# CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

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

**Spring, 2005** Editor, Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039
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**Get a CD with all back issues of the newsletter, PLUS the entire official history of the 455th Bomb Group! See the back page for details!**

## 60 Years Ago

### Mission 252, April 25, 1945
### The last mission of 455th BG

Twenty-eight B-24s took off to bomb the main station and marshalling yards of Linz, Austria. The group was escorted by P-51s. Two aircraft returned prior to bombing because of engine troubleand 26 aircraft dropped 62 tons of 500# RDX bombs on the target.

Flak at the target was intense and accurate. It appears the Germans were bringing all their flak guns back to protect their priority targets, as the flak was extremely intense over this area. One aircraft was hit in the bombay, and ten crewmen were missing in action. Three other crewmen received flak wounds, one serious and two slight. Twenty five planes returned to base at 1440 hours.

### Mission 253, April 26, 1945
### The Mission that Wasn't

Although a mission was scheduled for this day, it never got off the ground. As the group waited for takeoff, the war in Europe ended.

## President's Message

William Gemmill, Lt. Col (ret.)




*Editor's Note:*

*The President of the 455th BG Association, Col. William Gemmill, regrets that he is unable to submit a message in this edition of the Cerignola Connection due to health considerations.*

*Col. Gemmill is doing much better these days. He looks forward to continuing his duties as President of the Association.*

*I know I speak for all 455th BG Association members as we wish him and his family well during his ongoing recovery.*

## 60 Years Ago
## V-E Day
## May 8, 1945

*From 1945 Press Reports*

The Allies overran Germany from the west during April 1945 as Russian forces advanced from the east. Only a few strategic targets remained for attack from the air and these were rapidly destroyed. The last mission against an industrial target took place on April 25 when the famous Skoda Armament Works at Pilsen, Czechoslovakia was bombed.

The AAF then began flying mercy missions, dropping food to people in northern Italy and the Netherlands and evacuating released prisoners of war. On May 2, German forces in Italy and southern and western Austria stopped fighting and on May 7, after 3 1/2 years of war with the U.S., Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally.

The air offensive conducted by the AAF in conjunction with the RAF against Germany and Italy was of tremendous value in bringing about victory in Europe with the final defeat of these two nations. It was costly, however, for the AAF losses from all causes totaled 27,694 aircraft, including 8,314 heavy bombers, 1,623 medium and light bombers, and 8,481 fighters destroyed in combat. Total AAF battle casualties were 91,105 personnel --- 34,362 killed, 13,708 wounded, and 43,035 missing, captured, or interned.



Symbolic of the Nazi defeat, an AAF fighter lands at a former Luftwaffe airfield as an ME-109 is pushed aside.

By April 1945, the German Army was shattered. On April 25, American and Soviet forces met at the Elbe River. Five days later, Hitler committed suicide in his Berlin bunker. His successor, Admiral Karl Doenitz, sent General Alfred Jodl to the SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces) detachment in Rheims to seek terms for an end to the war.

At 2:41 a.m. on May 7, General Jodl signed for the unconditional surrender of German forces on all fronts, which was to take effect on May 8 at 11:01 p.m. After six years and millions of lives lost, the Nazi scourge was crushed and the war in Europe was finally over.





## 60 Years Ago

### More Events from 60 Years Ago

**March 11, 1945** ... 4,740 tons of bombs dropped by over 1,000 bombers on Essen, Germany

**March 18, 1945** ... 1,200 bombers and 670 fighters raid Berlin with the heaviest attack of the war.

**May 6, 1945** ... Last Liberator U-Boat kill. A total of 89 German U-Boats were sunk by B-24s during the war.

**May 30, 1945** ... first YB-24N accepted.

**June 5, 1945** ... last B-24 delivered from Consolidated plant in San Diego, CA.

**June 29, 1945** ... last B-24 delivered from Ford Willow Run plant.

**455TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION, INC.**
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Capt. USAAF
Elfred J. Specht
S/Sgt USSAAF
Craig Ward
Editor, *Cerignola Connection*

## Can You Help ?

Dear Editor,

I am a Hungarian researcher of history of aviation. I am interested in the history of air wars over Hungary in the days of World War II.

I have heard a story about a bomber that crash-landed near a little village named Kerekegyhaza, not too far from an industrial town named Kecskemet (Hungary) on 26 December, 1944.

I examined that place last week, and found a few oxygen bottles and heap of broken miscellaneous materials.

I am going to check the spot again by metal detector next month, although by the fragments I can identify a B-24 bomber.

*National Archives document:*
*26 December 1944. 455BG. 740BS B-24 Liberator Crashed in Kecskemet, Hungary.*
*Charles H. Crowley T/Sgt. 36033933 Killed in Action*
*LT Walter L. Gunn 1st Lt. 0-827801 Killed in Action*
*Co-pilot Barton H. Walter 1st Lt. 0-802867 Killed in Action*
*Fregoe J. William 0-712548 Killed in Action*
*6 airmen returned by Soviet Army.*

I and my colleagues know nothing about the deceased. However, a grave registration detachment working in Hungary searched the spot in 1946-47.

Please help me find persons who know about this accident. It would be great if I can find living persons from the bomber crew.

Please help me if you can. Thank you.

Zoltan Jankfalvi Oszolo u. 73. 3/8. 4400 Nyiregyhaza
HUNGARY

## Can You Help?

Hi! I had a cousin who was a member of the 455th Bomb Group, 742nd Squadron. On April 27, 1945, his plane left on a mission and never returned. His name was Frederick J. Boyle and everyone called him Bud.

I was wondering if anyone remembers him or has any further info on him. If so, please email me at the address below.

Thanks, Janis
Th8Ball@aol.com

*Editor's Note: If you don't have a computer, and can provide information to Janis, please write a letter to the editor at the address on the front of the newsletter. I will see that Janis gets it.*

## FALLEN SOLDIERS

Numbers of American service members killed in major military conflicts over the past century:

| | |
|---|---|
| World War I | 116,516 |
| World War II | 405,399 |
| Korean War | 36,574 |
| Vietnam War | 58,209 |
| Gulf War | 382 |
| Afghanistan (approx.) | 300 |
| Iraq (approx.) | 1,600 |

SOURCE: Department of Defense

## FOR WHAT ARE YOU THANKFUL?

As a member of the baby-boomer generation, I am thankful for my "greatest generation" mother and father. I am thankful that my father heeded his country's call to arms in World War II, and volunteered as a crewmember of a B-24 bomber that helped destroy Hitler's war machine. I am grateful that my mother, like millions of other wives and mothers in WWII, kept society together and kept the home fires burning during those intervening dark years.

My "greatest generation" parents raised two children the only way they knew how, instilling in my sister and me a sense of patriotism, honesty, work-ethic, and good citizenship that is so lacking in society today.

