What do the one or two bomb drawings on left signify, and;

2) What does the underlined number on the far right represent?

Thank you.

Chuck Ridgway
chucker2@gmx.de

	N.	1.	22,000	Flags	3
9-15-44	ATHENS	GREECE			
	N.	2.	24,300	500 RDX	0
9-19-44	Czeched	HUNGARY			0
	N.	3.	22,600	Flags	0
9-22-44	Munich	GERMANY			0
	N.	4.	22,600	100 Demo.	0
9-24-44	ATHENS	GREECE			0
	N.	5.	22,850	500 RDX	10
10-7-44	VIENNA	AUSTRIA			0
	N.	6.	24,300	500 RDX	0
10-10-44	Bridge-	N. ITALY			0
	N.	7.	24,300	500 RDX	1
10-12-44	Bologna	ITALY			0
	N.	8.	21,500	500 RDX	1
10-13-44	Bleckhammer	GERMANY			18
	N.	9.	20,000	500 RDX	0
10-14-44	Oderthal	GERMANY			1
No. 1 ENGINE SHOT OUT					
	N.	10.	19,200	500 RDX	3
10-17-44	Maribor	YUGOSLAVIA			0
	N.	11.	21,400	Flags	3
10-20-44	INNSBRUCK	AUSTRIA			0
	N.	12.	21,400	500 RDX	0
10-23-44	Regensburg	GERMANY			0
No. 1 ENGINE OUT - TURNED BACK					
	N.	13.	23,400	500 RDX	0
11-4-44	Linz	AUSTRIA			0
	N.	14.	19,200	500 RDX	0
11-5-44	Mitrovica	YUGOSLAVIA			0



Final Flights

Paul F. Moritz (742)

took his final flight on June 3, 2010.

He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1941, and was part of the 455th Bomb Group in Europe. His B-24 Liberator was shot down, and he was interned in Switzerland before escaping and returning to his unit.

After service in the Korean War, he worked for Berkshire Engineering before moving to Suffield, CT to pursue his lifelong career of building and servicing gunite swimming pools. Paul continued his military service as a Reservist Sea Bee and Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer, retiring with 30 years of combined service to his country. He returned to Sheffield in 1974 starting what is now Aquatic Designs, Inc.

He was a founding member of American Legion Post #340 and longtime member of Old Parish Church and Sheffield Kiwanis. He loved his trips to Africa to work with his son John's organization Hearts of the Father Outreach for orphan children. Paul deeply loved his family and believed in hard work and helping others.

Harry W. Vanderven (742)

passed away January 23, 2011.

Gene Kerr (741)

of Arlington Heights, Illinois, Bombardier on Hal Joesy's crew (*Big Gas Bird*), took his final flight on August 1, 2011.

Marion F. Baker, Sr.

nose gunner, passed away in his sleep last night at Beaufort, SC.

He flew his last mission here on earth after a brave fight with prostate cancer.

I cherish his Air Combat certificate, medals, and particularly his well-loved book, "Flight of the Liberators," he gave me.

I want to thank him and all of his comrades for their service to guarantee our LIBERTY as Americans today!

With kind regards,
J. Mark Baker, MD
P.O. Box 278
Ware Shoals, SC 29692
864-760-8246

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I have been directed to you by Dave Ungemach, a very helpful man I recently made contact with through the Army Air Forces online forum.

I was hoping you may be able to assist me in culling some information on my great-grandfather, S/Sgt. John Frederick Boasi.

Over this past year, I have been attempting to have the federal government reissue his service medals, which were stolen from him after a very sudden death. It has been a difficult process, especially in petitioning for a first issuance of the Purple Heart, for which my family have a single document in which an officer acknowledged his earning of the medal.

I understand the procedure for correcting a veteran's record (particularly for the Purple Heart) is a one-shot review that, if it fails, can never be revisited or overturned.

The National Personnel Records Center (which was only able to reissue two medals due to our country's budget crisis) informed me that a fire that consumed its facilities in the 1970s destroyed many of my great-grandfather's documents.

