# CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

***455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter***

**Fall, 2006** Editor, Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039
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## Gus Wendt (741) takes his Final Flight

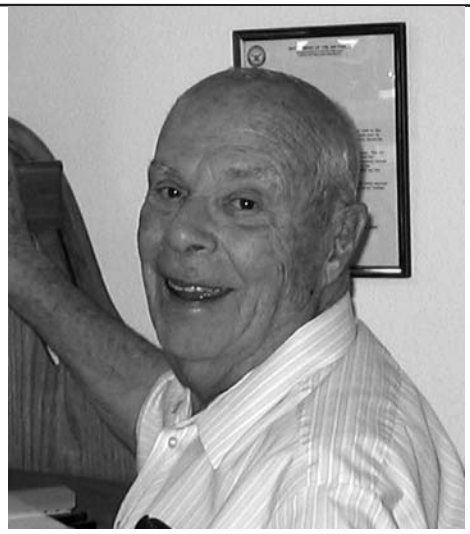
Lt. Col. Gus H. Wendt served for more than eight years as Secretary-Treasurer of the 455th Bomb Group Association.

Gus died Saturday, July 15, 2006 in San Antonio, Texas.

Gus represented the 455th Bomb Group across our nation. He has traveled from California to Virginia as our representative, and when we voted to install 455th Bomb Group plaques in such places as the March AFB Museum, Cannon AFB, the birth place of of the 455th BG, and our training base at Langley AFB, Gus was our representative.

Gus never missed a reunion in all those years, and was always at the board meetings with a fine report of his activities and an up-to-date treasurer's report. He traveled thousands of miles to represent us, many times at his own expense, and always displayed the highest degree of integrity and honesty in his oral and written reports.

He served under four Presidents of the 455th BG Association, and always with the same enthusiasm and vigor.



Gus joined the 741st Bomb Sq. in March 1944. He earned the Distinquished Flying Cross and five Air Medals in combat. He flew many of the toughest missions that were assigned to the 455th B.G.

After completing his tour of combat, he returned to the USA for various other assignments in the Air Force.

He married his lovely wife Marie in 1949, and retired from the USAF in 1966. Gus and Marie were two early members when the 455th Bomb Group Association was formed at Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Both Gus and Marie will always have a place of honor in our hearts and the 455th Bomb Group Association.

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## Can You Help? Response

**Dear Editor,**

Reverting to the Spring 2006 issue of the Cerignola Connection, I think I can supply some info to a couple of queries:

First, the request by Mr. Rodney Anderton on Page 2 of the Spring 2006 newsletter...

The spelling of the plane's name was slightly different, as there were only three letters "e"' in the word "Tepee", rather than four ("Teepee") as printed.

This is one of the most famous B-24's in the 455th Bomb Group, as many different crews flew the plane during its long operational service.

Many sources wrongly state that the serial number of this plane was 42-94790, and that it belonged to the 741st Bomb Squadron. This was a Ford Willow Run built B-24H-15-FO. The correct serial number was instead 41-29583, which indicates it was a Douglas Tulsa assembled B-24H-15-DT.

One source assigns the latter serial number to a 455th BG ship named "Gray Goose", but this is in error. The last three digits of the serial "583" were repeated on both sides of the nose, as usually done on most 455th BG aircraft.

Aft of the waist windows, a combat number 69 was painted in white on the fuselage sides. This number, plus a white diagonal stripe across the rudder, indicate that this aircraft belonged to the 743rd Bomb Squadron, at least when photographed, but this does not exclude that she may have been flown in other Squadrons within the 455th Bomb Group. This should be a good starting point to enable Mr. Anderton to track this specific aircraft in various official records.

Second, Mr. John Hallman, on page 23. I just would like to mention that there is another picture of the same aircraft, but showing the right side of the nose with a classical "noseart" (a nude female).

No name on this side, but the last three digits "105" of the full serial 44-41105 (a Consolidated San Diego built B-24J-195-CO) are present.

The picture with a 742nd BS crew posing can be found at http://www.b24bestweb.com/105.htm. I think this photo should please Mr. Hallman's father.

By the way, the designation B-24M-15-CO and the serial 44-42105 on the website are in error (the "2" digit should be replaced by a "1").

I hope that this info will please the two gentlemen.

Best regards to the
Vulgar Vultures,
Georges "Gino" Künzle



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## A Poem by Father Charles R. Fink

I've played a lot of roles in life;
I've met a lot of men.
I've done some things
I'd like to think
I wouldn't do again.

And though I'm young,
I'm old enough
To know someday I'll die,
And to think what lies beyond,
Beside whom I would lie.

Perhaps it doesn't matter much;
Still, if I had my choice,
I'd want a grave 'mongst
soldiers when
At last death quells my voice.

I'm sick of the hypocrisy
Of lectures of the wise.
I'll take the man,
with all the flaws,
Who goes, though scared,
and dies.

The troops I knew
were commonplace,
They didn't want the war
They fought because
their fathers and
Their fathers had before.

They cursed and killed and wept...God knows
They're easy to deride,
But bury me with
men like these,
They faced the guns and died.

It's funny when you think of it,
The way we got along.
We'd come from
different worlds
To live in one
where no one belongs.
I didn't even like them all;
I'm sure they would all agree.
Yet I would give
my life for them,
I know some did for me.

So bury me
with soldiers, please,
Though much maligned
they be.
Yes, bury me with soldiers,
for I miss their company.

We'll not soon see
their likes again,
We've had our fill of war.
But bury me with men like them
'Til someone else does more.

## Prayer for our Soldiers

Our Father, we pray you hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need.

## Can You Help?

Lt. Col. Edwin Ambrosen of the 455th BG (742) is a relative of mine. Do you know his status and whereabouts? I have written him and called the number that my grandmother had but cannot get a reply.

I would be pleased if you or anyone in the Association could help.

Thanks!

Patrick T. Sanchez
psanchez@maine207south.k12.il.us

## President's Message

William Gemmill, Lt. Col (ret.)




### Message from the President

Lt. Col. Bill Gemmill
President, 455th BG Assoc.
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Spring Hill, FL 34609
(352) 684-4894
wgemmill@tampabay.rr.com

Hi, all you 455thers, and some selected others to boot!

As I sit here composing, the National Weather Service has just indicated that Hurricane Ernesto has turned, and from its track, I expect it to come right over Richford Lane. But I digress, let's get on with the news.

As most of you know, we have been attempting to have another gathering of the 455th – this time in San Antonio, Texas. Due to attrition in our ranks, the committee (Maj. Gen. Gene Hudson, Col. John Davis, and yours truly) thought it would be a good idea to invite the participation of the other three bomb groups that originally comprised the 304th Bomb Wing – the 454th, 456th and the 459th.

It was a wonderful idea, but it was not to be.

The 454th, with whom we shared our reunion in Kansas City, has disbanded, and will meet only occasionally and informally. The 456th will be meeting at Mountain Home, Idaho, about the time we will be in San Antonio. They discussed joining us in Texas at a recent gathering in Covington, Kentucky, but voted to continue with their original plans in Mountain Home. The 459th has apparently disbanded as an association, and I was unsuccessful getting in touch with them. So it looks like we have to go it alone.

We are planning to gather at the Omni Hotel in San Antonio on 16–21 October 2007, Tuesday through Sunday. As with our previous very successful reunions, we have again contacted Armed Forces Reunions. Inc., who has made the necessary arrangements with the Omni.

The rate for both single and double rooms will be $105.00 plus tax (current rate 16.75 %) or $122.59 per night. We are expected to occupy 100 rooms on peak nights (18, 19, 20 October).

The crucial purpose of this correspondence is to ask you to respond to me as soon as possible, telling me if you plan to attend.

