



# CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

*455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter*

Fall 1994

## **JOIN US ON OUR LAST ITALIAN TRIP!!**

Plans are nearly finalized for the third, AND LAST, trip back to our 455th Bomb Group operational site at San Giovanni. If possible, we will be at San Giovanni on the date of the 50th Anniversary of the last 455th bombing mission to Linz, Austria.

This trip will be nearly the same itinerary as the ones in 1990 and 1994. It will be in the spring of 1995 and by the time you get this, the date will be set. These two trips have been enjoyed by all. We have visited with the City Officials in Cerignola, toured the site of our base and had a memorial service at the little chapel near the castle. We also visited American military cemeteries at Anzio and Florence.

We enjoyed many of the sights including Capri, Rome, Pompeii, Montecassino, Assisi, Florence, Pisa, Venice and others.

Plan to take advantage of the last tour. Veterans, wives, widows, family members and friends are invited to join.

Lou & Frances Hanse

## **Members of the 1994 Italian Adventure Group:**

Roderick W. and Marian Clarke -  
Alexandria, VA

Harlow K. and Esta Parker -  
Grand Junction, CO

Elmo J. and Erma Henske -  
La Marque, TX

Kenneth F. and Billie Hosterman -  
State College, PA

John F. and Mary Jureka -  
Springfield, VA

Charles W. and Margaret Painter, Jr. -  
Warminster, PA

Horst R. and Viola Schoene -  
Amers, NY

Edward C. and Anne Soderstrom -  
Sparta, MI

Theodore V. and Martha Tronoff -  
Daly City, CA

Karen Schoene

Herman Schoene

Lou and Frances Hansen - Spencer, IA

## **Chaplains Corner**

Lord of the nations, guide our people to go forward in justice and freedom, that our nation may bring glory to your name and blessings to all peoples. Amen

## **FINAL FLIGHTS**

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

Maj. Edward J. Armbruster (10/07/90)  
Navigator, Don Kahley's crew, 743rd  
BSq.

Capt. Eugene V. Eckert (4/21/91)  
Navigator, John P. Hancock, Sr.'s crew,  
742 BSq.

Capt. Julio C. Locatelli (12/27/93) 1st  
Pilot, Plane "OMIAKINBAK", 741st BSq.

1st Lt. Henry Jay Smith, Jr. (1/17/93) 1st  
Pilot, Plane "Snuffy Smith & the  
Yardbirds", 743rd BSq.

Lt. Jess E. Boust (12/78) Navigator,  
Leland L. Young's crew, 743rd BSq.

S/Sgt. Joseph G. Hetmanek (7/02/94)  
Ball Turret Gunner, Lloyd Brunson's  
crew, 741st BSq.

S/Sgt. Octavio Santiago (7/28/94) Waist  
Gunner & Aerial Photo, Dick Gosline's  
crew, 742nd BSq.

S/Sgt. Marion D. Eyster (1/19/89)  
Gunner, T. Reynold's crew, 740th BSq.

Sgt. Howard A. Ford (3/93) Ball Turret  
Gunner, William Roger & William  
Crawford's crews, 740th BSq.

Sgt. Donald M. Bechen (12/16/93) Tail  
Turret Gunner, J.W. Greenman's crew,  
742nd BSq.

Margaret M. Frawley passed away on  
May 25, 1944. She was the wife of David  
J. Frawley, Vice Chairman of the 455th  
Bomb Group Ass'n.

Elizabeth T. Barnard passed away on  
June 6, 1994. She was the wife of  
William O. Barnard.

## The 455th Returns To Cerignola



*Eleven members of the 455th Bomb Group, their wives and guests in front of San Giovanni Chapel after a memorial service.*



*Making new friends in Cerignola - Elmo Henske, Lou Hansen, Frances Hansen, Valerie (Our guide and interpreter) and three Italian friends.*



*Lou Hansen and Counte Francisco Toisti, who owns the land of San Giovanni.*



*Lou Hansen and Lord Mayor Salvatore Tatarella of Cerignola greet each other at City Hall.*



*Farewell dinner showing part of the group: L to R - Elmo and Erma Lee Henske, Mary and John Jureka, Marian and Rod Carke and Jane and Ted Tronoff.*



*We visited Rome, Montecassino, Pompeii, Dienna, Pisa, Venice, Florence, Capri, and Verona. Here the group is leaving the church at Oriveto.*

## The 455th Returns To Cerignola (Con't)



*Cerignola Officials hosted a reception at City Hall for our group.*



*An old quonset hut used for aircraft wing repair and oxygen storage is now rust red. Only thing put up by the US that is still standing.*



*A painting from the past on the walls of a makeshift "club" now looks down on machinery storage.*



*The 455th Headquarters Administration building still stands.*



*These buildings still bear the names of the rooms of the Aerial Maintenance Squadron.*



*Shower house down the hill from the 743rd Squadron area.*

## From The President

As previously announced our 1995 reunion will be held in San Antonio, Texas at the Airport Holiday Inn from September 27, 1995 to October 1, 1995. More details will follow in this and subsequent issues of the Cerignola Connection.

Thanks to our selection committee we have a great location, a wonderful hotel and some exciting tours. The committee was composed of Col Lou Hansen, Lt. Col Ross Ross Strode and Capt. Jimmy Smith (a native of San Antonio).

Don't forget that this reunion as well as our 1993 fiftieth anniversary reunion are dedicated to the enlisted, both air and ground, personnel.

We have already had some great enlisted stories in the Cerignola Connection but would like to have more. Send them to Tom Ramey, Editor, Cerignola Connection, 1211 Montclair Ct., Appleton, Wisconsin, 54915. If you have photographs, even better. Tom will return all photographs to you immediately after publication.

We have one last step to take in the arrangements for a 1995 reunion and that is the selection of our guest speaker. I assure you it will be one of the most interesting speakers of all time. If all goes well we will announce the selection and subject in the next issue of the Cerignola Connection.

It was great to read the comments of our WWII, 455th Bomb Group Red Cross Lady, Maggie Curtiss Meadows, in the last issue of the Cerignola Connection. I hope she will be at our 1995 reunion and say a few words at the group banquet.

I am really excited about the arrangements for our 1995 reunion and am looking forward to seeing all of you there.

As we approach the holiday season Pam and I wish you and yours the most blessed of holidays and extend warmest wishes for every happiness in the new year.

*Eugene L. Hudson*

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At the time of publishing it was reported that Colonel Horace Lanford, Squadron Commander of the 741st, was in critical condition from a four-way bypass necessitated by suffering a stroke. Three entries were required to correct the condition. To compound the problem, a massive ulcer also developed. Mrs. Lanford tells us that his recovery is very slow and it will take four or five months before he is near normal. Horace, at this point, cannot have visitors or take calls, but he can receive letters and cards. Let's cheer him up and send them to: Horace Lanford, 5840 Cloudstone Court, Naples, Florida 33999-4606.

## ALL ABOUT THE 455th

The group was constituted as the 455th Bombardment Group (Heavy) United States Army Air Corps (AAC) in May 1943, and was activated the following month. It became an important strategic bombing group in the European Theatre of Operation for the defeat of the German war machine. It trained in the United States with Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bombers and then moved to Italy during January and February 1944, where it served in combat with the Fifteenth Air Force (AF) from February 1944 to April 1945. The Group shared an improvised airdrome with the 454th B-24 Bomb Group at San Giovanni, about five miles west of Cerignola and 20 miles southwest of Foggia. It engaged primarily in bombardment of strategic targets such as factories, marshalling yards, oil refineries, storage areas, harbors, and airdromes. These targets were in France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Austria, and the Balkans. The Group received a Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for a mission on 2 April 1944 when it contributed to the Fifteenth AF's campaign against enemy industry by attacking a ball bearing plant at Steyer, Austria. Another DUC was received for the bombing of the Moosbierbaum oil refinery at Vienna, Austria on 26 June

1944. The results were highly successful for both targets, but the costs were high. The Group was under severe fighter opposition and heavy barrages of flak and lost several bombers, four on the Steyer raid and ten at Moosbierbaum from a standard formation of 36 airplanes.

In addition to the strategic missions, the Group bombed troop concentrations, bridges, marshalling yards, and airdromes during the fall of 1944 to hamper the German's withdrawal from the occupied countries. It also supported ground forces at the Anzio beach-head and Cassino, Italy during March 1944, by bombing troop concentrations. It knocked out gun positions in preparation for the invasion of Southern France in August 1944 and assisted the final Allied drive through Italy in April 1945 by hitting bridges, gun positions, and troop concentrations.

During the 15 months the Group was flying combat from Italy, it completed 252 missions, dropped 14,702 tons of bombs, and the gunners destroyed 119 enemy fighter aircraft. Another 78 enemy aircraft were probably destroyed. Casualties were 147 killed in action, 268 missing, 173 prisoners of war, and 112 injured and returned to action. A total of 1,200 men completed their tour of duty. The outstanding performances can be attributed to the dedication of the air crews and the ground echelon.

The group participated in the following campaigns: Air Combat, EAME Theatre; Air Offensive, Europe; Anzio; Rome-Amo; Normandy; Northern and Southern France; North Apennines; Rhineland; Central Europe; and, the Po Valley. Group commanders were: Colonel Kenneth A. Cool, July 1943 to September 1944; Colonel William I. Snowden, September 1944 to May 1945; Lieutenant Colonel William R. Boutz, May 1945 to July 1945; Major Jerome Hoss, July 1945 to July 1946; and, Major John C. Smith, July 1946.

## John Lutz - Fifty Years Ago

By Win Bowers

Along with the unpleasant memories of my World War II combat tour, are many pleasant memories. One such memory is that of our ground support personnel. All of them were very dear to me because of the great jobs they performed under very stressful, uncomfortable, conditions. Having been an aircraft maintenance instructor in the Army Air Corps Technical School, prior to receiving my pilots wings, I was especially impressed by our 741st Bomb Squadron aircraft maintenance personnel.

One of my first friends, after being assigned to the 741st, was the Maintenance Officer, Lt. Elmer Watters. Another, who I did not know very well, but felt that he was one of the best Line Chiefs I had ever known was Al Hademann. Once we had wrecked airplanes from which we could obtain parts, Al organized a special engine change crew that maintained built-up engines. This crew could replace a B-24 engine in only 4 1/2 hours. Our higher ranking people received some praise for feats such as this, but our lower ranking men probably didn't receive near enough.

I would like to record, before my memory fails any further, the example set by Sgt. John Lutz. (I believe he was still a corporal when I left Italy).

Lutz was one of the men assigned to the crew chief for "Pin Down Girl". As Frank Fox, our flight engineer used to say, "they just don't make many as solid as "Pin Down Girl". Lutz felt the same way. Busy as he was, Lutz salvaged plywood from bomb bay luggage carriers and cut the plywood to exactly cover the carpet on our flight deck. As soon as the aircraft landed and was parked, he would quickly put the plywood down on the flight deck, before anyone could track mud on our carpet. He would remove it again just before take off. Thus, our carpet was always nice and clean on all bombing missions.

