CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

Fall, 2014 Editor: Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039
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Message from the President

By
Norman Crum

I'm pleased to once again offer a few words for this edition of the *Cerignola Connection.*

We owe a hearty thanks to Craig Ward, who so capably pulls this publication together for us. Thanks, too, to Executive Director Greg Riggs, who keeps the organization running. Without these two capable men, the 455th Bomb Group Association would cease to exist.

In previous introductory notes, I've focused my comments on both the men and the machines that took the 455th to war. But, of course, the 455th was only one part of a larger organization: the 304th Bomb Wing of the 15th Air Force.

For those of us who are second-generation members of the Association, perhaps a review of the 15th's mission and history would be in order. I borrow many of the following words from the Fifteenth Air Force website, edited by Hughes Glantzberg. If you've not already done so, you might want to check it out: www.15thaf.org.

In the 18 months of its existence, the Fifteenth Air Force, operating principally from a complex of airfields in southern Italy, dropped 303,842 tons of bombs on enemy targets in nine countries of southern and eastern Europe. Its combat personnel made 148,955 heavy bomber sorties and 87,732 fighter sorties against the enemy. It lost 3,364 aircraft and 21,671 personnel killed, wounded, missing and taken prisoner.

The Fifteenth AF fought five broad campaigns:
1) enemy fuel production,
2) enemy air forces,
3) enemy communications and transportation,
4) enemy ground forces and
5) prisoner rescues.

Most vital of the Fifteenth's oil targets was the

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Ploesti complex of refineries, which contributed about 30% of the entire Axis fuel supply. Ploesti was protected by 150 first class fighters and 250 heavy flak guns when the Fifteenth began a series of attacks against it on April 5, 1944.

The Ploesti campaign continued until 19 August. Fifteenth Air Force and associated RAF bombers flew 5,287 sorties, dropping 12,870 tons of bombs. The cost was 237 heavies (15 of them RAF), 10 P-38 dive bombers and 39 escorting fighters. More than 2,200 American Airmen were lost, but results were good.

At the end of the campaign, these heavily-defended refineries were reduced to only 10% of their previous production rates. The Fifteenth followed up the Ploesti attacks by dropping 10,000 tons of bombs in attacks on three synthetic oil plants in Silesia and one in Poland, reducing their combined production by February of 1945 to 20% of what it was the previous year.

By devastating attacks on Weiner Neustadt and Regenshurg, two of the three main enemy fighter manufacturing complexes, the Fifteenth Air Force helped in the early attainment of European air supremacy.

By May 1944, well before the D-Day landings in France, estimated production at these sites had already been reduced to 250 aircraft per month against previous production of 650 aircraft per month.

In addition to the oil and air-supremacy campaigns, the Fifteenth also attacked enemy communications and transportation systems far behind the front lines, disrupting supply and reinforcement movements from industrial centers over an 800 mile radius from its Italian airfields.

The Fifteenth also supplied support to the army's ground forces, bombing targets at Salerno, Anzio, and Cassino in the Rome campaign. On 15 April 1945, the Fifteenth put up a record-breaking 93% of its available aircraft to soften-up the approaches to Bologna in one of the final missions of the Italian ground campaign.

A unique sidelight of the Fifteenth Air Force's operations was the rescue of air crews shot down in enemy territory. No other air force undertook escape operations in so many countries. The Fifteenth returned 5,650 personnel in more than 300 planned rescue operations. Men were brought back safely from Tunisia, Italy, France, Switzerland, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Austria and Germany.

In this edition of the *Cerignola Connection,* we continue to tell the story of the young men who flew, fought and serviced the B-24s over southern Europe. They were brave, intelligent men, and we continue to be awfully lucky that they did their duty and preserved our freedom.



Editor's Note:

Many of you have had the unique experience and pleasure, over the last several decades, of traveling to Cerignola, Italy, and seeing what is left of the San Giovanni airfield, quonset huts, HQ "castle", chapel, and other buildings that were such a big part of your mission in the 455th BG in 1944-1945.

Your tour guide was probably Mario Capocefalo, who is the "ambassador" of the 454th and 455th Bomb groups in the local community. Mario was a teenage "tent boy" for the airmen and ground crews. He ran errands, and did other work for the Americans, in exchange for food, money, English lessons, etc.

Mario has spent his whole lifetime keeping alive the memory of the brave airmen who risked their lives, and gave their lives, in the effort to smash Hitler's war machine. He has spent many days and nights showing visiting American veterans, and their families, all that he has gathered over his 84 years regarding the legacy of the Army Air Corps' struggles, in and out of Cerignola, during those terrible war years.

Mario has had some health issues recently. I'm sure he would like to hear from any and all well-wishers. His contact information is below:

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Current members may retain this form and use it to report a future change of address or other contact information. The form can also be given to anyone interested in membership. Please return completed forms to: 455th Bomb Group Association, P. O. Box 93095, Austin, Texas 78709-3095.

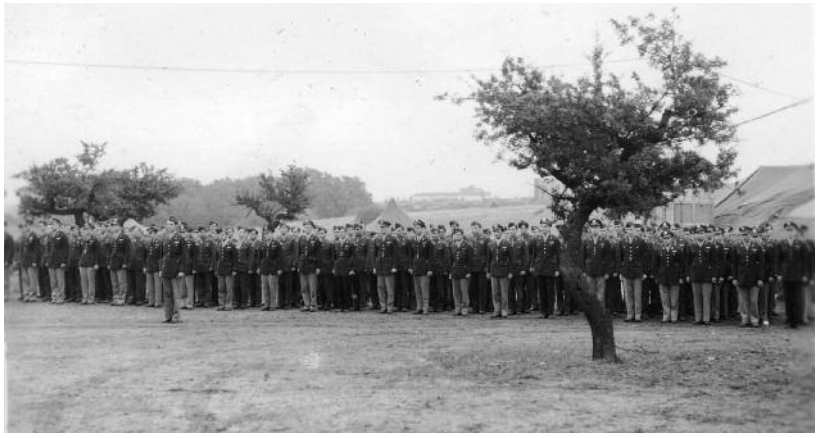
Dear Editor,

I went to my Mothers house for the holidays last year, and went through more of my Dad's things (Maj. Lloyd Griffin, 742).