If responding by e-mail, please use my address at the top of this page and include General Hudson at ephud@webtv.net. I will take phone calls and relay them to Gene.

I have included some members of the other Bomb Groups as well as others possibly interested in attending the reunion in this correspondence. We welcome hearing from all of you.

Here's hoping for a wonderful reunion in San Antonio.

Best Regards,
Bill

**Dear Editor,**

Here is a photo that purports to show an American airman in Yugoslavia. Joe Parkin was a navigator with the 740th in Wesley Powell's crew. They were shot down in on Sept 13, 1944.

Joe died May 16, 1993, but perhaps someone will be able to recognize if this is him in the photo. This is not the first time there has been a request to identify him.

Thanks for all you do.

Best Regards,

John Rohrer
jrohrercpa@wingsisp.com



JOE ROSENTHAL

# Caught iconic Iwo Jima image

Joe Rosenthal, the Associated Press photographer who won a Pulitzer Prize for his immortal image of World War II servicemen raising an American flag over battle-scarred Iwo Jima, has died. He was 94.

He died Sunday of natural causes in Novato, Calif., said his daughter, Anne Rosenthal.

Mr. Rosenthal's iconic photo, shot on Feb. 23, 1945, became the model for the Iwo Jima Memorial near Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. The memorial, dedicated in 1954 and known officially as the Marine Corps War Memorial, commemorates the Marines who died taking the Pacific island in World War II.

The photo was listed in 1999 at No. 68 on a New York University survey of 100 examples of the best journalism of the century.

It shows the second raising of the flag that day on Mount Suribachi on the Japanese island. The first flag had been deemed too small by a commander.

"What I see behind the photo is what it took to get up to those heights — the kind of devotion to their country that those young men had, and the sacrifices they made," Mr. Rosenthal once said. "I take some gratification in being a little part of what the U.S. stands for."

The small island of Iwo Jima was a strategic piece of land 750 miles south of Tokyo, and the U.S. wanted it to support long-range B-29 bombers and a possible invasion of Japan.

On Feb. 19, 1945, 30,000 Marines landed on the southeast coast. Mount Suribachi, at 546 feet the highest point, took four days for the troops to scale. More than 6,800 U.S. servicemen died in the five-week battle for the island, and the 21,000-man Japanese defense force was virtually wiped out.

Ten years after the flag-raising, Mr. Rosenthal wrote that he almost didn't go up to the summit when he learned a flag had already been raised. He decided to go anyway and found servicemen preparing to plant the second, larger flag.

He reached the site moments before the exchange. He thought he might be able to get a shot of one down-slope 25 or 35 feet to get a full perspective of the scene. He set his lens at an f8 to f11 and the speed at 1/400ths of a second.



**Joe Rosenthal, who won a Pulitzer for this 1945 photo, said he saw the servicemen start the flag up out of the corner of his eye. "I swung my camera and shot the scene," he said.**



He waited a second or two for the right moment and shot the picture — the 10th on his roll of film — with his Speed Graphic.

"Out of the corner of my eye, I had seen the men start the flag up. I swung my camera and shot the scene. That is how the picture was taken, and when you take a picture

"Millions of Americans saw this picture five or six days before I did, and when I first heard about it, I had no idea what picture was meant."

He recalled that days later, when a colleague congratulated him on the picture, he thought he meant another, posed shot he had taken later that day, of Marines waving and cheering at the base of the flag. He added that if he had posed the flag-raising picture, as some skeptics have suggested over the years, "I would, of course, have ruined it" by choosing fewer men and making sure their faces could be seen.

His account was later bolstered by a frame captured by a military cameraman, Marine Sgt. Bill Genaust, who filmed the same flag-raising.

The picture was an inspiration for Thomas E. Franklin of *The Record* of Bergen County, N.J., who took the photo of three firefighters raising a flag amid the ruins of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

Mr. Rosenthal left the AP later in 1945 to join the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where he was a photographer for 35 years before retiring.

He is also survived by his ex-wife, Lee Rosenthal; his son Joseph J. Rosenthal Jr.; and their families.

# Remains found ID'd as WWII pilot

SUFFOLK, Va. — Human remains found in the wreckage of a World War II bomber in New Guinea have been identified as a 24-year-old airman who disappeared on a stormy night in 1943.

The remains of Charles "Buddy" Feucht were identified through DNA testing.

His sister, Fern Lord, who had submitted a vial of her blood for DNA comparison, got the news Thursday.

"It's been so long," said Lord, 83. "Every day, you wake up and wonder if this is the one."

Feucht, a bombardier aboard a B-24 Liberator, was part of a formation looking for Japanese ships during a violent thunderstorm when his plane separated from the others to take a closer look at the water below. He and the rest of his nine-man crew vanished.

A hunter in the New Guinea jungle discovered the rusted wreckage of the plane in 2002. He collected a human bone and a handful of metal ID tags and delivered them to the U.S. Embassy in Papua New Guinea, along with the plane's tail number and location.

An excavation crew traveled to the site the following year and found more bones, teeth and ID bracelets inside the shattered cockpit.

Johnny Johnson, a specialist with the Army's Casualty and Mortuary Affairs operations center in Alexandria, Va., declined Friday to say whether the others had been identified because other crewmates' families have not been contacted.

Feucht's remains will be flown under military escort to Ohio, where he will be buried with full military honors beside his parents.

## BEFORE YOU GO

Quietly, you've all turned gray
You did your job, you saved our way
Our life and freedom you preserved
We've thanked you less than you deserved.

You never boasted, bragged, or asked
For adulation for your past
You did the job you knew was right
And quietly you cry at night.

For bodies maimed and comrades lost
For sights beyond our furthest thoughts
For what you've lived and felt and seen
For what the cost of freedom means.

You leave us blessed with every breath
That cost you arms and legs and death
You won the worst and greatest war
We owe you more, we owe you more.

Thank you for your wondrous feats
For open speech and quiet streets
For worship as we choose to pray
For preservation of our way.

Before you go, we need to show
That in your silence, we still know
What you accomplished
And what you did
For who we are and how we live.

So go with love from wives and sons
And daughters for a job well done
From kids who've never seen a tank
We give you thanks, we give you thanks.

For homes and jobs and baseball games
For many colors, many names
You saved our lives and we're still free
From shining sea to shining sea.

Thank you ... Go in Peace

*Courtesy of Dr. Sam & The Managed Care Blues Band*

# Final Flights

### Gus H. Wendt (741)

Lt. Col. Gus H. Wendt served for more than eight years as Secretary-Treasurer of the 455th Bomb Group Association.

Gus died Saturday, July 15, 2006, at the Health Center for the Air Force Village at San Antonio, Texas.

Gus was an intellegent, enthusiastic, likeable man who did a lot of work for our organization, much of which we never really knew about.

*(Editor's Note: Please see the front page for more on Gus Wendt.)*

### Lt. Joseph Dolinsky (741)
### Cpl. Alexander Dubetz (741)

Dear Editor,

I would like to report the passing of my copilot, Lt. Joseph Dolinsky, in 2005, and also my radio operator and gunner, Cpl. Alexander Dubetz. Lt. Dolinsky flew missions after our crew was shot down over Blechammer on October 13, 1944 --- a mission he missed because we were flying with another pilot for training. That pilot, Lt. John Noske, was killed on this mission.

Best Regards,
Lt. Walter Shostack (741)
boyar0711@woh.rr.com

### Seymour W. Siegel (743)

Lt. Col. Seymour W. Siegel passed away in December, 2005.

He was a pilot with the 455th BG, 743rd Squadron, from July through October, 1944.

Following the war, he joined the USAF Reserve, where he attained the rank of Lt. Colonel, retiring in the 1970's.

I'm attaching a photo of what I assume is his flight crew in the 743rd.



