



451st Bomb Group Newsletter No. 24 February 2024



Published for the preservation of our 451st heritage.

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MANAGERS MESSAGE

Vis Memorial Center Planned

Vis is an island in the Adriatic Sea, located off the coast of Croatia. During World War II, Vis played a significant role in the conflict. A brief history follows:

Occupation by Italy: Prior to the outbreak of World War II, Italy occupied Vis as part of the Axis powers. The island was strategically important due to its location in the Adriatic Sea.

Allied Presence: After the Axis forces occupied Yugoslavia in 1941, the island came under German control. However, as the war progressed, the Allies, especially the British, sought to establish a foothold in the Mediterranean. Vis became a base for the Yugoslav Partisans, a resistance movement led by Josip Broz Tito.

Tito's Headquarters: Vis served as the headquarters for Tito and the Partisans from 1943 to 1944. The Allies, particularly the British, provided support to the Partisans in their fight against Axis forces. The island served as a safe haven for planning and coordinating resistance activities.

Allied Invasion: In 1944, the Allies launched Operation Manna and Hvar to liberate the Adriatic islands from Axis occupation. British and Yugoslav Partisan forces, supported by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, successfully liberated Vis on June 15, 1944.

Legacy: The liberation of Vis marked a turning point in the region, and the island became a symbol of the successful collaboration between the Allies and the Yugoslav Partisans. Tito's presence on the island during the war contributed to the strong relationship between Yugoslavia and the Allies.

After the war, Vis became part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until the country dissolved in the early 1990s. Today, Vis is a popular tourist destination known for its natural beauty and historical significance during World War II.

“Looking for anyone who had a family member whose bomber either landed on the emergency airstrip on the island of Vis (then in Yugoslavia, now Croatia) or bailed out or ditched over the island in 1944 or 1945. Vis Aerodrome in the Adriatic was in the path of 15th Air Force bombers, including those from the 451st Bomb Group, as they returned from missions. The airfield was known as “The Last Hope” for bombers shot up by flak or running out of fuel.” Please contact James Peck at jpeck206@gmail.com with any stories you may have. He is gathering stories for a memorial center on the island.

Managers Note: Indeed, Vis truly was the last hope for many bomb crews in WWII, including my dad's final mission. You can read about it here in his own words: [Plan Baker Red Force = A Mission to Vienna.pdf \(451st.org\)](http://Plan Baker Red Force = A Mission to Vienna.pdf (451st.org))

Jonathan

LT SILLIMAN GOING HOME – Charles Parsonson

In a 14 January 1942 message to Congress President Roosevelt gave the National Resources Planning Board (NRPB) responsibility for developing long-range plans for “post-war full employment, security, and building America.” By mid-1942 the NRPB had conducted a conference with the War, Navy, and Labor Departments, War Manpower Commission, Veterans Administration, and several other agencies, resulting in a report, *Demobilization and Readjustment*, which was submitted to Roosevelt by 30 June 1942 and released to the public one month later. Planning would go through many refinements before a final plan was announced. In fact, final adjustments were still being made up to the end of the war in Europe.

Considerations had to include:

- Planning had to be made with the understanding that two wars were being fought,
- Planners assumed the war in Europe would be won probably a year before the war against Japan, and
- Some part of the forces in Europe would have to reposition to fight the Japanese. It was further assumed the majority of those forces would come from the naval and air forces, with ground forces largely eligible for shipment home.

By early spring 1943 AAF Headquarters was already working on a plan.

For some the end of the European war meant going home and getting on with life. For many, however, it meant heading for more fighting against Japan. It had been recognized from the beginning that winning a two-front war would be an extremely risky proposition. Therefore, the inherent philosophy for defeating the Axis would be concentrating on victory in Europe first, followed by pivoting to the Pacific after V-E Day to destroy Japanese forces. With that strategy in mind planning for the movement of forces in Europe and the Mediterranean began well over a year prior to the defeat of Germany. Aircraft, with the crews that had flown them, would be moved to the United States where facilities on the West Coast would process them for service against Japan. Other returnees would receive B-29 training before heading for combat.

The size of this effort would involve thousands of aircraft and tens of thousands of personnel. It would mean constructing facilities to handle the volume of people being moved around the world. Some groups, rather than going home themselves, would be reassigned to assist those who would be going. The WHITE PROJECT was the plan to bring home aircraft and their crews. It would rely heavily on the Air Transport Command.

