



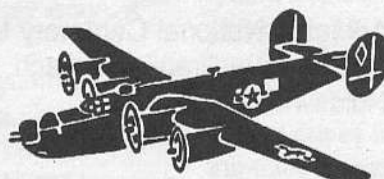
# CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

*455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter*

Fall 1996

IN MEMORY

455TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HEAVY)  
SAN GIOVANNI AIRFIELD, ITALY  
1943 - 1945



B-24



304th Wing

THIS OAK TREE, PLANTED APRIL, 1996, IS IN LIVING MEMORY OF  
THOSE WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE IN THE SKIES OVER  
EUROPE DURING WORLD WAR II TO PRESERVE OUR FREEDOMS.

THIS MARKER IS DEDICATED TO HONOR ALL WHO SERVED.

GROUP COMBAT MISSIONS: 255  
DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATIONS: TWO  
BATTLE CAMPAIGNS: TEN  
SQUADRONS: 740TH, 741ST, 742ND AND 743RD

DEDICATED 1996

## **455th Dedicates a Living Memorial - Arlington National Cemetery, 27 September 1996**

Nearly 100 members and wives of the 455th Bomb Group gathered at Arlington National Cemetery for the dedication of the Living Tree Memorial and Plaque in honor of those members of the group that made the supreme sacrifice during WWII. A brief but moving program followed:

Opening remarks, Lt. Col. Clarence Riggs, President of the 455th Bomb Group Association.

Invocation, Col. Louie O. Hansen USAF (Ret).

Presentation of colors, Air Force

Color Team.

Dedication remarks, Col. Alfred Asch, USAF (Ret).

Memorial plaque unveiling, Col. Louie O. Hansen and Ralph Holdsworth.

Presentation of Memorial to the Arlington National cemetery, Lt. Col. Clarence E. Riggs; accepted by Mr. Thomas Sherlock, Historian of the cemetery.

Taps, Air Force Bugler.

Benediction, Col. Louie O. Hansen.

Following the ceremony the group toured the cemetery and saw all the important land marks, e.g., Tomb of the Unknown Soldier with the changing of the guard, President Kennedy's grave, and then motored to the Fort Meyers Officer's Club for lunch and dinner.

## **Remarks by Col. Al Asch, USAF (Ret), Memorial Dedication**

Mere words alone cannot express the significance of dedicating this memorial in memory of those airmen who lost their lives. It has special meaning to all of us. I lost airmen from enemy action while flying combat, as some of you did. Some of the men lie at rest at our Arlington National Cemetery. Many of our downed airmen became prisoners of war and suffered extreme hardships of Nazi POW camps. It is to all airmen who lost their lives that we pay special tribute and dedicate this Oak tree and plaque as a living memorial. The tree was planted in April, 1996. Let this living memorial remain for generations to come as a reminder that the preservation of our freedoms required hardships and sacrifices by all who served during World War II.

## **Remarks by Lt. Col. Clarence Riggs**

We are proud of our Bomb Group and of those who served, with special tribute to those who gave their lives to preserve our freedoms. The Pin Oak tree with the bronze plaque will serve as a living memorial for those who have passed on and as a constant reminder to all that through their life we have life. Mr. Sherlock, on behalf of the 455th Bombardment Group Association, it is our privilege to present this living memorial to the Arlington National Cemetery. We know you will take good care of it.



Al Asch, with the help of the Grounds Keeper, plant the Memorial Tree at Arlington National Cemetery. Dedication is scheduled for September 27, 1996.



Arlington National Cemetery Memorial Committee. L to R: John Pramik, Al Asch, and Ralph Holdsworth.

## REMEMBERING THE FORGOTTEN MECHANIC

Through the history of world aviation  
Many names have come to the fore  
Great deeds of the past  
in our memory will last,  
As they're joined by more and more...

When man first started his labor of  
quest to conquer the sky  
He was designer, mechanic and pilot,  
And he built a machine that would  
fly...  
But somehow the order got twisted,  
And then in the public's eye  
The only man that could be seen  
Was the man who knew how to fly...

The pilot was everyone's hero,  
He was brave,  
He was bold,  
He was grand,  
And he stood by his battered old  
biplane  
With his goggles and helmet in  
hand...  
To be sure, these pilots all earned it,  
To fly you have to have guts...  
And they blazed their names  
In the hall of fame  
On wings with bailing wire struts...

But for each of these flying heroes  
There were thousands of little  
reknown,  
And these were the men;  
Who worked on the planes  
But kept their feet on the ground...  
We all know the name of Lindbergh,  
And we've read of his flight of fame...  
But think, if you can,  
Of his maintenance man,  
Can you remember his name?

And think of our wartime heroes,  
Gabreski, Jabara, and Scott...  
Can you tell me of the names  
Of their crew chiefs?  
A thousand to one you cannot...  
Now pilots are highly trained people,  
And wings are not easily won...  
But without the work of the  
maintenance man  
Our pilots would march with a gun...  
So when you see a mighty aircraft  
As they mark their way through the  
air,  
The grease-stained man with the  
wrench in his hand,  
Is the man who put them there.

Anonymous

*Ed: Dedicated and republished for the  
best maintenance group of the 455th.*

## RALPH MOORE WRITES

Ralph Moore writes that he has lost  
contact with all 455th enlisted men  
except for Sgt. Phillip Brunow who  
was on Lt. Taylors crew. He last saw  
Lt. Taylor in Austin, Texas shortly after  
the war. Ralph was Personnel  
Equipment with Lt. Anderson and Sgt.  
Marler.

## 455TH BOMB GROUP ROOTS

The roots of the 455th Bomb  
Group Association go all the way back  
to Langley Field. Tom Lyle Mitchell,  
Intelligence Officer for the 743rd  
Squadron put together the Vulgar  
Vulture Association, issued member-  
ship cards, Walt Disney designed our  
emblem, and we were off running!

When WWII ended, Tom started a  
newsletter in an attempt to hold for-  
mer members of the 455th together.  
This was mimeographed in letter form  
and as time passed, Tom had put  
together quite a list of interested and  
former members of the 455th.

He also spearheaded three  
reunions - St. Louis, Chicago, and

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Milwaukee. After the Milwaukee reunion it was difficult to get everyone together again - everyone was busy attending school, setting up in business or practice, rearing families, or doing their own thing.

*Ed: Earlier issues of the Certignola Connection has excerpts from Tom Mitchell's many newsletters.*

## VALOR

He gave his life for the mission and his crew!

It was just a simple military stone. A man's life in five lines:

Robert A. Montgomery  
Oklahoma  
1st Lt. 455 bomb GP AAF  
World War II AM PH  
Feb 7, 1922      June, 26, 1944

By June 26, 1944, the push was on to force the German troops back to their homeland. Any blow struck against Germany was a victory for the allies and a promise that World War II was one day closer to ending, at least in the European Theatre.

The 455th Bomb Group of the 304th Wing, 15th Air Force had spent June smashing targets in Munich, Germany; Vienna, Austria; Chivasso, Italy; Craiova, Rumania; and Arles, France.

Montgomery himself was ready to complete his coveted 50th mission. Then he could go home.

Orders came through for the next mission - a synthetic fuels plant in Moosbierbaum, Austria. The target was vital, since the Rumanian bombings had destroyed the gasoline production there.

Montgomery's bombardier and navigator had completed their 50 missions - Dave Brothers, Bombardier of another crew had completed 41 missions and was anxious for the remaining 9 so he, too, could be homeward bound. He

volunteered for the mission.

On warm-up one engine failed to function properly and the flight line mechanic warned of the risk in flying the plane. Even so, Montgomery chose to take to the air. Taking out the fuel plant was too important a mission to the Allies.

The last time Brothers saw Lt. Montgomery was in the cockpit of their burning B-24.

The target was heavily defended by German fighters. Montgomery's plane was in the rear-end Charlie position. Going into the target Montgomery's plane was hit consistently by machine gun fire and 20 mm air cannons. The airplane caught fire. As the blazing fuel leaked out of the tanks, it raced burning trails across the plane's body. The fire took hold despite the best efforts of the remaining crew members to hold it at bay. At this point only five crew members were still alive - Montgomery, Brothers, the co-pilot, radio operator and the tail gunner. On the bomb run Montgomery refused to move out of position and stayed at the controls until the bombs could be dropped. Finally giving orders that those left of the crew should bail out, he then held the plane steady until the last crew member was clear of the plane. As they ballooned away from the blazing craft, she exploded taking Montgomery, the pilot, with her. The crew never saw Montgomery again but they knew if he hadn't stayed aboard, they never could have gotten out safely.

A lot of stories of bravery and courage came out of WWII and a lot of brave men have been forgotten by all but a few family members. Maybe Montgomery would have been forgotten, too, except for a few small reminders - the bringing home of his remains 14 years after the war ended, a few pieces in his local paper and a few faded photographs. 14 years later, Montgomery's skeletal remains, along with his identification tags and high

school class ring, were found in the Black Forest near Vienna. His parachute was unopened.

All these years, Brothers has been treasuring his memories of the courage and sacrifice of Robert Montgomery. In the summer of 1984 Dave and his wife Ruth, drove across the country to visit one of their sons in New Mexico. They stopped in Nowata, Oklahoma Montgomery's hometown. Brothers wanted to visit Bob Montgomery's grave. All that he found was that simple flat marker - the standard military one. Buried was Montgomery's courage, dedication, loyalty, heroism, piloting skill and placing the safety of his crew above his own life. "When I saw his grave I just went to pieces," Brothers said. "It's all that's left of him. It just doesn't seem right."

In 1985 Brothers began an extensive campaign to win the proper honors for his friend. "I was just determined that he was going to get some recognition." His goal was the Silver Star for gallantry, the third-highest award of valor offered by the Air Force.

With the help of the Virginia Military Institute Aerospace Office Brothers wrote the proper authorities. "This letter is a request from the heart for a posthumous decoration for my WWII pilot," he wrote, "He displayed courage beyond anything that I had ever seen before ..." After recounting the events of June 26, 1944, he concluded his letter by saying, "This matter has weighed heavily on my mind and heart. In August of 1985 President Reagan ordered that the Silver Star be awarded to Robert Montgomery.

On Sunday, April 20, 1986, in the west meeting room of the Harmon Community Center in Nowata, Oklahoma, Brothers presented Montgomery's Silver Star for gallantry to the Montgomery family and the Nowata Historical Society, to be displayed for generations to come. It remains visible proof of the love from the man whose life he saved. Perhaps

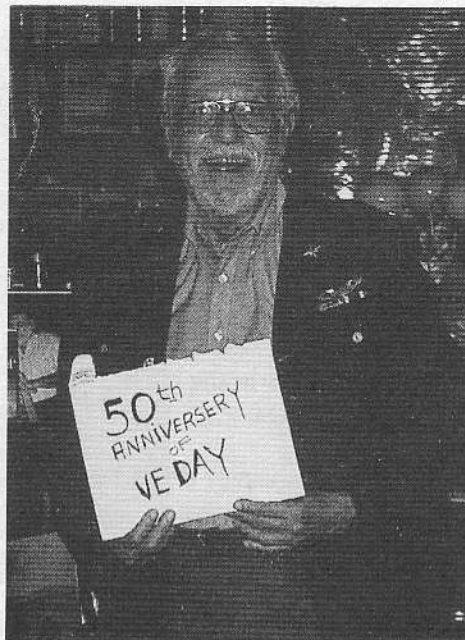
in the plaque Brothers also presented, everything was said that needed to be said. "The measure of a life is not in the number of its seasons but rather in its deeds."

