CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

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Message from the President

By
Norman Crum

I'm happy to once again offer a few words for this edition of *Cerignola Connection.* Many thanks to those who have contributed to, and skillfully edited, this unique publication.

In previous articles, I've tried to help us imagine what it was like to fly on a combat mission in a B-24. I've also made some observations about the B-24 aircraft itself and have reviewed the 15th Air Force's strategic role in the ETO.

Albert Speer, Hitler's Minister for Armaments, once declared: "I could see omens of the war's end almost every day in the blue southern sky when, flying provocatively low, the bombers of the American Fifteenth Air Force crossed the Alps from their Italian bases to attack German industrial targets."

In reading this quote, I found myself wondering what that "blue southern sky" over Cerignola was like. As these brave crews took-off or landed from their deadly missions, what sort of weather and air-traffic did they run into? What was the surrounding countryside like? How long had San Giovanni airfield been around and what was it like?

I discovered through some quick Google searches that the Foggia region's climate is remarkably similar to that of Stockton, California, where I sit writing this article. The summertime highs are in the low-90s with winter highs in the high-50s. Overnight temperatures are in the low-70s in the summer and high-30s in winter. Annual rainfall is a dry 18" and falls mostly between November and February. There are never more than nine rainy days in any month and it is clear and sunny approximately 81% of the time. **In short: great flying weather.**

The province of Foggia is generally flat, agricultural

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lowland with its most important crop being durum wheat. Because so much wheat is grown in this area, it is also commonly known as the "grainery of Italy". This would have made it relatively efficient to build the landing strips and taxiways needed to handle bombers and fighters, and to build their associated support facilities.

Before World War II, the Italian Royal Air Force constructed some airfields in the Foggia area. They consisted of permanent, hard-surfaced runways and taxiways, concrete parking areas, and buildings for the support units and barracks.

After the armistice between Italy and Allied armed forces in September, 1943, these airfields were seized by the German Luftwaffe. While under Axis control, these airfields were heavily bombed by the United States Army Air Force and Royal Air Force in 1943, before being seized by the British Eighth Army in October, 1943, during the Italian Campaign.

After the area was captured, these facilities were repaired by the Army Corps of Engineers to make them usable for heavy bomber operations by the new Fifteenth Air Force. Weather in southern Italy was much better than in England, where the Eighth Air Force was headquartered. Using the Foggia Airfield Complex for strategic bombing missions would allow Allied heavy bombers to attack targets in France, Germany, Austria and the Balkans, which were inaccessible from England.

In addition to the relatively few established airfields, additional temporary and "semi-permanent" airfields (such as San Giovanni) were constructed for operations by USAAF units. These airfields consisted of grass or pierced steel planking runways with support structures quickly constructed out of wood or canvas, along with a temporary steel control tower.

Six-man tents were used for billeting, lined up in rows with the orderly room and the mess hall at one end. There was one dim light bulb at the center of each tent. The tent floor was usually dirt. Eventually plywood was scavenged for flooring, wooden cots were used for beds, and ubiquitous 55-gallon drums were converted into a stove.

Since many of these airfields were captured from the enemy, wrecked aircraft were a common sight, with metal from fuselages and wings, glass and other useful parts finding their way into the support areas.

By mid-1944, about two dozen airfields were in operation in the Foggia area, supporting strategic bombing missions, escort missions, tactical fighter operations, reconnaissance and air defense missions.

With the end of the war in May, 1945, the non-permanent airfields were abandoned and the land was returned to previous owners or the Italian government. Today, these bases have long-since returned to agriculture. Little or no evidence remains of their use as wartime airfields.

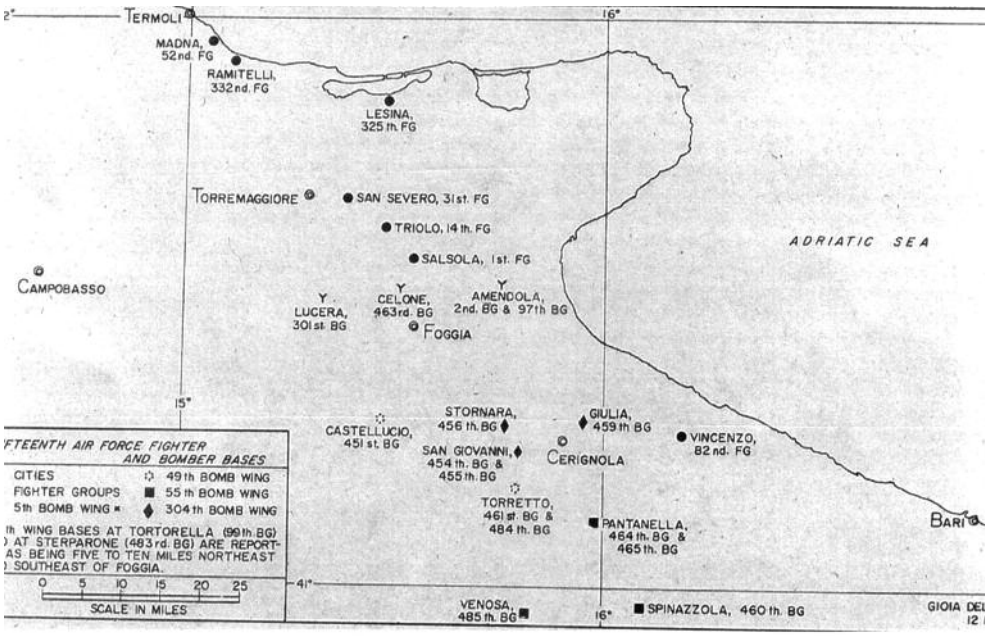
San Giovanni Airfield, home of the 454th and 455th Bomb Groups, was one of these semi-permanent bases and was abandoned soon after the war. It was located approximately 9km west of Cerignola. Built in late 1943, and opened January 1944, it had pierced steel planking runways with extensive taxiway and parking areas and a steel control tower.

At the time, it was considered to be a relatively large facility with capacity for approximately 150 heavy bombers. It remained in operation until the end of the war, closing in October 1945. Faint scarring of land is still visible, but there is little or no physical evidence of the airfield's existence.

In this edition of the *Cerignola Connection*, we continue to tell the story of the people who flew, fought and serviced the 455th bombers over southern Europe. They were brave, intelligent young men, and we continue to be blessed that they did their duty, and preserved our freedom.

See Map, Next Page





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The 455th Bomb Group Association, Inc. would like to thank the following Association members for their generous monetary contributions *(cumulative listing)*:

Taxi ($25-$99)

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Bombs away ($200-$499)

Francis G. Hosimer
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Robert W. Rohler, in honor of 1Lt Charles William (Bill) Rohler
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Mission complete ($500 or more)

Mary E. Jureka, in honor of Col John F. Jureka
Norman Crum, in memory of George W. Crum
Robert O. Foernsler, in memory of Capt Ed Soderstrom & crew

Joint Reunion of the
451st and 455th Bombardment Groups (H) WWII
With other 15th Air Force Units
24th-27th, September 2015
Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel, Kansas City, Missouri

Reunion Activities

Thursday, 24th September

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Early Registration – Hospitality Room will be open
7:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Reunion informational meeting in the Kansa room

Friday, 25th September

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM	Registration
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM	Optional Tour* – National WWI Museum with Lunch
2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Veteran led presentations & discussions in Kansa A & B room
5:00 PM - 8:30 PM	Evening Sit Down Dinner including 451st, 455th & 465th members with informal speeches

- 5:00 PM - Cash Bar *
- 6:00 PM - Sit Down Dinner in the Wyandot room

Saturday, 26th September

9:30 AM - 1:00 PM	Optional Tour* - Harry S. Truman Presidential Library with Lunch
2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Veteran led presentations & discussions in Kansa A & B room
5:00 PM - 9:30 PM	Gala Banquet - All Bomb Groups. Guest Speaker: Roger Locher

- 5:00 PM - Cash Bar*
- 6:00 PM - Sit Down Dinner in the Shawnee Ballroom

Sunday, 27th September

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	Memorial Service
12:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Optional Tour* – Steamboat Arabia Museum with Lunch
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Optional* Casual Farewell Dinner in the Wyandot room

Registration Fee: $115 per person (*Registration fee does not include the cash bars, the optional bus tours on Friday, Saturday & Sunday or dinner on Sunday)

Attire: Casual dress for all events with the exception of the Saturday Night Gala Banquet for which sport coat with or without tie is requested.