Another thing that Lutz did in his spare time was to polish the instrument panel! There was no polish available so he used

clean engine oil. It made the panel look awfully nice, but I had to stop him from doing that because going down the runway the shiny instrument panel would reflect on the windshield hindering my vision.

That old drab olive green airplane covered with engine oil and Italian mud, was not very pretty, but inside it retained its new look (except for a few patches).

John Lutz had never flown in an airplane and said he never would, because he was afraid of heights. Well, as much as I appreciated the guy, I knew of only one way to Lutz's mind.

It was June 23, 1944 that I flew a group of personnel to rest camp at Taranto, Italy. Taranto was down in Italy's heel.

Lutz was rather small, so it didn't take much manpower to place him in the airplane for his first flight. Two fellows held him down until after take off. Then no one needed to hold him down. Matter-of-fact, he sat on the floor back of the ball turret and didn't move an inch until we returned to home base. He did alright, but nearly had heart failure when we touched down on the iron runway matting at home base.

John never knew whether to trust me after that, but I feel sure I was forgiven. He has probably told the story about his first flight more times than I have.

Although I was old enough to command a B-24 crew (23 years old), I was not wise enough to obtain the addresses of all the people to whom later I would like to have sent thanks. When I left Italy, somehow, I just felt that we would meet again. Since the 455th Bomb Group Association was organized I have had the opportunity to thank a few, but many many more, such as John Lutz, need to be thanked.

I just felt that we would all meet again.

### Prayer



Dear God,  
we pray  
For mercy ask  
As we perform  
Our daily task  
Of freeing people  
Long enslaved

Destroying powers  
Madmen craved  
So hear our plea  
And help us then  
To set them free  
'Till death, Amen.

Lt. Jack Haring

## THE MEANEST TRICK

While the group was at Chateaudun du Rommel we were short on everything, especially food and things to do. On the 28th of December, 1943 several of us hitched a ride in to Constantine and bummed about town. We had a meal in a French restaurant and spent the night at the 20th Replacement Group Camp. The next day we had coffee and doughnuts at the Red Cross Club.

We started back to the airfield in the early afternoon, hitching a ride in an English truck (or "lorry" as the Limeys called it). As I now recall there were four or five of us in the back of the truck. To our surprise the lorry was half full of food, all kinds of food, from potatoes and onion sacks to canned hams, vegetables, sugar, fruit and all sorts of goodies, needless to say we were overwhelmed at the bounty at our fingertips after subsisting on the offerings of the field mess at Chateaudun.

We decided that each one of us would put a couple of cans or packages inside our leather flight jackets and make off with some real vittles. We did that but greed being what it is we decided that would not be enough. We checked on where we were along the road relative to the airfield and when we were within a quarter mile or so we began to heave more of the food out of the lorry into the roadside ditch. When we got alongside of the airfield we sent one of our guys up on each side of the cab and thanked the Limeys for the ride. The rest of us hopped out and climbed the fence and proceeded as innocently as possible towards the tent area. After the Limey's lorry got out of sight we all ran to the ditch and recovered our loot. We almost had more food than we could carry but we made it back to the camp and divided the goodies between us and went our separate gluttonous ways.

We never really thought much about our larceny then, but I have often wondered what happened when those Limeys got back to their bivouac. You see the lorry had the markings of an antiaircraft artillery unit stationed way up in the hills and I'll bet that food was their ration for a week or so. C'est le guerre.

Fred Gross, 740th Squadron



## FROM MAGGIE'S ALBUM



*The doughnut shack!*



*Maggie waits for the "birds" to come home!*



*"Early morning" mission takeoff!*



*Photo Section*



*743rd airmen - Can you identify everyone?*



*Yes, the 455th had an orchestra!*

## Mission To Munich

I was the navigator on the Leakin Deacon, 743rd B.S., 455th B.G., 15th A.F. on June 9, 1944 on a mission to Munich. I knew we had flown over the Alps in Austria and Italy and thought we had also flown over Switzerland. However, after putting together our collective remembrances and examining a few maps, I doubt we flew over Switzerland.

We headed for Switzerland and entered Austria to the west of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. I believe we went into the Fern Pass (3967 ft.) and flew SSW. At our airspeed and with out inability to gain altitude, decisions had to be made so fast, as we flew blind through mountain passes, that maps were useless. Al and Buddy watched the wingtips while I stood between them visually picking the route ahead. There were times when both wingtips were 10 feet or less from the mountains and there were times we ran into dead ends. We gambled - and won - but we were very, very, lucky.

My guess is that we flew through the Resia Pass (4936 ft.) near the intersection of the Swiss, Austrian and Italian borders. Just south of the pass is Lake Resia, whose outlet is the Adige River. The Adige flows south, then east to Merano and south again to Verona before turning east and emptying into the Adriatic. I believe we followed higher valleys roughly parallel to the Adige Valley toward Merano but that we turned south before reaching Merano to avoid the larger cities in the Adige Valley between Merano and Verona.

I don't remember our taking a vote to head for Corsica nor do I remember deciding to go there until we headed south along the valley which took us over Lake Garda. That decision was made on the flight deck. Over Lake Garda we dumped overboard some of our equipment. Shortly thereafter, as we reached the plain of the Po River, we bailed out. I don't know where I reached the ground, except that it was north of the Po River, nor do I recall the name of the town where I was picked up by Italians.

I know that I was taken to Verona by the Germans for extensive interrogation. I understand that Bob Skinner was taken to

a hospital in Guastella and my guess is that we all may have landed within 10 miles of Guastella.

I was first out of the bomb bay and did not see any other chutes. Since Bob was first out of the back of the plane and appears to have landed south of the Po River near Guastella, my guess is that I may have been the only one to land north of the Po. The more I stare at maps, the more familiar the town of Casalmaggiore seems to sound and to look like the town where I may have been captured - but I really don't know.

*Bob Greenquist, Navigator  
"Leakin Deacon"*

## A WAR STORY

*"Two sides to the same story!"*

Jim Scott writes that the 57th mission, June 4, 1944, was not a milk run as the group history relates. From the history - "We were scheduled to bomb industrial targets in northern Italy. Thirty-six B-24's loaded with 500# GP bombs followed the 454th Group into the target area only to see the target covered by clouds. We elected to bomb the alternate target, the Port of Genoa, Italy. Flak at the target was light and ineffectual, and we got a good bombing pattern on the target. No enemy fighters were seen. The group came back without incident or casualties."

From Jim Scott's Diary for Sunday, June 4, 1944: This morning we were briefed to go to some place way up in northern Italy, but the target was overcast, so we came back to Genoa and bombed the M/Y there. There was no flak until we started down the bomb run and then all hell broke loose. We were flying Deputy Group Lead. I was waiting to toggle my bombs when a burst of flak went off in front of #1 engine and splattered shrapnel all over the nose and the window I was looking out of. I thought for sure I had my head blown off. Then Maggie announced that his ball turret oxygen system was out. About the same time the right waist gunner, Weeks, gave us the glad tidings that he had been hit in the side and in the leg. After we left the target, Merfeld, the engineer, found a hydraulic line in the bomb bay that was shot in two and he tried to tape it together. It still

leaked a lot, but when we landed they didn't use the brakes too much and we got by O.K. Final mission results:

- 1) M/Y hit dead center, large fires started along docks.
- 2) 8 holes in left wing.
- 3) 3 holes in ball turret, oxygen system out.
- 4) Holes in each bomb bay door, hydraulic line broken, bomb bay door track shattered.
- 5) R.W. gunner hit twice, left waist gun hit by flak, left waist gunner hit in stomach with flak, 6 large holes in waist section.
- 6) Dents in right vertical stabilizer and two holes in right rudder, one hole in the tail section and one in the right elevator.
- 7) One hole in nose.
- 8) One slightly scared crew - including the bombardier.

ED: I guess a lot gets lost sometimes in translation between the squadron journal, the archives at Montgomery, and the history book.

## VOLUNTEERS, GOD BLESS THEM!

Many will be shocked to find  
When the day of judgment nears  
That there's a special place in heaven  
Set aside for volunteers.  
Furnished with big recliners,  
Satin couches and footstools,  
Where there are not committee chairmen,  
No group leaders of car pools.  
No eager team that needs a couch,  
No bazaar and no bake sale,  
There will be nothing to staple,  
Not one thing to fold and mail.  
Telephone lists will be outlawed,  
But a finger snap will bring  
Cool drinks and gourmet dinners  
And treats fit for a king  
You ask, "Who'll serve these privileged few  
And work for all they're worth?"  
Why all those who reaped the benefits  
And not once volunteered on earth.

*Anonymous*

## FIRST IN BETWEEN AND LAST

*or Starks Saga*

Our crew (I as Co-Pilot) arrived at the 455th BG on Monday afternoon July 23, 1944 via a ferry flight from a staging area near Goia. I recall thinking it strange that an aircraft the size of a B-24, capable of carrying 6000 lbs. of bombs should present such a storage space problem for the baggage of ten crew members. I was a big part of the problem, I traveled like General Burgoyne of the Revolutionary War.

We were assigned to the 740th Squadron, the officers to tent A1, and were told to be sure to use the mosquito netting on our cots at night. We became aware of the Squadron Headquarters Building and I believe we were told there was an Officers Club. We also had to be taken over to the supply shack in the dispersal area because we were issued cold weather flying clothes, a parachute, a Colt 45, a May West and told about picking up flak suits prior to each mission.

We also inherited a terrier pup by the name of Trudy from the departing crew and previous tent occupants. We found out the pup was gun shy. She probably got that way listening to tales of missions flown by her previous masters. She also provided a test vehicle for the GI louse powder we were issued. Fleas came off her like putting pepper on mashed potatoes.

It was also generally understood that the only reason we were in Italy in the first place was to harass Hitler but it came as a surprise on Tuesday afternoon when a Corporal from Headquarters stopped by to inform me that I would be flying a mission Wednesday in the right seat with Jim Riley. He would wake me up at 4 or 5AM, go get some breakfast and then jump on a truck to the briefing hall. (The Wine Cellar)

I suppose I asked questions that morning at breakfast but mainly I just followed the crowd. At the wine cellar I asked someone to point out Riley to me. I'm sure he was thrilled to have a flyer as Co-Pilot who had a total of 6 attempted landings in a B-24. That was the minimum requirement for Co-Pilots in overseas training at Davis-Monthan in Tucson.

I don't recall who was leading the Group that day but Riley was flying lead for the 740th Squadron.

After coming to "Attention", we sat back down on the plank benches. A sheet was removed covering a big map up front and the announcement made by a briefing officer was, "The target for today is Herman Goering's Tank Works in Linz, Austria".

I knew where Austria was and had probably heard of Linz but since I wouldn't be navigating, it wasn't of great significance to me but—as I now followed that black string back to its origin, I found out where I was and where the 455th BG was located in Italy, about 5 miles west of Cerignola and maybe 75 miles southwest of the spur on the Italian boot. This was important to me, I might want to get back to this place.

