

## 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Newsletter No. 5 November 2014



published by Winson Jones for the preservation of our 451<sup>st</sup> heritage. Printing and mailing of the Newsletter is funded solely by donation which should be mailed to: Winson Jones

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### 2014 OKLAHOMA CITY REUNION RECAP

First, a report on the 2014 Reunion held in September at Oklahoma City. Total attendance of more than 200 exceeded all expectations. We joined the 461<sup>st</sup> and 484<sup>th</sup> Bomb Groups (the other units of the 49<sup>th</sup> Wing) along with members of the 455<sup>th</sup> BG and other units. Our attendance totaled about 70 of which there were 12 WWII survivors. We were again honored to have Bobbi Kelly and her daughter, Karen with us. Bobbi is the only person to have attended all eighteen of the 451<sup>st</sup> Reunions held to date. We also were honored to have Gregory Riggs (Executive Director of the 455<sup>th</sup> BG) and Kim Hobbs (President of the 376<sup>th</sup> BG) with us. Attractively mounted Certificates of Appreciation were awarded to each of our WWII survivors present at the Reunion. Certificates also were presented to other attendees for their support of the 451<sup>st</sup> BG including:

Bobbi Kelly  
Jonathan Tudor  
Bill Brisendine

Karen Kelly  
Susan (Tudor) Prince  
Michael Smeltzer

Wilma Bennett  
Clay Keown  
Marsha Morris

Peter Polmen (age 96), Nathan McKinney (age 95) and Linn Newman (age 94), Sedge (Red) Hill and others well past ninety (all in attendance) provided continuing evidence of the Bomb Group's earlier determination and ability to successfully reach difficult targets in WWII. All in all the Joint Meeting of our various Air units went exceedingly well for all concerned. We greatly appreciated the good work and leadership provided by the members of the 461<sup>st</sup> and 484<sup>th</sup> Bomb Groups.

### 2015 REUNION

Mark your calendar! We will be holding our 2015 Reunion September 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> at Kansas City. Again we will be teaming up with the 461<sup>st</sup> BG and the 484<sup>th</sup> BG (the other Units in our 49<sup>th</sup> Wing) along with our good friends from the 455<sup>th</sup> BG and our new friends from the 465<sup>th</sup> BG. Additionally, Kim Hobbs and some of his associate members from the 376<sup>th</sup> BG may join with us. All in all, this should prove to be a truly historic meeting of the Fifteenth Air Force Units.

