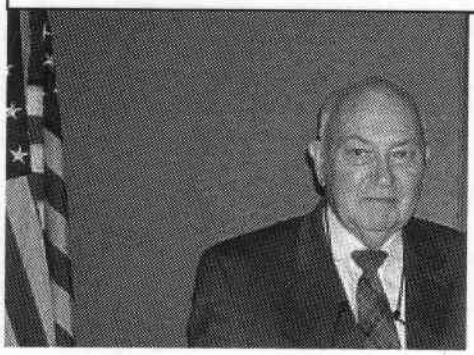
CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

Fall, 2007 Editor, Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039
phone: (817) 540-1068 ***email***: aphp@tx.rr.com ***website***: www.awardphp.com



Message from the President

I greet you all as the new President of the Vulgar Vultures. I feel as though it was a battlefield promotion, in that our Past President, Bill Gemmill, sent me an email message about ten days before the start of the San Antonio reunion telling me that he would be unable to attend due to the deteriorating condition of his health. He asked me to preside in his place.

I confess that I gulped when I read those words, but I quickly came to realize that it is the lot of the Veep of any organization.

As it turned out, things were in excellent shape as a result of the prior work Bill had devoted to the task, plus that of our Executive Director, Greg Riggs, and the folks at Armed Forces Reunions.

I think that all who attended the San Antonio reunion of the 455th Bomb Group Association would agree that it was a great success.

On Sunday morning, as we were preparing to return home, I found that everyone with whom I spoke seemed to have had a good time.

According to the attendance roster, 128 people signed up -- that's four more than were at the previous reunion in Kansas City. Only 40 were vets (there were 58 vets in Kansas City).

Another measure of our viability is the number of people who signed up to take the tours that were offered. All three tours were well subscribed and enjoyed, although there were a few folks that still preferred to continue to swap stories in the Hospitality Room on the Twentieth floor of the Omni Hotel.

The banquet on Saturday evening was also a big success. 101 people attended (compared to 128 in KC). Our enjoyment was enhanced by the enthusiasm of the speaker, Command Chief Master Sergeant Mark Luzander, as he told us about

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Message from the President (cont.)

the Air Force Education and Training Command in which he serves.

It was a lot more interesting than what those words convey, but you had to be there to appreciate them.

Here is how we stand as an Association -- we're down to a total of 339 life members, 116 annual members and 115 widows. The treasury stands at about $12,000, which would fund about four more years of the Cerignola Conection without any additional income. However, the members present seem determined to continue on with reunions, as is Craig Ward to continue editing the newsletter.

At our business meeting on Saturday morning, the members opted to meet again in 2008. Greg agreed to work with the Air Force Reunion folks in selecting a location and arranging interesting tours. Everyone seemed to recognize that time is short, so be prepared to respond to the sign-up documents in a timely fashion when you receive them.

The Board of Directors, chosen by the members, has two new faces -- Henry Paris of Colonial Heights, VA and Mark Mason of Vail, AZ. Mark is the son of a vet, the third of that stripe to serve on the board. They replace Bill Crawford and George Underwood, who did not attend. The new Vice-President is Frank Lashinsky, and the Past President is, of course, Bill Gemmill.

Recently, I discovered that the 455th is still active in the persona of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, based at Bagram, Afghanistan.

Go to their website:

http://www.bagram.afnews.af.mil/

You'll be delighted to learn that they are using the "*Vulgar Vulture*" as their patch, although it is a more modernized rendition from the one that once graced the area around San Giovanni air base.

I sent the 455th AEW Commander, BG James W. Hyatt, an email telling him about us and how much we like what he and his folks are doing. It reads in part --

"A quick note to let you know that the veterans of the original 455th Bomb Group (H) met at San Antonio, TX last week and instructed me, Association President, to send greetings to our modern counterpart.

"Having visited your website, I'm very favorably impressed with the scope and magnitude of your mission and activities, and the professional manner in which they are being carried out. It is gratifying to learn that the traditions of excellence we initiated back in 1943, and demonstrated in 1944-1945, are being continued by the men and women of today's 455th."

Best Regards,
Roderick W Clarke
Colonel USAF (Ret)
President,
455th Bomb Group Association

Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am Andras Pal Olah, a Hungarian historian, and I am writing an essay about the Group's July 27, 1944 mission, the target of which was the Manfred Weiss Armament Works, near Budapest. The essay will be published in the prestigious Hungarian Quarterly of Military History.

This was the mission in which Mr. Emick's plane was shot down (Gates's crew, plane serial number 41-29266, MACR6999). I got the crew members' list from NARA, but it would be very useful if you could please send me some more information about each of them.

We at the official Hungary Wreckage Researching Association have identified the crash sites of three planes out of the five that were lost in this mission.

If you or the veterans at the Association have any kind of photograph, documents or information about wartime Hungary, please share it with me.

Thank you very much.

Yours faithfully,

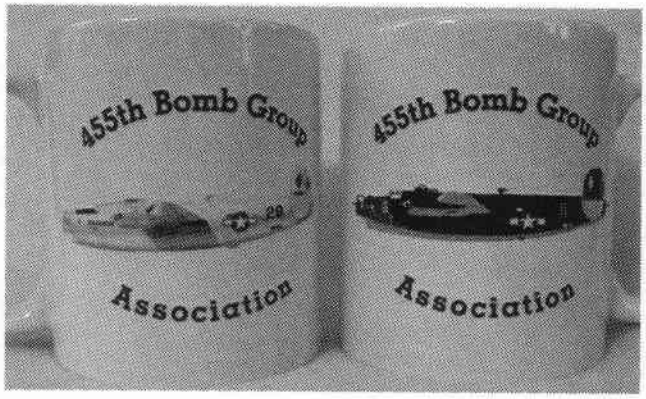
Andras Pal Olah, Historian
6723 Szeged,
Budapesti krt. 22/A, Hungary
olahandraspal@yahoo.co.uk

Remember ...

You don't stop laughing because you grow old, You grow old because you stop laughing.

455TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION, INC.
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AUSTIN, TX. 78709-3095

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Son, Lt. J. T. Ward (740)
Editor, *Cerignola Connection*



Available Now!

455th Bomb Group Association Mugs
Each 11-oz. mug sports two 455th BG aircraft:

One in natural metal finish and one in olive drab

Cost per mug is $12.00 ($7.50 plus $4.50 packing and postage)
Make checks payable to, and mailed to:
455th Bomb Group Association
P.O. Box 93095, Austin, TX 78709-3095

These Mugs Make Great Gifts!
Order quickly to ensure processing for Christmas

(Not a fund raiser ... these are being offered at cost)

Dear Editor,

I've created a new website for the Fifteenth Air Force (www.15thaf.org). I don't currently have a lot of information on there, but am hoping I can get contributions from the member organizations. I created a page for the 455th BG. There isn't much on that page right now.

Would your association members be interested in supplying some information about the 455th? I would be willing to post whatever the 455th feels is appropriate.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Hughes Glantzberg, 461st Webmaster
www.461st.org
P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230
(970) 641-6071

Editor's Note: Your editor also has a website with pages dedicated to the men of the 455th BG (http://www.awardphp.com/veterans.php). I believe the stories of the heroism and dedication displayed by WWII veterans needs to be told in as many forums and media as possible. If you have any information, pictures, and / or photographs that you would like posted on the internet, I would invite you to send them to both myself and Mr. Glanzberg. Thank you.

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I hope a 455th BG Association member can help me. My cousin, Ralph C. Owens, was in the 742nd Squadron.

I am trying to get information about him for a journal I am putting together for the family.

Ralph was an officer from Delhi, New York. He was shot down on July 27, 1944 on a mission to the Budapest, Hungary Manfred Armament Works. I believe it was mission #313 on Aircraft Number #50497, MACR7527.

Anything you could forward would be greatly appreciated. My mother and I (I was fifteen at the time) were the last family members to see him before he left for overseas in 1943. He is buried at Ardennes American Cemetery in Belgium.

Until then, may God Bless and thanks for serving.

Best Regards,

Artie Maxim
DAV Korean Conflict
artmaxim@hotmail.com

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am looking to find any information on my father, (deceased August, 1990) S/Sgt. Leonard S. Skotleski (742), Army Serial # 33605194.

He was an Armorer - Gunner on board a B24 with the Army Air Forces during 1944 - 1945. On April 25, 1945, his 18th and last mission, his bomber took heavy flak and was badly damaged over Linz, Austria. The pilot, 1st Lt. James E. Counsilman tried to bring it back but crash-landed at or near "Zara", a town on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea.

I think the bomber was called "Miss I Hope". I have searched in AAF documents on line, but found no record of the crash or the event, only notes on my father's navigational map on which he kept records.

After the war, and for the rest of his life, he would never talk about it. I would only hear bits and pieces from my uncles.

He went on to serve thirty two years with the Pennsylvania State Police stationed in Philadelphia, Pa., and passed away never to talk of his role in the AAF.

I would like to pass on information to his grandchildren about his involvement during that period. I would appreciate any information you or your readers could offer.

Thank You.

