

Vol. II No. III

P.O. Box 15, March Air Force Base, California 92518

July 1983

Reunion Reunion Reunion

15th Air Force 40th Anniversary Program

Wed 9 Nov	Early Registration	
1300-1700	Early Registration (Req for all departing on Thur morning tours)	March AFB Rec Ctr
Thur 10 Nov	Registration - Tours - Golf Tournament - Welcome - Meet & Greet	
0800-1700	Registration - locator service - hospitality room.	March AFB Rec Ctr
0830-2000	Shopping Tour to Tijuana, Mexico. Christmas shopping bargains.	March AFB Rec Ctr
0900-1900	Los Angeles Tour and shopping. Ride the freeways in comfort.	March AFB Rec Ctr
0900-1800	Universal Studios Tour. The 15th visits Hollywood!	March AFB Rec Ctr
0900-1800	Southcoast Plaza Shopping Tour. Golf widows spend his bucks!	March AFB Rec Ctr
0930-1800	Tour to Disneyland. For children of all ages.	March AFB Rec Ctr
1000-1600	Tour to Glen Ivy Hot Springs and Spa. Indulge yourself.	March AFB Rec Ctr
1000-1800	Golf Tournament. 1000 check-in. 1100 shotgun start. Prizes, beer, food.	March AFB Rec Ctr
1830-1930	Cocktail mixer and words of welcome. Very informal.	March AFB Course
1930-?	Club Night. O'Club and NCO Club open for dinner and tall tales!	March AFB Rec Ctr
		March AFB Clubs
Fri 11 Nov	Annual Meeting - Memorial Service - Tours - Dinner Dance	
0830-1000	15th AFA Annual Membership Meeting. Elections.	March AFB Theater
1100-1200	Memorial Service. Veteran's Day Services at the National Cemetery.	Nat'l Cemetery
1200-1300	Luncheons at the O'Club and NCO Club as desired.	March AFB Clubs
1200-1400	Board of Governors Luncheon and Meeting.	March AFB O'Club
1200-1800	Tour to Palm Springs and the Aerial Tramway. See the desert!	March AFB Rec Ctr
1200-1800	Tour of So. Calif. wineries, Mission Inn, and Heritage House.	March AFB Rec Ctr
1200-1800	Tour to Glen Ivy Hot Springs and Spa. Rest those weary bones!	March AFB Rec Ctr
1200-1800	Unit and crew socials as desired.	March AFB Rec Ctr
1900-2000	Social Hour. Swap war stories!	Raincross Square
2000-?	Dinner Dance with music by the 15th AF Band of the Golden West.	Raincross Square
Sat 12 Nov	Flight Line Displays - Air Show - Banquet	
1000-1500	Flight Line Activities	March AFB Flt Line
	Military demonstrations - Vintage aircraft displays - Air show - Base tours - Museum with special 15th AF exhibit - Briefings on current activities of 15th AF - Historical theater with movies of the 15th in action - Static displays of current aircraft from all services - Aerospace industrial displays - 15th Air Force Band of the Golden West - Golden Knights Parachute Team - Retreat ceremony with the missing man formation fly-by - and more!	
1800-1900	Social Hour	Raincross Square
1900-1930	Honor Ceremony	Raincross Square
1930-?	Gala Reunion Banquet	Raincross Square
Sun 13 Nov	Til We Meet Again	
1000-1500	March AFB Open House - Open to the public.	March AFB
1200	Motel Check-outs. Have a safe trip home. See you next year!	

(Continued on Page 16)

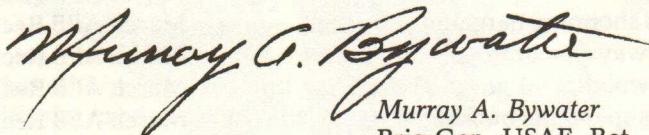
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In the last few months the magnitude of your response has almost overwhelmed us. Your words of encouragement, your many expressions of support, and your willingness to become involved have convinced us that we are on the threshold of a major step forward. Our Association is realizing the potential envisioned by its founders.

We still need each of you to sustain our momentum and to continue the work that we have started. I encourage those of you who have not paid your 1983 dues to respond promptly to our renewal mailing.

I am excited by the opportunity offered to our members by the Commemorative Book Project. Having personally examined the samples, I can attest to their outstanding value and quality. I solicit your early response to the reservation mailing so we can make firm commitments to suppliers and publishers.

Finally, for our reunion I echo the words of General Mullins in Mail Call, "Hope to see everyone there at the roll call."



Murray A. Bywater
Brig Gen, USAF, Ret
President



Gathering Eagles: (from the left) Maj. Gen. Twining, Brig. Gen. Born, Lt. Col. Holman, Lt. Gen. Doolittle and Lt. Gen. Spatz.



Our President

LIFE MEMBERS

We salute our life members and thank them for their support at a time when we need it the most.

Lt Gen James H. Doolittle	Max A. Dosland
Gen James P. Mullins	TSgt Archie Piirainen
Gen Leon W. Johnson	Lt Col John E. Fernsler
Gen Jack J. Catton	Sherwood D. Johnson
Gen Paul K. Carlton	Maj Lawrence Langlois
Lt Gen Archie J. Old Jr.	Maj I.W. Boswell
Lt Gen William K. Martin	Lt Col Alfred M. Janssen
Lt Gen William F. Pitts	Col Robert E. Kimmel
Lt Gen Bryan M. Shotts	Lt Col George R. Olds
Lt Gen John J. Murphy	CMSgt Robert Nicoletti
Lt Gen James V. Edmundson	Col John K. Coolidge
Maj Gen John A. Brashear	Col Joseph G. Manyo
Maj Gen Harold E. Humfeld	Maj Robert E. Lehnherr
Maj Gen Stanley C. Beck	Robert L. Wood Jr.
Maj Gen Lewis E. Lyle	Col Marvin J. Gottschall
Brig Gen Murray A. Bywater	Col I. Louis Hoffman
Brig Gen William M. Constantine	Henry J. Kreiensiek
Brig Gen Regis. F.A. Urschler	Lt Col Joedale T. Reesing
Brig Gen E.G. Shuler Jr.	CMSgt Richard H. Holley
Brig Gen Roger W. Smith	John S. Howell
Col Barrie S. Davis	Capt Thomas F. Hart
Col Martin E. Plocher	Col William E. Lewis
Capt Revis G. Sirmon	Lt Col Donald L. Snyder
Col John S. Fairfield	1Lt V. James Barison
Lt Col Paul R. Schulz	Eldon J. Tobias
SSgt Louis E. Cook	Frank H. English
Col David G. Wells	William F. Huggins
TSgt Ernest J. Pellington	Robert D. Jacobsen

CORPORATE MEMBERS

We salute our corporate members who share in our heritage and are committed to the service of our country and the defense of our nation.

The McDonnell Douglas Corporation
Northrop Corporation
Howell Instruments, Inc.

We recognize and acknowledge Mr. Buddy Gilman, McDonnell Douglas; Mr. Robert J. Clark, Northrop; and our life member, Mr. John S. Howell, Howell Instruments, for outstanding support and service to the Fifteenth Air Force Association.



The Sortie is published quarterly on behalf of the members of the Fifteenth Air Force Association, Box 15, March AFB, CA 92518, a non-profit organization dedicated to the furtherance of the heritage, legacy, and traditions of Fifteenth Air Force. Contributions are tax deductible.

PRESIDENT	Murray A. Bywater Brig. Gen., USAF, Ret.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	C.E. Ben Franklin Lt. Col., USAF, Ret.
EDITOR	Wayne Corbett Lt. Col., USAF

Small Talk

First, let me comment on Bob Kelley's letter in Mail Call. He raises an important point and one that has been discussed often in Board meetings. He is absolutely correct that this Association belongs to and represents all who have served in the Fifteenth Air Force over its forty year history. We are anxious to strike a balance in our reporting, both in terms of the era and the weapon system employed. Bob is also correct that the current emphasis on World War II history is intended to set the stage for our 40th Anniversary Celebration as we reach back to our roots. We should also note that we have no reporters and the *SORTIE* reflects the willingness of members to share their memorabilia. Please send us material to document the mission or years of your primary interest. We appreciate each of you and the contribution you have made by your service.

We have designated the March Field Museum as the official museum of the Fifteenth Air Force Association. The museum directors are planning an outstanding exhibit of our history for display during the reunion. We need your continued support of this project with donations and loans of memorabilia. If in doubt, send it — we can use almost anything that you have stashed from the past. Many have responded, but we need many more to have a representative display. Blow the dust off your trunks and help us! To insure that we have time to complete the exhibit, please send your contributions not later than Oct 15; but the sooner, the better.

