



CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

Spring 2001 – Editor, Tom Ramey, 1211 Montclair Ct., Appleton, WI 54915 (920) 731-2500

From Your President

There are two news items to bring to your attention.

First, we've extended an invitation to Dr. Stephen Ambrose, his son Hugh, and daughter Stephanie, together with their spouses, to be our guests, and join us at our reunion in St. Louis, MO in October. I have received telephone notification from the Secretary of the Ambrose-Tubbs office that they accept our invitation, and will attend. We hope to have Dr. Ambrose address our convention at our banquet.

His book, *"The Wild Blue: The B-24's Over Germany 1944-45"* by Simon & Schuster is scheduled for September 2001 publication, but it's launch may be delayed until our reunion. The book may be available for purchase at the reunion, signed by Dr. Ambrose. These details have not been finalized to date.

The second news item I am excited about is: **The 455th Bomb Group Association Inc.** donations credited to building the **National World War II Memorial** in Washington D.C., are in excess of \$10,000. This places our Bomb Group Association's donation in the "Defenders Gifts" category. This is the same category as the "Second Air Division Association, 8th Air Force", which represents a combined number of bomb groups. The National World War II Memorial Office, in Arlington VA, has informed me that we have gone over \$10,000. If you would like to add to our total, and I encourage you to do so, mark your contribution for mail code account **VG0FE**, which identifies it as a contribution in the name of our bomb group. There is still need for additional contributions.

*See you in St. Louis
Frank Lashinsky*

The Wild Blue Yonder

A year or so ago, many of you got a letter from Dr. Stephan Ambrose requesting articles about your WWII experiences while assigned to the 455th Bomb Group. We have been advised by Simon & Schuster, the publisher of Dr. Ambrose's book, that it will be on the market by the end of August this year. The title is *"The Wild Blue Yonder"*. Dr. Ambrose will be our Banquet speaker at our forthcoming reunion. We hope to have several copies of his book there for attendees to purchase and have Dr. Ambrose sign it. For those not attending the reunion, go to your favorite book store and buy a copy.

Dr. Ambrose spends his summer near Helena, MT and is a neighbor of George McGovern, who was assigned to the 741st Bomb Sqdn as a pilot, and who also spends his summers on his ranch near Helena. They had frequent conversations. Dr. Ambrose has written many books and noted that the 15th AF WWII activities were hardly ever mentioned. Whereas, the 8th AF has had many books and movies covering their actions. Thus, he decided to write a book about the activities of the 15th AF. The 455th Bomb Group was a source of information for this book.

The *"Wild Blue Yonder"* will be very interesting to members of the 455th Bomb Group Association. You might want to buy a copy or two for your "family library".

Final Flights

Ned Pahl 4/2000
Navigator, 743rd Squadron

Guy Robert Champney 9/21/2000
Flight Engineer

Emmett Hetzer 10/7/2000
742nd Squadron

Andrew Spewock 6/27/2000
Nose Turret Gunner
Robard's crew 743rd Squadron

Donald Lonergan 10/11/2000
Waist Gunner, 741st Squadron

Beverly Strode 1/12/2000
Wife of Ross Strode,
742nd Squadron

Andrew Brennan 12/25/2000
741st Squadron

Earl B. Kent 5/14/2000
743rd Squadron
Navigator, Lloyd Brunson's crew

Carl W. Otto 7/20/2000
741st Squadron

Grover Cleveland West 12/1999
742nd Squadron

Humphrey Hosmer 12/29/2000
Navigator, 741st Squadron

Our hearts are with and sympathies go to the loved ones of the 455th members.

Reserve These Dates! October 3 - October 7

The 2001 Reunion of the 455th Bomb Group Association will be held from Wednesday October 3, 2001 to Sunday October 7, 2001. We'll be counting on you. This will be our biggest, finest get together ever!

Special Invitation To Widows

Widows of 455th Bomb Group members are certainly welcome to attend our reunions. As pointed out in this issue of the Cerignola connection, we are having a reunion this year in St. Louis. In the past, we would occasionally be fortunate enough to have a widow attend our reunions. Wouldn't it be great if we could get several widows to attend our reunion? To encourage the widows to attend this forthcoming reunion in St. Louis, the Association will host a breakfast for eight or more widows register to attend the reunion. The breakfast will be at 8:00am on Friday, the 5th of Oct. in the Marriott Hotel dining room. Our President, Frank Lashinsky and his wife, Dorothy, and our Executive Director, Gus Wendt and his wife, Marie will also attend. If we get at least eight widows signed up to attend the reunion, their breakfast invitation will be in their registration envelope. Perhaps they want a "widow designated" table at the Saturday evening banquet. That can be arranged also.

Come Widows, join us and enjoy the fun!

2001 455th Reunion will be at St. Louis Airport Marriott- 3 thru 7 Oct.

The upcoming 455th Reunion will be at the St. Louis Airport Marriott. Registration starts on Wednesday, 3 October. The Banquet will be on Saturday night, 6 Oct. Departure for home should be planned to leave the Marriott on the Sunday morning, 7 Oct. The Marriott will provide transportation between the St. Louis Airport and their facility. So when you arrive at the Airport be sure to look for the Marriott Van to get transportation to the Hotel. Cost at the hotel is \$89.00 plus state and local taxes (14.475% per night).

We have planned three tours for you.

a: On Thursday, 4 Oct. there will be a **St. Louis City Tour**. It will depart the hotel at 0900 and return about 4:00pm. On this tour you will ride thru Laclede's Landing; a revitalized 19th century warehouse district with cobblestone streets and cast iron street lights. Then you'll drive through the Soulard area on your way to the Anheuser-Busch Brewery. Your walking tour of the brewery begins with the famous Clydesdales. See the brewery and packaging process, including a stop for complimentary beer samples in their Hospitality House. Then you'll proceed to Union Station, first opened in 1894. Here you'll have lunch on your own and time for browsing. This restored National Historic Landmark is a festive market place, with numerous restaurants, eateries and speciality shops. Following lunch, you'll continue your city tour with a stop at the New Cathedral to see one of the largest collections of mosaic art in the Western Hemisphere. Then you'll return to your hotel, passing through Forest Park and the St. Louis Zoo. The cost for this tour is \$22.00/person. Lunch is on your own.

b: The **St. Charles Historic Tour** on Friday 5 Oct. We board the bus at 11:30am and return to the hotel around 4:00pm. St. Charles was the original capital of the Missouri area, which was then owned by the French. Walk around the nine block National Register Historic District, complete with brick streets, gaslights and charming restored buildings. Browse through over seventy-five one-of-a-kind antique, craft, gift shops and a variety of quaint restaurants. Consider a tour of the Old Capital building, dating back to 1821 (small admission charge). The cost of this tour is \$18.00/person. Lunch is on your own.

c. **Gateway Arch Museum and Film/Laclede's Landing**. On Saturday 6 Oct., we board the bus about 10:15am and return to the

hotel around 3:15pm. The first stop of this tour is the St. Louis waterfront and the famous Gateway Arch. In the basement below the Arch is the "Museum of Westward Expansion." While there, you'll want to see the film, "*Monument to the Dream*", to learn how the magnificent structure was built. This tour does not allow time to go up in the Arch. The wait in lines for a trip to the top of the Arch, sometimes reaches 6 hours and is very seldom less than a couple of hours. Thus, we've had to leave out a trip to the top of the Arch. After leaving the Arch, we'll travel a short distance to Laclede's Land. Your guide will point out several restaurant options for you to, as usual, lunch on your own. The cost of this tour is \$25.00/person.

We will have our own Hospitality Room, where we can just get together and try to beat the other guy's story. The Hospitality Room will be open on Wednesday thru Friday. Noon to midnight. Drinks will be served in the Hospitality Room from 5:30pm to 11:30pm. It will be closed on Saturday night until after the conclusion of the Banquet. There will be a bar in the Banquet room, however, these drinks are not free.

In a short time you will be receiving a "package" in your mail. It will cover two basic items - your **room reservations** and your **reunion reservations**. (If you do not receive this package by 15 July, please drop me a postcard, so I can mail a package to you. We must get the answers back to Armed Forces Reunion by 11 Sept.)

a: You, as an individual, are responsible for making your own **room reservation**. All reservations will be held after 6:00pm and guaranteed for late arrival only if accompanied by a first night deposit or guaranteed to a major credit card. Cut off date for these reservations is 9/11/2001, 3:00pm. (Check-out time on Sunday, 7 Oct., is 1:00pm)

b: The Reunion reservations, (tours, banquet menu choice, etc) are all filled out and sent to

Armed Forces Reunion, Inc.

You'll note that the banquet menu consists of two choices. A chicken entree (\$27.00 per person) or a 10 oz prime rib entree (\$29.00 per person). The Association Officers agree that your Association will pay \$10.00 for each entree. Thus your banquet dinner cost will be \$17.00 for the chicken entree or \$19.00 for the prime rib entree. With your response to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. you should include a check covering registration (\$10.00), and the cost of the tours and banquet entree that you choose.

c: Parking Details: The St. Louis Airport Marriott offers on site parking for \$4.00/day. Guest valet parking, \$8.00 a day. **But, for our group, parking will be complimentary!!**

Reunion Agenda. And now the detailed stuff;

Wednesday, 10/3/01

1000-1600 (that's 4:00pm) registration
1400-2300 Hospitality Room (bar open 1730-2300)

Thursday, 10/4/01

0900-1600 St. Louis City Tour
1000-1600 Registration
1000-0000 Hospitality Room (bar open 1730-2300)
1630-1730 Board Meeting (small conference room)

Friday, 10/5/01

0800-0900-Widow Breakfast
1000-0000 Hospitality Room (bar open 1730-2300)
1130-1600 St. Charles Historic Tour
7:00pm-2130pm 741st Dinner

Saturday 10/6/01

0830-0930 General Membership Meeting.
1015-1515 Gateway Arch Museum and Laclede's Landing Tour
1600-1700 New Board Meeting (small conference room)
2200-000 Hospitality Room (bar open 1730-2300)
1800-1900 Banquet Reception (Banquet bar open)
1900-2200 Banquet (speaker-Stephan Ambrose)

Sunday 10/7/01

Depart Hotel before 1300 (01:00pm) or pay an extra day.

Charlie Stark Writes



Recently I began corresponding with a high school classmate with whom I have been separated since graduation except for a brief visit while in basic training in Miami Beach, Florida. He was stationed at the navy base at Opa Loca at that time.

Our correspondence has covered many subjects relative to our military service. One subject we got onto was high altitude bombing with the B-24 and the Norden Bomb Sight. I certainly am not an expert on this subject and know very little more than the rudimentary aspects of the bombing problem since I was a pilot.

In explaining to my friend with my limited knowledge, it came to my attention that the 15th Air Force's bombing record left something to be desired. I refreshed my memory by looking up the records in the 455th Group History Book.

Only 35% of our bombs fell within 1000 feet of the target. I made a few simple mathematical calculations relating to speed in feet per second and angular deflection in degrees and figured that a 2 degree deflection error and timing error in release of bombs of 3 seconds would still put the bombs within the 1000 foot radius of the target. Of course these errors could add up or cancel each other out. I am well aware of the many many variable entering into the problem including the hostile environment in which the bombardiers performed their work.

My thought is to have an article published in the Cerignola Connection explaining why we didn't put the bombs in the pickle barrel as the Norden was supposed to be able to do in 1940.

The flak gunners at Maribor, Yugoslavia had things figured out on my last mission. I watched a battery of three shells track us right down the bomb run. They were dead on that day and our group lost 2 planes and at least one man killed. The flak gunners problem

was just the reverse of ours except they had a stable platform to work on. (there were 25 flak guns at Maribor).

This is just a thought that I think might be of interest to a lot of people in our group. All you have to do is find a bombardier to write the story.

Best regards,
Charlie Stark
155 Gass Rd.
Pittsburgh, PA 15229

Ed: A challenge for all you bombardiers!

YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING 'MARVELOUSLY MATURE' WHEN.....

- When you step off a curb and look down one more time to make sure the street is still there.
- Your idea of weight lifting is standing up.
- It takes longer to rest than it did to get tired.
- Your memory is shorter and your complaining lasts longer.
- Your address book has mostly names that start with Dr.
- You sit in a rocking chair and can't get it going.
- The pharmacist has become your new best friend.
- Getting "lucky" means you found your car in the parking lot.
- The twinkle in your eye is merely a reflection from the sun on your bifocals.
- It takes twice as long - to look half as good.
- Everything hurts, and what doesn't hurt - doesn't work.
- You look for your glasses for half an hour and they were on your head the whole time.
- You sink your teeth into a steak - and they stay there.
- You give up all your bad habits and still don't feel good.
- You have more patience, but it is actually that you just don't care anymore.

Meet Me In St. Louie, Louie!

October 3 - October 7, 2001
At the 455th Bomb Group
Association reunion.

When you pass through the Gateway Arch there will be plenty to do to make this your best reunion ever. Whether you take one of the scheduled tours or decide to prowl on your own, or in small groups, you'll never have an idle moment. There's a lot to see...a lot to do!

You can start with the Gateway Arch, right in the center of town. Opened in 1965, the Arch towers 630 feet above the city, offering a birdseye view of the city and the mighty Mississippi River. Take a tram to the top and while you are waiting for the tram, tour the museum of Westward Expansion, tucked underneath the Arch.

The City Museum could spark your interest. It's located in the downtown Loft District inside a massive old shoe factory warehouse, the City Museum is a combination children's museum/ art center/ history museum with hands on activities galore. Walk through the mouth of a 55-foot Bowhead Whale, see 4000 square feet of man made caves (we are still young enough.) On the second floor, Art City, you'll see glass blowing and weaving, create pottery with an artist, watch an old turn-of-the-century shoelace machine produce dozens of brightly colored laces. A never-ending operational train chugs away on the third floor plus there's an outstanding display of artifacts and ornaments.

If you were stationed in or near St. Louis during WWII, you'll remember Forest Park. Here you could rent a tent and have a cot and clean sheets for a buck on a weekend in town plus go to the USO for "eats". This 1300-acre urban oasis contains many of the city's most famous attractions. There's the St. Louis Science Center (free), one of the ten top science centers in the world. The three building, 650-exhibit facility includes a planetarium, outdoor science park, live science presenta-

tion and OMNIMAX Theater. You'll see lifelike replicas of tyrannosaurus rex, and the underground tunnel that features a recreated coal mine, lead mine, brick sewer, and utility tunnel. You can build your own 8 foot Gateway Arch from faux leather-covered foam blocks up in the Structures Gallery. The Structures Gallery leads to an enclosed bridge crossing Interstate 64; radar guns are handy so you can clock passing vehicles and view the whizzing traffic underneath.

