# CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

Spring, 2016 Editor: Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039
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## Message from the President

By
Norman Crum

I'm happy once again to offer a few words of introduction to this edition of the Cerignola Connection.

In prior introductions, I remembered the aircraft and the men who flew and maintained them. I've also referred to the Italian countryside that hosted the airfields and facilities. In the last edition, I reflected upon the attempts to destroy the enemy's transportation, petroleum and manufacturing assets ... the reason why we and the British spent so much blood and treasure on strategic air forces.

Today, we'll reflect upon the men's lives after the war.

By the time you read this, the 71st anniversary of VE Day will have passed. It's hard to imagine the emotions that must have swept through the souls of the men of the 455th on that day. Relief. Astonishment. Sadness. Anger. And maybe a little fear as to what lay ahead for them.

The last major bombing mission of the 15th Air Force was conducted on April 26, 1945, with the loss of one bomber and crew. Once the 455th packed up, my understanding is that the Wing's bomber crews flew their planes back to the U.S., while ground crews and fighter pilots went by sea.

I don't know how many Italian war brides there might have been. There were approximately 45,000 British women who followed their 8th Air Force husbands back to the U.S., along with hundreds of babies and toddlers.

It must have been hard to adjust to civilian life. I read of a young attorney returning from Air Force duty in Europe who wrote, "Back home in Brooklyn, working for my old Manhattan law firm, I found myself in an unsettled state. Throughout my war service, I had been tightly disciplined. I put a brake on my

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emotions and probably held too much inside me. Now I began to unravel. I couldn't concentrate. I couldn't focus on my work. We were working on some important law cases, but the work seemed humdrum compared to what I had just been through."

There must have been hundreds of thousands of troubled young men who felt the same way.

But, there were happy times, too. After flying 50 missions over Northern Italy, Southern Germany, Austria and the Balkans, my own dad spent the last year of the war as an instructor/trainer in Tennessee. He was released from active service and returned home to Utah in time for Thanksgiving, 1945.

On one of his first days home, he borrowed my grandparents' car, and drove to a party at a friend's house near the BYU campus in Provo. On his way, he saw a pretty coed carrying her books and walking home from class. He pulled over, rolled down the window, and asked if she'd like a ride. Since it was cold and dark, she readily accepted.

It was a great match.

They were soon engaged, and got married in her parents' Evanston, Wyoming, home in June, 1946. George and Sheila Crum celebrated their 59th anniversary, just before my dad passed away in 2005.

My sister and I will be forever grateful for them, and to The Greatest Generation they were a part of. How many times has this story been repeated in some variation or another?

In this edition of the Cerignola Connection, we pause once again to remember and honor the brave young men who flew, fought, and maintained the bombers of the 455th Bomb Group.

We thank them for their faithful service and are grateful for the freedoms they defended.

## Final Flight

Ned H. Dawkins (741) died 9 Jun 2014, at age 89, at his home in Rockingham, NC.

Mr. Dawkins proudly served in the United States Army Air Force in World War II.

## Bomber Command

Lie in the dark and listen
It's clear tonight and they're flying high
Hundreds of them - a thousand perhaps
Riding the icy moonlit sky
Men, machinery, bombs, maps,
coffee, sandwiches, and fleece-lined boots,
bones, and muscles, and minds and hearts.
English saplings with English roots
deep in the earth which they have left behind.
Lie in the dark and let them go
Lie in the dark and listen
they're going over in waves and waves
High above villages, hills, and streams,
Country churches, and little graves
and little citizens worried dreams
Very soon they'll have reached the sea
and far below them will lie the bays
and cliffs and sands, where they used to be
taken for summer holidays.
Lie in the dark and let them go
Theirs is a world we'll never know
Lie in the dark and listen
City magnates and steel contractors
Factory workers and politicians
Soft hysterical little actors
Ballet dances, reserved musicians
Safe in warm civilian beds
Count your profits, and count your sheep
Life is passing above your heads
Just turn over and try to sleep
Lie in the dark and let them go
Theirs is a debt you'll ever owe
Lie in the dark and listen.

Poem courtesy of Lorraine Shostack Moskewicz,
daughter of Walter Shostack (aka Vladimir Shostak)

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## Final Flight

### Gerald W. Adams

died 8 Oct 2013 at age 90.

He served in the US Army Air Force from April, 1943, through October, 1945. He flew 50 missions as a ball turret gunner on a B-24 bomber in the 455th Bomb Group.

He received the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Unit Citation Badge with oak leaf cluster, and the European Theater ribbon with five battle stars.

He also received the Victory Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the American Theater ribbon, plus a marksman's badge for the rifle and the sharpshooters badge for the pistol.



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

### Taxi ($25-$99)

Loraine McGinnis, in memory of Joseph McGinnis
Gerald W. Adams
John Kay McBain
Victor E. Murray
Lloyd C. Kestner
W. Scott Lawing in memory of MSgt (Ret) Robert L. Denton (743)
Joseph A. Abbondondelo
William E. Fredrickson in memory of Elwood (Freddie) Fredrickson
John Caufield
Jarred Fishman

### Takeoff ($100-$199)

L. Harvey Hewitt
Charles V. Vandoren
Francis G. Hosimer
Charles H. Rosenberg
Elmo J. Henske
Anonymous
Richard C. Skagenberg
Helen A. Worster, in memory of Lt. Col John R. Worster
Dorothy Wood Cloud, in memory of T/Sgt Robert D. Cloud
Henry C. Paris
Wesley Fellowship Class in memory of MSgt (Ret) Robert L. Denton (743)
John Edwards

### Bombs away ($200-$499)

Francis G. Hosimer
Karen R. Schoene, in honor of Lt Col Horst R. Schoene
Virginia Corsello, in memory of 1 Lt Anthony (Tony) Corsello
Catherine Spewock, in honor of S/Sgt Andrew Spewock
Robert W. Rohler, in honor of 1Lt Charles William (Bill) Rohler
Thomas E. Boyd
L. Harvey Hewitt

### 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
L. Harvey Hewit

## Final Flights

Rayburn L. Anderson (743) passed away on 23 May 2007.
Raymond C. Butler (740) died 21 Nov 1998.
Leonard M. Beckmann (742) took his final flight on 17 Feb 2002.
Lincoln H. Townsend (740) died 4 Jul 2009.

## Can You Help ?

Dear Editor,

My father, Lewis Riley (740), flew 35 missions as a bombardier in the 455th. He passed away in Jan., 2008.

The Cerignola Connection newsletter still comes to his former residence (where I now reside), because nobody informed you of his passing. I really enjoy reading the newsletter, and I will continue to read the online .pdf versions. I apologize for taking so long to inform you.

Someone on my Dad's plane, probably the pilot (Dick Holrock), kept a log of all the missions on which he flew. My Dad had copies of them.

I noticed the name of the plane for the first mission is Bucket of Bolts, which is pictured on your website (www.awardphp.com).

Sincerely,

Rob Riley
rriley6818@gmail.com

## Can You Help? Response

Hi, Rob,

Thanks for writing.

My dad, Lt. J. T. Ward (740) flew on, among others, the

Bucket O' Bolts

from December 1943, to August 1944, at which time he got to come home.

Interestingly, there was another B24 in the 455th BG with a similar name ...

Bucket OF Bolts.

Do you know which one your dad flew on?

Sincerely,

Craig Ward
Editor, Cerignola Connection

## Final Flight

Robert E. Johnson (742) passed away May 30, 2010.