*There's a certain bonding of the pilots of the 455th Bomb Group that has carried on long after World War II ended. And this is true of John Nash of Klamath Falls, Oregon, a 742nd Pilot. When John heard of what Dave Brothers had accomplished he flew from Oregon to Oklahoma just to be present when the medal was presented and to say his last farewell.*

Ed: I met Dave Brothers during the death march out of Sagan, Poland, Stalag Luft III. In sub zero weather and a driving snow, I was falling back, further and further to the rear of the line. If you couldn't keep up you were shot or prodded on by bayonets. Dave came along pulling a home made sled with all his belongings on it. He limped along having been wounded in the back by a 20mm shell. He was making better progress than I since I was carrying my few belongings. "Come on Buddy," he said, "let's do this together." This started a life long friendship that still exists today. We survived the march together, rode the infamous box cars together and shared our meager food. We huddled in the air raid shelter at Nuremburg, together. We were liberated together, rode the ship back to the states together and then parted at Camp Shanks, New York. Our families still see each other from time to time.

Knowing Dave, I can feel his love for his pilot, and how he wanted to make his sacrifice and courage more memorable than a simple, cold, military grave stone. Dave's heart is so big there's always some there that he is willing to share with anyone.

\* \* \*



fighter attacks had just about passed into history due to the accuracy and determination of the Bombardiers and crews who preceded us!

December, January, February, March and April still took its toll of our crews and planes. None of us looked forward to getting up early and heading over the Alps to hit the many still well defended targets, but whatever we had to accomplish was made a lot easier by the courage of those crews who had kinda "cleared the way" for us!

I was among the lucky ones. I flew my own crew home to Bradley Field, Conn. in June, 1944...so, I owe a special and personal THANKS TO all those guys...even if it is 50 plus years late!

*ED: Irv's put on a lot of weight in 50 years. Note the jacket fit. Course, I should talk!*

## OUR FLAG

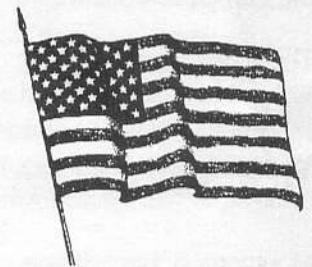
Here's to you, our Grand Old Flag.  
You're not just any common rag,  
But gorgeous, Red and White and Blue,  
The colors that are always true.

The Red must be for blood 'twas shed, for the world to see that we weren't dead. We've fought, we've died, we've sacrificed to show the world the real price, to prove for all the world to see, a real live, true Democracy.

The White must be for Purity, to strive and struggle when we seemed e'er to be the one who would give real meaning to old "Can Do." May we ever prove so strong and real, that evil foes will have to deal with Truth and Justice, Toil, and War; we've always proved we'd travel far, to "do them in", of course we would. Encourage Freedom when we could.

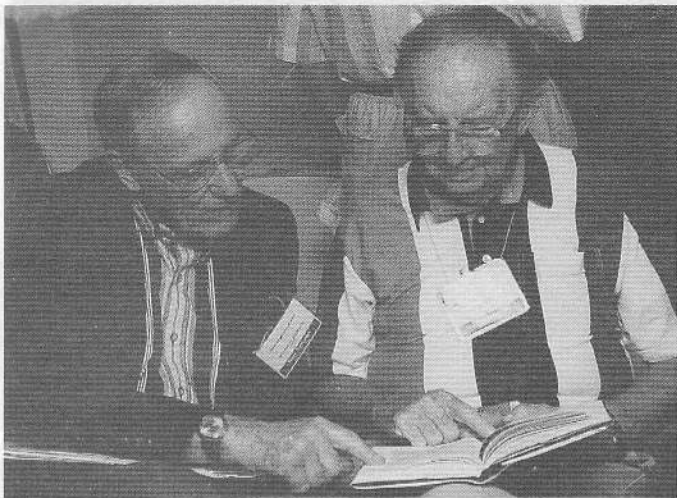
The Blue must be for azure skies, that seem to reach beyond our eyes. To know that Science, Art and Religion will prove to be beyond all regions. We know of course there is no end to skies above, below and when - we realize that "Freedom Rings" we're very sure that we can sing "Our National Anthem," it's sure a thrill to know that we will always drill our men our souls for all to see, the USA-eternally.

*Author-T/Sgt William P. Green 743rd Sq*



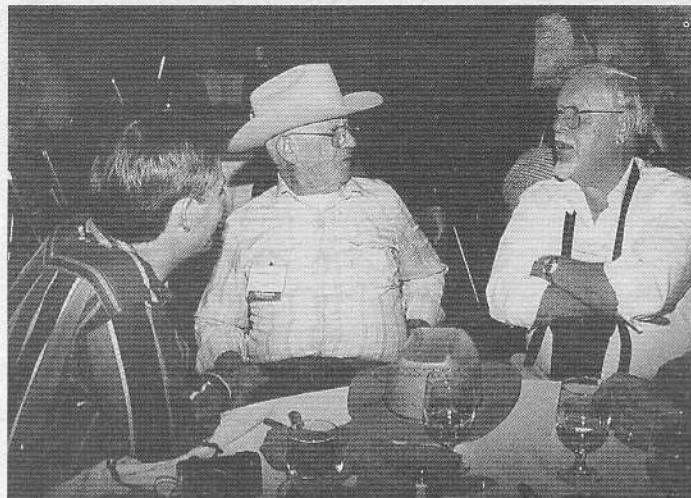


## '95 SAN ANTONIO REUNION REVISITED!



*If it weren't true they wouldn't have printed all these war stories about me!*

*Left to right: Arthur Johnson, Jack Blum*



*Actually, you could get hurt flying those missions!*

*Left to right: Shawn Caldwell, Bob Caldwell, Ray Beauvais*



*The Texas Bar-B-Q*

*Left to right: Frank Hosimer, Nancy Morris, Richard Armellino, Joan Armellino, Anthony Corsello, Virginia Corsello, Burton Hewett, Jean Hewett, Stan Vogelfang, Jeanne Vogelfang.*



*Left to right: Dick Hollrock, Albert Beauchemin, Delores Beauchemin, Dorothy Lashinsky, Frank Lashinsky, Billie Hosterman, Ken Hosterman, Bob Burkholder, Clara Burkholder, Anne Hollrock.*



*Sign in please!*

*Seated Lou Hansen, Frances Hansen.*

*Standing L to R: Ross Strode, Bill Barnard, Charles Rein*

### SAVE THESE DATES!

The 455th Bomb Group Association will hold its next reunion September 24th through 27th, 1997, at the Holiday Inn, Dayton Mall, Miamisburg, Ohio (located next to Dayton).

Our first tour on Thursday 25th will be to the U.S. Air Force Museum. The day includes the IMAX Theater, plus three buildings with aircraft, other exhibits and movies. A party will be held that evening at the Holiday Inn. More tours are planned for Friday and Saturday.

On Saturday evening, 27th, a super banquet will be held under/among the aircraft in the USAF Museum. This is one reunion you will not want to miss.

Remember, save these dates, September 24-27, 1997, for attending this next reunion.



*I've been here thirty minutes and all they've served is ice tea! Mr. and Mrs. Carl Krider.*



*The little lady that does all the work...Fran Hansen.*



*I remember the Cerignola Connection Editor when he would cut us out of the landing pattern to get to the officer's club first. Richard and Maude Dunscomb.*



*If you think being an Astronaut is hairy you should try being a Tail Turret Gunner. Rear - M/Sgt. Bill Francis, Col. Tom Hendricks, Lou Hansen. Front - Mrs. Hendricks, Sen. and Mrs. George McGovern.*



*Colonel and Mrs. Tom Hendricks. Astronaut and guest speaker.*



*Do you mean those space ships go higher than a B-24? Left to right: Mrs. James Shumard, Jim Shumard, Carl Krider.*





Left – Ralph and Jean Johnson. Right – Unknown



Left – Horace and Sudie David. Right – Tudie and Carl Wiskirchen.



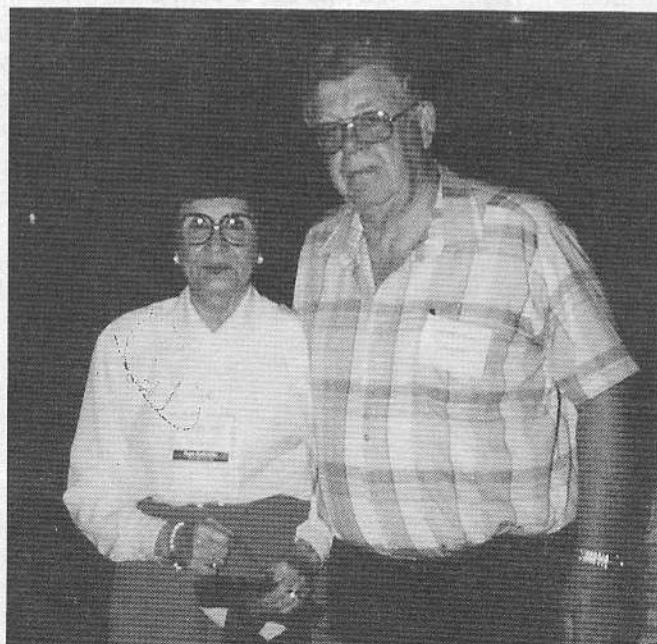
Saturday Night Banquet – Left – M/M Jerry Thuma, Erma Henske, Mickey and Leeland Young.



Ted and Jane Tronoff, Mrs. Rod (Marian) Clark.



Left – Mickey and Leland Young. Right – Unknown.



Left – Grace and Vern Ussey. Vern was a POW in Poland. He has some great stories that would be good Cerignola Connection reading.



*455th Tail Turret Gunner in action!*



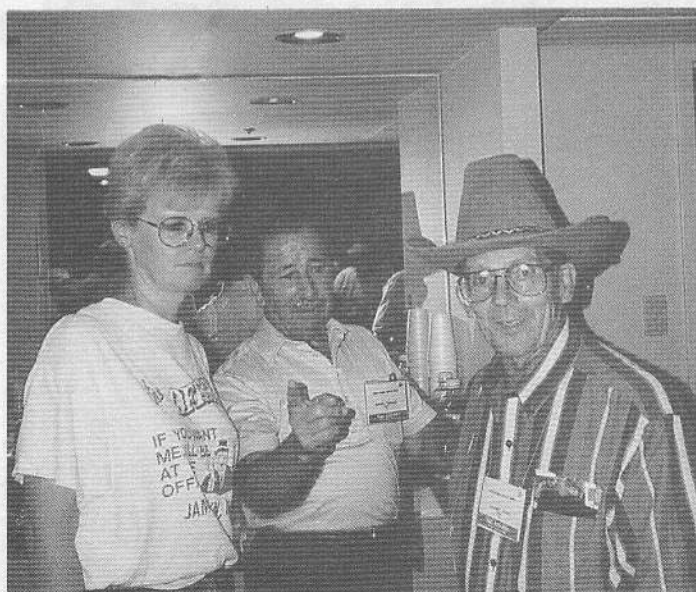
*Let me tell you how to make a coke on the rocks.  
Right – Bill Green. Left – Unknown.*



*Why do they call it a hospitality room when they keep the doors locked? Right – Doris and Bill Green. Left – Marian and Rod Clark. Rest – Unknown.*



*Mickey Lynn Crew – Leland Young, Pilot; Elmo Henske, Co-Pilot; Jerry Thuma, Engineer; Carl Krider, Ground Crew Chief; Bill Green, Radio Operator.*



*Volunteer Bartender who with her sister drove their dad down from North Dakota so he could attend the reunion. Far right – Bill Green. Center – Unknown*



