CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

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Message from the President

By
Norman Crum



I'm pleased to once again offer a few words in this edition of the *Cerignola Connection.* We're all appreciative of the efforts put into making this newsletter a success.

In reading Donald L. Miller's "*Masters of the Air*," I was struck by one of the paragraphs:

"*A new kind of warfare was being waged -- high-altitude strategic bombing. It was a singular event in the history of warfare, unprecedented and never to be repeated. The technology needed to fight a prolonged, full-scale bomber war was not available until the early 1940's and, by the closing days of that first-ever bomber war, was already being rendered obsolete by jet engine aircraft, rocket-powered missiles, and atomic bombs. In the thin, freezing air over Europe, airmen bled and died in an environment that no warriors had ever experienced. It was air war fought not at 12,000 feet as in World War I, but at altitudes two and three times that, up near the stratosphere where the elements were even more dangerous than the enemy. In this brilliantly blue battlefield, the cold killed, the air was un-breathable, and the sun exposed bombers to swift violence from German fighter planes and ground guns.*"

It's true! WWI and WWII were fought on a scale almost un-imaginable in both previous non-industrial days and in today's high-tech world. Dreadnaughts, machine guns and motorized transport all revolutionized warfare in 1914, but air warfare was still in its infancy.

Now, in the era of smart-bombs and guided missiles, a few attack-bombers and navy frigates can quickly and accurately deliver as much pinpoint destructive power as huge concentrations of men and equipment could do in

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generations past. It was only in the 1939-1945 window that huge fleets of piston-driven bombers could have been effective.

What an incredible undertaking it must have been to plan, organize, train, supply and execute the massive and complex mission of the U. S. Army Air Forces in WWII. It boggles the mind.

Of course, all this titanic effort would have been wasted if the air crews and ground crews hadn't individually done their part. The enlisted men and junior officers were the ones actually facing death, injury, fatigue, and confusion every day. Without their bravery and determination, all the economic & political resources in the world wouldn't have won the war.

So it's with that in mind that we publish another edition of the *Cerignola Connection*. This is the story of a few of the individuals and small teams that brought victory to America and its allies.

We salute them and thank them for their sacrifice.



Final Flight

Maj. James Gould III (743)

Dear Editor,

It is with great regret that I must inform the 455th BG that my Father, Major James Dunn Gould III, passed away August 26th, 2012, after a brief illness.

He maintained good health for over 90 years. He was driving his Ford Mustang until the end.

He was a proud *Vulgar Vulture*. He flew 50 missions with the 743rd as a Flight Engineer/Gunner, and Aerial Photographer.

He had three children, and is survived by his wife Mary Frances.

Sincerely,
Captain Cannon Gould
ebbtidz@yahoo.com

P.S.: He left behind a wealth of information, and some extraordinary photos.



Major James Gould III

Final Flight

Robert H. Harding (743) passed away on March 30, 2013.

My Dad served with the 455th Bomb Group as part of the automatic pilot and bomb sight maintenance group.

Mr. Harding was proud of his WWII service in Italy with the 743rd Squadron of the 455th Bomb Group; part of the Fifteenth Air Force.

He often spoke that his military service provided an opportunity to see parts of the world that he never expected to visit, and enabled him to experience historical landmarks firsthand.

During his service in Italy, he was chosen to be part of a select group of U.S. servicemen permitted to visit Switzerland for the first time since the war began.

Upon discharge from the military, Mr. Harding returned to his position at Detroit Diesel, where he met his future wife. Mr. & Mrs. Harding together built Harding Tube Corporation, and shared a love of travel around the country, and to their Florida home for winters.

It was important to my Dad to be be included in your *Final Flights* section.

Best Regards,
Tom Harding
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Any man who thinks he can be happy and prosperous by letting the government take care of him had better take a closer look at the American Indian. --- Henry Ford

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Interesting WWII Facts

courtesy of
Col. D.G. Swinford, USMC

You would really have to dig deep to get this kind of ring-side seat to history:

The first German serviceman killed in WW II was killed by the Japanese (China, 1937), The first American serviceman killed was killed by the Russians (Finland, 1940); The highest-ranking American killed was Lt. Gen. Lesley McNair, killed by the US Army Air Corps.

The youngest US serviceman was 12 years old: Calvin Graham, USN. He was wounded, and given a Dishonorable Discharge for lying about his age. His benefits were later restored by an act of Congress.

At the time of Pearl Harbor, the top US Navy command was called CINCUS (pronounced 'sink us'); The shoulder patch of the US Army's 45th Infantry Division was the swastika. Hitler's private train was named *"Amerika"*. All three were changed soon after Pearl Harbor for PR purposes.

More US servicemen died in the Army Air Corps than the Marine Corps. While completing their required number of missions, an airman's chance of being killed was 71%.

Generally speaking, there was no such thing as an average fighter pilot. You were either an ace, or a target. For instance, Japanese Ace Hiroyoshi Nishizawa shot down over 80 planes. He died while a passenger on a cargo plane.

It was common practice on fighter planes to load every 5th round with a tracer round to aid in aiming. This was a big mistake. Tracers had different ballistics so (at long range) if your tracers were hitting the target 80% of your rounds were missing. Worse yet, tracers instantly told your enemy he was under fire and from which direction. Worst of all was the practice of loading a string of tracers at the end of the belt to tell you that you were out of ammo. This was definitely not something you wanted to tell the enemy. Units that stopped using tracers saw their success rate nearly double and their loss rate go down.

When allied armies reached the Rhine, the first thing men did was pee in it. This was pretty universal, from the lowest private to Winston Churchill (who made a big show of it) and Gen. Patton (who had himself photographed in the act).

German Me-264 bombers were capable of bombing New York City, but they decided it wasn't worth the effort.

A German submarine, the U-120, was sunk by a malfunctioning toilet.

Among the first "Germans" captured at Normandy were several Koreans. They had been forced to fight for the Japanese Army, until they were captured by the Russians and forced to fight for the Russian Army, until they were captured by the Germans and forced to fight for the German Army, until they were captured by the US Army.

Following a massive naval bombardment, 35,000 United States and Canadian troops stormed ashore at Kiska, in the Aleutian Islands. Twenty-one troops were killed in the assault. It could have been worse, had there actually been any Japanese on the island.

The last Marine killed in WWII was killed by a can of spam. He was on the ground as a POW in Japan when rescue flights dropping food and supplies came over. A package came apart in the air, and a stray can of spam hit and killed him.

My Trip to the Store

There was a bit of confusion at the store this morning. When I was ready to pay for my groceries, the cashier said, "Strip down, facing me."

Making a mental note to complain to my congressman about Homeland Security running amok, I did just as she had instructed.

When the hysterical shrieking and alarms finally subsided, I found out that she was referring to my credit card.

I have been asked to shop elsewhere in the future.

They need to make their instructions to us seniors a little clearer!

Dear Editor,

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed seeing your website dedicated to the men of the 455th Bomb Group.

www.awardphp.com

My Grandfather was T/Sgt. Rolla H. Humburg (743) from Arrow Rock, MO. He passed in 1993 due to a brain tumor, cutting his life short at 71.

Not a day goes by that I do not think of him. I have included a picture of him in his dress uniform below for reference.