Karl E. Skotleski
1569 Clayton Road
West Chester, Pa. 19382
610-436-8723
karl.skotleski@lfg.com

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My Father-In-Law, Earl Bodenhorn, receives the *Cerignola Connection.*

In the Spring, 2007 edition, P. 24, Emmett Ledbetter, Jr. indicated that he flew on the *"Leakin Deacon".*

My Father-In-Law was on the last crew that flew the "Leakin Deacon".

I would like to make contact with Emmett Ledbetter, Jr. Can you provide me with any contact information you have for Mr. Ledbetter?

Best Regards,

Meredith Hughes
mjcahughes@comcast.net

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I was excited to view the photos of the *"Leakin Deacon",* and Neuman's crew tents in the Spring, 2007 edition of the *Cerignola Connection.*

My brother, S/Sgt. Marshall William Hilgendorf, was in the crew and flew fifty missions with them.

He was, and still is, my greatest "hero", as are all of the men in the 455th BG.

I enjoy your newsletter. Thank you very much.

Best Regards,

Robert E. Hilgendorf
653 Flippin Rd
Lowgap, NC 27024

Dear Editor,

I served as Ball Turret Gunner on George Kahey's crew on the B-24 *Minni Ha Cha* Serial # 4252184. We were with the orginial crews that were formed in Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

We left for overseas on Christmas Eve, 1943 from Morrison Field, Florida. Our crew completed 50 missions and returned to the USA on August 4, 1944.

(continued next page)

Minni Ha Cha (cont.)

We survived a scary occasion. One of our own B-24s turned over the lower element and dropped their bombs. We were hit just outside the number 4 engine.

We had to drop out of formation and were under heavy fighter attack. We managed to get in a cloud bank and limped back to our base in Cerignola.

We were on the Styer and Moosbierbaum missions and were awarded two Presidential Unit Citations.

Our nose gunner was the only member of the crew that lost his life. He was flying with another crew and was shot down on his 50th mission.

Jim Thiel (743)

Dear Editor,

How surprised I was to see the photo on page 23 of the Spring, 2007 edition of the *Cerignola Connection*!

This is a photo of our B-24H with the cannibal on a white background. This bird is the one Gene Hudson (741) and I took over from Langley! Sgt. Groen (741) painted the nose after we got to Italy.

I have a picture of the plane on the ground, but NEVER have seen this picture with the P-51 alongside.

You did a great job on the Spring, 2007 issue. The info from Gen. Gene Hudson about the men still buried in Italy (pp. 19-20) was very stirring to this old fellow.

Best Regards,
Jim Smith (741)

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My name is Jeff Colton, and I, like yourself, am the son of a member of the 455th bomb group (740th squadron), Arthur S. Colton, Jr. ("Coak" to many who knew him).

My dad was a member of the same crew, and also imprisoned at Stalag VIIA with Frank Lashinsky, the past President of the Association. I have spoken to Frank over the telephone and also traded a few e-mails in past years.

Frank and his wife visited with my mom, Gerre, last year in Nashville, Tennessee. My wife Deb and I would like to escort my mom to the next gathering of the 455th in San Antonio, in October.

I would be honored and humbled to, at last, meet the men who flew with my dad, who took his final flight in 1982.

Thanks so much for your help, and I look forward to meeting you at the reunion.

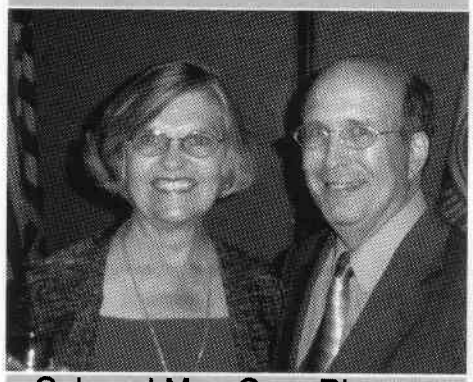
Best Regards,
Jeff Colton
1855 S. 1100 E
Zionsville, IN 46077
(317) 769-4227
jeff@wilson-partenheimer.com

America is NOT at war.

The U.S. Military is at war.
America is at the mall.
The Executive Branch is at war with our enemies.
The Legislative and Judicial Branches are at war with the Executive Branch.

...An Editorial Comment, brought to you by your Editor

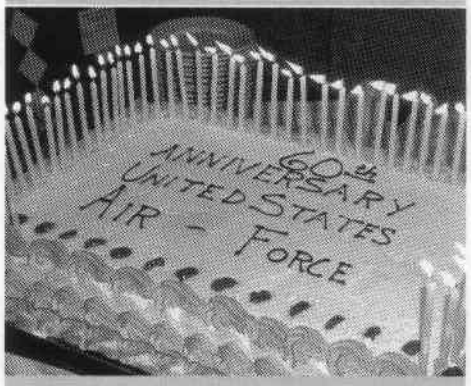
Reunion 2007
San Antonio, Texas



Col. and Mrs. Greg Riggs ... Thanks, Greg, for the great job you're doing as 455th B.G. Assoc. Exec. Dir.



Saturday Banquet Speaker Chief Master Sergeant Mark Luzander, U.S. Air Force Education and Training Command



Happy Birthday, U.S. Air Force!

Reunion, 2007 San Antonio, Texas



Col. Ed. Riggs (740), Association Exec. Dir. Greg Riggs, and Linda (Riggs) Boyd



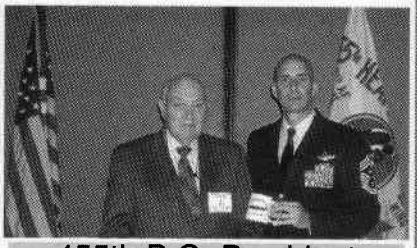
Thanks to Laura Flanagan, & Eunice & John Smoot, daughters & son-in-law of Ormond and Marie Buffington, for Keeping the Hospitality Suite Running Smoothly!



Col. and Mrs. John Davis (741), Gen. and Mrs. Gene Hudson (741), and Becky Gustafsson, daughter of Lt. J. T. Ward (740)



Your Editor, Craig Ward, with sister Becky Gustafsson (her first 455th B.G. reunion)

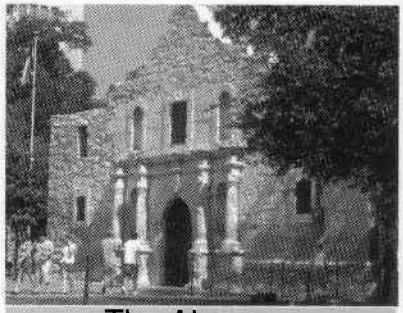


455th B.G. President Rod Clark with Saturday Banquet Speaker Chief Master Sargeant Mark Luzander





Sen. George McGovern (741) with his navigator, C. W. Cooper, at the 741st Squadron dinner Friday night



The Alamo ... Cradle of Liberty for the Republic of Texas



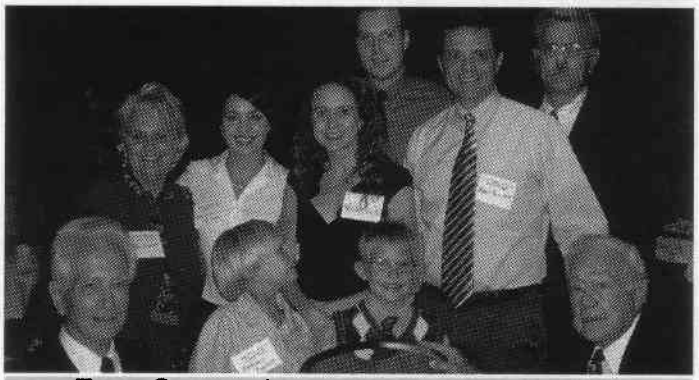
Omni Hotel 20th Floor Hospitality Suite



The Famous San Antonio Riverwalk



Lunch at The Casa Rio Restaurant on the Riverwalk on Saturday



Four Generations were at the Reunion

Final Flights

Lt William Ungemach (742) He was co-pilot on Lt. Samuel Archibald's crew.

Earl M. Shollenberger, of Sharpsville, Pennsylvania, a member of the 455th Bomb Group Association, passed away peacefully with his family at his bedside on June 22, 2007.

Earl was captured and held as a prisoner-of-war in 1944-45, after his plane was shot down by the enemy over Austria.

Earl's family sends its best wishes to the veterans of World War II, and thanks each of you for your brave service on our Nation's behalf.

Ray Beauvais (741) died April 25, 2007. He was a tail gunner on Bill Disbrow's crew.

Lt. Col. Howard Parton (743) USAF (Ret.) died May 16, 2007

It was August 3, 1944, and Howard was a 1st Lt., age 23, and based at Cerignola. Howard and his crew were on their 35th mission flying a B-24 Liberator. Their mission was completed and they were on their way back to base when they were hit and ditched at the shoreline of the Adriatic Sea.

No one was killed, but two boys learned to swim that very day! They were captured in North Italy by the Germans and taken as prisoners.