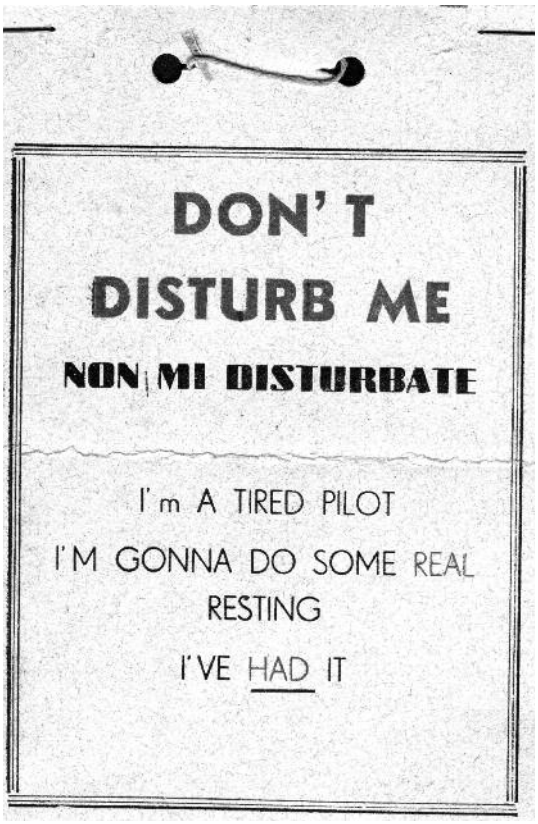
The book that we have is the *First 100 Missions Operations Manual*. This is the same book that someone scanned, and put a web link address on your newsletter. We also have a photo album and his flight logs.

I did find a few more things in the photo album that I thought you might be interested in, and they are attached.

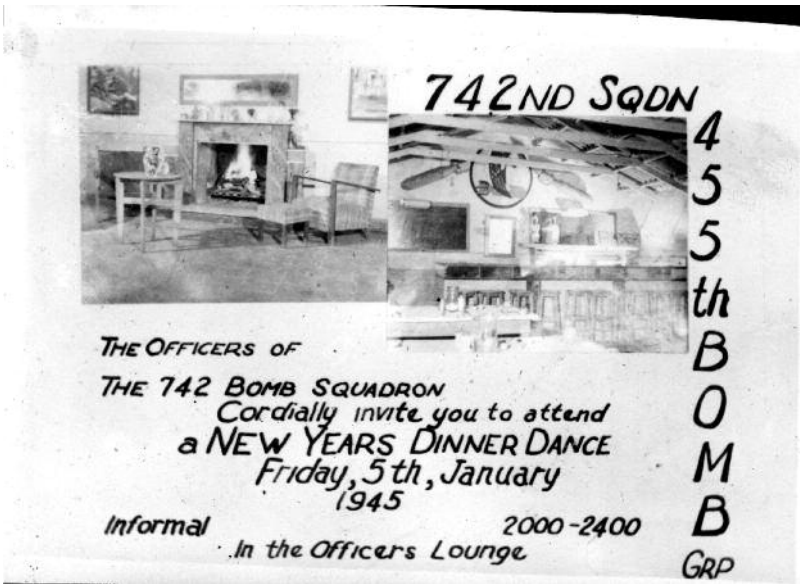
Best Regards,
Wayne Griffin
wayne.griffin@att.net







Photos on this page courtesy of Lloyd Griffin (742)



Dear Editor,

My grandfather was a crewmember on the B-24 *Pittsburgh Babe*. On your website ***(www.awardphp.com)***, I found a photo of him, with you listed as a contributor. I was wondering if you would know where I could find more information on the crewmembers of that plane, including my grandfather. The records I have found are rather incomplete. Any help you could give me would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Chris Lemmey
clemme1@students.towson.edu

Dear Editor,

I recently read about a last-minute B-24H assignment of my uncle's crew that was killed on July 27, 1944 over Hungary. I have gone through all my records and emails and cannot find where that source of information was.

From what I understand, the crew of the *Glammer Gal* was assigned another B-24H named the *Raleigh H* (sn: 42-94993) at the last minute due to mechanical problems with the *Glammer Gal*. I always thought the *Glammer Gal* serial number was that number.

Could that have come from your newsletter, or records, or even in an email I may have accidentally deleted?

Thank you.

Don Stafford
dstafford2@comcast.net

Dear Don,

I have *Glammer Gal* as 42-52198 (confirmed in photographs), and *Raleigh H* as 42-94993 (confirmed in group and aircraft records).

When the group first arrived at San Giovanni, crews often flew the same aircraft for almost each mission. As the war progressed, it became a mixed bag. For the 742nd BS, a turning point seemed to be the June 26, 1944 mission to the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, Austria near Vienna. They lost six aircraft, approximately half of the squadron.

Before this mission, there were references to aircraft belonging to certain pilots. After June 26, 1944, not so much.

Anything is possible!

I don't recall seeing anything specifically about 198 being swapped out with 993 on July 27, 1944, but I think it's certainly possible. Each squadron tried to put up ten aircraft for each mission, and there were usually a few spare aircraft per squadron.

Here is some trivia on 42-94993. It appears that it came into the squadron with the name *Raleigh H* already applied. This happened often - a crew would pick up a new aircraft in the US, hire an artist to paint the nose art, only to have the aircraft reassigned when they arrived in Italy. Here is an excerpt from the 742nd records (4-16-44):

"Our squadron received another aircraft today - number 993 - named *Raleigh H*. In the drawing for the new plane, held among the first pilots who haven't had ships as yet, Lt. Montgomery was the lucky officer."

It's possible that Lt. Montgomery renamed the aircraft, but there's no way of knowing. Hopefully more information will surface.

I hope this helps!

Dave Ungemach
davetw1@cox.net

Dear Editor,

Recently, I have written articles in the *Huffington Post* and *Parade.com* for Veterans Day and July Fourth about my father's experience in World War II. My mother gave me dozens of his letters, which he wrote to his mother in Queens, New York.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jack-levison/a-bomb-a-dad-and-a-veterans-day-plea_b_2097479.html

http://parade.condenast.com/313198/parade/why-ill-remember-my-father-this-fourth-of-july/

I found your excellent resource online, but I did not find my father's name in the roll call.

http://texasnetrans.com/Cerignola/pdf/455thBGHistory_Roll%20Call.PDF

I did discover the name of his pilot, George W. Cyr, who was a member of the 743rd.

My father: John Rodolf Levison
Number: 32 996 657
455th Bomb Group, 743rd sq.
Induction: August 9, 1943
Discharge: September 20, 1945

Other crew members included: George Cyr, Phillip Thiebert, William Ennis, Jr., Andrew Mondo, Steve Kurey, W. K. Ross, Early Abbott, Robinson Edgar, Floyd Blackdeer.

My first question is about his squadron. His pilot, George Cyr, is listed as 743rd, but his co-pilot, William Ennis, is listed as 740th. I believe co-pilots shifted. Is that the issue?

My more general question is whether you would help me to find out more about the particular missions he flew, his tentmates, the B-24 in which he was nose gunner, etc.

Any help you can give me in this search I will appreciate immensely.