*"Get along little dogies, get along".  
Luncheon entertainment.*



## AS I REMEMBER IT

BY LT. COL L.F. LIBERTY,

As I remember, a long time ago, these are some of the instances that strongly remain in my memory. I'll start with when I got out of the cadets I was sent to Tarrant Field in Ft. Worth, Texas to get checked out on B-24's, but the air-core needed co-pilots in Pyote, Texas to fly B-17's. So, I was stationed in Pyote in the Watts Provisional group as a co-pilot on the B-17's, but I finally moved up to pilot. It was a great crew and one of the most effective crews in the group. We were picked as a model crew and were given orders to go to Clovis, New Mexico to join the 455th Bomb Group and assigned to the 741st squadron. Captain Horace Lanford was my Commanding Officer and I was only a lieutenant. We didn't have any airplanes at the time being, but we were thinking that we would perhaps get B-24s or another type of aircraft. In the meantime, I was assigned as an Assistant Operations Officer in the 741st under Russell Welsh. Massy, my bombardier, was assigned as Squadron Bombardier, and Mac Williams was the Squadron navigator. The rest of my crew members were assigned as staff personnel in engineering, radio and gunnery. So, it was rather interesting to see what was going to happen. We finally found out we were going to be flying B-24s and that was rather exciting, to think that at the time being we would have a different kind of aircraft. But one of the most exciting part of our training was when we were in Salt Lake City, Utah. We had nine B-24s and Major Graff, at that time, was a Group Operations Officer. He was a hell of a good pilot. There were the staff pilots of the different squadrons and we would take the nine aircraft up and practice formation flying and flying in general. One of the most important parts of the whole thing was that he would always put us in a 9 ship echelon, extending to the right, and in those days when we

came in to land, we came in with a low approach and peeled up and out and came around and landed. It was so exciting to see from the ground, according to the people who saw it, that the tower, which was civilian operated, would clear traffic from the area so that we could come in and land. When we went to Langley Field in Salt Lake City, my CO, Horace Lanford, and I took an airplane that had lost a starter on one of the engines. We got permission to go down the runway at full speed, and I unfeathered the engine when Horace told me to, and we got it started. Then we came back and picked up the rest of the people and went on to Langley.

When we were stationed at Langley, I went up with four aircraft to practice formation flying along with several other squadrons doing the same thing. We had a 2,000 foot overcast ceiling that day, but it wasn't real thick. We penetrated this and went up and were flying around when the field was closed down because the ceiling lowered to nothing. Hugh Graff called me from the tower and told me to assemble everybody and take them to either Memphis or Atlanta since we couldn't land at Langley. Which city we went to I can't remember, but I think it was Atlanta, Georgia. We gathered everybody up, probably about a dozen of us, and we started out for Atlanta. We had to penetrate a front and when we did we used a penetration effect where you spread out at certain degrees and then fly straight ahead. We all came out of that except for two airplanes which landed at a primary training base. The rest of us landed at Atlanta and here we were in our flying suits, which happened to be sheepskins because it was kind of cool and we went on to a hotel in a taxi and to this day I cannot remember how we paid for it or who paid for it, but we were a scroungy looking bunch when we walked into the lobby of that hotel and got rooms. The next day we

took off and returned to Langley Field and everything was alright.

When we went to New York to pick up our planes, I was with Walters, as he had been made first pilot of the crew due to Lt. Black being relieved of duty and having to leave the squadron. We were the first crews, to my knowledge, to be sent over. There was Hudson, Wurtz, Nangeroni, Locatelli, plus myself and Walters. I was considered the ranking officer since I was the Assistant Operations Officer and Walters had not flown as a first pilot long enough. We took off for West Palm Beach, Florida, flew to Trinidad and then finally Forteleza, Brazil. From there we took off for Dakar, Africa. Now, there was a weather phenomena that particular day that was called an intertropical front extending all the way across. When we started out flying we were not together, we took off at different intervals. There was nothing about assigned altitudes, so we all flew on our own but we couldn't top out the storm. We tried to get below it and we couldn't, so we just flew instruments all the way across to Dakar. When we got into radio range, and picked them up, they assigned us to a thousand foot altitude separation and we did ok. Other airplanes, in the meantime, were coming in from Belem, Brazil. It was raining really hard but we landed safely. There were trucks to pick us up and they took us to our tents and then to the mess hall. I want you to know the mud was so deep it was almost up to our knees, it was really something. When we left Dakar, we flew directly to Marrakech. We spent Christmas there and when we arrived there it was nice weather and warm. However, I didn't know the nights in Africa got so extremely cold, but this was in December. We were given one blanket and a cot in a tent down in an olive orchard. Well, we were so cold that we finally went down to our airplane and slept there in our sheepskins. So, the next day since this was an ATC base for all the ATC

personnel ferrying airplanes back and forth, we found out they had a great number of cabins there, modern cabins, full of cots and full of blankets for the ATC personnel. There wasn't a single one of those cabins being used, and they wouldn't let us use one, but we went in there and took over one and got away with it. I don't think they could have gotten us out of there by gunshot. Anyway, we were warm then and we spent a few days there, including Christmas. From there, we took off for a place called Chateaudunn. When we got into Chateaudunn there was a field, tents, a sergeant in a jeep, but there was no personnel there to feed us or to give us blankets or anything like that. They had all left because they thought we were not coming in. This sergeant took Hudson and I over to some kind of depot that was full of supplies and gave us a sack to put some straw in from a haystack there. We filled the sacks and took them back to the tents. Well, we improvised stoves out of 55 gallon drums with 100 octane gasoline dripping into them so that we had a fire to keep warm in these tents. Several of us were playing poker in my tent and Hudson's tent was right next to us. All of a sudden we heard a whoosh and we all ran outside to find his tent on fire. Smitty, his co-pilot, had all his belongings in there and they all burned up, so he lost everything he had. Well, in the meantime, we left from there to head for Jadeida, which is close to Cape Bonn. Here we flew practice missions until our base was ready in Italy. Well, this field had been booby trapped and we found all kinds of abandoned vehicles. When Patton had run the Germans out of Africa and they were retreating to Cape Bonn, they were taking anything that would move, a horse, a camel or a car or whatever and run it until it died and then they would continue on foot to get to Cape Bonn. In the meantime, I found a Renault, 4-door sedan with no tires, battery, headlights or upholstery

because it had been stripped out by the Arabs. There was a sergeant who knew something about mechanics and he helped me put it together. Near our tent area there was a military dump yard. They took all the things that were wrecked, torn up or usable, like tires, batteries, trucks to this dump yard. We went over there and I got four tires for this Renault, put them on and towed it over to where we were staying. However, I soon discovered there was a broken head gasket and the cylinder head was full of water. So, I went into Tunis, found a head gasket for the darn thing, put it in and then we got a battery out of the dump yard and put it in and it started up. It sounded pretty good, so I got upholstery and seats out of other military equipment and fixed it up, but there were no headlights. I headed back over to the dump yard and found a couple of headlamps out of a GI truck. We drilled holes in the fenders, put them on and then we had lights. The only problem with that was when we were coming home at night from Tunis, those lights would vibrate off to the sides, and we would have to stop and line them up so we could see down the road. We'd take this Renault, four, five or six of us, pile in and go into Tunis. I think Tunis might have been around 40 or 50 miles away, not really sure on the distance now days, but there was a club there called the Ack Ack Club, which was considered to be an Officer's Club, where we would go and get champagne for nearly nothing. The booze they had was a rum which they spelled Rhum, which was really terrible, but it was all they had. Well, we'd spent a lot of time there at night, but one night in particular, there were several of us, Jack Reader, the Assistant Operations Officer, who was pretty well loaded, and all the group staff. They stayed in this castle with French guards at the gate, and when I drove up to let Jack out, the French soldiers, who knew no English at all, said "halto". Well, Jack was going to walk right past

them, but they had their guns out, so we had to hold him. We were making so much noise that one of the group staff came out to the gate and called off the French guards and Jack got in. We did a lot of training there and a lot of traveling to Tunis. The day before we were supposed to leave there, my car wouldn't start so I lifted up the hood and saw that the gasket had busted and the cylinder head had filled up with water again so we just left it there. In the meantime, other boys had a halftrack and Eugene Hudson had a big German motorcycle with a sidecar. It had eight speeds forward and four in reverse. They loaded their stuff in that and then left it beside the revetment when we took off for Cerignola.

When we left for Cerignola, our final base was in an olive grove where we all lived in tents. We finally got a barn there for our office. Inside of the barn was a big open area. All around the outside of it were little rooms which we used for our operations office, headquarters and communications. One day, we decided to make an Officer's Club and enlisted men's club in this old barn area. We took wheelbarrows full of manure out of that old building which had walls probably three feet thick of limestone and centuries old, I'm sure. After we got all that out, we got some Italian laborers to start working on it. We went down to Foggia, which had been severely bombed, and got tile for the floors. They put the tile floor in, painted the walls and it looked great. It was real nice as an Officer's Club and the Airmen's Club was right next to it. Then Horace Lanford sent me down to Barrie to try and find furniture for the clubs. I think I took Massey with me and we went down there and found a military furniture warehouse and located the owner. We found divans, chairs and different kinds of all new and nice furniture. We made a deal with the owner and then had to call the CO, Lanford, and tell him



we had found the furniture and needed \$2,000 and two trucks. We had field phone connections all the way back to Cerignola from Bari, I think it may have been about 100 to 150 miles, maybe further, but they would relay our conversations. When I asked Lanford for the \$2,000, I actually heard him say "what" over the bad connections. Anyway, we got the trucks and the money and hauled the furniture back to the clubs. We had one of the best looking clubs over there. It was really beautiful and large, I have a picture somewhere that shows it. But, in the meantime, we didn't have any booze. I don't understand exactly how they did it, but they went to Oran, Africa, and picked up enough booze to fill a B-24. They brought it back and gave some to all the squadrons. We had scotch, bourbon, gin and everything else, and it was really good stuff. We sold it for 10 cents a shot, whatever the drink was, it cost a dime. Those are my memories of that officer's club. It was really nice.

An interesting point of our operations there was one of our pilots, Dick Deeble who before he was 21 years old had made captain, flew 50 missions and was a flight leader. I think, this was a truly great accomplishment to be that young and to have done all of those things.

Another point of interest was the plane Col. Cool, our Group Commander flew, which was one of the planes out of our squadron. Generally, he flew with my old crew from the B-17s because they were one of the best in the business, particularly my engineer Clarence Fox. The Colonel had a habit of saying "best we do" when an idea would come up and he like it. So, we painted "Best We Do" on the airplane itself, and that was his plane. I even flew with him on a couple of missions and had the privilege of flying on his right wing. He was so smooth a

pilot, I could actually let go of my throttle and my controls, if they were trimmed up, and just breeze right along with him in tight formation. He was the smoothest of all. Another point of interest that came up during our stay there was Col. Upthegrove who later became a General. Col Upthegrove asked our group to help develop spotting and steering aircraft into a field or something major like that. So, he sent us an Ack Ack Control Radar Trailer to use for this and I was given the task of making the report of feasibility of using radar controlled equipment to control airplanes directing them into a field for landing. Gus Wendt was one of our pilots and he was real good. Gus' crew would go up somewhere in the sky and they would call into us and ask for directions. What we would do is set up a system of identification of where he was and what he was doing and then we would guide him in to a landing at our base. This was part of the forerunning of the GCA approaches we use today and I would like to think that what we did may have contributed to GCA landing.

## GOVERNMENT OF GREECE COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL

The Hellenic Greek Medal is available to eligible 15th Air Force personnel who participated in Air force operations and actually flew missions against Greece during the years of 1941-1945. The 455th Bomb Group participated in support of Greece during this period.

a.) Those qualified to receive medals are those individuals who served under the Hellenic Armed Force, or in Units of the Allied forces and who participated in operations only in Greece during the period of 28th of October, 1940 through 8th May, 1944.

b.) Specifically with regards to Air Force, attacks or landing at Hellenic Airports.

c.) The required documents which must be submitted for the awarding of medals are the following:

1) Declaration that indicates the year of service, the operations which the applicant participated in, or any other document which supports the right for the awarding of a medal for service performed during 1940-1945.

