



The 461st

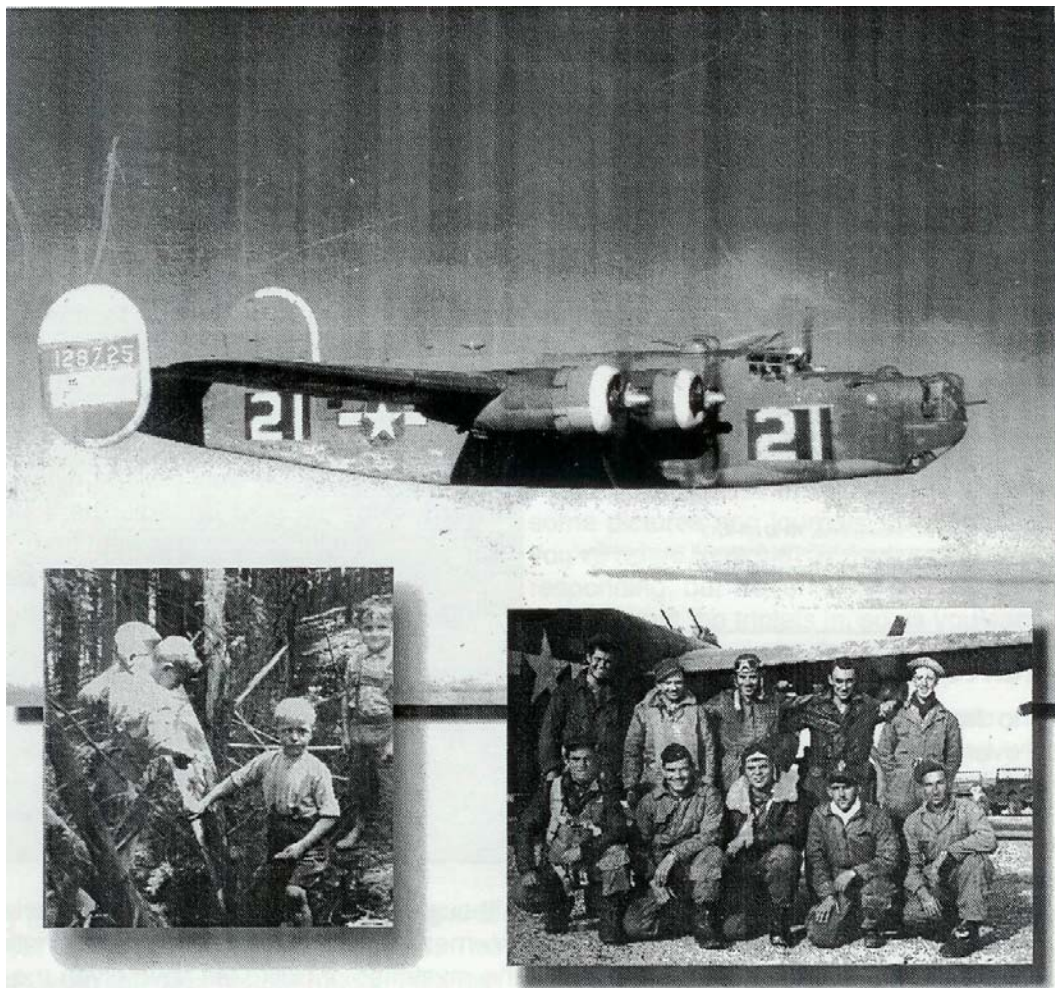
Liberaider



Vol. 16, No. 2

December 1999

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA



In This Issue:

My Last Mission of the War
Combat Missions—April 1945
Archivist's Corner

The 461st Liberaider
461st Bombardment Group (H)
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2000 Reunion

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"The 461st Liberaider"

Rob Hoskins—Editor—310 Tyne Ave., Murfreesboro, TN 37130-4513
The "Liberaider" is published twice a year on behalf of the members of the organization.
Permission is granted to use articles provided source is given.

Editorial Change

Anyone who has opened a copy of the 461st Liberaider over the last decade or so already knows what fantastic work George Dickie has done to keep the members of the 461st Bomb Group Association informed, and to assemble vast amounts of material relating to the history of "The Liberaiders".

I wasn't with the 461st in Italy, so "The Liberaider" was where I first learned about what it was like for my father (Robert S. Hoskins—766th BSq) to fly missions over Europe in World War Two. Heaven knows HE would never place any importance on his contribution to the war effort.

When I began digging for material to include in the 461stBG website, George was right there with just about anything I asked for, and he was always willing to point me to anyone who had material he thought I might be able to use.

"George Dickie? Who is he?"

Well, he is one of the men that made the 461st Bomb Group the outstanding organization that it is today.

George is a man that recognized areas that he could help in and did step forth to help. Who wasn't impressed with his ability, and effort, to secure from the manufacture the engine that provided the power for our B-24s? That display was one of the outstanding exhibits of the reunion. I know that it received many a "thank you" pat from aircrew members, not to mention the thoughts and stories of the ground crew members who had to work on that gem under many circumstances.

As the group grew it was George who stepped forward with his offer to edit the Liberaider. Under his hand this newsletter went from a "small town" paper to one that gave all other newsletter editors something to aim for in the future.

George, really for myself, and the 461st Bomb Group, please accept our thanks and a **WELL DONE** to you and Bobbie.

Frank O'Bannon
Past President

Although I have a good deal of experience in Internet publishing, the process of printing and the mysteries of Bulk Mail have given me a lot to learn, and George has been very helpful in getting me situated for this first issue.

I hope you will all feel free to contact me about anything you would like to have included in future issues and I look forward to serving as the Editor of the magazine that George has raised from an 8 page bulletin to such a valuable organ of the 461st Bomb Group Association.

Rob Hoskins, Editor



Because of the amount of E-Mail we now receive, we will be adding those messages to the regular mail bag as well.

What follows in this first series of messages exhibits the importance of

making the history of the 461st Bomb Group available on the Internet. I'm sure you will be as surprised as I was when you read the signature line!

I know that my grandfather was in the Air Force and served in WWII, but not much else. He died before I was born, and my father doesn't talk about him much. Every once in a while I do a search on "Glantzberg" to see what comes up, because there aren't many Glantzbergs in the world that I am not related to somehow. Today I saw your page. Could you confirm for me the full name of the "Col. Glantzberg" mentioned as serving with your group? If this is my grandfather, I would be very interested in finding out more about his service and maybe talking to somebody who knew him personally.

Thank you so much,
Elayne Glantzberg-Hunt
Austin, Texas

I knew my grandfather had retired as a General of some sort in the Air Force, but not much else. The family just doesn't discuss history much. I did just find out from my father that he has a collection of books written by my grandfather that he's going to try and transcribe onto the computer; there must be some interesting things in there.

I would love to hear from people who knew him. I never did, and since people in the family haven't said much, I don't know what he was like. Even my mother never met him. I ran across the tribute to him from "The Liberaider" on your site; he

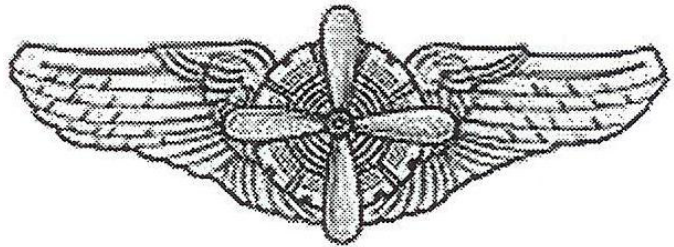
sounds like a fascinating guy.

Reading about some of the missions on your site has been interesting, too. As young as I am, the most experience with war that I have is the Gulf War.

The sheer number of missions your group flew is amazing, when I actually see them laid out like that.

Any more information or stories you could give me would be great. Thank you so much.

Elayne Glantzberg



I gave your address to my father, who says he has some pictures and journals stored away. I hope you've heard from him by now; sorry to be so long responding, but we're in the process of buying a house to put the triplets in, so as you can imagine I've been busy!

I would love to see the documentary you are working on, it must be fascinating! I watch that stuff on the discovery networks all the time, I can't wait to see the final product on TV.

I heard this week from a Frank O'Bannon who says he served with my grandfather. Thank you for putting me in touch with these people.

Finding out all this stuff is so exciting!

Elayne Glantzberg
11900 Hobby Horse Court #118
Austin, Texas 78758

Elayne would like to hear from anyone who would like to tell her about the Big G.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Hi, My name is Edward Kussler. I was the bombardier on the crew of 1st Lt. Robert Galva of the 767th Bomb Squadron. As you know we were shot down on the Dec. 17th mission. We ended up crash landing near Roznava in present day Slovakia after flying for about 45 minutes after the attack by the German fighters. Two of our crew members were injured from enemy gunfire. They were Art Piccoli, the tail gunner, and Lee Stacks, the engineer. Piccoli suffered wounds to one foot around his ankle. Stacks had several machine gun bullets pierce the mid-section of his body. After the crash landing we were taken prisoners by a group of Hungarian soldiers. We carried Piccoli and Stacks on makeshift stretchers up to a road where a truck took us into Roznava. The two injured men were taken to a hospital and their wounds were treated. I saw Piccoli after the war and found out that his foot had to be amputated by a Hungarian doctor. Russian troops liberated the two injured men in Jan. 1945 and both were returned to a hospital in Italy for further care and then returned to the states. Both lived to their early sixties.

Robert Galvan stayed in the Air Force but was killed in an accident when his plane blew up over Kansas during a training mission in the mid 1950s.

Tom Lyons, turret gunner, and Roy Wilhite, radio operator both died rather recently. Lyons died in Tennessee in 1996 and Wilhite died in Missouri in 1998. I have been in contact with the wives of both since their deaths.

Eldred Helton flew as the co-pilot on our crew for the Dec. 17th mission. I have no info on him as I have had no contact with him since the war.

Our regular co-pilot was Oliver Maggard and he flew with a new crew on this mission that was piloted by Charles Lang. Some of that crew ended up as POWs and some including Maggard and Lang got back to Italy. Maggard is alive and well and living in Indianapolis.

I have not been in contact with Tom Stevenson, nose gunner, or Albert Jones, ball gunner, so have no info on them.

Fred Smythe, navigator, is alive and well in I Texas.

The entire crew except for Stacks and Piccoli up in German POW camps. Smythe and I were at Stalag 3A in Luckenwalde, Germany and were liberated by Russians on April 22nd, 1945. We got back in American hands in early May and I got back to my home town in Illinois by June 1st.

Take care
Ed Kussler



Gentlemen: I represent the Stillwater Airport Memorial Museum of Stillwater, Oklahoma. Over the past seven years, I've been writing a book about 475 combat aircraft that were scrapped at our airfield immediately after World War II. For your information, 228 of these airplanes were Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bombers. Many saw combat during the war. Please be informed that I'm just about ready to finish my manuscript. Presently, I'm trying to tie up some loose ends. One item that concerns me is a particular B-24J 44-48961. All I know is that it was assigned to the MTO i.e. the Fifteenth Air Force.

Today, while browsing through the "B-24 Best Web" site, I came across a photograph identified as "Rhode Island Red II" 44-4896X of the 765th Bomb Squadron. The photograph was courtesy of Mr. Tom Mulhern. Can anyone help me find out whether or not this aircraft is in actuality 44-48961? Does anyone have any information about "Rhode Island Red II"? Any assistance you can give my organization will be greatly appreciated! Thank you.

Sincerely,
John L. Dienst, Curator
SAMMA
P.O. Box 6042
Enid, OK 73702
E-Mail: Dienst@hotmail.com



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Rob,

I've been involved in a research project on all the Eighth AF and Fifteenth AF missions to Poland. The "MIA project" focuses on all the crews lost over Poland and their subsequent fate. When it comes to the 461 BG, we have several question marks regarding actual crash sites of the B-24s:

07/08/1944—mission to Blechhammer, losses ?

04/10/1944—42-78247 Lt. Waggoner lost over Poland—searching for details.

14/10/1944—one loss reported, location unk.

17/12/1944—42-51322 Lt. Lang r.; 42-51319 2Lt, Cabalbo both lost over Poland—searching for details (at least 8 other lost outside Poland)

21/02/1945—3 crews reported heading for friendly territory from Vienna mission (could be Poland ?) - Maj. Baker, Lt. Marshall, 2Lt Hooper

This much I can quote at the moment, there may be other losses that I omitted. I am searching for any further details regarding these crews (names, ranks,



"Rhode Island Red II" 44-4896X

positions, plane names—if any, etc.). I would be extremely pleased to hear from surviving veterans who might remember missions to Blechhammer, Odertal, Auschwitz and other targets in the Upper Silesia.

I shall be most grateful for any detail and advice. Hope stories of these crews' wartime effort are never forgotten.

Best regards,

Piotr Wisniewski

Piotr.Wisniewski@bossard.pol.pl



I enclose herewith \$25 life membership in the 461st Bomb Group.