Hitting Herman's Tank Works seemed like a good idea. If you mess up production facilities it ought to keep some tanks off the ground troops back.

Briefing included all the usual information such as engine start time, taxi time, takeoff time, time at the IP, bombing altitude, time over the target plus Group, Squadron and Fighter Code names etc. I don't remember the bombing altitude or the number of flak guns (88 Millimeter) At Linz, more than one was too many to suit me. I do remember that there might be enemy fighters over the Udine area which I never heard of and was uncertain of its exact location. They also told us about the Island of Viz off the coast of Yugoslavia as a possible emergency landing strip. It was held by the Yugoslav underground, had a

3000 foot runway with a sharp drop off at each end. Those figures didn't impress me, if it was three times that length and in the middle of a coastal plain I might get into it.

Riley was assigned to fly #208 which turned out to be an aging olive drab plane with plenty of battle scars on it.

The flares were shot off from the tower and we were on our way. The Squadron formed up on us and in slow circling. Riley brought us into our assigned position in the Group formation which I believe was #3. The group joined up with the Wing and we were on our way in a generally northerly direction over the Adriatic Sea.

"The Weather's Fine For Flying, the clouds have gone to bed, there's such good visibility, that we can see victory ahead." It was that kind of day if you remember the words to the old Air Corps song.

The engines were purring fine. I may have been allowed to sync them to cut down the rmmm rmmm rmmm.

The instruments in front of me were all reading normal, the intercom was quiet so I guess I kind of leaned back in my seat and dozed off for a little bit. If I had known what lay ahead, I'd probably have been inquiring about the location of toilet paper.

At 10,000 ft. I advised the crew that it was oxygen mask time. Shortly after that, the gunners test fired their 50 calibers. That was new to me, our gunnery had all been done with cameras. Once with a B-26 making simulated fighter passes at our training formation of B-24's. When the gun camera film was shown on a screen, no B-26 showed up in the pictures. It made me wonder a little.

It became apparent when we entered the Udine area. Both the east and west coastlines of the Adriatic had been visible and now the east-west shoreline between Venice and Trieste was obvious.

We were probably

*(Continued)*



at 18,000 ft. by now and the Alps were beginning to show up ahead. Fortunately no enemy fighter came up to greet us. We undoubtedly had more than adequate fighter protection. I suppose it would have been interesting to sit back and watch some dog fights but being a potential target, I wasn't feeling any disappointment.

From my tourist seat, I became engrossed in examining the Alps I had heard so much about in literature. They were rugged, rocky, jagged and not too hospitable particularly if you thought about an emergency landing site but still they had a fascination about them. I thought of the Brenner Pass but it had to be much farther west.

A million vapor trails filled the sky ahead of us. I've always wondered what the vapor trails of a thousand plane raid would look like from the ground, it would be almost equivalent of a cirrus cloud covering if they were of the persistent type.

So we droned on and peering ahead now, I could see an abrupt change in the direction of the vapor trails even though I could not see the planes making them. I don't believe it occurred to me at the time but the change in their direction marked the IP (Initial Point-start of the bomb run).

On this mission #1, I'm really not a pilot, I'm an observer, haven't touched the controls, "Oh well, so, what the hell."

Very shortly then Riley motions to me and says on the intercom, "Switch to channel C and listen for information from the Group Leader." With a, "Rodger!" I switch. It is quiet there also but looking out ahead now I'm seeing all kinds of black puffs of smoke in the sky and all of a sudden I realize this isn't a training flight, this is the real thing and those black puffs are flak and an expression of the Hitlerites dissatisfaction with our presence.

My next, "What's that?" is in response to the appearance of a huge ball of smoke with a glowing orange flame at its base. I think I know what it means but would rather not think about it and besides what's all those brown lunch bags flying by in the air and tinsel, whose Christmas tree are we decorating? Oh-- that must be the chafe they talked about in briefing, it's supposed to screw up the German radar.

A new rumble and vibration in the plane tells me our bomb doors have been opened so we must be on the bomb run.

Those black puffs of smoke are now all around us. They appear and are gone behind us. We're now traveling close to 225 MPH instead of 160 MPH that the airspeed indicator shows. The air sure has gotten rough now. The instrument panel is bouncing, dust flying off it and I'm hearing what sounds like bees going through a tin can. I'm kind of all alone on channel C and hearing nothing until out of the blue I hear, "Hey Riley! Are you going down?" Riley that's us, that's me,— "What the hell is going on?"

I don't know if we are going up, down or sideways, so I don't answer and immediately switch to intercom.

I don't like the first thing I hear there. One of the waist gunners is screaming "Number one's on fire." "Holy shit!", I think, those big fuel tanks are right behind the engines.

Almost immediately following this announcement, Riley reaches up with his right hand and hits number four feathering button. "Jesus", I think, that's only going to leave us two engines and I don't think these birds fly too good on two and we're a long way from some place down in Italy.

By this time I had lost track of the other planes in the formation. I presume we peeled off to the left.

The next thing I heard on the intercom is Riley saying, "BAIL OUT!" My

inward reaction and more of a prayer was, "No not here." The peaks of those Alps seemed like they were almost scratching our ass. In a parachute, you'd hit them like a sack of you know what.

There was a very brief pause and Riley said, now talking to me, "The rudders are jammed, feel 'em!"

I put feet my on the rudder pedals and pushed right and left, it's clunk, clunk and no movement. I have to agree and shake my head up and down indicating agreement. He then took back the controls and almost immediately hollers, "Wait a minute, they freed up." Maybe with my adrenaline pumping I applied some super human force to them causing something to free up.

I guess the whole crew registered the same thoughts as I did because no one bailed.

The time interval of the preceding events was very brief and I could never venture a guess to put it in seconds or minutes, but at the time it seemed like an eternity.

After Riley reported the rudders freed up, we got leveled out and were headed south in the same general direction as a long stream of B24's ahead of us at a little higher altitude.

We are now running on three engines with #4 feathered so I asked the question of Riley, "Why did you feather #4?" It was a legitimate question since I had been monitoring VHF channel C just prior to the time it was feathered. I was surprised but no less happy when he said, "I don't know."

So we pulled the #4 feathering button back out, adjusted the throttle and mixture controls and she fired up fine.

Our situation looked much better now but certainly not good. At this point we did not know how much damage we had sustained. With rudder controls jamming once, who knew when they would jam again or fail completely.

The next announcement I recall, and time wise it wasn't long, was as follows, "Hey Riley, we're losing oil pressure on number one!" This fact registered with Riley the same as it did with me. If you lose your oil pressure you can't feather and he immediately hit the #1 feathering button.

By the time you see an oil pressure drop, you are already out of oil and it does take a substantial amount of oil to actuate the prop control piston located in the projection in the prop hub.

Not surprisingly, nothing happened. We knew what was going to happen shortly, number one would freeze up and stop from the lack of oil.

How long would it take? Not long and it didn't. In the mean time we did nothing. I had heard of engines twisting out of their mounts in such a situation. In this case it ground to a halt with power on and stayed in the wing.

Now we had big problems again, 24's fly pretty good on three but with a flat prop blade on an outboard, we were down to just about two effective engines and still over the Alps. Our airspeed drops to 140 MPH, we've got full power on #2 and #3. Due to the imbalance of forces, we can't apply any significant power to #4. Our left wing is too high and we are flying in a side slip using heavy right rudder and still losing altitude. We drop some flaps, that slows our rate of descent a little. The situation looks grim and the next thing we hear is complete silence. All three remaining engines stop dead. It's what you call an eerie silence. Riley says nothing, I said nothing, nobody said anything. We were all too stunned.

Well it didn't last long and the engines came back in but we lost more precious altitude. Very shortly the engineer came up between us and said he had been transferring gas from the wing tip tanks to the main tanks and had run them dry

which would pump air into the main fuel feed lines to the engines. Our fuel sight gauges, those glass tubes at the rear of the flight deck, had all been broken so we had no idea of our remaining fuel supply. "Throw everything that's loose overboard, flak suits, waist guns, ammo, every little bit helps. Raise the ball turret, close the waist windows!"

We're still losing altitude and the mountain ridges are uncomfortably close beneath us. We have full right rudder trim cranked in and I'm sure Riley was still adding more right rudder with the rudder pedal. If it was getting tiring for him he never mentioned it but then .....

In the far distance now we are seeing reflections from what looks like water and that can only be the Adriatic, so it appears we will make it over the mountains.

So it's out of the frying pan into the fire. Our direct route to Cerignola is mostly over water—a lot of water—and I swim like a brick.

Somebody mentioned the Island of Viz, that same island they had told us about earlier this morning in briefing. The navigator, bombardier, Riley and I had kind of a Pow wow on the flight deck. The question was, "Should we head for Viz or try to make it back to the base?" It might be a little closer but it was one of numerous islands along the Yugoslav coast and I'm thinking of the short runway and drop offs and could our navigator find it and Riley would have to hit it on the first attempt. I was all for trying to make it back to the 455th. Apparently everyone felt the same so we dismissed thoughts about visiting Viz. We were probably over the Udine area when a P-51 pulled up along side us on our left wing. It had an orange and black checker board tail. He probably tried to contact us on the radio but I don't believe we ever switched to the fighter frequency which when I think back was kind of dumb. I never recall listening or talking to any fighters, mainly because we never saw a German fighter. I'm

sure if we'd been jumped by bandits, we'd have been real quick in screaming for little brother to come help us out. One of Riley's crew later said he thought the P-51 was piloted by the then current fighter ace of the 15th AF, a Major Greene.

So we made it to the Adriatic. Now all we can do is hope those two inboard engines keep cranking out full power. We're still losing altitude but at this point it doesn't appear like that will present a problem since the lower we get, the slower our rate of descent will be.

After a tense hour and a half or so the coast line of Italy just above the boot spur lies dead ahead. There are some mountains in this area but they are no problem we are still at about 5500 feet altitude. It is quite a relief to see terra firma beneath us again but this relief is short lived.

I've had my eyes glued to the engine instruments constantly and I'm sure my eyes widened considerably when I saw the fuel pressure gauge on #2 engine start to quiver and start to drop. When #4 started to quiver, I made the profound announcement, "Hey Riley, we're out of gas," followed by a question, "Are you going to bail out?" His answer was very short, "Yeh!"

With that I'm out of my seat. Hitting the silk (nylon) here is all together different than in the Alps. We're close to sea level and the decent rate in a parachute should be normal. I turned to Riley and said "Did you tell the crew?" He said, "No, you tell 'em." I said, "I don't have a mic." The bombardier had borrowed mine for some reason earlier so I hit the alarm bell button three times. It rang loud and clear, three rings was the emergency bail out signal.