We recently wrote to the Citizen's Stamp Committee supporting a proposal for a special U.S. stamp block in 1985 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the B-17.

Please note the article on the Fifteenth Air Force Commemorative Book and support the effort by responding to the mailout.

We have mailed a renewal request to all who have not paid their 1983 dues. We need each of you to build the membership base that will sustain our momentum and help us reach our long range goals. If you have not done so, please take a moment and complete your renewal.

Finally, I want to thank you for your many words of encouragement and support. Some days I am overwhelmed by the magnitude of your response (160 pieces of mail in one recent two-day period), but keep 'em coming. With your continued support and interest, our Fifteenth Air Force Association is going to realize the full potential of our heritage. To quote Albert Speer (Page 14), "Here comes Fifteenth!"

-Ben -



Ben discusses commemorative book with the Board.
(left to right) Col O'Rear, Col Smith, Gen Bywater, Ben, Chief Doehele.

Flash

We are excited and pleased to announce that we have contracted for a pictorial history to commemorate the 40 years of the Fifteenth Air Force. It will be a major project with its success directly dependent on your support.

While you will be receiving numerous mailouts over the next few months, let me take a moment to outline the project. As presently planned, the book will be a hard cover, slick-page publication with hundreds of pages of our history and memorabilia. The first several hundred pages will be devoted to pictures of our history to include snapshots, operational photos, bomb strikes, ceremonies, documents, newsletters, unit histories, etc. The center section will be a color layout of our reunion and 40th anniversary celebration to include shots of the air show, banquet, dance, tall tale times, group photos, etc. The last section will be an alphabetized listing of individual member biographies and pictures similar to a college year book. The last pages will be devoted to a member directory with current addresses.

You will be receiving mailouts soliciting your biographies (a form will be included), photos and memorabilia. You will also be asked to reserve copies to insure that we have sufficient support to proceed. If not, all monies will be returned.

The project is planned for over a year's period and is costed based on a percentage of participation by the membership. Publication is dependent on a sufficient member response to cover publication and distribution costs. The greater the participation, the more pages that we can publish for the same unit cost. The Hump Pilots Association had sufficient participation to publish a quality book of over 600 pages. We should be able to do as well. It is up to you.

The publisher will copy all material mailed to him and return the originals to you. He will provide us with copies of all materials at no cost to use as source for the *SORTIE* and to be included in the museum exhibit.

We will be advertising our Association, our reunion, and the commemorative book in several of the major veteran publications in the next few months. We expect this campaign to insure the success of all three.

General Bywater and I have seen several examples of the publisher's work with other veteran's groups and are excited about the prospects that this offers for our Association. *(continued on page 15)*



OUR HONOR ROLL WE SALUTE YOU

885th BOMB SQUADRON

For outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. Assigned the difficult and extremely hazardous task of delivering, by night dropping operations, eighteen (18) agents and 67,000 pounds of arms, ammunition and special supplies to units of the hard pressed French Forces of the Interior at clandestine targets scattered throughout Southern France, the ground crews worked diligently and untiringly to insure the mechanical perfection of their aircraft to enhance the success of this highly important mission. On the night of 12 August 1944, eleven (11) heavily loaded heavy bombardment type aircraft took off and individually, alone and unescorted, set course for their respective destinations. In the complete darkness of a moonless night, by use of celestial navigation and such recognition points as could be discerned, with virtually no radio navigation aids available, all targets were accurately reached. Under these adverse conditions, the pilots, flying on instruments over 1200 miles, were required to fly at low altitudes over hostile and unfamiliar terrain, despite the presence of mountain peaks in the immediate vicinity of their targets. Reaching the objectives, descents were made to altitudes as low as 500 feet, where dropping runs were made at retarded air speeds. Flying in the immediate vicinity of numerous fighter airdromes, within range of all light and heavy enemy arms fire, these gallant crews successfully accomplished their assigned tasks with unerring accuracy. On the return flight, though pursued by enemy aircraft, they successfully evaded the hostile ships and returned safely to base. Through their extraordinary skill at night navigation and instrument flying, each crew reached its specified target and carried out their objectives with 100% success. A total of 67,000 pounds of supplies were dropped to the French Forces of the Interior, at strategic points for the immediate use in the support of the pending invasion. Eighteen (18) active agents were safely dispatched to take their vital parts in the organization of the Underground Army. In addition, 225,000 leaflets, alerting the population of three (3) large cities in Southern France, were dispatched. The outstanding success achieved by the Squadron in this operation provided valuable stores of arms with which the Marquis were able to give invaluable aid to the Allied invasion of Southern France. By the outstanding courage, professional skill and determination of the combat crews, together with the superior technical skill and intense devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the 885th Bombardment Squadron has reflect-

ed great credit upon itself and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

By command of Major General Twining.

454th BOMB GROUP

For outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. Notified to prepare maximum number of aircraft for a mission against the Hermann Goering Steel Works in Linz, Austria, the ground crews worked enthusiastically and determinedly to have their aircraft in perfect mechanical condition to insure the success of the mission. On 25 July 1944, thirty-three (33) B-24 type aircraft, heavily loaded with maximum tonnage, took off, and, assuming lead of the wing formation, set course for the objective. As was anticipated, their formation was intercepted by approximately fifty (50) aggressive and persistent enemy fighters, and, in the ensuing violent aerial battle, the enemy used rocket guns, 20 millimeter cannon, and machine guns in a desperate attempt to disrupt this vital operation. Despite very intense, accurate and heavy anti-aircraft fire and fierce enemy interception over the objective, the gallant crews battled their way through to score many direct hits in the immediate target area, causing destruction and severe damage to the enemy plant and installations. Throughout the heavy opposition by the enemy, two (2) crew members were killed, thirteen (13) injured by fighter and flak fire, and eleven (11) aircraft damaged. Through their ability to maintain a tight formation to procure maximum fire power available, they accounted for nine (9) enemy aircraft destroyed, two (2) probably destroyed, and three (3) damaged. The material damage inflicted in the target area contributed greatly to the damage and destruction of the Hermann Goering Steel Works, seriously curtailing the production of tanks and armament. By the determination, airmanship, and exceptional courage of the combat crews, together with the superior professional skill and intense devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the 454th Bombardment Group has reflected great credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

By command of Major General Twining.



Jan. 14, 1945

The Fifth Bombardment Wing of Flying Fortresses, the oldest and largest wing in the Fifteenth Air Force, today, Sunday, January 14, observed two years of operation during which it has flown 450 missions and dropped 104,694 tons of bombs on targets in 16 different countries. . . The wing is commanded by Brig Gen Charles W. Lawrence, Orlando, Florida, veteran Fortress pilot and former commander of one of the groups in the Fifth. On January 14, 1943, two groups of B-17's took off from a North African base to hit docks and shipping in Sfax and Sousse and launch the wing on its long record of achievement. Looking back, General Lawrence's unit could point to 1,597 enemy aircraft destroyed in the air alone, plus another 1,000 probably destroyed or damaged. More impressive, the wing has a loss record of only one-hundredth of one percent, on the basis of 520 bombers lost in combat for 45,362 sorties . . .

Feb. 4, 1945

Two brothers, SSgt Elliot and 1st Lt Wendell Lucas recently met at a Negro Mustang Fighter Group after a two year separation. Wendell was just assigned as a replacement pilot in the same squadron where his elder brother works as an engine specialist . . .

The Fifteenth closed the least active month of its history with two days of operations against Austrian targets on Wednesday, January 31, and Thursday, February 1. Most important target of the week was the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, 20 miles west of Vienna, which supplies much of the oil for the Germans opposing the Russians in Hungary. On Wednesday it shook under the heaviest weight of bombs ever dropped by the 15th on a single target. January as a whole presented a dismal picture of snow on the ground and thick clouds over Europe which held the Air Force to fewer operational days than in any previous month in its history.

Mar. 4, 1945

Striking at railroad yards and communication lines at Augsburg as part of a stepped up Allied air offense against the Reich, the 459th Bomb Group, commanded by Col Henry K. Mooney, flew its two hundredth bombing mission against Axis targets in Europe . . . A forlorn GI stumped Supply Sgt Ronald D. Delashmutt with this saddest of equipment-lost stories. He needed a new pair of shoes, because he had fallen asleep on a park bench in Rome and someone had stolen the old pair off his feet.

