



# CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

*455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter*

Fall 1993

## *From the President*

Our 50th Anniversary Reunion was a tremendous success, with over 460 in attendance. The Norfolk Airport Hilton Hotel did an outstanding job in supporting all our needs. Our memorial dedication ceremony at Langley AFB, Virginia, where we dedicated a plaque to honor the 455th Bomb Group personnel, was really impressive. The setting, the honor guard, and the welcome by the Langley AFB Commander were perfect.

The 50th Anniversary banquet at the hotel was truly outstanding. After a brief tribute to Col. Hugh Graff, his widow, Mrs. Katie Graff, spoke briefly to the membership. Mrs. Graff and her son, Hugh Graff Jr., were our honored guests. Senator George McGovern, who was a pilot in the 741st Bomb Group during the war, also spoke to the group. Our guest speaker, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Donald Harlow made an outstanding speech which kicked off a two-year tribute to the enlisted personnel of the 455th Bomb Group.

The next reunion in 1995 will be dedicated to the enlisted personnel of the Group. During the interim, the Cerignola Connection will carry stories about the enlisted personnel's accomplishments during the war. Your Board of Directors is already at work planning for the 1995 reunion. A special committee was formed to consider the possible locations for the next reunion. The next publication of the Cerignola Connection will bring you up to date on our plans and location of the 1995 Reunion.

In closing, I want to again thank Col. Lou Hansen and his wonderful wife, Frances, for the tremendous job they did for the 50th Anniversary Reunion of the Group. The selection of the hotel, the menus, the dedication ceremony, and the wonderful tours just couldn't have been better. Their tireless effort in preparing and conducting the registration of the members at Norfolk are deeply appreciated. Lou and Frances, we thank you for your wonderful work!

**August 11, 1993**

Today I lost a very dear friend. He was always smiling, always cheerful, and always happy. Being with him made you smile, be cheerful, and happy too. Although I've written many things over the course of time, today to publish Hugh Graff's final flight for the Cerignola Connection is most difficult. On this flight Hugh is closer to heaven and I'm sure that God has a very special place for a very special guy. No doubt Hugh is forming a flying group up there and when it's God's will, I want to be assigned to that group.

*Tom Ramey, Editor  
Cerignola Connection*

*Eugene L. Hudson*

# REUNION '93!



*A gathering of the troops, Langley AFB, 1993.*



*Getting ready to dedicate the 455th BG memorial plaque.*



*President Gene Hudson welcomes the group.*



*Al Asch presents group history to Colonel White of Langley AFB.*



*Memorial plaque unveiling.*



*IN MEMORY - 455th Bomb Group (H).*



*"Cuddle up a little closer!"  
Hotel and group reception.*



*And the band played on!*



*Kate Graff and son Hugh joined us at the group reception.*



*They even wore ties on banquet night!*



*"What's a reunion without a meeting?"*



*"Dear, why do you always have to read the mail first?"*



*Lunch at the NCO Club.*



*President Gene Hudson welcomes speaker CMSAF Donald Harlow.*



*Crew Night, Ed Riggs and Crew 11.*



*Fran and Slick Crumpler enjoy the hotel and group reception*



*Earl Howsam gets caught telling war stories.*



*"I don't care what you say, there's no bombardier like an old bombardier!"*



*I keep telling you, you always start the B-24 on the number 3 engine!*

## FINAL FLIGHT

Captain Howard I Miller, 740th Bomb Squadron, 455th Bomb Group and a Scarsdale resident, died September 26, 1993 at Lenox Hill Hospital in Manhattan. He was 75. Howard was educated in the Boonton, N.J. schools and was a graduate of Columbia University. During his tour with the 455th bomb group, Howard flew B-24's and received the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with clusters. He married Edith Blaustein in 1944. Howard was a self-employed businessman. He also worked with projects to eliminate toxic waste. He is survived by his wife Edith, a son, Kenneth Miller of Manhattan; two brothers, Edwin Miller of Oklahoma City and Gerald Miller of Scottsdale, Arizona; a sister, Muriel Gansler of Lake Hiawatha, N.J., two grandchildren and a great grandson. Howard will be missed by all.



*Richard Rushmore, 740th gunner and the ocelote pet 'Mutton' that accompanied the crew from Brazil to Italy and back to the United States. Mutton lived until 1959.*

## TAPS

There will be a great encampment  
In the land of clouds today.  
A mingling and a merging  
Of our boys who've gone away  
Though on earth they are disbanding,  
They are very close and near,  
For these brave and honored heroes  
Show no sorrow, shed no tear.  
They have lived a life of glory,  
History pins their medals high,  
Listen to the thunder tolling  
They are marching in the sky!

- ARTA NOTTINGHAM CHAPPIUS

# LANGLEY FIELD - REVISITED

## A 50TH ANNIVERSARY

The movement of personnel and airplanes from Salt Lake City to Langley AAB was completed on 6 October 1943. Moral of the Group began to revive with their arrival at Langley. A total of 292 men traveled by air in the Squadron's B-24's and another 1,418 came by rail.

