



The 461st

Liberaider



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JUNE 2005

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

Diary

by

Walter J. Galloway

Navigator on Crew 10
764th Squadron
461st Bomb Group
15th Air Force
Headquarters in Italy
World War II

September 4, 1943 –

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Coming Home

This is the final article by Vahl Vladyka. This one covers his return to the States at the end of the war.

by

Vahl Vladyka

After the war in Europe ended on May 9th, time passed slowly while we pondered our future and counted our discharge points. Word had come down that we would be discharged from service based on a points system, priority being given to those with the most. Points were based on time in service

and overseas; battle stars; marital status; children, and a few other criteria. Cliff, with 80, followed closely by Bob, with 79, were our leaders, while Wally was last, with 53. To my knowledge, this bureaucratic system was effective only as a topic of conversation. Actual separations took place with all the systematic methodology of lemmings headed for the sea.

The remainder of the month dragged by with only four routine flights, the

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**461st
Bombardment
Group (H)
Association
2005 Reunion
See page 18 for
details and sign-up
information.**

Chapter Four

WWII Experiences

This is the fourth in a series of articles by Bob Jones. This one covers his time as a POW. Future articles in this series will appear in this space in subsequent issues of the Liberaider.

By

Robert K. Jones

As I said we arrived at the Barth RR station and debarked from the train at about 5 AM and were marched through town to Stalag Luft I that was about one and a half miles northwest of town. I remember that there were very few civilians observing our marching through the town.

The Stalag occupied about 40 acres of very flat and level land about a half mile from an inlet from the Baltic Sea formed by the Zingst Peninsula. The water was barely visible from the camp since there was a scrub-forested area between. The soil was very sandy and the water table was less than 5 feet below the surface of the ground.

As we arrived we were greeted with cheers and jeers from our POW cohorts who had arrived before us and were now old timers. They were lined

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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
hughes@hugheshelpdesk.com

or
Bob Hayes
2345 Tall Sail Drive, Apt. G
Charleston, SC 29414-6570
BOB461st@aol.com

Headquarters

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Hometown</u> | <u>MOS</u> | <u>Date of Death</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------|----------------------|
| Francello, Louis P. | Buffalo, NY | 502 | Apr. 22, 2004 |

764th Squadron

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Hometown</u> | <u>MOS</u> | <u>Date of Death</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|
| Baker, Robert | Lake Panosoffkee, FL | 757 | Unknown |
| Hilliker, Ken L. | Largo, FL | 747 | May 3, 2004 |
| Kurowski, John | Lorain, OH | 748 | Mar. 19, 2005 |
| Priest, Thomas B. | Mobile, AL | 748 | Jun. 11, 2003 |
| Scogins, Oscar | Little Rock, AR | 748 | Unknown |
| Veno, Vincent Walter | Arlington, VA | 1092 | Jan. 7, 2005 |
| White, James E. | Colorado Springs, CO | 566 | Jul., 1977 |

765th Squadron

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Hometown</u> | <u>MOS</u> | <u>Date of Death</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------|----------------------|
| Boudaghian, Harry | Ann Arbor, MI | 747 | Unknown |
| Fries, Walter D. | Nothampton, PA | 612 | Jan. 15, 2005 |
| Perdue, Virgil | Moline, IL | 932 | Sep. 21, 2001 |
| Schwisow, Lauren L. | Olympia, WA | 1092 | Jul. 29, 2004 |
| Stucklak, John | Scranton, PA | 612 | Nov. 23, 2003 |

766th Squadron

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Hometown</u> | <u>MOS</u> | <u>Date of Death</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------|----------------------|
| Bailey, Jack L. | Lansing, MI | 239 | Sep. 8, 2004 |
| Davis, Wallace R. | Amsterdam, NY | 747 | Jan. 7, 2005 |
| Ebbert, Clarence P. | Cement City, MI | 757 | February 9, 2005 |
| Vanderhoeven, Gerard | Santa Ana, CA | 2161 | January 18, 2005 |

TAPS (Cont.)

767th Squadron

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Hometown</u> | <u>MOS</u> | <u>Date of Death</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------|----------------------|
| Bosso, Guy V. | East Rochester, NY | 748 | Nov. 25, 2004 |
| Kendall, Ted | Churchville, PA | 1034 | Feb. 22, 2005 |
| McQuillian, David P. | North Wales, PA | 2161 | Apr. 9, 2005 |
| Rezendes, Gerald A. | Plymouth, MA | 757 | Nov. 8, 2003 |
| Silverstein, Hyman | Brooklyn, NY | 612 | Dec. 27, 2004 |

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nature of which now completely elude me, to alleviate boredom. Late in the month I was surprised to be told that we were one of twelve crews, out of our two or three dozen, to be selected to fly one of our squadron's aircraft back to the States, and after a thirty day rest and recuperation leave, we twelve would commence training in B-29's (According to the Group Website statistics, only ten of our squadron's aircraft actually flew home.).

To this day, I have failed to fathom what went on in Major Baker's mind when he selected us. Based on our past relationship, I might presume that he decided I really could fly a B-24, in spite of my personal shortcomings, or else he wanted to chastise me further by taking me with him to combat in the Pacific. I will never know, for Major Baker passed away before I attended my first Group reunion. In any event, the early end of the war with Japan, hastened by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ended all plans for B-29 training.

We had been assigned three passengers for the trip: George Kudrav, from Pittsburgh, a crewless bombardier, and ground crewmen Paul Lower, from Amanda, Ohio and the probably unwilling Joseph Hazzouri (It was he who was crossing himself, while I was buzzing the Adriatic Sea at about 50 feet.), from Scranton, Pennsylvania.

On May 29, we packed our personal belongings, and the next morning struck and folded our tents, climbed in #27 (*YOU BET*, the airplane serving as backdrop in our crew portrait) and took off for Gioia, where we first landed in Italy five months earlier, now our staging

point for the flight home.

After a week in Gioia, where I saw Bob Perisho, one of my fellow theater workers before I enlisted, we were sent on our roundabout way home. Our first flight of nine hours and five minutes took us directly to Marrakech, Morocco, site of our December debacle on our attempted sightseeing tour.

This time we were given free rein to tour the town, but it was not as much fun when not forbidden. I brought back a fez, which I needed, as my grandmother would have said, "like a hog needs a saddle", but it was worn by several of my family members at snapshot sessions after my homecoming.

Kudrav came down with a strep throat, delaying our departure three days. During our stopover, our crew members alternated 24-hour guard duty on our airplane and personal effects, and after one tour, Moose came to my tent and informed me that a man from Marshalltown was guarding the next aircraft. I hastened to the field and found Earl Brand, in civilian life a steam locomotive fireman whom my father had apprenticed. We had a good visit, and in the early 1950's, during my brief law practice, he became one of my few clients.

On another day, some of us walked to the flightline and cadged a ride on the then-modern C-54, a four-engine transport in civilian use called the Douglas DC-4. We were astounded by the power-assisted flight controls, flight engineer's seat between pilot and co-pilot, and a steerable nose wheel. What won't they think of next.

George recovered, and on June 10th, we took off for Dakar, in French West Africa, 15 degrees north of the

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equator and on the westernmost tip of the continent. Our flying time of eight and a half hours was longer than the distance normally would require, because of the proximity of the Atlas Mountains, 13,000 feet above sea level. After takeoff we circled for some time to gain sufficient altitude to make a safe passage, but thereafter it was a routine flight across part of the Sahara Desert. We landed at a hot, dusty, and windy airfield, described by Antoine Saint-Exupery, the French aviator- author, writing of his adventures in the 1920's, while helping establish and fly the first air mail route from Europe to South America.

Other than the heat, dust and wind, my only memories are of the airport guards— strong, friendly Senegalese colonial troops in tropical khaki shorts and short-sleeved shirts, with wrap leggings and no shoes. In retrospect I am reminded of Muhammad Ali's comment on Africans, after he returned from a championship fight in Zaire: "I just *thought* I was black!"

Next day we flew across the South Atlantic to Natal, Brazil, five degrees south of the equator and hot and steamy. We made the nine and a quarter hour flight at ten thousand feet to increase our ground speed and keep above tropical turbulence, but even so, we spent an hour and a half in the soup on instruments. Bob had fun playing with his new toy, a LORAN navigation system still in use (when this was originally written) by mariners and dated aircraft. As usual we made landfall right on course.

The following day was spent buying goodies for wives and other relatives and ourselves. Everyone purchased handmade short boots, made of supple, russet leather, priced at five dollars per pair; I bought two pairs. Also available at low prices were nylon hosiery and Chanel No. 5 perfume, absent from stores at home for years, both of which made a hit with my female relatives.

After two nights in Natal, we flew on June 13th to Atkinson Field, near Georgetown, British Guiana, now Guyana. We were awed by mile after mile of solid rain forest of the *Mato Grosso* and by the huge volumes of water flowing down the *Rio do Para* and the *Rio Amazonas*, the latter, where we crossed, being nearly 80 miles wide and requiring 20 minutes for our passage. My records indicate we also spent two hours on instruments.

Like horses nearing the barn, we were champing at the bit to be home. Realizing that our aircraft was headed for the cutting torch, we made no effort to spare the engines. Advancing our power setting and aided by a healthy tail wind, we cruised this leg of our journey in eight and three-quarter hours, averaging 232 miles per hour ground speed— racing, by B-24 standards.

Remaining at the field overnight, we were treated to a decent meal and entertained by a tall, slender, black pianist, who spoke excellent English with the accent of a peer. Next morning our flight was delayed by rain and poor visibility, and during our wait on the hardstand, Moose playfully began wrestling with Bob. Before our astonished eyes, Bob put Moose on the ground, backside down, afterward explaining that he had studied jiu jitsu, an ancient Japanese art of self-defense, based on the principle of using the opponent's size and strength against him.

After several hours, we finally were cleared, but I had to make an instrument takeoff, for which the pilot lowers his aluminum seat so that his eyes are below the windshield and relies solely on flight instruments to make the takeoff. Although I had spent many hours practicing this maneuver with instructors, this was the only time I performed it out of necessity, for visibility down the runway was only about a quarter-mile.

This leg of our trip was uneventful. My chart shows that we flew a direct route to Trinidad, then to Saint Lucia and Saint Croix, and finally, after five plus hours, to Borinquen Field, on the northwest tip of Puerto Rico.

This field, reputedly boasting the longest runways in the Army Air Forces inventory, was nearly back to civilization. Food was excellent, and we enjoyed chocolate malted milk shakes, made with real ice cream. From the veranda of the officers club, we had a beautiful view of sunset over the ocean. Once again I am reminded of a cartoon by Bill Mauldin. Two officers are admiring sunset in the mountains, and the captain turns to the major and speaks:

"Beautiful view. Is there one for the enlisted men?"

On June 15th, we flew an absolutely straight line course from Borinquen to Morrison Field, at West Palm

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Beach, Florida, en route passing over Mayaguana Island and Nassau, in the Bahamas. To this date, Florida remains the only state I have not visited, for we turned northward before making landfall and flew up the coast to our destination, Hunter Field, Georgia. Our flight lasted seven hours.

We were met at our parking spot by an officer, who gravely saluted and said, "Welcome home." We returned his salute and several of us kneeled and kissed American soil. Our welcoming committee of one bade us leave our belongings in the airplane and follow him, explaining that others would unload and take our baggage to customs. We were taken to the shade of an open hangar, where we were instructed by a medical officer to drop our trousers and submit to a "shortarm inspection", to ensure that we were not bringing venereal disease into America. After this demeaning procedure, we were ushered to a milk bar, where we were served ice cream or my choice, a full quart of milk in a glass bottle, which I drank without removing it from my lips.

Zealous customs guards confiscated the parachute I was smuggling home, hoping to be able to do some flying in civilian life, but other souvenirs, all of which I now have lost, made it through. *C'est la guerre*, one final time.

Our crew was scattered by troop trains to army bases near our respective homes, I to Jefferson Barracks, at Saint Louis, Missouri, and after a couple of nights painting the town with another officer awaiting orders, I finally was granted thirty days for rest and recuperation, not chargeable as leave.

I took the next train home, changing trains at Albia, in southern Iowa, to a one-car local, pulled by a gasoline-electric locomotive and dubbed the *Puddle-Jumper* by my father, who in later years served as its engineer. At the first stop, I walked to the engine and, recognizing the engineer, Rex Lippett, I introduced myself as "Mose" Vladyka's son and explained that I was on my way home from Italy. Flouting railroad rules in a burst of patriotism, Mr. Lippett immediately invited me to accompany him on the engine the remainder of the way, which I promptly accepted, for a scenic ride through the Iowa countryside, lushly green in the early morning light, in stark contrast to the drabness of poor southern Italy.

After we arrived at Marshalltown at 0705 hours, I secured my bags and took a cab home. My father and mother heard the cab door slam and immediately ran out the front door and out to the sidewalk. When I see Harold Russell's homecoming, in the wonderful William Wyler film, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, I still choke up, as I am while writing this, for that is exactly the way it was.

Vahl Vladyka

June 4, 1994/October 2000/July 2004

The following is a verbatim quotation from the final episode of a twelve-week PBS series entitled *SOLDIERS*.

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT IN WAR'S ESSENTIAL HORRORS, BUT THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR LINKS FIGHTING MEN ACROSS HISTORY AND SETS THEM APART. AN [ENGLISH] OFFICER OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR OBSERVED:

THE VETERAN HAS COMPASSION FOR THE CIVILIANS HURT, THE SOLDIERS SLAIN, EVEN THE ENEMY SOLDIERS. BUT, HAVING SURVIVED A HUNDRED PERILS, HE WOULD NOT HAVE THINGS OTHER THAN THEY WERE, FOR HE THINKS BETTER OF HIMSELF FOR HIS CAMPAIGNING DAYS. HOWEVER REGRETTABLE IT MAY BE, THERE ARE STILL A GREAT MANY MEN IN THIS WORLD WHO FEEL QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE COMMON RUN OF MORTALS, BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN UNDER FIRE. IT IS AS THOUGH IT WERE SOME SORT OF HALLMARK.

Considering the number of women, some in uniform and others as partisans or in the underground, who fought for France, Norway, Jugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and other German occupied nations, he might have added "and women", for I am certain they bear the same "hallmark". Our army nurses also have been under fire in many wars.

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up inside the fences as we marched by to their chant of "you'll be sorry" which we were already. Our contingent for that day was about 300 new POWs or Kriegies as we came to call ourselves.

As I said, the local civilians did not even seem interested in car arrival or passing through their area and the guards just treated us as another dull days work.

The first thing the prison authorities did was interview each one of us and make out an information card on each and assign each a number such as mine, which was 5027 and was stamped along with my name on a German type dogtag to hang around my neck along with my GI tags. Next after much waiting around we were sent through delousing and a welcome shower. I really applied the delousing compound and lye soap and I almost began to feel human again!

