



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

ISSUE 15

MARENGO (AAFB), IL

FRENCH GOVERNMENT BLOCKS AWARD OF CROIX DE GUERRE TO AMERICANS

THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES

On the evening of Friday, October 31, 1986, in Paris, France, more than 125 United States Army, Air Force, Navy, and WAC veterans, representing 45 different WW-II units were shocked to hear that the President of France refused to authorize Medals for our American units.

In a very impassioned speech, LTC Hal Ryder, organizer and liaison with the Comite d'Action de la Resistance (surviving members of the French WW-II underground/resistance forces) informed us that French President, Francois Mitterand, chose to ignore the proposal. It seemed the reason for refusing to sign the proclamation was due in large part to the advice of a retired World War-Two French Colonel.

What precipitated this Colonel's negative attitude towards our award was apparently long term and deep seated. It had to do, as whispered between the Americans and our French hosts, with the theory that some years ago (during the German occupation) the leader of the of the wartime Resistance, Madame Marie Madeleine Fourcade, ran afoul, drew the hostility of, the previously mentioned Colonel (whose name was never offered). Whatever transpired between Madame Fourcade and the Colonel must have been of a military nature, and has never been resolved. When Madame Fourcade was elected to head the Comite d'Action de la Resistance, a very prestigious and highly respected French military order, it seemed that this Colonel was not pleased. It was pointed out that this may have been his way to retaliate for past transgressions.

Our hosts, the former Resistance fighters, were appalled by this action of their government, and have vowed to try and make it right. They look upon the behavior of the Colonel as, "The mental behaviors of an old man."

Whatever may have caused the loss of our planned award, there was a feeling of betrayal to those that traveled to Paris from all parts of the United States to take part.

I, personally, felt jilted about the fact that our 451st Bomb Group, represented by 6 of our members, did not gain the Croix de Guerre as had been hoped and planned. What we got, instead, was a "Certificate and Medallion of Appreciation" for having attended, courtesy Comite d'Action de la Resistance. I can't fault the Comite, nor LTC Ryder for our loss. I can only hope the situation can be rectified and the honors still be awarded.

WELL PLANNED TOUR

Those that attended from our Group were: Robert Barnd (726th); Howard Bryan (727th); John Cunningham (724th); Bob Karstensen (724th); Donald

Keister (727th); and John Schneider (726th). With wives, companions, and offsprings we made up a commendable group of 13 souls.



451st MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Front Row: Barnd, Karstensen, Keister
Back Row: Schneider, Bryan, Cunningham

Our Tour Group was visibly protected wherever we went. We had uniformed police as well as plaincloths security throughout our stay. The scare of terrorist bombings was still evident. Each time we boarded our buses for whatever destination we were escorted by several motorcycled Paris Gendarmes.

What amazed us was the absolute disregard the motor cops had for the "crazy" Parisian motorists. They zipped in and out between cars, sirens wailing, clearing a path for our four bus caravan. When a motorist failed to yield, the police would soundly slap the side, or hood of the car, and wave him aside. If that failed, he hauled back with his foot and caved in the door of the vehicle. If the driver was still defiant, the cop would reach over and rip off his outside mirror. That generally caught the motorists attention. In Paris traffic, if you are driving a car, the normal flow of travel isn't very fast. Traffic jams are common, and cautious drivers are rare. But with escort like we had, Lordy, could you made time.

Not only did we have land escort, but when we were boated up the Seine River to view the French Statue of Liberty, a patrol boat accompanied us.

(Cont'd Page 2, Col. 1)

"AD-LIB"

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Publication

Compiled, Written,
and Published by;

Bob Karstensen, Sr.
1032 S. State St.
Marengo, IL 60152
Ph. (815) 568-7766

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(FRANCE CONTINUED)



PARISIAN GENDARMES (LAND VERSION)



(SEA VERSION)



FRENCH STATUE OF LIBERTY, SEINE RIVER

The tour, by itself, was definitely well planned and kept most of us on the run from early dawn till well after dark.

It was a real pleasure to mingle with veteran foot soldiers that took part in the invasion, liberation and occupation of France. Some of these same men shared in the liberation of Paris, and could tell stories (differing from the history books) as to how this all came about.

We were received by high government officials, Mayors and such, and were well provided with the nations favorite beverage - Wines and Champagnes.

We did things, saw things, and were granted favors that most tourists are never privy to.

We were the guests of the Resistance in a formal ceremony at the French Resistance Memorial at Mont Valerien. This is the Memorial in which are placed 7 coffins. Six of these plain wooden coffins hold the remains of Resistance Fighters killed before firing squads or died in defense of their country. The single remaining empty coffin is intended for the last Resistance/Underground member to die. A joke among the living Resistance Fighters is to be very concerned as to the health of each other. A snuffle is reason to be concerned. An obituary in the paper is read with mixed emotion. Each member wants to outlast the next guy, and thus have the honor of being interred in this most sacred spot.

Throughout our weeks stay we visited the Suresnes Cemetery (the American burial grounds on the outskirts of Paris); French Statue of Liberty (where a representative of the 451st Bomb Group and the 4th Infantry Division laid a wreath for its 100 Anniversary); the grave of Marquis de La Fayette (French hero of the American Revolutionary war); formally marched up the Champs Elyses in ranks with the French Resistance to rekindle the Eternal Flame at the L'Arc de Triomphe.

During the middle of our stay we motored to Reims, France to participate in a Wreath Ceremony at the Reims War Memorial. Again, another 451st member, Robert Barnd, was honored to perform the ceremony. We were invited to attend formal reception in the office of the Mayor. Reims will always be remembered in history as the place of surrender for the German forces in WW-II.

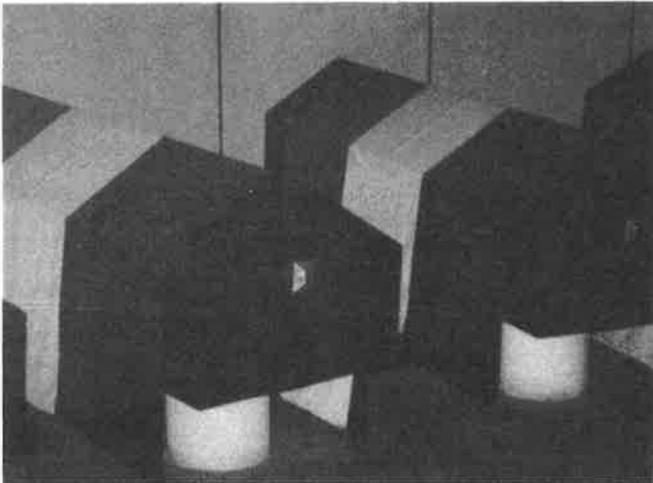
We spent time at the Versailles, where royal decadence stole the wealth of France and flaunted it in obscene grandeur.