This picture was one he had taken for his Mother, and it sat on her radio up until the day she died. He had the opportunity late in life to visit some of the 455th Bomb Group reunions that were held throughout the country. He was always so excited to reconnect with his old friends.

He was a mechanic & electrician on the B-24 bombers. My Grandmother still has photo albums with pictures from his time in Africa and Italy. He once recounted a situation where he and his group ended up outside of camp and missed getting the password for the evening. Upon returning, they found themselves at gunpoint as they attempted to re-enter the camp.

I am sure glad he made it through that situation!

I simply wanted to say thanks for having your website up for those of us from a generation that need to know the stories and influence of this great generation.

Best Always,
Chris Wisbrock
St. Louis, MO.
wisbrock@gmail.com

Dear Editor,

I have just completed scanning a notebook that my father, George Trbovich (GP), collected on the first 100 missions of the 455th Bomb Group.

I have loaded the approximately 200 pages on the Web at the following location using Picasa.

picasaweb.google.com/114854177239666360469/455thBombGroup?authkey=Gv1sRgCKTX7oLXuabzHA#

Anyone with this link should be able to see the pictures. I have looked at them on both my PC and my IPAD.

They include both write-ups and bomb plot photo prints. The write-ups appear to be type-written, carbon copies of original write-ups. I think my father collected much of this information as part of his assignment at the group level. I wanted to preserve this information before time deteriorates the original pages.

Also included within the pictures is a picture of him being awarded a bronze star medal (I do not know who is giving him the award), the orders for that (which was graciously provided by John Rohrer) and his obituary.

He retired after 25 years in the service at the rank of Major. He was the armaments and quality officer for the group.

He never talked about his experiences during WWII. All of the information I have gathered was from other sources.

As a note, I believe that he commanded soldiers from the Royal Yugoslavian Air Force who worked with the group. He spoke fluent Serbian. His father and mother immigrated to the US from Yugoslavia and settled in Pittsburg, Pa.

My late mother said that after the war, he was offered a position as a military attaché in Yugoslavia. He did not take the job because the Yugoslavs he commanded warned him he would be at risk, as the communists knew of his involvement with the royalists.

After WWII, he was stationed in the Philippines and Germany, working for military intelligence. He retired in Denver, Co.

Thanks,
Dale Trbovich
dalerussel@msn.com

Final Flight

Sebastiano Manzitto (743) took his final flight on March 26, 2012 in Omaha, Nebraska. He was a life member of the 455th Bomb Group Association.

After the war, Mr. Manzitto worked for 43 years with the Union Pacific Railroad. (see photo below)

Sebastiano Manzitto, *age 89 years. Retired, Union Pacific Rail Road after 43 years. He was preceded in death by his parents; four brothers; two sisters. He is survived by his loving wife of 65 years, Florence; daughter, Patty Evans; granddaughters: Kelli Evans (Jake Grimm), Traci Dinsmore (Josh), Jamie Davis (Russ); great-grandchildren: Sydney, Colton and Grayson; sister, Grace Phillips of California; many nieces and nephews.*



A precious one from us is gone, and the voice we love is still.
A place is vacant in our hearts which never can be filled.

When days are sad and lonely and everything goes wrong,
We seem to hear you whisper, "Cheer up and carry on."

Each time we see your picture, you seem to smile and say,
"Don't cry—I'm only sleeping, We'll meet again some day."

King of the Hill

For my Grandpa,
Anthony Michael Corsello (741)

We smiled, because He smiled first.
We sang because He wasn't afraid to.
The greatest musician without an instrument.
A natural performer, He didn't need a stage.
Sure there were times where He "bit off more than He could chew"
But He just "ate it up and spit it out!"
Medals of honor now lay upon His youthful breast,
And will never rust.
He was a city that never slept,
The sole fear in His life,
being that He might miss it.
The only one to understand what it meant to "come together",
He never gave up on us when we forgot.
But His legacy will forever be engrained in our hearts.
Family is forever,
we know that now.
So to the richest man we've ever known,
We say thank you for showing us the way to love.
And we thank the lord,
for bringing Him into our lives.
So now the City sits upon a heavenly hill,
And as we continue our journey to the top.
Let us remember the love He gave,
And let us share it with each other every day,
And may we never lose sight of it.

Roxanne Virginia Daly

Dear Editor,

I am sending this to you from New Zealand. I have a collection of over 100 WWII combat photographs, taken for a major media organization. The stack of photos were given to my father after the war, by the son of a friend of my mother's, who received the photos, I believe, from the actual photographer. This person's name is not known.

One photo is captioned at the bottom:

***--Southern Invasion--- Just before the actual take-off for the invasion of southern France. American Airborne Troops, part of a special task force, kneel in prayer beside their glider* "Leakin' Deacon".**"

It shows a group of eight servicemen kneeling, with what is presumably a military Chaplain (in uniform, of course).

He has what looks like a Red Cross armband. Part of the aircraft is behind him, with the name clearly visible. I would think the photo was taken at night as everything in the rear is dark.

I just did a Google search for "*Leakin' Deacon*, WWII glider", and among the responses was your *Cerignola Connection,* Fall 2010 newsletter, with a picture of the B-24 BOMBER *"Leakin' Deacon"*. Was that name commonly used, or did it pass from the bomber to the glider when the bomber was lost?

Regards

Barbara Rhodes
rhodesb@ihug.co.nz





Famous Quote

There's nothing more exciting than being shot at and missed.

... Winston Churchill

Editor's Note: I would imagine there are some readers of this quote who might have an entirely different opinion on the subject!

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Famous Aviation Quotes

The first time I ever saw a jet, I shot it down.
-- General Chuck Yeager, USAF, describing his first confrontation with an Me262.

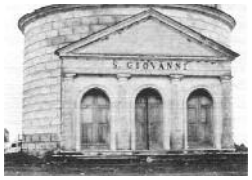
Aerial gunnery is 90 percent instinct and 10 percent aim.
-- Captain Frederick C. Libby,

See, decide, attack, reverse.
-- Major Erich 'Hartmann, Luftwaffe.

Aggressiveness was a fundamental to success in air-to-air combat, and if you ever caught a fighter pilot in a defensive mood, you had him licked before you started shooting.
-- Captain David McCampbell, USN, U.S. Navy ace in WWII.

I don't mind being called tough, because in this racket, it's the tough guys who lead the survivors.
-- Gen. Curtis LeMay

If I should come out of this war alive, I will have more luck than brains.
-- Captain Manfred Baron von Richtofen, in a letter to his mother upon being decorated with the Iron Cross.



