



The 461st

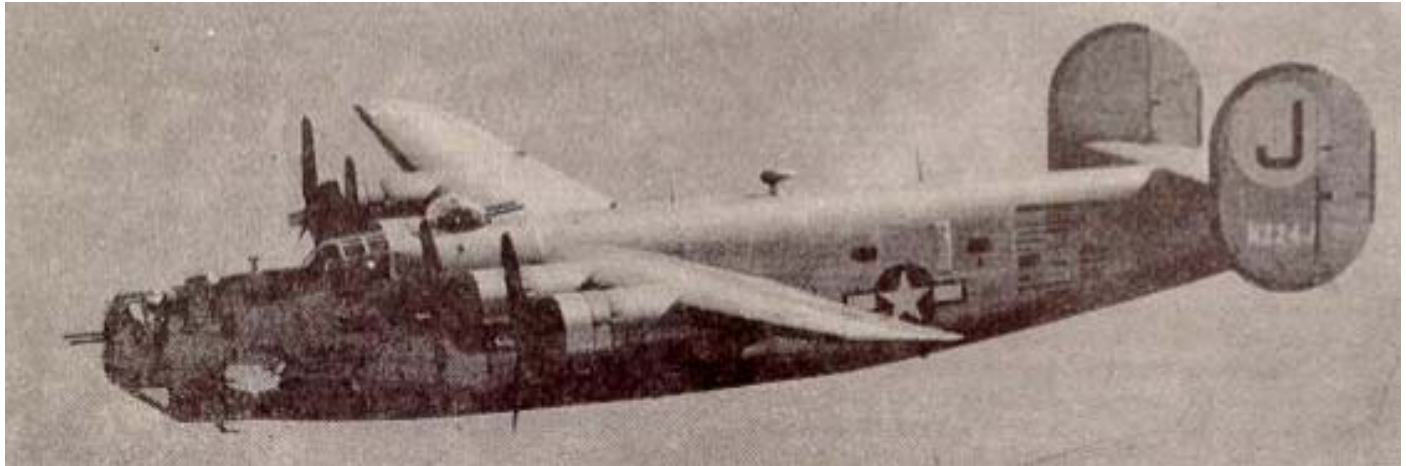
Liberaider



Vol. 6, No. 3

December 1989

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA



The "All American" Is Born Again

Roll-out—15 July, 1989

First Flight—8 September 1989

The 461st Bomb Group—Its Early Days

Mission #4—6 April 1944

The 764th Squadron commander, Capt. Edwin Goree, did an outstanding job in leading this mission. The lead pilot, 2nd Lt. James Bean; his bombardier, 2nd Lt. George Cran; and the Squadron Navigator, 1st Lt. Earl DeWitt, were the officers on the lead plane. For the fourth day in succession the freshman mission took the group to Yugoslavia.

The mission was another fragmentation bomb mission. This time to the south end of the airdrome at Zagreb. There was a 9/10ths cloud cover which obscured the target and only fifteen of the thirty-one planes over the target dropped their bombs. For the first time the group had fighter escort. It was also the first mission on which the group encountered enemy fighters. The attack was made by six ME-109 and nine FW-190 fighters. One enemy plane was shot down. This fighter was claimed by S/Sgt. Melborn Williamson, the top turret gunner on a plane in the 765th Squadron.

The plane flown by 2nd Lt. John Specht and Major Robert Applegate, which did not drop its bombs on the target, developed fire in the bomb bay that led to an explosion when the bombs were jettisoned over the Adriatic on the way back. Three members of the crew left the plane and were lost. They were: the bombardier, 2nd Lt. William Sullivan; the navigator, 2nd Lt. Harold Milne; and the nose turret gunner, Sgt. John Marszalkiewicz. Near the base the seven remaining members of the crew abandoned the plane and parachuted safely to earth.

Crew members were rapidly learning that combat missions are dangerous. As a result of this mission, all crews developed a deep-seated and persistent dislike for fragmentation bombs. The commanding officer, the deputy group commander, the group operations officer, the four squadron commanders and two of the squadron operations officers flew on this mission.

