

HAPPY  
REUNION

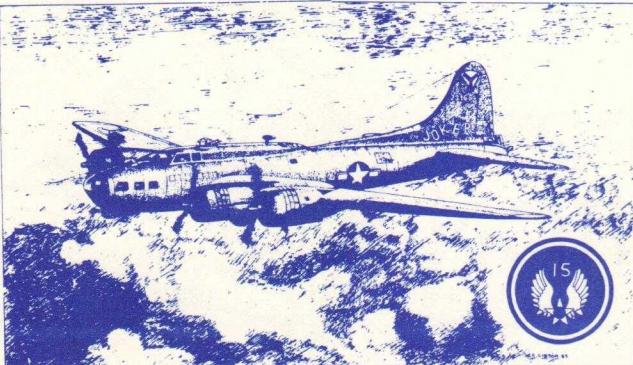


HAPPY NEW YEAR

# The 15th Air Force Association Post Exchange

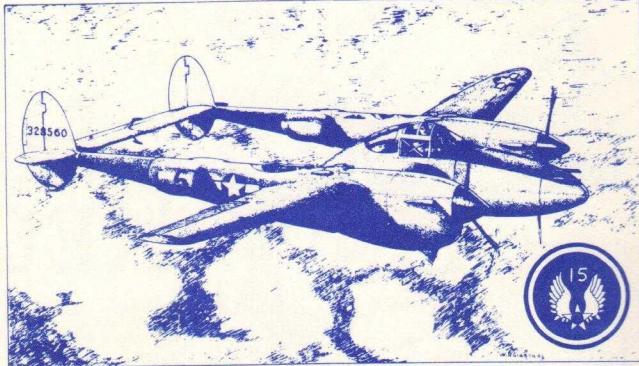
Our new PX is a mail order operation which offers a reasonably priced line of quality concession items useful to promote our history, raise needed funds, and provide another member service, since most of the items are unique and not generally available. Our first offering includes over 50 items. The order form on page 20 has complete listings with prices and directions for ordering. Space limitations prevent a complete description of each item in every edition. This page will be devoted to descriptions and photos of some items in each edition. The item number is keyed to the order form.

41.



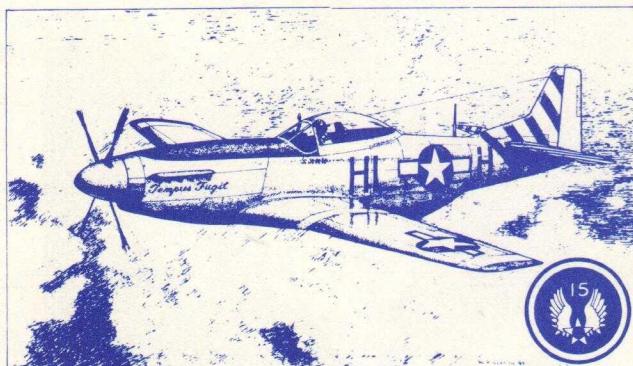
A B17 Flying Fortress Bomber of the 15th Air Force 5th Bomb Wing 97th B.G., 414 Sqn.

42.



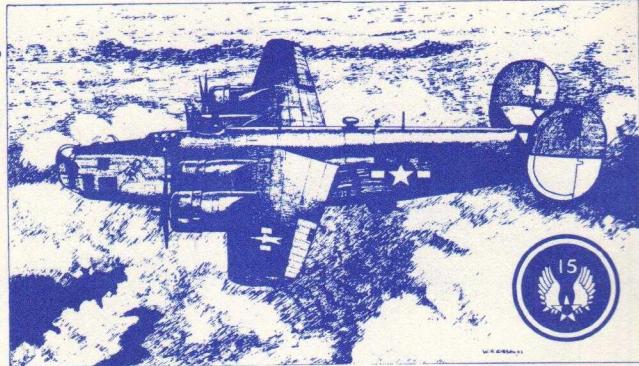
P38 LIGHTNING of the 15th Air Force 1st Fighter Group

43.



P51 MUSTANG "TEMPS FUGIT" of the 15th Air Force 31st Fighter Group

44.



B 24 LIBERATOR "REDDY MAID" of the 15th Air Force 454th Bomb Group.

26. 5-TO-GO by LePac ..... \$50.00

Complete set of nylon luggage that packs up into a small utility kit. Packing Case - 24"x18"x7"; Duffle Bag - 18"x11"; Carry On -21"x13"x6"; Utility Kit - 11"x7"x2½"; Garment Bag - 42"x12"x1½"; Color - Navy Blue.

27. 15th Air Force Story ..... \$ 7.95

By Rust. From France to the Balkans, shuttle bombing between Italy and Russia, Ploesti attacks, etc.

28. Flight Manual, B-24 ..... \$10.95

Development of the B-24, Cockpit Controls, Flying Characteristics, Power Plant, Crew Positions, etc. 164 pages, 115 Photos, drawings and graphs. 8½"x11" Softbound.

29. B-24 Liberators at War ..... \$16.95

By Freeman. The Mediterranean, So. Pacific, Ploesti, Borneo, Kawajalein, Iwo Jima, the 8th, 13th and 15th Air Forces. Nose art, vintage photos of air combat, personal stories of air and ground crews. 200 Photos. 8½"x11" Hardbound.

30. B-17 Flying Fortress ..... \$15.95

Color profiles, cockpit interiors, vintage photos of WWII. 10"x13" with 30"x13" foldouts.

31. Bomber Pilot; Memoir of WW II ..... \$18.00

A B-24 pilot's first-hand account of his war experiences including low level over Ploesti, bombing raids over the Normandy Invasion, Berlin, Sicily and Italy.

32. Target Ploesti ..... \$15.95  
by 15th AFA member Ted Newby. A stirring account by one of our own of his "view from the bombsight". Recommended by Gen Doolittle & Gen Bywater.

33. The Thunderbirds ..... \$25.00  
USAF Air Demonstration Team Silkscreened in five colors on aluminum. 7½"x11¼". Framed with team signatures and official logo.

34. USAF KC-135 Tanker ..... \$25.00  
Refueling a B-52 bomber. Silkscreened in 3 colors on aluminum. 7¼"x11¼" Framed.

35. USAF B-17G "Sally B"  
(a) Silkscreened in 1 color on aluminum. 7¼"x11¼" Framed. ..... \$23.00  
(b) Etched in copper. 18¼"x12¼" with Rosewood Frame. ..... \$30.00

36. USAF SR-71 "Blackbird"  
(a) Silkscreened in black on aluminum. 7¼"x11¼" Framed. ..... \$15.00  
(b) Etched in copper with SAC emblem. 14½"x12½". Rosewood Frame ..... \$27.00

# SORIE



Vol. III No. I

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

February 1984

## *"Celebration Was a Great Success"*



### OUR REUNION

Fifteenth Air Force celebrated its fortieth anniversary in grand style November 10-13, 1983 at March AFB and nearby Riverside, California.

"The Celebration was a great success," said Ben Franklin, Executive Director of the Fifteenth Air Force Association, one of the event's co-sponsors. "The feedback has been overwhelming. We have received hundreds of letters from those who attended filled with the same warmth and camaraderie that was so prevalent during the reunion. We are touched by the outpouring of genuine affection and encouraged by the many expressions of support. This was truly a gathering of the Fifteenth family!"

Franklin said that more than 800 people registered for the celebration. "We had people from 38 states attend, many from as far away as New England and Florida."

Eight former commanders of Fifteenth Air Force joined the current commander, Lt Gen James E. Light, Jr., in the celebration of our fortieth birthday. Past commanders in attendance were Gen Leon W. Johnson, World War II Medal of Honor recipient; Lt Gen Archie J. Old, Jr.; Lt Gen William K. Martin; Gen Jack J. Catton; Gen Paul K. Carlton; Lt Gen William F. Pitts; Gen James P. Mullins; and Lt Gen John J. Murphy.

Anniversary celebration events actually began early with registration on Wednesday the 9th for those departing on Thursday tours of Southern California. On Thurs-

The Board of Governors, the Board of Directors, and officers of the Fifteenth Air Force Association. (Front, from the left: Lt Gen Light, Gen Carlton, Gen Catton, Lt Gen Murphy, Lt Gen Martin, Lt Gen Pitts. Rear, from the left: Chief Holley, Col Coolidge, Chief Doeble, Lt Col Jorgensen, Col Smith, Chief Baldwin, Col Kimmel, Mr. English, Maj Gen Maxson, Lt Col Franklin, Brig Gen Bywater.) Note: Gen Johnson, Gen Mullins, Lt Gen Old and Col Manyo were not available for the picture but were in attendance for the reunion.

day morning tour buses loaded and departed for Disneyland, Universal Studios, Los Angeles and across the border to Tijuana, Mexico. As our "tourists" scattered to see the sights and our golfers began the trek to the greens, hundreds of others began arriving at the reception center. It was a busy day filled with reunions and more than a few war stories that seemed to get better as the refreshments sharpened memories of the past. By early evening a collection of tired golfers and weary tourists joined their more "laid back" comrades in an informal cocktail mixer at the reception center. General Light and Gen Bywater provided words of welcome.