Therefore, all that is in my possession that can assist my case is his DD 214 (which does not mention the recommendation for the Purple Heart), death certificate, and the correspondence between higher officers shortly after my great-grandfather was wounded that explicitly mentions the Purple Heart.

My knowledge about my great-grandfather is extremely limited. What I do know is that he served as a gunner and eventually bombardier on the *Bestwedu* (741).

I am requesting that through your position as editor of the *Cerignola Connection*, you may be able to assist me in reaching out to veterans who may have information about my great-grandfather.

This is of great personal importance to my family and me.

Thank you for any information you can provide.

Sincerely,
John William Boasi
45 Princeton Oval
Freehold, NJ 07728
(917)418-5571
jwb6@hermes.hood.edu

FINAL FLIGHT

**William B. Gemmill (740)
Past President,
455th BG Association**



Retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. William B. Gemmill, Jr., 87, of Spring Hill, Fla., passed away June 20, 2011, under the care of hospice. Bill was a loving and devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.

He was born March 6, 1924, in Chicago, Ill. Col. Gemmill's military career spanned more than 30 years. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps shortly after Pearl Harbor. He graduated from Aviation Cadet Training and as a navigator/bombardier. He was assigned to a B-24 crew in the 15th Air Force, flying combat missions out of Italy, bombing Northern Italy, Germany, Austria, Romania, Yugoslavia, and other enemy strongholds.

After World War II, he had assignments in Europe and the United States with the National Security Agency, as a

representative of Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, U.S. Air Force, at various committees held at the Central Intelligence Agency and was commander of the U.S. base in Turkey.

He served during World War II, Korea and Vietnam. He retired in 1972 from assignment at Headquarters U.S. European Command, Intelligence Directorate. He was the holder of many honors and awards for exemplary service to his country. These include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with five Oak Leaf clusters, and the 15th Air Force's Certificate of Valor in recognition of courageous service in Aerial Combat.

He was a very proud officer of the U.S. Air Force and was admired by many. Col. Gemmill was a graduate of Park University. Upon returning to the civilian life, he was National Development Director, Adventures in Movement for Handicapped Kids in Dayton, Ohio; Training Director, Horry-Georgetown Technical College; Executive Director, Horry County Association for Retarded Citizens, President, Horry County Chapter American Cancer Society, Board of Directors, SC Unit; and served as President of South Carolina Air Force Association.

A member of the Omar Temple Shrine Association, he served as Director General of the South Atlantic Shrine Association. He taught English and business courses at Horry-Georgetown Technical College. After relocating to Spring Hill in

1986, he was an adjunct instructor, teaching English and business at Pasco-Hernando Community College. During that same period, he was President of the Wings of Eagles Chapter of the Air Force Association.

He was President of the 455th Bomb Group Association Inc. He was a Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, 15th Air Force Association, the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Kiwanis International, a past Lieutenant Governor of Division 7, Florida Kiwanis, and past president and secretary of the Kiwanis Club of the Nature Coast in Spring Hill.

Bill is survived by the love of his life and wife of 42 years, Carole L. (Harper); three children, William B. Gemmill III (Judy) of Nashville, Tenn., Susan L. Gemmill, of Denver, Colo., and R. Bruce Gemmill (Courtenay) of Leesburg, Va.; three grandsons, Jon Behler, (Nicole), William B., IV, and Robert E. B. Gemmill; stepgrand-children, Eric Holmertz (Amber) and Alison Drinkwine (Jonathan); and four great-granddaughters, Rose and Daphne Behler, and Elisha and Katelyn Holmertz.

Bill deeply loved his family, country and people from all walks of life. He always had a smile and often, a little joke to tell.

Col. Gemmill was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.



FINAL FLIGHT

MAJOR GENERAL
EUGENE L. HUDSON (741)



October 6, 1921 – September 3, 2011

Major General USAF
Eugene L. Hudson

A hero by any standard

By DAVID ROSS

The word "hero" is bandied about gratuitously in today's world, with the word being attached to sports figures and movie stars who, although they might certainly be admirable, do not qualify as heroes.