All the best,

Jack Levison
http://johnrlevison.com
Email: jlevison@spu.edu

Dear Editor,

National Public Radio did their annual broadcast of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* on the radio the other day, and I remembered that a pilot from the 455th BG (742), 1st Lt David Aiken, played King Melchior in most versions. It was way before my time, but in the early days of TV – 1951 to be exact – it was broadcast live, and was popular enough that it was a live annual broadcast through '62.

The opera is on YouTube – Mr. Aiken could definitely sing He starts a solo around 25:25.

The internet links are:



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hzx-s46vjpY

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Aiken_(baritone)

http://forum.armyairforces.com/Looking-for-any-info-on-Lt-David-M-Aiken-of-the-742nd-m222928.aspx

http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_UajKLsIX6U0/TPV82vwSqsI/AAAAAAAAAAo/97j4EBsJ-ag/s1600/Scan+103270000.jpg



Best Regards,
Dave Ungemach
davetw1@cox.net



Dear Editor,

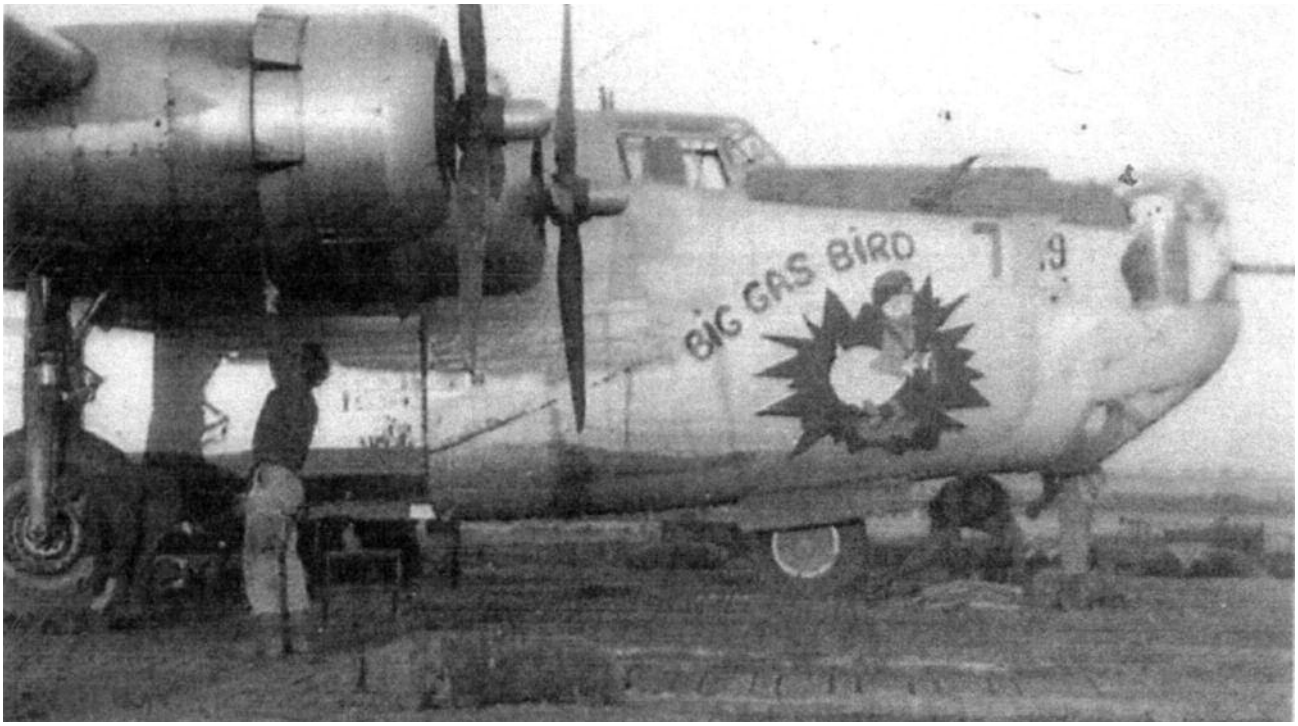
Thanks for all you do for the 455th BG! Sorry we could not attend Phoenix or OKC reunion. Hoping for another chance.

Two of us in Hal Josey's crew *(Big Gas Bird)* survive.

Angelo Bisinella, Engineer / top turret and me, ball turrett.

Joe Kiernan
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Men Are Just Happier People

What do you expect from such simple creatures?

Your last name stays put.
The garage is all yours.
Wedding plans take care of themselves.
Chocolate is just another snack.
You can never be pregnant.
You can wear a white T-shirt to a water park.
You can wear NO shirt to a water park.

See more of these truisms, Page 16

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Paul A. Young (741)
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Things that you will never hear a Southern boy say:

- When I retire, I'm movin' North.
- I'll take Shakespeare for $1000, Alex.
- Duct tape won't fix that.
- We don't keep firearms in this house.
- You can't feed that to the dog.
- That car is too old and unsafe to drive.
- Wrestling is fake.
- We're vegetarians.
- Do you think my gut is too big?
- Who gives a damn who won the Civil War?
- Too many deer heads detract from the decor.
- I just couldn't find a thing at Wal-Mart today.
- Cappuccino tastes better than espresso.
- The tires on that truck are too big.
- Unsweetened tea is better.
- My fiance, Bobbie Jo, is registered at Tiffany's.
- Checkmate.
- She's too young to be wearing a bikini.
- Hey, here's an episode of "Hee-Haw" that we haven't seen.
- I don't have a favorite college team.
- You guys.
- Those shorts ought to be a little longer, Becky Mae, darlin'.

AND THE NUMBER ONE "THANG" THAT YOU WILL NEVER HEAR A SOUTHERN BOY SAY:

- Nope, no more for me. I'm driving.

Final Flight

My father, Thomas D. O'Neill (742), passed away peacefully on August 6, 2014.

He was very proud to have been a member of the 455th Bomb Group. Dad was a Staff Sergeant, and made life long friends from his time in the Air Force.

He was 91 years old at the time of his death. My Mom and Dad were married a few weeks before he was shipped overseas. She passed away in 2000.

He worked as an auto mechanic well into his 80's and even then continued to work weekends at the local VFW Post.

He is survived by four sons, eight grandchildren and three great grandchildren. I have attached a couple pictures of my father from his time in the service (top, right, this page>>).

I want to thank you for the work that you do with the *Cerignola Connection.* Dad always looked forward to receiving the newsletter.

Sincerely,
Larry O'Neill
oneilll2@comcast.net





THE FINAL INSPECTION

The Soldier stood and faced God, Which must always come to pass. He hoped his shoes were shining, Just as brightly as his brass.

Step forward now, Soldier, How shall I deal with you?

Have you always turned the other cheek? To My Church have you been true?' The soldier squared his shoulders and said, No, Lord, I guess I ain't.

Because those of us who carry guns, Can't always be a saint. I've had to work most Sundays, And at times my talk was tough. And sometimes I've been violent, Because the world is awfully rough. But, I never took a penny, That wasn't mine to keep.