I would really appreciate hearing from anyone that knew him, or flew with him, in Cerignola. In particular, something special occurred on Mission 120, 20 Sept., 1944. I'd love to hear about that one.

Kind Regards,
Bob Siegel
4407 Westbourne Road
Greensboro, NC 27410
336-210-4738
rsiegel@triad.rr.com

### Eugene Scerbo (740)

Eugene Scerbo took his final flight on February 17, 2006 at his home in North Adams, MA.
He was a waist gunner on Walter Gunn's crew.

## Flying Sideways

*My First And Almost Last Mission*

*by Ralph E. Donnelly*

(Courtesy: *Bomber Legends* Magazine)



It was July, 1944. I was a 19-year-old pilot, who had just finished his training. I was co-pilot on my trip across the Atlantic, delivering a new B-24 to Italy.

Bob Furman, who I had met in training, was the pilot. Fred Winters was our 20-year-old Bombardier/Navigator. Plushnick was our Radio/ Top Turret. Pricilla was our Nose Turret and Dewey was our Engineer.

We delivered the new B-24 to Lecce, which is located in the 'Heel of the Boot' of Italy. We were attached to the 98th Bomb Group, 415 Squadron.

On the morning of July 20th, we were given our first mission. It was an industrial plant in the city of Friedrichshafen, Germany, possibly for ball-bearing manufacturing. Friedrichshafen is located on the banks of Lake Constance, also known as Bodensee. Lake Constance is a large lake that is located on the borders of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland.

We were assigned a B-24 that was nicknamed the 'Red F Freddy'. The Grounds Crew Chief told us that this was the oldest plane in the Squadron and that we didn't have to bring it back. It might have been funny, if it hadn't been prophetic.

The B-24 is a four engine bomber with two Pratt-Whitney engines on each wing. The stall speed for this plane is 110 miles per hour. If flying at any less speed, the plane will fall.

During our training, we were taught that this particular airship could not be flown with only two engines on the same wing operational. We were also instructed that the Pratt-Whitney engine could only last for one hour if flown continually at full military power.

As we boarded the plane that morning, we met the remainder of our crew. Unfortunately, my only conversation with them was to introduce ourselves and I cannot recall any of their names.

These four new guys manned the Ball Turret, Tail Turret, and both Waist Guns.

When flying a bombing mission, you stayed in flying formation. The tighter the formation, the safer the group was from enemy fighters. Also, the tighter the formation the more closely grouped the bombs fell when let loose.

Only the front two planes had a person strictly assigned to navigation on them. The Navigator on the lead plane led the group to the target, and then back home. The Navigator on the second plane was back-up, in case the first plane went down.

When on a bomb run, the Navigator in the lead plane leads the group to the target. Then, when he releases the bombs from his plane, all of the other planes drop their bombs, too. This way, the shape and size of the area bombed is similar to the shape and size of the flying formation.

On this day, the five-hour flight from Lecce to Friedrichshafen was uneventful. The bomb run crossed Lake Constance to the target. When we reached the IP (Initial Point of Bomb Run), we were 15 minutes out. We were flying at 26,000 feet and were the last plane in the formation.

While approaching the target, we were shot at by anti-aircraft fire. As we reached the target, Fred Winters saw the lead plane drop their bombs. Fred yelled "Bombs Away" and released our load. Just as he did so, a round of anti-aircraft fire exploded just underneath the front of our plane. A piece of shrapnel came up through the cockpit, right between Bob's and my seats. Some pieces went through our left wing. A piece went through our front turret, knocking the wristwatch off Pricilla and cutting a hole in his emergency pack.

Worst of all, a piece imbedded itself in Fred's head. To the best of my knowledge, Fred's young widow never remarried.

Just as suddenly, we lost control of our plane. We found ourselves descending while turning to the left.

In a B-24, there is a hatch that closes off the front turret from the rest of the plane. The latch for that hatch is inside the main body of the ship. It is the navigator's job to seal the front turret gunner in and also open the hatch to let him out. The front turret is not a place to be when the plane is in trouble. Not only would it be very scary watching the plane going down, but there is no way to bail-out from there. With Fred now deceased, there was no one to let Pricilla out of the front turret. Though not easily done, Pricilla managed to force his way out.

Both of the engines on our left wing were out. The propellers were 'wind-milling', creating a drag. Bob tried to restart the engines but was unable to. We then 'feathered' those engines.

Bob and I then pushed down, actually stood on, the right rudder pedals with all our might, while giving our two remaining right wing engines full throttle. This enabled us to regain control of our ship. It kept us from flying in circles and gave us a direction.

We were flying at a sharp angle to the left. We were now at 18,000 feet and were almost flying sideways.

We found that the hydraulics were out, which eliminated the use of all but our Waist Guns. Bob tried a few more times to restart the engines, but to no avail.

Dewey, the ship's engineer, then transferred all of the fuel that remained in the left wing into the right wing. Even at full throttle, our ship was now lower and much slower than the rest of the Bomber Group. We were quickly left behind.

We were now separated from the bomber group, 400 miles behind enemy lines, with no navigator, lost and flying a plane that we were told should not be able to fly.

Our top speed was now just about 110 miles per hour, stall speed. We would never have the speed to enable us to climb in altitude. Occasionally, we would dip under it and stall. In order to get up enough speed, we had to put our nose down. This would increase our speed enough to get out of the stall, but we would lose altitude.

Altitude which we could never regain again. Each time we had to do this, we would get lower and lower. To help keep our speed up, we jettisoned everything that we thought that we could do without, including all ammunition except for the Waist Guns.

Plushnick managed to get a radio fix from our base. With that we had a direction to fly towards. We knew we were close to Switzerland, but didn't know for sure where it was. We had given it a thought, as we didn't know how long our engines would hold up.

Not wanting to take a chance on where Switzerland was, we headed toward home base, via radio fix.

Our path took us towards the Alps. The Alps were covered in clouds this day. We knew that we were nearing them, but we couldn't see them. We didn't know if our altitude was high enough to get over them. We didn't know if we were going to fly into the ground, the side of a mountain or somehow manage to fly through an opening. We prayed for the best and proceeded.

We never did see anything in the clouds. We never knew how close we came to hitting. We did, however, make it through.

Plushnick continued to send S.O.S. messages over the radio, and also kept a radio fix on base. Somewhere over the Poe Valley, Italy, we spotted two Messerschmitt Me-109 single engine fighter planes heading toward us. We must have looked like easy pickings, flying solo, as well as low and slow.

All we had were our two Waist Guns. We didn't see any way out of this one.

Then, out of nowhere, two Red Tail P-51 Mustangs dropped from above; they weren't even assigned to us as air cover. They must have responded to our S.O.S.

They were last seen chasing the two Messerschmitts, who were now high-tailing it out of there. The Red Tail P-51 Mustangs were part of a Squadron of all-black pilots known as the “Tuskegee Airmen”. They were famous for never losing a bomber to enemy fighters. We were one of those bombers. Thank God for the “Tuskegee Airmen”.

Still following the radio fix, we entered air space over Venice, which was still occupied by the Germans. Once again we faced anti-aircraft fire.

However, now the very thing that was our bane, was now what saved us. They weren't used to an aircraft flying as slow as we were, so they kept aiming way out in front of us. Which was also handy, as we weren't flying to the front of the ship, but more towards the side.

We managed to get through Venice without a scratch.

On the B-24, each pilot had two rudder pedals, a right and left one. If the right one was pushed in, the left one would rise. Conversely, when the left one was pushed in the right one would rise.

Bob and I had been using all our might, pushing on the right rudder pedals for the entire return trip. Our engineer, Dewey, took a rope out of a duffle bag and tied it to the left rudder pedal. He then pulled up on the rope to try to ease our tension. Unfortunately, the rope was too soft and stretched. It was a good thought, but it didn't work.