I received The Liberaider on the apparent basis that my father Paul A. Hoffman, was a member of the Group.

Also, I intend to use the Internet to get more information regarding the missions he flew, since, although I know very little of the details, I recall Dad discussing his combat role as if it happened only yesterday.

As an aside, I majored in history in college and even now read very much history so I have both an emotional and intellectual interest in what happened.

As the experiences of World War Two fade, it is vital to continue the memory of those who served. The horror of war must never be forgotten, because if it is, it will have to be relearned, usually by another war.

Also, similarly, we must maintain our guard in a world where we have enemies.

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My Last Mission of the War

James Sipple—765th B. Sq.

It was about 1 A.M. when our crew were awakened for what we thought would be just another mission although it turned out to be much tougher one than any that we had ever flown before.

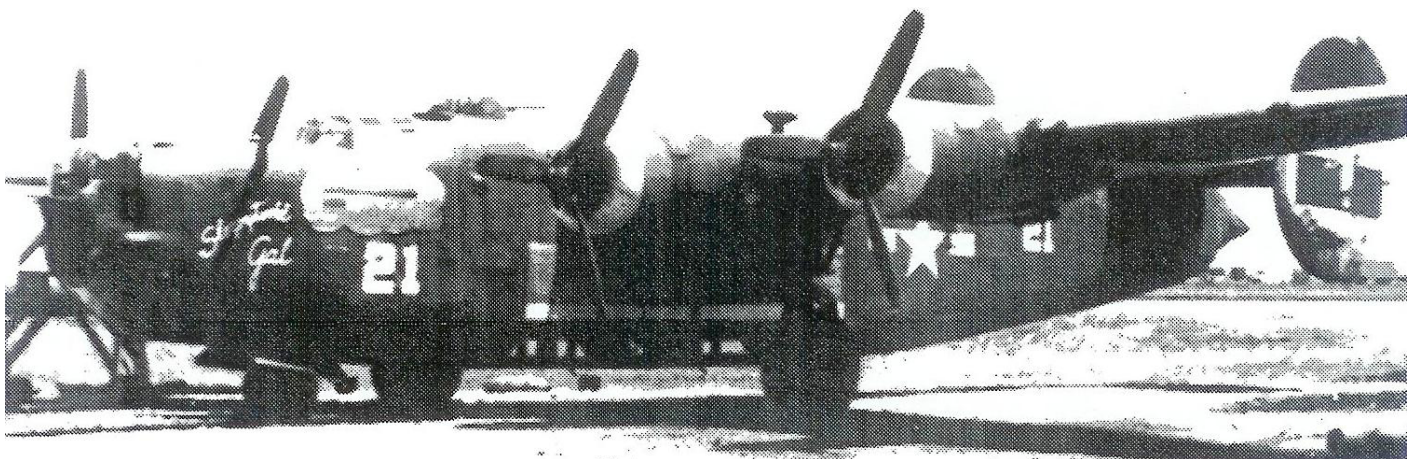
As soon as we were up and dressed we were on our way to the mess hall for our breakfast, which would be our last meal for about 15 hours. We had one of our regular breakfasts which consisted of oatmeal, milk, French toast, jam, and some hot coffee. It isn't much of a meal but in the near future we would have really delighted sitting down to such a meal. After we had our breakfast we were off to the supply room for our heated flying suits. Then at about 3:30 A.M. we were awaiting the call for what was to be our last briefing. When we were finally called into the briefing room we saw as before, our course charted out on the map on the wall of our briefing room. From the looks of things at the time it looked like a fairly easy mission. The intelligence officer started to give us whatever information that he had on the mission. He told us the course that we would follow and the opposition that we might expect to run into, the altitude at which we were to fly the mission, the time we would arrive over the target, what the target was, and also the expected time of our arrival back at the base. He also told us just what our fighter escort was to be and also where we were to meet up with them.

Now that our briefing is over we go outside and gathered up all our flying clothes that we had in the briefing room in our A4 bags. We then put them on the army trucks that were to take us down planes down on the field. Upon our arrival we would get into our flying clothes and start to check out the radio, bomb load, fuel, guns and ammunition while we were waiting for the officers of the crew to come from their briefing.

By this time it is about 5:00 A.M. and the officers are arriving at the plane to join us. Of course our first words are concerning the mission. We are also anxious to hear if they might have heard anything more than we had heard concerning the mission. The bombardier is soon showing us the photo of the target and its surroundings and the navigator is showing us the course that we are to follow. We also found out just where we were flying in the formation. We also find out at what time we are to take off on the mission.

After we are all set and waiting to get the signal to get aboard for takeoff we sit around smoking a few cigarettes and having a bull session. But now it is about time to get on board and warm up the engines. It is now about 6:00 A.M. and we are awaiting our turn down the runway. We check out our headphones and throat mikes and soon hear our

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"Sleepy Time Gal" in spring of 1944 with old style small ship numbers. If anyone has a clearer picture of this aircraft, or a port-side view from after the change to large numbers, we need one for the archive.

(Continued from page 6)

ship number called for takeoff from the communications tower on the field. So then we are all waving a grand good-bye to our ground crew, and out we go to the head of the runway, and get into position for take off.

Now we are at the end of the runway and are turning over the engines at full speed. They check out okay and as we get the signal from the traffic tower we start on our way down the runway. Half was down the runway we are doing about 75 miles per hour, now at 3/4 of the runway gone by we are starting to leave the ground at a speed of about 110 miles per hour. The pilot calls for the landing gear to be brought up into place, and as he gets up speed and altitude the flaps are pulled up into place by the co-pilot. The engineer checks the instruments and the armorer pulls the pins in the bombs as everyone else is getting into his respective position.

Now we are up about 5000 feet and we are looking around for the rest of the formation so we can take our position in the formation. We quickly catch up with the formation and take our place. On earlier missions we had been flying the lead or number 1 spot, but this mission we happened to be flying the number 5 spot, in box B. Now that we have our position in the formation the pilot gets the necessary information of the course from the navigator over the communications set. The pilot also is continually getting information from the gunners at their positions on anything that might develop in the formation such as another plane that might be in trouble, or it may be that some plane has turned back or left the formation to take the place of another plane in another formation.

Now we are in the air about 1 hour and have started on our way up the coast a few mile. We are still in safe territory and only on a joy ride this far, but we are only at the beginning of the mission and the fun is just about over because from here in we will have to be on our toes.

We are now out over the water and we are climbing up to about 10,000 feet. The weather is about as nice as it could be for flying and a clear sky is al-



Crew #21—Kneeling Front: Jim Robinson (P), Ken Githens (CP), Everett Kamps (N), Orville Moore (B), George Peterson. Standing: Howard Farr, Kermit Harrison (NG), Jim Sipple (TT), George Esser, Donald Wendte

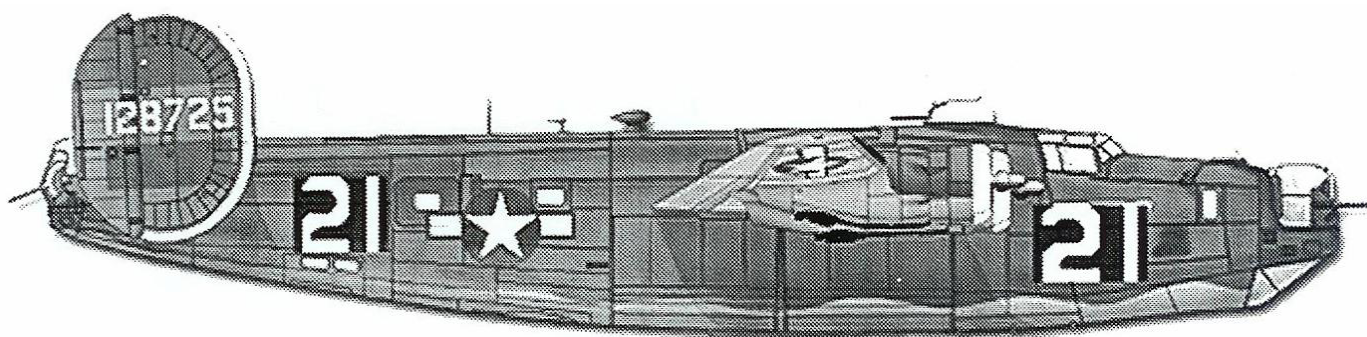
ways a welcome sight to anyone who is flying especially when you are flying on a mission. The vapor trails made by the planes are really a nice sight to see also. You can get a look at everything above as well as below. While we are over the water we are always on the lookout for anything that might be moving. If we should ever see anything moving on the water or on land we call the navigator and he will mark it down on his map and when we get back from our mission we will report it to the interrogation officer.

So far things are going along as smooth as any of the other missions except that now we are interrupted by the tail gunner and he is reporting that two of our planes have turned back.

Well now we are at about 15,000 feet and are now on the lookout for almost anything from flak to enemy fighter planes. So far we haven't run into any flak as sometimes we do when we are crossing the coast of Yugoslavia. We have now been in the air about 3 hours and have still about 2 hours of flying before we get to our target.

The crew is now plenty alert and looking for anything to happen at any time. The nose gunner reports a railroad with a large freight train moving over it. As we get a little farther inland we report that there is a string of barges moving down the

(Continued on page 8)



"Sleepy Time Gal" as she appeared on 25 July 1944 with enlarged ship numbers and no deicer boots. Illustration by Jim Caiella from the 461st Bomb Group documentary.

(Continued from page 7)

river below us. Then we finally get a bit of good news for a change from the top turret gunner as he reports that he has sighted a group of our fighters that are our escort. That is always the kind of news we are eager to hear and are looking for it on almost every mission.

Now that we have our escort we are feeling a little more free and we are more relaxed than we have ever been since we have gotten into enemy territory. Now we are getting pretty close to our target. So far I haven't said just what our target was for this mission. Well, the target is the Herman Goering Tank Plant, located in Linz, Austria. This is our first raid on that factory and city so we don't know too much about the surroundings. We are now starting to climb to 22,500 feet which is the altitude that we are to do our bombing from and it is getting pretty cold. We are going about 165 miles per hour.

We are now nearing our target and the bombardier is checking his sights for the target. As we make the turn that will line us up for the run on the target and we start to make our bomb run, the fighter escort has gone out ahead of us and is throwing out some window chaff or tinfoil which we use to help make the radar less accurate and also to do some strafing on the ground.

Now our escort has left us and we are starting to make the bomb run. The bomb bay doors have been opened and we are waiting for either some flak or enemy fighters to start hitting us any minute. Well we don't have to wait very long because the tail gunner just called the crew on the interphone and said enemy fighters attaching at six o'clock level. Now everyone

is getting anxious to get a shot at one of the fighters. They started attacking in a group of about 5 or 6 planes. Our machine guns rattle as the first wave or group of planes make their attack. The nose gunner calls in that one bomber is on its way down in flames. Then another wave came in and I reported that two more bombers are on their way out.

About this time the bombardier calls bomb away. So now our bombs are out and away.

About this time I imagine that I can see smoke back near the bomb bay and so I decide to take a whiff of oxygen as my hose had been disconnected in the shuffle of firing the guns. After getting some oxygen I decide that I am not seeing things and so I go back again to see if I can locate any fire, but I didn't see anything.

Then as I start back to my position I see the left waist gunner opening the hatch and already has his parachute on. I also hear the final warning bell and see the ball gunner getting out of his turret. By this time I decide it is time to go get into my chute and bail out the same as the rest are doing. As I got back to my station I saw a ME-109 coming in at about 2 o'clock high with his belly up and since I didn't have a shot until now I decided to stay and give him a blast before leaving. I used about 25 to 50 rounds of ammunition and saw the tracer bullets going into the nose of the plane and then a roll of smoke and he went down under our plane and out of sight. By this time the left waist gunner was already out of the plane and the ball gunner was on his way out. I started for the escape hatch and as I got there the tail gunner was putting on his chute and coming for the hatch. I left and he was

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right behind me. After I dropped about 5,000 feet I pulled my rip cord and when I looked around I saw only two other chutes besides my own. I noticed that when the ball gunner left he had rubbed his head on the floor of the plane and then I began to wonder if maybe he had struck it hard enough to knock himself out and then of course he would never have been able to open his chute. As I was falling in my chute I went over the Danube River. I saw in the air a short time when a German ME-109 came in close to me and for a minute I thought that he was going to strafe me but instead he tried to spill my chute.

It sure was a relief once I got the parachute on an even keel once again. As I was on my way I also saw a German soldier on a bicycle coming down the road just below me. As I was nearing the ground I saw that I was going to land between a few houses and on one side there was a clump of trees and bushes so I decided that as soon as I had

that was across two stumps. We sat there for a while and finally he started to ask me some questions in German, and that is when I made my first mistake. I told him in German that I didn't understand German. But naturally since I had said something to him in German he thought that I knew the German language. So he asked me a few more questions in German and when he found out that I wasn't answering him he gave up. About this time the German soldier that was on the bicycle came up and started to question me in German. But when he didn't get any answer from me he decided to take a swing at me. As he did I ducked under his swing and he didn't touch me. About this time the soldier that captured me stepped between us and sent the other soldier on his way. Then we both smoked an American cigarette of mine.