Though I worked a lot of overtime, When the bills got just too steep. And I never passed a cry for help, Though at times I shook with fear.

And sometimes, God, forgive me, I've wept un-manly tears. I know I don't deserve a place, Among the people here.

They never wanted me around, Except to calm their fears

If you've a place for me here, Lord, It needn't be so grand.

I never expected or had too much, But if you don't, I'll understand.

There was a silence all around the throne, Where the saints had often trod.

As the Soldier waited quietly, For the judgment of his God.

Step forward now, you Soldier, You've borne your burdens well. Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,

You've done your time in Hell.

~Author Unknown~

Final Flight

Duane Vance (743) took his final flight on May 28, 2014. He was a member of *Crew 17.*

He flew his 50 missions, and returned home soon after D-Day in 1944.

Information courtesy of Victor Murray (743), one of two surviving members of *Crew 17.*

Editor's Note: ***The following email exchange is between two family members, of two different crewmembers, that died in the same B-24 crash in 1944.***

Dear David Bridgman,

I was so thrilled to read your article in the *Cerignola Connection* Spring, 2014 newsletter, asking for help on your research into your brother's life and death.

My wife's paternal Uncle, Sgt. Charles B. Bingham, was also on that aircraft, and died in the crash. I have spent years researching my wife's family, and specifically in the past year, her Uncle. I have found a box full of information on Charles' death (see pictures, at right), and continue to look for more.

One of the things I have been looking for is a photo of the crashed plane they were in. The information you included enlightened me on another aspect of their mission ... that they were in an aircraft they did not normally fly in, and that they were falling behind the formation due to engine problems.

I have read all of the letters Charles' parents received, and a couple of the letters from Charles that he wrote just a couple of days before his death. These letters indicated they had been on ten missions and needed fifteen more to get R&R (rest and recuperation) on an island off the west coast of Italy.

I could tell in the letter that he was getting less confident about going home after fifty missions, as if he knew internally that the end was near.

I have sent off for a copy of the MACR (Missing Air Crew Report) and a complete copy of his military personnel file. Based on the history of the 455th Bomb Group, this was the group's 85th mission.

Our family had always said Charles managed to get out of the belly turret, but stumbled trying to get to the door. Apparently, Lt. Hiatt saw it happen, since he was the sole survivor. Another article I read indicated that one crew member was never found. Not sure which one that was.

One thing the family had also said was that their aircraft was hit by three German fighters. Also, there is another article in the Fall, 2006 CC that shows the crash site of their aircraft.

Sincerely,
Donald E. Stafford
dstafford2@comcast.net

(See response, next page)

Final Flight

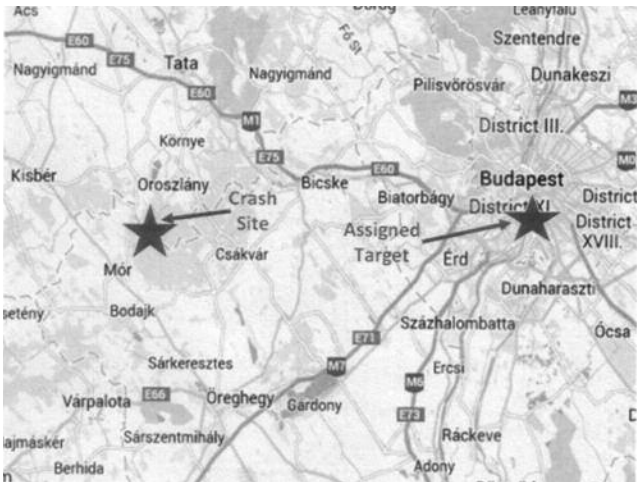
Robert L. Denton (743)

Link to his obituary is: http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/charlotte/obituary.aspx?n=robert-denton&pid=170294791



Sgt. Charles Bingham





Dear Don Stafford,

I am so grateful for your sending me this additional information. Thanks to encouragement from Editor Craig Ward and others, I was able to locate a copy of *Flight of the Vulgar Vultures, 1943-1945, a History of the 455th Bomb Group (H)*.

Find it online at:
www.awardphp.com

This has been fascinating reading. The chapter on The First 100 Missions has been invaluable in reconstructing the sequence and details of these missions, especially for the months of May, June, and July, 1944. Reading this history, I really got a feel for the stress and intensity these brave "kids" endured. Tommy was only 20.

I wrote to the Department of the Army, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, 1600 Spearhead Division Avenue, Fort Knox, Kentucky, 40122. They assembled for me a photo copy of the complete "Individual Deceased Personnel File".

My younger brother, Stewart Bridgman, and I both have submitted DNA samples to aid in the identification process. Since the crew remains are interred at Santa Fe in a group grave, there is the prospect of closure in getting final, exact identification.

Recently, my brother Stewart wrote his poignant reflections on our receiving the grim news back in 1944. You may find this of interest, so I've copied it here:

HAROLD T. BRIDGMAN, JR. (742)

By Stewart G. Bridgman

It was a hot afternoon at the end of July, 1944. We lived in Cacy, West Columbia, South Carolina. Mom and Pop were away. Only Sis, Davie, and I were home.

I do not know what we were doing to entertain ourselves. I had just finished second grade. The Christmas before, Aunt Lucile and Uncle Jimmy had given me a cherished present: a red stamped steel car and trailer – the total length was something like 18 inches. I could have been playing with that toy.

There was a knock on the door. We all went to see who it was. It was a woman that lived two blocks away. I remember she was thin, had black hair, and a one piece dress that was sort of white. She had a telegram for us. It has been accidently delivered to her instead of to us.

Telegrams in the days of WWII meant only one thing: ***bad news.*** At that time, my two oldest brothers, Arthur Leslie Bridgman and Harold Thomas Bridgman, Jr. were both in service in the European theater. Arthur was a grunt in the army, and Tommy was a navigator on a B-24. We did not open the telegram, but the impending doom of bad news was enough to make Sis start crying anxiously.

Thankfully, that woman stayed with us until Mom and Pop returned. I never knew her name, but in my thoughts since then she has always been an angel. She did her best to comfort us while we waited for Mom and Pop to return.

The telegram reported that Tommy was missing in action, after a bombing mission. There was no more information than that.

Pop started cranking on our party line telephone. He had to stand to speak into the mouth piece with the ear piece on a line held up to his ear. It was difficult getting through to anyone who could give any information. I remember Pop's voice cracking as he occasionally sobbed. It would be years before the story would unfold of what happened that horrid night in WWII

Tommy was born in 1923 in Yancheng. KU, China. This was the city where my parents served for 20 years before WWII. Pop was an evangelist going by house boat on the canals that webbed through that area of China to preach to wherever a crowd would gather.