Dear Editor,

I was looking over the roll call list in the 455th Bomb Group's history book (455th Bomb Group (H), Flight of the Vulgar Vultures, 1043-1945), and I do not see my father-in-law's name.

His name is Richard M. Lipton and was a bombardier on a B-24. He was shot down and placed in a POW camp in Germany.

He is still alive and very alert.

Thank you,

Debbie Lipton

Dear Editor Response

Hi, Debbie. Thanks for writing.

Over the years, I have heard from several families whose WWII veterans of the 455th BG are not listed in the roll call list.

This 455th BG history book (www.awardphp.com) was written 20 years ago, and includes lots of omissions of persons who deserved to be recognized, such as Lt. Lipton.

With the millions of details that the authors and editors of the book had to sift through, it's not surprising that some details were missed, or otherwise overlooked.

This history book, even with the omissions, is still one of the most detailed, comprehensive histories of any group of military aviators available anywhere. The authors were all veterans of the 455th Bomb Group, and I believe they did a fantastic job of detailing the legacy of the men who flew on the bombers, and the ones who kept them flying.

What I would recommend is that you interview Lt. Lipton about his service, captivity, and ultimate return to the USA. Take notes, send them to me, and I would be extremely pleased to include parts of his story in a future edition of the Cerignola Connection. Crew and aircraft pictures included would be even better.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Thanks.

Craig Ward
Editor, Cerignola Connection

Dear Editor,

My father, Ken Hosterman (740), was a member of the 455th Bomb Group. He was a navigator. I don't know any of the airmen he flew with.

My father is now deceased, but I would love to connect with anyone who might have flown with him.

My Dad was in Cerignola from October, 1944 to June, 1945, and flew 35 missions.

I remember Dad saying he was with the Vulgar Vultures. One of his pilots was Dick Hollrock. He called him Rock.

Other than that I don't know much more. Can you help me connect with anyone?

Thank you.

Karen Hosterman Sabel
khostsabel@gmail.com

## Can You Help?

Subject: 741st Squadron
April, 1944 incident inquiry

Dear Editor,

I am from Dana, IL, a farming community of 200 people. We have a Veterans Memorial in town.

I am preparing a summary of the Nettuno cemetery visit for the small café / gathering space in my hometown, and would like to have as much accurate information as possible versus speculation on his death.

John W. Rickey was a TSgt with 741st. His date of death is listed as April 6, 1944. The mission log indicates a navigator was severely injured on an April 3 (mission 19), and I am presuming he died as a result of his injuries.

I have located the tombstone of John W. Rickey in Nettuno, Italy on a visit in October, 2015. Rickey's service number is 16016969.

I have followed up with web searches for the possible event in which TSgt Rickey lost his life. I understand there were missions on April 3, 1944, with injuries to crew members; a mission on April 4 with all planes returning safely, and no mention of crew injuries, after an attack on a ball-bearing factory. I did not find any mention of a mission on April 6 that may have included a loss of a plane.

Questions:

1) Did this squadron complete training at Holloman AFB, New Mexico? As an aside, I worked at White Sands National Monument after being stationed at Holloman in 1973. While perusing the backcountry, I noted spent rounds of large caliber shells. I recall someone telling me the crews would shoot at antelope on the ground occasionally. Any rumors to that effect from your association with the group?

2) Do you have an image of tail markings or squadron patches for the 741st you could share?

3) Would you happen to have any crew photographs that have members identified?

4) Are any of the bomb group pins available (noted in the 2014 newsletter)?

I am hoping one of your readers may be able to shed additional information on his passing.

Thank you for your time and any assistance you could provide.

Sincerely,
Steve Cinnamon
Cell: 402-669-3441
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"The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for the urge to rule it."

Please Vote this November.

An editorial comment from your editor.

## 455th Bombardment Group

The group was activated July 1943, with four essentially stand-alone bomb squadrons: 740th, 741st, 742nd, and 743rd.

After a somewhat nomadic training regimen with dilapidated equipment, the pieces of the group came together at Langley, VA in October, 1943. They were issued G and H models of the Consolidated B-24 Liberator.

They departed Langley in December, 1943, and flew to Tunisia by way of Brazil, arriving in January, 1944. They remained in Tunisia until completion of their airfield at San Giovanni, Italy, about five miles west of Cerignola and 20 miles southwest of Foggia.

The group moved to San Giovanni in February, 1944, and flew its first combat mission (Anzio) on 16 February 1943 as part of the 304th Bomb Wing, Fifteenth Air Force.

The group flew its last mission (Linz, Austria) 15 months later on 25 April, 1945. The mission scheduled for the following day was cancelled, and the group began preparations to return home. Probably no one was sorry.

The 455th BG flew 252 combat missions over France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Austria, and the Balkans. They dropped 13, 249 tons of munitions. The group lost 118 aircraft, 31 directly to fighters, 36 directly to flak, and 51 from all other causes combined.

## 455th BG E-mail Roster

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### THE PRICE OF VICTORY
(cost of aircraft, WWII dollars)

| | |
|---|---|
| B-17 | $204,370. |
| P-40 | $44,892. |
| B-24 | $215,516. |
| P-47 | $85,578. |
| B-25 | $142,194. |
| P-51 | $51,572. |
| B-26 | $192,426. |
| C-47 | $88,574. |
| B-29 | $605,360. |
| P-38 | $97,147. |

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## Final Flight

Harry Paul Lundt (742) who went by Paul, passed away on July 21, 2015. He was 91 years old, and was able to live at home until the last few months of his life.

He was very proud of his service in WW II, and his membership in the 455th BG.

He was married to my mother, Margaret Lundt, from 1950 until her death in 2009. He was a terrific father to me and my brother Niles, and grandfather to Honor and Brady Lundt.

I have always enjoyed reading the newsletter after he read it.

Sincerely,
Sheila Lundt
Sheilaklundt@gmail.com

Dear Editor,

While searching for information on my husband's first cousin (Ralph Owens, 742), we found your website (www.awardphp.com) and email address (aphp@tx.rr.com).

We would be interested in any history, info, details, or photos that might exist within the archives of the 455th Bomb Group regarding Ralph Owens.

Any information you could share would be most appreciated and treasured.

Many Thanks!!
Lita and Jack Owens
Tucson AZ
520-575-8192 - home
520-471-9798 - cell

Dear Editor,

Ref: information on a B24J S.N. 44401055

I hope that you can help or direct me to someone who can. I am looking to find information on my Uncle Edward Silverman who was a gunner on The Miss Marjorie. His plane was shot down November 22, 1944 and he was either killed by enemy fire, or too wounded to bail out. Most of this information is from MACR 9947.

I have been looking for pictures of his crew and plane for many years and recently found this picture (at right>>>). He is in the photo to the right, standing, second from the right.

I am not sure if this is the crew of his plane, or even when this was taken. But if there is some way to find out, I would be grateful for any help or guidance.

Regards,
Joel Silverman
Joel@silverman.org



## Final Flight

Dear Editor,

I wanted to let you know of the passing away of William Doyle (742) on August 9, 2015, in Jupiter, FL.

He was a committed member of your group and kept every copy of the Cerignola Connection.

Thank you for all your group does and will continue to do.

Sincerely,
Cheryl Doyle
Daughter-in-law

## An Airman's Hymn

When the last long flight is over
And the happy landings past

And my altimeter tells me
That the crackup's come at last.

I'll point her nose for the ceiling
And I'll give my crate the gun

I'll open her up and let her zoom
For the airport of the sun.