SODERSTROM, EDWARD C. Edward C. "Ed" Soderstrom, aged 89 years passed away on Thursday, September 27, 2012. Our husband, father, grandfather and friend to so many people that he helped along the way. 1st Lieutenant Soderstrom joined the Army Air Corps and piloted the fabled "Yo-Yo" through 35 combat missions winning the Distinquished Flying Cross. True to their motto - We Always Come Back - the Yo-Yo's crew came home intact without suffering a single casualty. The exploits of Lt. Soderstrom, later Senator George McGovern and the rest of the 455 Bomb Group's Vulgar Vultures were chronicled in Stephen Ambrose's last book, "Wild Blue". Upon returning from the War, Ed completed his Engineering Degree from Michigan State College. Along with his brother, Chuck Saur, he co-owned Johnson Brothers Hardware in Sparta until the late 60's. He then joined Rapistan-Dematic in Grand Rapids as a mechanical engineer. At Rapistan, he worked with some of the fastest growing companies in the United States in 70s and 80s designing warehouse systems for Hallmark Cards, K-Mart, Federal Express and Wal-Mart. Always active in the community as a member of the Lions Club, leader of Mamrelund Lutheran Church and a volunteer fireman, Ed served as a town councilman and, then, mayor of Sparta for 20 years. He was a life long outdoorsman who loved to hunt, fish, play cribbage and enjoy happy hour on the deck of his cottage Up North that he built with his father in law, Justin Spangenberg. Orphaned at an early age after the deaths of his mother and father, Edward and Clara Soderstrom, he was taken in by David and Hilda Johnson who raised Ed and Chuck as their own sons. He was preceded in death by his sister, Alice Stover, and brother, Chuck. He is survived by his beloved wife and high school sweetheart, Anne Josephine Spangenberg; daughter, Kathleen Soderstrom; son Edward Jonathan Soderstrom and his wife Gail with grandchildren, Rachelle, Kari and Luke; and son Carl Soderstrom and his wife Elizabeth with grandchildren, Justin and Kathryn; and brother, John Schaefer and many nieces and nephews.

Dear Editor,

I am contacting you on behalf of the American Battle Monuments Commission. The ABMC is working on new exhibits for the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery's Visitor Center. We're looking for personal stories to highlight the sacrifice of American servicemen overseas.

We've targeted a number of stories from the 455th Bomb Group. These stories would be vetted through the ABMC before the final selection is made. However, any photographs that may exist for any of these stories would greatly increase the chances of them being selected. Please let me know if you have any photographs or if you could direct me to someone who may have photographs for these men:

CPL John D. Kripplebauer
CPL Herman L. Kennedy
T/SGT John W. Rickey
1st LT Thomas J. Markham

Thank you,

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Shifty

By Mark Pfiefer

Shifty volunteered for the airborne in WWII, and served with Easy Company of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, part of the 101st Airborne Infantry.

If you've seen the series *Band of Brothers* on HBO or the History Channel, you know Shifty. His character appears in all ten episodes, and Shifty himself is interviewed in several of them.

I met Shifty in the Philadelphia airport several years ago. I didn't know who he was at the time. I just saw an elderly gentleman having trouble reading his ticket. I offered to help, assured him that he was at the right gate, and noticed the "Screaming Eagle," the symbol of the 101st Airborne, on his hat.

Making conversation, I asked him if he'd been in the 101st Airborne, or if his son was serving. He said quietly that he had been in the 101st.

I thanked him for his service, then asked him when he served, and how many jumps he made.

Quietly and humbly, he said "Well, I guess I signed up in 1941 or so, and was in until sometime in 1945 ...", at which point my heart skipped.

At that point, again, very humbly, he said "I made the five training jumps at Toccoa, and then jumped into Normandy . . . do you know where Normandy is?"

At this point, my heart stopped. I told him "yes, I know exactly where Normandy is, and I know what D-Day was."

At that point, he said "I also made a second jump into Holland, into Arnhem."

I was standing with a genuine war hero. It was then that I realized that it was June, just after the anniversary of D-Day.

I asked Shifty if he was on his way back from France, and he said "Yes... And it 's real sad because, these days, so few of the guys are left, and of those who are, lots of them cannot make the trip."

My heart was in my throat, and I didn't know what to say.

I helped Shifty get onto the plane, and then realized he was back in coach, while I was in First Class. I sent the flight attendant back to get him, and told him that I wanted to switch seats. When Shifty came forward, I got up out of the seat and told him I wanted him to have it. I would take his in coach.

He said "No, son, you enjoy that seat. Just knowing that there are still some who remember what we did, and who still care, is enough to make an old man very happy." His eyes were filling up as he said it.

And mine are brimming up now as I write this. Shifty died on Jan. l7 after fighting cancer.

There was no parade for him. No big event in Staples Center. No wall-to-wall, back-to-back, 24x7 news coverage. No weeping fans on television.

And that's not right!

Let's give Shifty his own memorial service in our own quiet way.

Rest in peace, Shifty.

Final Flight

My father, Arnold I. Goldberg, died on Oct. 29, 2012 at the age of 89. He proudly served in WWII as a B-24 and B-26 flight engineer and aerial gunner, as part of the 455th Bomb Group.

After the war, my parents married. My father attended Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, graduating in 1950. Our family eventually settled in Williamstown, MA, where my parents opened a drug store, which they operated for over 30 years.

My father was also very active in the community, serving on various local school and town boards.

He spent the last 7 years living in Florida, enjoying visits from his four children, their spouses, six grandchildren, and various relatives and friends.

He often wore his favorite baseball cap, which said ***"World War II Veteran".*** Strangers often came up to him to thank him for his service!

He will always be remembered for his positive attitude, his kindness, friendliness, and good spirit, no matter what the situation.

He will be missed by all.

Sincerely,

Donna (Goldberg) Orlando
djomah@juno.com

Round Engines vs. Jets

Some observed differences in round engines and jets:

1. To be a real pilot, you have to fly a tail-dragger for an absolute minimum of 500 hours.
2. Large round engines smell of gasoline (115/145), rich oil, hydraulic fluid, man sweat and are not air-conditioned.
3. Engine failure to the jet pilot means something is wrong with his air conditioner.
4. When you take off in a jet there is no noise in the cockpit. (This does not create a macho feeling of doing something manly)
5. Landing a jet just requires a certain airspeed and altitude, at which you cut the power and drop like a rock to the runway.

Landing a round engine tail-dragger requires finesse, prayer, body-English, pumping of rudder pedals and a lot of nerve.

6. After landing, a jet just goes straight down the runway.
7. A radial tail-dragger is like a wild mustang --- it might decide to go anywhere. Gusting winds help this behavior a lot.
8. You cannot fill your Zippo lighter with jet fuel.
9. Starting a jet is like turning on a light switch --- a little click and it is on.
10. Starting a round engine is an artistic endeavor requiring prayer, curse-words, and sometimes meditation.
11. Jet engines don't break, spill oil, or catch on fire very often, which leads to boredom and complacency.
12. The round engine may blow an oil-seal ring, burst into flames, splutter for no apparent reason, or just quit. This results in heightened pilot awareness at all times.
13. Jets smell like a kerosene lantern at a scout camp-out.
14. Round engines smell like God intended engines to smell, and the tail-dragger is the way God intended for man to fly.

Golf Humor

A young man and a priest are playing together. It's a short Par-3. The priest asks, "What are you going to use on this hole, my son?"

The young man says, "An 8-iron, Father. How about you?" The priest says, "I'm going to hit a soft seven and pray."

The young man hits his 8-iron and puts the ball on the green. The priest tops his 7-iron and dribbles the ball out a few yards.

The young man says, "I don't know about you, Father, but in my church, when we pray, we keep our heads down."