OUR SORTIE

Feb 25, 1945

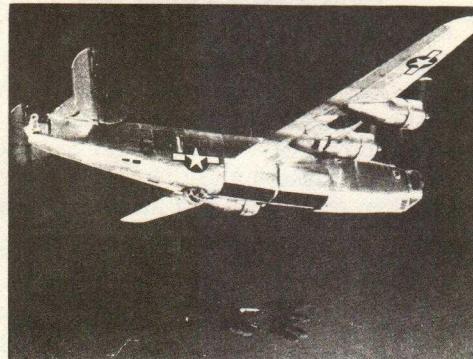
SSgt William H. Haenke is an aerial gunner on a Flying Fortress and when he isn't flying he works at his hobby of making shoes from plexiglass. The shoes, unique in design with a flexible arch, are made for his wife . . . The Fifteenth is now attempting to choke off all lines of communication leading southward from Vienna so the Nazis cannot bring up supplies for the German Armies between Vienna and Budapest. This is a sample of how the Fifteenth has been quietly operating as the Red Army's Air Force . . . Cpl Edward C. Convey, recovering from a leg wound, is convinced that a German 20MM shell can be fired from a trash barrel as effectively as a gun barrel. During a recent clean-up of the tent area, Italian workmen placed discarded German shells in a trash can and ignited the contents. Next time he hears gun fire, Cpl Convey will avoid the business end of a high powered trash can . . .

Mar. 18, 1945

As the 9th Flying Fortress of the 2nd Bomb Group crossed the target, the Kolin Oil Refinery in Czechoslovakia, it registered the 10,000th sortie for this unit of the Fifteenth. This event climaxed two years of combat operations for the 2nd begun in March, 1943 from a base in North Africa and which now totals 378 missions. The group, commanded by Col Richard Waugh, was originally formed in France in 1918 . . . Chaplain Guy Mayfield, group chaplain of the 62nd Service Center, spoke on "the Sixth Prune," the theme being that a little effort over and above what is required in one's work or sport is eventually rewarded.

Apr. 15, 1945

Presentation of its second Distinguished Unit Citation was made recently to the 450th Bomb Group for striking the initial blow in the battle of Ploesti one year ago. In the course of the historic mission, the group's formation was subjected to aggressive attack by more than one hundred ME-109's, FW-190's, and JU-88's. 450th gunners engaged the fighters in a savage air battle and were officially credited with the destruction of 27 enemy aircraft. Veteran of 250 combat missions, the 450th has participated in every major strategic bombing operation in this theater since December 1943 . . . Yvonne DeCarlo, twenty year old blue-eyed brunette is the girl named by producer Walter Wagner as the most beautiful girl in the world . . . During most of the week, bomb carrying Lightnings of the Fifteenth Fighter Command bombed rail bridges in southern Austria while Mustangs strafed in the same area. Sunday the fighters strafed and destroyed 22 locomotives near Linz, Austria while the heavies were bombing rail targets along the Brenner in coordination with tactical operations.



Bombs Away!

OUR WAR STORIES

WHEN IT HIT THE FAN

A reluctant GI, TSgt Ernest Stormo, was just doing his part . . . he had just filled a latrine ditch with gasoline, intending to set it on fire. He lit a match and threw it into the hole, and then it happened . . . the entire wooden construction over the ditch blew forty feet into the air and showered the surrounding area with debris. Surprised GI's hit the foxholes with amazing speed, and then cautiously peeked out a little later to see what the Jerries had been after.

All they saw was Stormo staring in amazement at the scarred, broken remains of the deluxe latrine cover. He later officially stated: "How was I to know that it was high-test? I hope this incident won't keep me from getting my Good Conduct Medal."

Editor's Note: Extracted from "The Flight of the Liberators", a history of the 454th BG. Courtesy of Bob Kelley.

MOUNTAIN CLIMBER

"Have you ever hit a mountain at 300 miles per hour or more?" is a question that might well be asked by Capt Hugh E. Watson of the 1st Fighter Group. And he might continue, "I have." This is how he told his story to his buddies on November 16th.

"I was directly over an ammunition truck when it blew up, so I buried my head in my arms as sort of a reflex action for more protection," he said. "When I glanced up I was right on a mountain — I tried to pull up, but even so, the propeller tips and the tail booms hit the mountain." One engine was out of his P-38 and the other was losing oil, but despite that he made it home.

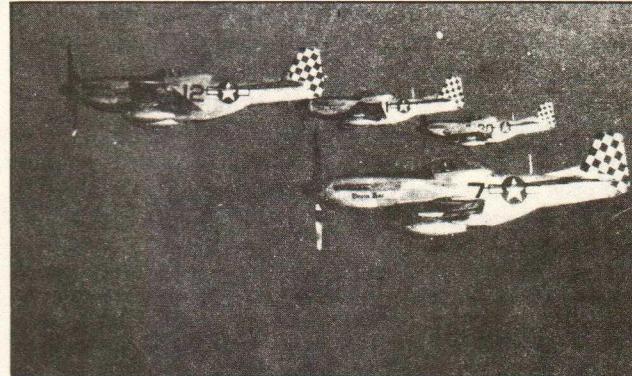
Editor's Note: Extracted from XVFC, Courtesy of Edwin Hodges.

HAIRY HERITAGE

2nd Lt Arthur E. Moenkhaus exploded an ammunition truck with the guns of his P-38. To prove it, he brought back souvenirs.

Strafing a German truck convoy, he scored direct hits on a truck and suddenly found his Lightning in the middle of an explosion. After the landing at his base, while he was counting the holes in his ship, he found stray pieces of German uniforms, some small arms shell casings, and even the paper wrappings of German cigarettes in his air scoop. He found plenty of holes too. Some of the exploding ammunition had knocked out his right engine, while the holes in the left wing indicated that the left engine had been missed by a scant one inch.

Editor's Note: Extracted from XVFC, Courtesy of Edwin Hodges.



P-51 Checkertails on the prowl.

GUN FIGHTERS

The fight took place when the Thunderbolts were escorting heavy bombers of the 15th AAF on an assault against four enemy airfields above the Adriatic Sea northeast of Venice. Led by Lt Col Robert L. Baseler, Boston, Mass, CO of the "Checkertails" fighter group, the P-47s outmaneuvered the enemy completely, even when the Luftwaffe pilots sought to evade their attackers by diving to low altitudes.

The Thunderbolts notched their great victory around noon when they encountered 50 enemy aircraft of assorted types. Operating at altitudes from 20,000 down to 500 feet, they attacked with a vengeance destroying 36 German planes with the loss of one P-47.

Capt Herschel H. Green, Mayfield, KY, may have set some kind of record when he shot down six of the planes singlehandedly. He sent to earth four JU-52s, one MA-202, and one Dornier-217.

When the Thunderbolts returned home, Lt Col Baseler, who himself accounted for one JU-33, was presented with the Silver Star by Maj Gen Nathan F. Twining, commanding general of the 15th AAF.

Editors note: Extracted from a clipping, Courtesy of John Wheeler

HAIRY HERITAGE

When the bombardier on a plane forced to return to the base had to toggle his bombs in a wheat field near here, the unpleasant job of digging them out fell on MSgt Keith Magee and Cpl Edgar Sample. All the bombs were located and the fuses removed, but many had broken on impact and had become armed.

When their plane crashed on take-off, Lt Fellows and TSgt Reading, 759th Bomb Sq, defused two 1,000 pound bombs after two had already exploded before the bomb disposal personnel from headquarters arrived.

OUR WAR STORIES

'LOOK AT THOSE G.I. SHOES!'

Wagging its wings, a German Messerschmitt 109 skimmed in low and fast to the huge air base of the Fifteenth Air Force Headquarters in Italy. U.S. gunners held their fire. Reason: a US flag was painted crudely on the fuselage, white stars daubed on the wings. The plane landed, braked to a stop. Tall, handsome Captain Carl Cantacuzino of the Rumanian Air Force climbed out. To the crowd of airmen who ran up, he said: "I have somebody here you'll be glad to see."

He unfastened the fuselage plate of the radio compartment. Someone in the plane stuck his feet out. A man in the crowd yelled: "Look at those G.I. shoes!"