Friday's events began with a membership meeting at the base theater. See Ben's *Small Talk* column for highlights.

After the meeting, hundreds of members and their families joined a crowd of several thousand people for the annual Veterans Day service at the Riverside National Cemetery. As the 15th Air Force Band played and a missing man formation flew by in tribute, it was a time for us to pause in our celebration to remember friends and comrades who are not and never will be forgotten.

*Continued on Page 18*

## President's Message

The 40th Anniversary Celebration of Fifteenth Air Force is now history, but the walls still reverberate with the magnificence of the occasion. It was truly a rewarding experience for all of us who were involved in its presentation. From the numerous enthusiastic responses, other attendees apparently share this same view. We have expanded the Mail Call for this issue to share some of the comments from those who participated in this unique time of camaraderie and friendship.

It is with the utmost sincerity that I express my gratitude to all the committee members for their many hours of time and devotion to make the occasion a success. We also express our appreciation to all the others who joined with us to achieve our common goal.

It is heartening to see so many membership renewals and we strongly encourage all who have not done so to respond as soon as possible. Our reunion is but an example of what we can achieve, if we all work together and give full support to our Association.

*Murray A. Bywater*

Murray A. Bywater  
Brig Gen, USAF, Ret.  
President



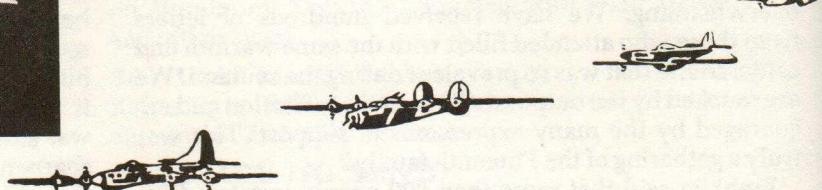
Gen Bywater renews an old friendship with Gen Lewis Lyle

## 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  
Gen James P. Mullins  
Gen Leon W. Johnson  
Gen Jack J. Catton  
Gen Paul K. Carlton  
Lt Gen Archie J. Old Jr.  
Lt Gen William K. Martin  
Lt Gen William F. Pitts  
Lt Gen Bryan M. Shotts  
Lt Gen John J. Murphy  
Lt Gen James E. Light, Jr.  
Lt Gen James V. Edmundson  
Maj Gen John A. Brashears  
Maj Gen Harold E. Humfeld  
Maj Gen Stanley C. Beck  
Maj Gen Lewis E. Lyle  
Maj Gen Francis W. Nye  
Maj Gen Patrick J. Halloran  
Brig Gen Murray A. Bywater  
Brig Gen William M. Constantine  
Brig Gen Regis F.A. Urschler  
Brig Gen E.G. Shuler Jr.  
Brig Gen Roger W. Smith  
Brig Gen Harold A. Strack  
Col Barrie S. Davis  
Col Martin E. Plocher  
Capt Revis G. Sirmon  
Col John S. Fairfield  
Lt Col Paul R. Schulz  
SSgt Louis E. Cook  
Col David G. Wells  
TSgt Ernest J. Pellington  
Max A. Dosland  
TSgt Archie Piirainen  
Lt Col John E. Fernsler  
Sherwood D. Johnson  
Maj Lawrence Langlois  
Maj I.W. Boswell  
Lt Col Alfred M. Janssen  
Col Robert E. Kimmel  
Lt Col George R. Olds  
CMSgt Robert Nicoletti  
Col John K. Coolidge  
Col Joseph G. Manyo  
Maj Robert E. Lehnher

Robert L. Wood Jr.  
Col Marvin J. Gottschall  
Col I. Louis Hoffmann  
Major Henry J. Kreiensiek  
Lt Col Joedale T. Reesing  
CMSgt Richard H. Holley  
John S. Howell  
Capt Thomas F. Hart  
Col William E. Lewis  
Lt Col Donald L. Snyder  
1Lt V. James Barison  
Eldon J. Tobias  
Frank H. English  
William F. Huggins  
Robert D. Jacobsen  
L.C. Thompson  
Col John C. Nagle  
Lt Col Lawrence Stumpf  
Howard P. Woodyard  
Col Guy H. Holt  
SMSgt James A. Barton  
Irving Shapiro  
Lt Col Paul F. Jorgensen  
Floyd D. Bender  
Capt. Robert H. Cockreham  
Col John W. Lee  
Col Edward B. Fitch  
Col Bruce S. Goodhue  
Col John P. Doolittle  
Col Fountain L. Gregory  
Col Vincent A. Bell  
Lt Col Thomas R. Moss  
Maj Nimrod Wells  
Lt Col Alvin S. Neighbours  
Col Arthur S. Olson  
Lt Col Randall W. Fentress  
Lt Col David A. Schroll  
Lt Col Warren E. Kuhlber  
Sherrill Burba  
Col Vincent T. Scarano  
Col Paul E. Bell  
TSgt R.D. Currier  
SSgt Robert H. Armstrong  
Lt Col Robert B. Kelley



## 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.

# SORTIE



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

The Celebration was an incredible success and surpassed all our expectations. While it is over, the times we shared will live in our hearts forever. I thank all of you committee people who worked so hard, who gave so much of yourselves, who touched and were touched — you are special. And those of you who attended from all over our country — you are certainly special. I have never experienced such an outpouring of affection and warmth and friendship and camaraderie. You make me proud to be a member of the Fifteenth Air Force family. I look forward to Seattle and a renewal of the spirit we shared.

Seattle! We agreed in our membership meeting held during the reunion to next meet in Seattle on 26-28 July 1985. While the details are still being worked, we do know that The Boeing Corporation and many of the World War II Bomb Groups will participate in festivities commemorating the 50th anniversary of the B-17. Indications are that 8th Air Force will join us in Seattle. Some activities will be planned to join together all veterans, and others will be planned to provide us with time for exclusive 15th Air Force activities. More details will be provided as we work the problem. I particularly appreciate the many Seattle members who saw me after the reunion and volunteered to help. We will make contact in the near future as we develop our plans.

At our annual membership meeting, we did not have the attendance necessary for a quorum as defined by our state charter. In the absence of a quorum, our Board of Directors choose to retain all previous directors and expand by adding three additional members to the Board. These are: Lt Col Paul F. Jorgensen, USAF, Retired, 82 FG; Mr. Frank H. English, 99 BG; and Chief Leonard T. Baldwin, USAF, Retired, 15th Hq. Each of these new members bring special talents and interests to the Board and will significantly increase our present capability. Welcome!

We have expanded the Sortie to 20 pages and added our *Post Exchange*. The merchandise is top quality and reasonably priced. Your orders will assist us in raising needed funds to sustain our operation. Many of our standard features have been temporarily removed to provide additional space for reunion coverage. Most will be restored in the next edition.

You will notice a significant increase in our life memberships since the reunion. Others have begun installment payments. We appreciate and are encouraged by these tangible expressions of support. We need it. Thank You.

The number of registrations for our commemorative book have been disappointing. We had hoped to have sufficient reservations at this point to guarantee publication. We encourage you to respond to the mailouts as soon as possible. If there is insufficient support, the project will be cancelled and all monies returned. I will work with the publisher to extend the cutoff date to give the project every chance. General Bywater and the Board are satisfied that the book will become a treasure and is certainly worth the price. I am willing to work the hours required over the next year to insure that it will be a quality product, but the decision is yours.



Ben Franklin and Mr. Buddy Gilman of the McDonnell Douglas Corporation, meet during roll out ceremonies for a new addition to the 22nd Air Refueling Wing's fleet of KC-10 tankers. McDonnell Douglas is a corporate member and strong supporter of our Association and its goals.

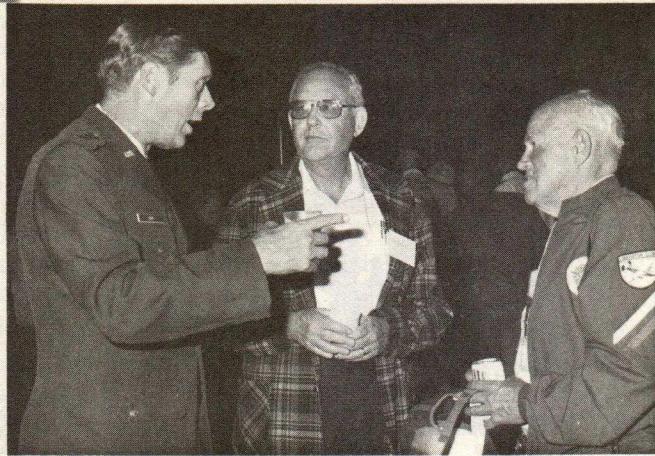
As reported in the last *SORTIE*, membership in the Fifteenth Air Force Association is now based on a member year versus a calendar year, ie., if you joined March 1983, your membership will expire in March 1984. We are in the process of preparing a major mailing requesting membership renewal. Our annual dues remain at \$10 which is tax deductible. Please respond promptly — we need the money. All of our expenses increased with the reunion and renewals declined during the holidays!