Then the great God of flying men
Will look at me sort o'slow

As I stow my plane in the hangar
On the field where flyers go.

Then I'll look upon his face
The Almighty Flying Boss

Whose wingspread fills the horizon
From Orion to the Cross.

Author Unknown

## Final Flight
## John F. Davis (741)

passed away February 1, 2016. He was born in Des Moines, Iowa, on December 15, 1918.

Mr. Davis was a long-time director for the 455th BG Association, and was the legal registered agent for the Association for many years.

He graduated from Roosevelt High School, the University of Iowa (BA 1942) and Harvard Law School (JD, 1948). He practiced law in Des Moines for about 40 years. He served one term as Justice of the Peace for Bloomfield Township, and as Mayor of Fort Des Moines (when the Fort was primarily used for veterans housing). He served on the Des Moines Board of Adjustment.

John was a retired Air Force Colonel. He spent over three years on active duty, initially in various locations around the US, then 21 months with the 455th Bomb Group at Cerignola, Italy.

He was in the Air Force reserve for the balance of his 30 years in the Air Force, for many of those years as the commander of his unit. He participated in a World War II veterans Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. in 2010.

John was an exceptional athlete. He was a high school wrestler and college boxer. He competed in Nastar downhill snow skiing for over 40 years, through age 92, winning over 300 gold and platinum medals. He was ranked #1, #2, or #3, a number of times, nationally, in his age group in Nastar rankings.

He windsurfed at his lake house at Clear Lake until he was age 94, which largely replaced his waterskiing. He was an exceptional golfer, croquet player, and ping pong player. He holds two records in the Iowa Senior Olympics.

John regularly, and mostly daily, played the piano from about junior high school until his death, playing at home, at Des Moines senior centers, and on the grand piano in the Deerfield lobby.

His wife Jane Hayes Davis, survives him.

## Final Flight
## Al Asch (740)

took his final flight on 8 Dec 2013.

He was pivotal in the writing and publishing of the Vulgar Vultures history book (455th Bomb Group H, Flight of the Vulgar Vultures, 1943-1945, read it online at www.awardphp.com). Colonel Alfred Asch, retired USAF, of Brentwood died at age 93.

Col. Asch was preceded in death his by wife, Naomi Idella Asch. He is survived by his sons, David (Marcia) Asch and Peter (Joani) Asch; half-brother, Dan Asch; sister, Leona Caldecourt; grandchildren, Graeme (Corrie) Asch, Darryl (Annie) McCreary, Jennifer (Eric) Johnson and Corporal Veronica Asch USMC; great grandchildren, Kaelan, Aryn and Raley Asch, Aidan, Liam and Finn McCreary, Garrett and Bryce Johnson.

## Final Flight
## Frank David Burge (742)

Frank David Burge, 90, died peacefully at his home on November 21, 2015.

He graduated from Old Town High School and attended North Carolina State University.

As a member of our Greatest Generation, Frank proudly served his country in the European Theater as a member of the Army Air Corp where he was a tail gunner in a B-24 Bomber.

He was discharged as Staff Sergeant. Upon his return to Winston Salem, he married Eleanor Shouse Burge on July 24, 1948.

Frank owned and operated Burge Transfer & Storage for many years and later owned and operated Crown Cordage until his retirement.

## Final Flight
## Tilden Fleming (742)

died 15 Apr 2014.

Tilden Fleming, age 89, passed away peacefully at his home in Kingsport on Tuesday morning, April 15, 2014.

He served in the 455th Bombardment Group of the 15th U.S. Army Air Force in Cerignola, Italy during World War II.

He was later deployed by the U.S. Navy to serve in the Korean War.

## Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I'm trying to determine the name of my father's B-24. He was in the 740th Bomb Squadron. The pilot's name was Bob Lebsock (Ship 167).

You have a photo of the nose art on his plane on page 97 of the 455th BG History Book — the woman dropping bombs as little devils poke her with their pitchforks (see picture below)!

I hope that perhaps someone there has that original photo. I know John Pierce, also on the crew, was the one who painted the nose art.

How would you recommend me tracking down any descendants of the survivors of that crew?

Another question: Do you know of a resource that lists which planes/ships went on which missions? I have a list of the missions, and how many planes went and how many returned, but not which ships or crews went. That information would be extremely helpful as I write my book on my dad's war history.

### Crew

Officers:
2 Lt. Al Griffin, Pilot, Alabama
2 Lt. Robert A Lebsock, Co-Pilot, Greeley, Colorado
2 Lt. Kyle W. Gilliam, Navigator, Tennessee
2 Lt. Odis Stewardson, Bombardier, Illinois

Enlisted men:
S/Sgt. James G Williams, Tail Gunner, Georgia
Sgt. John F. Pierce, Nose Gunner, Long Island, New York
S/Sgt. James D. Carney, Right Waist Gunner, South Dakota
S/Sgt. Billy G. Manning, Left Waist Gunner, Memphis, Tennessee
S/Sgt. John H. Loutham, Engineer and Ball Gunner, Texas
S/Sgt. O.D. Childers, R Radio Operator & Upper Turret Gunner, Missouri

Thank you for posting this request. If anyone knows the name of the plane, or knew any of the crew or their descendants, I'd love to connect with them.

Kind regards,
Gail Manning Fray
Daughter, S/Sgt. Billy Manning
fraygail@gmail.com

See next two pages for responses from 455th BG historians Dave Ungemach and John Rohrer

## Final Flight

Robert E. Frampton (740) died 23 Nov 2015, in Urbandale, Iowa.

Bob was born in Binger, Oklahoma, on August 30, 1922. He attended school in Des Moines, Iowa and Lincoln, Nebraska.

He graduated from Drake University with a degree in Business Administration. Bob interrupted his studies to enlist in the Army Air Corps during WWII, and was stationed with the Fifteenth Air Force, 455th Bomb Group in Cerignola, Italy.

He flew a B-24 bomber on nine missions, mostly to Germany and Austria, and was honorably discharged with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

Returning from one of these missions, they noticed that their B-24 had 57 holes from flak. None of their crew was ever wounded.



Can You Help ? Response

Dear Gail,

Your dad wasn't flying Magnetic Molly on the day he was shot down. It was the mission to the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, Austria, near Vienna, 26 June 44. The plane was a B-24G, Serial Number 42-78167. I've never been able to find a photo, unfortunately. The Missing Aircrew Report (MACR) number is 6433 – do you need a copy?

My dad was also shot down on this mission (742 squadron). I'll keep digging to see what I can find.

Dave Ungemach
davetw1@cox.net

Can You Help? Response

Dear, Dave.

That's great information!

I have the Missing Aircrew Report, but I don't have anything against which to compare the plane's serial number.

All this time, I thought ship 167 (from the MACR) was the number of my dad's plane, and I assumed he always flew on that specific plane. Since I have a photo of the plane with the crew and the nose art is so distinguishable, I assumed it was the same plane.

This opens up a number of questions from me to anyone reading this.

1) The crews sometimes flew other planes ... why? Was their "normal" plane being repaired?

2) Did they switch planes on a regular basis for other reasons?

Thanks,

Gail Fray

Dear Gail,

They often swapped planes between crews, squadrons, even bomb groups due to maintenance down time, battle losses, damage, etc.

It seems that the original crews that arrived at San Giovanni had a much better chance of "keeping" the same plane, at least from mission 1 on 16 February 1944, to Mission 68 on 26 June 1944. Things seemed to change after the mission on June 26.