Tommy was home schooled by Mom, like the rest of us, until he went to Pyengyang Foreign School in what is now North Korea. Arthur graduated there. When Tommy was a senior and Jack was a sophomore, Pop wired money to them in 1940 to go by train through Manchuria and Mongolia to Tsingtao, China, to catch a ferry to Shanghai to meet our evacuation ship. Tommy, Jack, Virginia Bell (Billy Graham's sister-in-law) and another female student took that trip together.

It was a tough time as they went through multiple Japanese lines. They were vaccinated four times for small-pox as they crossed national borders. They made it in the nick of time to Shanghai. We boarded the USS Washington for the trip to San Francisco in late 1940. We encountered many stormy days with 75 foot waves. Tommy was a good sailor, enjoyed it, and even took pictures of it all.

Tommy graduated high school in 1941. He went on to Hampton Sydney College in Farmville, VA. where Arthur was a student. He lasted one year. He then began an engineering program at NC State.

When the bombing of Pearl Harbor came, Arthur was about to graduate. Tommy was the first to volunteer, left NC State, and went into the Air Force. He washed out of pilot school, and went on to become a navigator. Mom took the long hot bus trip to San Marcos, TX to pin his wings on. She was the last to see him.

He and his crew flew the B-24 *White Christmas* across the Atlantic to North Africa, and then up into Italy.

He almost had enough bombing missions under his belt to get home leave when he and his crew were assigned for one bombing mission to another B-24. They were flying at night over Budapest, Hungary, when they developed engine trouble.

A Hungarian pilot shot them down. The plane descended, burning furiously. The first to bail out according to protocol was the bombardier. Because of the fire he was temporarily blinded. Tommy was the next to bail out. It was later reported that he was on fire, and that he either went down with the plane, or dropped to his death because his parachute would have been destroyed by the fire.

The Hungarian pilot later said he observed only one parachute. All the rest of the eleven-member crew went down with the plane.

The bombardier was captured, put in a hospital until his wounds healed, and was a prisoner of war until the end of the war in Europe. After the war Pop was able to contact him and get the story.

During World War II, each house that had someone in the service hung a flag with a star on it in a window near the front door. Our house had three stars, and because of Tommy, one of the stars was a gold color, instead of blue like the others. Pop even had a lapel pin with three stars on it, one of which was gold.

I have grieved for Tommy all my life. I have often had the fantasy that he had survived dropping from the plane and had amnesia. All I needed to do was go to Budapest and find him and remind him who he was.

As the years have passed, I have talked to a number of people going to Budapest saying that if they saw anyone who looked like me to let me know. I wore Tommy's two officer's shirts that were part of his personal effects returned to us. When I was in college they fit me perfectly. I wore them out.

At the time of Tommy's death, I saw a Western movie. In it, a man was shot and fell from a cliff. The angle of the camera filming the fall was from below. It scared me to death. That was because it made me think of Tommy falling from that B-24 to his death.

Since then, I have had a phobia of looking up from the street at tall buildings in cities. I do not even like going to the top of tall buildings even though I have been to the top of the Empire State Building.

There is now a grave, supposedly with the remains of four crew members, who could not be identified after the war. Tommy's name is one of the four.

Mom and Pop did not go to the internment of those remains in Santa Fe, New Mexico. However, a niece and her husband went there in 2008 and have made a DVD of the site, and what they had heard of the story of Tommy's death. The grave marker has the date of death as July 27, 1944.

The search goes on. Thank God there comes a day when all that is hidden will be revealed. We live in hope.

Gratefully,

David Bridgman
3321 Ashmount Drive
Orlando, FL 32828
dbridgman1932@gmail.com

Teach a child to be polite and courteous, and when he grows up, he'll never be able to merge his car onto the freeway.

455BG REUNION, OKC, 2014

Five bomb groups of the 15th Air Force formed up together in September, just as they used to do in the skies over southern Europe. This time the mission was to have fun and renew old memories. Over 200 attendees, veterans and their guests, represented the 455th Bomb Group (304th Bomb Wing), the 376th Bomb Group (47th Bomb Wing), and the 451st, 461st, and 484th Bomb Groups (49th Bomb Wing).

In addition to the tours advertised in our spring newsletter, numerous veterans spoke throughout Friday and Saturday. Each speaker highlighted a certain aspect of the heavy bombing operations. Of special interest to some of us, we heard from those who never flew, but who did the behind-the-scenes tasks which were typically unheralded, without which bombs would never have landed on target. Of the many reunions I attended, I think this one offered the most complete picture of what it took to be successful in Europe.

From the 455th, Thomas Boyd, tail gunner, told his story of bailing out over enemy territory and the harrowing experience of evading capture and eventually being returned to Cerignola. Ormond Buffington shared some of his experiences as a flight engineer and top turret gunner. Both did an excellent job and added to the understanding of those second, third, and fourth generation family members in attendance. It was a direct contribution of the purpose of the 455th Bomb Group Association to keep the memory of the group's service and contributions alive.

In addition to renewing friendships within our own group members, it was also nice to meet veterans of the other bomb groups. Many experiences are very similar, and yet each one carries the individual stamp of its owner. Together, all of these individual pieces help paint a more complete picture of what the veterans did for those of us who have enjoyed the freedoms they helped preserve.

Plans are under way now for another joint reunion next year in Kansas City. Look for detailed information in the spring edition of the *Cerignola Connection*, and plan to join us. Those who came this year found it well worth the effort!

Submitted by: Greg Riggs, Executive Director, 455th Bomb Group Association, Inc.



Ormond Buffington, Flight Engineer in the 741st Bomb Squadron, shares his experiences from WWII.



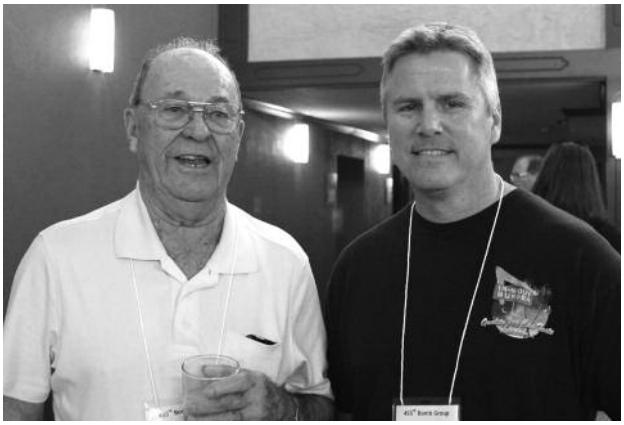
Carl and Barbara Stracka (743rd Bomb Squadron pilot) chat with Faron Thompson of the 461st Bomb Group before dinner Saturday night.

Are Drones Better Than Manned Bombers ?