I was recently invited to participate in "roll out" ceremonies at the McDonnell Douglas Plant in Long Beach of a new KC-10 tanker for the 22 AREFW at March. McDonnell Douglas is a corporate member of the Fifteenth Air Force Association and a strong supporter of our goals and plans. During the visit I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Buddy Gilman, who was the first to respond to our request for corporate assistance. His outstanding support and service to our Association is deeply appreciated. As an aside, on a short refueling mission back to the base, I had the opportunity to observe our 22nd in action — friends, we are in good hands. Lt Col Joe Hudson, our 15th Air Force Association project officer, was pilot and he flies as well as he campaigns! Thanks to Joe and the 22nd.

And thanks are in order for Lt Col Dave Williams, our project officer at the 44th Strategic Missile Wing. Dave and the 44th have been outstanding supporters of our Association. The 44th now has more members than any WW II Bomb Group or active duty wing with the exception of the 22nd at March. This is an extraordinary achievement since the majority of the 44th members are young airmen and officers. Your appreciation of your heritage and your desire to promote it certainly earn you our salute and gratitude. Thanks to Dave and the 44th.

*-Ben-*

# OUR REUNION ALBUM



*Gen Light trades a few war stories*



*Lovely lady makes our vets forget war stories*



*Old friends share a drink*



*Nineteenth hole*



*Tee time*



*Ellen makes a sale at our concession booth*

# OUR REUNION ALBUM



*"It was Nov 1944 and I was on my 38th mission when . . ."*

*More tall tales with Gen Light*



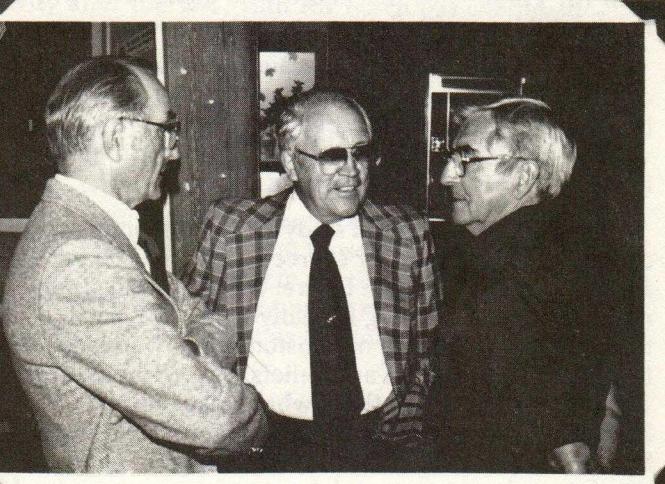
*"Happy Birthday to 15th Air Force"*



*"Jitterbugs"*



*Happy Hour*



*Tall Tales Time*

# THERE'S NO FUTURE IN A PRESENT WITHOUT A PAST

*Reunion Keynote Address by General James P. Mullins*



General Mullins delivers our keynote address

Every time I attend functions like this 40th Anniversary Celebration – functions which are so steeped in history, I am reminded of the teacher who asked her first-graders what they knew about George Washington. A little girl stood up and offered the following response: "George Washington was a very bad boy. He cut down a cherry tree and his father spanked him until he couldn't sit down." She paused for a breath. "And that," she concluded, "is why he stood up in the boat."

It is an interesting phenomenon of human history that our view of the past is often incomplete and inaccurate. That's because history is often a blend of fact and fiction – with fiction filling in where fact is missing. And that's why we are all here today – to preserve the historical facts of 15th Air Force – so that those who come later will not have to fill it in with fiction.

Our heritage is important because we are important. Indeed, like any legacy or tradition, our heritage is something carried from one generation to another – something which gives us the facts of our past, so that we might better know who we are and where we are going.

The past is clearly worth studying and remembering, because it is really the only source of information we have about the present and the future. Our past is all around us now, living and growing in many forms we usually take for granted. It's there in our customs and courtesies – it's there in our institutions and beliefs – it's there in the laws we live under. In fact, that's what makes our heritage so important – because it's not just a postmortem on a bygone time; rather, it's an effective way for us to understand ourselves today and better chart our course for tomorrow.

George Santayana's words that, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" alludes to the practical value of knowing our heritage. For it can indeed show us the way to success – and it can steer us clear of the many well-worn roads to failure.

Our heritage can also provide us with the personal identity we need – it can remind us of that which we're a part of – and it can give us the inner strength to meet the sobering challenges ahead. This is especially true in a military organization where the environment can be hostile – where life can be dangerous and austere – and where responsibility can be awesome. Indeed, knowing and having pride in one's military heritage can very literally be the difference between success and failure – death and survival. And not just for us, but for all we're here to protect.

It's important to understand, however, that our military heritage is not indestructible, nor is the special power it gives us to see into the future, and cope with the challenges we face. For without nourishment, our heritage will decay; without concern, it will fall from the realm of the living – a useless or misunderstood relic of a forgotten time, especially among our younger people.

The real danger is not that all sense of history will fade, because it won't. Most Americans will always want to identify strongly with their past, because it's their nature to do so. In fact, a substantial amount of research has shown that most people in this country consider themselves somewhat old fashioned in their tastes and habits. Especially as they get older, Americans tend to latch onto whatever legacy or tradition they can readily find to help them understand themselves, and cope with the problems of life.

The real danger today for many young Americans – especially many young military people – is that their true heritage may not be around for them to latch onto when they need it – that like the little girl and George Washington, they will have to invent a mythology to identify with, one which provides an inaccurate or inadequate view of what they really are – and where they're really going.

This planet is a tangible thing – but how we live on it is not. We are, indeed, creatures of our thoughts – memory patterns shaped by our own experiences, or by the experiences of others passed on to us. Many of you in this room enjoy uncounted and largely unrecorded memories of the past – memories based on your personal experiences. From those World War II days when B-24's and B-17's filled the skies over Europe to the Cold War period when the Atlas, Minutemen, and the Titans, along with their aircraft brethren, stood guard over our democracy – it was you, the members of 15th Air Force, who were there. And it was you, the members of 15th Air Force, who lived and learned and grew.

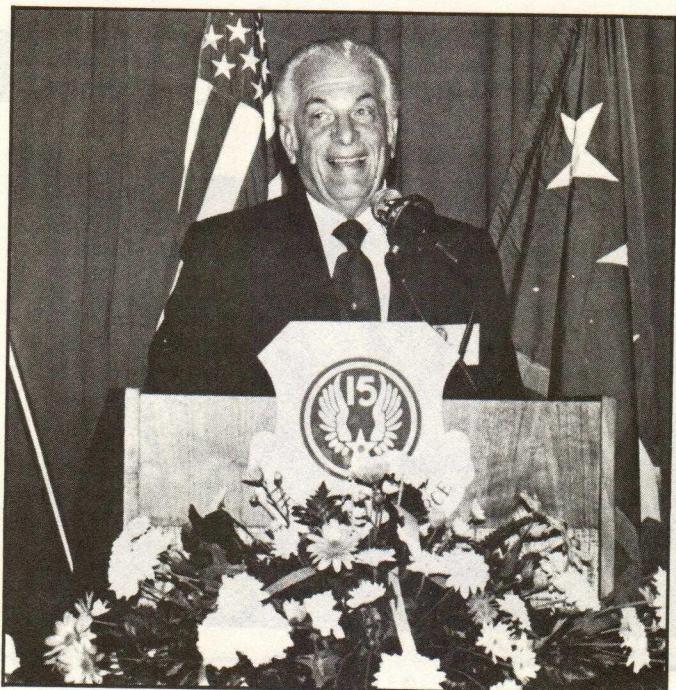
And that's why it is now you who must provide those experiences to others. For you and only you represent the heritage of 15th Air Force. If that heritage is to survive – if it is to remain intact – if it is to accurately reflect the successes and failures of yesteryear for those who will follow,

Unfortunately, one of the tendencies of a high technology society – a society like we have today in the modern Air Force – is to readily discard the old in favor of the new. And frankly, we in 15th Air Force are not without guilt in this regard. We've painted red "X's" on those old buildings which once gave us shelter, then watched as they were torn down so that new ones could take their place – but rarely did we think about all the history which was being destroyed with them.

We routinely condemned our old airplanes and missiles – those which served us and this country so well, then watched as they were scrapped for the value of their parts – but rarely did we think about the meaning which was being dispatched with them.

And we changed or ignored many of our old traditions and customs, some of which had been passed down for thousands of years – because suddenly they seemed irrelevant to modern life – or perhaps just too much trouble for us to preserve. But rarely did we think fully about that part of us they represented – that part of us which we are allowing to die.

What is done is done – what has been allowed to happen cannot be reversed. For once exterminated, our past cannot be brought back. No longer can we produce an original B-17 – no longer can we construct an original Atlas launch facility – no longer can we build an original World War II barracks – and no longer do we fully understand or even follow many of our original customs and courtesies.



Gen Bywater recognizes our distinguished guests

Fortunately, in recent years, we, the present and former members of 15th Air Force, have made a concerted effort to establish museums – to write monographs – to generate such symbols of our heritage as the 15th Air Force song and motto – and, of course, we've created this Association. But we have a long way to go, and perhaps not that much time left to get there.