Dear Editor,

I graduated with Calvin Casteel in 1940, from Automotive High School, in Cincinnati, OH.

Calvin was a pilot with the 455th Bomb Group.

Can you tell me if he is still living, and if so, where I can contact him.

Thank you,
Larry Holtgrefe
larryh334@yahoo.com

Editor's Response:

Dear Larry,

Thank you for your email. I looked in the 455th Bomb Group history book for all the people who served in the group with the last name of Casteel.

I found two.

1. Calvin Casteel (squadron, and current status, unknown).
2. Jack Casteel (742) of Mesa, AZ.

Jack is still on the newsletter mailing list, but Calvin is not.

I will put your request for information on Calvin Casteel in the next edition of the *Cerignola Connection* newsletter (Spring, 2013). I hope a reader knows something and contacts you.

Final Flight

I believe many reading this message knew our excellent pilot, and commander, Richard J. von Schriltz.

We sent a Christmas card to him this year (2012) addressed to his nephew's address, where he had moved several years ago.

His nephew sent us a card in return. It simply stated "We lost him last May", with no other details.

They also enclosed a photo of him when he celebrated his last birtday

We were sad to hear the news. I thought you should also be informed.

Regards,
Frank Lashinsky (740)

Can You Help? Response

This is in response to your request for information in the *Cerignola Connection*.

I was the Engineering Officer for the 741st Bomb Squadron. I was on the flight line the day the ME--109 landed. Needless to say, we were all puzzled as to what was taking place.



It turned out that the pilot was Captain Cantacuzene, a Romanian pilot who was an ace against Allied aircraft during the war.

After landing, he got out of the plane and pointed to a Zues fastener that was on the tool belt of a mechanic. He then opened the radio compartment, and the first thing we saw was a pair of Natale Boots, being handed out by Lt. Col. Jim Gunn.

Immediately after that, Jim managed to crawl out of the radio compartment.

To the best of my recollection, when the enemy was driven out of Romania, the prison camp was left behind and there were about a thousand Air Force men who had bailed out over Romania in the camp. Jim was the one who managed to get the Romanian pilot to fly him to our base. Since the war was still on, they decided to paint the American flag on both sides of the fuselage to avoid being shot down.

Jim contacted 15th Air Force Headquarters, and talked them into sending planes to rescue the prisoners. The Romanian pilot agreed to fly a P-51 to Bucharest, to make sure the Germans had gone.

When clearance was given, converted B-17's were used to bring the prisoners back to Italy.

Henry Burkle (741)
hburkle@cableone.net

Dear Editor,

I am looking for any information or memories of my Dad, 1st Lt. John P. Hancock, Pilot (742). I do know that he had his crew picture taken in front of "105". I know there are a lot of sons looking for information regarding their hero dads. I am one of them.

Dad passed away May 11, 2011.

Thank you in advance.
Tom Hancock
twh714@aol.com

(Editor's Note: see photo below)

Editor's Note: Lt. Hancock is in the middle of the back row. His legacy of service was passed to his sons and grandsons.

Frank is a 1972 graduate of West Point. Tom is a 1976 graduate of the Air Force Academy.

Two of his grandsons are aviators today, and are service academy graduates. LT. John S Hancock, USNA, 2005, over 200 carrier traps, and Capt. Mark T Hancock, USAFA, 2007, 100 combat missions.

Tom said that, like most of his generation, Lt. Hancock spoke very little about his 19 combat missions in WWII.



Dear Editor,

Just a note to tell you how much I've enjoyed reading the *Cerignola Connection* !

I just happened upon the 455th Bombardment Group websight last week, while researching my father's WWII assignments.

www.awardphp.com

I started reading the most recent edition of the newsletter, and enjoyed it so much I started with the earliest edition on the site and worked my way thru them all. Great job!!

My father, 1Lt Harold Francis Hall (743), was a bombardier with the 455th BG in Italy. He completed 28 missions before returning to the States for discharge.

I regret that I really don't know much about dad's tour in Italy. He didn't talk about it much, and by the time I was old enough to want to ask him about it, he had passed away.

He used to keep a chunk of shrapnel about the size of a golf ball on his desk that he "collected" on his first combat mission. It penetrated the greenhouse and destroyed his bomb sight, just seconds after he dropped his bombs and pushed back from the sight.

He regarded that piece of shrapnel as a good luck charm, and took it with him on his remaining missions.

I've attached the only photo I have of dad that I know was taken in Italy. He is on the right in the photo, and the officer on the left in the photo is Henry Chartier.

He was recalled for Korea in 1951, transitioned into B-29s for his last flying assignment, and retired from the AF in 1967.

He passed away in 1971.





I really appreciate the work you've done, and are doing, to preserve the story of our dads, and all the others who served with the 455th. They did some amazing things under truly miserable conditions. It's important to archive their history.

Sincerely,
LtCol Randall Hall, USAF (Ret)
Email: randnpat@att.net

Editor's Response:

Col. Hall,

Wow, our dads must have been very similar. My dad kept a piece of metal, about an inch square, on his desk all his life.

It was a jagged piece of a bomber that crashed on takeoff in Cerignola, and the B-24 literally blew into a thousand pieces.

He was close enough to the blast that it almost knocked him down, but he wasn't hurt. Later, he picked up this small piece of metal that was probably part of the bomber's torn fuselage.

He put it in his pocket and brought it home from Italy. He kept it as a tribute to his fallen comrades.

I still have that piece of bomber on a dresser in my home. I see it every time I reach for my keys!

It is my daily reminder of the high cost of our freedom.

A car's windshield is so large, and the rear-view mirror is so small? Why? Because our PAST is not as important as our FUTURE. So, look ahead and move on.

Friendship is like a book. It takes few seconds to burn, but it takes years to write.

Final Flights

1st Lt. William Arnold (743) passed away on September 9, 2008. He was a resident of Apalachin, NY, and was a US Army Air Corp B-24 bomber pilot in WWII. He received a Presidential Citation, Air Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross, and Oak Leaf Clusters. He received a Medal of Valor for completing 50 combat missions in June, 1944.

1st Lt. Robert E. Basala (741), 86, of Matherville, died Oct. 14, 2009. He was a navigator on the B-24 bomber in the Army Air Corp.

Albert Beauchemin (740), 84, passed away June 18, 2008. He was in the U.S. Army Air Forces, and served as a combat gunner on a B-24. He was also a POW for approximately two months, until the prison camp was liberated. He was awarded various medals, including the Purple Heart and the Air Medal.

Stuart A. Bemis (743), 86, passed away on February 13, 2012. He was a U.S. Army Air Corps veteran of WWII.

Casimir E. "Bud" Bialas (741), 81, died Sept. 18, 2001, in Gulfport, Mississippi. He was a U.S. Air Force veteran of WWII, and retired as a master sergeant in 1965.

Robert Vannoy Black (742), 87, passed away March 10, 2010, in the Houston VA Hospital. He was a gunner on a B-24 plane, shot down, taken prisoner, and spent thirteen months in Stalog 17B, a German prison camp. He received the Purple Heart, Air Medal w/IOLC, Presidential Unit Citations, WWII Victory Medal ETO Ribbon w/3 Battle Stars, Good Conduct and POW Medal.