From Forest Park you can take a shuttle bus to the zoo (we are all kids at heart)...90 acres...700 species of creatures.

If you have time left, head for the Missouri Botanical garden, a St. Louis institution since 1859. View an 80-acre recreated rainforest housed inside a climatron geodesic greenhouse, the English garden's shrub maze, which includes a Victorian-styled looktower.

If you are driving, or can catch a ride, you might find time for Grant's Farm, a free attraction sponsored by Anheuser-Busch, the 281 acre wildlife preserve once was farmed by President U.S. Grant and is now home to an amazing array of more than 1,000 diverse animals such as bison, antelope, ostriches, zebras and Sika deer, all roaming free. Make sure to catch the entertaining and educational animal shows featuring African elephants, parrots and birds of prey. Don't forget to cap off the visit with a peek in at the Clydesdale Stable, home to breeding and training operations for the famous Budweiser Clydesdales.

You'll want to check out the St. Louis riverfront, an area that blends history with modern entertainment pursuits. Pick up free information at the St. Louis Visitor Center, inside the American's Center and at Kiener Plaza.

You can venture into St. Louis' most popular entertainment areas, Central West End, busy with nighttime activity. Have dinner on your free night, window shop or take in a movie or concert at the newly refurbished Chase Park-Plaza, a former upscale hotel reborn as a center for entertainment.

If it is music that rocks and rolls over Beethoven is more to your liking, two neighborhoods - Soulard and the University City Loop - worth investigating for dinner and evening entertainment.

Soulard, south of downtown, is the place to hear the blues. The Budweiser is cold and music hot at Mike & Min's BB's blues, Jazz and Soups, between Busch Stadium and Soulard on Broadway, always has great blues artists such as locals Leroy Pierson, Tommy Bankhead and Rondo's Blues Deluse. University City Loop, west of downtown, has Blueberry Hill, a great place for rock 'n roll memorabilia.

Another strong anchor for downtown is Soulard Market, which opened in 1779 and claims distinction as the oldest continuously operated farmer's market west of the Mississippi. Stop for a donut, an early bratwurst or if you are up to it, a fuzzy navel, a specialty at Joyce's Corner. The Soulard neighborhood, containing restored 19th - century red brick homes was named for a Frenchman who surveyed the area for the king of Spain.

If you are hard pressed to find a Welsh restaurant, St. Louis has two of them. And they are within two blocks of each other in the Central Westend. If you get an open-faced cheese sandwich, broiled, flavored with beer that will be Welsh rarebit.

Llywelyn's features shepherd's pie, onion-and-potato pie and steak-and-vegetable pie. Also lamb stew, potato-leek soup, and hubble and squeak, a British dish made from fried leftover veggies.

If you are hungry for Italian go to the Hill, a 20 block neighborhood of Italian lore and fine places to dine. Visit the Amighetti Bakery, Di Gregorio's family owned grocery, Volpi's butcher shop, Favazza's restaurant or Dominic's - top of the line cuisine. Catch a little bocce ball and then head back to the hospitality room for a nightcap. If I missed anything there's a free call to the St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission at 1-800-916-0040 or if you are a laptop person try - www.explorestlouis.com.

455th E-Mail Roster

Below is a listing of e-mail address' of 455th members that were sent to us for publication in the Cerignola Connection.

*Indicates a new listing since last published in the Cerignola Connection. If you want your e-mail address included in this roster, please send it to us;

455th Bomb Group Assn, Inc.;
P.O. Box 4043
Sierra Vista AZ 85636-4043.

Harry W. Anderson (740), San Antonio, TX. **pomganny@aol.com**

Jack Blum (741), New Port Richey, FL. **jblum15677@aol.com**

Marlin L. (Bud) Brown, (742), Lake Placid, FL. **barbud@htn.net**

Robert Caldwell (741st), Prescott Valley, AZ. **rc7306@aol.com**

Howard Cooper, Staten Island, NY. **howgladcoop@worldnet.att.net**

Robert (Bob) Collette, St. Petersburg, FL.
dobybob1@juno.com

James A. Cowden (742), Tascaloosa, AL.
jcowden@earthlink.net

William (Bill) Crim (741), Lakewood, CO. **brccrim@aol.com**

* James P. Daly (740), Aberdeen, NJ.
panadaly@aol.com

* Jack Dekker (743)m, Grand Rapids, MI. **jdek@gateway.net**

Theodore Deppe (741), Bloomington, IN.
tdeppe@indiana.edu

Curtis Diles (740), Dayton, OH.
curtis-diles@prodigy.net

Paul H. Ditchett, (742), Safety Harbor, FL. **paul546@juno.com**

Bob Emick (741), Battle Creek, MI.
rfemick@aol.com

James A. Fedewa (740), Dunnellon, FL. **jcfedewa@cs.com**

* William B. Gemmill (740), Spring Hill, FL.

wgemmill@tampabay.rr.com

William C. Graves (742), Jacksonville, FL.

wgraves210@aol.com

Lou Hansen (743), Spencer, IA.
lohansen@nwiowa.com

Harvey Hewit (743), Haverford, PA.
lhew@aol.com

Thomas L. Kablack (742), Crown Point, IN.
techmart@mail.icongrp.com

Milton Kaplan (743), Croton, NY.
mkaplin@bestweb.net

Erling Kindem (742), Farmington, MN. **erlingk@aol.com**

Jack Lancaster (742), Clovis, NM.
mandj@3lefties.com

* John L. Larma (740), Omaha, NE.
jlarma@uswest.net

George L. Liddle (742), Sun City, CA. **olgeorge@ez2.net**

Dave Matheson (742), Harrison, AR. **hatebugs@northarkansas.net**

* Vic Murray (743), Longwood, FL.
vemurray@earthlink.net

Robert E. Newberg (743), West Des Moines, IA.
newy7aces@home.com

Charles Oltarzewski (740), Gallatin, TN. **murphB24@aol.com**

Roland J. Pepin (741), Johnston, RI.
pep4400@aol.com

Jack Phelps (740), Dallas, TX.
B7606@ix.netcom.com

Wesley Powell (740), Seabrook TX.
wesjulia@gateway.net

Sid Schoengold (740), Monroe, TWP, NJ. **harsid1@juno.com**

Gus R. Seefluth (742), Lebanon, OH. **gus@go-concepts.com**

Walt Shostack (741), Dayton, OH.
shirlystack@compuserve.com

Charles E. Stark, (740), Pittsburg, PA. **Carchar@aol.com**

(Dr.) Stanley Vogelfang (741), Houston, TX. **stanvog@aol.com**

MIA? We Need Your Help!

Missing or Inaccurate Addresses.

The Postal Service advises us that it cannot deliver the Cerignola Connection to our members listed below. Thus, we have deleted them from our mailing list. They are still on our membership roster. Those with an asterisk in front of their first name, have appeared in the MIA list for one year. They will be deleted from the next MIA listing.

Mrs. Lucille C. Annala
400 5th No., Bitterroot #303
Great Falls, MT 59401-2391

Greg Sprecht
2916 Sarrento Way
Union City, CA 94587

Mrs. Marion V. Tigert
1501 Lyda Steem Dr.
Biloxi, MS 39532

If anyone knows the whereabouts or has any information about these members, please let us know so we can bring our database up to date. Names preceded by an asterisk will be deleted permanently from our mailing list if no verifiable information is received. Send info to **455th Bomb Group Assoc., P.O. Box 4043, Sierra Vista, AZ 85636-4043.**

YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING 'MARVELOUSLY MATURE' WHEN.....

- When your idea of a night out is sitting on the patio.
- When you're on vacation and your energy runs out before your money does.
- When you say something to your kids that your mother said to you and you always hated it.
- When all you want for your birthday is to not be reminded of your age.

George Folk Writes



I appreciate your interest in hearing my account of the mission #84 to Linz, Austria. I will share it with you as I recall it.

I was on that mission with the following: George Baughman, John Taaffe, Robert Cox, Richard Felker, John Kornechuk, Robert Patrick, George A. Gulbranson, Paul Koshewa, William O. Vocial and myself. It was July 25, 1944. We were bombing enemy installations over Linz. We were on our way to our target when our B-24 lost an engine and had to drop out of formation. We were so close to our target that we continued on in order to drop our bombs.

I was the ball turret gunner. We were attacked by 8 to 10 ME109s. I was wounded in my right foot and came up out of the ball turret. Four others were wounded; the two waist gunners were unconscious. I crawled over to the right window and I looked out to see one ME109 coming toward us to finish us off. I grabbed the 50 caliber machine gun, aimed at that fighter plane and fired away. With the tracer bullets helping me, I hit the plane and shot it down.

I turned around to try to help my wounded buddies. I tried to use the first-aid kit at first, but then had to go to the front to get help. The bombardier/medic came to the back to administer help to the wounded.

Our plane was badly damaged: gasoline leaking and no brakes. Our pilot, Lt. Gulbranson, began to instruct us on how we would attempt a landing. He told us to get all parachutes, attach them to the windows, and to be ready to pull the cords when he gave the word. Hopefully, the chutes would help brake our landing.

We were safely back in our territory when he gave the signal. We pulled the cords on all the chutes. (For an instant, it seemed as if we stopped cold!) It worked! The landing went as well as could be expected.

I don't remember much immediately following our landing. Those of us who were wounded were grounded for awhile. The rest

of the crew regrouped some days later and went on another mission. On that mission, our report was that the plane did not return. Lt. Gulbranson, our pilot was on that mission. I was never informed any differently, and assumed he had died on that mission.

When I read the article in the Cerignola Newsletter (Spring 94) by Bill Loffer, I was shocked (and consider it a miracle) that Lt. Gulbranson survived that mission, and in fact returned home to the States. All these years, I had no idea he was alive until I saw the article.

I have been in touch with two men from my crew; Beroge Baughman and Paul Koshewa, over the years. When I spoke to George about this article, he was as surprised and excited as I was. We are very interested in reaching Lt. Gulbranson and any other former crew members who may have survived that mission with him.

If you can give me any information as to where he can be reached, if he is living, I would really appreciate it.

*George W. Folk
205 Pine St
Bamberg, SC 29003*

Did Anyone Know Lt. Ed Boteen?

The Association has received a letter from a fellow in Slovakia. He's asking for info regarding Lt. Ed Boteen, who was shot down and crashed in Slovakia on 13 Sept. 1944. (We listed the target as the oil refinery at Odertal Germany. After WWII boundaries were changed. We lost three aircraft over the target.) We have no info on Lt. Boteen, except he was assigned to the 743rd Bomb Sqdn. If you have any info, would you please send it to Peter Kassak, either by snail-mail or e-mail. Please snail-mail an info copy to the Editor of the Cerignola Connection. Your answer may make a good news article for the Cerignola Connection.

**Peter Kassak, Hospodarska 68,
Trnava 917 01, Slovak Republic,
e-mail: pkassak@yahoo.com.**



Chaplain's Corner

When upon life's billows
you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged,
thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings,

name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the
Lord hath done.

Count your blessings, name them
one by one;
Count your blessings, see what
God hath done;
Count your blessings, name them
one by one;
Count your many blessing, see
what God hath done.

Purple Heart Update

The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act (106-117) placed all veterans awarded the Purple Heart in Priority Group 3 for health care enrollment at VA facilities. It also exempts Purple Heart awardees from co-payments associated with VA Hospital care and VA outpatient medical services.

Photos Without a Home!

All submitted photos for the Cerignola Connection are returned immediately after printing. Occasionally we have photos without the owners name and address on the back. Consequently these cannot be returned. If any of those listed below you can claim, let me know and I'll mail them to you.

**Ed-1211 Montclair Ct.,
Appleton, WI 54915**

Fall 2000 Issue:
Page 4 - Crew pictures
All photos on Page 13 excepting
lower right
All Photos on Page 18
All photos on Page 19

A Memorable Day

Written by Humphrey
Hosmer, Navigator, 741st
Squadron, Final Flight
12/29/2000

I would like to share with you a memorable day. Early one morning, about a half century ago, I was lying on a canvas cot, under a pyramidal tent, surrounded by olive trees, on a knoll amongst the wheat fields of southeast Italy.

As I lay asleep, my senses picked up the movement of footsteps swishing through the heavy, dew laden grass, and they stopped next to my cot. A tug on my shoulder and a voice spoke out, "Lieutenant, it is time to get up."

I arose and dressed in the uniform of the day; cotton khaki T-shirt, cotton khaki boxer shorts with the three buttons, a blue gray heated flying suit, G.I. suntans and coveralls. I wore heated boots under my sheepskin lined overshoes. After getting dressed, I threw my G.I. shoes, with their laces tied together, around my neck, grabbed my briefcase and parachute bag, and went off to the mess hall.

After breakfast I piled into a truck with other airmen on our way to the briefing room, which was a converted wine cellar. As I descended the stairs, I glanced at the big map, on the north wall, which covered southern Europe. I noticed the blue string going from our base out over the Gulf of Manfredonia, along the Adriatic Sea, and into the Po Valley. The briefing was thorough, covering the bomb load, E.T.A. at the target, course, weather, opposition etc.

After dismissal, we started a mad scramble to the trucks waiting outside, next to the Chapel of San Giovanni. Our crew was dropped off at B-24H #476. This is the plane that carried us across the Atlantic Ocean three months earlier, stopping in Africa, before landing in Europe.

Quickly the crew lined up, each grabbing a propeller blade,

rotating it through each engine, in order to distribute the oil, before starting up the engines. I climbed over the nose wheel, in order to get into the navigator's compartment. I erased the old lines on my mercator chart, and plotted the new course and target. It is easier to do this while the plane is on the ground, than when it is airborne.

At the appointed hour, a red flare from operations burst into the air. It started the whine of energizers, which culminated in the roar of Pratt and Whitney engines.

One by one, the planes lined up on the taxi way, awaiting their turn to take off...Once airborne, we circled the field and got into formation, as per briefing. With this accomplished, the formation headed for the Gulf of Manfredonia, climbing on course as we progressed.