Our long return trip kept getting longer. It required Bob and I to use all of our physical strength, with no rest.

Still flying towards the radio fix to base, we were now over the Adriatic Sea. Our engines cut-out. With the engines stopped, the order to bail out was given.

Just as the "four new guys" prepared to jump, the engines started again. The order to bail out was cancelled for now.

Once again, we had descended to yet a lower altitude. Still over the Adriatic Sea, the engines cut-out for a second time. Once again, the order was given to bail out. A rope was tied to Fred Winter's ripcord, and he was let off the plane. The rope pulled the ripcord and his parachute opened. His body floated down into the sea. The "four new guys" quickly followed Fred out of the plane.

Amazingly, once again the engines restarted. And once again we were flying at yet a lower altitude.

A B-24 was not a ship you wanted to "crash land" as it would most likely break in two. We have been flying for about 3 fi hours from when our ship was first damaged, and our fuel was almost exhausted.

Still following the radio fix from base, we were now over land near the city of Ancona, Italy. As we started over a hill, our engines gave out for the third time. This was it, we couldn't afford to lose any more altitude and still have enough room to jump. The order to bail out was given.

Pricilla and Dewey jumped. Pricilla's ripcord malfunctioned. Using his hands, he ripped open his chest pack and his parachute deployed. I quickly checked the plane and found Plushnick sending out one last S.O.S.

I grabbed his leg and pulled. I yelled at him to get out. I could not jump until he did. As soon as Plushnick was out, I yelled to Bob that all were out and then jumped.

I pulled the ripcord as soon as I cleared the plane. There was absolutely no time to count to ten. Because of my parachute's canopy above me, I never saw if Bob got out.

I did see our ship crash to the ground. It burned in its entirety with the exception of the left wing and tail.

I quickly floated to the ground. As I descended, I unbuckled my leg straps and took out my .45. Once on the ground, I saw a group of people running toward me. I figured that this was it, but hoped to take as many of them with me as possible.

Seeing this, they turned and ran away, and started yelling. They spoke Italian, but I could make out the word 'Americano". I said "Si". They managed to convey to me that they were friendly.

It turns out that we landed 15 miles behind the 'Bomb Line', just inside friendly territory. They led me to Dewey, Pricilla, and Plushnick. Pricilla and Plushnick had landed a little hard. Plushnick had some back pain, and Pricilla had a lot.

I took some morphine out of the emergency pack and gave them some. An Allied truck picked us up and took us to a field hospital that was run by either the English or the Australians.

At 120 miles per hour, it only takes 7 fi minutes to go 15 miles. If our engines had gone

out only 8 minutes earlier, we would have bailed out in German-held territory.

We stayed at the field hospital overnight. The next day, we were taken to a small landing strip to await a small plane that would take us back to base.

To my joy, I saw Bob there, too. He had landed on the other side of the hill and was found by a man who lived there. The man took him home for the night. Amazingly, the “four new guys” were also there.

They were fished out of the Adriatic Sea by two British Mine Sweepers. The plane initially took us to Bari, where Pricilla and Plushnick were taken to the hospital for back pain. I was taken for stomach cramps and Dewey was taken for observation. Bob returned to our base at Lecce.

When Bob got back to base, he found that our bags had been packed and stored and that our tent had been taken down. He also found out that we had officially been listed as Missing In Action, with back home notifications and all.

Plushnick went on to become our Squadron's Lead Radio Operator. Dewey went on to become our Squadron's Lead Engineer. Pricilla's back injury prevented him from ever flying again.

**Author**

1st Lt. Ralph E. Donnelly
US Army Air Force
32 Missions
Distinguished Flying Cross
2 Air Medals
Purple Heart

You have never lived
until you have almost died.
For those who fought for it, freedom has
a flavor the protected will never know.

- Anonymous



455th Bombardment Group Headquarters, 1944
San Giovanni, Italy

*Constituted* as 455th Bombardment Group (Heavy) on 14 May 1943. *Activated* on 1 Jun 1943. Trained with B-24's. Moved to Italy, arriving in Jan and Feb 1944. Served in combat with Fifteenth AF from Feb 1944 to Apr 1945. Received a DUC for a mission on 2 Apr 1944 when the group contributed to Fifteenth AF's campaign against enemy industry by attacking a ball-bearing plant at Steyr. Although meeting severe fighter opposition and losing several of its bombers on 26 Jun 1944, the group proceeded to attack an oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, receiving another DUC for this performance. *Inactivated* in Italy on 9 Sep 1945.

Squadrons. *740th:* 1943-1945; 1947-1949; 1956—. *741st:* 1943-1945; 1947-1949; 1956—. *742nd:* 1943-1945; 1947-1949; 1956—. *743rd:* 1943-1945; 1947-1949.

Campaigns. Air Combat, EAME Theater; Air Offensive, Europe; Anzio; Rome-Arno; Normandy; Northern France; Southern France; North Apennines; Rhineland; Central Europe; Po Valley.

**E-mail Roster**

Below is a list of e-mail addresses of 455th BG Assoc. members. If you want your e-mail address included or updated in this roster, please email your Editor at aphp@comcast.net.

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## DEDICATED TO ALL THOSE WHO FLEW BEHIND ROUND ENGINES

Round Engines ... better known as piston pounders, recips, oil leakers, etc.

"We have got to get rid of those turbines, they're ruining aviation and our hearing!"

A turbine is too simple minded, and it has no mystery. The air travels through it in a straight line and doesn't pick up any of the pungent fragrance of engine oil or pilot sweat.

Anybody can start a turbine. You just need to move a switch from "OFF" to "START" and then remember to move it back to "ON" after a while. My PC is harder to start.

Cranking a round engine requires skill, finesse and style. You have to seduce it into starting. It's like waking up a steamy mistress. On some planes, the pilots aren't even allowed to do it... and for good reason!

Turbines start by whining for a while, then give a lady-like poof and start whining a little louder.

Round engines give a satisfying rattle-rattle, click-click, BANG, more rattles, another BANG, a big macho FART or two, more clicks, a lot more smoke and finally a serious low pitched roar. We like that. It's a GUY thing...

When you start a round engine, your mind is engaged and you can concentrate on the flight ahead.

Starting a turbine is like flicking on a ceiling fan - Useful, but hardly exciting.

When you have started his round engine successfully, your Crew Chief looks up at you like he'd let you kiss his girl, too!

Turbines don't break or catch fire often enough, which leads to aircrew boredom, complacency and in-attention.

A round engine at speed looks and sounds like it's going to blow any minute. They sometimes do. This helps concentrate the mind! It also contributes to the illusion of DAP, or Dirty Airplane Parts, quite fondly revered by some.

Turbines don't have enough control levers or gauges to keep a pilot's attention. There's nothing to fiddle with during long flights. We always told the newbies, "We'll let you sit up here, but don't touch anything!"

Turbines smell like a Boy Scout camp full of Coleman Lamps.

Round engines smell like God intended machines to smell.



## Can You Help?

**Dear Editor,**

I served my tour with the 455th BG, 741st. squadron. I learned I had no records of my service from June through November, 1944.

Has anyone else had these problems with the VA?

Thanks.

William Dixon
carolddixon@peoplepc.com

## Retirement Can Be Fun!!

Working people frequently ask retired people what they do to make their days interesting.

Well, for example, the other day I went into town and went into a shop. I was only in there for about five minutes. When I came out there was a cop writing out a parking ticket.

I went up to him and said, "Come on man, how about giving a senior citizen a break?"

He ignored me and continued writing the ticket. I called him a Nazi turd.

He glared at me and started writing another ticket for having worn tires. So I called him a s---head.

He finished the second ticket and put it on the windshield with the first. Then he started writing a third ticket.

