



451st Bomb Group Newsletter No. 3 January 2014



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2013 TEMPE REUNION UPDATE

Wow! Our Joint Reunion held at Tempe, Arizona in October exceeded our expectations. Total attendance numbered 140 plus, including 31 survivors of the Air War in Europe. Our 451st Bomb Group had 80 people registered of which 18 were WWII survivors. We had three people attend (Bobbi Kelly, Ralph Helmericks and A. Mike Stauth) who have a perfect attendance record covering the 17 Reunions held to date by our Bomb Group. In recognition of the strong support over the years of Bobbi Kelly and her family members, a special award was made to Bobbi—a silver pendant and necklace which we hope will serve to remind Bobbi of the special role she has played in our activities. Truly a person we all love and respect.

Bobbi Kelly



Ralph Helmericks



A. Mike Stauth

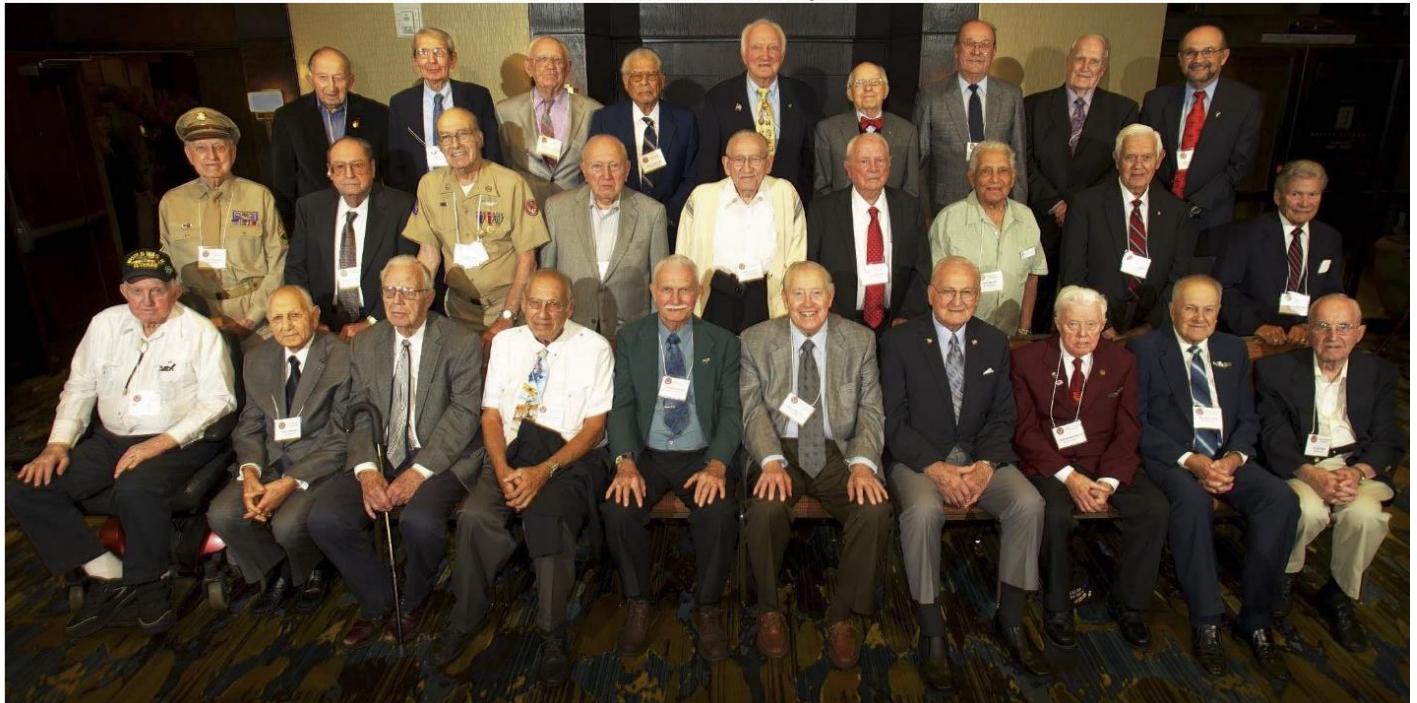


The other three Bomb Groups (The 99th, the 301st and the 455th) greatly contributed to the success of our meeting. Copies of selected pictures from the Reunion are included with this Newsletter. The speaker roster was most impressive, Colonel Tom Kirk who had traveled to Chicago (from Phoenix) for our 2010 Reunion, returned to again present a riveting description of his life as a POW at the Hanoi Hilton for 5 ½ years.