Below, and on our left, lay the spur on the boot of Italy. Most of it is made of limestone, with many caves and grottos along its shore. Directly ahead was the Dalmatian Coast, and it was now time to change our course to a northwest direction, up the middle of the Adriatic Sea.

We had now reached our bombing altitude of 20,000 feet. The day was clear, not a cloud in the sky. Looking to the east, the horizon was white against a cobalt blue sky. Yugoslavia was still locked in the grip of winter. To the west, the Apennine Mountains were shrouded in a purple veil. Below, and to the right was the island of Vis, a haven in case we ran into trouble.

Using the intercom, I said, "Navigator to crew directly ahead of us, along the shore, you can see a gold jewel glistening in the sun. It is the domes of St. Mark's Cathedral in the city of Venice. St. Mark is the patron saint of Venice, and it was in his mother's house that the Last Supper was served."

A quick flashback to my boyhood. At the age of nine, I was feeding the pigeons in St. Mark's square. The family guide pointed to the four bronze horses over the

portals of the cathedral, and told me that, during the big war (WWI), the horses were removed so that they wouldn't be damaged. I wondered if they had been moved again.

It was time to change course to a heading due west. Below us lay a lush, velvet, green valley with silver strips reflecting the bright Italian sun. The Po Valley, with all its tributaries, was before us.

As we approached the I.P. Sam Bakanauskas, our bombardier, came up into the nose, turned on the bomb sight, lit up the bomb control panel, opened up the bomb bay doors, and said, "Where is the target?"

Over the intercom I said, "See the railroad track coming from the northwest, the one from the southeast, and the one from the northeast? Where they meet that is your target. Do you want me to go down and put a circle around it?" Sam has had that question fired at him so often that he ignores it.

I climbed up onto my table to get out of the way. P.D.I. on pilot (Hudson) to bombardier (Bakanauskas), "The plane is all yours." The rest of the crew was quiet and still except for the bombardier. The lights on the control panel started to go out, one after the other.

Over the intercom came, "bombs away." Down off my table I climbed and looked out the bubble window. Thirty-seven seconds later, orange flashes could be seen exploding in the marshalling yard outside the city of Milan.

A small incident in a big war had just been completed. It had taken all our attention, and now the time had come for us to look out for ourselves.

Just ahead, rising out of the Po Valley, defying our passage, were the rugged peaks of the Alps Mountains. We passed up the challenge and turned slowly to the left. As we did the anti-aircraft guns at Genoa began to open up, but we never came within their range.

We continued our left bank until we were over the Apennine

Mountains, the backbone of Italy. By this time the sun had just passed our zenith, and we were headed back to our base.

"Navigator to crew. Below at ten o'clock is the city of Florence. This is the area where the Renaissance was launched, taking Europe out of the Dark Ages. Notice the covered bridge crossing the Arno River. It is called Pont Vecchio. It contains a passageway connecting two palaces on either side of the river. It is one continuous art gallery.

The large building, of different colored marble, is the Florence Cathedral. The hexagonal building is the Baptistery. On three of its sides are great bronze doors, with panels that depict stories from the Old Testament."

At this point one of the gunners pressed the command button on the intercom, overriding our 'Cook's tour', to report, "Those Renaissance are shooting at us."

Pilot to crew, "Did anyone get a shot at the ME 109 that just went by us?" No reply.

I took inventory. We could no longer see the east coast of the Adriatic, but we could see the west coast of Italy.

Navigator to crew, "Look to the right and follow the coastal plane to the foothills of the Apennines and below at two o'clock, is the little town of Assisi. This was the birthplace and home of Saint Francis, a man who preached a sermon to the birds, cultivated a rose without thorns, and in his later years suffered the wounds of the Crucifixion."

This memorable day, which you have just shared with me, my crew, and my squadron, was Easter, 1944.

*B-24H Peel Off
741st Bomb Squadron
455th Bomb Group
15th Air Force
Humphrey B. Hosmer*

From the 15th Air Force Honor Roll – 455th Bomb Group We Salute You!

The 455th Bombardment Group (H) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. Although handicapped by a shortage of personnel and operating with only 40 percent of their maintenance equipment, ground crews, by working from 14 to 16 hours daily, maintained a high percentage of operational aircraft during the months of the group's combat operations.

On 2 April 1944, thirty-five B-24's, carrying ten 500 pound general purpose bombs, took off on a vital mission to destroy the Daimler-Puch Aircraft Factory at Steyr, Austria. As part of the same operation, four heavy bomb groups from the Fifth Wing were scheduled to destroy the Steyr Walzlagelwerke Ball Bearing Plant ahead of this group.

The success of the entire operation was endangered on the bomb run when a group of B-17's was seen in the target area and a low cumulus cloud floated over, completely obscuring the target and the B-17 group. Approximately a mile to the northeast loomed the important ball bearing plant, the Steyr Walzlagelwerke. The group leader, making a hasty decision, decided to bomb this more vital enemy target which had not been bombed up to this time.

Throughout the bomb run, the group was under aggressive attack from approximately 75 enemy fighters which used rockets, aerial flak, cannon, and machine guns in an effort to disrupt the formation. Despite heavy, intense, and accurate anti-aircraft fire and continued enemy fighter attacks, the group maintained a close formation and scored direct hits on this unbriefed target. The coordination between the attack units resulted in 27 enemy fighters destroyed, 17 probably destroyed, and 3 damaged to the loss of four aircraft by the

455th Bombardment Group (H). Many direct hits were scored on the machine shops and a large explosion occurred, covering the plant with dense smoke.

The tremendous material damage contributed greatly to the curtailment of aircraft production by the enemy a time of great importance. A later Fifteenth Air Force Monologue on this day's operation particularly mentions the greatest number of hits by the 455th Bombardment Group (H).

By their grim determination, their outstanding skill, and unhesitating courage in successfully completing this mission, through the heaviest of enemy opposition, the officers and enlisted men of the 455th Bombardment Group (H) have upheld the highest traditions of the military service thereby, reflecting great credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

*By command of Major General
Twining
Credit - SORTIE*

HELP!

Catherine Spewock, Andrew Spewock's widow is seeking a group photo of Robards crew (743rd squadron) and also information regarding the ground crew chief for this crew. She may be reached at **Rd, 5, Box 140, Latrobe, PA 15650-9102**. Her husband Andrew was a nose turret gunner on this crew and is listed in this issue's Final flights.

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"Doctor, doctor, what's the news?" answered Hal when his doctor called with his test results.

"I have some bad news and some really bad news," admitted the doctor. "The bad news is that you only have twenty-four hours to live."

"Oh my God," gasped Hal, sinking to his knees. "What could be worse than that?"

"I couldn't get ahold of you."

§ ∞ § ∞ §

A Lovely Letter From Pat O'Boyle

Reed Peck's note in the Cerignola Connections, 455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter, appealed for some information on those of the group during training in Scottsbluff.

I grew up in Scottsbluff and was employed by an Albert P. Hauke as a 'soda jerk' in his drug stores. One was situated on the west side of Main Street, near the USO. The Weber Furniture store had previously occupied the building that was used for the USO. It was across the street from the Methodist Hospital. The older Hauke drugstore was on east side of the main street and closer to the Train Station and Bus Station and the road into town from the Army AF Base.

Being but fourteen years old classified me in the 'kid sister' bracket of many of the military who frequented the soda fountain. My own older brother was preparing to join US Army Air Force after his graduation which enabled me to better understand the emotions of the young military away from their homes, many for the first time.

My parents were very strict with me and although but eight blocks walk to and from work, my father cautiously, generally provided transportation. There were some trepidation of 'soldiers' in the small community. During working hours, Mr. Hauke kept an eagle eye on what transpired between the patrons and his employees. In spite of these obstacles >grin< there were many great friendships made and continued after departure of the training crews through correspondence. Red Cross taught the high school girls how to knit scarves and encouraged writing to the service men. If sugar rations were adequate ...a box of home-made fudge could be mailed to one or another and some of the friendships made, continued through many years. Geography became a more interesting subject

to study and history, both past and that being made taken more seriously. V mail letters were the highlight of the day. My Dad had a litany of hypothetical excuses when he occasionally came home empty handed from the post office box to two military uncle's wives, my mom and me.

Scottsbluff is in western Nebraska panhandle with agriculture it's primary industry. The town was named for SCOTT, a member of a group who traveled the Oregon Trail and was left by his party on the side of the bluff anticipating the next group would be better able to assist him. He was dead when that party found him. The population was probably about 36000 in early to mid 1940s and the Holly Sugar Factory one of the popular places for employment. The town of Gering was across the Platte River to the South of Scottsbluff.

Voluntary high school students were given days off from school to be trucked to potato farms to help pick the potatoes and the memory of those days are of the fun that we had & feeling patriotic, sharing brown bag lunches that probably cost more than the wages made. Those crisp and crunch fresh potatoes peeled with someone's jack-knife supplemented when the young people's appetites exceeded the contents of their brown bags.

On those trips, we often waved as we passed either the US Army Air Base that was about four or five miles east of Scottsbluff, or the Italian POW camp that was south west. Guards from the POW camp and the US Army Air Force personnel and the Paratroopers and crews from Troop Carrier aircraft from Alliance, NE were ever vying for the older girls attentions and the volunteer girls attended dances sponsored by local organizations.

Mr. Ramey, waxing nostalgic of those days is a favorite pastime of my husband of 53 years and two of his former crew mates who went from Scottsbluff to Langley Field, VA prior to being assigned to 455th, 743rd and eventually the Liberator

Teepee Time Gal in Italian Campaign. Sadly, we discovered the whereabouts of a fourth member of the crew but a few months before his demise. The names Johnson, Harold C. Brooks, Sammy Ginsberg, Pete Peterson, Paul Taylor, Chet Hosaac, Max, G. Wine, Omer Cluck and my husband, Jimmy O'Boyles have their place in history of Scottsbluff and that of WWII.

Should you be interested in additional information, please feel free to contact me and I will try to answer any questions that you may have. This information may seem a bit narcissistic but aren't all personal memories thus? The young man that came into the drugstore with Peterson and Cluck, of his crew, trained to be a tail gunner and flew 51 missions. He and I married in April of 1947 when I was 18 & he 23. At retirement of his career in USAF he was also with the 455th, not the 455th Bombardment Group BUT the 455th Strategic Missile Wing located in Minot, ND.

The e-mail address is **PatriciaOB@prodigy.net** in the event you are on computer, too.

Best regards and best wishes for a Happy Holiday Season. We, as you undoubtedly, are in the throes of the busy seasonal preparations but JUST had to touch base with you regarding Scottsbluff at the suggestion of one of the crew.

Patricia (Donahue) O'Boyle
5802 No. 42nd Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85019-1820
(602) 841-5415



Brought "Tepee Time Gal" Home

First Lt. Darrell G. Snook (left), E808 Thirty-eighth, being congratulated by his group commander at a 15th air force base in Italy after he flew the Liberator bomber Tepee Time Gal home from her 100th mission. A veteran of 22 combat missions, Lt. Snook brought the battle-scarred bomber home on only three engines after bombing railyards at Linz, Austria. The plane has 1000 flying hours in its log.



Top Row

Darrell Snook, Hamilton Frost, Harold Berman, James Reddy

Lower row

John Allen, Ingram Boudousquie, Anthony Delgallo Bernard Bloom, William Garland, Louis Betti



Armament Section 740th Bomb Squadron

Standing L-R: Walt Ziobro (Mass); Ken Miller (Mass); Chuck Gregory (NC); John Wade (Mich); J.W. Clark (Ark); Danny Bachman (Calif); John Bouska (Iowa); Lt. Shimrock (Ohio); Jack Thomas (Colorado); John Macario (NY); Jim Eby (Ohio); Bill (Pappy) Hays (Tenn); Al Reiwe (Wis).

Kneeling: L-R: Hubert Speer (Tenn); Aldine Turner (VA); Ralph Pacey (Ohio); Harry Isenstein (NY); Kirchgessner (NY); Bill Haggadone (Mich); Leroy Seum (NJ); Gerard Cassidy (MO); Robert Bradley (IL); Robert Kelly (Mich);

Sitting: L-R: Maurice Wiles; Don Dyer (Texas); Joe Macavoy (PA); Curtis Murphree (Texas); Howard Ray (IL); John Merkle (NY); Frank Navich (PA); Devert Buchmaster (Calif); Larry Nolan (PA);



Lying Down: L-R: Herb Boerum (NY); Bruce Rice (MN); Mole alias Harold Guiton (PA); John Thomas (MD); Joseph Hunt (Conn); Walter Mislik (Mich); Nathan Falwkowitz was still in the hospital.

Plaudits to Al Asch, 455th BG Historian

Gull Lake's Alfred Asch knows first hand the sacrifices and the dedication of the World War II soldiers who fought to keep this country free. That's why Asch, a WWII B-24 bomber pilot, has worked hard to make sure that no one forgets the legacy left by the veteran airmen.

Since his retirement as a colonel from the United States Air Force in 1968, Asch has written books, raised money and helped set up monuments to the memory of the pilots, navigators, gunners and others who served.

He flew his first mission in 1942 against an ironworks in the town of Lille in German-occupied France. The memory of that still burns brightly in his mind, as do the details of other missions flown against the Germans in Europe, North Africa and Italy.

After his first tour of combat as a pilot with the 93rd Bomb Group, Asch joined the 455th Bomb Group as an operations officer. In 1991, Asch joined retired colonels Hugh R. Graff and Thomas A. Ramey to coauthor "The Story of the 455th Bomb Group (H) World War II: The Flight of the Vulgar Vultures." The volume tells about the war experiences of those who served with the group. This book, along with others written by Asch, make sure the memories that are still so clear to him and other veterans will be saved for future generations.

"I think all veterans remember the war because of the patriotism of the men who fought and the people back home who supported the war effort," Asch told Special Writer Chris Tower in an Aug. 21 Hometown Gazette East story.

"Every one of us lost a lot of friends who made the supreme sacrifice by giving their lives. In the air war over Europe alone, we lost over 30,000 airmen, and none of us can forget that."

In addition to writing books, Asch served as president in 1997 of a nonprofit group of B-24 veterans

who raised more than \$200,000 for a large bronze replica of the bomber and a plaque praising the memory of the men who flew them. The memorial was set up in the garden of the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo. Asch also wrote a "Book of Remembrance" that chronicles the B-24's history and the creation of the memorial.

The same nonprofit group donated \$25,000 to the Air Force Memorial planned for Washington, D.C.