The troop train was commonplace during WWII. There was always a certain amount of mysticism surrounding a troop movement because of the secrecy placed on it by the Army. Most of the men were comparative rookies with six to eight months of service who accepted the confidentiality of moving with a certain amount of awe and suspense. Some had made friends at Salt Lake City and had regrets about leaving. None looked forward to spending three nights and two days aboard a crowded troop train propelled by a slow steam engine, especially those who had traveled by troop train from Clovis to Orlando, to Alamogordo and then onto Salt Lake City. Each squadron had a troop commander and its own troop kitchen. Two meals per day were served but fresh meat, fruit and vegetables were not common. The rights of the men to "bitch" were fully exercised by complaining about the food; stuffiness of the coaches; the lack of fresh air; the dust and smoke from the road bed and engine; and discomfort from the crowded, hard riding seats. The bitching failed to improve conditions but made the trip seem easier. Seeing new country for the first time provided some diversion and made the trip more bearable on the thirty-mile-per-hour train. There were sometimes glimpses of pretty girls when passing through towns with the associated hooting and whistling by the men. Time, nevertheless, went slowly and was spent in playing cards, reading old magazines and catching a few winks of sleep sitting up in the hard seats. Upon reaching Langley, everyone was ready for a hot shower, decent meal and a bed with clean sheets. These "amenities" helped relieve the aching backs and sore muscles produced by the cramped train quarters.

Langley Field provided the best living accommodations the men experienced to date. The quarters were permanent with reddish tile on the floors and also laid eye level up the walls. The bunks were double-decked with lots of room between them. The latrine and showers were tiled and there were even doors on the toilet stalls! The food was good with the mess hall

located downstairs from the sleeping quarters. The base provided recreation facilities which included a PX where one could buy toilet articles, beer, candy bars, magazines; clubs for the men; gymnasium; and a movie theater. Further, bus transportation was provided for those wanting to visit the town of Norfolk. However, with the large Navy bases, there was competition from Navy men in sharing the "goodies" of the town.

The flight echelon had a much easier trip to Langley with a flying time of seven hours. Some stopped enroute to visit friends and family. The squadron navigators got cross country navigation training from the long flight and the pilots gained experience in weather flying and radio navigation. The most experienced pilots were assigned to each airplane as airplane commanders as some pilots had little experience in cross country flying. The low frequency radio ranges were sometimes unreliable for navigation, especially in mountainous areas and the presence of thunderstorms. Also, there was not complete coverage of the low frequency radio airways throughout the United States. Although there were radio compasses in each airplane, which were relatively easy for the pilot to follow and home in on a range station, they were not always reliable because of poor maintenance and outside interference from mountains and bad weather. The most reliable procedure was to fly the range into and out of a radio transmitting station. The system was quite reliable, depending on the skill of the pilot and outside interference to the signals.

Langley was perhaps the best air base of the AAC for organizing the squadrons and accomplishing the equipping, training and staging for overseas movement. It provided an opportunity for the squadrons to learn how to get things done and became self-sufficient; learn about the capabilities of the personnel; and more importantly, making friends and establishing an *esprit de corps* which lasted throughout the war months. All personnel worked hard in training and mastered their jobs. There was little time for recreation because of the accelerated training program. Working 12 hours per day, seven days per week was not uncommon. All types of training were emphasized, i.e. administration, aircraft maintenance, armament, ordinance, signal, supply, flying, bombing, survival, and of course, the usual marching of the

men.

There were the traditional Army legionary lines of men for messing, monthly examination by the doctors and the once per month pay call. Payments, all in cash, were made by the squadron adjutants and the payroll clerks. They would sit at an olive-colored field table with a 45 calibre revolver at hand and disperse the payments by rank, in alphabetical order. The pay was so small that most men were broke from one pay day to the next.

There was emphasis on flying and navigation training to bring the pilots and navigators up to a level where they could safely fly the airplanes from the United States to Italy for combat. The Group was assigned two highly experienced airline pilots to instruct instrument flying. There were several days of bad weather with low ceilings and visibility at Langley which permitted excellent actual conditions for instrument flying. The training was invaluable. For some pilots, it was their first experience for takeoffs and landings while flying under actual weather conditions with low visibility and ceilings. All will remember the blue colored practice bombs and the bombing ranges. On good weather days, the pilots, navigators and bombardiers would practice high altitude navigation and bombing. The squadron operations officers had some opportunity to fly with the pilots to evaluate their capabilities prior to the long flight overseas. However, with 50 crews joining the Group at Langley, it was impossible to evaluate all crews.