USAF Maj. Gen. Gene Hudson was the real thing. Over his long career General Hudson flew bombers into harm's way in three of our nation's wars, including WWII, Korea and Vietnam. There are few activities that have called upon such a combination of courage and grace under pressure as flying a bomber into enemy fire.

Hudson and his wife, Pamela, lived in Valley Center for nearly 20 years after he retired. In retirement Hudson also personified grace.

He was a wonderful member of our community and during his last years helped pass on some of his values of courage and patriotism to young people who heard him speak at events such as the dedication of the high school's Heroes' Wall.

I had the pleasure of knowing General Hudson, and consider him to have been one of the most admirable people I have had a chance to meet and learn about during my time as editor of this paper.

As we as a nation move further away from World War II, we lose more and more members of those who Tom Brokaw dubbed "The Greatest Generation." Gene Hudson was a member in good standing—and more.

Used with permission from *Valley Roadrunner*
Newspaper Editor David Ross

General Eugene L. Hudson was born in 1921, in Los Angeles, Calif., where he graduated from Fairfax High School in 1940, and attended Los Angeles City College. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942, attended aviation cadet training, and graduated from flying school in May, 1943, with his pilot wings and commission as second lieutenant.

He earned a bachelor of science degree in engineering at the University of Southern California in February 1949, a master's degree from George Washington University in 1963, and graduated from the Air War College in 1963.

During World War II, he flew 36 combat missions with the 455th Bomb Group (741), over Nazi-occupied Europe. In Dec., 1945, he was released from active duty, and joined the active reserve while attending the University of California.

In 1949, he returned to active duty and attended the Atomic Energy Training Course and the Airborne Electronics Maintenance Course at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. He was assigned to the 43rd Maintenance and Supply Group, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., as armament and electronics maintenance officer. In 1952, he became maintenance officer with the 98th Bombardment Wing in Japan. During this assignment, he flew nine combat missions over Korea.

After graduation from the Air War College in 1963, his assignments included commander, 4000th Combat Support Group, Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., from July, 1963 until September, 1966; deputy commander for maintenance, Headquarters 68th Bombardment Wing, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., from September, 1966 to April, 1967; commander of the 68th Bombardment Wing at Seymour Johnson from April, 1967 to July, 1968; commander of the 42nd Bombardment Wing, Loring Air Force Base, Maine, from July, 1968 until April, 1970; commander of the 40th Air Division, Wurtsmith Air Force Base, Mich., from May, 1970 to February, 1972; assistant deputy chief of staff for operations, Seventh Air Force, Republic of Vietnam, from February to May, 1972; director of intelligence for Seventh Air Force and Military Assistance Command Vietnam, and the U.S. Support Advisory Group in Vietnam and Thailand from 1972 to 1973. He was appointed the deputy chief of staff, logistics, Headquarters Strategic Air Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Neb. General Hudson was reassigned to Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C., as director of logistics, plans and programs, for the Deputy Chief of Staff, Systems and Logistics, in 1975.

His military decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Distinguished Unit Citation Emblem, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award Ribbon, and the Republic of Vietnam National Order of Vietnam. He was promoted to the grade of Major General effective Aug. 1, 1972, with date of rank July 1, 1969. General Hudson retired on March 1, 1976.

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I was visiting with a friend the other evening. His name is George Kohl, and his father was a pilot on a B24 in the 455th Bomb Group.

We were looking at the group history book, and noticed that there was someone named Peter C. Pedalino who was a corporal in the 741st squadron.

I am almost positive that he had to be a cousin of my dad's, who by the way was in the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the navy in WW II.

What a coincidence that two good friends may have had two relatives in the same bomb group.