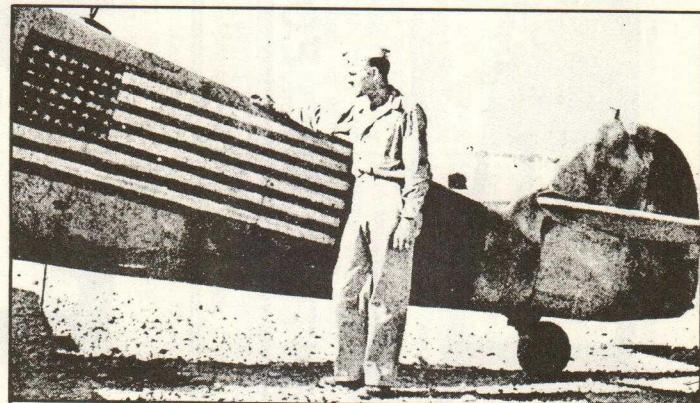
The passenger was Lt Col James A. Gunn III of Kelseyville, California, who had been shot down over the oil fields of Ploesti — "the hottest target on the face of the earth" — two weeks before. He was one of more than 3,000 U.S. airmen downed in Rumania in the thirteen months of raids. Two-thirds had been killed. But 1,101 plus 25 Britons were still alive in prison camps around Bucharest. They were well treated but they chafed.

When they heard young King Mihai announce on the radio that Rumania had switched to the Allied side in the war, they persuaded the prison commander to turn them loose — with their side arms. But it was not enough to be free; they wanted to be back in Allied territory.

Colonel Gunn interviewed the Rumanian Air Minister, who introduced him to Cantacuzino, Rumania's leading ace, with a score of 64 downed Allied planes. Cantacuzino agreed to fly Gunn to Italy.

Colonel Gunn told his story to General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson and his U.S. air commander, Lt Gen Ira Eaker. They made a quick decision. Within twelve hours 38 flying fortresses were speeding toward Bucharest; more soon followed. At the Bucharest Airport the bombers took aboard the 1,100 odd men and brought them back to Italy. Fifty were wounded, seventeen on crutches, and ten on stretchers. All were happy. So were their families in the U.S., who were promptly notified.

Editor's Note: Extracted from Time magazine — Sept, 1944.



Gunn's Messerschmitt 109.

HAIRY HERITAGE

The navigator told them that the target was free of flak that day, so TSgt Albert L. Gilman and SSgt William Mathers didn't bother to put on their heavy suits and helmets as the B-24 headed into the bomb run. Then the shells started breaking all around them. However, they think their timing was alright after all; because one of the first bursts lifted them off their feet. When they moved the flak suits they had been sitting on, they saw a large hole in the fuselage.

Editor's Note: Extracted from "The Flight of the Liberators," a history of the 454th BG. Courtesy of Bob Kelley.

Enroute to a target in Austria, a mechanical failing of the engines caused a 738th bomber to lose power, falling swiftly from 6,000 to 800 feet. The pilot, Lt William Harrigill Jr., gave the "prepare to crash" order. The bombs, as is customary under such circumstances, were salvoed. There was a tremendous explosion. The concussion lifted the B-24 into the air, jarred the engines, and in the moment of grace given by the added altitude, the plane regained engine power and carried its ten man crew home safely.

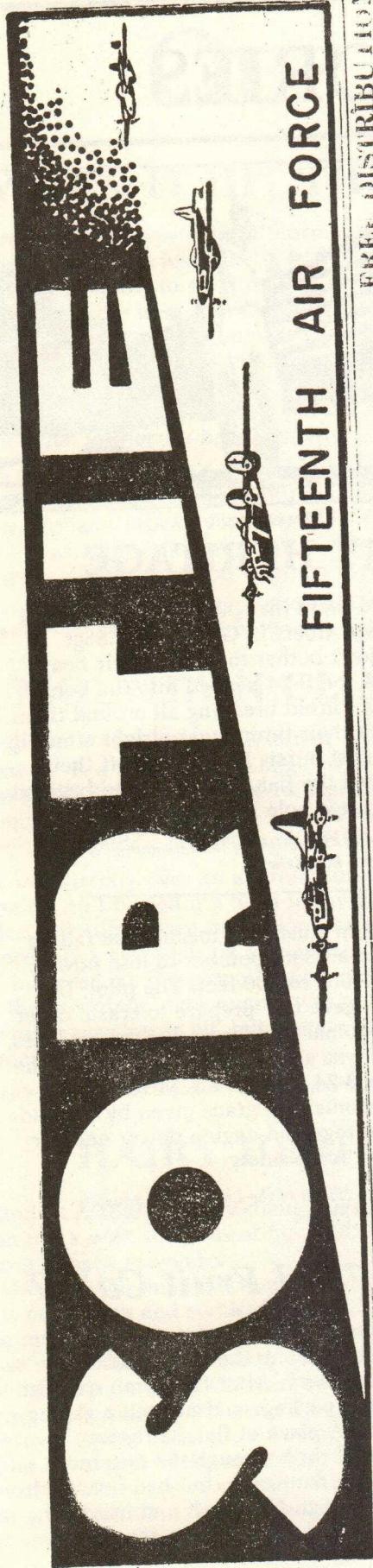
Editor's Note: Extracted from "Flight of the Liberator's", a history of the 454th. Courtesy of Bob Kelley.

An Angel Food Fruit Cake?

SSgt Walter C. Campbell took along a package of fruit cake on a mission to bomb the Nazi aircraft factory at Regensberg, Germany. After the bomb run, Sgt Campbell picked up the package and noticed a gaping hole in the center of it. A piece of flak had gone through the package and then through the two inch hole in the middle of the fruit cake, but had not touched the cake. Undaunted, Sgt. Campbell and his crew enjoyed the cake, but saved the hole as a souvenir.

Editor's Note: Extracted from "The Flight of the Liberators," a history of the 454th BG. Courtesy of Bob Kelley.





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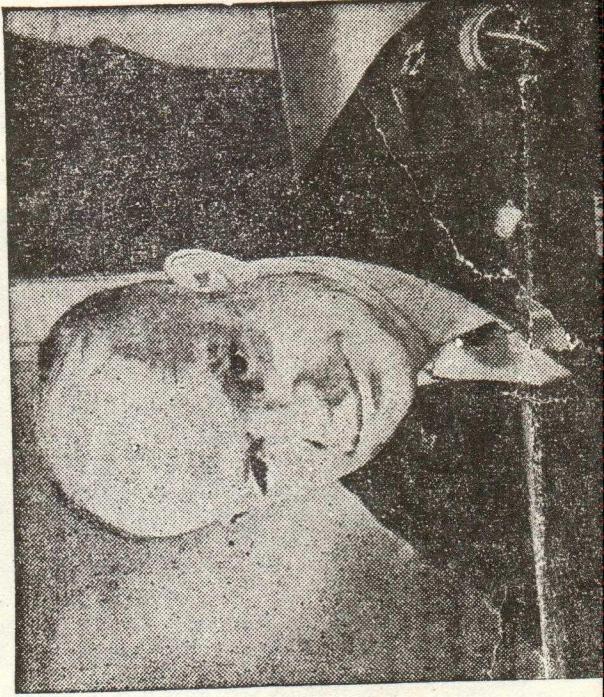
8 May 1945

Victory

Germany All To Gen. Eisenhower

Surrenders

The Victor



A dispatch from SHAEF last night announced that the war in Europe is over. Unconditional surrender took place at 02:41 o'clock yesterday morning at the Little Red School House in Rheims, Germany, which was General Eisenhower's headquarters. Colonel General Gustav Jodl, the new German Army Chief of Staff, signed for Germany. General Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, signed for the Supreme Allied Command. General Ivan

(Continued On Page Four)

On this historic day, the announcement of the termination of hostilities in Europe, I wish to express to every individual in the United States Fifteenth Army Air Force and the 205 Group of the Royal Air Force my sincere gratitude for the loyal devotion to duty which has contributed materially to this Allied victory.

Our air battles were bitterly fought, and not without cost to us. Our combat men paid for every victory. It is fitting that today we should review our accomplishments. First, in our strategic plan was the destruction of German aircraft and aircraft production facilities. The control of skies must precede control of the land. This was accomplished by the relentless day and night attacks of our bombers and fighters. We licked the Luftwaffe in the air and on the ground.

Striking at Ploesti on 5 April 1944, we slashed at the jugular vein of Germany's oil and gasoline supply, the life-blood of the enemy's vast mobile war machine. The full significance of the oil campaign became increasingly evident as the war progressed and Allied land armies forged ahead on all fronts. Following the fall of Ploesti, we eliminated all remaining gasoline production facilities within our range.

Nearly half the total bomb tonnage dropped by our air force was on enemy lines of communication. The disruption of traffic and destruction of supplies caused by our widespread and persistent attacks contributed greatly to the progress made on the Italian, French and Balkan fronts during the months that followed.