The 461st LIBERAIDER
461st Bombardment Group (H)
Activated: 1 July 1943
Inactivated: 27 August 1945
Incorporated: 25 November 1985

CORPORATE HDQRS: 313 Hill St, Box 638, Oakland, IA 51560

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Reflections on a Reunion

By
Millie O'Bannon

It had been many years since I visited St. Louis. I had forgotten what a beautiful, lush city it is. There are so many worlds in our great United States. Certainly those who live in St. Louis don't stand short. We were lucky, our weather was perfect for the entire reunion.

The Holiday Inn was huge, which is why it was chosen. It had a charm all its own which impressed me. The location was ideal.

Once we settled in our rooms we headed for the "Board Room". Alice Oglesby and Catherine Muller were the gracious ladies at the reception desk, where we picked up our envelopes that contained tickets to the events and quite a few "goodies" as mementos of

the reunion. Grace Cole seemed to be everywhere making certain that everything went smoothly. In case you wondered, Len Cole was the man making all the last minute name tags and keeping track of how many meals were being ordered. The committee members were very successful in getting free gifts from the hotel and local companies. It is rumored that Otto Muller had lost none of the skills he learned in Italy. Many members had arrived by the time I got there on Wednesday. Frank flew in on Monday but animals at home detained me. The total attendance at the reunion was 487. That represents a lot of talking but that's what reunions are all about. Frank is still mumbling that he missed some of those attending.

On Thursday, while Frank greeted and talked, our daughter, Barb, and I took advantage of the Holiday Inn buses and went to the mall at Westport to shop and look. That was a classy and attractive shopping area. We loved it and planned to go back since part of reunion business is buying souvenirs for grandchildren.

Thursday was also registration day in the "Board Room". The PX was set up and by the end of the reunion had sold over \$900 worth of pins, etc. We all took turns staffing the shop. The men enjoyed looking at video tapes and 461st memorabilia spread out on the tables.

Cathy Lundberg and Nellie Ross had the roughest job. Those two girls saw it through to the end. We thank you both very much. Up to now we have not found a trouble-free system for seating assignments. If you have any suggestions, please let us know. The larger our reunions get the harder it is to have everyone happy with their seating. Patience and understanding by members are appreciated by the committee and make the job easier.

It was such a joy to greet all our Italian tour friends. After talking to just a few we decided we want to go back. Frank has to take that idea under advisement! On Friday night the members of both Italian tours met to look at pictures we had taken. Such nostalgia!

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From 9:00 to 3:00 on Friday we toured St. Louis. One tour went to the Bush brewery while the second tour went to the Botanical Gardens. Much as I love beer, I went to the Botanical Gardens. They are very unique and beautiful. Both tours stopped to visit the Gateway Arch. The brave took the tram to the top. The tours also stopped at the St. Louis Cathedral to see the world famous mosaics. The cathedral was magnificent - something that you would expect to see in Europe. We came away with the feeling we could have spent another day studying the things we saw today.

In such a large organization as ours with over 1100 paid memberships, there is always the business meeting to express thoughts, new ideas and voting. The meeting took place Friday following the tours. Frank led the meeting which was very well attended. A highlight was the report by the treasurer, Glenn Stemple, that we had a balance of \$8,448.34 in the treasury. Glenn had the responsibility of paying the reunion bills. He was a busy man during those few days.

President	Frank C. O'Bannon
Vice President	Sammy West
Secretary/Treasurer	Gail Peterson

Tom Moss took over the meeting during the election of

Headquarters	Marion Pruitt
764th Squadron	John Underwood
765th Squadron	Tom Moss
766th Squadron	Bill Franklin
767th Squadron	Dave McQuillan

officers. The results were as follows:

Headquarters	Nye Norris
764th Squadron	John Trommershauser
765th Squadron	Bill Wilkins
766th Squadron	Ted Ahlberg
767th Squadron	Denny Perkins

The squadrons, in caucus, elected the following:

Alternate directors

Under new business was the discussion and vote on having a reunion every year. There were valid comments from the floor both pro and con. The final vote showed the large majority to be in favor of the yearly meeting. The proxy votes received showed 80% in favor of yearly reunions.

Willie Gibson reported he can't find a single copy of the group colors from WWII. He is still working on it.

Life memberships were discussed. The board will be consulted on the matter to determine the amount of dues to be required.