Dave Ungemach

Dear Dave,

3) What was the serial number of the plane my dad normally flew and how do I find it?

4) Is there a MACR site I can access to obtain all the losses in the 740 Squadron? I have a field order from that Mission 68 to Moosbierbaum that lists the planes and their order of take off.

Is there a website that I can access that will give that information about each mission? If my dad flew on different planes and didn't stay with the same ship, how would I ascertain which ship he flew on for which mission?

Gail Fray

Dear Gail,

I'm wondering if your dad and his crew brought Sweet Kid / Magnetic Molly into the group with them in April 1944.

Replacement crews sometimes flew into San Giovanni, only to have the new plane taken away from them and given to another crew or squadron. There's even an account of pilots drawing straws to see who got the new plane.

Sometimes it never even made it past Bari, Italy, which was usually the first place they landed after flying from the US. This happened to my dad – they flew a new B-24J into Bari and never saw it again (which was fine with him – he said they had nothing but problems with it). They went to San Giovanni via truck.

Anyway, it could be that they swapped it with 167. Maybe others can shed some light on that.

I'm not sure what the group was doing with the new crews in April 44. My dad arrived in late May as a copilot, and immediately left his crew to fly with an experience crew. At the same time, an experienced pilot was assigned to his regular crew to fly and train with them. His original crew was shot down on 13 June. Dad, of course, was shot down on the 26 June mission. He survived, and managed to evade for three days, before he was captured.

He was eventually taken to Stalag Luft III. His original bombardier, lost on the 13 June mission, was one of the first POWs to greet him!

Sincerely,

Dave Ungemach
davetw1@cox.net

Dear Gail,

Details of the missions flown in WWII can be found at the National Archives Annex in College Park, MD. There is a mission folder for each mission which includes many original documents, including: 1) field orders, 2) briefing outlines, 3) mission statistics, 4) weather forecasts, 5) formations diagrams, 6) combat loading lists, and 7) intelligence summaries. But not all of these documents can be found in every folder.

I believe you are looking for the combat loading lists from the 740th bomb squadron for each mission flown by your father. If you have a list of his missions then you are at a good starting point.

I am in the process of scanning/imaging these documents and then transcribing them for readability.

Unfortunately, I have only just begun this process over the past year, and it is going very slowly. I get to the archives once or twice a year, and if I had your mission list, it would focus my research the next time I am there.

From the Morning Reports, found at the National Personnel Records Center (part of the National Archives) in St Louis, Missouri, your father's crew joined the squadron on April 22, 1944. The crew members listed at that time were: Lebsock, Grissom, Gilliam, Stewardson, Galvin, Louthian, Manning, Pierce, Yaus, and Williams.

Morning reports were prepared daily in each squadron to report changes in personnel, such as, MIA, KIA, transfers in or out, promotions, reductions in grade, sick, hospitalized, etc. I have a partial set of these reports and I am hoping to go back to the NPRC this summer to obtain more copies.

I will do a little more digging in my records about this crew and let you know what else I have found.

John Rohrer
spartacpa@gmail.com

Dear Gail,

To continue with your research, you may want to plan a visit to Washington, DC and visit the annex I referenced previously.

If you go to the website for the National Archives at www.archives.gov, click on a link to "Plan a Research Visit".

It explains that anyone can visit and research, but you need to obtain a researcher card when you first go there. This site has a lot of tips and rules that you should familiarize yourself with prior to going. Doing this will make your visit more enjoyable and productive.

Combat crews stayed together for the most part, but sickness or injury or a need for further training sometimes resulted in a juggling of crews. Rarely did a crew complete all of their missions totally intact.

Your reference to Al Griffin is actually A. L. (Arthur) Griffin, co-pilot on Wayne Smith's crew, which was one of the original combat crews. Once replacement crews began to arrive, it was common practice to either have the pilot fly with another crew for one or two missions to acclimate to combat (as if that was truly possible), or members of another crew would ride along with the new crew to "break them in".

When I looked at the orders awarding the Air Medal to members of the Lebsock crew, I found that with the exception of the pilot, their first credited combat mission was on April 28, 1944. Lebsock's first credited mission was on April 24.

To answer your question about Morning Reports, they are primarily concerned with personnel issues, so unless it is an exceptional circumstance, they do not mention aircraft by number or nickname.

Best Regards,
John Rohrer
spartacpa@gmail.com

Final Flight

Capt. George R. Johnston (740)

took his final flight 21 Jan, 2016. Mr. Johnston was tail gunner on the Ed Riggs Sky Wolf crew. Ed Riggs is the father of the 455th BG Assoc. Executive Director Greg Riggs.

He was born in Grand Rapids, Mich., to George and Eva Johnston. George was a World War II tail gunner in the Army Air Corp.

George moved with his wife to Kingman in 1986. George is preceded in death by his wife, Lilian Johnston, and is survived by his son, Craig Johnston of Mesa.

## FINAL FLIGHT
## Vervin R. "Ponga" Gilson (741)
## 1924 - 2015

After 91 years of flight, Gil's plane came to a final rest on Dec. 16, 2015, leaving a legacy of love, service and family devotion. He navigated 35 combat missions during WWII, enjoyed 63 years of romance with Illa Jean, worked as a civil and structural engineer, maintained an immaculate yard, and got a hole-in-one during his passionate golf career. Upon the news of pancreatic cancer a few short weeks ago, Gil said, "whatever happens, I have lived a good life. I have no regrets."

As a testament to the tenants of his religious faith, he enjoyed a sharp mind and good health for 91 years of his life. Even this last summer, he performed all his own yard care and home maintenance on the beautiful house he built 35 years ago.

In 1942, Gil married Illa Jean Erlandson and became the proud father of 3 sons, Larry (Barbara), James (Meg) and Phil. He is also survived by his 6 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren, a great-great grandson, and a spoiled rotten cat, Mea. He was preceded in death by his son Phil, sister LaFon and daughter-in-law Sharon Ruff Gilson.

Vervin was known as 'Gil' or 'VR' until the grandchildren bestowed the distinctive name of Ponga. Ponga was the grandfather that attended every scouting event, dance recital, swim meet, soccer match, baseball game, and school assembly. He was the grandpa and great grandpa that was always there.

Gil embodied the elegance and grace of the Greatest Generation. As a proud veteran of World War II, Gil flew 35 missions with the 741 squadron of the 455th Bomb Group. Stationed in Cerignola, Italy, Gil navigated the B24 Liberator to the oil fields of Poland, Romania, Berlin and other distant targets during the war. His plane was crippled by flak over Italy.

He returned from the war and obtained an engineering degree from the University of Utah and had a very successful engineering career. He was the construction manager for projects like the Capital Theater.

It's impossible to describe Ponga's devotion to the love of his life, Illa Jean (Marner). Our sadness of his passing is only foreshadowed by the joy he must feel for his reunion. His family was the light of his life.

## B-24 Liberators flown by other countries in WWII

Three B-24s were captured, and then operated by, the German secret operations unit KG 200, which also tested, evaluated and sometimes clandestinely operated captured enemy aircraft during World War II. One of these was captured at Venegono, Italy on March 29, 1944. It was used on penetration missions in RAF bomber streams at night in Luftwaffe markings. On a ferry flight from Hildesheim to Bavaria on April 6, 1945 it was shot down --- by German anti-aircraft fire.