Asch and his wife, Naomi, have two sons, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. They have been married 57 years. Asch grew up in Beverton, and his wife was raised in the Allegan-Otsego area.

Preserving the legacy of the veterans is important to both. The couple has privately donated a display case dedicated to the 93rd Bomb Group in the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, Ga.

*Kalamazoo Gazette
Editorial Sept. 9, 2000*

From the Log of Arnold Goldberg



The TIME MACHINE
tunes in on 17 Feb. 1945.

By means of a 4" x 6" pocket notebook I kept notes concerning our flight to Italy. Why I did this I don't recall and have never kept a diary since. This log is dedicated to James Peterson, Richard Anderson, George Groh, Phillip McCleary, James Doty and Raymond Root who have made their final flights.

CREW 9351

P. Peterson, James E.	2nd Lt.
C.P. Anderson, Richard B.	F/O
B. Hampton, Kenneth R.	2nd Lt.
N. Groh, George A.	F/O
E. Goldberg, Arnold I.	Cpl.
R. McCleary, Phillip R.	Cpl.
G. Anderson, Cleve J.	Cpl.
G. Doty, James C.	Cpl.
G. Burge, Frank D.	Cpl.
G. Root, Raymond F.	Cp.

FEB 17TH 1945 TOPEKA

Tonight we are alerted once again. The weather is fine. Looks like we will finally get off.

FEB 18TH TOPEKA

This is it at last. After chow at midnight, we briefed at one AM. Our ship was second to take off. We got off the ground at 03:12, making a nice takeoff. Pointing our nose east we were on our way. Our route was over some large cities such as Ft. Wayne, Springfield, Toledo and Cleveland. Much to our dismay, we couldn't see any of the towns due to the overcast. After we hit Buffalo, the clouds began to break a little and we could see the ground. We passed over the outskirts of Rochester and that made me homesick; Dianne was down there and I was up here in the blue. As we passed over Syracuse and Albany it was very cloudy. At Albany we changed course and headed for Grenier Field at Manchester, NH. The weather was clear, we had no trouble finding the field. We landed at 10:57; just in time for lunch. Nothing happened during the trip, the ship was in A-1 shape.

Here at Grenier we were rushed thru processing and medical check-which was more or less a farce. At supply we did get the two piece electric flying suit and a darn good pair of sun glasses. We were very happy to get our barracks assigned since we didn't have any sleep all that night. As luck would have it we had to brief at 19:00. It was two hours later before we got back and at 22:00 I was in dream-land.

FEB. 19TH GRENIER FLD.

At 05:00 we were rudely awakened. We packed our stuff and ate chow. At 07:00 we were picked up and taken out to our ship. We found that the plane was loaded with a lot more equipment such as sleeping bags, blankets, and K-rations. By the time we were ready to crank up the engines it was 10:30. At 10:53 we were off the ground with plenty of power to

spare. This time we were heading north over Portland, Augusta, Bangor, and Presque Isle then on to Goose Bay, Labrador. We put the wheels down at Goose Bay at 16:07 after a flight of 5 hrs and 54 minutes. We parked our ship on the Canadian ramp, closed it up putting on engine covers, etc. We were then taken to operations and checked in.

FEB. 20TH GRENIER FLD.

Now well past midnight Swede and I had to go out and gas up the plane. There was a hell of a lot of snow, five to six feet in most places. By the time we got to the mess hall, ate and found our barracks it was early AM. Rested most of the day.

FEB. 21ST GOOSE BAY

At 00:15, yes 12:15 AM we awakened. We were taking off early that morning. The Pilot, Co-Pilot, Navigator and Radio Operator had to be at a briefing at 01:30. We ate chow and got to the Operations Ctr about that time. We hung around there until 05:00 before we went out to our ship. It didn't take us long to strip the covers off the ship and get it ready for takeoff. At 06:53 we were off for Meeks Field, Iceland. It was a straight course, over water all the way, except for the one check point we hit as we went over the corner of Greenland. As we approached Greenland we saw our first Icebergs, all shapes and sizes. The tip of Greenland that we saw was a desolate and rough looking sight. It was fairly cloudy most of the way with openings here and there allowing us to see the water. We did see a few other planes on the way but that was all. We sighted Iceland right on time, the field was right under us. At 14:23 we set down on Meeks Field. When we left Goose Bay it was 20 below but here it was 2 above and very little snow. We taxied the ship to one of the dispersal areas, just as we got the wheels chocked the weather changed. It began snowing so we got the

engine covers on in a hurry. The wind blew like all hell. The snow was really bad but by the time we finished it stopped and was clear again. Swede and I stayed at the plane waiting for the gas truck. In the mean time the rest of the boys went to check in. Doty was to stand guard all night, he came out two hours later, Swede and I were still waiting for the gas truck. We were so tired and hungry we said the hell with the gas. We walked to the hanger where you catch the bus to the hut and the mess hall. Just about this time it started to hail, I had never seen hail as rough as this was. We finally got to the mess hall, had a cold meal, then tried to find our hut with the directions they gave us, it took over an hour. It was a small hut with a curved roof, dirt packed around the sides. Twelve men to a hut with army cots and an oil stove. About now it was snowing like mad. We were beat, hitting the sac was no problem.

FEB. 22ND MEEKS FIELD

I woke up about 8 AM, the rest of the boys were still asleep. I figured I better go out and relieve Doty at the ship. After a good breakfast I went out to the plane. It snowed very little during the night, the weather was fairly good now. I got to the plane, Doty was sound asleep, on the flight deck, wrapped up in a sleeping bag. He was sore because the gas truck came about 2 AM and made him refuel. He went back to sleep. I safety-wired the gas tanks and did a few other small things around the plane. About 11 AM it began to snow hard. I woke Doty up, we closed the ship up tight to keep the snow out and fixed the bag covers. Doty's parachute came open, we had to take it over to the hanger to be repacked. To get there we were riding in an open jeep with it snowing like hell. From there we went back for chow. This time it was snowing so badly that all guards were ordered in.

FEB. 23RD thru 27TH MEEKS FIELD

During this period the snow storms were terrific. We hibernated in our huts. Once in awhile it would stop snowing for a few hours, then before you knew it, it was snowing again, most of the time with a terrific wind behind it. Every morning we had to be dug out, it was impossible to open the door from the inside. At other times we had to use the window. Our oil stove gave us plenty of trouble. One night we went to work on it, cleaned it out and adjusted the float. It worked fine after that. During every break in the storm we rushed out for oil. Since we had a lot of K-Rations from the plane we had plenty to eat whenever the weather was so bad that we could not make it to the mess hall. We slept until about one, then raised hell with K-Rations. To pass the time we wrote letters or played pinochle until 2 or 3 in the morning.

FEB. 28TH MEEKS FIELD

The weather finally cleared today. After eating chow Mac, Root and I went out to the ship. We cleaned most of the snow out of the bomb-bay, there certainly was plenty in there. The waist gunners area was also covered with snow. Took the engine covers off then started the engines. It had been about a week since the plane was idle; it started right up, gave it a good preflight inspection. We got a partial pay, and all I wanted was \$10. That night we went to the show to kill time, we saw "Keys to the Kingdom", it was very good. After the movie we went over to Red Cross for coffee and doughnuts. Went back to the hut to play cards and feast on K-Rations till about three in morning.

MAR. 1ST MEEKS FIELD

As usual it was noon before we got up and went to chow. Then out to the line where the plane was, we found Pete and Hampton. Since there was an I.O. compliance for B-24's we got a mechanic from the hanger, started the engines and set the throttles in compliance with

the new directive. After chow we saw a show "Flame of Barbary Coast", was OK. Before the picture the band played some popular tunes, they were good. As usual we headed for coffee and doughnuts at the Red Cross, back to the hut for pinochle until AM then the boys started shooting the bull.

MAR. 2ND MEEKS FIELD

The wind was blowing again but this time it was from the gulf and warm. Most of the snow was beginning to melt. It wasn't till noon that we got moving and managed to get to chow. For a treat we were able to take showers and shave that afternoon. After supper we headed for the theater for a special show. Just about now it began raining; after we were soaked they let us inside. They showed us restricted movies from 6 to 8 then at 8 the stage show with British actors, they were pretty good. After the show we went to the Red Cross for coffee and doughnuts then to the hut.

MAR. 3RD MEEKS FIELD

About 06:30 they woke us up and said we were leaving today. We ate a good breakfast, got our stuff together and headed for the plane. Completed the preflight, when the pilot and rest arrived we got going. Just before we were set to take off, our electrical system failed, we had to come back in and change the batteries. At 12:15 (GT) we were off the ground heading for the British Isles. As I am writing this we are about half way climbing to 15,000 feet to get above the overcast. We flew over Northern Ireland and hit the coast of England then followed the beam into Valley Wales. We landed here about 6:45 a flight of 6 1/2 hours. This place is really chicken - we have to wear class A's before we can eat. We went through the usual processing and finally were assigned a barracks. It certainly was a dreary and damp place. Almost everything was blacked out. Our mattresses were in three

pieces and the blankets were best described as Horse blankets. We waited for a chow truck to take us the four miles to mess hall. This place is spread all over the area with farms, houses and what have you in-between. The old stone fences still in place separating the houses and farm. With it laid out this way a bomb attack would have difficulty in pinpointing a target. The chow was terrible but we were so hungry we ate anyway.

MAR. 4TH VALLEY WALES, BRITISH ISLES

There was a 25 hour inspection due on the plane so I had to be out there at 9 AM. Mac was out at the plane all night, I woke him up and sent him in. I pulled the inspection by myself, it was a slow process but I finally finished.

MAR. 5TH VALLEY WALES, BRITISH ISLES

We were awakened at 5 AM for briefing. It was 8:25 before we got off the ground heading south for Africa. There were clouds most of the way. We passed over the tip of Spain and flew out about 10 miles from coast of Portugal south to Gibraltar on to Africa. We landed at Marrakech at 17:20 after 8:55 hours in the air. It certainly was warm, the sun was shining bright, we could see snow-capped mountains in the distance. The field was rather nice even though we slept in tents and had to use our mess kits for the chow which wasn't too bad.

MAR. 6TH MARRAKECH AIR FORCE BASE, AFRICA

We were awakened about six this morning and we sure hated to get up, it was so chilly. We ate chow and were out to the plane about seven as the sun was just starting to come up. By eight we were up in the air and on our way to Tunis. About two hours out of Tunis the weather turned bad and our fuel low. Called in and received permission to land at Algiers. This field is all British and French, there were only four US planes on the field. We ate great

chow and slept in the officers barracks. Best of all we could go to town as soon as we washed and changed. We were off for Algiers, caught a GI truck that dropped us off at the Red Cross center in town, 18 miles from the field. We gave the Red Cross building the once over and had something to eat at their snack bar. The town is about closed except for a few small cafes. Its a fairly modern town, buildings fairly new and they had street cars. The side streets certainly were dark. We carried our 45's and knives with us, we had been warned that if the Arabs caught you alone you might get robbed and beaten. Therefore we traveled in at least "threes." The Arabs we saw were quite the sight to us with their head bands or skull caps and rugged baggy pants.

MAR. 7TH ALGIERS BRITISH & FRENCH AIRBASE, AFRICA

We were up about 10 AM, got our stuff together, went to chow. It was a beautiful day, the sun was so nice and warm. We hated to leave but couldn't find an excuse to spend another night. We took off at 15:15 for Tunis. The weather was bad all the way with poor visibility. We made Tunis at 17:50 which gave us 2:25 hours in air. For a change Peterson made a fairly good landing. I stayed at the plane until Jr. came back, that was about 8 PM. I made my way to the mess hall, ate, then found my room. Our quarters were in a dilapidated hotel. I took a hot shower then to bed.

MAR. 8TH TUNIS, TUNISIA AFRICA

We were supposed to take off early this morning but the weather was bad so the flight was cancelled. We got out our blouses and went into Tunis. In order to qualify for a pass you were required to be at the base 48 hours. We changed the date on our ration cards and got our passes. Burge, Root, Anderson 1 & 2 and me caught a ride on a British Canteen truck, ended up in the center of town. We walked around looking the

place over, there were still a few bombed out buildings. Arabs running around with veils over their faces. French was the language in the greater part of town. We ended up at a bar, had wine and cognac. A little Italian kid came over to us, he was about eleven, asked if we wanted a good place to eat. We went with him to a French home where we had some good wine, and meal. Cost us 100 francs. We went back to the bar we started from, the Andersons and Root continued drinking. Burge and I walked around for a while then about five, went back to the base. The little Italian kid could also speak French and American, he was a smart cuss. His family was bombed out in Italy, that's when they all came over to Tunis. Its a dirty town, some of the Arabs are quite a mess, they had these old street cars 2 or 3 hooked together and jammed with people. At the field we stopped at the PX, bought cigarettes and candy. The jewelry they had for sale was very expensive, 30 to 40 dollars for a bracelet. I felt a cold coming on so I hit the sac early, some of the others went to the show.

MAR. 9TH TUNIS, TUNISIA AFRICA

At 6:15 AM we were up and ready for chow. It was raining, we wondered if we would get off. We went out to the ship, about 300 yards away was a pile of wrecked German planes, fighters, bombers and troop carriers completely totaled - just a heap of junk. Nothing there worth taking. We finally got off with a mess of other ships B-17s and B-24s. As we flew out of the harbor we could see a mess of sunken ships. In the distance on a hill we saw the ruins of Carthage. We flew across the Strait of Sicily then hugged the east coast of Sicily along the bottom of boot around the heel, up the Adriatic Sea to Bari and into Gioia where we landed. We checked in the plane, unloaded all the equipment and turned in what we had to. We were escorted to tents. For a stove

they used barrels that burned wood, most of it was so green it would not burn. As usual we used our mess kits for chow which wasn't too bad. We fixed up our cots, wrote a few letters before hitting the sac.

MAR. 10TH GIOIA AIR BASE ITALY

That night we almost froze, it was that cold. We had a light snow that night. Our feet were like icicles that morning. It was noon before we thawed out. That night about five we all went into town. Walked up and down the street checking everything out. We tried the Red Cross Center, the only respectable place in town. We ended up at a bar on the P.P., drank wine & brandy, had a good time singing and etc.