2) Certification from U.S. Department of Defense or a copy of the Log Book which indicates that the applicant participated or served in operations in Greece, during the above time period, as well as indicating the unit in which the applicant served.

3) Declaration stating that the applicant has never been convicted in any court of Greece.

4) For those who have served, inquiries should be directed to the office of the **Air Attache, Embassy of Greece, 2228 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, D.C. 20008, (202-234-0561).**

*ED: I can pin point two missions that qualify for the 455th, ie: Mission 117, September 15th, 1944, Tatot Airdrome, Athens, Greece and Mission 123 on September 24 to the same target.*

*(The 461st flew three missions, ie July 28, 1944, Phlortna Marshalling Yard; September 24, 1944, Athens/Eleusis Airdrome and September 25, 1944 Submarines in the Athens area.*

**# # #**

## BAPTISM BY FLAK

It was 15 July 1944 with emphasis continuing on the destruction of enemy oil production. Col. Thomas S. Power, who later became the commander-in-chief of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) was assigned to the 304 BW for a little combat seasoning prior to taking a B-29 wing to Saipan for attacks on Japan. He was assigned to my crew that day as the co-pilot. The target was Ploesti and our 455 BG was to lead a maximum effort of 165 B-17s and 542 B-24s. Our fighter escort was 231 P-51s and 153 P-38s. A total of 155 B-24s were to strike our target, the Dacia Romano Oil Refinery and the Telejean Pumping Station. Bombing was to be by pathfinder as we expected the refineries to be covered by smoke from smoke pots. The lead navigator was Capt. Gross and the lead bombardier was Capt. Ohlmeyer. We had a fine mickey operator and the well trained crew of Wayne Smith. The briefing was uneventful except for a few shudders about the heavy flak and fighters to be expected. After takeoff and arriving at our departure point, Col. Power asked me what he was to do. I asked him to use the command radio to manage the bomber stream behind us. Our tail gunner advised that a group was getting out of position and overtaking us. This would cause a mix up at the target. Col. Power called the group leader and said, "Get your ass back into position or you will hear from me when we get on the ground!" Nothing more was needed. Short of the IP we donned our flak jackets and steel helmets. The Col. asked me what I wanted him to do on the bomb run. I told him to signal me when the upper flight on our right dropped their bombs so we could make a right descending turn as soon as possible to get away from the flak. Prior to the target, I gave course control to our bombardier and mickey operator. It was a nice smooth bomb run as our heading from the IP was exactly as briefed; our navigator did his job.

Col. Power signaled "bombs away" for the upper flight immediately after our bombs were dropped and we turned away from the target. The flak was extremely heavy and we bounced around a bit from the exploding shells. The Col. asked if it was always this bad. I responded that it raised a bit. The flight home was uneventful except for the reporting from our gunners that we lost at least two aircraft from flak. They also excitedly reported a large number of fires and smoke arising up to 25,000 feet. At debriefing Col. Cool asked Col. Power about the mission and his response was, "great crew, smooth as silk." He said he would make good use of the experience and that the key to a successful mission was well trained and disciplined crews and good functioning equipment. The record shows that Col. Power's B-29 crews did an outstanding job and his command of SAC reflected the philosophy he developed in combat.

*Source: Excerpted from a story by Al Asch, SORTIE*

## I'M FINE

There's nothing whatever the matter with me.

I'm just as healthy as I can be,  
I have arthritis in both my knees  
And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze,

My pulse is weak and my blood is thin,  
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

I think my liver is out of whack  
And a terrible pain is in my back.

My hearing is poor, my sight is dim,  
Most everything seems to be out of trim,  
But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

I have arch supports for both my feet.

Or I wouldn't be able to go on the street.

Sleeplessness I have night after night,  
And in the morning I'm just a sight,  
My memory is failing, my heads in a spin,  
I'm peacefully living on aspirin.

But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.

The moral is, as this tale we unfold,  
That for you and me who are growing old,  
It's better to say, "I'm fine" with a grin  
Than to let them know the shape we're in.

*Cardinal Cushing*

## THE CHAPLAINS CORNER



For every person who hurts you there will be one who comes and heals the hurt with kindness and tenderness. For every disappointment in life that brings bitterness, there will come a beautiful rain that will wash away the grief and anguish of the heart and leave in its place a rainbow of confidence. For all the broken vow, the unkept promises, will come the voice of truth which may be found in a kindly face, a gentle word, a touch of a friendly hand, to bless the weary heart and give sure relief. For every stumbling step, a lighted path will appear and a safe harbor will be found. Where there has been the very deepest grief, a richer and deeper joy will be found, if we will only depend, with faith, upon the promises of the true and living God.



## The 455th Bomb Group Roots Run Deep

Headquartered at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, the 91st Missile Wing (92 MW) is one of four operational missile units in Air Force Space Command. The wing is under the control of Twentieth Air Force, headquartered at F. E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming. The mission of the 91st Missile Wing is to defend the United States with safe, secure intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), ready to immediately put bombs on target.

The wing traces its history to the 91st Bombardment Group, activated on 15 April 1942. The group flew B-17's, including the most famous aircraft in the Eighth Air Force, the *Memphis Belle*. Flying bombing missions against German targets, including the first United States bombing mission into Germany in January 1943, was the group's primary mission. The 91st also bombed German defenses at Omaha Beach to help pave the way for the D-Day invasion in June 1944, and attacked enemy forces during the Battle of the Bulge as the Allies marched toward Berlin. The group earned two Distinguished Unit Citations for bravery in combat.

The 91st began with the activation of the 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (91 SRW) on 10 November 1948. Headquartered at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey, the 91 SRW's mission was global strategic reconnaissance with an emphasis on aerial photography and mapping.

When the Korean War broke out in 1950, the wing sent its 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron to Japan. The squadron remained there for the duration of the war and flew reconnaissance missions over North Korea and surveillance missions over the Sea of Japan. For its role in the war, the squadron received the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation. After the war, the wing continued operations until its inactivation on 8

November 1957.

The group lay dormant until its activation and redesignation in November 1962 as the 91st Bombardment Wing. Stationed at Glasgow Air Force Base, Montana, the wing trained in B-52 bombers and KC-135 tankers.

In September 1966, the group once again answered the call to duty when they deployed 17 B-52 bombers, 10 KC-135 tankers, and over 3,000 personnel to the western Pacific to support the United States war effort in Vietnam. During the 6-month deployment, the wing flew more than 1,000 bomber sorties against the North Vietnamese. The 91st Bombardment Wing earned four Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards from 1965 to 1968.

In June 1968, the Air Force redesignated the group as the 91st Strategic Missile Wing and moved it without personnel and equipment to Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota. There the wing took control of three squadrons of Minuteman I ICBMs.

In 1971, the 91st moved to the forefront of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) missile force by becoming the first wing to convert to Minuteman III ICBMs. Through the 70s and 80s the group continued to secure America's freedom by ensuring missiles stayed on alert. The 91st excelled in this area achieving the highest alert rate in the command for eight consecutive years from 1988-1995.

On 14 June 1991, SAC inactivated the 57th Air Division, heralding the first of many changes for the group. On 1 September 1991, SAC restructured the entire command, redesignating the 91 SMW to the 91st Missile Wing and assigning it to the newly activated Twentieth Air Force. In addition, SAC activated three groups and assigned them to the wing: 91st Operations Group, 91st Maintenance Group, and 91st Security Police Group. On 1 June 1992, the group went through another realignment with the stand down of Strategic Air Command and the activation of a

new major command, Air Combat Command (ACC). In December 1992, the Air Force redesignated the 91st Security Police Group as the 91st Missile Security Group.

The group's infrastructure continued to change in 1993 with the realignment of the Air Force's helicopter detachments under ACC. Detachment 7, 37 Air Rescue Squadron located at Minot Air Force Base was assigned to the 91st Operations Group on 1 February 1993. On 1 May 1993, Air Combat Command redesignated the detachment 54th Rescue Flight. On 1 July 1993, the group's command structure again changed when the Air Force realigned the 91st from ACC to Air Force Space Command. The men and women of the 91st, known as the "Roughriders", took the changes in stride, keeping missiles on alert, and maintaining their mission of deterrence.

During the summer of 1994, the Air Force reorganized the structure of the wing. Air Force Space Command inactivated the 91st Operations Group, the 91st Maintenance Group, and the 91st Missile Security Group. The wing was redesignated the 91st Missile Group. The change occurred to comply with the Air Force's new objective wing/base structure.

On 1 December 1995, when the Air Force activated the 91st Security Police Squadron. The most recent change occurred on 1 February 1996, when the Air Force redesignated the 91st Missile Group to the 91st Missile Wing. Also, on 1 February 1996, the Air Force activated the 91st Operations Group and the 91st Logistics Group.

Since coming to Minot Air Force Base, the wing has earned four Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards. In 1991, the 4091st Maintenance and Operations Groups, along with the 742nd Missile Squadron, also received this award. Furthermore, in 1992, the 91st Maintenance Group also earned the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. The wing earned the distinction of having the best maintenance squadron and the best

missile operations squadron in Air Force Space Command during the command's first annual Space and Missile Competition – Guardian Challenge. The 91st Missile Wing finished 1995 with the highest annual alert rate ever recorded in ICBM history. The wing's fleet of ICBMs remains a key facet of our nation's deterrent force.

For five decades, through two wars, and with vastly different missions, the 91st Missile Wing and its predecessors have answered America's call. Today, the 91st lives up to its motto, "Poised for Peace," and keeps our nations free.

## 740TH MISSILE SQUADRON

**Lineage.** Constituted 740th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) on 14 May 1943. Activated on 1 June 1943. Redesignated 740th Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, on 6 Mar 1944. Inactivated on 9 Sep 1945. Redesignated 740th Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy, on 27 Dec 1946. Activated in the reserve on 10 Jan 1947. Inactivated on 27 Jun 1949. Redesignated 740th Fighter-Day Squadron on 7 May 1956. Activated on 25 Jul 1956. Inactivated on 1 Jul 1957. Redesignated 740th Strategic Missile Squadron (ICBM-Minuteman), and activated, on 28 Jun 1962. Organized on 1 Nov 1962. Redesignated 740th Missile Squadron on 1 Sep 1991.

**Assignments.** 455th Bombardment Group, 1 Jun 1943–9 Sep 1945. Tenth Air Force, 10 Jan 1947; 455th Bombardment Group, 25 Mar 1947–27 Jun 1949. 455th Fighter-Day Group, 25 Jul 1956–1 Jul 1957. Strategic Air Command, 28 Jun 1962; 455th Strategic Missile Wing, 1 Nov 1962; 91st Strategic Missile Wing, 25 Jun 1968; 4091st Operations Group, 1 Jul 1988; 91st Strategic Missile Wing, 14 Feb 1991; 91st Operations Group, 1 Sep 1991; 91st Missile Group, 1 Jul 1994–.

**Stations.** Alamogordo AAFld, NM, 1 Jun 1943; Kearns, UT, 9 Sep 1943; Langley Field, VA, 5 Oct–13 Dec 1943; San Giovanni, Italy, 15 Jan 1944; Bari, Italy, c. Jul–9 Sep 1945. Hensley Field, TX, 10 Jan 1947–27 Jun 1949. Myrtle Beach AFB, SC, 25 Jul 1956–1 Jul 1957. Minot AFB, ND, 1 Nov 1962–.

