



*The 461st*

# Liberaider



Vol. 25, No. 1

JUNE 2008

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

## President's Corner

To all of our members and youngsters: Yet another year has come and gone and it will be time for our 2008 reunion in Dayton, Ohio before you know it! It's great to have so much interest in our reunions and the friendships that are formed. I sincerely hope that everyone who is able will be there. I'm looking forward to seeing the group. Come one, come all!

Love you guys and gals,

AI

**461<sup>st</sup>  
Bombardment  
Group (H)  
Association  
2008 Reunion**  
See page 18 for  
details and sign-up  
information.

### *Inside this issue*

<i>Cerignola</i>	1
<i>Unforgettable Return to Romania</i>	1
<i>President's Corner</i>	1
<i>Building a Group</i>	23
<i>Frank O'Bannon</i>	32
<i>Fire Lecture</i>	33
<i>Willow Run's Glory Days</i>	34
<i>461st Mission #55</i>	38
<i>Military Humor</i>	39
<i>A Sightseeing Tour</i>	39
<i>Webmaster Comments</i>	40

## Cerignola

By  
Martin A. Rush  
767th Squadron

*The following is just one chapter from Martin's book that was recently published. I think you'll agree that this is fantastic. See page 3 for details about the book.*

We were moving up the boot of Italy, heading for the place that would be our home field for as long as we were in the country. Our location was nearer the ankle, just a little south of the spur,

which was called the Gargano Promontory. This large flat place around the spur was a change from most of Italy, whose Apennines Mountains run like a ridge the whole length of the country up to Switzerland. The flat area is called the Foggian Plateau, after the nearby large city of Foggia. The Fifteenth Air Force had surveyed the area and placed so many airfields in the area, that when they threw up an armada on the mornings of missions, the aircraft rose like swarms of bees from the whole area, the

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Unforgettable Return to Romania by Former POW's and Spouses - May, 1994

By  
Holly Hollinghead  
766<sup>th</sup> Squadron

Twenty-three of us were flown from New York's Kennedy Airport to Bucharest's Otopeni Airport in an Airbus 310-324 by Taron Airlines. We were only about a tenth of the total passenger load, of course. We flew non-stop except for a landing at Timisoara, the largest city in western Romania. The flight took eleven hours, from 4:30 p.m. in NYC to 10:30 a.m. in Bucharest (7 hours clock difference). Some of our group

had been up nearly 24 hours at that point. We obtained Visas, at \$33 each, and then proceeded smoothly through Customs.

We were fortunate that our group included two of this year's Association officers -- Russ Huntley, President, and John McCormick, Secretary/Treasurer. John and his wife are hosting the 1994 reunion at Orlando, and he had ordered black caps with a pair of silver wings overlaid with a circle showing a descending parachute, plus words in gold above the

*(Continued on page 24)*

# *Taps*

May they rest in peace forever

Please forward all death notices to:

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

## **764<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>Date of Death</b></u>
Butz, John A.	Landisville, PA	542	01/08/06
Clark, John K.	Salem, OR	612	09/18/07
Davis, Richard C.	Hardwick, VT	1034	2004
Livingstone, David R.		747	12/09/96
O'Bannon, Frank C. Jr.	Tucson, AZ	1092	02/12/08
Pollien, Frank	Ellsworth ME	1034	04/27/08
Russell, LeRoy G.	Fullerton, CA	2162-6	11/15/90
Verner, Dalton R.	Bartlesville, OK	757	01/11/08

## **765<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

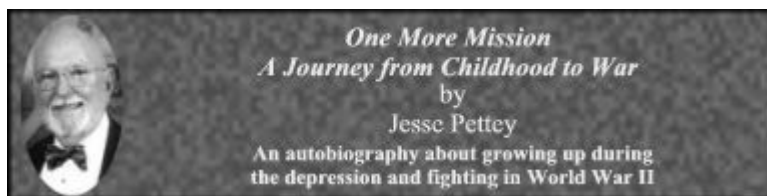
<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>Date of Death</b></u>
Bell, Alexander G. Jr.	Milton MA	1035	01/23/06
Zuber, Harold L.	Manchester PA	1092	11/19/07

## **766<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>Date of Death</b></u>
Davidson, Herbert L.	Morris. IL	750	01/14/08
Mahoney, George W. A.	Stillwater, OK	1035	04/21/08
Sobieski, Thomas J.	Detroit, MI	1092	05/20/06

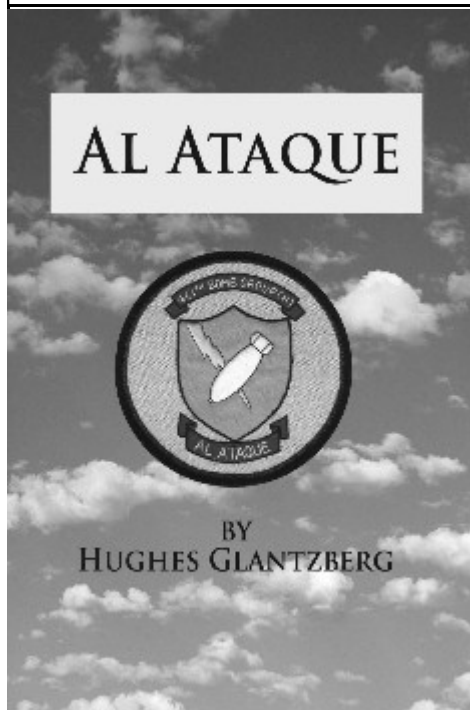
## **767<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>Date of Death</b></u>
Costley, Leon J. Jr.	Granite City, IL	757	06/18/80
Graden, Leonard A.	Two Harbors, MN	612	03/16/08
Martin, Winfield	Alburg, VT	612	
Sims, William C.	LeRoy, IL	748	07/07/07
White, Arlin	Waxahachie, TX	060	03/13/08



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

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



## Al Ataque

History / General

Trade **Paperback**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$26.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

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

413 Pages

On Demand Printing

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

To order call 1-800-AUTHORS

Trade **Hardcopy**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$36.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

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

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



## Music Bravely Ringing

by

Martin A. Rush

767th Squadron

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

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

*(Continued from page 1)*

takeoff patterns of each one crossing the takeoff patterns of the ones near to it. It was amazing that they could find their individual squadrons and groups to assemble into formations, and find their own nesting place at the end of the day in the labyrinth of scattered fields.

We learned that returning southward from the north after assaulting the soft under-belly of Europe, across Yugoslavia and the Adriatic Sea, we could plainly see the spur on Italy, and know that home was still there, nearby.

About halfway up the leg on the shin side, was Rome, which the Germans and the Allies, in what I thought was a very civilized gesture, agreed should be an open city, so that it was spared from bomb and artillery destruction. A little way above Rome was a line dividing the country at war. The Germans were said to control the rest of the country north, the Allies the territory south of Rome. We didn't fly over north Italy when we were going to targets in Europe, for Italy ran from southeast to northwest, and most of our targets were in the northeast, or directly north. This meant that we always wore Mae West flotation vests in case we dunked crossing the Adriatic Sea to get over to Yugoslavia in the morning, or to Italy from Yugoslavia, coming home at night. Going out in the mornings, we went straight across the Adriatic, due northeast, so as to get over to dry land again as soon as possible, then headed north for the heartland of Europe.

From the air, Cerignola looked as though it were about the size of one of the little towns of 10,000 people that dot the landscape of Ohio, but its size was deceiving, for the Italians have larger families than most of ours, and they live more compactly. It was rumored to have a population of 100,000, but I never tried to find out if that was true or not. An impressive cathedral was the most prominent building, and the rest of the town seemed to be clustered around it. We circled over the town before heading out to the field, which was only one of many.

It was another test of Jeffrey's powers that he was able to pick out our field from among so many, apparently almost identical fields. He guided us to a spot from which we could see our field ahead of us, and Rudy brought us into our usual smooth landing on the strip

that would be home for us for as long as we would be in Italy. As we came rolling to a halt, I thought how strange: here was this big flying box car that could take to the air, travel a hundred, or thousands of miles, and bring us and all of our belongings and the government equipment, in the same condition as it was when we loaded up at the last field. It was as though we and our duffle were sealed into a big capsule, flung into the air, and guided to an exact point fixed on a map, back in somebody's headquarters.

In response to our radioed request to land, and clearance to land from the tower, a jeep came out to meet us, and we followed it into the field, where the planes were scattered about, like in a honeycomb, each one on its own hardstand, the better to make it more difficult for troublesome German fighters to create destruction with strafing and fragmentation bombs, which would have been so much easier for them if we were parked in long rows. They said that when they had first set up the field, the German fighters used to strafe the field, and would sometimes attack the formations as they going into single file to land, figuring the gunners would all be out of their turrets, and would not fire back. It really gave off an aura of war preparedness. The progression of fields we had visited made this final transition more easy for us to accept.

After checking in with operations, they brought around a truck, and it took us to the area where our enlisted men unloaded under Carl's leadership, and they carried their duffle to their tent. Their tent was already set up, and looked as though it had been modified for instant occupation from the moving out of the previous crew.

Our tent was in another, nearby area, where the other officers' tents were in a casual sort of grouping, as if our tent had only recently been put up. It had an unsettled look, as though it were up, but just barely, for the tent wallowed and waved in the wind, around the edges, as though it needed a little more anchoring. We piled out, and stood there looking at it for a moment, and Rudy, ever the crew commander, said, "All right, fellows, let's fasten it down a little better, for if it gets cold tonight, we'll freeze our tails off, the way it is." A few of the established men had sauntered out

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

to take our measure and make us welcome. They told us we could go over to Supply and get stakes and ropes, and hammers to drive the stakes in. Also, we each were issued a folded cot, and a supply of blankets and rough cloth sheets. No pillows. One of the men said we would have to get those later from the local workmen, who worked on the post, and would have their wives make us pillows, to be stuffed with straw, or later, kapok.

The first day was wearing away, and after we got the edges of the tent pegged tighter, we also got a lantern from supply, and hung it up on the center pole, so we would have a little more light than a candle would give. We set up our cots, arranged a few sticks around each bed to hang mosquito netting on, and we were ready for the night. We got into the chow line, which was over in a large brick and stone cow barn that had been thoroughly spruced up with tile flooring, and substantial doors, windows, and major carpenter work, to be quite an impressive place.

We were told later, that this was one of the groups of farm buildings that were scattered about over a huge farm owned by an absentee landlord, a Baron Zedzah, a landholder of immense, almost medieval scope and style. He had hundreds of farm workers, hundreds of horses, and thousands of cattle on thousands of acres. Some idea of the flavor of the social order could be gained from the common sight of long rows of women, hoeing the rows of vegetable plants, and always, nearby, to supervise, an older, mustachioed man in black suit and white shirt, leaning on a cane. He would wave to the passing GI truck, but the women did not look up, and continued their hoeing.

Our squadron headquarters were established in another group of buildings, about a hundred yards from the Officer's Mess, and it, too had been extensively remodeled for military use. The Baron was paid rent for the use of his land and buildings, and was to be recompensed for the damages, or changes from barns to Operations offices and Officer's Club - for so were the Mess Hall and adjoining building designated. In addition to the dining room, there was a meeting room, for lectures - and entertainment, we were told. There was one room - a pretty good sized one, where there was an old grand piano, a pool table, and a Ping-Pong table. If this was war, we at least had a substan-

tial place to come home to after missions, assuming that we got home, of course. I had my eye on the piano, for it seemed to me that I might find somebody who could give me piano lessons, once more.

The next day, miracle of miracles, I received a cablegram from Betty. I don't know how they found me for it, but it was made of three set messages: #12, Loving greetings from all of us, #24, All well at home, #36, My thoughts and prayers are ever with you. Love, Betty. It was like a shot of adrenaline. She might not know where I was, but her message in a bottle had reached me, and I felt buoyed up.

The weather was windy, a little cool, and the dust was everywhere. We obtained some tiles, which were about brick sized, and we smoothed the ground inside the tent and found some sand to place the bricks on, and we had instant, partial, temporary tile floor. We "borrowed" them from the tent of a MIA crew who were now about a week overdue, a maneuver which had a slightly cannibalistic flavor to it. All of their personal things had been collected and were being held by Supply. If they did show up again, we would help them get some more bricks to make a new floor for them. All of their GI stuff had been taken back in by Supply, of course. We got some frames from a tent where another crew had moved out, to brace the sides of the tent, and to make a doorway, with a real door that shut out a lot of the wind, and so we didn't have to cope with the tent flap to go in and out. At this point, our inside area was defined by the side flaps. Later, we would get some tufa stone blocks and have the local labor force build us side walls, lift up the side wall flaps, and the side wall flaps would become the roof of extensions to our floor space, adding five feet on both sides of the tent. That would come later.

Rudy had his twenty-sixth birthday, and I was surprised. He was only a year and a half older than I, but his easy assumption of the role of leader and commander had made him seem older to me. Allen went over and talked to the head cook, and had him make a little cake for Rudy, and when we brought it out, with a bottle of white wine, he was touched. He tried to pass it off, and act as though it was not a matter for celebration, but when we set it out on a tail fin rack, and lit a candle on top of it, he stood and looked down

*(Continued on page 6)*

*(Continued from page 5)*

at it, and looked around at us, and said, "Thanks, Guys." We all poured some of the wine in our mess kits, and drank to him, and he blew his nose. It was a good celebration. Afterwards, we played poker, and he won two dollars.

The next day we had some classes in the little auditorium, and we were supposed to fly a training mission, but it was canceled.

In the first aid section of one of the lectures, they showed us the contents of the little First Aid packages fastened to the wall of our airplanes which we had all noticed, but never opened, since they were sealed. Included was a sterile cotton pad that opened to be about a foot square. It was to be opened, and applied to large wounds, if required, and if the wound was abdominal, with intestines showing, was to be moistened with warm, sterile, saline water before applying to the intestines. The doctor paused, and waited for a moment, and someone raised his hand to ask where we would get warm sterile water in an airplane. He smiled, as though he had waited for the question, and replied, "From your bladder. Urine is sterile, and of the right temperature, and perfectly safe to use." I had never thought of urine as being clean, or especially, sterile, before. It seemed like discovering a new asset I was carrying around in my own body.

The name of the farm was Torretta, and that is how our field was designated, and our location was good, in that we had electricity available. There was a 7,000 volt line that ran across the field, and a previous airman who was also an electrical engineer had gotten hold of a transformer from somewhere, and had channeled off leads to the operations and other buildings, and also for the tents.

We met an Italian electrician, a soulful-eyed young man who had served in the Italian infantry. He had been involved in a lot of the preliminary work of running the wires for the area, and he told Jeffrey and me about it. He said one man, a friend of his, had been electrocuted in the process, and we could feel his sense of tragedy, even though as a soldier he had been exposed to fighting and dying. He did not speak any or very little English, except for a little bit of GI swearwords he had picked up from the Americans. There was a kind of resistance on his part, to learning

the language, as though he was already making a major concession, by consorting with the former enemies of his country. He didn't seem very politically involved, only wanting the war to be over so he could marry and have a family in peaceful surroundings. After Mussolini was overcome, the Allies decided that the Italian people had been forced into the war by Mussolini, and they were more useful to us as Cobelligerents, than as vanquished enemies.

