



451st Bomb Group Newsletter No. 17 November 2020



Published for the preservation of our 451st heritage.

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WORLDWIDE INTEREST in WWII/451st BOMB GROUP

Did you know worldwide interest in WWII remains strong over 75 years after its conclusion? I frequently receive inquiries from individuals in European countries regarding specifics such as 451st missions, planes and crewmen. We are privileged to have two such individuals, Raul Semenic and Renata Gutnik of Slovenia share just one of their stories (see page 5) involving their efforts to honor men of the 451st and their above and beyond efforts reaching out to surviving family members. In Renata's words: *"My husband researched the mystery about the plane and the crew after more than 70 years from their crash. Since he got very little information about the crash from locals and officials here in Slovenia (Europe) and within USA, we started a huge journey of searching for the families of the doomed plane crew. In between 2015 and 2017 we found all 11 families of the 10 crew members and got surprised again. Their fathers (5 survivors) never shared their war experiences with their families and their children and grandchildren feel very sorry to not to ask them while they were still among us."*

So we gathered all the information that we thought would be suitable for introducing the stories to the families and their friends. From when and how the WW2 started for USA, what were Liberators, where and how they were built, about the structure of the USAAF, of the Bomb Wing, Bombardment group and Squadron this plane and the crew belonged to, to the Mission where they lost their lives and a plane in this small town, to the horrific stories about what happened to their bodies, to the survivors, to where they found their last resting place, how the survivors lived, to the memorial my husband erected with our own money, since this town politicians are still hostile towards the winning allies in WW2.

But because we all rather watch pictures then read (and the closest relatives of our crewmembers are all using glasses due to their age), we believe it would be great to help them with the pictures to get closer to the experiences their fathers and uncles went through while serving in the WW2."

Thank you, Raul and Renata, for sharing your story!

With the passing of Bob Karstensen (see page 3) the 451st has perhaps lost its most influential post-war member. It is safe to say that without his herculean efforts, there may never have been a 451st Bomb Group Association. Bob tirelessly tracked down veteran members and coordinated reunions, bringing together again

men and crews who shared a bond forged in heroism and patriotism. Thank you for your service, and for preserving the history of the 451st Bomb Group!

What's New on the Website: <https://www.451st.org>

Accident reports and mission flimsies added.

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dh5gv3lkihv0tob/AADJ1PtDGr_zGYqxjvOWIQAza?dl=0 – Use this link to see recently received negatives that were developed. Many pictures were familiar, but some were new even to the most experienced B-24 historians.

Reunion Update:

The 2020 joint bomb groups reunion has been rescheduled to September, 2021, again in Albuquerque, NM.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jonathan".

POST MISSION LIBATION - Courtesy of Jim Greco

Crews were eligible for a one ounce shot of whiskey at the conclusion of each mission. If you had a milk-run you could double up if the next mission was a rough one. The shots could accumulate like currency, payable in full at the end of a tour of duty. In truth they were used to loosen up the guys for intelligence debriefing which were conducted by one Intel officer with an entire aircrew present. Details such as concentrations of flak, enemy aircraft numbers, fighter escort effectiveness and losses, cloud cover, enemy smoke coverage, bombing patterns, and numbers of parachutes seen from downed aircraft were questioned. Also, enemy tactics, aircraft formations, methods of attack, rocket use, radio silence, enemy aircraft types, and last known for MIA's.

TRIBUTE TO BOB KARSTENSEN

With great sadness, we announce the passing of Bob Karstensen on September 23rd, 2020.



Bob was one of the four founders of our 451st Bomb Group alumnae organization. As one of the founders, he began organizing bi-annual reunions from 1978 through 2006 in various cities throughout the country.

Additionally, he was the publisher of the original 451st newsletter called the Ad Lib. He published the Ad Lib from 1978 through 2012. More than 50 Ad Libs were published over that 30+ year period. At its peak, Bob distributed the Ad Lib to 2000 members.