Ed Izzo, Chairman, Memorial Committee, proposed we provide a memorial in the Wright Paterson Museum walk at Dayton, Ohio. This proposal was approved. Willie Gibson will also be on the committee. The treasurer will handle this memorial fund. Ed will handle the actual memorial and shall notify the group when it is available for dedication. Members will be notified of the date. Within several hours the memorial fund had a cash balance of over \$2,100. All members who wish to contribute should send a check made out to "The Memorial Fund" to Glenn Stemple, P.O. Box 638, Oakland, IA 51560.

This year's reunion souvenir will be a photo album. All members attending the reunion were asked to have their picture taken in the "Board Room". Sammy West will make up the album from these pictures and others submitted by the attendees.

To get a feel for what personnel were represented at this reunion, Glenn Stemple asked all "ground pounders" to raise their hands. There were a lot more in attendance than the Tarrytown reunion but we would like to see even more of the ground personnel at these reunions. Get your friends involved!

Ed Chan, Membership Chairman, has found many lost 461sters in the past few months. Ed came forward with new ideas on finding men and introduced

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a new form which will give clues on how and where to find them. Ed asked for volunteers to help him find people. He would like representatives from each state and large city. Get involved, get in touch with Ed (See his address in the organization block on page 2.

A request was made to those who were on the Linz raid to meet in the hotel lobby following the meeting. (Editors note: What was the meeting for? Is there a story for the Liberaider?)

Your editor gave a short report on the "All American" B-24 that has been restored to "zero" time. Frank O'Bannon and others saw her in Tucson and at the 50th anniversary of the B-24 held in San Diego in September. (See the article on the "All American" later in this issue.) Frank would like to determine how many missions the "All American" flew before she was shot down. The original aircraft crew painted a football on the fuselage for each mission. Everyone agrees that these footballs should be added to the new aircraft. Are there any members who flew in her that can tell us how many missions she flew?

The meeting was adjourned. Now on to the fun!

Meeting old friends for dinner each night was our favorite pastime. Unfortunately we all had more friends than nights.

Saturday's tour was a lovely trip to Grant's farm (the home of our 18th President) and to the museum of transportation. Our beautiful weather contributed to the success of our tours. Grant's log home has been restored but is not open to the public. It was not a bad looking place but I'm sure it lacked many of the "frills" we have today. The entire farm is an interesting, beautiful place. There are many animals roaming free in natural environments without cages. I love the Clydesdale horses that are raised on a portion of the farm. Just think, those horses were the B-24s of the knights of the roundtable.

I had never heard of the museum of transportation. They have a wonderful collection of various means of transportation. The railroad train

buffs had a field day looking at and sitting in the famous cross-country steam engines of the by-gone days. Speaking of railroads, the group ate lunch one day in the restored "Union Station". Although it is no longer used as a station you can visualize those huge engines hissing and spitting steam.

Then it was up to the room to work on getting beautiful for the banquet. The big event was about to begin. But first things first. Cocktails! Then dinner in the large dining room. The hotel did a noble job in serving so many people.

The reunion committee, Harry Oglesby, Otto Muller, Len Cole and their wives were very creative in using Italian national colors to highlight this festive occasion. The red, white and green adorned the cover of the very attractive banquet program crafted by Grace Cole. These programs made a very nice souvenir of the evening. The same colors were used for the napkins. We were thankful that Alice, Catherine and Grace were around to add some class to the event. Their husbands wouldn't have known what to do.

We always respond to "our" music of the 40s. However, our age is beginning to show and we can no longer dance 'till dawn. After enjoying the gayety of the evening, one by one we drifted off to bed.

The memorial service on Sunday started at 9:00 AM. Following a prelude by Mrs. Ruth Schmulzer, the color guard from Scott Air Force Base posted the colors. When Chaplain, Col. James H. Thurman, USAF, opened our memorial service it was then that you remembered the serious part of our lives. When looking at those young men and women of the color guard, you could recall how our men, and ourselves, looked 46 years ago (if by chance you have forgotten, look at the picture of John Young's 764th crew, page 5). We quickly recalled the reality of those

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times. We who served and lived will not forget those who did not return. One of our own, Farrold F. Stephens, sang two very appropriate solos that brought back many memories. Farrold also led us in singing "Lord, Guard and Guide the Men Who Fly". It was a most memorable service.