Jeffrey, in his scholarly way, was very intent on learning the language, and although I did not pick it up as rapidly as he did, I too was learning it, and we had many conversations with the young electrician. He was not a southern Italian (he was emphatic about that) but was from Firenze, or Florence, which was still in the hands of the Germans. He had not heard from his parents or his sisters for over a year. He talked of going to South America when the war was over. I was surprised, for I expected everyone to want to go to America, but I didn't press him about it. Cobelligerent he might be, but he had his own integrity, and I respected him for it.

We sent in and bought two light bulbs from the PX in town, for a dollar apiece, which seemed exorbitant, but necessary, and since I considered myself something of an electrician, I ran electricity to sockets in each one of the corners where the men had their beds. I got some thin lumber and made a four-poster frame around my bed that would hold up the mosquito netting like a canopy. Inside, I put up a little bulletin board where I could fasten some pictures of Betty, and a shelf for some personal things, also a hook for my watch, and one for my flashlight. I had a mild dread of being awakened in the middle of the night and not know where I was, nor what time it was. With a switch installed to a light inside the canopy, it was beginning to take on some of the trappings of luxury.

The most noticeable shortage was water. We carried water back from the Mess Hall in our canteens, for drinking, and we carried some water to the tent in gasoline cans, to take sponge baths in the tent. The idea of walking about two blocks to the showers which were down in the valley at the end of the runway, did not seem very attractive. Of course, that was where the only hot water showers were available, and

*(Continued on page 7)*

(Continued from page 6)

it was turned on only from 6 AM until 6 PM.

Since it was still August, the nights were not uncomfortably cold, but the cool winds blowing in off the Adriatic made the sleeping bags more important than I would have expected. Rudy said, "I've been talking with some of these other guys, and they say we ought to have a stove so that when it gets colder, we can spend time out of bed, and walk around in the tent." The standard stove was the top half of a fifty-gallon gasoline drum, cut off in the middle, and buried in the sand in the center of the tent, next to the tent pole. The flat end of the barrel, which was the top of the stove, had two holes, a little one about an inch in diameter, and they had cut out the larger, three inch hole, and enlarged it to about four inches, with a little rim welded onto it, so it would take a small chimney. The burning chamber was the butt end of a brass anti-aircraft shell, and it sat there like a little sturdy ashtray - and a lot of those ashtrays were in use, too. There was a hollow post that had contained the igniting charge for the powder chamber, fastened to the butt, only it was sawed off, leaving this solid, heavy little cup. Into this cup dripped the GI fuel oil, which burned with a flickering flame when you first lit it. The trick was to make a copper tubing coil (like so many materials, salvaged from wrecked airplanes) that sat over the flickering flame in the cup, and preheated the oil. When it finally squirted out the end, it was so hot and volatile that it burned with a satisfying roar, and the inside of the drum heated up, and the stove became so hot you could fry an egg in a pan on top of the stove. We propped another fifty-gallon drum outside the tent, and ran the tube from it under the tiles to arch up inside the drum and drip into the cup. They provided the oil on a regular basis, with a truck pulling up every few days to replenish our supply of oil.

Talk about Yankee ingenuity: The chimney was made of brass anti-aircraft shells, with the butts cut off, stacked and nested one into the other, reaching up and out through a hole in a metal cap that sat over the top flap of the tent, like a teepee. The only problem was that the diameter of the chimney was that of the squeezed down end where the shell used to fit - eighty or ninety millimeters, about three and a half inches. When the oil was hot and the stove was burning brightly, the smoke going up the chimney was clean and hot, so no soot was produced. As it was used, part of the time it would die down a little, and the carbon soot would begin to accumulate. The tent would begin to smell like burning oil, and most of the smoke was coming into the tent. We'd turn down the flow of oil, and in the morning, let it go out, and remove the chimney. It would be so full of the soot that it would barely have a hole you could see - almost plugged solid. Much banging on the individual shells, soot flying, running rags through the shells to clean them out, re-assemble it on the stove and in the tent, and we had a clean, drawing chimney again. The air would thankfully clean up inside the tent, and we could breathe there again.

After cleaning out the chimney for the third time, Rudy said, "That goddamned oil has got to go. I talked with some guys who say gasoline is the only way to go." He looked about at us, and we shrugged. If it meant we wouldn't have to clean out the chimney so often, we were all for it. Of course, it was kind of risky, for it was 100 octane gasoline, the kind they used in the ships, and the smokers used it in their Zippo lighters, but if other people were doing it, it could be done.

(Continued on page 8)

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

Officers:

Alfred St. Yves, President, 4307 71<sup>st</sup> Place, Riviera Beach, FL 33404  
Leonard Bathurst, Vice President, 2330 Alluvial Avenue, Clovis, CA 93611-9586  
David St. Yves, Treasurer, 5 Hutt Forest Lane, East Taunton, MA 02718  
Frank, O'Bannon, Historian, 9260 N Fostoria Dr, Tucson, AZ 85742-4884

Directors

Nye E. Norris, Hdqtrs Sqdn, 559 S. Waverly Street, Columbus, OH 43213-2756  
John Taphorn, 764<sup>th</sup> Sqdn, 4311 School Section Cincinnati, OH 4521

Leonard Bathurst, 765<sup>th</sup> Sqdn, 2330 Alluvial Avenue, Clovis, CA 93612  
Edwin Baumann, 766<sup>th</sup> Sqdn, 5327 Littlebow Rd, Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274-2362  
Billy Harris, 767<sup>th</sup> Sqdn, Route 1, Box 101, Culloden, GA 31016  
Alternate Directors  
Lee Cole, Hdqtrs Sqdn, 1928 Bluffview Point, Osage Beach, MO 65065-2487  
Ron Johnson, 764<sup>th</sup> Sqdn,  
Peter Godino, 765<sup>th</sup> Sqdn, 2535 E. Saginaw Way, Fresno, CA 93726  
David Feldman, 766<sup>th</sup> Sqdn, 140 Woodlake Drive E., Woodbury, NY 11797-2314  
Cy Surber, 767<sup>th</sup> Sqdn, 345 NE 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50313  
Director at Large  
Jim Fitzpatrick, San Diego Magazine 1450 Front Street, San Diego, CA 92101  
The 461<sup>st</sup> Liberaider  
Hughes Glantzberg, Editor, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230  
The Liberaider is published twice yearly on behalf of the members of the organization.  
Permission is granted to use articles provided source is given.



*(Continued from page 7)*

We took out the preheating coil, for the gasoline roared into hot flame without any preheating, and it burned cleanly. The copper tube from the tank outside and under the floor ended in an arch that dripped directly into the brass combustion dish. We had to lift the tip higher than over the oil, for it burned so hot that it would melt the copper if it was too close. The cup sat directly under the little hole in the top of the barrel, and lighting the fire was an adventure in itself. Allen sat on his bed and watched me trying to light the fire that first time. We had run a little puddle of gasoline into the cup, and I was lighting paper matches, and dropping them through the hole and into the puddle. I knew it would light with a roar, and in dropping the lighted match, I was so busy diving away that I missed the hole three times. He shook his head, in mock admiration, after watching me miss three times in a row, and looking foolish sprawled five feet away from the stove. "Raw courage, a magnificent demonstration." I smothered an impulse to suggest that he take a turn, and the fourth time, the gas ignited with a huge "whoof!" That raised the stove an inch or two, and it settled down into an impressive roar. A suitable martial flame for us airborne warriors. I don't think we ever had to clean the chimney again, except for one brief period when we had to shift back to oil for a while, for administrative purposes.

We met the Lieutenant Colonel who was the adjutant of the group, and he was a cold-eyed man who welcomed us to the Group, and told us that even though we were in the battle zone, that the dress code would be maintained. He said that we were to wear Class B (suntans) at all times, except in the tent. The sleeves were to be kept rolled down. He said that although salutes were not required, a semblance of military correctness would be adhered to. This sounded a little bit like eyewash to me, but I nodded, along with everybody else, and looked serious. We visited him in his office, and it was a roomy space above the operations office. He didn't have any family pictures showing, but he did have two drawings on the wall of a sultry woman wearing nothing but a small, wraparound skirt. So much for military tone. Secretly, I coveted the picture, and eventually made contact with the Group photographer, who was able to get a copy for me, which I put inside my canopy. Jeffrey, with tongue in cheek, observed that the only manly course of action was to

write to Betty and tell her that she had been displaced temporarily by another woman, even if only for the period we were apart.



Pinup obtained from the Lt. Col.

The only woman on the post was Flossie, a somewhat horsey blonde Red Cross Woman, whose main job seemed to be to pass out coffee and doughnuts to the guys coming in off of missions - an incentive to get back, I suppose. She smiled and was friendly to everybody, taking seriously her job as resident sex symbol, but she was disappointingly unhandsome. I imagine it felt pretty good to be the only woman in a camp full of sex-starved men. She walked about, knowing that every man in the camp yearned for her, and it must have been nourishing for her. When she smiled, every man who watched her wished that the smile was for him. But, she dined, and had conversations only with majors and above. RHIP.

The disconcerting fact was that after a few days, Flossie began to look more attractive, even sort of pretty. I found myself sneaking peeks at her every time she went by, and hoped she would speak to me, or smile in a friendly fashion. I mentioned this to Jeffrey, and again, with a devilish grin, he said that I

*(Continued on page 9)*



*(Continued from page 8)*

must tell Betty that another woman had taken her place in my attention - at least for the time being.

The nearest PX was in town, and we sent in and obtained the light bulbs, and also two aluminum wash basins, for bathing and washing clothes. They cost \$2.50 each, a pretty sum, but a necessity. I mentioned the bomb fin cases, of which the larger ones made dandy tables and the smaller ones, stools. They had solid ends, and sturdy legs, and diagonal bracing, for they were to protect the bomb fins during shipping and transport. They rounded out our furniture requirements pretty well, and we were beginning to feel that our accommodations were nearly deluxe.

As for the camp plumbing, there was a latrine in the area with flushing commodes for our necessities, but for urination, there were unshielded stove pipes stuck in the ground, spotted about the camp, the pipes leading to gravel and sand absorption pits under each one. They were scattered about strategically and out in the open, and since there was only Flossie as representation of the fair sex, I suppose she developed an immunity to the sight of men urinating, or perhaps secretly enjoyed it. We obtained some mattress-sized cotton sacks, and had them filled with straw, for our beds, and finally some heavy cotton cloth that could be sewed up into pillows, and filled them with straw also. Nestling in for the night was like bedding down in a hay loft, with the sweet smell of the Italian straw in our nostrils as we went to sleep.

Jeffrey, who was so knowledgeable about so many things, seemed mystified about electricity. He coveted the light inside my bed so much, since he too, liked to sit in his bunk and read, that I installed one for him. He was inordinately proud of it, and put up prominent signs by the switch indicating "off" and "on." He seemed to like it so much, for such a simple thing, that I wished I could do something else nice for him, because his gratitude was so evident.

Most of the tents had barrels propped up on bricks outside them to hold water, and the men in the tents lifted the lid and dipped out water as they needed it. Rudy and I were of one mind that we had to improve on that, so we built a platform that raised the barrel higher in the air and we cut a small hole into the side of the barrel and fastened a piece of aluminum tubing

to the barrel, with the tube leading into the tent with a spigot on it, inside the tent. The biggest problem was making the joints tight enough that they wouldn't leak. It was surprising how many guys knocked on our door and asked to come in and see our "indoor plumbing." Having recently watched a real plumber, to see how he did it, put in pipes for a whole house, this seemed like small potatoes. There was a regular water delivery truck that made the rounds of the tents, and so the original sense of hardship dwindled away, and became almost nonexistent. If you had to fight a war, this seemed like a more civilized way to do it. Staying in one location that you were constantly upgrading seemed almost obscene, when you thought about the poor guys who had to sleep in the mud, and never have a roof over their heads. How lucky could you get? Every once in a while, I shook my head inside my skull and thought about how good it was, and how bad it could be, but wasn't. I was vaguely ashamed that we had it so good, when the folks back home assumed I was slogging around in the slush and mud, like a regular soldier. I was also aware that (it felt like) I had accepted every opportunity to prolong the preliminaries to delay my participation in the actual war activity, and in so doing, I was taking advantage of all the bloody fighting that had conquered the southern part of Italy, and had allowed us to move into territory that was already won. A few days after we arrived, and before we ever flew a mission, we learned with relief that the legendary terrible target, Ploesti, which had cost us so many ships and men, had fallen to the Russians, so we would not have to run any missions there. That gloomy target had been tossed around over card tables and in mess halls so much that it was like awakening from a bad dream and finding that all was well.

It should be emphasized that there were two kinds of bombing: tactical bombing, which had to do with fighting the enemy directly, with bullets and bombs; and strategic bombing, which had to do with destroying the enemy's factories, oil refineries, and transportation system. The latter was our job, and due to the work that had already been done, they were already short of oil, so that their machinery bearings were going dry, and we had dried up their gasoline so that they did not have enough to give their fighter planes gasoline for practice and learning how to fly, and for

*(Continued on page 10)*

*(Continued from page 9)*

that matter, limited the number of airplanes they could send up to shoot us down. Once in a while, in a surprise demonstration of strength, they would send up a squadron of fighters to attack our formations, and they were always alert for stragglers, not in the formation, or momentary scattering, as happened when a formation entered a cloud. They preferred to make a pass at single ships rather than face the combined guns of several bombers at once. Most of the time, the best they could do was to send up single fighters, not so much to attack us, but to circle around our formation at a safe distance, and radio down to the anti-aircraft guns our altitude accurately, to improve their fire on us. It felt a little cowardly to have arrived after so much of the savage fighting in the air had cooled down. Of course, they still had plenty of gunpowder to send up flak, but we knew it had been worse, earlier.

On our third day there, we went up with a man who had been there for a while, and flew around southern Italy. We circled over Monte Casino where the Allied had pounded the Germans dug into the monastery to rubble, and I was humbled thinking of the German soldiers up there having to submit to the pounding of the artillery, and also our own guys on the ground who had to climb up the side of that hill and clear out the remaining, resisting German soldiers. This was real war, and thankfully we were not asked to demonstrate our courage in this kind of savage, hand-to-hand combat.

The toy-like medieval towns clinging to the sides of the little conical mountains, some with the castles on top, and the little towns draped around in the skirts of the Queen's robes looked like illustrations for Anderson's Fairy tales.

We went out over and across the Adriatic Sea and flew along the coastline on the Yugoslavia side of the water, staying out a safe distance, then returned. We were up about three and a half hours, and it was meant to give us a feel for the action without any risk - a sort of orientation flight. It seems as though they had read Rudy's file and knew that he had been an instructor, and figured he didn't need as much breaking in as some of the pilots did. We found out later that the usual procedure was to send the co-pilot of an experienced crew along with a new crew on its first mission, and send the co-pilot of the new crew with an experi-

enced crew, but they didn't do that with us. I was sort of flattered, for our crew.

That night we worked some more on the tent, putting up a sign on a post outside the door, "Club 75", from the number of the airplane we had flown over from home. We contracted with some of the laborers to dig a good sized hole in the ground outside our tent, and filled it with gravel and sand, to be a soaking pit to handle the water we drained out from a sort of shower floor inside the tent, so that we could take splash baths inside the tent, and not have to walk over to the valley at the end of the runway.