Our keynote speaker for the Gala Saturday Night Banquet, Brigadier General Edwin D. (Dave) Woellner was a B-17 pilot (POW) flying out of England in WWII. He had a long distinguished career with the Air Force before retiring as a Vice Commander.

SURVIVOR PICTURE

Joint Reunion 15th Air Force Bomb Groups WWII
17th-19th October, 2013 Tempe Arizona



Row 1 (Seated Row (L to R)) – 1. Albert Tone 301st BG , 2-Peter Polmen 451st BG, 3-Ralph Helmericks 451st BG, 4-Herbert Guinness 451st BG, 5-Frank Finklang 301st BG, 6-Win Jones 451st BG, 7-Dave Woellner 306th BG, 8-Archie Aitcheson 301st BG, 9-William Hipple 451st BG & 10-Alfred Betcher 99th BG

Row 2 (L to R): 1-Achi Kozakis 451st BG, 2-Richard Minor 451st BG, 3-Earl VanBenschoten 451st BG, 4-Ormond Buffington 455th BG, 5-Mike Stauth 451st BG, 6-Nathan McKinney 451st BG, 7-Alex Garcia 451st BG, 8-Ed Longenecker 451st BG & 9-Verne Mason 451st BG

Row 3 (L to R) 1-George Insley 44th BG, 2-Willard Gil 451st BG, 3-Robert Caldwell 455th BG, 4-Milo Sanchez 451st BG, 5-Carl Stracka 455th BG, 6-Ted Tronoff 455th BG, 7-Tom Boyd 455th BG, 8-Linn Newman 451st BG & 9-Wes Nelson 451st BG

Not Pictured: Les Bartlett 98th BG, George Johnston 455th BG, Jack Miller 451st BG, Ryan Michael O'Brien 484th BG & Henry Ong Jr. 487th BG

2014 REUNION

Our 451st BG and the 455th B.G. have been invited by the 461st and the 484th Bomb Groups to join them for a Reunion now planned to be held in Oklahoma City, OK, September 18-21, 2014. In many respects, the proposed Reunion program would be quite similar to that of our most recent meetings. Should you have an interest in possibly attending the upcoming Reunion, please promptly notify us. We will not make a final decision on proceeding with this until later. If we decide to participate, Additional information will be available along with Registration Forms on our 2014 Reunion Website <http://www.gordons.ws/reunion2014>

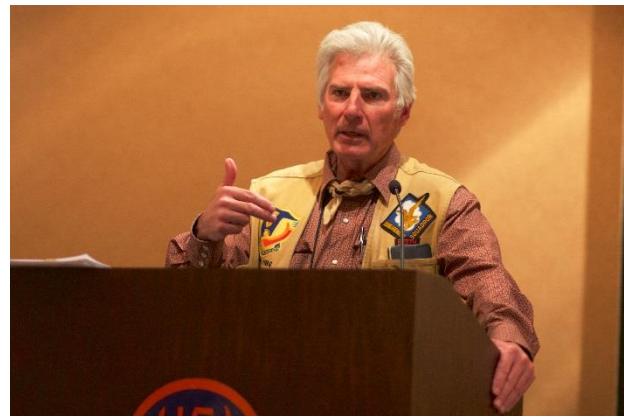
2013 REUNION PROGRAM & SPEAKERS

Getting to Italy

Speaker: Theodore V. Tronoff, Navigator



The Saga of Lady Be Good
Speaker: Kim Hobbs, President 376th B.G.