I am thankful to all the members of the "greatest generation", especially my wonderful parents, for helping to rid the world of fascism and tyranny, and to build the greatest civilization the world has ever known.

*Editor's Note: This letter was submitted to me anonymously by a reader of the C.C. newsletter.*

**Life's Journey**

Life's journey is not to arrive at the end safely in a well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, totally worn out, shouting "Holy Cow ... What a Ride!"




Sgt. William Kreidler of Duluth, Minn., 125th Field Artillery.

He won the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters, **ALTHOUGH NOT A MEMBER OF THE AIR FORCE!**

He was serving as an air-operations observer when the pilot was wounded. Acting fast, Sgt. Kreidler took over the controls and miraculously landed the aircraft safely!

Dear Editor,

I have a war story which may be of interest to you. I was the radio operator for "Crew 17" in the 743 BS/455 BG in Italy in August 1944. There were six of us enlisted men in our crew, all Sergeants, that had completed 50 missions and were preparing to return to the States.

We were bivouacked in an eight man tent and, as there were only six in our crew, two Field Artillery Sergeants were assigned to our tent. We six Air Force men had our Air Medals with clusters, and Citations with clusters.

One of the Field Artillary men was S/Sgt. William Kriedler from Duluth, Minnesota who was the proud possessor of the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross. Boy, did he ever rib us!

Above is a copy of a BELIEVE-IT-OR-NOT by Ripley that confirms this story.

Yours truly,
Victor E. Murray
105 Foxridge Run Longwood, FL 32750-2703

**ARTICLE IV OF THE 455TH BOMB GROUP ASSOC., INC. was amended adding Secs. 3 and 4, providing as follows:**

**Section 3. Spouses, Widows, Sons and daughters of the 455th Bomb Group personnel may become regular members of the Association by application to the Board, and acceptance by the Board as members by a 2/3rds vote of the Board of Directors. Such accepted members are entitled to all the rights, privileges and obligation of the membership provided under these by-laws for veteran members, including the right to vote and hold office in this organization.**

**Section 4. Not more than 10% of the total membership of this organization may be accepted by the Board of Directors from the Associate Membership. This section may possibly be increased by application to the IRS section interpreting the rights of the organization under section 501 (c) of the Internal Revenue Code.**

**ARTICLE XV was amended by adding Section 2 providing as follows:**

**Section 2. These By-Laws may be amended, changed, repealed or added to by an affirmative vote of not less than 3/4th of the members of the Board of Directors in any business meeting at which a majority of the members of the Board is present.**

**Section 3. These By-Laws may by amended, changed, repealed or added to by 3/4th of all of the board of directors by following the following procedure:**

**A member of the board may present a resolution to the President concerning a proposed change by mail. The President will then mail a copy of the resolutioin to the Secretary who in turn will mail a copy to all the members of the board. The members may call the President or the Director presenting the resolution, or both, for a further explanation, or make such other investigation as he deems fit. The Directors will then vote by mail within two weeks of the mailing of the resolution. Such votes will be sent to the Secretary who will make a record thereof and report the result to the President. If a Director fails to vote within the two weeks, the Secretary is authorized and directed to make a reasonable effort to contact him by telephone to obtain his vote. Such vote will be recorded as well as the name of the Director voting together with the date and time of the vote. Any votes not obtained will be deemed negative votes.**



## Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am interested in contacting two former 741st Squadron officers. I would be interested if there is any addresses/phone numbers for them if they are still with us. They are Richard K. Graham and Horace W. Lanford.

Any help or suggestions would be appreciated. Thanks !

Joe Kiernan
609 771 3886
jokernan@comcast.net

## Can You Help ?

Dear Editor,

I am Andras Pal Olah, a Hungarian historian. I am writing essays on air attacks against Hungarian cities by 15th AAF.

I seek information about the dates and targets listed below:

2nd June 1944 /Szeged, Szolnok, Miskolc, Debrecen/ Operation Frantic Joe
3rd July 1944 /Szeged/
20th August 1944 /Szeged/
24th August 1944 /Szeged/
28th August 1944 /Szolnok/
29th August 1944 / Szeged/
3rd September 1944 /Szeged, Szolnok/
5th August 1944 /Szolnok, Szob, Budapest/
8th September 1944 /Szeged/

In case you have any information, or you know American historians concerned in this topic, please write to me.

Thank You.

Andras Pal Olah
6723 Szeged Budapesti
krt. 22/A. Hungary
email: andrasbasa@freemail.hu

## Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I have just spent a couple of pleasurable hours reading every word of the Fall issue. Thanks for a good one!

The Can you help? question was, "Is anyone familiar with a crew ditching offshore Grado, Italy?"

My journal entry for 11/17/44 describes a sortie briefed for near Vienna, dropped on a target of opportunity. Our plane made the return trip all alone (for reasons lost to my memory), picking up a P-38 escort over the Adriatic. A brief note in that entry reads, "On return we saw a B-24 ditch just off the spur. All men survived."

This is not the ditching inquired about, but one that came to mind. We had followed the aircraft down near enough to circle and observe that the B-24 did not break up on impact, the crew took their time to leisurely get the raft out and inflated, then leave the still floating aircraft.

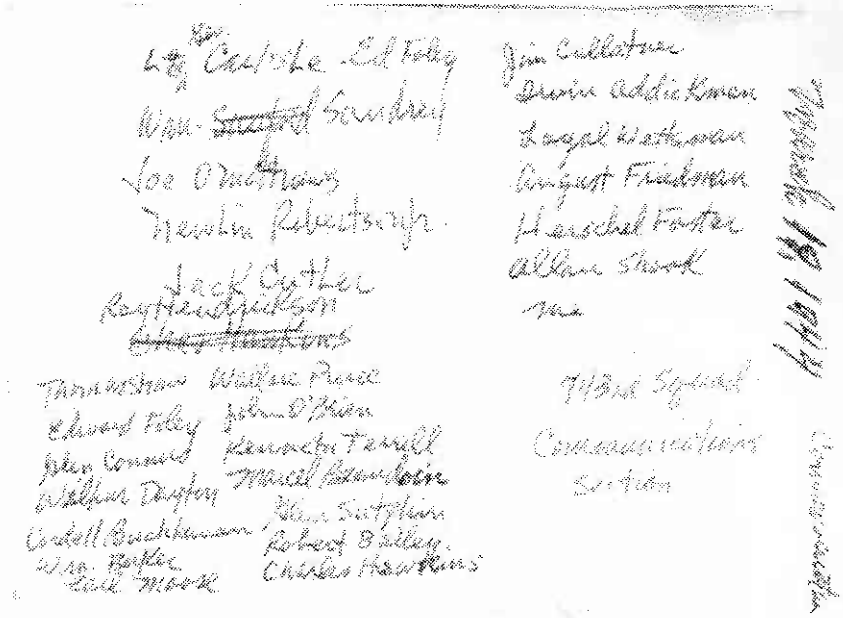
As I remember, they made some sign that all crew members were o.k. We did not learn which group they were from, but we did report the sighting during the debriefing.