Only one B-24 was officially delivered to the USSR, according to the Lend-Lease agreements. It was stranded in Yakutsk while flying a government mission to the Soviet Union, in November 1942. In addition, 73 Liberators of various models that had force-landed on eastern European airfields were recovered, and 30 of them were repaired and used by the soviet 45th Heavy Bomber Aviation Division.

The B-24 bombers of the 308th Bombardment Group (Heavy) joined the Chinese Battlefield in March, 1944, as the heavy bombers of the Fourteenth Air Force to fight against the Japanese during the Second Sino-Japanese War. About 48 B-24Ms were provided by the U.S. to the Chinese Nationalists Airforce after WWII, and were used during the Chinese Civil War.

The Communist Chinese Air Force had two B-24Ms captured from the Chinese Nationalists during the Chinese Civil War, and operated them until 1952.

# 2016 Reunion

**Date - Thursday, October 13 to Sunday, October 16, 2016**
**Dallas, TX**

## Wyndham Garden Dallas North Hotel

2645 Lyndon B. Johnson Fwy
Dallas, TX 75234

The hotel website is:
Wyndham Garden Dallas North Hotel

Room rates are $89 plus tax and includes up to two full, hot breakfast buffet coupons (including made-to-order omlettes) per room per day. Each additional person in a room will be charged $5.00 for breakfast each day. Reservations may be made by calling the hotel directly (recommended) at (972) 243-3363 and mention the booking code **Bombardment Groups 2016 Reunion** to receive the group rate. If you have mobility issues, be sure to mention this when you make your reservation and the hotel will attempt to accommodate you near the elevators. Room refrigerators are available upon request. The group rate is good three days prior to and three days past the reunion dates so come early and enjoy fall in Dallas.

Reservations can be made online by going to Bombardment Group Reunion 2016.

Reservations need to be made no later than 5:00 PM (CST) September 22, 2016 to receive the group rate. Reservations will be accepted after that date at the group rate as long as rooms are available, **but no guarantees are made after September 22nd. PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS EARLY**. Should it become necessary, you can cancel your reservation no later than 11:59 PM CST the day before arrival **WITHOUT** penalty.

Parking is plentiful and free.

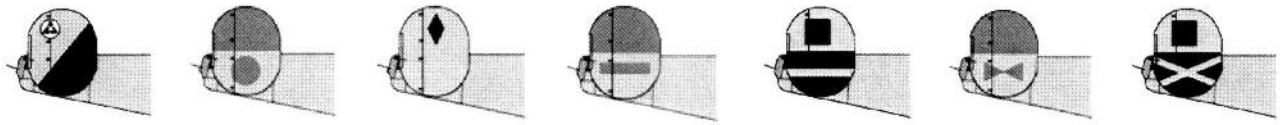
Complimentary airport shuttle to BOTH Love Field and DFW airports.

****PLEASE NOTE**: Reservations may be cancelled up to 11:59 PM CST the day before arrival with **no penalty** so please reserve your room now to make it easier on our planners.

Reunion Questions ?

1) Jonathan Tudor at (207) 730-0465
   E-Mail: b24xtrajoker@gmail.com
2) Susan Tudor Prince at (978) 866-0024
   E-Mail: kittyflea@hotmail.com
3) Dave Blake at (913) 523-4044
   E-Mail: reunion@461st.org

## BOMB GROUPS 2016 REUNION – DALLAS, TEXAS



376th 451st 455th 461st 465th 484th 485th

## ITINERARY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13TH will be arrival and check in day. A welcome team with gift bags from the municipality of Farmers Branch will be on hand to greet you at the hotel. The registration desk and hospitality room will be open most of the day featuring hors d'oeuvres in the afternoon. An informal welcome dinner will be held at 6:00PM in the Couture I & II Room. As dinner winds down, the Mayor of Farmers Branch will address and welcome our group and then we will have an informational meeting about the weekend and answer any questions. If you choose not to have dinner with the group, feel free to come into that same room at 7:00PM for the Mayor's address and information meeting.

FRIDAY, the 14TH We will depart the hotel at 9:00AM for a tour of the Cavanaugh Flight Museum, a complex of four hangers filled with an outstanding collection of military aircraft. You'll be so close that you can actually reach out and touch the nose of the P-40 Warhawk! Their most recent acquisition is the only flying B-25H that is equipped with two .50 caliber machine guns and a 75mm canon in the nose! We will have a box lunch in one of the hangers before departing for the return trip to the hotel at 1:00PM arriving by 1:30PM.

Beginning at 2:30PM there will be presentations by our veterans and others regarding WWII as it was fought from Italy. With restroom breaks in between, the presentations will last until about 4:30PM.

The evening will feature our Individual Group Banquets in various meeting rooms. Social hour with a cash bar will begin at 5:30PM in the common area with dinner served to each group in their respective banquet room at 6:30PM. More details will follow concerning which group meets in which banquet room.

Just before the Social Hour, our esteemed veterans will be asked to gather in the common area near the banquet rooms for an all-inclusive group photo. Individual group photos can be taken as desired by each group in their own banquet room.

SATURDAY the 15TH We will begin our day by departing the hotel at beginning at 9:20AM for a tour of the historic Sixth Floor Museum, the location from where Lee Harvey Oswald fired on President John F. Kennedy. This and the entire area are remembered by all of us who were of age during that fateful day, November 22, 1963. This is a very powerful museum to visit. PLEASE NOTE: The tour buses will depart the hotel at 10 minute intervals to make things go more smoothly at the ticket counter and while entering the museum. The first bus will depart the hotel at 9:20AM, the next at 9:30AM and the last at 9:40AM. We will re-board the buses for the return trip to the hotel at 12:00PM, arriving by 12:30PM. Lunch today is on your own. The hotel restaurant will have a reasonably priced buffet featuring soup, salad, deli style sandwich fixings and a drink or you can order from the menu. You can also go someplace altogether different if you choose.

Today again beginning at 2:00PM there will be additional presentations by our veterans and others regarding WWII as it was fought from Italy. With restroom breaks in between, the presentations will last until about 4:00PM.

The evening will feature our All Groups Banquet in the Couture Ballroom with Social Hour and a cash bar beginning at 5:00PM and dinner served at 6:00PM. During desert and after, live entertainment will be supplied by the trio, Ladies Liberty whose performance will include hits from the 40's and Big Band era that were performed by the likes of Bob Hope and the Andrews sisters. The show will be reminiscent of a USO show. A dance floor will be available for those who still want to "cut a rug"! The Ladies Liberty website states that *"Ladies Liberty performing troupe is dedicated to the All Around Good of our Country & World, from the land we live in, the values we hold as a nation, to the people that live among us and overseas. We humbly and gratefully recognize our heroes who so bravely serve to keep America safe and free! We are here to empower anyone we can through entertainment!"*

SUNDAY the 16TH will feature the Memorial Service beginning at 9:00AM led by the duo of the amazing grandson of the fourth and final 485th BG commander, Col. Douglas Cairns, active duty Army Chaplain/Captain Chris Cairns (who is a wonderful person that we're blessed to have again this year as Group Chaplain) along with Reverend Bob Oliver, who has acted as Group Chaplain for the 376th BG for some years now. Reverend Oliver is the son of a 376th Navigator/Bombardier and is looking forward to meeting with us.

Lunch again today is on your own. The hotel restaurant again will have a reasonably priced buffet featuring soup, salad, deli style sandwich fixings and a drink or you can order from the menu. You can also go someplace altogether different if you choose.

