



2019 Bomb Group Reunion

Our 2019 Reunion was held in Dallas, Texas Thursday, September 19, 2019 through Sunday, September 22, 2019. Our reunion home was the Wyndham Gardens Dallas North hotel (Farmers Branch), which provided complimentary airport shuttles to both Love, and Dallas-Fort Worth airports.

(Continued on page 4)

POW Status

POW Status for 461st Bomb Group Internees in the Soviet Union – 1945

by
Colonel Mark L. Brown
U.S. Army (Retired)

March - 16 April 1945 when his B-24 aircrew crash-landed in Russian held territory and were subsequently interned and held under armed guard by the Soviet Army.

Beginning in November 2013 I began what became a two-year quest to see if my stepfather (former Nose Gunner S/Sgt. James G. Erwin, 766th Bomb Sq.) qualified for the Prisoner of War (POW) Medal for the period 26

In short, the first official response was "Yes" (with a POW Medal sent to my mother) but then (following further inquiry by me and USAF historical research) changed to "No" (and return of

(Continued on page 8)

A Fainting Fall-Out

A Fainting Fall-Out, and A Fun Fall-Out

by
Robert M. Kelliher
Crew 89
765th Squadron, 461st Bomb Group

After a Marathon run in Alabama's High August Heat

The fainting fall-out was by me, on August 25, 1943, when I was an air cadet in the then U. S. Ar-

my Air Force. It occurred near the end of two months of pre-flight schooling at Maxwell Field, Alabama. Part of that schooling included rigorous physical conditioning under the direction of a trainer, whom we named "Tireless Joe." (Every cadet at a military school had one!) The "graduation ceremony" from his part of that phase of our training was a 7-mile "marathon run." Part of it was in some shade, in

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Taps

May they rest in peace forever

Please forward all death notices to:

Hughes Glantzberg
P.O. Box 926
Gunnison, CO 81230
editor@461st.org

764th Squadron

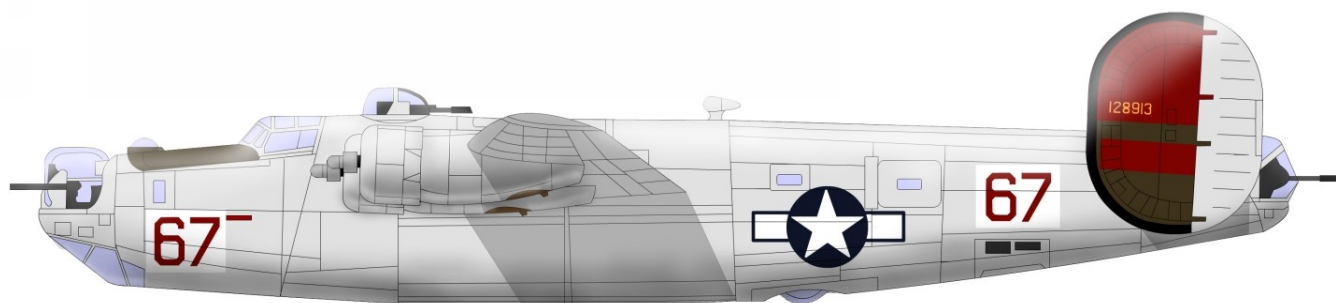
<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>DOD</u>
Bearden, Sidney R.	Chillicothe, OH	612	6/16/2019
Grew, Raymond E.	San Diego, CA	1034	9/2/2019

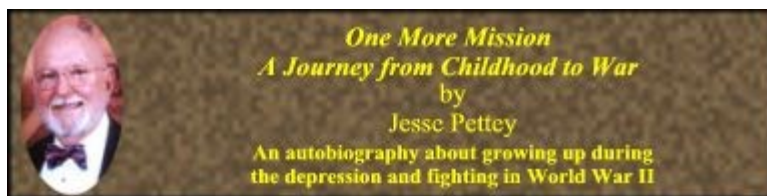
765th Squadron

<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>DOD</u>
Bonebrake, Case A.	Manhattan, KS	1092	6/13/2019
Doud, Robert L.	Cincinnati, OH	748	7/5/2019

766th Squadron

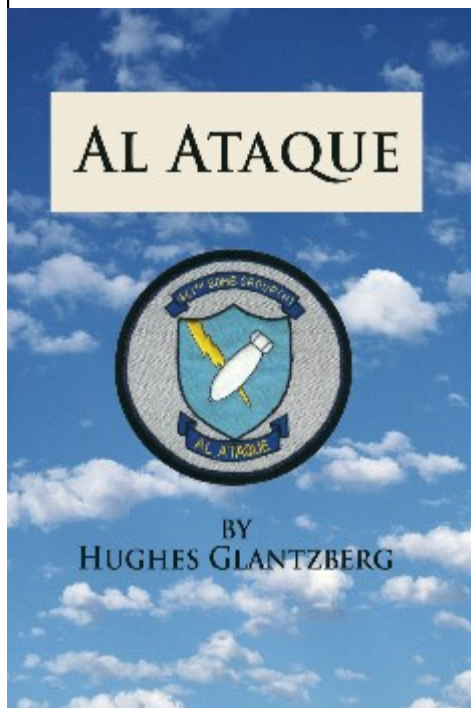
<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>DOD</u>
Petty, Jesse E., Jr.	Houston, TX	1092	5/25/2019
Blatz, Paul E.	Placitas, NM	1034	





With a special interest in World War II and the 461st Bombardment Group in particular, I found this book excellent. Most of the men who fought during WWII were in their late teens and early 20s. It's amazing to be able to read about their activities. Liberaider Editor

Available from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and Xlibris (at a 15% discount) (<http://www2.xlibris.com/bookstore/bookdisplay.asp?bookid=11013>).



Al Ataque

History / General

Trade **Paperback**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$26.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

ISBN: **0-595-41572-5**

413 Pages

On Demand Printing

Available from Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, Ingram Book Group, Baker & Taylor, and from iUniverse, Inc

To order call 1-800-AUTHORS

Trade **Hardcopy**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$36.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

ISBN: **0-595-86486-4**

Al Ataque is an excellent book that describes the preparation a bomb group goes through before being deployed overseas as well as the problems of shipping over five thousand men and supplies along with some eighty B-24 aircraft from a stateside base to a foreign country. The book details the establishment of Torretta Field which was used by the 461st for the duration of the war in Europe. The 461st Bomb Group flew two hundred and twenty-three combat missions between April 1944 and April 1945. Each of these is described in the book. Personal experiences of veterans who were actually part of the 461st are also included.



Music Bravely Ringing

by
Martin A. Rush
767th Squadron

This is the story of a small town boy who, during WWII, wandered onto the conveyor belt that turned civilians into bomber pilots. Initially awed and intimidated at the world outside his home town, he began to realize that this was an opportunity to have a hand in stimulating and challenging dealings larger than he had expected. He had a few near-misses, but gradually began to get the hang of it. His story is that like the thousands of young men who were tossed into the maelstrom of war in the skies. He was one of the ones who was lucky enough to live through it.

This book is at the publisher now and should be available early in 2008.

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Some of our reunion committee members arrived, Tuesday, September 17, 2019, and our numbers increased by the hour.

Wednesday, keeping with tradition, the reunion packets were assembled and the snacks and beverages were organized for the hospitality revelries. Dinner was on your own, with many great places to explore some Texas steak. For those who did not wish to venture off site, the hotel had a casual restaurant, to grab a relaxing dinner and watch some TV.

Thursday, the Dallas weather was kind to us, as it was sunny minus the blistering Texas heat. There was a steady stream of check-ins at the registration desk and the hotel lobby was humming, and not from a vacuum cleaner, but from the excitement of old friends reconnecting and new introductions.



Decorated Hospitality Room

Leaving the registration area, walking under an arch of royal blue, red and white balloons, you arrived in the large atrium where WWII theme music swirled in the air and were welcomed by a team from the municipality of Farmers Branch with gift bags. Next stop, was the reunion packet welcome table. This year we were blessed with bomb groups from the 98th, 99th, 376th, 451st, 455th, 460th, 461st,

464th, 465th, 483rd, 484th, and 485th. Wow!

At the hotel bar the drink menu included some the favorites of the 1940's, such as Tom Collins, Old Fashion, Manhattan, and the Daiquiri. Cookies, and candy such as bubble gum cigars, pink, yellow and mint green, candy cigarettes, and peanut butter bars to name a few were also available.