Upon our arrival at the concentration camp we were directed into a large court yard with high concrete fences. It was getting dusk when we arrived and we still had not had any food or water since being taken prisoner. We saw fellow crewmembers from other planes also had been picked up after they had bailed out of their planes as we had done. So since we were now apparently all picked up by the German home guard army except for a few crewmembers unaccounted for, we were to spend the night here. Some of the crews had some injured members among them in our immediate area of the camp and we tried best to tend their wounds and make the German guard nearest us understand that we wanted to have a doctor take a look at, and treat, the wounded. This, of course, was to no avail and so we decided to ask for water and food which was also useless. Finally after a few hours pass and it draws close to midnight we are told by a German officer to get up and follow him and his guards. This, of course, we did hoping that we may be fed and possibly be put under roof for the night. We soon found ourselves going into a building that had about 10 foot ceilings with a long center hall running the length of the building and numerous doors leading off to each side of the center hall. As we entered the center hall we

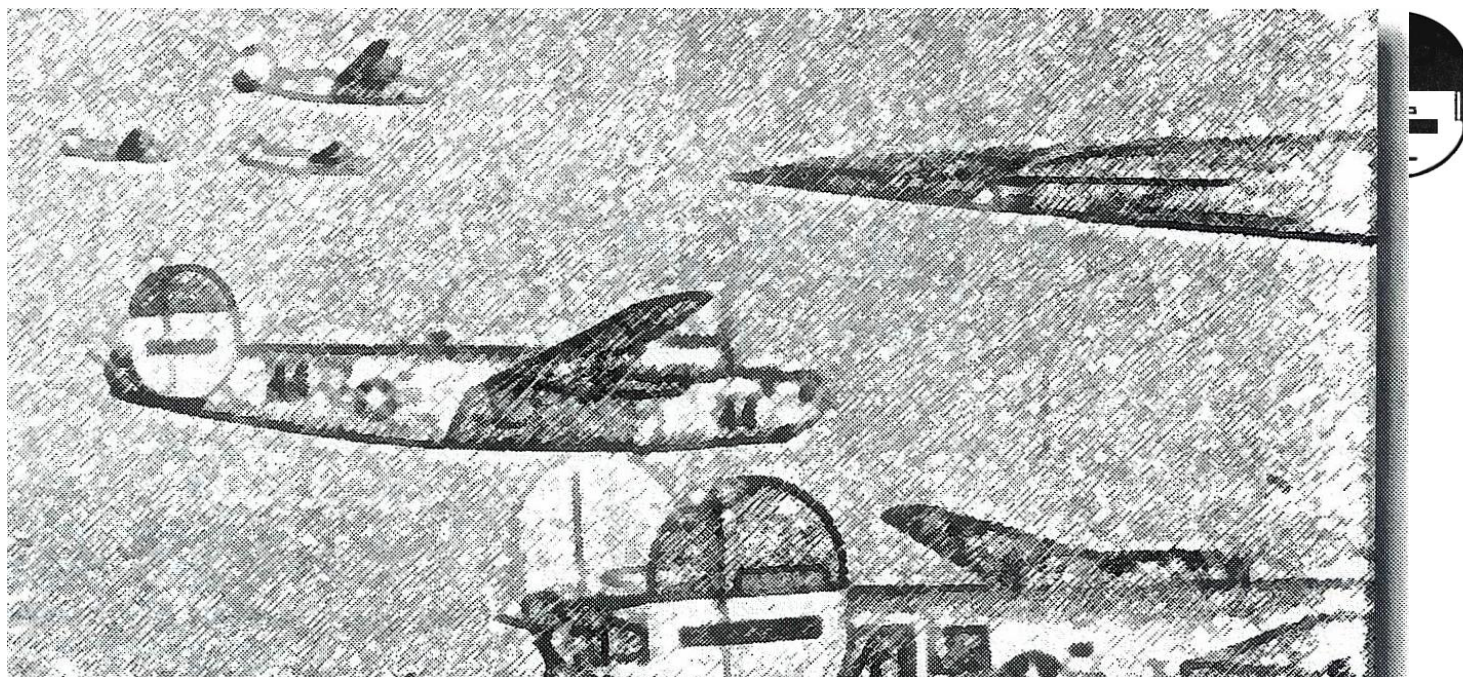


Wreckage of "Sleepy Time Gal" looking from tail position forward. Photo courtesy o Karl Affenzeller.

my parachute off, I was going to head for that bit of cover until it became dark enough for me to start out for Italy, but as soon as I had my chute off a German soldier was there to greet me with his rifle.

He searched me and along with a few civilians he took me toward he few houses that were nearby. As we got there he told me to sit down on a plank

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Form Up For SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA!



REUNION 2000 October 19—22

Full details in your next Liberaider
and at www.461st.com

Ed Stevenson has graciously volunteered to take charge of the year 2000 reunion in Shreveport Louisiana—Home of Barksdale Air Force Base. Further details will be posted to the website as they become available, and full registration information will be printed in your next edition of the Liberaider.

Mission Summaries

April 1945

The Final Month of Combat Missions

Crews received during the month of April.

764th Squadron

2nd Lieutenant Warren E. Inskeep and crew
2nd Lt. Herbert Beson and crew
2nd Lt. Wilbur H. McGoey and crew
1st Lt. Edgar B. Olson and crew
1st Lt. Allen L. Gilley, Jr. and crew

765th Squadron

2nd Lt. William O. Cunningham, Jr. and crew
1st Lt. Edward C. Demmond and crew
Captain Fenton H. Butler and crew
1st Lt. William I. Holly and crew
1st Lt. Richard F. Reiland and crew

766th Squadron

2nd Lt. Carl H. Ledendecker and crew
2nd Lt. Thomas J. Pearce, Jr. and crew
1st Lt. Roy A. Hatem and crew

767th Squadron

2nd Lt. Martin G. Hertz and crew
2nd Lt. Guyon L. Phillips and crew
2nd Lt. Daniel J. Silvis, Jr. and crew
1st Lt. Joseph A. Ballenger and crew
1st Lt. William F. Austin and crew
1st Lt. Stanley E. Caswell and crew
1st Lt. John P. Hutton and crew

Mission No. 206

1 April 1945

Bruck Marshalling Yard, Austria

On the first day of the month a force of twenty-seven planes led by Major Reider was dispatched to attack the marshalling yard at Bruck, Austria. Getting off to what appeared to be a promising start the formation crossed the Adriatic in fair enough weather.

Over Yugoslavia, however, the weather grew worse with cirrus building up to a ten-tenths layer of clouds extending from 16,000 to above 23,000 feet. A roundabout route, as far east as Lake Balaton in Hungary, in an effort to find a passage through the wall of clouds, proved unsuccessful, and the formation having no other alternative returned to base with its cargo of bombs. No mission credit was allowed.

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Mission No. 206

2 April 1945

Saint Polten Marshalling Yard, Austria

As part of the overall plan of impeding enemy troop movements in the Vienna area, the group was directed on 2 April 1945 to attack the Marshalling Yard at Saint Polten, Austria. Under ideal weather conditions and in the absence of both flak and enemy fighters, the group formation led by Major Baker achieved excellent results. Photographs show that a heavy concentration of bombs fell across the center of the Saint Polten Marshalling Yard, scoring innumerable hit on tracks and rolling stock; another concentration fell on the west choke point with at least seven direct hits cutting the line to Linz. Air Force plotted 79.3% of bombs dropped within 1000 feet of the briefed aiming point.

Mission No. 207

3 April 1945

Dolzano Marshaling Yard, Italy

Cancelled

Mission No. 207

4 April 1945

Bronzolo Marshalling Yard, Italy

Cancelled

Mission No. 207

5 April 1945

Brescia Marshalling Yard, Italy



Aerial reconnaissance of the 15th Air Force confirmed reports that the Germans were attempting to move masses of military equipment and Italian machinery out of Italy by way of the Milan to Verona railway. For this reason Brescia, accommodating upwards of 1000 railway cars and considered a critical link in the line, was designated the target for the day. A force of Twenty-eight planes commanded by Major Rider attacked the target in ideal weather with good results. Air Force scored the mission at 90.9%. The bomb pattern was rectangular and well-concentrate over the width and length of the marshalling yard. There was no opposition from either flak or fighters.

Mission No. 208

6 April 1945

Brescia-Breda Small Arms Works, Italy

The group returned to Brescia this time to bomb the Breda arms factory reported to be manufacturing shell cases for the Germans. A force of twenty-seven planes, led by Major Thackston, dropped a heavy concentration of bombs directly on the target getting about three-fourths of the factory buildings and installations. The mission was scored at 95.5% which turned out to be the highest score to be obtained in April. There was no interference from flak or fighters.

(Continued on page 13)

Message of Commendation:

Subject: Commendation (teletype)

From: 15th Air Force A311

To: Commanding Officer, 461st Bombardment Group (H)

The following message (15th AF A311) is forwarded with my congratulations.

"Bomb strike photographs of your attack on Saint Polten Marshalling Yard on April 2 show excellent bombing patterns by squadrons of the groups and post-raid reconnaissance reveals terrific destruction created. Please convey to the groups my commendation for a job well done."

Col. Todd

Fifteenth Air Force
Office of the Commanding General
A.P.O. 520

201.22

12 April 1945

Subject: Commendation

To: Commanding Officer, 41st Bombardment Group (H)

1. The following cables have been sent from the Commanding General, Eighth Army and the Commanding General, Fifteenth Army Group, respectively. To the Commander-in-Chief, MAAP, who has passed same to this headquarters with his congratulations and appreciation.

“Much appreciated is the wholehearted support of the Fifteenth Air Force on 9 and 10 April. The carpet bombing in front of our assaulting divisions, I am convinced, has been one of the decisive factors in our rapid advance to the Santorno River. The degree of success attained shows how enthusiastically all personnel tackled those close support missions. I fully realize the special and intensive training that this task demanded of all bombing crews.”

“I want you to know how fully I appreciate the splendid and effective air support which the air forces have already given us in the current attack. The excellent cooperation we have received from all air force personnel starting with the early planning phase has been a source of special gratification. I am confident of your all-out support in the future. Our air-ground team is a great success.”

2. I am particularly gratified to pass these well-earned commendations to all units of the command and to add my own praise for an outstanding demonstration of successful coordinated effort between air and ground forces.

/s/ N.F. Twining
Major General, USA
Commanding

(Continued from page 12)

Mission No. 209

7 April 1945

Vipiteno Railroad Bridge, Italy

Unpredictable weather over the Alps prevented the group formation from reaching its objective, the railroad bridge at Vipiteno, Italy. After fighting strong headwinds and ten-tenths cumulus all the way from Fiume to a point just south of Villach, Major Trommershauser, the formation leader, conceded victory to the elements and then had the formation return to base. The group received no credit for this mission.

Mission No. 209

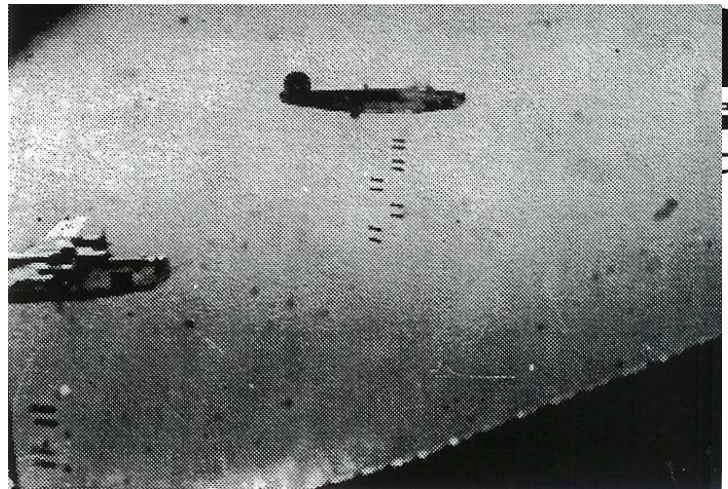
8 April 1945

Gorizia Marshalling Yard, Italy

The field order for this day directed the group to attack the marshalling yard at Bronzolo in northern Italy. Bad weather still prevailed and after an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate it in the area of Florence, the group formation leader, Major Trommershauser, selected the marshalling yard at Gorizia as an alternate target. At Gorizia the weather proved no handicap, for the bombing was done visually and with excellent results. Bomb strike photographs revealed

(Continued on page 15)

RIGHT: 766th Squadron Liberators release over the Brescia Small Arms Factory on April 6, 1945. Bob Hayes took this photo from the waist window of aircraft #43.



BELOW: The results of that drop. The mission was scored at 95.5% which turned out to be the highest score to be obtained in April.



