



FOR THE MEN WHO FLY 'EM • FOR THE MEN WHO KEEP 'EM FLYING

MARENGO, IL 60152

FALL 1982

## 82 REUNION: HUGE SUCCESS

### COLORADO SPRINGS ATTRACTS MORE THAN 525 ATTENDEES

Not since August 1945 has the 451st Bomb Group been able to rally as large a group as were assembled at the Four Seasons Motor Inn over the weekend of August 6-8, 1982. 37 years after the Group was disbanded at Dow Field (Bangor, Maine) more than 300 former members met to renew friendships, relive past experiences and to review lifestyles of old friends and comrades.

Many participants were new to our style of reunion and most all expressed their appreciation at what was offered. Those that had attended our "Chicago 80" reunion were pleased that this gathering may have even surpassed the quality, organizational aspects and locale chosen for this our second get-together.

Now plans are already "in the works" as to our 1984 Reunion. Contacts are being made in the Dayton, Ohio area to find suitable arrangements for a Group our size. Since we allow ourselves two years working time between reunions I feel sure we can generate the kind of interest, both, in the Dayton business community, and within our own membership, that we can count on another successful "mission". More information, as to our progress, will be forthcoming in future newsletters.

But, getting back to our Colorado Springs reunion, let's take a look in retrospect as to what was enjoyed by those attending. Perhaps a synopsis of events will induce those that did not, or could not make this reunion, try harder for our next.

Friday, 6 August 1982, as I affectionately call **R-2/D-1** (Reunion 2 . . . Day 1), promised to be a challenging and memorable start to our program. Before noon (Registration time) throngs of members were beginning to "line up" (They still remember how to do that.) to receive their name tags. Orderly confusion took over as each member suddenly recognized a long lost comrade, and for a few moments the registration line suffered for lack of movement as friends greeted friends.

The registration tables, under the direction of Committee-persons Andy and Joan Clark (724th) did an admirable job to sort out the mayhem from the confusion. Their delegated staff, handling each Squadron independently, managed to sign in most of the members by time we opened the doors to our "Hospitality Room". Those that lingered in the area of the registration tables were confronted by two of our "super-salesmen", Colonel Larry March (724th) selling his/our LAPEL PINS at a cost of \$4 each. (I understand some are still available, and Larry has offered the profits — above his costs — to our treasury. If you desire a PIN with our Group identity delicately emblazoned, please contact C. L. March (724th) . . . his name's in the roster.) The other "seller" is the "old" Master Sergeant from the 726th, Art Gallagher. Art was "hawking", and with little difficulty, the CAPS that have become synonymous to our reunions. (A very limited number are available for \$6 each. If interested contact this office.)

In tribute to our Army affiliations, back in the 40's, we sought out and had in concert the Fort Carson's 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) Band. We prevailed upon the Army's past alliance to the Air Force to induce them to join us this evening. A full presentation of a formal "Posting of the Colors" was done by the Fort Carson's Color Guard. Our own Colonel John O'Connor (724th), with his worthy trumpet, blew the Adjutants Call and Call to the Colors, thereby setting the stage for a truly remarkable program. After the Fort Carson Band had completed their program, Colonel O'Connor, with

the assistance of Mrs. Frank McNerney (725th) (Lois) at the piano, held a "sing-along". Some old army tunes that hadn't seen the light of day for some time, were once again aired. Colonel O'Connor even got M/General Eaton to warble a few notes . . . in the company of several Staff Officers.

In another part of the Convention Hall movies were being shown by Tom Charles (726th) and Ernest Erickson (727th). Ernie was showing 8mm film that he had taken while overseas in 1944. Tom had films that were more current, depicting our base at Castelluccia long after we had left.

Lt. Colonel Tom Kullgren, Head of Engineering Mechanics, USAF Academy, provided selected movies, from the Academy, for our viewing. Along with all that we had our own Audio/Visual 451st showing.

### R-2/D-2

Saturday, 7 August, saw us up bright and early to board the buses for our tour of the USAF Academy. Though somewhat concerned that we wouldn't have sufficient buses, Lt. Colonel Walt Downing (724th) (Transportation Chairman) and Lt. Colonel Paul Harden (725th) managed to compress most of our bodies into the available buses. (It must be noted that without the expertise of these gentlemen, and the timing that they developed towards the loading and unloading; the prodding and herding from one place to another, the tour wouldn't have been as effective as it was.)

Major General Robert E. Kelley, Superintendent of the Academy, gave of his time to address us and to take questions from our Group.