FINAL FLIGHT by Bob Karstensen



*I sometimes sit and wonder,
as the years go speeding by,
if our lives are shaped and guided
by our comrades from a 'high.'*

*We had learned to do together,
and to share our dreams and plans.
We had learned a bit of all the things,
that it took to be a man.*

*But life was not so kind, it seems,
war takes a heavy toll.*

*We saw our comrades leave our ranks,
and join the HONORED ROLL.*

*They died in simple silence,
or in anguish and despair.*

*They've blazed a route for all of us,
that we may meet "up there."*

*Some day we'll hear their voice again,
when our bodies cease to roam.*

*The call will come through LOUD and
CLEAR,
"BOX THE STRAGGLER IN, BOYS,
LET'S TAKE THIS FLYER HOME."*

LAST FLYBY

Here are the death notifications received since our May 2020 Newsletter:

451st Member	Squadron	Duty Position	DOD
Ault, Gaylord L.		Maintenance Crew Chief	10.04.2019
Cedarbaum, Harold P.	726 th	Bombardier	09.05.2015
Crosby, Robert E.	725 th	Ball Turret Gunner	02.28.2020
Gleason, Donald T.	727 th		11.08.2013
Karstensen, Robert	724 th	Nose Turret Gunner	09.23.2020
Lahaye, Paul G.	726 th		09.25.2013
Polmen, Peter G.	726 th	Tail Gunner	08.02.2020
Schoenborn, Henry	726 th	Armament Section	03.22.2018
Shuster, Charles F.	727 th	Radio Operator-Gunner	06.08.2016
Vogel, John R.	724 th		05.01.2018
Waller Jr, William W.	726 th	Nose Turret Gunner	03.19.2019

THANK YOU, DONORS!

Donor	In Tribute To
Hewitt, Alice & Gary	In memory of Linn W. Newman, Nose Turret Gunner
Jones, Gene Joseph	In honor of Joseph Jones, Nose Turret Gunner 725 th sqd.
McKinney, Mike (son)	In memory of Nathan McKinney, Line Chief 727 th sqd.
Mason, Karen	In memory of Lt. Robert M. Finehout, B-24 Pilot
Miller, Shirley	In memory of John F. Miller, Nose Turret Gunner 726 th sqd.
Murak, Peggy	In honor of Mike Pollino's birthday, grandson of Martin E. Aschenbrenner.
Prock, Susan (daughter)	In memory of Floyd Prock, Radio Mechanic, 725 th sqd.

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
26 Eagles Mere Way
Bristol, ME 04539

DOUBLE TROUBLE by Raul Semenic and Renata Gutnik

Note – the picture to the right shows the beautifully formatted story of Double Trouble by Raul Semenic and Renata Gutnik from Slovenia.

Slovenia is one of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia. Slovenia is a parliamentary republic and a member nation of the European Union, United Nations, and NATO.

An English version of the story appears below. The enlarged type alters the format a little.



Memorial dedicated to the American crew of the bomber B-24H-CF 5 sr. No. 41-29244, Double Trouble Cultural Heritage Memorial ESD 30178

During World War II Allied air forces achieved a historic turnaround with Operation Big Week, when they intensively bombed German and Austrian strategic points from February 20-26, 1944. The task of the 15th U.S. Air Force on February 25, 1944 was to bomb the ball-bearing and Messerschmitt aircraft factories in Regensburg, Germany. As American planes flew over Trieste and Rijeka, they were attacked by German fighter planes. In that attack the B-24H bomber Double Trouble, serial number 41-29244, was hit and the plane caught on fire. The pilot ordered the crew to bail out, while trying to land the plane and save those crew members, who he assumed might be still alive. Five crew members saved their lives by bailing out. The surviving airmen were captured by the Logatec's Nazi collaborators and later on taken over by the Germans. Two of the wounded were treated in Vrhnik and Ljubljana, then all five were taken to military prisoner-of-war camps for airmen in Germany, Poland and Lithuania. They survived the war, returned home to the United States, and started their families and careers.