Most of the training of the ground support personnel, e.g., aircraft maintenance, radio, armament and ordinance, was on-the-job provided by the most experienced sergeants. There was pressure on the aircraft maintenance personnel to keep in commission the few airplanes the squadrons had for air crew training. The ground support by all organizations was excellent and the morale was exceptionally high. There were several social functions at the clubs for both enlisted men and officers which brought the personnel even closer together. This was extremely important in preparing for combat. The entertainment was provided by "big band" groups of the day, playing ballroom and swing music of the 1930s and early 40s and remains the favorite of many of us today.

Training lasted from 5 October to 30 November 1943. The base personnel at Langley, and particularly the First Bomber Command Detachment, were very cooperative. Although a number of problems arose from the fact that this was the first heavy bomber group to train at the field, all training phases were accomplished on schedule. Some training could not be

completed because of the lack of equipment and facilities, in particular, aerial gunnery for the gunners. However, there was a 50 calibre machine gun mounted on a pedestal at the gunnery range for practice shooting by all personnel. The ground personnel developed a respect for the aerial gunners because of the recoiling velocity of the gun. All personnel were qualified in small arms fire. In spite of the grumbling by the men, there was a great deal of marching, some with full field equipment, and exercises to get us in shape. The flight training was accomplished without a complete loss of an airplane and there was no loss of life or personnel injuries. Two accidents did occur; one when a B-24 had a gear collapse on landing and the other when one of the airplanes had engine failure and was forced to land on the beach.

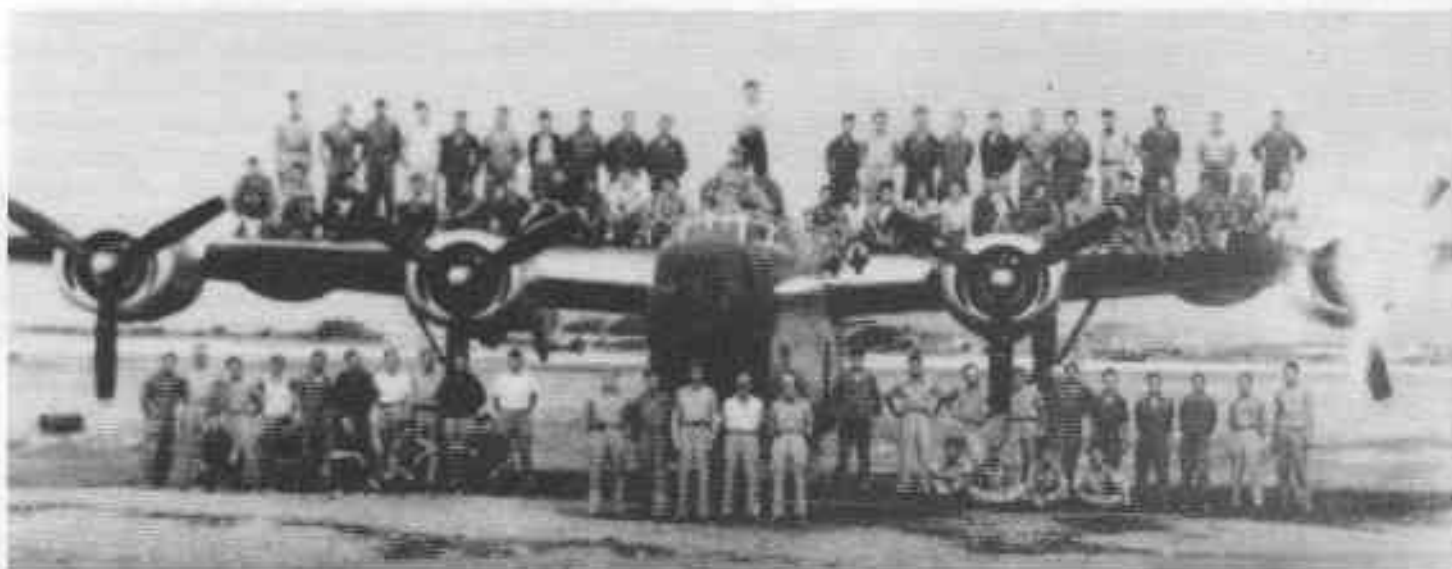
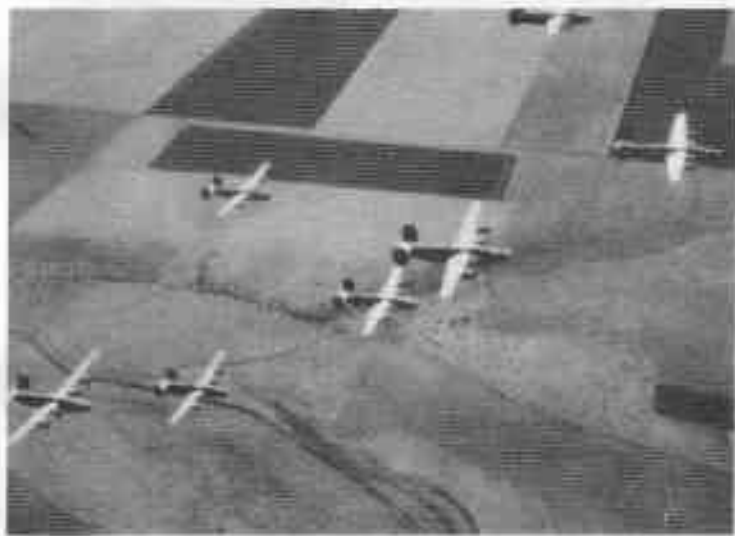
Finally, the Group was ready to receive its new airplanes, supporting equipment, clothing, etc., for the journey overseas. The censors had started censoring the mail and a temporary APO number was assigned for the overseas postal address.