MAR. 11TH GIOIA AIR BASE ITALY

We were told that today we are leaving for the 304th Wing, about 90 miles north. After we had chow they loaded us on trucks and shoved off for our new base. It was a beautiful day and a nice dusty ride. We looked over the country side as we travelled, saw plenty of ammo on the sides. Finally reached our destination, the 742nd Bomb Sq., 455th Bomb Gp. Everyone lived in tents here. There were a few wooden buildings, mess hall, rec room etc.. We were given a tent that was in sad shape, no stove, no nothing. We had to really scrounge around to find a stove. We had no place to wash, we were dirty with soot and dirt. We were certainly one pissed off bunch.

MAR. 12TH SAN GIOVANNI, ITALY

455th Bomb Gp (Heavy)
304th Wing 15th Air Force
742nd Bomb Squadron (Heavy)
B-24 Bombers

Today we tried to straighten up our tent, our home away from home. Most of our time was spent on the stove and it was messy. We were able to get Steel helmets and use the main part as a wash basin. We had to supply our own water and oil. This air field wasn't much

to write about, the PX was never open but there was a place to buy a few drinks.

MAR. 13TH SAN GIOVANNI

Today we tried to elevate the tent, worked all day on the poles. when we got it up the bottom was rotten. I went to the supply officer and we got a reconditioned tent, at 5 PM up it went. We managed to get enough done to keep the wind out. We nearly froze this night without a stove.

MAR. 14TH SAN GIOVANNI

We worked on our tent again building sides and etc. Our tools are very limited, no hammers or nails. We pulled out used nails tried to straighten and use again. It was impossible to get wood, no stove again tonight.

MAR. 15TH SAN GIOVANNI

Today we have a couple of lectures to attend, one at Engineering the other at S-2. Our tent is coming along fine. The sides are pretty good now and high enough so that we can stand up. We work at it every spare moment we have. Tonight was rather chilly so we dragged in the stove about 10 PM and had it operating before we hit the sac. Had a little excitement on the landing field today, as one of the B-24s landed it blew up about a mile high, one of the crew members was blown clear, severely burned but he'll live.

MAR 16TH SAN GIOVANNI

The stove burned great all night, it kept the tent really warm, it was a pleasure. We have nothing booked for today so we continued to work on the tent. We swiped some wood to finish the floor. A couple of others finished the back. We also swiped a swell stove with a good iron pipe. The stove burns gas-oil, the amount of soot is terrific. If we had a small pipe it would have to be cleaned daily but with the big pipe it should be more efficient. Right now it is working great.

MAR. 17TH SAN GIOVANNI

Weather was sunny. At 9 AM we had dental appointments. At 10 AM was a communications lecture which lasted till chow time. At 1 PM we had a medical lecture, busy day. Tried to write letters at night but the light wasn't good enough. Had to fix the stove today, the feed pipe broke at the rubber connection and I got oil in my hair and eyes while repairing it.

MAR. 18TH SAN GIOVANNI

Cloudy and windy this morning, didn't bother to get up for breakfast, use a K-Ration. Fixed up a little place to keep my stuff and got it straightened up. The wind was strong at times today, darn near blew our tent down. We did an emergency repair job on it. Managed to write a few letters today.

MAR. 19TH THRU 25TH SAN GIOVANNI

The past week was rather quiet. The first three days we had gun cleaning when planes came in, that was about 3:30 and that was all. On Wed. Pete flew his first mission, when he gets three more we start flying as a crew. On Wed. we started ground school, this lasted for three days. Comes Sat. we find out the officers were supposed to have attended with us. We were up for some special assignment but would not tell us what. Since the officers were absent we were eliminated. Sunday was a day of rest, not a thing to do. Found out Pedro and his crew are close by, hope to see them soon.

APRIL 9TH SAN GIOVANNI

FIRST MISSION: Target was Lugo, South East of Bologna in Northern Italy supporting the 8th Army. The flak was moderate but close, we had three flak holes in the stabilizer and a lot of dents to rear of waist where it ricochet off. We made good hits on the target. Flight Time 5:05

APRIL 17TH SAN GIOVANNI

SECOND MISSION: The target was just a few miles south east of Bologna in support of the ground troops. There was practically no flak, just a couple of bursts off to the side. It was a good mission, the target was hit, everything went fine. Flight Time 6:10.

APRIL 18TH SAN GIOVANNI

THIRD MISSION: Flew for 2nd day in row. Maximum effort again. Today we hit the same target as yesterday, again supporting ground troops. Milk run, everything went fine. Flight Time 6:30.

APRIL 24TH SAN GIOVANNI

FORTH MISSION: Today we carried 1000 lb. bombs. Flew to Northern Italy to bomb Friola Road Bridge which is 70 miles east of Verona. We dropped our bombs flying a box but B-Box didn't so we made another run on an ammo dump, this time the bombardiers got the bombs out and hit the target. Only a few bursts of flak, no damage. This was the big day in the sky. On the way north the sky was littered with bombers, as far as we could see there were planes in the air, a sight I'll never forget. Flight time 6:53.

April 21st we were supposedly flying our fourth but due to bad weather we turned back after logging 3:30 hours.

JUNE 15TH SAN GIOVANNI

I received orders to return stateside via military aircraft assigned to another crew that needed an engineer. The pilot was 1st Lt. Leighton A. Hope. They were not to happy to have a stranger as a crew member but it all worked out fine. We flew home the southern route, quite a change from the trip over. We flew into Westover field, Springfield, Mass. I was almost home.

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You Can Help Szymon Serwatka in Poland

Thank you for your recent letter. I truly appreciate all the help that Col. Wendt and yourself give. Interestingly I have made contact two weeks ago with Mike McFadden, whose father you have flown with! It is a small world!

I have studied the information that Col. Wendt had sent me in May this year (photocopies from the history book) and I compared it with what I knew already (based mainly on a Polish book describing raids to Silesia in 1944). I will appreciate help in learning the details of the following 455th BG losses. In each case I would like to learn the names of the crew, aircraft serial number, estimated crash/landing location. A MACR (Missing Air Crew Report) number will be very helpful.

1. The loss on August 27th 1944 - mission to Blechhammer.
2. 3 losses on September 13th 1944 - mission to Odertal.
3. 2 losses on October 13, 1944 - mission to Blechhammer.
4. 3 losses on October 14 1944 - missions to Odertal. Interestingly, a Polish book on bombing the targets in Silesia said the 455th BG lost four machines. It is possible the fourth landed in Vis and was not reported returned for the mission report before it was done. Anyway, I would like to identify this crew also.
5. 3 losses on December 26th 1944. Two of them decided to go to Russia. Have they made it?

If possible, I would also like to find out whether any 455th BG aircraft landed in Poland in Russian occupied territory. Such cases could have happened when the aircraft was damaged on a long mission like the ones to Silesia or Czechoslovakia from the late 1944 onwards.

Our USAAF over Poland research project is on www.samoloty.ip.pl/amiap/
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The Milk Run By John Dominey

It was on April 25th 1945 that I was on a mission which saw twenty-eight B-24's take off to bomb the main marshalling yards in Linz, Austria.

I was a ball-turret gunner, trained for upper turret on a B-25, and my story starts on April 24, 1945. In the very modern shower room of the 742nd Bomb Squadron someone down the line took a hot shower which meant that I got ice water, and it doesn't take a lot of cold to move me off the board, and the floor was slick with soap. Thus, my shoulder made contact with the floor before my softer parts.

The weather was clear on the morning of the 25th of April and the waist gunner who had trained in the ball-turret agreed to fly the ball for me. I usually wore that small back chute but elected to go with the chest pack on this mission.

When I put the harness on, it would not adjust to my large 125 lb. frame. Who is going to use a chute anyway, but I went back and got a smaller harness.

Over the Adriatic we test-fired the ordinance, and the waist-gunner jammed my two .50's with the ball pointing straight down at 6:00. The slip-stream prevented the ejection of spent shells.

OK, I would check the problem. You know there isn't room in the ball for the chest pack so I left my chute on the radio deck, just forward of the ball. My shoulder hurt but I cleared the ejection chutes, test fired, called my waist-gunner, and reported I could fly my regular position.

For that mission, #252, we had been briefed that Linz would have cloud cover and that flack would be heavy but probably inaccurate. That was the clearest day of my life.

Nose-gunner Anderson reported flack at 12:00 level. It was prayer time and this was going to be my end with not 5 minutes left. The

Lord's Prayer was started but would take more time than I had left, so I asked God if he would have me. He touched me and I felt a peace within and it didn't matter.

You can read about it in the 455th Bomb Group book – one aircraft was hit in the bomb-bay and ten crewmen were missing in action.

The B two dozen banked right and down into a 180° turn out of formation. We dumped our load on a railroad track but couldn't wait around to see the results.

I was out of the ball to help assess damage. There was a large hole in the fuselage over the rear bomb bay, one engine was out, feathered another same side, and pilot Greenman complaining about how hard she was to hold. Almost like a heavy fog, gas was everywhere. I connected up in waist as the Skipper called for an injury report. From the nose on to the tail each reported coming through OK – just like calling the roll in Sunday school and it made me feel really proud to be apart of a cool crew. Ball-gunner OK, waist-gunner Robert James, two hits in leg and hip. "Skipper can you jump?" "Yeah, I'm OK." "Tail-gunner Donald Bechen, OK."

"Skipper (some trouble with throat milk) to Co-Pilot Fred Funk, tell the crew to prepare to bail out." Fred, whose nickname was Cowboy, repeated three times, "crew prepare to bail out!"

Donald Bechen, tail-gunner, hooks up by me in the waist, and we opened the rear hatch. Several minutes pass, and the Skipper tells Cowboy to order the crew to bail out. I am the first in line by the hatch. I double over to roll out, but Robert James pulls my flack-helmet off. Thumbs up and a roll-out.

I wait until I slow down before I pull the red metal rip. It is never going to open, but it does and I'm sitting in a swing.

A P-51 Red Tail swings around me but doesn't pick me up, but he is a real comfort anyway.

There are cobwebs in my face and what are the spiders doing at

10+ thousand feet? The red metal rip-cord was still in my hand, and I wonder why I'm saving it. My hands are really cold in spite of two pair of gloves, but I managed to get hold of the strings in my face and look up to see two very large holes in my chute. Now you remember where my chute was in the plane.

Hours later I'm still coming down right over the middle of the river, my hands are so cold and I can't unsnap my harness. I pull on one side of my chute, and I slid away from the river, but the wind takes me back and I try again with the same results. The last 100 feet passes by in an instant, but two oscillations and I'm in the bushes two feet from the muddy river.

I'm out of the harness and pulling the chute out of the bushes. Prayer time again for a thank-you to God for my life and soul.

The pilot chute might come in handy, and my shoes are detached from the chute and harness.

In the small strip of woods by the river, I concealed the chute and harness and moved out from where I came down. About 100 yards from the spot where I landed, I discovered that water had washed out a hole in the ground behind a small tree. I opened my escape kit and found pencil and paper (in case I wanted to write a novel, I guess!) It's cold and I snuggled down in the washed-out hole feeling lonely but not for long. There is a noise and voices that are not English. A sneak peak reveals a couple of soldiers walking down what I thought to be a path and going in the direction where I had landed. It didn't take long before one soldier returned by the path, packing my chute and harness.

I was boxed in with an open field on my right and the river a very short distance to my left. There was at least one soldier to my front, and at least one and probably more to my back.

For me prayer time was an almost constant event. I took just a poise to swallow my heart every

minute. After about 20 minutes, I saw what I thought was a home guard unit. They were sweeping the small strip of woods, and I saw parts of the line pass on the left then on the right. Then a laggard comes by the hole I was hiding in but doesn't see me until he was about 25 feet in front of me. He decides to look back. I was scared, but the old man was more frightened than I, and he shouted while holding his rifle. He didn't think that the rifle was intimidating enough, so he pulled a percussion grenade out of his belt and held it over me. The percussion grenade would have done as much damage to him he was so close. The search squad came at his shouting, and I was searched and relieved of the .45 and then marched to a path that went down to the river. The squad gathered around me and tried to communicate, but no one could speak English. The squad leader didn't like his men talking to me, so he moved me over by a stump. I thought they were about to shoot me.

After all of the searchers gathered back, the squad leader, marched us back about a mile, where an officer questioned me in English.

Then we (me and the search squad) walked about a mile to a hunting lodge. At least I thought it was a hunting lodge, it was a long low building, stone up about four feet, about 60 feet long with a hall down the middle and small rooms on each side. They left me in the second room on the left for about ten minutes and returned with my shoes and let me know to put them on.

Two elderly men were guarding me as we walked about three miles to a paved road. Three times I increased my pace moving out about a 100 feet in front of the guards. One would catch up and motion me to slow down. It is a wonder they didn't shoot me.

The first truck that came by stopped and one guard and I got on, and the first hamlet we came to the guard and I debarked.

The guard and I went into a large building (probably the City Hall) where I was again interrogated.

An army corporal was in charge and we went outside, again I carried all of my gear (chute, harness, flying-boots, etc.). The guard allowed me to set the gear down.

A pretty girl came out of a building across the square, and I smiled at her and she returned the smile. The guard noticed her and looked back at me and made me turn and face the wall.

The first truck that came by picked us (the guard and I) up and delivered us to the gate at the Airfield in Wells. After I was processed, I was taken to the guard house at the gate where I joined four of my crew mates.

So much for the Milk Run.

After fifty years I still have questions that some one probably has the answers to. Who was the last guy to pack my chute, chest pack? Who or what crew flew "Roger the Lodger" back to the States? I saw "Miss I Hope" in the *Cerignola Connection* one of my favorite, parking pad two down and across from our plane "Roger the Lodger." "Miss I Hope" listed as 743rd Squadron. I was in the 742nd Squadron and feel pretty sure that we flew one mission in "Miss I Hope." Did the Squadrons share planes? I think we flew 3 missions in planes other than the "Roger." Roger was shot up on our first mission over Vienna.

Ed-John may not know but he has the dubious honor of being on the last 455th crew shot down in WWII.

From the Creative Pen of John Smidl The Men

Most everybody knows who Marlon Brando is, a big time movie star! His first movie was made right after the war in San Francisco Letterman Hospital. It was called "The Men" and it was about para-

plegics. It was not a very happy movie.

I have a copy and every once in awhile when I have one too many I'll put it on the VCR and let my mind go drifting back.

It was August 1944 when I first got my crew. I met them on the train to Lincoln Neb.. I was playing poker with some guy when Ray Page and Tom Henry found me. They were to be my R.O. and armor gunner. They were PFC's and I was a second louie. I remember how impressed they were when they found out I had 250 hours in the B-24 but we were all pretty dumb in those days.