Is there any way that you could give me any info about this Pedalino? (see photo >>>)

Sincerely,

Joe Pedalino

908-340-4367

94 Countryside Dr.

Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

joeped59@gmail.com



Squadron Intelligence Section (L - R)

Capt John J. Van Lent, Section Head;

S/Sgt Joe Havris, Chief Clerk;

Sgt Elton F. Caffrey; Sgt. Peter C. Pedalino

Photo courtesy of Dave Ungemach

Dear Editor,

I was looking for information about my relative's unit, and stumbled upon this piece of paperwork for Stephen Vicinski (741), a Radio Operator with 50 Combat Missions.

It is a very rare *Lucky Bastard* certificate (see at right>>) for completing 50 missions. *Lucky Bastard* certificates are among the toughest theater-made certificates to find.

Submitted by:

Mark Ucasz

mark.ucasz@pw.utc.com



Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am looking for some info on my wife's father, Bernard J. McNamara, who was a B-24 pilot. His MOS was Pilot 4, engine 1024. He passed away in 1986.

Wonder if you may be able to point me in the right direction.

Any info would be appreciated.

Thank you.

Terry McCarthy
ternmo1@hotmail.com

Can You Help? Response

Dear Terry,

Your wife's father, Bernard McNamara, flew in the 740th Bomb Squadron, 455th Bomb Group—the crew photo is on page 229 of our unit history, *"455th Bomb Group (H), Flight of the Vulgar Vultures"*.

The photo caption says; "Hank Houser's crew; Meyer Levin; B. McNamara; Dick Deppisch; the rest unidentified."

I would assume that your wife's father was the co-pilot when that photo was taken.

You can download a copy of the unit history book, as well as archived Cerignola Connection newsletter copies, at the following web address:

www.awardphp.com

I have a note in my personal journal for 16 October 1944, a mission flown to the marshalling yards at Graz, Austria that said:

"Houser's crew MIA."

Then, a second note in that same entry:

"Houser's crew safe."

I cannot say with certainty that the note referred to your father-in-law's crew. Since he received the Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, it appears that he flew 35 combat missions.

I am sending this as a CC to John Roher, our Association Historian, who may be able to give you some additional information. I have also sent it to each of the Association members with the thought that someone may have personal recollection of your father-in-law.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carl A. Barr
President, 455th BG Association

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I'm looking for some information on my dad's combat experience in southern Italy.

Recently, I found a few WWII pictures of my father, Francis P. Grigas (who passed away in 1990).

I believe he was in the 455th BG, as I see references to 741st and 742nd squadrons.

One picture shows a bombing run of several B24's unloading bombs taken from another aircraft. I assume the picture was taken from my father's B24, but I'm not sure.

The plane's tail (above) has a diamond on the top and a light color on the bottom.



I believe white on the bottom is the 454th BG, and yellow on the bottom is the 455th BG.

On the fuselage is the number 13. What does the number 13 signify?



There's another picture (above) of my father and his flight crew, with this written on the back:

c-no. 8 365 490.

Do you know what those numbers are? (Also, written on the back are the names Kirk and Leo Isaac.)

I have another picture of four guys on leave has these names: Art Roberts, Ed McCarthy, Fran Grigas (my father), and Jim MacNamara.

Could you ask your readers if they have any information on these names?

Thank you, and Best Regards,
Steve Grigas
sgrig3@netzero.com

Can You Help?

Response

(from request on previous page)

Dear Steve Grigas,

I'm not having much luck. I couldn't find your father or the other names in my files.

There were two Crosby's with the 742nd squadron, Frank A. and Allen P. (both are from Ohio).

The aircraft with the "13" on the fuselage looks like a 454th BG aircraft to me. I've never seen a 455th BG aircraft with the delineation line dividing the top and bottom of the tail, but I've seen it before on 454th aircraft.

It also doesn't have a squadron symbol on the rudder that I mentioned before. The 740th squadron used a vertical bar, the 741st used a clover leaf (long story), the 742nd had a horizontal bar, and the 743rd had a diagonal bar.

I've never seen anything like that on 454th aircraft (if I recall correctly, the 454th indicated squadrons by painting the cowlings on the engines different colors).