Travel: Hotel provides a free airport shuttle service as well as free parking for quests traveling by automobile and a free breakfast buffet for up to 2 people per room. Also 2 drink coupons per room per day.

Hotel: Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel
8801 NW 112th Street, Kansas City, Missouri, 64153
Hotel Direct Line: 1-816-891-8900 – Ask for In-House Reservations – Group Booking Code is BOM

(1)

Joint Reunion of the
451st and 455th Bombardment Groups (H) WWII
With other 15th Air Force Units
24th-27th, September 2015

Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel, Kansas City, Missouri

Bomb Groups

- The reunion includes the 451st, 455th, 461st, 465th, 484th and 485th Bomb Groups in order to keep our group a strong, viable size.
- Individual group dinners are planned for Friday evening. The 451st, 455th and 465th will meet together as one group and the 461st, 484th and 485th will each have their own group dinner.
- Saturday evening is the Gala Banquet including all Bomb Groups.
- Saturday guest speaker is Roger Locher, an F-4D Weapons Officer and Pilot who was shot down over North Vietnam in 1972. Locher spent a record 23 hair-raising days evading capture before being rescued and returned to friendly territory. Locher says he will consider it an honor to relate his story to our group. He is the nephew of 484th member, Dick Yunghans.

Hotel

Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel
8801 NW 112th Street, Kansas City, Missouri, 64153
Phone 1-816-891-8900 Ask for In-House Reservations
Group Booking Code is: BOM

If You Prefer, Reserve Online:

http://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/M/MCIAPHF-BOM-20150922/index.jhtml

- This hotel has been newly renovated and was done very nicely.
- Kansas City has direct flights in from 37 destinations nationwide!
- Complimentary Airport Shuttle - The shuttle (an actual stand up bus) runs every 15 minutes, 24 hours. It is helpful to call the hotel from a house phone in the airport to let them know you've arrived. There are bus stop type shelters outside that say Hotel Courtesy shuttle. From there you can wave down the Hilton shuttle when you see it.
- Room rates will be $99 per night plus tax and will include a full, hot breakfast buffet for up to two people and two drink coupons per room, per day.
- Parking is free.

(2)

Itinerary

Thursday, September 24th, 2015
Arrival and check in day. The hospitality room and registration table will be open with heavy hors d'oeuvres served in the afternoon and evening. No evening meal is planned.
7:00 PM – All group informational meeting will be held in the Kansa room (next door to the Hospitality room).

Friday, September 25th, 2015
9:00 AM - Depart hotel for optional* tour of the World War One Museum at Liberty Memorial with lunch at the Museum Café. This museum and memorial is the only one of its type in the country and is extremely well done! It also offers panoramic views of KC.
12:30 PM - Depart Liberty Memorial for return to hotel
2:00 – 4:00 PM – Veteran led presentations and discussions in the Kansa A&B room.
5:00 PM – Social hour before dinner with cash bar.
6:00 PM – Individual Group Banquets. 451st, 455th & 465th in the Wyandot room

Saturday, September 26th, 2015
9:30 AM – Depart hotel for optional* tour of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and museum. Lunch at the Library's Atrium overlooking a beautiful outdoor courtyard.
12:15 PM – Depart Truman Library for a quick stop to view (from the outside) the Truman home. National Park Service rangers will step onto each motorcoach to give an overview of the home's history. (Our group will be far too large to tour inside the home. They only take very small groups inside.)
12:30 PM - Depart the Truman home for return to hotel.
2:00 – 4:00 PM – Veteran led presentations and discussions in Kansa A&B room.
5:00 PM – Social hour before dinner with cash bar.
6:00 PM – All Groups Banquet, Roger Locher, featured guest speaker in the Shawnee Ballroom.

Sunday, September 27th, 2015
9:00 AM – Memorial Service
NOON – Depart hotel for optional* tour of Steamboat Arabia museum with lunch
3:30 PM – Depart Steamboat Arabia Museum for return to hotel
6:00 PM – Optional* Casual Farewell Banquet in the Wyandot room.

*** Registration fee does not include the cash bars, the optional bus tours on Friday, Saturday & Sunday or dinner on Sunday.**

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Tour Descriptions

- Tours are first class venues that you will really enjoy
- For some tours, there may be substantial walking – wheelchairs are on hand at the venues
- All tours are optional. Tour cost is not included in base registration fee.

World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial ($39 per person) – Friday, September 25th

This is the only Memorial of its type in the country and has been designated by Congress as the nation's official WWI museum and monument. The museum is extremely well done and nationally renowned. It offers a great insight into the war that many of our Bomb Group veteran's fathers fought in and illustrates that "some things just never change"! Atop the museum is the WWI Monument that was dedicated by President Coolidge and the Allied Commanders in 1921 in front of 150,000 people. The area surrounding the tower offers panoramic views of downtown Kansas City and the surrounding area. You can take an elevator to near the top of the 230 foot tall tower, although there are 45 stairs to get all the way up to the observation deck for breathtaking 360 degree views. We will have lunch in the Over There Café before returning to the hotel.

Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum ($39 per person) – Saturday, September 26th

You will see first-hand how this humble and simple man from Independence, Missouri led our country and made some really difficult decisions after the death of FDR during the height of WWII. You will be amazed at the simplicity and unpretentiousness of the "most powerful man in the world". This is a great museum that our Veterans and wives will especially relate to. We will have lunch in the indoor atrium that overlooks the outdoor courtyard where HST's grave along with his beloved wife, Bess is located. We will then go the mile or so to view the Truman home from the outside, the home where he and Bess lived from the time they married until his death in 1972. A National Park Service Ranger will board each bus to give an overview of the home. Their home, although quite large by yesteryear's standards is remarkable in its simplicity and that of the surrounding residential neighborhood where the President took daily walks with no Secret Service protection (until the 1960s).

Steamboat Arabia ($43 per person) – Sunday, September 27th

The Steamboat Arabia was a cargo and passenger steamboat that ferried supplies and people up and down the Missouri River, aka Big Muddy. This boat sank in 1856 and settled to a depth of about 45 feet of mud after the river channel changed over the course of time. It was discovered and a real treasure chest of ship parts and artifacts were retrieved. This is truly a fascinating museum and offers a great insight into the clothing, tools, kitchenware and many, many other items of life in the mid-1800s. We will have lunch in the museum's Atrium Café.

Print your return address in the space provided on the right. Please print clearly in dark ink.