Already fewer and fewer artifacts of yesteryear remain – already the ranks of our World War II members are thinning – and already we've forfeited much of the essence of what we were. That's why I believe we need to move and move quickly to preserve the parts of our past which have yet to be preserved – to preclude even more of our rich heritage from being lost forever.

It was on November 1, 1943, when 15th Air Force was constituted – and it was on November 2nd when we flew our first combat missions. And except for a short period of inactivity after the war, 15th Air Force has continued – from Tunis, Tunisia to Bari, Italy – from Colorado Springs, Colorado to Riverside, California.

In many ways, we are today and will be tomorrow what we have always been. And in many ways, we are facing today and will face tomorrow challenges we have always faced. We who have been part of 15th Air Force have much to be thankful for. For we are indeed fortunate that our heritage is so strong – that those golden orange wings of our insignia carry with them the power of our past. I am confident that with your continuing efforts, those who are yet to follow us will be just as fortunate.

Thank you.



Ben Franklin was our Master of Ceremonies

# OUR REUNION ALBUM



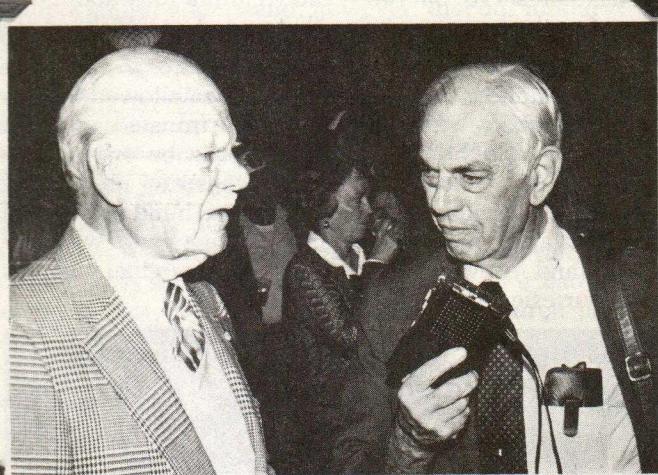
*An historic gathering*



*They still have those "fifty mission grins."*



*Gen Brashear knows a few war stories too*



*Randy records a moment for history with Gen Johnson*

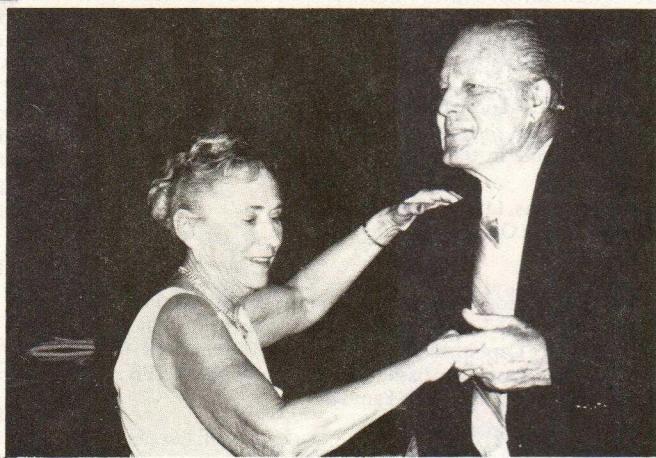


*Welcome, Gen Leon W. Johnson*



*Col Doug Cairns presents a 485th BG history to Gen Bywater*

# OUR REUNION ALBUM



*Still sweethearts*



*SSgt Bob Armstrong and WASP Maurine Wilson — and they still fit!*



*"Then the flak started"*



*From Ploesti to Hanoi we share a heritage*



*Wayne has an unforgettable moment at the museum*



*Al Lloyd makes a presentation to Gen Light*

# MAIL CALL MAIL CALL MAIL CALL

Dear Murray:

I am sure that for those of you who lived it day-in and day-out for the past three years, the 40th Anniversary Celebration will remain a living memory. It certainly was a memorable affair – one which everyone in attendance seemed to thoroughly enjoy. You are more than welcome to use my keynote address, a copy of which is attached. As you so aptly pointed out, this is but the beginning. It's upward and onward – with the next step 100,000 members. From there, with Ben Franklin and the team he's assembled, the sky's the limit. Barbara joins me in sending you all our very best wishes, and let me know if I can be of any assistance.

James P. Mullins  
General, USAF

Dear Ben:

I've gotten myself painted into a corner in connection with Armistice Day [Nov 11 and thereafter] in Albany, Oregon, which is an annual affair that I have attended for many years, and will not be able to attend the 15th Air Force Association activities. Am sincerely sorry about this as I would like very much to be on hand . . . My best to all and every good wish for a most auspicious 15th Air Force Association get-together.

J.H. Doolittle  
Lt Gen, USAF, Ret.

Dear Ben:

The Fifteenth Air Force 40th Anniversary celebration was a first class event from beginning to end – a tribute to your enthusiasm, inspiration, and sheer hard work. Although I received many laudatory comments about all aspects of the program, the two evening functions received the most praise. The dinner dance and banquet were exactly the kind of patriotic/nostalgic events that everyone hoped for and particularly enjoyed. Your performance as MC both evenings was superb – providing just the right combination of warmth and humor. All former Fifteenth Air Force commanders there were highly complimentary about the planning and execution of the celebration activities. Ben, it was a memorable celebration, and you deserve the major credit. My personal appreciation to you for making it all happen.

James E. Light, Jr.  
Lt Gen, USAF  
Commander

Dear Murray:

It was a great weekend and you and Ben are to be congratulated with all the other workers who made the reunion a success. Mary and I were truly impressed with the originality of the activities, and the good taste in which all the events were executed. Please extend to everyone my appreciation and thanks for making the 1st reunion a tremendous success. I am so happy that Archie Old was able to be present. Don't let Ben get away, he's a jewel.

William K. Martin  
Lt Gen, USAF, Ret.

Dear Ben:

Just a note to thank you for four memorable days. My wife, Eloise, and I found many pleasant memories returning of our own active duty with the Air Force so many, many years ago. Col Tommy Harrison is to be especially commended for his ability to make us feel a part of the organization. His warmth and friendly humor was appreciated. All active duty personnel with whom we had contact were most courteous and helped to make our stay at March AFB most pleasant. Ben, thank you and your staff for all the blood, sweat, and tears and congratulations on conducting a most memorable reunion.

Clarence and Eloise O'Donnell  
Los Altos, CA

Dear Ben:

Just wanted to write and thank you for all the work you did setting up the great 15th Air Force reunion. They were three fun filled days for me and our crew and wives . . . Incidentally, our crew came up with a slogan for the Seattle get together and it is "Stay Alive Until '85". We look

forward to the next reunion and hope to be able to attend.

Robert H. Leebody  
Pacific Palisades, CA

Dear Ben:

Our membership drive continues to progress in an outstanding manner. I feel confident that the 44th Strategic Missile Wing leads the pack of missile wings and probably all active units in 15 AF. We will continue to aggressively tell the 15 AF Association story, and look forward to playing a key role in the history and future endeavors of the 15 AF Association.

David M. Williams, Lt Col, USAF  
44th SMW Project Officer

Dear Sirs:

Please enter my sons as new members in the 15th Air Force Association. They were both born at March AFB during my tour there in the 22 BW . . . They are Capt Mark Pestana, Aircraft Commander, Offutt AFB and Capt Steven Pestana, Missile Officer, Vandenberg AFB . . . as you can see we are a "15th Air Force Family".

Edward F. Pestana, MSgt, USAF, Ret.  
Merced, CA

15th AFA Office and Staff:

Rosemary and I checked into the reunion Nov 10th. We want to extend our thanks and appreciation to all the staff and volunteer labor that helped make the *whole* thing so great. We'll see you in Seattle!

Myrl and Rosemary Graham  
Windsor, CA

Dear Ben:

The events of this past weekend have been consuming ALL my thoughts, and have made me appreciate what you and your reunion group have done. My, God! Ben . . . THAT WAS AN EVENT. It was put together with tact and feeling. It excluded no one. It took in the old – the present – and brought in the new. The recognition of the current young enlisted persons was a touch that softened a lot of our generation. I shall be humming the Air Force Song for a lot of days to come . . . You read the toast and Final Flight with such feeling that there were many in the audience that brought forth the hankies. Your crediting me for those words put me on cloud 9. Randall Fentress sought me out during the next break and thanked me for adding my words towards such a solemn and auspicious happening. The folks across the table from me were close friends of Sherrill Burba (composer of the prayer), being in the 485th BG as well. We, indeed, had a lot to discuss . . . The people! Ben, let me tell you about them. They were all "top-drawer". I didn't find a sour apple nor a negative person in the whole audience. My contacts with people reflected only the highest praise for this effort. From the flight line to the food line all I heard was how much everyone was making contacts and truly enjoying themselves . . . What would you like from us as a Group? Lord knows, you've got my support.