Finally about noon we were marched through the gates of a large (200 yard by 200 yard) barbed wire enclosure that was to be our home for the next 6 weeks. As we walked into Compound-2, as it was known, the prisoners who, were already there very carefully examined us and acknowledged anyone they knew by sight. There was a system of security based on personal recognition, which everyone was involved in and took part in. There were already over 2500 American Officers in Compound-2 and 3000 mostly British officers in Compound-1. Until someone, who was already there and accepted could recognize an individual and vouch for him, that individual was not accepted and almost ostracized by the entire POW population. Luckily some of our 461st group were already there and I had no trouble getting acceptance. Some POWs, especially fighter pilots, were not so lucky since they might not have a friend in the Stalag as yet to recognize them and vouch for them.

As we went in the gate, the guards stayed outside and for the most part we were on our own to a degree. The resident POW hierarchy welcomed us and offered us a wonderful bowl of boiled barley they had prepared in large field kitchen type units, which Compound-2, was blessed with. The barley had what

looked like raisins in it and tasted so delicious that I had nearly finished mine before one of our men discovered or one of the old timers pointed out that the "raisins" -were really a type of weevil that the barley was infested with. This did not bother me but some of our new group were still fastidious enough that they wouldn't eat any more of it, so the old timers finished it off with glee. It was the first real meal I'd had in a week

The camp was ultimately made up of four Compounds of about 2500 men each with not too close contact between them. One could stand back from the Compound-2 fence and yell at a man in Compound-1 but it was a 100-foot conversation.

The entire camp was supposed to be for officers with only a very few enlisted men to do the hard work. The Germans and British shared the tenet that officers were above dirtying their hands so they interred a few Sergeants in Stalag Luft I to prepare the officer's meals, etc.

Compound-1 was made up primarily of British, and a few American officers who had been shot down early in the war in North Africa or Dunkirk or elsewhere. Their buildings and facilities were very like a German Luftwaffe training camp which it may well have been initially, since it had small latrine facilities just outside each barracks as well as a supply shack, wash room, headquarters shack and a cook shack with adjoining messing area which was manned by the enlisted prisoners.

There was also a "Cooler" or solitary confinement unit where Kriegies were incarcerated for any infractions of German rules. Compound-1 contained 14 or 15 Blocks (barracks) of 200 men each.

Compound-2 was obviously newer and had 10 blocks of 250 men each similar to Compound-1. It had a large partially enclosed central building that served as a meeting, recreation and messing facility with the field kitchen equipment in one end where about ten enlisted POWs did the cooking.

When we arrived Compound-2 was overfull and we new people had to sleep and live in the corridors of

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their blocks which were made up of about 20 rooms of about twelve men to a room arranged along a central 8 foot wide corridor. Due to the overcrowding we were bedded down along the walls of the corridors on temporary cots and excelsior mats on the floor, which interfered with the foot traffic of the regular residents. We settled down to the boring routine but the over crowding caused some little friction with the men who had been there a while and felt we were intruding.

Compound-3 was under construction and we were all anxious to get moved to our new permanent quarters. During that first six weeks that we stayed in Compound-2 we learned a lot about their setup and systems, which was of great benefit to us later.

The Compounds were set up as much as possible to maintain the military chain of command in all things. The Germans encouraged this and adhered to the principle that officers were above manual work. Therefore there were no work details and consequently limited chance of escape.

Compound-1 or North compound as it was sometimes called was older and very well organized. Some of the English had been there since 1940. After such a long time they had a rapport with the Germans, to the extent that until about a year before our arrival they were allowed to give parole and go into town for over night or whatever. We could not give parole or leave the Stalag for any reason.

By our own rules, which were rigidly enforced, by our own personnel, we could not converse or deal in any way with any Germans except as approved by senior staff officers. There were one or two author-

ized Kriegie traders per compound who could trade for various items, which we might need. (Yeast, for example) The number one trading item on our side was cigarettes with soap a close second, both of which had high black market value in Germany.

One interesting item was our salaries, which naturally went on accumulating to our accounts, in the States, but the Germans officially paid us the same monthly salary as a German officer of the same rank. They didn't actually give us any Marks but kept and published on the bulletin board, a meticulous accounting of it, totaling up each month as much as \$300,000 for our compound. They then, totaled up the cost of things they provided us like paper, pencils, broken windows and the like. The two tabulations always balanced out each month.

Compounds 1&2 had fair libraries, which they had accumulated over an extended period, from items sent from home and okayed by German censors. Both of those Compounds even had what passed as theaters (Compounds 3 and 4 did not) where they produced passable plays and skits as well as showing an occasional movie, which the Germans allowed. I saw the original version of "Ecstasy" with a very nude Hedy Lamar running around in the woods. I think (know!) the Germans delighted in seeing how frustrated they could make us.

We finally had moving day in Mid-September, which was about the same time that we disconcerted the guards no end by all 2500 men packing our gear and lining up and marching to the gate and demanding that it be opened since the war was over and we were ready to go home. Its seems one of our senior

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

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commanders had made a bet of many candy bars that the war would be over and we would be out by the middle of September and we knew he had to be right. The German guards usually were easily shaken by such antics and this was no exception. They just had no sense of humor!

Our new compound was different in many respects from the other two, in that our blocks or barracks were composed of five large 24 man rooms and two smaller 4 man rooms arranged on each side of an 8 foot wide hall corridor. They were built atop 4-foot high pilings, which meant that there were no hiding spots for us below the floor but provided acres of good spots for the German ferrets to hide and spy on us at night when we were confined to our rooms. There were 11 such barracks arranged around the perimeter of the 240-yard by 240-yard area with a latrine and washing facility near the center flanked by a sump pond. There was another block close to the latrine, which the senior types made into a "Wheel" facility and Headquarters. The pond varied greatly in size depending on the amount of rainfall and amount of effluent from the latrine and the essence varied inversely to size. We Kreigies complained about the sump pond every chance we got but to no avail until the Swiss Red Cross reps who made periodic (three month) visits took up the cause and the pond was finally cleaned up and a septic tank installed when the war was almost over, which helped a lot.

Near the compound gate was a large concrete bin where we were required to deposit our tin cans and nothing else, but we Kreigies in our usual madder used it as a garbage dump which caused the guards to detail a group of POWs to clean it up. This made us POWs angry and we refused to comply. It was approaching a real showdown until the Red Cross types happened to be passing by and got into the hassle, to the degree that the Germans finally backed down.

Each compound had a complex barrier completely around the perimeter with one large 16-foot double gate. The barrier was composed of two fences made of 12-foot high posts about 4 feet apart. They were

strung with very heavy barbed wire 4 inches apart vertically and horizontally. There were two rolls of Concertina wire on top of each other between the fences. Additionally there was a warning wire about one foot high strung 12 feet inside of the fence which created a no mans land where no POW was allowed and was fair game to shooting for any violation. If anything landed in that area we had to get a guard to retrieve it that made for some rather lengthy football and baseball games.

I was in the third block to the left of the entrance gate and somewhat closer (only 50 feet) to the latrine than some. Also closer to the pond and its aroma. Our room was on the south side of the building near the center of the 140-foot side. The room which originally had 16 men and eventually had 24 was about 25 feet long by 16 feet wide with one door to the corridor and one 8 foot by 4 foot window with heavy shutters centered on the outside wall.

The 24 bunks provided by the Germans were about 2 meters by 1 meter with 4" by 4" corner posts that we were able to stack on top of each other to make them triple decked which was the most efficient use of the space we could attain. The bunks originally had solid bottoms composed of wooden 1"X4"X39" slats which turned out to be removable and served as our main supply of lumber for tunnel shoring along with rafters and joists from the attic area. The bunks had a 1 meter by 2 meter burlap bag filled with wood shavings or excelsior to an initial thickness of 6" that after a little use was only about an inch thick and hard as a rock.

I had a bottom bunk nearest the stove, which I coveted. Each of us was issued one GI type blanket that in the cold weather was inadequate. I sewed my blanket to form a sort of sleeping bag with two layers of blanket on one side and one layer on the other so that in warm weather I could have only one layer above and two below but when it was cold I had two layers above. For additional warmth we had our coats to place on top. We were issued two single sized sheets, which were exchanged for clean sheets every other month.

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There was a large 4-foot by 12-foot table and four benches in the center of the room. The only other item of furniture was a rectangular baseburner type of stove constructed of heavy sheet metal, which was utilized for both heating (only incidentally), and cooking. Since our coal ration was very limited we had to closely control the use of the stove.

There was no place to put personal belongings except under the bed, but this was only a minor problem since we didn't have many belongings. Each person had a nail on the wall near the door for his jacket or coat and space under the beds for a Red Cross parcel box to house his treasures such as chocolate, cigarettes, soap, shave gear, towel, toilet paper, etc. No one had any secrets from his roommates.

The life of a prisoner at any level is sheer boredom which most of us at that age had difficulty coping with. The crowded room in which we were forced to exist made for some animosities but not as many as might be expected. Most of us spent much of our time laying in our bunks or playing outdoor games or walking around the compound with friends. There were occasionally some near fisticuffs and harsh words in our room but nothing so serious as to require personnel movements as some rooms experienced.

The only thing one had to look forward to was eating if there was anything to eat. We were awakened before 8 AM in order to be dressed and assembled for roll call by the Germans at that time. We lined up in groups by blocks in files of five so that the guards could walk along and count the files and report the number present. We intentionally luffed around in and out of line in order to make it as difficult as possible for them to get an accurate count the first time. During the roll call, other guards that we referred to as ferrets, went through the blocks looking for contraband and escape evidence and materials. We spent a lot of time standing around and marking time during roll calls.

This roll call routine also occurred at 5 PM daily as well as any time that the guards wanted to blow the whistle in between. They did it if they suspected an

escape attempt or sometimes just to hassle us.

After morning roll call we went back to our room and had breakfast. This usually consisted of toast with jam or cheese as available and ersatz or instant coffee.

Now is a good time to iterate some of my recollections of our food situation. When all went well with our world, meaning when the trains moved on schedule and our Red Cross parcels arrived, we ate fairly well.

We were given, a German ration, which was supposed to be the same as a German civilian who did our level of work. This consisted of:

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Brat | ¼ kilo per man per day | 80% wood powder |
| Potatoes | ½ kilo/man/day | |
| Oleo | ½ kilo/man/week | from coal tar |
| Pea powder | ½ kilo/man/week | |
| Onions | ? | Sometimes |
| Barley | ½ kilo/man/week | Often |
| Sugar | ½ kilo/man/week | from coal tar |
| Coal | ½ (12" by 2" by 3") briquette/man/day | |
| Ersatz coffee | 1oz/man/day | |

There were occasional additions like some kind of jam made from coal tar and a little fruit for taste. Never any fresh fruit or vegetables but twice in my stay we had about a 1/4 kilo per man of Argentine corned beef and once some kind of fish which I turned up my nose at. Mostly the ground pea powder was moldy when we got it to the extent that it was unusable for soup but we rat-holed it away in the rafters above our room for a rainy day (never throw anything away). Twice I remember getting several barrels of sauerkraut but not at the same time as corned beef. One other welcome item was an occasional few barrels of pretty good beer that was barely a glass per man.

Now we get to the real food, which was the saving

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

grace in our diet! The Red Cross Parcel! American ones normally contained the following:

1 LB Kilm powdered whole milk
 12 oz can Spam or Corned beef
 1 lb raisins or prunes
 1 lb Sugar cubes
 1 Box of K-2 biscuits
 4 oz liver Pate
 8 oz Fruit Jam or Marmalade
 8 oz Velveta cheese
 8 oz Oleo (American but little better than German)
 6 packets instant coffee (very poor as compared to now)
 Small salts and peppers
 8 oz Tropical (no melt) Chocolate bar
 5 packs Cigarettes

A razor and blades, a toothbrush and paste, and other little goodies that made life easier. All this in a heavy cardboard box about 18 inches by 14 inches by 5 inches, which was very useful for storage.

The combination of the two rations meant that we had a larger diet than most German civilians or soldiers even if it were not too well balanced. With few exceptions we each received the above every week until mid February and it was up to us what we did with it.

In our room we put all the rations together except for the cigarettes and chocolate so the cook could use them for the common good. This was unlike compounds 1&2, which had common messes for the entire compound. We started out for the first couple of weeks passing the cooking and Kitchen police chores around on a schedule so that one man was cook and two others helped as KPs under his direction each day.

This ended when one day, the cook through nothing but stupidity burned a four-gallon bucket of boiled potatoes and I, in my usual diplomatic manner, proceeded to blow my top. There were some harsh words and after some cooling off it was voted that loud mouthed me would, in the future, be Chief Cook. There would be two kitchen police assistants each day, selected by roster.

This may explain why I have a pretty good recollection of what we got as rations and what was done with them. This worked okay for the rest of our stay although 3 new men did elect for the last couple of months to go on their own, which made some problems with scheduling of the stove.

At any rate from there on I had an occupation for a few hours a day but not much real work and I really welcomed the activity. Our main food was potatoes, which were usually available, doctored up with whatever we had to make them taste good. Spam is great fried or boiled as is corned beef but it goes much farther when crumbled and mixed in the potatoes.

The bread as I indicated came in loaves the size of our present 1½ lb loaf but weighed nearer ten lb. because they contained 80%+ sawdust and a very little of various grain flours. We had one good butcher knife of origin unknown, but which I wielded proficiently to make 1/8 inch thick bread slices which we toasted on the stovetop. The toast even went well with the German jam as well as the canned American jams and American type cheese.

The ersatz (German for substitute) coffee was made of seared barley and other grain hulls and really tasted terrible. Once in a while for lack of American parcels, we were issued British ones which contained among other things some tea and canned bully beef and canned Yorkshire pudding which some of the men liked but not I. About once a week I made a cake that was very hearty and went over well. My cake pan was made of Klim cans (more on this later) and was about 16" by 10" by 2" deep and was plenty for 24. For flour I had the KPs grate up K-2 biscuits to make flour to which I added grated chocolate bars, powdered milk, sugar, salt and some oleo and baked until it had a reasonable consistency to pass for cake. A small 2" by 2" piece weighed about a half pound, but was very filling and tasty.

I should remark that the food seemed passable as long as we got our ration of potatoes and parcels but occasionally late in the war the Germans substituted rutabagas or turnips for potatoes and none of us ever

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

figured how to make either of them eatable.

Our real food problems started when the Germans discontinued delivery of Red Cross parcels about mid February 1945, pleading a shortage of rolling stock from Rostock, where there were many parcels in storage. We offered to walk to Rostock and bring them to the Stalag, but to no avail.

At any rate trying to live on the German ration caused me to lose down to about 115 lbs. before a few parcels were issued again about the first of April. I was not alone in the weight loss situation; in fact, I was not half as bad off as the larger men.