CEREMONIES AT MONT VALERIEN



PRIDE IN BATTALION FLAG EVIDENT



COFFINS OF RESISTANCE FIGHTERS



MAYORS RECEPTION, REIMS, FRANCE

We wandered through, and around, the Cathedral of Notre Dame, amazed at the spectacular spires, religious statues, gargantuan gargoyles and vaulted ceilings. Looking up at each lofty crevice for the legendary Hunchback of the same address.

We attended a Fashion Show, (strictly for the benefit of the ladies) wondering just how safe the lovely young models would have been, had this been conducted 43 years previous - and we been traveling STAG.

We all returned to our respective homes on, or around, the 1st of November; wiser but not a heck if a lot richer. With the Criox de Guerre as our prize, we would have felt a lot more comfortable.

Sorry, fellows -- target was in the sight, but we couldn't "kill the drift" and the target slipped out of range. We'll try another pass, some other time.



BOB BARND & BOB K. IN SHADOW OF EIFFEL TOWER



MADAME M.M. FOURCADE GETS HUG OF APPRECIATION FROM TOUR HOST, LTC HAL RYDER (RETIRED)



TAITTINGER CHAMPAGNE CAVES



**1944 TRAIN WRECK IN INDIANA
FATAL TO 3 (?) 451st GUNNERS**

Flying combat missions over southern Europe is not the only way that death and injury can befall a member of 451st Bomb Group. The following excerpts are taken from the Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Tribune (circa 14 and 15 September 1944).

(quote)

HEAD-ON CRASH AT TERRE HAUTE KILLS SOLDIERS

Thurs. Sept. 14, 1944 (Special to the Daily News)

Twenty-nine persons were killed and 64 others injured, most of them soldiers wearing the decorations of service in Italy, when two fast trains of the Chicago & Eastern Illinois Railroad crashed head-on early today, three miles north of here, in a blinding fog. Many of the soldiers were believed to be from Chicago. They were traveling southbound on the 14-coach Dixie Flyer, carrying 400 persons in all, bound from Chicago to Florida, when it crashed into a standing mail train, which carried no passengers.

FOG HAMPERS RESCUE

Screams of fright and cries of the dying were heard in the confusion that followed in the fog--so dense that the first rescuers to reach the scene worked under heavy difficulties. In addition, the railroad's telegraph lines were severed by the wreckage, hampering communication.

Most of the victims were riding in the first three coaches, all Pullmans. Those three Pullmans, two baggage coaches, five passenger coaches and one of the four civilian Pullmans were hurled from the tracks.

Some of the Pullman cars and coaches were split wide open. Others were piled into a twisted heap. Locomotives, tenders and baggage cars of both trains were reduced to wreckage.

The first rescuers to reach the scene, using flares in the heavy fog, found soldiers pinned to their seats. Some were caught beneath cars. Some were lying dead along the tracks, wearing decorations that they had won on the battlefield before they met death in their homeland.

Purple Hearts, the award for those wounded in service, Air Medals, scores of other insignia for heroes and veterans, were strewn for more than a hundred yards alongside the track, mixed with the baggage of personal belongings of the soldiers.

"One of the soldier Pullmans was lying open like a valise," said Carl Bauermeister, chairman of the Red Cross Disaster committee here. "Several of the soldiers were sitting in their seats in the stillness of death. The night was filled with the moans of the dying. People were lying all along the right of way."

WORSE THAN BATTLE

Soldiers who survived the wreck said the experience was "terrible." There was a terrific shock, they said, then a ripping sound, and they were tossed from their seats. Then the lights went off, adding to the confusion. Some of the soldiers, who had never flinched in battle against the Axis, were shaken from the shock and horror of the scene.

All available ambulances, accompanied by physicians, nurses and officials, swarmed to the wreck scene. A Catholic priest also hurried there to administer the last rites to victims.

HOSPITALS ARE FILLED

Union and St. Anthony's hospitals, in Terre Haute, were soon crowded and temporary hospital facilities were set up in the city armory for the soldiers. In the rain that followed the fog, the uninjured soldiers were placed aboard another train to continue their southward trip.

(unquote)

Following article taken from the Chicago Tribune; dateline, Friday, 15 September 1944.

(quote)

24 AIRMEN LIVE THRU WAR--ONLY TO DIE IN WRECK

Twenty-four air force veterans who have completed up to 50 missions in overseas combat were among 27 persons killed early today in a head-on collision of a passenger train and an express train on a single track three miles north of here. About 40 others, including 15 more Air Force veterans, were injured.

The soldiers, who had just completed 30 day furloughs, were enroute to a redistribution center in Florida. They occupied the first three Pullman cars of the 14 coach Chicago and Eastern Illinois Dixie Flyer, which crashed into an express and mail train bound from Florida to Chicago. The express carried no passengers.

The only coaches to hurtle from the tracks after the collision were those carrying the soldiers. Thirty-nine noncommissioned air force officers occupied the first coach and 34 commissioned officers were in the two following Pullmans.

CRUSHED IN BERTHS

The first coach burst wide open, spewing torn bodies along the right of way. Many soldiers were crushed in their berths. Air Medals and Purple Heart decorations were strewn along the wreckage. The other two Pullman cars, two baggage coaches, the locomotive and tender piled up along the tracks.

The train crashed at 2:30 a.m. in a heavy fog which enveloped the scene of death and destruction and hindered rescuers trying to locate the cries of the injured. Passengers who were unhurt helped volunteers pull the dead and injured from the wreckage. Three of the dead were members of the Dixie crew.

Doctors and ambulances arrived from Terre Haute shortly after the crash. Red cross workers set up a first aid station and members of the office of Civilian Defense joined city and State Police searching for dead and injured.

WAKES UP IN THE AISLE

Army Lt. E.B. Owens of Chicago, on the Dixie, said: "I was asleep in the second Pullman. All I remember was waking up in the aisle. Our car was derailed and tipped over somewhat. I counted 15 bodies as they were removed from the wreckage. At least two or three more were in there at the time. I helped with the injured until I became too ill to continue."

(unquote)

---X--X--0--X--X---

The following list of fatalities comes from the Chicago Tribune. This list is composed of airmen from different units of the 15th AAF, and their home addresses are from within the area of the 5th Service Command, Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

Technical Sergeants' Harry L. Baldauf; Benjamin R. Brown; Donald W. Clapp; Robert C. Hecht; **Robert Hoekstra** (member of Charles Small's crew, 726th BS) Charles A. Loeffler.

Staff Sergeants' Henry W. Barnholtz; Robert W. Cundiff; Wallace F. Doerffler; Arthur D. Fitch; Norbert H. Gnoit; **Charles B. Jordan** (member of Charles Small's crew, 726th BS); Oscar W. Lange; Charles W. Mercer; Marion F. Minniear; Robert Purdue; William L. Schley; Robert W. Stoddard; **Robert P. Thorn** (member of Cortland Read's crew, 727th BS) Donald J. Van Dixhorn; Robert F. Vermette; Wallace E. West.