(Continued from page 13)

that 56.3% of the bombs found their mark within 1000 feet of the briefed aiming point, though the pattern was somewhat scattered. No flak came up to oppose the formation. The Luftwaffe made a feeble gesture when two ME-109s dared show themselves in the area of Udine and did no more than observe the formation from long range.

Mission No. 210

9 April 1945

Troop Concentrations Northeast of Lugo, Italy

April 9th was D-Day on the Italian front. In preparation for this day along towards the later part of March, the Group Command staff were called to a conference at 49th Wing Headquarters where they were told that a spring offensive on the Italian front was in the offing. Plans were drawn up and every phase of Operation Buckland, as it was called, was discussed.

Upon their return from the conference, the group command staff began to make intensive preparations. In the days following, flight navigators and bombardiers held frequent meetings behind closed doors with Colonel Rogers, Major Rider, Major Murphy, Captain Toth, and Lt. Goodfriend. A number of navigators and bombardiers were flown to northern Italy to the scene of future operations, where they studied the surrounding terrain.

Operation Buckland was designed to extend over several days and presented many difficulties. There could be no mistakes because thousands of lives depended on the outcome of the operation. The area to be bombed—troop concentrations and gun emplacements in the vicinity of Lugo and most of the Santorno River—was devoid of prominent landmarks, thereby putting a high priority on skillful and accurate navigation. Bombing was to be over a wide area and therefore had to be perfect. Moreover, the job called for precision timing because the entire Air Force had to pass over the target within the space of an hour and a half.

The Group formation of forty-one planes compris-

ing two forces—the Red Force led by Colonel Rogers, and the Blue Force led by Major Rider—took to the air at 1200 hours. In the target area the Red Force encountered no difficulty—ground markers were clearly visible, radio navigational aids worked perfectly, the target was identified and bombed as planned. The Blue Force following closely on the Red Force, however, ran into unexpected interference on the bomb run. Another formation came underneath them at bombs release point and Major Rider, choosing the only possible alternative, ordered the bombardiers to refrain from bombing. By then the hour was very near to being 1520, the time when all bombing was to cease, and it was considered too dangerous to attempt a second run on the target. As a result of this the Blue Force did not bomb but returned its bombs to base.

Contrary to expectations, enemy resistance at the target was surprisingly slight. Anti-aircraft fire was encountered but was described as slight, inaccurate, heavy, and generally ineffective. The Luftwaffe was conspicuously absent. Consequently not a single plane was damaged.

Strike photographs of the bombing by Red Force show that the aiming point was well covered though the pattern did not extend as far as was intended.

Mission No. 21

10 April 1945

Troop Concentrations Northeast of Lugo, Italy

Operation Buckland, in support of the Eighth Army was continued on 10 April. The Group sent a double force, led by Colonel Rogers and Major Rider, against troop concentrations and gun emplacements in the vicinity of Lugo, Italy. The whole operation was executed as planned. A total of eighty tons of fragmentation bombs was dropped on the target with excellent results. Photographs show that the assigned target area was well saturated and that the

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

heavier concentrations fell directly on the aiming points. Enemy anti-aircraft fire was described as slight and inaccurate. Three FW-190s were seen scavenging in the target area.

Mission No. 212

11 April 1945

Bronsolo Marshalling Yard, Italy

The attack on the Bronsolo Marshalling Yard south of Bolsano was designed to cripple further the enemy's escape routes and to deny him the opportunity of withdrawal into the Alps. Major Thackston led the Group formation of twenty-seven planes on this mission. Against moderate flak the Group achieved excellent results—54.7 percent of the bombs dropped were plotted within 1,000 feet of the briefed aiming point. A concentrated pattern of

bombs fell on the south choke point and north of the marshalling yard cutting through line destroying an unestimated number of railroad



The plane piloted by 2nd Lt. Robert Caran was hit by flak at the target and did not return. When this aircraft was last seen, five crewmembers had bailed out.

Mission No. 213

12 April 1945

St. Veit Railroad Bridge, Austria

In pursuance of the Air Force policy of interdicting all enemy escape routes, the Group was directed to bomb a small railroad bridge at St. Veit in Austria. Major Poole led the Group formation of twenty-

(Continued on page 17)

Commendations

"I send my most hearty congratulations to your entire command for your record effort of 15 April in support of our ground forces. To your ground personnel particularly great credit is due for the near miracle of maintenance which allowed 1233 heavy bombers and 629 fighters to be dispatched on that day. Operational and Intelligence staffs who conceived, planned and directed the execution have every reason to be proud. And the combat leaders and crews for a splendid day's work I extend my appreciation and commendation."

/s/ General Cannon

"I want you to know how deeply I appreciate the thoroughly effective support which the Air Forces under your command have already given to the 15th Army Group in the current attack. Your excellent cooperation began with the planning phases of our operation and has continued in a manner which is most gratifying to all personnel in the 5th and 8th Armies which you are supporting."

/s/ General Clark

Order of the Day Number 2. "The advances of our ground forces have brought to a close the strategic air war waged by the United States Air Forces and the Royal Air Forces Bomber Command. It has been won with a decisiveness becoming increasingly evident as our armies overrun Germany. From now onward our strategic air forces must operate with our tactical air forces in close cooperation with our armies. All units of the United States Strategic Air Forces are commended for their part in winning the strategic air war and are enjoined to continue with undiminished effort and precision the final tactical phase of air action to secure the ultimate objective—complete defeat of Germany."

/s/ General Spatz

(Continued from page 16)

eight planes to the target and to a superior mission. Despite a three-tenths undercast which interfered with visibility at the target, the bombing was exceptionally good. Seventy percent of the 1000 pound RDX bombs dropped were plotted within 1,000 feet of the briefed aiming point. The south approach to the bridge was particularly well hit.

Mission No. 214

13 April 1945

Platting Marshalling Yard, Germany

Cancelled

Mission No. 214

14 April 1945

Malcontenta Ammunition Factory, Italy

The operations order for this day called for a normal effort against the Malcontenta Ammunition Factory located seven miles due west of Venice. Major Thackston led the Group formation of four boxes. Owing to a nine-tenths undercast in the target area, only one box was able to identify the target and drop its bombs. The other three boxes after making several passes at the target abandoned it and returned bombs to base. The mission was scored at 67.4 percent. Anti-aircraft fire at the target was slight and inaccurate.

Mission No. 215

15 April 1945

German Troop Concentrations in Bologna Area, Italy

The second phase of Operation Buckland, this time in support of the Fifth Army, began on 15 April and aimed at disorganization of the enemy's day, the Red Force led by Colonel Rogers has for its objective enemy troop concentrations and gun emplacements located approximately a fourth of a mile north of the junction of Reno and Sette Rivers. En route to the target the plane piloted by 2nd Lt. Frank M. Brown, Jr., lost two of its engines and the crew were forced to bail out in the area of Florence. The rest of the force of thirty-eight planes got through to the target without incident. Using 250

pound general purpose bombs, the Group unloaded its cargo of eighty tons directly on the target leveling the installations. There was no opposition at the target in the way of flak or enemy fighters.

Mission No. 215

15 April 1945

Nervessa Railroad Bridge, Diversion, Italy

Blue Force which was led by Major Baker, bombed the Nervessa Railroad Bridge in northern Italy. Unfavorable weather at the target prevented one box of six planes from bombing. The other twelve planes, however, did bomb with satisfactory results for a score of 36.1 percent. The pattern was none too good; the major concentration of bombs fell 800 feet short of the aiming point. Two planes were damaged at the target, though the flak was described as slight, inaccurate, and heavy.

Mission No. 216

16 April 1945

Troop Concentrations in Bologna Area, Italy

The following day the Group again sent a large force to Bologna in support of the Fifth Army. Enemy troop concentrations were the objective. Major Trommershuser, who led the formation, upon finding the target effectively screened by eight-tenths cumulus at 10,000 feet, ordered the formation to return to base with all its bombs. The Group did not take credit for a mission, though the Air Force allowed sortie credit.

Mission N. 216

17 April 1945

Troop Concentrations in Bologna Area, Italy

This last mission to Bologna in support of the Fifth Army brought Operation Buckland to a close. Major Trommershausser led the formation of forty-two planes against German troop concentrations. Only thirty-five planes in this force were able to bomb. One box of six planes found the target obscured by smoke and had to abandon it after three unsuccessful attempts. Photos show that the bombing was

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from page 17)

good and the pattern well concentrated. No enemy resistance from either flak or fighters was encountered.

Mission No. 217

19 April 1945

Avisio Viaduct and Railroad Diversion, Italy

The Avisio Viaduct, located approximately six miles north of Verona, is one of the vital links in the Brenner railway line. It was frequently visited by Groups of the Fifteenth Air Force and made inoperative on several occasions. Notwithstanding this, the enemy by the ingenious use of pre-fabricated spans was able to remedy the damage and continued to funnel traffic through the Brenner Pass at night. To make interdiction of all railway lines feeding into the Brenner absolute and complete, the Air Force assigned several groups to destroy the Avisio Viaduct. The 461st Group participated in this operation.

The field order called for a maximum effort of

thirty-six aircraft; the Group supplied thirty-nine aircraft. Major Thackston led the Group formation. Haze partly obscured the target but good bombing results were obtained. The pattern fell across the Viaduct and continued to a point one thousand feet west of the aiming point. Air Force scored the mission at 40.3 percent.



Flak was moderate at the target but not very accurate for not a single plane sustained damage. The Luftwaffe was out in force. Both FW-190s and ME-109s were seen in comparatively large numbers in the vicinity of Lake Garda. Enemy fighters, however, did not engage the Group formation.

Mission No. 218

20 April 1945

Lusia Road Bridge, Italy

Major Phillips led the successful mission of 20 April against the Lusia Bridge in northern Italy. This bridge, one of the few left standing, spanned

(Continued on page 19)

Commendation

“The result of the bombing of the Badia Road Bridge on 23 April 1945 are a source of great pride and satisfaction to me. The accuracy and precision displayed on this mission are indicative of the standard desired by every commander engaged in the final defeat of the enemy. My commendation to you for a job well done.”

Commendation

“I congratulate you and your personnel on the fine results obtained in the attack against the Rovereto Marshalling Yard on 24 April 1945. The determination and devotion to duty displayed on this attack are to be commended.”

Brig. General Lee

Commendation

The successful bombing of yesterday 26 April 1945, by all groups of this command was a fine display of leadership and aggressiveness. Your action in reaching targets through adverse weather that turned back many other units is deserving of commendation.

Brig. General Lee

(Continued from page 18)

the Adigo River and was being used by the retreating Germans.

One thousand pound RDX bombs were dropped to obtain excellent results. Flak at target, described as slight, inaccurate, and heavy, damaged one plane; save that it interfered little with the accuracy of the bombing, for the mission was scored at 91.9 percent. Direct hits were observed on abutments and approaches to the bridge, as well as the span itself. One lone ME-262 pursued by two P-51s was seen in the area of Bologna.

Mission No. 219

21 April 1945

Att nang/Puchiem Marshalling Yard, Austria

The briefed target for this mission was to be the marshalling yard at Brennere, Italy. En route, in the vicinity of Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, the formation encountered impassable weather and was forced to abandon the primary target in favor of alternate target No. 2, the marshalling yard at Att nang, Austria. Major Poole led the formation. Bombing through a three-tenths undercast, which necessitated as many as five passes at the target by some boxes, the Group nevertheless obtained good results. Air Force scored the mission at 61.1 percent. The pattern began just short of the marshalling yard and carried well into it. Neither flak nor fighters were encountered.

Mission No. 220

23 April 1945

Badia Road Bridge, Italy

The Group formation, led by Major Trommer-shausser, gave a good account of itself in bombing the road bridge at Badia, Italy. In good weather but in face of heavy anti-aircraft fire which damaged nine planes, the formation unloaded its cargo of 1,000 pound general purpose bombs directly on the bridge. At least twelve direct hits or near misses were scored on the span of the bridge. Of the bombs dropped,

85.8 percent were counted within 1,000 feet of the briefed aiming point.

Mission No. 221

24 April 1945

Rovereto Marshalling Yard and Gun Emplacements, Italy

Major Baker was in command of a force of thirty-seven planes which bombed the Rovereto Marshalling Yard in northern Italy on 24 April 1945. The bomb load consisted of 500 pound RDXs; three aircraft, however, carried fragmentation bombs for the purpose of bombing gun emplacements at Rovereto. Results were good. The marshalling yard was effectively hit, but it was not possible to determine whether any of the gun emplacements were hit. One aircraft was damaged by the slight flak at the target.

Mission No. 222

25 April 1945

Linz Main Marshalling Yard, Austria

With the offensive in Italy progressing successfully, the Air Force suddenly turned to bombing in support of the Russian armies on the southeastern front. The mission on 25 April 1945 was to Linz, Austria with the Main Marshalling Yard as the primary target. Major Phillips led the mission with Lt. Colonel Gregory leading the second attack unit. In view of the extremely heavy anti-aircraft fire encountered, which damaged eleven of the twenty-six planes over the target, the bombing was exceptionally good. Of the bombs dropped, 55 percent were plotted within 1000 feet of the briefed aimed point.