We had stored many pounds of powdered peas above our room and began to utilize it when some enterprising cook discovered that we could sear it and get rid of the mustiness so that it could be utilized as a tasty thickening for gravy and such. Any change of menu was usually welcomed.

The best meal I had was the result of an unusual accident. Seven of us were playing poker one February night in one of the four man end rooms, when it was very cool and foggy outside such that we couldn't even see the German flood lights 100 feet away. A little before midnight there were a series of solid thuds against the wall of the room we were playing in.

While some of the men went to complain to the "goon watch" about letting a ferret get so close without alerting us I peeked out the window and saw 4 ducks laying on the ground still alive but stunned, so I went out, at risk of being shot if a German saw me, and picked them up and brought them in and skinned and dressed them. The next day a few friends and we poker players had the fresh roasted duck with whatever I found to go with it. That was one of the few times during my stay there that I had fresh meat and the only time it was fowl.

As I indicated there was much time to kill and not much to occupy it. There was less than 50 books in our, so-called, Library initially but it did grow some. Almost every one spent at least two hours a day

walking around the perimeter of the compound just inside the warning wire usually in profound conversation with a friend, discussing everything and nothing. I must admit that I learned a lot about other parts of the USA and about how people in other areas lived, worked, played and thought.

In that environment one has lots of captive audience. There were a few chess and checker games around to be checked out at the library and they got a lot of use. Some enterprising souls scrounged materials and made their own games as well as many other things, which I will tell about later.

There were basketballs and hoops but no courts and the same goes for volleyball which got a big play since it only required a ball and net in spite of the rough uneven terrain. There were several footballs that were kept in playing condition in spite of extreme conditions and wear. There were several football teams and leagues formed and play had no season in the Stalag.

There were many big games played with some drawing large galleries and much interest. The most interesting game was played on Thanksgiving Day 1944 in our compound between the champions of compounds 2 & 3. The rules called for eleven man teams playing touch football with referees, umpires and all the trimmings just like back in the States. The touch had to be made with both hands on the ball carriers back.

It was very cold that day and the ground was frozen solid in addition to being rough. There were about twenty players on each team including subs. Between the two teams there were, as nearly as I can remember, at least twenty former All-Americans on the rosters. There was little or no padding and most of the players were big. I do not remember who won the game but there were 5 broken bones that day and I watched one ball carrier fly 20 feet through the air when he was "touched" by a 240 lb. ex-pro tackle from Green Bay.

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

There was some softball play but very limited because the ball was hit or thrown out of the allowed areas too often and the guards usually took much time before recovering them or letting the Kreigies recover them. We did a lot of calisthenics and sitting up exercises and I should say that I was petty good at that.

Playing cards were in short supply until the Thanksgiving Season parcels arrived with a pack per parcel in them. Many of us made makeshift decks to use for lack of the real thing. I played a lot of card games of all types but mostly Poker! Our poker games were worth a little explaining because they took much perseverance, patience and time.

There were seven of us who played regularly after our evening meal, from about 7 PM until 1 AM, in spite of "lights out" being at 9 PM. We usually played in one of the smaller 4 man end rooms so we wouldn't disturb anyone since 3 of the men in the room were regulars in the game. There were a couple of spares who played if a substitute was needed. We had no money so we used cardboard chips labeled \$1, \$5, and \$10, so that at the end of each night's session we had to update each members account of his -"owings" to each other. This usually took until about 2 AM.

The Thanksgiving RED CROSS parcels had in addition to canned turkey some extra goodies like Bicycle playing cards. Before that we played with an old German deck, which had been played with so much that the deck had swelled to more than an inch in thickness and the corner markings had been worn off and restored many times. Additionally the face cards were labeled Knave for Jack, Duchess for Queen, Baron for King and Jester for joker. As you can imagine it was difficult to read the cards to know what you held when the lights were on, but after lights out we passed around a single candle so that each man could see his cards. Then the dealer called the cards as he dealt them, which made for a lot of memory work. I couldn't do it today!

After we got many new decks in our holiday Red

Cross parcels the play was easier and faster. The final result of over nine months of play was that one man owed another 800 dollars, which they settled for a wristwatch. I owed another man 25 dollars for which I gave him a very fancy check drawn on my account at the Bank of Bennington. Harold Roe the bank President paid the check, but did not deduct from my account in return for my letting him keep the check which he had framed and hanging in his office for many years.

With 24 men in the room we soon knew every thing about everyone's past since we lay awake after lights out and conversed because we weren't tired enough to sleep. I missed a lot because of the poker games but it seemed like I knew everything that went on anyway. It's an old cliché about the tired jokes but in all truth we had told the same jokes so many times that as we lay there someone would just say a punch line and everyone would laugh uproariously. We never did resort to a number system as I heard some did.

Some of us used our spare time to be industrious of a sort. My big thing was making containers (pots and pans) from Slim Cans. I made many pans of all sizes and storage vessels for food as well as for personal goodies.

I developed a system using a locking "C" seam with string which I had boiled in wax in the seam to seal and water proof it. I spent many afternoon hours cutting up cans and flattening them to make new pans, since the life of a pan was short. I also taught other Kriegies my art and some improved upon it. One of our men made an oven which sat 2 feet above our stove with the chimney smoke passing through its baffles to provide much better baking capabilities. It also made better toast from the bread we had.

Others developed ways to utilize our other food cans. Several made a thriving industry of melting the heavy lead sealing material from the corned beef tins and making wings and medals that they designed. All this was labor intensive but what else was there to do. No TV!

Mail Call

The following was extracted from a letter Bob Kelliher wrote to one of his grandsons.

After I finished flying training in the southern U.S. in early 1944, I was sent to Lincoln, Nebraska, to be assigned a crew. Then with hundreds of other crews, we were sent to Mountain Home (in the desert!) in Idaho, near Boise, for about two months of combat training, consisting of practicing flying in big formations, cross-country navigation, aerial gunnery, and accurate bombing using Norden bomb sights. And most important of all, rapid evasive action, after "bombs away" to get out of flak alley! After that we were sent to Topeka, Kansas, where some got new B-24 Liberators from the factory to fly overseas. My crew, and most others, were sent to Newport News, Virginia, and sailed on Liberty ships in a big convoy of 50 ships that took the whole month of October to cross the Atlantic.

I was in the 765th Squadron of the 461st Bomb Group of the 15th Air Force in Italy, near Cerignola, and got in only 18 of the 25 missions of a "tour" (we were "tourists", but didn't know it!) before the war ended in May 1945.

As a possibly interesting aside, on May 6, 1945, to celebrate the end of the war in Europe, this entire 15th Air Force, maybe nearly a thousand heavy bombers, was sent aloft to fly in formation in a victory parade over headquarters in Caserta, near Rome. This was to benefit General Hap Arnold, not us air crew members. We were at low altitude for us, only 10,000 feet at most, it was a very hot day, making the air very turbulent, and holding position very difficult, so we were working hard and sweating and cussing all the way, including cussing Hap Arnold. To add insult to injury, the P-51 and P-38 fighter planes that came along and provided "escort" and "target cover" kept criss-crossing through and in front of our formations, getting us bounced around by their prop wash. They even did it in the "target"

area. Over a real target, where hellzapoppin with flak, they would be discreetly absent.

Robert M. Kelliher
765th Squadron

* * * * *

1945 the Air Command sent over only half of the trained bombardiers. I was one of those left. I had heard that my old crew was shot down over Vienna in March. Today, 2005, I was scanning your website and WOW there was some of my old crew listed. I couldn't find my co-pilot, navigator, armorment gunner, or waist gunner:

Robert W Jennings 0-836486
Richard Ming Navigator
Raymond J Nelson 17181224
Everette E Bradfield 34989251

Any word would be good.

Thank you.

Will Johnson
0-2073386
Will2Johnson@aol.com

* * * * *

We received a very nice letter from the Embassy of Greece, Washington, D. C., which I am copying for your information:

Dear Mr. Willliam Meincke:

In response to your letter dated January 14, 2005 we are pleased to inform you and Mr. Louis Henley that concerning the awarding of commemorative medals to the Veterans of World War II the Greek Government issued the Presidential Degree #493, on December 28, 1983.

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According to the provisions of the Degree, those qualified to receive medals are for those individuals who served under the Hellenic Armed Forces or in units of Allied Forces and participated in operations in Greece during the period 28th of October 1940 through 8th of May 1945.

The documentations, which are entitled to the medal and should be submitted, are the following:

- Certification by the United States Department of Defense, or a copy of the Log Book which shows the military operations and the military unit in which the applicant was enlisted. Particularly, for those who have served in the Air Forces, it is necessary to be proved that they landed in any Hellenic Airfield or that they attacked, as crewmembers, on any target within the Greek territory.
- A statement that shows the service offered or the military operations, which they took part in, or

any other document which proves the right to such an award.

- An affidavit showing that the applicant has never been convicted in Greece.

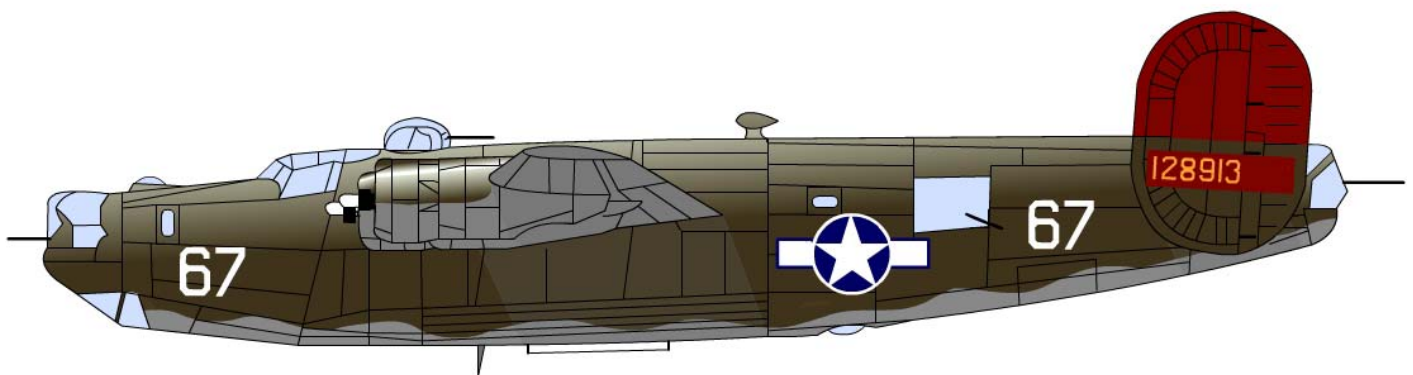
Finally, we would like to assure you that the medal it is available and it is a great honor for our Embassy to communicate with Veterans of the World War II.

Should you have any questions or you need further information please do not hesitate to contact the Assistant Air Attache, Lt. Col. A. Christodoulou (202) 234-0075 or (202) 234 -0561 ext 122.

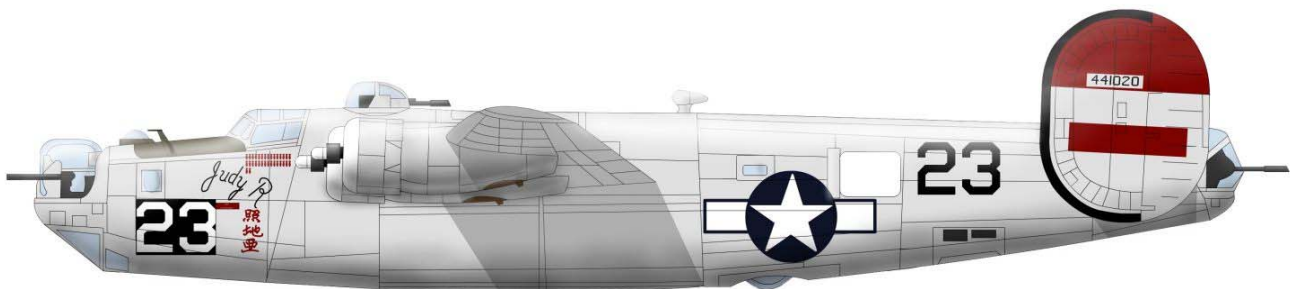
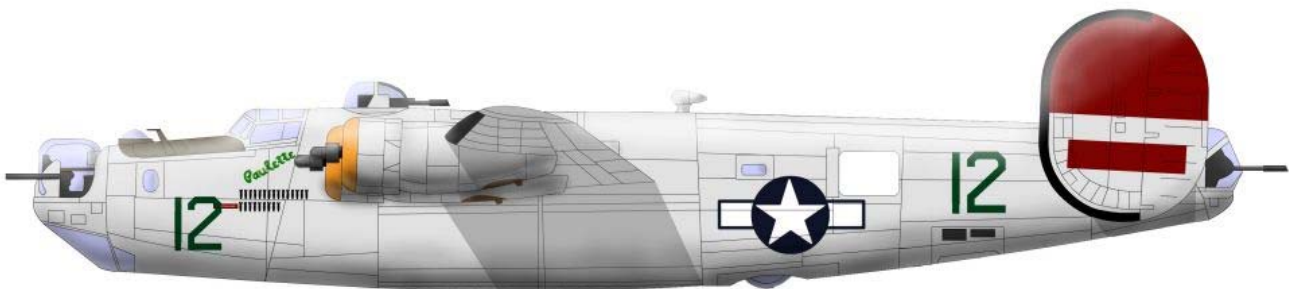
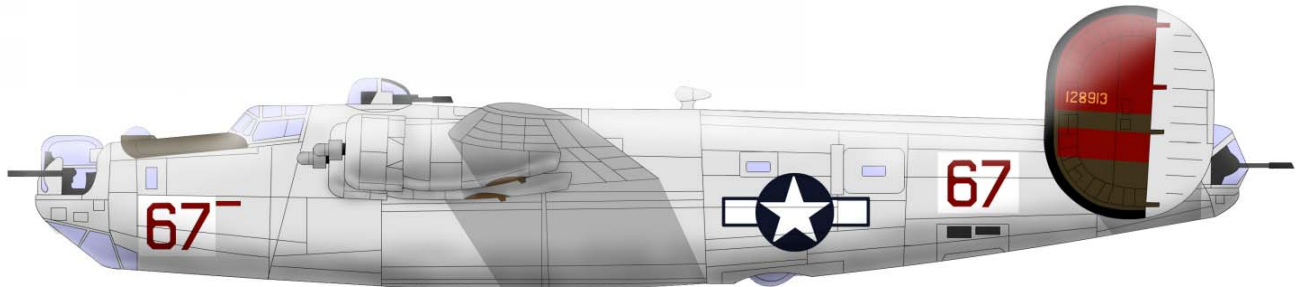
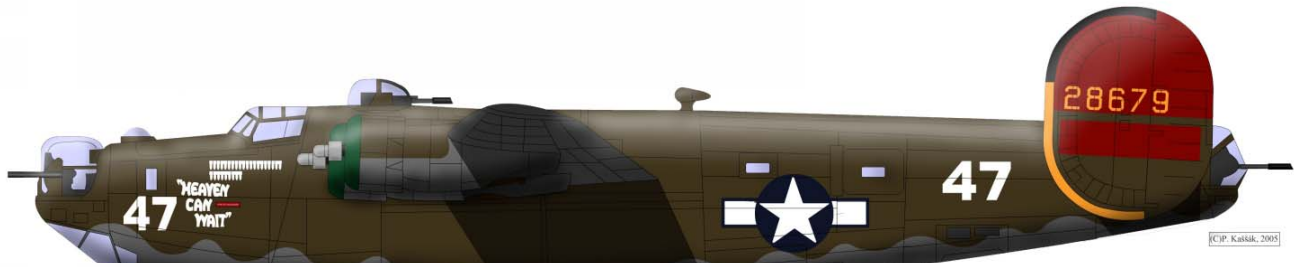
Sincerely,

Lt. Col Athanassios Christodoulou
Assistant Air Attache

William A. Meincke
rmeincke@earthlink.net



The following images were donated by Peter Kassak. http://www.kaso.ahoj.sk/the_15th_usaaf Thanks, Peter.