**Aircraft and Missiles.** B-24, 1943–1945. B-29, 1947–1949. Minuteman I, 1963–1971; Minuteman III, 1968–.

**Operations.** Combat in MTO and ETO, 12 Feb 1944–25 Apr 1945. Not operational, 1956–1957. Missile alert operations, 1963–1991.

**Service Streamers.** None

**Campaign Streamers.** *World War II:* Air Offensive, Europe; Naples–Foggia; Anzio; Rome–Arno; Normandy; Northern France; Southern France; North Apennines; Rhineland; Central Europe; Po Valley; Air Combat, EAME Theater.

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers.** None

**Decorations.** Distinguished Unit Citations: Steyr, Austria, 2 Apr 1944; Austria, 26 Jun 1944. Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards: 1 Jul 1972–30 Jun 1973; 1 Jul 1976–30 Jun 1978; 1 Jul 1978–30 Jun 1980; 1 Jul 1989–14 Feb 1991.

**Emblem.** On a red disc a light red keystone in base shaded black, supporting a blue stylized missile fimbriated yellow ascending palewise enfiling a yellow orbit ring bendwise charged with three white stars and a yellow Orbit ring bendwise sinister charged with four white stars. *MOTTO:* CUSTODES PACIS – Custodians of the Peace. Approved on 16 Jul 1964 (K15735).

## 741ST MISSILE SQUADRON

**Lineage.** Constituted 741st Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) on 14 May 1943. Activated on 1 Jun 1943. Redesignated 741st

Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, on 6 Mar 1944. Inactivated on 9 Sep 1945. Redesignated 741st Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy, on 27 May 1947. Activated in the reserve on 26 Jun 1947. Inactivated on 27 Jun 1949. Redesignated 741st Fighter-Day Squadron on 7 May 1956. Activated on 25 Jul 1956. Inactivated on 1 Jul 1957. Redesignated 741st Strategic Missile Squadron (ICBM-Minuteman), and activated, on 28 Jun 1962. Organized on 1 Dec 1962. Redesignated 741st Missile Squadron on 1 Sep 1991.

**Assignments.** 455th Bombardment Group, 1 Jun 1943–9 Sep 1945. 455th Bombardment Group, 26 Jun 1947–27 Jun 1949. 455th Fighter-Day Group, 25 Jul 1956–1 Jul 1957. Strategic Air Command, 28 Jun 1962; 455th Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Minuteman), 1 Dec 1962; 91st Strategic Missile Wing, 25 Jun 1968; 4091st Operations Group, 1 Jul 1988; 91st Strategic Missile Wing, 14 Feb 1991; 91st Operations Group, 1 Sep 1991; 91st Missile Group, 1 Jul 1994–.

**Stations.** Alamogordo AAFld, NM, 1 Jun 1943; Kearns, UT, 9 Sep 1943; Langley Field, VA, 5 Oct–13 Dec 1943; San Giovanni, Italy, 15 Jan 1944–9 Sep 1945. Hensley Field, TX, 26 Jun 1947–27 Jun 1949. Myrtle Beach AFB, SC, 25 Jul 1956–1 Jul 1957. Minot AFB, ND, 1 Dec 1962–.

**Aircraft and Missiles.** B-24, 1943–1945. B-29, 1947–1949. Minuteman I, 1963–1971; Minuteman III, 1968–.

**Operations.** Combat in MTO and ETO during World War II, 12 Feb 1944–25 Apr 1945. Not operational, 1956–1957. Missile alert operations, 1963–1991.

**Service Streamers.** None.

**Campaign Streamers.** *World War II:* Air Offensive, Europe; Naples–Foggia; Anzio; Rome–Arno; Normandy; Northern France;



Southern France; North Apennines; Rhineland; Central Europe; Po Valley; Air Combat, EAME Theater.

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers.** None.

**Decorations.** Distinguished Unit Citations: Steyr, Austria, 2 Apr 1944; Austria, 26 Jun 1944. Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards: 1 Jul 1972–30 Jun 1973; 1 Jul 1976–30 Jun 1978; 1 Jul 1978–30 Jun 1980; 1 Jul 1989–14 Feb 1991.

**Emblem.** On a disc per pale Azure and Celeste a flight symbol bendwise Vert fimbriated Argent enfiling an orbit ring bendwise sinister charged with three electrons and an orbit palewise charged with two electrons of the last between in dexter chief two mullets bendwise sinister white and issuant from sinister base a demi-globe axis bendwise per bend blue and white gridlines counter-changed, overall a base embattled of the third all within a diminished bordure of the first. *MOTTO:* FIDELITAS ET FORTITUDO – Fidelity and Fortitude. Approved on 29 Sep 1964 (K 15827).

## 742ND MISSILE SQUADRON

**Lineage.** Constituted 742nd Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) on 14 May 1943. Activated on 1 Jun 1943. Redesignated 742nd Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, on 6 Mar 1944. Inactivated on 9 Sep 1945. Redesignated 742nd Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy, on 13 Aug 1947. Activated in the reserve on 9 Sep 1947. Inactivated on 27 Jun 1949. Redesignated 742nd Fighter-Day Squadron on 7 May 1956. Activated on 25 Jul 1956. Inactivated on 1 Jul 1957. Redesignated 742nd Strategic Missile Squadron (ICBM–Minuteman), and activated, on 18 Jul 1962. Organized on 1 Jan 1963. Redesignated 742nd Missile Squadron on 1 Sep 1991.

**Assignments.** 455th Bombardment Group, 1 Jun 1943–9 Sep 1945. 455th Bombardment Group, 9 Sep 1947–27 Jun 1949. 455th Fighter-Day Group, 25 Jul 1956–1 Jul 1957. Strategic Air Command, 18 Jul 1962; 455th Strategic Missile Wing, 1 Jan 1963; 91st Strategic Missile Wing, 25 Jun 1968; 4091st Operations Group, 1 Jul 1988; 91st Strategic Missile Wing, 14 Feb 1991; 91st Operations Group, 1 Sep 1991; 91st Missile Group, 1 Jul 1994–.

**Stations.** Alamogordo AAFld, NM, 1 Jun 1943; Kearns, UT, 9 Sep 1943; Langley Field, VA, 5 Oct–13 Dec 1943; San Giovanni, Italy, 15 Jan 1944–9 Sep 1945. Hensley Field, TX, 9 Sep 1947–27 Jun 1949. Myrtle Beach AFB, SC, 25 Jul 1956–1 Jul 1957. Minot AFB, ND, 1 Jan 1963–.

**Aircraft and Missiles.** B-24, 1943–1945. B-29, 1947–1949. Minuteman I, 1963–1971; Minuteman III 1968–.

**Operations.** Combat in MTO and ETO during World War II. Not operational, 1956–1957. Missile alert operations, 1963–1991.

**Service Streamers.** None.

**Campaign Streamers.** *World War II:* Air Offensive, Europe; Naples–Foggia; Anzio; Rome–Arno; Normandy; Northern France; Southern France; North Apennines; Rhineland; Central Europe; Po Valley; Air Combat, EAME Theater.

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers.** None.

**Decorations.** Distinguished Unit Citations: Steyr, Austria, 2 Apr 1944; Austria, 26 Jun 1944. Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards: 1 Jul 1972–30 Jun 1973; 1 Jul 1976–30 Jun 1978; 1 Jul 1978–30 Jun 1980; 1 Jul 1988–30 Jun 1990; 1 Jul 1990–14 Feb 1991.

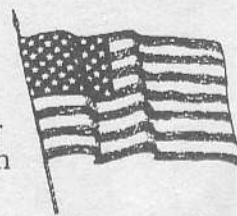
**Emblem.** Issuing from the base of a blue disc a white cloud formation detailed Air Force blue, directly above, an Air Force yellow key,

above this arched from lower sinister to upper dexter a green olive branch over a red lightning bolt from upper sinister to lower dexter, vertical over all a white missile detailed Air Force blue. *MOTTO:* CLAVIS PACIS – The Key to Peace. Approved on 4 May 1964 (KE 15514).

*ED: The 3 squadrons of minutemen II CBMs taken over by the 91st Strategic Missile Wing in June 1968 originally were the 740th, 741st, and 742nd Bomb Squadrons of the original 455th Bomb Group.*

## THIS FLAG,

which we honor and under which we serve, is the emblem of our unity, our power, our thought and purpose as a nation. It has no other character than that which we give it from generation to generation. The choices are ours. It floats in majestic silence above the hosts that execute those choices, whether in peace or in war. And yet, though silent, it speaks to us – speaks to us of the past, of the men and women who went before us, and of the records they wrote upon it.



“We celebrate the day of its birth; and from its birth until now it has witnessed a great history, has floated on high the symbol of great events, of a great plan of life worked out by a great people...”

“Woe be to the man or group of men that seeks to stand in our way in this day of high resolution when every principle we hold dearest is to be vindicated and made secure for the salvation of the nation. We are ready to plead at the bar of history, and our flag shall wear a new luster. Once more we shall make good with our lives and fortunes the great faith to which we were born, and a new glory shall shine in the face of our people.”

*President Woodrow Wilson  
1917 Flag Day message*

## ALL WORK AND NO PLAY...



455th EM's prefer a cooling coke at a quiet cafe rather than see the sights in Pompeii.

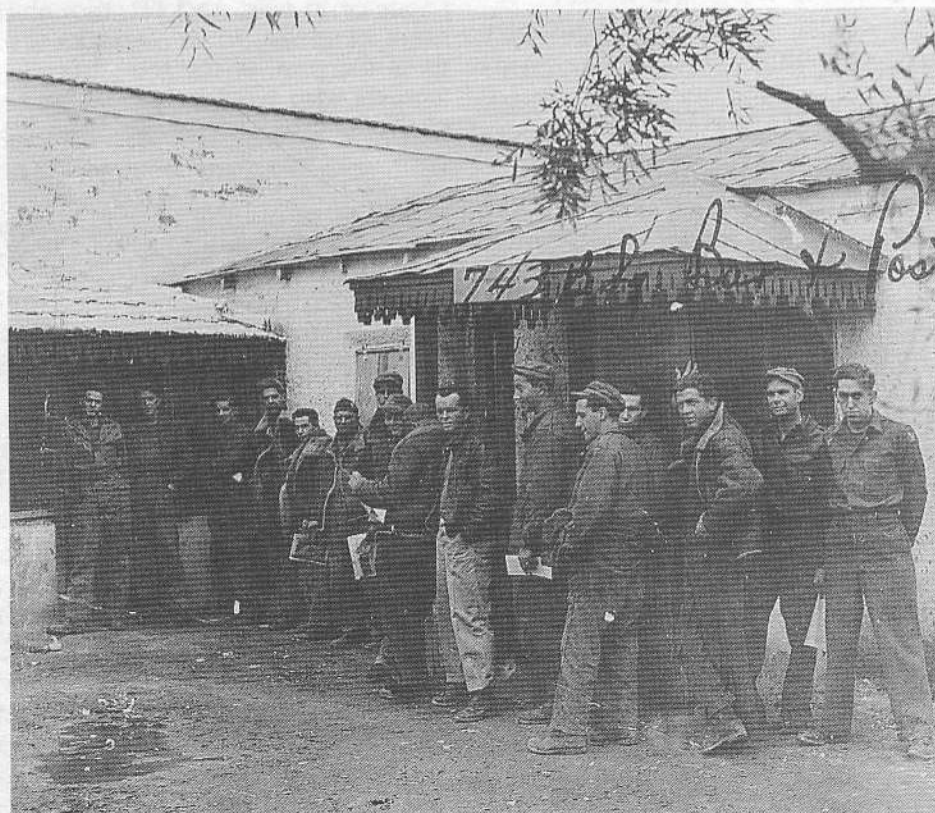
ie Smith Hayward, Kenneth Hill, Ralph Moore.



Well that's not entirely right, they did visit some ruins!



And went to Rome!