Robert Karstensen, Pres. 451st Bomb Group, Ltd.  
Marengo, IL

Dear Murray:

My heartiest congratulations to you, the Board, and Ben Franklin for producing such an outstanding 40th Anniversary Celebration. None of the attendees will ever forget the event. It was so great seeing so many old friends at such a fine affair.

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

Dear Ben:

I know you must be pleased with the truly extraordinary results of all your efforts during these past couple years. The anniversary celebration, by all accounts, was an unqualified success – largely due to your personal efforts and those of the dozens, indeed hundreds, of people you arranged to assist you. I join all of those who participated in thanking you and commanding you for an important job extremely well done.

James P. Mullins  
General, USAF

# MAIL CALL MAIL CALL MAIL CALL

Dear Sir:

It is indeed a small world! I am in Plano, Texas visiting my daughter – enroute from Racine, Wisconsin to Tucson, Arizona for the winter. Today George Shaw is laying tile in the kitchen. Of course, we older boys talk and I learn George was in the 459th and was a member of the 15th Air Force Association – and just happened to have copies of the *SORTIE* in his truck. This is the first time I have heard about the Assoc. So sign me up quick and I'll relay the material to my crew . . . We are looking for the navigator, Charles Cory – last address Leavenworth, Kansas, and Bruce Baum Martin, turret gunner from NY.

E.J. Amos Larsen, 461 BG  
Racine, WI

Dear Ben:

You, your wife, and staff put on a grand "party". We thoroughly enjoyed it! See you in '85.

Maddie & Cecil Hall, Lt Col, USAF, Ret.  
Oroville, CA

Dear Ben:

Sorry that I missed the reunion – heard about it too late, but hope I'll be around for the next one. Enclosed is my check for life membership. Hope you'll take an old ROM gunner in. Always been very proud to have been in the 15th. Still looking for 3 of our crew.

Bob Currier  
Jackson, MS

Dear Gen Bywater & Ben Franklin:

Helen and I enjoyed our stay in Riverside and the events surrounding the 40th Anniversary of the 15th. Thank you for the nice plaque. Ben, your work was outstanding in putting across the events you were Master of Ceremonies for. A great time was had by all. It was good to see all our old friends again.

P.K. Carlton  
General, USAF, Ret.

Ben:

Enclosed is my final payment toward life membership in the 15th Air Force Association. At the time of our membership meeting, I pledged upgrading my membership from a yearly to life membership. At this time I issue still another challenge and that is to obtain 25 new members during 1984. When you receive applications bearing the number "0066" in the lower right hand corner, you will be able to identify that application as one of mine. Keep up the good work. It sure reflected in the reunion!

Vincent T. Scarano, Col, USAF, Ret.  
Riverside, CA

Dear Ben:

Once again I want to thank you for all your favors to me. You are doing a great job for all of us, especially the ones who ask for information as I did on two occasions. So far you have done wonders for me in getting names and addresses of my former buddies. Keep up the good work and may God bless and keep you.

Herman C. Hoffman  
Haddon Heights, NJ

Dear Ben:

Thank you and everyone involved for a super, super reunion. I have tired to write this letter five time, but the adjectives to describe my impressions are not adequate – what I'm trying to say is it probably defies description without writing a book! Believe me, it was breathtaking! Every man or woman in Blue we met was an inspiration. From the guards at the gate, the people at the desks, the dance and banquet, plus the great band, groups, and color guards, right up to the commander, please pass along our thanks. It's a good feeling to know "we're in good hands." The tours were great – thank your tour people . . .

Bill Kearney, 454 BG  
Dayton, OH

Dear Ben:

My wife and I wish to thank you for all your efforts to make the reunion such a rewarding experience. I have always been proud to have been a member of the 15th but never more than at the memorial service at the National Cemetery and both beautiful nights at Raincross Square . . . Again, thank you for making us feel so good and proud to be Americans . . . the honor guards who were absolutely inspiring, the great 15th AF band . . . God willing, we will see you again in Seattle.

George Geraci  
Midlothian, IL

Dear Ben:

I received a notice a few weeks back about the commemorative book. I want to do something special to be sure that all of my crew will be included . . . I want to buy enough space so that the whole crew will be pictured.

V. James Barison  
Torrance, CA

Dear Ben:

. . . brought back memories as a woman ferry pilot in Air Transport Command, Love Field, Texas, WW II. Having flown as 1st Pilot in C-47's and Co-pilot in B-17's, the reference to the B-17s "Memphis Belle" and "Shoo Shoo Baby" reminded me of my ferrying twin engined Beechcrafts and target planes from factory and stopping at Tinker Field for refueling or overnight. I remember they were repairing B-17s day and night. There was a tiny cubicle with an Army cot upstairs and when I opened my door, I could look directly below into the hanger and watch repair going on, and would hear loud noises all night long, testing engines, etc. Don't know how I ever slept, but was so tired I could sleep any place . . . After flying in WWII, I worked at Walt Disney Studios for 5 years. I attended the 320th Air Refueling Sq reunion a few months ago . . . I went back to the Studio and got their original license agreement signed by Walt and an enlargement of the elephant and Mickey Mouse insignia for their reunion. If any other units had insignia for their planes designed by Walt Disney artists, would be happy to go back to studio to obtain copies for their reunions . . .

Maurine Wilson  
Riverside, CA

Dear Friends:

Your reply to our appeal to you for the March AFB Food Basket Program has stirred our hearts anew, for we really appreciate your generosity . . . you have shown your love and that indeed you are "your brother's keeper". May God bless you for helping to meet the challenge.

Cornelius P. O'Leary, CH, Col, USAF  
Installation Staff Chaplain

Dear Colonel Franklin

Father Saint John was a good friend and continues to be of General Faye Upthegrove. He was a catholic chaplain whom I met near Foggia back in the spring of 1944. I am enclosing \$10 with the request that Fr. St John be added to our roster. Unfortunately, I do not know his unit.

Robert L. Wood, Jr.  
Arlington, VA

Dear Ben:

Just a short note to tell you what a great job you did on the reunion. All of our 485th people join me in offering our congratulations. In addition, I would like to offer my services as a member of your proposed "lobbying" group to further military and retired goals.

Roger Monroe  
Newport Beach, CA

Dear Ben:

Congratulations on bringing off a great event! The hours of work you devoted to this program were apparent during its execution from beginning to end. I'm so impressed. Please find my check for \$150 for a life membership and many more years of pleasant association. Again, superb job!

Paul E. Bell, Col, USAF, Ret.  
Riverside, CA

# MAIL CALL MAIL CALL MAIL CALL

Dear Murray:

Congratulations to you, Ben Franklin, Tommy Harrison and all the Fifteenth Air Force Association staff for an absolutely superb 40th Anniversary Celebration. No one knows better than I about the heavy demands that were placed upon you and the hard work that went into making this event such a success. Clearly, taking an idea from scratch and in two short years turning it into a well-established and smoothly run association is no small task. To achieve what you have takes a commitment that is found only in our finest people. I know I don't have to tell you about the enthusiasm that was present during the anniversary. The camaraderie that flowed as veterans revisited their units through shared experiences clearly shows that the 15th Air Force has a rich heritage and one that must be preserved. The 15th Air Force Association will be a key factor in preserving this priceless heritage. . . If I can be of any help in your endeavors to keep the Association going, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

John A. Brashear, Maj Gen, USAF  
Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations

Dear Ben:

Just a line or two to let you know how much I enjoyed the reunion and dinners. The program was outstanding. You are to be commended for the fine job you did. I have heard several times from Ped Magness since our reunion and it's a shame that he had to miss it. But he is Gung Ho for Seattle in '85. I fell heir to the 97th BG newsletter with Don Hayes from Walla Walla . . .

Arvin (Mac) McCauley  
Downey, CA

Dear Ben:

It is with heavy heart that I must write and tell you that I will be unable to attend the 15th Anniversary. I spent the day with the doctor yesterday and additional heart trouble has developed. My orders not to attend the reunion. I had so planned on meeting you and possibly we could sneak a cup of coffee and out lie each other! Well my friend, God knows best and who am I to question why. Ben, I consider you a close friend even though we have never met. Take care.

Ped Magness, Lt Col, USAF, Ret.  
England, AR

Dear Ben:

I thank you for your *most* valuable part in putting together the whole thing. Ben, you naming me as a VIP in the presence of all the wonderful people of the 15th caused me to have that much more pride in that I served my country as well as I did. I like being your friend.

Louis Cook  
Jacksonville, FL

Dear Ben:

. . . Need I expound on the reunion? Truly a magnificent affair. I doff my cap to you and those who gave so much of themselves to insure its success. I am still deeply impressed with not only the superb major festivities, but also with the attention given to sundry mundane details — the variety of daytime activities — the busing arrangements — availability of personnel rosters, etc. Well done, Ben, so very well done. I only wish your schedule wasn't so hectic so that we may have been able to get to know each other a little better. The main purpose of this mini-tome is to renew my membership for 1984 and to request my status be changed from reserve to regular (life membership). God bless.

Robert B. Kelley, Lt Col, USAF, Ret.  
Bellevue, NE

Dear Ben:

Just a note to tell you how much I enjoyed the reunion. The efforts put into organizing and coordinating this event resulted in an experience none of us will ever forget. Enclosed is my check for 1984 dues . . .