These previous names represent the members of

the military that perished on that 14th day of September 1944. The names written in boldface were members of our 451st Bomb Group. It may be that I have missed others on that list that were from our Group; if that is the case, I'd appreciate being notified.

Injuries were of course prevalent, and the most noteworthy was that of S/Sgt **Raymond W. Puccetti** (member of H.L. Imhoff's crew, 725th). Ray survived numerous fractures and internal injuries, and when last heard from, lives in the St. Charles, Illinois area.

I'm sure we all can recall the mass movement of military troops, and the conditions under which we made these moves. The railroads had to press into service such equipment as they had, and some of it wasn't all that good. My recall, as an enlisted man, goes from the wooden shack on wheels (with the pot-belly stove in the mid part of the car) to the plush streamlined Zephyr that could speed us across the nation in record time. Gone now are the coal burners, and for as much as we hated them, (try going through a mountain tunnel with the window ajar) they are still a part of our glorious past. For the most part, rail travel was the basic mode of transportation that we in the States could count on. Though not necessarily the safest, as the past recounting shows, it was, in the whole, about the best available.



COL. SLUDER (EXTREME LEFT) WITH GROUND CREW.
(NOTE CHECKERBOARD MARKINGS ON TAIL OF AIRCRAFT)

In December 1943 the 325th moved to Italy as part of the new 15th Air Force, having been re-equipped with P-47 aircraft. After some delay caused by the shortage of paint, the checkerboard design was applied to the new aircraft, using 12" squares. The 325th flew the checkertailed P-47s, escorting B-17 and B-24s, until the later part of May 1944.

In the continuation of their Group's history it should be noted, according to Colonel Sluder, that a misconception arose relating to the ALL BLACK Group that also flew escort for us. It had to do with the 325th's transition from one type aircraft to the other. The explanation is as follows:

NARRATIVE (CON'T)

The 325th flew its last P-47 mission on 24 May 1944 and then began transferring its P-47s to the 332nd. (the all-black Group under command of Colonel Benjamin O. Davis) The 325th's P-51 aircraft were being delivered in large numbers over a very short period of time and it was necessary to turn the P-47 over to the 332nd quickly because there was no parking space for both the P-47 and the arriving P-51s. There was no time to paint-out the checkerboard tails of the P-47s and they were delivered to the 332nd still carrying the 325th's distinctive marking. Upon receiving their P-47s from the 325th, the pilots of the 332nd began their transition and landing at various airdromes around Italy while on their practice flights. This resulted in the black pilots being identified with the checkertail paint jobs. AT NO TIME DID THE 332nd FLY CHECKERTAILED AIRCRAFT IN COMBAT. They settled on all-red tails and painted their aircraft accordingly before entering combat. They used the P-47s for only about a month and then were re-equipped with P-51s, painting the tails all red.

The 325th established an enviable record escorting medium bombers (B-25 and B-26) and its earlier checkertailed P-40s earned the respect of the bomber crews.

When the 15th Air Force moved its Fighter Groups from Africa to Italy in late 1943, the aircraft assigned to the Groups were:

P-38s - 1st FG, 14th FG and 82rd FG
P-47s - 325th FG

Our "Jugs" were equipped with only one 75 gallon belly tank - about 45 minutes at cruising speed. In January 1944 we were re-equipped with later model Jugs with two 165 gallon drop tanks under the wings. This increased range permitted us to cruise (for example) to Vienna, fight for

325th FIGHTER GROUP COMMANDER OFFERS HISTORIC INFORMATION

Colonel Chester L. Sluder, (Retired) former Group Commander of the 325th Fighter Group of WW-II fame (North Africa and Italy), has been in recent contact with this office. Col. Sluder commanded this Group from April of 1944 till 11 September, but (get this!) 23 August 1944, was his last combat mission. The 325th was one of the more noted Fighter Groups that flew escort for us as we went against the targets of southern Europe.

Col. Sluder initiated contact with me through the efforts of Harry Fox, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Harry was responsible for inserting a news article that I had offered him, hoping to generate some new membership. The Colonel first called Harry to verify the article, then wrote to me and introduced himself and his famous Group.

Col. Sluder had noted over the years, that many of the heavy bomber Groups of the 15th AAF were not totally familiar with some of the Fighter Groups that formed the protection that accompanied us to our various targets. Not only was Colonel Sluder concerned that some of the 325th FG history was not known by us, but just the simple fact that we probably don't remember the type aircraft they flew nor recognize its easily identifiable tail markings. In all honesty, I didn't. And now that I've been taught, why don't you join me.

Remember folks, the motto of this office is: "To teach if called upon: to learn if we are found lacking."

NARRATIVE

On 17th April 1943 the 325th Fighter Group, 12th Air Force, Tunisia, flew its first combat mission. It was equipped with P-40F and P-40L aircraft. Shortly, it was determined that distinctive markings of the fighter aircraft of the 12th Air Force would be desirable. After tests of several color schemes, the 325th selected a checkerboard design, composed of 12" squares of yellow and black, for the tail surfaces of its P-40s.

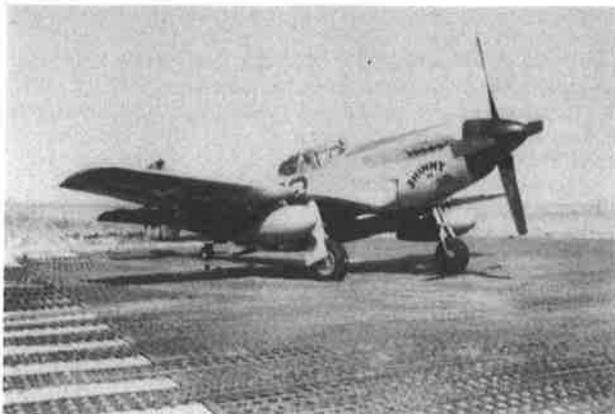
five minutes, and then return to base on the fumes. Obviously, this endurance did not permit us to provide you with all the escort that you needed; but we did prevent a lot of Germans from getting to you - as witness the 152 destroyed with which we were credited while flying this aircraft, including 37 on January 30th alone in the Udine area, for a loss of 2 P-47s.

In the spring of 1944 two Spitfire Groups (31st and 52nd) were transferred from the 12th AF to the 15th AF and re-equipped with P-51s. In late May the 332 Group joined the 15th AF and they ended up with our P-47 and we got P-51s.

We flew a couple of missions in the P-51 and then were picked to escort the 5th Wing B-17s on the first shuttle-bombing mission to Russia on 2 June 1944.