Our bombers and fighters operated in close co-operation with the Allied armies in Italy, France and the Balkans. The 15th contributed greatly to the air operations which broke the German offensive designed to capture Tito and crush the Yugoslav

fronts. Sevez for France. A CBS broad-

(Continued On Page Four)

On this historic day, the announcement of the termination of hostilities in Europe, I wish to express to every individual in the United States Fifteenth Army Air Force and the 205 Group of the Royal Air Force my sincere gratitude for the loyal devotion to duty which has contributed materially to this Allied victory.

Our air battles were bitterly fought, and not without cost to us. Our combat men paid for every victory. It is fitting that today we should review our accomplishments. First, in our strategic plan was the destruction of German aircraft and aircraft production facilities. The control of skies must precede control of the land. This was accomplished by the relentless day and night attacks of our bombers and fighters. We licked the Luftwaffe in the air and on the ground.

Striking at Ploesti on 5 April 1944, we slashed at the jugular vein of Germany's oil and gasoline supply, the life-blood of the enemy's vast mobile war machine. The full significance of the oil campaign became increasingly evident as the war progressed and Allied land armies forged ahead on all fronts. Following the fall of Ploesti, we eliminated all remaining gasoline production facilities within our range.

Nearly half the total bomb tonnage dropped by our air force was on enemy lines of communication. The disruption of traffic and destruction of supplies caused by our widespread and persistent attacks contributed greatly to the progress made on the Italian, French and Balkan fronts during the months that followed.

Our bombers and fighters operated in close co-operation with the Allied armies in Italy, France and the Balkans. The 15th contributed greatly to the air operations which broke the German offensive designed to capture Tito and crush the Yugoslav

15th Reviews Its Strategic Contribution To Nazi End

General Dwight D. Eisenhower

As the world celebrates Victory-in-Europe Day, Major General Nathan F. Twining's Fifteenth Army Air Force proudly reviews the leading role it has played in over 18 months as a strategic air force, helping to lay the groundwork for the final collapse of the Nazi empire. Coming as a fitting climax to the continual acknowledgement by the Allied commanders of the part played

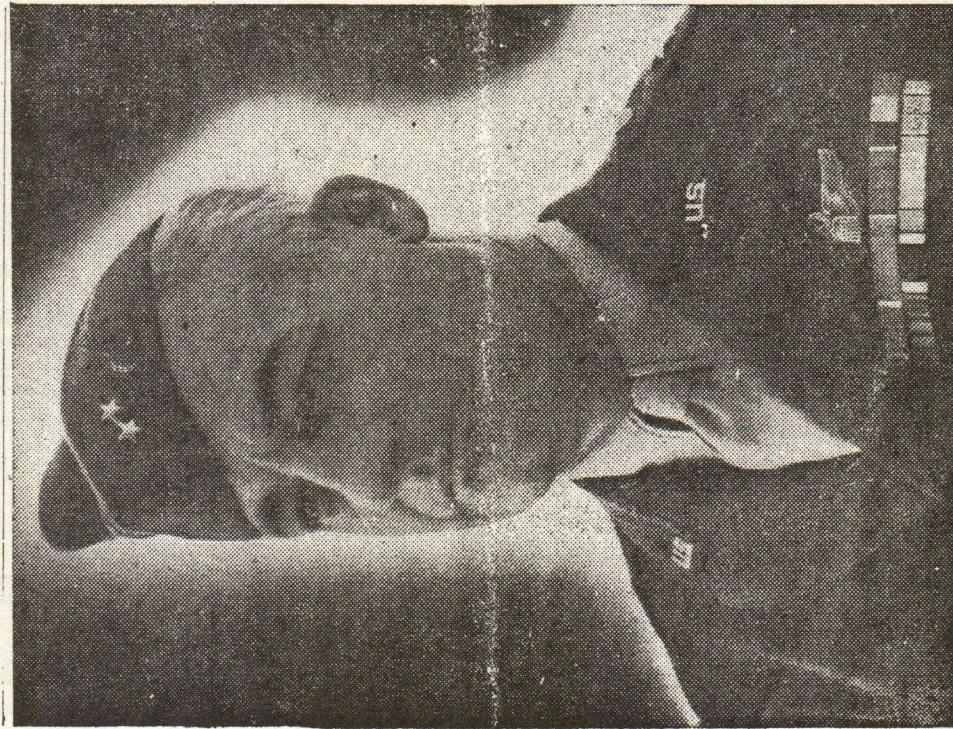
by strategic bombardment is the admission by Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, who march into the German towns, in an interview after his capture stated that "systematic destruction from the air, with the lack of fuel and raw materials, were among the principal reasons for Germany's defeat." Strategic bombardment also accounted for the lack of fuel and raw materials which came to be such a vital issue for continued resistance.

The dramatic crumbling of the German armies on all fronts may temporarily overshadow the endless days and nights, weeks and months of bombing which drained the German war machine and the German nation of their inner will and power to resist. But those months of aerial campaigns against enemy aircraft, both in production and in the air, against rail and communications lines, against armament and munition production, against troop concentrations and defensive positions, and lastly, the continuing campaign against the life blood of the enemy war machine, oil, made possible the utter collapse of an army which the world had viewed at one time as being invincible.

At the helm of the 15th was Lieutenant General, then a major general, James H. Doolittle, who brought the new organ- The airmen, those of the 15th

Major General Nathan F. Twining
Praises 15th AAF

(Continued On Page Four)



(Continued On Page Four)

MAIL CALL MAIL CALL MAIL CALL

Dear Murray:

Just received my copy of the April edition of the *SORTIE*. Please pass my compliments to everyone who had a hand in putting it together – an outstanding effort!

Glad to see things are coming together for the reunion in November. Hope to see everyone there at roll call.

James P. Mullins
General, USAF

Dear Editor:

Congratulations on the fine job you're doing with the *SORTIE*. It's certainly bringing back memories. Enclosed are snapshots of our crew and the Officer's Club near Foggia, as well as the program for the dedication . . . thanks for the work you're doing on the *SORTIE*!

William D. Tatler, Lt Col, USAF, Ret
Venice, FL

Dear Sir:

. . . Would you please forward a copy of your magazine to the enclosed list? We are all a combat crew of the 721st BS, 450th BG. We planned a reunion late this summer. Perhaps if we had specific details about the reunion of the 15th, we might reschedule our meeting to take place at March Field.

William N. Flanagan
San Jose, CA

Dear Ben:

Your new *SORTIE* format is great! The Honor Roll is excellent, and I look forward to the salute to the 460th for its July 26 mission to the Zwolfaxing Air Drome near Vienna . . . Enclosed are flak maps of Vienna, Weiner Neustadt and Moosbierbaum . . . The Military Book Club will offer *Target Ploesti* as its August selection . . .

Leroy Newby
Webster City, IA

Dear Col Corbett:

Thank you for your placement of the 449th BG on your Honor Roll . . . In October 1982, the 449th BG men formed an Association and planned for a reunion . . . The dates of Nov. 4-6 were selected. With the 15th AF reunion also planned, we agreed that placing our date thus would enable many of our 449ers to attend both . . . we entered your 15th AFA membership in our first newsletter . . . Please count on our 449th BGA in the support of the 15th AFA . . .

Richard F. Downey
St. Louis, MO

Dear Ben:

It's early – cold – fire in the fireplace – coffee is hot – wish you were here and we could out-lie each other . . . Soon I will get together all my paraphernalia for the 15th AF Museum. 8th AF is sorta unhappy with me but my heart is with the 15th. Take care ole friend and hang in there as you have your hands full.

Ped G. Magness
England, AR

Dear Murray:

Delighted to see that the 15th AF Association is under way. My check is enclosed. Count me in. It doesn't seem possible that 45 years have gone by since you and I were shavetails living in the March Field BOQ and flying A-17A's, does it?

I served in the 15th AF from 1949-1957, during which time I commanded the 22d, 92d, 57th, and 36th. Good luck with the Association.

James V. Edmundson, Lt Gen, USAF, Ret
Longboat Key, FL

Dear Ben:

I received your nice letter and feel good being referred to as a "distinguished wartime leader" . . . we will "probably" attend the reunion only because at 71 years you don't get too positive about anything that far off. I have a number of snapshots taken in Italy at the 483d and 301st BG and will have prints made and forward the best. The pictures include shots of Twining, Doolittle, Spatz, Born, etc. Also some battle damaged B-17's, etc.

Ernest S. Holmes, Col, USAF, Ret
Las Cruces, NM

Dear Ben:

First, I want to congratulate you on the *SORTIE*. It is by far the best publication of its type that I have ever seen. Keep it up! I am enclosing several items on the 82nd FG which you may keep for your history files. I was a pilot in the 82nd from Sept 1943 to March 1944 and was fortunate enough to complete 50 missions . . .