Passenger trains took them to Stalag Luft III in Sagan, Germany. It was that camp where the famous movie "*The Great Escape*" was made with Steve McQueen.

When asked, "How were you treated?", the answer is always the same. We were officers and treated well...no complaints."

On January 27, 1945, the camp had a march to move the men, doing about 20 KM a day. It was extremely cold. It was then the idea of the Germans that the "Crazy Russians" were coming, and they were going to protect the Americans! This march took about two weeks in the freezing cold. Howard received severe frostbite of both feet.

Eventually, they arrived at a French freight car known as a Forty and Eight. (i.e.; 40 men or 8 horses). They had 63 men in each car.

They were transported to another camp in Nurenberg, Germany. The men were given less food, but treated O.K.

In the spring of 1945, the men had another march to Munich, Germany. General Patton and the U.S. Army came through, and Howard was liberated on April 29, 1945.

Howard gave 27 years of active duty for his country, and continued to keep in touch with a few of his buddies.

Regards,
Barbara Parton (Howard's wife)
2974 Feather Dr.
Clearwater, FL 33759

1st Lt. Stephen Truhan (740) took his final flight July 27, 2007. Lt. Truhan was co-pilot on Lou Dolan's crew. He flew missions from Sept., 1944 - April, 1945.

Walter Summerfield (743) passed away June 20, 2004.

S/Sgt. Robert Probst (741) of West Columbia, SC, passed away July 29, 2007. He flew aboard the "Yo-Yo".

Lt. Willie Moore (740) took his final flight Sept. 4, 2006.

See his story about the Bucharest mission on pp. 18 through 21 of this newsletter.

Col. Horace W. Lanford (741) USAF (Ret.), Ph.D, passed away September 21, 2007, at his home in Naples, FL. at the age of 88.

Col. Lanford was the original squadron commander of the 741st Bomb Squadron, 455th Bomb Group, flying missions out of Cerignola, Italy. During WWII, Col. Lanford flew 30 combat missions, was hit by AA fire over Brux, Czechoslovakia, parachuted from the disabled and out-of-control B-24 south of Ljublijana, Yugoslavia, and was rescued by the Slovene Partisans. He was MIA for four days, and returned to Allied control by C-47 in a night pickup from Slovenia.

As the Bomb Squadron commander, Col. Lanford led the aircrews in his unit by example. He would never ask the aircrews to do something he himself would not do. In doing so, he flew some of the most dangerous and difficult combat missions assigned to the Squadron. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the air medal with three clusters, the

(continued next page)

Horace Lanford Final Flight (cont.)

Purple Heart, Group Citation badge with cluster, and various Theatre ribbons. He served in Japan in the Army of Occupation. He retired from the Air Force with over 26 years service.

After retirement from the Air Force, Col. Lanford attended Georgia Tech, graduated from the University of Georgia (BA), George Washington University (MBA), and Ohio State University (Ph.D). He authored two books, one of which was translated into the Spanish language, combined with a book by B. C. Twiss, an English author, and published as part of a six volume business encyclopedia by Duesto.

He retired as Emeritus Professor of Management, Wright State University, after a 22-year teaching career. Horace Lanford belonged to the Sigma Xi scientific honorary, was a Paul Harris Fellow of Rotary International, member of International Men's Club of Florida, Quiet Birdmen (QB), Order of Daedalians, Ohio State University Alumni Club, Moorings Presbyterian Church, S.A.R.

He is survived by his wife of 43 years, Joyce (White) Lanford of Doncaster, England; two sons, two daughters, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

A celebration of Horace's life was held at Fuller Funeral Home, Naples, FL., on September 27, 2007. Interment will be held in Arlington National Cemetery at a later date.

Final Flights



PATRICK MCCARTHY
April 29, 1925 - July 16, 2006

Lt. J. Patrick McCarthy (740) took his final flight July 16, 2006 in Arlington, Va. Lt. McCarthy completed 35 combat missions as a gunner and aerial photographer.

Dear Editor,

This is to report to the members of the 455th Bomb Group Association and their families that I have established an archives repository with the University of Tennessee for the 455th Bomb Group Association.

I have sent them three (3) large boxes of material. Following are examples of the materials sent:

* 455th BG History Book, *Flight of the Vulgar Vultures.*
* Background material used for writing our book.
* Material about the 455th Bomb Group Association reunions, held while Al Asch was President.
* Correspondence generated and received from the 455th President's office.
* Small number of pictures.

Ms. Cynthia Tinker of the Center for the Study of War and Society called and told me they were in receipt of the boxes and were very pleased with the material. She said they would welcome material from other members of the 455th BG.

The address is:
University of Tennessee Center for Study of War and Society
Attn: Cynthia Tinker,
Project Coordinator
220 Hoskins Library
Knoxville, TN 27996
(868) 974-0128

Please express our best wishes to everyone.

Sincerely,
Colonel Alfred Asch (USAFR)
300 Wheatfield Circle, #B207
Brentwood, TN 37064
(615) 370-6053

When Insults Had Class

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it."
-- Moses Hadas

"He can compress the most words into the smallest idea of any man I know."
-- Abraham Lincoln

"He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends."
-- Oscar Wilde

"I feel so miserable without you, it's almost like having you here."
-- Stephen Bishop

One More Time

By Frank Lashinsky (740)

Editor's Note: I recently received an email from Frank Lashinsky about his recent flight in the Collings B-24. I asked Frank if he had any vivid memories that came flooding back when he was flying aboard that Liberator.

Here is his response:

Recently, the Collings Foundation called me from Stowe, MA., and said their B-24, B-17, and B-25 would be coming to Coatesville, PA. They asked me to fly to New Jersey when they left, on the plane of my choice.

I flew to Trenton on the B-24. They claim it was fully restored, but I found it more difficult to board and exit.

I really enjoyed the flight.

During the flight, I thought back to August, 1943. I volunteered to become a Flying Cadet. I passed the mental exam with flying colors. I barely began the physical exam, and was stunned to be told I was rejected because of color vision.

I remembered August 17, 1944. After nine months of training, I was out of the USA for the first time in my life. I was in Gander, Newfoundland, in a new B-24, with about 200 flying hours, despite my color vision, on my way into combat.

The B-24 would be a complete wreck, with 27 flying hours, when the right landing strut broke apart when we touched down. The official accident report stated the cause as "improper heat treatment of the casting".

We were learning on the job, as were those building our Air Force.

I remembered August 17, 1945. I was returning for reassignment to the Japenese theatre.

By then, I had parachuted out of a crippled B-24 into Bosnia on October 14, 1944, evaded capture, was picked up by Tito's Partisans, and returned to Cerignola.

I remembered February 21, 1945, when we were leading our Squadron on a bombing mission of the railroad marshalling yards in Vienna. The Flak gunners' aim was excellent. There were two close loud explosions on each side of our B-24.

At the same time, the aircraft leapt violently upwards. The noise and racket were loud, as the center round of the three in the battery, tore into our plane about one foot behind, and about one foot below seat level of our pilot, Richard J. von Schriltz. It followed an angular course into, and upward towards the upper turret occupied by Walter Lipps.

It destroyed the escape hatch. It destroyed the plexi-glass cover. It hit one 50 caliber machine gun, stripping off it's perforated cooling barrel, as it bent the barrel into a 90 degree angle. Luckily it's path was just right to keep it from destroying our wing. It failed to explode.

Some German munition maker must have also been learning on the job.

The junk was salvaged for parts.

I remembered March 12, 1945. We were leading our group on a mission to the Florisdorf Oil Refinery in Vienna, Austria.

At bombs away, our right outboard engine ran away. With no response to any controls, and seeming that it would tear loose, it eventually froze. We began losing altitude..

We began jettisoning arms, ammunition and anything else we could pry loose . We set course for the airfield behind the Russian-German lines in Pecs, Hungary.

When we broke through the undercast, we believed we were over Pecs. We were attacked by three fighters from seven o'clock low, as well as heavy flak.

It turns out we had stumbled upon an attack against the Russian Bulgarian allies launched by the Nazis six days earlier, code named operation Waldteufel..

Three of our crew died, and three returned from behind Russian lines. I was amongst the six captured by the Germans.

We became part of the retreating German army, straffed once, bombed three times. The last time we were left locked in our 40 & 8 (rail car ... 40 men or eight horses), when the guards left in haste to seek shelter as the bombs fell.

We broke out of the car on our own and found shelter. Eventually we got to Stalag VIIA in Moosburg.

Lashinsky (continued)

We were liberated by Patton. Upon return to the USA and a sixty day furlough, I reported back for reassignment in August, 1945.

These memories all came flooding back prior to boarding the B-24. I hoped my luck would continue to holdout as it had in the past, and that this flight would be successful.

I was aware that if something unfortunate happened, my risks were greater because of my challenged physical mobility, which was demonstrated as I boarded the aircraft..

Overall I enjoyed the flight and the scenery. It seemed noisier, but that was probably because I flew without a helmet.

Regards,
Frank Lashinsky (740)

Can You Help? Reply

Dear Editor,

You put my grandfather's story with two pictures in the Spring, 2007 newsletter (P.5) The two pictures included a photo of him and his crew, and the other photo was of what I have thought since childhood was his plane on fire.