Phil T. Clark Sr.  
Foxboro, MA

Dear Sir:

I received the 15th Air Force *SORTIE* yesterday. It was very interesting and I am enclosing a check for partial payment on a life membership. I understand that one of our crew members, ex SSgt Steve Podroskey, sent in all our names to your organization to be sent the *SORTIE*. I will write him about how much I appreciate it . . . One thing I have been unable to find are the 449 BG and 717 BS badges (insignia). I would appreciate any information on where these could be bought. . .

Chauncey E. Hart  
Randolph, NJ

Dear Ben:

After your very eloquent emceeing of the programs, right in the easy JFK manner, I feel familiar enough with you as to address you as Ben. One of the highlights of the reunion for me was saluting Gen Johnson. I had to tell him how lucky he really was. They had to hit Ploesti once or twice, but I had to go eleven times . . . the 40th anniversary was an opportunity for me personally to thank the Air Force and the country for the trade they taught this intermediate school dropout, to feed and raise his 18 kids decently. I thank them and I thank you for making it happen. By now you know, Ben, you're a chaplain too. In your duties of thanking those on your staff for doing such an excellent job, which they really did for us, I would like to give a special thanks to Lt Col Gary Eastep. Busy as he was, he gave my wife and I that little personal attention that was much appreciated. As they say "we needed that". Ben, thanks again for a memorable weekend. It was indeed a tribute to all. Well planned, well staged, excellent meals, smoothly run, wonderful speeches — Hell, I was tempted to enlist. If I can be of service I would be honored to oblige.

Bill Dukes (once TSgt William W. Dukes)  
Seattle, WA

Dear Ben:

After all these years I have finally found out about the 15 AFA. One of my daughters lives in California and went to your reunion and air show. She sent me all the info including a copy of the *SORTIE*. I want to tell you *that* is a real publication. I was a left waist gunner on a B-24H, "Sweating It Out", with the 743rd BS, 455 BG based near Cerignola. We lost lots of good men in our squadron and in all of the 15th. God bless them all! . . . I have and always will be so proud to have served in the 15th Air Force . . . Keep up the good work, Ben. You can bet your flak vest I will be at the next reunion.

Jim Bates  
Aurora, IL

Dear Ben:

Thank you for your effort in assisting with the attempt to locate members of our B-24 crew. Plans for the reunion are underway by the four of us who are in contact . . . would you please send me 3 more applications for membership to pass along to the 3 known crew members. Also 3 issues of *SORTIE*.

Charles Broun  
Manhattan Beach, CA

Dear Mr. Franklin:

I was delighted to receive your letter and membership application form in today's mail. And so with great pleasure, I have enclosed my annual dues for 1984 . . . I served with the 483 BG, 840 BS . . .

Richard J. Shire  
Port Charlotte, FL

Dear Ben:

Enclosed is 1984 membership fee. I have included a photo of my crew taken at Charleston, SC in 1944 prior to overseas shipment. We joined the 459 BG, 759 BS in Aug 1944. I am including my individual combat flight record which is typical of a tour with 15th AAF at the time and a poem "Panorama of Italy." I have ordered the 15th Air Force Story.

John B. Whitley, Lt Col, USAF, Ret.  
Colorado Springs, CO

# OUR MISSILES

The 44th Strategic Missile Wing is assigned to 15th Air Force and is based at Ellsworth AFB, Rapid City, South Dakota. Its history dates back to WW II when it was designated the 44th Bombardment Group. Equipped with B-24's it was assigned to 8th Air Force and based in England. After participation in the successful attack on the naval installation at Kiel, Germany on 14 May 1943, the unit was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation.

In late June 1943 a large detachment of the 44th was moved to bases in North Africa to support the invasion of Sicily. The detachment also participated in the low level attack on the oil fields of Ploesti on 1 August 1943. For this action, the unit was awarded another Distinguished Unit Citation and the commander, Colonel Leon Johnson, was awarded the Medal of Honor. In October the group reassembled in England where it remained until the end of the war. During the last year of the war, the 44th participated in the D-Day invasion, the Battle of the Bulge, and assaults across the Rhine. The group returned to the states in August 1945 and was deactivated.

In January 1962 the 44th was reactivated and designated as the 44th Strategic Missile Wing and permanently stationed at Ellsworth. The 44th received its first operational Titan I ICBM on 22 June 1962. The launch facilities were located near Wicksburg, Hermosa and Sturgis in South Dakota with each site equipped with three missiles.

Although the Titan I served as a mighty deterrent force, construction of the more advanced Minuteman system was already under way. The first Minuteman was positioned near Wall, South Dakota in April 1963 and assigned to the 66th Strategic Missile Squadron. Others quickly followed and by late October the last missile was accepted. With the 67th SMS and 68th SMS aboard, the 44th SMW was declared combat ready on 1 November 1963 (exactly 20 years after the 15th was formed in North Africa). Each strategic missile squadron supported five flights of ten Minuteman I missiles with the 150 missile sites dispersed over a 13,500 square mile area of western South Dakota. Fifteenth's missile force had come of age!

With the Minuteman system fully operational, the Titan I force was deactivated in the spring of 1965 – short lived, but an essential part of our nuclear deterrence at a critical time in our history.

The 44th participated in an important first on 1 March 1965 when a test missile was launched from an operational missile site. Termed "Project Long Life," the test was conducted with a Minuteman missile that contained only enough fuel for a few seconds of flight under controlled conditions. The 44th SMW still holds the distinction of being the only SAC unit to have launched a missile from an operational launcher!

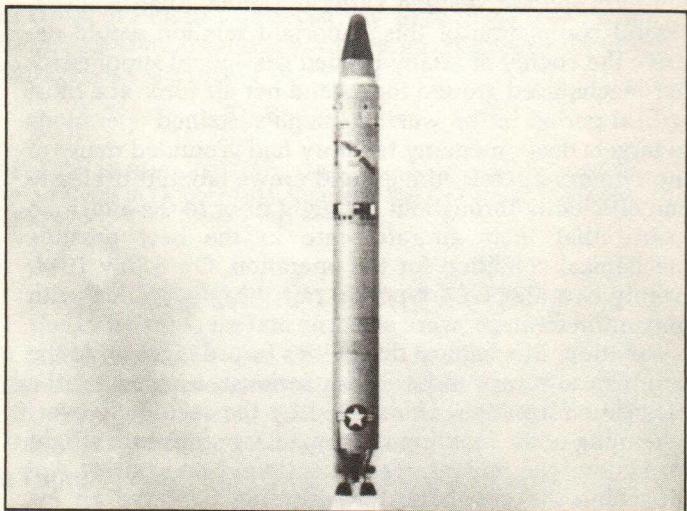
*Courtesy: Lt Col Dave Williams;  
Photos Courtesy: Capt Steve Headley*



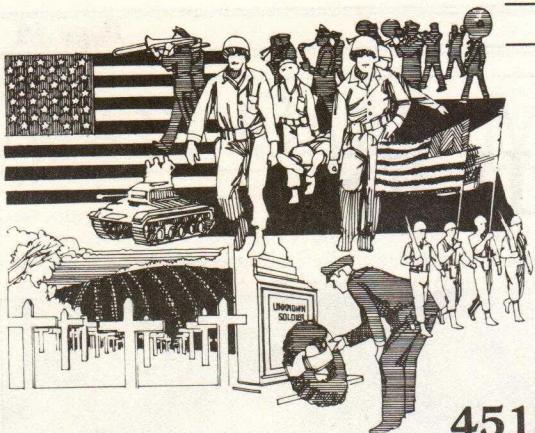
*Impressive deterrence*



*Capt Dave Turner & Capt Mike Turner pull alert*



*The mighty Titan*



# OUR HONOR ROLL WE SALUTE YOU

## 451ST BOMB GROUP

For outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. On 5 April 1944, under the most difficult and trying conditions on the ground and despite extremely adverse weather conditions in the air, the Group successfully assembled thirty-four (34) B-24 type aircraft heavily loaded with maximum tonnage of high explosive bombs and set course for the vital enemy oil installations and marshalling yards at Ploesti, Rumania. Having been briefed to anticipate heavy interception from approximately 200 enemy aircraft and knowing that they would be without fighter escort in the vicinity of the target, the Group penetrated enemy territory determined to carry on the offensive. Well before arrival at the target area, they were intercepted by enemy, which in waves of approximately eighty-five (85) at a time opened the attack with rocket fire and closed into within one hundred (100) yards with their automatic weapons. The savage running air battle continued over the target through a maelstrom of intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire and lasted without interruption for forty-five (45) minutes on the return trip. In

the ensuing violent and bitter aerial battle, during which five (5) of our bombers were shot down, thirty-five (35) enemy aircraft were destroyed or damaged; 20 known destroyed, 12 probably destroyed, and three known to be damaged. Despite the intense opposition of the enemy, the 451st Bombardment Group (H) successfully delivered a devastating blow to the important enemy oil installations and communications facilities. The tremendous material damage contributed greatly to the curtailment of oil production and shipment by the enemy. The grim determination, outstanding skill, and heroic courage of the combat crews, together with the professional skill and devotion to duty of the ground personnel of the 451st Bombardment Group (H) in accomplishing this mission through the heaviest enemy opposition is outstanding in the history of aerial warfare and is deserving of emulation. By their gallant and outstanding performance of duty these men have reflected great credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