Our Mission Reports do not tell us which Bomb Groups we escorted; simply that we escorted "B-17s to Vienna" or "B-24s to Ploesti," etc. I find, however, that we were on the same mission with you to the same target many times. It is possible we could have been escorting you or adjacent bombers. Some interesting examples: 28 June - you went to Chitila M/Y, Rumania; we were not escorting, but were assigned to run a fighter sweep through the area and knocked down 17 E/A which might have annoyed you. 31 July - you went to Bucharest, and so did we, escorting B-24s; we clobbered 18 ME-109s and lost 1 P-51. 3 August - we both went to Friedrichshafen, Germany, and we shot down 10 ME-109s and FW-190s. 23 August (my last mission) - we both went to Markersdorf, Austria, and our Group was responsible for shooting down 15 ME-109s and FW-190s and lost a P-51. Not all of our missions were this juicy - some were dry runs - but we did a good job and I believe we had the respect of you bomber troops. Although we lost no escorted bombers while flying P-40s, this situation did not continue after we got P-47s and then P-51s, because of the different environment: the speed differential between us and the B-17s and B-24s, the vertical arena of 4-5 miles (versus 8-10,000 feet in the P-40), etc., etc.

Although bomber crews, who were shot down by enemy fighters late in 1944, would find it a little hard to believe, the Luftwaffe fighter effectiveness declined noticeably starting about January 1944. It was still possible to have a helluva fight and you could tangle with German "old Pro's" on occasion, but their general trend as 1944 wore on, was toward less skill, and our campaign against their oil reduced the effort of which they were capable.



"SHIMMY"

LED ESCORTING FIGHTERS ON 1ST SHUTTLE-BOMBING MISSION TO RUSSIA, 2 JUNE 1944
("SHIMMY" COMPOSITE NAME OF FAMILY MEMBERS)

When we first got to Italy in December 1943, we were assigned to the 5th Bomb Wing. Knowing nothing about Fighters, or Fighter tactics, they wanted us to fly formation with the B-17s; fly longer than our fuel load permitted; etc., etc. We finally quit arguing and ignored the fine print in the Ops Order and simply provided the best escort of which we were capable. In a couple of months we got our own Fighter Wing and things got better.

Colonel Sluder noted that during the summer of 1944, the 325th color scheme varied to a slight degree. The dorsal surface of the tail assembly received the same coloration as the vertical stabilizer. The dimension of the squares were also reduced to 10". Each improvement offering it more visibility to the gunners in the bombers, and to the other Fighter Groups that accompanied us on escort duty.

In reconstructing Colonel Sluder's tenure with the 325th Fighter Group, and bringing it up to his 23 August 1944 Markersdorf A/D mission, it should be noted that he was the Group's 4th Commanding Officer. By the end of hostilities in 1945 the Group had indulged itself in utilizing 8 CO's. The Colonel assumed command 1 April 1944 and finished on the date already mentioned.

Worthy of repeating would be his accounting of that last mission as seen from his side of the gun-sight. This is a synopsis of the letters sent me dealing with the subject:

COLONEL'S FINAL MISSION

23 August 1944

325th Fighter Group

17 P-51s of the 317th FS, 14 P-51s of the 318th 22 P-51s of the 319th took off at 0938 hrs to provide close escort on PTW for B-24s attacking Markersdorf A/D, Austria. 4 P-51s returned early. 1 P-51 lost (2nd Lt Donald D. Hawkins). 49 P-51s made R/V at 1135 hrs. 18 P-51s were over the target and provided withdrawal at 1135 hrs. 31 P-51s engaged approximately 45 E/A. 15 E/A were destroyed and 2 damaged in this engagement. Victories were credited to the following:

Major H. H. Green	1 FW-190
Major J. E. Perry	1 FW-190
1st Lt J. Bond	1 FW-190
1st Lt R. Bass	1 ME-109
Capt. S. W. Farnham	1 FW-190
1st Lt J. M. Simmons	2 FW-190
1st Lt Parker	1 FW-190
1st Lt W. Pomerantz	1 FW-190
1st Lt P. Sangermano	2 FW-190
2nd Lt V. A. Woodman	1 ME-109
F/O F. G. Johnson	1 FW-190
F/O W. D. Terry	1 FW-190
1st Lt P. P. Tatman	1 FW-190 Damaged
1st Lt P. Sangermano	1 FW-190 Damaged

Personal Narration

From where I was sitting the mission went as follows: We routinely intercepted the bombers and assumed our escort disposition (one squadron [me] covering the front of the bomber formation, one squadron covering the rear, and the third squadron a bit higher and sweeping the entire bomber formation, ready to go anywhere needed. As we approached the target area I saw 40+ bogies approaching from the northeast. I called them out, we dropped our external tanks and I maneuvered in behind the bandits as they started their attack on the rear bombers. ME-109s were making the attack, with FW-190s coming in from a higher altitude. I picked out a 190 who immediately started diving away with me fol-

lowing. While I was waiting to close in to shooting range I called my wingman but got no answer. I looked back to see where he was and looked right into the nose of a 190 who had already started shooting. It seemed appropriate to forget about the guy I was chasing and contemplate some way of frustrating the guy who was chasing me. This consultation with myself and the following action required a fraction of a micro-second to implement. All the handles went against the firewall and we started picking up speed and making crazy turns. Shortly the speed caused the P-51 to start to roller-coaster and try to snap-roll. I helped it perform these rolls. Every time I thought I had shaken the 190 and straightened out, here would come a string of bursts from his 20mm and off we would go again. Finally, I spotted a small cumulus cloud and jumped into it. Doing a fast 180, I came back out just in time to see a flight of P-51s on his tail. They burned him. He had never touched me. He was a fine pilot, but he could not shoot for you-know-what. I joined-up with some other scattered P-51s and came home. This was an ignominious way to complete a combat tour! He had run me from 25,000 feet down to 10,000!

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Major Green was the 325th top ACE, and was top ACE in the Mediterranean at the time of this mission at the time of this mission. Captain Farnham was the friendly fellow who knocked the FW-190 off my fanny. Parker was our second-ranking ACE (later KIA). Lts Simmons and Sangermano were ACES.

The 325th Was the "youngest" Fighter Group in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (except for the 332nd) but led the others in total victories until the last couple of weeks of the war, when it was passed by the 82nd.

Also it was tied with the 31st in total numbers of ACES (25) - the other Groups had fewer.

Thus concludes the effort on the part of Colonel Sluder to reintroduce us to a part of our past; that through the passing of time has grown a bit dimmer. On behalf of all 451st Bomb Group members, I offer my deepest thanks to the Colonel for the part he played in our survival, and for stepping forward at this time to recreate the interaction of his "325th Fighter Group" with our 451st Bomb Group.