This went on for about 20 minutes. The more I abused him, the more tickets he wrote.

Personally, I didn't care. I came into town by bus.

I try to have a little fun each day now that I'm retired. It's important at my age.

### Why Marry a Military Man?

Many girls like to marry a military man--he can cook, sew, make a bed, is in good health...and he's already used to taking orders.

Heavy emphasis on the "used to taking orders" part!

**Dear Editor,**

My first goal is to actually ID each B-24 that flew in the 455th. This means searching as many resources as possible, including photos not previously published, but in the hands of vets or their survivors.

I have already noticed instances where an aircraft was flown out of more than one squadron, probably due to unequal losses in the squadrons that would required a transfer of ownership (for instance, the raid on Moosbierbaum on June 26, 1944, that took out so many aircraft ... ten from the 455th).

When researching the personnel, I am looking for two specific things. First, the air crews as they were originally configured, and the replacements that also flew missions. Second, I want to identify as many of the support personnel, who really never get much recognition, as possible. Without the eight men on the ground for every airman, the 455th could never have performed as well as it did. If others have lists of tent mates, support crew rosters, or fathers who were there in a support role, I would like to use the additional information to expand the roster of the 455th.

I am not trying to re-create the 455th BG history, just compile more data (like home states and service numbers) so the details don't disappear in the future.

There is a volume III of the history, which is specifically about the 741st. This was mentioned the 1993 publication and a copy is supposed to be in each of the Library of Congress, the AF Museum in Dayton, OH, and the AF Historical Research Center at Maxwell AFB. Getting a photocopy of this would really go a long way toward filling in the details.

Anyhow, I'm trying to move ahead as quickly and methodically as possible. Any assistance with this database will be greatly appreciated.

Best Regards,
John Rohrer
(son of Carl Rohrer, SSgt, aerial photographer 740th BS)
spartacpa@sbcglobal.net

**Dear Editor,**

About a year ago, I contacted you regarding information about Hugh Graff and others who were POWs in Bulgaria during WWII. You graciously sent me a CD containing back issues of the Cerignola Connection, which was greatly appreciated.

Since that time a couple of authors have used some of the information that I have gathered regarding POWs in Bulgaria. I thought some of your readers might be interested in these.

One book by Jerry Whiting, who is the historian of the 485th Bomb Group, contains a chapter about Major Walter Smith's crew downed over Bulgaria. Major Smith was the ranking officer in the POW camp in Bulgaria until Lt. Col. Hugh Graff was shot down. The title of this book is, "Don't Let the Blue Star Turn Gold: Downed Airmen in Europe in WWII". Jerry can be contacted at EAJWWhiting@aol.com.

The other book is by Robert H. Johnson, who was a POW in Bulgaria. His book vividly tells the story of his war time experiences including his time in Bulgaria. In September, 2004, he went back to Bulgaria to be part of the events held to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the closing of the POW camp in Shumen, Bulgaria. He was able to draw from some wonderful sources in both the U.S. and Bulgaria. The title of his book is, "Gidi Gidi Boom Boom: The True Story of the Plane and Crew in WWII Europe". Bob can be contacted at jhrob7@sbcglobal.net.

Your readers may find these interesting given the connection to part of Hugh Graff's experiences.

Thank you.
Randy Hannum

**May you always have work for your hands to do.**

**May your pockets hold always a coin or two.**

**May the sun shine bright on your windowpane.**

**May the rainbow be certain to follow each rain.**

**May the hand of a friend always be near you.**

**And may God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.**











**Dear Editor,**

Per our telecon, here are the pictures we discussed (left):
1. Returning from mission without hydraulics.
2. Mail call at 741st Sq.
3. Relaxing in our olive grove. Left to right, Wayne L. Darnall, Joseph W. Doyle, and Thomas E. Boyd.
4. The four officers on my crew, all Lts., H. Rollin Batham, P; Edward M. Herbert, CP; Julius C. Phillips, N; and Howard Ginsburg, B.
5. Thomas E. Boyd relaxing after cleaning his guns.

If you have any questions, please e-mail me care of Kent Brewster (my son-in-law) at kent_brewster@yahoo.com, or call me at 408-245-1423. Thanks.

Best Regards,
Thomas E. Boyd

**What is a Grandparent?**

(taken from papers written by a class of 8-year-olds)

Grandparents are a lady and a man who have no little children of her own. They like other people's.

A grandfather is a man grandmother.

Grandparents don't have to do anything except be there when we come to see them. They are so old they shouldn't play hard or run. It is good if they drive us to the store and have lots of quarters for us.

When they take us for walks, they slow down past things like pretty leaves and caterpillars.

They show us and talk to us about the color of the flowers and also why we shouldn't step on "cracks."

They don't say, "Hurry up."

Usually grandmothers are fat, but not too fat to tie your shoes.

They wear glasses and funny underwear.

They can take their teeth and gums out.

Grandparents don't have to be smart.

They have to answer questions like "why isn't God married?" and "How come dogs chase cats?".

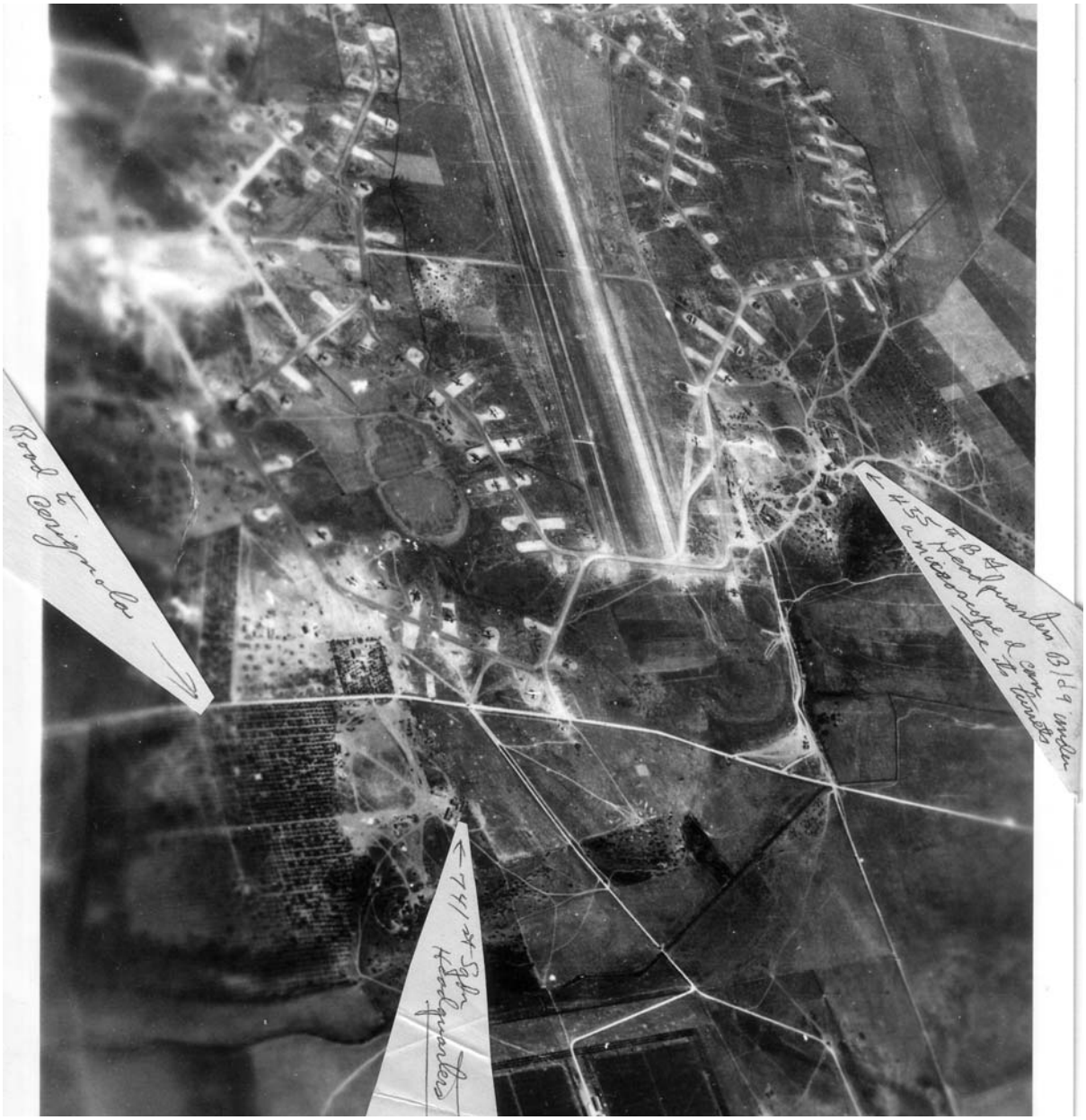
When they read to us, they don't skip. They don't mind if we ask for the same story over again.

