



451st Bomb Group Newsletter No. 28 March 2026



Published for the preservation of our 451st heritage.

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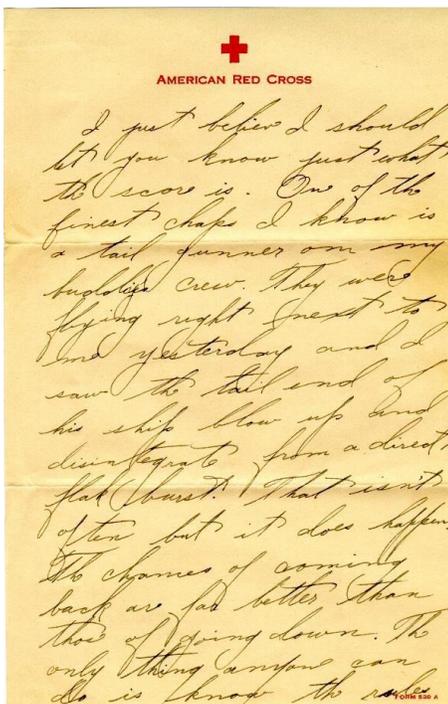
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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

In the last edition of the newsletter, we honored Sgt. Hugh Balfanz and 1stLt. Charles Campbell for making the ultimate sacrifice. In one of those strange coincidences that can't be explained, it turns out they were good friends. From the tribute to Charles R. Campbell by Colin Campbell, in one of his letters home:



"I just believe I should let you know just what the score is. One of the finest chaps I know is a tail gunner on my buddy's crew. They were flying right next to me yesterday and I saw the tail end of his ship blow up and disintegrate from a direct flak burst. That isn't often but it does happen. The chances of coming back are far better than those of going down. The only thing anyone can do is know the rules of the game, whether the game is flying, religion, or just living in itself; and play the game the best he can by sticking to the rules. That way regardless of what happens if you've tried your best to do the right thing things will turn out for the best."

We are grateful to friends Francesco Rollo and Maurizio De Angelis for their unselfish efforts to return dog tags to 451st families (page 2).

I hope you enjoy the newsletter!

Jonathan

DOG TAGS RETURNED TO FAMILIES OF 451st VETERANS

In a moving act of remembrance and respect, four dog tags belonging to veterans of the 451st Bomb Group have been returned to their families.

The dog tags were discovered at the former 451st base in Castelluccio, Italy, by Francesco Rollo and Gerardo Liscio. Their find set in motion an international effort to reunite these historic mementos with the families of the men who once wore them.



Francesco Rollo and Gerardo Liscio in front of the still standing 451st Canteen Building

I was first contacted last year by Francesco regarding the dog tags found at the 451st base. After months of communication and research, Francesco connected with Maurizio De Angelis, founder of the Italian Dog Tag Restitution Project <https://www.facebook.com/people/Italian-Dog-Tag-Return-Project/61569468687955/> and President of the Association of Historical Researchers with Metal Detectors <https://www.facebook.com/grupporicerchestoriche>, who is assisted by Dario Conti.



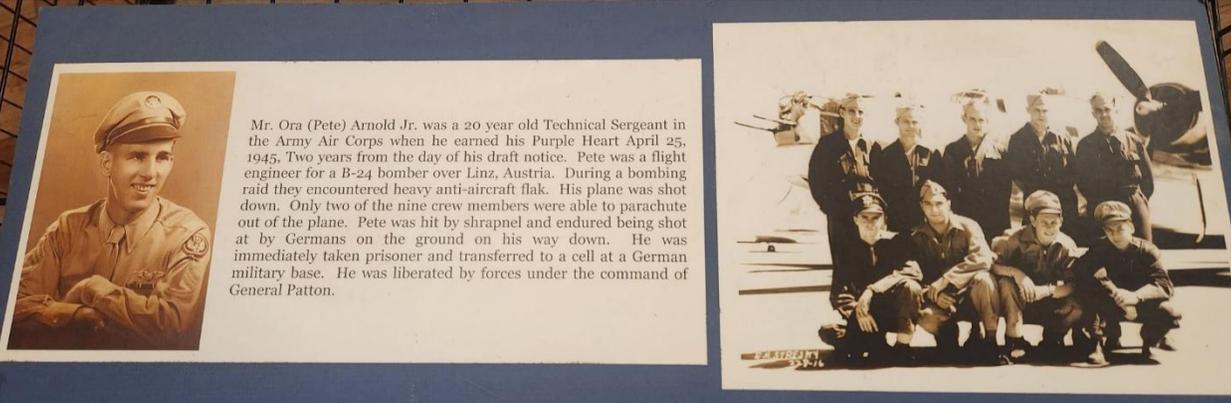
Dario Conti & Maurizio De Angelis, Italian Dog Tag Restitution Project

I was able to locate the daughter of one of the veteran's heirs, but mostly stayed out of what can only be described as a smooth-running operation! For more than 20 years, Maurizio has dedicated himself to returning lost military identification tags to families—free of charge. Through the Italian Dog Tag Restitution Project, he has successfully completed more than 200 returns across Italy, England, and especially the United States.

Working with collaborators in America who assist with research and contacting relatives, The Italian Dog Tag Restitution Project sends the dog tags beautifully framed in a small picture—supported by a sponsor who reimburses the shipping expenses.

The return of these four dog tags is more than the delivery of personal artifacts; it is the restoration of memory, history, and connection. Thanks to the dedication and integrity of those involved, four families now hold a tangible piece of their loved one's service and sacrifice.