The Group staging was to be performed for the ground personnel for the long trip by boat to Italy at Fort Patrick Henry, and for the flight echelon at Mitchell Field on Long Island, New York. Staging for the ground personnel, however was actually accomplished at Langley Field. Restrictions began at midnight on 5 December 1943 where all military personnel were confined to the field. The first contingent of the flight echelon took off for Mitchell Field on 2 December 1943 and the last B-24 left Langley 15 December 1943.

The loading of equipment to travel by ship began 4 December at Hampton Roads, Virginia. A total of 2,004 personnel were involved in the movement, 868 by air and 1,136 by boat. The staging process involved the receiving of organization field equipment, clothing and personal equipment such as mess kits, carbine rifles with six rounds of ammunition, steel helmets and overseas physicals. Again, there were long lines to receive the personal items which were carried in the famous duffel bag and lines for the final overseas physical examination. Every 20th man in line also received a Thompson submachine gun. The famous cough for checking for a hernia became a part of barrack's humor. Those resenting the examination coughed in the doctor's face...those more polite turned their heads. One of the physical checkup jokes had a man bending over for one doctor while another would look down his throat. If the doctors didn't see each other, the person was pronounced physically fit for overseas combat. The final stop was getting one's immunization shots up-to-date.

The squadrons started receiving their B-24H airplanes during November 1944 while at Langley. A total of 64 were received, or 16 airplanes for each squadron. Training continued and equipment shake-down was accomplished at Langley before the trip to Mitchell Field for final staging. Most crews had works of "art" done on their airplanes, usually a well-stacked, scantily clad girl. All the crews named their airplanes and fell in love with them, each boasting how much better theirs was from anyone else's. Having their own airplanes was a morale booster for the combat crews and their assigned maintenance personnel, the apex for what they had been working toward during the hard months of training.

Excitement was at a high pitch with the crews realizing the plunge overseas was directly ahead. The dependents started leaving for home and there were many sad partings. The squadrons started losing their identity as the long process of moving overseas began. However, the air crews remained intact by Group and Squadron Headquarters personnel and maintenance men were assigned to various airplanes, making a total of 14 people for each B-24H for the trip to Italy. Wherever possible, the most experienced pilots were assigned to each crew as airplane commanders. All crews made the trip safely to Mitchell, with the last one arriving on 15 December 1943.



## NEWS NOTES

I was saving this page of the Cerignola Connection for special news that Lou Hansen was putting together for the membership. Unfortunately, and we're so sorry to hear, Lou had a severe stroke on the 7th of December and has been hospitalized. He has four to six weeks of recuperation ahead of him and our hearts and prayers go out to Lou for a speedy recovery.

Drop Lou a line, or send a card—don't phone. By the time this Cerignola Connection is printed, Lou should be home. You can reach him at: 917 W. 11th Street, Spencer, Iowa 51301.

### **Officers and Directors of the 455th Bomb Group Ass'n Elected for 1994-95 at the Reunion at Norfolk, VA on 10/02/93**

President, Eugene L. Hudson, Maj. Gen., USAF Ret.

Vice President, David J. Frawley, S/Sgt. USAAF

Secretary, John F. Davis, Col., USAF Ret.

Treasurer/Executive Dir., Louis O. Hansen, Col., USAF Ret.

#### **DIRECTORS:**

Robert H. Armstrong, S/SGT. USAAF

James E. Bates, T/SGT. USAAF  
Winfield S. Bowers, Jr., Lt. Col., USAF Ret.

Carl R. Loiocano, T/SGT. USAAF  
Thomas A. Ramey, Lt. Col., USAF Ret.

Clarence E. Riggs, Lt. Col., USAF Ret.

Harold F. Schuknecht, Capt. USAAF

James W. Shumard, Col, USAF Ret.

James H. Smith, Capt. USAAF  
Ross D. Strode, Lt. Col., USAF Ret.

## COME WITH US TO SAN GIOVANNI IN 1994

Yes, it's back to San Giovanni one more time. After our great trip in 1990, we're going back to revisit our 455th Bomb Group operational site at San Giovanni, as well as Cerignola, Foggia, the Isle of Capri and other sites of our WWII activities.

In addition to these nostalgic places, we will visit many of the highlights of Italy. We depart on 9 May and return on 24 May 1994. We hope you can join us in "Italian Adventure II."