Return To:	From:
Winson Jones 451st Bomb Group 18502 NW Montreux Dr Issaquah, WA 98027 Email: winjones@comcast.net Phone: 425.223.2101	Name: Address: Telephone No. E-mail:

Joint Reunion 15th Air Force Bomb Groups WW II
Kansas City Reunion: September 24th – 27th, 2015
Registration Form for 451st & 455th Bomb Group Attendees and Special Friends from the 376th Bomb Group

Basic Registration Fee: Includes Fri & Sat Dinners	_____ X $115.00 per person =	$
Optional Bus Tour 9/25: WWI Museum & Lunch	_____ X $39.00 per person =	$
Optional Bus Tour 9/26: Truman Library & Lunch	_____ X $39.00 per person =	$
Optional Bus Tour 9/27 Steamboat Museum & Lunch	_____ X $43.00 per person =	$
Optional Sunday Dinner 9/27	_____ X $30.25 per person Southern Catfish _____ X $30.25 per person Grilled Pork Loin _____ X $25.50 per person Veg. Lasagna	$ $
	Total	**$**

(Make Checks Payable to: 451st Bomb Group)

Specify how name should be listed on name tag:

My Name Tag:	
Spouse's Name Tag:	
Guest's Name Tag:	
Guest's Name Tag:	
Guest's Name Tag:	
Guest's Name Tag:	

Continue →

Name of Person Registering (same as Page 1):_____

Dinner Selections
For the dinner entrees, I/we have selected the following: (Select one entrée for each attendee)

Friday Dinner: Grilled Salmon _____ Roast Pork Loin _____ Ravioli _____

Saturday Dinner: Kansas City Strip _____ Chicken Oscar _____ Vegetable En Croute _____

Hotel & Travel
Staying at the Hilton Hotel : Yes _____ No _____

Arrival Date: Thursday 9/24 _____ Friday 9/25 _____

I plan to arrive by: Plane_____ Car_____

Bomb Group Association
Are you a Survivor of the air war in WWII? (Yes/No) _____

What was your group number? _____

Date of Birth: _____

List your duty position (pilot, tail gunner, mechanic, etc.): _____

If air crew member: Were you shot down: Yes_____ No_____
Were you a prisoner of war: Yes _____ No _____
Number of Missions: _____

List Medals awarded:_____

_____

Attach your Air Force history (write-up) if available.

(6)

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FINAL FLIGHTS

Mr. Walter P. Lee

March 2, 1921- Dec. 7, 2013

He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942, and served as a pilot in World War II in the Army Air Corp., 455th Bomb group, 15th Air Force; flying B-24's for over 50 missions, returning home with his 11 man crew intact.

His service medals included the European African Middle Eastern Service Medal, the Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Distinguished Flying Cross, and later the Greek Service Medal.

Roy Madsen

1925 - 2011

Roy Madsen, age 86, died Sept. 4, 2011 at his home surrounded by family and loved ones.

Roy was a decorated veteran who served as a tail gunner in the Air Force during World War II. After being shot down the second time, he credits his life being saved by the Czechoslovakian partisans who helped him flee from the pursuing German army.

After the fall of the iron curtain, he was able to travel back to his beloved Czechoslovakia several times where he was instrumental in honoring the American service men and women who had lost their lives during World War II.

Many of Roy's personal effects from the Air Force are currently on display in the museum honoring the Slovak National Uprising in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia.

Solo Sortie

by Lt. Winton S. Reynolds (742)

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to fly in a heavy B-24 *Liberator* bomber deep into Germany - alone?

Much has been written about the formations, numbering well into the thousands, that sweep the skies over axis held Europe; when the weather permits, but little has been written about the 15th Army Air Force secret briefings that are held for crews that have been trained to fly - alone.

When the weather is "socked" in solid from five thousand up and the strength of the Air Force is forced to stand down, "the weather crews" are alerted to fly.

At an early hour, when camps are asleep, a few especially trained crews crawl out of their "sacks", dress and hurry off to the mess hall for a breakfast of hot cereal and coffee. In a truck they are carried to a war room. There behind locked doors they are briefed on the target selected for the day's operations.

It is an entirely different sensation to be briefed for a flight without the company of the entire Air Force, without fighter escort, and through the greatest of all hazards to all pilots - weather! It requires all of the skill and courage of an entire crew. Complete co-operation and eagle-eyed alertness.

The crews listened carefully as they were given information pertinent to the flight. Pencils were busy copying down secret call signs and signals into pocket sized notebooks as the Major read the orders.

"You are carrying delayed action bombs today, men. You must drop them. You will be carrying two pamphlet bombs, also," he pointed out.

There were strained expressions on the faces of the crew members as they looked at the course line stretching across a large portion of a sprawling map of Europe. They knew the dangers involved in a flight where cloud formations offered the only protection against enemy fighters. They knew the danger of ice that forms so rapidly on the wings and tail assembly of an aircraft, that to break it loose with the aids of de-icer boots is a relative impossibility.

They were fully aware the concentrations of heavy 88 mm flak and aerial rocket barrages that were not confined to the target alone. If the navigation be faulty and the airplane off course, in some instances but a few miles, they would be subjecting themselves to a rather rude awakening of its presence. Perfect navigation in the "soup" is a rather ticklish business. It requires a great deal of energy and skill of the men who direct the flight of a large bomber.

Weather flying, from the pilot's standpoint, is of course hazardous work. Intricate instruments, gauges and dials are the nerve endings of an enormous piece of flying machinery. Simply because there are numerous planes, and men to fly them, does not alter the size or importance of one specific airplane and the pilot who is its brain.

His judgment and psychomotor reaction to a given situation, regardless how he might feel physically or mentally, must be the right one or all may be lost.

The instrument pilot has, of course, been trained to disregard all sensations that he may experience that may prompt his thinking in a split-second analysis of a sensation as to his relative position and attitude in the air. Sensations that contradict the instruments before him are known to all who fly in the "soup" as vertigo.

Overpowering these sensations can be, in time, very fatiguing. The sensation of "stalling out" while in a climb, or banking to the right or left while the aircraft remains in level flight are extremely confusing to the pilot. There is but one and only one remedy to this almost nauseating sensation, which may attack without provocation. Fly on instruments! Not by the "seat of your pants."

At length the crews were dismissed and they filed out of the briefing room into a wet, cold drizzle. The dawn was a faint pallor which filtered through the heavy overcast. The pilot paused for a moment, before he climbed upon the truck, and scanned the skies.

"Through that muck and into Germany - alone. Well," he thought to himself, "I hope I make it."

With pseudo-zest he swung aboard and the truck, with the grating of gears, skidded off down the road filled with thick, sluggish mud.

At the "parachute room" on the "line" the men dressed for their assent into the overcast and into the sub-zero temperatures; where little by little, and in spite of every protection available (heated suits, boots, and gloves), the cold gnaws at one until you feel you can no longer stand it.

The crew chief and his assistants had checked and rechecked the plane prior to the crew's arrival at the "hard stand". Engines had been pre-flighted and were perfect. The armorers were busy fusing delayed action bombs with special "booby trap" attachments. The engineer and assistant engineer were busy safetying the gas tank caps. The oil had been checked and the caps safetied.

The pilots were occupied inspecting the plane. Checking her de-icer boots for rips and tears. Her antennas were intact. The turbo-buckets had proper clearance and were in excellent condition. Gunners worked quietly and efficiently over their fifty calibers and deadly belts of ammunition. They handled them like babies. A solo mission can be a do-or-die affair, and an unprotected tail could spell death for eleven men. Cartons of chaff were loaded into the waist section. The oxygen was checked at all stations. The interphone, VHF, and command transmitters were quickly checked by the radio operator.

The airplane was in order.

The pilots were in their cockpit and crew members at their appointed station for takeoff. Minutes passed. The pilot glanced at the clock snuggly set into the instrument panel.

"It's time to start," he thought.

From that moment forward the crew had to function not as eleven individuals, but as eleven crew members who had specific jobs to do.

"Let's start 'em up," he called out. "Main line and battery. Put-put."

The copilot snapped the battery switches and main line bar on. The assistant engineer started the put-put.

"Clear left!" came the warning from the pilot.

The copilot called out, "Clear right."

Routine checks were made. Inverters and instruments were cautiously checked for possible failure. Number three engine was accelerated, primed and meshed. The big Pratt & Whitney engines kicked over. The pilot pulled the mixture into auto-rich, and the engine began to run smoothly. Number four - number two - and then one. The artificial horizon erected itself as the gyro instruments came into operation.