As the day progressed, more and more WWII Memorabilia was displayed in our hospitality room to reminisce or teach another generation about life in Italy during 1943-1945. As luck would have it, Gerald Weinstein, the son of Seymour S. Weinstein the Group Photographic Officer, 485th BG (Heavy) displayed a room full of black and white photographs mounted on poster boards and easels depicting rural Italy during the war years. These wonderful time period photographs spilled out into the adjoining hallways and into the hotel lobby. In addition, special thanks go out to David Webster for once again bringing a museum quality display of Army Air Force artifacts and memorabilia, including an actual .50 cal waist gun and a Norden bombsight along with many, many other items.



David Webster's display

At 6:00 PM in the banquet rooms there was an informal pasta buffet which was well at-

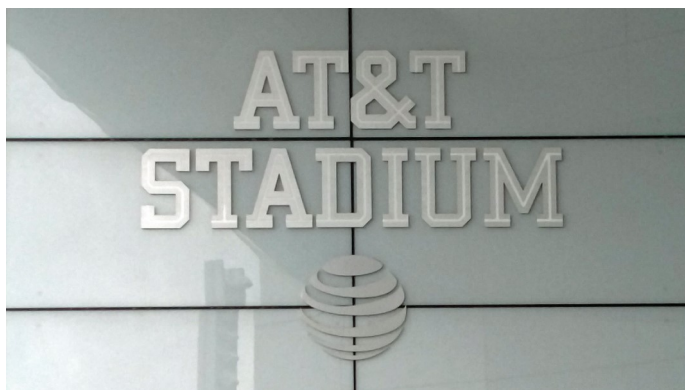
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tended by the veterans and their families. Just before 7:00 PM there was another surprise! The Mayor of Farmers Branch was ushered to the stage. He welcomed us and thanked our veterans, the last great generation for their service to their country. We transitioned over to our informal informational meeting where all the bomb groups in attendance were recognized; the Reunion Planning Committee, and an overview of the scheduled events for the weekend. At the conclusion of the informal meeting, the group dispersed throughout the hotel, some to the hotel bar, some in the atrium, some in the hotel lobby, and some to the hospitality room. We had once again taken over a hotel for a weekend. Late check-ins, conversations, and storytelling was in full swing. Such stamina.

Friday morning, the hotel breakfast buffet kicked off at 7:00 AM to feed nearly 300 hungry souls some scrambled eggs, bacon, hash browns, biscuits, gravy, and a cup of hot Joe.

At 9:00 AM we departed the hotel with three buses for the AT&T Stadium located in Arlington, TX. Go Cowboys!!

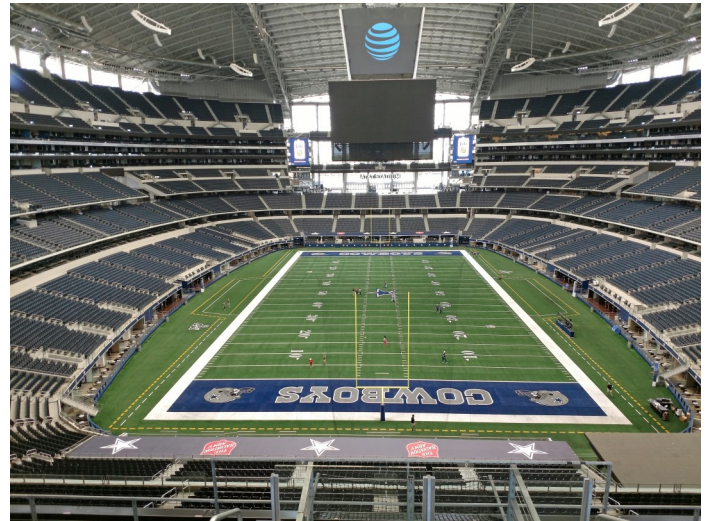


AT&T Stadium

The AT&T Stadium is more than the home of the Dallas Cowboys. It is a world of facts and figures about the world's largest domed

structure, as well as an art museum and classroom.

Our AT&T Cowboy Stadium Tour was complete with a gourmet lunch and drinks in the Stadium Club, and a group picture on the playing field.



Field view

Some interesting facts from our tour: three million square feet; steel arches that soar 292 feet above the playing field; supports the world's largest domed sports structure; 14,000 plus ton retractable roof that opens or closes in 13 minutes, one of the world's largest high-definition video screens; climate-controlled interior and more than 3,000 Sony LCD displays throughout the venue.

Others ventured off on their own to visit the Bush Presidential Center, Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza, shopping or just enjoyed their day at the hotel. However we spent our day, we had plenty of time for camaraderie with our friends.

The Social hour with a cash bar commenced at 5:00 PM, and the Individual Group Banquets were held at 6:00 PM in various locations throughout the hotel. After dinner there was a mad dash back to the hospitality room

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for additional banter.

Saturday morning after our breakfast buffet, we had a day to “stay in house” where we could visit, attend speaker presentations or attend a craft demonstration.

To our delight, Nancy Clifton, (483rd BFA) who is associated with the Chicago Botanic Garden and has appeared on Chicago outdoor decorating TV shows lead an informal crafts demonstration in one of the meeting rooms.

Nancy greeted the attendees as we entered the meeting room which was located off the hotel atrium. The room was set up with approximately eight round tables. Where to sit? Noticing at each round table there was a different seasonal collection of floral sprays, ribbons of various colors, widths, and textures, and entire spools of ribbon. Come to find out, that Nancy had created all these ribbons for us to touch, look at and take home!

Nancy gave a demonstration on how to create these wonderful bows at the center of the room. Nancy then walked from table to table giving us individual attention. Many of us not trusting our memory on how to make these bows once we were back home, utilized the video function on our phones so we now have Nancy’s expertise at our figure tips.

This was definitely a wonderful experience and we look forward to next year’s craft demonstration.

Shortly thereafter the mesmerizing veterans’ presentations took place in the atrium. Beginning at 10:00 AM in the hotel atrium there were presentations by our veterans and others regarding WWII and life in Italy. Today we had lunch on our own, and at 2:00 PM additional opportunities for interesting presenta-

tions, tales and oration were held in various breakout rooms throughout the hotel.

The legendary group picture of all the veterans in attendance was taken in the hospitality room. After the photo op, many attendees transitioned to the hotel bar in the atrium or to the Couture Ballroom for the Social Hour.

Prior to dinner, a superb high school ROTC unit presented and posted colors. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and the National Anthem was sung.

The wait staff was busy with thirty-one tables and ten guests per table. The evening meal was served at 6:00 PM and we ended the dinner program with entertainment provided by *The Ladies Liberty*. The ladies entertained us by singing popular songs of the 1940s and the Big Band era for an hour and ended their performance to a standing ovation. Some of us actually left our tables for the dance floor. Maybe next year, more of us will join in.



The Ladies Liberty

After dinner, the hospitality room was crowd-

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ed once again. Some of us in causal attire, others still in their formal dinner attire, either was a sight to behold

Sunday morning after the hotel breakfast buffet there was a Worship Service which was presented by Reverend Robert B. Oliver who has acted as Group Chaplain for the 376th BG for several years. Reverend Oliver is the son of a 376th Navigator/Bombardier.

Our Reunion Chaplain, Captain Chris Cairns conducted the traditional Memorial Service following the Worship Service. After the morning services, our numbers began to dwindle.

Lunch was on our own, and many chose to eat in the hotel mess before boarding the bus for the last tour on the weekend. Buses departed at noon for the Aviation & Space Flight Museum. This aerospace museum was established by Jan Collmer, William E. "Bill" Cooper and Kay Bailey Hutchison in 1988. The museum is affiliated with the Smithsonian Affiliation Program.

As we entered a 100,000 square foot building located at the southeast corner of Love Field, we stepped back in time to explore an expansive collection of aviation, space flight and vehicles focusing on the history of aviation and space exploration with an emphasis on the role of the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Some of the items on display were an Apollo 7 Command Module and a Sopwith Pup replica. After a fascinating afternoon, we boarded the buses one last time as the 2019 Reunion family.

The Sunday evening meal featured an informal "Farewell Fajita" dinner buffet with sixteen tables set. Chow time commenced at 6:00 PM. After dinner there was one last opportunity to retreat to the hospitality room. This was our last chance to share old tales, create new experiences and a final wrap for reunion 2019.

To our veterans who have been coined, "The Last Great Generation", as your sons, daughters, grandchildren, and extended families, we thank you for all your sacrifices for us and our country! We love and treasure you. See you in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2020.

Respectfully,
Mary Jo Hayes

The 461st Liberaider
461st Bombardment Group (H)
Activated: 1 July 1943
Inactivated: 27 August 1945
Incorporated: 15 November 1985

Officers:

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Glenda Price, Vice-President, 1621 Devoe Drive, Lincoln, NE 68506
Dave St. Yves, Treasurer, 5 Hutt Forest Lane, East Taunton, MA 02718
Mary Jo Belak, Secretary, 692 Harbor Edge Drive, Apt. 201, Memphis, TN 38103-0811
Hughes Glantzberg, Historian, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230

Directors

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The 461st Liberaider
Hughes Glantzberg, Editor, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230
The Liberaider is published twice yearly on behalf of the members of the organization.
Permission is granted to use articles provided source is given.