This is a high quality trip at a very reasonable price. We will be flying TWA Airlines; most of our meals (including full breakfasts) are included. For full details of our trip, drop me a note or call and ask for a brochure. Based upon the number of early reservations to date, this trip may fill rather quickly.

Address: 455th Bomb Group Ass'n, Box 6125, Spencer, IA 51301 or Phone: 712/252-7237.

*Lou Hansen*

*Executive Director/Treasurer*

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY CAPS AVAILABLE

By popular demand, we are now making the 455th Anniversary Caps available to those of you who could not make it to the reunion. These caps come in either white or blue color and are very attractive. To avoid over-stocking, we need to have your order, with payment, by January 22, 1994.

The cost per cap is \$7.00, with includes postage and handling. Send your order, stating color wanted, and your check to Lou Hansen, Box 6125, Spencer, IA 51301. make check payable to

455th Bomb Group Ass'n.

## FINAL FLIGHTS:

Col Hugh R. Graff, Sr., USAF Ret. (8/10/93) Pilot & Dept. Commander, 455th Bomb Gp & Pres., 455th Bomb Group Ass'n.

Lt Col Timothy M. Swearingen, USAF Ret. (4/06/93) Pilot, 743rd BSq.

Maj James D. Mehegan, Jr., USAF Ret. (7/08/93) Armament Maint. Officer, 741 BSq.

Capt. John H. Aufderheide (3/28/93) Pilot, 742 BSq.

Capt. Howard I Miller (9/26/93) Pilot. 740th BSq & Ass't Gp Ops Officer

1st Lt Joseph L. Parkin (5/16/93) Navigator, Wesley Powell's Crew, 740th BSq.

T/Sgt Lendon F. Lumpkin (5/14/93) Flt Engineer/Gunner, Horst Schoene's crew, 740th BSq.

S/Sgt James E. Barker (5/30/93) Radio Operator/Gunner, William Roger's crew, 740th BSq.

S/Sgt Ewing A. Howlett (10/24/93) Flt Engineer/Gunner, John M. Smidl's crew, 743rd BSq.

S/Sgt Joseph A. Kirby (3/14/93) Gunner, Thomas Markham's crew, 743rd BSq & Public Relations, Gp Hq.

Mrs. Angelo Marcotrigiano passed away just after the 50th reunion, 24th of October, at her home, in 41 Casswood Raod, Yonkers, N.Y., 10701.

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

# KATHLEEN "KATE" GRAFF AND FAMILY:

## Eulogy for Hugh R. Graff, Sr., Colonel USAF (Retired)

Hugh graduated from the Army Air Corps flying school in March 1941 with the class of 41-B. He had various military assignments flying B-18, B-17, B-23, LB-30 and B-24 aircraft. He joined the 455th Heavy Bombardment Group at Clovis, New Mexico in June 1943 as a Captain and became the Group Operations Officer. In this position, he directed all training and flying operations for the B-24 combat crews to prepare them for flying high altitude bombing missions against the Axis Powers in Europe.

He flew with the Group to Italy in late 1943 and continued to direct the flying training for the bombing missions. The Group became one of the outstanding combat groups in the 15th Air Force in Italy receiving two Distinguished Unit Citations for destroying important targets at Steyer and Vienna, Austria. Hugh led the group of 36 airplanes to bomb the Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery at Vienna where they encountered very heavy enemy opposition from both German fighters and anti-aircraft artillery fire known as flak. In spite of heavy opposition, Hugh led the Group over the target and destroyed it. The Group lost 10 aircraft and 100 men on that mission from fighters and flak.

Because of his leadership, Hugh moved up the promotion ladder very rapidly, becoming a full Colonel and Deputy Group Commander in June, 1944. He had a unique dry sense of humor and one could always find it in the most trying situations. For example, the Group was scheduled to bomb the German barracks at Bucharest. The squadron commander who was scheduled to fly the lead had partied a little too much the evening before having celebrated the Group's 100 mission milestone. Both the Group Commander, Colonel Cool, and Hugh wanted to lead the mission as it was to be a "milk run." To settle the issue, Hugh and Colonel Cool played a hand of poker and Hugh won and thus led the mission! On the return flight, Hugh's B-24 took a direct hit from flak in the bomb bay. The airplane caught fire and Hugh had to exit through his small pilot's window. However, he stayed with the burning airplane until the other crew members could bail out. By this time, the airplane was so close to the ground that Hugh injured both feet and ankles from bailing out at such a low altitude.

He was captured and became a POW at a prisoner's

camp at Shumen, Bulgaria. Hugh was the ranking officer and was appointed the prisoner commandant with direct interface with the guards. He became acquainted with an English Officer prisoner who spoke several languages. They decided to try to escape before the Russians arrived as they were pushing toward that area with their land offensive. One evening during the changing of the guards, Hugh and his English friend sneaked through the gate and convinced the Garrison Commander at Shumen to release all 350 POW's. He did this through intimidation on what he would tell the Russians about him and others. The Commander released the POW's to Hugh and they boarded a train going to the Black Sea and Turkey and then to Aleppo, Syria where they boarded American aircraft and were taken to Cairo, Egypt. When arriving in Italy, Hugh was sent home. He had flown 34 combat missions but was not permitted to fly additional ones having been a POW.