The pilots, after allowing the "power plants" to warm up, checked the mags and ran up the engines. Contact was made with the tower. Taxi and takeoff instructions were succinctly given. The big *Liberator* bomber responded to the slow advancement of the throttles by the pilot, and began to move. Onto the taxi strip, which would its way across the area and down to the end of the runway.

"Controls unlocked," was the pilot's terse command. "High RPM! Auto-rich! Booster pumps on! Half flaps! Okay in the waist?" The pilot called over the interphone.

There was a quick reply, "Roger!"

On cue from the tower the big lumbering bomber, loaded to the brim of her bomb bays, with death and destruction plus leaflets which were to be dropped along with the bombs to give the people of Germany a clue as to why they were being bombed. The unwieldy bomber pulled out on the runway. Poised and ready for takeoff, the pilot advanced the throttles and the bomber went thundering down the runway. With her nose wheel off the ground the plane was held in the proper angle of attack.

Gaining momentum with every second that ticked with the beating of the hearts of the men who flew her, she lifted her heavy and splashed body from the runway, and flew into the quiet gray shroud of mist about her.

There was something graceful about that bomber as it took off for Germany. In spite of its awkwardness on the ground, there was a certain dignity in the way it flew. The way its gear almost automatically folded up into her wings. The drone of her

four engines in perfect synchronization.

The "tri-bladed props" thrust their way into the overcast with every bite and the "solo" ship disappeared into the clouds.

This radar ship, known as a *Mickey*, is different than most B-24's. It's equipped with navigational aids too secret to mention. Painted blue-grey to blend with the clouds she flies through.

There is no identification insignia smartly exhibiting her wing, group and squadron on her tail assembly. She flies alone and unnamed.

With almost rehearsed precision the plane and crew function as one. At fourteen thousand feet they were well across the Adriatic Sea and still in a steady climb. Requests for half-degree corrections from the navigators were quickly complied with by the pilot. Equipped with the latest advancements in navigational aids the course and position were frequently plotted. With the aid of the "G-box", the navigators were capable of pin-pointing their position within a thousands feet of their actual position in the air.

With complete confidence the crew flew on through the never ending whiteness. The *Mickey* navigator continuously turned knobs and dials and reported with monotonous regularity to the dead-reckoning navigator their position over interphone.

"We are right on course, lads - nothing to worry about. How's our ETA coming out on DR?"

The DR navigator, after a few moments of calculation, responded with an encouraging reply. "On the ball."

Climbing steadily the free air temperature gauge fell. At eighteen thousand it had dropped to thirty-three below zero. Each time a man exhaled through the rubber vents of his oxygen mask the moisture immediately condensed into fog. Ice had begun to form on the silk scarves and the fur collars of the tightly zipped up jackets. There were frequent oxygen checks mad and all stations reported in.

Every one was okay.

Suddenly, it began to snow, and the world they flew through was a swirling mass of white. The flakes came directly at the windshield and then just before they splashed, just like rain, they quickly altered their crazy course, and blew by, never touching the windshield. The snow was forming and falling so fast the outboard engines were no longer visible. All sense of time, speed, and direction would have been lost if it had not been for the instruments that told the navigators and pilots they were only one and a half hours from the target.

Slowly the cylinder head temperatures began to creep up as the engines pulled the heavy load up the long grade. Cowl flap was opened on number four engine.

"Not too much," the pilot cautioned. They could not afford to increase their drag.

A turning point was reached and the plane was promptly turned to a new heading. Nothing new on scenery - only the swirling snow.

The second hand on the clock went round and round and finally the larger hand decided to move. Minutes seemed like hours.

At twenty-two thousand it suddenly stopped snowing. It was lighter and the outboard engines came into view. The engines droned in the rarified atmosphere. Steadily the temperature dropped, and number four engine began to run dangerously hot for consistent operation. More cowl flap was opened and more drag was induced.

Deep into enemy territory, and only a short time from the target, the engine began to lose manifold pressure. Slowly it dropped. The possibility of carburetor-ice was extremely illogical with the cylinder head temperature so hot. All other instruments read normal. The amplifiers were checked and still it dropped. If the target was to be reached the other three engines must assume the load. The RPM and the manifold on the other three engines "stepped-up".

At twenty-four thousand two hundred feet, the weather ship, after having flown for hours on instruments, managed to climb above the clouds.

As lonely as a ship in the middle of the sea they came out "on top", barely skimming the high cirrus deck which stretched as far as the eye could see.

The sun was bright and the clouds were dazzlingly white. The tail gunner called over the interphone that they were leaving a vapor trail. A long pencil-slim cloud that streamed from the engines like white smoke.

They were a dead give away for gregarious enemy fighters. The clouds immediately below, however, were comfortingly close to duck into.

It occurred to the pilot as well and the DR navigator that at the present power setting, due to the unexplainable reduction in manifold pressure on the number four engine, a great deal more gas was being consumed than they had planned on. It was apparent that the engine was still good. Possibly something in the induction system. All instruments checked normal.

Excessive manifold pressure had not been used, and there had been no sudden reductions. This made the possibility of a faulty coupling doubtful.

Precautionary measures were taken, and the gas consumption problem was quickly worked out on cruise control charts and on an E 6-B computer. After a short controversy over the question, it was decided that a high priority alternate target, producing oil and high test gasoline, would be their target.

The bombardier quickly consulted his "flimsy" and plans were immediately altered. The radar navigator informed the dead reckoning navigator and pilots that they were but a short distance from the IP for the alternate target.

The crew members and gunners quickly donned flak suits and helmets, of meshed iron, and readied themselves for the bomb run. The pilot cleared the interphone of all superfluous conservation. Carefully the pilot wheeled the plane to the left from the IP, as directed by the radar navigator. Starting down the bomb run the bombardier called for the bomb bay doors to be opened.

The engineer quickly complied with the order. A rush of air was heard as the sliding doors were retracted into the open position. The bombardier quickly took off the heated bombsight cover and began to synchronize for rate.

"Coming up on - seventy. Coming up on - sixty," was the weird monologue from the radar man.

"Roger," replied the bombardier.

Nimble fingers, numbed with cold, made last minute corrections.

"*Mickey* to pilot - give me a couple degrees to the left. That's good ... hold it."

The crazy chant continued, "coming up on - fifty." There was a pause. The interphone rang in the high altitude. "Coming up on - forty. Pilot, give me a couple to the right - quick!"

Drift was killed. The bomb run, which was being made on PFF, was a long one and chaff was dispensed at a given signal. The tension increased as flak was reported by the pilot over the target

"Flak at twelve - intense - and accurate as hell," was his report in "almost" conversational tones. As if by magic, black curls of smoke began to appear about them. "The Jerry has got our course okay, but he hasn't quite got our altitude," the pilot said encouragingly to his crew.

"Pilot from *Mickey* - I can hold the target within my scope if you want to take evasive action."

"Roger, *Mickey*, can you hold the target in view if I skid the plane?"

"Yeah - sure. Not too much though."

Flak was beginning to burst about the plane.

"Hold tight every one, we will be through in a minute," the pilot said.

"It's coming up to us now. It's popping off our tail," the tail gunner broke in.

"Okay," was the pilot's quick reply, "I'll skid her over a little bit."

After a short dialogue between the bombardier and the radar man, the radar man said, "it's all yours."

"Steady, hold her - that's it. Bombs away," was the bombardier's triumphant cry over the interphone.

The pilot peeled off into a sharp bank to the right and out of the flak. Clear of the flak there was a quick exchange of enthusiastic chatter over the interphone.

"Hot damn, we did it! We did it!"

"I hope we blew hell out of 'em down there," came another voice.

"Okay every one - we did a nice job. Let's go home." The pilot was quick to squelch superfluous interphone chatter. Granted they had made their run, dropped their bombs electrically, and they had not been touched by the hundreds of bearable flak guns.