Also, the 455th tended to put the last three of the serial number on the nose.

The fuselage numbers in the 455th were based on a range of numbers assigned to each squadron; 740th was 00-19, 741st was 20-39, 742nd was 40-59, etc. I'm guessing the 454th used a similar scheme.

You can see all of these on the picture of "Cherrie", a B-24J of the 455th BG (742) at the following web link:

www.b24bestweb.com/cherrie-v1-3.htm

So it looks good for #13 being a 454th BG aircraft, especially since the one in the background has a similar appearance. That having been said, I've been burned before! We can only make an educated guess.

I'll see if the experts on "Bestweb" can provide additional information on the aircraft photos. It looks like the aircraft in the other photo is a Ford B-24J, block 1-5, but without nose art or a number visible, it will be difficult.

You could also try posting your questions/photos to www.armyairforces.com in both the 454th and 455th forums.

Regards,
Dave Ungemach
davetw1@cox.net

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My uncle, Fred Thomas Beatty, Jr. (740), was involved in a collision during a mission.

His aircraft number was 41-29296. All crew were MIA, except one body was recovered.

I'm trying to find pictures of his crew, other than the ones shown in the 455th BG history book. I have a photo of him and grandmother at a barracks.



I recently spoke to Arnold Lundwall, the son of Pilot Albert Lundwall (740). Albert Lundwall was KIA in this collision.

I was told he has limited pictures and letters saved by his mother and aunt.

I believe the name of one of the aircraft involved in the collision was *Big Az Bird*.

Any help you can provide will be appreciated.

Sincerely,
John Tew
117 Shadsford Blvd.
Fayetteville, NC 28314
910-689-8212 (cell)
910-864-7346 (home)

Can You Help?

Response

(from request above)

Dear John Tew,

I haven't had much luck with this aircraft.

Aircraft # 41-29296 (aka "296") remains as *UNKNOWN* or *GLAMOUR GAL* in my listing for now.

At one point, the BestWeb experts thought it might have been named *Snuffy Smith and the Yard Birds*.

However, a few years ago, a photo surfaced of that aircraft (confirmed 455th BG), and it was a from a different manufacturer, and wasn't a match for 296.

Another suggestion was that it may have been named *GLAMOUR GAL* (an ID sometimes incorrectly credited to me), but that has never been confirmed.

The search continues.

Never give up hope, John. A case in point is the other aircraft involved in the collision.

After many years and many false alarms, one of the BestWeb contributors found a photo of *Star Duster* (<http://www.b24bestweb.com/starduster-v2.htm>).

It appears to be a solid ID. Maybe someday the same thing will happen for *UNKNOWN / GLAMOUR GAL*.

I'll be sure to add a note to contact you should a photo ever surface.

Sincerely,
Dave Ungemach
davetw1@cox.net

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

We are looking for information regarding our father, Franz Gerber (742). The plane's pilot was Ed Nlchak, and the co-pilot was Karl Anderson.

We think our father was on his 5th mission when the plane was hit by flak. They turned back, but crashed before reaching their airfield. He was severely injured, and was hospitalized for several months.

Can you tell us the name of his plane? Although he has passed away, we want to honor his name with more information about his military career.

Thank you very much in advance for your efforts.

Sincerely,
Jerry Gerber
PO Box 169
Rice Lake, WI 54868
715-234-5665
jgerber@cbnwi.com

Dear Editor,

I am currently the Executive Officer for the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group out of Bagram, Afghanistan.

I suspect you have tracked the changes in your former unit, but we are currently one of the most prestigious wings in the AF. We fly everything from the F-15E to rescue Helicopters and even have a Navy EA-6 detachment. We also have fielded the Air Force's newest ISR asset, the MC-12.

The commander is redesigning the Group coin and was looking for ways to add heritage. We've made the coin an oval with some of the tail markings of the old B-24's. **See below.**

Now, we're trying to find a better slogan. Do you have any good sayings from when you flew that you'd like to share?