After leaving Arnold Hall we all met at/in the Cadet Chapel. Here we were to have our most moving and remembered experience of our reunion . . . our Memorial Service to our departed comrades. Throughout the ceremony, as conducted by Reverends Paul G. Johnshoy (724th) and John C. Pafford (727th), with an invocation by Chaplain William W. Campbell, Colonel USAF Aca-

### PLEA . . . . . PLEASE . . . . . PLEA

Don't forget your pledge to help in the continuation of our GROUP by way of your financial support. We are, at this time, solely dependent on your generosity for its future.

Your TAX EXEMPT contribution should be made out to; 451st Bomb Group, Ltd. Mail to; Marengo, IL 60152.

THANK YOU

demy, we were honored to listen to the impressive music of the Chapel Organ and to the Brass Quintet, as offered by the Academy Band. The reading of the poem, "High Flight" by Reverend Johnshoy; the scripture readings done by Reverend Pafford; and the Moment of Silence followed by the pure sound of Colonel O'Connor's trumpet as we heard him play TAPS, all lent to the occasion of paying tribute to our fallen and departed comrades.



Academy's Brass Quintet

Noted, but not scheduled by myself or anyone to my knowledge, was the parachutists that "dropped" within our view, by way of the sightings looking north through the glass above the Alter. As effective as the "Missing Plane Formation" would be for an outside function, the parachutists gave us the same sense of nostalgia towards our "fallen comrades".

Upon completion of our Memorial Services we all scurried back aboard our buses and headed for the Officers Open Mess, where awaited our scheduled luncheon. Then back onto the buses as we headed for the Cadet Field House, wherein we viewed the Hockey Rink, Basketball Court and Indoor Field and Track complex. Through the benevolence, and the efforts of John H. McKibbin (726th) we had the opportunity to have a television crew (KRDO, TV 13, Colorado Springs) filming our attendance at the Academy. After the Field House we had a driving tour of the Academy grounds; then back to the 4 Seasons Motel for a little rest prior to our Banquet.

Cocktails from 1730 to 1830 hours and we were all set for our "Gala" evening. Lt. Colonel Paul Harden (725th) performed the duties of Master of Ceremonies. First the Invocation by Reverend Paul Johnshoy; second the Pledge of Allegiance; and third a Toast to the memory of our Group and to the Air Force.

Then came the DINNER.

After a fine "mess" of Prime Rib, M.C. Paul Harden announced to the Group that on this day, August 7, 1982, the city of Bangor, Maine had proclaimed, in our honor, "451st Bomb Group Day". Though Paul did not have the actual proclamation "in hand" we are hereby printing it in total. We wish to thank the city of Bangor for this generous memorial to our past association.

Next our M.C. introduced the KEYNOTE SPEAKER . . . me! This was Paul's chance (with tongue in cheek) to "shaft a few barbs" into this old carcass, regarding some of the demands I had put upon the Colorado and Illinois Committee's in making this event as acceptable as it was proving to be. But Paul, in response to your observations, this reunion could not have been achieved if it were not for you, and guys like yourself, that pitch in and make it come about. The Good Lord looks upon me with favor when it comes to granting me the personnel to "pull off" a quality reunion.

Whatever it was I may have said in my Keynote Address, I'm not certain. But, to my great honor, I have been asked to print it in total in this newsletter. So, for those that requested it . . . it will be included.

M/General Robert E. L. Eaton (Original Group Commander) offered a short address. His comments expressed his appreciation in having been a leader of, and a member of, such an eminent Group as we proved to be.

General James V. Hartinger (Commander in Chief, Space Command) addressed his remarks to the duties that befall his command. General Hartinger disclosed that his new command, SPACE COMMAND, now encompasses his previous commands, North American Aerospace Defense Command and the Aerospace Defense Center. In total, General Hartinger reign of duties take in all United States "hardware" that is orbiting this earth, and to track and evaluate all foreign objects that "float" in that area high above our "highways in the sky".

A presentation of awards was made, in behalf of our 451st Bomb Group, to General Hartinger and to Lt. Colonel Tom Kullgren for the effort and time offered towards our Group, and to the success of our reunion.

The program concluded with the Benediction by Reverend Johnshoy.

Next came the musical portion of our planned program. We were honored to have the Air Force Academy Band's "Moods In Blue", participate in our reunion. The "young folks" gave us a very exuberant and tuneful display of dance and song. We were honored to have Lt. Colonel John D. McCord, Band Commander, conduct his fine ensemble of musicians, and to give a fitting close to our formal program.



Academy's "Moods In Blue"

Prior to our Dance segment, we had the services of a professional photographer take Squadron pictures. A lot of good natured bantering went on while the photographee was positioning himself amongst his peers while the photographer was trying to get everyones undivided attention.