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the POW Medal). Although the final outcome was unsuccessful in getting my late stepfather the POW Medal, I think the final result was very well-researched by the USAF and reasonable.

Further the effort revealed a number of previously unknown historical records about the conditions under which the 461st Bomb Group (and other Army Air Corps) internees were held in the Soviet Union which may be of interest to Liberaider readers. The key milestones for my two-year effort follow:

25 November 2013 - The Army Times publishes an article (Setting the Record Straight by Kristin Davis) which detailed the successful effort of Army Major Dwight Mears, a history professor at West Point, in getting the POW Medal awarded posthumously to his late grandfather Lt. George Mears who was a Fifteenth Air Force B-17 pilot shot down near (and subsequently interned in) Switzerland. The medal is awarded based upon new language in Section 584 of the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act which allows the defense secretary to award the POW Medal to any service member held captive under conditions "comparable to those circumstances under which persons have generally been held captive by enemy armed forces during periods of armed conflict." Lt. Mears and 140 other members of the U.S. Army Air Corps who were interned and held captive in a prison camp in Wauwilermoos, Switzerland are awarded the POW Medal because of the harsh conditions in the camp which was run by a Nazi sympathizer later accused of war crimes. The article reminds me of my stepfather's experience when his B-24 Liberator was badly damaged while on a bombing mission to Straszhof, Austria and subsequently crash-landed in Russian held territory near Pecs, Hungary. My stepfather and his air-

crew were interned and held under armed guard until they were turned over to the International Red Cross in Odessa, U.S.S.R. for processing on 16 April 1945. The Red Cross issued the Americans an identity Card for Ex-Prisoners of War and arranged for their transport back to Naples, Italy on a British transport ship.

2 December 2013 - The National Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri receives (by Certified Mail) my "Request for Posthumous Award of the Prisoner of War (POW) Medal to WW2 Aerial Gunner S/Sgt. James G. Erwin, 461st Bombardment Group, Fifteenth Air Force." As supporting documentation I include a copy (front and back) of Jim's Identity Card for Ex-Prisoners of War, a copy of the telegram sent to his mother notifying her that her son was "missing in action over Hungary since 26 March 1945", a subsequent letter to Jim's mother from the Commanding General (Major General N. F. Twining), Fifteenth Air Force conveying additional details about Jim's loss, a copy of the telegram sent to Jim's mother notifying her that her son had "returned to duty in Italy" on 28 April 1945, a (front & back) copy of Jim's Enlisted Record and Report of Separation/Honorable Discharge (WD AGO Form 53-55), and an extract from the 461st Bombardment Group (Heavy) web site which lists "Erwin, James G." as a "POW" with a date shot down of "3-26-45".

29 December 2014 - After not hearing from the National Records Center in over a year, I made a telephone inquiry and learned that my original request had been lost and that I should address my resubmission to the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph AFB, Texas who now had responsibility for awards due veterans of

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the former U.S. Army Air Corps. The mailing address is: AFPC/DPSIDR, 550 C Street W, JBSA-Randolph AFB TX 78150. The E-Mail address is: dpsidr.taskmgt@us.af.mil The phone numbers are: (210) 565-2516 and 2520. I then called the AFPC, who I found to be very helpful, and followed my call with an E-Mail that included a complete copy of my November 2013 request as an attachment.

14 March 2015 - My mother receives a letter (dated 18 February 2015) from the AFPC notifying her that "After a thorough review of your husband's limited official military personnel record, we were able to verify award of the Prisoner of War Medal for being confirmed as a prisoner of war of the government of Germany from 26 March 1945 to Italy 28 April 1945"... "please accept the enclosed Prisoner of War Medal with our deepest appreciation for your husband's faithful and dedicated service to our country..."

16 March 2015 - I called the AFPC Awards Branch and spoke with a Mr. Nave to explain that, although I was very grateful for their work in awarding my stepfather the POW Medal, I was also concerned that the award could be in error because Jim was held by the government of the U.S.S.R. and not "the government of Germany". Mr. Nave advises he will have the case reopened and work with the USAF Awards Policy Branch and Air Force Historical Research Agency to determine if Jim would still be entitled to the POW Medal even though he was held by the Soviet Army (vice the German Wehrmacht).

22 July 2015 - I received a telephone call from Mr. Nave which conveyed that, following the discovery of several pertinent records in the 461st Bomb Group (Heavy) archives, the Air Force had determined that Jim was not authorized the POW Medal based upon a

written "Escape Statement" report prepared by the 461st Bomb Group (Heavy) Combat Intelligence Officer (Major Leigh M. Lott) on 30 April 1945 and other included documentation. The Escape Statement concludes that "Although the members of the [internee] party were not considered prisoners, at no time were they permitted absolute freedom." Therefore, the USAF Awards Policy Branch officials concluded that, although the internees were indeed held under armed guard by the Soviet Army, the severity of their confinement did not rise to the level experienced by POWs held by actual enemy armed forces. Mr. Nave followed his call with an E-Mail that included the historical documentation as a PDF file attachment.

5 September 2015 - My mother receives a letter (dated 24 August 2015) from the AFPC which regretfully explains that, based upon "documentation provided by the Air Force Historical Research Agency",... "we can no longer support our earlier verification of the Prisoner of War Medal for Staff Sergeant Erwin". "We ask you to return the Prisoner of War Medal mailed to you in February of this year in the pre-paid envelope provided with this letter."

In the end, I found the path of discovery to be interesting and the Air Force's final determination to be well-researched and reasonable. I am not sure that Jim would have agreed, however, given the pre-Cold War tension and rivalry observed by Jim and his air crew while his party was held under guard by the Soviet troops and the living conditions they experienced (being confined in railway box cars at times, etc.) during their transit and confinement. Regardless of the POW status, Jim recalled the overall experience as a tension filled adventure where he had the unusu-

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al experience of observing the Soviet armed forces firsthand as well as the extreme devastation that resulted from ground combat on the Eastern Front. Also the "adventure" culminated with great relief when his air crew was finally returned to Naples, Italy on 28 April 1945 and learned that the war in Europe was over soon thereafter (on 8 May 1945).

HEADQUARTERS
461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ARMY AIR FORCES
Office of the Combat Intelligence Officer

APO 520, c/o Postmaster
New York, N.Y.
30 April 1945

SUBJECT: Escape Statement

TO : Commanding General, Fifteenth Air Force, APO 520, c/o PM, NY, NY
Attention: AC of S, A-2.

THROUGH: Commanding General, 49th Bombardment Wing (H), APO 520, c/o PM,
NY, NY.

1. Forms for escape statements have been filled out by and are included for forwarding as follows:

- a. 2nd Lt. Randall L. Webb, O-771851
- b. 2nd Lt. Walter O. Reil, O-1302196
- c. 2nd Lt. Edwin F. Strauss, O-2064673
- d. 2nd Lt. Michael H. Milby, O-280404
- e. S Sgt. James G. Erwin, 36767696
- f. S Sgt. William T. Jones, 34354387
- g. S Sgt. Frederick J. Mc Grath, 32914310
- h. S Sgt. Thomas J. Reiland, 32780874
- i. Cpl. Donald R. Hall, 17092185

2. The above listed personnel, flying as a crew in aircraft number 49 of the 461st Bombardment Group, took off in a Group formation on 26 March 1945 to bomb the Straszhof Marshalling Yard, Austria. En route to the target the plane lost an engine approximately thirty (30) miles southwest of Pecs, Hungary. Shortly thereafter the plane lost a second engine and an oil leak necessitated the feathering of number 3 engine. Leaving the formation near Pecs, the plane circled the landing strip at that city, gave the Russian recognition signal for the day, and landed safely without incident. Russian soldiers came to the plane as soon as it had landed and directed that the bombs be removed. After this, the pilot, 2nd Lt. Randall L. Webb, taxied the plane to the opposite end of the airdrome from which it had stopped. There the Russians took command of the plane and stationed a detail to guard it.

