



# CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

*455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter*

**Spring, 2007** Editor, Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039  
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## Message from President George H. W. Bush (41st President of the USA)

Although I cannot be with you personally, I am happy to have the opportunity to pay my respects to the members of the 455th Bomb Group Association, who will gather in San Antonio this fall.

As veterans of the United States Armed Forces, you are heroes in the truest sense of the word. Your courage and sacrifices reflect the great spirit of which General MacArthur spoke at West Point:

### **Duty, Honor, and Country**

These are words dear and special to me. They have guided my life as they have guided yours.

I look back on my days in uniform as among the very greatest in my life, as I am sure you do. I was lucky to have served, and you must feel the same way.

As a former Navy man and former Commander-in-Chief, I salute each of you for taking up the torch of freedom and answering your country's call to duty. I also join you in remembering those members of the 455th Bomb Group who

made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. All Americans owe them a lasting debt of gratitude.

Have a wonderful and memorable gathering.

Sincerely,  
George H. W. Bush

### AIR FORCE PRAYER

O, Lord, we thank you for the men who fly, For fighting soldiers aren't afraid to die,

For men whose heart is tough as steel, Whose courage makes the enemy reel.

For pilots, brave and true, For wills their task to do, For men who guide the planes, Through the fog, mist, and rains.

For men who work upon the ground, Their skill is good and sound. For Air Force men everywhere, For them, we ask this prayer.

And, last of all to thee we praise, For guiding hands along airwaves, For Presence with us every day, O, Lord, this prayer we ever pray.

The days are now numbered But still it is clear, It's only a short while That I can remain here.

But I shall ever love you Tho I'll be far away, I'll be fighting, ever fighting, For you, and the good ole U. S. A.

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ht Welcomes:

**455th BOMB GROUP**

**REUNION**



### **Message from the President**

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President, 455th BG Assoc.  
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There were some who didn't think it a good idea to send my undated (sorry about that) letter to all members of the 455th Bomb Group Association that announced our plans for a reunion in San Antonio.

After all, the letters cost our treasury around \$700.00 ! Nevertheless, our Reunion Committee and almost all of the Board of Directors voted in favor of the expense.

You'll recall that we wanted to know if we could exceed the minimum of the 50 rooms that were originally required by our contract with the Omni Hotel and Armed Forces Reunions. The good news is that you have responded overwhelmingly. The result was 83 requests for rooms!

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed speaking with those of you who phoned - those of you whose e-mails brightened my days - and those of you who took the trouble to use Uncle Sam's snail mail.

I received responses far in excess of those who were reserving rooms. Some of you just wanted to wish us luck even though ill health put a damper on your travel. Sadly, others - mostly wives or children - informed me of the deaths of our fellow members of the 455th. Those names appear elsewhere in this issue of *The Cerignola Connection*.

The compilation of all these names became a labor of love for me, and I feel grateful, indeed, to be the President of such a wonderful Association.

### **Can You Help?**

**Dear Editor,**

I am looking to find any information on my father, T/Sgt. William E. Carter (deceased June, 1994). My father was a Flight Engineer with the 15th Air Force, 740th Bomb Squadron, 455 Bomb Group.

My father never talked about the war, but I do have some photos of his crew, and a write-up on his saving the tail gunner's life by fashioning a tourniquet out of arming wire.

I also have a write-up on him receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross in March of 1945. The DFC was also awarded posthumously to the copilot, 1st Lt. Charles Brazelton Jr. of Waco, Texas.

I remember asking my dad what scared him most about the war and he said, "flak" and also telling me that flak had killed their copilot.

I don't know the plane's number nor do any of the pictures have any art work on them. I know that the plane was called *The Uninvited* and I have the names of the crew members. I have researched as much as I can on the 740th, but his plane's name is not mentioned.

I don't know what kind of nose art was on his plane but in one of the pictures the number stenciled on the plane in 2 to 3 foot numbers is 438. I googled 438 but all I found was a 438 that belonged to another crew and, of course, the crew photo isn't of my father's crew.

My brothers and I are proud of our father's service both during and after WWII. He retired from the Air Force in October 1975. It is a proud legacy I would like to pass on to his grandchildren.

Any help will be gladly appreciated.

Best Regards,  
James L Carter  
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*Editor's Note:* For anyone with internet access, please go to the following link:

[www.awardphp.com/pdf/dragich%20uninvited.pdf](http://www.awardphp.com/pdf/dragich%20uninvited.pdf)

This story written by S/Sgt. Walter Dragich (740) details a harrowing mission on *The Uninvited*.