FINALLY: "BOMBER CREW 369" IS OFFERED AS FICTION NOVEL OF 451st BOMB GROUP Subtitled "The Reluctant Heroes"

Somewhere's up the drive called Oxbow Marina, in California, sat a youthful looking retired Lieutenant Colonel (WW-II vintage) pouring over a Webster Revised Dictionary and Roget's Thesaurus, picking out the proper and necessary words to add creditable prose to what would make up his newest book. Locked in his studio by his lovely wife, Dortha, the only contact this author had with the outside world was what this sweet young thing thought he needed. With lots of encouragement, along with his black coffee -- and portions of his front lawn to smoke, the erstwhile writer plunged ahead.

With fingers numbed and stiffened from his unceasing struggle over his old (but reliable) Woodstock typewriter, he maintained an even pace of 2 pages each day. With his green visor eyeshade firmly snubbed down, his sleeves rolled above his elbows, he labored long and hard, studying documents and journals, to bring to fruition this, his

latest effort. With limited outside distractions, the Colonel, shaken and exhausted, managed to eche out a 300+ page manuscript for his publishers.

The Lieutenant Colonel of which I speak is William C. Anderson (former pilot of the 725th Bomb Squadron).

(Continued Page 8 Col. 1)

A new novel of World War II
adventure and heroism from the
bestselling author of BAT-21.



- More than 250,000 copies of BAT-21 in Bantam print.

Bestselling author, William Anderson is a retired Air Force Colonel whose experience as a bomber commander in Germany during World War II formed the basis for this book.

Set at the end of World War II, BOMBER CREW 369 tells the story of an American bomber crew, their lives, friendships, loves -- and the growing awareness among them that someone in their midst is a saboteur working for the enemy. BOMBER CREW 369. A gripping, action-packed account of a courageous fighting unit.

BOMBER CREW 369 William C. Anderson
\$3.50 (\$3.95 in Canada)/26223-8/Novel/288 Pages/Spine: 23/72 CTN
AUTHOR'S RESIDENCE: Isleton, CA
OTHER BANTAM BOOKS: BAT-21

(Bomber Crew 369, continued)

It was in December of 1979 that I first made contact with "Andy" to see if he would be interested in joining our newly formed 451st organization. The answer I got back was more than I could have hoped for. Not only was he interested, but quoting from his very first letter, had the 451st currently in mind.

Without deletion he said;

"I'll be go to hell!"

"You won't believe this, but only last week I started my fifteenth book to be published by (?) The subject? A World War Two novel to be based on our experiences in the 451st Bomb Group. And the day I started the tome, I received your letter like some kind of omen - a ghost from the past - Talk about hairy!"

"I've written several books about the military since retiring from "Fort Fumble" in 1964: HURRICANE HUNTER, which became an ABC Movie of the Week; THE GOONEY BIRD (about Vietnam); PANDEMONIUM ON THE POTOMAC (about the Pentagon)."

Andy's agent wrote a deluge of graphic new information about our illustrious author/member, but the one that capsulated it all was found on the back of a promotional flyer about one of his earlier books. It reads in part: William Anderson was a career Air Force pilot for twenty-two years. As a command pilot, he has flown all over the world, including the North Pole. He still holds the record for the longest hurricane-hunting mission as a hurricane-hunter pilot. He flew a sampling mission through the cloud of the largest H-bomb ever detonated at Eniwetok. He is the author of numerous books including PENOPE, THE DAMP DETECTIVE; THE GREAT BICYCLE EXPEDITION; HURRICANE HUNTERS; TWO-TON ALBATROSS; WHEN THE OFFSPRINGS HAVE SPRUNG; BAT-21; and many others.

Upon completion of his tome, Dortha removed his green visor, rolled down his shirt sleeves, put on his sport jacket, and bought two air tickets for our San Antonio Reunion. There, propped between his bomb-aimer, Lenny Baltzer, and his navigator, Bill Loranger, was found the shaken, but unbowed, W.C. "Andy" Anderson.



"CREW 369"

(Standing, L-R) W.C. Anderson, [P]; L.P. Murphy [CP]; W.E. Loranger, [N]; L.A. Baltzer, [B]. (Kneeling Gunners, L-R) D.D. Derringer; H.E. Dubois; A.C. Henry; L.L. Passint; S.R. Weber; T.M. Callotti.

Andy made it clear to me that this novel was strictly a fictional accounting of the 725th BS, 451st BG, and was in no way meant to be a pure historical documentation of our Group. The way it was written, bearing towards the imaginary plot and individuals, was to make the book more marketable to the general public. Andy puts a disclaimer in the FOREWORD as to its authenticity, but in the same FOREWORD gives credit to the 451st Bomb Group as being one of the best in the 15th Army Air Force. To the purist within our organization, please don't accept the premise that we actually had people living amongst us that meant to do us overt physical harm. The way Andy used his characters was to "stew the plot" to an exciting climax.



My recommendation is to buy the book; its a minimal \$3.50 a copy, and is found at most book stores; all public libraries; selected K-Mart's; and on occasion may be found on the bedside table of the more discriminate "ladies of the night." I think you'll either smile with enjoyment as you read of the trials and trivialities of "Swede Stromburg," the pilot, with his "hair-brained" crew, or gnash your teeth in reading the fiction evolved around some of facts, as we remember them.

"ANDY" & DORTHA ANDERSON (circa 1986 Reunion) If you would like, Bill Anderson will send you an autographed copy (if its one of his good day) for a total sum of \$4.00 to cover shipping and handling. Address your request to:

William C. Anderson, LTC USAF (Ret.)
190 Oxbow Marina Drive
Isleton, CA 95641

MAILBOX ODYSSEY

(By Bob Karstensen)

I like my old mailbox, that stands by the road.
It's large, and quite regal, an' it takes a big load.
Sure, it bears all the scars of storms and bad snows,
And the outside is rusty, and the door won't quite close.
But it shelters my mail, that the courier brings,
What more could I ask, than it do all these things.
I should look for another; one that will seem more in line.
But why should I bother, this one's doing quite fine.
Its been near forty years, that this mailbox has reigned
By the side of the road, at the end of my lane.
And for near forty years, I've been having it stand,
Like a steadfast old soldier, just a'waiting command.
It has offered me mail, that was joy in the getting,
From a pal from my past, or a friend not forgetting.
But it hands me a letter, every once in a while,
That shows me no joy, not even a smile.
I stand by my mailbox, and we both share our grief,
As I read from a letter, (with a message quite brief)
That a comrade has fallen, a true friend to us all,
Who, in memory and deeds, will always stand tall.
My old mailbox has seen it, the good and the bad,
The letters of joy, plus the ones that are sad.
Now it stands like a sentry, this link to the Group,
Awaiting the word, that it wants from its troops.

PLANNING UNDERWAY FOR 1988 REUNION

For some time the 451st Bomb Group has been exploring for possible reunion sites along the East Coast. Our policy has been to select reunion areas that will work favorably with the military and non-military desires of our attendees. And, too, to seek an area that will be a variation from the previous reunion.

One such region of our United States is that of the Virginia Peninsula (known to the area people as the TIDEWATER AREA).