3. Source No. 1 - 2nd Lt. Randall L. Webb, O-771851.

Crew of ten (10) persons was taken to the Commanding Officer of the Russians at the Pecs Airdrome who ordered them hospitalized for the night. At 2200 hours on 27

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March the crew was taken in the rain on open trucks to Scavoly, Hungary (46° 11' N - 19° 09' E). There the crew members met a Colonel Waugh and a Major Blanton. Colonel Waugh, a member of a B-17 Group in the Fifteenth Air Force, was in command of a party of American Officers and Men. The following day the party moved to Baja, Hungary (46° 11' N - 18° 57' E) by trucks. At Baja, Colonel Waugh had a total of eighty-eight (88) officers and men in his party. After several hours at Baja members of the party were placed in box cars to start a two day trip to Szeged. After arriving there the party waited ten (10) hours before beginning a three day train ride for Timisoara, Roumania. From there the party travelled on a Russian hospital train to Bucharest, Roumania. In Bucharest, Colonel Waugh took the party to the United States Mission where they were given some clothing and some Red Cross supplies.

At Bucharest seventeen members of the party, including S/Sgt. Roy G. Myers, 16083741, of Lt. Webb's crew, were left in a hospital in Bucharest. The remaining sixty-one (61) members of the party travelled on a good train from Bucharest to Galatz, Roumania. From there they took a truck to Reni, Roumania (45°25' N - 28°18' E). There they boarded a sleeper for Odessa.

After being in Odessa approximately two (2) weeks, the party left on an English transport on 21 April 1945. On 27 April the transport arrived at Naples, Italy. The following day the above listed members of Lt. Webb's crew were transported to Headquarters of the Fifteenth Air Force. On 29 April the above listed crew members were returned to the 461st Bombardment Group.

4. No member of this crew was at any time in enemy hands.
5. After this crew landed at Pecs a Russian guard was placed with it. A Russian lieutenant accompanied Colonel Waugh and his party from Baja to Odessa and remained with them until they went aboard the boat. Although the members of the party were not considered prisoners, at no time were they permitted absolute freedom.

LEIGH M. LOTT
Major, Air Corps
Combat Intelligence Officer

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER
JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH TEXAS

18 February 2015

AFPC/DPSIDR
550 C Street W
JBSA-Randolph AFB TX 78150

Mrs. Ann S. Erwin
44-103 Bayview Haven Place

(Continued on page 12)

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Kaneohe HI 96744

Dear Mrs. Erwin

This memorandum is in response to your 31 December 2014 request to the Air Force Personnel Center requesting award of the Prisoner of War Medal as well as the medal sent to you on behalf of your later husband, Mr. James G. Erwin. This office is responsible for verifying award of Air Force awards and decorations, and we are happy to provide a response.

After a thorough review of your husband's limited official military personnel record, we were able to verify award of the Prisoner of War Medal for being confirmed as a prisoner of war of the government of Germany from 26 March 1945 to Italy 28 April 1945.

Your husband's record has been forwarded to the AFPC/DPSOR, After Actions Branch, for correction of his Enlisted Record and Report of Separation Honorable Discharge (WD AGO 53-55). Upon completion, you will hear from their office by separate correspondence. Meanwhile, please accept the enclosed Prisoner of War Medal with out deepest appreciation for your husband's faithful and dedicated service to our country.

Sincerely,

TROY R. ARMITAGE, MSGT, USAF
Superintendent, AF Recognition Programs

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER
JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH TEXAS

24 August 2015

AFPC/DPSIDR
550 C Street W
JBSA-Randolph AFB TX 78150

Mrs. Ann S. Erwin
44-103 Bayview Haven Place
Kaneohe HI 96744

Dear Mrs. Erwin

This memorandum is in response to an inquiry by Colonel Mark Brown, U.S. Army, Retired, to our 18 February 2015 response to your original 31 December 2014 inquiry to the Air Force Personnel Center requesting the Prisoner of War Medal for your late husband, Mr. James G. Erwin. This office is responsible for verifying award of Air Force awards and decorations, and we are happy to provide a response.

Our 18 February 2015 response stated even though your late husband's military personnel records

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were very limited, we were able to verify award of the Prisoner of War Medal. This verification was based on a National Archives and Records Administration database which lists prisoners of war. Staff Sergeant James G. Erwin was listed in this database as being a prisoner of war, however, no location was listed other than "European Theatre: Hungary" and that the detaining power was "Germany". Colonel Brown contacted our office questioning the award of the Prisoner of War Medal as he detailed the events where your late husband's B-24 Bomber Aircraft landed near Pecs, Hungary where soldiers of the Soviet Union detained the crew until they were transported to Odessa and turned over to an English transport. The English transport returned the crew to Naples Italy where they returned to the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force. Our office was able to confirm these events with documentation provided by the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

Unfortunately, based on the information above, we can no longer support our earlier verification of the Prisoner of War Medal for Staff Sergeant Erwin and will be taking administrative action to correct his military records. We ask you return the Prisoner of War Medal mailed to you in February of this year in the pre-paid envelope provided with this letter.

We regret the scenario which led to the erroneous verification of the medal; however, we must follow Department of Defense and Air Force policy to maintain the integrity of each military award and decoration. Your husband's record has been forwarded to the AFPC/DPSOR, After Actions Branch, for correction of his Enlisted Record and Report of Separation Honorable Discharge (WD AGO 53-55). Upon completion, you will hear from their office by separate correspondence. Meanwhile, please accept our deepest appreciation for your husband's faithful and dedicated service to our country.

Sincerely,

TROY R. ARMITAGE, MSGT, USAF
Superintendent, AF Recognition Programs

=====

S/Sgt. James G. Erwin was assigned to the Farnham crew #42R, but on 26 March 1945, he was assigned to fly with Randall L. Webb who was the pilot of the following crew:

Randall L. Webb, Pilot
Walter O. Reil, Co-pilot
Michael H. Milby, Jr., Bombardier
Edwin F. Strauss, Navigator
William T. Jones, Right Waist Gunner
Roy G. Meyers, Left Waist Gunner
Thomas J. Reilland, Top Turret Gunner
Donald R. Hall, Ball Turret Gunner
Frederick J. McGrath, Jr., Tail Turret Gunner
James G. Erwin, Nose Turret Gunner

2020 Annual Reunion Albuquerque, New Mexico “The Land of Enchantment”



September 9-13, 2020

Again this next year the 461st Bomb Group Association will gather with a number of like minded groups to participate in a joint reunion. While maintaining our own organization, as do the other groups, the combined group will allow us all to still have the requisite number of individuals necessary to make it financially feasible to hold a reunion. What we have with a joint reunion is a good sized, vibrant group that is great to be a part of. All groups were assigned to the Fifteenth Air Force in Italy and many flew missions in the same formations as our beloved 461st Bomb Group. Groups from all five Bomb Wings of the Fifteenth are represented.

While planning is in the very early stages at this time, a few things are becoming clear that are “must see” activities.



The New Mexico Veterans Memorial is a “must see” venue.

It is a wonderful outdoor memorial with sections for all conflicts since New Mexico first came into existence and is very well done. The Visitor’s Center building is more like a small museum and is packed with interesting things to see. In a part of the Visitor’s Center is a large room that is begging to be used for a luncheon while we are there. Immediately out the back door of this dining room is a small, intimate amphitheater that would be a perfect venue for our traditional Military Memorial Ceremony where homage is paid to those who didn't make it home from Italy and those lost in the previous year.

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The National Museum of Nuclear Science & History is another “must see” venue.

This museum cannot be adequately described in a short space. It includes displays of scientific equipment of the day used to design and produce the bombs that led the end of the war. Also on display are various delivery methods including a B-29 along with other aircraft, missiles and an actual conning tower from a nuclear submarine.

In addition, members of the current 512th Squadron based at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, are planning an event for us on the base. This squadron traces their history back to one of our groups and for the past few years have sent a delegation to our reunions. They are now excited to host us for an event on Kirtland AFB. These plans are in the very early stages, but if what is hoped for and what will be proposed by our liaison to the base commanders materializes, it will be a special event.