Hyman Silverstein

by
Harvey Silverstein

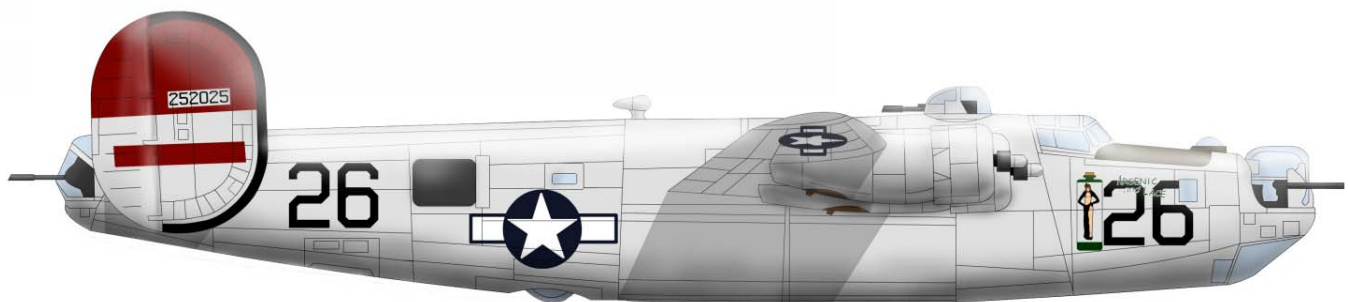
With a heavy heart, I report the passing of my father Hyman Silverstein, who died in Brooklyn, New York on December 27, 2004. He was 86 years young, but let me tell a little bit more about his life.

He was born and raised on the Lower East Side of New York, growing up in a tenement and coming of age during the Depression. A graduate of Seward Park High School, he worked as a machinist in the Brooklyn Navy Yard before enlisting in the Army Air Corps in 1942. He told me he enlisted under the belief that it was safer than the infantry, but I don't know if the facts would bear this out.

Only in the later years of his life did he begin to speak of his military service, which is typical of the modesty of many of his generation. He participated in 44 missions with the 461st Bomb Group, 767th Squadron, as a waist gunner. He had high praise for his entire crew, and I understand he spoke with a few of the fellows (Arthur Hewitt and John LeMieux) in recent years. There are two pictures of the crew that I found on the Internet. One can be found at www.461st.org/Riley.htm, where the crew is standing under an airplane. The other is also on the 461 website, in the unknown photos section - the second

picture from the top on the right hand side. This crew is slightly different from the "Riley" crew.

After the war, he operated a produce stand in the Essex Street Market in his old neighborhood in Manhattan, specializing in bananas and tomatoes. He married my mother, Gloria, in 1951, settled in Brooklyn, and raised two sons, my younger brother David and me. He worked long hours in the market, and later on in the US Post Office, so that his children could get the education that he didn't. He took care of his own aging parents. Upon retirement, he was able to spend more time at the activities he truly enjoyed, such as playing handball with his cronies at the boardwalk courts in Coney Island, a good cigar (when mother wasn't around), playing craps at the casinos in Atlantic City, the New York Yankees, gardening at Floyd Bennett Field (the man could really grow those tomatoes), traveling to places like England and Israel, and bragging about the achievements of his children (whether or not we deserved it). He successfully fought off prostate cancer, and didn't complain about it. He loved his family, his community, and his country, and in the last year of his life was very concerned about the loss of his "brothers" in Iraq and Afghanistan. As his son (and I speak for my brother also), I will remember his honesty, generosity, and the way he always rooted for the underdog. I will honor him, and those who served with him in the 461st Bomb Group, as heroes.



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:

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

- **Life Membership** – Men who served in the 461st during World War II 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 \$10.00 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 \$10.00 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 reunion.

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|------|
| 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 #: | | | ASN: |
| Check No. | | | Amount: | | | |

Charleston Travel and Cruise Center

*1525 Sam Rittenberg Blvd., Charleston, SC 29407
800-868-0132 843-556-8646 843-556-3365(fax)*

May 20, 2005

Hello Liberaiders,

Our 24th Reunion will be held at the Hilton Washington Dulles Airport. The Hilton is a full-service upscale hotel with an indoor pool, outdoor pool, and fitness center. The hotel is conveniently located, with easy access to important sights and attractions. Check in and registration will begin Wednesday, October 19th, 2005. We have day trips scheduled for Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Thursday, October 20th, we plan to visit the newly opened Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Museum. The Center was named in honor of its major donor, and features a large aviation hangar in which aircraft are displayed on three levels. Visitors can walk among aircraft and small artifacts in display cases located on the floor, and view aircraft hanging from the arched ceiling on elevated skywalks. We will have a casual hamburger and hot dog "cookout style" meal Thursday evening.

Friday, October 21st, we will tour the WWII Memorial, as well as the Korean, Vietnam, and FDR Memorials. Afterwards we will stop at Union Station for lunch and free time to shop and explore. The Squadron Dinner will be held this evening.

Saturday, October 22nd, we plan to visit Arlington National Cemetery. We will take the tram tour from the visitor's center which will give you the opportunity to view the Kennedy gravesite, observe the changing of the guards at The Tomb of the Unknowns and much more. Later, the buses will drop us off in Georgetown for lunch and free time to enjoy this historic district. The annual Dinner and Dance will be held this evening.

The reunion will conclude Sunday, October 23rd with the Memorial Breakfast.

Please complete the Registration Form and return it to Charleston Travel as soon as possible. Also enclosed is a Hotel Information Sheet. I look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

*Bob Hayes
President, 461st Bomb Group*

461st Bomb Group-Reunion 2005

HOTEL INFORMATION

DATE: October 19-23, 2005

LOCATION: Hilton Washington Dulles Airport
13869 Park Center Rd.
Herndon, VA 20171

ROOM RATES: \$79.00 per room per night plus tax

RESERVATIONS: 1-800-HILTONS /OR/ 1-800-445-8667
The agent will ask for a booking code.
Our booking code is: **BOM**
Major credit card required for guarantee.

PARKING: Free

DULLES AIRPORT SHUTTLE: Free shuttle operates 24hrs/day*
***NOTE: This shuttle does not operate from Reagan Airport.**

Be sure to make your room reservations prior to September 30th, 2005.

461st Bomb Group
October 19th – 23rd, 2005
 Washington, DC

NAME _____ SQUADRON _____
 SPOUSE _____
 CHILDREN/GUEST NAMES _____
 NAME(S) FOR NAMETAGS _____
 ADDRESS _____ CITY _____
 STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE _____

Registration Fee _____ @ \$10.00 per person subtotal _____
 # of persons

Oct. 20th
Trip to nearby Udvar/Hazy Air and Space Museum
 _____ @ \$14.00 per person subtotal _____
 # of persons

Oct. 20th
Hamburger/Hot Dog
Dinner _____ @ \$20.00 per person subtotal _____
 # of persons

Oct. 21st
Washington DC Tour _____ @ \$20.00 per person subtotal _____
 # of persons

Oct. 21st
Squadron Dinner _____ @ \$28.00 per person subtotal _____
 # of persons

Oct. 22nd
Arlington Cemetery Tour _____ @ \$25.00 per person subtotal _____
 # of persons

Oct. 22nd
Dinner and Dance _____ @ \$43.00 per person subtotal _____
 # of persons

Please select One (1) per person:

Oct. 23rd
Memorial Breakfast _____ @ \$19.00 per person subtotal _____
 # of persons
 ___ Sliced Roast Sirloin ___ Baked Filet of Sole ___ Grilled Chicken Breast

GRAND TOTAL _____

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS REGISTRATION FORM AND MAIL WITH CHECK TO:

Charleston Travel and Cruise Center
Attn: Kelly McKenzie
1525 Sam Rittenberg Blvd.
Charleston, SC 29407

(Continued from page 1)

This diary begins with my graduation as a navigator and 2nd Lt. in the Army Air Force at Selman Field, Monroe, Louisiana. After graduation, we met in an auditorium where we got our assignments as to what planes we would be navigating and the airbase. I was told B-29's were located at Mountain Home, Idaho, so I chose to go to Mountain Home. According to the information on B-29's, they would be used against Japan, could fly above flak, and Jap fighter planes were very inferior to that of the Germans.

September 14, 1943 – Arrived by train to Mountain Home, Idaho, and was loaded into the back of an army truck with others assigned to Mountain Home. As the truck approached the airbase, I began seeing more and more B-24's, not a single B-29. I asked a Sgt. Sitting next to me why the B-24's were on a B-29 base; he told me it was a B-24 base. That was a real shocker; instead of flying in a high altitude B-29 in the Japanese War theatre, I'll be in the aircraft that was my very last choice, the boxcar, flying coffin, B-24's against the Germans and "Goering Luftwaffe". I arrived at my headquarters at 2:30 P.M. and on the bulletin board I read that I was assigned to crew 10, Lt. Wastman was the pilot and crew leader. I asked if anyone knew where Wastman was and a Lt. told me he was taking a shower. I went into the shower room and yelled, "Where in the hell is Wastman?" and a tall good looking Swede putting on his clothes answered, "Who the hell wants to know?" He introduced himself as the best pilot in the world, and asked if I knew how to navigate. I told him I knew absolutely nothing about navigation. He introduced me to the co-pilot, Frank O'Bannon, bombardier, Mike Doshan, radio man, Tibbets, and Engineer, Johnson. The remaining four gunners hadn't been assigned to the crew yet.

October 18, 1943 – Reassigned to Wendover Field, Utah, to join the 461st Bomb Group, 764th Squadron. We still haven't met the four gunners needed to complete our crew to ten.

October 21, 1943 – Started our leave en route to our next airbase, Hammer Field, Fresno, California. Mike, O'Bannon and I headed towards Chicago together.

October 29, 1943 – Starting back from leave – caught my train in Huntington at 4:34 A.M., met Mike in Chicago at 8:30 P.M. just before our train was due to leave for California. We had the new government Pullman beds, the best car on the "Challenger" train.

November 1, 1943 – Arrived in Sacramento two hours late; missed our train; all buses were crowded so we hitch-hiked the 200 miles to Hammer Field, Fresno. We made good time; caught four rides here and beat both the bus and the train to Fresno. One ride was with an old timer driving a Ford Model A; said it was the only car he had owned and had never caused any trouble; he really speeded it up for us; did almost 45 MPH. Mike and I reported to the base late that night in Fresno.

December 25, 1943 – Back from a navigation flight that started on the 23rd. Arrived back in Fresno at 3:00 P.M. While on the flight, we landed at Muroc Lake the night of the 23rd; took off on the 24th. But bad weather forced us down on Christmas Eve at the Bakersfield, California airport. Christmas Eve was really dull; no place to go and nothing to do but eat; at least the food was good. We flew back to Fresno as soon as we got clearance on the 25th. After arriving back at our base, most of us went into Fresno to hit the bars and liven things up for the balance of Christmas Day.

January 19, 1944 – Our full crew, crew chief, and three other passengers took off for our first port of embarkation; landed at Hamilton Field, near San Francisco at 3:30 P.M. Our crew consisted of the four officers, Vern, Frank, Mike and myself, and six enlisted men, S/Sgt. Johnson – engineer and waist gunner, S/Sgt. Tibbits – radio and waist gunner, Sgt. McKinstry – nose turret gunner, Sgt. Rohde – ball turret gunner, and Cpl Charland – tail turret Gunner. T/Sgt. O'Larry is our crew chief. 160 N.Mi., 184 S.Mi..

January 28, 1944 – Took off for Phoenix, Arizona this morning; arrived at 4:30 P.M. Some of us visited town for a while. Also, while we were at Hamilton Field, we visited San Francisco several nights

(Continued on page 22)

(Continued from page 21)

and it is quite a city. The last night there Vern, Mike and me were just getting ready to start back to our base (Hamilton Field) when one of the officers from the base found us and told us to get back to the base at once; we were hitch-hiking from out on the Golden Gate Bridge; a tractor trailer was the first we flagged; he stopped and with room for only one, Vern went because he needed to get back first for orders, etc. A lady in a caddy stopped a short time later and picked Mike and me up; we got back to the base about the same time as Vern. Since leaving Fresno, the entire 764th Squadron has been making the flights in formation. 696 N.Mi., 800 S.Mi.

January 29, 1944 – Flew to Midland, Texas, a very poor base and a small town. 551 N.Mi., 635 S.Mi.

February 3, 1944 – Flew to Memphis, Tennessee; had been weathered in at Midland, Texas. Some of us sneaked off the base and went to town tonight; Memphis is a nice town. 648 N.Mi., 745 S.Mi.

February 4 1944 – Took off for Morrison Field, Florida, our port of Embarkation and last stop in the States. Our AGO passes were taken from us and we were immediately confined to the field. The place is heavily guarded by M.P.'s, dogs, and tall, barbed fences; there isn't a chance of getting out. We still don't know where we are going but we do know that it will be by way of South America and Africa. 709 N.Mi., 815 S.Mi.

February 7 1944 – We left Morrison Field at 10:50 A.M. We were now flying alone; the squadron left the day before; our plane developed engine trouble so we had to lay over a day. We had orders to not open the sealed envelope we were given just before take off until we reached the coast line heading eastward. At 10:50 A.M. we crossed the coast line and Vern opened the orders; we were to report to Oudna Field, Tunis, Africa flying by the way of U.S. controlled airbases in Puerto Rico, Central and South America. We landed at Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico, at 4:00 P.M. 872 N.Mi., 1050 S.Mi.

February 8, 1944 – Took off at 5:00 A.M.; landed at Waller Field, Trinidad, British West Indies at 11:00 A.M. We had been told to buy some rum at Trinidad

because from then on, about all we could get to drink would be wine and possibly beer. We bought 14 cases at \$10 a case and loaded the rum in the bomb bay. 660 N.Mi., 768 S.Mi.

