



## 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Newsletter No. 13 November 2018



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

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Andover, MA 01810

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### A MESSAGE FROM SUSAN:

Hello 451st and 455th Members, family and friends.

We had another fantastic reunion at Dayton Ohio.

Nathan McKinney and Andrew Pendleton were the 2 WWII survivors from the 451<sup>st</sup> in attendance.

Highlights from the reunion include:

- Speaker's Program
- Air Force Museum Tour
- Commemorate Medal Ceremony
- 451<sup>st</sup> Memorial wreath

In spite of Hurricane Florence, veterans and their families traveled to the reunion.

Veterans and their families wish to honor and highlight an important period in their life as well as our history.



Andy Pendleton brought his granddaughter Christina Haine and her husband Ed.

Win Jones passed in July, and his children were all in attendance – Marsha Morris, Mike Smeltzer and Craig Jones.

Craig and Donna Van Benschoten attended to honor Craig's father Earl, who passed in June.

Joan Mason and her son Scott and wife Janis attended. Joan brought her daughter Susan last year to New Orleans.

Tracy and Phillip Andrew attended their first reunion, honoring Tracy's father, Terrell Prewitt, with the 451<sup>st</sup>, 727<sup>th</sup> sqd.

Edwin & Theresa Wiest attended the Sat. eve banquet. Ed's father Jeston Jake Wiest (JJ or Jest), a Sargent with the 451st 724 sqd. passed in 2015. Ed had attended a prior reunion with his Dad in Chicago.

George Frisbee, son of George Frisbee, SSgt 451<sup>st</sup> 725<sup>th</sup> sqd had on display numerous items and literature related to B-24 aircraft and other WWII information.

Bobbi Kelly (has attended all the reunions except for 1) was in attendance with her daughter Karen and son Mike and wife Gail.

Prior reunion attendees who could not attend this year:

A special tribute to veteran Ed Longenecker 451<sup>st</sup>, 726<sup>th</sup> sqd, Tech sgt who had to cancel his trip to the reunion with his daughter Lori Johanson.

Willard Gill- thank you for your special note and donation.

455<sup>th</sup> reunion attendees included:

Larry and Michelle Babcock - honoring her grandfather, Cecil S. Kessler, flight engineer

Tm and Gretchen Thatcher

John Rohrer

A very special thank you to Norm Crum, son of Capt. George W. Crum, 455<sup>th</sup> 742<sup>nd</sup> B.G., former president of the 455<sup>th</sup> BG for a most generous donation which supports the funding of the newsletter.

I also wish to thank my cousin John Tudor (from California) and his wife Sandy for helping make the reunion a success- John at the check-in desk and Sandy, tending bar with my husband Chris, in the hospitality room. They have made this an annual trip to honor my father, George Tudor, as well as John's father, David, who was a fighter pilot.

For those veterans who have applied to the French Consulate for the Legion d'Honneur, the turn around time is approximately 6-8 months. Please contact Jonathan Tudor if you have any questions or need assistance.

The Joint BG reunion for 2019 has been set: Sept 19-23 in Dallas, TX. It is at the same location as the 2016 reunion.

I have received letters and calls from members and family members of the 451<sup>st</sup>- thank you for your kind words, stories and support. I also wish to thank my brother Jonathan, who maintains the 451st.org website and Marsha Morris, who makes the publishing of the newsletter possible.

Susan

## **REUNION RECAP – SPEAKERS PROGRAM**

2018 BOMB GROUPS JOINT REUNION of 98th, 376th, 451st, 455th, 460th, 461st, 464th, 465th, 484th & 485th BOMBARDMENT GROUPS (H), Dayton OH

## **YouTube Links for Speakers Program**

**Welcome and opening remarks, Jonathan Tudor**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taVMHgONbQI>

**Flying, John Billings, 484th Bomb Group**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EIA0sdyglk>

**Shot Down in Yugoslavia, Donald Buck, 376th Bomb Group**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mA4l0xuJ\\_3g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mA4l0xuJ_3g)

**Home Again, Home Again, Fred Gonroff, 464th Bomb Group**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwYP2CM6puA>

**Battle of the Biscuits, Andy Pendleton, 451st Bomb Group**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uoOMC20ah14>

**The Flying Junior, Dr. Susanne Meinl**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQY7XCII5wU>

**Commemorative Medal Video**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4M77W3ybif8>

## REUNION RECAP – AIR FORCE MUSEUM

The National Museum of the United States Air Force is truly a special place. Upon arrival we were allowed a private viewing (with ropes down) with the B-24 “Strawberry Bitch”, an original B-24D that was assigned to the 376th BG, “Flash” Gordon Byfield, Pilot, one of our participating veterans and bomb groups. Pictured below are Andrew Pendleton (Left) and Nathan McKinney (Right).