Hugh left the Service in 1947 as a full Colonel and became a successful businessman. He and Kate raised a fine family in Ohio and always provided strong support to their community and church. During the past two years, Hugh served as President of the 455th Bomb Group Association and co-authored a book, "The Story of the 455th Bombardment Group (H) WWII." He received the following war-time decorations: Distinguished Flying Cross; Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters; Purple Heart; Commendation Ribbon; POW Medal; Unit Citation with Oak Leaf Cluster; French Croix de Guerre Avec Palm; American Defense Medal; American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Medal with six Campaign Stars; and the WW II Victory Medal.

Hugh will be sorely missed by his family, friends and all members of the 455th Bomb Group Association.

*Alfred Asch, Colonel USAF (Retired)*



## *Dick Carens Writes—*

Here is a picture of a replacement crew that trained in the West Coast Training Command at Davis Monthan Field in Tucson, Arizona. After 5 weeks of training as a unit we embarked on a train heading for Lincoln, Nebraska where we were treated like royalty. There, we checked out a brand spanking new B-24 and with sealed orders at midnight we took off, climbed to 10,000 feet and then opened our orders to discover our destination was to be Gioia, Italy. We flew first to Grenier Field, Nashua, N.H. and then via Gander, Newfoundland; the Azores; Maracech, Africa; Tunis, Tunisia, and on to Gioia. We were all assigned as a crew to the 741st Bomb Squadron of the 455th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force in Cerignola. (Incidentally, I've been back to this location and believe me, it was a moving experience.) I stayed with the crew for three missions, at which time I became the squadron bombardier under the command of Major Jack Reeder. (A highlight of that assignment was a mission to the southern coast of France in support of an amphibian invasion by our own troops. We dropped the "last" bomb. Our instructions were that if we could not get the bombs off by 0729, then we were not to drop; our troops were 200 yards off-shore.) Later, when Colonel Bill Snowden arrived from the Training Command in the U.S., he tapped me as his Group Bombardier.

The picture was taken in July of 1944 shortly after we arrived in Cerignola. I can identify all of the

officers but only one of the enlisted men. I really feel badly about that because they were all fine airmen and went through a really tough campaign. (On one trip to Ploesti oil fields, Adams landed at our base and at the end of the runway, all four engines stopped—out of gas.) I do remember Sgt Hatherly, our crew chief for two reasons:

(1) We had a ritual just before boarding the plane for a combat mission. In a very formal way I would ask Hatherly if the plane was ready for combat. And just as formally he would look me square in the eye and say "Yes, Sir." It may sound like a little thing, but in those days we grasped at any straw to give hope that we'd return.

(2) On our very first mission I checked out a chest harness and a chest parachute. It wasn't until we were in the air and just about to bomb the target when we were instructed to put on our chutes. To my horror, the harness had a female fitting and so did the chest pack. I reported this on the intercom to our pilot, Captain Adams, and upon hearing of my dilemma, Sgt. Hatherly came bounding into the nose and said, "If we have to jump, you can go with me." He knew he'd be risking his own life in taking someone with him. Fortunately, I didn't have to accept his invitation, but this act of bravery was nothing short of heroic.

The cast that I can identify are: Top row, L-R Richard Carens, bombardier; Bob Evans, navigator; — radio operator; — Sperry ball gunner; — side gunner; bottom row, L-R John Noske, co-pilot; Captain F.O. (Bill Adams, pilot; — side gunner; — tail gunner; Hatherly, our crew chief is at the far right sitting.

Noske was on my wing on his 49th mission as a lead pilot, took a severe flak hit and the plane spiralled stright down. Only one was seen parachuting to safety. It was a huge personal loss to me as John and his wife Betty had become close personal friends of ours during the training period in Tucson.

Good Luck,

*ED'S NOTE—If anyone can supply this missing information, your editor would appreciate it. (Tom Ramey, 1211 Montclair Ct., Appleton, Wi 54915-0101*

# **BITS AND PIECES**

## **Our Neighbors at Cherignola - The 461st Bomb Group:**

In 13 months of combat, dropped 10,885 tons of bombs in nine countries: Austria, France, Greece, Italy, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Rumania.

Losses sustained by the Group were: Killed in action—198, Missing in action—93, Killed in line of duty—33.

Since activation of the 461st Bombardment Group, over 5300 men served within its squadrons. During its tour the Group lost 99 B-24's to enemy aircraft, flak and weather. Gunners downed 129 enemy fighters, probably destroyed 44 more and damaged 16.