Three days later we went out on our first real mission, a bridge in Szolnok, Hungary. There was the man with a flashlight who popped into the tent to make sure we all got up, the quick breakfast, the briefing in the briefing hall, the raising of the Top Secret canvas cover over the big map, with lines of tape thumb tacked to the map showing our route to Szolnok. There was a short lecture on the importance of the bridge being blown up as one of the principal routes of supplies and equipment, the ceremonial hack of the watches, and we got up and went out and into the truck that took us out to our plane we had brought from home, old #75, which some of the enlisted men called "Old Crip," because of its repairs in Tunis. It was on its hard stand, and the ground crew had already loaded it with gas and bombs, and as we drove up, they were warming up the engines to full high RPM and the air was full of all the roaring engines of all the planes being warmed up. Sometimes we did this ourselves. After they turned our engines off, the gas truck came around again and topped off the tanks, to give us a little air time if we needed it. They screwed on the caps, inserted the lock wires to keep them tightened, twisted them into a knot, and clipped off the extra wire.

We taxied out and got into the line for takeoff. At that point we were third for takeoff. One plane was ahead of us, nose pointing toward the ship which was already on the runway, at right angles to ours, on the takeoff point. That one on the takeoff spot with its brakes locked, all four propellers revving up to full high RPM, was waiting for the one ahead of it to take off, it hurrying away down on the far end of the run-

*(Continued on page 11)*

*(Continued from page 10)*

way and just lifting off. It did, and the takeoff plane got the green light, released its brakes, and it crawled forward, engines roaring at their frantic maximum, and like a drunken elephant trying to stumble into a run, it lumbered slowly forward, doing the best it could to reach flying speed before it reached the end of that short, one-mile runway. Ten miles an hour, twenty, thirty, fifty, eighty, ninety, a hundred, and three-quarter of a mile away, we could see the pilot pulling the nose up and its wheels reluctantly leaving the ground.

The guy ahead of us was already sitting in the takeoff spot just left vacant, brakes locked and engines roaring, frantically trying to marshal enough power to follow the one that just lifted off. The tower shot him a green light, he released his brakes and oozed forward, and - we were next.

Since the B-24s took so long to get off the ground, they used side-by-side runways, ships taking off alternately, to keep the line of ships up into the sky closer together, and save time on assembling the boxes. This meant that once off the ground, we would be trying to follow, not the man who had just taken off our runway, but the man from the other runway, who had taken off just after him. It required a good deal of preliminary planning to make these two lines of airplanes smoothly interdigitate, like shuffling a deck of cards perfectly.

We whirled around into the takeoff spot, Rudy locked the brakes, pushed all four throttles full forward against the stops, and I laid my left hand on the back of his right one to hold him in place. Both of us were watching the tower, and there it was - a green light from the biscuit gun. The plane shuddered with the strain, grunted when he released the brakes, and we gently trundled forward, and after another moment, we were moving like a car in slow traffic, then faster, and after what seemed like minutes, we were speeding along at fifty, then sixty, eighty, ninety, the wings were trembling with the effort of lifting that big barrel of bolts off the ground. The end of the runway was just ahead, coming at us, with that sharp drop-off into the valley, down and just beyond the end of the runway where the creek and the shower stalls were. He pulled back on the steering column, and the wheels stopped rumbling on the gravel, and we were in the

air. We were not on the gravel, so we had to be in the air, but glancing out the window, we were barely above ground level, and still strongly attracted by the magnetic draw of gravity. Rudy said, "Wheels up," and I threw the handle and we could feel the hydraulics struggling with the job of lifting those great clumsy wheels into their cradle in the underside of wing, next to the outboard engine nacelles. It was our first takeoff with a fully loaded aircraft with topped tanks, full ammunition and bombs. It was a nicely balanced argument between propellers and dead-weight. They figured it as close as they could, and we pulled it off

It was daylight then, and all this time we were laboring upward, one agonizing ten feet after another, and Rudy gestured toward a cluster of airplanes describing a slow circle over Benevento. The first two boxes were already assembled, and the leader of our box was off to one side, flying alone, and waiting for the rest of us to join him. The man who had taken off from our runway just ahead of us was aiming for the lead plane's left wing. The guy just ahead of us, who had taken off from the runway to our left, was aiming for the right wing. We were aiming for the slot, just behind and under our lead plane. Three more planes were strung out behind us, and the next one would tack onto our left wing, the next one onto our right wing, and the last one would slip into the Tail End Charlie spot behind and under us. He would be the seventh man of our box, and we would be ready to set out for the target, a three-box formation, twenty-one ships. Surely one of the boxes could hit the bridge.

I would like to have been in the lead ship of the box, at this point, not because of the prestige, but because it didn't have to fly formation. Being in the center of the box was the next best, for we just followed the lead plane above and in front of us. When the three guys behind us caught up and tacked onto us, we headed off across the Adriatic, north and east toward Yugoslavia, then north to Hungary. From then on it was just a long truck ride to the target. We knew that German observers on the ground counted the ships in the formation and radioed ahead telling them it must be a small target, and they scanning their maps, drawing a line coinciding with our heading, speculating on what the target could be.

*(Continued on page 12)*

*(Continued from page 11)*

I used to think about it. War started out as a multiplication of two men fighting over territory, or goods, or mates. The ones with stronger arms or longer swords were the winners. The Chinese learned how to make gunpowder, but the Japanese refused to allow it into the country, since it took all the sport out of fighting. Anyway, when their warriors had spent their whole lives learning how to fight, it didn't seem fair for an inexperienced peasant to vanquish a noble warrior just because the peasant had a gun.

Eventually, despite its ban on gunpowder, the Japanese had to accept the fact that there was more to war than showing off who was the better man, and wars began to be contests between equipment, and not between men. Instead of sending crowds of armed men against other crowds of armed men, the battles became a contest of using machines to destroy the other crowd of men, saving their own men to secure the territory taken by the superior equipment.

At first, the explosives were hurled over distance to blow up the other group of men. As man became able to travel in the air, it became fashionable to send aircraft, with a few men to guide it, and use gravity to deliver and unload great piles of explosives down onto the opposing forces. The Japanese developed aircraft that were loaded with explosives, and strapped a pilot into the driver's seat to guide the airplane and the explosives onto their target.

In our part of this war, we also had men strapped into the airplanes to guide the load of explosives, and other men in the airplanes to defend it against airplanes sent up to intercept the bombers, but our trips were not meant to be one-way. Our generals did not require that the bombers be directed down into the targets, nor that the passengers along with the load of bombs be sacrificed in reaching the target, or at least, not all the passengers. That was our part of the bargain. If we could stay among the group that got through the bomb delivering, we could return to the relative comfort and civilization of our customized tents, sleep warmly and live snugly until the next call came to deliver another load of bombs. It still seemed like a pretty good deal, else we would have been miserable and uncomfortable all of the time, instead of only the brief periods when we went up to the targets

and took our chances in a game of We-Will-Drop-Bombs-on-You-and-You-Will-Try-to-Knock-Us-Out-of-the-Sky-Before-We-Do-It.

The round trip took six hours and forty-five minutes. Since it was only a bridge, and not an oil refinery, it was not heavily protected, and the few bursts of anti-aircraft explosives seemed like mild curiosities, not life-threatening obstacles. Hah! Silly people. You can't hurt us. Get out of the way, so we can blow up your foolish little bridge, and cause your trucks and trains to back up, and your factories to shut down for want of parts and lubricants. Serenely unscathed and confident, our three formations each took their turn at trying to hit the bridge. Since I had my eyes locked onto the lead ship of my box, above and ahead of me, I never saw the stupid bridge and don't even know if we hit it. I was just a truck driver trying to hold my place in the formation. I could see the lead ship open its bomb bays, and could feel the air rushing through our plane as our bomb bay doors opened. I saw the bombs come out of the lead ship belly, and felt a slight upward lurch as our bomb weight was shed. We were on our own time then. Our box wheeled around and we headed back southwest again, to home, and doughnuts, coffee, and our cozy tent. Back south again, we passed in formation over the home field, peeled off into a long single file, and zoomed in for a triumphant landing.

Caesar Augustus, riding in his golden chariot at the head of his parading, victorious legions must have felt that way as he led them marching down the wide avenue between the hysterically cheering crowds of citizens, home from the wars. Bronzed by the desert sun, their armor and weapons scarred from battle, they maintained their grim warrior expression, but their clinched jaws were to hide the grins that tried to come through, because they had made it. They had gone out and had fought, and they had survived, and it was good to be home again, and not dead, their bodies lying on some distant battlefield.

I was surprised at the ballooning surge of relief I felt at having gone on that first mission, dropped the bombs, and returned. All of the pent-up anxiety I had been living and reliving for months in my unnoticed inside feelings had been let out, and the reality was a

*(Continued on page 13)*

*(Continued from page 12)*

welcome relief from the dark, hidden, inside fantasied missions I had run a thousand times in the gloomy recesses of my waking and sleeping mind. We'd finally done it. My relief was so great that some part of me wanted to weep with joy, but instead, I grinned, and realized what a beautiful day it was and how good it felt to be alive.

The ground crewmen waved to us, and we returned the salute with a dismissive it was nothing, nothing at all. Any Hero could have done the same thing. No. No more laurel wreaths, please, no more rose petals. It's hard to walk through them. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Riding in the pilot's compartment of a B-24 when it is taxiing is a little like riding the neck of a giant war elephant. The heavy wheels are midpoint, front to rear, of the aircraft, and the front end where we were, dipped and rose with the alternate motion of the two outboard propellers biting into the air, and the lurch of the occasional pauses of the brakes grabbing the wheels. A single plane on the taxi way might move as rapidly as it wished, (though this was officially discouraged) as long as it stayed below stalling speed. A plane in procession must not chew off the tail of the plane before it, and so a reasonable distance was maintained.

Milk run or not, they did shoot at us, and that legitimized the hazard. We ran the flimsy gauntlet, and we escaped without injury, we were all in one piece, and we were ready to see Flossie and accept her doughnuts and coffee and sweet female smile. Gee, it felt so good to breathe in the smells and taste the flavors of the dusty day filled with Italian sunshine. Only forty-nine to go, now.

The poker game that night was a little quieter, as though we were sobered by our entry into the routine of flying missions, even though it was not particularly hazardous, only potentially so. It was soaking in - we were a combat crew, and contributing to the war effort, and even though we weren't enduring any hardships, it was what we had been training all these months to do. It felt solid, and important, and had the definite heaviness of life and death activity.

No flying the next day, but we had to put on our class B's and go join a formation to witness the pinning on of decorations for some crew members. Three crews got the Air Medal for having flown ten missions. The squadron commander got a Distinguished Flying Cross, and two men got the Purple Heart, one of them for frost bite. I had a red place on my nose from where the oxygen mask had rubbed the skin pretty hard, but I didn't think I ought to mention it.

Every day we put on another small layer of civilization in our tent. The power was unreliable, and some nights I wrote to Betty with my flashlight propped on my shoulder. The tent was beginning to feel more and more like home, with indoor water supply, a shower drain in the corner, our own stove, our own



Our home away from home

beds with lights - and we were planning on that other ten feet we would have when we could get the side walls built.

One week to the day after arriving at Cerignola, I got a parcel of letters from Betty! She had been writing them faithfully, and sending them to the APO Number, and the wondrously efficient postal system had found me and delivered the packages of love, affection, and nourishment to me, the prototypical lonesome soldier. I thought of how it was when I was sorting the cards in the Priority Department, multiplied by many thousands, and marveled that they could get the mail where it was supposed to go. I felt

*(Continued on page 14)*

*(Continued from page 13)*

mildly guilty, on reflection, that I was not hungrier for the letters, for I had temporarily stifled my gnawing hunger for them, and concentrated on a new life made up of the homey tent and my airplane friends. It felt like opening up the leaky vent I had sealed shut, to survive, without my little wife's love - but no need for that now, the pipeline was open and functioning again. The censors had asked me to omit putting numbers on the outside of my letters, but it was all right for Betty to continue numbering hers. I did abstain for a while, but then I resumed it and didn't get any more flak about it. As I read her dear handwriting, it made me aware all over again how much I loved her, and how good it made me feel to be in touch with her again. As I read her letters, I could sense the courage and resolve of this sturdy little woman whose man had left and might not be back, but who resolutely went about her routines, writing her daily letters as though there was no doubt that he would finish whatever he was doing now, and be back in our cozy little house with her again - sometime. Meanwhile, I was dealing with the section of life that had been dealt me, and trying to enjoy it as much as I could.

Jeffrey and I went down to the shower sheds in the valley where the airplanes took off overhead, the end of the runway being just at the edge of the little valley. It was sort of like a ski jump. Ever once in a while, a plane would get off the ground, jump over the little valley, and then set down in the field beyond, with a malfunction on takeoff.

One plane made it over the dip, and then crash-landed in the field beyond. The nose wheel folded on impact, and it skidded to a stop, and all the crew got out, but because there was a booby bomb on board, nobody went near it. A booby bomb was one mixed in with the rest of the bombs, and looked just like the others. When it hit, it didn't go off, and was not supposed to. On the ground, the enemy soon learned that if you tried to remove it, or take the fuse out, it would detonate as it was being defused. Inside, there was a little metal chamber filled with acid that would slowly eat its way through the wall of the container, and at some point, it would eat away a clip restraining the spring-loaded fuse. It could be an hour, or it could be days. This meant they had to cordon it off, and send

traffic around it until it finally exploded. It was somebody's fiendish way of paralyzing the activities and the traffic in its area, and stopped everything as effectively as if it had blown up and destroyed everything. The impact of landing hard might have activated it, and so it was wait and watch. Of course, it was in the same rack as all the other bombs, and it would detonate them, as well. On the way to and from the Mess Hall, we would sometimes pause and stand there looking across the little valley at it, hoping it would blow up while we watched. It finally went off one night, and the next morning there was a pretty good sized hole in the ground, but we didn't get to see it happen.

There was an occasional blowup on landing or take-off, but we never did see one happen. That was why there was so much tubing and hardware that we could use in the tents. We would be playing cards in the tent, and we would hear this tremendous explosion, and we would rush out of the tent and look over toward the landing strip, which was about a mile away. No ball of fire, or anything at all that we could see. It was a morbid sort of curiosity, for we knew it could always be us, maybe the next time. We would look, see nothing, look at each other, and go on back and resume the game. We didn't talk about it. What could we say?

Anyway, on this particular day, we had decided we would walk to the shower room and try it out. When we got there, there was a sign on the door, "Out of Order." Oh well, it was pretty warm, so we decided to walk upstream along the creek and look for a good place to take a bath in the creek. There was a good path along the creek, through the weeds and the woods. You could see that at one time, the woods had been a place where there had been a lot of military activity, for there was insulated wire all over the ground where communication jeeps, probably under fire, had gone helter-skelter unreeling wire behind them so somebody could talk to somebody else on a telephone. It was like a battle that had been frozen in time, just to look at the miles of abandoned wire running in all directions.

We walked upstream about a half mile, and came upon a herd of pigs wallowing in the middle of the

*(Continued on page 15)*



*(Continued from page 14)*

creek. At first, I thought they were alone, but we saw this little boy sleeping under a nearby tree - the traditional swineherd. They looked as though they were posing for a painting. I put my fingers to my lips, and we went on, quietly. Around the bend, we found another place that the pigs would have liked, but they were downstream from us, now, and we enjoyed a chilly, but refreshing bath.