Drones will not be late to briefings, start fights at happy hour, destroy Officers Clubs, attempt to seduce others' dates, purchase huge watches, insult other military services, sing "O'Leary's Balls," dance on tables, yell "Show us your t--- !", ***or do all of the other things that we know win wars!"***



The Vulgar Vulture was proudly on display throughout the reunion.



Tom Boyd (741st Bomb Squadron tail gunner) visits with Bob Jones, whose grandfather was shot down with Tom over enemy territory. Both evaded capture and returned to the 455th.



Cerignola Connection editor Craig Ward, son of Lt. J. T. Ward (pilot, 740th Bomb Squadron), chats with Louis Hoffman of the 451st Bomb Group before dinner Saturday night.



John Rohrer, son of 455th veteran Carl Rohrer, and Group Historian, chats with a couple from the 484th Bomb Group.



Achi Kazakis of the 451st Bomb Group takes the initiative to speak at area schools in Texas to help educate students about the war over Europe.



Ormond Buffington is pictured here with granddaughter Meredith Sherrill and her guest, Jacob Miles, daughter Laura Flanagan, and granddaughter Emily Love. Rounding out the table are Barbara and Carl Stracka.

More of:

Men Are Just Happier People

Car mechanics tell
you the truth.
The world is your urinal.
You never have to drive to another gas station restroom, because this one is just too icky.

You don't have to stop and think of which way to turn a nut on a bolt.
Same work, more pay.
Wrinkles add character.
Wedding dress $5000.
Tux rental-$100.
People never stare at your chest when you're talking to them.

New shoes don't cut, blister, or mangle your feet.
One mood all the time.
Phone conversations are over in 30 seconds flat.
You know stuff about tanks.
A five-day vacation requires only one suitcase.

You can open all your own jars.
If someone forgets to invite you, He or she can still be your friend.
Your underwear is $8.95 for a three-pack.
Three pairs of shoes are more than enough.

Everything on your face stays its original color.
The same hairstyle lasts for years, even decades.
You only have to shave your face and neck.

Dear Editor,

I have been in contact with Erling Kindem via your group. What I am doing is working on a future submission to the magazine WORLD WAR II QUARTERLY that has previously published my submissions.

This current project is about how many American planes the Luftwaffe captured and flew.

The 762nd adds a tale of the *Phantom B-24,* and how, circa February, 1945, Tuskegee airmen intercepted it and escorted it back to an American airbase.

Does anybody know whatever happened to the mysterious B-24? How about an identification of the Tuskegee airmen who intercepted it? Would anyone know which air base it was taken to?

Thank you.
Stephen D. Lutz
stephendlutz@gmail.com

Dear Editor,

Could you please ask your readers for information on my Uncle, James C. Williams.

His tombstone reads that he died on the 26th of June, 1944. I remember my father talking about Austria as where he went down.

He was from Georgia. I believe he was a tail gunner.

Thank you.
Sam Williams
swilliams6513@yahoo.com



Five simple rules of Happiness

1. Free your heart from hatred - Forgive.
2. Free your mind from worries - Most never happens.
3. Live simply and appreciate what you have.
4. Give more.
5. Expect less from people, but more from yourself.

Dear Editor,

My name is Spencer Fields, a Political Officer at U.S. Embassy Skopje in Macedonia, writing to inform you about a project related to a downed B-24 Liberator *Our Love* (Airframe # 42-78240), which crashed near Vratnica, Macedonia, on August 26, 1944.

My mission has done quite a bit of research on this aircraft and its crew.

We would like to create a small memorial in the town of Vratnica to the bomber's crew.

I thought that maybe your organization would be interested in this because the bomber was from the 15th Air Force / 455th BG / 742nd Squadron.

Any information or assistance you can provide regarding this bomber or crew would be appreciated. Please email me at the address below.

Very Respectfully,
Spencer Fields
Political Officer
U.S. Embassy Skopje
FieldsSM@state.gov

See attached magazine article, following two pages of this newsletter.



From bottom left, guide Mise Misajlovski, the author and Political Assistant Adrian Ismaili and two Vratnica residents display artifacts from the site where the team discovered the WWII bomber. *Photo by Spencer Fields*

Unearthing History

Discovery of fallen WWII bomber unleashes memories

By Spencer Fields, political officer, U.S. Embassy in Skopje, Macedonia

In March, Ambassador to Macedonia Paul Wohlers asked Political Assistant Mitko Burcevski to learn what he could about an American bomber that had crashed in World War II near the village of Vratnica in what is now Macedonia. Embassy Air Attaché Lieutenant Colonel Boris Gershman was helping Burcevski, and as a former military officer and history major, I was eager to assist. Sensing my fascination with the topic, they turned the project over to me.

I thought the bomber might have been a B-24 that crashed after the Ploesti oilfield raid in August 1943. But after hours of research, I had hit only dead ends. All I had were vague details from a decade-old Macedonian newspaper interview with a villager from Vratnica who recalled helping American survivors of a plane crash in 1943. I was about to give up when, after a presentation in Tetovo (about 40 minutes west of Skopje), I thought to ask how far it was to Vratnica. I learned it was about 20 minutes north.

"Let's just go there," I told colleague Adrian Ismaili, who'd joined me at the presentation. "We can walk around and ask people about the airplane until we find something."

We interviewed at least a dozen villagers, and from Vratnica's church records learned the date of the crash: Aug. 26, 1944. Buoyed by this breakthrough, I knew I had to go into the mountains around Vratnica to find the plane's remains.

Ten days later, I was on the steep face of a mountain at 5,000 feet above sea level struggling for footing as the cool air chilled my sweat. My handheld metal detector, until then frustratingly silent, began to put out a high whine. I scraped away earth with blackened fingers and discovered a mangled piece of aluminum. Holding it up to the sun's light, I could see an even line of rivets, slightly warped by heat and time.

Farther up the slope, another member of my team, Mise Misajlovski, found another piece of metal, a small disc resembling the bent top of a soda can, but heavier, like steel. I brushed the face of the cylinder top against my jeans to reveal the neat brass lettering beneath: "Regulator Assembly … Oxygen … AN-6022-1."

We had found the plane. These rusting pieces of wreckage would connect me with the crew and their families, whose pictures, files and letters would help turn the bits of information we collected into a detailed mosaic.

Later, I reviewed accounts of the crash and put together this scenario. On Aug. 26, 1944, 23-year-old 1st Lt. Edwin Kieselbach struggled at the controls of the silver B-24, nicknamed "Our Love," trying to keep it aloft after weathering a hail of bullets from enemy fighters. His young crew of eight airmen was in bad shape. Co-pilot 2nd Lt. John Edwards, on only his second mission, sat slumped and unresponsive at his controls, his thick flight suit turning red. Tail Gunner Staff Sgt. William Rhodes and Ball Turret Gunner S/SGT Willis Stephenson were dead or dying at their posts onboard.