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Eleanor McGovern  
Wife of  
Sen. George McGovern (741)  
1921 - 2007

Eleanor McGovern died of heart failure at her home in Mitchell, SD on January 25, 2007 at age 85.

She was born November 25, 1921, on a farm near Woonsocket, SD.

She attended school in Woonsocket, SD and graduated in 1940, as salutatorian. Following graduation she attended Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, SD where she met her future husband, George McGovern.

On October 31, 1943 she married George McGovern at the Woonsocket Methodist Church where George's father, a minister, officiated. They raised five children. During their married life Eleanor and her husband lived in Mitchell, SD, Washington, DC, Stevensville, MT, Rome, Italy and traveled widely.

Eleanor campaigned for her husband in elections to the US House of Representatives, the US Senate and again when he won the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972.

Frequently, Eleanor discussed national and

international issues in the media. Following that time, she addressed civic, academic and women's groups as an advocate for children, family life and the roles of women. She wrote articles and gave interviews on many issues.

She wrote her memoir, *Uphill: A Personal Journey*, in 1974. She loved nature and was a voracious reader.

She is survived by her husband George, four children: Ann McGovern, Stevensville, MT; Susan McGovern and husband James Rowen, Milwaukee, WI; Steven McGovern, Madison, WI; Mary McGovern-McKinnon, London, England; ten grandchildren; six great grandchildren; sister Phyllis Riffe, Jamestown, ND; and many nieces and nephews; and her beloved pets, Ursa and Kitty-cat.

**Dear Editor,**

Ref: 743rd. dinner dance on Oct.3 1944.

I was there. We had a very good crowd and as I listened I was not understanding a word the girls were saying. I assumed they were Italian nurses.

One bumped into me and I discovered that I was wrong. They were from South Africa and spoke English. After she told me her name four times I finally got it. "Lil King". They had been trucked in from some where. We had a reputation for throwing good "whing dings" and usually had a General from Wing Headquarters attend.

Thanks!

Capt. Bill Loffer (743)

## Final Flights

*Editor's Note: Please read Bill Gemmill's President's Message on page 2.*

*In his message to the membership, Bill Gemmill mentioned receiving many notices of final flights from family members and friends that received the letter about the San Antonio reunion.*

*You'll see some of the final flights below were flown many years ago. We regret that it took so long for this information to appear in the newsletter.*

*Thank you to all the families and friends that informed us of their loved one's final flight.*

**Sgt. Royal L. Dixon (743)** resident of Owasso, OK, passed away Friday, February 23, 2007, at the age of 82 years.

**Frank DeMarco** passed away Jan. 30, 2007

**1st Lt. Herbert Weaver (740)** passed away May, 2004.

**1st Lt. Walter I. Summerfield (743)** passed away June, 2006.

**1st Lt. Karl D. Anderson (742)** died June, 2005.

**John Leftwitch** died April 11, 1996.

**S/Sgt. Donald A. Kaplanek (740)** died June 29, 2006.

**T/Sgt. Leon Seman (742)** passed away in January, 2002.

**Maj. Gerald F. Graham (743)** passed away in Dec. 2001.

**PFC Lloyd Texley (741)**  
No date given.

**Cpl. Norbert F. Bailey (742)**  
No date given.

**1st Lt. Jack Blum (741)** took his final flight on December 17, 2006.

**T/Sgt. Donald F. Bauer (741)** died January, 2002.

**T/Sgt. Vern Ussery (740)** passed away March 27, 2006

**Capt. William V. Richards (743)** took his final flight June 23, 2003.

**Capt. George J. Guido (742)** passed away April, 2006.

**S/Sgt. James A. Jackson (742)** died September 2, 2006.

**1st Lt. Martin Hoade (740)** passed away September, 2006.

**1st Lt. Leo Stopa (743)** took his final flight August 3, 2003.

**S/Sgt. Francis McPartlan (741)** died September, 2005.

**Maj. Harry J. Grosser (741)** passed away January 2, 2005.

**S/Sgt Dallas W. Cramer (742)** former POW, shot down August 1944 over Ploesti. His final flight was in May, 2002.

**John B. Coyle (741)** passed away October 5, 2006.

**Capt. William V. Richards (743)** passed away June 23, 2003.

**T/Sgt. Charles Oltarzewski (740)** passed away October 31, 2006. "Murph" was the engineer on Bill Gemmill's crew (pilot Wesley Powell). Others on that crew were George Harvey (radio) and Curtis Kell (co-pilot).