Carl A. Barr, Navigator
743rd BS (Swearingen's crew)

**What are Grandparents?**

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





Dear Editor,

Received the *Cerignola Connection* last week. Have read it and re-read it. Thought it was excellent. Really enjoyed all the info. Every time I read it, it brings back memories.

In the transcript website, the article Reunion 1944, omitted the picture of the 743rd Communications Section. It was in that picture that I had asked for anyone recognizing their picture to contact me.

If you can put that photo back in, I would appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Milton Kaplan (743)
Scottsdale, AZ.
mkaplan7@cox.net
dkaplan1@cox.net

## Final Flights

### Charles M. Miller

of Elkhart, Indiana, took his final flight on Sept. 22, 2004.

Captain Miller served in the Air Force from 1940 to 1947, flying 30 missions in his B-24 "The Secret Weapon" from Italy. He was shot down over Vienna in June 1944 and was in prison camps in Poland and Germany until being liberated in April, 1945.

### Arthur Henry Eads, Sr.

S/Sgt. Arthur Henry Eads, Sr., 84, passed away on July 27, 2004. He was an Armorer/Gunner in the 742nd Squadron. The name of his aircraft was the "Miss I Hope".

His pilot was Lt. William Solley. Sgt. Eads was stationed at San Giovanni Airfield from Nov., 1944 to Sept., 1945.

He returned home to the United States via North Africa as a passenger on a war-weary B-17. He flew a total of 23 missions over Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe.

### Leonard A. Kujawa

New Brighton, MN.
Final flight July 10, 2004

### Joe Hachey

Daytona Beach, Florida
Final flight December 23, 2002.

### Sgt. Charles Rein (742)

Mechanic on ship 105
Passed away January 3, 2005.

### 1st Lt. Herbert Weaver (740)

Final flight May 17, 2004 in Ocala, Fl. He was radar bombardier on "Micky".

Lt. Weaver saw the German Army surrender in the Po River Valley, Italy.

### Bob Lackner (741)

took his final flight in December, 2004.

### Maj. Walter N Heidmous (743)

of Lompoc, CA passed away September 19, 2004. He was a lifetime member of the 455th BG Association.

## Other Final Flights

### Bill Jewell

British submarine skipper, 90, who died Aug. 18, 2004 in suburban London, had a vital role in one of the more macabre and celebrated clandestine operations of World War II ... using a corpse planted with fake documents to fool Nazi intelligence.

Operation Mincemeat, as the wartime plan was known, was shrouded in such secrecy that not even Mr. Jewell's after-the-fact memoir noted the caper.

Only later did books, articles and a 1956 film, The Man Who Never Was, detail aspects of the story.

The deceit was intended to distract from the Allies' planned 1943 invasion of Sicily and sweep into Italy - the quickest way for them to reach Nazi-held Europe from North Africa.

British intelligence formed a ruse ... to plant on the southwest Spanish coast the body of a sham Royal Marines officer carrying "invasion" plans" for Sardinia and southern Greece. For most of his voyage, Mr. Jewell was the only one aboard his boat (the Seraph) to know about the trick, which was described as "an unqualified success" by World War II magazine in 1995.

### Gordon Cooper

Original Mercury astronaut & pioneer in space exploration

Gordon Cooper, who was the youngest and perhaps cockiest member of the original Mercury astronauts, and who set the space endurance record that helped clear the way for the first moon landing, took his final flight in 2004 at age 77.

### Ancel Keys

Ancel Keys, the University of Minnesota scientist who invented the K-ration diet used by soldiers in World War II, and who linked high cholesterol and fatty diets to heart disease, died Saturday of natural causes. He was 100.

In 1941, Mr. Keys was asked to help develop an Army ration that soldiers could carry in combat. He purchased supplies, such as hard biscuits, dry sausage and chocolate bars at a Minneapolis market.

When the Army mass-produced the packages, he was surprised to see them marked with the letter "K", for Mr. Keys.

The K ration was born.

### What are Grandparents?

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

## Can You Help?

I was reading the Fall 2004 article in the *Cerignola Connection* about the World War II memorial, and the meeting of Ed Foley (741St) and Howard Cooper (740th).

The article mentioned the 455th BG insignia that Foley wore on his cap. Is there any way I can obtain one for myself?

Thanks,
Al Klinek (743)
6798 Meadowwood Drive
Mayfield Village, OH 44143

## Can You Help?

My father, Joe L. Parkin, was a veteran of the 740th Squadron, 455th BG, and served during late-1944 and early-1945. He has long since departed.

I am very interested in contacting anyone who may have served with him.

Thanks,
Jon Parkin
Pyper_Jon@hotmail.com

## 60 Years Ago

### OPERATION DOWNFALL

***The Largest and Bloodiest Invasion in History that Thankfully Never Happened***

Deep in the recesses of the National Archives in Washington, D.C., hidden for nearly four decades, lie thousands of pages of yellowing and dusty documents stamped "Top Secret".

These documents, now declassified, are the plans for Operation Downfall, the invasion of Japan during World War II.

Only a few Americans in 1945 were aware of the elaborate plans that had been prepared for the Allied invasion of the Japanese home islands. Even fewer today are aware of the defenses the Japanese had prepared to counter the invasion had it been launched.

Operation Downfall was finalized during the spring and summer of 1945. It called for two massive military undertakings to be carried out in succession and aimed at the heart of the Japanese Empire.

### Olympic

In the first invasion, code-named Operation Olympic, American combat troops would land on Japan by amphibious assault during the early morning hours of 1 November, 1945. Fourteen combat divisions of soldiers and Marines would land on heavily fortified and defended Kyushu, the southernmost of the Japanese home islands, after an unprecedented naval and aerial bombardment.

### Coronet

The second invasion, 1 March, 1946, code-named Operation Coronet, would send at least 22 combat divisions against a million Japanese defenders on the main island of Honshu and the Tokyo Plain.

The goal: unconditional surrender of Japan.

With the exception of a part of the British Pacific Fleet, Operation Downfall was to be a strictly American operation. It called for using the entire Marine Corps, the entire Pacific Navy, and elements of the 8th Army Air Force, the 8th Air Force (recently deployed from Europe), the 20th Air Force and the American Far Eastern Air Force. More than 1.5 million combat soldiers, with 3 million more in support (more than 40 percent of all servicemen still in uniform in 1945), would be directly involved in the two amphibious assaults.