The gunners Varga, McCord and Scafidi, were most likely dead already after the first attack of German fighters. Pilot Pries and tail gunner Tokarski, who shot down one of the three attackers, most likely died when the plane crashed on the ground. The bodies of the five dead airmen were robbed and stripped all the way down to the "blue bunny" – an electrically heated suit worn under at least three layers of clothes. It was not until seven days later that they were buried in the local cemetery in Dolenji Logatec, while in the meantime the locals were looting the plane. On October 23, 1946 the representatives of the American Graves Registration Service of US Army, excavated and transported the remains to an American military cemetery in Belgrade. At the end of 1947 and early 1948 identification procedures were carried out and, after the identification confirmation, they sealed the coffins with the remains and sent them to the American military cemetery in Nettuno, Italy, where they waited for the decisions of their relatives. Only then did the relatives find out about their fate.

**Edwin H. (Heine) Pries**

Pilot, Second Lieutenant, Waverly, Iowa, (11/17/1918 - 2/25/1944)

Edwin Heine Pries operated a trucking business. When enlisted, he wanted to become an aviation mechanic, but the Army educated him for a pilot due to his talent. He lost his life in the plane crash after he did his best to save his crew. His body was not burnt, but was robbed off of his clothes and jewelry. He wore his pilot's ring that he got when graduated for a pilot and had his name engraved on it. Edwin's mother asked the US Army for her son's pilot's ring. In 1951 an Air Attaché to the American Embassy in Argentina located the ring at the Nazi collaborator who escaped from Logatec to Argentina. He would give the ring back to pilot's mother, but only if she paid for it. Pilot Pries was buried with military honors in Harlington Cemetery in Waverly, on November 28, 1949.

**Steve Varga**

Lower turret gunner, Sgt, Rosebush, Michigan, (6/30/1922 - 2/25/1944)

Steve Varga was the second of five children. The Varga family at first lived in East Chicago and when Steve was seven years old, moved to Rosebush, Michigan. His father called him Duxic, since he was always willing to help the others in need. Steve graduated from high school and got a job as a metalworker. He had a Harley Davidson motorcycle. The autopsy showed that his body was not burned, but it was badly damaged. Steve Varga had been laid to his final rest at an American military cemetery in Florence, on June 21, 1949, 9 days before his 27th birthday. Posthumously he was awarded the Air Medal and Purple Heart.

**Joseph J. McCord**

Right waist gunner, radio operator, Sgt, Washington, Indiana, (6/8/1924 - 2/25/1944)

Joseph J. McCord came from a big family, where from 4 brothers were sent to war. Two served in the Army Air Force, one in Marine Corps, and one in the Army. All three brothers survived the war. He completed a four year high school education. According to Human Resources Command, he was 6 feet (183 cm) tall and one of the tallest crewmembers. After the war, on May 21, 1949, his remains were buried in the American military cemetery in Florence, Italy. He was posthumously awarded the Air Medal and Purple Heart.

**Salvatore P. Scafidi**

Left waist gunner, Sgt, Boston, Massachusetts, (7/23/1924 - 2/25/1944)

Salvatore Philiadelfin Scafidi was the youngest crewmember. His crew called him Rocco. After elementary school he completed another year in high school and worked as an apprentice. His parents were Italian immigrants and got divorced, which was a real rarity in those days. His mother got custody of his sister and brother, while Salvatore went to his father. He joined the army soon after his 18th birthday to avoid the family conflicts and possible prison. On July 27, 1949 he was laid to his final rest at the American Military Cemetery in Florence. He was posthumously awarded the Air Medal and Purple Heart. His family received those awards, his personal belongings and a flag from his coffin. They lent all these items to the Park of Military History in Pivka.