There was now the remaining problem of reaching their base. Hours of flying ahead. Back through the endless "white" and one engine which was pulling but a third of its power. Not a dangerous situation under normal conditions, but there was the extremely long route back - the possibility of severe storms and severe icing. The pilot noticed just before they ducked back into the clouds, on course for home, his own vapor trail leading from the IP and across the target, where the puffs of smoke from the bursts of flak still hung in the air, and then the sharp turn to the right and out of the area they had just flown through. The long white rope of the clouds cast a shadow on the flat, smooth deck of cirrus a thousand feet below. One of the most interesting of all cloud formations that airmen see - the vapor trail.

It was late afternoon and even in the dense fog they were aware that the sun had crossed the zenith and was well across the sky. It was darker in the clouds than it had been while enroute to the target.

As the pilot began a "let-down" into the lower stratus the airplane began to pitch in turbulent air. Again, they were in a violent snow storm.

As the air became more turbulent, it occurred to the pilot that there was a possibility of running into the core of an extremely dangerous cumulo-nimbus. The radar man turned his scope to the immediate course ahead.

Carefully he analyzed the weird blips of light on his oscilloscope. He searched for check points. None could be seen. Only the reflections of mountainous terrain appeared in his scope. At seventeen thousand feet the pilot noticed rime ice forming on the leading edges of the wing and tail assembly. He leveled off.

"Mustn't go any lower," the pilot confided with the co-pilot, "we might run into clear ice below."

Things were not going any too well. Check points which should have been visible by now were not. Time came for a change in heading, but a deviation from the flight plan was thought to be a wiser move. Then, as if by some telepathic warning, it occurred to the navigators that they had encountered a serious shift in the winds.

What was supposed to have been a tailwind on the reciprocal heading was not a tailwind, but a headwind of possibly a hundred knots. This changed the complexion of the situation considerably.

The remainder of the flight was now a matter of time, distance, and remaining fuel. A gas check was made.

"Well, we are not doing so hot, sir," was the rather feeble reply from the engineer.

"Well, how much?" The pilot's tone of voice obviated his concern in the matter.

There was a pause. Then in a high voice the engineer replied, "I guess about two hundred in number one…"

There was an interruption on the interphone as the *Mickey* man broke in wildly, "I know where we are. I know where we are now." The instrument navigator relieved the tension considerably with his outburst.

"Well where the hell are we?" the pilot demanded.

What the radar navigator said in reply stunned the crew. After having flown for hours they were still hundreds of miles from their home base in Italy. It was concluded after a careful observation of the gas available that it might be possible, if unnecessary corrections for course were avoided and the RPM and manifold pressure reduced to a still lower setting, to reach the base.

The radar navigator, in conjunction with the dead reckoning navigator, took frequent pinpoint fixes, thus avoiding numerous flak areas to the right and left of the course. All of the fuel had been transferred from the auxiliary tanks to the main fuel cells.

All that could be done had been done. The remaining problem was the weather. A rather serious problem confronted the pilot.

The leading edge of the airfoil and vertical and horizontal stabilizers were sugarcoated with rime ice. As it built up, the de-icer boots were inflated, and the ice cracked off. The danger of letting down any lower was hazardous because of the mountains over Yugoslavia. The aircraft was being weighted down by the ice which was collecting in front of the turrets, aerials, and windshield.

The defrosters were employed and managed to keep the windshield sufficiently warm to prevent the ice from caking over. It was growing dark, deep in the core of the mass of weather. The crew was numb with cold, and a constant check had to be made to prevent ice from forming at the connection of their oxygen masks.

The crew was tired, and the strain of flying "blind" for so many hours had begun to take effect. There were anxious questions over the interphone. The pilot intervened and asked the crew to relax. They still had engines and in spite of the gas, which he admitted to them was dangerously low, they had sufficient fuel to reach the base. Although in the minds of those who knew - there was doubt.

Their progress was slow and the air was turbulent over rough Yugoslavian terrain. The icing was persistent and became slightly more adhesive.

At last the instrument man revealed to the crew that he could plainly see, through his radar scope, the coastline ahead. There was relief among the weary airmen who had sat in cramped positions for hours on end. Soon they would be able to take off their itching oxygen masks and stretch their tired limbs.

Contact was made by the radioman with *Big Fence*. Bearings were taken and found to coincide with the course and position of the aircraft. "Air Sea Rescue" was alerted of their position, altitude and heading, and of their intention to reach their base. *Big Fence* and "Air Sea Rescue" cooperatively stood by while the airplane began its descent. From seventeen thousand feet, they quickly descended to fifteen thousand, then to thirteen.

The pilot pressed the mike button and said, "you can come off oxygen now. All stations come off oxygen. We are below thirteen thousand and we will be down in a few minutes."

Everyone promptly tore off their masks and exercised the tired muscles of their faces.

From the waist came a call over the interphone, "okay to smoke now?"

"Yeah, okay to smoke," was the reply from the flight deck.

"How soon can we clear the turrets?"

"Any time, now is safe enough. We are at the coast and I doubt if the Jerry is within hundreds of miles, and even if he were, I doubt if he could find us in this stuff"

As the gunners cleared their turrets the pilots became genuinely alarmed..

"Good Lord, look at the ice forming on the wings!" The co-pilot's tone of voice was convincing.

The pilot looked out his side window. "Break it off, for Pete's sake! Turn on the de-icer boots. We are picking up piles of the stuff. Pilot to crew," his voice was sharp and he spoke quickly, "we are in heavy weather and picking up clear ice very fast. I don't know if it can be broken off or not. Better get ready for an emergency in any event. Check the spare raft and *Gibson Girls*. Hey *Mickey*, how's our course, can you see the island?"

The island the pilot made reference to lies off the eastern coast of the Adriatic and is the only place an emergency landing can be attempted. It is a very small island and rather hard to find in among the islets if the rugged coastline. It has proven to be, during the 15th Army Air Forces activity over many countries to the north and east, a pilot's haven.

A "last chance" stop before crossing the cold Adriatic Sea.

The radar plane's tanks were leveled by the busy engineer and in spite of the steps taken, they read alarmingly low.

"Yes! I can see the island, " yelled the *Mickey* man, who sat immediately back of the pilot. After a few moments hesitation, while he peered into his scope, he exclaimed, "it's dead ahead. You will pass right over it."

"Are you sure?" inquired the pilot.

"Positive," the radar man insisted.

"Good, keep it in view. Unless we can break off the ice we may have to head for it. And besides," he yelled, "we sure as hell haven't got much gas left. We should have ample to reach the Italian coast, however; but damn it all, I can't trust these gas gauges."

"Roger," the *Mickey* man yelled.

"How's the ice coming? Can you get it off?"

"Hell no, I can't get it off," replied the co-pilot dryly. "The boots won't budge it. It's cracked but it's piling up faster than the boots can break it off. What will we do?"

The pilot parried an answer. "Beats the hell out of me, let 'er pile up I guess. We will be down low enough in a few minutes for it to melt off."

Both the pilot and the co-pilot had their fingers crossed as the airplane continued its glide toward the sea.

"When do you think we will break out of this stuff?"

"Your guess is as good as mine," was the pilot's unsatisfactory comeback.

"Above the water someplace I hope. We are 'unwinding' pretty fast - we are at eight thousand now."

"Think we ought to whack 'er back some more, maybe back to 1900 rpm."

"Oh - I don't know - I don't think so. Fifty rpm one way or the other won't make a hell of a lot of difference. Let 'er go. Roger?

Pilot to waist - sit tight every one, we are doing okay - be home…" The pilot's voice trailed off. The pilot released the mike button on the wheel. "What's wrong?"

His eyes snapped to the instrument panel. The number one fuel pressure gauge fell to zero! "Pilot to crew," his voice was hesitant, "we are running out of fuel! Stand by to bail out!"

In a split second, the co-pilot yelled for the engineer to transfer fuel. "Number one cut out!"