We are now negotiating with some of the larger hotels in the cities of Virginia Beach, Hampton, and Norfolk, Virginia for one that will be eligible as our HOST hotel. As many of you are aware, the size of our attendance predicated the need for ample rooms and banquet facilities in order to make for an enjoyable event. Thus a close scrutiny of hotels is just as important as the features that the locality may have to offer. This factor we hope to finalize by mid-summer (1987) and have the details in the next AD-LIB.

My contacts with members of our organization living in the area, have amplified the benefits and historical significance of what is available.. They are eager to see, and to work with, the possibility of our Group selecting this area as its 1988 site.

Now would be the time to examine the old "Rand and McNally Atlas" and familiarize yourselves with what the area has to offer. I'm sure that upon close examination you will consider taking your vacation in/at that place and time. (Dates have not been determined: predicated on hotel room rates and availability - most probable time: autumn of '88."

"REUNIONS"

by Bill Burlingame

Bill and his wife, Peg, [724th Bomb Squadron members] have followed up their reunion attendance by submitting an article to their local veterans publication. What follows is their latest effort ... (editor)

Another two years have passed since I wrote about attending an Air Force Reunion. My wife and I just returned from the 4th Reunion of the 451st Bombardment Group (H), WWII at San Antonio, Texas. We spent four days with comrades from forty-two years ago. We arrived a day early because our schedule for the next four days was a full one. When we checked in at our "operations center" (Marriott Hotel) we met old friends from past reunions with the same idea. Since the sun was out (you all have read and heard about the floods in San Antonio) we went for a stroll along the Riverwalk and dined at a tree-shaded outdoor restaurant watching the "water taxis" go by. Thursday took in downtown San Antonio; saw The Alamo; rode an authentic reproduction of a rail streetcar used as downtown buses for only 10 cents. Then registration; social hour (debriefing); then attending a "Fiesta" in La Villita, a restored historical area, to shop, wine and dine Mexican style.

Friday, we (nine bus-fuls) attended a Military Graduation Ceremony and Parade at Lackland AF Base; lunch at the renowned Frenchies; then a tour of Kelly AF Base where the C-5A Cargo Planes and the B-52 Bombers are overhauled. We also saw the one and only XC-99, a double-decked version of the

B-36 bomber. They did not go ahead with this aircraft because it was too big. But now they have the C-5A's and 747's.

Friday evening was the formal opening of the reunion with a Flag Presentation by the Randolph AF Base Color Guard; a Concert by the 5th U.S. Army Band; a film on the Ghost Squadron by the Confederate Air Force; audiovisual displays of the 451st Bomb Group in action; then dancing to the oldies.

Saturday, when the floods started, we had a choice of tours, LBJ Ranch and Fredericksburg, or Highlights of San Antonio. We took the later and visited Hemisfair Plaza (left from the 1968 World's Fair); The Alamo; El Mercado Mexican Market; King William residential area and Mission San Jose, Queen of the missions.

Saturday evening was our Banquet Event, a Cocktail Hour followed by the Banquet. Guest Speaker was Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (Ret.) Robert D. Gaylor.

Sunday we attended an Interdenominational Worship Service, then it was farewell and good-bye until 1988 (God willing) when we will have the 5th reunion of the 451st Bomb Group (H) WWII.

The next time you see your outfit in the reunion column I urge you to get in touch with your old comrades.

EXTRA REUNION BOOKLETS AVAILABLE

"REUNIONS" INC., photographers for our 1986 San Antonio, Texas Reunion, has informed me that they have a few extra copies of our noted event still available. If you wish to obtain a booklet, please be specific and make your request for the **451st Bomb Group San Antonio Reunion Booklet**. To order please send \$10 for each Booklet wanted (with a clear return address), to:

"REUNIONS" INC.
413 S. Rosalind Avenue
Orlando, FL 32801-8010

You may also order using your Visa or Master Charge. In that case, the toll free number is:
Out of state: 1 (800) 327-8010
In Florida: 1 (800) 432-6293



WORDS FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

STORIES RETOLD AND REVIEWED

A good way to start this segment would be to repeat a little phrase that I have frequently pondered. I guess now is the time to share it with you.

The **PAST** to be remembered with reverence.
The **PRESENT** to be enjoyed with lightheartedness.
The **FUTURE** to be awaited with hope.

(Continued Page 10, Col 1)

(FLIGHT DECK, Continued)

For all three of these "tenses," for which we seem tied to, I have found it a pleasure to relate them to the text that goes into making our AD-LIBs. Ferreting out stories, finding documentation, and finally seeing the results in print is truly rewarding. I'm sorry I can't put more time into it and get them out more often. But, with the strong input I get from you guys, it helps to make the job a little easier.

What makes the task truly interesting is to receive a response from someone in regards to a story with the various questions that were raised. And then to hear the answers to those, almost unanswerable, questions.

Since I started this effort I've tried to sift out the fact from hearsay that comes from our membership. After our last issue (#14), in which I offered the article "**Jack Martin Seeks Illusive Check-out Pilot,**" I've come up with some partial answers.

Jonathan S. "Jack" Martin has informed me that the name of the co-pilot on his mission to Lyons, France, 26 May 1944, was **Lt. John J. Kane**, O-681434 (724th).

This information came to Jack Martin through correspondence with former member of the 461st Bomb Group, **Milton Radovsky**. Milt, a bombardier with the 767th Bomb Squadron, 461st Bomb Group, recalls John J. Kane very clearly. Lt. Kane ended up being transferred from the 451st to the 461st, and flying as Aircraft Commander with Milt Radovsky as his bombardier. The following are excerpts from Milt's letter to Jack Martin:

"..... and he was our pilot on our B-24 when we were shot down on July 25, 1944 after attacking the Herman Goering Tank Works at Linz, Austria.

Kane was wounded in the neck during this mission. He spent the rest of the war with me in Stalag Luft 1, on the Baltic almost due north of Berlin, near a small town called Barth.

I am sure my "Kane" is the same as the one you are looking for. He had fair hair, was of average height, perhaps about 5'8", but built like a tank and with the face and disposition of a bulldog. It was this testy temper of his that save those of us still alive. After numerous fighter attacks from the tail, Kane saw one swooping down on us from about 12 o'clock. By now he was mad! He pulled up the nose of our plane, directly toward the fighter. -- He later said he fully intended to ram --. The fighter pulled up his nose; Kane pulled up higher! The fighter broke off the attack.

I remember hearing the story about Kane being involved in landing a B-24 on the Anzio fighter strip. Didn't the story appear in Stars & Stripes at the time? He did mention being from Chicago.

He always enjoyed telling about his induction processing: the clerk asked him what kind of work he did. He said, "Bookmaker." The clerk entered that into his record. A man in line next to him asked, "You print books?" "No," Kane said "I work for my brother, who is a BOOKIE.""