The plane was falling toward the rugged peaks of the nearby Sharr Mountains. Kieselbach maneuvered it into a valley, and Bombardier 1st LT Richard McCauley and Nose Gunner S/SGT Harold Viken yanked open a floor panel in the plane's nose to lighten it. S/SGT David Koblitz and S/SGT Bruce Tuthill forced open the bomb-bay doors amidships and with gloved hands furiously dumped equipment and shiny brass belts of ammunition into the frigid air.

Then, the aircraft's two vertical tail rudders were shot off by anti-aircraft fire, sending the plane into a spin of such power that it threw Koblitz and Tuthill out the bomb-bay doors and pinned the rest of the crew inside. McCauley and Viken wrestled free of the plane's nose and jumped out. S/SGT. Edward Ambrosini pulled himself through plane's waist window. Kieselbach clawed his way aft to the bomb-bay doors, and using all of his strength, pulled himself out onto the skin of the spinning plane and pulled the ripcord of his parachute.

On the mountainside below, villagers met Kieselbach, Ambrosini and McCauley, warning them they would be captured soon by occupying Bulgarian soldiers. The villagers carefully cut down the motionless Koblitz from his harness in a nearby tree, and carried a silent Tuthill down from the rocks above; the impact had killed him. Viken could not be found. The German-allied Bulgarian soldiers soon overwhelmed the villagers and took the survivors prisoner. A villager called after them, promising they would bury their comrades in the local churchyard, which they did.

After being transferred between several detention centers, Kieselbach, Ambrosini and McCauley were reunited at Shumen Prison Camp in Bulgaria. By mid-September 1944, the Russian advance through Bulgaria frightened off the camp's guards, and the trio fled back to their base in Italy. Afterward, they were transferred home to the United States. As for Viken, his fate would not be clear to his family until they received a notification in 1947 that his grave had been moved from Vratnica to Belgrade. His cause of death still remains a mystery.

All of the flyers' relatives whom I contacted were affected by what they learned. One, on learning about the crash and my discovery of the wreckage, responded: "With the few rusting pieces of the wreckage you recently recovered, you brought that event back to life and opened doors again for the families more than half a world away and more than 65 years removed. While there is much we may never know, your efforts sent many back to old and nearly forgotten albums, letters and in at least the case of my uncle's younger brother, to his Army-issued footlocker to review the bits and pieces of information to which their parents clung for hope during that difficult time."

The end to this story came Sept. 5, when, high on the mountain above Vratnica, Ambassador Wohlers called together a party that had hiked to the site, and included embassy staff, villagers, security guards and Macedonian officials. "I would like everyone to observe a moment of silence to remember the Americans who gave their lives on this spot nearly 70 years ago and also to remember the Macedonians who helped the survivors and buried the deceased," he said. "These airmen bravely risked their lives, and many gave their lives, far from home in places they probably had never heard of, fighting for the future of Europe and their own country."

Then, I stepped forward to read the crewmembers' names, and in the silence that followed, the sound of a lone airplane's engine high above echoed in the blue skies. ◻



Top & Middle: Members of the bomber crew pose while off duty and as they prepare for a mission. **Bottom:** Sergeant Tuthill shows off some of the bomber's anti-aircraft guns.

Photos courtesy of the crews' families

Answers to question in Spring, 2014 *Cerignola Connection*:

Which was worse ... fighters or flak?

Dear Editor,

I flew nine missions at the end of the war. Flak was the biggest villain.

I am going to be 96 years of age in June, 2014.

Sid Schoengold (740)
Navigator, *Best We Do*

Dear Editor,

My dad told me that flak was, by far, worse and more stressful than fighters for exactly the reasons you site on Page 20 of the Spring, 2014 *Cerignola Connection* newsletter.

My mom said that for many years after they were married, dad would have nightmares about flak.

Norman Crum
President, 455th BG Assoc.
norman.crum@vpps.net

Dear Editor,

I have a photo of my dad along with other crew members, and would like to know if there is a way to see if any of the crew members are still alive.

You are listed as the contributor in the photo. My father was Charles P. Fisher, and he was ball gunner.

Any info you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Michelle Fisher Davis
michelle.davis.7@us.af.mil
>>>> Photo at right >>>>>>>>
Requested Info: Above, Right

Dear Michelle,

Your father was with the 742nd BS. Unfortunately, I don't have any information on surviving crew.
Here is the crew list for *SWAMP ANGEL*:
B-24J-165-CO S/N 44-40499, 742st BS (aircraft also flew with 741st BS at some point).

Standing (L-R)
1st Lt Johnston M. Hart - Pilot
2nd Lt Donald K. Fotheringham - Co-Pilot
2nd Lt Chadbourne B. Smith - Navigator
F/O Horace G. Haley - Navigator

Kneeling (L-R)
Sgt John K. Kilbane - Nose Gunner
Sgt Duane E. Kiesecker - Tail Gunner
Sgt Charles Fisher Jr. - Ball Gunner
Sgt Harland M. Gilman - Tail Gunner
Sgt Robert E. Demaline - Engineer
Sgt. Thurston M. Dawson - Radio Operator

Your father was also on *HEAVEN CAN WAIT* (B-24G-16-NT S/N 42-78355) when it was wrecked during a taxiing accident on Nov. 1, 1944. They were on their way to the runway when the aircraft slipped off the strip, which was muddy, and into a drainage ditch. No one was hurt, but the aircraft was too messed up to fix.

Warm Regards,
Dave Ungemach
Warner Robins, GA
davetw1@cox.net



Dear Editor Craig Ward,

I got your email address off a web page while searching for a picture of the B24 *Bucket o' Bolts.* This picture hung in my house when I was growing up, and I was told that my great uncle Ward (Lt. J. T. Ward, 740, standing, second from left) flew it during World War II. Ward was my fathers middle name, and is the middle name of one of my nephews.

Well, Craig, I guess my relative in this picture is your father. As I understand it, he was the uncle of my father, Patrick Ward Campbell.

My father's side of the family came from West Texas. Ward has become something of a family name now, as one of my nephews now has the middle name Ward. I also seem to remember an audio tape of your father recounting some of his wartime memories (something about landing in North Africa is all I remember).

I just wanted to reach out to you, because that picture was such a staple of my childhood memory.

Best Regards,
LTC Patrick R Campbell (Ret)



Editor's Note:

I never cease to be amazed how much this wonderful tool, called the Internet, *has helped people find information on their family histories.*

A World War II fighter pilot, who spoke with a thick Irish accent, was reminiscing in front of some school children about his days in the Army Air Corps.

"In 1942," he says, "the situation was really tough. The Germans had a very strong air force. I remember, " he continues, "one day I was protecting the bombers, and suddenly, out of the clouds, these fokkers appeared."

At this point, several of the children giggle.

"I looked up, and right above me was one of them. I aimed at him and shot him down. They were swarming. I immediately realized that there was another fokker behind me."