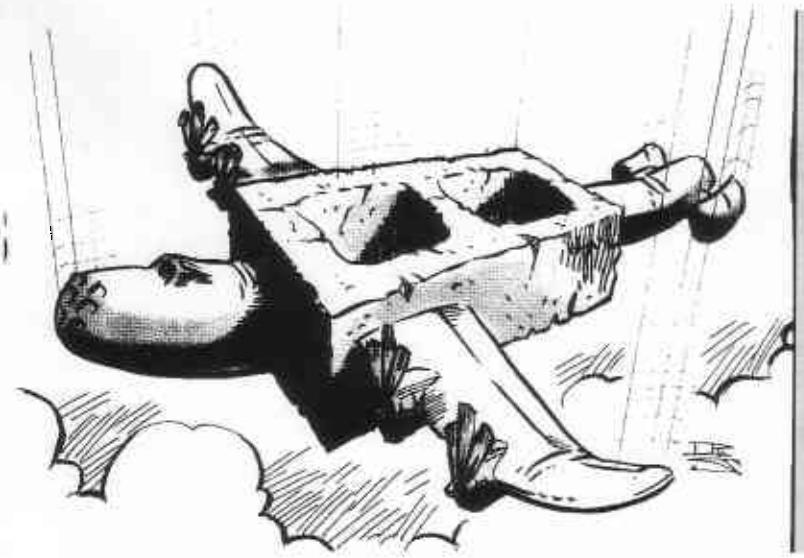
Casualties were expected to be extremely heavy.

Admiral William Leahy estimated that there would be more than 250,000 Americans killed or wounded on Kyushu alone. Gen. Charles Willoughby, chief of intelligence for Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Southwest Pacific, estimated American casualties from the entire operation would be 1 million men by the fall of 1946. Willoughby's own intelligence staff considered this to be a conservative estimate.



### Aviation Wisdom

Never fly in the same cockpit with someone braver than you.



# "GLIDE" CHARACTERISTICS OF THE B-24:

# AN OXYMORON

Some of you airplane drivers may remember the "glide" characteristics of the B-24, when you lost power on all four engines. I was introduced to this one day in 1944 while transitioning from PBYs (the lovely old twin engine Catalina) to the Libs. I might note that my few hundred hours in P-boats, including horsing one of them into a nose high attitude for a full stall landing on the water, had built up my arms enough to deal with the Lib's heaviness on the controls.

We were cruising at 5000 feet, returning to our base at NAS Hutchison, Kansas after a few hours of instrument training and general air work. About 10 miles south of the field my instructor called Hutch tower requesting a straight-in approach to runway 36. Tower cleared us for the straight in, advised wind from north and barometer setting. He then told me to line up for 36, maintain 5,000 feet and tell him when the approach end of runway 36 disappeared under the ball turret on the nose. That made me more than a bit curious, but I rolled the Lib, lining her up to runway 36 as instructed. When the approach end disappeared under the nose, I notified him of such. He immediately pulled all four throttles back to idle (15 inches manifold pressure for zero thrust), dropped the gear, moved the mixture controls to full rich, dropped half-flap and shoved all four props to high RPM. He looked across the cockpit at me and said, "Maintain airspeed and land her, call for full flap when ready!"

My plane captain who was sitting on the jump seat with his headset on had obviously heard our conversation over the intercom. A brief glance at his face across my right shoulder indicated that he, as well as I, didn't have the foggiest notion how we were going to avoid over-shooting the runway.

I was shoving forward on the yoke, for the airspeed indicator was rapidly unwinding and the rate of descent indicator was pegging down. That didn't do the job, so I rapidly rolled-in nose down tab, all the time thinking, "My God, we are going to land long!" I was still rolling in down tab as I glanced at the airspeed and the still rapidly unwinding altimeter and then back up and saw the runway looming up over the nose turret! We were going down like a rock. Seconds later I called for full flap, horsed the yoke back, rapidly cranking-in nose up tab, rotated, flared-out and a fully stalled 4Y-1 crunched down on the numbers at the approach end of 36. I'll bet our tail skag was off the end of the runway when we touched down! As we rolled out, my instructor leaned over and shouted, "See how she glides!" That's how I learned that with power off, the Lib had all the glide characteristics of a brick, albeit a "flying one."

Slight exaggeration, as its approach profile without power(sink rate)was about one foot down for each foot forward. All in all, the B-24 was a damn good aircraft, but a glider she was not.

Courtesy: *Bomber Legends* Magazine

## Progress Report on the Air Force Memorial

By Alfred Asch

On September 15, 2004, I attended groundbreaking ceremonies for our Air Force Memorial at the invitation of the Air Force Memorial Foundation. A flyover was planned but had to be cancelled because of rain and low ceilings. The B-24 was one of the aircraft scheduled.

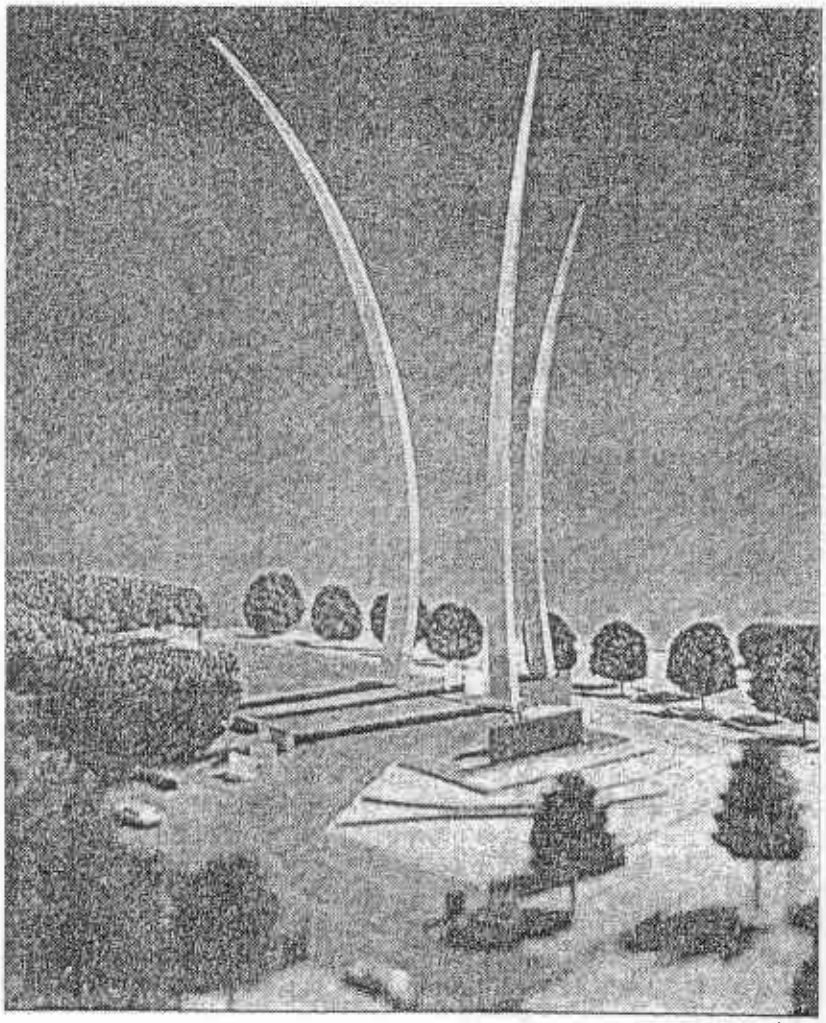
This national memorial, which is expected to be completed in two years, will be built adjacent to the Arlington National Cemetery and in an area known as the Navy Annex, which is just a short distance from the Pentagon. The actual site will be on a hill where the three stainless steel spires, the tallest one 270 feet, may be seen from most locations in the Washington DC area.