The plane piloted by 2nd Lt. Lawrence R. Toothman was lost to flak over the target. The plane piloted by 1st Lt. Richard F. Reiland had a brief encounter with a FW-190 which opened fire at 600 yards. When the alert gunners fired back the Fock Wulf turned away and headed north to Germany.

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Mission No. 223

26 April 1945

Lienz Marshalling Yard, Austria

The primary target for this mission was the Cortina Ammunition Stores in Italy. Bad weather in northern Italy made identification of this small target impossible and Colonel Rogers, leading the formation, decided on one of the alternate targets, the marshalling yard at Lienz, Austria. Because of the nine-tenths cloud coverage at Lienz, the formation had to let down to 12,000 feet in order to bomb visually. Bombing was done by boxes, some boxes making as many as three passes at the target. Two boxes dropped their bombs directly on the marshalling yard; the others were either short or over but on the whole results were very good. Air Force scored the mission at 64.6 percent. There was no interference from flak or fighters.

Commendation

“Attacks against the enemy’s vital communications center at Lienz yesterday show excellent results by the Forty-Ninth Wing. Bombing of the 451 and 461 Groups was particularly outstanding.

Brig. General Lee



BELOW: Linz Main Marshalling Yard, Austria is struck by a well concentrated pattern as seen in this detail from the strike photo for 25 April 1945. The 461st Bomb Group suffered its final combat loss when “Miss Lace” was lost to flak over the target with Lt. Lawrence Toothman in command.



www.461st.com

The website continues to draw attention from aviation enthusiasts around the world. Many new audio segments have been posted, and there are now over 60 nose art photos on display.

Frank O'Bannon has fallen into the role of ad hoc Message Board moderator and he has been fielding any historical questions that arise.

In the next few months many exciting additions will be coming online:

There will be extended segments detailing many individual aircraft in service with the 461st.

A new section dedicated to making crew photos and information available will be launched. Please make sure we have a copy of your crew photo!

You will soon be able to preview color artwork being developed for the documentary by aviation artist Jim Caiella. It is wonderful to see the aircraft in color after having seen them in only black and white for so long.

Sneak previews of segments of the video are now featured, which you can view on your computer.

Drop in on YOUR website if you are online!

Crew Photo Project

It is our intent to locate, duplicate, and archive all the crew photos from the 461st Bomb Group. Making the crew photos all available on the web, with captions containing the names of the members, will allow the opportunity to search for a given name and instantly retrieve a picture. That means that once we've had the search engines re-index our site, you could type in the name of a given crew member and the results of the search would turn up his crew photo.

We have many of these in the archive already, but they are in no particular order and some have no captions. We will be putting them all up on the site as time allows, but this may take weeks or months to work through.

ASSUME THAT WE DO NOT HAVE YOUR PHOTO. That way, the ball is rolling as soon as you see this, and you don't have to wait for us to respond to that question. I also encourage you to write a crew history to accompany your picture. Send a duplicate (not a Xerox) of your crew photo—with identifying captions—to:

461st Bomb Group Crew Photo Project
ATTN: Rob Hoskins
310 Tyne Avenue
Murfreesboro, TN 37130

Include a self addressed stamped photo mailer if you wish to have your photo returned. We would naturally like to have a hard copy on file for the archive, but we will return any photo you would like to have back.



***Humor...**
Or something
like it.*

Only a Child's Mind.....

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed little Alex was staring up at the large plaque that hung in the foyer of the church. The plaque was covered with name, an small American flags were mounted on either side of it.

The seven-year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the boy, and said quietly, "Good morning, Alex."

"Good morning, Pastor," replied the young man, still focused on the plaque. "Pastor McGhee, what is this?" Alex asked. "Well, son, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service."

Soberly, they stood together, staring at the large plaque. Little Alex's voice was barely audible when he asked, "Which service, the 9:00 or the 11:00?"



Police in Los Angeles had good luck with a robbery suspect who just couldn't control himself during a lineup.

When detectives asked each man in the lineup to repeat the words, "Give me all your money or I'll shoot," the man shouted, "That's not what I said!"

In Modesto, CA, Steven Richard King was arrested for trying to hold up a Bank of America branch without a weapon. King used a thumb and a finger to simulate a gun, but unfortunately he failed to keep his hand in his pocket.



"Co-pilot"

In the Ozarks, there was a mountaineer that was reputed to have the best hunting dog ever, by the name of Co-pilot. Three city folks went up in the mountains and wanted to rent him

"Good huntin dog, ... gonna cost ya \$50 a day." They agreed, and three days later came back with the limit. The next year they came back. "Co-pilot got better, gonna cost ya \$75 a day."

Again they agreed, and 2 days later came back with the limit. The third year they came back and old the mountaineer they had to have Co-pilot, even if it cost \$100 a day. "You can have that worthless mutt for \$5 a day, and I'm overcharging you \$4." But I don't understand, what happened to him?"

"Well, a crew from tat there Air Force Base in Oka-loosa county come up and rent him. One of those idiots called him Pilot, and he's been sittin on his ass barkin ever since."

Transcript from Canadian Forces ATC communication:

Helicopter Pilot [talking to ground]: "Roger, I'm holding at 3000 over beacon."

Urgent second voice interrupts: "NO! You can't b doing that! I'm holding at 3000 over that beacon!"

[Brief pause, then first voice again]: You idiot, you're my co-pilot."

Actual lines out of U.S. Military OERs (Officer Efficiency Report):

1. Not the sharpest knife in the drawer.
2. Got into the gene pool while the lifeguard wasn't watching.
3. A room temperature IQ.
4. Got a full 6-pack, but lacks the plastic thingy to hold it all together.
5. A prime candidate for natural selection.
6. Gates are down, the lights are flashing, but the train isn't coming.
7. So dense, light bends around him.
8. Was left on the Tilt-A-Whirl a bit too long as a baby.
9. If brains were taxed, he'd get a rebate.
10. Wheel is turning, but the hamster is dead.

Fighters vs Airlift

A couple of F-15s are escorting a C-130 Hercules and their pilots are chatting with the pilot of the transport to pass the time. Talk fell to the subject of the relative merits of their respective aircraft with the fighter pilots holding that their planes were better because of their maneuverability, weaponry and the like.

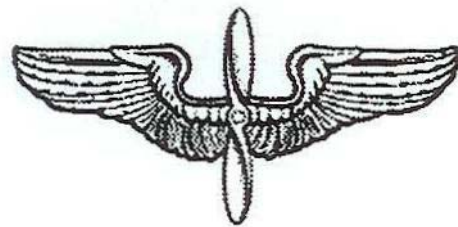
The C-130 pilot replied, "Yeah? Well, I can do a few things in this old girl that you'd only dream about." Naturally he was challenged to demonstrate. "Just watch," he tells them.

The C-130 continues to fly straight and level, and after several minutes the Herk pilot returns to the air and says, "There! How was that?"

Not having seen anything the fighter pilots say, "What are you talking about? What did you do?" He replies, "Well, I got up, stretched my legs, got a cup of coffee, then went I the back and took a leak."

Actual excerpts from Royal Navy and Marine officer fitness reports:

1. His men would follow him anywhere, but onl out of curiosity.
2. I would not breed from this officer.
3. He has carried out each and every one of the duties to his entire satisfaction.
4. He would be out of his depth in a puddle.
5. This young lady has delusions of adequacy.
6. Since my last report he has reached rock bottom, and has started to dig.
7. She sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them.
8. He has the wisdom of youth, and the energy of old age.
9. Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a at in a trap.
10. This man is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.



And the strangest...

The last dogfight in Europe was between a Piper Cub spotter plane (unarmed) and a German Storch, also a spotting plane. Over Germany in April 1945, the Cub dove on the Storch, and the observer shot it down with .45 Colt pistols. They then landed and captured the two Germans.

It was the only air-to-air victory claimed with a handgun.

Short Bursts

Setting the Record Straight

Rob Hoskins

In the December 1998 issue of *The 461st Liberaider* there was a large table of information outlining the aircraft losses sustained by the 461st Bomb Group during World War Two. The response to my request for confirmation and correction was encouraging.

The need for such an exercise is reflected in one particular egregious error featured prominently in the article and illustrated at the bottom of page 19. That is the notation and date of the crash of "Swee'Pea". An article in "The Torretta Flyer" and the handwritten caption on the back of the photo we used in "The Liberaider" reported the aircraft as having crashed at Torretta after the Ferrara Railroad Bridge mission on August 26, 1944. The pilot's name in all four instances was listed as Edward Tenner.

We received many responses pointing out that the aircraft was, in fact, lost returning to base from the disastrous July 25, 1944 mission to the Hermann Goering Tank Works at Linz, Austria. The pilot was, of course, Edgar Trenner. The fact that the aircraft returned to base rules out a Missing Air Crew Report, which allowed the error to slip past us.

The fact that this data has been widely accepted as fact, and even quoted in other articles, points out the importance of setting the record straight while the first-hand information is still available!

Again, I would like to thank everyone who supplied corrections, additions, and clarifications to the Losses index. If you were involved in the loss of an aircraft which returned to Torretta, please take a moment to see if it is listed in the index.



Edgar Trenner (L) and Co-pilot Bill Paradise pose beside Swee'Pea. The date and mission on which this aircraft was damaged beyond repair has been often misreported.

Life Memberships Prove Popular

461st Bomb Group Association Treasurer Bob Casey reports that recent efforts to promote the **\$25 life membership** have encouraged many Association members to upgrade to that level. Among the advantages to life membership are that "lifers" aren't bothered with annual renewals or possible lapses.

Why not step up to life membership by contacting Bob at:

Robert T. Casey—461st BG
122 S. Wilke Road—Suite 600
Arlington Heights, IL 60005

Lone Wolf Missions

Bill Thompson, an aviation writer in Windsor, IL, is researching "Lone Wolf" bombing operations carried out by Fifteenth Air Force B-24s. He describes a Lone Wolf mission as a coordinated attack made by a force of unescorted bombers making individual or small formation bombing runs under non-visual conditions either by day or by night. These aircraft were usually equipped with H2X radar.

"My reason for writing this book," says Thompson, "is that I feel that the general public is relatively unaware that the Fifteenth even existed as a strategic air force during World War II. The deluge of books written about the Eighth Air Force, especially Roger Freeman's "The Mighty Eighth" has overshadowed to a great deal the equal courage and sometimes greater sacrifices of the men of the Fifteenth."

"I want this book to be the first of a series of books about the Fifteenth to eventually cover every aspect of the men, operations, and equipment of the great Air Force."

Bill Thompson
RR 2 Box 86
Windsor, IL 61957-9442
Phone: (217) 752-6734
E-Mail: mtrae426@msn.com

Volunteer Typists Needed

We have a few documents and manuscripts that could add more depth to the website, but are not in clear enough condition to be 'scanned' into the computer.

A high priority is the transcription of the official 461st Bomb Group History. At over 400 pages, this could be broken up into manageable segments of 25 pages or so, to make the exercise less of a marathon.

Any word processor format is fine, since the text will need to be reformatted for the web anyway. Drop a note to your Editor if you can help out.

17 December 1944—Odertal!

There has been a seemingly endless series of events unfolding in the last several months involving a collection of historians who are each researching this air battle from unique perspectives.

Of course, the 8 minute marketing video for the 461st BG documentary features a bit of the story line, and now we hear through the grapevine that a Czech firm I also pursuing a film about the mission.

One of the most interesting research projects involves John Bybee and Peter Kassak who are attempting to link actual JG300 victory claims with individual 461st aircraft losses. You will remember John from his two-part article "Angels Unknown" in Liberaider Vol. 10—#2 (12/93) and Vol. 11 #1 (6/94). Peter is working from the Slovak Republic and can be reached at:

Peter Kassak
Hospodarska 68, Trnava 917 01
Slovak Republic

Did You Shoot Any Video in Omaha?

Don Johnson did a wonderful job in coordinating the 1999 reunion and our thanks go out to him for a tough job well done.

Don's daughter-in-law, Sharon Cox, shot some very nice video of the Memorial Breakfast on Sunday. He would like to hear from anyone who may have had a video camera at any of the dinners or tours. Please contact him if you have video take you could share

I'm sure that if you would like a copy o Sharon's tape, Don could make the arrangements.

Don C. Johnson
8513 Underwood Ave.
Omaha, NE 68114-3514
(402) 391-5453

Reunion 1999

This report is distilled from letters sent by several who attended, but is largely drawn from a very nice synopsis sent in by Lorraine and Walter Fries.

Thursday October 21st, 1999

The reunion of the 461st Bomb Group began with approximately 200 checking in and registering at Omaha Marriott Hotel, Omaha, Nebraska. The day and evening ere spent registering and renewing acquaintances with other members and families.