Later on I got Art Jurado - he was to be my co-pilot.

I sure was not very impressed with him though. He had zero hours in the Lead Bird - having been washed out of P47 transition for getting a little too low over Lake Pocatillo. He had some scars to prove it and was pretty sour on the thought that he was out of fighters for good.

Art was a real handful alright, he had a penchant for getting into trouble.

He was a physical masterpiece - had muscles all over the place and could walk on his hands as well as his feet. He had been a boxer and was still in training. He came from SFO and was of Mexican descent - dark and handsome. Yeah- he should have been a fighter pilot - he really fit the mold.

I found out later that he was also very smart - IQ in the genius category. Maybe that's why he was always in trouble - he could see all the loop holes in the rules and loved to explore them.

Like a lot of high IQ people he was short on common sense and could do very dumb things at times.

Like the time he came back from Cerignola with a 50 foot rope over his shoulder. "Hey Art, what's with the rope?" "It's for climbing, builds arm muscles, also great for stamina. I'll hang it up and work out every day." (In Italy our group

was located in an area where the only trees were olive trees, not more than fifteen feet high.)

Art never thought of that. "Hey Art, why don't you tie it onto the trunk and pull yourself along the ground." That's the last we ever saw of the rope.

Well on and on it went until finally the war staggered to a close. We knocked down all the tents, said goodbye to the club, climbed into our 6 x 6's and set off for Naples.

There we waited for orders to go back to the states.

Well now about 14 miles out in the Bay of Naples is a place called the Isle of Capri - a most beautiful spot.

Art and I got a two day pass to bask in the sunshine and test the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Like I said, it was 14 miles out and the only way to get there was by boat which left in the morning and came back the same night. That was it!

So when the two days were up I said to Art, "Let's go, the boat is leaving soon." Art said, "You go, I'll stay another day, we aren't going to ship out tomorrow anyway."

So I went and he stayed. Guess what - we had orders to ship out for the States at 6 AM the next morning. Art was wrong again!

I met Art again in Dakar. He had caught another flight. We laughed about it and the next day we left for the 1500 mile hop from Dakar to Natal.

I was riding co-pilot in our ship while Art was a passenger in his. I saw him take off, but in that big sky we quickly lost sight of each other.

After a couple of hours of looking at nothing but water everywhere. I heard his airplane calling May Day!

They had lost an engine and had fire in another one and were going to have to ditch. We turned back to look for them, but saw nothing. A PBY spotted them and saw two life rafts and reported everyone out OK. Everyone but guess who?

Whenever I see "The Men" I see Art climbing a rope and talking to Marlon Brando. He sure was a handsome son of a gun.

Too bad he didn't come back to the base with me that night. He would still have the use of his legs.

Teepee Time Gal

She was the one we all loved but nobody owned.

Maybe it was the shy beautiful Indian Maiden that graced her fuselage. Maybe it was the intriguing name— and then again maybe it was just the way she flew — smoothly and gracefully. The controls were soft and fluid and she sliced through the sky with effortless ease.

Yeah-she was a beauty all right! The first thing a pilot did when he got into an airplane was to reach down on the left side of the seat for the form 42A - the maintenance book.

There he saw a red diagonal in the box denoting the condition of the ship, along with all the minor things that were not quite right. A red diagonal meant not perfect, but OK to fly.

Every airplane I ever flew had something minor wrong with it. Everyone except "Teepee Time Gal." She always had black initials, meaning nothing wrong. Nothing!

You knew it when you first climbed into the pilots seat. Everything was clean, the floor, windows, instrument panel, everything. The seat adjusted just right and latched into place with a comforting "click." The controls moved like a flowing river. Things even smelled better as every airplane had a certain smell about it.

She was probably the oldest airplane in the squadron. "Eligible Brooks" was one of her early pilots-now long gone. Many other followed -who knows how many. I was the lucky one to draw her number (61) on their 119th and last mission and brought her home safely for the last time.

I'll never forget her!

THE 455TH BOMB GROUP IN COMBAT (a continuing series)

Our Final Missions

APRIL 1945

Mission 237, April 7 Six B-24's of the red force took off to bomb the flak emplacements at Bressanone, Italy. Weather prevented them from bombing the target, so the mission was aborted. All planes returned to base.

Mission 238, April 7 The blue force consisting of 28 B-24's loaded with three 2,000# RDX bombs took off to bomb the marshalling yards at Innsbruck, Austria. Twenty-six aircraft dropped 81 tons of bombs on the primary target by pathfinder method. Flak at the target was moderate and inaccurate. No enemy fighters were seen. All planes returned to base.

Mission 239, April 8 Twenty-eight B-24's took off to bomb the railroad bridge at Campo Di Trens, Italy. Flak at the target was moderate and accurate. Twenty-eight aircraft dropped 81 tons of 2,000# RDX bombs with fair results. One crewman was wounded and two aircraft were damaged severely. All planes returned.

Mission 240, April 9 Forty-two B-24's took off to bomb troop concentrations in northern Italy. Two aircraft returned prior to bombing. The planes were loaded with 8,272 fragmentation bombs. Bombing was done visually and good results were obtained. Flak was moderate to slight at the target and all planes returned safely.

Mission 241, April 10 The Group again went to northern Italy to bomb troop concentrations. The bomb load was the same, fragmentation bombs. This time they dropped 9,084 of them with good results. Moderate and accurate flak was encountered at the target. No fighters were seen and all planes returned to base.

Mission 242, April 11 The Group was briefed to bomb the railroad bridge at Ponte Gardena, Italy. Twenty-eight B-24's loaded with 1,000# RDX bombs took off at 0800 hours. Two aircraft returned prior to bombing and only seven aircraft could bomb the primary target. The rest of the aircraft selected an alternate target, the fuel depot at Goito, Italy. Moderate flak was encountered at the primary and one aircraft was seen leaving the formation, radioing that his controls were shot away and he would try to make it to Switzerland. Eleven crewmen were listed as missing in action. The rest of the planes returned to base safely.

Mission 243, April 12 The Group was briefed for another railroad bridge. This time it was at Nervessa, Italy. Twenty-eight B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs took off at 1000 hours. Six aircraft returned early, two because of engine trouble and four because of weather. The remaining aircraft dropped 210 bombs with very good results. From observations, the bridge appeared to be knocked out. Moderate and accurate flak was encountered at the target. One aircraft was lost when its nose wheel collapsed on take-off; six crewmen were killed. One crewman was severely injured by flak and three slightly injured.

Mission 244, April 15 Seven B-24's took off to bomb the Ghedi, Italy ammunition depot and 42 B-24's took off to bomb troop concentrations in northern Italy. Six aircraft of the blue force bombed the ammunition depot with 500# RDX bombs and 39 aircraft of the red force bombed the troop concentrations. No flak was encountered at Ghedi and only moderate flak at the other target. All planes returned to base.

Mission 245, April 16 The Group was briefed to strike at troop concentrations in northern Italy. Forty-

three B-24's took off at 0900 hours loaded with 250# GP bombs but were unable to bomb because of weather conditions. All planes returned to base.

Mission 246, April 17 Forty-one B-24's took off to bomb troop concentrations in northern Italy. Again they were loaded with 250# GP bombs. The Group bombed visually and dropped over 85 tons of bombs on the primary target with very good results. Flak was slight and inaccurate at the target. All planes returned safely.

Mission 247, April 18 The Group went back to the same area to bomb troop and equipment concentrations. This time 41 B-24's dropped 96 tons of 500# RDX bombs with good results. All planes returned to base.

Mission 248, April 19 The Group attacked an alternate target with mixed results as only 30 aircraft dropped their bombs on the Bischofshofen, Austria marshalling yards. Weather prevented the remainder from dropping their bombs. Three Me-109's were observed but they did not attack and were driven off by P-51's. All planes returned to base.

Mission 249, April 20 Forty-three B-24's took off to bomb the Campodazzo, Italy railroad bridge. Five aircraft returned prior to bombing for various reasons. Thirty-three aircraft bombed the primary target with excellent results, dropping 1,000# RDX bombs on the target. Five aircraft dropped their bombs on the Campo Di Trans railroad bridge, an alternate, because the primary was obscured by smoke. Flak at the target was slight and inaccurate. All planes returned to base safely.

Mission 250, April 23 Forty-two B-24's took off to bomb the road bridges at Padua, Italy. They dropped 93 tons of 500# RDX

bombs with good results. No flak or enemy fighters were encountered in the area or en route. All planes returned to base.

Mission 251, April 24 Forty-two B-24's took off to bomb the road bridges at Friola, Italy. Twenty-eight of the aircraft dropped 1,000# RDX bombs on the primary target with good results. Fourteen aircraft dropped their bombs on the alternate, Osepepe marshalling yards and ammunition dump, with good results. Flak at the target was slight and inaccurate. All planes returned to base safely.

Mission 252, April 25 Twenty-eight B-24's took off to bomb the main station and marshalling yards at Linz, Austria. The Group was escorted by P-51's. Two aircraft returned prior to bombing because of engine trouble and 26 aircraft dropped 62 tons of 500# RDX bombs on the primary target. Flak at the target was intense and accurate. It seemed that the enemy was bringing all their flak guns back to protect their priority targets as the flak was extremely intense over this area. One aircraft was hit in the bomb bay and ten crewmen were missing in action. Three other crewmen received flak wounds, one serious and two slight. Twenty-five planes returned to base at 1440 hours.

Mission 253, April 26 Although a mission was scheduled for this day, it never got off the ground as the air war was over while the Group waited for takeoff. April was over and so was the war in Europe. The results for April were 20 missions flown with a total of 653 aircraft over the target and 1,305 tons of bombs dropped. The Group lost three aircraft, two to enemy action and one accident. The loss in personnel was six killed, 21 missing and eight wounded in action.

THE WAR HAS ENDED!

April 25th marked the last day the 15th Air Force flew high over enemy territory and the last day the bombs fell in full force. Everyone knew the war would soon be over and the air crews started "sweating out" the last few missions as they had made it this far and some suspicions and anxiety prevailed about getting shot down at this stage of combat. The remaining strategic targets were heavily defended with flak with Linz, our last target, being no exception. We lost one airplane and crew from flak on that mission and two men were severely wounded and one received slight wounds. Seven of our B-24's received severe flak damage and 11 were slightly damaged. The Group had flown 13 missions with no enemy opposition from flak or fighters before striking Linz. These missions were flown in support of the ground forces in the Po Valley, Italy. Another mission again was scheduled against Linz for 26 April 1945 and the crews were already waiting in their aircraft with great concern, hoping the red flare would be fired from the tower for its cancellation. It was time for starting engines and shouts of joy could be heard as the red flare was fired. The war was over for the combat crews!

During these last few months, the Group dropped 2,851 tons of bombs from flying 1,434 sorties. From these operations, we lost eight aircraft from flak and 134 received flak damage. There were 74 crewmen missing in action, 20 wounded and 16 killed. In addition, we lost three B-24's to causes other than combat. The Group started with 60 aircraft at the beginning of this period and with the loss of 11 planes, the rate was 18%. Losses to causes other than combat plagued the Group throughout the war. Many of the crews listed as killed were from these accidents.

Much of the Group's efforts during April was giving direct and indirect support to our ground troops trying to push the Germans out of Italy, or to capture them. In

doing this, we bombed just ahead of our troop lines and hit bridges and marshalling yards to stop all ground transportation. Air transport was no longer a factor.

Crude but effective ways were developed to mark the areas along the front lines for the bombers to hit the dug in enemy troops and make certain that we would not accidentally hit our own. This was accomplished by the use of low frequency radio beacons and white markers well placed along the lines. The bombing altitude was generally 15,000 feet. The radio beacon was placed at one end of our dug in troops. Supplementing this, the Army placed a series of white letters "T" 100 yards in length and 1,000 yards apart to mark where our troops were located. The bomber stream flew perpendicular to the line of troops from an IP and would not drop their bombs until the pilot got an indication on his cockpit radio compass that he had passed the radio beacon, i.e., his compass bearing to the beacon was 90° or more. The white markers were for the benefit of the navigators and bombardiers to insure the bombers were beyond them before dropping the bombs. Also, this was of great assistance in locating the dug in troops of the enemy for bombing. This system worked extremely well with the Group flying several missions in March 1945 in direct support of the ground forces. Shortly after this campaign, our ground forces were able to move out and defeat the Germans.

Missions 205 and 206

My recollections of missions 205 and 206, Feb. 28, 1945 is a little different from the story on pages 15 and 16 of the Cerignola Connection, Spring 2000 issue.

The target was the Isarco/Ables R.R. bridge. I believe it was Col. Snowden who briefed us (both red & blue forces) in the old wine cellar. The Col. related that the Germans were trying to retreat through the Brenner Pass to join other German armies. This

would normally be a tactical target for B-25s, however, when they loaded 1000# bombs they could not fly high enough to avoid heavy losses.

The problem was that our target (Isarco/Ables RR bridge) was at the bottom of the river valley with 10,000 ft. mountains on either side. For better defense the Germans put 88mm flak guns on top of the surrounding mountains. Consequently, when we would fly at 20,000 ft. over the target we would only be at 10,000 ft. from the flak guns. In addition, the mountains were close enough to the river that we would need to fly parallel to mountains in order to get enough time to synchronize the bombsite on the target bridge.

Being the lead bombardier of the blue force I was not too worried because the Col. had assured us that his red force bombardier would wipe out the bridge. Then my blue force would attack the secondary target after the red force advised us of their destruction of the bridge.

I started to say my prayers after the Col. called my pilot, Jack Stewart with the news that the flak was intense and accurate; his bombardier's foot was badly wounded; they missed the target; and it was up to us (blue force) to take out the bridge.

When we arrived at the river and I started on our bomb run, our lead plane was hit more heavily and accurately than the aircraft in formation behind us. While flak bursts were bouncing me over the bomb site, Jack Stewart, pilot and Harry Hal, co-pilot were extinguishing fires in 2 engines. Jack said that our auto pilot was blown out. He asked if the PDI was working and it was. I asked if he could maintain altitude. He said that he could for a while. We made a successful bomb run and hit the target. We all returned to base safely. Jack and I received the DFC and we helped to win the war a little.

Rodney S. Perrill 1st Lt. 742 Sqd, 455 B.G.

From The Album of Emmett Ledbetter



Emmett Ledbetter, served 40 years as conductor on GM&O and I.C. Railroads. Made the Santa Claus run in KY Coal Mining area.