Paul F. Jorgensen, Lt Col, USAF, Ret
Burbank, CA

Dear Ben:

. . . Had quite a few talks with James Peters of *Sentimental Journey*. If the money can be raised for gas, they sure want to come . . . I'm enclosing my check for life membership. I want it gold plated, with Frank H. English, Founder Member printed in 72 pt. script and 5 stars.

Frank H. English
Whittier, CA

Sirs:

. . . I have a book on the 460th BG, compiled by Capt Edward Devaney . . . On page 13 of the April *SORTIE*, Capt Harold Timmerman is mentioned. I was the crew chief of his airplane, 954, named "Peace Maker" with the picture of a quite well shaped lady between the two words. I have pictures of the plane and crew. On the same page under the caption "Landing," I have pictures of the crew chief of airplane 279, the one that went in the drink near Naha just after take off. If any of these items would be of value, I would be glad to send them.

Elmer W. Cogdill, MSgt, USAF, Ret
Nebraska City, NE

Dear Ben:

I know that you are up to your kiester in alligators but take a breather so I can add my 'atta boy' for a super edition of *SORTIE* (April). It's obvious many long hours of sweat and tears went into its production . . . I note that the predominance of space in the April issue was devoted to WWII related news items. I suspect that this may cause a flurry of discontent from some of the later troops who look upon WW II as having taken place in the days of the Neanderthal man. They may feel slighted . . . that their TDY's, alerts, sacrifices, and dedication are being passed over unnoticed . . . perhaps, a few words might be made to point out that the current emphasis is being placed on WW II 15th AF history in view of the upcoming 40th anniversary, the limited accounts of that period and that post - WW II 15th AF history is far better documented. I think such a comment would let everyone know that they are remembered . . . and instill a deeper feeling of pride and affiliation among all present and potential members. . .

Bob Kelley, Lt Col, USAF, Ret
Bellevue, NE

Dear Ben:

. . . Yes, you may pass my address to any of the members, especially widows, as I am a widower!!

Francis W. Nye, Maj Gen, USAF, Ret
Albuquerque, NM

MAIL CALL MAIL CALL MAIL CALL

Dear Ben:

... We are looking forward to the reunion and will be very happy to get a chance to display our ten foot B-17 Model ... We have considered doing the combat colors of one of the 15th AF planes. We now have Tony Starcer in our group who did the original nose art on the Memphis Belle and Shoo Shoo Baby and some 130 other planes with the 91st BG ... I plan to do our newsletter in November on the 15th AF and push the reunion. I will get it out early for the occasion. Looking forward to the next issue of the *SORTIE*.

Arvin McCauley, "B-17 Combat Crewmen & Wingmen"
South Gate, CA

Ben:

I was under the bomb bay of the B-52 at March AFB ... A young man (it turned out to be your son) asked if I had flown with the 15th AF. Surprised, because not many people ask questions about the 15th, I answered yes and you know the rest. I was 1Lt Jack A. Levin, Pilot with the 301st BG at Lucera, Italy. I was in the 32nd BS or as we called it, the 32nd AF. Lt Col E.F. Harding was the Group C.O. It sure is great to know that there will be a 40th reunion. I certainly will attend ...

Jack A. Levin
Costa Mesa, CA

Dear Col Franklin:

... I am pleased that the March Field Museum is planning a special exhibit in which my brother John's military possessions will be displayed ...

Mary A. Gilligan
Greenport, NY

Dear Sir:

I was glad to read that it is now possible to become a life member with the cost paid over a period of time ... I am enclosing a letter that Maj Gen Twining gave to each incoming replacement crew when they joined 15th AF. It shows a sensitivity that is often rare in men of leadership. I am proud to have served under his command.

V. James Barison
Torrance, CA

Dear Sir:

Here's some papers that I found, and being one of the original *SORTIE*, I hope you enjoy ... never was all together that I can remember. Probably out stealing something. They could strip a wrecked bomber faster than a guard could be placed to guard it. They called it "winning." Some things they listed: one MP motorcycle, one Italian ambulance, an Italian engineer's fire truck, telegraph poles, transformer, wire, etc., to put lights in our tents from Italian hi-tension wires, an outhouse, Red Cross donuts, etc., etc. They were the best group in their business of armament! Keep up the good work. Joseph F. Maggioncalda, MSgt, USAF, Ret
Garden City, MI

Dear Mr. Franklin:

Enclosed are some things pertaining to the 15th AF POW's interned in Romania. I hope that they may be of use to the Association ... Our Association of POW's in Romania may be able to come up with various items. Try contacting Roy B. Meyer ... perhaps he can include an article in the next newsletter.

George Skrba
Westfield, NJ

CLEARING HOUSE CLEARING HOUSE

Membership Committee:

As a member of the 15AAF, 55th Wing, 385th Bomb Group, 828th Bomb Sq, I request membership in the Association. Please let me know how I might contact members of my old squadron.

Fred M. Bloom, Lt Col, USAF, Ret
Clinton, CT

Sir:

I was stationed with the 782nd Bomb Sq, 465th Bomb Group at Pantenella, near Foggia, Italy. Would appreciate to know if you have knowledge of who I can contact who was assigned to my sq?

George Meurer
Tampa, FL

Dear Ben:

... also would like to get in the Clearing House. Would like to hear from former members of my outfit, 885th BS, 2641 Sp Group (Prov).

John K. Mattison
Peru, IL

Dear Ben:

... I have enclosed two other photos in which I would like to locate the officers, Lt John Harper and unidentified officer playing table tennis

... I tried to get my crew members addresses, but the personnel center in St. Louis lost all of my records in a fire. Can anybody help find them? Lt Bob Meyers (co-pilot), 1Lt J. Jackson (Nav), Lt Landrum (Pilot), 484 BG.

Walter L. Bruesch
Redding, CA

Gentlemen:

I served as a ground armorer, 720th Sq, 450th BG, Italy, May 1944-May 1945. I am interested in meeting or hearing from members of this Sq.

Captain Neal D. Payton, USAF, Ret
Clearview, FL

Dear Ben:

... I was recently able to put two men who had flown together back in touch after 25 years: Robert Nutter and Francis "Fritz" Dalrymple. Both were in the 97th BG, 340th BS. Anyone else that flew with them would be nice to find.

Carol Rizzo
Kalamazoo, MI

Dear Sir:

I have just learned of the existence of the 15th Air Force Association and am enclosing my check ... I was a bombardier of the 515th BS, 376th BG. Our crew led the first mission flown by the 15th AF, Nov 2, 1943. Target: Weiner Neustadt from Enfidaville, Tunisia. Do you have the names of any members or group formed in the Seattle or Portland area?

Perry E. Zaback
Seattle, WA

Gentlemen:

... I was a gunner with the 460th BG, 761st BS in Italy in 1944. Our crew is having a reunion and we are lacking one person. Our tail gunner, Robert C. Moss, last known address: 2669 23rd Ave., San Francisco ...

Alex J. Sonkoly Cleveland, OH

OUR CREWS



2nd BG, 49th BS crew at Casablanca, North Africa on 10 Feb 1944. (From the left standing): 2Lt William Tatler, Pilot; 2Lt John Rice, Co-Pilot; 2Lt Robert Unger, Navigator; SSgt Walter Lisowski, Radio Operator/gunner; SSgt Thomas O'Connor, Engineer/gunner. (From the left kneeling): Sgt Wallace Wampler, Right waist gunner; Sgt Leon Nestor, Left waist gunner; Sgt Herman Butko, Tail gunner; SSgt Lester Ellinger, Ball turret gunner; 2Lt Thomas Gregory, Bombardier. Courtesy: William Tatler.



82nd FG P-38 Pilots at Foggia, Italy on 14 Jan 1944, after escort of B-24's over Mostar, Yugoslavia. (From the left): Lt J.D. Stoutenborough, Lt Robert Kinnie, Lt Paul Jorgensen. Courtesy: Paul Jorgensen

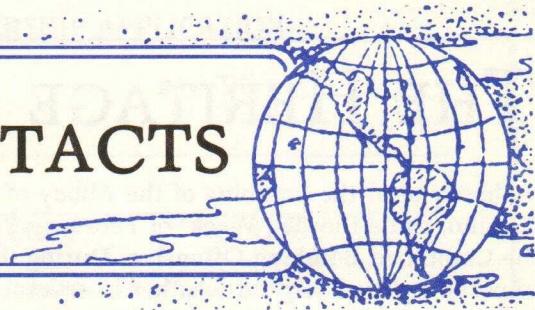


454 BG, 736 BS crew at Cerignola, Italy in Jan 1945. (From the left standing): Norman Edwards, Bombardier; Paul Johnson, Pilot; (From the left kneeling): John Oliver, Co-Pilot; Don Gordon, Navigator; John Duren, Engineer/gunner; Charles Little, Armorer/gunner; Reginald Barnard, Ball gunner; Robert Kelley, Nose gunner; Nicholas Aramando, Radio Operator/gunner; William Buk, Tail gunner. Courtesy: Bob Kelley.