Next up we adjourned to Carney Auditorium for a special presentation of commemorative Presidential Unit Citation medals to each of our veterans by Lt. Gen. C.D. Moore II, USAF, Ret.





Following the commemorative Presidential Unit Citation ceremony, a Military Memorial Ceremony was conducted by Chaplain/Captain Chris Cairns, Grandson of the last CO of the 485th BG and Reunion Chaplain.

As a part of the Memorial ceremony a multi-part wreath was presented. This wreath as a whole represented the combined effort of our bomb groups that worked together in the Fifteenth Air Force to secure victory over the Axis powers during WWII. The wreath had removable sections with each section representing one of our individual Bomb Groups.

The individual groups placed their part of the wreath on their respective marker in the Memorial Gardens outside on the museum grounds. The picture below shows Nathan McKinney at the Memorial Gardens 451<sup>st</sup> plaque:



#### **Plaque Inscription**

**WITH THIS MEMORIAL, WE WHO SERVED IN THE RANKS  
OF THE  
451<sup>ST</sup> BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)  
PAY TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF OUR HEROIC WW-II  
COMRADES  
"BLOODIED IN BATTLE ..... CLEANSED BY COURAGE"**

**3 DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATIONS  
25 FEBRUARY 1944 - REGENSBURG, GERMANY  
5 APRIL 1944 - PLOESTI, ROMANIA  
23 AUGUST 1944 - MARKERSDORF AIRDROME, AUSTRIA**

**10 CAMPAIGN STARS          245 COMBAT MISSIONS**

**ACTIVATED MAY 1943   INACTIVATED SEPTEMBER 1945**

**DEDICATED 11 AUGUST 1984**

**LAST FLYBY**

Here are the death notifications received since our May 2018 Newsletter:

451st Member	Squadron	Duty Position	DOD
Anderson, Charles W.		Flight Engineer-Gunner	02.03.2018
Arnold, Lawrence	724 <sup>th</sup>	Co-Pilot	10.07.2018
Blue, William G.		Lead Navigator	05.12.2018
Brown, John H.	725 <sup>th</sup>		01.03.2018
Cunniff, Kevin F.	727 <sup>th</sup>	Maintenance	June 2018
Demshok, Joseph **		Parachute Technician	09.24.2017
Jones, Winson	727 <sup>th</sup>	Top Turret Gunner	07.09.2018
McElheny, James R.	727 <sup>th</sup>	Pilot	07.06.2018
Sanchez, Milo	727 <sup>th</sup>	Tail Gunner	09.01.2018
Van Benschoten, Earl	725 <sup>th</sup>	Waist Gunner	06.15.2018

**\*\*Joseph Demshok by Don Madden (Joseph's stepson):** "Joseph was a parachute rigger. He placed his name in every parachute, which were made of silk. He received a few thank you's from crewmen whose plane had been hit and they had to parachute out, safely making it to the ground. He also made his wife's wedding dress from a silk parachute."

**451<sup>st</sup> WEB SITE**

Jonathan Tudor is actively adding content to the 451st web site. The URL is: <http://451st.org/>

Jonathan does not have copies of the initial Ad Libs, No 1 through 8. If you have some or all of these Ad Libs and would be willing to loan them to Jonathan, that would be much appreciated. He would scan the newsletters and post the images to the web. The originals would be returned to you.

Please contact Jonathan if you can assist with the missing Ad Libs or help by supplying pictures or stories to be added to the site. Jonathan Tudor can be contacted at:

Email [b24xtrajoker@gmail.com](mailto:b24xtrajoker@gmail.com)

Phone: 207.730.0465

Address: 222 East Promenade #6, Portland ME 04101

## DONATIONS

We truly appreciate your generosity and support – without it, we would not be able to provide this newsletter.