From the Air Force Museum, Dayton, Ohio.



They all took their rest leave at Pompei

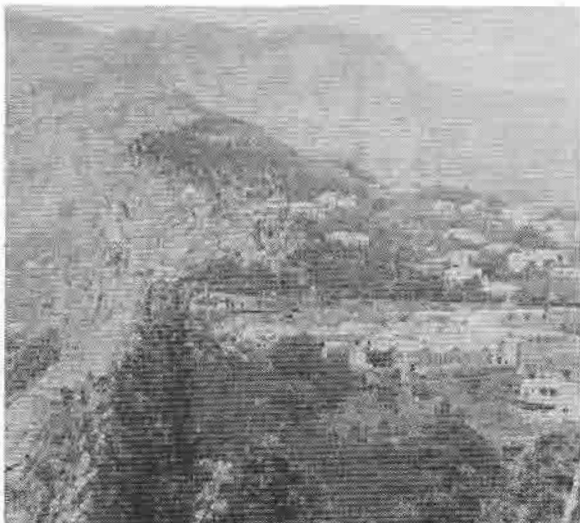
Credit – Photos by 1st Lt. John Cayea, Co-pilot, Leakin'Deacon, Neumans Crew. Killed in airplane crash after return from overseas.



*Leakin' Deacon crew enlisted men.
Front row L to R – Sgt. Hilgendorf, T/Sgt Kloss, S/Sgt Peck.
Back Row L to R – T/Sgt Ledbetter, S/Sgt Kennedy, S/Sgt Phillips.*



Tail Turret Guner, S/Sgt Marshall Hilgendorf, Leakin'Deacon Crew. Credited with shooting down several German fighters.



Also, Capri.

Doing the Macho Thing in Cheesehead Country

Anyone into just about any sport knows that Wisconsin is rabid "Cheesehead" territory. This extends to more than Green Bay Packer and University of Wisconsin football behavior; it is present in other outdoor sports as well.

This Cheesehead had just bought a new Ford Explorer, and in one of those male bonding rituals, decided to go on an ice fishing expedition on one of our omnipresent lakes. Since he was also a great hunting enthusiast, he decided to take his constant companions and hunting dog along with guns just in case some game strayed within shooting distance.

Picking up his buddies at one of the many places of fun and frolic, they helped him load all the usual fishing necessities, namely beer and food, munchies, pizza, and nachos into the new Explorer, and headed for a nearby lake.

It is a common practice in Wisconsin that no matter how thin the ice you always drive your vehicle onto the lake. It is also quite common, if slightly illegal, to blow a hole in the ice by using a stick of dynamite. This is a celebrated labor-saving method and does wonders for the ever-important male bonding macho ritual of fearing no one else on the lake.

Once on the lake they were ready to blow a hole in the ice near the Explorer when they discovered that the stick of dynamite had a short fuse. Since it isn't a good idea to light the fuse, drop the dynamite and run (you might slip and fall on the ice), it was a macho thing to light the fuse and throw it as far as possible.

Unfortunately, the dog, doing what he was taught, chased after the stick, picked it up, and started to bring it back. The men screamed at the dog to drop the lit dynamite, to no avail. Finally, in desperation, one of the men grabbed his ever-

loaded shotgun and fired at the dog. Since the gun was loaded with bird shot it only scared and confused the dog, so he ran and crawled under the Explorer with the stick of dynamite still in his mouth.

The dynamite exploded, blowing the dog to smithereens and raising the vehicle about ten feet off the ice. On the way down the ice gave way, and the new Explorer ended up on the bottom of the lake. In Wisconsin it is illegal to deposit any foreign material into a lake. For this there is always a severe conservation fine assessed each day, and the usual charge for vehicle retrieval is \$6,000 — more for vehicles the size of the Explorer.

The insurance company refused to pay because the Explorer was used in an illegal activity—dynamiting a fishing hole, and the first payment was due at the end of the month with only 47 more to follow. This is a true male bonding experience in Cheesehead country! Only the names have been omitted to protect the guilty.

Credit — Ray Pytel, 445th BG

About the American Battle Monuments Commission Cemeteries

ARDENNES: Located near the southeast edge of Neupre, 12 miles southwest of Liege, Belgium, this 90-acre cemetery contains the graves of 5,328 war dead, many of whom died in the Battle of the Bulge. Headstones aligned in straight rows form a huge Greek cross on the lawns. Along the outside of the memorial are the names of 462 missing.

BRITTANY: Buried on 28 acres of rolling farm country 1.5 miles southeast of the village of St. James, France are 4,410 war dead. Most gave their lives in the Normandy and Brittany campaigns in 1944. Along the retaining wall of the memorial terrace, 498 names of missing are inscribed.

CAMBRIDGE: Sitting three miles west of Cambridge, England, this 30.5-acre cemetery was donated by the University of Cambridge. Buried here are 3,812 Americans, most of whom died in the Battle of the Atlantic or the strategic air bombardment of Europe. On the Tablets of the Missing are 5,126 names.

EPINAL: Four miles southeast of Epinal (Vosges), France, the cemetery contains the graves of 5,225 war dead on 48 acres. Most gave their lives in the campaigns across northeastern France to the Rhine and into Germany. On the walls of the Court of Honor are inscribed the names of 424 missing.

FLORENCE: Located about 7.5 miles south of Florence, Italy, this is a 70-acre site that contains 4,402 American graves. The memorial has two open courts joined by the Tablets of the Missing upon which are inscribed another 1,409 names.

HENRI-CHAPELLE: Two miles northwest of the village of Henri-Chapelle, Belgium, the cemetery covers 57 acres and contains 7,989 graves of Americans who died during the S.S. advance into Germany. The rectangular piers of a long colonnade have inscribed upon the names of 450 missing.

LORRAINE: Situated about one mile north of the town of St. Avold, France, the 113.5-acre cemetery contains the largest number of graves of World War II war dead in Europe, a total of 10,489. Most died while fighting in this region. Inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing are 444 names.

LUXEMBOURG: Lying just within the city limits of Luxembourg city, Luxembourg, this 50.5-acre cemetery contains the remains of 5,076 Americans who died during the Battle of the Bulge and in the advance to the Rhine. The names of 371 missing are inscribed on pylons flanking the chapel.

NETHERLANDS: The only American cemetery in the Netherlands, it lies in the village of Margraten. Covering 65.5-acres, the

cemetery contains 8,302 graves. Two Tablets of the Missing are inscribed with 1,723 names.

NORMANDY: Situated on a cliff overlooking Omaha Beach, the cemetery is just east of St. Laurent-sur-Mer. The site covers 172.5 acres and contains the graves of 9,386 American war dead, most of whom died during the landings and ensuing operations. The walls of a semi-circular garden on the east side of the memorial contain the names of 1,557 missing.

NORTH AFRICA: Located close to the site of the ancient city of Carthage, Tunisia, the cemetery is 10 miles from Tunis. The 27-acre cemetery contains 2,841 American graves. Engraved on the Wall of the Missing are 3,724 names. Most died in military activities from North Africa to the Persian Gulf.

RHONE: Set in the city of Draguignan, France, 28 miles west of Cannes, Rhone Cemetery is the site of 861 graves of American war dead, most of whom gave their lives in the liberation of southern France in 1944. The retaining wall of the chapel terrace contains the names of 294 missing.

SICILY-ROME: Lying at the north edge of Nettuno, Italy, immediately east of Anzio and 38 miles south of Rome, the 77-acre cemetery site contains 7,862 graves. The majority of these Americans died in the operations preceding the liberation of Rome. On the white marble walls of the chapel are engraved the names of 3,095 missing.

The Story of Veterans Day...

In 1921, an unknown World War I American soldier was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. This site, on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River and the city of Washington, became the focal point of reverence for America's veterans.

Similar ceremonies occurred earlier in England and France, where an unknown soldier was

buried in each nation's highest place of honor (in England, Westminster Abbey; in France, the Arc de Triomphe). These memorial gestures all took place on November 11, giving universal recognition to the celebrated ending of World War I fighting at 11 a.m., November 11, 1918 (the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month). The day became known as "Armistice Day."

Armistice Day officially received its name in America in 1926 through a Congressional resolution. It became a national holiday 12 years later by similar Congressional action. If the idealistic hope had been realized that World War I was "the war to end all wars," November 11 might still be called Armistice Day. But only a few years after the holiday was proclaimed, war broke out in Europe. Sixteen and one-half million Americans took part. Four hundred seven thousand of them died in service, more than 292,000 in battle.

In 1954 President Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11 as Veterans Day, to honor those who have served America in all wars.

Ex-POW Bulletin

On a wing and a prayer

Veteran's wife feels the B-24's terrible beauty
By Carolyn Miller

They soared into the wild blue yonder, just as the song lyric says. Of 18,000, there is just one that is airborne today.

I flew in it.

It's the B-24, the Liberator — or, as it sometimes was known, the Flying Boxcar.

Fifty-four years ago, Frank, my husband, completed 35 missions over Germany. Trained for the Sperry Ball, he was assigned to tail gunner duty after the Sperry Ball was discontinued.

Recently my grandson Logan and I went to Latrobe to see the one B-24 and one of several B-17s still maintained for flights.

There they were, two of the behemoths of their day. We went through each and talked with the pilots and crew.

We walked around the planes, awed by the size of the propellers, the intricacy of the engines, the beauty of such power for its time.

As we were about to leave, one of the pilots mentioned rides were available.

Reluctantly, I declined. "Grandma," Logan said, "when will this chance ever come again for you?"

Other family members asked the same question. I had the opportunity to experience a flight in a B-24. Why had I turned it down?

Two days later, we went back to Latrobe.

The storm of the previous day had dwindled to a drizzle. We walked over to the planes, inquired about a ride for me. The pilot took my name and said she would try to schedule me on a flight. We needed a "window" in the sky to fly.

Logan and I walked around the plane. Logan had a camcorder, and he went to get shots of the B-17.

I stayed by the B-24, hoping.

Then the pilot handed me a clipboard with instructions to read and sign. I was given a sticker for my jacket and asked to step to the building for a briefing. A first flight was soon to board; I had made it for the second flight.

We stood by the building, a few hundred feet from the Liberator.

Suddenly, the engines came to life, the propellers spun, the exhausts spewed smoke.

What power.

The B-24 began to roll. It taxied down the field, turned, revved its engines, came right by us and lifted into the air.

What beauty.

My husband had seen and experienced this many times, and now I was here.



We watched it disappear into the sky. *I would be on the next flight.*

I would fly in a World War II bomber from the '40s—a craft famous when I was in my late teens. Here I was, a 73-year-old in 1999—with a chance of a lifetime.

It seemed like ages to me before we saw the Liberator return.

In the meantime, we had been briefed on actual flight time. Buckle up on take-off, freedom during flight, buckle up on landing.

The B-24's engines would not be turned off when it landed. We would board, buckle and take off.

As the previous flight's passengers disembarked, we were directed to board through the bomb bay doors.

The force from the propellers was terrific. We moved. The first three of us hopped a bar, sat on the floor and buckled up. The second set of three sat directly behind us, closer to the front of the plane.

The gentleman to my right had been a navigator in the war; the young lady to my left made the trip because her uncle had been a gunner "way back then."

The engines revved; the man next to me made a circular motion with his hand. We were going.

The engines roared again, and this time I heard them echo inside the plane. Down the runway, turn, rev and prepare for takeoff.

I knew just when the plane left the ground. Suddenly, we were in the clouds. The bail-out bell rang once to let us know we were free to unbuckle and move about.

I looked out the waist section, aimed the guns. Then I navigated a narrow cat-walk, holding on to the sides, and moved into the tail section.

There, I was able to see what my husband had seen.

We approached the B-17 below us and passed it. What a beautiful sight.

It was easy to pick out the veterans on the flight. Their eyes told you they were back there—for just a little while.

Too soon, the bail-out bell sounded twice, time to sit and buckle up for landing.

As I sat on the floor again, I looked at the tail against the clouds, a sight I will never forget.

A beautiful landing: out through the bomb bay doors and over to the building.

The crew boarded, the engines roared. *Taxi, turn, race, lift.*

And a bit of me flies with that crew forever.

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Mrs. Andrew Spewock Writes—

Enclosed is the ground crew photo and the article by Carolyn Miller for your consideration to publish.

The other enclosures may be of some personal interest. My husband never talked much about his experience in combat, but when he did, he always had the greatest admiration for the pilots with whom he flew, recalling their extraordinary performances facing extremely difficult odds. When my son and I walked through the B-24 in August, a year ago, I could not even imagine the drama that all of you beautiful young airmen must have experienced during those dangerous times. Words fail when we think of our unsung heroes. We can only extend deepest gratitude and greatest respect.

UNLUCKY THIRTEEN

A man is walking by a mental hospital surrounded by a high wooden fence when he hears voices chanting. The voices are saying excitedly, "13! 13! 13! 13!" He's very curious, so he looks through a hole in the fence, and someone pokes him in the eye. "Ouch!" he says. Then he hears the voices chanting, "14! 14! 14! 14!"

Arranging Burial in a VA National Cemetery

* Veterans with discharges other than dishonorable, their spouses and dependent children may be eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery.

* Gravesites in Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries cannot be reserved in advance. However, families are encouraged to prepare in advance by discussing cemetery options, by collecting the veteran's military information, and by calling the cemetery where burial is desired prior to the time of need.

* VA will provide a gravesite, gravestone, headstone, or marker, Presidential Memorial Certificate, US flag, perpetual care of the gravesite, and will open and close the grave at no cost to the veteran's family. Services provided by funeral directors and other related costs, usually including transportation, must be paid for by the veteran's family.

* VA's Veterans Benefits Administration pays a burial and plot allowance to those veterans eligible by law. For information, please call the nearest VA regional office at 1-800-827-1000.

* The veteran's full name; rank; branch of service; date of entry and discharge; serial, social security and VA claim numbers; date and place of birth; and, date of death should be provided, if possible, to establish eligibility for burial in a VA national cemetery.

* A copy of the veteran's official military discharge document with the character of discharge is also required. If this document is not available, a copy may be obtained from the **National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Record's Office 9700 Page Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100**. This should be done prior to the time of need.

* Your funeral director should be making the arrangements with the national cemetery for the veteran's family.