That night we played poker for a while, and I lost \$6.95, which made me a little worried, and I decided I must play more carefully. I didn't want not to play, and let my friends down, but it was reaching serious proportions. After we quit playing, Allen went over to the Club and got into a crap game, and came home later, announcing that he had won \$200. He was flushed with success, and I was glad for him. He said that when he was a cadet, he sent home about \$800 from his crap shoot winnings. I was impressed, but it felt a little foolish to me. I didn't feel as though I had the makings of a successful gambler in me.

The next day we got paid, and I went into town for the first time, and sent Betty \$125, in addition to the money she got as her allotment. I told her I might not be able to send that much every month, but would send as much as I could, so she could be paying down our mortgage. The allotment the army sent her was \$225 a month, and also a savings bond. It felt like we were rich. I didn't know soldiers got so much. Of course, there was that officer thing again - they got more than enlisted men, but I was startled that it was so much. In addition to pay for my rank, I got pay for flying time, and also hazardous duty pay on overseas duty. I felt vaguely guilty, but I accepted it, anyway. I knew that officers had better living conditions, but I had never dreamed they were paid on this scale. I felt smugly rich, and kept quiet about it, even though those around me got the same, except for wife allotment. Morgan, being a first lieutenant, got even more, of course.

Up early the next morning for our second mission, and it was a milk run over in Yugoslavia - a railroad junction to snarl up supplies to the German army. It was only four hours and thirty-five minutes, and we saw absolutely no flak. The operative name for these no-flak missions was milk-run, like delivering bottles

of milk, and it seemed a little like cheating, but a mission is a mission, and nobody complained.

We played poker again and I lost again. I was beginning to be worried. I was wondering if I would end up like a man I had known who had returned late at night after a poker game to wake up his wife and tell her, "Honey, we've got to move. I've lost the house." I seriously considered telling the guys I didn't want to play anymore because I was a poor poker player. I loved playing, but I just couldn't afford to keep on losing. In two nights, I had lost \$8.60, a hefty amount, for me. I decided to continue, for it seemed like letting your friends down to do otherwise, but I wasn't enjoying it as much as I had at first.

I noticed, as I was doing it, that in my letters to Betty, I was still using "Darn" and "Durn" and "Doggone" instead of "Damn," which was fairly comfortable conversation-wise. I suppose it was only natural that I would try to shield my wife from knowing that her husband had become a mild degenerate. All in all, though, I hadn't reached the place where I wanted to have sex with Flossie, or if I did, I didn't know it, even though I quit whatever I was doing to watch her go by, every time she did.

They announced that all of us were expected to (translate: must) join the Officer's Club. I was a little worried that it might be about \$20 a month, but it was only \$7.00, which was the amount I was already paying for a month's food. There was also a \$10 initiation fee for joining the Club. But really, the fees were very reasonable. They also announced that there was to be a big party at Group Headquarters, with liquor, live music, and women guests from the Red Cross. The only rub was, it was for majors and above. Hah! It felt like they were probably financing the party from the Officer Club's money - our money. I didn't mind, particularly, for I didn't drink, and I didn't want to be tempted by any sex-starved Red Cross women. At least, I told myself I didn't, and I believed it. Before lunch, it was announced that we would have a standby inspection in our tents, the first one, and we were expected to have everything all spit and polish. So we shined our shoes, and our brass buckles, and sat around all afternoon waiting for it to

*(Continued on page 16)*

*(Continued from page 15)*

happen. I sat and wrote letters to Betty, and Jeffrey read, Allen napped, and Rudy had to go over and stand inspection with the enlisted men. Finally it was announced that the inspection was canceled. I think they had to quit and get ready for the big party.

Allen always seemed to come up with the scuttlebutt, or current rumors, and he said that he had heard that every man in the army, after discharge, was entitled to three years of college, but I didn't allow myself to get too worked up about that for two reasons: (1) It seemed too good to be true, and was probably only a rumor, and (2) We weren't home free just yet, and there was no guarantee we would be. I did think that it was very clever of them to be thinking about all these guys getting out of the service and not having jobs, and with the war over, there might be a lot of unemployment, and some college or other kind of training would give the service guys a little help. I avoided thinking about it, for the two reasons given, and if it happened, it would be good, but - who knows?

Rudy told me that Col. Klagon had noticed me - what did that mean? - and was thinking about putting me up for pilot. At first, I was elated, for I had never liked being #2, when I could just as well have been #1. But Rudy was better for the job than I was, and besides, if I was promoted, I would have to leave my crew and I had grown to like the guys very much, and dreaded the idea of leaving them. Anyway, it was just a rumor, and I put it in my head on the back burner, thinking, like a lot of things, I'll deal with that if it comes up. I would go for it, of course, if it happened, but it was surprising to find that I didn't really care, one way or the other.

A day or so later, I got a notice to report to Operations, and they told me there I was to take training flight with a Captain Ornstien. I met him, and he said he and I and a crew chief would take a plane over to Bari and back, and we would shoot some landings, and practice taxiing. We did go up, and over to Bari, where I shot several landings, with the crew chief standing at my shoulder calling out the airspeed, like Carl did. I was surprised how comfortable I was landing it, and he didn't have anything bad to say about it, and acted as though he expected me to

do well, and I guess I did all right. I taxied it around on the field at Bari, and also at Torretta when we got back. He shook my hand, and said thanks, or something politely dismissive, but noncommittal. I felt pretty good about the whole thing, but when I got back to the tent, I thought Rudy acted sort of cold. I could tell he didn't want me to leave the crew, for I took a lot of formation flying off his back, and he knew I was dependable, and besides, I lost at poker regularly. I know that some of the other co-pilots were frequently allowed to land the plane, and did part of the taxiing. Rudy had never let me do either one, and I had a little touch of bad feeling about it, but not much. He had so many good things going for him, that I couldn't hold a grudge against him.

I had had my hopes raised so often, that I didn't worry about it much one way or the other. Rudy kept on pouting, or so it seemed to me, for the next several days, and finally when nothing more was heard about it, he began to relax, and decided it had all blown over. I guess it did.

Jeffrey came out with a harmonica he had in his baggage, and I thought what a handy little musical instrument to have. I wrote home and asked Betty to try to get me two of them, in different keys, so maybe he and I could play some duets.

I continued to live two lives: One in Torretta, Italy, and one in Ohio. Both of them were pretty rich, for there was always something of interest going on in Torretta, and even though I was supposed to hate it, it was sort of like a prolonged vacation. The pay was wonderful, and as Tom Sawyer would have said (a la fence-painting), "How often do you get a chance to fly a \$200,000 airplane, even as co-pilot?" Well, not very often, and it was exciting. The element of danger seemed to fit into the picture smoothly, and no doubt added to the excitement.

Speaking of which, I have not mentioned the armor, which although sparse, was there, if only for morale's sake. Behind the pilots, with a small cutout for the door into the cockpit, was a heavy sheet of armor plate, which meant that if some flak came from behind us, we were likely to be protected. Also, when

*(Continued on page 17)*

*(Continued from page 16)*

we were approaching the target area, Carl would show up at our elbows, and say, "Time to get your flak suit on." I would fly while Carl helped Rudy into his, and he would fly while I slipped into mine. Since we had armor behind us, the jacket was only for our front and sides. It was made up of little overlapping pockets, and into each pocket was a little square of metal, that was supposed to be able to hold off the impact of the average piece of flak, especially since the little squares were double thickness over most of the jacket. Frankly, I doubted it would take much of a hit, but it was better than skin and bone. Also, we put regular army helmets on, with our earphones under the helmet, and it was funny to look over and see Rudy dressed up like a GI Soldier, and I looked the same. We were still flying a plane in formation, but were dressed like foot soldiers, sort of.

A few of the planes we flew in, when we didn't fly Old Crip, had standing up coffin-shaped armor not only at our back, but also in heavy sheets at our sides and above us. It was like sitting in a propped-up mummy case, and there were rumors about planes crashing on landing, and the coffins tearing loose, and pinning the pilots against the dashboard. I think that was probably just a goofy rumor. Some people always have to think up something bad to say about anything new. I can tell you that when I flew missions to busy places with lots of flak, I leaned back as far as I could, with my arms stretched out in front of me as far as I could and still fly good formation. I was glad to have all the armor around me, coffin or no coffin.

Jeffrey told me in confidence, that since Allen, as bombardier, just went along for the ride when we were not leading, which we never were, he would ordinarily lie on a pile of flak jackets on the way to and from the target, and actually fall asleep. He had to be awake over the target so he could punch the switch to drop the bombs when he saw them come out of the lead ship bomb bay. As soon as the bombs were dropped, and the bomb bay doors closed, his duties were over, and he would sometimes sack out again on the flak suits. Jeffrey did not tell me this as a matter of reporting misconduct, but merely as an interesting occurrence. It was surprising that, flying in a bomber over enemy territory, he could be so re-

laxed that he could sleep while this was going on. I guess he knew that if we were hit by fighters, and shot down, somebody would wake him up. Jeffrey would not have told Rudy, of course, for Rudy would have thought it his duty to reprimand him, for conduct unbecoming for an officer, or some such. Besides, he wouldn't want anybody to know that one of his officers was sleeping on a mission.

Personally, I was surprised, but not particularly outraged. It felt like something I would not do, but then, I was not a bombardier, and who knows how he felt. Maybe this was his way of fending off the stress of being on a mission, or maybe he had so much confidence in his crew mates that he just felt like taking a nap. It was a strange occurrence. Actually it was pretty monotonous, flying along in formation, hour after hour. Rudy was pretty transparent about his dislike for flying formation, and we were supposed to change every thirty minutes, but he would often let it drag on another ten or fifteen minutes. I noticed, but I didn't say anything, because he was the pilot, but also it gave me a little moral advantage, as though I privately knew his weak spot. Besides, I liked the feeling that he trusted my flying enough to let me fly the spot without worrying about it. I liked flying in the slot, number four position, for it was easier to simply fly in line below and behind the lead ship, and it was easier than flying on a wing. Also, there was the added responsibility of flying in a stable fashion, for you had three airplanes flying on you, one on each wing, and one under and behind you, and you wanted to make it as easy as possible for all three of them to stay in place. We only got to do this about half the time, and on the other missions we flew off a wing, sometimes right, sometimes left.

Betty sometimes told me, in wifely fashion, not to work too hard, and I wrote back to her saying that she need not worry, for we didn't fly every day, and on the ground, we didn't even have PT. I think the war was winding down, for we usually only flew missions about once or twice a week, and in between we'd fly some training missions, so it was not very strenuous in terms of frequent flying. The real trick was finding projects to keep us interested, and active, and that is where Jeffrey and I had so many interesting experiences.

**461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group**  
***Annual Reunion***  
**October 9-12, 2008**  
**Holiday Inn Dayton North**  
**I-75 & Wagner Ford Road, Dayton, Ohio 45414**  
**Reservations: 1-937-278-4871**

**ITINERARY**

**Thursday, October 9th**

Arrival and check in day. The registration table will be open all day with plenty of time to arrive and visit with others in the Hospitality Room. A welcome and information meeting (or you might call it a mission briefing) will be held that evening at 7:00.

**Friday, October 10th**

We will visit the fabulous Air Force Museum. The first bus will depart the hotel at 7:40 a.m. so that the Veterans who choose to will be able to actually get into the B-24 (which must be done before the museum opens to the public at 9:00 a.m.) while family members can watch and take pictures. Another bus will depart the hotel for the museum at 9:00 a.m. We will also be able to see the 461st plaque in the Memorial Garden at the museum. Transportation back to the hotel will be available at various times during the day so you can spend as much or as little time at the museum as you wish. That evening we will hold our traditional Squadron Banquet at the hotel with the social hour beginning at 6:00 p.m. with our meal served at 7:00 p.m.

**Saturday, October 11th**

The bus will depart the hotel at 9:00 a.m. and we will visit the Wright-Dunbar Interpretive Center and Wright Cycle Company complex, followed by lunch and shopping on your own at the Webster/Second Street Public Markets followed by a visit to the Huffman Prairie Interpretive Center and then a short stop at the Esther Price Candy Company for treats and shopping. Transportation back to the hotel will be available at different times during the day should you decide to call it quits. We will return to the hotel by 3:00 P.M. In the evening we will have the traditional Group Banquet at the hotel with the social hour beginning at 6:00 p.m. with our meal served at 7:00 p.m.

**Sunday, October 12th**

We will continue the tradition of the Memorial Breakfast at 8:30 a.m. which will mark the close of our reunion at approximately 11:00 a.m.

(Note: If you would rather spend your Saturday going back to the Air Force museum, the hotel can help with complimentary transportation to the museum and back. Just ask at the front desk or have one of the reunion committee members arrange it for you.)

# *461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group-Reunion 2008*

## ***HOTEL INFORMATION***

**DATE:** October 9-12, 2008

**LOCATION:** **Holiday Inn Dayton North**  
2301 Wagner Ford Road (I-75 & Wagner Ford Rd.)  
Dayton, Ohio 45414

**ROOM RATES:** \$75.00 per room, per night plus tax  
This rate will be good for three days prior to  
and three days after the reunion.

**RESERVATIONS:** (937) 278-4871  
Tell them you are with the 461st Bomb Group,  
booking code **BOM**.  
Major credit card required for guarantee.

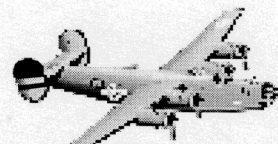
**PARKING:** Free

**Free hotel shuttle to and from Dayton International Airport**

**461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Reunion**

October 9th - 12th, 2008

Dayton, Ohio



Please complete and return this form by September 15, 2008. Late registrations, however, will be accepted.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ Family/Guest Names \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Please enter names as you would like them to appear on your name tags)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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

**October 10th**

United States Air Force Museum (Transportation back to the hotel will be provided at various times during the afternoon. Lunch is on your own)

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$16.00 per person - subtotal \_\_\_\_\_  
# of persons

**Squadron Dinner - Buffet Dinner**

Sliced Roast Strip Loin, Chicken w/ sauteed mushrooms &amp; melted mozzarella, Veggie Lasagna

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$27.00 per person - subtotal \_\_\_\_\_  
# of persons

**October 11th**

Wright/Dunbar Interpretive Center & Wright Cycle Co. Complex tour, Lunch & Shopping (on your own) at the Second & Webster Street Public Markets, Esther Price Candy Store & Gift Shop

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$16.00 per person - subtotal \_\_\_\_\_  
# of persons

**Dinner & Dance**

Grilled Chicken Breast Honey Dijon Glaze with Fresh Rosemary &amp; Redskin Potatoes

or \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$25.50 per person - subtotal \_\_\_\_\_  
# of persons

Seared Salmon Filet with Jasmine Rice, &amp; Buttered Carrots

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$23.50 per person - subtotal \_\_\_\_\_  
# of persons

(Note: Please indicate on a separate sheet which entree choice each member of your party prefers.)