Friday October 22nd, 1999

At 9:00 a.m. we filled four buses and had a two hour tour of Offut Air Force Base. Highlights of the base were he big hangars where B-29s and one B-24 were built. The hangar was huge. Two B-52s could be placed in the hangar, nose to nose, with only the tails sticking out.

We had a terrific meal at the Officers' Club. This base at one time was an "old Army Base" converted to the Air Force Base.

The tour continued into the city to the Durham Western Railroad Museum.

On the tower level is where the trains arrived and departed, which has also been refurbished with old railroad artifacts. There is also a large model railroad train set up with several small trains traveling through hill and dale.

Meanwhile, back at the hotel, Rob Hoskins and his documentary team were busy with a local film crew videotaping interviews for the 461st Bomb Group. General Burke, O. B. Streeper, Frank O'Bannon and Gerry Smith were among those on the "Hot Set" throughout the day.

After we returned to he hotel a Board of Directors meeting was held. Ed Stevenson made a fine presentation of what the Shreveport/Bosier City area could offer for the year 2000 reunion. In the evening we enjoyed visiting at the Squadron Dinners

which were held in one room. Through the remaining hours of the evening group of Liberaiders could be found scattered about the conversation areas around the hotel.



Saturday, October 23rd, 1999

We departed from the hotel about 09:00 and toured the Strategic Air Command Museum. The structure of the museum buildings was fantastic, actually an architect's dream. The historic aerospace artifacts were displayed in 300,000 square feet of indoor space. As we left the buses to enter the museum, missiles were on display as sentinels.

After leaving the museum we entered the Eugene T. Mahoney State Park. We had a buffet lunch which was great. After leaving the Park, we traveled to "Boys Town" with a "step-on" guide. There are both boys and girls staying at the home. They are supervised in family style homes.

Then back to the hotel, where the website team had been in the hospitality suite all day scanning images and documents for the 461st archive

An eight minute segment from the 461st Bomb Group documentary was played in the hospitality suite throughout the day, and copies of the tape were available to Group Members and their families.

The annual business meeting was held in the late afternoon and was well attended. It was announced the year 2000 reunion would be held in October in Shreveport, Louisiana—to be hosted by Ed Stevenson.

The annual banquet was well attended on Saturday evening.

Sunday, October 24th

The memorial service was led by Edward P. Fedor, Chaplain, Lt. Colonel 55th WG/HC, USAF. After the service we enjoyed a very nice breakfast. After breakfast we bid farewell to all our friends.

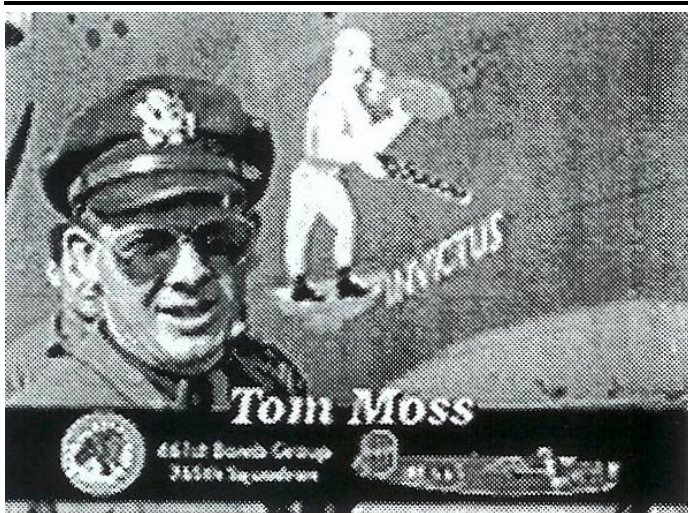
DOCUMENTARY UPDATE

At the reunion in Omaha we debated the eight minute video that we will be using to market the 461st Bomb Group documentary to potential donors and content contributors. The response overall was enthusiastic, and it was nice to have something tangible after two years of preparation.

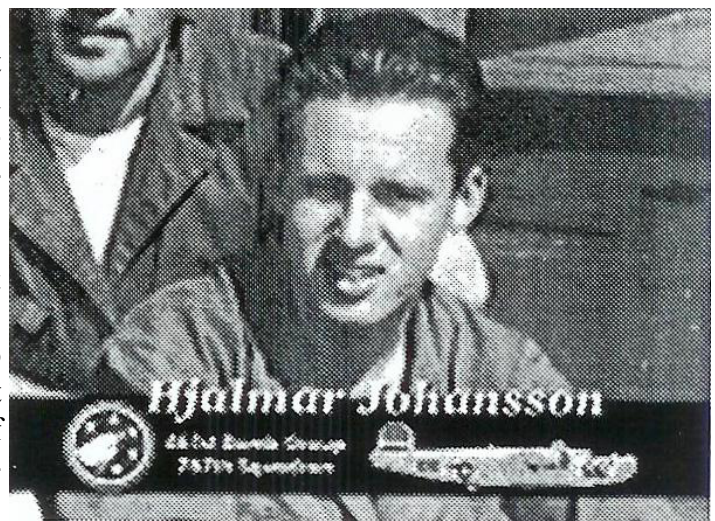
Shortly before the reunion we decided to buy out Electravision Productions' interest in the project. Unfortunately, they were no longer in a position to pursue the documentary with the energy the project deserves, and it seemed wisest to move them out of the picture before they incurred any further expenses.

Happily, this development allows us to concentrate a while longer on gathering film and video assets to use in the final product. Frank O'Bannon has dug out 21 minutes of 16mm black and white film that was shot at Torretta in 1944 and 1945. One of our priorities now is to have this footage cleaned and preserved properly.

We would also like to have you give a little thought to any film you may have tucked away from your time with the 461st. We could certainly use it for the documentary, but beyond that it would be nice to get copies into the Group archive or reference.



Tom Moss sets the record straight about the Fifteenth Air Force in the 461st BG documentary.



Nose Gunner Hjalmar Johansson tells about the encounter with 109s of the Luftwaffe's elite JG-300 on 17 December 1944.

The reunion in Shreveport will be our last opportunity to conduct interviews before we begin to cut the final product together, and we have a lot of ground we'd like to cover while we still have a chance.

We particularly need to spend time with Group members who participated in the first combat mission, the 25 July 1944 mission to Linz, the 8 October 1944 mission to Munich, and the cargo runs to Lyon and the POW camps.

Let Rob know if you would like to participate.

We are putting together a VHS tape with the 8 minute presentation and the restored 16mm film for use as a fundraising tool. Proceeds will be used to fund the restoration of any film stock our research reveals, and for the further production of the documentary.

We will make that tape available for a \$30 donation to the documentary project. If you would like a take of the 8 minute presentation along, I'd be happy to send you one for \$5 to cover the postage.

Make checks payable to Rob Hoskins, and send to the address on the back cover of this issue.

(Continued from page 9)

marched single file down the hall with guards along side of us. As we approached a door the guard would unlock it and in would go five of us prisoners for the night.

Once inside these cells we found it a bit cramped as each room or cell was only about 3 ft. wide, 8 ft. long and about 10 ft. high. The only thing in the room was a 5 gallon can used for a latrine, if you could call it that. Since the one member put in the



Austrian civilians inspect a wing and landing gear from "Sleepy Time Gal".

cell I was in had been injured landing in his chute, we made him as comfortable as possible by letting him lay down on one side of the room. This of course took up almost half the cell so that meant that the other four of us had to sit one behind the other in the other half of the cell.

A short time after we were all secured in cells for the night a guard came around with a piece of brown bread equal to about three slices of bread served in the States, and a piece of lard on it, at least that is what we called it. We also were given some water with this bread. We attempted to eat it but with little success since our stomachs were not used to this food we didn't succeed in eating very much of this mixture. Some of us ate what we could force down and later some of us also threw it right back up. I guess we just weren't hungry enough. The next morning we were marched from these cells and taken to a train and sent on to an interrogation camp. When we arrived at this camp we were put into barracks that had small rooms about six ft. wide and eight ft. long. Each room had a cot in it with a blanket over it. Each prisoner had a room to himself in this camp, and food, bread and

water was brought around by a guard to each room as had been done in the previous camp. After a few days there we were all sent into an office for interrogation by a German officer. He was very well educated apparently as he could speak our language very well. Before the interrogation started he offered me a cigarette which I turned down. Then he asked me for name, rank, serial number, group, and other military info regards to our operation and mission on which we were shot down. Since I didn't give him any more information than my name, rank and serial number he asked me to fill out a questionnaire which contained such questions as group, squadron, base, target, bomb load, type of aircraft and also where we were shot down, by what means the aircraft was disabled, who picked us up and other such stuff.

The only thing I filled in was the same information I had given to him previously such as name, rank and serial number. After he had it back he wanted to know if this was all that I knew, and when I told him yes, he said, "Surely you know who picked you up?" That I answered by telling him a German soldier. Since I would not give him any more information, he proceeded to show me a book he had made up with all the various squadron markings on the various bomber groups and told me that he had gotten the information from some of the other prisoners and that if I didn't fill out the form I failed to fill out the last time it was given to me, that when it was turned over to his superiors that I was to be held for further questioning and treatment until I had supplied whatever information they wanted, before I would be released and sent to a permanent prisoner of war camp with my fellow crewmembers for the duration of the war.

With him satisfied that I was not going to cooperate any more he had me taken back to my cell. I presumed that I would be later sent for more interrogation by other officers or maybe not be quite so fortunate next time, however, I was wrong because in a few hours I was taken with other prisoners to a railroad station and put onboard for a trip to another camp. En route we had a night on board the train

(Continued on page 29)



(Continued from page 28)

which we spent in what we believed to be Berlin. While in a railroad yard outside of Berlin we had the opportunity of going through a bombing raid. It was quite an experience because some fellows got real curious and were peeking out of the window curtains which we pulled down once we heard the alert sirens go off. So naturally we jumped on those who let out any light from the train by pulling open window curtains or lighting cigarettes. However after about 10 or 20 minutes the all clear was sounded and we had survived without any casualties.

When we finally arrived at the next camp it was quite different from the previous ones we had encountered as it was run very much like our own army camps. We saw later that the reason for it was that lots of the supervision was carried on by American prisoners who were you might say permanent party in this camp by now. They directed us to barracks and we were issued clothing which were in suitcases issued by the Red Cross. The feeding system was run the same as our own camps in the States. One barracks was set aside for a mess hall and tables set up and the food was combined into the mess hall for those in charge to prepare and serve. So in this way we had fairly good meals. During one of the meals here we got to talking with a negro boy who had been a P-38 pilot and he gave us quite an interesting story of his interrogation. When he was being questioned the German officer asked him how come he was capable of being an American fighter pilot being that he was colored. The German people always chose only the most educated men as material for air force personnel, and they were very surprised to see him as a pilot. They asked him, "How did he know so much about flying?" In reply he told the German officer who was interrogating him that he was not so bright, and didn't know very much about flying. He told him he was told that there were two lights in the cockpit of the plane. One was red, and one was green, and that so long as the green light stayed lit he was OK, but the minute he saw the red light come on, that he was told to return to base and have the mechanic service the ship. We all got a big laugh out of his little story, and he said it seemed to satisfy the German officer questioning him, as he was released for transfer to a permanent camp.

After a few days in this camp we were finally sent out by train again. This time it was to be to our permanent prison camp. First we were put into only tents of about 10 persons to a tent. In about 3



Austrian children find one of "Sleepy Time Gal's" propellers deep in a forest, July 1944.

months time enough room had been made to get us into barracks. The barracks were similar to ours except that it had a center hall with rooms off to each side. Each room was about 18 foot square, with a coal stove (pot belly type) in it, a table, and four double-decker bunk made of wood using 4x4s as posts and wood planks with wood-shaving-filled burlap bags for mattresses. The bunks were built to sleep four persons, just as if it were double beds in double deck form. In this way we had 16 people in a room.

When morning came all barracks fell out for roll call in front of their respective barracks. Actually it was just a count of heads, to be sure no one had escaped during the night. The same procedure took place each night at dusk just before we were locked inside to determine that all were accounted for at the

(Continued on page 30)

(Continued from page 29)

close of the day. At meal time a member of each room was designated to make a trip to the chow hall with a bucket to get our soup, stew, potatoes, or whatever was on the menu.

Every once in a while we would have the security team come to each barracks to pass on whatever information might have been put together regarding the latest situation on the war. This information was compiled by what information the latest prisoners could give us, some by radio (unknown by Germans), and some received by a few of the German guards that could be trusted. Each time a report was given by the security team, lookouts would be posted at doors and windows to watch for any approaching "goons" (German guards), as we called them. This was pretty much the routine day in and day out in our camp as we waited for the day of liberation to come. We had very little mail coming into our barracks as it took quite some time before the folks back home ever knew where we ended up as POWs. We were allowed to send two form letter blanks and 4 post cards out of the camp each month.