Credit EX-POW BULLETIN

From The Albums



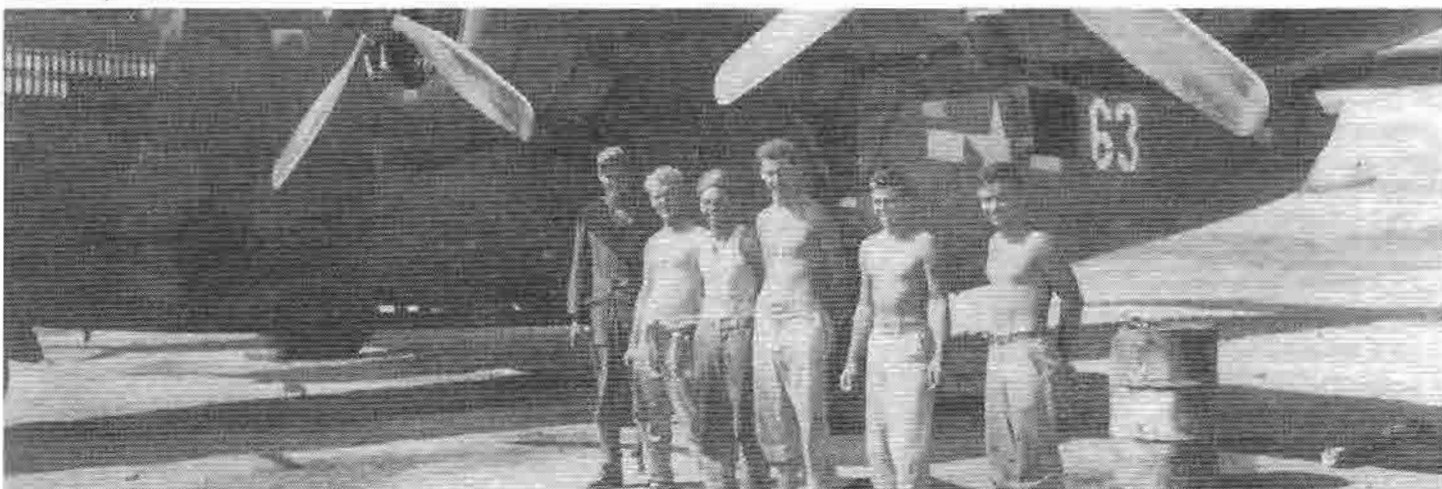
Front row, L to R – Ulys Taylor, Waist Gunner; Wm Malcolm, Engineer; Allan Holeman, Tail Gurret Gunner; Grover West, Ball Turret Gunner; Dominick Frugale, Radio Operator.
Back row, L to R – Ed Eber, Navigator; Jack Stuart, Pilot; Harry Hall, Co-pilot; Rodney Perrill, Bombardier



Front row, L to R – Andrew Spewock, Nose Turret Gunner; John Cotter, Bombardier; John Els, Navigator; Robert Robards, Pilot; Albert Eckhoh, Co-pilot.
Back row, L to R – Albert Crocker, Waist Gunner; Luther Minyard, Tail Turret Gunner; Vernon Schrader, Engineer; Richard Keene, Ball Turret Gunner; Rayburn Anderson, Radio Operator.



Andrew Spewock seated, Wayne Kappel, check out the Collins Foundation B-24 when it came to Latrobe, PA.



Can you identify this crew? If you can, let Mrs. Andrew Spewock, RR 5, Box 140, Latrobe, PA 15650-9102, know. Thanks-Ed.



From The Files

When the 455th Bomb Group left Langley Field, 868 went by air and 1136 by ship. There were a total of 64 crews, but only 62 airplanes. Destination was San Giovanni, Italy, by the way of Africa. The 455th was stationed with the 454th on a strip at San Giovanni, Italy, about 5 miles west of Cerignola and 20 miles southeast of Foggia. The 455th flew 255 missions during the 15 months of combat, 147 air-men were killed in action; 268 missing; 173 prisoners of war. New assignments to the group, 2478. Injured returned to duty, 112. Total group personnel, 3374. 1200 completed their tour of duty. The 455th was the last group to be inactivated after the war and did not leave Italy until September 1945.

The first 455th Bomb Group reunion was held, September 18, 1948, in St. Louis, Missouri. The second followed in 1949, Chicago, Illinois. The third, September 2, 1950 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The first issue of the Cerignola Connection was printed, Fall 1989. 26 issues have been printed, the first being only 8 pages. Present issues run 24 pages.

The rugged B-24 achieved fame during the second world war as one of the Army Air Corps' most reliable long-range bombers. The B-24 D was the first version of the Liberator to be built in large quantities, and more than 2,700 of these aircraft were produced prior to the introduction of the B-24 E. Though often overshadowed by the highly publicized exploits of the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, the incredible B-24 saw action over more operational fronts than any other American bomber.

During the service life of the B-24, the long deep fuselage enabled the Army air corps to adapt the Liberators to an endless variety of wartime tasks. They served admirably, not only as strategic bombers, but as photo-reconnaissance

aircraft, anti-submarine patrol planes, and cargo transports as well.

Though initial versions of the B-24 were deployed to the Mediterranean and Great Britain, the desperate need for long-range aircraft in the South Pacific caused the Liberator to become the mainstay of Allied operations in the island campaigns. By 1943 the B-24 had replaced the B-17 as the standard long-range heavy bomber in the South Pacific.

Piloted by Army and Navy aircrews as well as British aviators, the Liberators fought valiantly until replaced by massive waves of silver B-29s.

Cerignola was the site of the first battle in the Western World with firearms, (guns and cannons) (1500-1510). This was the battle between the French and Spanish. The first battle at Cassino between the French and the Spanish (1506) ended in the same result as 1944.

Fifteenth Air Force shows the way. Approximately 80% of all Eighth Air Force and 70% of Fifteenth Air Force missions during the last quarter of 1944 were characterized by some employment of blind-bombing devices. Constant study and assessment continued to show the not unanticipated conclusion that radar bombing was far less accurate than visual. For the last three months of 1944, the percentage of Eighth Air Force bombs that fell within 1,000 feet of the target was 38%, 25%, and 25% respectively; in the same months the Fifteenth Air force score was 40%, 36%, and 36%, and the Fifteenth continued to do much better than the Eighth in this respect.

The Isle of Vis was a haven for crippled bombers and fighters that could not make it to Italy from bombing targets in Austria, Hungary and the Balkans. It is one of the three most western Dalmation islands in the Adriatic Sea, nestled between Bisevo and Susac. Vis is a rock island, had no fresh water but boasted of a natural and protected harbor for ships. The runway was gravel and only 3500

feet long located in a valley. The island was a junk yard of wrecked B-24's, B-17's, and other types of aircraft. They had been bulldozed off the runway and stripped of usable spare parts and equipment. Some airplanes were repaired and flown back to their bases. On occasion, there would not be room for a crippled bomber to land and the crew was asked to bail out over the airfield and let the airplane crash in the sea. In the early stages of our combat, the island was frequently bombed by German Stukas. To invade the island would have been very costly for the Germans, thus it provided a safe emergency landing space for the Allied airplanes. While at Vis, downed flyers feasted on Yugoslavian wine and Spam until their transportation back home arrived which was a small high speed supply boat or a C-47.

Where did the Vulture come from? With the passing of time one tends to forget some of the small details that were quite vivid a few years ago. How did the Vulture come about? It was started by Tom Mitchell, Intelligence Officer of the 743rd Squadron and then later adopted by the group. The art was done by Walt Disney Studios, gratis, and it depicted a vulture riding downward on a bomb. Red designated the bomb color for the 743rd Squadron. Other colors were assigned to the other squadrons. Membership cards were issued to all members of the 455th Bomb Group, these signed by Tom Mitchell. The symbol was used on printed material, jacket patches, scarves for the ladies, etc.

A member revisits Cerignola - The place known as San Giovanni was a land grant from Frederick 11, 13th century, and has been in the family of present owners for over 400 years. Under land reform since the war, the family was forced to sell some of the land so the castle (Group Hdq) is now a girl's school. The chapel just east of the castle has been renovated and is an active parish. The Corps of Engineers scraped away the top

soil and laid out the runways, taxiways and hard stands. They were to have been covered with "pierced steel-planking", however in December of '43 a German JU-88 bombed a ship in Bari harbor and hit an ammunition ship with the result that 19 ships sank including the one carrying the 455th pierced steel planking and support equipment. Consequently we only had planking for the touchdown ends of the runway and a part of each hard stand. That is why, all through the war, maintenance people were working off of ammunition boxes and empty oil drums. Group airplanes were held up in North Africa until the Corps of Engineers could complete a pipeline from Bari to provide aviation gasoline. All of those pieces of 4 inch steel pipe we used as chimneys for our homemade stoves in our tents were gifts from the Corps pipeline. The Service Squadron located NE from Group Hdq. was assigned to the base to support both bomb groups with maintenance beyond the capability and manpower assigned to the flying squadrons. They built a long quonset hut, for a machine shed, which is still there and is a rich rust red color. The Service Squadron was our source of technical supplies, replacement propellers, engines, tires, brakes, etc. when it came time to load bombs and ammo, preparing for a mission, the armorers always showed up driving a long string of trailers with bombs on them. During our visit to San Giovanni on the 455th Italian adventure we presented a plaque to the parish near the castle.

If You Can...Drop Sue a Line.

Sue Otto Stannard writes that her father Carl W. Otto made his final flight, July 20, 2000. She asks if you have any information about her dad that you wish to share, feel free to write. She can be reached at: **Sue Otto Stannard, 44 Lilac St., East Hartford, CT 06118.**

Al Cratch Writes!



In the Fall 2000 edition of the Cerignola Connection, Roger Caple writes that his crew flew the B-24 "The Captain and His Kids" to Italy and landed there April 14, 1944. He must have flown another plane by that name. The B-24 pictured on Page of the Fall 2000 edition is the plane I personally painted the picture on and flew in that plane from the first part of March 1944 until we were shot down on April 21, 1944. The caption under this picture asks for the crew names on this plane. This was Captain Norgard's crew as follows: Co-pilot Lt. Stiner, Navigator Lt. Everson, Bombardier Lt. Dumas, 1st Engineer T/Sgt Hartman, 2nd Engineer S/Sgt Myrick, 3rd Engineer S/Sgt Jenkins, Radio Oper. T/Sgt Bantz, Nose Gunner S/Sgt Bergmann and Tail Gunner S/Sgt Cratch.

All of the above were POWs in Romania and returned safely.

Bruce Rice Writes!



Here is my next year's membership payment for \$15.00. Nice to know what is still happening. Hard to believe the time that has passed since Italy.

I sent Stephen Ambrose a couple of tape cassettes of my experiences in the 740th Squadron. Brought back some memories and experiences which really are still fresh in my mind.

Thanks for your efforts to keep communications with those still around.

Had a memorable experience in 1998 visiting Romania and Ploesti, seeing where the group bombed and hearing from some Romanians how they appreciated the efforts to take out the Germans. The trip was a people to people endeavor where I was a guest and my wife one of 13 women working on maternal and child health situations in Romania and Russia.

Give Gus a Call When You Are In Siera Vista!

People very infrequently visit Sierra Vista. There is a heck of a lot of history here. (Ft. Huachuca, Tombstone, Wyatt Earp, Bisbee, etc.) As I mentioned, some of it even originated in the Northwest. i.e. Portland. In fact, Wyatt Earp died in Oakland, CA in 1929 and is buried in a cemetery in Daly City, CA. A few years back somebody stole Wyatt Earps headstone from his grave in Daly City. They found it in tombstone. There **was** still a \$10,000 reward out for him Dead or Alive. His body is still in the Daily City cemetery. So if you are in Sierra Vista, give me a call!

One really good reason NOT to clean the house:

Leaving it dirty can boost the body's disease defenses. Scientists report that a little dirt and dust may actually be helpful in building a well-functioning immune system, especially in preventing early allergies and asthma. So turn off the vacuum cleaner, drop the duster and bless the mess.

A Bit of Humor

A fellow was invited to an old friend's house for dinner. The host preceded every request to his wife by calling her "sweetheart," "honey," "darling," my love," etc. The guest was quite impressed since they had been married almost 70 years.

While the wife was in the kitchen, the guest remarked how nice it was that he still called her those pet names. "To tell you the truth I forgot her name about 10 years ago," the friend replied.

Credit-VFW Magazine

Plaudits to a 741st Bomber Pilot

ROME (AP) — George McGovern, the 1972 Democratic presidential nominee, said Thursday the Bush administration has asked him to remain in his post as U.S. ambassador to Rome-based U.N. agencies.

McGovern, 78, a longtime U.S. senator from South Dakota and former Democratic presidential candidate, was appointed by President Clinton in March 1998 and is one of four U.S. ambassadors based in Rome.

"As far as I know, I am the only Clinton presidential nominee so far who has been asked to stay on, and I have accepted," McGovern told the Associated Press.

Since his appointment, McGovern has revived a bipartisan alliance with former Sen. Robert Dole, R-Kan., the 1996 Republican presidential nominee. The two senators worked together in congress to expand the American school lunch program, food stamps and special nutrition help for pregnant women and poor children.

For the past year, with Clinton's support and Dole's help, McGovern has been pushing U.N. agencies and member countries to provide a nutritious school lunch every day for every school child in the world.

Around 300 million school-age children are not fed at school, mostly in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. About 125 million, largely girls, do not attend school and are thus illiterate.

Clinton announced Dec. 28 at

the White House that the United States would distribute \$300 million in surplus farm products as the first step in the global child-feeding initiative. Dole was present at the ceremony.

In his Rome job, U.S. ambassador to United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture in Rome, McGovern has been urging other countries to follow the U.S. lead and help underwrite the program with cash or produce. He has also just finished a book on the subject, "The Third Freedom: Ending Hunger In Our Time."

In 1944, McGovern was a bomber pilot in the U.S. Air force based in southern Italy. Last August, President Clinton awarded McGovern the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The three other U.S. ambassadors based in Rome are Thomas Foglietta, a former congressman from Pennsylvania, the ambassador to Italy; former Rep. Corinne "Lindy" Boggs, D-La., accredited to the Vatican; and Ambassador Richard Sklar, special representative for the Southeast Europe Initiative, which supervises U.S. efforts for reconstruction in the Balkans.



Ambassador George McGovern, center and historian Stephen Ambrose, right, visit with Mario (see story in this issue) in his special 455th BG Museum, in Cerignola, Italy.

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