At this instant the girls in the auditorium start to giggle, and boys start to laugh. The teacher stands up and says, "I think I should point out that 'Fokker' was the name of the German-Dutch aircraft company".

"That's true," says the pilot, "but these fokkers were flying Messerschmidts !"

Dear Editor,

As a long-time reader of the *Cerignola Connection*, and a former member of the 741st going back to Col Kenneth Cool, I thought our readers might enjoy a recollection of my final mission.

Thank you for keeping the fond memories going.

Sincerely,

Charles H. "Rosie" Rosenberg
Former Captain (741)

Final Mission

It was late Sept., 1944. I was stationed with the 741st Squadron, 455th Bomb Group, in the 15th air Force and, at the time, when you finished 50 missions you were through. You got to go back to the "States".

I flew over , flying a B24," The Secret Weapon". However, upon arrival, I was advised that the plane would be taken from me and placed in the squadon pool and the crew assigned as replacements on other crews, I was placed with a veteran crew shich had lost its co-pilot who had been wounded in action.

After a peiod of breaking in new crews, I became a lead pilot, flying only when our squadron was scheduled to lead the group.....At this point, I was credited with flying 49. I needed one more to be through and, having achieved some seniority, the commander was waiting for a "milk run" to be scheduled, as a kindness to me...Well, after an extended period of time when the 741st was not being scheduled any "milk runs", I repectfuly requested to be assigned to fly on the next opportunity, "milk run" or not.

I was soon accomodated, and assigned as co-pilot on the lead plane. The mission was a new one, far north, into Germany.

After takoff, all went smoothly, as we met with no enemy fighers and little flack. After about three hours of flight, for the first time in my tour, the urge to urinate occurred. I advised the pilot, took off my oxygen mask and put on the oxygen walk-around bottle.On the way to the hatch,consealing the relief tube on the floor of the flight deck, I began to feel light headed and it be came difficult to activate the handle on the entrance to the relief tube. I was becoming more disoriented and was losing my ability to open the hatch. Then my ability to contain my urination failed.

I abandoned my effort to open the hatch and struggled back to my seat.I removed the walk-around bottle and managed to reattach my oxygen mask. Soon my physical condition returned to normal. Glancing at the walk-around bottle I observed that the instrument indicated that the oxygen content measured zero.---I was lucky to get back to my seat. I further noticed that the lower part of my flight suit was damp and, at altitudes over twenty thousand feet, moisture freezes.

The rest of the fight was uneventful. No flack. No fighters.---But, as we descended, the temperature warmed and the flight suit melted. After landing I wasn't comfortable in a dampened flight suit. However, despite failing in my mission to use the relief tube, I was successful in completing my 50th combat mission.....I was headed back to the "States".

Dear Editor,

Ah, the Isle of Capri rest break. A reward for completing 25 missions. What a real contrast to living in a tent at San Giovanni. A large, first-class luxury hotel. A room all to myself. Sheets changed daily. Marble bath, two toilets, all the steak and lobster you could eat.

Then, back to the tents with four other guys. Army cot, sleeping bag, and half a steel drum burning gasoline to keep warm (burn only during the day, as using this heater at night would be too dangerous).

Ten more missions and everyone gets to go home.

We left in December, 1944, and got home Christmas Day!

Frank G. Hosimer (741)
221 Hayes Ave.
Charleston, WV 25314-1026

See Frank's photos below ----



Frank Hosmier in front of tent, with a "45" holstered.



Lt. Horace Redding (741). This photo was taken the day before he ditched in the Adriatic. Four crew lost.



455th BG ground crew. Names unknown.



#1 Co-pilot Smith
#2 Pilot Don Bailey
Frank flew with Don Bailey his first 5 missions.



Harold Gales (741) Tail gunner. Photo taken 1990.
Pointing to the name *Ten Hits and a Miss,*
painted on the Collings foundation B-24
that travels the USA airshow circuit.



741st officers on the boat to the Blue Grotto, late September, 1944.
Only 10 more missions, and it's home !



Observations on Aging

Your kids are becoming you. But your grand-children are perfect!

Going out is good. Coming home is better!

You forget names. But it's OK because other people forgot they even knew you!!!

You realize you're never going to be really good at anything --- especially golf.

The things you used to care to do, you no longer care to do, but you really do care that you don't care to do them anymore.

You sleep better on a lounge chair with the TV blaring than in bed. It's called "pre-sleep".

You miss the days when everything worked with just an "ON" and "OFF" switch.

You tend to use more four- letter words. "what?"..."when?"

Now that you can afford expensive jewelry, it's not safe to wear it anywhere.

You notice everything they sell in stores is "sleeveless".

What used to be freckles are now liver spots.

Old is good in some things: Old Songs, Old movies, and best of all, OLD FRIENDS.

Stay well,
OLD FRIENDS !

Anyone Remember This Little Ditty ?

Oh, That B-24,
Oh, that four-engined whore,
The men who fly in it
are certain to lose,
At 55 inches,
she won't even cruise,
Oh, That B-24.

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A MESSAGE FROM GREG RIGGS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE 455TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION, INC.

The joint reunion of five 15th Air Force bomb groups in Oklahoma City is now history. Look for photos and the write-up elsewhere in this newsletter. Plans are now underway for a repeat performance next fall in Kansas City. Look for registration information in the Spring 2015 Cerignola Connection.

We currently have 320 people on our mailing list. 188 of those are listed as surviving veterans; however, we continue to discover that many of our listed veterans have passed away and we were not notified. I hope the number of 188 veterans is correct, but it is probably inflated. 101 of those on our mailing list are widows of men who were life members at the time of their final flight. The rest are other family members, plus a few special category recipients of our newsletter.

As of 31 August 2014, the 455th Bomb Group Association had a total of $5,338.10 The *Cerignola Connection* costs in the neighborhood of $2,200 a year to print, mail, and pay for forwarded and returned copies which were not deliverable. Beyond that, our next biggest regular expense is $128 annually for our post office box. Other miscellaneous expenses typically total less that $100 a year.

In the spring newsletter, I invited feedback concerning the future distribution of our newsletter. Should we continue to print and mail it as we presently do, or should we go to a less expensive on-line distribution which would extend the number of years we could offer it? So far, I've received only two specific responses, one for each option. However, several people have given an implicit nod towards continuing the print version by donating to keep it in print.

Also, in the spring newsletter, I invited second-generation members to step forward and volunteer to serve on the board of directors. So far, no one has taken that step, so I may be calling some of you in the future. If you have an interest, please contact me at 455bg-h@austin.rr.com, or send a note to P.O. Box 93095, Austin, TX 78709.

If you are one of the members who still pays your Association dues annually, don't forget that dues for 2015 are due by December 31, 2014.

Thank you again for the history-changing efforts that you made which preserved our freedoms!