The total monumental structure is to honor the selfless contributions of the airmen who distinguished themselves in the Air Force and a sculptural representation of the tremendous achievement of American air and space power.

The Air Force Memorial Foundation has raised $38.5 million and hopes to raise an additional $3 million to complete the memorial. The program devoted a page entitled "Sponsorship Recognition" which included recognition of the Second Air Division Association (2ADA) and the B-24 Groups Memorial of the Army Air Forces. Each of these organizations donated $25,000 and their names with be etched in the final structure of the memorial.

The 455th Group and some members made major contributions toward the model and the excess funds were donated to the Air Force Memorial Foundation to help build the Memorial. There is still time for one to make a contribution by sending it to the: Air Force Memorial Foundation, 1501 Lee Highway, Arlington, Va 22209. The website is:

www.airforcememorial.org.




The Air Force memorial will have three stainless steel spires that "gracefully and boldly soar into the heavens," a foundation official said.

### 60 Years Ago
#### Invasion of Iwo Jima

Feb. 19, 1945
36 day battle
6,800 Americans killed
19,000 Americans wounded
20,000 Japanese died

Iwo Jima is the battle that produced the famous Joe Rosenthal photo of the Marines raising Old Glory on top of Mount Suribachi.

Of the Marines on Iwo Jima, these immortal words:

"Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue"

*... Admiral Chester Nimitz*

NOTE FOR CUSTOM PRINTING: YELLOW PAPER

## A MESSAGE:

## TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE 455th BOMB GROUP ASSOC.

## FROM: ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC., THE ORGANIZATION THAT IS COORDINATING THE 2005 REUNION IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI.

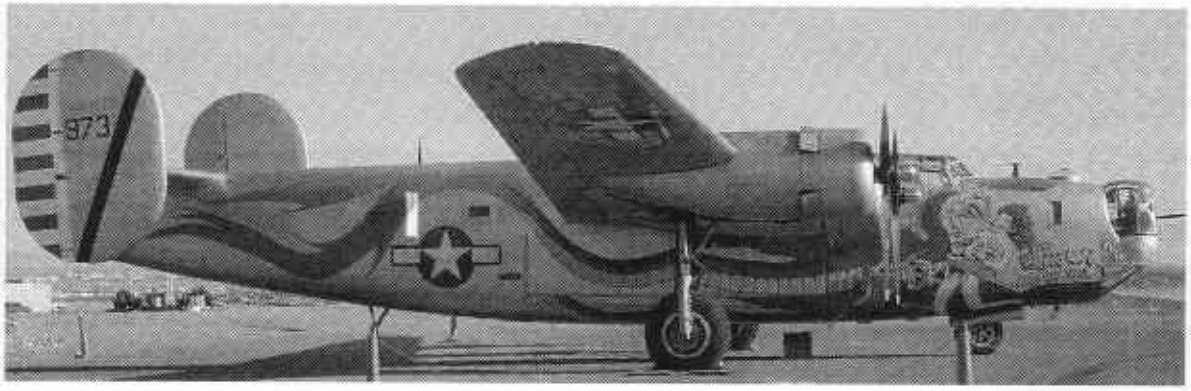
Mark your calendars for the 2005 455th BG Association reunion, to be held Wednesday, October 19 through Sunday, October 23, at the Westin Crown Center in downtown Kansas City, Missouri.

You won't want to miss this reunion, as there is a strong possibility that the Collings Foundation will bring in their B-24 Liberator during the reunion! As of this newsletter's press time, the final program and schedule of events has not yet been determined, as we are waiting for the Collings Foundation to give us specifics on the date and time the plane will be at MKC (Kansas City Downtown Airport, less than 3 miles from the reunion hotel). See the Collings' B-24 below.

You can count on the 741st Squadron dinner being on Friday evening, October 21, and the Banquet Dinner on Saturday, October 22.

We thank you in advance for your patience. We will get the final program and activity registration form to you as soon possible. In the meantime, please do plan on attending, and be sure to reserve your room at the Westin using the reservation form on the following page of this newsletter.

*Editor's Note: The final program and activity registration forms will either be mailed directly to you by the Armed Forces Reunion, Inc., or by Gus Wendt and myself. In either case, you will receive the information as soon as possible after the final details are determined.*



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Should you need to rent a wheelchair for the reunion, ScootAround rents both manual and power wheel chairs by the day and week. Please call their toll free number at (888) 441-7575 for details. All prices quoted include delivery fees. Vendors, Schedules, and Prices are subject to change.

---------- CUT HERE AND MAIL TO HOTEL ----------

455th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION - HOTEL RESERVATION FORM
REUNION DATES: OCTOBER 19-23, 2005

NAME_____

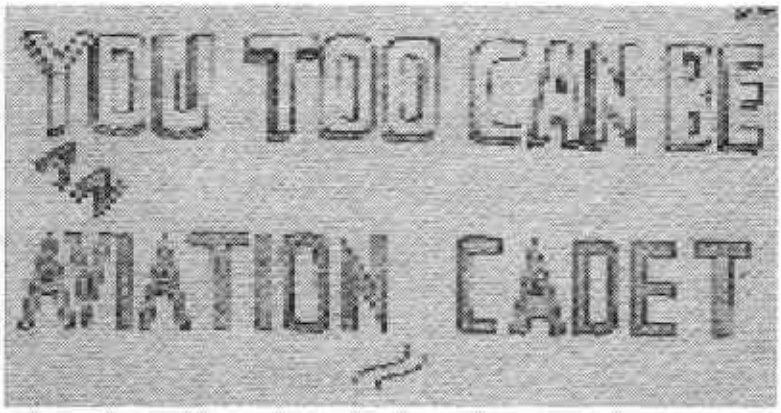
ADDRESS_____ZIP_____

TELEPHONE # (  )_____SHARING ROOM W/ _____

ARRIVAL DATE_____TIME_____am/pm DEPARTURE DATE_____

SPECIAL REQUESTS: Wheelchair accessible room _____ Non-smoking room _____
King Bed _____ Two Double Beds _____ Bed types are not guaranteed.
RATE: $85 (single/double) + tax (currently 14.48%) + $1.50/day city tax. Rate good three days before and after reunion dates, based on availability.
CUT OFF DATE: 9/16/05. Reservations received after this date will be processed on a space available basis, at the prevailing public rate.
CANCELLATION POLICY: Deposit is refundable if reservation is canceled 72 hrs. in advance of arrival date. Record your cancellation number. Call (816) 474-4400. All reservations will be assessed a $50 early departure charge for each night you check out in advance of the scheduled departure date.
GUARANTEE: Reservations must be guaranteed by credit card or first night's deposit, enclosed.
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(OPERATIONS HEADQUARTERS)
NO. 609623)