February 9 1944 – Left Waller Field at 5:22 A.M.; crossed the equator at 11:17 A.M.; landed at Belem, Brazil at 12:10 P.M. We did our flying in the morning as we had been informed of terrific storms that start occurring in the early afternoons. The Brazilian beer is served in pint or larger mugs and is very good. Fresh picked bananas were super juicy, running down the arm while peeling one, and also very good. The sleep area is tents located out from the airfield towards the jungle; four mosquito net covered cots to a tent. When we turned in for the night, my cot was located right under a 5,000 or 10,000 watt light; the only light in the tent area. With the light in my eyes I couldn't sleep; someone in the tent said I should knock it out. I got out of bed and started looking for a rock, but I couldn't find anything but soft, black dirt. I was determined to put that light out so I shot it out with my 45 automatic; the combination of the shot and the large bulb exploding made a terrific noise and M.P.'s came running out wanting to know if that was a shot, etc., but everyone was sound asleep, including me, so the M.P.'s soon left. 666 N.Mi., 768 S.Mi.

February 10, 1944 – Took off over Belem at 0831; flew over more jungle and landed 1230 at Fortaleza, Brazil. After sipping some beer in the afternoon, Vern and I decided to go to town. However, we were not supposed to leave the field area which was fenced in with the fence running along the edges of the field and terminating in the jungle. We followed the fence on the side facing town into the jungle to the fence's end and then started back of the jungle from the other side of the fence, but due to a large swamp area we had to leave the fence. With darkness setting in and a lot darker in the jungle, we almost got lost, but luck was with us; we not only made it out of the jungle but found a road heading towards town and were picked up by a farmer in a pick-up truck. We had dates with several Brazilian girls, drank a lot more beer, and about daylight caught a taxi back to our base. He dropped us off

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right at the main entrance and an M.P. took us to the M.P. major. He didn't like it when we told him we simply walked around the fence and said he ought to lock us up in the stockade, but Vern told him we were scheduled to leave for Dakar, Africa late that night and were expected to be on time by our C.O. He told us to get going. 612 N.Mi., 707 S.Mi.

February 12, 1944 – We were up at about 0300, ate breakfast, then Vern and I checked in for the briefing on our flight to Dakar, Africa. During the briefing we were told to look for survivors of crews that didn't make it to Dakar. The weather was very good off the coast of Brazil; we took off at 0416 on a course to Dakar. At 0508, I took a 3-star fix and the plotted fix showed us to be almost 11 degrees off course to the left. I gave him the corrected course and we continued on our way. I told Vern that I was sure the magnets in our compass had been tampered with by friends of the Germans at the Fortaleze air field which was why we were off course at such a magnitude; that was why several crews flying from Fortaleze to Dakar didn't make it. When the sun came up I took sun shots every 20 to 30 minutes to confirm that we were maintaining the correct course. While still about halfway across the ocean, one of the crew members asked if I knew where we were; I told him sure, we were over the Atlantic Ocean. We landed at Dakar, Africa at 1530. Flying time was 11 hours and 14 minutes. We reported our compass magnets being tampered with and were told it would be corrected in time for our flight the next day. 1995 S.Mi, 1696 N.Mi.

February 13, 1944 – Our compass was corrected and we left Dakar at 0820 on a course to Marrakech. We landed at Marrakech, Africa at 1630. 1363 S.Mi., 1189 N.Mi.

February 15, 1944 – Left Marrakech at 0900, out over the Sahara Desert toward Tunis. The heat was almost unbearable, the sun hitting us direct and the blinding white glare from the desert sand; we stripped down to our underclothes and put on our oxygen masks and climbed to 18,000 feet to lower the heat in the plane. Before coming to the mountains at the north end of the Sahara Desert, we hit

bad weather; also got caught in a down-draft that dropped the plane 5,000 feet before Vern got it under control again; then he took it back to 20,000 feet to clear the mountains; the weather was so bad we didn't want to take a chance on flying at a lower altitude, provided we could have found the pass in a solid mass of clouds. Landed at Tunis at 1600. 1158 S.Mi., 1060 N.Mi.

February 16, 1944 – Left Tunis at 1100 this morning; flew 15 miles south to oudna where we finally caught up with our squadron. We were issued cots, more blankets, and were assigned to tents. The weather was wet, cold, and we made a gasoline stove out of an oil drum similar to those in the other tents. It rains three-fourths of the time; there is no table or chairs; we eat out of mess kits standing up, but the food is good. Mike, Vernon, O'Bannon and I share a tent, the enlisted men of the crew have two tents. 15 S. Mi., 13 N. Mi.

February 23, 1944 – Took off from Oudna this morning; flew to Italy, to a new base we're to help build ourselves just south of Cerignola, Italy and 70 miles from the front; at times we can hear the big cannons at the front. Our base is located at Torretta, Italy. As of now, like most of the other officers, I am letting my mustache grow; I won't shave it off until I complete (I hope) my fifty missions. 615 S.Mi., 533 N.Mi.

February 29, 1944 – Took off this morning to deliver our plane to an old outfit south of us and in the flight were other planes and including our squadron C.O., Captain Witte. We were hit with the worst weather I've ever been in; the formation was split up and Captain Witte and his crew crashed into a hill, killing the entire crew. Our crew spent the night in the sick bay of the dispensary since there was no other place to sleep on the base.

March 1, 1944 – Got back this afternoon to our squadron headquarters, the place was bare, since most everyone was in Bari at the funeral of the men who were killed yesterday – The American Cemetery is located at Bari around 50 miles south of here.

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March 9, 1944 – Had a “red” air raid warning at 5:30 A.M., but we didn’t get out of bed and run outside to a foxhole as we had been told to do when the Jerries sent their one or two bombers over as they did about every night. However, no bombs were dropped on our base, anyway.

March 16, 1944 – Opened our officer’s club we had been working on since arriving here with a “bang”! All officers denoted one of their bottles of rum (which cost \$10.00 a case at Trinidad). Almost all of us were drunk, and sick, by the time we had finished drinking the conglomeration of hot buttered rum. We had dressed in our officer’s blouses, ties, etc.; my entire outfit of clothing, from my tie to my shoes, were completely buttered with butter and rum. When the rest of my tent mates finally sobered up enough to miss me, they found me passed out near the water “lilly” close to our tent.

April 2, 1944 – Didn’t do anything today except wait and watch for the half of the squadron to return from our first real combat mission. The target was the railway marshalling yard in a town in Yugoslavia. The 461st Group lost two planes, both from the 767th Squadron. The 764th was lucky this time. Our crew is scheduled to fly tomorrow.

April 3, 1944 – We were up by 2:30 A.M., flew our first combat mission. The group bombed railway yards and enemy installation near Drania, Yugoslavia. All planes returned. 5 hours and 5 minutes flying time.

April 6, 1944 – Flew our 2nd combat mission today; Zagreb was the target. Within 60 miles of the target our plane lost all four turbochargers and dropped down out of formation. As we lost altitude and Vern turned the plane around to head back, 7 P-38’s broke away from the fighter escort and brought us to the coast of the Adriatic Sea. However, on the way back we bombed a secondary target in Yugoslavia. The group lost one plane. 5 hours, 15 minutes.

April 7, 1944 – Started on our 3rd mission to bomb Ferrara, Italy, but had hardly cleared the coast when a large gas leak was discovered and forced us to return. No credit towards a mission. All planes re-

turned. 2 hours, 10 minutes.

Lt. Steele’s crew went down over Budapest, Hungary on April 13, 1944. Our crew wasn’t on this mission.

April 15, 1944 – O’Bannon and I flew with a new replacement crew – high altitude gunnery and bombing practice. Approximately 4 hours.

April 16, 1944 – Briefed to bomb Brasov, Rumania; ran into cloudy adverse weather that split up the planes of the group in the clouds. However, 16 of our planes broke out of the clouds in view of each other, got together in formation and bombed an alternate target, Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Flak was heavy and accurate; one plane went down in flames and exploded; we saw 4 parachutes. 6 hours, 35 minutes.

April 20, 1944 – Flew over main target of Ferrara, Italy, but could not see the target because of an undercast; flak came up thru the clouds but was wild. Our alternate was a railroad and highway bridge at Tagaliamto, Italy. We hit our target okay, encountered some flak and 2 enemy fighters that stayed out of range of our gunners and shot a few rockets at us. All bombers returned. 6 hours, 30 minutes.

April 23, 1944 – Briefed to hit an ME-109 factory and airbase at Bad-Voslav, Vienna, Austria. Skirted heavy flak at Zagreb on the way and several groups of B-17’s, B-24’s, P-38’s, P-47’s and P-51’s joined us. At Vienna the flak was very heavy, several enemy fighters breaking thru our fighters from above dropped time bombs on us and others fired rockets at our formation. Saw several enemy fighters go down, one B-24 went down in flames and B-17 on fire; 7 men of the crew bailed out just past the target; the pilot got the fire out by diving and was on course toward home with three engines when last seen. Vienna and surrounding targets took a pasting today. 7 hours, 30 minutes.

April 30, 1944 – Briefed to bomb marshalling yards at Alessandria, Italy. Saw some flak on course to target but no hits on any planes of the group formation; no flak or fighters over target. Good hits on target. Flew our new plane, No. 212, for the first time, named it “Scrouch.” A 950 mile flight. 7 hours, 30 minutes.

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May 2, 1944 – Briefed to bomb marshalling yards at Parma, Italy. Flew by way of Naples, up by Corsica. Plan formation ran into heavy clouds, split up and we bombed a secondary target, Findenza, Italy. 950 miles, 7 hours, 50 minutes.

May 5, 1944 – Briefed to hit oil tanks, factories, and marshalling yards at Ploesti, Rumania. Sky was black with flak from the initial point, over the target and for several miles beyond that. Our plane received 53 flak hits. Two FW-190 fighters made a pass at us but didn't connect. All our planes were pretty well shot up; Joe Meyer, a bombardier, was killed when we hit flak again on the way to home base. Several other crew members were wounded. Our plane will be grounded a couple of days for repair work. 1200 miles, 7 hours, 40 minutes.

May 7, 1944 – Flying this mission on our 3rd straight Sunday; we bombed marshalling yards at Bucharest, Rumania around 30 miles south of Ploesti. Ploesti was still burning from the bombing two days ago when black smoke was rolling up to 20,000 feet. Bucharest had already been bombed and huge flames and smoke were rolling up as we dropped our bombs down into the mess. Flak was heavy but not as much or as accurate as at Ploesti. Only a few enemy planes were sighted. All ships returned in group 461st; no one was wounded in our squadron. Our ship, 212, was still grounded so we flew 729, a new crew's ship. 1200 miles, 9 hours.

May 10, 1944 – The crew was on pass today. Vern, Mike, Frank and I went to Foggia. When we got back we learned that our new plane, 212, had been shot down over Wiener Neustadt, Vienna, Austria. Lt. Wallace and his crew were flying it. Also, a ball turret gunner was killed and several crew members wounded on the mission.

May 12, 1944 – Briefed to bomb marshalling yards at Castel Maggiore, Italy. Flew along the front where our troops were starting a push; the sky was full of planes. Weather was bad over northern Italy so secondary target, factories at Carraca, Italy were bombed. We were flying another crew's plane. Flak in the target area was inaccurate; only a few fighter planes were seen; none attacked our group. All planes in group returned okay. 750 miles, 6 hours, 50 minutes.

May 13, 1944 – Received another new plane today, No. 286, another silver colored plane.

May 14, 1944 – Mother's Day and Sunday. We bombed Padua (Padova), Italy, hitting the marshalling yards about noon. Flak was very heavy and accurate; flak knocked out both the navigator's windows, tore up the nose turret, smashed the astro compass, hit the ball turret, put a hole through a prop blade, and many holes thru the fuselage, plus a large chunk of flak in a tire. Mike was hit in the face with flying glass from the smashed nose turret window; I put compresses over his eyes. I shot a red flare as we reached our field so we could make a quicker landing so the doc could work on Mike's face and eyes. Luckily, his eyes were not hit. A very good landing kept the damaged tire from blowing out. All planes returned though many were shot up about as much as ours. We flew the "Chippiedall", the plane with 25 consecutive combat trips. 825 miles, 5 hours, 50 minutes.

May 17, 1944 – On pass today. Johnson, Baker, Arndt, and I went to Bisceglia near Bari for the day. We took a boat ride, my first boat ride on salt water.

May 18, 1944 – Briefed to bomb Ploesti-Xenia oil refinery, Ploesti, Rumania. Hit bad weather over Danube River and turned north to the alternate, Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Bombed thru the clouds; flak was heavy but scattered, a few planes picking up flak holes. 800 miles, 6 hours, 15 minutes.

May 22, 1944 – Briefed to hit Marina DeCarrara. Flew over target twice but too much of an undercast; went to the alternate, steel mill and harbor at Piombio Harbor; dropped incendiaries and covered the place with a perfect pattern of our incendiary type bombs. Flak was very accurate; our new plane – its first combat mission – picked up several holes, some of the windows out but no one was wounded. Practically all our planes were hit. One made it back on two engines; no planes were lost. 800 miles, 6 hours, 15 minutes.

May 24, 1944 – Briefed to bomb aircraft factory and airbase at Wiener Neustadt, Vienna, Austria. Made several bomb runs in heavy flak; enemy fighters made several passes, some lobbing rockets at our group, our gunners knocked down a ME-110. A plane on our left got a direct hit from an exploding flak shell, burst into

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flames and went down; three men bailed out okay but a fourth's chute was burning as it opened. Many crew members in our group were wounded, some seriously. Most of the planes were hit by flak and/or enemy fighters. Our plane got off easy; the astro dome knocked out, some holes in the wings and rudders. 1000 miles, 7 hours, 55 minutes.

May 25, 1944 – Briefed to bomb marshalling yards at Carnoules, France. Had heavy fighter protection and saw no flak or enemy fighters. 1000 miles, 6 hours, 45 minutes.

May 27, 1944 – Bombed the Salon de Provence air-drome, France. Ran into heavy, accurate flak as we crossed the French coast, also heavy flak over the target. Several planes were damaged but lost none; our group C.O., Col. Glantzberg in the lead plane had a bit of luck, an 88 mm shell went up thru the flight deck, barely missing him; it was a dud. 1200 miles, 8 hours.

May 29, 1944 – Returned to Wiener Neustadt again today to hit an aircraft assembly factory; very heavy flak and hundreds of enemy fighters were waiting to give us a reception; ME-109's, ME-110's, ME21's, FW-190's, JU-88's, ME-410's and even four engine planes as fighters. However, we had several hundred P-38's and P-51's along with several bomber groups besides ours. The sight I saw today seemed almost unreal, life a movie, only this was deadly real; dog fights between our fighters and every type of fighter in the German air force, sky filled with flak, hitting our planes and, also, some of their own fighters in the flak area near our bomber, rockets being fired at our bombers, and planes, also, many parachutes could be seen floating down. The 461st group was luckier than most other groups, most of our planes received some damage but lost only one bomber; the group immediately following us lost 5 bombers, all other groups lost one or more. 1000 miles, 7 hours, 50 minutes.