**Capt. Don McConnell (740)** took his final flight on 11/05/06. Capt. McConnell volunteered to bomb Hitler's Chalet in the Alps during the winter of 1944, which entailed an extremely long round-trip flight. On the return leg, his cabin heater broke, resulting in his frostbite and hospitalization. He was buried last Veteran's Day (11/11/06) with full military honors.

**M/Sgt. Cyril V. "Jim" Martin (742)** died September 4, 2003.

**Sgt. Ralph Johnson (GP)** died in 2004.

**1st Lt. Leonard Beckman (742)** No date given.

**Sgt. Charlie Hilland (742)** died on January 7, 2007. He was a nose gunner in George Maitzen's crew.

**Sgt. Charles A. Rein (742)** passed away in 2005.

God Bless these brave  
veterans and their families

**Dear Editor,**

You are not going to believe what my kids gave me for a Christmas present. They handed me a poem they had written and they asked me to read it out loud. I did. I am enclosing a copy so you can enjoy it (see right column this page). About the only things I expect you may not know is my special birthday is number 90 that comes up in May, 2007.

Already established is the departure date to New Orleans of April 8. We will visit the D-Day Museum on April 13 and April 14.

My kids remembered to work into the poem a much repeated story. We were supposed to wear our flak helmets on our heads, but I wore mine under my rear to protect my family jewels! My kids were the result of my great wisdom ... of my foresight!

Best Regards,

C.W. Cooper (741)

Navigator, George McGovern's crew

**Dear Editor,**

Please see the picture of the aircraft on fire ((below). My grandfather was 2nd Lt. Patrick W. Murphy (740). I believe that picture was taken on May 10, 1944. My grandfather's plane got badly shot up on their way back from a bomb run. They lost all hydraulics and Lt. Murphy controlled the plane using the engines.

He got it back to the airfield and circled while his crew all bailed out. Once everyone was out he belly landed on the runway and wound up nose down in a bomb-dump. He was knocked out and woke up covered in oil. I don't know how he got out or even how he survived. But he lived to fly more missions in a new plane (The Green Latrine II) until he lost almost his entire crew on July 22, 1944, over Ploesti in a mid-air collision.

Lt. Murphy didn't fly that day due to a bad sinus infection. His copilot, 2nd Lt. Edmund C. Russell, piloted the plane that day with a rookie copilot, 2nd Lt. Dolson Meeker. The only one to make it out of the plane was radio operator James Shumaker. The rest perished. I know right up until he passed away at the age of 72, he never got over losing his crew ... his brothers in arms.

My grandfather is the one on the top all the way to the right. My goal is not only to find some one who may have known him, but to put the names to the faces in that picture.

Sincerely yours,

Shaun Duncan

Port Washington, NY

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*Christmas is the time of year  
To find a special treasure  
To give a gift just right for you  
Would truly be our pleasure.*

*And knowing that a milestone day  
Awaits you this coming year  
We, your kids, will accompany you  
So you'll have to pack your gear.*

*"Off we go" into the Crescent City  
For a weekend in the spring  
Visiting that famed museum  
We'll treat you like a king.*

*Jazz will fill the N'Awlins air  
Music you taught us to like,  
As we stroll through the museum,  
Bringing good memories of "Ike."*

*WWII and the 455<sup>th</sup>  
Also brings a memory or two  
Who the heck needs GPS  
When all we need is you!*

*You'll navigate our way down south  
Stephen Ambrose will be there  
If only in spirit along with those  
The heroes of the air.*

*We were going to invite McGovern  
but that would be insane  
He'd try to tell us what to do  
and want to fly the plane.*

*It won't be a B-24 Liberator,  
And we will not fly first class,  
But we'll get there on a nice big jet,  
With no helmet under our..... billfold.*

*This is our plan, we hope you like  
So save a date for us  
Standing by, Scott, Jeff and Sara  
To help you off the bus!*

*And so we finish our little rhyme  
About a special trip  
Along with Colonel Cooper  
Down the mighty Mississippi!*

*Merry Christmas and Happy Birthday  
To a very special Dad.  
With love from your kids*



**Dear Editor,**

Ref: your inquiry in the Fall, 2006 newsletter, page 16. I believe the lower picture (reproduced below) is in fact San Giovanni.