Near panic gripped the crew. The pilot yelled at the radar man, as the co-pilot flipped the fuel booster pumps back on. "We will do a 'one eighty'. - Head for 'Yugo' - better still - the island. Can you pick it up?"

"Yeah - hell, yes, we are only about ten mile from it now."

The airplane began to fall like a rock. Power was added in an effort to keep the airplane, so heavily loaded with ice, from stalling out and falling into a spin. The pilot subconsciously cranked in trim to counteract for the yaw created by the "windmilling" prop.

The co-pilot presses the "D" button on his VHF set and immediately began a frantic call in the open. "Mayday! Mayday! This is St. Nick V-for-Victory going down. Out of fuel - Will try to reach the coast! Will try to reach the coast!"

Number one sputtered. The fuel pressure came up - and then went down. Then number three fuel pressure gauge fell to zero and the engine cut out.

"Now, we are in for it," the co-pilot yelled. "Let's leave this crate."

"And fall into that icy sea? No thanks."

The co-pilot flipped off number one and number three fuel pumps and left two and four on.

"Pilot to crew - open the hatches and stand by. We are running out of fuel. If we break out of the clouds near the island we will bail out over it. We have two engines."

"We are down to five thousand, let's get the hell out of here," was the co-pilot's desperate plea.

"Hold on - we are breaking out of this stuff. There is the island. See! Right below us. See it? There's the island! Hey, *Mickey* man, you were right - there it is!" the pilot cried exultantly.

The pilot pressed his mike button with his thumb encased in a heavy leather glove. "I can see the island, lads. There is a landing strip on the island and I'll try to make it."

The icy sea below was churning and white caps made a froth on the surface of the water. To attempt survival in that angry sea would be a horrible ordeal for anyone.

"Clear the nose quickly. Clear the nose," came the pilot's sharp command.

The ice began to melt from the antennae and smashed against the windshield. The ice on the props hit the side of the fuselage and sounded like spent flak fragments.

The pilot and co-pilot were thinking fast now. They had a plan. Fly straight out and turn around. Then, head back for the southern side of the island. A fifty-to-one shot of finding a narrow landing strip which they had never seen. They still had altitude and there was time to make an approach to the landing strip.

The radio operator continued to tap out "Save Our Souls" until the pilot told him to get ready for a rough landing. He then screwed the key down and took his position.

"I see the strip. It's over to your right. See it ?!" the co-pilot yelled excitedly. "It's right over that ridge."

The pilot searched the rugged bush-covered island for the "strip" the co-pilot claimed to see. Yes, there it was. He could see it now. A landing strip - indeed! The wet metal runway located like a silver ribbon lying in the valley between two mountain ridges. The "pilots' last chance" stop. There it was before them glistening in the waning light.

The pilot approaching the island began to make corrections to line up with the runway. The power on the two remaining engines was increased and a quick routine check was made for a landing.

"What's that on runway? It's another airplane. It's cracked up on the runway!" The pilots were frozen with the stark realization that they could not land on the "strip".

"Insult was added to injury" when number four engine cut out without even so much as a sputter. One engine hung in the balance between eleven men and death, which seemed imminent. The horror flashed across the pilot's mind. Rather a rough grave for eleven airmen - on the side of a sea-eaten cliff on the island.

The air speed indicator fell in air speed. Almost mechanically, the pilot nosed the big "bird" down. He headed it for the lowest part of the island. A "gun-sight" which was formed at the vertex of the two ridges; barely wide enough to fly through.

In the sequence of events that followed, which took place in a matter of seconds, little was said. The time for tricks was over. There was nothing left to do but crash.

"Prepare for a crash landing," was the last call made over the interphone.

The heavy bomber seemed doomed to crash on the crag. So close and yet so far from a runway that they couldn't get on, even if they had had the power to reach it. The angle of glide was extremely steep. They were completely powerless to alter their situation. The airplane glided with the weak assistance of one remaining engine, which screamed - alone.

As they slipped down, the few remaining seconds left little time for maneuvering - only gestures to survive. As they passed over the crag the waves were clearly visible, out of the corner of the pilot's eye - dashing against the pinnacle of rock below.

The pilot yelled, "watch the wings. Will they clear the walls of that canyon?"

"Yes - yes, we're clear, " the co-pilot replied with a sob in his voice.

Like an enormous gull the blue-grey "bird" glided between the walls of the canyon, and there below, nestled behind the ridge, but a short distance from the runway, was a small vineyard. Neat rows of vines suddenly loomed up.

There wasn't time to think as the pilot yelled, "gear down." The action of the pilot and the co-pilot was almost spontaneous as they nosed the helpless bomber down into the vineyard.

"Watch out for the fence." There was a quick tug on the elevators as the bomber, with its gear locked down, "high jumped" the fence. Just above the ground the ship rounded-out. Two wheels touched the ground. The co-pilot cut the main line and battery as the pilot applied brakes. Immediately ahead, a stone revetment came rushing up.

The plane's terrific weight settled in the soft, spongy earth. The nose gear snapped as if it had never been there. The big bomber's stubby nose shoveled into the rain soaked soil. The rate of deceleration was extremely rapid - but gentle.

When the bomber finally came to rest, a blade of the number one propeller was bent on the stone revetment. The rudder pedals were resting in the mud. The cockpit was filled with mud and shredded grape

vines, which had been scooped in through the completely demolished nose compartment.

The crew left the plane like mad men escaping from an asylum. They ran in all directions. When the last propeller finally stopped turning, the scattered crew was stunned by the sudden silence on the rain drenched island. A bark of a dog and the sound of a gentle rain was all that was heard. The crew members felt limp. Almost too weak to stand.

Some laughed a little and called to one another as they collected near the plane. "Guess we're pretty lucky." Some had tears in their eyes and broad grins on their haggard faces as they clasped hands.

Others said nothing. They just sat quietly on the wet ground. Shocked, tired, hungry and quietly thanking God that they were alive.



Dear Editor,

I seek information on James A. Fedewa of 455thBG, 743rd Squadron.

My father was a B-17 Command Pilot with the 100th BG (8th AF) out of England, and a POW at Stalag Luft I. I serve on Board of 100th BG Foundation, and often encounter people looking for information on family members.

I have enough contacts within 8th AF and POW networks that I can help locate crew information, but 15th AF is less familiar to me. I got your contact information off the 455thBG website, and hope that you can help.

Fred Fedewa, the son of James A Fedewa, served in the USAF, graduated from USAF Academy, but never got his father to open up about HIS experiences in the 455th BG. Belatedly (the father is deceased), the son is trying to piece together his father's USAAF service.

Your website lists James, but I did not see a listing to determine what crew he flew on, what position he held in the crew or what missions he flew. His rank was S/Sgt, Army serial# 15328018, flew 35 missions - the last one on April 6, 1945, according to an official record.

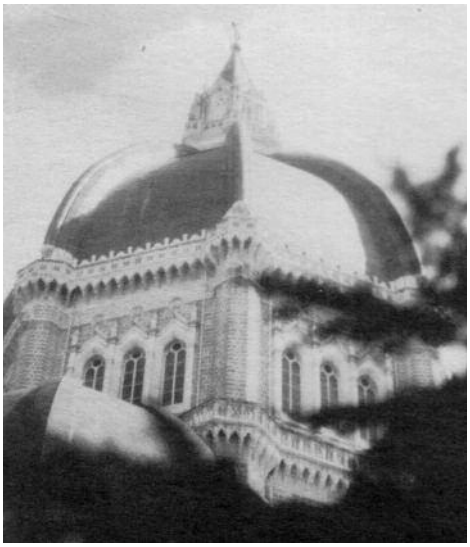
Any specific information you could provide would be appreciated. And if there are any surviving crew members, that would be best of all.

Thank you.

Nancy Putnam
100th Bomb Group Foundation
nputnam51@gmail.com

"It is true we have won all our wars, but we have paid for them. We don't want victories anymore."