Thanks in advance for your help. I look forward to talking to you sometime.

Sincerely,
Capt. David Gribbin
455 EOG/CCE
DSN: East: 318-447-2317 West: 318-431-4414
VOSIP: East: 447-3089
West: 447-3063
NIPR: 455.eog.cce@bgab.afcent.af.mil
SIPR: David.Gribbin@bgab.afcent.af.smil.mil



Final Flight

Richard Armellino (741)

Little Richard wanted to fly before he knew it. At age three, he was photographed in a WWI Jenny Bi-plane.



As a teenager, he would roller-skate about ten miles from his home to Barren Island airfield in Brooklyn, N.Y. Early aviators entertained with aerobatics, wing walkers and daring feats. He would have to install new rollers about once a week to replace the worn ones.

We got to know each other in Cerignola, Italy, while flying bombing missions in B-24 bombers. Our friendship lasted a lifetime.

Dick remained in the USAF Reserve after WWII. He was recalled to active duty during the Korean War. He gave up a relatively safer duty flying C-46 transports around Japan & Korea.

Dick was one of very few volunteers for very secret "spook" missions. He dropped infiltrators at night into designated drop zones, landing on sandy beaches to deliver personnel and supplies.

One night, U.S. Navy fighters

shot down an enemy fighter that was on Dick's tail. The enemy used downed Air Force personnel to radio for rescue in an effort to lure him closer to their anti-aircraft guns.

Having fought with and become friendly with some of the Koreans who fought the Communists, Dick was deeply saddened that the agreed peace-line left some of these people to lose their ancestral lands, farms and homes, and therefore subject to the Korean Communists.

Dick was a competent and principled individual. He spoke his mind and pulled no punches. The frosting on the cake was his sense of humor, and sense of adventure.

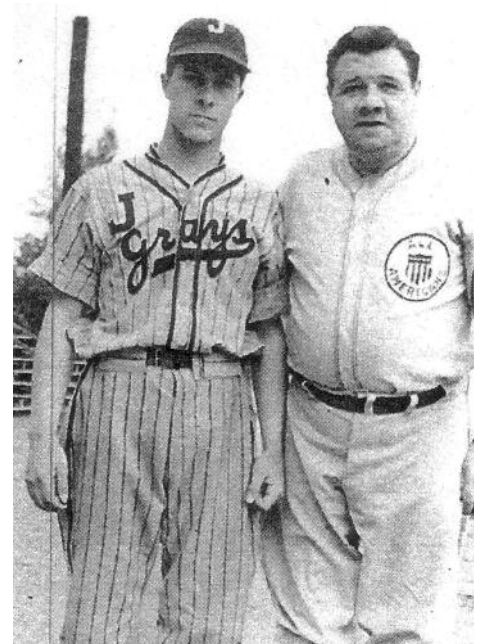
In Italy, I was served and enjoyed what was beefsteak and another time rabbit, after which he identified them, smiling, as horsemeat and cat.

Very adept at athletics as a youngster, Dick was quickly recruited as a quarterback onto the Farmingdale Agricultural College football team.

Following graduation, he joined a minor league baseball team in Florida, and was soon recruited onto the Brooklyn Dodgers player developmental minor league "farm" team as a pitcher.

Highlights during his minor league baseball days was Dick's getting to personally know baseball Hall of Fame legend pitcher Bobby Feller, and being granted the honor of pitching to Babe Ruth during a war bond fundraising exhibition baseball event. He

was instructed to pitch right into the strike zone for the Babe (which he did), and the then-retired Babe Ruth knocked them all out of the park, to the delight of the cheering crowd of stadium spectators.



As World War II was getting underway in earnest, Dick decided to join the Army and postpone his potential baseball career.

Showing an aptitude toward flying with excellent eyesight and eye/hand coordination, Dick was quickly accepted into Army Air Corps as a pilot candidate.

He soon ended up based in Italy, flying 35 combat missions over German-occupied Europe, with the 455th Bomb Group, 741st Squadron.