With that I scrambled off the flight deck down onto the cat walk level of the bomb bay, trying to remember what we had been told to do in a bail out situation. I think we had practiced this half heartedly once back at Davis-Monthan,

*(Continued)*

no one likes to think about bailing out. I happened to look down and notice the leg straps of my back pack chute are hanging loose. "Holy Shit!" I had been into my flying suit pocket for something and had unhooked the straps to get there. With them loose, I'd pop out of the harness like the seed out of a grape when the chute popped open.

Getting into position on the catwalk, the bomb doors had already been opened by the bombardier, I noticed a chute open almost as soon as someone exited via the waist escape hatch. That's no good we've got plenty of altitude, keep your hand off the rip cord until you are clear of the plane.

I got down on my hands and knees on the catwalk facing forward and just kind of rolled over to the right. Wow! What a jolt when you hit the slip stream. "Hold your legs out straight, don't pull your knees up or you'll tumble and roll up in the chute risers." You do remember a few things from training.

I saw 208 disappear between my outstretched legs. "Okay, now pull the rip cord." There, I've got the ring in my out stretched hand, I can see the release pins where they are attached to the cable. "Holy Sh--, nothing happened, pull it again." Some time between the interval when my hand went back to my chest and extended for the second time, Whap! The chute popped. That was the second jolt in this bail out procedure.

I've seen some good looking silk, looking up, but nothing ever as good as what I am now seeing above me. Just like they said, I'm swinging like a pendulum. Jockeying the riser straps a little bit stopped that.

Well, this isn't bad, a beautiful view and it's nice and quiet, "I think I'll hang around here a while."

After a little bit, I noticed objects on the ground becoming more distinct. Let's try to get switched around to

face in the direction of drift. "That's pretty good." Let's see, they said keep your knees bent and your leg muscles tense. "That ground is coming up to meet me pretty fast now and Ka Wapp! I'm on it. My knees buckled and I fell forward onto my hands and arms with my head hitting the ground, far different from the way you see sky divers walk onto the ground today. It was a pretty good three point landing, feet, hands and head, the same kind I was accustomed to making in an airplane.

Having already kissed the ground, I got up to look around. I had landed between what I believe was olive trees which were not very big. About a hundred yards across the orchard was one of the crew, it's Clowery, the bombardier.

I know I'm in Italy and so are the Germans and I'm not sure how far up the boot they are at this time so it seems like the prudent thing to do is to get out the 45 Colt automatic and kick a shell into the chamber—might need that quick. Next I unsnapped the chute harness and began to gather up the nylon canopy.

Walking toward me Clowery hollers, "Ya got your rip cord?" "Rip cord, what's a rip cord, I'm on the ground, who cares?" Then I realized that when the chute popped, my hand was up turned and flew open. No rip cord.

By the time Clowery and I got together, there's all kinds of vehicles and men coming over the the brow of the hill. It was a relief to recognize the vehicle as a Jeep and good old GI khaki on the men.

Very shortly all ten of us had been rounded up and they proceeded to transport us to a fighter base not far from San Severo. We had all landed safely with no apparent injuries.

I recall making a fuss about my knee high rubber boots which I had taken off for easier walking. It had occurred to me that some GI might have taken a liking to them the same as I had. It had been mentioned when we were

getting equipment at the supply hut that electric heated boots didn't last long if you had to walk back and I figured the rubber boots would be warm enough on the flight deck where the pilots had the luxury of some heat. Seemed like there was a limited number of the rubber boots so I didn't want to lose them. Some GI asked me if I wanted my parachute. I guess I kind of shrugged and said no. At this rate I'd have plenty of opportunity to get another one. Like fifty more chances. All that nylon would be appreciated back home but that was thinking too far ahead.

At the fighter base we talked to an officer of some rank about notifying the 455th about landing a little short of the runway. With that taken care of we were left to ourselves in some kind of room sitting on benches and proceeded to talk among ourselves about our recent experience. I found out that Riley and his crew had 43 missions to their credit which meant they were pretty well seasoned.

I can only imagine everything we talked about but I do remember a few quotations. One was, "I ain't flying no more missions." Following that somebody else said to console me, "They're not all as bad as this one."

One of the crew talked about seeing torn aluminum at the hinge point of the left rudder. This was probably what caused the rudders to jam.

Then we did have an extended discussion about our escape kits. Each one contained a silk map of southern Europe, a compass, matches, a little concentrated food, and the big thing, \$50 in US greenbacks. It was my responsibility to collect these at the end of a mission and turn them in.

Considering what we had been through, \$50 seemed like small compensation, so it was unanimously agreed that once we had arrived over Italy, the escape kits had been collected and were in the satchel on the flight deck. Everyone had to have the same story. What we didn't know at that time was that 208

had made a pretty fair landing all by itself. It didn't burn because there was no gas. I recall hearing later that one engine had torn out of its mount and came to rest against an Italian hacienda. No one on the ground was injured.

The wreckage had been examined and no escape kits were found. Had our story been true, the examiners would have done the same thing we did, kept them. I treasured that silk escape map as a memento. Very strangely it disappeared from between the lining of an A-2 jacket on the way back to the States. 32 years later, when I had the occasion to visit with one of my original crew, I mentioned the fact that I was wearing the same GI sun glasses we had been issued in Tucson. He then showed me a silk escape map of southern Europe. Since they were so carefully documented, I now figured I understood what had happened to my map.

Getting back to San Severo, we continued to sit on the benches talking, time was passing and of course you can imagine we were shook up from the day's experiences.

Losing patience, and being ignored it appeared, we rounded up some officer and he assured us that the 455th had been advised. I'm sure we all assumed that as important members of the U.S. Army Air Corps, the 455th Bomb Group would immediately dispatch a plane to fly us back home. It was only about 40 miles away I learned later.

When we had bailed out, we were within sight of probably a half dozen fighter and bomber bases but I didn't know it and never saw any runways from my position in 208. I know I was keeping a very close eye on those engine instruments.

So we continue to sit and we're getting irritable and also hungry, it's now three o'clock or later and it's been a long time since breakfast.

Our friendly host officer showed up again at some point and we said, "Hey what's the chances of getting something to eat?" He seemed almost apologetic for not having thought of it and quickly said he would see what he could do. He was successful in getting some mess Sargent to whip us up some of the usual GI goop. We certainly weren't visiting dignitaries.

Following lunch, the waiting continued, it appeared the 455th didn't care if we ever got back.

It's now 4:30PM and we are still sitting, fussing, fretting and fuming. Nothing. It had to be 5PM or later when an enlisted man showed up in a weapons carrier, not even a 6x6. Don't ask me why but it seemed degrading for the high and mighty to be hauled back to base in a weapons carrier.

It was almost dark before we arrived back at the 455th after what seemed like an endless and bumpy ride over rough Italian roads. Details are fuzzy about our arrival at the 455th until being united with members of my own crew.

Since the rest of my crew was as green as I was about this thing of bombing the Nazis, they were anxious to find out all about it from me.

They had gone to the group area where all the returning crews were debriefed following a mission. The 740th Squadron came in but no #208. I don't know what other crews might have told them but 208 didn't return.

You can imagine how they would feel when one of their own crew goes out on his first mission and doesn't come back. They will shortly be flying their first mission.

Naturally we talked quite a bit and there was one remark I recall making, "Learn your emergency procedures!" Obviously I felt that while we had been told and maybe practiced once or twice, we didn't know them well enough to react quickly in an

emergency.

For me it had been a harrowing initiation into the business of bombing Hitler.

Riley and his crew did complete their tour despite some of them saying, "No more."

Clowery, Riley's bombardier impressed me as being a cool operator and I recall reading information in the 740th Squadron history that substantiated my thought, 45 years earlier. He was a Canadian if I remember correctly.

After my first mission, I was given a week's rest and fell a couple of missions behind the rest of my crew. I missed the pleasure of visiting Ploesti.

When I was told to report to the medic's four or five days after mission #1 the Captain said, "After an experience like you've had, we've been giving people a month's R&R but it doesn't seem to do any good. How do you feel?" I replied, "OK, might as well get on with it." I didn't want to fall too far behind the rest of the crew or be assigned to another crew.

As time went on, thinking back, we flew Tail End Charlie for a long time. Andy, (Harry Anderson) our first pilot, didn't hack it in real close formation flying enroute to the target. The closer you flew, the more physically demanding it became. It had to be harder on the engines and used a lot more fuel.

Dragging back stood us in good stead one day on the bomb run going into Odertal (synthetic oil plant). Andy was at the controls and Powl, right in front of the nose a huge black cloud appeared. The concussion was terrific. We went through it like it was a cumulus cloud. We smelled powder even though we had oxygen masks on. I'm sure every one that saw it expected the nose of #492 to be gone. There was a long silence and finally Andy said, "Hey Ray, are you alright?" Ray Douglas

(Continued)

our bombardier was flying nose turret since we were now down to a nine man crew. He answered, "Yeh, I'm okay." Even though we're at 23,000 feet, the next thing we smelled was cigarette smoke coming through to the flight deck from the nose section. I guess it kind of shook Ray up too. But had we been in closer formation, we'd have gotten it right in the middle of the bomb bay. It was unbelievable, but nothing from that burst touched us. Briefing had told us there were 88, 105 and 155 millimeter flak guns at Odertal. This had to have been a 155.

It is summer, the weather is good and we are always flying. The 15th AF is mounting a maximum effort. We got to saying, "Sunday, Monday and Always." (Remember the song by that title?) The 740th was also short of crews at this time.

Maybe we just didn't talk about it but I don't recall gory stories of crews coming back with badly wounded members aboard in the Squadron or the Group.

Our right waist gunner, Pete DeMetri, did get a "Purple Heart" for a relatively minor scratch when a piece of flak knocked off the charging handle of his 50 caliber waist gun and hit him.

Unfortunately for Pete, he knocked a knee out of joint jumping down off a 6x6 and was off flying status for about a month and fell behind the rest of the crew in the number of missions flown. The rest of the crew finished their tours and Pete was left behind. I was the last one to see him.

After the war was over I learned that Pete had been killed in a bad weather crash into the mountains on the Spur not far from where I had bailed out. Hank Lekan our flight engineer from Chicago took me over to visit Pete's parents. It was a very sad experience trying to console them knowing that he was the only one of the crew who didn't return home.

For the most part, our crew and good

old #492 faired pretty well on our missions. We came back on three engines several times but nothing serious except the time 492 was out of service for an extended period with 300 flak holes in her. That had to be the time a cut hydraulic line filled the corrugated bomb bay doors with hydraulic fluid. Hank, our engineer, took hydraulic tubing from the ball turret and patched the main line. To get hydraulic fluid to fill the main reservoir, he drained the tail turret reservoir contents into a flak helmet and handed the helmet to the assistant engineer with the intention of pouring it into the main reservoir located on the right side of the bomb bay.

We had serious problems, landing gear, brakes and flaps were all hydraulically operated on the B-24. To illustrate how us humans react under these harsh conditions of sub-zero temperatures insufficient oxygen and plain old stress, the assistant engineer took the flak helmet forward to the rear bomb bay hatch door, opened the door and threw the helmet of hydraulic fluid onto the corrugated bomb doors along with all the rest we had already lost. Guess he figured we were bailing out a boat and had to get rid of this fluid.