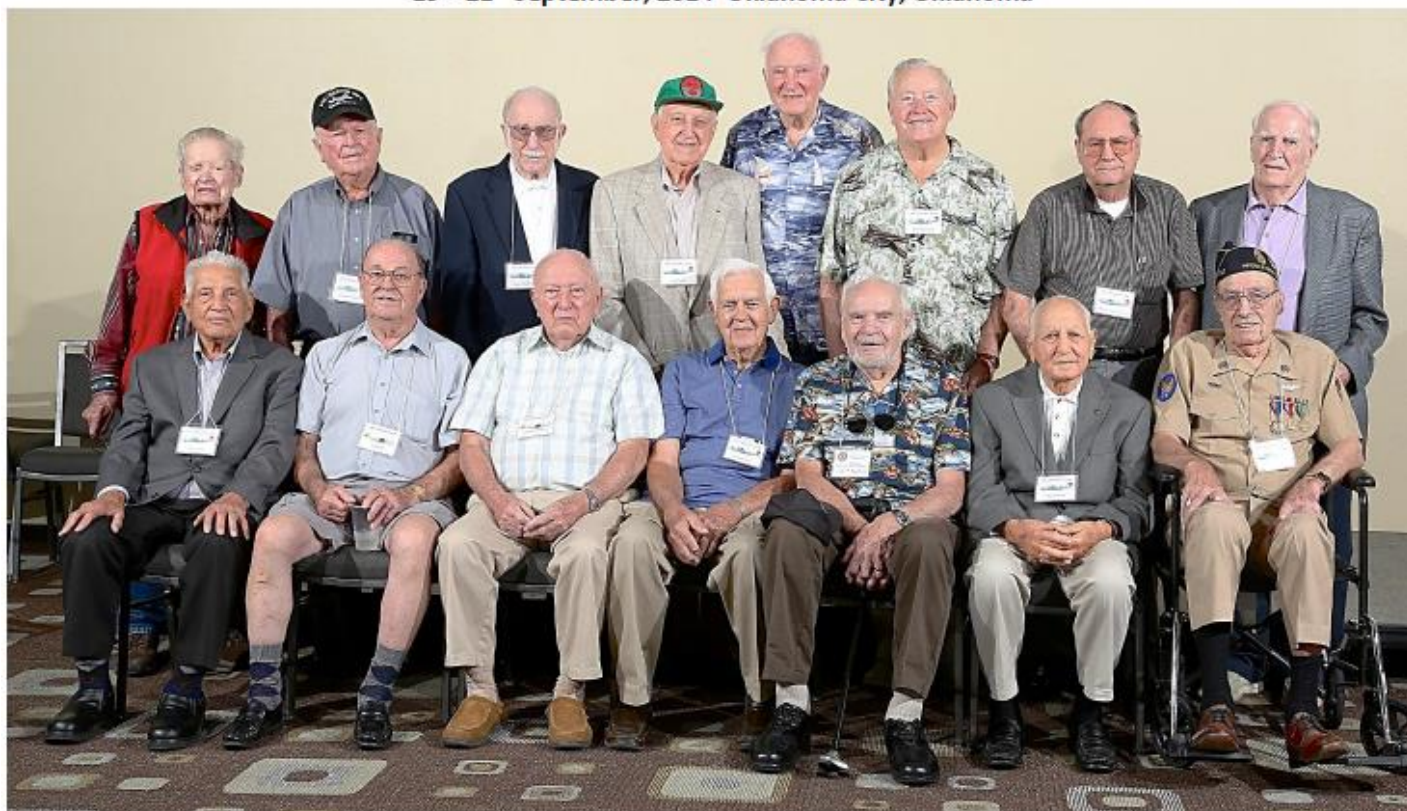
Preliminary information on this is available on our 2015 Reunion Website

<http://www.gordons.ws/reunion2015> which will be updated as the Program details are established. If you

don't use the computer and the Internet and you have an interest in attending the 2015 Reunion, just send me a note with your full address. I will send along a copy of the Program and Registration Forms as soon as available. Feel free to contact me regarding this at the address in the heading on the first page.

## 2014 SURVIVOR PICTURE

**Joint Reunion 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force Bomb Groups WWII  
19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> September, 2014 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**



**Row 1 (Seated Row (L to R)) – 1. Alex Garcia 451<sup>st</sup> BG 2. Tom Boyd 455<sup>th</sup> BG, 3. Ormond Buffington 455<sup>th</sup> BG, 4. Ed Longenecker 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 5. Louis Hoffman 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 6. Peter Polmen 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 7. Ed Van Benschoten 451<sup>st</sup> BG**

**Row 2 (L to R): 1. Jim Dooley 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 2. Nathan McKinney 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 3. Sedge Hill 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 4. Achi Kozakis 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 5. Carl Stracka 455<sup>th</sup> BG, 6. Win Jones 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 7. Richard Minor 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 8. Linn Newman 451<sup>st</sup> BG**