Maintaining the Aircraft

Speaker: Nathan McKinney, Line Chief



The Long March, POWS

Speaker: Henry Ong, Jr., Radioman-Gunner, POW



The Story of Patsy Jack

Speaker: Lt. Colonel Keith E. Bennett

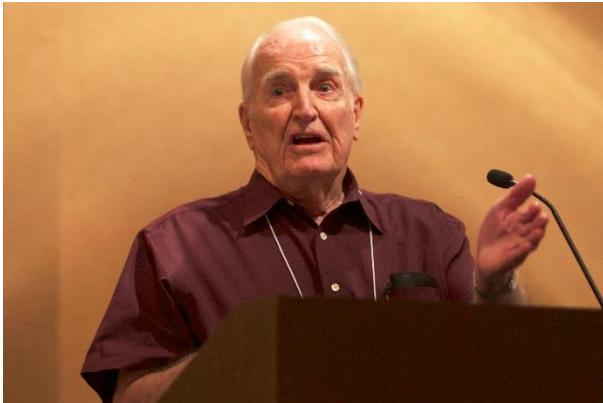


The Markersdorf Airdrome Mission

Speaker: Winson Jones, Top Turret Gunner



Hazard of Flying that First Mission: Unscheduled
Sampling of Turkish Hospitality
Speaker: Linn Newman, Nose Turret Gunner



5 ½ Years at the Hanoi Hilton Prison
Speaker: Colonel Thomas H. Kirk Jr., Pilot



Keynote Speaker – Brigadier General Edwin D (Dave) Woellner,
Pilot, POW 306th Bomb Group WWII



TEMPE REUNION HOTEL EXHIBITS

Tempe Reunion. Randy Jones provided our 451st impressive collection of murals and other artifacts. Then David Webster and Charles Workman greatly increased our regular exhibit space with an expansive Air War collection that included a machine gun, Norden bomb sight and sundry other items. At the Reunion, Craig Jones (Win's son) presented his dad with a very attractive glass encased B-24 Model which also was placed on display. All in all, the total items for viewing constituted a small Air Force Museum.

COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE MUSEUM TOUR



Jack & Shirley Miller



Bill Hipple

Program- Joint Reunion
15th Air Force Bomb Groups WWII

Sponsoring Units:



Reunion Management

Reunion Manager	Winson "Big" Jones 451 st Bomb Group
Committee Committee	Gary Staffo 99 th Bomb Group
Committee Committee	Frank Finklang 301 st Bomb Group
	Gregory E. Riggs 455 th Bomb Group

Reunion Staff

Reunion Support	Diane Kae Jones
Reunion Support	Marsha Morris
Reunion Web Master	Warren Gordon
Photographer	Michael Smeltzer
Transportation	David Fisher
Transportation	Craig Jones
451 st B.G. Historian	Randy Jones
WWII Artifacts	George Webster

Arizona Liaison

Arizona Liberator Group	David Arnett
Arizona Liberator Group	Paul Arnett
CAF Museum	Larry A. Turner
Advisory	A. Mike Stauth
Advisory	Roger Fenton

Special Contributors

Delcia Bagwell	7:00am – 9:00am
Louie Lopez	12:00 noon – 5:00pm
"Achi" Kozakis	5:00pm – 7:00pm
"Alex" Kuras	12:00 noon – 7:00pm
"Gus" Margaritis	
Victor E. Murray	
Linn W. Newman	

17th, 18th & 19th, October 2013
Phoenix, Arizona
Tempe Embassy Suites Hotel

Thursday Program
October 17th, 2013

Free Breakfast Bar	7:00am – 9:00am
Registration	12:00 noon – 5:00pm
Hotel Manager Free Wine Bar	5:00pm – 7:00pm
Crew and Friends Meetings	12:00 noon – 7:00pm

Friday Day Program
October 18th, 2013

Free Breakfast Bar	7:00am – 9:00am
Registration	9:00am – 5:00pm
Bus Tour CAF Museum & Luncheon Group A Departure	10:00am
Bus Tour CAF Museum & Luncheon Group B Departure	11:00am

Friday Evening Program
October 18th, 2013

Hospitality Hour with Cash Bar	5:00pm – 6:00pm
Dinner & Program	6:00pm – 9:30pm

- ❖ Opening Remarks - Winson "Big" Jones
- ❖ Introduction of Head Table
- ❖ Recognition of Guests Honoring Deceased Members
- ❖ Recognition of POW Survivors in Attendance
- ❖ Recognition of Survivors in Attendance
- ❖ Sing Along Featuring Burgie Crandall's Lets Dance Band Combo