The nose and main landing gear can be lowered manually, but without hydraulic fluid we may not have brakes or flaps for landing. It came time for flaps in the landing procedure and I am going to do this with the emergency manual hand pump located on the right side of the co-pilots seat. I pushed and pulled on it and said, "It doesn't work." Hank said, "Jesus, put the flap control lever down." Then it worked.

We must have had sufficient accumulator pressure to operate the brakes once or twice because we got stopped on landing without the need for a ground loop.

There is no end to the incidents that could be told. For instance, going into Munich one day, (I was there four times) the Squadron lead plane

dropped its bombs just after we made the turn at the IP. The deputy lead plane had aborted earlier for some reason. With no bombsight we had no way to tell when to drop our 500 pounders. So it was decided to just drop them. The waist gunners followed them down looking through the escape hatch in the waist. It was Sunday morning about 11:00 AM. It was probably the only time we saw exactly where our own bombs landed and in this case it was right in the center of a small cluster of buildings 15 or 20 miles south of Munich. I often wondered if this crossroads was the local country church with the parishioners gathered for Sunday morning services. Judging by the normal bombing accuracy, we wouldn't have hit those buildings in a hundred attempts but I would guess that the locals would say it was intentional bombing of non-military targets.

It was probably the same mission when we peeled off to the left and Andy asked the navigator for a heading so we wouldn't run into the Augsburg flak area. We had a "fill in" navigator that day, the rest of his crew had not returned one day when he wasn't with them. His answer was, "Fly between the rivers, fly between the rivers!" From the flight deck we couldn't see what was beneath us and needed a compass heading. One of our crew later said that he had his head buried in flak suits. It wasn't too difficult to understand his mental state at this time.

One day when the weather wasn't too good, the 15th was mounting a maximum effort and our Group was trying to get to bombing altitude through holes in the clouds. We finally ended up in soup so thick the plane you were flying off just disappeared. Now you had 36 to 40 B-24's in close proximity headed in every direction and nobody can see anybody. Talk about near misses, we probably had dozens that day and never knew it. The 15th lost eight bombers that day to weather and didn't get to the target. (Continued) 13



Then there was the day we went to Avignon, France to bomb a railroad bridge to slow down the German's withdrawal from southern France. It was a long haul and the weather turned bad on the way back. Somehow we ended up at low altitude on the western side of the Appenines around Naples. We were running low on gas and now we had to increase power settings to regain altitude to get over the mountains. We made it but we had 50 gallons of gas left to feed those hungry Pratt & Whitneys, about 12 minutes worth. On takeoff, those engines sucked it up at the rate of 550 gallons an hour. It was a good thing the folks back home getting 2 or 3 gallons a week with "C" ration coupons didn't know that.

Then there was the day we weren't flying and as I stepped out of the tent I looked up to see a 24 flying in a slow turn at low altitude in a west to east direction on the northern side of the tent area. As I was looking, there appeared to have been something thrown out of it. Later I learned that it was the bomb doors that had been torn off when they salvoed their bombs which were of the delayed action type and they landed next to the Colonel's Villa without exploding. I don't know if the crew got an ass chewin' but the Colonel was able to move back in a couple of days after the bomb squad disarmed and removed the bombs.

Time wore on and the numbers kept adding up. When you got down to the single digits, the target for today takes on a greater significance, none are good but some are a lot worse.

The rest of my crew had completed their 35 missions and I had two to go. I'd have to look at my records to see where my second from last mission was but my last one was scratched after briefing. Vienna had been scheduled and I knew that the next day it would be the same because at this point it didn't matter if the Germans knew our plans or not,

there were no fighters to intercept us.

Four hundred flak guns at Vienna. I didn't sleep much that night. Major Reeder probably didn't sleep either, it was also his last mission and he was to lead the group.

Sure enough, when the map is uncovered, the target for today is, "Vienna!" We were to bomb through an overcast using "Mickey" (Radar).

Our route north was the usual and uneventful over the Adriatic and I believe we were in the vicinity of Lake Balaton when we were advised by the group leader that we would hit our number one alternate target because of Mickey trouble. I must say it was a relief because Maribor, Yugoslavia only had 25 flak guns.

We altered course and headed in a southerly direction. The target at Maribor was the marshaling yard.

The bomb run was to be made in an east to west direction. Altitude, airspeed and course were all predetermined based on the latest meteorological information so that minimal corrections would have to be made by the bombardier in keeping his cross hairs on the target.

Somehow we arrived on the west side of Maribor instead of on the east side. So we made a 270 degree turn to the right and after getting far enough east, we made a 180 degree back to the west setting us up for the predetermined bomb run course.

We're on the bomb run now and Peterson had to be flying because I'm seeing a lot that I wouldn't have had time for if I'd have been concentrating on the #4 plane in the formation. I noticed a battery of three flak shells off the right at our altitude and too close for comfort. I thought, "Those flak gunners have to be lucky." In short order, I see the same thing, "Those guys are good." The third time it happened, I figured, "Those guys are graduates of Vienna." They had our number and we were taking a pasting.

Just after bombs away, I hear that dreaded announcement on the intercom, "Number two's on fire."

This time we get the right feathering button, #2, and the engine RPM drops to 1200 but that's as far as it goes. About this time Peterson grabs his forehead as plexiglass is shattered on the left side of the cockpit. I thought he'd gotten it. We veered off to the left and into a mild dive with the airspeed indicating 190 MPH. Since it wouldn't feather, we pulled the feathering button back out. Before we could stop it, #2 wound up to 3600 RPM. What a racket. The prop tip is traveling at super sonic and the prop hub can separate from centrifugal force. Peterson and I are right in the plane of the prop's rotation. The hub held together and we got it slowed down to normal RPM. We then checked out Peterson.

Apparently a piece of spent flak hit the plexiglass above his head and to the left and a splinter hit him enough to draw blood but nothing serious. (I never heard if he got a Purple Heart.)

Since #2 didn't want to feather, we backed off power on it and ran it at low RPM the rest of the way back to base. We didn't rejoin the formation but just followed the pack back.

It had been unbelievable the pounding we had taken from those 25 flak guns at Maribor. An engine fire on mission #1 and on mission #35, I was ready and glad to call it quits. Actually a lot of smoke was, I believe, reported as fire by the waist gunners. Escaping oil from a flak hit around an engine would hit the hot exhaust and turbocharger and create a lot of smoke. If you got a gas fed flaming fire in an engine, it didn't take long to burn through to the fuel cell right behind it and away you go.

Back at the base, our ground crew and the rest of my crew greeted me with congratulations for successfully completing my tour. Now it seemed like you could start thinking about the future again. In the past four months you only thought of the present and not too seriously about that.

The next day our crew chief, Don Bradish, gave me a piece of flak the size of your thumb that they had found under my seat as a memento. It was standard practice to try to snitch an extra piece of flak suit to sit on to protect your most valuable possessions. I really treasured that piece of flak as a memento but I think my mother threw it out as a piece of junk one day when she was cleaning out desk drawers. I figured it was from the base of a shell because it was flat and you could see lathe tool marks on it.

Speaking of Don Bradish, he was a great Crew Chief and kept our regularly assigned B-24 #492 in superb condition. He was awarded a bronze star for maintenance because all four engines on 492 had 500 or more combat hours on them. I don't know if Andy and I contributed to their longevity or not.

The second day after #35, I was assigned as Group Duty Officer so I happened to be in Group Headquarters when Major Reeder and his crew finally arrived back at the base from the Maribor mission two days earlier. They too had experienced the accuracy of the Maribor flak gunners. They made it back across the Adriatic to Ancona, a town in Italy about 200 miles north of Cerignola and on the coast. At that point they bailed out. Their B-24 flew on west and crashed in the Appennine Mountains which wasn't too far. I don't recall any details of the interrogation but these old men, they were probably 30, were visibly shaken from their experience two days earlier. It made me think that flying these milk run bombing missions could be quite a traumatic experience.

That about concluded the dramatic aspects of my vacation in Italy. The rest of my crew except Pete Dimitriu which included Harry Anderson-Pilot, Johnny Grim-Navigator, Ray Douglas-Bombardier, Hank Lekan-Flight Engineer, Gil Ekstrom-Left

Waist Gunner, Joe Cadwalader-Ball Turret Gunner, Jim Booth-Tail Gunner, Bill Leonard-Radio Operator all left the squadron area for Naples on their way back to the States and I joined up with them there a few days later.

We left Naples aboard the troopship SS General Meggson Dec. 10th and believe it or not I was home with my family in Pittsburgh, PA for Christmas Eve 1944. It was the best Christmas ever!

The foregoing represents my recollection of events as clearly as they can be discerned through 50 years of intervening cloudy memory. I feel that what I have related was indelibly impressed in my memory.

In reading the published history of the 455th I was surprised to learn about the crew from the 741st squadron that had made an emergency landing at Recarati, Italy and safely returned the following day after my last experiences at Maribor, Yugoslavia. It gave me still greater respect than I had had for those Maribor flak gunners.

At the tender age of 19, I wanted to learn to fly and the Army Air Corps would teach me but they didn't mention the potentially high delayed cost. Today I'd probably opt for 4F status because of severe allergy problems, but this is the way I remember it in 1944!

*Charles E. Stark, 740th*

*Selected Poems From The Weekly Briefing*

## BROOMTAILS

We are the "little friends"  
Those square-wing bastards of the upper blue;  
Whose streaking silhouette always tends,  
To bring fire from our old lads, but 'specially from the new.

Oh, where is their recognition?  
Those dauntless gunners of the heavy crews  
We know of their sworn ambition,

And bless 'em when they knock down Jerry's slews.  
But, Laddies, we're there to help ye, the next time, split a second, and be sure of what you see.

You're not a mustang type at all,  
They'll swear at the Broomtail roosts,  
Until you've screamed through U.S. fifty ball;  
And lost M.E.'s have flown your wing, while you navigate.  
Our morale would suffer higher boosts  
If we knew 'twere only Jerry, who tried to seal our fate.

This is just a fervent plea;  
Let it be an enemy slug that brings us home to prang  
With American A.P. I. don't make us flee  
For fear of the job aborted by the loss of a loved Mustang.



## MOTHER

Here, on a lonely tropic shore  
I found a soul I'd known before,  
Here, on the eerie watch at night  
A warm affection glowed so bright,  
Here, where death becomes a brother  
Oft thinks a son of home and Mother.  
When things are tough and the outlook no better,  
There comes salvation in form of a letter,  
A letter from home and of things so dear,  
Lessening the pain and lessening the fear,  
Please, dear God in Heaven above  
Think not of me, but the Mother I love.