**Not Pictured: Milo Sanchez 451<sup>st</sup> BG**

## DISTRIBUTING THE NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL

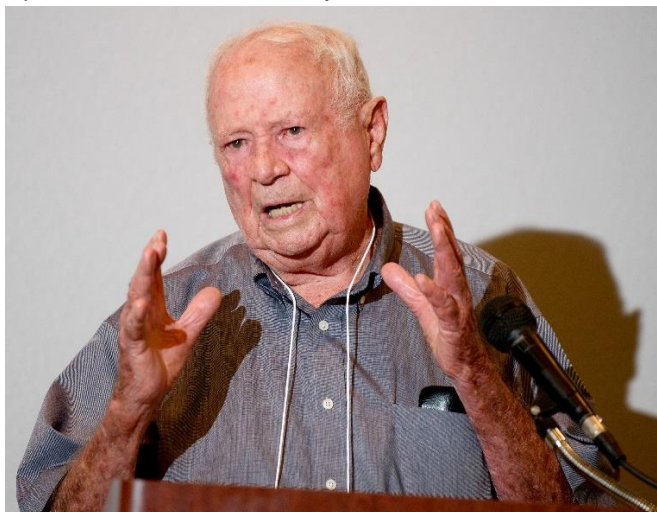
With the passage of time, more and more people are using E-mail as their primary communication vehicle. If you are receiving the newsletter in the mail and have an E-mail address, kindly send in your email to [winjones@comcast.net](mailto:winjones@comcast.net). This will serve to reduce the cost of distributing future Newsletters. Also if you are a WWII survivor, please let us know your duty position with the 451<sup>st</sup>.



## 2014 REUNION PROGRAM & SPEAKERS

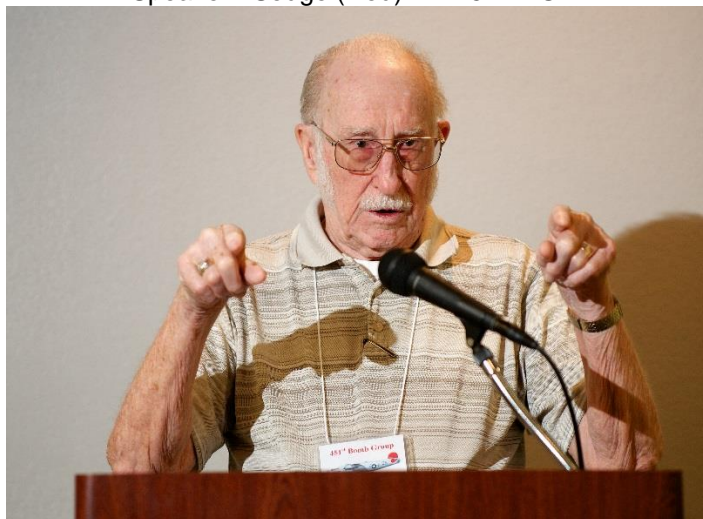
### Special Happenings

Speaker: Nathan McKinney, Line Chief 451<sup>st</sup> BG



### Getting the Planes Ready

Speaker: Sedge (Red) Hill 451<sup>st</sup> BG



### The Markersdorf Airdrome Mission

Speaker: Win Jones, Top Turret Gunner 451<sup>st</sup> BG



### Bailing Out – Evading Capture

Speaker: Thomas Boyd, Tail Gunner 455<sup>th</sup> BG



A Typical Day

Speaker: Alex Garcia, Office Staff 451<sup>st</sup> BG



Emergency Landing at VIS

Speaker: Richard Minor, Ball Turret Gunner, 451<sup>st</sup> BG



An Overview of the Air War

Speaker: Achi Kozakis, Nose Turret Gunner, 451<sup>st</sup> BG



Emergency Flight Operations

Speaker: Ormond Buffington, Flight Engineer 455<sup>th</sup> BG



451<sup>st</sup> History

Speaker: Mike Hill





## DONATIONS

Should you desire to honor a crewmate or family member, just make a memorial donation of \$50 or more. Please send along the full name and duty position of the person being honored. Memorials and other designated tributes recently received are as follows:

<u>Donor</u>	<u>In Tribute To</u>
Braverman, Shirley	George Braverman, Waist Gunner
Clancy, Paul T. Jr	Paul Clancy Sr., Line Mechanic
Elliott, Sallie (Eaton)	Colonel Robert E.L. Eaton
Esser, Karen	Harold Esser, Armaments
Hill, Sedgefield D.	Joseph F. Gard, Flight Engineer/Gunner
Hill, Sedgefield D.	David Eagles, Nose Turret Gunner
Jones, Jack (Little)	Robert Anderson, Pilot
Jones, Jack (Little)	Joe Naranjo, Nose Turret Gunner – Macks Crew
Jones, Jack (Little)	Crew 89, Pilots Hopkins, Massare, Brockett and Tedesco
Jones, Jack (Little)	Ernest W. Atkins, Flight Engineer/Gunner Crew 89
Jones, Jack (Little)	James E. Burns, Radio Operator/Gunner Crew 89
Kozakis, Achi	Harold S. Patterson Crew
Longenecker, Edward,	Dick Long, Pilot & Crew of Screamin Meemie
Prince, Susan (Tudor)	Captain George E. Tudor, Pilot
Yates, Jane H.	Robert M. Finehout
Zinn, Steven E.	Eli Zinn, Engineering Officer 727 <sup>th</sup> Squadron

Donations also have been received from the following since the May 2014 Newsletter:

Burlingame, William	Mason, Verne, H.	Miller, John B.	Robinson, Ron
Hipple, William F.	Mastracci, Cesareno J.	Nelson, Wesley F.	Tedesco, Frank L.
Latchaw, Arthur J.	McKinney, Nathan	Newman, Linn W.	Vogel, John R. Sr.

## LAST FLYBY

The following reflects the death notifications received since our May 2014 Newsletter:

<b>451<sup>st</sup> Member</b>	<b>Duty Position</b>	<b>DOD</b>
Crim, Hubert L. Sr.	Unknown	04.07.2014
Dix, William G.	Unknown	04.11.2014
Dupee, Merle E.	Tail or Ball Turret Gunner	04.27.2013
Hanson, Clarence A.	Unknown	10.06.2014
Lindblom, Andrew C.	Radar-Electronics Officer	09.00.2013
Miller, John F. (Jack)	Nose Turret Gunner	05.09.2014
Nelson, Lloyd	Radio Operator/Gunner	06.23.2013
Roberts, Robert Jr.	Unknown	Unknown

451 <sup>st</sup> Member	Duty Position	DOD
Saurin, Robert W. Sr.	Flight Engineer/Top Turret Gunner	04.06.2014
Small, Charles	Pilot (Small Fry)	05.02.2014
Tackes, Jerome M.	Ball Turret Gunner	03.12.2012
Williams, Leroy	Unknown	02.19.2014
Williams, Robert	Flight Engineer/Top Turret Gunner	04.06.2014
Zinn, Eli	Engineering Officer 727 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	06.24.2012

## THEN AND NOW

**Gerald E. Apple** of Leavenworth Indiana sends along his “hello”. Gerald was a pilot with the 724<sup>th</sup> Squadron – his tour of duty of 50 missions included seven trips to Ploesti! He still lives independently but his wife resides in a nursing home. He would enjoy hearing from anyone that might remember him. His number is 812.739.2638.

**Jack E. (Little) Jones** is still battling lung cancer. He would appreciate your help in identifying the following flyer. The Sgt. Gunner was a member of Lt. Compton’s Crew (727<sup>th</sup> Squadron) and he often would attempt to hypnotize people as something of a hobby. He was scheduled to fly the next day, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1945 and he stopped by our tent to tell us good-bye, saying he had a strong premonition he would not make it back. He showed no fear; it was like he had accepted his fate as he shook hands with each of us and told us good-bye. That was disturbing to us, and we all tried to assure him that he likely would make it back home, but his premonition was strong. The next day, Lt. Compton’s Crew was shot down over Linz, Austria, killing 6 of 10 crew members. “I don’t know if my friend survived or not. It haunts me that I can’t recall his name.” If anyone can provide any information on this, please call Jack at 225-766-0403.