S/Sgt. Zane G. Boyce (741), died August 4, 2000.

M/Sgt. Billy A Breed (740) died Sept. 27, 2010.

S/Sgt. Henry Molica (740), 90, died peacefully on Sept. 30, 2011. He served his country as a staff sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII, and was a decorated hero, receiving the Air Medal, Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

S/Sgt. William J. Dickinson (741), died Nov. 22, 2006 in Allentown, PA.

Kenneth Dean Lacey, age 84, died Sept 8, 2009, at Cambridge Manor in Indianola. He served with the U.S. Army Air Force during WWII, 455th Bomb Group, as a ball turret gunner on a B-24. He was the recipient of five Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster Medals for meritorious achievement in aerial flights, and the Distinguished Flying Cross for aerial combat in the Mediterranean Theatre.

Sgt. Victor Lawrence Dalton (742), 89, of Windsor, passed away June 22, 2004. He was a U.S. Army Air Corps Veteran of WWII.

Sgt. David James Donaldson (740), passed away March 5, 2011 at the age of 91, in Lyndonville, Vermont. He resided in Canyon Lake, CA from 2000 to 2009. Dave served as an airplane mechanic with the B-24 Liberator bombers in WWII in Italy.

Lt. Col. Richard "*Bird Eggs*" Dunscomb (743), age 81, died May 12, 2000, in Springfield, Illinois. Mr. Dunscomb had been a bomber pilot in the U.S. Air Force during WWII and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel from the U.S. Air Force Reserves.

Lt. John C. Ellis (740), died Sept. 9, 2004 in Loveland, Colorado. He was 82. John was a B-24 pilot with the 15th Air Force in Italy during WWII.

Edward Enghaus (742), 89, of Modoc, IN. passed away January 15, 2012 in Winchester, IN. Ed honorable served as a veteran of the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII. He served with the 455th Bomb Group, known as the *Vulgar Vultures.*

1st Lt. Melvin Evenson (741), 89, of Hudson, Michigan, died May 26, 2007. Mel entered the Army Air Corp during WWII, where he qualified as a fighter pilot and a navigator. He chose to remain a navigator, and flew B-24's in Europe during 1944, until his plane was shot down over Bucharest, Romania. He spent about eight months in a German prison camp until he, along with other prisoners, were able to escape in 1944.

Lt. Russ Felzer (743), passed away May 5, 2006. He was a WWII veteran, and flew over 30 missions.

All things in life are temporary. If life is going well, enjoy it, as it will not last forever.

If things in life are going wrong, don't worry, they can't last long either.

Final Flights (cont.)

Lt. Fred R. Funk (742), passed away Feb. 26, 2012. As the co-pilot of a B-24 bomber, he completed sixteen combat missions before his plane was shot down by anti-aircraft fire over Linz, Austria in 1945. That mission was chronicled as the harrowing final combat flight flown by Sen. George McGovern in the Stephen Ambrose book, *"The Wild Blue".* Funk parachuted from the crippled bomber, was captured by German troops, and was interned as a POW for the remainder of the war.

Lt. Col. William J. Sauerwein (742), of Portland, OR, died March 5, 2007, at 84 years of age.

Lt. Col. Herman M. Gammell (740), of Ogden, Utah, passed away June 29, 2010. He served his country as a B-24 Pilot with the 455th Bomb Group in WWII, completing 35 missions, and never losing one man.

Lt. Col. Lewis M. Gettings, Sr. (742), age 86, of Holland, MI, passed away February 24, 2012.

William C. Graves (742), 87, of Jacksonville, FL, passed away September 1, 2010. He was a veteran of WWII, flying 50 missions as radio operator on a B-24 bomber.

T/Sgt. Leonard S. Grefkowicz (743), a resident of Trevor, Wisconsin, passed away December 24, 2009.

Henry "Hank" Groen (741), 93, of Murray, UT, passed away September 11, 2010. He was with the U.S. Army, 455th Bomb Group fighting in Italy, as a mechanic on B-24 bombers.

Lt. Col. Fred A. Gross, Jr. (740), 88, of White Rock, N.M., passed away February 17, 2012. Fred joined the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1942. He retired from the U.S. Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1963, serving as a navigator, instructor, post engineer, and nuclear weapons research and development officer. He served with the B-24 Heavy Bombers in Italy during WWII, and with the B-29 Heavy Bombers in Okinawa, England, and Kansas. His decorations included the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with five Oak Leaf Clusters, the Presidential Unit Citation with one Oak Leaf cluster, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle East Campaign Medal, WWII Victory Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal and Air Force Longevity Service Award with four Oak Leaf Clusters.

Lt. Kenneth S. Hosterman (740) passed away April 7, in State College, PA. He flew 35 missions as a navigator on B-24 bombers. He received the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. While at pre-flight school, he won the prestigious “best athlete award” in the navigator's division.

T/Sgt. Arthur Reuben Johnson (741), 88, of Citrus Heights, CA, died March 16, 2012. He enlisted in the Army Air Corp in 1942, was shot down over Yugoslavia, and spent the next seven weeks walking more than 300 miles to safety.

Dr. Finis Harrell Josey (Lt., 741), of Starkville, passed away October 13, 2010. At the age of 19, he distinguished himself by the extraordinary accomplishment of completing 50 missions as a B-24 bomber pilot and captain during WWII. While serving his country, he received the Air Force's highest honor, The Distinguished Flying Cross, as well as the Air Medal for meritorious achievement.

Carl J. Wiskirchen (741) took his final flight on September 20, 2011, after a tragic automobile accident.

A Marine’s Perspective on War and Patriotism

I just returned from San Diego, quite possibly the most patriotic city on the planet. Ten years of war, and people literally standing in line to buy me, my C.O., and my Color Sergeant beers in a nightclub.

Plus, major league ball teams bring us to their games, and roll out the red carpet.

As if that’s not enough to make me feel great about being a Marine and an American, this morning I read a report about some a--hole that died from fumes ingested while burning the American flag.

Americans whipped the world’s butt at the Olympics, we have an SUV rolling around on Mars, and now our flag has a confirmed kill.

How great is that?

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am the grandson of 1st Lieutenant Daniel Linder (740), who served with the 455th BG from April, 1944, through June, 1945. His AF serial number was 0-926-011, and he was a copilot on B-24 Liberators, one of which was shot down over Yugoslavia.

I would love to be able to collect any information you would have on the Group, the Squadron, or my Grandfather.

I have only been able to find two pages of records from the Air Force, as most of them were burned in the fire at St. Louis in the 1970s.

As I am a Captain in the USAF Reserve, it has added meaning to me if I could find more information on the wartime record of the unit and my relative.

Thanks so much for any assistance you can provide!

Best Regards,

Jarred A. Fishman, Esq., Counsel, Export Controls
CPT, USAF Reserve Command
Hamilton Sundstrand
One Hamilton Road, MS 1-M-2
Windsor Locks, CT 06096
860.654.5898

Reply to "Can You Help" message above

Dear Capt. Fishman,

I had completed my 35 times over the target on April, 1945. It was customary to go to the runway on the next mission to see the group take off.

I had a 35mm camera and was getting pictures at the take-off beginning point.

I got a picture of *Butch the Second,* which crashed at the other end of the runway.