**October 12th****Memorial Breakfast**

Pancakes, Sausage or Bacon &amp; Fruit Cup

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$14.50 per person - subtotal \_\_\_\_\_  
# of persons

Scrambled Eggs, Sausage or Bacon, Hash Browns &amp; Pastries

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$12.75 per person - subtotal \_\_\_\_\_  
# of persons

(Note: Please indicate on a separate sheet which breakfast choice each member of your party prefers.)

**GRAND  
TOTAL:\$** \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS REGISTRATION FORM AND MAIL ALONG WITH YOUR CHECK TO:

461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group, Attn: Dave Blake • 648 Lakewood Road • Bonner Springs, KS 66012-1804



## **Some Thoughts Regarding Touring The National Museum of the United States Air Force**

As you know our group will tour the Air Force Museum on Friday, October 10<sup>th</sup>. Our scheduled tour will begin at 8:00 a.m. that morning with the opening of the B-24 "Strawberry Bitch" for the veterans to climb through. Family members may attend and take pictures but unfortunately will not be able to board the aircraft. Transportation to the museum will also be available a little later in the morning for those who are not interested in such an early start. The museum closes at 5:00 p.m. that day. Transportation back to the hotel will be offered at various times during the afternoon.

This museum is large to say the least. Those who wish to really scour the museum and see everything there is to see will find it time-consuming and physically demanding to walk all through the facility. A number of wheelchairs and motorized scooters are available on a first-come, first-served basis. In addition to the main museum building, there are two very good tours available that involve boarding an Air Force bus and going onto the active part of Wright-Patterson AFB. For either of these tours you must sign up at a registration desk in advance. Each of the two tours is nearly two hours long including time spent getting checked in and riding back and forth. A photo ID is required. One tour is to the Restoration Hanger where the original Memphis Belle is currently undergoing a complete restoration. There are many other aircraft to see there in various stages of the restoration process. The other tour is to the Presidential Hanger where some of the first Air Force One aircraft are on display and can be boarded including the very first Air Force One, a C-54 that FDR used.

For those of you who want to see the entire museum in detail and take the tours mentioned, scheduling some extra time is advisable. It is recommended that you plan an extra day either before or after the reunion to allow adequate time for the museum. Our discount rates at the hotel are good for three days prior to and three days following the reunion and the hotel can help with transportation to and from the museum with their shuttle bus at no cost. If you need additional information you can call the museum at (937) 255-3286 or you can visit their web site at: [www.nationalmuseum.af.mil](http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil).

### **HELP WANTED**

As a part of the last two reunions we have had a member of our group speak briefly during the Sunday morning Memorial Breakfast and everyone has really enjoyed that. Your reunion committee is searching for a 461<sup>st</sup> veteran who would be willing to give a short (ten minutes or so) talk about his time with the 461<sup>st</sup>. You could talk about ground or air memories or about the people assigned to the group.

If you would be willing to help out with this please contact Dave Blake either by email at [daveblake@kc.rr.com](mailto:daveblake@kc.rr.com) or by phone 913-523-4044 or by mail at 648 Lakewood Rd., Bonner Springs, KS.

## **461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association Membership**

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

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

If you have any questions, you can E-Mail Dave at [dstyves@pmn.com](mailto:dstyves@pmn.com).

The 461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association offers three types of membership:

- **Life Membership** – Men who served in the 461<sup>st</sup> during World War II and their spouses are eligible to join the Association for a one-time fee of \$25.00. This entitles the member to attend the annual reunions held in the fall each year, receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461<sup>st</sup> Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reunion.
- **Associate Membership** – Anyone wishing to be involved in the 461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association may join as an Associate member. The cost is \$10.00 per year. No renewal notices are sent so it is your responsibility to submit this form every year along with your payment. Associate membership entitles you to attend the reunions held in the fall each year and receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461<sup>st</sup> Liberaider. You are not a voting member of the Association.
- **Child Membership** – Children of men who served in the 461<sup>st</sup> during World War II are eligible to join the Association as a Child Member. The cost is \$10.00 per year. No renewal notices are sent out so it is your responsibility to submit this form every year along with your payment. Child membership entitles you to attend the reunions held in the fall each year, receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461<sup>st</sup> Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reunion.

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

# **Building A Group**

By  
Frederic E. Glantzberg  
CO of the 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group

On October 25, 1943, I reported at Wendover Army Air Base, Utah, to take over the command of the 461<sup>st</sup> Group from Lt. Col. Willis G. "Nick" Carter. I had been relieved of command of the 467<sup>th</sup>, one month behind the 461<sup>st</sup> in training, to take over the 461<sup>st</sup> because Nick had been grounded for six months on account of his health. Fortunately for me, Nick agreed to stay on for 10 days to help me get the run of the outfit. With the outfit scheduled to move to Hammer Field, Fresno, California by the first of the month, I had a small amount of work cut out for me to become acquainted with 259 officers and 1070 enlisted men, organize and make a move to a new station half way across the country and be ready to start training when we got there. But Nick was a peach and stayed on to give me a hand getting started. Two days after I took over, Gen. Sam Connell, C.G. of the IV Bomber Command arrived with Beau Dougher who had the Supervisory Training Unit at Hammer. In the two days I had had before he arrived we had planned our movement and were pretty well set, with the first movement of the ground echelon planned to move out the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> on the same day with the air echelon. Consequently after satisfying himself with us, Sam went over to look over the 399<sup>th</sup> at the same station and see what their plans were for the move to Tonapah. Apparently nothing much had been done and he gave orders that their movement would have priority over everything at the base, little thinking that he was completely wrecking all the plans we had made.

The following evening, the 28<sup>th</sup>, I made a final check up with the Base Transportation to make sure everything was set for the train which was to leave the next morning with the ground echelon. Great was my astonishment when I was informed that the train had been cancelled for us and had been made available to the 399<sup>th</sup> for their move, because, Sam had said their move took priority. "Holy jumping fish-cakes," I told the Transportation Officer, "If you

don't get this straightened out before General Connell finds out about it, he will skin you alive."

"But," he tried to explain, "General Connell said the 399<sup>th</sup> had priority and the railroad can't find another train. Your outfit will have to wait until the 399<sup>th</sup> moves and the train can come back from Tonapah."

"How long will that take," I asked, practically ready to blow a fuse.

"Oh, the train will be back in about three days."

"Now look," I was ready to commit homicide, "we made our plans to be in Fresno and start training by the first. The 399<sup>th</sup> won't even be ready to start moving by then."

"Sorry," he said, "there isn't anything I can do about it. It is out of my hands. All troop movements are handled from Washington and they have cancelled your movement and set up the 399<sup>th</sup> to move first."

"Why in hell did they do that?" I demanded.

"Probably because I told them that General Connell had given them priority," he replied.

"Nuts," I explained, "He only did that because we were already set up to move, and he wanted to get the 399<sup>th</sup> on the schedule before some outfit got in ahead of it. Who do I have to call in Washington to get this straightened out?" He gave me the office and I got a civilian clerk on the phone who told me there was nothing he could do. "Orders were orders and no other train was available." Then I had a brainwave.

"But this is an overseas movement." I lied. That did it.

"Why didn't you say so," he said, "We will have your train there by noon tomorrow." I went back to my office, wondering if I would be able to get out of the country before my sins caught up with me.

*(Continued from page 1)*

wings reading **FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR IN ROMANIA**. John wisely decided to pass out caps to the sixteen of us on the tour, so we were easy to identify, by each other and by media people looking for our group.

We were advised in advance that a US Naval Attaché from our Embassy would meet us on our arrival. A 1976 graduate of Annapolis, John Brown not only met us at the airport, he was with us most of our waking hours. Becky, his wife, and five well-behaved children, from ten years down to five months, were also with us a great deal and added many delightful memories. John helped us in many ways, as will be noted below.

We were also met by staff people of the Paralela 45 Tour Agency. We soon fell in love with Andreea Brezean who took time off from her new job as a manager to be our main guide and interpreter. She was with us from beginning to end, as was Stefan Sandulescu, usually called "Greek". Other Agency staff members with us most of the time included a competent bus driver and a photographer. Andreea was the only one of them who could speak English with any degree of fluency.

Another loyal leader was Lt. Col. Mihail Taparlea, from Romania's Ministry of Defense. His many contacts and advance preparations made our visits to military museums, cemeteries, and memorials go well. His explanations, interpreted by Andreea or John, were factual but without excessive details. After the first formalities, he relaxed and became our "Colonel". His first duty was to join with a group of about twenty Romanian Veterans to welcome us at the airport.

The Colonel was given a big assist by Professor N. Savoiu, a native Romanian who has spent most of his career as an English instructor, and who served in a liaison role after the first American flyers were captured in 1943. The Romanian veterans included a few fighter pilots who had defended their homeland against our Air Force attacks of 1943 and 1944. Savoiu pointed out that we had once been enemies, but we had only been doing our duties, so now we should be friends. That set the stage for much of the good

fellowship that followed in the next six days.

We proceeded by bus to Hotel Bucharest with the veterans and media close behind. Photographers were falling all over each other to get close-up shots. Several of our group were featured on TV and front page newspaper articles on May 6<sup>th</sup>. After check-in to our rooms, we had a late lunch, and then launched right into our scheduled sightseeing program.

A great deal of our pleasure during the tour came from observing the interaction of Andreea, John, and the Colonel. Their skills soon had us feeling like one big family. With few exceptions, like our fifty-year friendship with the Werths, which began when Bill and I were fellow prisoners, we weren't well acquainted within our group. We remained in good spirits during the full tour, even with a quite demanding schedule.

To help your understanding of what we visited, I need to insert here brief backgrounds on Romanian history, Allied air attacks on the oil industry during WWII, and Princess Caradja's ties to POWs in Romania.

Romania's name comes from being a Roman colony of Dacia about 100 A.D. Later it was part of the Ottoman Empire. As part of important trade routes, from biblical times forward, its size and shape have been changed many times by wars and by powerful rulers. An enemy of Germany and Bulgaria during WWI, it suffered terrible manpower losses, but had some territory returned as part of the peace terms. During WWII Romania had to submit to occupation by Germany, who needed her oil for their war machine. Antonescu ruled Romania as a dictator for most of WWII, until August 1944, when young King Michael with his supporters rallied against him and the German occupation troops to again make peace with the Allies. Soon after WWII, the Communists came into power, with help from Russia. Much of what wealth they had was stolen by Russia.

A series of Romanian leaders were hand-picked by Russia until Nicolae Ceausescu came to power in the mid-sixties. He was an ambitious, anti-Russian na-

*(Continued on page 25)*

*(Continued from page 24)*

tionalist whose leanings brought friendly gestures from the West. As he solidified his power, however, he made gods of himself and his wife Elena. They destroyed many historical monuments, churches, and architectural treasures to make room for self-glorifying monuments. In effect, they sacked their own country to honor themselves, destroying the homes of 50,000 people for their palace site in Bucharest. The revolution of December 1989 abruptly ended their reign and their lives, by execution. A new government was formed and many freedoms were restored, but the country is pitifully poor and struggling to overcome the devastations of recent decades.

Long-range plans to defeat Hitler's war machine logically included a reduction in fuel supplies, particularly high octane gasoline for his planes. As much as one-third of his fuel came from the oil refineries clustered around Ploesti, Romania, but its distance from Allied air bases was too great for bombing attacks prior to 1943. Even then, the nearest bases were in North Africa, about 1,100 air miles from Ploesti. A highly secret plan was approved by Churchill, Eisenhower, and others to send five groups of Ninth Air Force B-24 bombers to North Africa for concentrated training for a low level surprise bombing of Ploesti oil capacity. Called Tidal Wave, it was carried out on August 1, 1943 by 178 B-24s carrying 1,733 men and 311 tons of bombs. Many crews had volunteered for the raid knowing they had less than a 50% chance of returning safely. The Germans had prepared well for Ploesti's defense, and the hoped-for advantage of surprise was missing. Many bombs were never delivered to their intended targets, but damage per ton of bombs against tons of oil was high, and the psychological effects were good.

Fifty-eight of the 178 Tidal Wave B-24s were lost, many by crash landings in Romania. One hundred and eight flyers were imprisoned, some after extensive hospital care for their injuries. High-level raids on Romania, made possible by the use of air bases in Italy, began April 4, 1944. Primary targets included Bucharest railroad yards and Ploesti oil facilities. Anti-aircraft fire was more severe than fighter attacks, as Hitler's fuel supply for his planes dwindled. High-level daylight raids and low-level night raids

by the Royal Air Force continued until August 18, 1944, shortly before Romanian forces overcame the occupying German troops and Antonescu, their own dictator. The total loss of bombers was 286 by the U.S. and 38 by the R.A.F. Men killed or captured totaled 2,829 for the U.S. and 33 for the R.A.F. Nearly 1,275 men were returned to Italy by September 1, 1944, after their release from prison camps.

Princess Catherine Caradja was the guardian angel for American and R.A.F. flyers imprisoned in Romania. She literally saved lives of Tidal Wave flyers such as Dick Britt whose plane crashed in her garden near Ploesti. He had been left for dead in the wreckage, but she with help from her nearby orphanage got him out and treated his injuries. She convinced authorities that flyers should be imprisoned in Romania, not sent to German camps. She had a hand in much of the humane treatment given to prisoners - books and bibles to read, some help from the Red Cross. Her help to orphanages and hospitals continued until the Communists forced her out. She escaped to France in 1949, then came to the U.S. in 1955. For 35 years she traveled widely, mostly by bus, looking for her "boys" and urging them to "keep American freedoms strong". At age 97, she was finally able to return to Romania where her efforts at St. Catherine's Crib in Bucharest were needed more than ever. She spent her final years there and died five months after her 100th birthday. Her granddaughter, Princess Brianna Caradja, is carrying on her work.

Our tours of Bucharest began with a visit to the National Military Museum, with relics dating back to the Roman Empire, but showing the evolution of weapons to the WWII era. One building showed their first attempts to build "flying machines".

We visited Princess Catherine Caradja's tomb in a large cemetery, then continued to her "Crib" which includes a school, church, and hospital. Several of our group gave much needed financial gifts while there. Others will do so later. Princess Brianna plans to create a Foundation and a Foster Parents Program to aid the many Romanian orphans.

Our 36-hour day ended with dinner at Hotel Bucha-

*(Continued on page 26)*

*(Continued from page 25)*

rest, followed by most welcome showers under plenty of hot water.

Friday, May 6th, promised to be another full day. Our hotel breakfast was typical European fare of cold cuts, cheese, juice, various breads, and coffee or tea, buffet style. Some mornings there were eggs, boiled or scrambled, dry cereal with yogurt, and fresh vegetables or fruit.

Enroute to Ploesti, we stopped in Tincabesti to visit the tombs of about 90 R.A.F. flyers. Gordon Cormie, from Canada, and the only former R.A.F. flyer with our group was surprised to find the radio operator from his crew buried there. Typical of WWII flyers, the average age of the deceased men was less than 25 years.

In the Ploesti/Prahova area, we first visited the remains of the Vega Refinery, now devoted to research and production of catalysts. We saw a bunker used by refinery workers during WWII bombing raids. We proceeded to Ploesti's Petroleum Museum where we were welcomed by Romanian Vets of that area. They pointed out many photographs taken after Tidal Wave and the 1944 high-level raids. These documented damage to refineries AND to non-military buildings. A large chart showed voluminous details for every Allied bombing raid -- date, time, number of planes, tons of bombs, where they landed, casualties, and injuries. Ploesti, a name meaning peace, was one of the most heavily bombed targets of WWII. I spent five days there after being captured and experienced both daylight and night alerts.