His unit was immortalized in author Stephen Ambrose's book *"The Wild Blue"*, which was published during the extensive recognition given to the "Greatest Generation" during the early 2000's.

In 1950, Dick was called back into the Air Force and sent to Korea, where he flew classified covert combat missions under the direction of the Army Special Operations Command.

Upon Dick's return from Korea, he quickly married his Minnesota-raised, gorgeous sweetheart, Jean Isabel Nelson. They quickly started a family, and seven years later four boys (Greg, Rick, Steve, & Gary) were running wild throughout the household.

He founded American Body Armor & Equipment Inc. (ABA) in 1969, which he operated until selling the company and retiring to Florida in 1985. ABA subsequently grew through acquisitions, and is now owned and operated by British based BAE Systems, which is currently one of the world's largest defense contractors.

After retirement, Dick and Jean lived life to the fullest at their dream home on Big Talbot Island, FL. Dick relished the many opportunities to crab, fish, boat, golf, play poker, argue politics, and of course, FLY.

He finally surrendered his pilot's license, and sold the plane, at age 84, proudly proclaiming that during 60+ years of flying aircraft, he never put a scratch onto one.

Dick Armellino made it to a ripe age with good humor and a fighting spirit.

He peacefully took his Final Flight, with his beloved wife Jean at his side, on October 4, 2010 in their Florida home.



A Memorial Service with Military Honors was held on Nov. 23, 2010, which would have been Dick's 90th birthday.

Several airplanes performed fly-overs immediately after. A huge party was held to celebrate Dick's life.

Later in the day, Jean and each of her sons released balloons in remembrance of Captain Armellino. Then their neighbor Cindy (who has an established bird-care sanctuary on a bordering property) released a two-year-old American Bald Eagle! It was an amazing sight!

The family named the eagle "*Liberator*", in remembrance of the B-24 *Liberator* bombers Dick flew in WWII. Even today, *Liberator* the eagle flies over Dick and Jean's peaceful property on a frequent basis.

We are so glad to be able to share Dick's life accomplishments with you. He will forever be loved.

There can be little mourning when every memory of Dick evokes smiles and laughter.

Captain Courageous, and *Captain Adventurous*, to the very end.

Submitted by,
Tony Corsello (741)
corsello@aol.com

Profound Words

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

Eagles may soar in the clouds, but weasels never get sucked into jet engines.
~Attributed to both Jason Hutchison and John Benfield

If The Phone Doesn't Ring, It's Me.
~Song title by Jimmy Buffet

I plan on living forever. So far, so good.
~Author Unknown

You can't have everything. Where would you put it?
~Steven Wright

When somebody tells you nothing is impossible, ask him to dribble a football.
~Author Unknown

If you cannot answer a man's argument, all it not lost. You can still call him vile names.
~ Official policy of a certain American political party

Maybe this world is another planet's Hell.
~Aldous Huxley

He who believes that the past cannot be changed has not yet written his memoirs.
~Torvald Gahlin

A conclusion is the place where you got tired of thinking.
~Arthur McBride Bloch

Final Flight

John Darrel Tolbert (742)



My Grandfather, John Darrel Tolbert, took his final flight on June 19, 2003. I only discovered the 455th BG Association and the *Cerignola Connection* recently, and since I needed to confirm some details with my mom and uncle, it's taken me far too long to put together this Final Flight notice for the Association newsletter.

John arrived in Cerignola in late August, 1944.

He was nose gunner in the aircraft *STINKY* with George Underwood (former President of the 455th BG Assoc.).

He flew his first mission on 15 September 1944 over Athens, Greece, and his last on 25 March 1945 to Prague, completing 35 in total, all but one with his *STINKY* crew.

After the war in Europe, John returned home to Yuma in July 1945, still thinking he'd be sent to the Pacific. Fortunately, that was not necessary, and he

settled back into civilian life, working as a mechanic and eventually opening his own garage.