Saturday Morning Program
October 19th, 2013

Free Breakfast Bar	7:30am – 10:30am
Program	10:00am – Noon

Getting to Italy Theodore v. Tronoff, Navigator

The Saga of Lady Be Good Kim Hobbs, President 376th Bomb Group

Maintaining the Aircraft Nathan McKinney, Line Chief

The Long March, POWS Henry Ong, Jr., Radioman-Gunner, POW

Saturday Afternoon Program
October 19th, 2013

Program	2:00pm – 4:00pm
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The Story of Patsy Jack Lt. Colonel Keith E. Bennett

Hazards of Flying that First Mission:

Unscheduled Sampling of Turkish	Linn Newman, Nose Turret Gunner
Hospitality	

The Markersdorf Airdrome Mission Jack "Little" Jones, Nose Turret Gunner
 (451st B.G. awarded its third Presidential Unit Citation for this mission)
 Winson "Big" Jones, Top Turret Gunner
 Paul V. Anderson, Ball Turret Gunner

5 1/2 Years at the Hanoi Hilton Prison Colonel Thomas H. Kirk Jr., Pilot

Saturday Evening Program
October 19th, 2013

Hospitality Hour with Cash Bar	5:00pm to 6:00pm
Gala Dinner with Big Band Orchestra	6:00pm to 10:30pm

Dinner and Program

- ❖ Invocation
- ❖ Dinner
- ❖ Color Guard – ASU Air Force ROTC
- ❖ Guest Speaker – Brigadier General Edwin D.(Dave) Woellner
- ❖ Closing Remarks – Winson "Big" Jones
- ❖ Heroes' March – Randy Jones calling Roll
- ❖ Removal of Colors
- ❖ Taps
- ❖ Survivors' Group Picture

8:30pm to 10:30pm - Big Band Music for Dancing and Listening
 Burgie Crandall's Let's Dance Band. Burgie Crandall Leader and Music Director. Band Managers – Jenny Werner and Chuck Bellman

DONATIONS

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the generous contributions received since our last Newsletter. We now have sufficient carryover funds to cover the various printing and other costs associated with getting Newsletter No. 3 to you. We also have received donations from the following since Newsletter No 2:

Aarons, Theodore	Horn, Lawrence H.	McNerney, F.P.
Anderson, Charles W.	Jeunette, Edward R. Sr	Miller, John B.
Bowman, David L.	Jodell, John H.	Newman, Linn W
Collins, Kenneth	Kozakis, Achilles	Osofsky, Meyer
Cushner, Stephen S.	Kuras, Alexander	Pendleton, Andrew L.
Dan, Bonnie J.	Latchaw, Arthur	Prince, Susan Tudor
Duncan, Kenneth S.	Longenecker, Edward W.	Shaffer, Rossman
Elliott, Sally & Earle	Lopez, Louie	Stauffer, George
Erickson, Leonard M.	Malone, Paul E.	Tedesco, Frank
Gill, Willard C.	Margaritis, Gus	Therriault, Lawrence E.
Hall, Gail J.		

Special memorials and other designated tributes recently received are as follows:

Donor	In Tribute To
Bagwell, Delcia	John Bagwell Jr.
Goldsmith, Cynthia R.	Orville Richey
Hill, Sedgefield D.	David Eagles
Hill, Sedgefield D.	A. Mike Stauth
Murray, Victor E.	455th Bomb Group
Nelson, Wesley F.	Crew Members of "Extra Joker"
Reise, David	Alvin G. Reise
Rohde, Harry O.	Billy Seale
Walkey, Cliff	Thomas E. (Edward) Walkey

DISTRIBUTING THE NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL

With the passage of time, more and more people are using E-mail as their primary communication vehicle. If you have an E-mail Address kindly send it along. This will serve to reduce the cost of distributing future Newsletters. Also if you are a WWII survivor, please let us know your duty position with the 451st.

Send to: Win451BG@gmail.com

LAST FLY BY

The following reflects the death notifications received since our July 2013 Newsletter:

451st Member	Duty Position	DOD
Adams, Dennis S.	Pilot	10/15/2013
Anderson, Robert J.	Pilot	10/26/2013
Dattan, Howard S.		9/6/2013
Eppestine, Alfred H.	Radio Operator/Gunner	10/5/2013
Humphrey, Winston E.	Co-pilot	05/2013
Kuchinsky, Joseph Jr.	Flight Engineer/Gunner	3/6/2013
Merklein, Robert Jr.		9/11/2012
O'Connor, John Alexander	Pilot	5/28/2013
Richey, Orville W.		5/8/2013
Rogers, Lawrence	Flight Engineer/Gunner	5/25/2013
Seale, Billy B.	Flight Engineer/Top Turret Gunner	05/2013
Young, Sherman S.		