* * *

It should be remembered that Milt Radovsky made a plea for information, in our last AD-LIB, from anyone that had participated on the mission of July 25, 1944 against the Herman Goering Tank Works in Linz, Austria. His address: 10710 Lockridge Dr. Silver Springs, MD 20901.

So now we've now come to this point in our quest for the elusive co-pilot that flew with Jack Martin on that memorable 26th of May 1944. We've gotten the fellows name!

I personally made several attempts to locate John Kane, or some family member, through the Chicago and Suburban telephone directories; but to no avail. I know that Milt Radovsky has tried all the possible Washington, D.C. archives and has come up with ZIP. What we need now is a HOT lead from some of you guys that have information, but are just sitting on it.

---x--x--0--x--x---

Another article from the last AD-LIB had to do with "Who was the lead pilot, and the crew, of the 724th Squadron Flight on 30 July 1944?" This was the mission, you may recall, written up on page 9. (Issue 14) That was when Jack Martin was flying in the plane that held #4 position, immediately behind the stricken aircraft.

The answer was quick in coming, and it came from the pilot, himself, Reverend **Paul G. Johnshoy**. In part it reads:

"Enjoyed reading your last copy of AD-LIB and then got caught up short by your article about the 30 July 1944 mission to Budapest! Do you know that you were an eye witness to the last mission of Gashouse Jr, that I have told you about several times? I was the pilot of that plane ahead of you and the plane was Gashouse Jr. And as far as I know that was the last mission it made, because inside of a week we were painting the name of "Minnesota Mauler" on its replacement. I don't know if Francis Russell remembers it or not, but he helped to lay out the letters and made sure we had a good paint job for the "Mauler."



INSPECTING DAMAGED GASHOUSE, JR.
Paul Johnshoy [pilot] & Unknown Skeptic
A/C in background [#52] identified as SMALL FRY

Your last line says, "I'm pretty sure they survived ... " We sure did and we made it back to the base an hour after everyone had landed; and it was an interesting trip. I was a Flight Leader that day (not the Group lead ship) and the reason I kept going straight after bombs away was because I couldn't see anything, all on account of the fact that we were all soaked to the skin in raw gasoline. The bomb bay smoke you saw was raw gasoline. The direct hit we took removed the sides of two main gas tanks and you watched half of our gasoline supply pour out. Of course the drama started for us as we assessed the damage and "**Dusty**" Rhodes, our engineer, began to work over the open bomb bay doors to get one of the two engines going again. This took place as we were approaching the mountain peaks and we started our gas-conserving slow, low

level flight across Yugoslavia and the Adriatic Sea and finally landed at home on the fumes.

Anyway, what a thrill to read your article and discover that it was you who was directly behind us that day. **Quarles P. Hinton** is the only other member of my crew that I have been able to contact. He was our belly gunner that day. So I thought I'd just quickly drop you a line so you would know who manned the lead ship on that infamous mission, 30 July 1944. By the way, **Morris Manoogian** wrote us up for that mission and "Dusty" and I each got the DFC for bringing Gashouse Jr. Home again that day."

---x--x--0--x--x---

Another letter of "button popping" magnitude came to this office from **Donald V. Kelly** (724th). I proudly repeat it here:

"Clearly you are widely read. I've just finished the last issue of the AD-LIB and saw myself quoted. And that explains **Bob James'** letter of inquiry about our pilot, **Bob Beach**. Turned out he was trying to locate a different Bob Beach, one who had briefly been his co-pilot. What is significant is that I was contacted through the 451st AD-LIB. It's content is evidently of great interest and is apparently thoroughly read. I started reading this last issue casually but was soon absorbed. Then I returned to past issues, reading carefully, and learned much I simply hadn't known. Things I had taken for granted or never thought of during our brief service in the 451st. We were abroad only about 2 months (14 missions I think) before the Luft Waffe scored. We flew some to remember though; Ploesti, Marseille, (for the invasion) and of course Markersdorf. With respect to the last, it is helpful to learn from issue #9, and **General Eaton's** supplement (issue 10), that we had been up against their best and that Eaton noted their best as "brilliant."

Thanks again for the work you are doing, and the opportunity to revisit what I'm sure was the most memorable event of our lives."

---x--x--0--x--x---

Always out to help a fellow airman, be he in the 451st, 461st, or wherever, I got a letter from a comrade, **Lyman M. Delameter** (461st BG) that bears checking out.

From his journal, shortly after the incident, he wrote:

26 June 1944

Target was oil refineries near Vienna, Austria Very heavy flak was encountered but we were to the left of Vienna and the flak did not reach us. As we turned on the target I was about 35 enemy fighter aircraft. Over the intercom I heard the tail gunner report another B-24 joining our formation, then, "Hell it's a ME-410," and he opened fire. Two B-24s went down in the target area. I saw one B-24 spiral down but recover at 12,000 feet. On the way home we saw a puff of smoke about 15 miles ahead of us. A fighter or bomber, enemy or friendly, went down. We passed over the plane, numerous explosions were noticed. The plane that had recovered at 12,000 feet was all alone and no one covering him. We left the Group to go down and give him support. Another plane joined us and flew on the crippled planes right wing. He joined us just as enemy fighters attacked.

We finally contacted the crippled plane (**SMALL FRY**). He was just about out of gas. Crew members were busy dumping all loose equipment overboard.

The aircraft seemed to keep going off course like he was having problems maintaining a heading. We flew directly over flak areas. We hit the coast of Italy and flew along side of him for a time. We noticed a field below. We heard him call the tower but no answer. He dropped his landing gear and landed.

27 June 1944

The crew of **SMALL FRY** were here today. They said they were very happy to have seen us. One prop governor was shot out and the pilot had to hold full right rudder all the way home. As they turned on the base leg they lost two engines, so they had one engine to land with. As they landed that engine cut out. This was their 50th, and last mission.

29 June 1944

Flew over to the 451st to pick up the Pathfinder ship. Navigator of **SMALL FRY** told us that with all the enemy fighters around they never expected us to come down and help them.

* * *

Here's your chance to gain a few "brownie points" by searching your memory as to this incident. If you were a member of the **SMALL FRY** crew, it won't be that hard. But if you weren't, but remember witnessing, from another A/C, what happened, how's about letting us know. **Lyman M. Delameter** is trying to fill in a few blank places in his memory and can be reached at: 42103 Agena, Temecula, California 92390.

---x--x--0--x--x---

Always on the search for new members, this office has initiate a plan of attack using the print medium as its target. Not satisfied with our roster of 1250+ registered members, we have developed a news article (outlining our purpose) that we hope will be viewed by those members of our Group still unaccounted for.