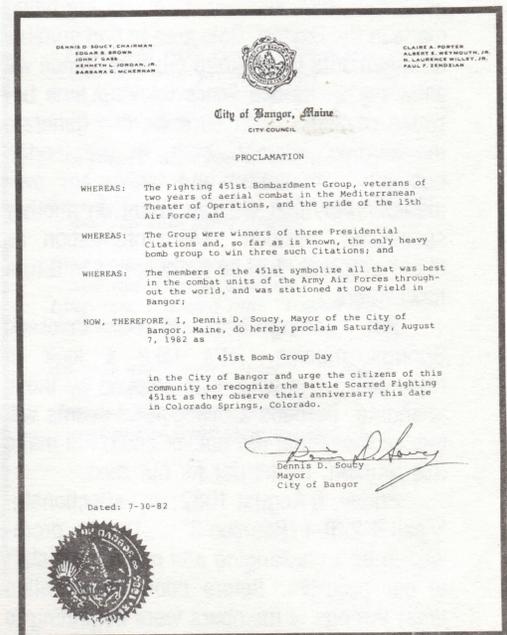
The Dance Band, a segment of the "Moods In Blue", gave us a fine selection of music that was enjoyable to listen to, as well as for dancing.

**R-2/D-3**

Sunday was to be our concluding day. Interdenominational Worship Services were conducted by Reverends Johnshoy and Pafford. Bill Bihn (726th) offered a vocal solo, accompanied by Lois McNerney. John O'Connor and Mrs. McNerney accompanied us with trumpet and piano, as we sang AMAZING GRACE, SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER and PASS IT ON. Thus concluded our 1982 Reunion.

Many of our members stayed on to investigate the beauty of the area, while others, with their own transportation, took the long way home. Many either, started their vacation with our Reunion, or finished up a vacation in our company. To those of you that could not attend, for health sake or family responsibilities, we offer you this summary of happenings that you may know of the Groups activities and may, when we next conduct a Reunion, plan on attending.

1982 Reunion Adjourned!



Now if you'll excuse me . . . I'd like to "shift gears". As you can already tell, I'm not much of a public speaker. Never WAS . . . nor was it ever my intent TO BE. I took up "quote" PUBLIC SPEAKING, "unquote" two years ago, when it was apparent that my co-hort, Peter Massare, would not be in attendance for our first reunion. Once again, Pete could not attend. So once again you are going to be subjected to some ramblings of an old Nose Gunner. (Like most gunners that came into the 451st, I came in as a NOBODY and left as a HAS-BEEN.)

When I started putting my thoughts together, as to what I could say, and what you would be interested in hearing, my thoughts always zeroed in on the memories and friendships that were forged and tempered while a member of the 451st Bomb Group. I think, both, the memories and these friendships are what has drawn us together for this most memorable weekend. When you think of it . . . how could it be that guys, that now range in age from 55 to 75, would add such importance to the time spent with the 451st, that they would travel half-way across the United States to renew these old ties. I think the reason is "PRIDE". Pride in the outfit . . . pride in the men that they served with. Tentmates and crew members who have not laid eyes on each other for more than 35 years, have been burning up the telephone lines, making contacts and trying to generate those comrades into filling the ranks . . . just one more time.

If it wasn't for this feeling of "pride", I'm sure this extra effort would not have been taken.

I know that I'M taking a lot of pride in the fact that from our 950 plus membership . . . we have nearly 300, of that membership in attendance tonight. I think that's a pretty good target for any World War Two Group to take a run at. Again, as I've stated before, "The 451st is generally in the lead."

But as we live in the present . . . we do draw from the past. And as the more notable achievements of the Group are easily recalled, perhaps I can open your "minds eye" with a few minor recollections of my own.

From our GROUP HEADQUARTERS, which was our community: to the SQUADRON, that became our neighborhood: right down to our TENTMATES, who became our family. We can all draw upon that alliance, and bring to mind more recollections that I could offer you now.

Remember the C.Q. coming around before dawn . . . waking the ground crews to ready the ships for the day's mission? Remember him coming into the aircrews tent . . . looking for a spare gunner, and before he was through . . . had the whole tent awake before he located the right guy? In the wintertime, remember dressing by the light of the hundred octane stove . . . that for some strange reason hadn't either, blown UP

or blown OUT, during the night? Do you recall the rattle of the mess kits? Remember how we strung all the pieces together, so they made an "easy to carry" unit?

