



2024 FIFTEENTH ARMY AIR FORCE REUNION

SPEAKERS PROGRAM

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2024

Maj Gen David Lyons, Commander Fifteenth Air Force. At the time of this writing, it is believed that Gen Lyons will be at the opening welcome dinner and informational meeting to open the 2024 reunion and will address the reunion group then. (Accompanying Gen Lyons will be CMSgt Jeremy Unterseher, Fifteenth Air Force Command Chief Master Sergeant.)

Col Scott Mills, Commander 355th Wing of the Fifteenth Air Force, will open the reunion by welcoming the group to Tucson and outlining the mission of the 355th Wing and how it relates to the Fifteenth Air Force.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2024

Mr. John Mollison

John Mollison is an aviation artist, a self-described Edutainer and an enthusiastically prolific “history geek”, public speaker, producer and director of the internationally recognized, award winning series “Old Guys and Their Airplanes”. For much more information, visit www.JohnMollison.com.

Mr. Jerry Whiting

Jerry is a renowned author and historian for the 485th Bomb Group. He has authored *Of Broad Stripes and Bright Stars, Gallantry Over Bucharest, Missions By The Numbers, Don't Let The Blue Star Turn Gold, I'm Off To War, Mother, But I'll Be Back (co-author)*. The reunion welcomes Jerry back after a multi-year absence caring for and mourning the loss of his beloved wife.

Mr. James Peck

I represent a group setting up a new WWII memorial center on the island of Vis,

Croatia. There was an emergency airstrip there in 1944-1945 where many bombers landed or bailed out over when returning to their bases in Italy". Mr. Peck will describe the memorial center and what is being done to bring it to fruition. He will also talk about the importance of the island of Vis (pronounced VEESE) in providing an emergency airstrip for bombers returning from combat missions in various states of "disrepair".

The following is hair raising story from a Power Point presentation produced by Jim...

Daniel Driver, Navigator: *"We called Vis Tower and asked if we could land. They would not let us land as there was a plane stuck in the mud on the runway. They gave us the choice of bailing out over the island or going back to the coast of Italy [about 120 miles] and landing there. We elected to try and make the Italian coast. When we were approximately five minutes from the island of Vis at approximately 43N-16E, #3 engine ran out of gasoline. We then headed back to the island of Vis running all three engines off #4 fuel cell. When over the island of Vis, we bailed out at 4,000 feet. The coordinates when we bailed out were 43/02N-16/12E at approximately 1615 hours".* **Pilot Ed Vogel:** *"Shortly after [the order to bail out] Morris called me over the interphone and said the waist was clear, wished me luck and said he was bailing out. The men then started jumping out of the bomb bay. I remained at the controls until the rest of the men had jumped. As I left the ship, the two remaining engines stopped from lack of fuel. Morris [Radio Operator Morris Peck] did a wonderful job all the way back until we decided to leave the ship. We were in contact by radio at all times and it was he who supervised the jumping from that part of the ship. He called me just before he jumped and said he was the last one to leave the waist. I had more confidence in Morris than anyone on the crew, yet I had to marvel at his coolness in handling things. Even his last words were cheerful and showed no evidence of fear. He said '**Good luck Ed, see you downstairs.**' That was the first time he had called me 'Ed.'"*

- Seven bailed out over island of Vis & landed successfully
- Three went into the Adriatic Sea due to strong gale winds
 - Sgt Johnny Dicranian drowned in bay
 - Sgts. Morris Peck and Louis Garr bodies never recovered
- Searched for 6 months- officially designated KIA in 1948