## IT PAYS TO STAY IN FORMATION

A co-pilot of a B-17 flying out of England, Orson Pacey, was from Chalmers Indiana (also the hometown of Win Jones). On February 16, 1943 Pacey’s plane piloted by Lt. Dunnica elected to leave their Bomb Group Formation to go to the aid of a solo B-17 being attacked by a few ME-109s. While circling the damaged B-17 at about 10,000 feet over the English Channel, suddenly appeared fifteen additional ME-109s. Pacey’s B-17 was shot down and crashed in the cold icy water of the channel. Upon crashing the B-17 broke into parts.

Tail Gunner Sgt. Taylor went down in the tail section. Waist gunner S/Sgt. Dew was last seen floating in high waves. The pilot, Lt. Dunnica, failed to get out of the pilot’s window and went down with his B-17. Radio operator T/SGT. Holland had been shot and couldn’t exit the B-17. Lt. Pacey, T/Sgt. Tucker, and S/Sgt. Cascio escaped through the radio hatch and reached an inflated rubber dinghy. They spent about 14 hours in the dinghy, were strafed three times, flipped over many times in the high waves, and eventually reached the French coast near Brest in the darkness of early morning. They found a small shoreline hut and slept a short

time. At about 0600 they saw a French House in the distance, and headed towards it. The French family gave them coffee, bread, and a change of clothing and then asked the crewmen to leave since German soldiers were in the area. They were captured a few hours later and transported to a jail in Paris, then to Frankfurt, Germany and on to POW camps.

### THREE FEATHERS – Sidney Winski, Pilot - 726<sup>th</sup>

We were over the Caribbean, early December 1943, on our way to Africa. It was peaceful, when suddenly #1 tach started oscillating wildly, and we could hear the beat of a runaway prop. No big deal, when the rpm hit the red mark once then the next time went above the red mark I said, "feather #1." Morfit the co-pilot feathered #1. About that time #2 went wild, before we completed the feathering of #2, #3 prop ran away, we feathered #3. I remember my main concern was the props running away far past the maximum rpm and one would tear loose and damage the airplane. We were about at 10,000 ft. above the overcast with no land in sight. We broadcast a MAYDAY and prepared to ditch. Within a very short time our signal was picked up by an ADF station which gave us a heading to steer to make the island of Saint Lucia. We broke through the overcast maybe about 2,000 feet and spotted the island off on our left. Soon the runway came into view on the southern end of the island. I purposely made a high approach to be sure that I would not undershoot. When I was sure we would make the runway, we feathered the three engines but did not apply any power to them. After making a few "S" turns on final, to kill altitude, we made a normal power off landing.



"Three Feathers" a lady of some repute. She could be cantankerous to the point of wishing you'd never loved her. Then come right back with a ride so smooth that you wished that she was yours alone. One thing you can give her credit for, she was NO "lady of the nite" Capt. Winski, Lt. Morfit, Major Haltom and Capt. "Doc" Kremers (726th) remember her well.



**PLAN BAKER RED FORCE = A MISSION TO VIENNA by George Tudor, Pilot – 725<sup>th</sup>**

The target on this mission of October 7, 1944 was a group of oil refineries some four miles east of Vienna. The Germans by this time had been retreating steadily from the Balkan Countries, taking their anti-aircraft guns with them. At the briefing for this mission we were told they now had 1,000 to 1,200 guns defending Vienna, mostly 88 mm, with some of the larger caliber. We were soon to sample some of this firepower.

Our crew had been together for several months and none of us had received injuries of any kind until this mission. Bob Donovan was our Bombardier; Nate Firestone, Navigator; Ray Fisher, Radio Operator and Waist Gunner; Ted Gosinski, Top Turret; Harold Graham, Ball Turret; Gus Meissner, Co-pilot; Lin Miller, Flight Engineer and Waist Gunner; Dick Moreau, Nose Turret; Orville Richey, Tail Turret; and George Tudor, Pilot.