For our tour today we will depart the hotel at 12:00PM to tour the Dallas Holocaust museum and will feature a holocaust survivor who will address our group. We will also take a leisurely Sunday afternoon driving tour of Dallas with professional guides on the buses. We will return to the hotel by 4:30PM

The evening will feature an informal "Farewell Fajita" dinner in the Couture 3 & 4 banquet room. Dinner will be served at 6:00PM. This will conclude our reunion for this year although the hospitality room will be open the remainder of the evening.

The staff at the hotel promises to be as good as any we've ever worked with. They are most anxious to host our reunion. This is the same hotel that the 485th BG used in 2014 when their group numbered 350 for their final stand-alone reunion. They gave the hotel and staff rave reviews regarding how well they were treated and taken care of. The local suburb of Farmers Branch is planning a welcome center including folks to help with logistic issues inside the hotel as well as a large welcome banner for our group.

It is recommended that you reserve your room early. We have a good sized room block but we ended up running out of rooms last year as too many people waited until close to the reunion time to book and no more rooms were available. ***IF YOU BOOK A ROOM AND FIND LATER THAT YOU MUST CANCEL, YOU MAY DO SO WITH NO PENALTY UP TO 24 HOURS PRIOR TO ARRIVAL. So please, PLEASE, book your room now so if we run out of rooms in the block again, there will be time to add more.***

# 451st & 455th BOMB GROUPS REUNION Registration

October 13—16, 2016 ~ Dallas, Texas

Name_____ Group_____ Squadron_____

Address_____ City_____

State_____ Zip_____ Phone_____ Email_____

Names as they are to appear on name tags:_____

_____

Registration fee # people _____ @ $25.00 each Sub Total_____

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13TH

Informal Welcome Italian Buffet Dinner # people _____ @ $27.00 each Sub Total_____

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14TH

Cavanaugh Flight Museum & Lunch # people _____ @ $44.00 each Sub Total_____

Individual Group Evening Dinner

Salmon #_____ Chicken Chablis #_____ Veggie Trio #_____

@ $30.50 each Sub Total_____

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15TH

Sixth Floor Museum # people_____ @ $35.00 each Sub Total_____

All Groups Evening Banquet

Petite Filet # _____ @ $40.50 each Sub Total_____

Chicken Cordon Bleu # _____ Vegetarian Tart #_____ @ $36.00 ea. Sub Total_____

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16TH

Dallas Holocaust Museum & Driving Tour of Dallas

# people_____ @ $37.00 each Sub Total_____

Farewell Fajita Informal Dinner # people_____ @ $29.50 each Sub Total_____

(Fajita buffet will include some items for Vegetarians too.)

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Emergency Contact: _____ Phone _____

Wheelchair(s) needed? _____

Mail this form with your check (payable to 451 BG Reunion) to:

Susan Prince 14 Reservation Road Andover MA 01810

Final Flight

Charles E. Stark (740)

died 22 Aug 2015, age 92.

Beloved husband of Lois (Davis) Stark; father of Richard Stark and Donald (Marie) Stark; proud grandfather of Nicole (Anthony) Traini and Kimberly Stark; dear great-grandfather of Julianna and David.

Charles proudly served in WWII in the Army Air Corps with the 455th Bomb Group, stationed in Cerignola, Italy.

He flew 35 bombing missions.

Final Flight

Jean M. Fitter (742)

died 26 Aug 2015.

He graduated from Altus High School in 1942, where he participated in all sports.

Jean joined the Army Air Corps and in July 1944, he was sent to Italy, assigned to the 742nd Bomb Squadron as a co-pilot, and later a first pilot, of a B-24 bomber.

He flew 35 missions in the European theater, and attained the rank of Captain.

Final Flight

William "Bill" G. Doyle (742)

died 14 Aug 2015.

Bill Doyle, Brooklyn native and long-time resident of Tarzana, CA, died peacefully at the home of his son, Bob, in Miami.

Bill was a champion high school 440 runner. He was a 1st Lt. and navigator on 15th Air Force B-24s, completing dozens of WWII missions over enemy lines.

He earned a B.A. (UC Berkeley) and M.A. (USC). He spent his career as an educator in Burbank, including many years as director of Burbank Adult Education.

Final Flight

William M. Doyle (742)

died 9 Aug 2015.

William Monroe Doyle, 92, passed on to be with his Lord on August 9, 2015 in Jupiter, Florida.

He served proudly in the U.S. Air Force, had a rewarding career in the aerospace industry, and was a long time member of North Palm Beach First Presbyterian Church.

Final Flight

Harry Wilton Anderson (740)

died July 9, 2015.

Harry Wilton Anderson went to be with the lord on July 9th, 2015, joining his beloved wife Merlene. Known to many as "Andy", he enlisted in the Air Force by hitchhiking to Randolph AFB in 1941.

Soon after enlisting, he married the love of his life, Merlene. He proceeded to pilot's training preparing for duty in World War II. After serving in Italy, based near Cerignola, on the Adriatic Sea, and completing 50 bombing missions flying B-24 bombers, he earned a Distinguished Flying Cross and returned home.

He was recalled to duty for the Air Force during the Korean Conflict. After attaining the rank of Major and serving as a pilot, he remained in the Air Force for 20 years, serving in both Okinawa and Germany.

After retiring at Randolph AFB, he joined the US Civil Service working at Ft. Sam Houston for another 20 years.

Growing up in the Great Depression, the military gave him a way to the world, and he was forever a service-man for his country.

The Greatest Generation is missing a hero.

Final Flight

Richard H. Kuhnz (743)

died 8 July 2015.

Richard Howard Kuhnz, 90, of Fond du Lac, Wisc., died July 8, 2015.

He was born March 30, 1925. Dick graduated from Fond du Lac High School in 1943, and joined the U.S. Army Air Force (USAAF) shortly thereafter.

He served his country as a ball turret gunner, 15th Air Force, 455th BG, aboard a B-24 "Liberator" Bomber, during World War II.

Final Flight

Charles J. McArthur (743)

died 26 Jun 2015.

Charles J. McArthur, 93, a resident of Elkland, Tioga County, Pa., passed away peacefully, June 26, 2015 in Wellsboro, Pa. He joined the Army Air Corp. Charles, flew 51 missions as tail gunner on a B24 in the European Theatre based in North Africa and Italy.

Charles was the 1963 North American Trap Shooting Champion.

50 years after the war, he was awarded his purple heart for his service in WWII.



T-Sgt. Reginald D. Bennett




riends Will Recognize T-Sgt. Reginald D. Bennett, Second From Left Standing. Other Crew Members Are, Front Row, Left to Right, Lt. R. K. Knox, Bombardier; Lt. W. J. Gross, Navigator; Cpl. Gunnel, Pilot of Another Crew. Standing, Left to Right: T-Sgt. T. M. Pelkey, Engineer Top Gunner; Sgt. Bennett, Engineer Ball Gunner; T-Sgt. J. J. Romano, Radio Operator, Waist Gunner; S-Sgt. C. F. Brock, Nose Gunner; S-Sgt. W. F. Haffmeister, Waist Gunner; S-Sgt. D. J. Frawley, Tail Gunner.

Photos courtesy of Tom Bennett, son of T/Sgt. Reginald D. Bennett,
recipient of three Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters for Aerial Flight Medals
Tom Bennett, 394 Terning Drive West, Eureka, MT. 59917, 406-882-4673
Please contact Tom Bennett if you know one of these crewmembers, or are a relative of Mr. Bennett.

## Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My father, Walter Shostack, aka Vladimir Shostak, was a B-24 co-pilot, whose Final Flight is recorded in the Cerignola Connection.

Walter was co-pilot of a B-24 which succumbed to flak after bombing the Blieburg Oil Refinery in October of 1944. He was initially MIA until being found in a German Prison Camp.

I don't know if any of his artifacts are pictured in your archives, so I thought you might enjoy seeing some of the material that I recently acquired from my sister.

I also have his diary which includes his reflections and artistry by another POW who reportedly died or was killed in the camp.

Sincerely,
Lorraine Shostack Moskewicz
mom.moskewcz@gmail.com



Lt. Walter Shostack
(aka Vladimir Shostak)
MIA - POW




Dear Editor,

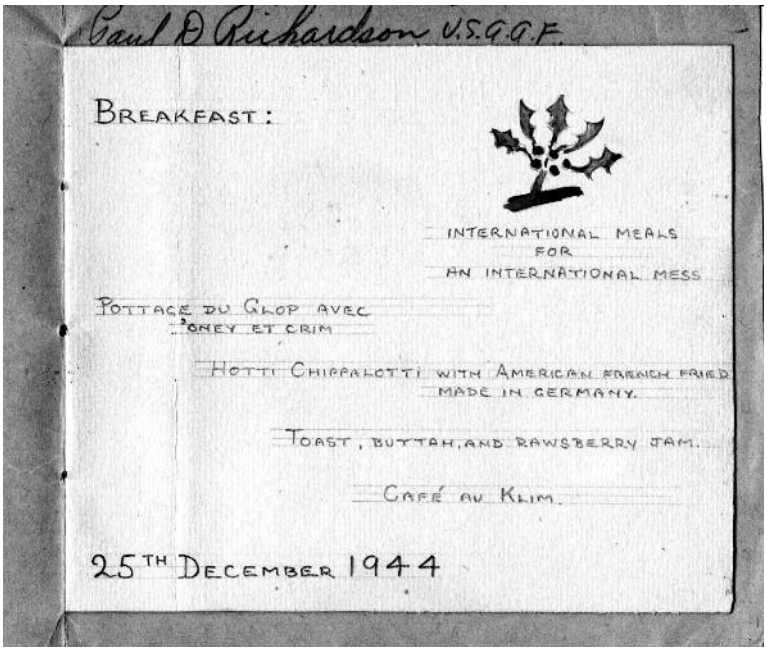
Could any of your readers confirm that the POW camps in which Dad spent his time were Dulag Luft and Stalag Luft III? He reported that he inherited a diary from a person who had died or been killed while a prisoner. This was the custom in the Camp.

The artistry in the diary (example above) looks a lot like what is seen in the POW menu (below). It would be an honor to learn the identity of the deceased person who preceded my Dad.

I feel fairly certain that Dad was in an officers' camp, and that several there were British pilots. He spoke of RR Stanford Tuck and appeared to follow his life. I just discovered in Wikipedia that RR spoke Russian as did my father.

Do you think any of your readers could help me find the missing artist in my Dad's diary?

Thank you.
Lorraine Moskewcz
mom.moskewcz@gmail.com




Above is a copy of a menu which seems designed to mock life as a POW. Perhaps someone will recognize the signature.

Final Flight
Dominick L. Dote (742)

Mr. Dominick L "Dickie" Dote, age 92, of Utica, NY, passed away on Tuesday, March 31, 2015.

Final Flight
Edward "Red" Nestler (741)
died 22 Mar 2015, at age 90.

He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II, based in Italy as an aircraft armorer in the 455th Bomb Group, from 1943 to 1945 serving in the Rhineland, Normandy, North Apennines, Rome-Arno, Northern France and Naples-Foggia.

While serving in Italy, he visited Rome, and met Pope Pius XII, and also witnessed the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Final Flight
John D. Helbig (743)
died 23 Dec 1993.

Final Flight
David J. Frawley (742)
died 7 Mar 2015.

David John Frawley, devoted husband and father, transitioned from this life on March 7th, 2015, at his residence in Kingwood, Texas, with his son Timothy by his side.

He was 91 years young.

He grew up in the melting pot that was Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s, World War II changed the direction of his life, as he took up the call to serve in the Army Air Corps with the 455th Bomb Group from 1943-45 as a tail gunner on a B-24 Liberator, flying missions into Europe from Africa and Italy.

Final Flight
Raymond Lohnes (743)
died 28 Feb 2015.

Raymond W. Lohnes, a true gentleman, passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by his family and friends

He was a decorated Veteran of WWII, where he served in the European Theater in the Army Air Corps.

Burial will be in Arlington National Cemetery.

Final Flight
Duane D Bush (743)
died 10 Dec 2014.

Duane D. Bush, 92, served in the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II as an air crew member, flying on heavy bombers on missions over Europe.

Final Flight
Robert O. Foernsler (741)
died 7 Oct 2014, at age 91.

He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in October, 1942. He received his pilot wings in June, 1943, and was assigned as a B-24 bomber pilot with the 455th Bomb Group, 741st Squadron, near Cerignola, Italy.

He flew 30 combat missions. He was awarded the Air Medal, with two Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters; the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, with one Silver Star; the World War II Victory Medal; and, the Honorable Service Lapel Button.

In March of 1969, he served an unusual civilian tour. He was assigned to Ben Lisk, Vietnam, in the Vietnamese Laboratory Assistance Program. While there he served as project engineer to evaluate a new high-velocity water jet proposed for installation aboard naval ships as river war weaponry.

During his brief assignment there, he was wounded by 109mm enemy rocket fire. He became one of the few civilians awarded the Purple Heart.

Final Flight
Carl R. Loiocano (741)
died 5 Aug 2014.

Carl was a decorated WWII Army Air Corps veteran, and was a POW in 1944.

He was a member of the 455th Bombardment Group, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Purple Heart among many others.

Carl was a member of the 455th BG Association's Board of Directors for several years prior to his death.

Carl enjoyed spending time tinkering with electronics, woodworking, hunting, fishing, and summers at Bear Lake, NY with his family. .

Final Flight
Edward G. Spencer (740)
died 23 Jun 2013, at age 88.

He served as a sergeant in the military from June 1943 served until June 1945. He was a waist gunner on a B-24 squadron stationed in Cerignola, Italy, and flew 35 bombing missions over central Europe and Balkans.



Final Flight

Curtis "Bud" Diles (740), Jr. died 10 Sep 2014 at age 89.

He was also a member of the VFW Post 3283, and an honorary Serbian. He was a veteran of World War II, a Staff Sergeant serving in the Army Air Corps from 1943-1945.

He was shot down while in his B-24 bomber behind enemy lines over Belgrade, Yugoslavia on September 8, 1944 in the Halyard Mission, but was rescued by the Serbian Chetniks lead by General Draja Mihailovich. Had it not been for Serbia, he and his descendants would not have been blessed with the gift of life. The details of this incredible rescue are documented in the book "The Forgotten 500", by Gregory Freeman.

It was his life's mission to spread the truth to the world about the Serbians' loyalty to America in WWII. The country of Serbia recently presented him with the Order of Karageorge's Star with Sword, for 70 years of exceptional service in spreading the truth about Serbia and its WWII and post-war struggles.

Final Flight

Andrew G. Klopchin (743)

passed away on October 14, 2011, at age 87. Andy entered the US Army on March 15, 1943 and served in Italy with the 15th Army Air Force's 743rd Bomb Squadron on a B-24 bomber.