By Command of Major General Twining

## 465TH BOMB GROUP

For outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. During the intensive aerial campaign against the Axis oil and communications centers, the Group was ordered to attack and destroy the Florisdorf Oil Refinery and Marshalling Yards at Vienna, Austria. A successful completion of this important mission would deprive the enemy of vitally needed gas and oil supplies for her mechanized ground forces and her air force at a most critical period in the war. Although sustained operations to targets deep in enemy territory had grounded many of the Group's aircraft, the ground crews labored tirelessly and efficiently throughout the night prior to the attack, to insure that their aircraft were in the best possible mechanical condition for the operation. On 8 July 1944, twenty-two (22) B-24 type aircraft, heavily loaded with maximum tonnage, were airborne and set course for their destination. Mechanical difficulties forced eight (8) of the bombers to return to base thus seriously weakening the defensive formation. Undaunted by the seemingly overwhelming odds, molding the remaining ships into a tight formation, the gallant crews continued on course. Approaching the target the formation encountered an extremely heavy anti-aircraft barrage which inflicted severe

damage on the Group before it reached the objective. Heedless of the intense and heavy enemy fire, displaying superior coordination and outstanding professional skill, the courageous crews brought their aircraft through for a highly successful bombing run, inflicting damage to vital enemy installations and supplies. Leaving the objective, their formation was aggressively attacked by approximately twenty-five (25) enemy fighters. In the ensuing fierce aerial battle, maintaining a perfect formation to enhance the effective defensive fire, the gallant gunners of the Group accounted for seven (7) enemy aircraft destroyed and three (3) damaged, with their own losses held to a minimum of one (1) bomber. Later reconnaissance revealed that the Florisdorf area was rendered inoperational at a time when the war was approaching a critical stage. By the outstanding gallantry, airmanship, and grim determination of the combat crews, together with the outstanding technical skill and devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the 465th Bombardment Group has reflected great credit upon itself and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

By Command of Major General Twining

## PART VI

## THE HERITAGE OF FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

Thirty percent of all Axis oil production was concentrated at Ploesti . . . within range of the Fifteenth Air force and not open to attack at that time by any other Allied military organization.

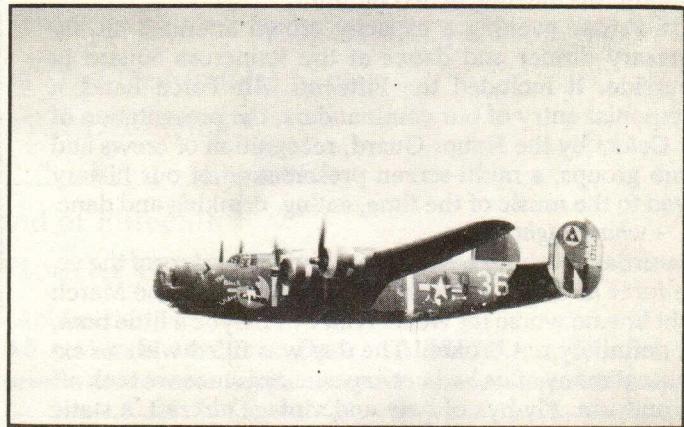
Thus, the stage was set for what was to become strategic air power's greatest single contribution to the ultimate destruction of Wehrmacht. Eight months after the 1943 attack, the first of 24 hammer blows was delivered to Ploesti on 5 April 1944. Although this attack and the four which followed were by directive aimed at the great Ploesti rail yards running through the heart of the oil refineries, so severe was the damage to adjacent oil installations that the desirability and effectiveness of aerial bombardment of oil refineries was no longer questioned. Oil became at once the top strategic priority. It was not only a way to cripple the enemy's war machine prior to the invasion of the European continent, but also the most effective means of keeping the GAF in check.

It soon became apparent that the task on hand was by no means easy. No one realized the significance of the Ploesti bombing more than the enemy. His efforts to defend the refineries are ample testimony to the importance of this objective. After the first few attacks the Germans found that aerial defense would not stop the seemingly never ending stream of bombers and their cargoes of destruction. The bombers were armed "to the teeth" and their gunners could shoot as well as their bombardiers could pin-point targets. Added to the destruction of their fighter force by bombers and their escorting fighters was the inability of the enemy to provide replacement aircraft at a rate equivalent to his losses.

Heavy guns were constantly added to the Ploesti flak ring. Nowhere on the continent could be found a more accurate or deadly concentration of "those little black flowers that bloom in the sky." Losses to flak were high, but not prohibitive, and still the bombers came, adding almost daily to the destruction of precious oil. What developed from lack of adequate fighters and flak that was good, but not good enough, proved to be the enemy's most successful defensive technique — a smoke screen to hide the Ploesti refineries from the keen eyes of the Norden and Sperry bombsights.

This new tactic temporarily slowed up the inevitable loss of Ploesti as an oil source, but it too was defeated through the development of successful countermeasures. For almost five months the battle continued. A grand total of 9,173 aircraft (5,408 heavy bombers; 38 P-38 dive bombers; 229 night bombers; escorted by 3,498 fighters) dropped 13,663 tons of bombs, knocked down 360 enemy fighters — and destroyed Ploesti.

The story of Ploesti is not hard to tell. It is a clear cut and colorful saga of a great air victory. Vastly more difficult, in many respects impossible, is to set down in effective prose the story behind the story, the summary of all the intangibles which in the final analysis spell the difference



*The 721st assembles. Courtesy: Clinton R. Lyons, 450 BG.*

between victory and defeat. Many chapters of the story can never be pieced together for the airmen who might have written them are no longer with us.

We do know of countless examples of unselfish devotion to duty, heroism, and gallantry high over enemy territory. The account of Lieutenant David R. Kingsley in the October 1983 Sortie is perhaps the best known and speaks volumes for the silent many.

Unsung, but every inch heroes of this air battle are the crew chiefs and men "of the line," without whose consistently long and patient hours of work no such sustained operation could have taken place.

And it must not be overlooked that before an aircraft ever leaves the ground there has to be a plan. Much credit for the destruction of the Ploesti oil refineries, defeat of its smoke screen, crippling of its fighter defenses rests with the many officers and men who conceived and planned for the elimination of Ploesti.

Through the unceasing efforts of all concerned and the spirit of men who were willing to sacrifice their lives, the air battle of Ploesti was decisively won. The Fifteenth Air Force Association salutes you veterans of Ploesti for your courage and sacrifice.

To Be Continued

From "The Air Battle of Ploesti," a historical summary prepared by the Army Air Corps in October 1944. Courtesy: Maj Gen Fay R. Upthegrove, Commander, 304th Bomb Wing, 1944.

### Moments From History

In March 1947, Maj Gen Charles F. Born, Fifteenth's first postwar commander, led a flight of six B-29's from Smokey Hill Army Air Field, Kansas, to Montevideo for the Uruguayan presidential inauguration.

In February 1955, the 93rd Bomb Wing at Castle AFB, CA, began converting to B-52 aircraft (the first SAC unit to do so).

Our Reunion continued from Page 3

In the afternoon as the members relaxed and shared the richness of our heritage, the Board of Governors and Board of Directors met in a working luncheon to discuss plans and goals for 1984. Ben has also included pertinent points of this meeting in his column.

On Friday evening a capacity crowd attended an anniversary dinner and dance at the Raincross Square in Riverside. It included the Fifteenth Air Force Band, a ceremonial entry of our commanders, the presentation of our Colors by the Honor Guard, recognition of crews and bomb groups, a multi-screen presentation of our history keyed to the music of the time, eating, drinking and dancing — *what a night!*

Saturday morning we surprised the youngsters of the active force as bright and early we assembled on the March flight line no worse for wear. Well . . . maybe a little bent, but definitely not broken! The day was filled with an excitement many of us had not experienced since we took off the uniform. Fly-bys of new and vintage aircraft, a static display of over 60 aircraft (the largest ever in California), movies, museum, displays, exhibits, aerial demonstrations, explosives, even the Army - whew!

On Saturday night more than 800 people jammed into Raincross Square for the grand climax of our celebration. An honors ceremony with a memorial wreath laying accompanied by a special prayer from the 485th BG and a moving poem from the 451 BG, presentations, movies of Ploesti, special recognition of General Johnson, a stirring keynote address by General James P. Mullins who conceived and founded the Association, young airmen, seasoned veterans, a patriotic finale by the outstanding 15th Air Force Band, a ceremony honoring our flag with shiny helmeted honor guards marching through the crowd with thirty flags fluttering — a 40' flag raised to the ceiling — the band playing "Stars and Stripes Forever" — movies of the Thunderbirds flashed on the walls surrounding the band — never been so proud to be an American — 800 teary but proud members of the 15th Air Force family standing and singing "God Bless America"!!

"The Celebration was a great success", said Ben Franklin. And so it was. See you in Seattle.