On this mission Gus Meissner flew with Jack Sirney, and Dave Gould our new 725<sup>th</sup> Squadron Commander flew co-pilot for us. Gould had been on one or two milk runs to Rimini, Italy, and he told me he would like to see a little more action. He did!

We were flying a 724<sup>th</sup> Squadron plane #69, named BURMA BOUND. It was a Mickey Ship or Pathfinder, equipped with very early primitive by today's standards – radar, with which significant ground features such as rivers, large lakes, cities, etc. could be seen well enough on the radar scope to determine our position so that relatively accurate bombing could be done, even though the ground was completely obscured by clouds.

Some of our problems began shortly after takeoff when two of four generators failed. We now had insufficient electrical power out-put to operate the radar equipment. This had no bearing on the success of the mission as the target area turned out to be almost entirely clear of clouds. More importantly, this loss of electric power meant we would have had only limited use of our gun turrets in case of enemy fighter attacks. Fortunately, no fighters were encountered on this mission.

At the start of the bomb run, anti-aircraft fire began immediately. It was intense and very accurate.

Within seconds, or so it seemed, a number of things happened. Dozens of pieces of shrapnel from anti-aircraft shells exploding close to us were penetrating the airplane like bullets. These metal shards were shredding the quilted lining, lining the walls of the cockpit, to such an extent the flight deck was full of pieces floating around like chicken feathers. I was flying the plane with my left hand, working the throttles with my right. My gloves had been cut several times by small pieces of flak, then a large piece of shrapnel buried itself in my left wrist, cutting all the tendons to my hand. This was followed by several more large pieces going into my left leg. I turned to Gould to say "Gould, you'll have to take over," but quickly saw that Gould was in much worse shape than I was!



A large piece of flak had almost severed his left hand at the wrist. He was holding that arm up trying to stop the flow of blood by squeezing the arm with his right hand. Blood was squirting toward the windshield as well as running down his arm.

When I next looked at him, this face was covered with blood, his oxygen mask was off and he had stuck the oxygen hose in his mouth. A piece of flak had completely severed his oxygen hose. He had the presence of mind enough to grab the hose with his right hand and put it in his mouth. Seconds later another large piece of flak hit him in the stomach penetrating his flak suit and cutting the skin. We had been in very heavy flak for at least 10 minutes.

Our bombs now had been dropped, but even before we reached the target the formation was breaking up. My impression at that point was seeing B-24s drifting around-some crossing our path, others heading away.

Now to assess the condition of the other crew members as well as damage to the plane. Our Mickey Operator had been hit in the hand and leg, our navigator in the face with fragments of Plexiglas in his eyes. We had to shut #4 engine down. The manifold pressure on #2 engine has dropped pressure indicating probable failure of the supercharger. We had no hydraulic pressure indicated. Some of the hydraulic plumbing had apparently been ruptured.

With the failure of the two generators shortly after takeoff we were left with little electrical power. Perhaps a blessing in disguise, since we were flying an airplane in imminent danger of blowing up. Our flight engineer came across the catwalk in the bomb bay to the flight deck to tell me that gasoline was pouring out of the left wing into the bomb bay "like it's coming out of a garden hose." The bomb bay doors were open. An 88mm shell had gone up through the left wing, puncturing the #2 fuel tank on the way through. Fortunately, the shell must have been a dud since it did not explode on impact. The flight engineer was able to transfer some of the fuel from the #2 tank but we lost most of it. He put this fuel into the #3 tank since the #3 engine was our only good engine. He then fed the #2 engine which was still running from the #4 tank, the #4 engine having been shut down.

Now we were returning home with three hours to go. We took care of Gould and the others the best way we could. A shot of morphine helped Gould. Mostly he wanted to smoke. His pack of Camels was on the throttle quadrant. With gasoline still coming out, no one could smoke. No one touched any controls, we just sat there. I don't remember anyone saying anything, no one used the intercom but Gould would occasionally point to his cigarettes.