Col. E. M. Hampton, the Commanding Officer of the 463rd Bombardment Group (H), was placed in command of the Operation Homebound Task Force, which would plan and put into action the movement of aircraft and personnel from Italy to Casablanca where they would be placed under the control of Air Transport Command. The 483rd Bombardment Group (H) and later the 460th Bombardment Group would also be placed under his command to provide additional manpower.

April 1945 saw an end to combat aircraft arriving from the United States. First, four-engine bombers without radar were stopped. Then all bombers stopped and finally all aircraft stopped on April 18, 1945. Any planes still enroute to Europe on that date were turned around and sent back. The Combat Crew Reception Center at Gioia would not be welcoming any more men to Italy.

Gioia del Colle ceased to be a Fifteenth Air Force Service Command (XV AFSC) organization and came under the control of Army Air Force Service Command/Mediterranean Theater of Operations (AAFSC/MTO), which renamed it Staging Airdrome No. 1 under the direction of the 38th Air Depot Group. Gioia would be responsible for processing all four-engine aircraft.

Two-engine aircraft would be processed through Pomigliano would be named Staging Airdrome No. 2 under the direction of the 515th Service Squadron.

Any aircraft being processed for water shipment would go to Air Force General Depot Three in Naples, Italy under the direction of the 20th and 90th Air Depot Groups, which were composed of the 20th, 302nd, and 36th Depot Repair Squadrons.

Initial processing of crews and aircraft for movement was the responsibility of the Fifteenth Air Force. Each aircraft received a 100-hour inspection, was tested for fuel and oil consumption, and was equipped with the safety devices required for all ATC aircraft. Pilots had to hold an instrument card or be certified as qualified for instrument flying. Navigators underwent a 6-hour refresher course. Health exams and baggage checks were conducted before they were cleared to ATC.

When an aircraft arrived at Gioia del Colle, the crew was picked up by truck, assigned temporary quarters including a cot and blankets, given showers, and sent to the mess hall. What happened from there was 36 hours of processing. It was assumed all out-processing would be completed prior to being assigned to the ATC. Clothing and flying equipment were checked and corrected as needed. Personnel forms were processed, including paybooks, flying records, shot cards, dog tags, medical forms, and other records.

Medical and dental exams were conducted. Just prior to leaving, local currency was exchanged for U.S. currency. During this processing period extra personnel were assigned to the plane as passengers.

The aircraft was also being thoroughly evaluated. All information pertaining to the plane was handed over to the Alert Section by the pilot. Following review of the documentation a team of mechanics went over the entire aircraft fixing anything found no matter how small. Once cleared for flight testing it was turned over

to the Flight Section for a thorough flight test by depot-based pilots. If satisfactory, the engineering liaison officer notified the base personnel processing officer. The crew was alerted and ordered to fly a two-hour fuel consumption test flight. Should it fail, it would have been red-lined and another aircraft pulled from the reserve pool for the flight home. A total of 1,367 aircraft of all types were salvaged, including 264 B-24s, following their failure to pass inspection.



Incoming crews were assigned temporary quarters while out processing.
(Photo taken 31 May 1945)



Staging Airdrome No 1

The next morning the crew received a two-hour briefing and was cleared for takeoff. During the flight from Gioia to Marrakech the aircraft and crew remained under the operational control of the theater, but would transfer to the control of the ATC once they arrived in Marrakech. This process was repeated 25 times every day, seven days a week.

From Marrakech the planes flew all three routes homes, including 3,224 by the Northern route, 2,282 by the South Atlantic route and another 459 heavy bombers by the Middle Atlantic route through the Azores. In addition to the 50,763 crewmen who flew home there were an additional 33,850 passengers. In all the White Project brought over 84,000 men home.

One problem arose for which the ATC never found an answer. The combat groups believed, erroneously, that they would help the ATC for a few months and then go home as a proud unit. Instead, they were absorbed into the ATC and later sent home individually. They had no time for serving those personnel they had seen as “Allergic To Combat”. For their part, the ATC personnel saw no reason to give preferential treatment to a bunch of newcomers to their unit. An attempt was made to convince the unhappy groups that they did not work for the ATC, they were the ATC working for Uncle Sam. Nobody bought into the argument and morale remained low for the rest of the time the program existed. Despite their feelings about the situation, the former combat personnel did their jobs and did them well. The ATC, for their part, were handed a huge project without any reduction of their other assignments, including air evacuees and other “normal traffic” plus Eastbound traffic headed for India/China. That they accomplished all they set out to do is a testimony to their expertise and dedication.