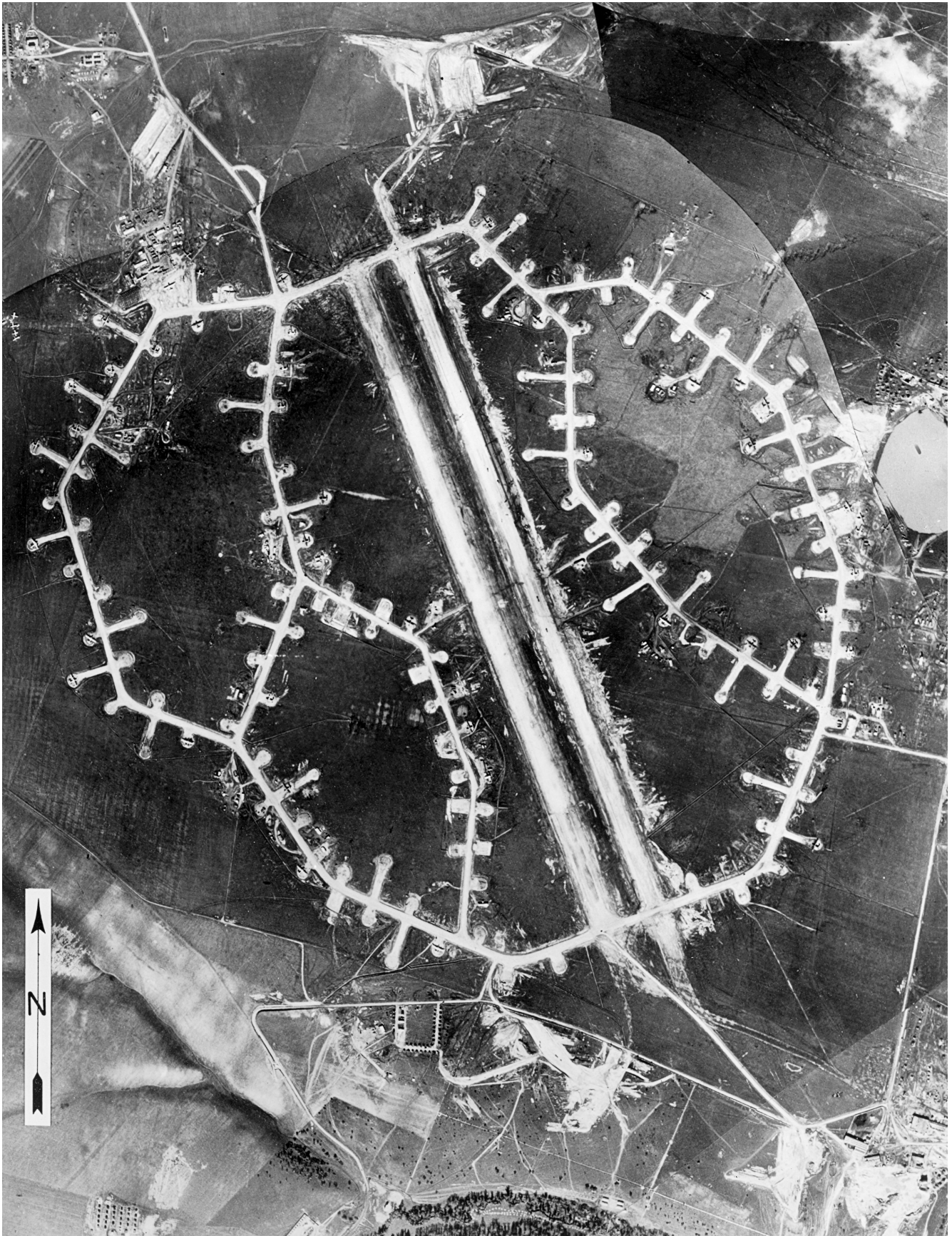
As of this writing, four potential host hotels have sent formal proposals to the reunion committee. I have recently returned from a trip to Albuquerque to visit these hotels and see the attractions mentioned above. Each hotel brings something unique to the table and each hotel has its own unique qualities and drawbacks. More information on the hotels is being gathered at this time but, suffice it to say that making a decision on which hotel to use as reunion headquarters will be challenging!

I had hoped to announce the hotel selection as well as the destination and dates in this issue of The Liberaider, but things have just not come together as quickly as hoped. Please visit YOUR website, www.461st.org for current information as it becomes available.

Additionally, there are many things to see and do in the Albuquerque area. Information will become available on these attractions and I would encourage you to not only come fellowship with us at the reunion but plan to spend some extra time in the area and take advantage of all there is to see. Please consider joining us when we meet again in Albuquerque.

Dave Blake

Reunion Committee Chair



Torretta Field nine miles southwest of Cerignola, Italy.

461st Bombardment Group (H) Association Membership

For membership in the 461st Bombardment Group (H) Association, please print this form, fill it out and mail it along with your check for the appropriate amount to:

Dave St. Yves
5 Hutt Forest Lane
East Taunton, MA 02718

If you have any questions, you can E-Mail Dave at treasurer@461st.org.

The 461st Bombardment Group (H) Association offers three types of membership:

- **Life Membership** – Men who served in the 461st during World War II and their spouses are eligible to join the Association for a one-time fee of \$25.00. This entitles the member to attend the annual reunions held in the fall each year, receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461st Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reunion.
- **Associate Membership** – Anyone wishing to be involved in the 461st Bombardment Group (H) Association may join as an Associate member. The cost is \$15.00 per year. No renewal notices are sent so it is your responsibility to submit this form every year along with your payment. Associate membership entitles you to attend the reunions held in the fall each year and receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461st Liberaider. You are not a voting member of the Association.
- **Child Membership** – Children of men who served in the 461st during World War II are eligible to join the Association as a Child Member. The cost is \$15.00 per year. No renewal notices are sent out so it is your responsibility to submit this form every year along with your payment. Child membership entitles you to attend the reunions held in the fall each year, receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461st Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reun-

Type of membership desired:		Life <input type="checkbox"/>	Associate <input type="checkbox"/>	Child <input type="checkbox"/> Father's name:	
First Name:		Last Name:			
Street Address:					
City:			State:		Zip:
Phone number:		E-Mail address:			
Squadron #:		Crew #:		MOS:	
ASN:					
Check No.:				Amount:	\$

(Continued from page 1)

woody up-and-down terrain, along the Alabama River, that the cadets called the “Burma Road”, as being akin to that challenging terrain in the Asian theater of WWII. Much of the run, though, was in the open terrain of a golf course’s perimeter, on a 101° hot, very humid day. Toward the end of the ordeal I was well nigh exhausted, and gasping for breath. The sight of our barracks, when it came in sight, was the only thing that kept me going. But then when we got to it, Tireless Joe hollered out, “We’ll go around the block a few times! We’ve still got a lot of time to kill!”

Well, that did it! With my illusion of heavenly relief burst, I almost blacked out on my feet. I began to “see stars”, and was overcome with a dazed feeling of imminent retching. I veered off, out of the loose formation, staggered back to my barracks, and into its latrine, knelt at a commode, and gasped and choked in dry heaves, unable to vomit.

When the first few other survivors of the ordeal finally burst into the latrine and found me, there was a hullabaloo about ‘calling the meat wagon’, and I passed out. When I ‘came to’, I found myself in idyllic heaven, in contrast to the ‘hot as hell’ ordeal I had been through. I was in the hospital, in a comfortable bed, with nurses plying me with cool drinks, and otherwise attending me. That heaven lasted through the next day, when the flight surgeon decided to play safe and keep me for further observation.

When I finally did get released, and back to my barracks, I ran into a blizzard of derisive taunts, along lines like this:

“Ah, here he is, then great Charles Atlas muscle man himself!”

“You and your ‘dynamic tension’ exercises! Phooey!”

“Shame on you, you chicken-liver wimp!

Etc. Etc. Etc.

When that barrage died down, I made a humble response like this:

“Sorry guys, that I let you down, in re our esprit de corps. I wish I was more of a credit to our barracks and Charles Atlas. I tried to be with you in spirit, as you were out there going round and round the block in that God-awful heat. But to tell the truth I was too distracted, on account of those pretty nurses who were fanning my brow and feeling my pulse.”

Long thoughtful silence. Suspicious looks! Beetling brows! Growing suspicion about a master stroke of a scam! Only the immanence of our move onto primary flight training kept it from becoming a ‘cause celebre’ on the scale of that of the dastardly “Pincher”!!

During my brief respite in that idyllic hospital heaven, there were a number of ‘dark side’ down-to-earth happenings:

Gunter field mechanic, 40, in delirium about scissor bolts, etc.

McCabe, in with ‘G.I.s’, reverts from C to D, bemoans loss of cadet pals.

John, cadet from Gunter, in with asthma, fearing possible washout.

Rich and Red, in hospital for a year, still waiting for C.D.D.

(Continued on page 19)

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Cadet Johnson, Gunter, beserk overnight, roaming, wrecking beds... pleading innocent, trying to implicate me.