May 31, 1944 – Briefed to hit Ploesti, Rumania oil refineries again. Over Yugoslavia a main gas tank cracked and gas was leaking down into the bomb bays; then about the time this was discovered, a prop governor went haywire and we had to return to base. Our squadron lost another plane, Lt. Buder's crew made it back to Vis, Yugoslavia, before they had to bail out of their heavily damaged plane. Crew 10 traveled 500

miles, 3 hours, 50 minutes.

June 2, 1944 – Bombed marshalling yards filled with hundreds of loaded freight cars at Szolnok, Hungary. Very good bomb hits, leaving target in flames and heavy smoke rolling up to at least 12,000 feet. Encountered flak on the way to target, over target and on the way back to base; a few planes were damaged by flak, we had P-38 fighter protection so were not attacked by enemy fighters. 1200 miles, 7 hours, 5 minutes.

June 4, 1944 – Briefed to hit railroad bridge near Nice, France. A major with the field artillery was going to go with our crew to see what it was like. This was anticipated to be an easy mission, only 17,000 foot altitude flight, no flak or fighters expected. But No. 1 engine wouldn't hit and we couldn't make the mission; the major went with another crew. The mission was as anticipated, no flak or enemy fighters.

June 5, 1944 – Bombed a railroad bridge at Forno De Tro, northern Italy. Saw flak near Bologna, but it was to the right of us; no flak at the target, no enemy fighters. 100 miles, 7 hours, 10 minutes.

June 6, 1944 – Up at 12:30 A.M. and on mission to bomb the remaining oil refineries at Ploesti. Encountered the usual intense flak and swarms of enemy fighters. Lt. Ryder's crew of our squadron was shot down; the 484th group sharing our airbase lost 4 bombers. 1200 miles, 8 hours, 30 minutes.

June 10, 1944 – Bombed Porto Marghera, Venice, Italy. Saw no enemy fighters, some flak but not accurate. 700 miles, 5 hours, 50 minutes.

June 11, 1944 – Up at 1:00 A.M. and off before daylight to hit oil refinery and storage tanks at Giurgio, Rumania just a few miles south of Ploesti. Approximately 100 enemy fighters hit us on the way to the target and stayed with us during the target run and for a way on the return trip. The flak wasn't as heavy or accurate as usual but the enemy fighters shot everything at us, including rockets. Lt. Hanley's crew of the 766th Squadron was among the planes lost in our group; the 484th lost 7 planes. Some of our planes hit by the fighters simply exploded, others could be seen going down, a few were heading down towards the Danube River.

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1200 miles, 8 hours, 5 minutes.

June 14, 1944 – Bombed oil refineries at Szony, Hungary. A long trip with fighter protection most of the way; encountered some inaccurate flak. 1200 miles, 7 hours, 20 minutes.

June 23, 1944 – Up by 1:00 A.M. and off before daylight to bomb oil refineries at Giurgui, Rumania. Hit heavy clouds over Yugoslavian mountains but most planes of the group broke thru the clouds, got back into close formation and kept going; some planes got lost from the group in the clouds and turned back. Just before reaching the target enemy planes swept in on us. The Jerries threw everything they had at our groups; fighter planes ME-109, FW-190, JU-88, ME-210, ME-410, and even some old JU-87's. Luckily most of the other groups with us had made it thru the clouds in Yugoslavia which spread the fighters over a large area and more B-24 gunners to fire back at the Jerries; our gunners were much improved now and exacted a toll on the attacking fighters. Our group was now in the lead and packed in close formation and the gunners really throwing hot lead at the Jerries; the Jerries went for the groups following us, concentrating mostly on 484th and the 451st groups. Flak filled the sky as we started the bombing run, it was big stuff and accurate; one of our ailerons was blown to pieces, a motor hit, hydraulic system shot out, and many holes all over the plane, including one in the main gas tank. We didn't think we would make it back but stuck with the formation until, with only three engines running, one of them not too good, we fell behind and below our group. Two other crippled bombers were near us so we got together and headed for Vis, Yugoslavia. By flying thru the clouds we avoided fighters but were in danger of our plane icing up and not being able to stay above the 9,000 foot mountains and reach home base. We lost the other two bombers in the clouds, reached Vis but decided we could make it to home base so kept going. We had to crank our wheels and flaps down by hand and put two 'chutes in the waist windows, with no hydraulic system, no brakes. Vern and Frank made a super landing; the brakes caught once and then went out, but with the help of the 'chutes, the plane stopped before going off the end of the runway. Lt. Hefling and his crew didn't make it back in our squadron. The 484th group was reported to have lost 11 planes, the

451st lost 8. 1200 miles, 8 hours, 30 minutes.

June 24, 1944 – Hit marshalling yards at Avignon, France. Flak wasn't accurate and only a few enemy fighter planes which P-51 escort had well in hand. 1200 miles, 8 hours, 30 minutes.

June 28, 1944 – Bombed marshalling yards in Bucharest, Rumania. As usual, encountered heavy flak and many fighters; however, our fighter escort kept most of the Jerries busy. Some of our bombers had some flak damage. 1200 miles, 8 hours, 30 minutes.

June 29, 1944 – Our crew was sent to a rest camp near Melfi, in the mountains near here. We are staying in an old monastery, built on the side of a very steep mountain, probably in the 16th century. There's a lake at the base of the mountain but it's much too cold to swim in. Nothing to do here so Vern and I decided to "borrow" a jeep from the motor pool and go into the town of Melfi. Vern drove going into town, had to cross a river on the way that had had the bridge destroyed, Vern made it down the bank, across the shallow river and up the other side okay. We drank about a fifth of wine each, then just before dark we decided we should get back so I drove going back. I was driving fairly fast, didn't feel any pain (the wine!) and forgot about no bridge over the river. The jeep went sailing out into the shallow water, turned over, broke the windshield, and maybe bent the body in a place or two. So, Italians that lived nearby heard the noise, came out to help us turn the jeep back over on its wheels. The Major in charge of the rest camp area was waiting on us and, boy, did he get his dander up. He said he was going to call our executive officer and have us court-martialed.

July 2, 1944 – Returned to our squadron; we were glad to leave the so-called rest camp and get back to flying missions so we can get our 50th and get back to the States.

July 5, 1944 – Started to Bezier, France to hit marshalling yards but a cylinder head blew out of an engine between Italy and Corsica; returned to our base. Flew 600 miles, 4 hours.

July 6, 1944 – Briefed to hit the oil and gasoline storage tanks at Aviano, Italy. The target was completely

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destroyed; no flak or enemy fighters. 900 miles, 6 hours, 15 minutes.

July 8, 1944 – Briefed to hit the Kornenburg oil refinery, Vienna, Austria. The entire 15th Air Force was up there; bombed the target one wave of bombers right after the other; the entire industrial and refinery area were in flames. Flak was intense, 4 B-24's went down in flames; our fighter escort kept the Jerry fighters pretty well away from the bomber formations. Our plane collected a few flak hits but no serious damage. 1100 miles, 7 hours, 35 minutes.

July 9, 1944 – My birthday today; we got the day off; guess the C.O. knew it was my birthday. I'm 27 years old today; really getting old. Arty Gadarian, my best friend of cadet days back at Monroe, LA, came over to see me; he's in the 451st Bomb Group and will be going home soon.

July 11, 1944 – Bombed submarine pens at Toulon, France today; very heavy flak but no enemy fighters. The group lost 1 B-24. 1300 miles, 8 hours, 42 minutes.

July 12, 1944 – Briefed to hit marshalling yards at Nimes, France. The groups of B-24's were hit by many fighters before getting to the target, 4 bombers right behind our flight went down in flames in the fighter's first pass from out of the sun; the gunners couldn't see the fighters until they were right on top of us. Then came the flak; out of it and back into the flak a second time. Several of the 766th squadron's planes were shot down; two B-24's made crash landings on Corsica. Most of the bombers received hits from flak or fighters; our plane had one bullet thru a rudder. 1400 miles, 9 hours, 20 minutes.

July 14, 1944 – Bombed Petfurdo oil refinery, Varpalota, Hungary today. The place was really smashed with 1000 pound bombs; a little flak came up but was inaccurate; our fighter escort kept the kraut fighters busy. 1100 miles, 7 hours.

July 15, 1944 – Bombed Creditul oil refinery at Ploesti, Rumania today. Our fighters kept most of the enemy fighters away from us, but the flak was as usual over Ploesti, heavy and accurate. I saw two B-

24's go down, one a 765th squadron plane. Most of the planes were damaged by mostly flak, our plane wasn't hit this trip. 1200 miles, 8 hours, 25 minutes.

July 16, 1944 – Briefed to bomb Weiner Neustadt aircraft engine factory, Vienna, Austria. As we began the bomb run, No. 1 engine quit, then within a minute, No. 4 engine quit; we began losing altitude fast and started falling below and behind our group formation; our radio generators, and entire electrical system went out. Still losing altitude. Vern swung the plane around and headed out of the target area; also Mike released the bombs. A flight of 13 ME-109's saw us falling out of the protection of our group formation and headed down to finish us and another bomber in trouble nearby off, but some P-38's had also seen us and hurried down to entertain the ME-109's, arriving just in time. As we headed south our crew was too busy throwing out equipment to lighten the plane to watch for fighters, finally even throwing our 50 caliber machine guns and ammunition out along with everything not fastened down. We had no hopes of getting back to home base, we simply wanted to get back as far as possible before we either were shot down or the plane lost the remaining engines. At 6,500 feet the plane stopped losing altitude, but we knew we would soon be to the 7,500 to 9,000 foot mountain peaks. I was forced to use the small magnetic compass in the cockpit above the pilots head to keep on course, then the No. 3 engine started to miss; we discussed whether or not we should bail out. All of us but one gunner decided our best chance for survival was to take to our 'chutes; Vern said he would stay in the plane and take it as far as it would go, I told him he would need a navigator and that I would stay, Frank said he would stay to help with trying to keep the No. 3 engines going, so all of us decided to stay and take our chances. We got into the mountains; Frank kept working with No. 3 engines to keep it going as we got into the clouds, and then we broke out of the clouds and found we were entering the pass; at our altitude it looked like our plane was almost touching the tops of the trees. We got to the coast of Yugoslavia to the location of an airstrip in Vis, which is Partisan controlled territory. Considering the terrible condition of the plane, Vern and Frank did a super job on landing on the

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landing strip wedged in between the mountains. None of us were hurt, and almost immediately Yugoslavian Partisans rushed out to meet us, some Britishers were with them also. They loaded us on a truck and took us to a coastal area where a few U.S. Navy men were located with their small speed boats whose job it was to help the Partisans worry the Jerries, who were in strength only a few miles north. Soon after we landed another crippled B-24 came in but crashed while landing killing 4 of the crew members; the rest of the crew were seriously injured.

July 17, 1944 – An American officer stationed on Vis wanted us to try to take off in a repaired B-24 which was stripped of all unnecessary equipment to lighten it as much as possible to help it take off from the less than 3000 foot runway. Immediately on the run for takeoff a prop went out of control, but Vern and Frank got the plane stopped before we overran the runway and smashed the plane. No flight today. The Partisans were a rough lot; several thousand Germans are located within 6 miles and the Partisans pull all kinds of sneak attacks and tricks on the Jerries. They use mostly German weapons; everybody carries a gun. They told us of one 11-year-old boy who had killed 15 Germans. Women fight with the men; carry hand grenades and a pistol on a heavy belt. The Navy officers treated us very nice; we went swimming with them and they invited us to go on a raid with them in their speed boat if we're still here tomorrow night.

July 18, 1944 – A C-47 flew in today to take out the wounded men; there was room for us so we went along. The plane landed at Bari, Italy and all of us were sent to the General Hospital for a medical checkup.

July 19, 1944 – All of us were given new clothing and released from the hospital except Vernon; he's very sick and docs don't know yet as to what is wrong with him. On reporting to the 15th Air Force Headquarters in Bari, we found that we were listed as "missing in Action"; a crew member in a plane behind ours on the bomb run over Vienna, Austria had reported that he saw our plane go down suddenly and that he saw no parachutes. We spent the night in

a 15th Air Force hotel.

July 20, 1944 – Lt. Weir flew down to get us today and take us back to the squadron. While we were gone, 5 new crews had come in to replace some of our crews shot down. Several of our original crews who came over with us have completed 50 missions and additional replacements are needed to replace them; they'll be headed back to the States soon. We now have completed 47 missions. Haven't heard from Vernon yet. We're grounded for a few days until Vern gets back; also we need another plane. I also found out that the date for Vern and my court-martial for "borrowing" and slightly damaging a jeep while at Melfi Rest Area came up while we were listed missing in action. The court-martial was cancelled. Our flight to Vienna was 6 hours 20 minutes.

July 22, 1944 – Lt. Paradise and a new crew he was flying with over Ploesti were shot down today. We are still grounded.

July 23, 1944 – We were given orders promoting Vern, Frank, Mike and myself to 1st Lieut. Today effective date July 13, 1944.

July 25, 1944 – Our group, crew 10 still grounded, flew to Linz, Austria near the German border to bomb a tank factory. They were hard hit with fighters and flak losing 12 B-24's. Lts. Freeman, Benton, D'Amantee, and Levine and their crews, very good friends of ours and completing their 50th combat mission were among those not returning from the mission. The other planes lost were the replacement crews. Lt. Trenner, his plane shot almost to pieces, made it back to base but crashed on landing. Lt. Cain also made a landing with the plane shot to pieces, but his plane held together on landing and he made a good landing. Charland was in Lt. Freeman's plane which was shot down. Vernon came back from the hospital today.

July 31, 1944 – Frank, Mike, Mackinstry, Baker, Tibbits, and Johnson left for a week's vacation at Capri. Vern and I were not on orders to go along because of us "borrowing" and wrecking the jeep at Melfi Rest Area.

August 1, 1944 – Vernon and I left for Rome today; our C.O. sent us on "special business" for 5 days.

5,000 Mile Flight to the Unknown

by
William J. Kelliher

In early August of 1944 after 18 months of concentrated flying training and other preparation, I was ready to fly into the wild blue yonder and face the enemy.

I was the pilot and leader of a crew of 10 waiting at the air base in Topeka, Kansas to receive our overseas orders. Just after midnight we were awakened and told that our plane was ready and we were to take off within the hour.