Group personnel were awarded the following military decorations: 4 Legions of Merit; 11 Silver Stars; 319 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 28 Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters; 66 Bronze Stars with one Oak Leaf Cluster; 15 Soldier's Medals; 2,806 Air Medals with 29 Silver Oak Leaf Clusters and 4,328 Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters; 271 Purple Hearts with 8 Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters.

## **FINAL FLIGHT**

James Daniel Mehegan Jr., 72, died July 8, 1993, at his residence in Holiday Beach, Texas.

He was born July 14, 1920 in Fortress Monroe, Virginia. He had been a resident of Holiday Beach for the past 11 years. He attended

Texas A&M University, was a member of the 455th Bomb Group, and was a retired Major from the U.S. Air Force and the State Department in South Eastern Asia. He was also retired from the Sisters of Charity Hospital System in Houston, where he was the Supply Director. He was a member of the Retired Officers Association and a member of numerous square dance clubs including Coastal Bend Camping Squares, the Seagulls, and Ocean Waves. He was the President of the Holiday Beach Water District Board and a member of the Holiday Beach Homeowners Association. He was preceded in death by his wife, Elizabeth Louise Mehegan, and a son, James Daniel Mehegan III, both in 1979. Survivors include his daughter, Jeannette McDuffie and her husband, Tony, of Linden, Texas; five grandchildren, Brett, Craig, Michael, and Amanda McDuffie, all of Linden, and Shelley Mehegan of Bay City, Texas; and his best friends, Vi and Linda Shirey of Rockport, Texas.

Jim will be missed greatly by all members of the 455th Bomb Group.

## **455th Bomb Group Dedicated at Langley Field, VA, October, 1993**

## **455th Bombardment Group (Heavy) 304th Wing**

This memorial commemorates the 50th anniversary at Langley Air Force Base where the 455th Bom-

bardment Group (H) came together for organizing, training and equipping before embarking overseas for Italy in December 1943. It is dedicated to those who served so valiantly in the defense of freedom during World War II. The Group participated in ten battle campaigns in the European Theater of Operations by flying high altitude bombing missions against enemy targets while stationed at San Giovanni, Italy during 1944 and 1945.

**Combat Missions: 255 Distinguished Unit Citations: Two Squadrons: 740th 741st, 742nd, and 743rd**

**Activated 1 June 1943; Deactivated 9 September 1945**

## **A Note to 741st Personnel**

The 741 Squadron History is history. Thirty-five (35) members ordered copies of Vol. III. Copies of all three volumes are in the Library of Congress, in the library of the AF Museum in Dayton OH, and in the files of the AF Historical Research Center, Maxwell AFB AL.

*Horace Lanford*

# *On The Ground...*

## Unsung Heroes:

The combat achievements would not have resulted without the outstanding support of the ground echelon. Every individual was dedicated to the destruction of the German war machine. The aircraft maintenance and supply people maintained and "patched" the airplanes for the following day's mission. Some airplanes seemingly beyond repair from enemy action would fly again from the efforts of the 304th Service Group and Squadron Engineering. The combat crews marvelled at the repair techniques used. Many airplanes returned filled with holes, some having more than 50. These were patched by simply taking sheeting "skin" from a wrecked airplane, cutting it into patches to fit over the holes, and rivetting in place. There simply was not time to remove sections of skin and replace it with new as is the requirement of today's aviation repair standards. Some airplaces were patched so much that they were nicknamed the "Sieve." The rugged B-24's never failed because of the makeshift patching.



## 741st Flight Surgeon Honored

Harold Frederick Schuknecht, M.D., Weston MA, was inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame on September 18, 1993.

Dr. Schuknecht was awarded the Soldier's Medal on April 20, 1944, at Cerignola, Italy, for pulling out the pilot of a crashed B-24, while it was burning and with ammunition exploding.

Dr. Schuknecht's experience with WWII aircrews kindled his interest in aerotitis, a malady of the middle ear. Dr. Schuknecht's interest in aerotitis made him one of the most highly regarded ENT (Ear, Nose, Throat) men in the world. His resume shows honors, lectureship, and papers from Canada to Australia, Japan to Egypt and Central America. He wrote the most comprehensive book ever done on the middle ear, *Pathology of the Ear*, first published in 1974 and revised in 1993. Dr. Schuknecht has co-authored four books dealing with surgical aspects of managing ear disease. In addition to research and writing, he has served on editorial boards for six major medical journals. He has over 200 original journal articles and 68 reviews, chapters and editorials.

From 1961 through 1984, Dr. Schuknecht served as Chairman of the Department of Otolaryngology and Otolaryngology at Harvard Medical School. (Dr. Schuknecht received an honorary M.A. from Harvard University in 1961 and an honorary D.Sc. from the University of South Dakota in 1972.)

Dr. Schuknecht has been associated with the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Boston, MA, since 1961. He is the Emeritus Chief of Otolaryngology at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infir-

mary, the most prestigious ENT hospital in the world, where he still does part-time research.