**Thaddeus S. Tokarski**

Tail gunner, Sergeant, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, (6/10/1922 - 2/25/1944)

Thaddeus Stanley Tokarski – Teddy was a loom fixer and as a hobby worked on his car and radio. He met the love of his life Eleanor in the neighborhood. They wanted to get married, but his mother thought they were too young, so they eloped and got married. His crewmembers called him Shorty. When their bomber got attacked by German fighters, it was him who fought back so furiously, that one fighter had to crash land shortly thereafter. He lost his life in the impact when the plane crashed. There was a hear-say that someone not only took of his wedding ring but also cut off his finger while doing that. His wife Eleanor decided to bury him on American soil. He was laid to his final rest on December 1, 1949 in Beverly, New Jersey.

**Frank R. Gerrity**

Co-pilot, Second Lieutenant, Pittston, Pennsylvania, (7/1/1920 - 4/19/2009)

Frank Raymond Gerrity completed a law school and joined the FBI. His work influenced an amendment to the Missing Persons Act. While fighting organized crime, he worked on high-profile cases as the Weinberger's. The case involved the kidnapping of an one-month old baby from a middle-class suburban family. The case echoed throughout America and struck fear in the hearts of average Americans. People started locking their doors and Americans lost their sense of security. During his time of service with the bureau he earned numerous commendations and special recognitions for his work from FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. After retiring from the FBI he served as president of investigating agency Intercon in Manhattan. He was married to Margaret S. Dunton. They had daughters Eileen and Meg.

**James W. Cottrell**

Navigator, Second Lieutenant, Louisville, Kentucky, (6/18/1921 - 1/5/1994)

When bailing out of the bomber, the propeller almost entirely cut off James Wilburn Cottrell's foot, so he spent the entire POW time in Bavarian prisoner hospital. A German doctor amputated it, so he wore a prosthesis for the rest of his life. When he returned to USA, he weighed only 79 pounds and was hospitalized for another 4.5 years. While recovering in hospitals, he finished college and became a personnel manager. He married Mary Patricia "Pat" Ryan and they had four children: Karen, Janice, Michael and Susan.

**George A. Evens**

Bombardier, Second Lieutenant, Hadley, New York, (10/4/1918 - 7/4/2000)

George Albert Evens was a member of the crew of the B-24 bomber Honey Child, sr. No. 41-29220. He was assigned at the last minute to fill in for Double Trouble's bombardier, Harry E. Taylor, who remained on the ground because of frostbite from their previous mission. After the war Evens worked in the insurance business, was elected to the Lake Luzerne Town Board as Town Justice and served for 33 years. He also was active as a volunteer firefighter. As a member of the Lions Club International he was involved in many community service projects. He married Beatrice Gaskill. They had daughters Sally and Kathleen and a son George

**Harold Koslow**

Upper turret gunner, engineer, Sgt, Dorchester, Massachusetts, (5/29/1913 - 1/12/1966)

Harold Koslow was the oldest Double Trouble crewmember, so they called him Pops and Pappy. In 1937 he married Annie Glickman. During the war, in 1943, their son Barry was born, and after the war, a son, Edward. Before the war Harold and his brother had a gasoline station, automobile repair shop and a small used automobile lot. His expertise in the area of car and truck repairs helped him to become expert also for planes and avio engineer. After the war Harold returned to work as an automotive mechanic and became very active in the Jewish War Veterans Organization. While a POW during WWII he was part of the March of Death across Germany. As a result of the deprivations he endured, his heart was so weakened that he passed away at the age of 52.

**Don T. Abernathy**

Nose gunner, Sergeant, Coker Creek, Tennessee, (1/2/1922 - 10/15/2013)

Don Thomas Abernathy also survived the infamous 86 day and 600 mile long March of Death during his captivity. When they had to go on the March, he managed to escape twice. At first, he was recaptured but his second attempt at escape was successful. Even before that, in the prison camp, he tried everything to escape. Along with some of the other prisoners, including Harold Koslow, he dug a tunnel, but was unsuccessful. After the war he married Fay Ball, with whom he had a daughter Ramona Fay and a son David Don. He worked as a Research Machinist for a company whose laboratories produced enriched uranium. As the last living member of the crew, he left this world on October 15, 2013