Should you desire to honor a crew mate or family member, please send the full name and duty position of the person being honored. Please send to:

451<sup>st</sup> B.G.  
c/o Susan Tudor Prince  
14 Reservation Rd,  
Andover, MA 01810

Tribute contributions received since the last newsletter:

Donor	In Tribute To
Crum Norm	In honor of Capt. George Crum, former 455 <sup>th</sup> B.G. President
Elliott, Sally	In tribute to her father M/Gen Robert L. Eaton
Gill, Willard	In honor of the 451 <sup>st</sup> Bomb Group
Gust, Robert	In honor of Edward Gust, Tail Gunner - Armorer
Horn, Larry	In honor of the 451 <sup>st</sup> Bomb Group
Morris, Marsha	In tribute to Win "Big" Jones, Top Turret Gunner
Prince, Susan	In honor of the 451 <sup>st</sup> Bomb Group
Rushing Jr., Robert	In honor of his uncle, Lawrence M. Rushing co-pilot 727 <sup>th</sup> Sqd.
Tedesco, Frank	In honor of the 451 <sup>st</sup> Bomb Group

## 2019 BOMB GROUP REUNION

Mark your calendar – the next Reunion will be held in Dallas Texas, September 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Full reunion detail will appear in the spring newsletter. Hope to see you in Dallas!

## COMING HOME – WILLIAM BURLINGAME

“When the war ended in Europe, we all got 30 days leave. All 5 Groups reported for Duty at Dow Field, Bangor Maine; HDQ, 724<sup>th</sup>, 725<sup>th</sup>, 726<sup>th</sup> and 727<sup>th</sup>.

We were at Dow for about a week, end of July through August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1945.

We had a 2-3-page story in the Bangor Daily News on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1945.

All 5 Groups were put into the North Atlantic Air Transport Command, HTC flying C-54s.

Each group went to a different Base. The 724<sup>th</sup> went to Presque Isle, Maine. I was discharged from there Sept. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945 and had more than 80 points”

## BANGOR DAILY NEWS TRIBUTE TO 451<sup>st</sup> BOMB GROUP

Excerpts from the following article appeared in the Bangor Daily News on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1945 in tribute to the 451<sup>st</sup> B.G. which was stationed at Dow Field at the end of the war.



## Battle Scarred Fighting 451<sup>st</sup> Observes Anniversary at Dow

“The fighting 451<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group, veterans of two years of aerial combat in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, and pride of the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force, is taking part in the celebration of the 38<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Army Air Force at Dow Field today. Winners of three Presidential Citations, and so



far, as is known, the only heavy bomb group winning three Presidential Citations, the members of the 451<sup>st</sup> symbolize all that is the best in the combat units of the AAF throughout the world.

Now stationed at Dow Field, the 451<sup>st</sup> has been assigned to the North Atlantic Division of the ATC under the command of Brigadier General Lawrence G. Fritz. As fast as they can be screened, classified and processed, they will be assigned to the five major continental bases of the North Atlantic Division, Presque Isle, Dow, Grenier Field, LaGuardia Field and Washington National Airport. Some have already gone to take up their new duties with the Air Transport Command.

But even in their new stations, this writer sincerely believes that the boys of the 451<sup>st</sup> will not have changed—their old allegiance will stick. They will be members of what they affectionately call “The Four Filthy First”. And well they might.

The Four Fifty First is reputed to be the most heavily decorated in the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force—top outfit out of 21. It has won three Presidential Citations—more than any other bomb group in Europe. Its personnel have won one DSC, nine Legion of Merit Badges, 25 Silver Stars, 50 Soldier Medals, one British Distinguished Flying Cross, hundreds of DFCs, thousands of Air Medals, several hundreds of Bronze Stars and many other decorations.

The members of the outfit proudly wear 12 battle stars—representing 12 major campaigns in which they participated. They flew their planes against almost every country in Europe, including Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Poland and all the islands of the Mediterranean. They bombed oil wells, refineries, factories, railroads, bridges, roads, ships—in fact any target they were assigned to attack, no matter how dangerous.

### 245 MISSIONS

Altogether, they flew 245 combat missions and dropped over 13,000 tons of bombs on the enemy. Over 8,000 men were at one time or another members of the outfit, with the flyers rotating in and out. When their missions were done, they were through and replaced by newcomers. The esprit de corps and the morale of the Group have always been exceptionally high.

On an average combat mission, the B-24s of the 451<sup>st</sup> would fly 38 planes, although they have flown as high as 54. Their last mission was flown on April 27<sup>th</sup>, just 5 days before hostilities ceased in the Italian section. This cessation of hostilities was due in no little part to what they had done.

The original Commander of the 451<sup>st</sup> was Col. Robert E.L. Eaton. The group trained under him in the States, and flew under his command until September 1944. His successor was Col. James Knapp who remained with the group until December 1944 when Col. Leroy L. Stefanowicz assumed command.

He is still in charge of the group, while it is being deactivated at Dow Field. Some of the men with the group at Dow, have been with the outfit, ever since it was organized at Tucson, Arizona, in May 1943.