The White Project had been designed to quickly move the aircraft and crews that would be needed for the final victory over Japan. The ATC moved thousands of aircraft and hundreds of thousands of personnel. However, with the sudden surrender of Japan, not one bomber or crew ever went to the Pacific Theater.

AAF Staging Airdrome No. 1 Special Orders No. 17, dated 30 May 1945, directed 1st Lt. William E. Silliman and his crew, formerly of the 451st Bomb Group, to depart Gioia del Calle aboard B-24 #42-52631. He was to deliver his ship to Hunter Field, GA before continuing on to Camp Miles Standish in Boston. Two passengers traveling with Lt. Silliman would be delivered to Waller Field in Trinidad. Everyone on the aircraft would be under the jurisdiction of ATC until their arrival in the US.

For whatever reason his aircraft failed the inspection and was pulled for repairs. Rather than delay the crew Lt. Silliman was assigned #44-49596, formerly a 485th Bomb Group ship which itself had been pulled, repaired, and placed in the aircraft pool for future use. His flight path would take him to Marrakech, Dakar,

Natal, Georgetown, Puerto Rico, and finally Hunter Field. The flights to Marrakech and Dakar were uneventful. On 4 June 1945 at 0325 Lt Silliman called Mallard Tower in Dakar and requested taxi instructions.



He was notified to taxi to runway 30 with takeoff to the west. He was cleared to take off at 0400, wind direction and speed was NNW at 12 miles per hour. He made a normal takeoff with all engines operating normally. At an altitude of 100 feet, he made a gradual left turn losing altitude until crashing into the sea where it exploded and burned. There were no survivors.

No cause was determined although the opinion was either pilot vertigo or gyro horizon failure.

Killed in the crash were 1st Lt. William N. Silliman (P), 1st Lt. Carl B. Roberts (CP), 1st Lt. Clarence L. Wellman (N), 1st Lt. Martin E. Walsh (B), T/Sgt Forrest G. Millis (Mech/Gunner), S/Sgt Malcolm R. Smith (RO/Gunner), S/Sgt William Geller (Arm/Gunner), S/Sgt John P. Chylek (Arm/Gunner), S/Sgt Eugene Dye (Arm/Gunner), and Pvt. John F. Prieskorn (Aerial Gunner), all from the 451st Bomb Group. Two passengers, PFC Curtis L. Kline and Cpl Edward B. Wiggins (Airplane and Engine Mechanics), had been assigned to the 465th Bomb Group.

B-24 #42-52631, Lt. Silliman's original ship, landed at Bradley Field on 30 June 1945.

The crew she brought safely home is unknown.

LAST FLYBY

Here are the death notifications since our March 2023 Newsletter:

451st Member	Squadron	Duty Position	DOD
Yeaton, Robert R.			Unknown

THANK YOU, DONORS!

Donor	In Tribute To
Formanek, Arthur	In memory of the flight and ground crew and staff of the 15 th Air Force
Jones, Gene Joseph	In memory of Joseph Jones, 725 th Squadron, Nose Turret Gunner
Lindner, Brian	In honor of the 451 st Bomb Group
Malakowski, Jeff	In honor of Willis H. Malakowski, Pilot
Pendleton, Andrew	In honor to those who served in the 451 st Bomb Group

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:

451st Bomb Group
c/o Jonathan Tudor
12605 Goldenrod Avenue
Bradenton, FL 34212

OR

Zelle® to 207-730-0465

OR

Venmo to <https://account.venmo.com/u/jontudor>

ROBERT R. YEATON'S PURPLE HEART

For the April 5th, 1944 mission to the Ploesti Oil Fields, Robert Yeaton, Flight Engineer drew the low card for an extra mission. On that day while on his 26th mission, T/Sgt. Robert Yeaton was shot down. He was taken prisoner and placed in front of a German Firing Squad. A Romanian major saved him from the firing squad, and he was placed in a German prison camp.

Sgt. Yeaton and some fellow prisoners made 4 attempts to escape, each time being recaptured, tortured and once placed in a "sweat box" for 11 days.

After months in captivity, Sgt Yeaton was liberated in August 1944. He was awarded the "Purple Heart".