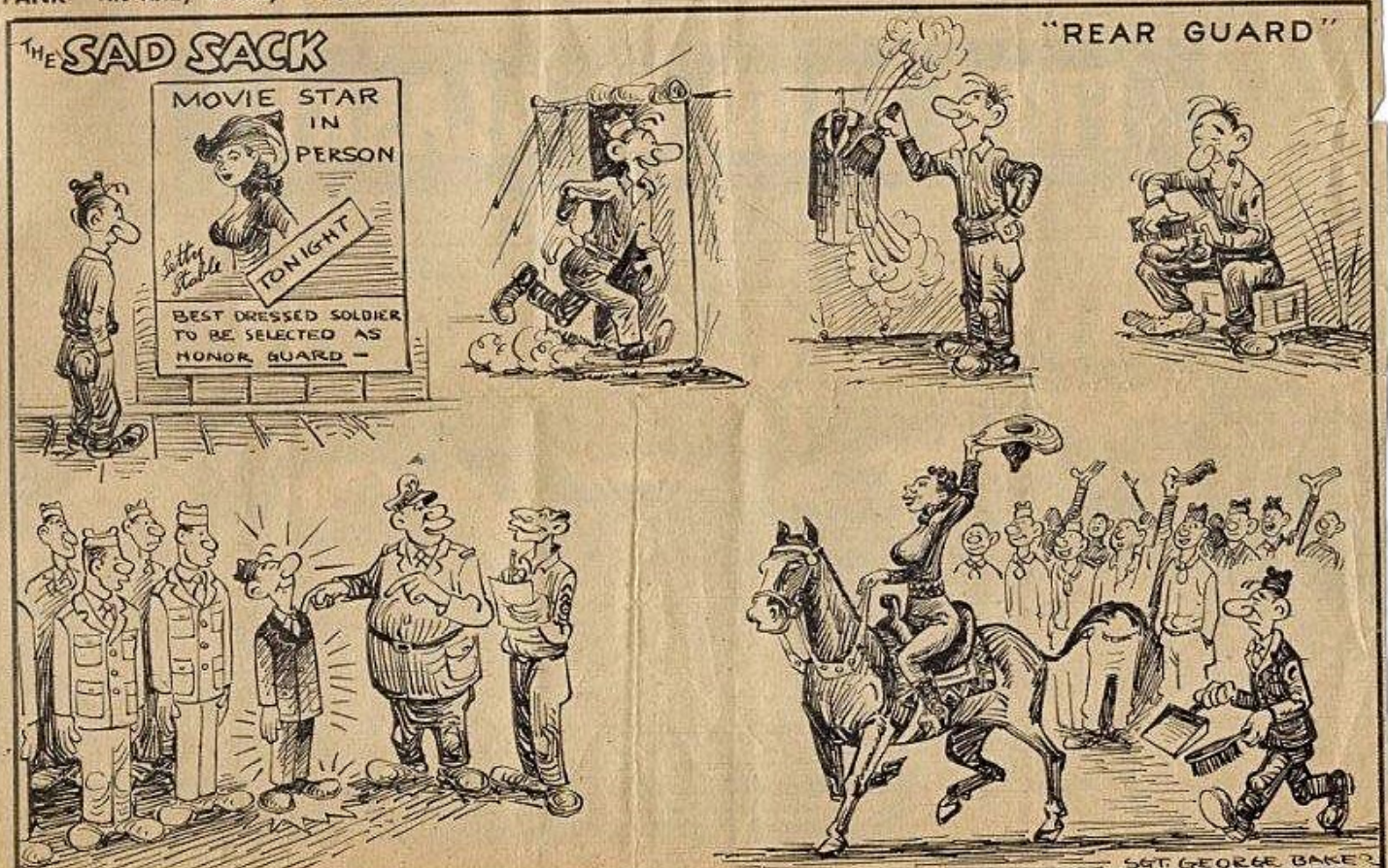
Ward surgeon grilling me, at length, before releasing me!

The aftermath caper of that "marathon run" was one of the highlights of fond comradeship in my brief active military career, in 1943-1945. It was also fondly akin to other highlights of comradeship, in other facets of lifetime relationships, with family, kin, neighbors, playmates, schoolmates, churchmates... and volunteer-mates. In that latter category, I had the good fortune ("cosmic blessing"?!) in my retirement in the latter quarter century of my life (1991-2014...) to

become very involved in worthy volunteer activities. That was muchly due to the example and urging of my exemplary wife, who had early-on entered the fray of promoting peace and friendship in south suburb areas of Chicago's "changing neighborhoods." Some of the volunteer activities I was privileged to take part in were:

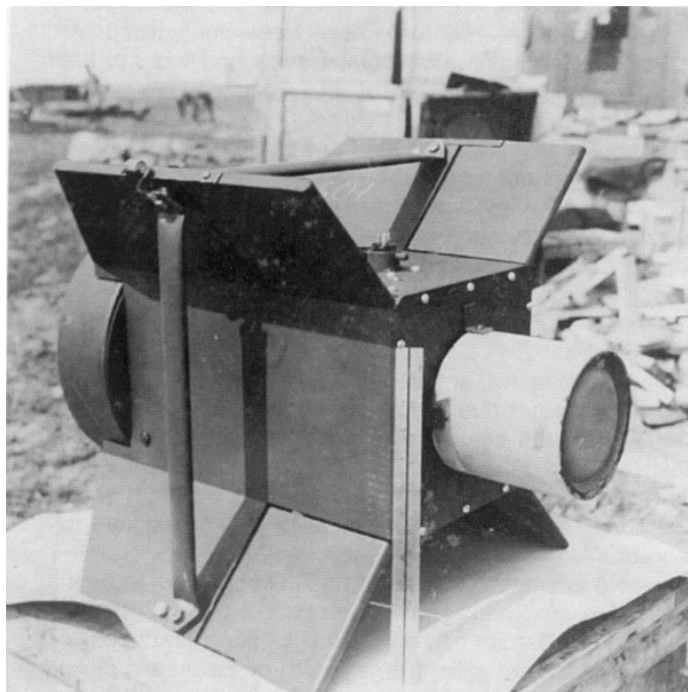
Blood donating and recruiting, local zoning board, area land use planning, prairie preservation, counter-attacking against sewage pollution of water, and against proliferation of garbage mountains (euphemism: "landfill"!), efforts to restore a worthy environmentally friendly industrial base, etc, etc. All with the super bonus of being rewarded with the gracious company of many interesting, productive like-minded people!

YANK The Army Weekly • JUNE 30



What is an AZON Bomb?

The Azon (AZimuth ONLY) Bomb was a 1,000-pound bomb intended primarily for attacking bridges and docks. The bomb was fitted with a special device on the tail of the bomb that allowed the bombardier to remotely control the direction of the bomb while it fell toward the target. These bombs were first used in early 1944 by H2X or radar bombing. This was later referred to as PFF bombing. Some groups used H2X to aim their bombs while others bombed visually. The results showed that bomb patterns were tighter with H2X than with visual sighting.

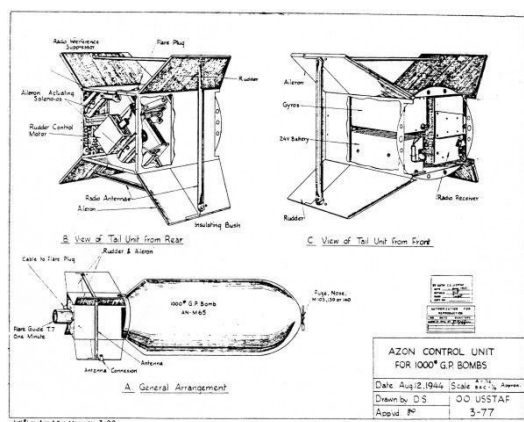


The Azon Bomb consisted of the tail fin unit [pictured above] being bolted to a 1,000-pound GP bomb. Four were usually carried, and the altitude was determined by weather conditions in the target area. Normally, about 15,000 feet was required to apply adequate controls for the missile. Crews were subjected to many alerts only to have a last-minute scrub because of weather. Azon is the father of “smart bombs” in use by military forces today around the world. Therefore, a label of suc-

cess must be applied to the total project, if not in terms of quantity, then most certainly one of quality. To a man, the crews are proud of their all-out efforts for even a limited achievement.

The ten Azon aircraft and crews were en route to the CBI Theater when they were diverted to the ETO for bridge and dock missions as D-Day pre-invasion operations. Training in local flight conditions and procedures began and continued for most of May, 1944.

Seven of the original ten aircraft met a grievous fate after the project was terminated in September. Some of the crews left the program before it ended to fly regular combat missions. Most of the crews survived the war, although individual members and one crew did not. Other Azon pilots volunteered for the top secret “Operation Aphrodite” project which was using the Azon unit to control crewless, explosive-laden B-17’s as radio controlled drones (pilots flew the B-17’s part way, then the “mother ship” B-24’s assumed radio control) to destroy selected targets in France. It was an unsuccessful venture of short duration.