I was in a jeep with another pilot, and we raced to the crash site, taking pictures as we approached.

It was a dangerous situation, with delayed-action bomb fuses on the crashed *Butch the Second.*

After leaving the scene, we found there were two men killed, and four injured.

Two gunners broke their legs, jumping from the camera hatch opening in the tail, which was very high in the air.

Later, it was determined the plane was off the runway and the main gear was wrecked. After clearing the runway, it touched down again collapsing the nose wheel and sliding until it nosed over into a bank, vertically on the nose.

I hope you enjoy the pictures of your Grandfather, Daniel Linder, that I am sending you.

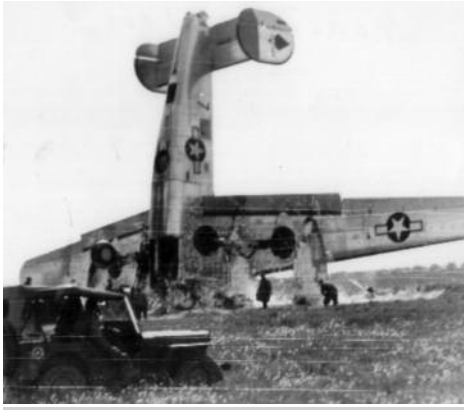
Best Wishes,

Hurley W. Lane (740)

(I am the last survivor of my original crew. I was 91 yrs old 4-8-2013.)



Hurley Lane (740)



Butch the Second



Lt. Daniel Linder (740)



Lt. Daniel Linder (740)

Final Flight

Edwin L. Keil (742)

Born: April 16, 1920
Died: December 6, 2011

Ed was born in Detroit, Michigan, and grew up in Decatur, Illinois. He attended Millikin University from 1938-1940, when his National Guard 33rd Division Band was called to active duty for WWII. He played first chair trumpet in the Division Band.

After Pearl Harbor, he joined the Army Air Corps, became a B-24 pilot, and flew fifty missions over Europe with the 455th Bomb Group, advancing to the rank of Captain and Flight Commander.

His WWII awards include the Distinquished Flying Cross, Air Medal with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters, Group Commendation Award, and European Theater Medal. He later became a B-24 flight instructor in Tennessee.

In 1945, he married Jean B. Reep, and finished his college degree at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance, graduating in 1947 with a BS degree in Economics.

In 1950, he moved to Spokane, and became a division credit manager for Phillips Petroleum Co.

In 1964, he was employed by Spokane Community College business department, as Mid-management Coordinator, and DECA Club advisor. He was SFCC Outstanding Teacher of the Year in 1971 and 1972.

He retired in 1980 to travel and play tennis.

Ed loved playing his trumpet, which led to the formation of the *Men of Note*, a big band in which he played for years at various large dances around the Inland Empire.

Ed also loved playing tennis. He got his first racquet at age 12, and played well into his 80's. In 1995, at age 75, he won the national singles and doubles titles and ranked #4 in the nation.

Ed died peacefully, and gracefully, in his sleep, and will always be remembered with love and fondness by his friends and family.

Dear Editor,

I believe my father was involved on the B-24 Liberator crash that took place in Cerignola on April 12, 1945. He is still living and has told us many stories regarding the crash.

Where can I find out more information about his service during this period?

Editor's Note: ***No name was given on the email above, of either the writer, or the writer's father ... just the email address below:***

KTESmith@aol.com

I directed the person via return email to go to the 455th BG website:

www.awardphp.com

If any of our readers know anything about the April 12, 1945 crash referenced above, I'm sure the email writer would love to hear from you. Thanks.

Ronald Reagan Quotes

Here's my strategy on the Cold War: We win, they lose.

Of the four wars in my lifetime, none came about because the U.S. was too strong.

I have wondered at times about what the Ten Commandments would have looked like if Moses had run them through the U.S. Congress.

The taxpayer: That's someone who works for the federal government, but doesn't have to take the civil service examination.

The nearest thing to eternal life we will ever see on this earth is a government program.

It has been said that politics is the second oldest profession. I have learned that it bears a striking resemblance to the first.

Politics is not a bad profession. If you succeed, there are many rewards; if you disgrace yourself, you can always write a book.

No arsenal, or no weapon in the arsenals of the world, is as formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women.

Final Flight
Col. David Bellemere (743)

Col. David Gray Bellemere (743), U.S. Air Force, Retired, passed away peacefully in his sleep at the age of 93, on March 27, 2013.

David was born Aug. 21, 1919, and spent most of his youth growing up on the family farm, and in Kansas City. He eventually graduated from Kansas State College, with a degree in engineering.

When World War II broke out, David joined the Army Air Corps and was a member of the 743rd Bomb Squadron, 455th Bomb Group. As a B-24 Liberator pilot, he deployed to operational bases in North Africa and Italy.

David participated in many bombing missions over Europe during the war, including raids on Ploesti, Romania.

On another mission in the skies over Budapest, Hungary, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his extraordinary achievement.

On his last mission, David had a near-death experience when his plane stalled and started to fall like an elevator. The crew was getting ready to bail when David was finally able to stabilize the plane. Upon landing, everyone kissed the ground.

Besides many of his other accomplishments, David was most proud of having been a command pilot for most of his military career. Following World War II, David joined the newly formed U.S. Air Force, was a pilot in the Korean War from 1950-53, and was assigned to the Strategic Air Command for most of the remainder of his career.

Before retirement after 22 years of military service, he was also the deputy base commander in Bangor, Maine, Sculthorpe, England, and Chaumont, France.

David said that the wartime experience had a profound effect on his life. He developed a high respect for his fellow man, and an especially strong bond with his fellow crewmen.

In 1943, while training in Albuquerque, N.M., he met Vivian Dimke, who was an Army Air Forces nurse there. They were married from 1945 to 1975, traveling extensively in more than 23 states, Canada and Europe.



Col. David Bellemere (743)

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My dad was in the 455th BG. He was a belly gunner.

His name was Edward Letone Wood from Bloomington, Indiana. Some people called him Lee or Letone.

How could I find out anything about him or his service? Here is a picture of him.



Thank you so much.
Patty Wood-Ruble
Email: pjibs@aol.com
PO Box 60
Stinesville, Indiana 47460

A blind person asked St. Anthony: "Can there be anything worse than losing eye sight?" He replied: "Yes, losing your vision!"

Worrying does not take away tomorrow's troubles, but it takes away today's peace.

Editor's Note: As I have previously stated In earlier editions of this newsletter, my father, Lt. J. T. Ward (740), had a **LEAST FAVORITE TARGET** of all the missions he flew in 1944 ... Ploesti. Here, on the next two pages, is a partial list of the Ploesti missions flown by the 15th Air Force:

WEDNESDAY, 5 APRIL 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

334 B-17s and B-24s hit targets in Romania and Yugoslavia; the B-17s bomb a marshalling yard at Ploesti, Romania and Nis, Yugoslavia; the B-24s hit a marshalling yard at Ploiesti and Leskovac, Yugoslavia; fighters and AA shoot down 13 bombers.