Waiting for the PX to open.

Squadron PX's were located in small tents in the center of the enlisted men's living area. While not overstocked with merchandise, they managed nearly from the start to meet the basic necessities of life with Ipana toothpaste, Life Buoy soap, writing paper, envelopes, pencils, pens, razor blades, sour lemon balls, and shaving cream. One could buy a pack of cigarets for 15 cents. Much later, there was cold soda, an occasional ration of beer and even gifts one could send home. Late in March 1944, there were chocolate bars, a refreshing change from the box rations in the planes, provided for aircrews. But no matter how bare, the PX met the needs.





## AIRBORNE WITH A PIECE OF TUBING, A LENGTHY HOSE, AND TWO CLAMPS

The story started in the air, shifted to the ground and ended in the air. M/Sgt. Robert Betsinger was the C.C. of the Fearless Fifinella. Betsinger was known as Betsy more than Betsinger. I was one of his 2 helpers. He alternated the helpers to be out for pre-flight. When Betsy would start the engines for pre-flight, I stood out in front of each engine with a fire extinguisher. Often wondered what he would say if he found out I didn't know how to use it?

After pulling through the props, we found the putt-putt wouldn't start although the fuel tank was full. After some work on it, it started. I'm sure everyone knows the sequence for starting the engines, 3, 4, 2 and one. When Betsy started #1, immediately a clear fluid poured out. Getting Betsy's attention, I pointed to #1 engine and ran my finger across my neck for him to shut it down. When he found out the problem, he shut down the other engines.

We rolled over an engine stand and removed some cowling. We could see where a piece of flak had hit an engine mount which I thought had a gold tinge to it. The flak had ricocheted off that engine mount and made a cut in the fuel line to #1 engine carburetor. It looked as if the cut had been made by a razor blade.

Betsy said cut out a 3 inch length of the hose while he went to the junk pile to get a piece of tubing and 2 hose clamps. One blade in my trusty knife was small and very sharp. By the time Betsy returned, the flight crew had arrived, one from the 742nd. Why the 742nd? I never found out. The pilot kept assuring Betsy he was

going on that mission, so don't worry. Betsy slipped a hose clamp on each end of the fuel line. Then inserted the tubing into the hose ends, tightened the hose clamps and had the F.E. put on some pressure. No leak! The pilot kept saying he was going no matter what time it was. We put back the cowling and off they went. Can't remember if the pilots checked out the engines before getting onto the taxiway.

We watched as the old girl roared down the runway and then made a bee-line to the formation. As we watched, it was comical to see one plane move out of its position and the old Fearless slipped into the vacated place in the formation. It completed the mission. So this is a little story of why we were on the ground there - to keep them flying.

This happened over 50 years ago. Yet, I can still see where that flak ricocheted off that engine mount as if I were looking at it now. During the last few years I've often wondered if any of that air crew is alive and remembers this incident. If so, I wish that person would speak up.

Evidently the fuel hose sealed up when hit and while sitting over night, opened up. One thing I wish I had done was keep that piece of fuel line I'd cut out. To me, it would be quite a war souvenir now.

*Richard Humphrey*

*Taking a clue from the Winter '95 Certignola Connection, all mistakes, errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation are strictly the fault of the pen used to write this.*

## \$ DUES \$

Dues for 1997 are due November 1, 1996. If you haven't already done so, get your check for \$15 to Lou Hansen ASAP. Make your check out to the **455th Bomb Group Association, Inc.** and send it to **P.O. Box 286, Spencer, Iowa 51301**

## FINAL FLIGHTS

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

S/Sgt. Robert H. Armstrong (06/08/96) Ball Turret Gunner, Harry Grosser, Jr.'s crew, 741st B.Sq.

T/Sgt. John E. Warren (05/22/96) Flt. Engineer/Top Turret Gunner, Willis J. Pardoe's crew, 742nd B.Sq.

Capt. Carroll E. Sorenson (06/11/96) Squadron Navigator, James W. Shumard, Jr.'s crew, 743rd B.Sq.

1st Lt. Bill J. Hutton (04/12/96) 1st Pilot, Plane "Linda Ann", 741st B.Sq.

T/Sgt. John C. Laptewicz (04/11/96) Flt. Engineer/Ball Turret Gunner, Don M. Rawles' crew, 743rd B.Sq.

S/Sgt. Kenneth O. Roegner (05/18/96) Armorer, NOse Turret/Waist Gunner, Timothy Swearengen's crew, 743rd B.Sq.

Sgt. Joseph Meyer Levi (10/22/95) PX Director for the 743rd B.Sq.

Sgt. Walter Trzasko (02/22/96) Top Turret Gunner, Franklin H. Nichols, Jr.'s crew, 743rd B.Sq.

1st Lt. Elmer W. Taylor (05/08/95) 1st Pilot, Plane "Twin Tails", 742nd B.Sq.

S/Sgt. Orion L. Hawkins (10/27/95) Flt. Engineer/Gunner, Donald E. Anderson's crew, 742nd B.Sq.

S/Sgt. Joseph I. Sokel (05/12/95) Headed the Instrument Shop, 743rd B.Sq.

S/Sgt. Jay W. Shoots (08/01/86) aircraft Bombsight and Auto Pilot Maintenance, 743rd B.Sq.

Sgt. Richard J. Bales (03/02/81) Radio Operator/Tail Turret Gunner, Henry G. Moreman's crew, 741st B.Sq.

M/Sgt. Albert H. Hagemann (12/17/86) Line Chief, 741st B.Sq.

Bonnie J. Hagemann passed away Feb. 1, 1995; was the widow of Albert H. Hagemann.

Dorothy M. Levenson passed away on June 21, 1996; was the wife of Kenneth V. Levenson.

Gwendolyn E. Mlack passed away on Aug. 8, 1996; was the wife of Edward C. "Eddie" Mlack.

Lt. Merl F. Newby, Jr. (06/26/44) Bombardier, Robert W. Lackner's crew, 741st B.Sq.

## Maybe Your Editor Needs Glasses!



Maybe I need glasses – we all do not write as legibly as we used to and it's difficult to make out the spelling of some names. So if there are errors, or photos and names that cannot be identified, your editor did the best he could.

## John Davis Asked –

Reference page 5, Spring 1996 Cerignola Connection: In our visits at the reunions, we talk to some of the people but with many only for a matter of minutes and with the others only a little concerning their present situation, activities, etc. It's only a very few that I find that I know any real background on, or what they've been doing since retirement. I think members really would enjoy knowing what happened to the others after leaving the service. Would it be feasible to have members submit what they've been doing all these years. It would be enjoyable reading.

*ED: Give me a short recap and I'll get as many in the next issue that I can.*

## A THOUGHTFUL MIND

When it sees a nation's flag, sees not the flag, but the nation itself. And whatever may be its symbols, its insignia, he reads chiefly in the flag, the government, the principles, the truths, the history that belongs to the nations that sets it forth. The American flag has been a symbol of Liberty and men rejoiced in it.

"The stars upon it were like the bright morning stars of God, and stripes upon it were beams of morning light. As at early dawn the stars shine forth even while it grows light, and then as the sun

advances that light breaks into banks and streaming lines of color, the glowing red and intense white striving together, and ribbing the horizon with bars effulgent, so, on the American flag, stars and beams of many-colored light shine out together..."

*Henry Ward Beecher  
Pastor and Writer  
(1813-1887)*

## FIFTY YEARS YOUNG!

In 1997 it will be fifty years since the U.S. Army Air Corps became the U.S. Air Force. The anniversary period will begin on September 18, 1996, and run through December 31, 1997.

The objectives of this anniversary will be to:

- Highlight the importance of air and space power
- Increase pride within the air force team
- Thank and honor air force veterans and family members (33 million strong!)
- Educate the public on air force contributions to the nation
- Thank the community and our citizens for their support
- Create an Air Force Memorial

The festivities will begin on September 18, 1996, with the following events taking place in Washington, DC:

- Air Force Memorial ground-breaking ceremony
- 50th anniversary stamp unveiling – First Day of Issue
- Air Force Anniversary gala performance
- Air Force Pioneer Awards presentation

This is only the first of many major events, such as:

AETC "Tattoo", Sept. 24, 1996  
"Spirit of Kitty Hawk", Dec. 16-17, 1996  
Thunder Over Louisville, April 19-20, 1997  
Nellis Airshow, April 22-26, 1997  
RAF Mildenhall Airshow, May 24-25, 1997

HQAMX Berlin Airlift Commemoration, June 7-9, 1997  
New York City Events, June 20-22, 1997  
Hickam AFB Airshow, July 19-20, 1997  
ACC Air Tattoo, Sept. 4-5, 1997  
AFA Convention, Sept. 15-17, 1997  
AF Gala, Washington, DC, Sept. 18-19, 1997

## VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Your editor is still looking for a volunteer chaplain to write the short Chaplain's Corner twice yearly. Also an official reunion photographer to take those much needed reunion photographs looked forward to by members who could not attend the reunion.

## THE FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE Those Memorable Years 1943-1945

The Fifteenth Air Force in its 18 months of existence during the European World War II made a tremendous contribution to the complete and overwhelming defeat of the Nazi enemy.

It destroyed all gasoline production within its range in Southern Europe.

It destroyed 6286 enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground.

It contributed to the attainment of total air supremacy in the skies of Europe by knocking out all major aircraft factories in its sphere.

It crippled the enemy's transportation system over half of once-occupied Europe by repeated attacks by bombers and fighters.

It came on many occasions to the aid of hard-pressed ground forces or spearheaded the advance of the armies of our Allies. It dropped 309,126 tons of bombs on enemy targets in 12 countries of Europe including major military installations in eight capital cities.



Its combat personnel made 151,029 heavy bomber sorties and 89,397 fighter sorties against the enemy.

The magnificent record of the Fifteenth was not accomplished without cost in the lives of brave men and the loss of 3379 aircraft.

The Fifteenth has made AAF history in record breaking flights, number of operational aircraft dispatched on a single mission, longest USSTAF B-24 mission, and in numerous other instances which will always be proudly remembered by its entire personnel.

Brief summaries of the principal operations of the Fifteenth AAF follow:

## COUNTER-OIL OPERATIONS

An achievement in which the Fifteenth AAF is justly proud was the drying up of German fuel supplies through attacks on oil refineries. As a result the vaunted 20th Century Wehrmacht was forced to run on 18th Century transportation. The first attack in the coordinated campaign to eliminate German gasoline supplies began with a mission against rail yards at Ploesti April 5, 1944. The damage done in this and subsequent rail attacks in the great refinery town convinced AAF planners that the Fifteenth's contention that heavy bombardment could profitably be used against oil installations was sound. This commodity then received top priority for the strategic Allied bombers striking at Germany.

When the campaign began over 50 per cent of Germany's total gasoline production was located within range of the Fifteenth. On March 23, 1945, an attack on the great Ruhland synthetic plant and a very minor refinery near Vienna dried up the last known source of gasoline for the German Army. And for months before the German documents prescribing the most stringent restrictions on the use of fuel testified to the continuing success of the campaign.

Oil is a memory of Fifteenth

AAF crewmen marked by great names: Ploesti, Vienna, Brux, Blechhammer, Ruhland--where the enemy was determined in his resistance, using aircraft before the decline of the Luftwaffe, smoke screens and always some of the heaviest known concentrations of flak. To the intelligence analysts of the Fifteenth, oil meant refineries drawing on four major sources of the crude product.

Within range of the Fifteenth were three major crude oil basins, in Rumania, Hungary and Austria, and a series of synthetic oil plants in Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. First attacked and first eliminated were the Ploesti refineries. After Rumanian gasoline production was reduced from 155,700 tons per month in March 1944 to 15,400 tons per month in August, when captured by the Red Army. With unerring precision the Fifteenth's bombers sought out and destroyed what was left.