The Azon (AZimuth ONLY) unit consisted of remote controlled fins attached to a 1,000-

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(Continued from page 20)

pound General Purpose bomb, and bombardiers altered the bomb's trajectory in flight with radio signals which moved the fins. Also, a collar was added to its midsection for additional control. Elevators were attached to the collar similar to preset trim tabs on the control surfaces of aircraft. The elevators created a stabilizing effect on the falling bomb, allowing more ease in altering the missile's azimuth. Gyros prevented a weaving effect of the bomb as various corrections were made. Compressed air kept the gyros spinning during the time of the fall. The radio system was powered by a dry cell battery whose life was about three minutes – more than enough to exceed time for a thousand pound bomb to strike a target.

Additionally, a smoke generator marked the bomb's flight path. It produced a streamer of red, white, or green (yellow was added later) to distinguish between individual bombs being controlled.

The bomb only had one fuse -- in its forward end. Settings for the fuse were instantaneous. Difficulty had been encountered early in the development stages using as little as one second delay, accounting for almost as many duds as explosive bombs. This created disadvantages in some types of targets where a delay fuse would have a more destructive force – as in the armor-like surface of bridge spans or concrete construction. But it did add a security factor, deemed necessary, in that the secret weapon would more likely be destroyed on contact rather than fall into enemy hands intact.

The Azon control system was designed to correct deflection errors, and testing indicated this could potentially be reduced to zero. But it would not improve range errors. Experience was said to have shown (in the latter stages of the program) that bombardiers were inclined

to be a little careless in solving range problems. Alternately, some bombardiers claimed the ability to shorten an Azon bomb's flight, but few, if any, boasted of extending one's range.

Weight of the control unit was only 96 pounds. However, bulkiness of the fins and collar on an assembled bomb made it too large for transporting in the standard 1,000-pound bomb racks. Thus, the aircraft had to be equipped with 2,000-pound bomb racks, and this normally limited the number they were able to carry to four. On some occasions, however, five and even six were transported.

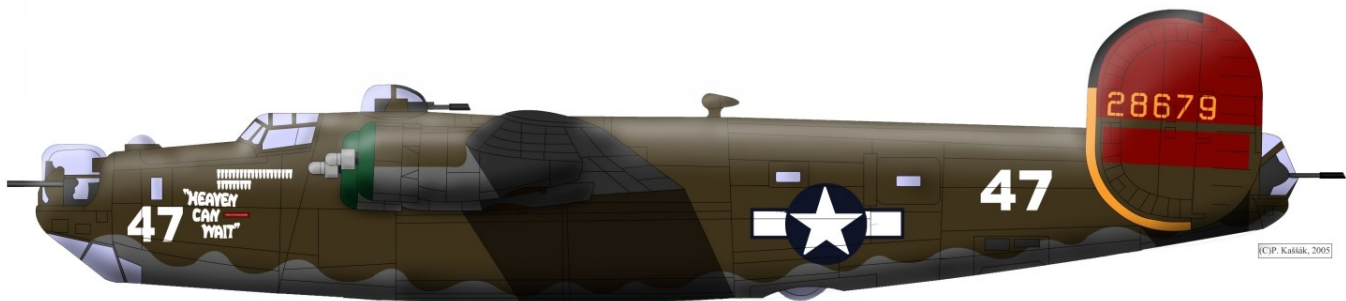


Each aircraft had three antennas mounted beneath its tail section for control purposes. One transmitted a signal on 475 cycles for left deflection, one on 3,000 cycles for right deflection, and the third at 30-40 cycles to activate the smoke generating system. All three frequencies were changed periodically to prevent jamming by enemy radio monitoring crews.

The transmitter was a standard Signal Corps type used in controlling model planes, ships, tanks, and drones. With a power output of 25-watts, the unit was capable of sending on 15 different frequencies. This equipment weighed 33 pounds, and modification to the B-24, for accommodating it, amounted to an additional 25 pounds.

461ST BOMB GROUP
FINANCIAL STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED OCTOBER 31, 2019

Cash Balance—November 1, 2018	
Checking account	<u>\$8,220</u>
Income	
Reunion income	51,830
Dues and memberships	<u>570</u>
Total income	<u>52,400</u>
Expenses	
Reunion Expenses	49,591
Liberaider expenses	706
Other expenses	<u>448</u>
Total expenses	<u>50,744</u>
Net income for the year	<u>1,655</u>
Cash Balances—October 31, 2019	
Checking account	<u>\$9,875</u>



©P. Kassak, 2005

In the Company of Friends

by
Milton Radovsky
767th Squadron

From the Torretta Flyer #11

A howling wind flattened the marsh grass fringing the small finger of land that jutted northward into the Baltic. Icy rain blew in gusts against the sides and low, sloping roofs of the long wooden barracks. The eight-foot high double fences and huge rolls of barbed wire between them reflected with a million sudden twinkles the searchlights sweeping back and forth in the unpredictable patterns that the German tower guards predictably used during bad weather.

The fourteen inmates of Room 3 of the northernmost barracks settled down to their usual after-supper routine of fun and games. Chappel spread his tools and sheets of tin on the long table in the center of the room. Fenner sat down opposite Chappel and opened his German grammar to the chapter on irregular verbs, and Davidson and Deene rehashed their last mission. The bridge players took their usual places at one end of the table, and the hearts players spread out on the lower level of one of the bunks ranged round the room against the walls.

Davidson went over to the stove in one corner, picked up two coal briquettes, and yanked open the firebox door. He threw the briquettes inside, hastily pulling his hand back from the searing heat, and slammed the door shut.

"I guess we can take this thing down," he said, eyeing the faded sheet of paper thumb-tacked to the wall over the stove. "'Through the Door in Forty-Four' doesn't makes sense

now."

"It didn't make much sense when we put it up a year ago," said Chappel.

"It made no sense at all in August, when Dave and I got here," said Keene.

"We better get out of here this year," said Chappel, tapping a tip along the longer edge of one of his sheets of tin. His voice rose.

"This is the eighteenth frying pan I've made here. All I dream about is frying pans. All night I see these goddam sheets of tin, and I tap-tap-tap miles of seams and cut thousands of ends off thousands of powdered milk cans. It's not right. I should be dreaming of broads no flying pans.

He stood up, pushing the backs of his knees against the bench, and his voice rose to a mock scream.

"I think I'll go mad; I tell you. MAD!"

"OK, Chappie, Ohhhhhkayyy," said Davidson. "Save it for Broadway, or at least for the next play we put on here. Try something new and different next time."

Fenner slammed his book down on the table. He stood up, stepped back over the bench, picked up his book and without a word retreated tight-lipped to the confines of his lower bunk. 'Home alive in Forty-five'?" said Keene.

"What do your German buddies think, Fenner?" said Chappie. Fenner spoke some German, and thus had official sanction from Captain Johnson to trade with the guards for the barracks. He turned away from Chappie,

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studying his grammar, yet not studying it at all.

“Fenner?” said Keene.

“When do the Germans think the war will be over?”

“They don’t confide in me!”

Fenner’s roommates never openly expressed to each other the vague feeling of distrust he aroused in them.

The bridge players erupted into a noisy argument over a questionable three-no-trump bid, and Davidson moved over to a vantage point for kibitzing. After watching a few hands, he came back and sat down next to Chappie. The wind rattled the outside shutters, which had long since been closed from the outside by a guard.

“Hey, Fenner, what do you and your Germans talk about?” he said. “I mean, besides the price of onions? Do they know what’s going on? Do they know anything about the concentration camps?”

“They’ve never heard about concentration camps. That’s a lot of propaganda, anyway.”

“Propaganda, my butt!” said Davidson. He leaned forward, peered into the deep shadow of Fenner’s bunk. “Is that what they say?”

“That’s what I say.”

“Christ! Don’t talk to that idiot,” said Keene.

“Who’s an idiot!” Fenner burst out of his bunk suddenly. Before the war Keene had been a bookie’s helper on the East Side of Chicago and was built like a toy bull.

“I’m sorry, Fenner,” said Keene. “You’re not

an idiot. Go lie down.”

Fenner stood there a moment, glaring at Keene who was calmly inspecting Chappel’s work. Then, feeling that he had defended his honor sufficiently, he sat down on the bench next to his bunk and reached for his book. Davidson climbed up on his bunk, over Fenner’s, by stepping first on the edge of the lower bunk, then heaving himself up with an obvious grunt. Fenner glared up at him. Fenner spent a lot of time glaring.

“I’ve told you a thousand times, keep the hell off my bunk!”

“Fenner, just how am I supposed to get up here without using your bunk?”

“I don’t care how you do it, just stay off!”

“Sure, Fenner sure. Say, Chappie, what are you going to do after the War? Maybe you could go into the tinsmith business.”

“Very funny, Dave, very funny.”

“How about you, Dave?” said Keene. “You had a bakeshop in New York, didn’t you?”