Their work stands as a powerful reminder that even decades later, the bonds of history and honor remain strong.



Deborah Long, daughter of Ora Arnold Jr.



Alfred Edgar Bent



Katherine Bent, daughter of Alfred Edgar Bent



Family of Clifford Bogue



Family of John B. Nelson Jr.

DIDDLIN' DOLLY



Diddlin' Dolly – Photo from the book “The 451st Bomb Group in World War II: A Pictorial History”

The Italian writer Michele Mari recently published these stories (links to the full story below – use Google Translate) in the publication Tuscia Web about the 451st plane 42-52077 “Diddlin’ Dolly”, that was shot down on April 28, 1944 near Perugia, Italy, after years of research.

<https://www.tusciaweb.eu/2025/11/28-aprile-1944-il-bombardiere-usa-abbattuto-a-collazzone-era-il-b-24-diddlin-dolly/>

<https://www.tusciaweb.eu/2025/11/quando-laereo-venne-colpito-lala-sinistra-prese-fuoco-e-ci-lanciammo-con-il-paracadute/>

Diddlin’ Dolly was piloted by Walter Graber, Jr. The remaining crew were Copilot: Emil Mason, Navigator: Albert Anderson, Bombardier: James Horan, Radio Operator: Edward Noneman, Aerial Engineer: William Kuhnert, R. Waist Gunner: John Battaglia, L. Waist Gunner: William Womack, Ball Turret Gunner: Irwin Kushner, Tail Gunner: James Ogdon. Most crewmembers were captured, with one KIA (Anderson).

As described in the article by Michele Mari, *the reconstructed story concerns the downing of the four-engine B-24 Liberator bomber serial number 42-52077 with the nickname “Diddlin Dolly” belonging to the 724th Bomb Squadron of the 451st Bomb Group of the USAF, shot down by German anti-aircraft fire on 28 April 1944 during a mission to hit the Orbetello airport in the province of Grosseto.*

The historical research began thanks to a 1944 document found by the Romagna Air Finders association in which the province of Perugia communicated to the Ministry of the Interior the downing of an aircraft on April 28, 1944.

Angelo Fagioli collected numerous contemporary and eyewitness accounts, which confirmed the incident and provided further details.

Michele Mari, investigating American military documents, analyzing in particular the loss reports (MACR – Missing Air Crew Report) of the squadrons employed in Italy in 1944 and the reports of each individual sortie (DOR – Daily Operations Report), found that on April 28, 1944, a four-engined B-24 bomber was hit by German anti-aircraft fire near Perugia and then crashed between Collepepe and Cerro, about twenty kilometers from Perugia.

Furthermore, the German anti-aircraft unit, Abeitlung 365, also claimed the downing of a B-24 between Collepepe and Cerro on that distant day in April 1944.

The aircraft had taken off at 11:00 from Castelluccio dei Sauri, near Foggia, to bomb the Orbetello airport together with thirty-five other B-24 H version and four B-24 G version with forty P-38 escorts.

Walter Graber and John Battaglia were taken to Air Fleet Command 2 in Verona while Irwin Kushner, James Ogden, William Kuhnert, Edward Noneman to Sagan's Stalag 3 in Germany. William Womack was taken to Dulag Luft.

From my previous correspondence with Ken Coates, the nephew of John Battaglia: *“He was captured and held a prisoner in Stalag Luft 3. He passed away at 90 yrs old a few years ago. He was my hero and the reason I joined the Air Force where I spent 27 years.”*

Ken shared these photos:



John Battluga



Partial Crew of Diddlin' Dolly

1st Row (L-R): William Kunnert, Edward Noneman, Irwin Kushner

2nd Row (L-R): Robert Preston, James Ogden (Armorers)

Kneeling: John Battliga

LAST FLYBY

Here are the death notifications since our October 2025 Newsletter:

451st Member	Squadron	Duty Position	DOD
Kuras, Alexander		Navigator	06.04.2024

THANK YOU, DONORS!

Donor	In Tribute To
Jones, Gene Joseph	In memory of Joseph Jones, 725 th Squadron, Nose Turret Gunner
Kaczmarek, Michele	In memory of Edward Kaczmarek, 726 th Sq. Tail Gunner/Radio Operator
Oliveira, Lynn Marie & Ryan	In honor of Major Samuel Roger Cessna, Pilot
Walkey, William & Shirley	In memory of Thomas Walkey, 726 th Sq., Squadron Commander
Yates, Jane	In memory of Lt. Robert M. Finehout, 725 th Squadron, Pilot

Should you desire to honor a crew mate or family member, please send the full name and duty position of the person being honored. Please send to:

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

OR

Zelle® to 207-730-0465

OR

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

FINANCIAL REPORT

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

451st BG Association Financial Report

Beginning Balance September, 2025	\$10,451.45
<u>Income</u>	
Donations	\$550.00
Interest	<u>\$191.10</u>
Total Income	\$741.10
<u>Expenses</u>	
October Newsletter	\$378.54
Website Upgrade	<u>\$681.15</u>
Total Expenses	\$1,059.69
 Ending Balance February, 2026	 \$10,132.86

15th AIR FORCE REUNION UPDATE

When: October 15-18

Where: Hyatt Centric French Quarter, New Orleans

Activities: WWII National Museum, Speakers, and more (TBD)

Once details are finalized see the *Latest News and Updates* on <https://451st.org/> for more information.

Trivia Question:

How many Unit Citations did the 451st receive? See <https://451st.org/> and scroll down to *Latest News and Updates* to see the answer.