On this plane, with the flight deck filled with radar components, the radio and the operator position were now over the bomb bay. Our radio operator, Ray Fisher, was back there with his heated suit plugged in. He said that with the gasoline coming back into the waist section he was afraid to turn the heated suit off. He sat there for a few minutes but couldn't stand to stay any longer, so he shut his eyes and jerked the plug out of the socket; then went back into the waist section.

The wind was carrying the gasoline like a white fog from the open bomb bays into the waist section and out the waist windows. He was so sure the plane was going to blow up at any minute, he had his chute on and sat in the open waist window so if it did it might blow him out of the plane. Based on our altitude over the target and the estimated time back to base, we could afford to sacrifice this altitude to gain more airspeed. Even so, we could not keep up with the group.

We weren't alone. Col. Green and Lt. Voll, two theater aces, flying P-51s, escorted us out of enemy territory. They flew so close to us we could count their kill markings painted on the fuselage of their planes. I especially remember Lt. Voll flying practically under our right wing.

Miller kept me continually posted on our remaining fuel. It became painfully clear we would not be able to make it all the way back to base. The best bet for us would be the Island of Vis, off the coast of Yugoslavia. That we were in need of immediate medical care concerned me lest, none being available there, but our nearly empty fuel tanks left us no other choice. This island, only a little more than ½ mile in diameter had only recently been captured from the Germans by British Commandoes.

I told the radio operator on Vis that we couldn't bail out; seven of us were wounded, we would have to land. Since our hydraulic system was damaged, we had no brakes, so chutes were tied to the waist gun mounts to help us stop after landing. Miller cranked the landing gear down manually, and we landed with no flaps. The sudden deceleration when Fisher and Miller pulled the chutes threw them to the floor. We swerved out around to the right side of the B-24 and stopped at the end of the strip. We estimated that we had, at most 10 minutes of fuel remaining. The British had a tent for a field hospital and two medical personnel. The medics were at the plane as we stopped and immediately administered shots of Sodium Pentothal which put us out instantly.

The crew members were given medical attention and patched up. They spent the next day, Sunday, with the Partisans on the island, who they said were a great bunch of people. On Sunday Eve, they left Vis by boat for Italy, landing at Bari.

Gould and I had emergency surgery by a British doctor and then were confined to bed in their hospital tent. The next morning he and I had a pleasant surprise. I could hardly believe it, but neither will I forget it. For here on this tiny out of the way island a man from the American Red Cross came to see us. He had packages for us. Kits containing personal necessities which had been put up in the states. Also candy bars, gum, cigarettes and writing material. This is what I remember when I hear disparaging remarks about the Red Cross.

Our return to Italy was delayed by bad weather, then finally he and I were put on a British torpedo gun boat and headed for Foggia. Our last thrill of this mission came when the boat caught fire half way to the mainland!

Gould was flown back to the states for surgery and I have never seen or heard from him since. I was sent back to the states on a hospital ship. We docked at Charleston, S.C., on Christmas Eve. I returned to active duty in