The big problem of course was killing time which seemed plentiful. During the day we spent our time visiting fellow prisoners in other barracks of our compound. Some of us managed to make up a substitute football and played football in the center of the compound.

Of course, many other forms of sports were dug up to help us pass the time such as baseball, strong horses, leap frog, and most anything we could think up for amusement.

The nights we spent in the barracks of course were the hardest periods for us to pass the time. Some fellows would play cards, smoke, read (if you were lucky enough to have any reading material), and some fellows even mended clothes, knitted caps, and other domestic deeds were performed during the night while inside the barracks. Well now we have been in the camp for about 7 months and all we did to pass the time was either play ball, read books, play cards or take a walk around the compound in the camp, and maybe stop in and chat with

a buddy who was in another barracks. It was a pretty long time and now we get the word that in a week or two we would be put on the march through Germany.



On the morning of February 6, we were awakened early and told to be ready to leave about 7:00 A.M. Once we got on the road we would march anywhere from 10 to 45 K.M. a day, and sleep in a barn during the night. Out on the road our food was even more scarce than when we were in the camp.

We were liberated one afternoon near Buchen, Germany. During the trip we covered about 700 miles altogether. One boy died on the trip due to exhaustion and exposure. It was really a pretty rough trip for all of us on it.

We were liberated on the day of May 2nd, and it was by the British Army. We were then sent to a British camp and were fed and deloused and then given some British uniforms to wear. Finally, we got into American hands and went through the same routine as we were put through by the British and we were due for a nice long boat ride back to the good old U.S.A. once again.

June 11th we arrived at Boston, Mass. From there to Camp Miles Standish for the night and the next morning we were on our way to Camp Dix, New Jersey. We were only there for about three days and on June 14, we had our 60 day furlough and we were on our way home. Happy days once again.



You can find more material from Jim Sipple in the "Kriegies" section of the 461st Bomb Group website.

www.461st.com

TAPS



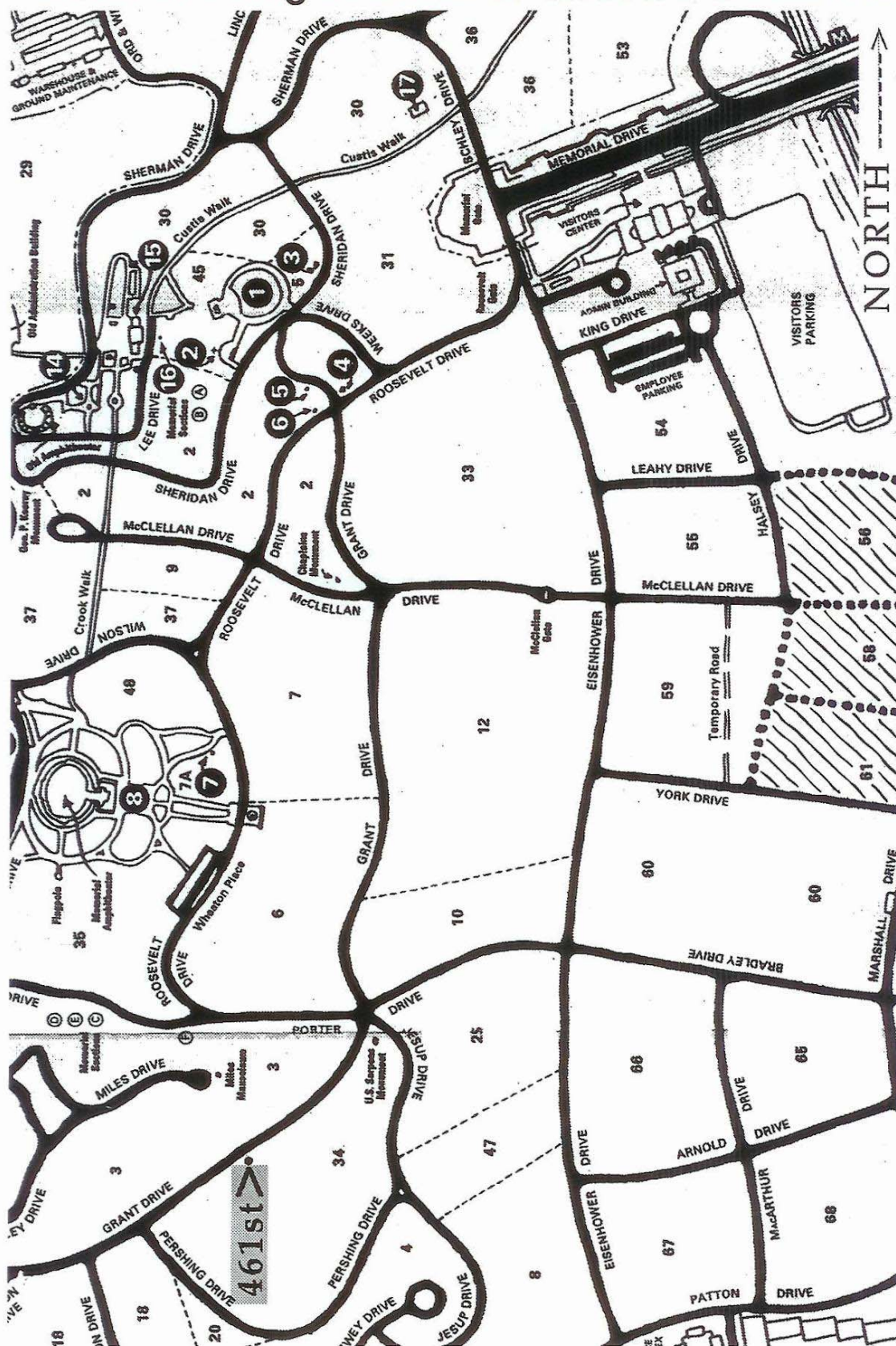
	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>
<u>764th Squadron</u>			
Harry E. Brown	Jersey Shore, PA	911	10 September 1999
Charles H. Dudding	Tulsa, OK	685	16 April 1999
Walter J. Gallaway	Hamlin, WV	1034	
Leslie C. Hayden	Melbourne, FL	1092	16 February 1997
Clyde A. McKinstry	Hartville, OH	748	11 January 1999
Wilmer A. Rhode	St. Augustine Bch, FL	612	9 July 1996
<u>765th Squadron</u>			
Howard J. Farr	Hillside, IL	612	26 March 1999
Raymond R. Steineck	Boulder, CO	612	19 March 1999
Trefry A. Ross	Tucson, AZ	757	29 December 1999
<u>766th Squadron</u>			
George Baugh	St. Louis, MO	612	
William J. Powers	Farmington, NM	1092	1998
Marvin Stoloff	Birmingham, MI	1034	7 October 1999
<u>767th Squadron</u>			
Forrest M. Bentz	Sinking Springs, PA	757	1995
Arthur W. Mohlman	Cincinnati, OH	1034	Ma 1998
Soloma Ostroy	Nassau, NY	747	30 August 1999

Please forward all death notices to:

Bob Hayes
2345 Tall Sail Dr., Apt. G
Charleston, SC 29414-6570

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Detail Showing Location of 461st BG Monument



How To Find The 461st Bomb Group Monument in Arlington National Cemetery

At the Reunion in Omaha many Group members requested information on the location of the 461st Bomb Group monument in Arlington National Cemetery. Carl Peter secured a wonderfully scenic site for the plaque and arranged for the only "Golden Rain Tree" in the entire cemetery. The dedication ceremony was tape by George Dickie, and a portion of the ceremony was replayed at the 1999 Memorial Breakfast.



Enter the cemetery from the Visitor's Parking Area, turn LEFT on Eisenhower Drive, and bear immediately RIGHT on Roosevelt Drive.

Turn LEFT on Grant Drive. You will continue past McClellan Drive and Porter Drive. Looking to your left (the downhill side), you will find the 461st Bomb Group Memorial right beside the road roughly halfway between Porter Drive and Pershing Drive.

ARCHIVIST'S CORNER

Notes and News
from the
461st Bomb Group Archive

The 461st Bomb Group Archive began to take shape as we gathered the first materials for the website. It became evident as we searched—first for this document, then for that photo, and later for some other item—that while there was a “Group Collection” of sorts, it was widely scattered, completely uncataloged, and generally a chore to search through.

Thus began an effort to consolidate, assess and preserve as much of the Group’s historical record as possible. With the 461st’s strong presence on the Internet, what was once an ad hoc collection of photos and information has become a very helpful and accessible body of material for Group members, their families, and historians worldwide.

I hope to use this segment in the Liberaider to keep you up to date on items of interest as they come into the Archive, and as an opportunity to appeal to you for items and information that we need to track down.

A couple of items have recently surfaced that are of more than passing interest. The first is a reel of 16mm film shot by Special Services Officer Joe Mente in 1944 and 1945. There are about 800 feet of silent film, running about 21 minutes. There are scenes of group photos being taken in front of Group Headquarters, a baseball game between ground crews, Red Cross worker Ellie Mae behind the wheel of a cargo truck, and aerial shots from one of the POW relief missions.



Information on how you can get your own copy of this footage can be found on page 27 of this issue.

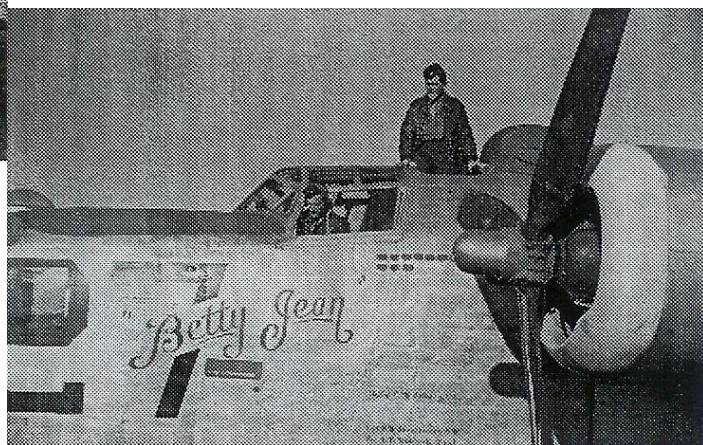
The second curiosity is a Squadron History of the 765th Bomb Squadron. Ever since I began researching the 461st Bomb Group history, I had been hearing about Squadron histories that were produced along the same lines as the official daily Group history. Frank O'Bannon and I had discussed this rumor and concluded that the stories probably related to the information submitted to the Group for distilling into the Group history.

Well, we were wrong. Maxwell AFB houses all the microfilmed unit histories from the AAF in WWII, and sure enough, there are reels of squadron histories. One such reel has Bomb Squadrons 757-775. Unfortunately, not every numbered squadron in that range is present on the reel, and the only squadron from the 461st Group was the 765th—and it is barely readable even at the highest of magnifications.

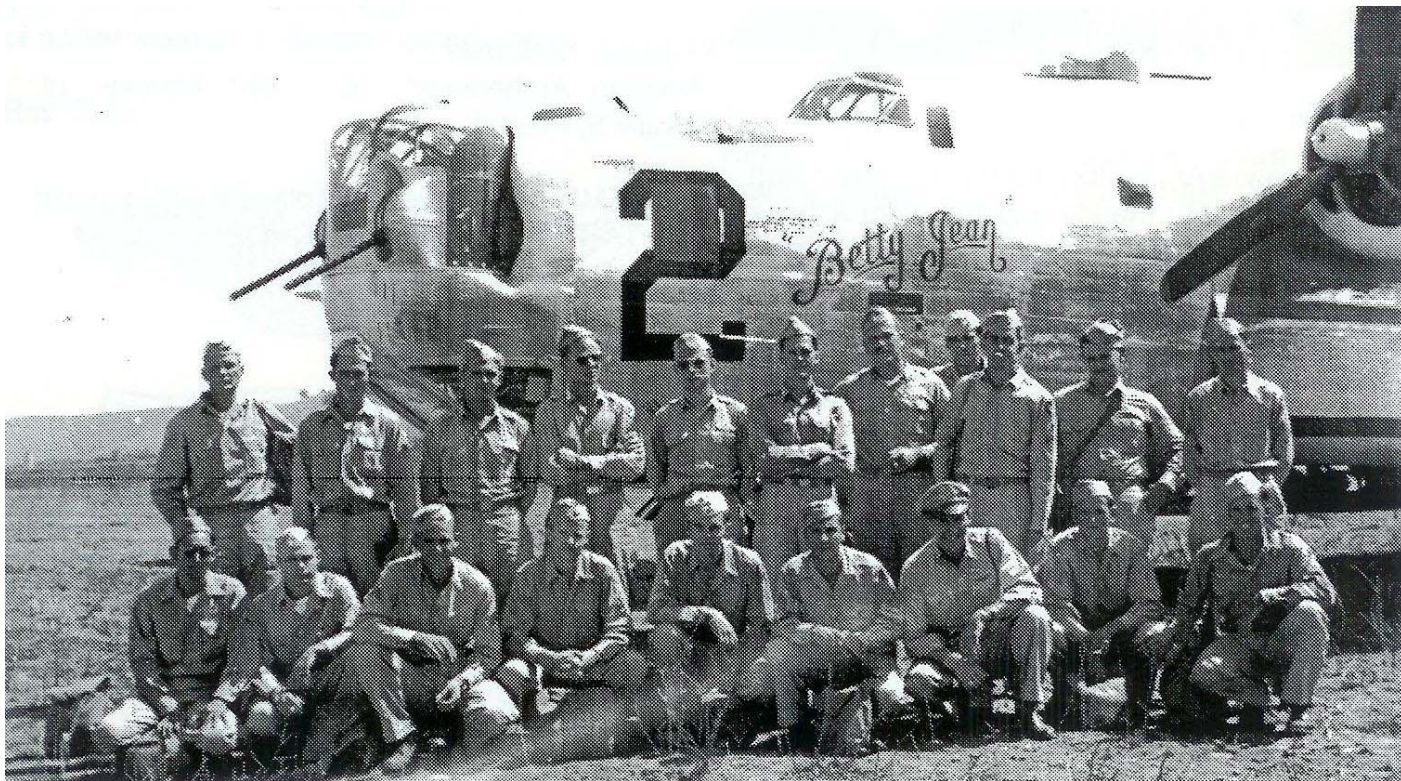
It makes for interesting, if troublesome reading—even more conversational in tone than the Group history. Does anyone know of the existence of any other Squadron histories?