Hungary followed Rumania: synthetics--six great plants, at Brux in the Sudetenland, Blechhammer North and South and Odertal in German Silesia. Oswiecim in Polish Silesia and Ruhland, just south of Berlin--were battered. Most were knocked out in a series of instrument attacks in December that earned the tribute from Lt. General Ira C. Eaker, "The Fifteenth AAF is undoubtedly the leading exponent in the world today of blind bombing."

The Viennese refineries were operating to the final blows in March, an example of German tenacity in keeping going. Some of them were successfully attacked in early assaults by the Fifteenth; high repair priorities given oil by Nazi planners permitted them to resume production but they were all finally destroyed. But no amount of ingenuity could save the German war machine from squeaking to a halt for lack of modern fuel.

## COUNTER-AIR OPERATIONS

The first objective of a strategic air force is to assure complete air superiority so that the task of

demolishing the enemy's war economy may be accomplished without prohibitive loss. When "Operation Pointblank" was conceived in the winter of 1944, about 50 per cent of the greatly increased single-engine aircraft production, present or contemplated, for the German Air Force was within range of the Fifteenth AAF in Italy.

"Operation Pointblank" was designed to break the back of fighter manufacture which offered a threat to the entire Allied bombing effort. The Germans expected to gain some immunity from air attacks by locating many of the biggest assembly and production complexes to the south, out of range of British-based bombers. In a series of missions which began with the first flown by the Fifteenth November 2, 1943, against Wiener Neustadt, a focal point of one of the three main complexes (Regensburg was another heavily hit by the Fifteenth), the elaborate production schemes of the Luftwaffe stood at about 250 aircraft a month within range of the fifteenth Air Force as against a contemplated production of 650 aircraft.

The part played by the Fifteenth was carried out in attacks on Wiener Neustadt and its satellite plants as far away as Brasov, the major plants at Regensburg, where Me-109's were also made, and the twin-engine fighter complex in Budapest. By May large-scale production was at an end and German fighter planes were being produced inefficiently and of inferior quality in small dispersal plants, some on the sites of the old factories. By the time production figures had risen again, the Luftwaffe was outnumbered and outclassed and fuel and pilot shortages made it no longer a major factor in air battle.

Counter air operations continued to a certain extent throughout the summer and fall of 1944, chiefly in attacks on enemy airdromes. The heavy bombers successfully dropped fragmentation bomb carpets on many airdromes, principally in the Vienna area. The

fighters added a new trick in strafing fields crowded with Nazi ground support aircraft fleeing from Red Army advances in the Balkans with phenomenal results. The last chapter in this type of operations came in late March when frag bombs destroyed 108 and damaged 54 German planes in one day. Most were concentrated on two airdromes near Prague, whence they flew against Russian troops in Silesia.

In the winter of 1944/45 the German Air Force introduced operationally the revolutionary jet-propelled Me-262 to oppose heavy bomber penetrations of the Reich. This white hope was never effective against the Fifteenth, although there were a number of engagements when the Italian-based Fortresses flew the longest mission over Europe to Berlin and nearly as arduous trips to the Ruhland synthetic oil plant. The score was well in favor of the Fifteenth, with its fighters accounting for twelve jet planes and the bombers and additional handful. Including those knocked out on the ground in destructive attacks on several key airdromes, the Fifteenth AAF destroyed approximately 160 Me-262's.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Throughout the time that the Fifteenth AAF helped to destroy first the German Air Force and the German oil production, the campaign against communications was also waged. This was a campaign often overshadowed but never obscured by other operations.

Communications targets were attacked whenever the strategic situation permitted, and often, when the tactical situation demanded, received the full attention of the Fifteenth Air Force.

Our own ground forces in Italy and France, the advancing Russian armies in southeastern Europe, as well as the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Partisans were substantially aided by the wide-spread

communications attacks of the Fifteenth AAF.

The campaign reached a high point in December 1944, when 108 attacks against communications targets were carried out. Attacks on the same scale continued throughout February, March and April, chiefly against key centers in Austria. This last phase aimed at disruption of German supply movements from industrial areas within Germany, Austria and northern Italy to the Italian, Yugoslavian, southern Russian, and western fronts.

The Fifteenth's methods of striking at communications involved both fighters and bombers, seeking to cut lines and to destroy rail traffic. Heavy bombers and dive-bombing Light-Attacks on crowded rail yards and strafing of traffic on the lines blew up and burned vast numbers of locomotives and other rolling stock, as well as supplies and equipment.

The communications campaign, in some respects halfway between long-range bombing and destruction of material at source, and operations close to the front lines, vitally affected the power of the enemy to resist the Allied armies sweeping into Germany from all sides.

## GROUND COOPERATION

The Fifteenth AAF was the lineal descendant of a strategic air force that learned from its inception the technique of cooperating with ground armies. Following the Twelfth bomber command, when the Northwest African Strategic Air Force was activated in February 1943, its medium bombers and the two heavy bombardment groups, the 97th and 301st Flying Fortress units, which formed the nucleus for the present powerful aggregation, were called upon to repel Rommel at Kasserine Pass. The two oldest Liberator groups, the 98th and 376th, learned ground cooperation with the Eighth Army in the Western Desert.

This tradition of standing ready

to forsake its long range blows at the German war potential for temporary coordination with the infantry continued and its technique was perfected until the record blows at Lugo and before Bologna by the Fifteenth's formation, the heavy bombers of the Mediterranean struck at Germans fighting in Tunisia and Sicily. At Salerno, strategic fighters patrolled the skies over the beaches and the bombers battered the enemy in the hills.

One of the Fifteenth's first major campaigns was preparation for the Anzio landing in January, followed by concerted frag bomb attacks against German forces counter-attacking against the bridgehead. At Cassino monastery in February 1944, at Cassino itself in March, and at the time of the great breakthrough in May, the Fifteenth directly co-operated in response to requests from the Fifth Army. In October the heavies put forth their greatest effort up to that time in coordination with a drive by the Fifth Army mired in the Appennines. On April 15, the Fifteenth AAF sent up 98 per cent of its available aircraft to soften the approaches to Bologna, in a historical maximum effort.

Army missions were welcomed by airmen of the Fifteenth because they were thus able to help their brothers-in-arms on the ground. The assistance given seemed more direct and personal than the also important task of a strategic air force in destroying enemy armies at the source of production.

## GROUND ARMAMENT AND AMMUNITION

Never a top priority target system, enemy ground armament and ammunition installations have nevertheless been very seriously damaged in the relatively few major attacks directed by the Fifteenth at these targets. The most successful blows delivered from Italy against Armored Force Vehicle plants were those of March 23, 24 and 25 1944, when the Fifteenth's heavy bombers knocked out three of the



most important--the St. Valentine plant produced over 1,000 tanks in 1944 and was an important repair center; the Berlin factory was a major producer of the 50-ton Panther tanks; while the Prague works was engaged in the manufacture of self-propelled tank destroyers. The virtual loss through bombardment of these essential military producers was a severe blow to German armies facing the Allied offensives from the West and East.

The over-riding priority of oil and communications as the major assignments for strategic bombing put AFV targets on the alternate list for a long period. As such, the Linz Hermann Goering plant was struck and severely damaged in July 1944, St. Valentine was attacked for the first time in August 1944, and the Skoda works at Pilsen received some damage in October 1944.

Among the ordinance depots, Munich Milbertshofen and Vienna South Ordinance were heavily bombed. On the whole, however, small formations struck targets in this system when weather prevented them from reaching the scheduled targets of greater importance.

The importance and timeliness of the March assaults cannot be over-emphasized. While no shortage of tanks, guns or ammunition was felt to exist in the German ranks prior to the last great Allied offensives of the war, the losses which the Wehrmacht suffered as it reeled back before the sweeping advances of the Allies threw new importance on these targets.

## RECOVERY OF AIRMEN

The rescue and repatriation of aircrews shot down in enemy territory was a graphic and distinctive feature of the operations of the Fifteenth in the Mediterranean Theater. No other Air Force recovered so many of its missing pilots and crews, nor undertook escape activities in so many countries. More than 5,650 personnel have been returned, by air, surface ves-

sels or on foot through enemy lines. In over 300 successful operations, men have been brought back safely from Tunisia, Italy, France, Switzerland, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany.

## SERVICE COMMAND ACHIEVEMENTS

When the Fifteenth AAF was organized its effective strength was 654 airplanes. On April 15, 1945, 1,916 aircraft were assigned to the Air Force and 98 per cent of them took to the air to attack targets at the Italian front. These figures illustrate the greatest achievement and the growth of the Fifteenth Air Force Service Command. Less than one half of one per cent were cut of commission for lack of parts, a fact which measures the efficiency of the command.

During the year and a half that it operated during war time in Italy, the Fifteenth Air Force Service Command repaired and retrieved 1,500 aircraft down at emergency fields in Italy and Yugoslavia and has repaired 5,323 that have required major maintenance at regular bases. Modifications of new aircraft, dictated by battle experience, were performed by the command, to the tune of 35,000 heavy bomber changes and 45,000 fighter changes.

Supply was also a function of the Service Command, carried on in Italy against difficulties of inadequate shipping space and poor road communications. Nevertheless, trucks of the Fifteenth Air Force Service Command carried over 1,500,000 tons of supplies and equipment for a total of over 27,000,000 miles. To keep the planes of the Air Force in the air, 482,782,700 gallons of aviation gasoline were supplied since January 1944.

## LETTERS, WE GET LETTERS!

I received a nice letter and a packet of photographs from Ralph Moore, now living in Baltimore, Maryland. Ralph was a member of the 743rd Squadron and worked in the Personal Equipment Section. He also filled in, occasionally, as PX Clerk. Ralph says that he has lost contact with all the 743rd EM's since leaving the service. If you want to drop him a line he can be reached at: **7845 Hillsway Ave, Baltimore, MD, 21234-5940.**

Of interest he included in the packet a CI meal ticket with 18 days left unpunched, a copy of the 455 Bomb Group calendar for the year of 1945; the 743rd mess pass issued by Capt. L. W. Taylor; G.I. Vehicle Permit, issued by Capt. Paul Livingston, Transportation Office; and a copy of the Soldier's Guide to Naples. It's a real neat booklet as it tells you where to, stay, to eat, to drink, times and places of church services, tours you can take, bus schedules, points of interest in Naples, and bit of friendly advice from the Provost Marshal. If you're going to Naples, Paul would probably lend you his copy.

Unfortunately I can't reproduce them in the Cerignola Connection, but they still were memories of another time.

## LOST 455TH BG COUSIN

Lon Bechtold writes that he is searching for information about his cousin, Wilbur C. Bechtold, Operations Officer, 743rd Squadron. Wilbur stayed in the service after the war and the Bechtold family lost all contact with his family through the years and many moves. Any help or information would be greatly appreciated. Write **Lon Bechtold, HCR 1, Box 670, Blue Eye Missouri 65611-9644.**

*Ed. Wilbur is carried on our rolls as deceased.*

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

**Mission 45, May 22** We sent 35 B-24's to bomb the harbor at La Spezia, Italy. Although the target was partially obscured, many bombs dropped in the target area. Flak was light and no fighters were seen. All planes returned to base safely.

**Mission 46, May 23** We were still helping the 5th Army as we scheduled 39 B-24's loaded with 500# GP bombs to bomb troop concentrations round Nemi, Italy. Light flak was seen in the target area but it was ineffectual. Only 26 aircraft dropped their bombs on the target as the second section did not have a clear view of it due to the cloud-cover. All planes returned safely.