“Yeah. I had a good business, a good steady neighborhood-type trade.” He could almost smell the fragrance of the pastries, and the bagels.

Fenner snorted, as though questioning the size of Dave’s trade, the quality of his cakes, even the weight of his one-pound loaves of bread. There was a lot in that snort, Dave felt, and not having an answer for it troubled him.

The door opened slowly and Parsons walked in. He held the door open.

“Dave, Captain Johnson wants to see you in

(Continued on page 25)

(Continued from page 24)

his room.”

He wants to see me?” Johnson did not talk much to lowly second Lieutenants, especially if they weren’t pilots. “What about?”

“Maybe he’s lonesome for you.” Said Chap-pie.

“I’ll try to crowd him into my busy sched-ule,” Dave said from his perch. He landed on the floor beside Fenner with a room-shaking crash just missing Fenner’s left foot. Fenner jerked back, almost falling off the bench. Dave felt much better about not having re-plied to Fenner’s snort.

He walked out of the room and closed the door, and started down the long, drafty hall toward Captain Johnson’s room at the front of the barracks. He almost bumped into Feldman coming out of his room. It occurred to him that Feldman was heading for the la-trine, but he turned and walked with him.

“What’s up?” Feldman asked.

“Does Johnson want to see you, too?”

“Yeah. What’s up?”

I have no idea,” Davidson said. He won-dered why Parsons had avoided looking at him.

Inside, Captain Johnson stood looking out of the window. Rather, he would have been looking out the window if the shutters had been open. Davidson and Feldman stood just inside the door waiting for him to turn around. Finally, he did, and took a sheet of paper out of his back pocket, and slowly un-folded it. With the bare overhead bulb light-ing the front, Davidson could see through the

back of the paper that it contained what ap-peared to be two columns of names. Johnson looked up from the paper, first at Feldman, then at Davidson. His face had lost its ruddy color. It seemed to Davidson that he had dif-ficulty Speaking.

“I’ve just come back from a meeting with Colonel Riley,” he said at last, rushing his words out. “The Germans have ordered that all Jewish prisoners are to be moved into South Compound.” He looked away quickly, the paper shaking in his hand.

A star burst inside Davidson’s brain, causing him to lose sight of the captain momentarily, and almost lose his balance. Feldman stared at Johnson as though not understanding what he had said. When Davidson had parachuted into the foothills of Austria, he was prepared for the same kind of treatment the Germans had used on European Jews unfortunate enough to fall into their hands. Five months as an American prisoner-of-war in the com-pany of men who were his friends had not prepared him for this. He had forgotten.

“When are we supposed to move?” asked Davidson.

Tomorrow morning, right after rollcall.”

I’ll miss the bread distribution, Davidson thought. “What if they try to move us out of the camp completely?” Johnson just shook his head.

Feldman finally found his voice. “They can’t do it,” he said. “It’s against the rules of the Geneva Convention.”

Johnson looked at the floor. “They can do anything they want.”

(Continued on page 26)

(Continued from page 25)

Davidson turned and opened the door. Feldman followed him out into the hall, and closed the door. They stood there for a moment, looking at each other, seeing each other perhaps for the first time as a fellow Jew, not as fellow Americans. Without a word, they walked slowly toward their rooms, side by side. The hall seemed much colder, darker. They stopped in front of Feldman's room. Davidson had never felt particularly friendly toward Feldman, but he was reluctant to leave. When Feldman turned and opened the door to his room.

They know. Parsons must have told them. They know. What do they think of this? How do they feel about it? Are they going to let the Germans do this to me? I've read about the concentration camps. Have they?

Do they know about the death camps?

There was not a sound in the room. Even Chappie's everlasting hammering was silent. Everyone looked at the floor, at the wall, or out the shuttered windows. No one said a word as Davidson walked, wearily, over to his bunk. I wonder how the Germans found out, he thought. He climbed with an effort up to his bunk.

"I've told you a thousand times, Davidson," said Fenner. "Keep the hell off my bunk!"

"Goddam you, Fenner, you son-of-a-bitch!" Keene hurdled the table and smashed his ham hock fist against the side of Fenner's head.

Davidson heard nothing of the Scuffle. I wonder how they found out, he thought.



Standing (L-R): Radovsky, Milton (N); Ferguson, Paul W. (B); Alkire, Robert W. (P); Snively, Dale (CP); Lovett, William B. Jr. (RO/WG)

Squatting (L-R): Lawson, Donald W. (BTG); Cox, Fred C. (WG); Sanders, Kenneth A. (TG); Brown, Woodrow W. (E/TTG); West, William C. (NTG)

President's Corner

Veterans know this, I'm sure, but not everyone is aware of how the 461st Bomb Group fit into the war in Europe. I'd like to use this article to explain this a little.

If you have been reading the Liberaider for a while now, I'm sure you are aware that you can get a lot of information about the 461st by going to the website (www.461st.org). During WWII, the 461st was part of the 49th Bomb Wing along with two other bomb groups—the 451st and the 484th. The 484th shared Torretta Field with the 461st. The 451st was at another field nearby. These three bomb groups frequently flew missions together. The day before a mission, the 49th Bomb Wing would issue what was called an Operations Order providing a high-level view of the mission for the next day. The Operations Order would identify the target for the day along with the order in which the bomb groups would fly, the route that would be flown and the altitude each group would fly. Since the 49th Bomb Wing was just one of five bomb wings in the Fifteenth Air Force, the Operations Order would include some information about the targets other wings would be bombing. Upon receiving the Operations Order, each bomb group would determine the crews that would fly the mission and the aircraft they would fly. This information would be posted on the group bulletin board to let the crews know they would be needed the next day. The group staff would formalize the information received from the wing along with the detail information about the crews and aircraft in what was called a “poop sheet” in the 461st. Other groups called this a “pilot flimsy”. The poop sheets would be handed out to the crews during the briefing in the morning. After the mission, the crews would be debriefed and an Operations Report would be sent back up to the

wing.

As I said, there were a total of five bomb wings in the Fifteenth Air Force. Each bomb wing had a target and followed a similar pattern for bombing that target.

So how many aircraft could be flying on any given day? Each bomb group consisted of four squadrons and each squadron typically had twenty aircraft that could fly a mission. This meant that each bomb group could put eighty aircraft in the air. But there were three bomb groups in the 49th Bomb Wing and if each group put eighty aircraft in the air, the wing would have 240 aircraft in the air all flying to the same target.

What about the other wings? The other wings were not configured the same as the 49th Bomb Wing. The 5th Bomb Wing flew B-17s and consisted of six bomb groups. If each of these put eighty aircraft in the air, the 5th Bomb Wing would have 480 aircraft flying to a target. The 47th Bomb Wing had four bomb groups so they could put 320 aircraft in the air. The 55th Bomb Wing had four bomb groups so they could put 320 aircraft in the air. The 304th Bomb Wing had four bomb groups so they could put 320 aircraft in the air. Add these up and the Fifteenth Air Force could send 1,680 heavy bombers against the enemy. This doesn't include the fighter escort that flew along to protect the bombers.

The Fifteenth Air Force did a fantastic job to manage all these aircraft on any given day. On a rare occasion, the mission for the day was a maximum effort meaning all bombers flew against the same target. Timing was critical to insure that each wing was able to get over the target.

461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

P.O. Box 926
Gunnison, CO 81230

Phone: (970) 209-2788
Email: editor@461st.org



We're on the web!
Visit
www.461st.org

Webmaster Comments

The 461st Bombardment Group (H) was an organization of some 5,000 men who dedicated a year of their lives fighting to preserve our freedom. That year doesn't include training and equipment investment required. I can't begin to estimate the cost it took to train and equip those men for the year they spent in Italy.

But those 5,000+ men did not fight that war by themselves. There were a lot of other organizations that participated right along side the 461st. The stories of the men who served in the 461st are interesting, but so are the stories of the other men of other organizations. If you haven't explored some of the other websites out there, let me encourage you to do so.

The Fifteenth Air Force (www.15thaf.org)

had all the bomb groups stationed in Italy along with the fighters and support organizations. Down the left side of that website you will see the five bomb wings (5th, 47th, 49th, 55th and 304th). The 5th Bomb Wing contained six B-17 bomb groups. The 47th Bomb Wing had four bomb groups. The 49th Bomb Wing had three bomb groups including the 461st. The 55th and 304th Bomb Wings each had four bomb groups.

Starting with the Fifteenth Air Force, you can explore as deep into the organization as you want. There is also a Google search function down a couple of page down on the main page where you can key in a name to find out what organization that person served in. As you click through the website, new browser tabs will open in some cases—just close these to return to the previous tab.