While we were at the Petroleum Museum, one of the Romanian Vets gave Bill Werth a two or three page hand-written description about a B-24 that crashed near his home. There were no survivors. He didn't know what became of the bodies, or what report might have been made fifty years ago, but he finally found an opportunity to provide details that might be very interesting to the families of those flyers. Bill plans to have the information translated into English and will then take any action that seems appropriate.

Also at the museum, we were shown many Romanian censors' copies of letters written by American flyers

to their families after they were imprisoned. Many spoke of the good treatment they were getting, which is probably why they were saved. To read them seemed like an intrusion of privacy, though I may include a few in my scrapbook for illustration.

The Romanian Vets of the Ploesti area shared lunch with our group at Seciu Village, at tables around an open courtyard of a restaurant named Mondial S.R.L. Each table was set with a vase of yellow tulips, white linens, and crystal. One notable person present was Dr. Petrescu, who had saved the life of John Palm, following the August 1, 1943 Tidal Wave raid. John's story, alone, would fill a book. He was one of the first flyers to reach a Bucharest hospital, so was visited in turn by General Antonescu, Queen Mother Helen, and young King Michael. Dr. Petrescu moved John into a private room, by the Queen's orders, and gave him special care, including a peg leg after his stump had healed. John remained a favorite of the royal family and their circle of friends.

After our lunch, we visited other parts of Ploesti, primarily Princess Caradja's church near the home where she lived in 1943, and what was then the orphanage which she directed. The small cemetery in the church yard will become the permanent resting place for Princess Catherine's remains when Princess Brianna gets the funds and permission to move them from the Bucharest cemetery. The former orphanage is now a reform school for quite young boys. Some of us walked in to take a picture of the Princess' former home, but were asked to leave. One of the awkward ongoing problems involves property confiscated by the Communists and put to new uses. The property can't be returned to the rightful owners, in anything like its original state, even if the present government was inclined to do so. An example is the Princess' former property across from the church. Princess Brianna's request is on file but nothing is happening. The field behind the reform school is where Dick Britt's plane crashed, and where he was rescued by the Princess and her orphans.

We completed our visit to the Ploesti area by busing to the top of the highest hill where we were treated royally by the mayors of Seciu and Placate. Dinner

*(Continued on page 27)*



*(Continued from page 26)*

was accompanied by a live band, each course was served with special flourishes by the waitresses, and we were entertained by folk dances of four couples. We ended with each of our group being led to the dance floor with a kerchief, kneeling and kissing our partner on each cheek. The Rovit restaurant where we met was said to be a favorite of the deceased rulers, the Ceausescus. INTERPOL had just completed an international meeting there. We bid our new friends good-night about 10:00 p.m. and made the one-hour drive back to Bucharest.

Saturday, our third day, began with "luggage out before breakfast" as we would be spending that night in Brasov. All but one of us properly left our room key at the desk. Andreea came to the bus and asked Julian Cowan for the key to his room. His response, "What did you do with the one I gave you last night?" had us all in stitches. He produced the key and we were soon on our way north, back through Ploesti to Sinaia.

The two main attractions in Sinaia, named after the biblical Mt. Sinai, were Senate Monastery and Peles Castle. The monastery was built during the 1840s so is relatively new. It is noted for hand-carved pews and other wood features, many of them covered with gold; for its beautiful stained glass windows; and its paintings. It was also the first church in Romania to use electric lighting.

Peles Castle was built by King Carol I for himself and his successors. Also relatively young (late 1800s), it has beautiful spires and turrets, as in jigsaw puzzles of German castles. Inside, fantastic wood carvings decorate every wall, stair case, and the furnishings. A royal show place, but used by the high-level communists for 45 years after WWII, it is now a museum for the public to enjoy.

After lunch in the Sinaia area, we continued north a short distance to Timisul de Jos where 108 flyers from the Tidal Wave raid were held for more than a year. They occupied a three-story resort hotel plus one adjacent building, and probably had the most unusual POW camp ever conceived. The officers in the hotel had nearly every luxury except freedom. And they even had a bit of freedom when those that be-

haved well were allowed to go to Bucharest, under guard, of course. One even spoke to the Rotary Club in Bucharest. There were no work details as Russian prisoners took care of cooking and cleaning. All prisoners were paid an amount equal to what their equivalent rank was paid in the Romanian army. They bought fresh fruit, meat, beer, and plum brandy (tsuica, pronounced "sweeka") from farm wives who came to the fence. At first, the non-coms were kept in their own quarters so did not fare quite as well in getting food and drinks. They solved that by stealing the gun of a guard and locking him in a room until he promised to deliver some "sweeka". The separation of prisoners ended several months later after they were visited by General Antonescu and his wife. The flyers were asked if they had any complaints. One saluted smartly and asked, "Why are the ranks separated when we are all in the same camp?" The barriers were soon removed.

The main north-south railway ran directly by the POW camp at Timisul de Jos. It carried German troops and supplies south to the Ukrainian front, and oil from the Ploesti refineries passed by on the way north to Germany. One prisoner counted cars going each way and found a way to report his figures to British Intelligence.

Princess Caradja visited the camp and left a radio. The flyers were kept informed on war fronts by BBC. They put up a map and sometimes put the pins out of position purposely. Romanian officers would come in and correct the pin locations, based on their own secret reports.

Several escape attempts were made at the Timisul de Jos camp, usually planned by two British non-coms Doug Collins and Ed Lancaster. They had escaped 21 times before being captured in Romania, so were put in with the American flyers. Russ Huntley, the only Tidal Wave flyer who was with us on our trip, soon joined Collins and Lancaster in their escape plans. A forty foot tunnel was finally completed after they found new places to put the dirt. As we were enroute to the former camp, Russ expressed doubt that the old hotel could still be standing since he knew the walls had been filled with dirt 50 years ago.

*(Continued on page 28)*

*(Continued from page 27)*

None of the flyers escaped for more than a few days. One of the tunnels they made ended in an adjacent garden used by a man still living and whose nephew brought him to see our group. A most interesting discussion took place between Russ and the gardener, with the nephew interpreting. The camp buildings are showing their age, but are still occupied as apartments.

One of Russ Huntley's escape experiences is not described in the book entitled PLOESTI. He had made a solo escape but was captured and told that he would face severe punishment, including time in the "sweat box", in which a man could neither sit nor stand, unless he revealed how he had escaped. As they took him back to the camp, he falsely confessed that he had climbed out a window when the guards weren't looking and slid down a nearby drain pipe. They doubted it could be done so had one of their guards try it. Fortunately for Russ, the guard was successful, so Russ was put back into camp without punishment and with his secret intact.

From Timisul de Jos, we traveled on to Poiana (suburban) Brasov and to our home for the night, the Hotel Ciucas. It was a more typical hotel, of those operating in Romania today, although located in a resort area. Hot water for bathing was only a dream; the towels were ragged, odd sizes; and lack of funds for maintenance was quite obvious. Our dinner and breakfast were tolerable, and the view of the surrounding mountains was rewarding, even in the overcast conditions.

Our fourth day began with a visit to Bran Castle, built as a fortress more than 600 years ago. It guarded the pass and main commercial route during the Middle Ages between Brasov and the Wallachia region. For its support, the castle was allotted an estate covering nine villages, and the castle lords were permitted to collect taxes from the subjects. The near-by customs house collected a 3% tax on all commercial traffic on the Bran road. The castle was given to the Romanian Royal Family in 1920 and was used by them as a summer home until 1947 when the Communist Government claimed it as "State" property. Finally, in 1956, it was set aside as a museum of history and feudal art, and opened to visitors. It has been well

cared for or restored, and is much more imposing from the rear than from the front and the village below. The wood and stucco construction, topped by red tile roof sections surrounding a courtyard makes it very colorful. For those of our group who did not choose to make the steep climb to the castle, there were many booths in the village selling heavy wool sweaters, lace tablecloths, embroidered pieces, and other souvenirs.

From Bran we traveled through a "Little Switzerland" section of the Transylvanian Alps -- a great contrast to the American-like plains of southern Romania. We looked down on lush green valleys, with villages nestled among the trees, the red tile roofs of the buildings standing out. Small hay fields had typical peaked hay stacks built around a center pole. We came to an unusual mountain park with clusters of statuary dedicated to Romanian playwrights. Near Cimpulung, we visited a large mausoleum and monument dedicated to the soldiers of WWI. We stopped for lunch at Posada Hotel and Restaurant in Pitesti.

Pitesti is the site of a famous cathedral Curtea de Arges, built by a local Duke in 1512. Slanting windows on the towers create the illusion that they are leaning. The building, rich in beauty and history, holds regular worship services for those who visit it. Many come to burn one or more candles for their loved ones.

We returned to Bucharest via Romania's only limited access divided highway. We were assigned the same rooms we had before at Hotel Bucharest, and gathered for dinner in their restaurant. Princess Brianna came to tell us goodbye before she returned to Paris on Monday.

Our top priority on Monday was to visit our former prison camps, the school, known as Laquerre de Razboi #13, and the garrison/hospital where the non-com flyers were kept after the school became too crowded to hold everyone. The school is near the center of Bucharest, not far from the boulevard built to be viewed from the Ceausescu palace. The Orthodox church is still across Ecaterina street. I remember the church so well because my bed was under a window

*(Continued on page 29)*

*(Continued from page 28)*

from which I could see the front steps and the activity there. One very vivid memory is of a woman dressed all in black crawling along the sidewalk beside the church then turning to crawl up the steps and into the building. She was wailing or chanting as she mourned the loss of a loved one, a war casualty I assumed. The school is now used by the church as a seminary for young women and men.

Externally, the school building looked about the same, though without the high fence, the barbed wire, and the guard towers. The courtyard where we exercised was being changed by construction of a building next door. That part of the courtyard behind the building seemed to be the same. John McCormick disrupted but entertained the class in the room overlooking the rear courtyard, by telling about the girls in an apartment facing that room. They used to write notes to the flyers and drop them to the ground via parachutes made from handkerchiefs. Those same girls used to tease the flyers by doing little dances near their apartment windows.

The wide hallways and stairs, the auditorium, and the dining room on the ground floor looked the most familiar to us. I could have gone right back to the alcove at the rear of the dining room and taken my place, though the tables now seat four rather than ten or more. They also use tablecloths and chairs, not bare wood and benches. My old room has been made into offices so I didn't get to see it.

May 9th is Romania's Independence Day, marking the uniting of Transylvania and Moldavia in 1859, and Germany's surrender to end WWII. While most of us were visiting the school, John Brown, Gordon Cormie, Russ Huntley, and a few others returned to the Tincabesti cemetery to take part in a special military ceremony. We noted wreaths of beautiful flowers were also placed at the Arch of Triumph in Bucharest.

Drastic changes have been made in the area where the garrison/hospital was located 50 years ago. Several attempts were made to find the exact spot, but without success. All of us felt sad for the flyers who had been there, but could not see how it looked 50 years later.

Lunch on Monday was at Hanul Manuc, a famous inn and restaurant. Wide balconies overlook the courtyard where dancing and other entertainment take place in the evenings. A rather famous treaty involving Bessarabia was signed in that courtyard in 1812 (?). Our luncheon partner was John McCormick with whom we had a really good visit.

We proceeded to Ceausescu's palace, renamed Palace of the Republic or Palace of the People. It seems beautiful to anyone not aware of how the country was savaged by the Ceausescus to build it. Our guide told us it has 608,000 square meters of floor space (150 acres), far more than the U.S. Pentagon. It is 13 stories (84 meters) high and has more than 600 rooms. The great hall was built for the sole purpose of framing the thrones on which the couple would sit when receiving foreign leaders. That hall is 240 x 90 feet and the 40 foot high ceiling is covered with gold leaf and pink gypsum. Huge chandeliers light the marble staircases. The five-ton chandelier over the main staircase consumes 85,000 watts. Prior to the December 1989 revolution, a network of tunnels was believed to exist below the palace. They were said to be fully equipped and ready for underground living. Large apartment houses near the palace were left vacant as a protective buffer, though long-range plans called for them to be fortified and lavishly furnished for Ceausescu loyalists.

We returned to Hotel Bucharest to prepare for our last dinner there. Shirley and I were delighted that Bill and Dot Werth were invited by Andreea to visit the flat where she lives with her husband, their little girl, and her husband's parents. With three bedrooms, two baths, kitchen, and living room, it is luxurious by Romanian standards, yet all four adults living there must work hard to make ends meet. The inflation of recent years has been devastating to people with savings in any form. At one time the exchange rate was nine lei for a U.S. dollar. During our visit, we could buy 1,655 lei for a dollar. Andreea's husband is a surgeon who has no choice but to work for the government, for the equivalent of \$30 per month, only 60% of her \$50 per month as a manager for the tourist agency. People on welfare in this great country of ours live like queens and kings compared to middle class Romanians.

*(Continued on page 30)*

*(Continued from page 29)*

Our last day of sightseeing promised to be as full as all the rest had been. We asked Andreea to arrange for a car with a driver to take John Lee, navigator for Bill Werth's bomb crew, Shirley and me to the villages northeast of Ploesti where John and I were captured in 1944. We could combine our trip because the villages were only ten or twelve kilometers apart. By 9:00 a.m. we were on our way with Virginia Mura in a Dacia, Romania's locally made and most popular car.

Decent maps are very difficult to find in Romania, apparently because of a general shortage of paper. We needed a better map to pinpoint the villages, so on our way through Ploesti, Virginia stopped at the tourist office to see what they might have. All they could find was their own office copy of an atlas. They tried to make a copy of the one page we needed, but neither their machine nor the one at the bank next door was working. They finally let us take their office atlas with the promise that we would return it on our way home that afternoon. This shows how kind and helpful everyone was during our visit.

As we traveled the rural roads toward Podenii Noi, John's point of capture, cars and trucks were mostly replaced by wagons and carts. Many of the wagon wheels are actually used auto wheels with inflated tires. One wagon was pulled by oxen, and I regret not getting a photo of it. A common practice in Romania is the grazing of cattle or other animals along the roads. A single milk cow with a collar and leash will have someone keeping her in check as she feeds along a road. There may be flocks of sheep or goats with a shepherd watching them. Many people were walking and some were working in their gardens. We saw very few lawns or lawn mowers in any of our travels. What we would use for lawns, they use for production of food -- gardens fill nearly all available space.

Geese with their goslings were in abundance around most of the homes. Electrical service to many of the homes in the villages was visible, but the water supply always seemed to be an open well, equipped with a bucket on a rope and a windlass to help in raising a full bucket. Each well would serve several homes. We did not see mail boxes or any evidence of mail

service.

In Podenii Noi, we stopped for John and our driver to speak to a man who appeared old enough to have lived there in 1944. He was an eager talker but not really helpful. I was interested in a group of children who came pouring out of the rear of one of the larger homes, evidently a school for that part of the village. We did not see any public school buildings like we take for granted here. We were told that seven years of schooling is provided, though not required. More education is planned but not yet feasible.