JOHN O'CONNOR

Our Last Fly By includes the passing of John O' Connor who until recently was a very special contributor to our Reunion programs.

John was an accomplished trumpet player and musician. He often would join various bands and orchestras that were providing music for our meetings. As a pilot, he had a distinguished career with the 451st. In a subsequent Newsletter, perhaps we can include more information regarding John's wartime experiences.

JACKETS

Yes, we now have two jackets. The second having been contributed by Margaret Kacena and her family. It had been worn by her late husband, Bob Kacena, who served as a lead navigator with the 451st.

At our Tempe Reunion, we honored Wilma Bennett and her family members. Additionally; her son Lt. Colonel Keith E. Bennett made an excellent presentation covering the B-24 "Patsy Jack" and its crew members.

DISTINQUISHED MILITARY SERVICE OF 451ST ALUMNAE MEMBERS

For most, upon completing our 35 missions, we returned to the States and re-entered civilian life. However, there were quite a number of 451st members that continued with military duty. For example, Jack Miller served in Vietnam where he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Once Paul E. Malone, Co-Pilot of the original Patsy Jack crew completed his bombing missions, he volunteered to continue his air force career in Europe where he flew 42 missions as a P-51 fighter pilot.

In the case of Alexander C. Kuras, navigator, the following summary reflects an extensive post WWII career involving many facets of military operations.

Many of the 451st members returned to the US and later were involved with the Korean and/or the Vietnam Wars. In a few words, I joined the 426th as navigator in November 1944. My many memories of the B-24 include; bellying in a B-24 four miles off the end of the runway at Pueblo CO (co-pilot error); flying with many different crews due to a navigator shortage; surviving 33 missions and the heavy flak; emergency landing at Vis with double engine failure; losing an engine over Vienna and coming home alone – thank God for the P-51 escort; a bad flak hit over Vienna, killed the ball gunner and caused #4 engine to lose oil and run away (wouldn't feather) – just made an emergency field in Northern Italy; and landing at an abandoned airfield due to fuel shortage. And the great joy of surviving and flying home in our B-24 in May of 45.

The war being over I took advantage of the GI bill and earned a BS in Electrical Engineering. I also joined the AF Troop Carrier Reserve Squadron at O'Hare Field. Recalled in March 51, flew air rescue with the SAC survival school for four years and then assigned to R&D work. This includes B-52 R&D weapons drops – logged about 50 hours in B-52s. Spent five years on the Gemini program at Cape Canaveral – launch operations of astronauts where I met many who landed on the moon.

With the completion of the Gemini Program I attended a training with Industry Course at McDonnell Corp, St Louis as a prelude, I thought, to joining other Gemini officers on the Manned Orbital Program at Vandenberg AFB (which was later cancelled). Instead orders were to Vietnam, this was July 1968. After some preliminary training and upgrading to flying status Code 1 from Code 3 (which required no flying), I had orders to Manchester NH where they modified 25 year old C-47s into EC-47s. This included adding a Doppler navigation system, B-3 driftmeter and special electronic surveillance equipment.

The mission was to eavesdrop on enemy communications and fix their position to within a few hundred yards which required extremely accurate navigation. The crew of the EC-47 included two pilots, a navigator and three security system operators who knew the Vietnamese language. They were trained to determine which sites to fix and then the navigator would fix the location and he would call it down to ground stations over secure communications for further action. It was a navigator's mission and he required a higher security clearance than the pilots.

Getting to Vietnam was an adventure. We were to ferry an EC-47 to Saigon (TSN). The two pilots, both LCol, one a history prof at the AF Academy, myself, also now a LCOL and a very young junior flight mechanic made up the crew, which the officers having 20 plus years of service and thousands of hours of flight time. Compare this with the 451st crews who ferried B-24s to Italy where at most there might be a 1st lieutenant on the crew.