I recently received an email from a gentleman named Mr. Haney. He said he was the co-pilot of the plane in that picture and the pilot was a Lt. Cook. In disbelief, I asked Mr. Haney to send me the picture he had.

He did, and my chin hit the floor. Mr. Haney was correct ... it was not my grandfather's plane. According to Mr. Haney, that crash happened four days before my grandfather took off for his first bomb run.

I'm sorry for the incorrect information. I know the story I sent you to be true, and I'm trying to find some documentation. Maybe there's an accident report out there somewhere.

I do have full documentation of the mission to Ploesti in which grandfather lost his crew in a collision on the way back.

In short, the one thing that doesn't appear true is that picture of the plane. I just thought you should know, and if you want to post any corrections in your next newsletter, it's perfectly fine with me.

Sincerely yours,
Shaun Duncan
Old66Impala@aol.com

Editor's Reply:

Dear Shaun,

No apologies necessary! I was glad to list your request and photos in the Spring, 2007 edition. I will also post your most recent comments and another information request in the next newsletter ... maybe another reader can fill in a few more "blanks".

Thanks for reading the newsletter ... and for appreciating these WWII heros as much as I do!

It's scary when you start making the same noises as your coffeemaker.

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I need help finding information on my father, T/Sgt. Paul C. Roadman (741).

He said his plane was the *Pin Down Girl.* He was a radio operator from February, 1944 through June, 1944. His plane was "forced" or "shot" down. He had injuries and spent time in a hospital in Italy.

That was about all he ever said about the war. We are very interested in learning more about his service. If there is anyone that can give us more information about his service, please let us know.

Regards,
Sharon Ardrey
1507 Vintage lane
Naples, FL 34104
239-434-4020

For those of you with an internet connection ...

If you would like to access photos from the recent 455th BG Association reunion in San Antonio, please log on to the following web address:

http://share.shutterfly.com/action/welcome?sid=1AcMmjdk5YsXIQ&emid=sharview&linkid=link4

Many thanks to Linda (Riggs) Boyd, daughter of Col. Ed Riggs (740), and sister of 455th Bomb Group Association Executive Director Greg Riggs.

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Paul A. Young (741)
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pyoung04@tampabay.rr.com

I decided to take an aerobics class for seniors. I twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But, by the time I got my leotards on, the class was over.

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am trying to reconstruct my deceased father-in-law's military service record. I have searched the 455th BG Unit History on the internet (*http://www.awardphp.com/455th_BG_History.php*) and all internet issues of the *Cerignola Connection* (www.awardphp.com/cerignola%20connection%20archives.php). I have not found any mention of him, nor have I seen any unidentified personnel in photos that could be him.

Below is what information I have about him, including a photo of him in flight gear.

I would appreciate correspondence from anyone who knew my father-in-law, or who has advice to offer regarding other sources that I can search. Thank you!

Best Regards,

James Pontolillo
PMB-127
2200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 102
Arlington, VA 22201
(703)-507-0840
jpontoli@yahoo.com

S/Sgt Angelo Bruno Dispoto
Home - Hasbrouck Heights, NJ
Army Serial Number - 12229037
Basic Training at Fort Dix, NJ (February, 1944)
Aerial gunnery training at AAFGS Harlingen, TX. (March, 1944)
Tailgunner with 455th Bomb Group (unsure of exact squadron, crew and aircraft)
Arrived in Italy 27 Sept., 1944; departed 23 May, 1945.



S/Sgt Angelo Bruno Dispoto

(Two) Can You Help? Requests

Ref: S/Sgt. Leslie Stockdale

(Request # 1)

Dear Editor,

My father, S/Sgt. Leslie H. Stockdale (743), was shot down on Aug. 26, 1944. He flew with the *TePee Time Gal* and one other aircraft, which crash-landed and burned on 20 April, 1944 (listed on page 205 in your unit history book).

Col. Hugh Graff (Final Flight, 1996) was the pilot of the plane on which my dad died. I have the report of the crash, and I believe Col. Graff may have had the last conversation with him.

I am trying to find out about Sgt. Stockdale, Col. Graff, and both their lives.

I found your internet-based newsletters and the Group History very informative. I will try to get to the San Antonio reunion.

Best Regards,

Gary Stockdale
Blue Springs, Mo. 64014
flytyer43@comcast.net

(Request # 2)

Dear Editor,

I am working on a documentary, and would like information about S/Sgt. Leslie Stockdale (KIA, Aug. 26, 1944)

Respectfully,

Tom Talbert
Tom Talbert Video Productions
816-918-7333

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I was bombardier on Lt. Bill Beck's crew, then Lt. Bill King's. I had my right eye blown out by flak on May 10, 1944, near Vienna.

I would like to connect with any of my old crewmates, or others I knew as we flew those early missions. My old buddy and fellow crewmate, Jay Gaenzle, and I have already connected.

I would also like to make a correction in the History of the 455th BG, *Flight of the Vulgar Vultures*, on page 122. Lt. Bill Beck and his crew were shot down over Bulgaria on May 6. He is listed as MIA, but his co-pilot, Lt. Joe Bunata, wrote to his family following his release as a POW. He said Lt. Beck fell to his death following the destruction of their plane.

Best Regards,

1st. Lt. Thomas A. Bell (742)
840 Kimberly Ct.
Lander, WY 82520
tsalix@yahoo.com

Dear Editor,

In March of this year, I fulfilled a dream of traveling to Italy. It is the place of my wife's heritage, and it was there that my father served in WW II. He was a member of the 740th Squadron of the 455th BG, stationed at San Giovanni Airfield outside of Cerignola, Italy. He was the copilot on Orris Kirtley's crew during 1944-1945.

On March 23, 2007, we boarded the train at Termini Station in Rome for Foggia. There, we had to change trains. Thirty minutes after leaving Foggia, we were at Cerignola Compagna. When they said the station was outside of town, they weren't kidding!

I took a picture of the name on the station wall, and said to my wife as we were standing on the platform, "If this is as far as we get, at least I tried."

We walked into the station, and saw that there was a small bar and snack room, where four gentlemen were talking. I walked in and asked in very poorly pronounced Italian if anyone spoke English.

To my dismay, the answer was no.

I started out with "Mi padre" hoping my very limited Spanish would translate. Using English and hand signs, I was trying to convey that my father was a co-pilot on a B-24.

The person tending the bar gave me a pad of paper. I wrote Cerignola, San Giovanni, Aero, WWII, Hitler, and 1944.

An animated discussion in Italian followed. I kept hearing Cerignola and San Giovanni. Knowing there was a town of San Giovanni, I assumed they were discussing where the airfield was located. At the end of the discussion, two of the gentlemen left.

At about the same time, a lady came in and spoke to the man tending the bar. I heard him use the word papa. At least he understood that part.

The other man drew a picture of a tree and kept saying oliva. I finally understood that he was trying to tell me the airfield was now an olive farm. This, I already knew. The gentleman behind the bar motioned for my wife and me to sit down. I ordered 2 coffees.

While we were drinking our coffee, he started making a series of telephone calls. When I stood up, he again motioned for me to sit down.

A few minutes later the phone rang. After speaking to the caller, he handed me the telephone. The person on the other end said in accented English " I understand you want to see San Giovanni Airfield." I HAD BEEN UNDERSTOOD!!! Twenty minutes later, Mario Capocefalo picked us up at the station. I can't explain the range of my emotions when we drove onto the airfield.

Mario stopped and pointed out where the runways were. I stepped out of the car and just stood there. I could visualize the planes lining up for takeoff, taxing down the runway, and lifting off the ground. In the wind, I could almost hear the roar of their engines.

We walked around the buildings. Mario pointing out the officer's club, enlisted men's club, headquarters building, infirmary, and the chapel.

Going inside, we saw that it was a monument and a memorial to all the airmen that were stationed there. Mario does this as a remembrance of the American airmen, and a reminder of their sacrifice to the people of Italy.

After we left the airfield, Mario took my wife and me into Cerignola. He showed us the Church, and the Opera House, where the airmen took him to see Frank Sinatra. He then took us to his house, where he prepared lunch for us. He showed us a room that is dedicated to the San Giovanni airmen.

We discussed my father's experiences, along with his memories of working on the airfield as a youth. I showed him a picture of my father from a book that he had. He apologized that he did not remember him. I said that I didn't expect him to.

All too soon, our visit had to end. We had to return to Rome. Mario took us back to the station. There, I had him thank the gentleman in the bar for all his help. Mario told us that he had called the chief of police, the head of the library, and someone else in Cerignola, trying to help us. It was one of these people who contacted Mario.

On the train, my wife and I sat quietly. She kindly left me to my thoughts. I kept going back to the chapel.

Mario handed me the guest book, and asked if I would like to sign it. I wasn't sure what to write when all of a sudden the words poured out:

Robert W. Hagen:
He came home with a wound you could not see. He was always proud of his service.
With love and respect,
Robert E. Hagen.