The 451<sup>st</sup> boasts group commendations from Brig. Gen. Hugo P. Rush, Brig. Gen. William L. Lee, Lieut. Gen. Nathan F. Twining, and Lieut. Gen. Ira W. Eaker. Congratulatory messages complimenting the group on its bombing efficiency have come from General Marshal, Gen. H. H. Arnold, Gen. Touhey Spaatz, and Gen. Mark Clark.

The 451<sup>st</sup> started overseas in November, 1943, with the B-24s of the group flying the South Atlantic route of the ATC and winding up in Africa for further training. The ground echelons went over by boat, landed in Napoli Italy. The two groups united in January, and were originally based at Gioia airdrome, an Italian base with dirt runways.

### STRIKE OPPOSITION

They flew their first combat mission on January 20<sup>th</sup> against enemy radar installations in Albania. They flew nine missions without casualties, inflicting terrible damage against enemy factories, bridges and installations, but they struck real opposition in their 10<sup>th</sup> trip into Festung Europe.

Their target was the famous Regensburg aircraft factory in Germany, which was manufacturing one-third of the total production of Messerschmitt's 109's, one of Germany's most effective fighter planes. In the raid, a joint operation of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Air Forces, the 451<sup>st</sup> was the first group to reach the target, after a terrible battle with enemy fighters. Although the 451<sup>st</sup> lost six planes in the struggle, they managed to knock down 25 of the enemy fighters. Despite the tremendous opposition from fighter planes and heavy flak, the target was hit squarely and the factory was thoroughly gutted by explosion and fire. The plant never again resumed operation, the factory was a total wreck.

The 451<sup>st</sup> was awarded its first Presidential Citation for the Regensburg raid. There was plenty of trouble on the homeward trek, because a torrential rain had turned the mud runways into a swamp. Only a few of the planes were able to land and the others were scattered all over southern Italy. The group was split up, part of the outfit going to Manduria and the rest to San Pancrazio. But despite this separation of the squadrons, all formations were made, and the bombing went on without delay.

There were no buildings for either living or operational purposes. The men lived in tents, resting on mud. The work on the planes had to be done outside, in good weather and bad—and more frequently the weather was bad, rather than good. Nevertheless, 15 heavy raids were made against vital targets, including the bloody battlefield of Cassino.

### BATTLE 300 NAZIS

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> a tremendous raid was launched against enemy ball bearing plants at Steyr, Austria, where unexpectedly heavy enemy opposition developed when 300 Nazi fighters were battled for better than two hours. Although two B-24's went down in the raid, 30 enemy were known to be been shot down, and another 30 were listed as probables.

On April 9<sup>th</sup>, the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force made the first of its many terrific raids against the Ploesti oil refineries, which at that time were producing nearly one half of the natural oil used by German tanks, automobiles, trucks and planes. A crash on the take-off at Manduria resulted in 100 percent casualties for one plane, and held things up for an hour but the group formed on schedule. Again, they were heavily and bitterly attacked by enemy fighters with five of the B-24's being shot down. The gunners had a field day, however, shooting down nearly 50 of the enemy craft.

The 451<sup>st</sup> received its Presidential Citation for that first Ploesti raid. Later, they were to make 20 more raids against that bitterly defended German target.

On April 9<sup>th</sup>, the group was reunited again at Castelluccio air base near the great Foggia airdrome. At that time, it was anything but the powerful air base it is now. As the planes landed they found nothing more than a runway—no buildings, no nothing. Since war could not wait for the construction, and they were ordered to go into action immediately, they jumped right into their work. Although weather prevented their flying, they were ready to go into the combat the day after they arrived.

Main targets from the new operating base of the 451<sup>st</sup> were Ploesti (raided 20 times), Vienna (13 times), Linz, Munich, Friedrichshafen, Budapest, Bucharest, Belgrade, Steyr, and Bolzano—all powerfully defended cities, with hundreds of flak guns and swarms of protecting fighter aircraft.

### PLOESTI OIL RAIDS

Toughest cities to attack were Vienna, Ploesti and Munich. Ploesti was particularly well defended, because oil was vital to the success of the Nazi war machine, and it was at Ploesti that the backbone of the Nazi oil system was broken. With 11 refineries in that city, it was a prime target—with top priority for the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force. By the time the 451<sup>st</sup> finished with it, oil production and refining was down to practically nothing.