Can your "mind's eye" picture the flash of a match as a cigarette was being lit . . . then the glow of that cigarette as it bobbed along . . . headed in the direction of the mess hall? Still in the morning darkness . . . recall the muffled voices — in respect to the men still sleeping — regarding the placement of the tent ropes and stakes . . . and perhaps a slit trench or two?

Remember the gasoline lanterns that were part of our breakfast decor? Remember the eerie shadows that were cast and the constant hiss of the lantern as it cut away the darkness?

And Lordy, do you remember those powdered eggs, or the little cereal boxes that we cut open and poured THAT powdered milk into? Take and refresh your memory on the pancakes . . . once eaten they were like mercury in your stomach. Giving you the allusion that if you went too far off center you'd keel over from being "top-heavy". And of course that tropic butter that just wouldn't melt.

Taking the day a little farther, for those that were involved with the day's mission . . . Remember hearing the crew chiefs running up the engines, shattering the early morning stillness? Hearing the ordnance trucks, as they wheeled their trailers, loaded with their lethal cargo, up to the midsections of the ships. There to hoist the bombs into the bombays, and then to fuse them. Though most of the bomb loading was done upon receipt of the operations order, the night before . . . it was not uncommon that an order be changed, resulting in the bomb load being changed, as well. Thus the frantic effort, just prior to take-off.

Then came the crews . . . unloading themselves and their flying equipment from the back of a high-bedded truck. Remember how you ground crews could almost guess the target for that day? If the crew was light-hearted and kinda frisky . . . it meant a target with few anti-aircraft guns and no fighters expected. If the mood was a little more somber . . . then there could be upwards of 100 guns and possible fighters. BUT when you saw everyone check out their positions more than once, and start stealing flak vests from the ship in the next revetment . . . then it had to be REGENSBURG . . . PLOESTI . . . OR VIENNA.

One thing that the aircrews and the groundcrews did in common during the last moments before "engine start" . . . that was the vigil that we all gave to the control tower. All waiting to see if we would see a green flare — meaning "go", or a red flare — meaning "stand down". When the green flare was sighted . . . then all engines were again started and checked out. Minutes later

we watched the lunging of the aircraft as it made its way onto the taxi-strip, to position itself in line for take-off. Then came the final engine run-up, as each pilot and flight engineer made sure that their aircraft was ready for the mission. Now, for the crews, came the first of a series of traumatic moments . . . "TAKE-OFF". Each aircraft, in turn, positioned itself on the runway . . . the aircraft beginning to roll as the pilot started to advance the throttles. With throttles shoved against the maximum each aircraft began to accelerate . . . faster and faster . . . as the props begin to dig in. Slowly . . . ever so slowly, while gaining speed, you could see the main wheel struts begin to stretch out as the aircraft becomes more airworthy. Now free from the ground, with wheels up, the ship begins its deadly mission. To be back . . . hopefully . . . before the day's end.

Once the ships were away, and the group resumes its normal business . . . so, too, does the squadron area and the flight line. The operations officer has removed the string that had told the half-awake crews what their destination was to be. The clerks, both in operations, and the orderly room began shuffling papers and making out reports. Those that had been on the line, hours before dawn, are heading for their tents to catch a little shuteye before the formation returns.

Aircrews are "discussing" major decisions. Who's going into town? Who wants to play cards? Who wants to take an early shower? Who wants to go down to the line and "watch 'em shoot landings"? Finally, when all is settled, you'll see those that have opted for Foggia . . . heading out with a borrowed five hundred "lira". Plus a smart-looking "class 'A' uniform" that had been worked over by the Italian laundry. The ones that chose to possess a clean body are heading out with soap in hand and a towel over the shoulders. Those that chose to visit the "line" . . . found no great rush to "get there first".

Remember the letter writing? Sometime during each day a guy had to find time to send off a couple letters. A writer had to labor hard to give the folks at home some information . . . but not so much as to divulge anything that the censors (OUR OFFICERS) would cut out.

For those that waited and sweated out the return of our ships, it was a very emotional time. When the formation was first sighted, you could hear someone making a loud verbal count. If the count came up short, there was an immediate recount. If, again, the count was short . . . then came the worry as to which squadron had the missing ship . . . or ships. As the formation neared, you could hear the call of some excited watcher, as their sharp eyes noted, and their voice proclaimed, "number three engine is out on the lead ship." Still another

voice comes up with, "Look there's smoke trailing from the ship in the next formation." And the most disheartening comment, yet, "Take a look at the two ships breaking formation . . . I'll bet they got wounded aboard . . . LOOK! There goes the red flares!"