When we got back to the USA, I called Mario. Although I knew the answer, I still had to ask him if the airmen ever asked him to sing? Mario laughed and said, "All the time. Why do you think they took me to see Frank Sinatra?" I replied, "Mario, my father knew you. He spoke of you many times, and how he loved to hear you sing."

I don't think a son truly understands his father. Every father makes a pledge that his children will have a better life then he had. He will try to protect them from the dangers he had to face and the mistakes he made.

Although I will never experience the forces of war that shaped my father, my visit to San Giovanni helped me to understand them. There was a presence there. I can't explain what it was, only that I felt it. Maybe it was the fact that over 60 years later, I had the privilege to walk in the footsteps of my father.

My father took his final flight on August 16, 1985.

Best Regards,
Robert E. Hagen
bobhgn@charter.net

Dear Editor,

I am the Air Force Civilian historian, deployed for the Air Force here in Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan. I would like to introduce you to Chief Master Sergeant David Williamson, who is the Command Chief for the 455 Air Expeditionary Wing here.

We are planning our 60th Anniversary of the Air Force Dinner here on Sept. 8, 2007.

I was asked to research some of the Wing's lineage and honors. In the course of that research, I came across your website and newsletter.

The Air Force in *Operation Enduring Freedom* in Afghanistan is carrying on the legacy of the 455th BG (H). Our wing flag proudly carries the bestowed campaign honors you earned during WWII.

I think reminding today's forward-deployed Airmen serving in Afghanistan that they are personally carrying on your proud traditions will make the dinner that much more special for them.

Here's our website: www.bagram.afnews.af.mil/v/r
John R. McQueney
455 AEW/HO
May-Sep 2007
DSN 231-1601

Editor's Note: The following is the response to Mr. McQueney's email above, by 455th BG Past President Bill Gemmill

Dear Mr. McQueney,

Holy smokes! I had no idea there was a reactivation of the 455th somewhere!

I am the Past President of the 455th Bomb Group Association, Inc., and it's great to hear from you. We are having a reunion in San Antonio in October.

As you know, the 455th, along with the 454th, 456th and 459th made up the 304th Bombardment Wing of the 15th Air Force in Italy.

The other three groups have stopped having reunions because of the great loss of membership. As you can see, we're still willing to try.

If any of your personnel are in the states on Oct. 17-21, we'd love to have you join us.

Best Regards,
Bill Gemmill, Lt.Col, USAF (Ret)
wgemmill@tampabay.rr.com
232-684-4894

Diplomacy

A U.S. Navy Admiral was attending a naval conference that included Admirals from the U.S., English, Canadian, Australian and French Navies. At a cocktail reception, he found himself standing with a large group of Officers that included personnel from most of those countries.

Everyone was chatting away in English as they sipped their drinks, when a French admiral suddenly complained that, "Whereas Europeans learn many languages, Americans learn only English. Why is it that we always have to speak English in these conferences, rather than speaking French?"

Without hesitating, the American Admiral replied, 'Maybe it's because the Brits, Canadians, Aussies and Americans arranged it so you wouldn't have to speak German."

You could have heard a pin drop!

455th BG Veteran Recalls Time Served Overseas



Carroll "Coop" Cooper (741), who served as navigator aboard a B-24 during World War II, points to himself in a group photograph (back row, second from the right). Standing to his right (second from left in the photograph) is George McGovern, who was the pilot of the plane. Coop flew 32 bombing missions.

Recollections of his military service, and others aboard the B-24s, have been compiled into a book by Stephen E. Ambrose, "The Wild Blue, The Men and Boys Who Flew the B-24s Over Germany."

The cover photograph features Coop and his crew, including its pilot, George McGovern, former U.S. Representative, Senator and Democratic presidential nominee. Coop was the navigator.

While his stories are shared in this book, his military service has also been recorded in other ways. In January, 2007, Coop was invited to the office of Jerry Patterson, the Texas State Land Commissioner in Austin, Texas. He was interviewed for 90 minutes concerning his military service, with the tapes to be placed in the state archives.

Born in McCaulley, Texas, Coop was in the corps at Texas A&M University. He received his civil engineering degree from A&M in 1941, and upon his graduation, he was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant in the infantry of the U.S. Army.

Over the next few years, he served in the infantry, and in 1944, he volunteered as a navigator to serve in the Amy Air Corps. It was during his training in San Marcos that he met his future wife.

"We became engaged before he left," recalls Mary Louise. That fall he earned his navigator's wings, and a year later when he returned from Europe and the war was over, they were married.

Coop recalls several of his bombing missions.

"On my first mission, I was with a different pilot before McGovern," he said. "George McGovern's navigator was killed and I was transferred."

His squadron was based near Cerignola, Italy. Coop was considered an older-timer, since he was 28 and other members of the crew were in their late teens or early 20s.

He was on McGovern's final bombing mission. "We were on that mission together. It was his 35th and last one, and the 32nd for me," he said. "I was the lead navigator. The lead plane for each of the squadrons had a navigator. If one plane got hit, it had to have a navigator to get down."

Of his 32 missions, the last was the one he will never forget. "The last mission we flew was very interesting," said Coop. "We had 100 holes in the plane when we landed. My place was in the nose of the plane." During heavy artillery fire, the bomber received irreparable damage, "hitting the hydraulic lines that controlled the brakes and other controls," said Coop. In an attempt to save some of the fluid, Coop left his seat. "I thought I would catch some of this fluid, and floundering in that red fluid, the nose gunner asked if I was okay. I had disconnected my communication line, and was not able to answer. I was in this red fluid and he thought I was bleeding."

Coop was okay, and they returned to base with McGovern landing the plane without brakes. The crew tied parachutes to the plane, pulling the rip chords in time to create drag for a safe, jolting landing.

Since the war, Coop and his wife attend World War II reunions each year. They returned to Italy in 2001 to visit the site of his former base.

During the war, Coop and his buddies took in an Italian child on their base. "The U.S. soldiers took him under their wings," she said. "The country was so war torn," said Coop. "So we and the powers that be allowed him and his buddy to come on base."

Food in the village was scarce, so they fed them, and gave them refuge.

See Cooper, next page

Cooper (continued)

"Through George McGovern, we got in touch with this man." And in 2001 they met this man again.

"He gives the U.S. Airmen so much credit for the person he became," added Mary Louise.

The Coopers live in Arlington, Texas.

***(Editor's Note:** The Italian boy referenced above is Mario Capocefalo. Many 455th BG Association members have met him at past reunions, or on trips to Cerignola, where he has been a wonderful tour guide to many visitors. My wife and I visited Cerignola in 2001, and were treated to a great experience thanks to Mario.)*