DESCRIPTION OF FAIRCHILD PT-19A

It is a slightly powered glider that might well be described by the following phrase--20,000 bolts flying a loose formation.

This machine, jokingly called an aeroplane, has, as standard equipment, a built-in headwind of 40 M.P.H. and also a built-in stuff off that is used in all aerobatic maneuvers.

The flying characteristics of this piece of machinery very much resembles a log with a motor on the front.

### Older Vets Fear Backlogs at VA

As the war in Iraq creates thousands of new cases for the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system, older veterans with pending disability claims are worried they may be pushed back in line.

"There's concern that people in the system, who have been waiting sometimes for months or years, may face further delays", says David Autry, a spokesman for Disabled American Veterans, a nonprofit organization with more than a million members.

The V.A. has given top priority for health care and disability claims to veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. The agency has a backlog of about 325,000 veterans, mostly from World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars, who are waiting for the VA to evaluate their disabilities and determine their benefits. The average wait is six months.

Through April 2004, 166,334 veterans of the two current conflicts had become eligible for benefits, and 26,333 had applied for disability. Those numbers are expected to swell.

Daniel Cooper, V.A. undersecretary for benefits, says the extra effort being made to accommodate the wounded from current wars will not slow other claims. "Older veterans," he says, "will absolutely not have to wait longer."

*Courtesy Dallas Morning News*

Dear Editor,

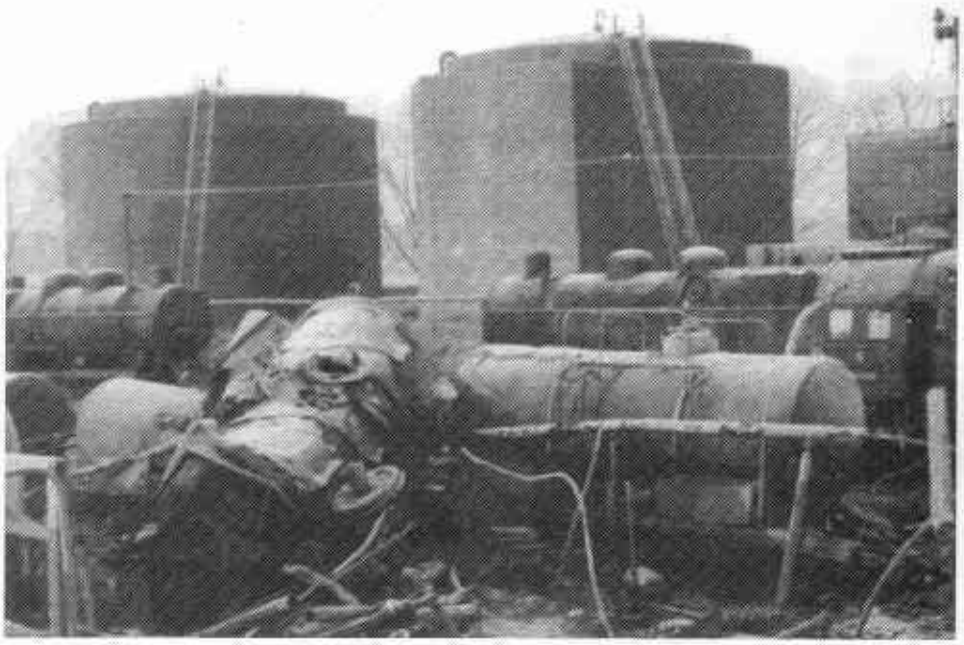
I am Czech historian and journalist and I am now writing a book about War Days in Central Bohemia.

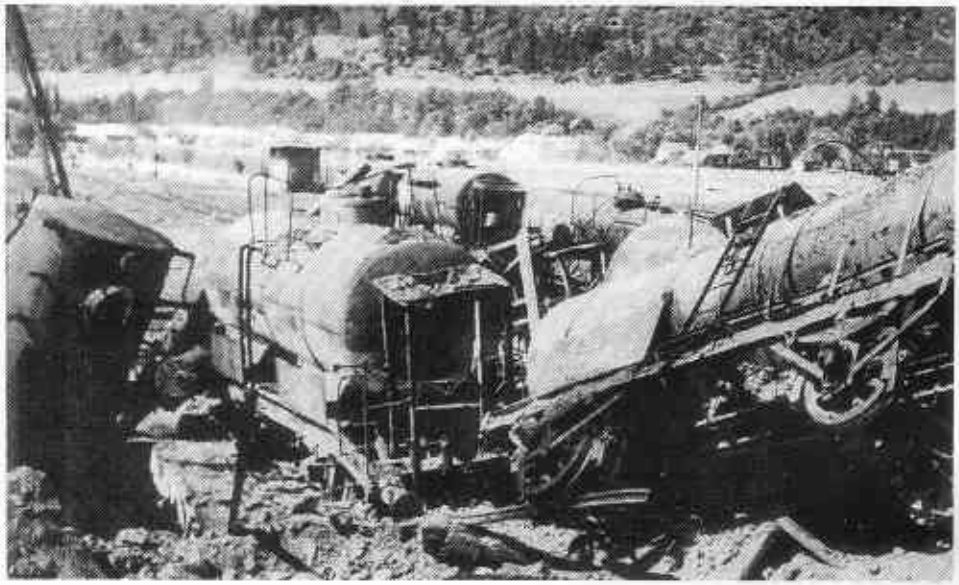
One of the towns which I am interested in is Kolín. If I have good information, the 455th BG should at least one time (December 28th 1944) have bombed oil refinery plant named Vacuum Oil Company in that city.

I have collected lots of photographs of the city after the attack and memories of witnesses as well from archival and official sources, but I lack of information from US sources. If it would be possible, I would like to offer you my pieces of information and photographs in exchange for yours (Narrative reports, which aircrafts took place in these attacks, operational reports and/or some memories of witnesses).