SATURDAY, 15 APRIL 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

Clearing weather again permits bomber operations. 448 B-17s and B-24s attack marshalling yards; B-17s hit Ploiesti, Romania and Nis, Yugoslavia; B-24s hit Bucharest, Romania; 150+ fighters provide escort.

MONDAY, 24 APRIL 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

520+ bombers attack targets in R0mania, Yugoslavia, and Italy; B-17s bomb a marshalling yard at Ploiesti, Romania, an aircraft factory in Belgrade, Yugoslavia and the Ancona-Rimini railroad line (this is the first Azon mission by 5 B-17s); the B-24s bomb marshalling yards at Ploiesti and Bucharest, Romania; 250+ fighters fly support for the bombers.

FRIDAY, 5 MAY 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

465th Bombardment Group (Heavy) with B-24s becomes operational, making a total of 20 heavy bomber groups operational in the Fifteenth Air Force.

640+ bombers (the largest force to date) attack targets in Romania and Yugoslavia; the B-17s hit marshalling yards at Ploiesti/Campina and Brasnov, Romania; the B-24s hit the marshalling yard at Ploiesti and troop concentrations at Podgoricu, Yugoslavia; fighters fly 240+ sorties in support.

SATURDAY, 6 MAY 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

About 300 B-17s and B-24s, escorted by P-51s and P-38s, hit targets in Romania; the B-17s attack an aircraft factory at Brasov and marshalling yard at Turnu Severin; the B-24s bomb Ploiesti/Campina marshalling yard and an aircraft factory at Brasov.

THURSDAY, 18 MAY 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

Almost 450 bombers, mostly with fighter escort, hit targets in Rumania and Yugoslavia; both B-17s and B-24s bomb the industrial area at Ploiesti, Romania and the marshalling yard at Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

WEDNESDAY, 31 MAY 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

480+ B-17s and B-24s bomb oil refineries and communications targets in the Ploiesti, Romania area; fighters fly 200+ sorties in support; 15 bombers are lost to flak and fighters; 40+ enemy aircraft are shot down.

TUESDAY, 6 JUNE 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

Shuttlebombing (Operation FRANTIC) continues as 104 B-17s and 42 P-51s (having flown to the USSR from Italy on 2 Jun) attack the airfield at Galati, Romania and return to Soviet shuttle bases; 8 enemy fighters are shot down and 2 P-51s are lost. 570+ other bombers, with fighter escort, hit targets from bases in Italy, i.e., in Yugoslavia, B-17s hit the Belgrade marshalling yard and Turnu-Severin canal installations, and in Romania, B-24s hit Ploiesti oil refineries and the marshalling yard at Brasov.

SATURDAY, 10 JUNE 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

P-51s and P-38s fly escort, and in Romania, strafe targets of opportunity between Bucharest and the Danube River and S of Craiova, and dive-bomb an oil refinery at Ploesti.

FRIDAY, 23 JUNE 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

400+ B-17s and B-24s attack oil targets in Romania; the B-17s hit oil refineries at Ploiesti; the B-24s also hit oil refineries at Ploiesti and oil storage at Giurgiu. 100+ US aircraft are shot down; the bombers and escorting fighters claim 30+ aircraft destroyed.

SATURDAY, 24 JUNE 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

335 bombers attack targets in Romania; B-17s attack the railroad bridge at Piatra; B-24s bomb the railroad repair depot at Craiova and oil refinery at Ploiesti; 33 P-51s sweep the Ploiesti-Bucharest area while other P-51s, P-38s, and P-47s fly 220+ sorties in support of the bombers; the bombers and fighters claim 20+ aircraft shot down; 10 US aircraft are downed and several others are missing.

SUNDAY, 9 JULY 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

In the Fifteenth's first Pathfinder-led mission, 222 B-17s and B-24s bomb Xenia and Concordia Vega oil refineries at Ploiesti, Romania; P-38s and P-51s fly escort; other P-51s sweep the Ploesti area during the attacks; the bombers and fighters claim destruction of 14 of the 40-50 opposing fighters; 6 AAF aircraft are shot down.

SATURDAY, 15 JULY 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

In Romania, 600+ B-17s and B-24s bomb 4 oil refineries in the Ploiesti area and the Teleajenul pumping station; and P-51s and P-38s fly 300+ escort sorties.

SATURDAY, 22 JULY 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

In Romania, 76 P-38s and 58 P-51s begin the second Fifteenth Air Force shuttle missions, attacking airfields at Zilistea and Buzau (claiming the destruction of 56 enemy aircraft) and landing at Operation FRANTIC bases in the USSR; 458 B-17s and B-24s (with fighter escorts) bomb an oil refinery at Ploesti and other bombers hit alternate targets of the Verciorova marshalling yard, Orsova railroad bridge, and Kragujevac, Yugoslavia marshalling yard.

WEDNESDAY, 26 JULY 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

Fighters on the second shuttle mission leave USSR Operations FRANTIC bases, strafe enemy aircraft in the Bucharest-Ploesti, Romania area, and return to bases in Italy. In Austria, 330+ B-17s and B-24s attack the Wiener Neudorf aircraft factory, the airfield at Markersdorf, Thalerhof, Zwolfaxing, and Bad Voslau, and targets of opportunity in the Vienna area. Also hit are Szombathely Airfield, Hungary and oil storage at Berat, Albania. Fighters fly escort and carry out patrols and sweeps in the Brod-Zagreb, Yugoslavia and Ploesti-Bucharest, Romania areas; bombers and fighters claim 70+ enemy aircraft shot down.

FRIDAY, 28 JULY 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

345 B-17s and B-24s attack 2 oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania and a marshalling yard at Florina, Greece; P-51s and P-38s provide support for the Ploesti raid.

MONDAY, 31 JULY 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

360+ bombers attack targets in Romania; B-17s hit an oil refinery at Ploesti; B-24s bomb 2 oil refineries at Bucharest, 1 at and Doicesti, and oil storage at Targoviste. Fighters escort the bombers.

SUNDAY, 6 AUGUST 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

60 fighters take off from Operation FRANTIC bases in the USSR, attack Craiova marshalling yard and other railroad targets in the Bucharest-Ploesti, Romania area, and land at Italian bases.

THURSDAY, 10 AUGUST 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

450+ B-17s and B-24s, with fighter escort, hit 6 oil refineries in the Ploesti, Romania area.

THURSDAY, 17 AUGUST 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

53 B-17s, with fighter cover, bomb Nish Airfield, Yugoslavia. 250 B-24s, escorted by P-51s, bomb 3 oil refineries and targets of opportunity in the Ploesti, Romania area.

FRIDAY, 18 AUGUST 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

370 fighter-escorted B-17s and B-24s bomb 5 oil refineries around Ploesti, Romania; 89 B-24s, with fighter cover, bomb Alibunar Airfield, Yugoslavia. The detachment of the 94th Fighter Squadron, 1st Fighter Group, operating from Aghione, Corsica with P-38s returns to base at Salsola Airfield, Italy.