*David Hammond*

## Around The Corner

By Henson Towne

Around the corner I have a friend,  
In this great city that has no end.  
Yet days go by and weeks rush on,  
And before I know the year is gone,  
And I never see my old friend's face,  
For life is a swift and terrible race.  
He knows I like him just as well  
As in the days when I rang his bell  
And he rang mine. We were younger then  
And now we are busy, tired men --  
Tired with playing a foolish game,  
Tired with trying to make a name.  
"Tomorrow," I say, "I will call on Jim,  
Just to show that I'm thinking of him."  
But tomorrow comes and tomorrow goes  
And the distance between us grows and grows.  
Around the corner! ...yet miles away...  
"Here's a telegram, sir."  
"Jim died today."  
And that's what we get -- and deserve in  
the end --  
Around the corner, a vanished friend.

*Copied from the 461st Liberaider*

Editor's Note: It's later than you think!  
Don't vacillate or hesitate. If you haven't  
done it lately, write, call or visit an old  
friend, crew member or anyone in need of  
T.L.C. Everyone feels better and you'll  
never have to say, "I wish I'd gotten  
around to it."

## A Day of Remembrance

Each year, Americans are encouraged to  
pause (even if only too briefly) to observe  
National Prisoner of War/Missing in  
Action (POW/MIA) Recognition Day.  
Some 78,750 of our nation's sons and  
daughters remain unaccounted for from  
World War II; 8,177 from Korea; and  
2,231 from Southeast Asia. Their sacrifice,  
and that of their families, must not be for-  
gotten.

On this special day, and every day, we  
should demand that our country's leader-  
ship accelerate, in every honorable way, the  
fullest possible accounting for those still  
missing and the repatriation of the remains  
of those who died serving our nation.

## DOUGHNUTS, AND STUFF



They've written us  
poems about P-38's,  
About billowy clouds in the sky,  
Of Gremlins and such, and all very much  
Enjoyed by the fellows who fly.

But so much neglected, by poets, at least  
Are the girls whom daily we meet  
When the bomb run is over and we're back  
on the ground  
The Doughnut girls, boy, they look sweet.

The doughnuts, wonderful, the coffee, it's  
swell  
But better, far more, I should say  
Is the smile we receive, the lift that it gives  
Each man as he goes on his way.

No less of importance, yes, equally so,  
Are the girls we meet while in town.  
Our hostesses, busy, but smiling always  
Not once have they e'er let us down.

So - Loraine, Helen, Robbie, and Luc,  
Ann, Inez, Jane, Emily and Bee  
And all of the rest, you're by far the best  
Of the friends we've had overseas.

Someday when we're back in the old USA  
When we're thinking of days spent across  
We'll remember, I know, Exceedingly so,  
the girls of the American Red Cross.

*Lt. Dale Jensen*

## TAKE AN OATH WITH ME

When all this war is over  
And the days of death are through.  
The last soldier's life's been taken  
And your life belongs to you,

We'll sail away some sunny day  
To the land we left behind.  
To plan and play and often pray  
In this our land so fine.

As days go by for me and you  
The memory of our past has faded.  
Let's not forget the man who flew  
lest our own soul be tainted.

To respect these men, our friends who fell,  
Come take an oath with me  
To reverend those who died in hell  
That we might live in liberty.

*Lt. J. J. Hedrick*

## "HELL IN ITALY"

I'm sittin', here a thinkin' of what I left  
behind,  
So I'll put it down in writin', what's run-  
nin' through my mind.  
We've dropped so many bloomin' bombs  
an' done so many flights,  
An' froze our feet an' han's an' things while  
ridin' at sub-zero heights.  
But there is one consolation, now you lis-  
ten while I tell  
When we die we'll go to heaven, cause  
we've done our hitch in HELL.

We've taken a million atabrine, those dirty  
yellow pills,  
To fortify our systems a'gin the fever an'  
the chills.  
We've seen a million Ack - Ack bursts  
around us in the sky,  
Fear's gripped our heats and chilled our  
blood when flak began to fly.  
"Put on those lovin' dirty flak suits" we  
hear our Pilot yell,  
Cause this ain't a bloomin' picnic, it's  
another hitch in HELL.

But when taps have sounded, and we leave  
our earthly cares.  
We'll stage our best parade of all, upon the  
Golden Stairs,  
Angels will be there to meet us an' harps  
will softly play  
We'll draw a million dollars an' we'll spend  
it in a day.  
Old Gabriel will be there to meet us, an'  
St. Peter will proudly yell,  
"Front seats, you guys from Italy, you've  
done your hitch in HELL."

*Lt. H. R. Hathaway*

## Love... To "Mom" Hunter

The lady whom we dream about  
Is short and fair and slightly stout  
Her hair - in which the blueing lay  
Is not ash blond - but silvery gray  
Two blue pools, where wisdom lies  
And love and tears - these are her eyes.  
The Tiny lines which are inlaid  
Around them, are with laughter made.  
Not one of us would dare compete  
With swains, who clamor at her feet  
And all these wonders radiate from -  
Our one and only grandest - MOM!

*From her "Girls"*

## TO A GIRL'S EYES



When we met your  
eyes spoke  
And through their cheerful glow  
As clearly as your tongue would  
speak  
I heard them say "Hello".

Then at good night I watched your  
eyes  
I'm sure I heard them say:  
"I'm so glad I met you, and  
I've had a lovely day."

Another night, a lonely beach  
Deserted save we two  
I watched your eyes, and heard  
them say  
"Yes, there's hope for you,"

An instant then I held you close  
Then slowly let you go  
I never asked you for your love  
Your eyes had answered "No."

*Lt. Ed McBrayer*

## A VETERAN SPEAKS ON LIFE

"You should have seen the flak  
today"  
Said the rookie to the vet.  
"The stuff burst so damn close to me,  
My heart is pounding yet"  
The vet'ran raised his eyebrows,  
And said sagaciously,  
"Son, the one that's got your number  
is the burst you'll never see"

"When the one-o-nines buzz round  
you  
And the one-tens fly in near  
If you can see the devils  
There is no cause for fear.  
For the plane that does the damage  
The one that's really mean,  
Is the one that comes from nowhere  
The plane that strikes unseen."

"That's life, went on the vet'ran  
With troubles large or small  
The ones that hit you hardest

You never see at all.  
When your girl flirts with all your  
friends  
You have no cause to fret  
For the guy that causes trouble  
Is a guy you've never met."

*Lt. Richard Sterba*

## ISLANDS IN THE SKY

The other day while flying  
In my "Fort" away up high  
I saw some cloud formations  
Shaped like "Islands in the Sky"

Some were flat and filmy  
Then others billowy white  
'Twas a treat from Mother Nature  
To those of us in flight.

Some were huge with mountains  
And shadowy valleys, too  
Ah, these are fun for flyers  
To zoom our aircraft through.

Some had caves or castles  
With winding gremlin trails  
Where ships like mine can wander  
As through the sky it sails

Oh, how they float serenely  
these Islands in the Sky  
Such soft and pure white beauty  
hardly meant for you nor I,

That I sometimes think this Heaven  
So far from worldly sod;  
Is a playground for the Angels  
And a resting place for God.

*Lt. Harry R. Carroll*

## INTO THE AIR

Into the air Army Air Corps  
Into the air Pilots true  
Into the air Army Air Corps  
Keep your nose up in the blue  
And when you hear the engines  
singing  
And the steel props start to whine  
You can bet the Army Air Corp  
Is along the firing line.

## THE TIN DUCK'S PRAYER



One Sunday afternoon  
While looking for a lark,  
Unthinkingly I strayed  
In an amusement park.

Of all the things to do  
And all the sights to see  
My interest centered on  
A shooting gallery.

There, in that noisy booth  
I sought to try my luck  
Knocking off the feathers  
Of a slowly moving duck.

He seemed to roll his eye,  
He was a forlorn thing,  
And as I raised my gun  
I swear I heard him sing:

"I'm just a frightened duck  
As on my way I go  
The shots fly near the shots fly close,  
The shots fly high and low.

How I sweat out each run  
To reach the end, and then  
Before I calm my nerves,  
It starts all o'er again.

Oh, God up in the sky  
For help I look to Thee,  
Protect me from the guns  
Of those who shoot at me."

The years have come and gone  
(It's strange how time does fly)  
Now I've been sent to war  
And sail up in the sky.

That tin duck comes to mind  
Each time I hit the air,  
And when the flak bursts close  
I say his little prayer.

"For I'm a frightened duck  
As on my way I go.  
The shots fly near, the shots fly close  
The shots fly high and low.

Oh, God up in the sky for help I look  
to Thee  
Protect me from the guns  
Of those who shoot at me."

*Lt. R. L. Sterba*

## 'Twas The Nite Before The Mission

'Twas the nite before the mission  
And all through the Group  
The Wheels and the Big Wigs  
Were grinding out Poop.  
The bombers were parked  
On their hardstands with care,  
Waiting for armament  
soon to be there.  
The flyers were nestled  
All snug in their beds;  
While visions of milk runs  
Danced in their heads.  
When out of the darkness  
There came quite a knock;  
We cursed the O.D.  
And looked at the clock.  
"Briefing will be in two hours," the  
caller calmly said....  
Well, that meant we'd have forty  
more winks in bed....  
Time marches on and then, gapping  
and sighing, we leap from the sack to  
make with the flying.  
We rush to the mess hall  
Quick as a flash.  
We eat cold powdered eggs  
And hideous hash.  
Then the long bumpy ride  
To the Group Briefing Room,  
Where the Big Wigs preside  
And dish out our doom.  
The target is told,  
The first six rows faint—  
For lo and behold!  
VIENNA it AIN'T!!  
The Brain has slipped up,  
My poor achin' back!  
We're bombing a place  
That throws up no flak!  
So it's back in the truck  
And off of the line;  
The road is now smooth,  
And the weather is fine.  
The crew is at Station,  
The check list is run;  
The engines run smoothly,  
As we give 'em the gun.  
Then suddenly the pilot  
Calls in despair:  
"Look at the Tower!  
They just shot a flare!"  
We dashed to the window  
With heart full of dread;

The pilot was right,  
The darn thing's RED!  
So it's back to the sack  
And we sweat out our fate,  
For there's a practice formation  
At a quarter past eight.

*(Here 'tis 99th Bomb Gp.  
Newspaper)*

## "SMOKE RINGS"

Bad men want their  
women  
To be like cigarettes,  
Just so many, all slender and trim  
In a case,  
Waiting in a row  
To be selected, set aflame, and  
When their flame has died  
Discarded.

More fastidious men  
Prefer women like cigars.  
These are more exclusive  
Look better and last longer;  
If the brand is good,  
They aren't given away.

Good men treat women  
Like pipes  
And become more attached to them  
The older they become.  
When the flame is burnt out  
They still look after them,  
Knock them gently.  
(But lovingly)  
And care for them always...  
No man ever shares his pipe.