Not having the range to get to Hawaii even with a 500 gallon cabin tank, our route was NH to CO, CA, McCord AFB Wash, Anchorage, the Aleutian Islands, Midway, Guam, Philippines, Saigon. At 150 mph we logged 82 hours in the air.

One exciting event half way between Mid-Way and Guam, #2 engine lost power. After quickly identifying a course to the nearest field about three hours away, I check the pilot's instruments and noted the fuel pressure to the engine was only half what it should have been. My past experience with cabin tanks told me to go back and check for problems such as loose connections. The tank had two standard, four position selector valves, one per engine. The valves at that time should have been off, but the flight engineer apparently without double checking put one OFF and second one to BOTH. As the wing tank gas dropped, this allowed air into the pump system and engine failure. Closing the valve cured the engine failure and 10 minutes later the second engine failed. They bellied the plane on a beach in Canada most likely due to ferry tank problems. We likely were in the same danger.

The 360 TW Sq. had 30 flight crews and 15 aircraft. Flying was intense, averaging 150 hours per aircraft, about 80 per crew each month. Since I was the ranking navigator, I had the responsibility over the 30 navigators who were majors, captains, lieutenants, many from previous desk jobs.

The aircrews were overloaded with rank from those recalled from desk jobs. We had numbers LCOLs, Majors, and Captains with thousands of hours of flight time. This vast experience level was noteworthy in minimal mistakes. The few lieutenant pilots needed 500 hours with the squadron to move to the left seat. This contrasts with the 451st where 500 hours of flight time might be met at completion of a tour. The 451st folks had to learn quickly and some mistakes occurred. Also the war pressures were not as great in Saigon.

The missions covered the southern part of Vietnam, usually within 150 miles of TSN. The airfield at the time was the busiest airport in the world so activity was intense. Most missions kept the navigator very busy, often there wasn't time to even eat a sandwich. Missions were flown day and night and usually lasted five to six hours, which was the fuel limit since the EC-47 was heavily loaded with crew and equipment and couldn't carry a full fuel load due to weight restrictions.

The only enemy action was occasional small arms fire, which at 3500 feet altitude was ineffective. We did have a front line seat for some action. We were given notice of B-52 drops so as to avoid the drop zone. I would position our aircraft about four miles from the drop site and watch the spectacular action of 3 B-52s with each dropping about 40,000 pounds of bombs from 30,000 feet. Remember a flight of nine B-24s would drop about what one B-52 dropped, and they came from Guam. Also at night we also had a side show when gunships opened up.

Aircraft maintenance, even on 25 year old aircraft was superb. As engine outage or a maintenance scrub was unheard of. Morale of the crews and ground personnel was excellent. The one year tour limit worked well.

We arrived well after the Tet offensive where TSN had about 400 casualties. The base and Saigon were quite safe. We even bicycled into Saigon. Being a permanent base, quarters and food were good. Unlike the F-105s and B-52s that bombed the north, our mission was quite safe. In the years time I logged 1000 hours, the squadron had no casualties and had no aircraft accidents. I

celebrated my 45th birthday at the rooftop restaurant on top of the REX Hotel (military run) in Saigon. Overall a production and exciting tour.

Alex Kuras

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION

From time-to-time, we receive a variety of contact requests related to 451st bomb group members. Some of the requests are from family members hoping to gain some insight on their relative's war experiences. In other cases, friends are trying to locate a 451st member and don't have a way to contact them (and they aren't on our mailing list). If you can help provide information or make connections, please directly contact the person searching listed below:

451 st Bomb Group Member	Family or Friend Searching
Carey, William F. Private, Possibly Office Staff (Close friend of James Plarenos)	Mar Gee Farr – Friend P.O. Box 7272 Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067-7272 Phone 630.624.6634
Haldeman, John M. Bombardier 724 th Squadron	John Haldeman – Son 508.481.2494
Hice, Joseph John	Gary Hice – Son garyhice@gmail.com
Notestone, Edwin Flight Engineer/Gunner 724 th Squadron	Damon B. Notestone – Son 107 Terrace Ct. Lancaster, OH 43130
Pryzblinski, Lawrence PFC Ordnance Dept. 726 th Squadron	Thomas Pryzblinski – Son pryzzie@comcast.net

Issaquah, WA 98027

18502 NW Montreux Dr.

c/o Wilson Jones

451st Bomb Group