Gen Light stresses the value of our heritage at a 22nd AREFW luncheon which launched a successful membership campaign for the 15th Air Force Association.



Chief Holley and Chief Doehle present a 15th Air Force Association Trophy to the March Air Force Base Airman of the Year, A1C Stephen A. Bailey

## Wings Award Program

Just prior to the holidays, the Fifteenth Air Force Association participated in an awards ceremony at the 22 AREFW which recognized the wing's top enlisted men for 1983. Our new board member, Chief Leonard T. Baldwin, organized our effort and is now developing a proposal for similar activities as part of a chapter program at other 15th Air Force bases. Chief Richard H. Holley and Chief Hanns W. Doehle presented engraved trophies to Senior NCO of the Year, SMSgt Lawrence G. Bushard; NCO of the Year, Sgt Allen L. Chang; and Airman of the Year, A1C Stephen A. Bailey. The Fifteenth Air Force Association congratulates each of you and salutes you for your outstanding achievement.

## 22 AREFW MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

The 22nd Air Refueling Wing (AREFW) at March AFB recently held a luncheon to kick off a base campaign to increase membership in the Fifteenth Air Force Association among the active force. Almost 200 attended the event which was organized by base project officer, Lt Col Joe Hudson. After viewing a movie which highlighted the history of 15th Air Force, Col Donald L. Ashley, 22 AREFW commander, introduced the speaker, Lt Gen James E. Light, Jr. Gen Light stressed the importance of our heritage and the value of our traditions. He spoke of the benefits of an increased sense of duty, honor and pride as we know our history and identify with our distinguished record of faithful service to our country. Gen Light commended the Fifteenth Air Force Association for its work in preserving our heritage and encouraged support for its goals.

## — HUMOROUS HERITAGE —

Capt Robert Hanafee was informed of a new arrival by a telegram which read: "Baby has mother's features and father's fixtures."

From: "A Narrative and Pictorial History of the 463rd Bombardment Group". Courtesy: John Boyett.

## FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ Number/Street \_\_\_\_\_ City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

- Annual Membership (\$10) Check Enclosed (Tax Deductible)
- Life Membership (\$150) Check Enclosed (Tax Deductible)
- Life Membership Installment Payment \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed
- Active  Retired  Separated  Friend of Fifteenth

15th AF Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ 15th AF Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Check and Application to:

Fifteenth Air Force Association • Box 15 • March Air Force Base, CA 92518

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## REUNION NOTICES

**390th Bomb Sq.**, Blue Arrow Campgrounds, Estes Park, CO. 15-19 June 1984. Contact: J.B. Herring, 3129 Newcastle Drive, Dallas, TX 75220.

**American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc.**, Red Lion Inn /SeaTac, 18740 Pacific Highway So., Seattle WA 98188. 17-21 July 1984. Contact: (800) 547-8010.

**451st Bomb Group**, Dayton, OH. 10-12 August 1984. Contact: Bob Karstensen, 1032 S. State Street, Marengo, IL 60152.

**454 Bomb Group**, Four Seasons Motor Inn, Colorado Springs, CO. 4-7 October 1984. Contact: Donald L. Bieber, 205 Tucson St., Aurora, CO 80011.

**32 Bomb Sq., 301st Bomb Group**, Sheraton Twin Towers Hotel, Orlando, FL. 18-20 October 1984. Contact Willard C. Beane, Star Route 3, Box 840, Eustis, FL 32726.

## HUMOROUS HERITAGE

Eighth Air Force personnel temporarily on hand during Russian shuttle missions commented on the "milk run" in sarcastic tones. Naturally enough, this did not help to reduce the outspoken rivalry that was present. Later the men of the 463rd went into Foggia to attend a movie. The usual audience of rather raunchy looking flying personnel were in the Flagella Theater, waiting for the movie to begin. From one of the side doors entered a long line of strange looking characters, dressed in "pinks", combat jackets, wearing ties, and very neatly combed and manicured. The 8th AAF boys marched to an empty row of seats and remained standing until the superior officer of their Group, a major, had taken his seat. Then, very smartly, they sat down. With unbelieving eyes, the 15th AAF boys watched this performance. Then the silence was broken by a terrific round of applause. One awe struck 15th AAF pilot was heard to observe, "Migawd, they even fly in class 'A' uniforms!"

From "A Narrative and Pictorial History of the 463rd Bombardment Group." Courtesy: John Boyett.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

During the reunion, Video Memories made a series of VHS video tapes of the reunion activities. These are available through the company at the price of \$50 for each two hour tape. To keep the price as reasonable as possible, the Association receives no income from the sales, but agreed to allow the taping as a member service. We purchased 4 tapes for the archives and are generally satisfied with the result. The composition and content of an individual two hour tape can be specified in the order. For example, an order could specify an hour of the membership meeting and air show, and another hour of the dinner dance and banquet. Coverage is available of the golf tournament (21 Min), golf awards (30 Min), cocktail mixer (10 Min), membership meeting (78 Min), National Cemetery Service (28 Min), dinner dance (105 Min), banquet (137 Min), and air show (120 Min). I am told that the events which are of short duration (30 Min or less) must be ordered in their entirety. Other longer segments can be ordered in 30 minute to 1 hour blocks. Keep in mind that they are *not* professionally staged, since we did not want an intrusion into reunion events. Tapes can be ordered by addressing your order to the Association. Include desired tape composition and a check payable to Video Memories. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.

Members involved in the Udine-Villaorba raid on 30 Jan 1944 are asked to contact author Lawrence Cortesi, 79 Boght Road, Watervliet, NY 12189.

Attention members of 460 BG. For information on forming a 460th BG Association, please contact: Robert F. Cutler, 1335 U.S. Hwy. 19 So., Apt. A-16, Clearwater, FL 33546.

Attention members of 450 BG. For information on forming a 450th BG Association, please contact: Victor Meeker, 3145 N.E. 27th, Portland, OR 97212.

456 BG tour to Cerignola, Italy on 4 June 1984. Contact James F. Watkins, 11415 Minor Dr., Kansas City, MO 64114.

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



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## 15th Air Force Association PX Order Form

Please cut out the order form below. *Indicate the quantity desired*, total your order in the space provided on the form, and send with your check to Vogel & Sons (15th AFA), 5350 Mayten Grove Ct., San Jose, CA. 95123. Be sure to add \$2.50 postage and handling fee to each order.

Quantity	Item Description	Price
1.	4" 15AFA Patch . . . . .	\$ 3.50
2.	4" 15AFA Sticker . . . . .	.75
3.	3" 15AFA Inside Decal . . . . .	.75
4.	¾" 15AFA Lapel Pin . . . . .	2.50
5.	¾" 15AFA Life Member Pin . . . . .	3.00
6.	¾" 15AFA Tie Tac . . . . .	3.95
7.	3" 15th Air Force Patch . . . . .	2.50
8.	15AFA Bumper Sticker . . . . .	.75
9.	15AFA Cap (All Sizes) . . . . .	5.95
10.	15AFA Beer Pitcher . . . . .	10.00
11.	15AFA Pilsener Glass . . . . .	4.50
12.	15AFA Pen Set/Marble Base . . . . .	10.00
13.	15AF Belt Buckle (Bronze) . . . . .	25.00
14.	15AF Buckle (Brass) . . . . .	9.95
15.	15AF Buckle B-17 . . . . .	9.95
16.	15AF Buckle B-24 . . . . .	9.95
17.	Thunderbird Buckle . . . . .	6.00
18.	Sally Ride Buckle . . . . .	6.00
19.	Space Shuttle Buckle . . . . .	6.00
20.	B-17 Tie Tac . . . . .	6.00
21.	B-24 Tie Tac . . . . .	6.00
22.	B-47 Tie Tac . . . . .	6.00
23.	B-52 Tie Tac . . . . .	6.00
24.	KC-135 Tie Tac . . . . .	6.00
25.	15 AF Poster . . . . .	3.00

Quantity	Item Description	Price
26.	5-TO-GO Luggage . . . . .	\$ 50.00
27.	15th Air Force Story . . . . .	7.95
28.	Flight Manual B-24 . . . . .	10.95
29.	B-24 Liberator at War . . . . .	16.95
30.	B-17 Flying Fortress . . . . .	15.95
31.	Bomber Pilot . . . . .	18.00
32.	Target Ploesti . . . . .	15.95
33.	Thunderbird Print . . . . .	25.00
34.	USAF KC-135 . . . . .	25.00
35.	USAAF B-17G "Sally B"	
	a. Aluminum . . . . .	23.00
	b. Copper . . . . .	30.00
36.	USAF SR-71 "Blackbird"	
	a. Aluminum . . . . .	15.00
	b. Copper . . . . .	27.00
37.	Gun Bus & Rules . . . . .	
	a. Aluminum . . . . .	23.00
	b. Copper . . . . .	30.00
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39.	Morality of War . . . . .	25.00
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Make checks payable to: Vogel & Sons (15 AFA). Prices are subject to change without notice. Write for special overseas postage rates. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery. Your purchase helps support projects of the 15th Air Force Association – Thanks.