The article, some 970 words in length, was planned to include the name and location of a current member living in the city in which the article would appear. Thereby giving the reader a contact that could introduce him into the 451st BG. The article, as written, was not intended as pure copy that can not be altered by the News Editor. Rather it was intended as a basis for the Reporter or Editor to create their own story by. (Seldom does a Reporter like to use something that is not of their own making: I think they call it professionalism.) Over the past few months I have sent this article to numerous dedicated members around the U.S. Those that were fortunate to get recognition for the 451st BG in their local paper, were a bit disappointed that the article was not reprinted as originally offered. To these members I say, "Well done, gentlemen." Just to get a squib of any size in these more prestigious publications, is showing off the fact that the 451st Bomb Group (H) WW-II is still alive, well, and very active.

To **Charles Haltom** (726th), **Harry Fox** (724th), **Jerry Keilman** (727th), **Nick Zender** (725th), **Dick Hayford** (724th), and others I've failed to mention, I offer thanks from all us 451st'ers in getting a story placed and sending me the results. And to the rest of you that are still working on it, I know you have a lot of "arm twisting" to do in the process ... and I leave you to it.

If any of the rest of you guys feel that you have some clout in the Publishing Business; have some input in the Television industry; converse on occasion with Radio Talk Shows, send me some evidence of the results. Trying to promote our Group through these media is the only way we can find our

unfound members. I feel we've pretty much exhausted using the Military oriented publications in our quest, though we will continue to use them as we have in the past. But, other than by word of mouth and personal effort on your part, we have a smaller "window of opportunity" to get the word out and publicize our presence.

---x--x--0--x--x---

We are fast becoming an International Clearing House for overseas historians seeking information. I have, over the years, been in contact with several European historical investigators working to clear up, or reexamine, some point, or fact, within their interest. I have never attempted to discourage such effort, rather I want to help them in whatever way I can.

But the knowledge of one, even surrounded by data as I am, has not the intelligence as our Group possesses as a whole. Questions that cross my desk and just beg for answers aren't all that easy to satisfy. So it behooves you guys out there to help me to unravel some of these questions that are presented me by these dedicated fact seekers.

One such investigator is **Alessandro Gaffarelli** of Rimini, Italy. Alessandro is an Engineer by profession and a determined historian by choice. Alessandro was, and still is, a native of Rimini. His purpose in research is to gain as much information about the wartime happenings concerning his city, as is possible to get. And since the Air Force played such a big part in the destruction of certain parts of the city, he is requesting our help. In explanation, let me quote from his recent letter:

"I thank you very much for your letter, and enclosed 451st BG mission list and newsletter. The mission list is a very helpful document for me. It is a very long time (about 20 years), that I am searching for records and official documents concerning the Allied air actions carried out by the 12th and 15th Air Forces over Rimini during the Second World War. From the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense in Washington D.C., I have received many air photos of Rimini taken by the aircrafts during the air raids. From the National Archives and Records Services in Washington and from the Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center of Maxwell AFB, I have obtained the Mission Reports referring to the many raids over Rimini.

Moreover, by correspondence I got in touch with the 97th, 98th, 99th, and the 301st Bomb Groups, as well as the 14th Fighter Group. I got in touch with many pilots and crew members who took part in the mentioned air raids.

During the Second World War I was present to the misfortunes of Rimini, from the date of the Italian Army surrender (8th September 1943) until the capture of the town by the Allied Army (21st September 1944), and I clearly remember the course of the air raids.

At that time I was 23 years old and was a student at the University (I graduated Engineer after the war).

My observation post was on the hill about eight miles south east of Rimini, where, during the war my home was (Rimini then was entirely empty, without inhabitants); from that place I saw the passage of the bomber groups directed towards the town. I remember the approach of the "Fortresses" and "Liberators" in attack formation at a great height and silver colored; the fire of the German flak, from emplacements north west of Rimini; the dropping of the bombs. Even if feeble minded I have a vague recollection of the 22 June 1944 air

raid to which the 451st BG took part.

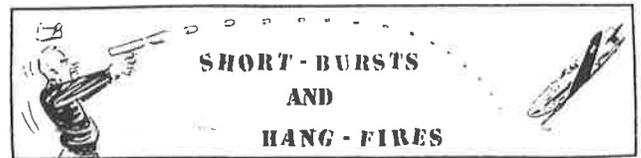
Now I have enlarged my searches to documents regarding some other Northern Italian cities, because I intend to collect the memoirs in a booklet. Some time ago I published the records regarding the main air raid over Rimini: not for profit but only for the sake of advertising the historical reality. The above mentioned cities are: Bologna, Faenza, Ferrara, Mestre, Padova, and Verona.

I should be very grateful to you if you would kindly inform the former members of the 451st Bomb Group (H) WW-II about my wish to collect memoirs regarding the war flights carried out over Rimini; over the other six cities and over Northern Italy, in general."

* * * * *

As you can see Alessandro is in earnest in his desire for documentation about the air war that was part of his youth - and ours. I know that other Groups have already honored his request for information. So, beyond what I have offered, perhaps you can donate some of your experiences relating to his scope of interest.

Direct your letters to this office and I will forward them, or the contents thereof, at your bidding.



CHARLES C. HALTOM (726th) I guess you heard about George Morris, our Squadron Bombardier; he died suddenly not long after our reunion in San Antonio. **BYRON F. BALLIET (725th)** I was assigned my A/C at the same time as Ed Wilson, Pete Janensch and Ed Pries ... I lost the CITADEL the latter part of April returning from Ploesti when I had to crash land on the eastern coast of Italy in no mans land between the British 8th and the Germans ... They (British) sent a tank to pick us up. **WILLIAM BLUE (725th)** The only bumper sticker ever applied to a car of mine is the one you sent re: 451st. Unfortunately not one person has come forth to identify with it .. (Editor .. Keep trolling Bill, they will soon surface) **HERBERT A. GUINNESS (726th)** I am enclosing a check to help defray your costs. I must compliment you on your diligence and time you spend on this project. Without your work, we would lose all of our fond memories forever ..(Editor ..Thanks for the donation and the kind words) **HARVEY BROWN (725th)**....I also talked to Charles Reamer and Roman Sewald. These fellows were both in the original 726th Sqdn and went over to Italy in late 1943 ... (Editor..Thanks Harv, these boys are now bona-fide members, as well as your pilot, Charles Trumper) **EARL REITZ (727th)** I noted some very excellent writing in the AD-LIB by the editor and various contributors. The last article by Lt. Jonathan Martin was exciting, poignant, and of the first water .. (Editor .. Again, I doff my helmet to a gentleman that recognizes a struggling pair of potential authors "in labor") **FRANK BERENS (724th)** I was the radio gunner on WOLF WAGON, 724th Sqdn, shot down over Ploesti, 28 July 1944....I would be interested in purchasing one or more of the pictures of WOLF WAGON, when available...(Editor..You must have been on WOLF WAGON II, Frank, since the first was condemned after the April 5 mission. Try Francis Russell for a picture, if still interested)