My Grandmother died in 1986. John continued living alone at his Colorado ranch, though he spent a lot of time down at our place.

During this time, he started reading up on the war, both big picture, strategic stuff and the details of what the bombers had done. He began also at this time to tell us his stories from the war, something he hadn't done before.

In the late 1980's, two big changes occurred. First was the dramatic rise in real estate values in Colorado, especially as close to the ski areas as we were. The second was that John discovered the "seniors dating scene". The effect of the first was that, after sub-dividing and selling off the ranch, he was able retire in comfort.

In 1991, he remarried and moved to Grand Junction, Colorado (I was his best man). Here he lived happily for twelve years until he was diagnosed with liver cancer in 2003. At the time, I was serving in the Navy in Germany, but was fortunate to get emergency leave, and to come see him before the end.

A few years ago, while I was doing some Navy Reserve work in Naples, I got the chance to drive over to Cerignola and San Giovanni. I spoke with the woman whose family now owns the farm that was the center point of the 455th's base. She showed me the chapel, the few remaining Quonset huts and the

book she has all the vets or their family members sign when they visit. Even though her family was not in San Giovanni during the war, she is most keen to maintain and honor the history of the place and seems to take a strong interest in the history of the Group. In fact, I have seen her mentioned in several issues of the *Cerignola Connection*.

My visit to San Giovanni was for me a very personal way to deepen my connection to my Grandpa, his time in the service, and to those he served with.

My Grandpa John Tolbert was one of the finest men I will ever know. He definitely had his own demons, most brought back from the war, I suspect, and some of which he dealt with in less-than-positive ways. But he also epitomized the ethos of hard work and uncompromising honesty that is so often ascribed to his generation. I am proud of him, his service, and all he stood for. I am very proud to be his grandson.

Sincerely,
Chuck Ridgway
Email: chucker2@gmx.de



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A MESSAGE FROM THE 455TH BOMB GROUP ASSOC. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's been hot and humid in Texas! I chose this summer to build a shed in my back yard, concrete foundation and everything, so I've gotten the full enjoyment of our exceptional temperatures. At least I know my sweat glands are still working properly.

I took a hiatus the first three months of this year to spend time with my dad. It was time well spent! The next month was spent in Tulsa wrapping up loose ends. I'm afraid the Association's business suffered during those months. I think I am caught up with orders, requests, et cetera. If you have pending business with the Association that seems to have fallen through the cracks, please contact me and let me know. Hopefully we can get everything back on track.

My personal thanks to all of you who expressed condolences when my father passed away. I was truly blessed to have grown up with him as my father. I enjoyed him in a son-father relationship and in a friend-to-friend relationship. There is not a week goes by that some event comes up which I still want to share with him on the phone. I know many of you have similar stories to tell. We have lost several of the Association's past leaders this year, all truly good men and personal friends.

As I write this, today is my pregnant daughter's due date. Jan and I are about to break into the ranks of grandparents. The cycle continues.

We still have group logo pins available for \$5 each, but they will no longer be advertised in the newsletter. The squadron pins have all been sold. If we end up ordering more, their availability will be advertised in a future edition of the *Cerignola Connection*.

We still have 302 WWII veterans on our roster. In addition to this, the Association currently includes 108 widows of veterans, as well as 27 other various relatives of veterans. Technically, nine members and associate members are due to be dropped due to non-payment of dues. I'm waiting another year in case I made an error during the first three months of this year.

I again encourage all of our annual members to purchase a life membership for only \$60. It removes the annual burden of remembering to pay dues. Please look at the mailing label on this newsletter to determine your membership status. If you see a two-digit number, that indicates the last year for which I have received your dues. Membership payments are due by the end of December.

I continue to thank God every day that I live in a free country. I'm grateful for those of you who preserved that, and passed it along to the rest of us. Thank you. I wish for you good health and the ability to enjoy all your days.

Best Regards,

Greg Riggs

Executive Director / Treasurer / Secretary

455th BG Association, Inc.

Email: 455BG-H@austin.rr.com