Remember how, after the ships have touched down and you begin to follow the returned crews back to the de-briefing area . . . to the guys you know quite well . . . you begin to question them as to the roughness of the mission? You check to find out if the missing ships may have been able to make it back to Italy, and could have landed at another field. You absorb all the information you can, so you can relay it to your tentmates . . . and for once be the "guy in the KNOW".

Remember, too, in the late afternoon, at least for the enlisted men, came the mail-call? Perhaps you would take time to attend, if not, one of your tentmates would answer for you and bring your mail back to the tent. OH! How we cherished those letters from home, and relished the busted up packages, we even revered the two month old hometown newspapers. Remember the joy when we received a windfall of delayed mail? Remember, ALSO, the heartbreak when we went for almost a week without word from home.

Comes evening, I'm sure you will remember the roar of the squadron generator. Here was the chance to play cards, or to write letters by the light of a single electric bulb. Those that had radios had the chance to listen in on "The Armed Forces Radio". Those that didn't . . . begged for the chance to string wire and to be hooked into a "master" radio with their homemade speakers. A sad day for the 724th was when the governor on the generator BROKE. For a brief moment, all the bulbs that were turned on, glowed like they never had before. All the radios that were on . . . jumped up in volume and clarity before they began to "fry" and go dead.

Do you guys remember, during the last six months of the Group's overseas duty, when the air crews pulled night guard duty on the flight line? Recall how we were assigned to guard about four or five aircraft? And how we had to parade back and forth, lugging our rifle, trying to stay awake for the three or four hours we'd be on duty. Some poor flying officer was pulled into the cause as "Officer of the Guard". It was not a happy duty, and most of them could chew nails for having to spend half the night chasing and checking up on the guards. It became even more interesting when we had Colonel Stefen drop by and suggest that we display a little more military discipline . . . by perhaps making our challenge a little louder . . . and by not taking to the ditch whenever we heard a jeep in the area.

I'm sure we all remember . . . Lines . . . How much of our Army life was spent in "lines"? I passed through puberty while

standing in some of the following lines:

Chow Lines . . . . . For all the adbrine I was forced to take . . . I still contracted Malaria, and at the same time had to ward off "line crashers".

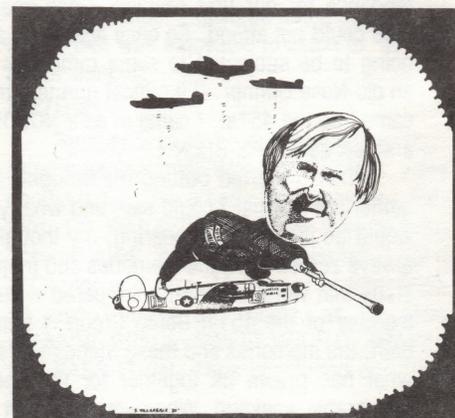
P.X. Line . . . . . Visions of two Beers, two Cokes, seven packs of smokes and assorted candy bars come to mind.

Do-Nut Line . . . . . I don't know what the rest of you guys thought . . . I don't remember the do-nuts, nor the coffee being all that great . . . BUT, the American Red Cross Hostess . . . WOW! . . .

Whiskey Line . . . . . As an 18 year old kid, flying combat, back there in 1944, and being able to stand together with you "OLD GEEZERS" . . . who had already attained the mature age of 20 or 21 . . . was really a thrill that has never left me. Course, I've tossed a few "down the tubes" since then . . . but never in the company of guys that I respected more.

I hope I've been able to take you through a little bit of "Memory Lane". What I tried to describe was not a typical, nor an average day, as anyone would remember it . . . it was just a "day". A day as viewed by one of the enlisted men that had the good fortune to have served with . . . AND IN . . . an outfit that contained the caliber of men that I see before me NOW.

To you wives and children . . . that guy of yours that wanted to get to this reunion . . . wanted to do so because he had the feeling and the urge to re-associate with the men that were important to him. The memories of his experiences are with him yet. Don't allow them to fade . . . nor should you allow those rekindled friendships to fall back into the past. When this gathering is over, I want you to return home, enriched by the friendships and memories that have been revived by this event.



#### CAMARADERIE

(by: Bob K.)

*I've walked with you in alien lands  
and felt your presence near.  
I've flown through lofty sunlit clouds  
to share your thrills and fears.*

*I've joined with you to rid the world  
of enemies who dared.  
Like you, I've watched our comrades fall  
and felt that deep despair.*

*Like you, I've faced up to the task  
and did what I could do.  
Like you, I sensed that "Father Time"  
is saying, now... "Soon you."*

*So take great heart in what we did,  
as soldiers from the past.  
Our deeds are now recorded  
and our shining star will last.*