The only known and ever published photograph of the bomber B-24H CF 5, sr. No. 41-29244, Double Trouble
(Source: Semenič, Raul. (2017). 41-29244. 4. edition, Logatec, self-published, pg. 96, 97)



On October 15, 2014, a memorial was erected to celebrate the memory of the American crew and the B-24H bomber that crashed near Logatec. The memorial was erected by award-winning author and researcher of Double Trouble's fate, Raul Semenič. His wife, Renata Gutnik, helped him with logistics, while their friend Branko Rupnik secured the landowners permit of land usage. Six months later, on April 20, 2015 the Slovenian Ministry of Culture recognized the monument as so special and important that it deserved to become a Cultural Heritage. They enrolled it in the Register of Cultural Heritage of Republic of Slovenia under record number 30178.

On June 9, 2017, the permanent exhibition "To Hell and Back" was opened in the Park of Military History Pivka. It is dedicated to 142 American airplanes that crashed on Slovenian soil during World War II. An important part of the exhibition is focused to the Double Trouble crew and its fate. There are smaller plane fragments on display, but the most valuable, in addition to the personal items of the shooter Salvatore Scafidi, is the military training material of the bombardier George Evens and his personal notes from the time of his bombardier training.

Double Trouble Memorial



HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY – JOSEPH JONES

Joseph Jones turned 100 years old on 1/1/2020. Joseph was a Nose Turret Gunner with the 725th Squadron. He was part of the crew on Devil Duchess.

Joseph Jones Now



Joseph Jones Then – (3rd from Left Standing)



TRIBUTE TO PETER POLMEN – by Ruth Faklis

Uncle Pete Story: At 102+, Uncle Pete (Peter G. Polmen) passed away peacefully on Sunday morning (Aug. 2). His funeral was yesterday, some of you may have seen it live streamed from our church. As most all of you know Uncle Pete served as a B-24 tail-gunner during WWII with the 451st out of Foggia, Italy. He was awarded the following: Purple Heart Medal, Air Medal and two clusters (21 missions), European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, American Campaign Medal, WWII Medal and Good Conduct Medal.

At his funeral both officiating clergymen spoke beautiful eulogies using "Uncle Pete Stories" and personal knowledge to bring his memory alive. His family members truly appreciated their remembrances. (Best eulogies -ever - in my humble opinion.) Friends who have never heard an "Uncle Pete Story" were laughing along with the others in acknowledging his wit and wisdom. And yes, there was a Cadillac logo on his casket and a cigar in his inside pocket.

But truly, the most memorable moment for me was at his graveside when the very young ROTC men lifted the flag from his casket and the (live/not canned) bugler performed taps across the silent field. As the flag waved softly in their outstretched arms and the music played, I suddenly heard the roar of a jet overhead - and my first thought went to a 'fly-by' directly overhead. As I glanced up from under the tent, I immediately realized it was a SW Airline coming over for a landing at Midway; but in my heart it will always be his last fly-by. (Thank you SWA.) As his casket was lowered Fr. Tilemachos led those present in the hymn of Christos Aneste (Christ is Risen) which is (usually) only sung forty days following Easter. For those who don't know, Uncle Pete would go to bed every night with the usual 'Good night/Kali Nichta' (in Greek) - but the last words on his lips before falling asleep were always "Christos Aneste". So, this farewell hymn was very meaningful to me.

I want to thank all of you for the love and support you've afforded Uncle Pete and myself. I plan on taking his numerous stories - many which you never heard - and hopefully organize and publish them. Time will tell. But one thing I know for sure...his generation was one of a kind, and I was blessed to witness it. Memory eternal Uncle Pete - now you're free to soar.

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 June, 2020	\$7,189.08
Income	
Donations	\$490.00
Interest	\$7.29
Total Income	\$497.29
Expenses	
Add'l May Newsletter expense	\$44.18
Nov Newsletter Printing	\$575.00
Nov Newsletter Postage (est.)	\$275.60
Develop negatives	\$404.00
Scanner/printer	\$400.78
Total Expenses	\$1,699.56
Ending Balance October 31st 2020	\$5,986.81