On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, the target was Lobau oil refinery near Vienna at Markersdorf. Enemy fighters attacked in force, shooting down seven of the aircraft. The next day the 451<sup>st</sup> lost nine aircraft out of 24—the losses were terrific. But in spite of the heavy opposition and tremendous losses, the balance

of the group fought its way through and hit the target, with excellent bombardment results. The 451<sup>st</sup> received its third Presidential Citation for this raid.

Later, the 451<sup>st</sup> was called on to give support to the drives of the Third and Seventh armies in southern France. B-24's were used to fly supplies of gasoline, ammunition and bombs to Lyons France. Seven supply missions were flown in heavily laden aircraft, despite severe cloud conditions which made flying over mountainous terrain difficult and dangerous.

That fall, synthetic oil plants in central Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary were hit almost daily in successful attempts to deprive the Nazis of fuel for their mechanized army and Luftwaffe. Communication targets and railroad yards were second in priority.

With the shortage of airplane gasoline, fighter opposition dwindled, but as this occurred, anti-aircraft opposition at the major targets became increasingly great. "There were times when we could almost walk on the flak—it was that thick" said one pilot. Vienna was protected by more than 400 heavy flak guns which took a heavy toll of the 451<sup>st</sup> bombers, with nine being shot down in one day over that city.

#### SUPPORT GROUND UNITS

With the beginning of the ground drive by the American Fifth and the British Eighth armies in northern Italy, the 451<sup>st</sup> began to fly close support missions in conjunction with the ground forces. During April of 1945, 22 missions were flown in 26 days, and bombing accuracy reached a new peak of 67.7 percent of all bombs landing within 1000 feet of the exact pinpoint target.

On April 27<sup>th</sup>, the 451<sup>st</sup> made the last raid. On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the war in Italy was over, and the men were notified that they were coming home...."

#### HONORABLE SERVICE LAPEL BUTTON (PIN)

Note from Marsha Morris - Upon my late father's passing (Win Jones), I was offered an Honorable Service Lapel Button in remembrance of him. I wasn't familiar with the pin and don't know if he received one at discharge. I was informed that the button was sometimes called a "Raptured Duck". A brief description from Wikipedia appears below.

Per Wikipedia, "...The Honorable Service Lapel Button was awarded to United States military service members who were discharged under honorable conditions during World War II.



The Department of Defense awarded the button between September 1939 and December 1946, and it was made of gilt brass, except during metal shortages during which it was made of gilt plastic. Service members who received the plastic version were later allowed to trade it in for the brass version.

“Honorably discharged veterans wore the lapel pin on the left lapel of civilian clothing...”

“Even though the button depicts an eagle, the design of the eagle itself seems to depict its breast bursting through the button as though it has ruptured, and the eagle was believed by some to have been so poorly designed as to resemble a duck rather than an eagle; the term "ruptured duck" was coined to refer to it on that basis.”

“The award served several purposes. It served as proof that the wearer was an honorably discharged veteran returning from duty. Unofficially, it was also used as an identifier to railroad, bus, and other

transportation companies who offered free or subsidized transportation to returning veterans.”



## HELP IDENTIFY THE PLANE & CREW

Note from Richard Gray – “My father, Wayland Wayne Gray, CPL, radio operator, was assigned to the 724th. He died in 1970. I'm trying to research his military service. “My father is front row second from right. Don't know the date. Trying also to find the pilot, Ray Beatty, so I can find the name of the B24 plane.”

If you have any information that could help Richard Gray, please call him at 602-494-6464 or email him at [rgray.izoom@cox.net](mailto:rgray.izoom@cox.net)



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Raymond W. Beatty (Pilot)<br>108 N Brighton<br>H.C. Mo.            | 5. Thomas E. Fisher<br>P.O. Box #402<br>Pecos, Texas                         |
| 2. Richard J. McLean-V.R. (nose)<br>115 N STREET<br>HONOLULU VIRGINIA | 7. Winston Humphrey<br>2904 N. 1st St<br>Louisville, Ky.                     |
| 3. George J. Martin<br>84<br>N.Y.                                     | 8. John Buck<br>12 Overhill Rd.<br>Baltimore Md.                             |
| 4. (Tail)<br>N.Y.<br>N.Y.   | 9. Mayland H. Gray<br>(R.O.)<br>733 S. Missouri St.<br>Indianapolis, Indiana |



## WWII PLANE PERFORMANCE - PROOF OF ALLIED AIR SUPERIORITY

Note – The chart below was uncovered in Win Jones' WWII files. How he came to be in possession of this chart is unknown. The chart was published by the New York Times & Pintograph Corporation – date is unknown but likely from the 1943 timeframe.