Everybody should try to have a grandmother, especially if you don't have television, because they are the only grown ups who like to spend time with us.

They know we should have snack-time before bedtime and they say prayers with us every time, and kiss us **even when we've *acted bad.***

**Does anyone from the 743rd squadron remember attending this dance?**








**Dear Editor,**

Can any of your readers identify this airfield (left)? Is it possibly San Giovanni? If so, which side belongs to the 455th and which way is north?

Thanks!

*Editor's Note: The photo at the top is San Giovanni. Is the photo to the left the same airfield? Can a reader help???*

*Thanks.*

*Your Editor*

## "Can You Help" Response

**Dear Editor,**

I read a help request in the Cerignola Connection from Svatopluk Vaculik asking about Edward Ruyter.

Ed Ruyter was the bombardier on my crew and we were shot down by flak on Oct. 13 while on a bombing run over Blechammer. Ed Ruyter, and our nose gunner Johnny Stella, were both killed when the shell struck our plane.

We lost three more, including our instructor pilot John Noske, when they were caught and executed by the SS in Bleiburg, Austria.

Best Regards,
Lt Col. Walter Shostack (741)

## Can You Help?

**Dear Editor,**

I just received the Spring, 2006 Cerignola Connection and really injoyed it.

By the way, I was the one who came up with the newsletter's name. Tom Ramey wrote to me, and I passed that recomendation on to him.

In the inaugural edition of the newsletter (1989) is a picture of the Officers Club bar for the 743rd. It shows a picture of David Woodlock on the left. Behind the bar is Sgt. Brewer, our radio operator. Next is Robert Cook, who was my pilot when we trained & went to Italy.

Woodlock was our navigator. I got my own crew after two aircraft crashes.

Our ball turret gunner (Henry Paris) and I have been trying without luck to locate other members of our crew.

Please include my e-mail address in the next issue. Maybe some one will see it and contact me.

Thanks,
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## Can You Help?

**Dear Editor,**

Please, could you tell me serial numbers of 455th BG planes which were lost on September 13, October 14 and December 26, 1944 ? We need it for a publication we write.

On Sept 13, 1944, we know 42-52283 (Powell,Gemmill,Parkin, etc.) and don´t know another two planes. A mission on Oct. 14 - we know no. 42-78359, 42-78620, 42-51912 and don´t know one other plane. A mission on Dec. 26 - we know 44-49377 and don´t know another one bomber.

Maybe one of your readers can help?

Thank you very much.
Vaculík Svatopluk, RNDr.
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## Other Final Flight

### Manuel Armijo

*Bataan Death March survivor*

Manuel A. Armijo, a veteran of the World War II Bataan Death March who tended to fellow war prisoners through years of brutal captivity, died recently in Santa Fe. He was 92. Mr. Armijo was considered the oldest survivor of the ordeal. He will be buried at Santa Fe National Cemetery.

"His heroism and courage will set an example for New Mexicans for generations to come".

He was 29 when he deployed with the New Mexico National Guard in 1940. In August 1941, he departed for the Philippines.

Thousands of U.S. and Filipino troops fought off the Japanese for four months before U.S. Maj. Gen. Edward King ordered the surrender.

Mr. Armijo and the other prisoners were forced to march 65 miles up the Bataan Peninsula without food, water or medical attention. Those who collapsed along the way were shot or bayoneted. Thousands more died in labor camps or on ships that transported the POWs to camps in Japan, Korea or China.

Because he had been appointed first sergeant in his company, Mr. Armijo took on the responsibilities of minding fellow prisoners.

Mr. Armijo returned home in 1945, where he completed a career in New Mexico civil service.

Mario Capocefalo
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May 8th 2006

Very dear Craig & Marsha

First of all I wish this letter finds both of you and your dears in go=
od health and happy.
Usually I prefer call you and talk with you by phone,but this time I
have to enclose some interesting news for you.
Cerignola Connection spring 2006 on page 18 Shawn Caldwell ~~asked~~ wrote
asking some about donut girls.You may learn some on Stepanie's story
the 459th red cross girl,about all historian books of the 304 Wing of
the 15th AIr Force,Lyle McCarty wrote the best with lot of colored pic=
tures ans stories .
The girls of the 304 wing were SthaphanieChaconas 459th-Hariette Vaden-
Miss Franai-and miss Margaret Curtis. I think Margaret was the one the
~~fifth~~ 455th called Maggie.Beside Stephanie ,Maggio is one of the other
three pictured in the enclosed photos.
From April 25th to May 1st I had my third exposition of the american
~~fiji~~Air base stationed around Cerignola.It has been not so big as the
second due to the place much smoller of the theatre,but I had much mo=
re time to talk and explain story to many visitors,specially young pe=
ople.
New elected mayor was honest telleing he could not give me much help
due the very economical difficoltiee the city has,but he begged me to
give him time,He doesn't want me to give all the museum material to
the University of Foggia in case of my departure to the home of our
good Lord.
It isn't necessary to write the cost I had for transportation and broken
frames,but showing and honor the memory of the many heros american fliers
that gave their lives for our freedom,is some ~~things~~ thing that keeps
me alive.
Please call mr write me if you need more news.

Love and a prayer

Mario




***Editor's Note:*** *I received this letter from the 455th Bomb Group's Italian "Ambassador" in Cerignola, Mario Capocefalo. He is the world's biggest fan of American WWII veterans, and is always eager to help in any way he can. Thanks, Mario!*





**Dear Editor,**

I hope the article below is of interest to the readers of the Cerignola Connection. I believe these brave Tuskegee Airmen fighter pilots deserve recognition.

May I make a request? If any of your readers flew with or knew my father, Sgt. A.G. Bathie (740), I would be pleased to hear from them. Thank you.

Best Regards,

Dave Bathie
davidbathie@yahoo.com






***Editor's Note:***

*On a recent trip to our nation's capital, I took a side trip to pay my respects to those heros buried at Arlington National Cemetery.*

*As I was moving down one of the main walkways that snake through this hallowed ground, I just happened to look down at one of the many memorial plaques that line the path.*

*You can see the 455th BG memorial plaque in the photo above.*

# Aging heroes still waiting

**■ Tuskegee Airmen, their numbers falling, still don't have Congress' Gold Medal, months after award**

[redacted]

Spann Watson wants Washington to make good on its promise, before it is too late for him and these other aging pilots who have passed ee it. But I f dying be- ."
k aviators ing at the n Alabama nly 388 are th, Elmore ed lieuten- d in Philanplications of a stroke.

About five of the veteran fliers live on Long Island, and several more are scattered about the metropolitan area.