Dr. Schuknecht retired from the Academic posts in 1984, stopped medical practice in 1989, and plans to suspend formal research endeavors in 1994 after 38 years of uninterrupted financial support from the National Institute of Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Schuknecht began premed studies at the University of South Dakota in 1934 and attended Rush Medical College at the University of Chicago. In June, 1941, Dr. Schuknecht completed his internship at Illinois and married Anne Bodle of Mishwaka, Indiana.

In 1950, Dr. Schuknecht received the Achievement Award from the Deafness Research Foundation of New York City. Since that time, he has received 16 major awards and honors, been named to lectureships 20 times, and become an honorary member or Fellow of 19 societies and organizations. Dr. Schuknecht is the Emeritus Chairman of the Department of Otolaryngology and Otolaryngology at Harvard Medical School.

Congratulations to Dr. Schuknecht.

## From the Mouths of Babes!

Your Editor's eight year old grandson was flying from Tucson to Appleton on Northwest. During a stand down in Denver, waiting for the weather to clear, he was given the opportunity to go to the cockpit, view the controls and talk to the pilot. His first comment was "My Papo flew B-24's in the war!" The pilot's reply, "My Dad did too!"

## Time Out!

Let's take a minute and talk about dues. We cover this subject in about every issue of the Cerignola Connection but with only modest results. We don't send out a dues notice at year's end, this in order to save on postage. We rely entirely on your memory for payment.

Dues are due November 1 of each year for the following year. As you read this issue, ask yourself, "Did I send in my dues check?" And if you didn't, stop for just a moment and do so today!

Tom Ramey

## FREEDOM

Only those  
who have lost their freedom...  
can appreciate...  
truly appreciate...  
how terribly vital it is.  
I have looked  
through barbed wire  
at machine gun towers...  
and longed with all my being  
to be free again.  
My body was imprisoned...  
but never my mind...  
my thoughts...  
my soul.  
Since my liberation  
I have treasured my freedom...  
and will never forget  
those terrible, torturous months  
when I was hungry  
and dirty  
and cold...  
but most of all  
when I was enslaved.

*Lt. Col. Bert McDowell, Jr., USAF,  
Ret.  
AXPOW, WWII, Germany*

## *Man From Outerspace or. . . what the well dressed crew member wore*



Our cold weather flying gear was sheepskin sheared jacket, pants, hat and boots which fit over street shoes. These were especially needed at the waist gunners position for protection against sub-zero weather, sometimes reaching 45 degrees below zero. Goggles were required at some positions and dog tags were a "must." Flak vests and steel helmets were also worn but they were burdensome and not always used by those who had to move around or fit into tight quarters. There were three types of parachutes. The pilots used the seat pack, the back pack was for those who needed only limited movement at his position and the chest pack which snapped onto a harness when needed to move about the airplane during flight. Electrically heated flying suits were available, including gloves and boots. They were of poor design and often shorted out at the most inopportune time, and some crew members suffered burns. They were a bright blue color and if one got shot down, they were totally unsatisfactory for escape and evasion or wearing in a prison camp for the duration. Each crew member was given an escape kit that contained a map printed on silk cloth, compass, first aid kit, a sum of \$50.00 in gold certificates, canned food, candy and biscuits we called "k" rations.

The navigators carried their maps and navigation equipment. The bombardiers carried maps and photographs of the target and a 45 Colt

automatic pistol with a few rounds of ammunition. The pistol was carried in a holster attached to a web belt. They were instructed to use the pistol to shoot critical parts of the Norden bombsight to damage it just prior to bailing out of a crippled airplane. This would deny its use to the Germans if it remained intact in the downed aircraft. Some of the other crew members donned a 45 Colt pistol. By this time, the crew members' weight increased as much as 50 pounds and their bulk up to 30%. Nevertheless, they did manage to function and bail out of a crippled airplane and survive.

### **THOUGHT FOR TODAY...**

Days were plentiful and cheap when I was young like penny candy. I was always having a pocketful and spent them casually. Now my supply is limited and their value has soared. Each one becomes worth its weight in gold of dawn. Suddenly I live in unaccustomed thrift, cherishing hours the way lovers prize moments. Even at that, when the week is ended it seems I've gone through another fortune. A day doesn't go as far as it used to.

## THAT'S THE SPIRIT



Ted Bates shows his loyalty to the dear old lady by sprouting special Illinois license plates.

I haven't seen one anywhere that says B-17!

The Cerignola Connection is published at least twice a year and is provided to the membership of the 455th Bomb Group Association. No charge is made but your dues support is appreciated. Contributions, pictures may be sent to your Editor, Tom Ramey, 1211 Montclair Ct., Appleton, Wisconsin 54915. All material submitted will be returned after publication

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS



This time of the year we pause to reflect and count our blessings. And they are many. And we are thankful. During this season the officers and directors of the 455th Bomb Group Association, and your Editor, wish you the most blessed of holidays and a great 1994.

### 455<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Membership

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