Golda Meir
Former Prime Minister, Israel



FINAL FLIGHTS

Thomas J. Macaulay (743)
died March 22, 2012.

During WWII, he flew 35 missions with the 743rd Bomb Squadron and attained the rank of Captain. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with 3 clusters.

Don Coin Walrod (740)
June 6, 1919 - March 31, 2008

Arthur Mattson (743)
was called to his heavenly home on September 29, 2012. Art was an Army Air Corps veteran of WW II, and a member of the VFW.

Dear Editor,

I'm the Historian for the 485th BG Association (and the son of a deceased tail gunner from that group).

I've been trying to track down some information for years, and have been unsuccessful. I'll explain:

On December 29, 1944, one 455th BG B-24 landed at Ramitelli, Italy (home of the segregated 332nd FG, the *Red Tails*) in bad weather, returning from a mission. Seventeen B-24's were also there from the 485th for the same reason. The planes and men stayed several days until the weather improved. From all accounts, the men got along extremely well.

I told the story in one of my books (*I'm Off to War, Mother, But I'll Be Back*), and also made a documentary about it (*New Year's at Ramitelli)*.

I've interviewed a bunch of the 485th guys who were there, and I also interviewed several of the *Red Tails* (for Lucasfilm) concerning the story.

One book published many years ago told a different story, of a bunch of racist things that occurred. None of the 485th guys or *Red Tails* who were there had any knowledge of any of this. I don't doubt that this sort of thing happened, but I believe the incidents happened at other times. I know at least one of the incidents described happened on 1/20/45.

Memories fade and I think several incidents that occurred over several months were "blamed" on this visit. The problem with this is that it puts the 17 crews from the 485th and the one 455th crew in a bad light. If it happened then, so be it. We need to tell history accurately. If it didn't happen then, it's not fair to the guys who were there.

Supposedly there was a gunner, a married sergeant, by the name of Schwartz, who was writing a bunch of racist comments to his wife while he was at Ramitelli. A *Red Tail* pilot censored the letter and confronted Schwartz. My records indicate this man wasn't in the 485th. I also don't believe he was in the 455th.

I've been unable to locate any information identifying the 455th crew who landed there on 12/29/44. Do you have a way of identifying this crew?

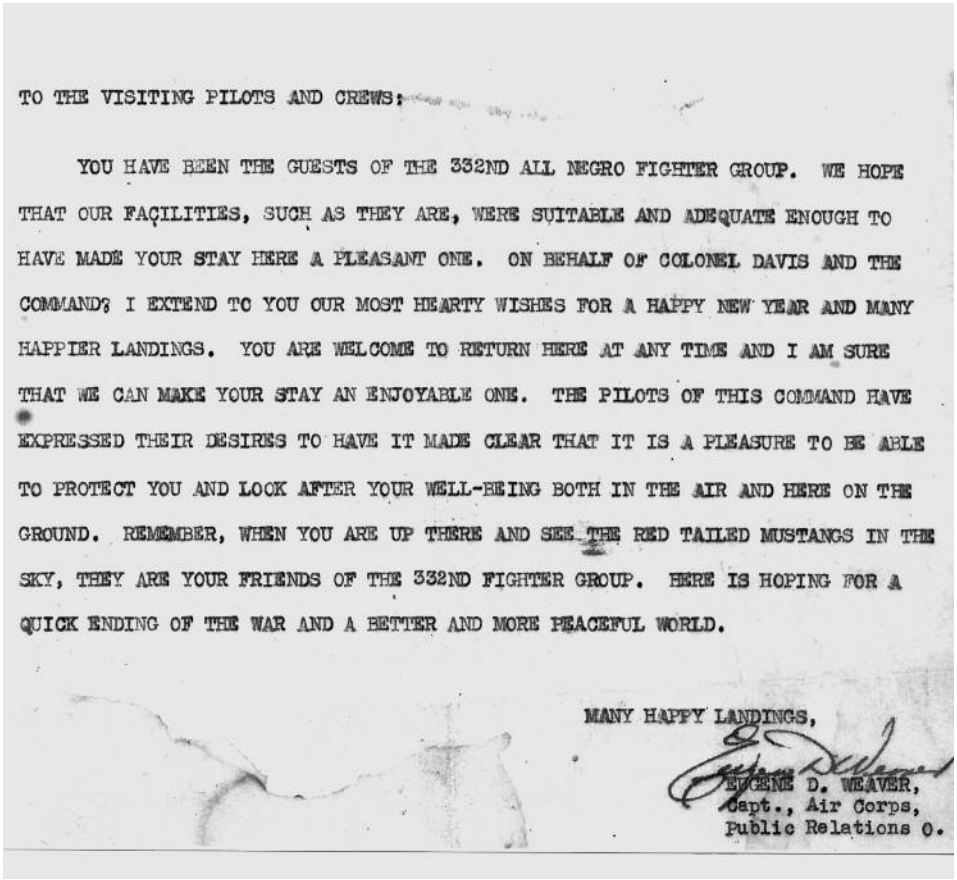
I'm not trying to make anyone look bad on this, and certainly wouldn't want to create any embarrassment for any group.

I do get concerned about some of the more recent, inaccurate stories that we hear. A recent book about the *Red Tails* contained this same, inaccurate information.

Lastly, I'm almost certain that the *Red Tails* left a letter in the cockpit of the 455th plane that was there. A copy of the letter that was left in the 455th plane is below. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jerry Whiting
eajwwhiting@aol.com



TO THE VISITING PILOTS AND CREWS:

YOU HAVE BEEN THE GUESTS OF THE 332ND ALL NEGRO FIGHTER GROUP. WE HOPE THAT OUR FACILITIES, SUCH AS THEY ARE, WERE SUITABLE AND ADEQUATE ENOUGH TO HAVE MADE YOUR STAY HERE A PLEASANT ONE. ON BEHALF OF COLONEL DAVIS AND THE COMMAND; I EXTEND TO YOU OUR MOST HEARTY WISHES FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR AND MANY HAPPIER LANDINGS. YOU ARE WELCOME TO RETURN HERE AT ANY TIME AND I AM SURE THAT WE CAN MAKE YOUR STAY AN ENJOYABLE ONE. THE PILOTS OF THIS COMMAND HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR DESIRES TO HAVE IT MADE CLEAR THAT IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE ABLE TO PROTECT YOU AND LOOK AFTER YOUR WELL-BEING BOTH IN THE AIR AND HERE ON THE GROUND. REMEMBER, WHEN YOU ARE UP THERE AND SEE THE RED TAILED MUSTANGS IN THE SKY, THEY ARE YOUR FRIENDS OF THE 332ND FIGHTER GROUP. HERE IS HOPING FOR A QUICK ENDING OF THE WAR AND A BETTER AND MORE PEACEFUL WORLD.

MANY HAPPY LANDINGS,

EUGENE D. WEAVER,
Capt., Air Corps,
Public Relations O.

Dear Editor,

I have a follow-on to a question that was asked in the Spring, 2013 newsletter.

Here's the background: Patty, and her brother Dave, were able to recognize their dad (Edward L. Wood) in one of my AFHRA photos. The aircraft is *Irish Lassie* (B-24J 44-40517).

I've never found a view with the nose art, but the name was confirmed from a couple of good sources. The aircraft flew with both the 741st BS and 743rd BS.

The photo belowshows the Herbert Cahill crew (743). Sgt. Wood is fifth from the left.

The caption for the photo only identifies it as Lt. Herbert F. Cahill's crew, with none of the crew individually identified.

According to the group microfilm, the Herbert Cahill crew arrived at the 743rd BS on 27 January, 1945. Dave and Patty have their dad's notes, which mention Herbert Cahill and the 743rd BS, so I think we have a good match.

I don't have anything else on Sgt. Wood, and he's not in my group roster. Do any readers of the *Cerignola Connection* have anything else on him?