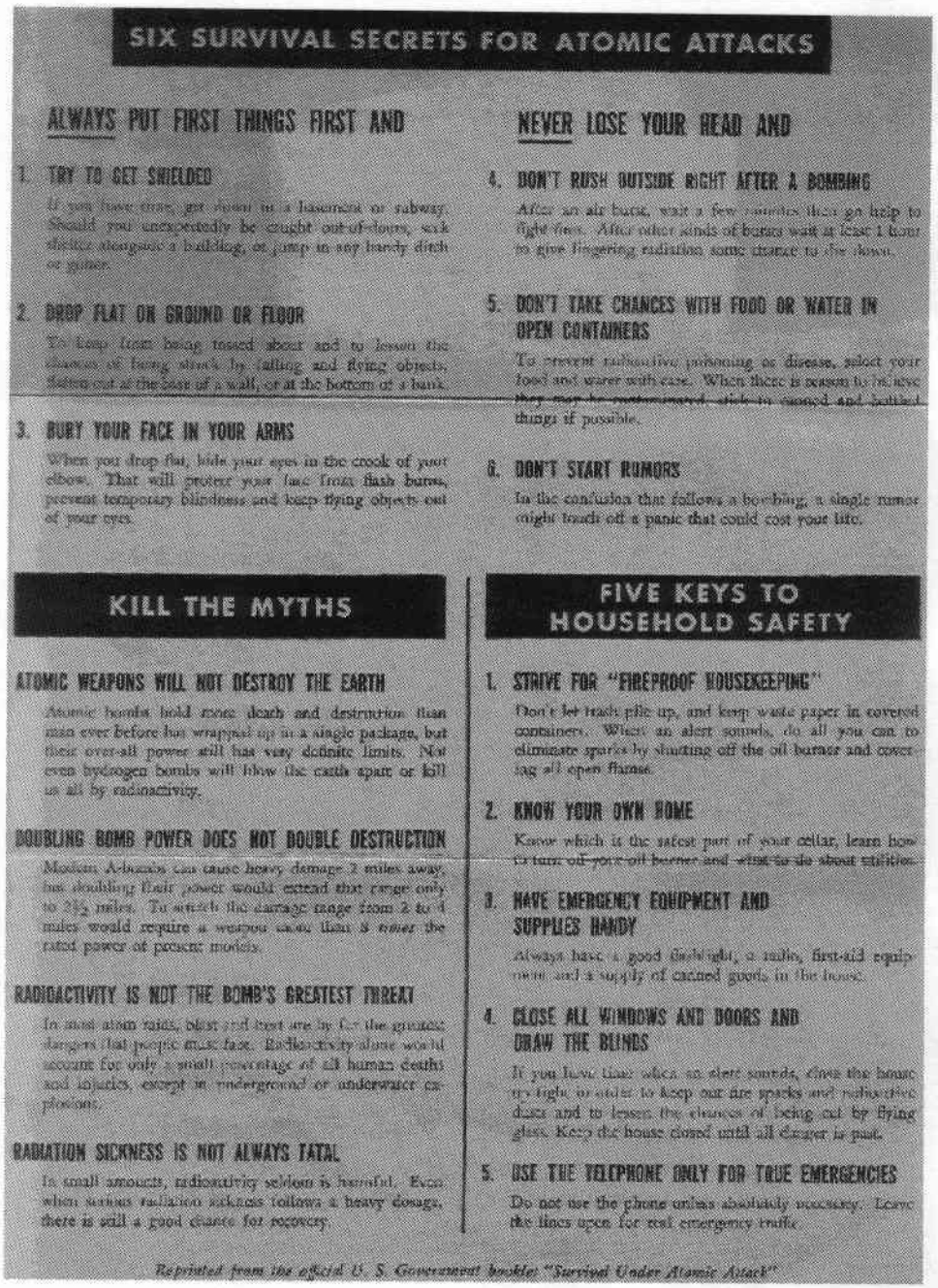
One Tough Grandma

An interaction between an elderly woman and an antiwar protester ...

There were protesters on a train platform in Washington, DC, handing out pamphlets on the evils of America . The elderly lady politely declined to take one. A young female protester put her hand on the lady's shoulder as a gesture of friendship, and said, "Lady, don't you care about the children of the Mideast ?"

The elderly lady said, "Honey, my father died in France during World War II, I lost my husband in Korea , and my son died in Vietnam . All three died so you could have the right to stand here and bad-mouth our country. If you touch me again, I'll stick this umbrella up your a-- and open it."

REMEMBER WHEN ?



SIX SURVIVAL SECRETS FOR ATOMIC ATTACKS

ALWAYS PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST AND

1. TRY TO GET SHIELDED

If you have time, get down in a basement or subway. Should you unexpectedly be caught out-of-doors, seek shelter alongside a building, or jump in any handy ditch or gutter.

2. DROP FLAT ON GROUND OR FLOOR

To keep from being tossed about and to lessen the chances of being struck by falling and flying objects, flatten out at the base of a wall, or at the bottom of a ditch.

3. BURY YOUR FACE IN YOUR ARMS

When you drop flat, hide your eyes in the crook of your elbow. That will protect your face from flash burns, prevent temporary blindness and keep flying objects out of your eyes.

NEVER LOSE YOUR HEAD AND

4. DON'T RUSH OUTSIDE RIGHT AFTER A BOMBING

After an air burst, wait a few minutes then go help to fight fires. After other kinds of bursts wait at least 1 hour to give lingering radiation some chance to die down.

5. DON'T TAKE CHANCES WITH FOOD OR WATER IN OPEN CONTAINERS

To prevent radioactive poisoning or disease, select your food and water with care. When there is reason to believe they may be contaminated, stick to canned and bottled things if possible.

6. DON'T START RUMORS

In the confusion that follows a bombing, a single rumor might touch off a panic that could cost your life.

KILL THE MYTHS

ATOMIC WEAPONS WILL NOT DESTROY THE EARTH

Atomic bombs hold more death and destruction than man ever before has wrapped up in a single package, but their over-all power still has very definite limits. Not even hydrogen bombs will blow the earth apart or kill us all by radioactivity.

DOUBLING BOMB POWER DOES NOT DOUBLE DESTRUCTION

Modern A-bombs can cause heavy damage 2 miles away, but doubling their power would extend that range only to 2½ miles. To stretch the damage range from 2 to 4 miles would require a weapon eight times as powerful as the rated power of present models.

RADIOACTIVITY IS NOT THE BOMB'S GREATEST THREAT

In most atom raids, blast and heat are by far the greatest dangers that people must face. Radioactivity alone would account for only a small percentage of all human deaths and injuries, except in underground or underwater explosions.

RADIATION SICKNESS IS NOT ALWAYS FATAL

In small amounts, radioactivity seldom is harmful. Even when serious radiation sickness follows a heavy dosage, there is still a good chance for recovery.

FIVE KEYS TO HOUSEHOLD SAFETY

1. STRIVE FOR "FIREPROOF HOUSEKEEPING"

Don't let trash pile up, and keep waste paper in covered containers. When an alert sounds, do all you can to eliminate sparks by shutting off the oil burner and covering all open flames.

2. KNOW YOUR OWN HOME

Know which is the safest part of your cellar, learn how to turn off your oil burner and what to do about utilities.

3. HAVE EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES HANDY

Always have a good flashlight, a radio, first-aid equipment and a supply of canned goods in the house.

4. CLOSE ALL WINDOWS AND DOORS AND DRAW THE BLINDS

If you have time after an alert sounds, close the house up tight, or enter it to keep out fire sparks and radioactive dust and to lessen the chances of being cut by flying glass. Keep the house closed until all danger is past.

5. USE THE TELEPHONE ONLY FOR TRUE EMERGENCIES

Do not use the phone unless absolutely necessary. Leave the lines open for real emergency traffic.

Reprinted from the official U. S. Government booklet "Survival Under Atomic Attack"

A VETERAN

Whether active-duty, retired, or national guard or reserve, a Veteran is someone who, at one point in his life, wrote a blank check, made payable to, "The United States of America ", for an amount of "up to and including my life."

That is Honor!

There are way too many people in this country who no longer understand it.

BUCHAREST

by Lt. Willie Moore (740),
Final Flight Sept. 4, 2006

On April 21, 1944, the 455th Bomb Group was briefed on a mission to Bucharest, Rumania. I was a first pilot in the 740th squadron, and scheduled to fly that day.

My co-pilot, Dick Ennis, was ill, and was replaced by F/O Raymond Butler. Butler had been assigned to our squadron, along with his crew. They hadn't flown in combat and he needed experience. During the next few hours, he got just that!

The mission started out as usual as we took our position in the formation. This day we were in the *"Tail-End Charlie"* position.

We had to go above 30,000 ft. because of a cloud covering. The planes were heavily loaded and harder to fly at that altitude.

Nearing the target, Jim Gall (bombardier) developed severe pain in his side. We decided it best to stay in formation because we were expecting fighter opposition. The Jerries didn't want to disappoint us, and hit us hard.

Our plane took several hits by 20 mm shells and other smaller arms. The instrument panel was shattered, and an incendiary exploded under the pilot's seat.

Thanks for the half inch steel plate under the seats!

The controls jammed, and the plane filled with smoke. I pushed the nose down to prevent colliding with others in the formation. I couldn't see inside or out because of the smoke.

The Germans did us a favor on the next shot. They took off the top turret. To the turret gunner sitting there, it didn't seem so great. Miraculously, he was ok.

With the nose doors open and the top turret gone, it caused a draft and pulled the smoke out.

About this time, I saw the bombardier in the astrodome and waved OK. He read it wrong and bailed out.

With (navigator) Lt. Erickson already out, it looked logical. I was to find this out later.

Now, I could see the formation above and ahead of us. The # 4 engine was knocked out. I had lost power, so I had to lighten the load. I pulled the emergency release handle and jettisoned the bombs. They tore the bomb bay doors off. I had pulled the emergency release all the way instead of allowing the door to open.

Things were a bit hectic at this time, and I feathered the # 4 propeller. I had enough power to get back in formation and go over the target with it. This was the safest place to be at this time, with the enemy fighters out in force.

Even with the intense barrage of flack, our gunners were making it hot for the enemy. The Germans would dive into the clouds, come up under our planes, fire, and then were out of range before our gunners could get a "beed" on them.

As we exited the target, fighters were there waiting for us, *ready for the kill.*

It was about this time our fighter planes arrived, and between our gunners and the escort aircraft, we made it hot enough that they left (minus a few of their buddies).

Our escort had been delayed because of a recall. I didn't realize our escort had arrived until one came in close and banked on his side to show who he was.

Now was the time to take an inventory of our situation. The formation was ahead and disappearing fast. My compass was working, so I held this heading. The altimeter was also working.

The instrument panel was shattered from a shell explosion. Our fighter escort left about this time. I told my flight engineer to go to the nose compartment to tell our navigator, Lt. Leif Erickson, to give me a heading to home base.

Simple? Not So!

In about fifteen minutes, the engineer was back with a strange look on his face. I said, "Well, what?" He answered, "There's no one down there!"

It dawned on me what had happened during the German attack on us. They thought we were going down and bailed out.

I could see why! It had to look bad from where they were.

Cross off another.

In a case like this, he's the most important man on the

plane. About this time, he was probably being captured.

I don't intend to leave my co-pilot out of the story. He was doing all he could during this ordeal, and acted like a veteran during all of this. He was getting experience in combat.