## PIN-UP POEM

Of the thousands upon thousands  
Of pin-ups and the like  
That decorated the barrack's wall's  
Of GI's Joe or Mike  
There's Betty G. and leg art  
Or horrid busted dolls,  
With leering, toothy, weird grins  
From soul-less paper dolls;  
Their poses far from human,  
Some standing on their head  
With limbs as long as monkey's  
They're cold hard print and dead;  
I've seen them all indifferently,  
I've yawned and turned away

For you are last week's favorite,  
tomorrow's and today's.

Dear love - you are my pin-up,  
The ideal - sans compare,  
To anyone the world can dream  
Your love has put you there.  
You're the perfect little child of  
The Guardian Angel o'er me;  
The mother of my living with  
The love that you've set free.  
You're the mate that keeps my future,  
The sweetheart standing fast,  
You're my whole wide world of hope  
when  
Our peace will come—and last.

*Lt. Harry R. Carroll*

## MOTHER

Mother's Day we'll miss her even  
more.  
For we were with her before  
Not realizing how much the flowers  
meant,  
How kind her kiss, once given, now  
sent.

The vase we gave her from the ten-  
cent store  
She keeps, for it takes her back  
when there was no war  
And tho' in price it seems so small,  
To her it's priceless and still hangs  
upon the wall.

Her thoughts were all so full of us,  
She never could forget,  
So I know that where 'ere she is,  
She will be watching yet.

Waiting 'till we come to her,  
Anxious because we're late,  
Watching from her window,  
Or listening at the gate.

Since I've gone, I miss her more  
Realizing her kindness as I never did  
before.  
I shall remember and find a way  
To make her most happy some  
Mother's Day.

*Lt. Ray M. Griffith*





## TOUCHING SHOULDERS

There's a comforting thought at the close of the day  
When I am lonely and weary and sad,  
That sorta grips hold of my tired old heart  
And makes me be merry and glad.  
It gets in my soul and drives out the blues,  
And finally thrills through and through,  
For it is just the sweet story that chants the refrain,  
I am glad I touched shoulders with you.

Did you know you were brave?  
Did you know you were strong?  
Did you know there was one leaning hard?  
Did you know that I waited and listened and prayed, and was cheered by your simplest word?  
Did you know that I longed for the smile on your face?  
For the sound of your voice ringing true?  
Did you know I grew stronger and better?  
Because I had merely touched shoulders with you?

I am glad that I live, that I battle and strive for the place I know I must fill.  
I am thankful for sorrows and I'll meet with a grin what fortune may send good or ill.  
I may not be brave, I may not be strong, but I know I shall always be true,  
For I have in my life that courage you gave  
When once I had touched shoulders with you.

*I do not know who wrote this little poem. It expresses my feelings as I leave you. You represent to me the BEST in American manhood. I have wept with those who wept. I have rejoiced with those who rejoiced. I came to try to make a "home away from home" for you. You have given me a joy and a zest for living. You*

*have made me know what we are fighting for. You have given me a glimpse into American family life that has made me proud to be an American.*

*The club will go on and on as long as it can serve your needs, but I shall miss you and look back on the months spent here as some of the best in my life. May God bless you all.*

Robbie

## Safe For Another Day



It is said that living day to day  
Is wrong. What else can we do?  
For our lives are weighed on the scales of fate  
If we fly with a bomber crew.

"You're valuable men" we've all been told,  
But when all is said and done  
Our expendable lives are cheap enough  
When we start on the bombing run.

They've got our range, the flak is thick  
Our wings resemble a sieve  
Bombardier says, "twenty seconds to go"  
Is it twenty seconds to live?

"Ten seconds now" one engine's gone,  
Another's beginning to fail.  
That burst was close and it left its mark  
A big gaping hole in the tail.

The seconds left seem like a year  
Not a single sound is made.  
The silence is broken "Bombs are away"  
And the lethal eggs have been laid.

The fight's not through, we're far from home,  
We've got a thick overcast.  
And here comes Jerry—one o'clock high

And here comes our escort at last!

We've reached the sea, we're headed back  
We're free from aerial duel  
We now take things easy—all except two,  
The pilots, who sweat out the fuel.

Our minds are eased, our base is near  
But all we can really say  
"We got through this one, and we're safe and sound  
That is, safe for another day!"

Lt. Richard Sterba

## INDIGNANTLY - YOURS

Listen, Lieutenant, and let me relate  
The adventures and eventual fate  
Of most of those poor damn "Girls in Blue"  
Who came overseas just to serve you.

\*\*\*\*\*

You leave your homes and the 4F beau,  
You're an Eager Beaver, you're ready to go!  
You feel pretty good to have the nerve.  
To risk all that danger just to serve.

So, lugging eighty pounds or more.  
You leave the beloved U.S. Shore  
Twenty-nine days later to  
Headquarters you reel  
Knowing just how a sardine must feel.

You're pretty tired, weary and worn  
And a little bit of the gloss has gone.  
But you go to your first job full of pep  
and the first few weeks you're really "hep".

They're All-American, those girls in blue  
And the men make a terrible fuss over you.  
They paw you and rush you and drone in your ear  
"How many days did it take to come here?"

*Continued from page 19*

Where is your home and what is your state?

Here's my wife's picture,  
how's for a date?"

At your very first dance they murmur  
real low

It's nice to speak English—But now I  
must go.

If you look at an officer you're no  
good at all  
And heaven help you if you should  
"fall"

Might just as well resign on the spot  
They'll make the place so blooming  
hot!

You get a transfer to an Officer's Club  
You think it is better, but here's the  
rub;  
The Lieutenants all tell you the last  
girl "stank"  
She was so terribly conscious of  
rank.

They date you up, weeks in advance  
They make you promise to come to  
their dance  
And when you get there, they're  
drunk and it's late  
And you never again lay eyes on  
your date.

They're married it seems, but it's you  
they adore.  
And then a blond USO girl crosses  
the floor.  
Then the last faint illusion dies off  
you "pan"  
And you know you're a "has been" an  
"also ran".

\*\*\*\*\*

And so, Lieutenant—you see how it  
goes  
We've all tried hard, heaven Knows!  
It's not all your fault if the stardust  
has gone  
If little by little our illusions were  
shorn.

And so in what time we have to spare  
We'll take your suggestion and sit in  
a chair  
With the Majors and Colonels to  
stroke our hair  
We'd just as leave die a peaceful  
20

death there!

*Nancy Brown*

*P.S. You wrote lines to the "Girl in  
Blue"*

*(That ARC gal with heart so true)  
I just have one more word to say  
Have you noticed they're uniform's  
steely gray?  
(You're wrong—Italy's too large!*

## As Time Goes By

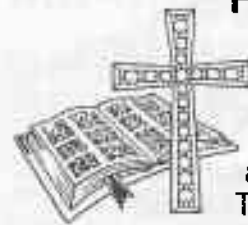
It's still the same old story  
A case of death and glory  
While flying in the sky  
The odds are always too high  
When flak goes by.

And when the fighters come  
you hope you're not the one  
to tumble from the sky  
The odds are always too damn  
high  
When Flak goes by.

One-tens and two tens knocking  
at your gate  
Sky filled with fighters, got to kill  
that rate.

Bombs don't go way sale  
Don't be late the target's passing  
by.  
It's still the same old story, the  
eighth gets all the glory  
And we're the ones who die  
The odds are always too damn  
high as flak goes by.

## FREEDOM'S PRAYER



I have a prayer  
I say to Christ,  
A prayer for you  
and me.  
To live upon this  
lonesome earth,  
With only your love for me.

Now Christ the Lord, He heard my  
prayer.  
This answer He sent to me.  
That before I can your love accept  
I must send my love to thee.

My love is like your love for Christ  
A love both strong and right.  
I think of you with every breath  
Both through the day and night.

And when the day of freedom's  
here  
Our lives will coincide.  
And you, my love, my life, my  
dear,  
We shall live it side by side.

*Lt. John J. Hedrick*

## To Those Who Wait Behind

The crack of dawn had just  
appeared  
When in the CQ came,  
And reading from the battle order,  
Three men he called by name.

Again t'was Grossman, Meier,  
Zifferblatt  
(Not once have I heard mine)  
Again the boys were off to war  
And again the co-pilot stayed  
behind.

So off they went to an early chow  
With the sleep still in their eyes.  
And again I stayed inside the sack  
And listened to their gruff "good-  
byes"

I tossed and turned, and rolled  
and churned,  
But sleep was not for me.  
I wondered when my turn would  
come.  
To answer early reveille.

At 0600 I heard the engines start,  
And then the thunderous roar,  
As each crew checked their '17  
Their huge efficient bird of war.

In trail they left the parking ramps  
And slithered 'round the treacher-  
ous bends  
That were the slippery taxi strips  
To lead them to the runway's end.

They goosed the throttles and  
held her back  
And I could hear the engines sing,  
As down the strip they slid and  
skipped

*(Continued)*

*Continued from page 20*

To leave the earth on that final  
spring.

Each '17 again was free;  
The surly bonds of earth were  
gone  
Straight as an arrow they left my  
sight  
And disappeared in the cold gray  
dawn.

Again I stayed behind and  
watched  
The silver ships on their long jour-  
ney's start.  
For Pilsen, Regensburg, Vienna  
or Brux?  
Or somewhere deep in Germany's  
heart?

All day I wondered how they were  
How far they were going?  
And as the day increased in  
length  
My apprehension started growing.

They should be back by now—I'm  
sure—  
But Hell!—It's barely time.  
Or maybe they're not coming  
back—  
All kinds of thoughts run through  
my mind.

And then, like always, there they  
are!  
The Group is coming home!  
But as I count and miss a few,  
I know that some will come alone.

Eagerly I look, to find DOG 5  
Ah! there she is—right in her  
place.  
And as she racks up in the peel-  
off  
I feel again my boys are safe.

Back to our tent they plod their  
way;  
Tired, sleep upon their mind.  
But still a smile and nice "hello"  
For the guy they left behind.

In answer to my million queries  
I get but terse replies—short  
slipped.  
"10/10 undercast"—"Flak was  
accurate"

"24's got it—but we weren't hit".

Always we worry—those who wait  
and sweat it out on the ground.  
Always we wonder if things are  
OK  
And those who fly seldom let us  
down.

My day to fly will come; I know;  
And when the flak is bursting  
'round,  
If I can remember, I'll just take a  
second  
To think of that guy on the ground.

For as long as there's and Air  
Corps,  
I know you'll always find  
That the guys who do the most  
sweating  
Are the ones on the ground  
behind.

*Lt Dana M. Mudge*



## Luke The Spook

The other day  
In a hazy way  
I met this Gee  
That's queer to see  
With ghostly eye  
And moaning sigh  
With head aglow  
Like an Inverted bow!  
Ah then I knew  
This silly Boo  
That this strange fluke  
Was  
Luke  
The  
Spook!

*Lt. Harry Carrol*

## THE REASON WHY

When you're flying in the heavens  
Up above the crowds below  
And your head is in the ether  
And it's forty below zero.

There's a girl you always think of  
She is with you all the way  
She is the one you'll live and die  
for  
And at night to her you pray.