**Mission 47, May 24** Thirty-seven B-24's loaded with fragmentation bombs were scheduled to bomb Munchendorf Airdrome in Austria. flak at the target was heavy intense and accurate. We lost two aircraft to flak with 20 crewmen missing in action. The results were not good as only 19 aircraft dropped their bombs on the cloud-covered target. The remaining planes dropped their bombs on the Varazidan marshalling yards.

**Mission 48, May 25** We sent 37 B-24's to bomb the Airdrome at Piasenzia, Italy. The flak was light but the fighters were very aggressive and pressed their attacks most forcefully. One of our aircraft was shot up so badly it was forced to make a belly landing at a British base, and two crewmen were severely injured. All the remaining planes returned to base.

**Mission 49, May 26** We took 35 B-24's to Grenoble, France. Our target was the marshalling yard. There was no flak nor fighters and we dropped over 85 tons of 500# bombs on the target. All planes returned safely.

**Mission 50, May 27** We flew our

50th mission. Thirty-seven B-24's carrying 100# demolition bombs dropped them on the airdrome at Montpellier, France. The airdrome was called Frejorges and we did a good job of bombing on its west end. Flak at the target was moderate and accurate, and over 17 of our airplanes received damage. No fighters were seen and the group returned to base with no casualties.

**Mission 51, May 28** We sent 38 B-24's to bomb the harbor at Genoa, Italy. The flak at the target was moderate but very accurate and 14 of our planes received damage. No enemy fighters were seen; we had a good bomb run at the target. All planes returned safely.

**Mission 52, May 29** On this date we briefed for two missions. This was the first time we had attempted this and it was an unusual occurrence. The first mission was to Bos Crupa, Yugoslavia where we sent 40 B-24's loaded with 100# GP bombs. Little resistance was met and we had a successful bomb run in the target area. We returned to our base for our second mission of the day.

**Mission 53, May 30** Our mission was a little rougher than the last two as we sent 35 B-24's to bomb the airdrome at Welz, Austria. We were pleasantly surprised as we had little opposition, either in the way of flak or enemy fighters. We did find a new way to lose an aircraft as one plane dropped its bombs on the plane below. This resulted in ten crewmen missing in action.

**Mission 55, May 31** We ended the month by sending 36 B-24's to drop 500# GP bombs on the Urinea Sperantza oil Refinery at Ploesti, Rumania. Flak at the target was intense and accurate. Twenty-five fighters were seen but they appeared to be waiting for stragglers, as they did not press their attacks against the formation. We did lay claim to three enemy

fighters destroyed and one probable. All aircraft returned safely.

May would turn out to be our most productive month. The 455th put 745 aircraft over the target while flying 21 missions. We dropped over 1,631 tons of bombs on the enemy. We claimed nine enemy fighters destroyed and five probable. On the other hand, we lost nine aircraft and 90 crewmen missing in action. In addition, we had one crewman killed in action. In the last ten days of the month, we flew 11 missions and had 411 aircraft over the target. That's an average of over 37 aircraft per mission for the last ten days of May. What a tremendous effort on the part of the ground crews as well as all the support people in the Group and the 304th Service Group.

### JUNE 1944

The month of June saw the 15th Air Force and the Group concentrating on communication targets, namely marshalling yards. We bombed them eight of the 15 missions in June. This strategy was mainly aimed at disrupting their flow of oil and other supplies to the enemy. With the outlook of good weather ahead, our effort to strike deeper into the enemy's territory increased.

**Mission 56, June 2** We sent 34 B-24's to bomb the marshalling yards at Miskole, Hungary. Each plane was carrying ten 500# GP bombs. Flak at the target was heavy but not very accurate and we came through the mission without any casualties.

**Mission 57, June 4** 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.

**Mission 58, June 6** We were back



in the oil business. This time, 37 B-24's loaded with ten 500# GP bombs hit the marshalling yards at Brasov, Rumania. This was one of the marshalling yards servicing Ploesti. Although the flak was heavy and nine Me-109's attacked, we came through without any losses.

**Mission 59, June 7** We received news of the invasions of Europe by the Allies on D-Day, June 6th. Our spirits were lifted as it meant the war would be shortened. Thirty-five B-24's loaded with 500# GP bombs attacked the ship-yards at Voltri, Italy. This was our secondary target and the results were not very good as the target was partially covered by clouds. Flak was light and no fighters were sighted. All planes returned to base safely.

**Mission 60, June 8** Thirty-eight B-24's carrying 1,000 GP bombs were scheduled to bomb the marshalling yards in the Munich area. When the pathfinder equipment malfunctioned, the Group had to bomb on ETA and the results were not observed. Flak was very heavy and those fighters who were in the air attacked other groups. We lost one aircraft and ten crewmen missing in action. The rest of the Group returned to base safely.

**Mission 61, June 9** Our bomb load was fragmentation bombs. Thirty-eight B-24's attacked the airdrome at Ferrara, Italy. Results were good as there were a good number of aircraft sighted on the field. Flak was light and there were no enemy fighters sighted. All planes returned safely.

(Fragmentation bombs are the least liked bomb load, they are very 'touchy.' They drop out of the plane in clusters, separate very quickly and become armed. They cannot be jettisoned safely as other bombs can. The only safe way to get rid of them is to toggle them out and in an emergency that takes too much time. One of our pilots salvoed his frag bombs and

one blew up shortly after it left the bomb bay, forcing a water landing in the Adriatic.)

**Mission 62, June 11** Today we were after oil supplies. Thirty-eight B-24's were to bomb the oil storage facilities at Giurgiu, Rumania. The flak was moderate at the target area so we had a good pattern and many fires were seen in the target area. Seven Me-109's attacked the formation. One fighter got too close, was shot down and seen to crash. We lost one aircraft and ten crewmen were missing in action. The rest of the planes returned to base safely.

"As an aircraft flight engineer, I rode in the top turret. It gave me a good view forward and almost 360° of fire with the two 50 caliber machine guns. Most of the fighters I shot at came from the front, diving through the formation from nine, three or 12 o'clock. While the fighters were attacking, you would be in a cold sweat and after they left, you froze all the way back to base, I could at least shoot back at them. I felt sorry for the pilot and co-pilot who had to sit there and take it." A quote from Emmitt Ledbetter Jr. of the 743rd Squadron.

**Mission 63, June 13** Our target was the BMW Aircraft Engine Factory in Munich, Germany. Thirty-three B-24's loaded with 1,000# GP bombs attacked the target. It was well defended and the flak was very heavy, extremely accurate and we lost one aircraft. Two crew members were killed by flak and one seriously wounded in the returning aircraft. Ten crewmen were missing in action.

**Mission 64, June 16** Thirty-seven B-24's loaded with 250# GP bombs took off to bomb the oil facilities at Winterhoven, Austria which is near Vienna. We dropped our bombs on the target and many fires were seen. As usual, flak at the target was very heavy and accurate, and we lost one plane over the target from it. Many fighters were seen in the area. They

pressed their attacks vigorously, but we managed to come through without additional losses. We lost one aircraft on the way home without explanation. Twenty crewmen were missing in action.

**Mission 65, June 22** A maximum effort was ordered as 42 B-24's carrying 250# GP bombs to attack the Motor Repair Facilities at Chivasso, Italy. The Group had an outstanding bombing mission as over 82% of the bombs fell within a 1,000 foot radius of the aiming point and all bombs fell within 2,000 feet. Flak was light in the target area and all planes returned safely, a picture-perfect mission.

**Mission 66, June 24** Thirty-seven B-24's took off to bomb the railroad repair shops at Craiova, Rumania. flak at the target was very light and good results were obtained. No fighters were observed in the area and all planes returned safely.

**Mission 67, June 25** We tried something a little different for heavy bomb group. We bombed from 14,500 feet and found that the B-24 flew much better formation at that altitude. Thirty-seven B-24's dropped 110 tons of bombs on the target area, a railroad bridge at Arles, France. Although we had a good concentration of bombs in the target area, we could not determine if the bridge was hit. Fortunately, flak in the area was very light and none of our planes were hit. All planes returned to base.

**Mission 68, June 16** Moosbierbaum, Austria Oil Refinery. The following is the field order and all other related papers that resulted from the mission to Moosbierbaum.

**Mission 69, June 28** We were only able to get 29 aircraft ready for our mission to bomb the airdrome at Karlova, Bulgaria. We dropped 57 tons of bombs on the target. Flak was very light and no enemy fighters were seen. All plane returned to base safely.



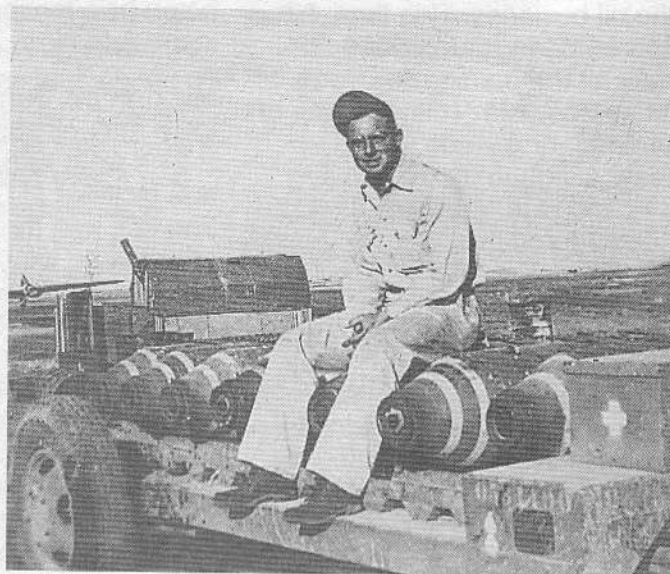
Lyman Bensinger and Bert Peterson's Crew  
 Standing, Left to Right:  
 Marvin Arbit, Bombardier (KIA); Bertrand A. Peterson,  
 Co-Pilot; Unknown Navigator; Lyman Bensinger,  
 Pilot, (KIA)  
 Kneeling, Left to Right:  
 Herman Guillory, Nose Gunner; Albino Wesolowski  
 Flt Eng; R.W. Johnson, Waist Gunner; Fred R.  
 Hamilton, Radio Operator/Top Turret gunner; M.G.  
 Green, Tail Gunner; Eli Kaplan, Ball Gunner.

*Ed: Bensinger and Albit were on an orientation mission with Pilot Harry Sims. The aircraft hit the Spur Mountain on either 20 or 24 December 1944. I do not know if they were going to the bombing or returning. Peterson took over as the 1st Pilot for the crew of 6 enlisted.*

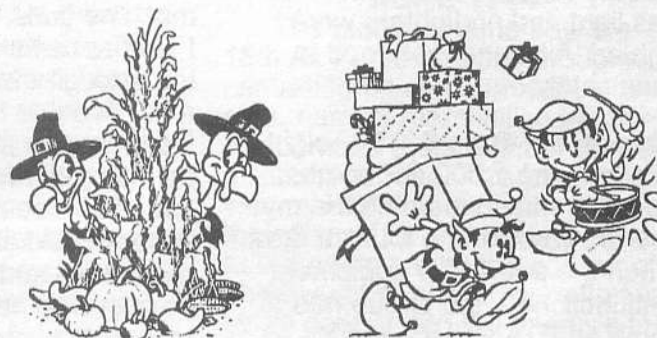
## The Season's Best to You!

After this issue goes to press we'll be into the holidays with great enthusiasm. With this spirit your Editor wishes you and yours the best of the holiday season.

**455th Bomb Group Association, Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 286**  
**Spencer, Iowa 51301**



Frank Stewart, Italy, 1994



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS

This time of the year we pause to reflect and count our many blessings. And we are thankful. Marjorie and I wish all of you a most Bountiful Thanksgiving and Blessed Christmas. We look forward to seeing each of you at the 1997 reunion in Dayton, Ohio.

Ed Riggs, President

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