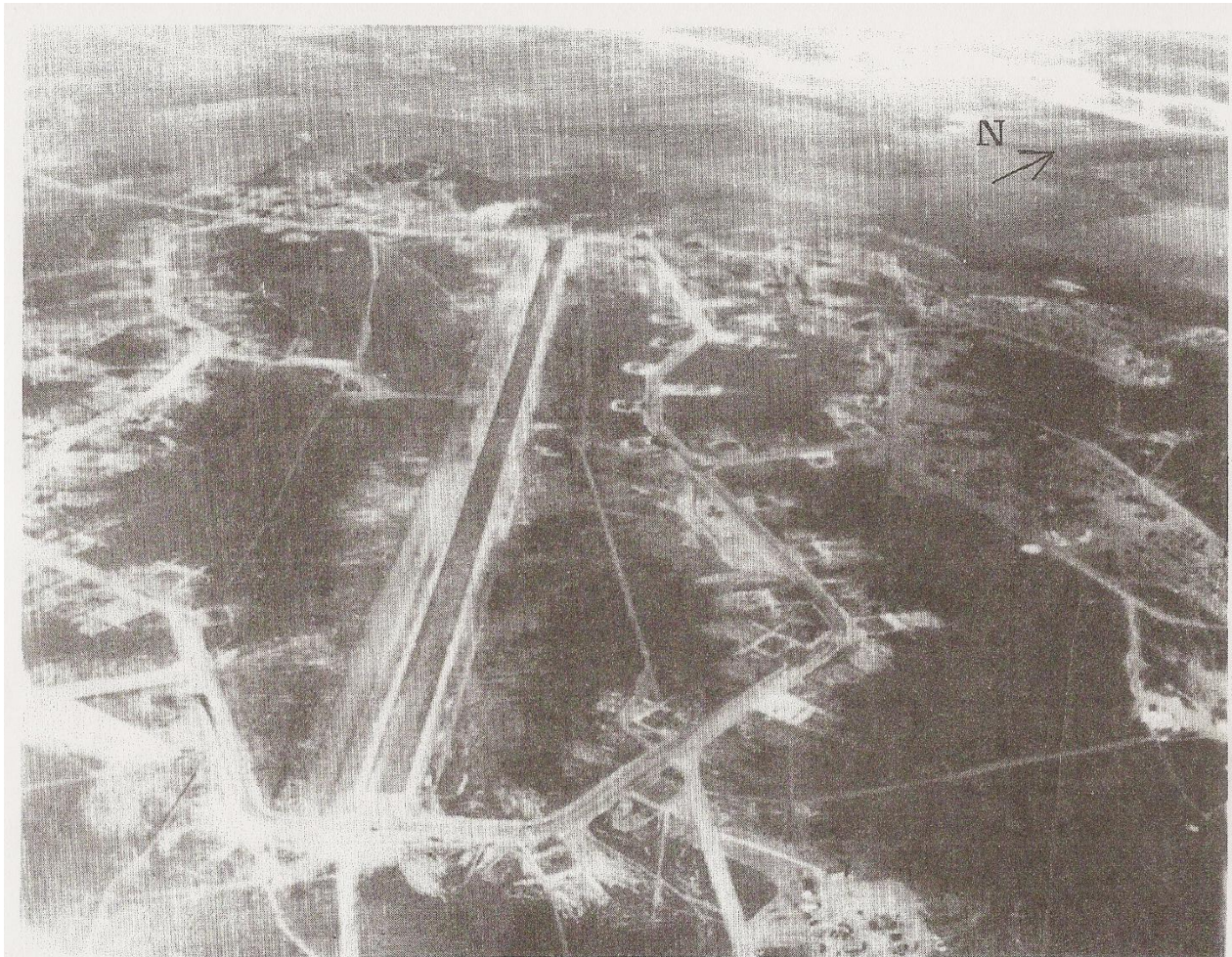
May of 1945. The other injured crewmen were returned to duty at the squadron. BURMA BOUND was eventually repaired and was on active status when hostilities ended in Europe.

This mission had been a costly one. The information I had was that some of our planes had fatalities on board. Two planes were lost over the target area, and most, if not all, had suffered flak damage to the extent that none of the planes returned to base, putting down at various fields along the return route.

Despite this, we had hit our target well, that was our mission, and we should be justly proud of our accomplishment on Saturday, October 7, 1944.

Epilog: Captain George Tudor was awarded the Silver Star and Staff Sgt. Lindley Miller was awarded the DFC for this mission.

### CASTELLUCCIO AIR BASE



Aerial view of Castelluccio Air Base. Top of picture (left of end of runway) lies the 727th Bomb. Sqdn. Clockwise, at far right, 726th and just below that lies the 725th Bomb. Sqdn. At extreme lower center would be the 724th Bomb. Sqdn. Group Headquarters would be still further below picture limit. (note aircraft on runway approaching tower standing 2/3 distance of length of runway---left side)



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