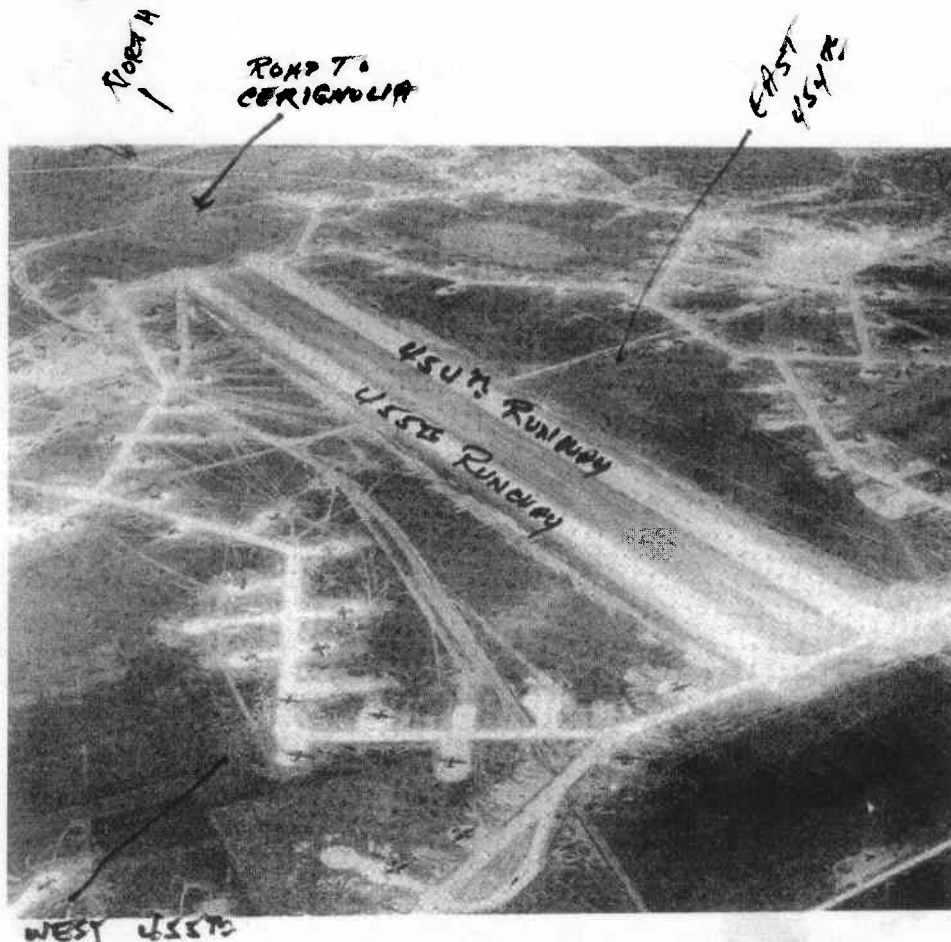
The oblique photo (not shown here) was taken with the camera facing southwest, so the 455th is to the right. Our olive grove tenting area is just beyond the top center of that photograph.

The annotations on the top picture (not shown here) were by Bob Armstrong, an early supporter of our organization. I miss him.

Best Regards,

Edward Hughes (740, Thorne's crew)

efhughes@charter.net



Notes on the photo above courtesy of Jack Phelps (740)

## Charlie Brown's Story

Charlie Brown was a B-17 Flying Fortress pilot with the 379th BG at Kimbolton, England.

His B-17 was called 'Ye Old Pub' and was in a terrible state, having been hit by flak and fighters. The compass was damaged and they were flying deeper over enemy territory instead of heading home to Kimbolton.

After flying over an enemy airfield, a German pilot named Franz Steigler was ordered to take off and shoot down the B-17.

When he got near the B-17, he could not believe his eyes. In his words, he 'had never seen a plane in such a bad state'. The tail and rear section was severely damaged, and the tail gunner wounded. The top gunner was dead. The nose was smashed. Holes were everywhere.

Despite having ammunition, Franz flew to the side of the B-17 and looked at Charlie Brown, the pilot. Brown was scared and struggling to control his damaged plane.

Aware that they had no idea where they were going, Franz waved at Charlie to turn 180 degrees. Franz escorted and guided the stricken plane to and slightly over the North Sea towards England. He then saluted Charlie Brown and turned away.

When Franz landed, he told the C.O. that the plane had been shot down over the sea, and never told the truth to anybody. Charlie Brown and the remains of his crew told all at their briefing, but were told to keep it quiet.

More than 40 years later, Charlie Brown wanted to find the Luftwaffe pilot who saved the crew. After years of research, Franz was found. He had never talked about the incident, not even at post-war reunions.

They met in the USA at a 379th BG reunion, together with 25 people who are alive now - all because Franz never fired his guns that day. Research shows that Charlie Brown lived in Seattle, and Franz Steigler had moved to Vancouver, BC after the war.

When they finally met, they discovered they had lived less than 200 miles apart for the past 50 years!

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