We continued to Apostolache near where I was captured. It has a large church and we decided that might be a source of helpful information. We drove up a winding road to get close and found several men working in the obviously very old church yard. The young man in charge invited us to look around and offered to phone the priest who was teaching a class at another location. My first impression was that the church was no longer in use because of its condition.

A very friendly priest, about half our ages, came driving up in his Dacia. He showed us around and served us cups of cool water. The church is still in use after 499 years! It is being renovated as funds become available. I said that I wanted to make a gift for that purpose, and was shown a drawer on the side of a podium where I could place my gift. I realized later that the priest did not want to touch the money.

We asked the priest's advice about finding someone that might have lived in that area in 1944. He offered to take us to see his 87 year old grandmother. We followed him to another part of the village to a tiny home. Although bedfast, she invited us in and shared memories of the seven children she had raised. Her home had a few bare electric lamps, but the entry room had a dirt floor. A wood-burning stove at the head of her bed appeared to provide heat and a small cooking surface. Thus, our search in Apostolache was rewarded with warm, friendly people rather than any specifics about flyers being captured there.

Virginia decided to take a different route back to Ploesti, and this led to an unscheduled adventure in the town of Urlati. We were nearly through the town

*(Continued on page 31)*

*(Continued from page 30)*

on a main street which intersected another heavily used street. Our driver and the driver of another Dacia, coming toward us at about 2:00 o'clock, both believed they had the right-of-way. The resulting collision would have been head-on except for last--instant swerving and braking. Both cars had battered hoods and front-end damage that disabled them. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured in either car. John Lee in the front passenger seat of our car was wearing his seat belt. We had no seat belts in the back seat, so Shirley bruised a shin and I bumped a knee. We waited patiently for the local police to come. Virginia found a phone and called the travel agency in Bucharest to have another car sent to pick us up. We all felt badly for her as she tried so hard to take good care of us.

Two young police officers came to investigate, to move the disabled cars out of the traffic flow, and escort us to their station. After a detailed report was typed and signed by the drivers, the other driver was very irate. He must have felt our driver was given an underserved break of some kind. He didn't seem to be angry at us, and had no reason to be. He finally vented his wrath and went on his way.

We waited another hour before our new ride arrived from Bucharest. John found some candy bars and a liter of coke to serve as our lunch. We found one or two of the police officers could speak a bit of English. They were delighted to show us their thriving garden planted around the station. Our accident probably provided them the most excitement they had had in a month. Our new driver and car rushed us back to Bucharest just in time to change clothes and board the bus for the events of our final evening. Virginia stayed in Urlati to arrange for the repair or return of her car.

We were entertained the last evening by the Romanian Association of War Veterans, first with a press conference. A receiving line at the entrance to a large hall greeted us individually. Each lady received a bow, a kiss on the hand, and a long-stemmed flower. We were escorted to tables for two, arranged around the circumference of the hall, and facing the center. Each position at the tables had a demitasse (strong black coffee) and a glass of red wine. Both

were at room temperature by the time the press conference was convened. An official of the Vets Association read a several page statement, interpreted line-by-line by Aura, a young woman who had been with us on an earlier local tour. Russ Huntley briefly responded for us. Then media reporters had a chance to ask questions. We do not know how this information was used as we left for the airport early the next morning.

We reboarded the bus for a short ride to the beautiful building used by the Romanian Veterans for their many activities. Tables were set up banquet style for our farewell dinner. We were seated across from their veterans and were all soon having a fine time. Meaningful conversation was inhibited by the language barrier, but we all tried. One of their retired generals proposed several toasts, and, of course, someone in our group responded. Each of our group was given three lapel pins. One of their former flyers gave Bill Werth a small set of pilot wings, a very personal gesture. Our meal consisted of several courses, accompanied by wine, and ending with a dessert of crepes. I never met a dessert I didn't like, including those in Romania, though we were never served ice cream. Refrigeration and ice or ice cream are seldom experienced there. Most food and drinks are served at room temperature, regardless of how they were prepared. They do save energy that way. Our dinner complete, we thanked our gracious hosts and departed for our hotel.

Breakfast was served to us in our rooms, to assist in our 6:00 a.m. departure for the airport. Andreea, John Brown, "Greek", the Professor, and the Colonel, our faithful companions and leaders for the previous six days, were all present to bid us farewell. We will be indebted to them forever for showing us a grand time in a historic but struggling country.

We visited among our group of 23 during the long flight back to NYC. We felt quite close to each other after sharing so many experiences during the past week. With our feet firmly on U.S. soil again, Shirley and I said goodbye to all except Russ and Charlotte Huntley, who continued to Atlanta on the same flight. We arrived at our home in Tucker almost exactly 24 hours after our wake-up call in Bucharest.

# Frank O'Bannon

Frank O'Bannon was buried on 19 April 2008 at 11am at George Washington Memorial Park Cemetery, Plymouth Meeting, PA (just outside Philadelphia). It was a simple graveside burial.

Thanks,  
Barbara O'Bannon



Thanks for letting us know. We can at least send a card or acknowledge it in some way.

Lillian Howdy



Another Great American Hero laid to rest.

Thanks,  
Lorn Westfall



Thank you for letting us know...Had this service been taking place in Arlington or someplace where any one of our family was close enough and could represent us, I feel that they would have been there...out of respect for Clark's father who was in the 461st and to honor this gentleman though we did not personally know him. We seem to always be so far away and unable to physically be there living here in Tampa though our hearts are most certainly with the families of those who served. Clark and I are of course very saddened to learn of the loss of another great American.

Beverly Rogers  
(Mrs. Craven Clark Rogers, Jr.)



Please accept my sympathy,

Paul Hartal



Although Frank and I were not contemporaries in Italy, we had some very nice correspondence in later years and a good visit at one of the reunions. Comrades in arms have a special relationship, and he will be sorely missed.

Vahl Vladyka



My condolences on the loss of Frank O'Bannon and my Prayers go out to his Family and Loved ones.

John C. BonTempo, Lt. Col. USAF Ret.



Barbara O'Bannon - I was a 461st BG pilot late in the war, but have read many articles over the years by Mr. O'Bannon and am aware of his commitment to the history of the outfit. You can be justly proud of him - what he did was to provide a memorial to a lot of good guys that didn't come back.

In Sympathy,  
Guyon Phillips



Thanks for the notice on Frank's funeral. I had met him on more than one occasion. Fine Man.

Stan Staples



# Fire Lecture

(to be given to students prior to first flight as part of first airmanship lecture)

## General

Fire can be one of the more serious hazards of flight. However, all airplanes are equipped with apparatus for fighting fire and in many instances, prompt action by members of the crew can remove the danger to life and limb as well as save a highly valuable airship.

## Duties of Crew

Though fire is a rare hazard, it is the individual responsibility of each member of the crew to know what to do when fire breaks out and above all, to do it promptly. Equipment provided is adequate only when the fire is discovered early and equipment put into use immediately.

All air crewmembers upon being assigned to an airplane should at once familiarize themselves with the location and type of fire fighting equipment installed in the craft.

First important consideration upon discovery of fire in flight is – “Do we abandon the aircraft, or fight the fire?” Here the decision rests with the pilot, and other members of the crew follow out his instructions remembering that speed and coolness of action are paramount.

## Types of Fires

Fires in flight fall into three general categories – engine fires, fuselage or wing fires and cabin fires. The first two are under the pilot’s and co-pilot’s jurisdiction while the latter falls to other members of the crew.

Engine fires are controlled by extinguishers installed in the engines. They are

operated from the cockpit. The pilot turns a selector switch to the proper engine and pulls a handle labeled “fire”. This causes carbon dioxide to be released in the engine housing and will normally smother the flames. At the same time the pilot cuts off the fuel supply to that engine and decides whether or not to land the aircraft.

In case of wing fire, the pilot will alert the crew to “abandon ship” and then try to extinguish the blaze by side-slipping. If this method is ineffective, the crew will be ordered to abandon ship.

Cabin fires will be reported at once to the ship’s pilot. Crewmembers will seize upon available fire fighting equipment and try to extinguish the blaze.

Prompt action here may mean an airplane saved.

## Types and Proper Use of Fire Extinguishers

Airplane fire extinguishers are of two types – carbon dioxide and carbon tetrachloride. In using either type, close all windows and ventilators. Aim at the base of the fire and turn on the extinguisher.

As soon as the fire is extinguished, open the ventilators and windows again. This last step is particularly necessary when using carbon tetrachloride for this is a volatile fluid and will form gases. These gases act as an anesthetic, causing drowsiness, dizziness, headache, excitement, anesthesia and sleep.

The hand-type carbon dioxide extinguisher is supplied in some heavier airplanes and is particularly effective in combating gasoline and oil fires. If fabric, wood, etc., are involved, the carbon tetrachloride extinguishers should be used with the carbon dioxide type.

*(Continued on page 34)*

(Continued from page 33)

### Precautions

When using the portable type of carbon dioxide extinguisher, avoid contact with the horn or the chemical itself as carbon dioxide burns at a low temperature and may cause burns.

Carbon tetrachloride is poisonous if taken internally, the reaction coming several days after the fluid is taken into the mouth. Anyone who ingests some of this fluid should report to the flight surgeon as soon as possible. Caution is advised in handling this type of extinguisher. When operating it, stand as far from the fire as possible to avoid fumes and avoid, at all cost, swallowing any of the fluid.

### Fire Equipment for Cabin Fires in the AT-18A and AT-7 Aircraft

The AT-18A aircraft is equipped with both types of fire extinguishers. The carbon tetrachloride extinguisher is located behind and slightly to the right of the pilot's seat. It is used for cabin and cockpit fires. The carbon dioxide extinguisher is located to the right of the door and is available for a member of the crew to stand-by during starting of the engines.

The AT-7 aircraft is equipped with one carbon tetrachloride extinguisher of the commercial type located just inside the door on the right.

## Willow Run's Glory Days

By  
LeRoy Duke

During WWII, the Ypsilanti factory became a worldwide symbol of American industrial might. To get it built, Charlie Sorensen had to overcome red tape from Washington, skepticism from the aircraft industry, and his own quixotic boss, Henry Ford.

Ann Arbor High senior Don Exinger spent the summer of 1941 on a farm east of Ypsilanti, named Camp Willow Run, after the creek that wound through its woods and gently rolling fields. It belonged to auto pioneer Henry Ford. Ford was determined to instill his own work ethic in the teenaged campers: they slept in army tents and were roused at 5:30 a.m. to attend church services before breakfast and a hard day's work in the fields.

But even as Exinger's group planted and reaped, bulldozers were leveling Camp Willow Run's woodlot. By the next summer, the first of a corps of 50,000 factory workers were crowding out Ford's youthful campers. Two years after that, new B-24 Liberator bombers were pouring out of the Ford Willow Run

plant at the rate of one each hour, headed for battle in the European or Pacific theaters.

Then, almost as quickly as it began, it was over: fifty years ago, on June 24, 1945, the farm-turned-factory completed its last bomber and halted production.

At the outbreak of WWII, Henry Ford was an elderly unpredictable man riddled with contradictions. Decades earlier he had been far ahead of his time in paying workers at the unheard-of rate of \$5 a day. Now he was threatening to close down Ford Motor Company rather than accept worker's efforts to unionize. He was often spiteful toward his only son, Edsel, although he doted on his four grandchildren. At first loathe to build weapons for a conflict he believed to be driven by moneyed interests, he ended up as one of WWII's most prolific arms makers.

Ford abandoned his stand against the war when the Nazis swarmed across Europe in May 1940. But at

(Continued on page 35)

*(Continued from page 34)*

first he insisted his weapons be used only to defend the United States. In June, he vetoed a contract Edsel had negotiated to manufacture Rolls-Royce aircraft engines under license, because most of the engines were destined for England. A few months later, the elder Ford accepted a contract to build 4,000 Pratt & Whitney engines for U.S. aircraft.

In January 1941, Ford executives were invited to visit Consolidated Aircraft in San Diego, California, in the hope that the company might expand its involvement in aircraft production. Henry Ford had made it clear that he wasn't interested in collaborating with any aviation company, but Edsel made the fateful journey anyway, accompanied by Ford manufacturing boss Charles Sorensen.

Sorensen had begun his Ford career in 1905 as a \$3-a-day pattern maker. The Danish immigrant was Hollywood-handsome, with a commanding presence, piercing blue eyes, and swept-back blond hair. Associates admired his quick mind as much as they feared his hot temper. Though little known compared to his publicity-hungry boss, Sorensen was Ford Motor Company's top manufacturing expert.

The Ford executives were polite to their hosts, but Sorensen in particular was unimpressed by the methods Consolidated was using to produce its B-24 Liberator bomber. There were no blueprints accurate measuring tools. Major components were custom fit, so each plane was different from the next. Final assembly took place outside in the California sun. In his memoirs Sorensen observed sourly, "What I saw reminded me of the way we built cars at Ford 35 years earlier.

Sorensen knew that the assembly line method he had perfected in building more than thirty million Ford automobiles could easily eclipse Consolidated's modest goal of one airplane per day. When asked how he would manufacture the B-24, Sorensen replied confidently, "I'll have something for you tomorrow morning."

He wasn't kidding. He sequestered himself in his Coronado Hotel room, and by 4 a.m. the next day, he had sketched out the plan that became Willow Run.

Working solely from figures he carried in his head, Sorensen estimated that it would take 100,000 workers and a \$200 million plant to meet his goal of delivering one finished airplane every hour.

Over breakfast the next morning, Edsel Ford pledged his full support for Sorensen's bold stroke. George Mead, the government's director of procurement, was delighted, but Major Reuben Fleet, Consolidated's president, wasn't convinced. His counteroffer: a contract for Ford to build just 1,000 wing sections. Sorensen flatly replied, "We'll make the complete airplane or nothing."

Back home in Dearborn, Sorensen explained his scheme to Henry Ford. First he got an antiwar lecture, then a diatribe on how General Motors, the DuPonts, and President Roosevelt were conspiring to drag the country into war and take over Ford's business. But in the end the cranky Henry agreed to the plan.

With little more than a letter of intent from the government, an army of Ford laborers set to work in a frenzy. Late in March 1941, 300 men with saws, axes, and bulldozers attacked the 100-acre woodlot where the plant would be situated. A steam-powered sawmill was brought in from Greenfield Village, Henry Ford's outdoor museum, to convert the felled trees to 400,000 board feet of lumber.

The fields were cleared for construction of the plant, designed by renowned Detroit architect Albert Kahn. Tool designers and other engineers were dispatched to San Diego to learn everything they could about building B-24's. Tool and die maker Martin Chapin traveled to San Diego with the first wave of 240 Ford personnel. "Consolidated had built and assembled aircraft for generations, and they thought our innovations were sacrilegious," he recalls. "They built airplanes with plumb bobs and levels, while we were used to sophisticated fixtures and gauges."

Ford engineers were particularly amazed by Consolidated's design of the landing-gear pivot. It was assembled out of half a dozen pieces of steel, a couple of large tubes, and some flat plates, all held together

*(Continued on page 36)*

*(Continued from page 35)*

by nearly a hundred welds, each of which had to be X-rayed. Back in Dearborn, the inevitable conclusion was that Consolidated had never engineered the B-24 for high-volume production. Ford engineers reduced the landing-gear pivot to just three large castings.