Henry Jones sends us this photo of "Myra G" having her de-icer boots reinstalled. Can anyone elaborate on why we find the vertical stabilizers painted black in this series of shots? Note the natural metal finish on the fuselage of this "Mickey Ship", which is a late H model.



Burnie Prescho ran across the photo below on the website, erroneously listed as a 764th Squadron ship due to the Ship Number '2'. I should have caught the white cowlings and prop boss of the 765th Squadron! He supplies the above photo of "Betty Jean" as he knew her, as #27. Does anyone recognize the group gathered by the nose here? Why the missing '7'? Note also that in the photo above, the boss is not painted.



(Continued from page 5)

I believe Dad understood these competing values: defense and the horror of war. But he never came to terms with the, as indeed, mot of us cannot. But, he felt those conflicting values as long as I can remember.

Dad's first trip to Europe was to bomb it. My first trip to Europe was to visit Paris. There's a world of difference and my purpose in maintaining our relationship through my father is to understand more fully the situation he was in beginning in 1943.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mark A. Hoffman
430 Main Street
Harleysville, PA 19438
215-256-6586



Dear Sirs.

I am an aviation Archeologist. I work in the Polish Arm Museum. My friends and me write a book "White Stars over Poland" about American bombing missions and losses over Poland. We look for U.S.A.A.F. crewmembers who took part in the missions on Oswiecim, Blechhammer and Odertal and survived, were shot down, emergency landed or bailed out.

I look for any information about an unknown "silver" B-24 which crashed in the small village Tzemesna near the town Tarnow (Trzemesna—village is placed between big town Tarnow and town Tuchow in south Poland). It happened on fall 1944 (September—October ?). The front line was not far from there.

Crew of this plane bailed out, but two fliers on the parachutes wee shot by the German infantry sol-

diers and later taken in to the hospital. 6 crewmembers were POW, but two were hidden by our partisans. Few weeks later these fliers attempted to steal through a German-Russian front line and were missing. American committee asked about these crewmembers when war was over, but without results.

The wreckage of this plane was dismantled by the Germans and later by the farmers. I saw in this village only buckles madder from the oxygen tans. Under the ground there are only small pieces of the aluminum skin.

I suppose that this B-24 belonged to the Fifteenth USAAF. Bomb Group/Squadron, serial number of this plane and names of the crewmembers are unknown. I would like to clear p this event. Informations are important for our book. We would like to save these things from oblivion.

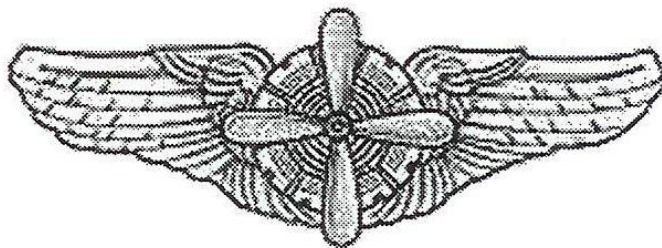
Do you can check if one of Liberators from your Bomb Group as shot down in the area of the Polish town Tarnow.

I shall appreciate any information you can give me.

Sincerely -

Wojciech Krajewski

"Aviation Archeology";02—807 Warsaw, ul. Kukulki 3, Poland



I don't know how much interest the following would be to anyone else, but at the time we were very emotionally involved with finding a good home for our friend's faithful companion.

(Continued on page 37)

(Continued from page 36)

When we received the go ahead to fly "Full Boost" home after the cessation of hostilities in Europe, one of the ground crew approached us with a request. He told us that he would eventually be going home by boat and wouldn't be able to take his dog, and asked us if we could take his dog back to the States with us. He also said if for any reason we couldn't get him to his mother's place we should try to find him a home with military personnel.

We agreed to do what we could and after flying through a hurricane coming home the southern route we landed at Natal, Brazil. When we left Natal for the leg home we developed engine trouble and set "Full Boost" down on an emergency strip in central Brazil. The base was manned by the British, they didn't have a dog and made a great fuss over him. They said they had very limited leave because of the remote location, and begged us to leave him with them.

We were informed that the chance of ever getting him into the States was slim to none so we let them have him. The whole base personnel turned out for our take off and when we started down the runway the dog broke loose and started running after the plane. The dog was half Doberman, out of a litter sired by a German guard dog.



Ray Clark

I almost slipped up in paying my dues. Fortunately my subscription carried me through 1998. Attached please find a \$25 check for Life Membership.

Page 20 (461st Liberaider Vol. 15 #2) was of great interest. Our ship, "The Redhead", is listed as go-

ing down on 1/31/45 with Lt. Ed Delana as pilot. I knew it had gone down, and ditched in the Adriatic, but didn't know where or when. At a reunion a few years ago I met a crewmember who had gone down with her, who said that four crewmembers had survived. As I recall, we had just completed a mission, and another crew was assigned to "The Redhead".



This is the only picture we have of "The Redhead" in the 461st archive. Does anyone have a clearer photo of this ship?

Our crew with myself as pilot, had brought her to Italy. While held up in Bangor, Maine, we decided to name her, and my co-pilot, Jack Lien-decker, did the painting. I have one picture of her and her name but we had only her outline painted, and not completely filled in in color. However I thought it appropriate to describe where the name came from. I, my co-pilot, engineer, and the radio operator had redheaded wives—some more red-head than others, but all redheads. This was the name chosen and we were very proud of her. We brought her to the 767th base early January, and

(Continued on page 38)

(Continued from page 37)

somehow I don't recall whether we flew her on missions and if so, how many.

I'm sure members of the 61st will be pleased to know that my wife, Alice, to whom I have been married for 55 years is still doing great as is the co-pilot's wife, Phyllis, Liendecker of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Of course they, too, have been married as long. I know the radio operator's wife is not alive, the engineer's wife may still be alive, although they divorced many years ago.

I still keep in touch with all members of our crew that are still alive—at Christmas all are doing well. If any of this is printed, I would welcome hearing from those members of Delana's crew who are still alive.

"The Redhead" is still sitting there on the bottom of the Adriatic waiting for us to retrieve her. Do you suppose?

Warm best wishes,
Bill Hettinger
605 Via Verona, Villa D'Este
Deerfield Beach, Fla. 33442
(305) 570-7927



I guess every bombing mission has some dramatic moments for at least some member of the group. The bare bones official report of the Captain marshalling Yard on February 22nd, 1945 (Liberator 12/98) contrasts with our actual experience and prompts me to flesh out of record. As the byline for the old TV show runs: "There are eight million stories and the 'Naked City'" — there must be a few thousand at least in the 461st.

My pilot was Andy Curtis (now living near Seattle) of the 766th Squadron, and I was navigator/bomb toggler on my 10th sortie. For some reason now lost, the Group was scheduled to bomb from 13,000 ft.

instead of the usual 26,000 ft. The report says we encountered "impossible weather" on the way to Ingolstadt — and indeed there was a binding snow storm (uncommon at our usual altitude) which scattered the formation.



Here is where two dramatic things happen simultaneously: which attests to the huge contribution of seasoned Colonels in the larger war effort, and the other an event specific to our plane. Colonel Lawhon called Lee, gave his heading to the Group, and began gathering planes like a mother duck rounding out the ducklings. Talk about coolness under stress, and determination to carry out a run on an alternative target! A younger, less experienced pilot might have given it up as a bad job — maybe picking a balmier target on the way home.



Lt. Colonel Brooks Lawhon

For some unusual reason I was on VHF and heard his efforts. For the only time in my flights, I had a flux-gate compass which held steady as we wheeled around in the snow. Just as I was con-

(Continued on page 39)

gratulating myself on that good fortune, one of our engines quit! Now at 13,000 ft. north of the Alps (14,000 ft.) we could understandably feel that we were not going to make it home. Experts will tell you that a B-24 can climb on three engines, but that is the ideal with the plane in top condition. In our experience the battle-weary 24s we had flown could not dependably climb at high altitude on three engines. So I am sure we all felt a moment of dread. Later, I realized we are practically on the border with Switzerland, and had the problem continued or worsened, the alternative of internment in that neutral country may have been our only option.

Fortunately, Andy got the engine going again and we caught the Group. The snow abated and we made the run on the Kempton Marshalling Yard. As the report states, "the choke point of the target was well hit, but the mission was not scored ... because the target was a non-briefed one. Ironical, because in my 29 sorties I never saw a target so well hit. It was sensational!

Now the Colonels should have at least been awarded the DFC, or better, but I suppose a non-briefed target gets lost in the detritus of wartime paperwork. Such a mission probably becomes a small bean, yet a day on which 1100 aircraft were launched on the 10th successive day of operations according to the commendation signed by General Nathan F. Twining (Liberaider 12/98).

Many times in the war one didn't know what in hell was going on, or was in one of the monumental foul-ups characteristic of warfare everywhere. Here I felt like a witness to genuine heroic action brought to a successful conclusion and actually making a difference. Like the snows of yesteryear the real drama of the mission has vanished.

Andy and I hope Colonel Lawhon is still living, and would love to hear from him. How old was he in 1945? Even grand old veterans in those days could be in their 20s and 30s—I remind you wishfully.

Sincerely yours,
Fred Massey

22 Vista Drive
East Providence, RI 02916-2131
(401) 434-0266

* With general approval of Andy Curtis, who should not be held accountable for my ignorance of the technical details of piloting!

PS Accolades should, of course, go to the lead bombardier as well as to the Colonel.



Thank you for sending the information and video. What a find—461st specific film footage. I know there has to be a lot of information out there, but it seems too well hidden.

Keep up the great work, and if I am able to come across more information, I'll be sure to send it off to you.

I do have a question that you might be able to answer. It has to do with the fighter escort groups/squadrons that flew cover for the bombers. I have a friend at work who is trying to track his uncle. Some of his information is somewhat vague, but he feels he was in the Eighth AF, flying a P-38. His last mission was flying cover for the 461st on 2 September 1944, Mission #95, Mitrovica Railroad Bridge, Yugoslavia. Is there any information in your files that would indicate what fighter squadrons flew that day? Any help you might be able to give will be appreciated.

Take care and I'll be in touch.

Gerald Landry
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Where to, Pal?



It only takes a quick glance at the calendar to see that this "December" issue of The Liberaider is going out quite a bit behind schedule. Your new Editor had quite a bit to learn about the process! My most sincere thanks go to George Dickie who was right there to point out many of the mines and pitfalls I would want to dodge, and to Bob Hayes, Bob Casey and Frank O'Bannon for their patient support and encouragement throughout the transition. Thanks also to Steve Curry who designed and produced the header graphics for the Mail Call, Archivist's Corner and 'Bent Props' sections.

I am excited and honored to be editing a publication that I have so enjoyed over the last decade and a half, but I won't be able to do the job without your help and involvement.

Primarily, I need you to tell me what you would like to see The Liberaider over as we move forward. With the conclusion of the Combat Mission Summaries, about one quarter of the usual content will be going away. I want to maintain the 40 page standard that has been so successful, so I would like to hear from you about what

you might like to see take its place.

Taking advantage of the art of Jim Caiella, who is producing quite a bit of aircraft art for the documentary (see also page 8), I hope to produce a series of profiles of individual aircraft as a regular feature. That will still leave quite a bit of space, so please let me know what you would like to see more of. The kind of minutiae that I find fascinating may leave you cold, and I'd like to keep the publication fresh!

If you have anything you'd like to contribute for publication, if you have anything that should make its way into the group archive, or if you'd like to point out something I've missed, I'm as close as your phone, computer or mailbox.

Let me know how I can serve you better!

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