In March, Congress unanimously approved the medal in recognition of the group's aerial exploits — its fighter escort pilots never lost a bomber to enemy fire — as well as their battle gone," said Watson, of Westbury. "We'd like people who are still living to be able to receive them. I want to get my medal in my hand."

The delay in getting the medals to nearly 400 of the airmen still living has upset some of them, who say they hope to receive the medals before they die.

"There is some concern," said retired Col. Lee Archer, 84, of New Rochelle, the nation's first black combat ace. "Since Congress approved [redacted] medal," said the congressman had hoped the medal would have been ready in time for the annual convention of the Congressional Black Caucus in early September. But the aide, Emile Milne, said several revisions to a design submitted by the aviators' group have delayed the medal's issuance.

Milne said the medal originally was to have featured the images of three aviators on the



tles against racial discrimination. Past recipients of the medal have included George Washington, the Wright Brothers, Pope John Paul II, the Navajo Code Talkers, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King.

The medal, cast in gold, will be displayed in Washington. Bronze duplicates will be distributed to each veteran.

An aide to Rep. Charles Rangel (D-Harlem), who co-sponsored legislation authorizing the [redacted] for Tuskegee Airmen Inc., said the medals are not expected before next year.

Watson does not want recognition delayed to become recognition denied.

"A Gold Medal from Congress? It would be the greatest medal I could ever receive," Watson said. "It would thank us for our performance during the war when everyone else was saying we were incapable."

[redacted] flew their way to glory.

Nearly five months after Congress voted to bestow its highest honor on the Tuskegee Airmen — pioneering aviators who during World War II broke the color bar banning black pilots in the U.S. military — the Congressional Gold Medal is still not in their hands.

"Every time you pick up a newspaper, one or two more are

front, and aircraft on the medal's reverse side. He said efforts to simplify the design have led to delays.

"There will be only one Gold Medal, which will sit in the Smithsonian, honoring the contributions of nearly 1,000 African-American pilots who served heroically in World War II under the banner of the Tuskegee Airmen," Milne said. "Everyone wants to get it right."

[redacted] three people who on and will never have no intention fore we get the me

Of the 994 bl who got their tra Tuskegee Institute beginning in 1942, still alive. Last m Kennedy, 90, a re ant colonel who li delphia, died of c





Captain Glenn Rojohn and his B-17 crew.

## Piggyback Hero

*by Ralph Kenney Bennett*

Tomorrow they will lay the remains of Glenn Rojohn to rest in the Peace Lutheran Cemetery in the little town of Greenock, Pa., just southeast of Pittsburgh. He was 81, and had been in the air conditioning and plumbing business in nearby McKeesport.

If you had seen him on the street he would probably have looked to you like so many other graying, bespectacled old World War II veterans whose names appear so often now on obituary pages.

But like so many of them, though he seldom talked about it, he could have told you one hell of a story. He won the Air Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart all in one fell swoop in the skies over Germany on December 31, 1944. Fell swoop indeed.

Capt. Glenn Rojohn, of the 8th Air Force's 100th Bomb Group was flying his B-17G Flying Fortress bomber on a raid over Hamburg. His formation had braved heavy flak to drop their bombs, then turned 180 degrees to head out over the North Sea .

They had finally turned northwest, headed back to England, when they were jumped by German fighters at 22,000 feet. The Messerschmitt Me-109s pressed their attack so closely that Capt. Rojohn could see the faces of the German pilots. He and other pilots fought to remain in formation so they could use each other's guns to defend the group.

Rojohn saw a B-17 ahead of him burst into flames and slide sickeningly toward the earth. He gunned his ship forward to fill in the gap.

He felt a huge impact. The big bomber shuddered, felt suddenly very heavy and began losing altitude. Rojohn grasped almost immediately that he had collided with another plane. A B-17 below him, piloted by Lt. William G. McNab, had slammed the top of its fuselage into the bottom of Rojohn's.

The top turret gun of McNab's plane was now locked in the belly of Rojohn's plane and the ball turret in the belly of Rojohn's had smashed through the top of McNab's.

The two bombers were almost perfectly aligned -- the tail of the lower plane was slightly to the left of Rojohn's tailpiece. They were stuck together, as a crewman later recalled, "like mating dragon flies."

Three of the engines on the bottom plane were still running, as were all four of Rojohn's. The fourth engine on the lower bomber was on fire and the flames were spreading to the rest of the aircraft.

The two were losing altitude quickly. Rojohn tried several times to gun his engines and break free of the other plane. The two were inextricably locked together. Fearing a fire, Rojohn cut his engines and rang the bailout bell.

For his crew to have any chance of parachuting, he had to keep the plane under control somehow.

The ball turret, hanging below the belly of the B-17, was considered by many to be a death trap -- the worst station on the bomber. In this case, both ball turrets figured in a swift and terrible drama of life and death.

Staff Sgt. Edward L. Woodall, Jr., in the ball turret of the lower bomber had felt the impact of the collision above him and saw shards of metal drop past him. Worse, he realized both electrical and hydraulic power was gone.

Remembering escape drills, he grabbed the handcrank, released the clutch and cranked the turret and its guns until they were straight down, then turned and climbed out the back of the turret up into the fuselage.

Once inside the plane's belly, Woodall saw a chilling sight, the ball turret of the other bomber protruding through the top of the fuselage. In that turret, hopelessly trapped, was Staff Sgt. Joseph Russo. Several crew members of Rojohn's plane tried frantically to crank Russo's turret around so he could escape, but, jammed into the fuselage of the lower plane, it would not budge.

Perhaps unaware that his voice was going out over the intercom of his plane, Sgt. Russo began reciting his Hail Marys.

Up in the cockpit, Capt. Rojohn and his co-pilot, 2nd Lt. William G. Leek, Jr., had propped their feet against the instrument panel so they could pull back on their controls with all their strength, trying to prevent their plane from going into a spinning dive that would prevent the crew from jumping out.

Capt. Rojohn motioned left, and the two managed to wheel the huge, collision-born hybrid of a plane back toward the German coast. Leek felt like he was intruding on Sgt. Russo as his prayers crackled over the radio, so he pulled off his flying helmet with its earphones.

Rojohn, immediately grasping that crew could not exit from the bottom of his plane, ordered his top turret gunner and his radio operator, Tech Sgts. Orville Elkin and Edward G. Neuhaus, to make their way to the back of the fuselage and out the waist door on the left behind the wing. Then he got his navigator, 2nd Lt. Robert Washington, and his bombardier, Sgt. James Shirley to follow them.

As Rojohn and Leek somehow held the plane steady, these four men, as well as waist gunner, Sgt. Roy Little, and tail gunner, Staff Sgt. Francis Chase, were able to bail out.

Now the plane locked below them was aflame. Fire poured over Rojohn's left wing. He could feel the heat from the plane below and hear the sound of .50 machine gun ammunition "cooking off" in the flames. Capt. Rojohn ordered Lt. Leek to bail out.

Leek knew that without him helping keep the controls back, the plane would drop in a flaming spiral and the centrifugal force would prevent Rojohn from bailing.

Leek refused the order.

Meanwhile, German soldiers and civilians on the ground that afternoon looked up in wonder. Some of them thought they were seeing a new Allied secret weapon -- a strange eight-engined double bomber. But anti-aircraft gunners on the North Sea coastal island of Wangerooge had seen the collision.

A German battery captain wrote in his logbook at 12:47 p.m.: "Two fortresses collided in a formation in the NE. The planes flew hooked together and flew 20 miles south. The two planes were unable to fight anymore. The crash could be awaited so I stopped the firing at these two planes."

Suspended in his parachute in the cold December sky, Bob Washington watched with deadly fascination as the mated bombers, trailing black smoke, fell to earth about three miles away, their downward trip ending in an ugly boiling blossom of fire.