301st BG crew. (From the left standing): TSgt John Wheeler, engineer; 2Lt Vance Heavilin, Bombardier; 2Lt Samuel Esposito, Navigator; 2Lt Lyman Whitney, Co-pilot; 1Lt William Walsh, Pilot; SSgt Joseph Scully, Radio Operator; (From the left kneeling): SSgt Austin Minks, Tail gunner; SSgt Robert Hardmeyer, Left waist gunner; SSgt David Chapman, Ball turret gunner; SSgt Glenn Holen, Right waist gunner. Courtesy: John Wheeler

OUR OVERSEAS CONTACTS



SWITZERLAND

What a good surprise as I begun to read the latest issue of "Briefing"! An 15th Air Force Association is found! Congratulations for this - the 15th Air Force was so important in World War II to have not an Association. I am very interested in American planes down in Switzerland and Germany during the last World War,...enclosed please find a picture of a 15th Air Force Liberator, shortly the plane came down at Dubendorf Airfield, Switzerland...My father was attacked by American fighter near the German border. I try to get in touch with former 15th Air Force Crews in Switzerland. If you feel that I can help you anything, don't hesitate and write me. It would be a pleasure to help, perhaps as contact man in the German and French spocken room in Europe...

Hans-Heiri Stapfer
Horgen, Switzerland

FRANCE

Thank you for your assistance in helping me find members of the 15th Air Force who flew the 26 May 1944 mission to Chambery, France. Through my own efforts, I have been able to locate three former members of the 15th Air Force who might not be aware of the Association. They are...At the request of the mayor of Chambery, I wrote a small Pamphlet/Book of the Chambery mission. The book is in French but it does contain photographs and maps. If the association would be interested in having a copy, please let me know. I shall send one free of charge, if you would like. I still plan to write some books on the missions of the 15th to Southern France in English. Thus any assistance the association might be able to give me such as dates and locations of reunions would be appreciated.

Garrett R. Anderson
Chambery, France

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

...The research on August 24 mission to Pardubice lasted more than five years and consumed all my free time including weekends. During more than 25 years of research on US 15th Air Force activity over Czechoslovakia. I've collected thousands of pages of documents, photos, official and eyewitness statements. I've researched 85 crash sites of 15th AF aircraft shot down over Moravia and Slovakia. I've visited almost all these crash sites in order to collect fragments of crashed planes, eyewitness statements, pictures, etc. Three years ago I received a stroke and now have more difficulties with my coronary systems. These troubles prevents me to continue in research on crash sites whose

are mostly situated deep in the hills. Now I am doing research in our files. The results of my research work I use for lectures about 15th AF activity over my homeland in II WW. These lectures without any payment are determined preferably for the young people here who had no knowledges about American war effort. Most of these young people know not that there were more hundreds American fliers who lost their lives in combat over Czechoslovakia and for the freedom of Czechoslovakia. Sorry my research work is handicaped by lack of documents from US files. Several times I wrote to officials and institutes in your country, several times I requested aid and support for my research on the fate of American fliers. I requested no money but some documents like Missing Air Crew Reports relating to aircraft that crashed on Slovakia and Moravia. I've never received no answer. It is very difficult for me to compile a lecture about American fliers fallen in Czechoslovakia without documents from US file. Some MACR's I received through my friends living in USA, most of them are ex-members of 325th Fighter Group and 451st, 485th and 2nd Bomb Groups. In my list of 15th AF aircraft lost over Slovakia and Moravia I have two planes belonging to 460th Bomb Group /H/. The one was shot down by German fighters on 20 December 1944 and crashed near the town of Olomouc in North Moravia. The pilot of the plane was 2nd Lt. Gibson. No other information till yet. The second liberator crashed on 11 December 1944 near the town of Myjava in west Slovakia. Three members of the crew - Co-pilot 2nd Lt. John Zebrowsky, T/Sgt. Wilford Tritz and S/Sgt. Eugene Hodge were saved by Slovak underground. The rest of the crew was captured by Germans. For my further research I'd like to know more about both planes and crews...there will be no problem for the National Archives to find the correct MACR's...but since the pay for an MACR relating to one missing aircraft is 8.00 to 9.00 US dollars, maybe this price would be more expensive for you. Then please neglect my entreaty. Another problem: in some narrative Mission Reports I've read that some targets were bombed by "Offset Method" or the lead bombardier used "PDI Methods". Can you please explain me the principle of both bombing methods? Now some lines about myself. 53 years, married, work as a designer in state factory. My wife Ludmila is teacher on Public School. Two sons, Walter 25 years will be graduated next month on Technical High School in Prague, Lacko 20 years studies on Technical High School at Bratislava. For several years I work on a book "US 15th AF Over Slovakia and Moravia 1944-45". The work absorbs my entire free time...

Juraj Rajninec
Trencin, Czechoslovakia
Courtesy: Letter written to Leroy Newby.

PART IV

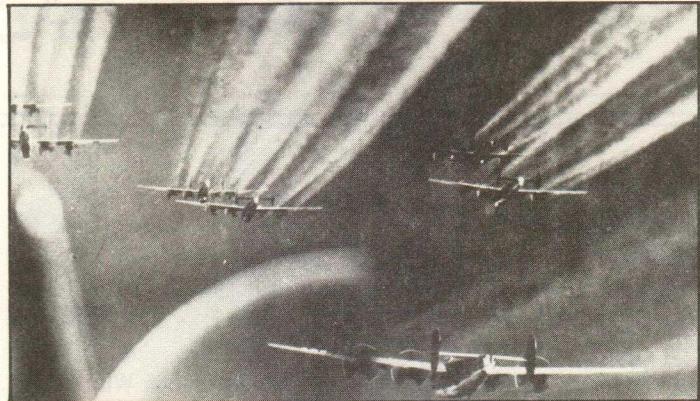
THE HERITAGE OF FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

Shortly after the bombing of the Abbey of Monte Cassino, came the "Big Week" of February 19-25 for the Combined Bombing Offensive. During the only important period of good weather in several months, Fifteenth and Eighth jointly participated in mass raids against the German aircraft industry. Fifteenth lost 14 bombers out of 183 dispatched on its first day of participation, February 22, against Regensburg. The next day 102 bombers struck a ball bearing plant in Austria losing 19 aircraft. On February 24, Fifteenth attacked an aircraft component plant at Steyr, Austria losing 17 bombers. The intensity of the air battles was reflected in the kill claims. On February 22, the escort fighters for the combined Fifteenth and Eighth bomber armada claimed 60 German fighters with the price of 11 lost. On February 24, the bombers claimed 108 German fighters destroyed, while their escorts claimed 37.

Fortunately, the weather held good for the fourth successive day as both Fifteenth and Eighth continued the attacks against the German aircraft industry with strikes in southern Germany on February 25. Fifteenth launched 400 bombers with 176 attacking the main target at Regensburg, while the remainder were targeted against other installations located at shorter ranges. These actions concluded a week of maximum effort to paralyze the German aircraft industry and defeat the German Air Force before the deadline for the Normandy invasion, looming ahead in June 1944. Fifteenth lost 89 bombers or an average of about six percent per mission. Bomber losses per sortie were nearly five times as great as those of the escorts.

On March 15, units of Fifteenth joined with those of the Twelfth in a mass saturation bombing designed to eliminate German resistance in the Monte Cassino area; the town was destroyed, but Allied armies were unable to break through at the time. Fifteenth flew its first "thousand ton" raid on March 28, one of a five day series of especially heavy missions against rail yards and industrial areas in northern Italy in support of "Operation Strangle". This operation was carried out from March 19 to May 11 to cut off supplies to the German troops who were still mounting a stiff defense against advancing Allied armies. On April 3, bombers made the first heavy air attack on Budapest, Hungary. The next day Fifteenth's heavy bombers made the first air attack on Bucharest, Rumania. Other special missions reached to Sofia, Bulgaria, and later to Athens, Greece. During the May 25-27 period, hundreds of bombers dropped more than 3,000 tons on 14 rail and transportation centers in southern France as part of the preparation for the upcoming cross-channel invasion.