He had on the big electric gloves, and a projectile entered at the top and came out at the end of the thumb.

Ray was reluctant to remove his glove, but with a little persuasion he did and found only a slight scrape. His oxygen line had been severed, and he was a bit groggy. The crew fixed him up with a walk-around bottle.

Ray and I had some shrapnel in our legs ... nothing serious. Holes were in every section of the plane; the crew miraculously was OK.

There was a hole through the right wing, between the # 3 and # 4 engines. Gas was leaking off the trailing edge. The # 3 engine was smoking, and # 4 was feathered. The controls were working OK. I held the heading which our group had taken.

I informed the crew of our situation, and told them to stay vigilant for enemy aircraft. They each indicated eagerness to do anything asked of them. Our radio operator had the intercom working now.

To say the least, we had an air conditioned plane. Nose wheel door open, bomb bay doors open, (torn off), top turret gone. The ball turret had to be taken apart to retract.

We came to the Yugoslavia mountains. Clouds covered it, and we didn't have enough altitude to clear them.

I flew north, and found a hole in the clouds, flew through it, and luckily had clearance to the Adriatic.

At this same time, I came in visual contact with two more B-24's at the same level. We three went through the hole at the same time. One plane had to bank sharply as we all went through together.

I indicated we could stay together, but they had troubles and other ideas. I never saw them again.

I now set my heading southwesterly. I headed 270 and looked for dear old Italy.

We were losing altitude. I briefed our crew that we may have to ditch in the Adriatic. They all rehearsed what each would do.

Luckily, we didn't have to ditch. With all the doors open, it would have been a disaster. The crew threw guns, ammo, and all other things of weight out of the plane and into the Adriatic.

We sighted the coast of Italy, and I used a little more power to stay above 1000 ft. At this time, the engines began to smoke more.

The crew was planning our strategy when we reached the base. It wasn't to be.

We encountered some highly elevated terrain. The # 3 engine had really started to smoke, and the # 1 and # 2 were failing. I instructed the crew we had to bail out, and we were really low. I informed them I'd fly between two peaks to give them more elevation in the valley.

Pull your rip cords as soon as you clear the plane.

I still remember Raymond's words, when I said, "Ray, do you know what we have to do?" He said "Bail out. That's the best news I've heard today". I said "Clear the crew".

He informed me they were out, and he bailed out himself. I tried to get the auto-pilot to hold the ship steady, so I could bail. I turned in my seat, and my engineer, S/Sgt. Towle, was standing there.

He said, "I'm staying with you." I said, "We are at the end of the road ... bail out!"

I dropped to the cat walk, looked briefly around at the damage, dropped out and when I felt the slip stream, I pulled the rip cord.

The chute opened, and as low as I was, I still saw the plane crash on the side of the next peak. It dropped off left and skimmed down the side of the mountain. No fire, no smoke.

I drifted over the head of some lady walking through an orchard. She never saw me. I landed easily, and rolled up my chute and mae west and stuck them under a hedge nearby.

I had no knowledge of which side of the battle line I was on. ***Just hope!***

Two teenage Italian boys came running to me and kissed me on both cheeks. The best I could tell, they said, "No Germans"!

We went up the side of the hill to a stone house. I was thirsty, and asked for water.

They dipped some out of a cistern by the house. I looked at the mosquito larva in the water and refused it. They then ran down the side of the hill to a spring, washed the bucket several times and brought up some spring water. The first I'd had since 5:00 a.m.... *good and refreshing.*

I started looking for crew members. I found three chutes up a ridge, and was informed the occupants ran back toward the costal town we had come over.

One chute I saw had about ten people in a fight over it. I didn't want anything to do with that, and walked away. Two women indicated they wanted it for bambina clothes. I looked back, and one man was dividing it with a long sharp knife. They were getting out of his way as he grabbed and cut off each piece.

I returned to the stone house, and decided to look for more of my crew. I found Sgt. Smith and Sgt. Towle way down in a canyon. They saw me, indicated they were coming up, and to stay put.

They came up, and Sgt. Smith said "Sir, you told me so!" He was barefoot. I had warned him about taking off his shoes and wearing only the sheep lined electrical boots. He said when he bailed out, they flipped off, and he never saw them again. I still had my boots on, and I gave them to him.

A crowd gathered at about this time. I could never figure where they came from. A young man, dressed in a suit and tie with a camera slung over his shoulder, came up. He spoke English, so we were satisfied we were on the Allied side. He lived in the village which we could see to the Northwest. He said we could get food there, and that he would accompany us.

About this time, a man in a black uniform came up the hill toward us. He had a rifle slung over his shoulder. We were somewhat concerned, so we stayed inside the group which had gathered. He kept the rifle on his shoulder, and informed me he was employed by our army. I asked him to go to the plane, and to not let anyone remove anything from it.

We now started walking toward the village ... Sgt. Towle, Smith and myself with about 25 to 30 natives. I heard someone yelling, and saw the man from the stone house running toward us. He came up and showed me his hands. He was desperately wiping his hands, and he was in tears.

He had found the flotation vest, and handled the dye marker!

I returned to his house, and an older lady with eight younger females, perhaps daughters, were there. These I had not seen when I was there before. They had been inside.

The dye marker was on the ground. I picked it up and rubbed my hands with it, smiled and said O.K.! They were all crying, and their faces immediately broke into smiles. I threw the marker away. They evidently thought he was marked for life.

The man gestured to the circle, and said "Picka de one." I shook my head, "NO THANKS" and returned to the business of finishing my mission.

At least I wouldn't have had to sleep outside that night!

I rejoined my two crewmen and the escorting crowd, and we started down a dirt road toward the village. We heard a vehicle coming toward us. It was strange looking. We left the road, and as it drew near I saw it was British. We stepped out and flagged it down.

The mayor of the coastal town of Carpino, which we had just flown over as we reached Italy, had been educated in the U.S., and he spoke English. He called the military authorities, and told them two of our engines were on fire, and we would not get far. He told them he could take them to the spot we would be. They took him as a guide and he brought them to pick us up. We thanked him and British soldiers for all their help.

The three of us loaded onto the truck with the Italians who had helped us. They were kicked off by the British soldiers, and we started for the village. As the vehicle came into the village, the people poured out into the street. They climbed all over the vehicle, wanting to touch us.

When we finally exited town, the driver took us on about a one-hour drive to a U.S. Army division base camp.

I saw a total of three service men in the camp (a Sergeant, a cook who gave us food, and an enlisted man who gave us bunks for the night).

We were also given iodine, for some superficial flack wounds.

The camp had two large generators for their power. They were out of sync, and seemed a continuation of the aircraft engines I'd listened to all day.

The next morning, a U.S. Army truck with the other three crew came, and we loaded up for the last leg of our mission from Bucharest, which we had began about 6:00 a.m. the previous day.

We made it back to friendly territory because of several things in our favor. The biggest factor in our favor was one of the best bombers built at this time, a B-24 Liberator, equipped with Pratt-Whitney engines, which could take lots of punishment.

They took their share of punishment on this day.

Another factor was a crew of gunners that stood with the best of the best. S/Sgt. Robert Swisberger, left waist gunner, S/Sgt. T.J.Smith, tail gunner, S/Sgt. Paul F. Greland, rt. waist gunner, T/Sgt. Sheldon L.Towle, engineer and top turret gunner, T/Sgt. Charles Derock, radio operator, Lt. James Gall bombardier and nose turret gunner, Lt. Leif Erickson, navigator, F/G Ray Butler, who was there with a hand when needed, S/Sgt Robert L. Koutsky, ball turret operator, who gave comfort and aid to the entire crew.

Sgt. Koutsky also gave his life in the bail out. His bravery will never be forgotten.

We also had some good flight training and advice from our squadron leaders (Col. Alfred Asch and Col. Kenneth Cool) who had experience in combat.

Their advice ... ***"Stick with your plane as long as your plane sticks with you!".***

1st Lt. Willie W. Moore, *the pilot and author of this story, had all the help described herein, a lot of luck, and strength from a higher power.*

Lt. Moore took his final flight on September 4, 2006.



Dear Editor,

I would like to correct an error I made in my previous e-mail message, the contents of which were published in CC Fall, 2006. While the serial number of *"Tepee Time Gal"* was indeed 41-29583, this isn't a Douglas Tulsa B-24H-15-DT, as I inadvertently wrote, but a Consolidated Fort Worth , Texas assembled B-24H-15-CF.

Switching to the Spring, 2007 issue of the *Cerignola Connection*, I think I can add a few comments as follows:

1) Can you help? request from Mr. James L. Carter:

To the best of my knowledge, 1st. Lt. Charles Brazelton Jr. of Waco, Texas was killed in action over Austria on March 12th, 1945 aboard Ford Willow Run built B-24L-5-FO serial #44-49366, named "Evelyn E." of the 740th Bomb Squadron. Missing Air Crew Report #12941 (of which I, unfortunately, have no copy) should also indicate that he was the Navigator, rather than the Co-pilot.