In the cockpit, Rojohn and Leek held grimly to the controls trying to ride a falling rock. Leek tersely recalled, "The ground came up faster and faster. Praying was allowed. We gave it one last effort and slammed into the ground."

The McNab plane on the bottom exploded, vaulting the other B-17 upward and forward. It slammed back to the ground, sliding along until its left wing slammed through a wooden building and the smoldering mess of came to a stop.

Rojohn and Leek were

still seated in their cockpit. The nose of the plane was relatively intact, but everything from the B-17 massive wings back was destroyed. They looked at each other incredulously. Neither was badly injured.

Movies have nothing on reality.

Still perhaps in shock, Leek crawled out through a huge hole behind the cockpit, felt for the familiar pack in his uniform pocket, and pulled out a cigarette. He placed it in his mouth and was about to light it. Then he noticed a young German soldier pointing a rifle at him. The soldier looked scared and annoyed. He grabbed the cigarette out of Leak's mouth and pointed down to the gasoline pouring out over the wing from a ruptured fuel tank.

Two of the six men who parachuted from Rojohn's plane did not survive the jump. But the other four and, amazingly, four men from the other bomber, including ball turret gunner Woodall, survived.

All were taken prisoner.

Several of them were interrogated at length by the Germans until they were satisfied that what had crashed was not a new American secret weapon.

Rojohn, typically, didn't talk much about his Distinguished Flying Cross. Of Leek, he said, “My co-pilot is the reason I'm alive today."

Like so many veterans, Rojohn got unsentimentally back to life after the war, marrying and raising a son and daughter. For many years, though, he tried to link back up with Leek, going through government records to try to track him down.

It took him 40 years, but in 1986, he found the number of Leeks' mother, in Washington State. Yes, her son Bill was visiting from California.

Would Rojohn like to speak with him?

Some things are better left unsaid. One can imagine that first conversation between the two men who had shared that wild ride in the cockpit of a B-17. A year later, the two were re-united at a reunion of the 100th Bomb Group in Long Beach, Calif.

Bill Leek died the following year.

Glenn Rojohn was the last survivor of the remarkable piggyback flight. He was like thousands upon thousands of men, soda jerks and lumberjacks, teachers and dentists, students and lawyers and service station attendants and store clerks and farm boys who in the prime of their lives went to war.

He died last Saturday after a long siege of sickness. But he apparently faced that final battle with the same grim aplomb he displayed that remarkable day over Germany so long ago.

**Let us be thankful for such men.**



## Correction

**Dear Editor,**

Gene Benson is a dear friend of ours and shares your fine newsletter with us often.

In the Spring 2006 edition, on page 20, you printed a photo of a painting and a shadowbox of military mementos that Gene sent in to share with your readers.

The caption, however, seems misleading. I just wanted your readers to know that the portrait is of Gene Benson and the medals and patches are Gene's.

The montage was painted by my husband, Stirling Lantz, as a tribute to Gene for his heroic participation as a B-24 Bombardier.

The shadowbox was my contribution.

Thank you for keeping these memories alive.

Sincerely,

Barbara Lantz
583 O'Rea Ck Rd
Livingston, MT 59047

***Editor's Note:***

*Dear Barbara,*

*You are 100% correct. The caption is misleading, and doesn't tell the full story.*

*Thanks for pointing it out, and I will submit your correction in the Fall 2006 edition of the newsletter.*

*Best Regards,*
*Your Editor*

Airspeed, altitude and brains. Two are always needed to successfully complete the flight.



**Dear Editor,**

The photo above is from Nandor Mohos, the Hungarian who works with the Pentagon office that search for POW & MIA's who are still unaccounted for.

The photo is of one of our group planes downed on July 27, 1944. Nandor lists it as # 42-94993, MACR #7140.

Best Regards,
Frank Lashinsky

**Dear Editor,**

Mr. Frank Lashinsky suggested that I write to you. I am an amateur aviation historian.

I am interested in the American planes that were shot down here in Hungary and the fate of their crews.

I am in contact with several former airmen who landed in Hungary during World War II. I try to locate the crash-sites where American aircraft hit the ground. In cooperation with the Defense POW and Missing Personnel Office, I also work on the still MIA cases in Hungary.

I recently moved to a village not too far from Budapest. The area called "Vertes" is quite close to my house.

It is a hilly and wooded land. There, I located several crash sites. Usually the main portion of the wrecks were collected right after the war but one can find still smaller pieces of the aircraft even without a metal detector.

I also collect the recollections and stories from local eyewitnesses. This is how I got the photo of the 42-94993 what I am sending here.

The reason I am writing you is that some of the sites belong to B-24s of the 455th BG that went down on 27 July, 1944. I would like to share my findings with the 455th BG veterans. If any of your readers would like more information, please have them email me at nandor.mohos@nokia.com.

Best regards,
Nandor Mohos

**Dear Editor,**

My father, T/Sgt. Robert Cloud, flew as a radio operator with the 743rd BS between Nov. 1944 and June, 1945. Bob is shown in the pictures below in the front row far right (top pic) and front row far left (lower pic).

I tried to find his crew picture in the 743rd Sq. section of the 455th BG History Book, but it was not included. Is there anyone out there that is in these pictures or can identify anybody in them?

I would enjoy making contact with any crew member or their family. I would especially enjoy knowing which B24's they flew.

Thanks in advance to everyone for your help and attention.

Appreciatively,
Dorothy Cloud Wood
(Bob Cloud's daughter)
38273 S. Arroyo Way
Tucson, AZ 85739
Phone: 520-818-9119
Email: SVGigolo@yahoo.com





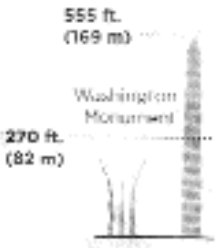
# AIR FORCE MEMORIAL

The memorial, located next to Arlington National Cemetery and overlooking the Pentagon, will open to the public after dedication ceremonies Saturday and Sunday.

**1 Runway to Glory**
Coming through the entry, this path leads to the spires and other memorial elements.

**2 Parade Ground**
A bluestone path links a bronze Honor Guard statue at the south end to the Glass Contemplation Well, a tribute to fallen airmen, at the north.

**3 Soaring to Glory**
Three asymmetrical stainless steel spires, the tallest of which is 270 feet (82 meters) high.









Inspiration was drawn from the contrails of a Thunderbird "bomb burst" maneuver.

## AIR FORCE FACTS

The Air Force Memorial recognizes the millions of men and women who have served in the U.S. Air Force and its predecessors, including 54,000 airmen killed in action.

**History:** The Air Force goes back to an Army unit created in 1907. It was established as its own military branch in 1947.

**Mission:** "To deliver sovereign options for the defense of the United States of America and its global interests ... to fly and fight in air, space, and cyberspace."

**Status:** The Air Force chief of staff, Gen. T. Michael Moseley, oversees 710,000 members in active-duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian forces in the United States and overseas. Its latest deployments were the Iraq campaign, starting March 19, 2003, and the Afghanistan campaign, starting Oct. 24, 2001. Both are ongoing.

## Attention: All 455th Bomb Group Association Members

Remember that your membership dues pay for the costs of this newsletter, along with many misc. expenses related to the Association's activities. If you haven't paid your 2006 dues yet, please mail your check for $15 to the 455th BG Assoc., Attention: Gregory Riggs, PO Box 93095, Austin, TX. 78709-3095.

Note your mailing label on this newsletter. If there is a number 00 or lower on the top line, you're going to be dropped from the newsletter mailing list. This number indicated the last time you paid your annual dues, and we haven't heard from you since then. Thus, we are deleting those names from our newsletter mailing list. To re-establish having your name on the mailing list, please send $15 for 2006 dues to P.O. Box 93095, Austin, TX. 78709-3095.

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