Best Regards,
Dave Ungemach
davetw1@cox.net



Information regarding the request for information about Edward L. Wood and crew (<<<<<<<<< left column):

Corporal Edward L Wood, s/n 35148996, was identified in a set of Air Medal orders issued 19 April, 1945. His hometown was listed as Bloomington, Indiana, and his missions were from 19 March through 7 April, 1945.

Two other possible members of his crew were also listed in those orders:

Corporal Samuel B Siler, Jr (of Clearwater, Florida) and Corporal Andrew H Norford (of Washington, DC).

At this point that's all I have on this airman.

Regards,
John Rohrer
Historian, 455th BG Assoc.
jrohrer@spartacpa.com

FINAL FLIGHT

Capt. Pedro E. Guerrero (GP)

died in September, 2012. Capt. Guerrero was the exclusive photographer for Frank Lloyd Wright, and had been since before the war began! Wright tried to convince him to refuse to go to WWII and get locked up instead !

Google "Pedro Guerrero" and you'll get all kind of interesting articles about him and links to books he wrote.

During his time with the 455th BG in Italy, he developed bombing run photos.

Go to the following link:
www.guerreromovie.com

It links to a short video that connects Capt. Guerrero to Cerignola.

Dear Editor,

I want to thank you for including my information about my wife's uncle, Sgt. Charles Beverly Bingham (page 5) and my contact with David Bridgman, the brother of Harold T. Bridgman, Jr (pages 11, 12, and 13) in your Fall, 2014 edition of the *Cerignola Connection* newsletter.

Since my wife's uncle, Charles B. Bingham, was included in a photo with his fellow crewmen in an earlier newsletter photo with their aircraft, *Glammer Gal*, and having that connection, I was fascinated by another article in the same Fall 2014 newsletter (P. 10) by Larry O'Neill, regarding the passing of his father, Thomas D. O'Neill.

Apparently from the photos included with the article, Thomas was also a crewman of the *Glammer Gal* at one time. I sent Larry an email about the connection to see if he will respond.

Your newsletter has been an amazing tool for me in my research.

Best Regards,
Donald Stafford
dstafford2@comcast.net

FINAL FLIGHT

Paul F. Moritz, Sr. (742)
1922 - 2010

He enlisted in 1941, and was part of the 455th Bomb Group in Italy. His B-24 was shot down. He was interned in Switzerland, escaped, and returned to his unit.

FINAL FLIGHT

Arthur Noble West (742)
age 93, passed away peacefully of natural causes on January 11, 2015.

He served in the Army Air Corps, 15th Air Force, 455th Bomb Group, 742nd Squadron as a bomber pilot, flying 16 combat missions over Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, and France, including the last heavy bombardment mission over Europe.

He returned home after the war, and served in the Air Force Reserve. He received an honorable discharge from the service, as Captain. For the next few years he worked instructing pilots in Kinston, North Carolina, and then transferred to Georgia where he taught jet pilots. During his career, Arthur trained over 200 pilots.

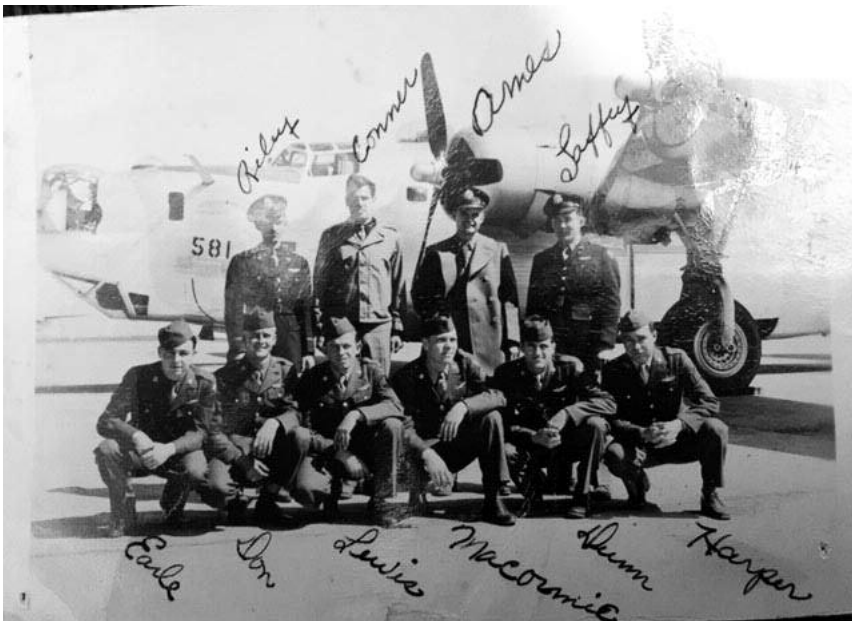
Can You Help ?

Dear Editor,

I was attempting to find information about my father-in-law, Charles Donaldson (Don) Martin who served in the 740th Bombardment Squadron, 455th Bombardment Group, as a gunner on the B-24.

I came across your website (***www.awardphp.com***), and the newsletters you produce. I'm reading those with great interest.

He talked many times about his service, and the time he was stationed at Cerignola. He kept in touch with his pilot, Riley and another crew



member, Laffey, but lost contact in the years before his passing.

I'm not sure which names are first or last names for some crewmembers. I believe Riley's last name was Riley. Not sure what his first name was.

I am attaching a picture of his crew (see above). I'm not sure when or where the picture was taken.

Don passed away, at the age of 87, on August 31st of 2011. He left a daughter (my wife) Teresa, and four sons, Ron Martin, Tommy Martin, Randy Martin and Brian Martin. He was preceded in death by his wife Elsie. His was a life well lived.

I appreciate the tremendous effort you put into preserving the memory of that generation. I understand that your dad served on a B-24, also.

My dad was a gunner on a B-24, stationed in Texas, as an instructor and because of a health problem, he was never in combat.

My one regret is that we never got Don to a Wings of Freedom show to see and fly on their B-24. I had the pleasure of climbing through a B-24J at the Pima Museum in Tucson.

I hope to find more as I read your past newsletters.

Thanks for all you do,
Dannie Cutts (researcher)
Please respond to:
Randy Martin (son, Don Martin)
rmartin@sunburstfinancial.com

FINAL FLIGHT

John E. Merfeld (741)
1923 - 2014

His family moved to San Diego shortly before WWII, where he entered the US Army Air Corps and served on a B-24 *Liberator* Bomber.

Flying missions over western, central and eastern Europe, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and three Air Medals.

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A Message from the 455th Bomb Group Association's Executive Director, Greg Riggs

By the time you've gotten to this page, you probably know the next joint bomb group reunion will be September 24-27, 2015 at Kansas City. Reports from the Tempe, AZ reunion in 2013 were all positive. The reunion last year in Oklahoma City was also very enjoyable and actually more informative for some of us than previous reunions have been.

For the second, third, and fourth generations attending, we are learning more about the full scope of the strategic bombing effort, including what went on in the background to keep the planes flying. If at all possible, consider joining us.

We've had an interesting development during these last six months. We've actually had WWII veterans joining the association. It's been refreshing to have people contact us and express an interest in joining with us. All of that has occurred because of the fine work Craig Ward does with this newsletter!

People continue being generous in supporting the *Cerignola Connection*. We currently have sufficient funds for three more issues after this one. Had it not been for member support, the previous edition would have been the final one. We all thank those donors listed elsewhere in the newsletter!

There is not much other news. I've been reading several books lately about various B-24 crews operating both out of England and out of Italy. What has continued to impress me is how different the experiences were depending on timing and location: the strength of the Luftwaffe, the lethal concentration of AA defenses, and the country out of which bomb groups operated.

The one thing common to all those scenarios was that you guys were being shot at! Thank you, again, for the freedoms you preserved for subsequent generations.

I wish you a healthy summer, and I hope you can be part of the reunion in Kansas City.