Our assigned aircraft was a spanking new B-24 four engine bomber and our destination was Bari, Italy. The route to be followed was Topeka, Kansas to Grenier, New Hampshire – from Grenier to Gander, Newfoundland – from Gander to the Azore Islands in mid-Atlantic – from the Azores to Marrakech, Morocco – from Marrakech across the northern Sahara Desert to Tunis, Tunisia – from Tunis over the Mediterranean and Sicily to Bari in southern Italy. As a self-confident young 21 year old, I looked forward to the trip as a great new adventure, which it certainly turned out to be, starting with our very first take off at Topeka.

It was a dark, moonless night as I prepared to roar down the runway with our heavily loaded plane and my crew of ten. As I reached flying speed and left the runway we also left behind the lights which outlined the runway. Suddenly all that I could see through the windshield was pitch black nothingness, as a consequence I had no way of knowing if I was flying straight and level nor if I was gaining or losing altitude. I then turned my attention quickly inside the cockpit to the instrument panel where I could use the instruments to maintain my direction and altitude.

I had barely adjusted my eyesight to the instrument panel lighting when my co-pilot shouted, “Watch out for the trees!!” I instinctively jerked back on the wheel and raised the nose and we scraped through the top branches of a number of trees and continued unharmed on our way. By then we were high enough that I could see the lights of houses and towns in the area which enabled me to become oriented and properly control the plane and continue our climb.

The first leg of our journey, from Kansas to New Hampshire took about nine hours and was uneventful. We followed our course and located the air base at Grenier with no trouble thanks to the fine work of our navigator, Jack Bowen.

The next leg from Grenier to Gander, Newfoundland was intermittently over land and the Gulf of St. Lawrence in the Atlantic. Once again our trip was on schedule and without any significant problems.

Because of poor weather conditions at Gander, as well as out over the Atlantic Ocean, we had to remain at Gander for two days. During this time we were introduced to goat’s milk since they had no cow’s milk. We also had the pleasure of being served our meals in the crew’s mess hall by the young beauties of Newfoundland – all of whom had toothless smiles. Apparently there were no local dentists in Gander, Newfoundland.

The weather finally cleared up over the Gander air base and I was cleared to take off late the third night. This time I had no difficulty with the dark night take off but soon after we had passed the small coastal town of St. John’s, Newfoundland, we flew into heavy snow and rough stormy clouds over the Atlantic for the next five or six hours. Flying for long periods in those conditions will bring on a little nervous tension

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and can cause a young pilot to start missing his mother, which I did.

We were a little off on our dead reckoning navigation. When enough time had elapsed that we should have reached the Azores they were nowhere in sight. It was morning by then and the skies were clear so that we could see for many miles, nothing but water.

Fortunately the plane was equipped with a Radio Direction Finder and through the use of it and the navigator's input, we located our destination just past the horizon to the south. After a little difficulty I found the small air base on one of the nine islands which comprise the Azores.

We refueled and had a good meal. We also wandered around the island for a few hours. One of the interesting sights was the hundreds of Nazi German war prisoners who had been captured in Africa. The Azores are about 1,000 miles southeast of Newfoundland and about 900 miles west of Morocco on the western coast of Africa.

The following morning we took off bright and early on the next step of our journey headed for Marrakech, Morocco, a distance of a little over 1,000 miles. Marrakech is inland about 100 – 150 miles southeast of Casablanca.

It was a beautiful day and the flight was progressing peacefully. So peacefully, however, that the co-pilot proceeded to doze off. He awoke suddenly and with a start that caused him to bump an ignition switch and cut off our #3 engine. As soon as he realized what had happened he quickly reached over and turned the ignition switch back on. By this time there apparently was an accumulation of excess high octave gasoline in the #e engine and when the spark ignited that fuel, it blew out a part of the engine and I had to close it down completely as I struggled to control the plane.

I still had three good engines and the B-24 would fly just fine on three engines. I was to learn some months later over Germany it could almost hold altitude with only two engines operating.

My first thought was to return to the Azores for re-

pairs; however, careful calculation determined that we had passed the "point of no return"! This meant that we were beyond the halfway point to Morocco so that while we may have enough fuel to get there, we did not have enough to return to the Azores. Theoretically we had enough fuel to reach shore, but that was predicted on operating all four engines. With the loss of #3 I had to greatly increase the power of the three remaining engines to maintain a safe flying speed. At this great increase in power and fuel consumption of the remaining engines I was not certain of just how far I could travel before running completely out of gas.

Needless to say, we all sweated out those last few hours before the west coast of Africa came into sight. Then we only had about 100 miles or so from the coast to the air base at Marrakech.

As we neared the air base I radioed in to the tower and told them that I was coming in with one engine out and the gas tanks on "empty." We caused some real moving and shaking down there as they prepared for our arrival. They had two ambulances and three fire engines roaring around as I approached the end of the landing strip. Fortunately I had a nice soft landing and coasted to a happy stop. The crew was all ecstatic and relieved to crawl out of that plane and feel the good old terra firma. There were some make-shift quarters for us which we used for the two days that it took to replace the entire #3 engine.

We wandered around Marrakech for one day and saw many different and interesting sights. The architecture was colorful and attractive with its Arabian-African flavor.

The following morning dawned bright and clear and we prepared to test the new #3 engine. I was most pleased to find that it performed normally. We then had a quick breakfast and I took off for the long, lonely trip over the Sahara Desert and the northern mountains of Algeria to the coastal area of Tunisia.

The remains of burned out planes, tanks, and trucks were scattered liberally in the general area as we approached Tunis for there had been a titanic struggle there not long before between the American, British, German and Italian forces. I had some minor diffi-

culty locating our base in Tunis but I did locate it and landed there without incident.

We stayed over night there at the air base before leaving in the morning for Bari, Italy which is located on the Adriatic Sea in the southeast portion of Italy. The route took us across the Mediterranean Sea passing over the western edge of Sicily. While over Italy, but before reaching the town of Bari, I called in to the control tower by radio to get the exact location of the landing field. It was then that I learned that we were assigned to the Air Group stationed at Torretta, Italy, which was only about 60 miles north also just inland from the Adriatic. We were to proceed directly to that base without landing at Bari.

Well, I figured we were now really in the war zone so I strapped on my holster and 45 automatic and also inserted a large hunting knife in my flying boot. I must have looked like a comic strip character and when I reported to the Group Commander after landing at Torretta, he had a somewhat surprised look on his face. While obviously suppressing outright laughter he said, "It really isn't necessary to be

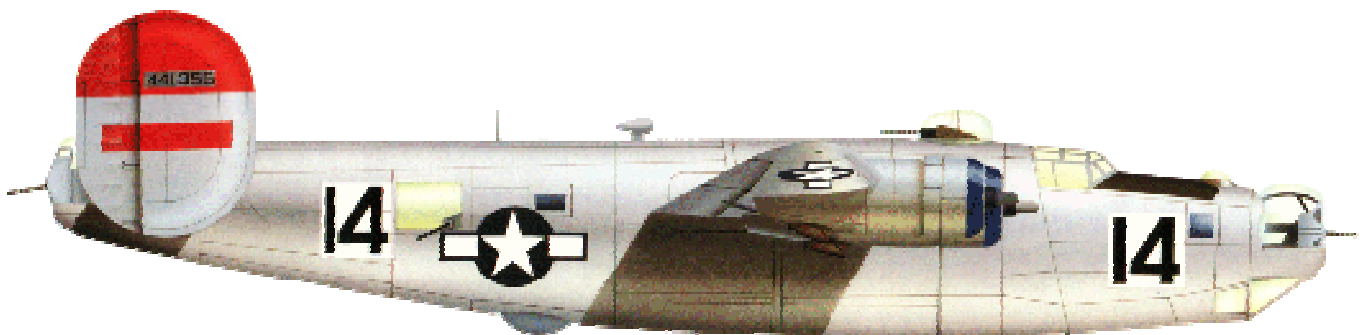
armed while on the ground here." I then noted that there were many other officers in the area but only I had the 45 strapped across my chest with the hunting knife protruding from my boot; embarrassing moment.

We were now at our final destination where we spent the following 10 months with the 765th Squadron of the 461st Bomb Group.

From early 1944 through June 1945 the Group flew 214 missions – but lost 29 B-24s to enemy fighters – lost 46 to flak and 47 more to other causes, a total of 122 lost B-24s.

I never cease to wonder how we ever managed to successfully complete that journey from Topeka, Kansas, over the Atlantic Ocean, over North Africa, to our final destination of Torretta, Italy. Somebody upstairs must have liked this young inexperienced crew.

Of course, flying the ensuing 35 missions placed many further demands on that "somebody upstairs."



Fallen Warrior An Airplane and Her Crews

by
Gerald L. Landry

On December 17, 1944, a Yugoslavian family aboard their fishing boat saw an American bomber crash into the Adriatic Sea after flying over Hvar Island. They proceeded out to the crash site to assist in rescuing any survivors. That day the family rescued seven crewmembers, and saw to it that the survivors were taken to the Isle of Vis. The crewmembers were returned to Italy for further medical attention. What follows comes from over 20 years of research, mostly about this particular day in World War II history, and hopefully, is the story of the Fallen Warrior.

It began as a family project when I started genealogy research some 20 plus years ago in hopes of compiling the family tree. While researching relatives involved in military service during WWII, I concentrated on the story of our only missing family member, Russell Landry, who died on December 17, 1944, in a crash somewhere in the Adriatic Sea aboard "The Tulsamerican." This airplane still lies on the sea floor and is the final resting place for her pilot, flight engineer, and navigator—my cousin Russell. After 60 years, there is a chance this airplane has been found. Information from various sources has put me in touch with people on Hvar Island off the coast of Yugoslavia. Efforts are now being made to identify the airplane in hopes that it is "The Tulsamerican."

"The Tulsamerican" holds a special place in the hearts of many in the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma, for this airplane was 'born' there. Though some of her parts and assemblies came from Ford's Willow Run Plant in Michigan, this airplane was created by the hard working hands of aircraft workers of Tulsa, Oklahoma. When she rolled off the assembly line at the Douglas Tulsa Army Air Force Plant in August of 1944, she was resplendent in her very own special nose art, including the autographs of all those who had built and paid for her. The good people of Tulsa purchased this airplane with war bonds and adopted her as their very own contribution to the war effort. Known to one and all as "The Tulsamerican", a B-24J-10-DT, with an AAF Serial Number of 42-51430, she carried the hopes and dreams of victory and also of peace. "The Tulsamerican" was the last of the B-24's built at Douglas Tulsa AAF Plant before it began building Douglas A-26 airplanes.

"The Tulsamerican" wore production number 952 on her nose for the roll out in August, but that would soon be changed to "24." This number would be her designated ship number while attached to the 15th Army Air Force, 49th Bombardment Wing (H), 461st Bomb Group, 765th Bomb Squadron at Torretta Field, Cerignola, Italy in the closing days of September 1944.

After doing her duty to sell war bonds in Tulsa, "The Tulsamerican" was flown to Topeka, Kansas in September where she was prepared for her first overseas flight. The ferry flight crew flew her to Giola, Italy. Shortly thereafter, "The Tulsamerican" was assigned to the 461st Bomb Group, 765th Squadron where her arrival was duly noted in the Bomb Group history, and she became the pride of the 50 men of the 461st who were from Oklahoma. Cpl. Raymond D. Yount, of Oklahoma City, tended to her on Jake Genuardi's ground crew. Sgt. John F. Toney, of Muskogee, OK, flew as nose gunner, and S/Sgt. Charles E. Priest, of Tallant, OK flew as tail gunner and flight engineer.

The last air crew to fly aboard "The Tulsamerican" were Pilot Lt. Eugene P. Ford, Co-Pilot Lt. Vincent Eckland, Navigator Lt. Russell C. Landry, Bombardier Lt. Val P. Miller, Flight Engineer T/Sgt. Charles E.

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Priest, Tail Gunner S/Sgt. James R. Hazel, Ball Turret Gunner S/Sgt. Wallace H. McLemore, Nose Gunner S/Sgt. John F. Toney, Waist Gunner S/Sgt. Casimir P. Walenga, Radio Operator/Waist Gunner S/Sgt. Edward F. Steelandt.

“The Tulsamerican’s” 18 missions took her over France, Italy, Austria, Germany, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Poland, and she even flew over the oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania.

On 17 December 1944, the Fifteenth Army Air Force ordered every airworthy plane for a massive assault on the oil refineries of Blechhammer North, Blechhammer South, and Odertal. In all, the Fifteenth AAF launched 527 B-17 and B-24 bombers, along with 300 P-38 and P-51 fighter escorts. There was one crucial item the Fifteenth AAF Headquarters did not know while planning this mission. The Luftwaffe had placed some of its best fighter groups within striking distance of the oil refineries and the Ardennes to support the German army at the Battle of the Bulge.

German radar, code named Freya, detected large bomber formations approaching the area of the oil refineries, and Luftwaffe fighters were scrambled from four different air fields to fend off the attack. There were 100 fighters launched at 10:45 a.m. to confront the bomber formations. As the battle joined, Liberators from the 49th Bomb Wing were the first to fall. The Luftwaffe claimed 22 B-24’s within the first 10 minutes of the battle.

“The Tulsamerican” sustained battle damage, and attempted to return to its base in Italy. This particular airplane had been pulled from the ready line and scheduled for replacement prior to this mission. She took her crew into battle one more time despite her need for critical maintenance. It was the 151st Mission for the 461st Bomb Group.

What really happened to “The Tulsamerican”? Other flight crews were up that day who witnessed the fighter attack and its aftermath. From information pieced together from these and the surviving crewmembers, the following story unfolds.

The 765th Bomb Squadron was flying high trail in the formation of 17 December 1944, and the weather was poor with heavy clouds and snow. The formations entered the clouds and flew on instruments towards the Initial Point (IP). Because these airplanes did not have the modern sophisticated instrumentation that aircraft now have, detection of other nearby planes in the clouds was only possible if they could be seen. In the cloudy conditions visual contact of the formation was lost. Because they had to maintain radio silence, the various groups in the formations were unable to talk to one another to define each other’s positions.

“The Tulsamerican,” piloted by Lt. Eugene Ford, was lead in a ‘box’ of six B-24’s. Apparently, there was a near mid-air collision when another ‘box’ was encountered in the heavy clouds. In an effort to avoid this collision, Lt. Ford took his flight high and a mile to the right of the now disoriented and scattered formation. Lt. Gerald Smith witnessed this tactic and later said, “*I would have made the same maneuver if I had been flying in the same position as Lt. Ford.*” Lt. Ford’s ‘box’ somehow ended up leading the formation at this time and broke out of the clouds somewhere near the town of Muglitz, Germany. But only disaster awaited the ‘box.’

Unknown to the airplanes in the formation, they had been ‘shadowed’ in the clouds by pilots of the Luftwaffe from JG-300 and JG-301 Squadrons who saw that some of the airplanes did not have their lower ball turrets extended. It is almost certain they believed these airplanes would be easy prey if they came in low and fired into their bellies. As it happened, the airplanes of the 461st Bomb Group were the only ones in the formation that had been ordered to fly with their lower ball turrets retracted on this day. The purpose was to minimize drag and conserve fuel for the long mission to Odertal, Germany.

