

Reflections on a Reunion  
by  
Millie O'Bannon

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

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

Once we settled in our rooms we headed for the "Board Room". Alice Oglesby and Catherine Muller were the gracious ladies at the reception desk, where we picked up our envelopes that contained tickets to the events and quite a few "goodies" as mementos of the reunion. Grace Cole seemed to be everywhere making certain that everything went smoothly. In case you wondered, Len Cole was the man making all the last minute name tags and keeping track of how many meals were being ordered. The committee members were very successful in getting free gifts from the hotel and local companies. It is rumored that Otto Muller had lost none of the skills he learned in Italy. Many members had arrived by the time I got there on Wednesday. Frank flew in on Monday but animals at home detained me. The total attendance at the reunion was 487. That represents a lot of talking but that's what reunions are all about. Frank is still mumbling that he missed some of those attending.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tom Moss took over the meeting during the election of officers. The results were as follows:

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

The squadrons, in caucus, elected the following:

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

Alternate directors

Headquarters	Nye Norris
764 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	John Trommershausser
765 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	Bill Wilkins
766 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	Ted Ahlberg
767 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	Denny Perkins

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ed Chan, Membership Chairman, has found many lost 461sters in the past few months. Ed came forward with new ideas on finding men and introduced a new form which will give clues on how and where to find them. Ed asked for volunteers to help him find people. He would like representatives from each state and large city. Get involved, get in touch with Ed (See his address in the organization block on page 2).

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

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

The meeting was adjourned. Now on to the fun!

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

Saturday's tour was a lovely trip to Grant's farm (the home of our 18<sup>th</sup> President) and to the museum of transportation. Our beautiful weather contributed to the success of our tours. Grant's log home has been restored but is not open to the public. It was not a bad looking place but I'm sure it lacked many of the "frills" we have today. The entire farm

is an interesting, beautiful place. There are many animals roaming free in natural environments without cages. I love the Clydesdale horses that are raised on a portion of the farm. Just think, those horses were the B-24s of the knights of the roundtable.

I had never heard of the museum of transportation. They have a wonderful collection of various means of transportation. The railroad train buffs had a field day looking at and sitting in the famous cross-country steam engines of the by-gone days. Speaking of railroads, the group ate lunch one day in the restored “Union Station”. Although it is no longer used as a station you can visualize those huge engines hissing and spitting steam.

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

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

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

The memorial service on Sunday started at 9:00 AM. Following a prelude by Mrs. Ruth Schulzer, the color guard from Scott Air Force Base posted the colors. When Chaplain, Col. James H. Thurman, USAF, opened our memorial service it was then that you remembered the serious part of our lives. When looking at those young men and women of the color guard, you could recall how our men, and ourselves, looked 46 years ago (if by chance you have forgotten, look at the picture of John Young's 764th crew, page 5). We quickly recalled the reality of those times. We who served and lived will not forget those who did not return. One of our own, Farrold F. Stephens, sang two very appropriate solos that brought back many memories. Farrold also led us in singing “Lord, Guard and Guide the Men Who Fly”. It was a most memorable service.

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

Then it was “hug” time. The end of a great reunion. We can't say enough “Thank you's” to the committee: Harry, Alice, Otto, Catherine, Len and Grace. They did an exceptional job.

See you in Tucson in 1990!

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