Thank you in advance for your kindness.

Best Regards
Michal Plavec
Prazska 1163/16
288 02 Nymburk
Czech Republic





***Photos Courtesy of Vacuum Oil Company***

**Mission 98 August 20, 1944**

This was our third mission in a row on oil refineries, this time Dubova, Czechoslovakia. 30 B24s were sent. Only 21 dropped their bombs as "C" box was not able to line up on the target. The other planes returned to base with their bombs. Light flak at the target, not accurate. All planes returned to base with no casualties.

**Mission 173 December 28, 1944**

This was the fourth day in a row with good flying weather. 28 B24s were sent to bomb the primary target, the oil refinery at Kolin, Czechoslovakia. There was no flak at the target and none enroute. A milk run. All planes returned safely to base.

***Mission reports from 455th BG History Book***

***Where does Grandma Live?***

A six-year-old was asked where his Grandma lived.

He said "She lives at the airport, and when we want her, we just go there and get her. Then when we're done with her visit, we take her back to the airport."

## 455th BG E-Mail Roster

Below is a list of e-mail addresses of 455th members. If you want your e-mail address included in this roster, please send it to Craig Ward at 813 Peterstow Dr., Euless, TX. 76039, (817) 540-1068 or email aphp@comcast.net.

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**August 12, 1942**

**XB-24B Accepted by USAAC**

During the next three years, more than 24,000 B-24s were built and used by 29 countries against the Axis enemy.

Never before or since has there been as many military aircraft of a single type built.



## Can You Help ?

Since 1996, I have been researching for a book regarding U.S. bomber crews over Europe during WWII. My book is based on six of the most famous and most widely published photographs that show American bombers at the very instant in which they met their fates.

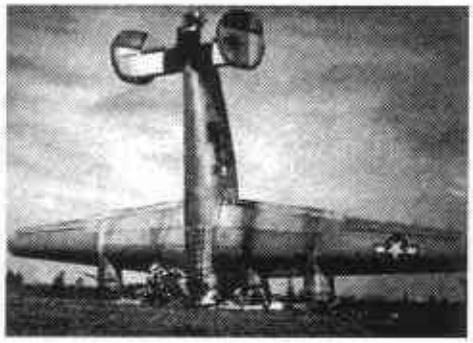
Of the six photos that I have selected, despite being published hundreds of times since WWII, rarely has any previous caption or story contained accurate information. Never has there been any meaningful article about the fate of the individual crewmen that were lost on these ships and nobody has written down the tales of those few who survived.

In each case, I have tracked down the survivors and interviewed other crewmen's friends and relatives. As a result, I have a rich history of information and photographs of each crew.

The first six photos are of B-17s and B-24s in flight over Germany or eastern Europe when they were struck and captured on film immediately before plunging from the sky.

For decades, I have been aware of the famous photo showing 2nd Lt. James T. Harris' Liberator #44-50468 of the 740th BS amazingly standing on its nose at the end of the runway at San Giovanni.

Only rarely has a caption for this photo been published with either the right Bomb Group or Bomb Squadron named.



Never have I seen this famous 455th photo published with the names of the crew. Too often, I have seen the photo printed with a caption attempting a lame form of humor.

Now nearing the end of the research phase for my book, I have decided to also include the story behind the famous photo of Harris' accident.

I hope that you can put me in contact with 455th veterans of the six crewmen who were killed and/or the four that survived. I am seeking personal recollections about the individual crewmen, the plane, the events of that day, photographs of the crew and accident scene, letters, documents, etc. My goal is to create the most complete and accurate story of this crew and their fate.

Thus far I have learned that only one survivor provided a written statement of the crash. Corp. Peter W. Armato wrote a short paragraph but it would appear (unconfirmed) that he died on 24 February of this year.

Another survivor was Corp. Donald F. Behkamp but he appears to have died on 24 September, 1990.

The other two survivors were Corporals Robert Smith and Thomas C. Roberts whose names are so common that I have been unable to track any information on them.

Of the deceased crewmen, only the copilot, 2nd Lt. Wilbur D. Blackwell, was buried in Italy. The remains of the other five must have been repatriated after the war. They were:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Pilot:** | 2nd Lt. James T. Harris |
| **Navigator:** | 2nd Lt. Samuel H. Slawett |
| **Bombardier:** | F/O Charles R. Shelton |
| **Engineer:** | Corp. Delker L. Krumey |
| **Radio Op** | Corp. William C. Edghill |

Any suggestions that you might be able to provide in helping me to research this story will be deeply appreciated. Any final results with photos, etc. will be freely shared with the 455th BG Association.

BRIAN LINDNER
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*Editor's Note: While I am unsure exactly where I came across the photo above, the name on the digital file from which it was taken said "456th BG". According to Mr. Lindner, attributing this aircraft to the 456th BG would be incorrect.*

*I hope our readers can help, as an answer to this mystery might be interesting to many of us.*

## BUCHAREST

**By 1st Lt. Willie Moore (740)**

On April 21, 1944 the 455th Bomb Group was briefed on a mission to Bucharest, Romania.

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. He hadn't flown in combat and 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 loaded heavily and hard to fly at that altitude.

Nearing the target, bombardier Jim Gall 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 at this time 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 enemy fighters did us a favor 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.

Now I could see the formation above and ahead of us. Number 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 prop. 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. They would dive into the clouds and come up under our planes, fire, and were out of range before our gunners could get a line 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, we made it hot enough and 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 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 attack. 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.

My copilot was doing all he could during this ordeal and acted like a veteran during all of this ... while getting initial 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 only a slight scrape. His oxygen line had been severed and he was a bit groggy.

*(continued next page)*

The crew fixed him up with a walk-around bottle.

Ray and I had some shrapnel in our legs but nothing serious. Holes in every section of the plane, the crew miraculously was ok.

There was a hole through the right wing between 3 and 4 engines. Gas was leaking off the trailing edge. # 3 engine was smoking and #4 was feathered. The controls were working ok. The wheel control lever was cut off and lying on the floor (more good luck). Another round hit the oxygen supply tank. 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 and flew thru 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 thru the hole at the same time. One plane had to bank sharply as we all went thru 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 to compensate for the northerly direction I had taken and came to the Adriatic. 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 do that, as with all the doors open it would have been a disaster.

The crew threw guns, ammo and all unnecessary things of weight out of the plane into the Adriatic. We sighted the coast of Italy and I used a little more power to stay above 1000 ft. The engines began to smoke more this time.

The crew now was planning our strategy when we reach base. It wasn't to be. We encountered some highly elevated terrain.