As the formation led by Lt. Ford in “The Tulsamerican” broke out of the clouds, fighters of the Luftwaffe were awaiting them. The engagement began at 11:53 a.m. and lasted until 12:20 p.m. with the Germans claiming 10 bombers. In Lt. Ford’s box, four of the six airplanes were shot down, the other two

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received battle damage and were forced to abort the bomb run. "The Tulsamerican" sustained heavy damage, losing one engine, the hydraulic system, and taking a hit in a fuel tank. Though damaged, the other airplane was able to return to base safely.

After the attack Lt. Ford released his bomb load and pointed the nose of "The Tulsamerican" towards home base. His airplane was in bad condition and because of the loss of an engine and the hydraulic system, he was required to fly slower and at a lower altitude on the return leg. The bomb bay doors were jammed open, and there was no way to transfer fuel from the damaged tank because the hydraulic system was no longer functional. While on the return leg and over Hungary, they encountered flak batteries and another engine was lost. At this time the B-24 and her crew were on their last two engines and losing fuel, air speed and altitude, and it became evident to Lt. Ford that they could not get the wounded airplane back to Italy. Sgt. John Toney later wrote, "I don't know how Lt. Ford and Lt. Ecklund managed to keep the plane in the air, but when we reached the coast of Yugoslavia, Ford decided we couldn't make it any further, so decided to try and crash land on the Isle of Vis."

There was an emergency airfield situated on the Isle of Vis for returning allied airplanes that could not make it back to their home bases in Italy. This emergency landing strip was in a low valley, and it was a very difficult place to land even for an undamaged bomber. Lt. Ford chose to attempt an emergency landing on Vis; however, there were complications due to the battle damage to "The Tulsamerican." The landing gear needed to be manually extended because of the loss of the hydraulic system. It was the Flight Engineer's responsibility to extend the landing gear, so Sgt. Charles Priest tended to his duties in an effort to get the wheels down. Priest managed to extend the main gear, and then began work to extend the nose gear. At this time, Lt. Ford opted to do an orbit off the Isle of Vis in order to give Priest some time to extend the nose gear. During this first orbit, the gear would not budge. Lt. Ford decided to give it one more orbit and then land even if the nose gear was not down and locked. About halfway

through the second orbit the remaining two engines quit. They had apparently run out of fuel while attempting to get into the traffic pattern for a landing at Vis, and they had already flown over Hvar Island when they were forced to ditch the airplane. Sgt. John Toney wrote:

"As we circled the second time, Ford saw we couldn't make it and ordered us to bail out, but before we could get out, the other two engines quit and he yelled 'ditch'. With the bomb bay doors open, gear down and no power we really hit the water hard and the plane sank immediately. Ford, Landry, and Priest were killed on impact, but the rest of us were picked up by a couple of Yugoslavian fishermen in a small boat and taken to a large building of some kind, where they stripped us and wrapped us in blankets and poured down us what I think was Vodka. We were then moved to the small hospital on Vis. We were then flown to the hospital at Bari, Italy. Only one of the crewmembers was known to return to duty, the tail gunner S/Sgt Jim Hazel."

The other wounded crewmembers were returned to various hospitals in the U.S. for treatment and recovery.

As "The Tulsamerican" slipped beneath the waves of the Adriatic, carrying some of her crew with her, one might think that this would be the end of the story; however this is not the case. Further research and contacts opened up other avenues of information regarding the fate and possible position of "The Tulsamerican." One of these contacts, Kevin Gray, a native of Tulsa, put me in contact with Mr. Zeljko Bocek in Croatia. Zeljko asked that I write an ad to be placed on the Isle of Vis searching for individuals who might recall 17 December 1944 and the crash of "The Tulsamerican." The ad was answered by a family from Hvar Island who told me their father, mother, and grandmother were the rescuers who saw

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the bomber crash that day. This family knows the location of the airplane which is at a depth of 160 meters of water west of the Island of Hvar. There is not a positive identification of this airplane at this time; however, Zeljko has put together a team to dive on this airplane to verify its identity. It is hoped this dive will take place in September, 2004. The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) at Hickam AFB, Hawaii has also been notified of this event, and we hope to bring them on board in an effort to identify not only the airplane but also any remains that might still be with it.

I have been told by Kevin Gray that many people of Tulsa still recall "The Tulsamerican" and what she meant to them. Kevin Gray told me, "When the people of Tulsa heard of the crash of 'The Tulsamerican,' they bought enough war bonds to pay for a squadron of A-26 airplanes to avenge 'The Tulsamerican.'"

If this airplane in question off Hvar Island is "The Tulsamerican," then those still aboard might be brought home to their families and native land after more than 60 years. Anyone who wishes to learn more about the activities of the 461st Bomb Group and its activities during WWII, please visit their website at: <http://www.461st.org/>.

I wish to acknowledge the following people who were so helpful in offering information: Russell's sister Pauline Crossin and brother, Robert Landry, my mother Martha Landry, Norma Ford Beard, daughter of Eugene Ford, John Bybee, Kevin Gray, Mrs. John Toney, Val Miller, Vernon Miller, and other members of the 461st Bomb Group, and U.S. and Foreign Archivists.

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Men that fly in heavy bombers are business men. They do a job and there is little emotion in the job. Fighter pilots get emotional because their work is quick and it ends before the emotion has time to end and the emotion is still with them when they climb out of their planes. A fighter pilot can get drunk at his work, emotionally drunk, but a heavy bomber pilot just works, an aerial taxi driver he calls himself ruefully, a freight engineer and he just works and the men who fly with him just work. Long-range heavy bombardment takes hours, three and four hours going and three and four hours returning and that is too long for emotion to last. There is brief emotion when the enemy closes in and there is the feeling of combat,... but those moments are lost in the long monotony of the mission, the hours of steady, noisy airplane pounding in the air, the deadly drugging effect of the engines on nerves, the long times, one hour, two hours, three hours, four hours, on oxygen, the careful, precise, non-amusing, can't-be-done-improperly stream of things that the pilot, the engineer, the radio man, the navigator, have to do, the sitting and waiting, ears aching, head rocking, mind-alert hours, sometimes tilting mentally forward for something that may never come, pitching mentally over when it does not come. Men who fly bombers and who fly in bombers come out of their airplanes exhausted and bored in a way no one was ever bored before. Men who fly in bombers are not really older than the men who fly in other kinds of airplanes; they just look that way.

HEADQUARTERS
SOUTH ATLANTIC DIVISION, AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND
c/o Postmaster, Miami, Florida

A
PREVIEW
OF YOUR NEXT
AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND STOP
NATAL

After crossing 1888 miles of the Atlantic Ocean from Dakar, you will arrive at Parnamirim Field in Natal, Brazil. On arrival your plane will be sprayed by the Brazilian Medical Authorities. The necessity for this action was occasioned about a year and one-half ago when malaria bearing mosquitoes were found alive on planes arriving here from Africa. During this period of disinsectization (about five minutes) your temperature will be taken by our own Medical men and any requests for medical attention should be directed to this attendant. During this same period, the Priorities and Traffic Officer will pick up the Passenger Card that you will find attached to this sheet. Fill in these cards prior to your arrival so they will be ready for this officer.

From the aircraft you will be taken as a group to our Transient Service Building. Here you will be given the correct local time (three hours earlier than Dakar time). Report at this time if you do not have your Dog Tags. You will be required to have them before proceeding north. An escort will be assigned your group to be of all possible assistance in offering directions or information. You will then proceed to the area where latrine and shower facilities are located. After showing, clean underwear and sox will be issued on an exchange basis for enlisted men so desiring. Then to the Officers or Enlisted Mens Messes where hot meals will be served on a twenty-four hour basis.

Two hours after your arrival you will return to the Transient Service Building where you will be advised your northbound flight number and approximately your departure time. Some will depart north immediately, others may be delayed due to weather or air traffic tie-ups. If there is an extended delay, you will be given a room where you may sleep until called.

FOR THOSE WHOSE TIME PERMITS

Day rooms for Officers and Enlisted Men will be open at all hours. Pool tables, ping pong tables, darts, transient library and reading rooms, writing desks, Red Cross Canteen and information desks will be available here.

An athletic area will provide: lots of sun bathing, volley ball, shuffle board, archery range, tennis, soft ball, horse shoes and hobby shops. There will be an athletic director to help you organize your teams and provide the equipment. We should warn you now not to expose yourself to this tropical sun for more than 20 minutes at any one time.

Our Post Exchange will have all the usual items together with many local products which you may care to take back as a memento of your visit to Brazil.

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The Base Theatre will have two showings each evening. In addition movie shorts will be shown in the Recreation Area 24 hours a day.

Ponta Negre Beach is approximately seven miles from the Base and trucks will be available for transportation. The City of Natal, however, is off limits for all transient personnel.

You will be given no work details during your stay in Natal.

BAGGAGE

Access to your checked baggage will be granted only when unusual circumstances warrant and such permission will be granted only by the Transient Service Officer.

CENSORSHIP

CABLEGRAMS: EFM (Fixed Text Messages) and straight messages may be sent from the Base Censor's Office. PACKAGES: Due to limited wrapping facilities, it is recommended that all purchases at the PX be carried rather than mailed. LETTERS: Writing is not recommended as your plane will reach the States long before any letter you may mail here. If they are sent, they will contain only information of a personal nature. You may, however, mention you are in Brazil.

YOUR FLIGHT FROM NATAL

After your rest period, two types of aircraft will be assigned for the balance of your trip. There will be a Douglas C-47s (Skytrains) carrying twenty passengers each and Curtiss C-46s (Commandos) carrying 30 passengers each. For additional comfort several litters will be set up in the C-47s so that all may have an opportunity to rest during some leg of the flight. Your Plane Group Leader will be given a suggested plan of equitable assignment of litters so that each may have his proportionate share of litter time.

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE NATAL BASE

Pernamirim Field was activated as a part of the South Atlantic Division, Air Transport Command in June 1942. Since that date and up until "V-E Day", 18,579 combat aircraft, 24, 899,771 pounds of high priority cargo, 3,910,766 pounds of mail and 39,364 urgently needed personnel have been flown from this field to the men on the fighting fronts. The same flights return through Natal and have carried strategic materials, sick and wounded and thousands of personnel. Also 4,143,266 pounds of your mail has been flown back to the U.S. Twenty-four hours a day seven days a week have been spent by these men to see that the planes, men and materials have moved with the greatest possible speed.

We will be looking forward to seeing you in Natal and with the facilities available we will do everything possible to make your stay pleasant and comfortable.

/s/Thomas D. Ferguson
Colonel, Air Corps
Commanding.

Vincent Walter Veno

Vincent Walter Veno, a resident of Arlington, Virginia, since 1947, died January 7, 2005. He was predeceased by his beloved wife, Norma (Laymon) Veno; a grandson, William Andrew Scheil; his brother, Harold Thomas Veno of Framingham, Massachusetts; and his sister, Mildred Beryl (Veno) Barber of Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is survived by his daughter, Barbara Veno Scheil and her husband, Bill, of Glen Allen, Virginia; his son, William Russell Veno, and his wife, Katherine, of Mabank, Texas; his grandson, Christopher Caldwell, and his wife, Laurie, of Augusta, Georgia; his great-grandchildren, Nastasia and Ian Caldwell, also of Augusta; and many loyal friends and neighbors.

A native of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Veno began his military career at age 15 with enlistment in the Massachusetts National Guard. After three years in the Guard, he became a member of the inactive reserves. He was called to active duty with the US Army in 1943. Upon completion of Officer Candidate School, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant and undertook Flight Training with the Army Air Corps. He became a B-24 pilot with the 461st Bomb Group and participated in the European Theatre Italian and Southern France Campaigns. He completed 50 missions and was awarded the Victory Ribbon, the EAME ribbon with Two Battle Stars, the Air Medal with Three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Distinguished Unit Badge, and the American Theatre Ribbon. He was also awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for a raid on the oil fields of Ploesti following which he piloted his plane to safety despite heavy flak that destroyed one engine and the plane's hydraulic system and bucking a 50-mile per hour cross wind.

He was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness at sea in December 1944 during his return to the US. After almost 2 years at Lovell Hospital, Fort Devens, Massachusetts, his condition was pronounced incurable and he retired from the Army Air Force as a Captain in 1947. He defied medical predictions by going into remission and resuming a career in the stove industry that he began prior to his call to active duty,

Veno's career in the stove industry started with the Walker & Pratt Manufacturing Company (later the Kalamazoo Stove and Furnace Company) in Watertown, Massachusetts. He was associated with the Stove Pricing Unit of the Office of Price Administration as a pricing analyst from 1941 to 1943, and briefly with the Marshall Stove Company in Tennessee. Following his military retirement and convalescence, he joined to Institute of Appliance Manufacturers in Washington, DC, in 1947. He stayed with that organization through its merger into the Gas Appliance Manufacturers Association (GAMA), and progressed through increasingly responsible positions culminating with his election as Secretary in 1970. He retired from GAMA in 1981.

Funeral services will take place on February 23 at 1PM at the (Old) Fort Myer Chapel with burial immediately following at Arlington National Cemetery, the Rev. Sam M. Catlin, Rector, St. Luke's Anglican Catholic Church, Fredericksburg, officiating. The family will receive friends at the residence after the services.

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

Webmaster Comments

Again I have been surprised by our web space. This year when I renewed our web space, I was told we had 2-gig of space and the cost was about \$100. I now have all sorts of space and am looking for suggestions on what we should be putting on the website. If you have any ideas, I would love to hear from you.

With 2-gig of space for our website, the only constraint is the CDs I'm offering. A CD holds approximately 700- meg of data so I would like to hold the website to this limit. We are a long way from filling even this right now so send in your suggestions.

I was amazed at the interest in the website CDs at the reunion last year. I took twenty-five copies of the website CD with me to the reunion and figured I would be lucky if I sold that many. As it was, I sold every copy and took orders for almost that many more. If you did not receive your copy as promised at the reunion, please let me know.

I would like to remind everyone that the 461st Website CD contains everything that was on the website at the time the CD was created plus some extra things such as some history files, MAC Reports and some of the Liberaiders. The CD costs \$25.00 for the first copy and \$15.00 for subsequent copies. If you already have a CD, you might consider a replacement CD in order to have everything that's been added to the website since you received your copy. I will once again have copies at the reunion.

I want to maintain an accurate E-Mail list for members of the 461st. If you have Internet access, please take a few minutes to drop me a note to make sure I have your address. The Internet is an excellent way for us to keep in touch, but it only works if we have your correct address. I thought about publishing addresses in the Liberaider, but decided not to because of the possibility of abuse (spam, viruses, etc.). I do have a list of those people who have shared their address with me so we can keep in touch.