Nine hundred men and women worked night and day seven days a week to design the critical tooling. More than 30,000 metal stamping dies – equivalent to eight or nine car model changeovers were ultimately required to manufacture the bomber's 1,225,000 parts.

On April 18, 1941, five weeks after receiving an initial \$3.4 million contract to build B-24 subassemblies, Ford broke ground for the plant. It was dedicated less than two months later, shortly before Henry Ford finally consented to the very first contract between the United Auto Workers and the Ford Motor Company. The last load of concrete for the adjoining mile-square airport was poured on December 4, three days before Pearly Harbor.

The harsh spotlights of publicity now shone on Willow Run. The sheer size of the facility was daunting. In his journal, Charles Lindbergh called Willow Run "A Grand Canyon of the mechanized world". With 2.5 million square feet of usable floor space, Willow Run had more aircraft manufacturing area than Consolidated, Douglas, and Boeing combined. The press extolled the sheer size of the undertaking without understanding that Willow Run still had to be equipped with effective tools and a functioning workforce. Production began in November 1941, but ten months passed before the first B-24 rolled off the mile-long assembly line. People began calling the plant "Willit Run?" prompting Senator Harry Truman to undertake a special investigation. According to a May 1943 article in *Flying Magazine*, "The Truman Committee, which came to Detroit with blood in its eye, felt better after touring the plant and talking to Ford officials, and left with the pronouncement that "Willow Run compares favorably with any other airplane plant in the country as far as actual production work is concerned – and we have seen them all."

Ted Heusel, then a teenager working in plant protection at Willow Run, remembers getting a call on Sunday morning from his boss, the infamous Harry Bennett, to help shepherd the Truman Committee around the factory. Ordinarily, Heusel's job was to listen in on phone calls made from the plant to watch for possible security leaks. The future WAAM radio host was just one of many Ann Arborites who found jobs at the plant. Based on interviews with people who lived in Ann Arbor during the war, it seems that anyone who didn't work at Willow Run himself or herself had a friend or family member who did.

Warren Staebler's uncle, Herman Staebler, co-owned the Pontiac dealership, but with car production halted for the duration of the war, he took an office job at Willow Run. Steve Filipiak, retired manager of WHRV (WAAM's forerunner), ran the factory's internal radio station, playing music, interviewing Truman and other distinguished visitors, and selling war bonds. Attorney John Hathaway remembers that almost everyone in his family worked at the plant. His sister Betsy was a long distance telephone operator in Harry Bennett's office. She sometimes drove to work with Ted Heusel. Hathaway's other sister, Mary, inspected hydraulic tubing, while her husband, Ned, worked in shipping and receiving. Hathaway's mother, Lucile Hathaway, identified and inventoried tools. "At Miller's Dairy Store, I had been working for 35 cents per hour," she wrote in an unpublished memoir. "When I drew my first pay at Willow Run I nearly fainted. We were working 9 hours per day and all day Saturday so that my pay at \$1.10 per hour was really staggering."

In all, more than 10,000 women worked at Willow Run. Anne Morrow Lindbergh lived in Bloomfield Hills while her husband, Charles, was helping Ford develop the planes. (Opinions differ on whether he was merely window dressing or an important advisor, but many report having seen him at the plant.) After a tour of Willow Run, Anne wrote in her diary, "One noticed chiefly the size, and the number of women working (they all looked like housewives – quite ordinary middle western housewives – not a new breed of 'modern women', as I had expected....)"

*(Continued on page 37)*

*(Continued from page 36)*

Flora Meyers worked first in fingerprinting (another wartime security measure) and then on the telephones – for instance, she'd call cleanup people when there were accidental spills. Johanna Wiese, retired assistant dean of the U-M School of Nursing, worked as a librarian in the Ford Airplane School, where new workers learned such skills as riveting. Betty Walters Robinson, although trained as a beautician, found herself working as a carpenter at Willow Run, hammering lids onto waterproof boxes that held replacement parts to be shipped to air bases all over the world.

Workers flooded in from all forty-eight states, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Canada, and Latin America. John Hathaway, who bought his house from shoe store-owners Fred and Gertrude Smith, remembers them saying that some of their customers had never worn shoes before and had to be taught how to walk in them. The late Art Schlenderer remembered bomber plant workers, many of them enjoying real money for the first time in their lives, coming to his jewelry store and making extravagant purchases, like diamond-studded watches. Helen Mast, who was in the service, sold hard-toes protective shoes to many women who worked at the plant.

By early 1942 there were no rental rooms to be found within a fifteen-mile radius of Willow Run. Resourceful landlords often collected double or triple rent for rooms – while one tenant worked, the other slept. Many larger single-family homes in Ann Arbor were divided into rental rooms or apartments during this time. Warren Staebler's parents, Dora and Albert, rented a room to a Willow Run control tower operator. Fritz and Bertha Metzger, owners of the German Inn on Huron, rented rooms to four or five lucky people who for \$11 a week got not only a bed but meals at the German Inn.

At first Henry Ford balked at building housing for Willow Run workers, but under federal pressure he finally relented. Guy Larcom, later Ann Arbor's city manager, came to Willow Run to work for the Public Housing Administration. The PHA erected an entire town – Willow Village – almost overnight, with dormitories for single workers and small houses for families. The first set of fifteen buildings accommo-

dating 3,000 people, opened early in 1943. A mobile home park that followed was promptly jammed with 1,000 trailer homes. Ramshackle prefab houses rolled in by the truckload. They were loaded with the floor sections on top and roofs on the bottom, and as a crane lifted the pieces off, workers nailed them up in speedy succession. Each house had a crude coal stove, and residents had to get by with iceboxes instead of refrigerators. They were the lucky ones – many workers lived in converted gas stations, shacks, or tents. By the end of 1943, when 42,331 employees worked at the plant, Willow Village was providing temporary shelter for 15,000 – a population greater than the city of Ypsilanti.

Gradually Willow Run's production numbers began to mount – from a net output of fifty-six airplanes for all of 1942 (most of them assembled by Consolidated and Douglas, in Oklahoma and Texas) to thirty-one airplanes in January 1943 and 190 in June. By March 1944 – shortly after Charlie Sorensen was pressured into resigning from Ford in a power struggle – Willow Run realized his dream, producing 453 airplanes in 468 working hours. Willow Run's output nearly equaled the entire airplane production of Japan that year. Ford's efficient assembly line methods led to a remarkable drop in the delivered price of a B-24 – from \$238,000 in 1942 to \$137,000 in 1944. In all, 8,685 B-24's were built at Willow Run before the last contract expired in June 1945 – including 1,894 knocked-down kits to other plants for assembly.

After the war ended, Ford chose not to exercise its option to buy Willow Run from the government. The airport served as southeast Michigan's main passenger airport until the late 1950's when all the main carriers moved to Detroit Metro. The plant was sold to Kaiser-Fraser for production of automobiles (and later, of C-119 cargo planes). General Motors acquired the facility in 1953 after fire ravaged its Hydra-Matic transmission plant in Livonia. After a frantic twelve-week conversion, GM began making automatic transmissions at Willow Run and continues making them to this day. Some of the overhead cranes and hanger doors installed by Ford more than fifty years ago are still in regular use.

## 461<sup>st</sup> Group Mission #55

(5 July, 1944)

(Crew #35, BTG Ed Stevenson & Radio O. Louis F. Duchinsky)

This is a sidelight as to some of the experiences that could happen on a so called milk run.

After visiting such well defended targets as Weiner Neustadt and Ploesti, on July 5, 1944, we were delighted to be going to the lightly defended target of Beziers Marshalling Yard, France. As described in our list of missions, we were attempting to hamper the movement of two German divisions from Southwest France to the fighting front in Normandy. We had good weather, no fighters, and no flak.

All was well and good except before the target we started having engine trouble. The turbocharger went out on one engine and we had to drop out of the formation. It was not too uncommon to have engine trouble on at least one engine of the four on a B-24, and most of the time with some loss of full power. We salvoed our bomb load on a mountain in Northern France. Heading back to Cerignola we started having trouble with another engine. We were back over the Mediterranean and could see the island of Corsica.

We were losing altitude to maintain air speed and we were now out of formation and alone. We were down to about 10,000 feet and heard something that sounded like flak. Down on the ocean surface, we spotted a submarine firing at us. After a couple of rounds, we were out of range. They were not even close.

With only two good engines, we were still losing altitude, and Lt. Grimm decided we would try to make an emergency landing on the Island of Corsica, which was now held by our Allies and the British had some Spitfire fighter bases there and the Air Transport Command had a base at Borgo. We had lost so much altitude that it did not appear we could make it over the mountains to where landing fields were. Lt. Grimm saw a "saddleback" between two mountain peaks, and we flew thru a few feet above the trees. We first tried to land on the ATC base but

some fighters were taking off and they would not give us permission to land. Dutch shot the entire supply of flares to signal our emergency but they still would not give us permission to land. We circled around and finally spotted a Spitfire landing strip. We sat down between four fighters that were taking off and did not even interrupt their take-off plan. Landing on a short Spitfire strip was a new experience in a B-24, but for an experienced pilot like Lt. Grimm, it was no big deal. He made a good landing as usual but had to use all breaking power possible.

Having had to make an emergency landing while on a mission, we did not have any personal belongings such as billfolds and money. The town of Bastia was near by and we wanted to go in to town but it was no use to go without money. We, the six enlisted men, decided to break open an "Escape Kit" which we had heard contained some American money. It contained 39 one dollar bills. American money was in much demand and we were able to trade at the rate of one for nine, so we had a handful of Corsican Francs. I still have some I kept as souvenirs.

In Bastia the cognac and vino was plentiful and we soon were feeling pretty good, but back at the base where we landed, Lt. Grimm was not too pleased and had a few unkind words for us. I responded with an outburst and by all rights should have been kicked off the crew at that time, but considering the situation and our experiences together, he did not.

Col. Glantzberg had to make a visit to the Island of Sicily and in order to keep our crew flying, came by the island of Corsica, in a B-24, and picked up our crew of ten men. Col. Glantzberg, being the experienced and skillful pilot that he was, had no trouble landing or taking off on the very short Spitfire strip. He picked us up and took us by Sicily and on back to our base in Italy.

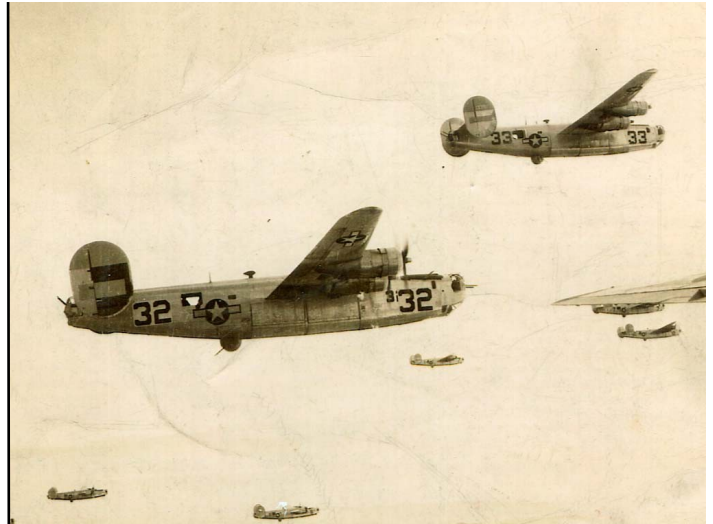
It was reported to us later that the new pilot sent to Corsica to pick up our B-24, after two new engines had been installed, lost an engine on takeoff from the short airstrip and on trying to land at Rome, crashed and the whole crew was killed. This was never confirmed. That was the last of our old B-24H that we had picked at the Consolidated factory in San Diego,

*(Continued on page 39)*

(Continued from page 38)

that had nose art "GRIMM'S GREMLINS, INC. painted on the nose and No. 35 on the fuselage and flew overseas by way of South America and Africa. Our Crew No. 35 was one of the original crews that made up the 765<sup>th</sup> Squadron of the 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group. The best I remember, old no. 35 had over 30 missions when we lost her.

This "Milk Run" was rather long, it was several days before we were back at our base and flying missions again but we were not too anxious to return because we knew there were more tough missions to come.



### MILITARY WISDOM

'Tracers work both ways.' - U.S. Army Ordnance

'Five second fuses only last three seconds.' - Infantry Journal

'Any ship can be a minesweeper. Once.'

'Never tell the Platoon Sergeant you have nothing

to do.' - Unknown Marine Recruit

If you see a bomb technician running, follow him.' - USAF Ammo Troop

'The only time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire.'

## A SIGHTSEEING TOUR

After an uneventful two weeks for our crew, we were sent up on February 14<sup>th</sup> for instrument flying practice. In addition to those required for this jaunt, all the remainder of my crew, like the postman who took a walk on his day off, elected to go along for the ride.

After a couple of hours under the hood, shared with my co-pilot, John R. ("Mac") McDonald, we decided to go sightseeing. We all recalled the spectacular photo on the cover of a 1944 Life Magazine of 4190-foot Mount Vesuvius in eruption, so we decided on that site for our first flyover. After a few turns over and around the crater that buried Pompeii in 79 A.D., we flew along the southwesterly slopes of the Apennines to Rome, some 125 miles distant, where we first circled the Vatican City, then the Coliseum, and finally the Pantheon, all at about 1,500 feet above ground level.

Our final flyover was the battlefield at Monte Cassino, where bomb and shell craters on the slopes and surrounding valley astounded us. Someone on the intercom likened the sight to the top of a gigantic pepper can. The ancient abbey was in ruins — bombed, we learned many years later, in the mistaken belief it sheltered German army forces. According to the websites, the abbey treasures had been moved to Rome before the bombardment. One website puts the bombs dropped at over 370,000 kg's, roughly the equivalent of more than 1,600 five-hundred pound bombs.

Mac's diary notes that it was a "Cook's Tour" he would long remember, and time has proved him right, for 61 years later it is still vivid in my memory.

Vahl Vladyka

January 18, 2006



## 461<sup>ST</sup> BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

P.O. Box 926  
Gunnison, CO 81230

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



We're on the web!  
Visit  
**[www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org)**

## Webmaster Comments

I did it! I just hope I haven't bitten off more than I can chew. What have I done? Well, let me give a little explanation first. One of the things that has bothered me for some time is the lack of information about the overall Fifteenth Air Force. Yes, there's been some information on our website, but the main focus of our website has been the 461<sup>st</sup>, not the other organizations making up the Fifteenth Air Force. And yes, some of the other organizations do have their own websites, but getting the overall picture of the Fifteenth Air Force and access to the individual organizations within it has been difficult. To solve this problem, I created a new website ([www.15thaf.org](http://www.15thaf.org)) that brings the whole organization together in one place. Where appropriate, I've put in links to the websites already done. I'm offering space to any of the organizations that don't have their own website. The cost is minimal, but if someone wants to contribute to the maintenance of this new website, I would welcome donations.

With 10-gig of space for our website, the only constraint is the CDs I offer. A CD holds approximately 700-meg of data so I would like to hold the website to this limit. We are a long way from filling even this right now so send in your suggestions.

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

I want to maintain an accurate E-Mail list for members of the 461<sup>st</sup>. If you have Internet access, please take a few minutes to drop me a note to make sure I have your address.