Regarding the 740th Bomb Squadron ship named *"The Uninvited"*, I first went to the link indicated - **www.awardphp.com/pdf/dragich%20uninvited.pdf.** In spite of the low-definition level of the photos in the document, I nevertheless managed to glean some useful info. First, the plane was un-camouflaged, in natural aluminium finish; second the last 3 digits of the full serial number were 414, painted on the nose, between the navigator's window and the nose turret (this is clearly visible on the photo at bottom left on page 13 of the document with Radio operator T/Sgt. Muro standing in front of *"The Uninvited").*

With this useful data, all olive drab camouflaged B-24s with last three digits "414" of serial were ruled out. This left me with a total of ten B-24s in natural metal finish with "414" as the last three digits. Of these ten, nine were discarded for one reason or another, and I arrived at the conclusion that the only B-24 meeting the criteria for *"The Uninvited"* was Douglas Tulsa assembled B-24J-10-DT, serial #42-51414. If you have access to some 740th records (a/c rosters, crew loading lists etc.), I think there should be some record confirming the presence of 42-51414 among B-24s belonging to the Group.

Mr. Carter also mentions a B-24 photo with number 438 stenciled, but the size indicated, 2 to 3 feet, (much larger than the size used for 414 above) makes me think that this plane was a plane used during the training period in the U.S., prior to combat missions flown from Italy. Perhaps Mr. Carter could have the photo of 438 published in a future issue of the Cerignola Connection.

2) Mr. Shaun Duncan, page 5:

The photo of 2nd Lt. Patrick W. Murphy's B-24 on fire made me recollect that I had seen another, almost identical photo of that same B-24 on page 81 of a book titled *"The Fifteenth Air Force Story"* by the Fifteenth Air Force Assoc., March Air Force Base, California, 1986, published by Taylor Publishing Company, Dallas, Texas.

The position of fuselage star and bars and shallow, enclosed waist gun position (as opposed to earlier open hatch) are clues for a Ford Willow Run built B-24H-20-FO model.

On the book picture, one can barely read the first three digits of the six digit number on the tail "294", part of the full serial number 42-94xxx, where xxx is in a range comprised between 795 and 999. The book picture was supplied by former T/Sgt. James E. Bates, an original member of the 743rd Squadron and left waist gunner on the Lt. Horst R. Schoene crew. Their regular ship was "*Sweatin' It Out!*", B-24H-10-FO serial #42-52278. At the time (1986), he resided in Aurora, IL.

Jim Bates also wrote an article for the Cerignola Connection that was published in the Fall, 2004 issue, page 19.

I checked on the "*Switchboard.com*" website and found about ten persons with the last name "Bates" residing in Aurora, and some of them may know the whereabouts of their next of kin. Should an original of the photo come out, then the plane serial number could be read and this should provide a good start for further research.

3) Can You Help? from John V. Sampson:

If Mr. Sampson is sure about the date of April 20th, 1944, then this should be group mission #27 to Monfalcone (not

Malfacona) shipyards, Italy. On that day, B-24H-10-FO serial #42-52289 of the 455th Bomb Group was lost. Missing Air Crew Report #4202 gives the details about this loss and may include Willard Sampson as one of the casualties.

4) Can You Help? from Mike Kilian:

Yes, a mid-air collision occurred on the March 19th, 1944, group mission #11 to Steyr aircraft factories in Austria. The ships involved were B-24H-10-CF serial #42-64497 (MACR #4026) probably named *"Star Duster"* of the 740th BS and B-24H-10-CF serial #41-29296 (MACR #4021).

Editor's Note: *My father, Lt. J.T. Ward (740) and Greg Riggs" father, Lt. Col. Ed Riggs (740), were both on the mission described above. Over the years, Dad spoke several times about this mission, and about his friends that perished on the two ships. Debris from the two exploding aircraft almost knocked both Lt. Ward's and Col. Riggs' aircraft from the sky.*

As for the "nose art" book Mr. Kilian is referring to, I think it's the book titled "*B-24 Nose Art Name Directory*" by Wallace R. Forman (The author is deceased since June 9th, 2005). I also have a copy of this book, and it is generally a good reference work. However, in this specific case, the book is in error as *"Glammer Gal"* cannot be a Consolidated Fort Worth assembled B-24H-10-CF, but is clearly a Ford Willow Run built B-24H-10-FO, serial #42-52198, as proven by several photos.

The same comment applies for *"Minnie Ha-Cha Wives"*, which, although its correct serial number is unknown to me, cannot be #42-64497, assembled at Fort Worth. There is photographic evidence that it is a Ford Willow Run built B-24H instead.

By the way, photos of both *"Glammer Gal"* and *"Minnie Ha-Cha Wives"* can be seen on the site **www.b24bestweb.com,** even though out of context regarding the March 19th, 1944 mid-air collision.

5) Can You Help? from Geoff Denke:

In this case, I would suggest that Mr. Denke read the contents of the Fall, 2001 issue of the *"Cerignola Connection"*, page 11, where crewmember names of the 742nd Bomb Squadron crew who force-landed in Switzerland on September 12th, 1944 aboard B-24H-20-DT, serial #41-28989 *"Reddy Teddy Too"*, battle (or combat) number 44 are listed (MACR #8359). Photos of this ship can be seen on the afore-mentioned site: **www.b24bestweb.com.**

As for the B-24 lost on August 22, 1944, as mentioned in MACR #11545, it was a Ford Willow Run built B-24J-5-FO model, serial #42-50892. This ship is said to have been named *"Dakota Queen"* in the B-24 Nose Art Directory book, but there is another ship, North American Dallas-built B-24G-10-NT, serial #42-78166 to which both this name and *"Rosalie Mae"* have also been associated.

Does anybody have some clues which might lead to positive identification?

6) On page 23 of the Spring, 2007 C.C. newsletter, you mention Mr. Henry Groen (741) of Murray, Utah. It is great news to read that a nose-art artist of the Vulgar Vultures has been found. The painting published shows *"Peel Off"* serial #42-64476, of the 741st Bomb Squadron.

I'm pleased to see that he did not forget the four leaf clover painted on the rudder, indicating a 741st Bomb Squadron ship. While the group diamond and yellow painted lower fin and rudder area are fairly well known, there is still some confusion as to the proper squadron markings. The correct breakdown follows:

Rectangle (vertical bar):
740th Bomb Squadron
Four leaf clover:
741st Bomb Squadron
Horizontal bar:
742nd Bomb Squadron
Diagonal stripe:
743rd Bomb Squadron

These were normally painted white (sometimes also in yellow) on the rudders of camouflaged B-24s, and in black on metal finish ships.

Your readers may get a copy of their aircraft history card, also called Individual Aircraft Record Card (IARC) at:
Smithsonian Institution
P.O. Box 37012
National Air and Space Museum
Archives Division,
Rm 3100, MRC 322
Washington, DC 20013-7012

Best Regards,
Georges "Gino" Künzle
ginox@bluewin.ch

Message from 455th BG Association Executive Director Greg Riggs

The reunion in San Antonio would have to be considered a success if we define "success" as an enjoyable time of visiting with friends. We had over forty bomb group veterans and over ninety family members and guests.

One family even had four generations present!

I'd like to extend a special thanks to John and Eunice Smoot and to Laura Flanagan, daughters and son-in-law of Ormond and Marie Buffington. The three of them kept the hospitality room stocked and operating throughout the reunion. As many of you know, the hospitality room is the hub of the entire reunion.

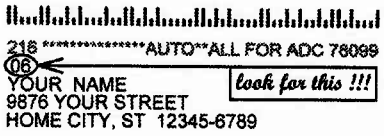
There were two items of business which ought to be of interest to Association members:

1) The general membership voted to hold another reunion next year --- in 2008. This breaks with our tradition of holding bi-annual reunions. Two years is beginning to look farther away as time goes by, so we decided to meet again next year. We have not yet picked a location, but location and registration forms will be published in the Spring, 2008 edition of the *Cerignola Connection*. Be watching for it! Plan to join us, especially if you were unable to attend this year.

2) Another important item of business concerns the payment of annual dues. Most of our members are life members, but we currently have 116 people on our roster who pay dues annually. Many in this category do not actually pay dues annually, but should. The Board of Directors voted to drop from the mailing list anyone who falls more than one year behind in paying annual dues. We don't want this to happen to you!

Please pay attention to the sample mailing label below. It shows you whether or not our records indicate you owe annual dues. Look at the line immediately above your name on the mailing label for this issue of the newsletter. If you see "life mbr" or "widow," you do not need to pay annual dues. If you see a two-digit number, it indicates the last year for which we recorded annual dues for you.

In the example below, this member last paid annual dues in 2006 (note the "06" above the name). That means that this person would be dropped from the mailing roster in 2008 unless we receive a check for annual dues.



Annual dues are $15. A life membership can be purchased now for only $60. This may be the more convenient approach for many of you. Checks should be made payable to: 455th Bomb Group Association, P.O. Box 93095, Austin, TX. 78709-3095.

455th Bomb Group Assoc., Inc.
P.O. Box 93095
Austin, TX 78709-3095

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