We had two breakfast buffet lines and while they reminded us of the old "chow lines" the food was great and no one went away hungry.



TID BITS

The design of the B-24 started in late 1938. Within a year the first prototype was flown. The first production model was delivered in 1941. By December of 1941 it was in service with the Army Air Force. Developed by Consolidated Aircraft, it was also built by Douglas, North American and the Ford Motor Co. Within five years more than 19,000 were built.

Do you remember 22 November 1944? What pilot rammed his nose turret into the tail turret of the plane ahead of him on that mission?

Harry Jones, a 764th gunner on "Evil Weevil" has the ZIP code 46143. He joined the 461st Bomb Group in 1943. He should have no trouble remembering either the group or ZIP code.

Then it was "hug" time. The end of a great reunion. We can't say enough "Thank you's" to the commit-

tee: Harry, Alice, Otto, Catherine, Len and Grace. They did an exceptional job.

See you in Tucson in 1990!

Editors note: Thank you very much Millie for your great report on the reunion. You get this year's honor award for "Contributing Editor". I hope we can find others for reunion 1990!

* * *

WE ARE THE YOUNG AT HEART
THEY WERE THE HEART OF THE YOUNG

Top Row L-R

Pilot	John Young
Co-Pilot	Alexander Gulis
Engineer	William Griggs
Bombardier	Willard Wisheart
Navigator	Robert Casey

Bottom Row L-R

Ball Gunner	Warren Crook
Radio Operator	Charles Winchester
Top Gunner	Jennings Ashton
Waist Gunner	Leonard Comingore
Tail Gunner	William Hall

* * *

The Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society (AFEES) wants to contact all airmen that either escaped or evaded capture during the war. If you did either and are interested, contact Claude Murphy, AFEES, 16810 Boswell Blvd., Sun City, AZ 85351.

Jim Hardee, 764th, reports he visited Portland, OR to see his grandson. He spent time looking in phone books for George Best, his tail gunner. He also checked the American Legion post in Newport where George lived before the war. No luck. On the way home they went to an aquarium. He checked the phone book in the booth. It was not for the local area but George was listed in it. It takes perseverance but we can locate lost members. Write to Ed Chan.

B-24 Bomber Crew No. 42 Reunited After 45 Years



Crew Members, Left to Right

Ernest Wood	Radio Operator
Lester Stone	Top Turret Gunner
Joseph Donnelly	Engineer
Joseph Burgio	Tail Gunner
Earl Cunningham	Nose Gunner
Carl Vock	Bombardier
Eugene Thomas	Co-Pilot
Russel Battaglia	Ball Gunner

Taps has sounded for

Art Jehli	Pilot
William Leewright	Navigator

One June morning Carl Vock got a telephone call from Lester Stone. At first Carl didn't know who it was, then the memories came flowing back. This call started the wheels in motion for a crew reunion in St. Louis last October. Carl says, "45 years had passed and although our faces and physiques bore the marks of time, our hearts still swelled with the comradeship that made us a great crew." The eight men and their wives enjoyed the experience immensely and were heard to say as they drove out of sight, "See you in Tucson". Are there any other crews that have or can put together eight or more members for a reunion?

* * *

THE ALL AMERICAN

* * *

Your editor believes that the 461st Bomb Group should be conspicuously marked on the fuselage of the re-born aircraft. She was one of ours; we should be there. It will cost money but as a group we should have the pride to financially support this restoration project. The facts are this. Individuals within the 461st have contributed about \$1800 and the group put up \$500 for a total of about \$2400. For an additional \$7600 we can have the 461st BG printed within the white outline of the United States on the nose of the aircraft (see picture on page 1). If we could get 250 members to contribute \$30 (or some other combination of members and dollars) we could make it. Send no money!!! I have no idea what the sentiment is out there among you. If you favor this proposed project make a pledge. Send me a postcard with your name, address and amount pledged. If the response is great enough I will ask you to send in your money in the next Lib-er-er-er. Give it some thought and respond! We could fly again.

461st BOMB Group (H) 1943-1945, Inc.

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