SATURDAY, 19 AUGUST 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

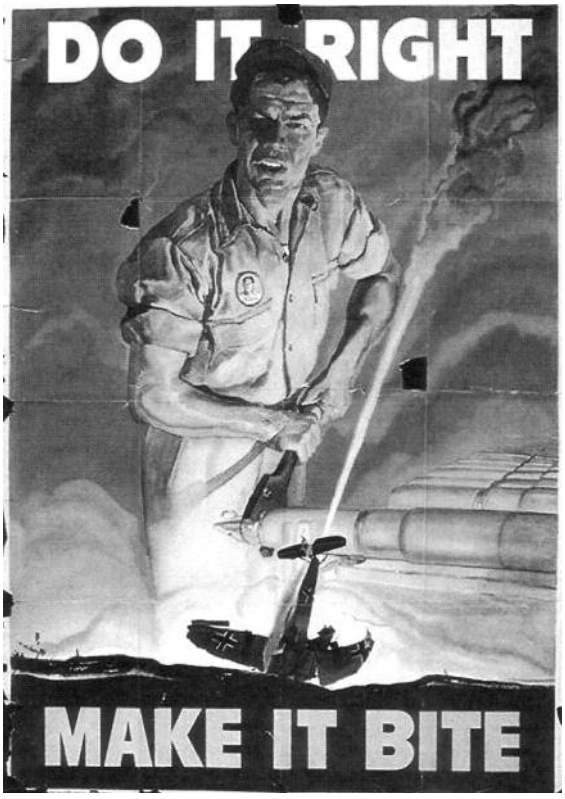
Bombing the Ploesti, Romania area for the fourth consecutive day, 65 B-17s supported by 125 P-51s blast 2 oil refineries.

TUESDAY, 17 OCTOBER 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

P-51s escort a C-47 picking up personnel at Valjevo Airfield, Yugoslavia, a B-17 carrying a photo crew to Romania (to photograph Ploesti), and several C-47s transporting personnel to Araxos Airfield, Greece.

REMEMBER THESE ?









Editor's Note: ***I recently came into possession of the "genesis version" of the 455th BG newsletter, which was published in November, 1944. I regret that I cannot credit the person who sent it to me.***

This publication was NOT named the **"Cerignola Connection"** ***at the time. It appears to be named*** **"Reflections".**

I assume subsequent editions were distributed to the airmen and soldiers on 455th base in Cerignola in 1944-45. I don't know how many issues were made before the end of the war, but it's great to have the original volume in original condition.

I will be including excerpts from this first Bomb Group newsletter in future editions of the **Cerignola Connection.**

I hope you enjoy the memories that these "Reflections" will bring.

REFLECTIONS

Volume 1, Nov. 1944
Public Relations
Sgt. W.S. Clayton (742), Editor

During the period of time which I have been associated with the 455th Bomb Group, I have observed with a great deal of satisfaction, the cooperative spirit which each individual soldier goes about his tasks, and attacks the problems which confront him.

No one is more fully aware than I am, that at times, through lack of material and equipment, you have been called upon to use your ingenuity and skill. I appreciate your efforts.

I feel that a group paper, with the proper cooperation on your part, can materially help to build an inter-squadron spirit, and provide you with a mental stimulus which you will thoroughly enjoy.

I do heartily endorse it.

Col. William Snowden (GP)
Commanding Officer

REFLECTIONS

They told me to write a story for the new journal. It was the opportunity I wanted. I would tell them how to run this outfit. I would give them the lead that would end this war mighty damn pronto, or I might even tell them how to put the screws on Hitler and Hirohito over-night.

I picked up my pencil and pad. My tent is so warm and cozy. Sitting by candlelight, with the reflections cast by the fire on the walls of my tent. My thoughts run rampant. The last lap of a year in a strange country. Remember leaving the states, and your last thoughts. Some of you came straight across. Some of us were less fortunate. The Captain of the ship said we were in the worse storm in twenty-five years. Our second night out. Lost from the convoy. The careening and lurching of the boat, tossing about by the waves of a sea gone mad. Midnight, a crash ! Rammed by our escort. Five terrible, brain-searing bells.

Vomit. Darkness. The briny sea pouring down upon us. Courage, discipline, prayer, cold, the trip back to the USA, and the never-to-be-forgotten shores of the States. Safe, a few days relaxation. Another attempt.

Italy, wet, cloudy, muddy "sunny Italy". Pup-tents, then the joy of a larger tent, though a bit over-crowded, and heated only by a can of oil in the center ... chimney?

We were too joyous at the sensuous comfort of heat to mind the choking, blinding, foul smelling smoke. Glad for the first signs of darkness that we might retire to gain some little comfort from our blankets spread on the damp ground. Then, too, there was nothing else to do. Lying in our blankets, we would laugh uproarously at some fool-heartly joke told to boost the morale of the jokester.

Yes, the comparative luxurious living of the present, at the close of our year on foreign shores.

Sgt. W.S. Clayton (742)
Editor

Editor's Note: More of this column, and several other columns from the 1944 group journal, will be included in the Fall, 2013 edition of the **Cerignola Connection.**

Airline Pilot Humor

ST. LOUIS APPROACH TO UNITED: "United 231 best forward speed to the marker, you're number one."

UNITED 231 (MALE VOICE): "Roger, balls to the wall."

ST. LOUIS APPROACH TO AMERICAN: "American 1432, you're number two behind a United 737, follow him, cleared visual, best forward speed."

AMERICAN 1432 (FEMALE VOICE): "Well I can't do balls to the wall, but I can do wide open."

*****LONG RADIO SILENCE*****

UNIDENTIFIED PILOT (MALE VOICE): "Is American hiring?"

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

Spring greetings!

We are drawing closer to time for the joint reunion in Phoenix in October, 2013. Registration forms were included in the previous edition of the Cerignola Connection. In addition to the 455th Bombardment Group, the other participating organizations are:
451st Bombardment Group (H), 49th Bomb Wing, Fifteenth Air Force
99th Bombardment Group (H), 5th Bomb Wing, Fifteenth Air Force
The Arizona Liberator Group

There is an excellent website (http://www.gordons.ws/reunion) featuring information about the reunion. It also includes registration forms as well as details of events and speakers. I encourage each of you with internet access to visit the website and learn more about what is planned. The Directors voted to join in the sponsorship of this reunion to give our association members another opportunity to gather together. Don't miss this opportunity.

All positions on the Board of Directors, including the officers, will be up for re-election for four-year terms in November 2013. If you have an interest in serving on the Board of Directors in any capacity, please contact me.

Email may be directed to 455bg-h@austin.rr.com. U.S. mail may be addressed to:

455th Bomb Group Association
P.O. Box 93095
Austin, TX 78709.

We continue to receive contributions to help continue the publication of the *Cerignola Connection*. Please take note of the updated contributors list earlier in this newsletter. These are people who are helping ensure you continue to receive the *Cerignola Connection.*

On a closing note, I recently read a fascinating book, *A Higher Call*, written by Adam Makos with Larry Alexander. It was sent to me as a gift by Karen Smith, the daughter of 455th member Roy Strohmeier. "Stroh" was the radio operator on my dad's plane, *Sky Wolf.*

The book follows the combat careers of an Me-109 pilot and a B-17 pilot and begins with their unusual encounter in the skies over northern Germany. I recommend it to each of you. Information is available at the http://valorstudios.com/a-higher-call-book.htm website. It's a great reminder of what it took to keep our nation free.

Thank you again for your role in that!