The #3 engine really started to smoke, and the #1 and #2 were failing. I instructed the crew we had to bail out, and that we were really low. I informed them I'd fly between two peaks and give 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, 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 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 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 thru 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 idea 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 and 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 some spring water up. The first I'd had since 5:00 a.m....good and refreshing.

I started looking for crew members and found three chutes up a ridge and was informed the occupants ran

***(continued next page)***

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 and 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 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 rifle slung over his shoulder came up. He spoke English so we were satisfied we were on the Allied side from what he told us. He lived in the village which we could see to the northwest. He said we could get food there and he would accompany us.

About this time a man in a black uniform came up the hill toward us, carrying a rifle. 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 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. At this time 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 in tears. He had found the flotation vest and handled the dye marker. I returned to his house, occupied by an older lady with eight younger women, perhaps daughters.

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 as if to say "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. About this time we heard a vehicle coming toward us. It appeared in sight and 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 flown over as we reached Italy, had been educated in the U.S. and 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 and we started for the village. As the vehicle came into the village, the people poured out into the street. Men, women, children. They climbed all over the vehicle, wanting to touch us.

When we finally exited town, the driver took us about an hour's drive to a U.S. Army division base camp.

I saw a total of three service men in the camp. A 1st Sgt., a cook who gave us food, and one other 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 power. They were out of sync, and seemed a continuation of the plane engines I'd listened to all day.

The next morning, a U.S. Army truck with the other three crew came and we loaded on for the last leg of our mission to Bucharest, which began about 0600 the previous day.

*(continued next page)*

**Bucharest (continued)**

We made it back to friendly territory because of several things in our favor. One of the best bombers ever built, a B-24 Liberator equipped with Pratt & Whitney engines, took lots of punishment and saved us. They took their share of punishment on this day.

Because of 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, right waist gunner, T/Sgt. Sheldon L.Towle, engineer and top turret gunner, T/Sgt.Chas. Derock, radio operator, S/Sgt Robert L. Koutsky, ball turret operator, who gave comfort and aid to the entire crew.

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

Lt. James Gall, bombardier and nose turret gunner, Lt. Leif Erickson, navigator, steady and dependable. F/G Ray Butler, who was there when needed.

Also we had some good flight training and advice from our squadron leaders who had experience in combat, namely Colonels Alfred Ash and Kenneth A. Cool. Their advice was "Stick with your plane as long as your plane sticks with you!". We were to fly another day for the good-ole U.S. of A.

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

## 60 Years Ago
## V-J Day

*From 1945 Press Reports*

Japan has surrendered to the Allies. There is joy and celebration around the world and 15 August has been declared Victory in Japan day.

The end of war will be marked by two-day holidays in the UK, the USA and Australia.

After days of rumor and speculation, US President Harry S Truman broke the good news at a press conference at the White House at 1900 yesterday. He said the Japanese Government had agreed to comply in full with the Potsdam declaration which demands the unconditional surrender of Japan.

In an address to a crowd that had gathered outside the White House President Truman said: "This is the day we have been waiting for since Pearl Harbor. This is the day when Fascism finally dies, as we always knew it would."

There were no celebrations in Japan. In his first-ever radio broadcast, Emperor Hirohito blamed the use of "a new and most cruel bomb" used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki for Japan's surrender.



"Little Boy" atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, August 6, 1945 by B-29 "Enola Gay", piloted by Col. Paul Tibbetts, 509th Comp. Group, Tinian.

"Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in the ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but would lead also to the total extinction of human civilization."

*Which day is really VJ Day?*

The Allies had delivered Japan an ultimatum to surrender on 28 July 1945. When this was ignored, the US dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima on 6 August and Nagasaki on 9 August, the day Soviet forces invaded Manchuria.

The Allies celebrated victory over Japan on 15 August 1945, although the Japanese administration under General Koiso Kuniaki did not officially surrender with a signed document until 2 September.

Both dates are now known as V-J Day.

*Editor's Note:*

*My father, Lt. J.T. Ward, wrote in a 1944 letter to my mother that he was probably going to the Pacific to fight the Japanese after the Germans had been vanquished. The atomic bomb made that deployment unnecessary.*

*Did you think you would be deployed to the Pacific? What were your thoughts about that possibility, and about the United States' use of the atomic bomb against Japan?*

*Historians disagree about the necessity of using the atomic bomb to bring Japan to its knees. As veterans of WWII, your opinions are likely more valid than others who were not involved in the fighting. Tell your editor what you think.*

## Attention: All 455th BG Association Members

Remember that your membership dues pay for the costs of this newsletter, along with many misc. expenses related to the Association's activities. If you haven't paid your 2005 dues yet, please mail your check for $15 to the 455th BG Assoc., Attention: Gus Wendt, PO Box 149, Castroville, TX. 78009.

Note your mailing label on this newsletter. If there is a number 98 or 99 on the top line, you're going to be dropped from the newsletter mailing list. This number indicated the last time you paid your annual dues, and we haven't heard from you since then. Thus, we are deleting those names from our newsletter mailing list.

To re-establish having your name on the mailing list, please send $15 for 2005 dues to P.O. Box 149, Castroville, TX. 78009.

## EDITOR'S SQUAWK

I have received several excellent, written personal histories from members of the 455th BG Assoc. They include memories, photos, documents, and other memorabilia related to their time in the military. These fascinating stories are too lenghthy to produce in their entirety in this newsletter. Editing them down would not do these stories justice.

I have created a website on which I have posted these stories and pictures in their entirety. Friends, families, researchers, and historians can access these personal histories & photos via this internet website.

To access the personal histories page, go to:

**www.awardphp.com/transcripts.php**

Available now on the internet: ALL of the previous editions of the Cerignola Connection, going back to 1990!

To access the archived back-issues of the C.C., go to:

**www.awardphp.com/veterans.php**

Also, available now on the internet: The entire 455th BG History book is available online at the following web address:

**www.awardphp.com/455th_BG_History.php**

**A BIG "THANK YOU" TO ALL WHO SENT ME YOUR ARCHIVED EDITIONS OF THE C.C. NEWSLETTERS. WITHOUT YOUR HELP, THE NEWSLETTERS COULD NOT BE POSTED ON THE INTERNET FOR OTHERS TO ENJOY!**

**Would you like a computer CD with digital copies of ALL back issues of the *Cerignola Connection*, PLUS a digital copy of the 455th BG History book? Send $15 for 2005 455th BG Association dues, plus $12 (cost of the CD, protective mailing case, & postage) to 455th BG Assoc. at the address below.**

**This CD has over 900 pages of 455th BG information (in pdf format).**

**If you don't have a computer, you can take the CD to any neighborhood print shop in your area. They will be able to print these pages out for you at the cost of about 8 to 10 cents per page.**

***Disclaimer:*** *The APHP website referred to in this section is related to a part-time, DFW-area personal history service business. No business solicitation is intended.*

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