He was shot down during their 35th mission over Romania and spent four months as an Allied prisoner of war in Bulgaria.

Final Flight

Gordon W. Smith (741)

died 15 Jun 2013 at age 94.

Mr. Smith served in the US Army Air Corp during WWII with the 455th Bomb Group, 741 Bomb Squadron based in Cerignola, Italy.

He was an active member of the 455th Bomb Group Association veterans group.

Final Flight

Sterling Artis Bryant, Sr. (740)

died in March, 2013.

Sterling enlisted in the US Army Air Corp during World War II. He was injured by enemy fire while on a bombing mission over Germany, and was transferred to a military hospital in San Antonio, Texas, where he met a young nurse, and the love of his life, Rose Marie Mock. Sterling and Rose Marie were married in December 1945 in Fort Worth, Texas.

Sterling continued to serve his country in the Air Force Reserves and achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, before retiring from the reserves in 1983.

He also continued to attend the reunions of his flight group, the 455th Bomb Group, meeting the children and grandchildren of men he served with during the war.

He was acknowledged by author Stephen Ambrose for his contributions to his book, "The Wild Blue: The Men and Boys Who Flew The B-24s Over Germany".

Can You Help ?

Dear Editor,

I am trying to get some information about where my uncle served in Italy during World War II.

Here's the info I have:

1) Charles H. Roy, born 8/28/20, died 12/19/88.
2) Promoted to Master Sergeant while in Italy.
3) Served in Italy from Dec. 1943 - April, 1945.
4) Worked in Ordnance
5) Was in 455 bomb Group and 741 Bomb Squadron.

All of Uncle Charlie's letters home in WWII have been saved and are in the possession of his grand-daughter. She loaned them to me, and I was proud and fascinated!

I write and edit a newsletter for our local historical society and have been doing a special series with excerpts from his letters home from Italy. Of course, he could say nothing in his letters about where he was stationed, or in what battles he was involved. Any family members that would have known that info are gone.

Thus, I am writing to you hoping you can give me some information about where he was stationed in Italy, and if you know any specific battles in which he was involved.

Charlie was one of three brothers, including my Dad, who all served in and survived the war.

Thank you.

Debbi Roy
droy8108@kc.rr.com

Final Flight

George E. Defenbaugh (743) died 1 Sep 2012, at age 91.

After nearly 69 years of marriage George E. Defenbaugh, 91, and Dorothy Waldrep Defenbaugh, 90, passed away on September 1st and September 5th, respectively.

George served in the Army Air Corp as a bombardier during WWII. He was stationed in Italy with the 743rd bomb squadron of the 455th bomb group, and received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Following the war, George earned his J.D. from the University of Oklahoma and began his law practice in Shawnee, Oklahoma.

He also served two terms in the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

Final Flight

Andrew G. Klopchin (743) decorated WWII veteran, POW, died 14 Oct 2011 at age 87.

Final Flight

Herbert L. Pryce (740) died July 7, 2010 at age 87.

Final Flight

Robert F. Vest (GP) died 10 Dec 2009 at age 87.

Final Flight

Lewis A. Riley (740) died 24 Jan 2008 at age 86.

Mr. Riley was a WWII Army Air Corps veteran and an Air Force Reserve retiree. He taught chemistry and science for over 20 years in Milwaukee public schools.

Final Flight

Robert "Bob" T. Probst (741) died 29 July 2007 at age 85.

He served in the United States Army Air Corp during WW II, where he flew 44 missions in a B-24 Liberator named Yo-Yo.

He received the Air Medal with 3 oak leaf clusters, the European-African-Middle Eastern Service Medal, the Presidential Citation, Distinguished Service Medal, Victory Medal and the Good Conduct Medal.

Final Flight

Willie Warren "Bill" Moore (740) died 4 Sep 2006.

He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant on May 24, 1943, and sent to Tarrant Field in Fort Worth, Texas, for B-24 pilot training, and then on to Tucson, Arizona for crew assignment. Willie trained with his crew at Langley Field, Virginia, and then flew his B-24 Liberator airplane and crew to Morrison Field, Florida for final staging before flying through South America and up the Western Coast of Africa to Cerignola, Italy in December 1943 for combat.

Willie was promoted to lst lieutenant and was assigned to the 740th Bomb Squadron, 455th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force. He flew 35 high-risk bombing missions in areas where hundreds of allied planes were shot down by German fighter planes or anti-aircraft guns. His plane, the "Sadie Hawkins", was shot down on his 15th bombing mission in Rumania, but he and all but one of his crew survived. Willie returned to the United States in September 1944 to perform instructor duties and was discharged a year later at Camp Chaffee Arkansas. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Purple Heart, the Air Medal with Three Oak Leaf Clusters, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with three Battle Stars, the Good Conduct Medal, the World War II Victory Ribbon, and the Presidential Unit Citation.

Final Flight

Forest C. Shoup (742) died 15 Mar 1998 at age 75. Lieutenant Colonel, United States Air Force

He was a U.S. Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, flying B-24 bombers out of Italy in the European Theater of Operations.

He participated in the Ploesti raids in Romania and received the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal, among other military honors.

In 1948, he participated in the Berlin Airlift and flew active duty during the Korean Conflict. He also joined the D.C. and Delaware National Guards and flew missions in Vietnam. He rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel before retiring from military service.

After leaving active military duty, he was hired by Capital Airlines, which merged with United Airlines. In 1982, he retired as a 747 captain from United Airlines after 32 years of service as an airline pilot.

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

This has been a challenging six months for our Association which have presented us with some difficult decisions. I've learned of 48 final flights, including George Johnston, the last member of my father's Sky Wolf crew. Of great official impact to the Association, John Davis, our good friend and the Association's legal Registered Agent, passed away in February. Our Association is chartered in Iowa and must have a Registered Agent living in Iowa. John was our only member in Iowa able to perform that function.

Counting John, we've also lost two of our seven directors, plus another one is no longer able to serve. That actually brings us below the minimum of five directors required for us to conduct business in accordance with our bylaws. I have been in the process of trying to recruit replacement directors. You may receive a phone call from me asking you to serve for a short time.

The net result of all of this is that it appears we have taxied to a full stop and we are preparing to shut down. The current plan is for us to publish one more issue of the Cerignola Connection, the Fall 2016 issue. As soon as our board of directors is again properly staffed, we will establish the final details for termination of the Association.

The Association has two gentlemen who are avid 455th BG history buffs. John Rohrer, our official historian, is a life member. Dave Ungemach is an associate life member. I have asked each of them to consider, based on their extensive, personal research experiences, what location or which locations would best serve as a final repository for our historical documents. They are currently evaluating that request. If you have personal memoirs which you would like to have included with our historical documents, please send them to the Association mailing address to arrive before the end of October. I will close down our post office box in November.

On a much more positive note, there will be another joint reunion in Dallas from October 13-16, 2016. Details are available elsewhere in this newsletter. Participating bomb groups will include: 451st, 454th, 455th, 461st, 465th, 484th, and 485th. This is one last chance for as many of us as possible to gather together as an Association. I hope to see you there. Let's see if someone can match or exceed Ormond Buffington's 2015 achievement for showing up with 15 family members!

Once again, I thank each of you for helping preserve the freedoms we sometimes take for granted. My recent work with current war refugees simply renews my appreciation for what you did. Freedom is a precious gift!