TRIBUTE TO LT. RAY G. MOSER - Greg Moser

Lieutenant Ray G. Moser (pilot) and the crew of the “Big Mogul” flew 51 missions over Nazi occupied Europe between April 13, and July 3, 1944. Upon arrival in Europe, Ray and his crew agreed that they would fly every mission they could as quickly as they could, and they did! According to an August 1944 article in The Amarillo Globe, Ray and his crew “completed their missions in two month and 19 days – about half the usual time for the limit.” Ray and his crew were awarded a Presidential Unit Citation and the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters. The unit citation was for “the most perfect bombing mission ever made by the Fifteenth Bombardment force in Italy” on an aircraft factory near Wiener Neustadt, Austria. Ray and his crew also flew three missions over the infamous Ploesti Oil Fields. Ray’s only injury was knuckle that was skinned by flak that went through the bomber’s windshield. As noted in the 1944 newspaper article, Ray reported “the only sensation I has was a small rock skimming by. The co-pilot was knocked unconscious, but his flak suit prevented a wound and we revived him.” Ray went on to explain that “during a bombing run a pilot can use no evasive action. Because of the heavy anti-aircraft fortifications at Munich and any place inside Germany the air is a mass of black puffs anywhere over the target. But you speed blindly through the darkness knowing your perfect bombsight and expert bombardiering (sic) will knock out the target if the millions of pieces of shrapnel making that black mass don’t wreck the plane or kill the crew first. When I started in March, the Nazi fighters were so good it was tough going. The least deviation from formation meant you were a dead duck – the fighters would pick you off before you could return to line. But we have brought down so many of their fighters the principal worry now is ack-ack”. Ray and his crewmen remained good friends long after the war ended. He attended the reunion in Chicago in 1980 and several of the crew joined him for a 50th reunion at his home in Guymon, Oklahoma in July 1994.

Ray and his generation fought and defeated Nazi fascism. He returned to ranching, married the love of his life, raised his family, and died peacefully in 2003. Life after the war was not always easy, but when asked about it he would always say “anything after the war is just gravy.” Life after the war was a privilege that was denied to too many of his generation. They did not have the opportunity to live out the lives and loves that should have been theirs. He never forgot his crew or the many who fought and died to protect America and democracy. His legacy lives on through his three children, eight grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren who continue to cherish his memory and respect his sacrifices.

LT. RAY G. MOSER





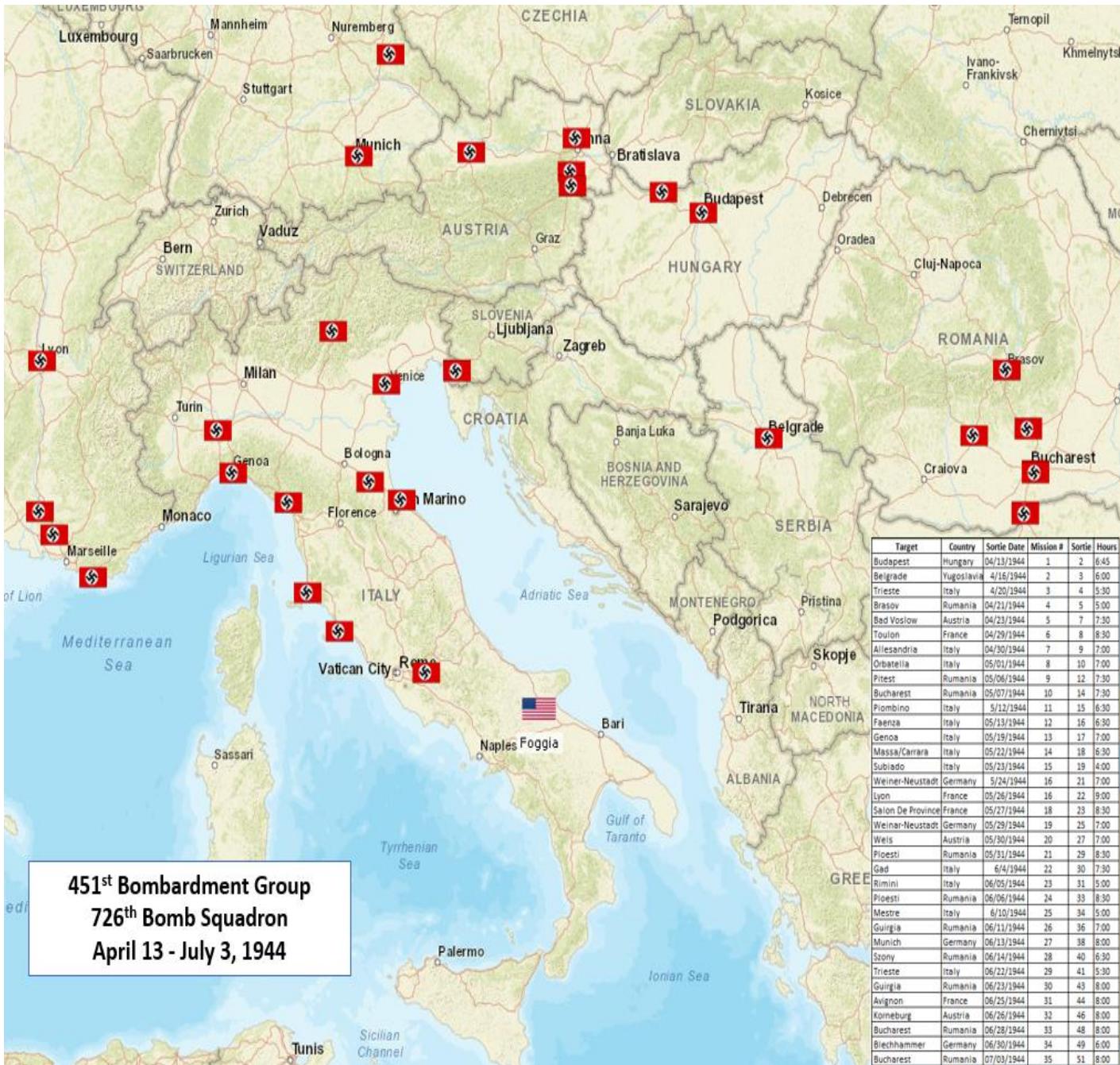
Crew of Big Mogul:

Bottom Row:

Mike Miller-Bombardier, Lexington, Kentucky
Artzvig (Art) Gadarian-Navigator, Defuniak Springs, Florida
Ray Moser-Pilot, Amarillo, Texas
Richard (Dick) Kline-Co Pilot, Syracuse, New York

Top Row:

Valentine (Val) Goldsmith-Nose Gunner, New York City, New York
Francisco (Frank) Guiterrez-Radio Ops & Ball Turret, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Jimmy Collins-Assistant Flight Engineer & Right Waist Gunner, Beaumont, Texas
Gordon Williams-Flt Engineer & Upper Ball Turret, Paris, Texas
Ralph Manning-Left Waist Gunner, Chicago, Illinois
Wally Mooney-Tail Gunner, Cleveland, Ohio (not in the picture)



The static map of Moser's crew and Big Mogul's missions appears above. However, an interactive map can be created per the steps below if you have information on missions flown. For steps on how to compile a list of missions flown, see the following link to a previous newsletter (page 19):

<https://www.451st.org/Newsletters/PDFs/451st%20Bomb%20Group%20Newsletter%20No.%202021%20-%20Oct%202022.pdf>

To view the interactive maps, download Google Earth. Then download the “451st Deployment 1942-45” and “Ray Moser Missions Map” files attached to the newsletter email to see these very interesting interactive visuals.

How to create KMZ Files in Google Earth (from Greg Moser):

- Search/download Google Earth (its free)
- Click “add” and “folder” (top left)
- Enter a location in the “search” bar. Once you are at the general location, you can look around for the railyard, refinery, or other target if you have the details.
- Click “add” and select “placemark”. Move the marker to the point you want to mark. Name it and add details.

If you want to customize the place marker like I did, just find an image on the internet, save it (I use .png). When you have the new placemark window open, click on the place mark image and add your custom icon.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The 451st Bomb Group Association does not charge annual dues. Your generous contributions help cover expenses for printing/mailing the newsletter, and for maintaining the website, www.451st.org. Please let us know if an electronic version of the newsletter is acceptable in lieu of a paper copy, as that helps lower costs.

451st BG Association Financial Report

Beginning Balance July, 2023 \$9,885.11

Income

Donations	\$1,575.00
Interest	\$324.16
Total Income	\$1,899.16

Expenses

Go Daddy - SSL Renewal (2 years)	\$199.98
August Newsletter	\$457.62
Total Expenses	\$657.60

Ending Balance January, 2024 \$11,126.67