Her hair is black and raven  
Her eyes are like the night  
Her figure defies description  
Her heart's pure gold and white

You know you'll always love her  
You'll swear by God above  
She's the girl you're coming back  
to  
It is she you'll always love.

*Lt J. J. Hedrick*

## THE FIGHTING "27"

While motors roar  
the props will sing  
Planes soar into the Heaven  
Look out, you Huns,  
Here comes "dem bums,"  
The Fighting Twenty Seven

With watchful eyes  
They scan the skies  
They guard the gates of Heaven  
Though skies are bare  
They're always there,  
The Fighting TwentySeven!

When tales are told  
Of pilots bold  
There'll be a niche in Heaven  
for those who've gone  
But still live on  
The Immortal Twenty Seven.

## DEDICATED, DREAMED, BUT NEVER REALIZED

Tell me, lad, were you ever drunk,  
Drunk perchance as the proverbial skunk?  
Squiffed to the gills with ye usual glow,  
Had that feeling inside you know.

Such was my plight the other night,  
As I detected a most God awful sight,  
An officer draped upon the wall,  
His feet overlapping into the hall.

With human kindness I staggered near,  
Belched in his face my late downed beer,  
Kicked his shins and slapped his head,  
Gave him up at last as dead.

My throat drew tight as I saw him stand,  
Stretching forth his blood smeared hand,  
"Sit", he said, "While I give you a clue,  
There is one thing don't ever do."

His parched lips could scarcely tell,  
This episode scened in hell,  
His eyes grew watery, his hair stood straight,  
He paused, winced and began to relate.

Upon arrival around these parts,  
I noticed only natives and their carts,  
Then I visited the A.R.C.  
That trip alone did this to me.

My mind, it wandered as minds they do,  
My eyes they tracked a girl in blue,  
Sighs alone filled my heart —  
Now you know where came the start.

Hopes came forth with vim and vigor,  
As I surveyed her shapely figure,  
I searched her eyes for a tell-tale glance,  
Signifying she too, would take a chance.

I raced to camp to read, you know,  
How to become a B.T.O.  
I scoured each page and drank it in,  
Soon I felt quite ready to begin.

Come one week later I launched my ship,  
God knows why I took that trip,  
I found her reclining in a chair,  
Five majors and a colonel stroked her hair.

Her Red Cross badge shined like new,  
How I longed for that girl in blue,  
One by one the ranks arose,  
Hitched their pants and blew their nose.

At last she was alone you see,  
She turned and blandly smiled at me,

My heart stood like a feathered prop,  
The hair from my head began to drop.

The soles on my shoes sizzled like steak,  
Then I made that sad mistake,  
"We're having a party," I blandly stated,  
"Are you, or aren't you dated?"

"I'd love to go, I'd be thrilled to death,  
It's my duty," she said under her breath,  
My mind and my heart were all a'twitter,  
couldn't tell my head from my sitter.

I longed by day, and dreamed by night  
Never once conscious of my plight,  
The evening came, I called at five.  
"Oh!" she said, "Are you still alive?"

"Run to the cleaners and get my dress —  
Don't come in, my room's a mess.  
What, no jeep? Gracious what a shock,  
Guess we'll have to walk that block."

"I'm sure you cannot mind,  
If I bring a friend who's very kind,  
The colonel's sweet, you'll love him so  
Although you're only a lieutenant, I know."

"Please don't try to hold my hand,  
The Red Cross Council won't understand,  
Oh, yes, I've promised the first eight dances,  
Can't afford to take any chances."

We soon arrived at the horrible place,  
Then began the hottest race,  
She ahead and poor me behind —  
The colonel hoped I didn't mind.

I took one step in set number nine.  
Tagged six times before I spoke a line,  
Grumbled a bit, cut quite short,  
"Why," she said, "Are you such a poor sport?"

The colonel and I both cried in our gin,  
When this speech she did begin,  
I'm so sorry, but I promised Joe,  
I must go home with him you know.

So I've told by horrible story,  
Here's to the Red Cross and all its glory,  
I've paid my dues as so have you,  
God help us if it goes to that girl in blue."

*Submitted respectfully with the realization that my life will  
not be worth the proverbial lead nickel after its publica-  
tion*

*Lt. Ray M. Griffith  
"Somewhere in Italy"  
(Heaven knows it won't be large enough)*

## 15th Air Force Memorial Bench Dedicated

MEMORIAL BENCH: On May 23 1994, before a large gathering of our veterans and friends, we dedicated a 15th Air Force Memorial Bench at the Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson AFB in Dayton. Bill Large Jr (454 BG), represented us and made the dedication with these words: "This Memorial Bench is presented to the Air Force Museum for display in recognition of our members, both those living and those who are no longer with us, and in commemoration of our dedication to freedom and to our great country. We hereby entrust it to the museum for the benefit and knowledge of our own and future generations of visitors who come here from around the world. May it serve to remind each one of us of our priceless heritage. On behalf of the 15th Air Force Association, we are pleased to officially present this Memorial to the Air Force Museum."

Jim Shumard (455 BG) presented a history of the 15th Air Force during WW II including a poignant remembrance of our wartime commander, Maj Gen Nathan Twining. Ross Strode (455 BG) and Elwood Miller (455 BG) unveiled the bench for presentation to the museum.

Our Memorial Bench is depicted along with a salute to Bill, Jim, and Ross. We deeply appreciate their dedication and service. We also express our gratitude to the members and officers of the 454th and 455th Bomb Group Associations. They made major and generous contributions to enable us to place this memorial. Thank you 454th and 455th and of course, all of our many members whose support enabled us to complete this project. During Bill's public remarks, he recognized the project's ramrod - Ross Strode, our 15th Air Force Association Project Officer - whose drive and perseverance made it all possible. We join him in saluting Ross for a "job well done." Thank you, Ross.



L To R: Ross Strode, 742nd - Jim Shumard, 743rd

## AMERICAN LOSSES AT PLOESTI

### *Low Level Raid August 1, 1943*

53 Bombers Shot Down With 530 Men - 130 Taken Prisoner

### *High Level Raids April 4, 1944 to August 19, 1944*

314 Bombers Shot Down	3140 Men	1027 Taken Prisoner
111 Fighters Shot Down	111 Men	28 Taken Prisoner
425	3251	1055

### WHERE DID THE FIGHTERS AND BOMBERS COME FROM

#### 8th AIR FORCE ON LOW LEVEL RAID BASED IN ENGLAND *(flying from the Libyan desert)*

B-24 44th Bomb Group	51 POWs
B-24 93rd Bomb Group	18 POWs
B-24 389th Bomb Group	17 POWs
B-24 98th Bomb Group	Also on the High Level Raids
B-24 376th Bomb Group	Also on the High Level Raids

#### 15th AIR FORCE ON HIGH LEVEL RAIDS BASED IN ITALY

##### 310 B-17 BOMBERS

2nd Bomb Group	11 POWs
97th Bomb Group	76 POWs
99th Bomb Group	62 POWs
301st Bomb Group	20 POWs
463rd Bomb Group	<u>85 POWs</u>
	254 POWs

##### 166 P-38 FIGHTERS

1st Fighter Group	6 POWs
14th Fighter Group	3 POWs
82nd Fighter Group	<u>8 POWs</u>
	17 POWs

##### P-47 FIGHTERS NOT KNOWN

##### 166 P-51 FIGHTERS

31st Fighter Group	2 POWs
52nd Fighter Group	5 POWs
325th Fighter Group	<u>4 POWs</u>
	11 POWs

##### 930 B-24 BOMBERS

98th Bomb Group	59 POWs
376th Bomb Group	84 POWs
449th Bomb Group	97 POWs
450th Bomb Group	133 POWs
451st Bomb Group	62 POWs
454th Bomb Group	26 POWs
455th Bomb Group	68 POWs
456th Bomb Group	26 POWs
459th Bomb Group	67 POWs
460th Bomb Group	25 POWs
461st Bomb Group	31 POWs
464th Bomb Group	44 POWs
465th Bomb Group	26 POWs
484th Bomb Group	17 POWs
485th Bomb Group	<u>8 POWs</u>
	773 POWs

#### FINAL ANALYSIS OF LOSSES AT PLOESTI

367 Bombers Shot Down With 3670 Men

111 Fighters Shot Down With 111 Men

3781 Men Shot Down --

Only 1185 Survived and Returned Home



## From Your Editor

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 and pictures may be sent to your Editor, Tom Ramey, 1211 Montclair Ct., Appleton, WI 54915. All material will be returned after publication. When sending photographs, please apply your address label on the back of the photo in order that these may be identified after publication and then returned to you.

If you have a special "war story" and it need not be flying or combat, but a squadron or group happening, send it in. This makes interesting reading for everyone.

**About dues - due notices are not mailed each year as they become due. We do this in order to save on postage and mailing costs. We rely entirely on your memory for payment. 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 it today! Annual dues are: \$15, payable November 1 of the preceding year. Life memberships, \$100. Make your check payable to the 455th Bomb Group Association and mail it to Louis Hansen, P.O. Box 6125, Spencer, Iowa 51301.**

Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas are just around the corner. When the end of October rolls

around be sure that you don't eat all the good pieces of candy out of the basket before the little ones get there.

Have a delightful family Thanksgiving and maybe share it with someone who is alone on that special day. And if you were a POW you can appreciate the festive spread that will be in front of you.

And at Christmas we pause each year 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 and yours the most blessed of holidays and a great 1995.



## Bob Tank Writes

After coming back from a long stay at the hospital in Bari I was sent to Capri and then down to an old Roman hot bath area on the Adriatic, the whole crew went. We would soak in big tubs in the caves where the hot sulfur water would keep running on you. The hotel had an accordion player who played the lounge and the dining room. He was a good sing along man and fun to sing with. He just loved "Lilie Marlene" and would play it as every fourth or fifth song. I have never heard it sung more times than in the days we sang it there. I often wonder where the singers are at the group reunions. There must be some of them left in the crowd. Maybe next time.

## The 50th Anniversary Era

We are now in the 50 years ago today era. 50th anniversary of D-Day. 50th anniversary of certain war events. Lt. Col. Howard Parton, bombardier, flying with your editor when German flak took its toll, writes how he recognized this special day. His church did not have an American flag flying outside the church, so he donated a flag pole and flag to commemorate this special 50th anniversary. A great idea that each of you might want to consider. And if you don't have a special anniversary day, it's a great patriotic idea that you might want to consider anyway.

## I BELIEVE

I believe every person has been put on this earth for just one purpose - to serve his fellow man. It doesn't matter how he does this. He can build a bridge, paint a picture, invent a labor saving gadget or run a gas station. The point is, he should try to leave the Earth a better place than he found it. If he does, his life will have been worthwhile. If he doesn't do what he can, within his own limitations, he is destined to be unhappy.

*Jimmy Doolittle*

*Ed: God put me on earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I'm so far behind, I will never die.*

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