(To be continued)



B-24s Strike! Courtesy: Bud Markel and the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association.

HERE COMES FIFTEENTH!

Page 338; "Inside the Third Reich, Memoirs Albert Speer." "...I could see omens of the war's end almost every day in the blue southern sky when, flying provocatively low, the bombers of the American Fifteenth Air Force crossed the Alps from their Italian bases to attack German industrial targets."

Courtesy: Carol Rizzo

HEROIC HERITAGE

In July 1944, the Germans took an awful drubbing when one of the most curious battles of the war was fought by Mustangs on an escort mission to the oil storage depots in Bucharest. It was the last battle of July and curious because of the tactics used by the Germans.

Whereas the Lufberry is considered a good protective tactic by many pilots when outnumbered by an enemy, the Hun's use of it in an odds-even battle was his undoing.

Again in protection of the heavies, the Mustangs attacked. Capt. Harry A. Parker, one of the big ten and high scorer for the day with four victories, described the fight simply. "When we attacked the ME's," he said, "the Jerries immediately formed a huge Lufberry protective circle. We did the same - but on the outside. Every time a Jerry plane tried to get out of the circular trap, we had him cold - like a fish in a rain-barrel." Parker saw two of his victims bail out and saw the other two enemy planes crash. The enemy's Lufberry broke when the few remaining planes split-up, only to have two more destroyed on the deck by the attacking P-51's.

Extracted from the XVFC, Courtesy of Ed Hodges.

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

PRESENT CARD NO. _____

DATE _____

NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____
Number/Street _____ City/State _____ Zip Code _____

CHECK ENCLOSED (\$10) FOR 1983 MEMBERSHIP (TAX DEDUCTIBLE)

LIFE MEMBERSHIP (\$150) CHECK ENCLOSED (TAX DEDUCTIBLE)
(Make checks payable to 15th Air Force Association)

My present plans for the 40th Reunion at March AFB in November 1983:

Definitely Attend Probably Attend Can't Attend Uncertain

Mail check and renewal to: Fifteenth Air Force Association, P.O. Box 15,
March AFB, Calif. 92518

REUNION NOTICES

2nd BOMB GROUP, Menger Hotel, San Antonio, TX, Oct. 6-9, 1983. Contact: Dr. L.E. Ihle, 346 W. Mariposa St., San Antonio, TX 78212

97th BOMB GROUP, (Eng, Africa, Italy), Henry VII Motel, St. Louis, MO, Sept. 16-17, 1983. Contact: Clarence Hammes, 15 Avilla Heights South, Alexander, AR 72002.

AMERICAN EX-POWS, INC., Stouffers Inn on the Square, Cleveland, OH, July 20-22, 1983. Contact: American Ex-POW 1983 Convention, P.O. Box 34083, Cleveland, OH 44134.

459th BOMB GROUP, New Orleans, LA, Oct, 1983. Contact: Ed Murphy, 3711 Rue Delphine, New Orleans, LA 70114.

376th BOMB GROUP, Daytonian Hotel, Dayton, OH, July 30-Aug. 1, 1983. Contact: Tim Holt, Box 727, Hutchinson, KS, 67501.

780th BOMB SQ & OTHER 465th BOMB GROUP PERSONNEL, Las Vegas, NV, Sept. 22-25, 1983. Contact: Bernard Bezinover, P.O. Box 107, Northridge, CA, 91328.

783rd BOMB SQ, Falcon Inn, Colorado Spgs., CO, Sept. 23-26, 1983. Contact: Don P. Kay, 2000 Scott Lane, Los Altos, CA 94022.

463rd BOMB GROUP, Amarillo, TX, Oct. 6-8, 1983. Contact: John Boyett, 3500 E. 15th, Amarillo, TX 79104.

319th BOMB GROUP, Sheraton National Hotel, Arlington, VA, Oct. 19-23, 1983. Contact: Harold Oyster, 662 Deering Drive, Akron, OH 44313.

321st BOMB GROUP & STRAT MISSILE WG., Grand Forks AFB, ND, Sept. 6-8, 1983. Contact: Maj. James Boensch, 447th SMW/DO, Grand Forks AFB, ND, 58205.

48th BOMB SQ, Desert Inn Hotel, Las Vegas, NV, Oct. 27-30. Contact: Gene Olsen, 3949 Canyon Road, Lafayette, CA 94549.

397th BOMB GROUP, Holiday Inn, Tampa International Airport, Tampa, FL, Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 1983. Contact: Nevin F. Price, P.O. Box 1786, Rockville, MD, 20850.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Frank English, Whittier, CA writes that the Greek Embassy has notified him that he has been awarded the Commemorative Medal of World War II. (Reference announcement in April *SORTIE*). Inquiries/documentation of missions in or near Greece should be sent to the: Air Attaché, Embassy of Greece, 2228 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

Presidio Press announces the publication of Leroy Newby's book on Ploesti with an indorsement from Lt Gen James H. Doolittle. "The first time I have seen so well recorded the bombardier's side of the combat story."

Carol Rizzo, who is writing a book about the 15th Air Force, has developed a questionnaire to assist in her research. While she expects to attend our reunion and conduct in-person interviews, many of you will receive her questionnaire. We endorse her work and solicit your cooperation in documenting our history. We have been "the other Air Force" too long!

Flash (continued from page 3)

What an opportunity! - You can be immortalized in a commemorative book, be recognized in a museum display, support a national advertising campaign for our Association, help us build our files and museum exhibits without giving up your originals, and have an ideal gift for children and grandchildren who keep asking "But what did you do in the service?" Ben Franklin in the same history book with Gen Doolittle?!

Fifteenth Air Force Association
P.O. Box 15
March Air Force Base, CA 92518



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July 1983

SORTIE

Page 16

REUNION NEWS (Continued from Page One)

As you can see from the reunion program, our planning for the 40th Anniversary Celebration has progressed to the point where we can begin to see "the light at the end of the tunnel." most of the major activities have been finalized and we are beginning to deal with the myriad details that must be addressed before November.

We have planned a fast paced program that offers a variety of activities. Your registration form will provide you with the opportunity to select those events which appeal to your personal interests.

You will be receiving your registration package in the next few weeks. I urge you to return your registration form and the check as soon as possible. Some of our activities could become space limited if our response is as great as preliminary polls indicate. While we will do all that is possible to accommodate everyone, all reunion activities will be reserved on a first-come basis. Please respond to the registration request promptly.

If you have not reserved a motel room, you should do so immediately from the list furnished in the April *SORTIE*. This list will be repeated in the registration mailing.

Except for a limited desert shuttle, no commercial air carrier offers service to Riverside. The nearest airport with commercial service is the Ontario Airport. At the present, the only surface transportation from Ontario to Riverside is either a rental car or a commercial van service. Since both are expensive, we are endeavoring to offer an alternative. Our problem in this regard is money, but we will continue to search for a better system. Until advised otherwise, plan to arrange your own transportation to the Riverside motels.

We are soliciting financial assistance from a number of sources to help us defray the extra costs associated with the program and events listed on the front page. While a small registration fee will help, we need more than is presently projected from this source. If you can help, please advise us.

Regardless, we are confident that this will be a great

time of nostalgia, reflection, renewal, and celebration among comrades and friends. When the roll is called, we need you to answer. See you in November!

DEDICATION

We dedicate our reunion to those who cannot attend and are best represented by a B-17 waist gunner who was killed on April 17, 1944 while participating in a bombing mission. This poem was found among his personal effects.

When Duty Called

*We've laid aside our peaceful tasks,
We've packed our kits and gone to war,
We loved those things we left behind,
But loved our country even more.*

*And though we lie in some strange land,
Forgotten perhaps, by all but God,
We rest in peace because we know
Transgressor's heels shall never grind
Our country's flag into the dust.*

*We know, because we made it so.
The lad whose hands have milked the cow,
Whose hands have guided straight the plow;
He did not shirk his country's call,
But gladly gave his live, his all.*

*We loved the murmur of the brook.
that flows between the mountain slopes;
The golden moon that softly smiled
As if it shared our secret hopes.*

*We loved the whisper of the rain
Upon the roof tops overhead;
The gleam of sun upon the snow.*

*We sacrificed these things we loved
To keep our flag forever free.
We know, because we made it so.*

*The lad whose hands made tools of steel,
Whose hands have held the big truck's wheel;
He did not shirk his country's call,
But gladly gave his live, his all.*

— An American Sergeant

Courtesy: John Mattison