

NEWS LETTER

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SECOND AIR DIVISION ASSOCIATION

June 1975

Wolfpack! The 56th Fighter Group

by Charlie Gallagher (Associate)



The affectionate nickname 'Little Friends', bestowed upon the escorting fighters by the hard-pressed crews of the Bomber Groups, was often breathed like a prayer when the P.47's, P.51's or P.38's screamed

down on the intercepting German fighters. One of the 2nd Air Division Groups most deserving of this benison was the 56th Fighter Group – Zemke's 'Wolfpack'.

Amongst its distinguished alumni can be found 'Hub' Zemke, Francis S. 'Gabby' Gabreski, Robert Johnson, Walter Mahurin, Dave Schilling, Frederick Christensen Jr. – men who became legends in their own lifetime. Indeed, 'Gabby' and Robert Johnson, each with 28 victories were rated the two top-scoring aces of the 8th Air Force.

In total, the 56th had no fewer than 41 pilots who were rated as aces – e.g. with an individual score of at least 5 'kills', and the total number of enemy aircraft destroyed by the Group numbered 674 in the air, and 311 on the ground.

Activated at Savannah AFB, Georgia, on 15 January 1941, the 56th spent the next 18 months on the East Coast. However, in June 1942, the Group became a truly pioneer outfit when it was supplied with the first P.47B's. and not



Two of the 56th's 'Jugs' formate on the camera ship.

only did it pioneer the Thunderbolt, but it remained the only 8th AAF Group to fly the 'Jug' throughout the War.

Officially assigned to 8th Air Force Fighter Command on 12th January 1943, the Group took up quarters at Kingscliffe, a satellite airfield to Wittering in Huntingdonshire, where they were to serve their ETO apprenticeship prior to going on operations. 'Hub' Zemke – a very polished pilot who rapidly developed an impressive reputation as a master tactician – had been the Group C.O. since September 1942 and now had the task of seeing that his pilots reached the exacting standards required in the skies over Europe, in addition to dovetailing the 56th's operational procedures into the long-established British system.

The Group continued its intensive working-up programme, the latter part taking place at Hershaw St. Faith from which base, on 13 April, the 56th flew its first operational mission. After a few initial losses, Captain Walter V. Cook opened the Group's score book on 12 June by shooting down a FW 190. In July 1943, another move took the outfit to Halesworth, where, on 17 August the three squadrons – 61st, 62nd and 63rd – were briefed to support the beleaguered B.17's returning from the first bloody mission to Schweinfurt. In this action, Lt. Schilitz scored a triple – the second pilot in the ETO to achieve this distinction of shooting down three enemy aircraft in the course of the same mission.

The 56th's pilots were by now in the routine of 8th AAF operations, flying in all weathers on every sort of mission requested by the planners. Col. Zemke was replaced in October by Col. Robert B. Landry, under whose stewardship the Group's reputation and score sheet was continually enhanced, and a friendly rivalry with the 4th FG from Debden developed.

This rivalry continued when 'Hub' Zemke rejoined the outfit for a second tour as Commander in January 1944, and the 56th constantly challenged the 4th Group for the pennant position as the 8th AAF leading fighter Group.

Dave Schilling – a native of Kansas – took over from 'Hub' in August 1944, Zemke having supervised the Group's moving to another base, Boxted, near Colchester in April, and on 23 December of that year Dave gave the Group – and 8th Fighter Command – a resounding Christmas present by downing no fewer than 5 E.A. on this day. Schilling remained in the USAF after the War, but was tragically killed in an auto accident near Lakenheath England in August 1956.



Captain Walker H. Mahurin

Another pilot who elected to remain in the Air Force, and who used his considerable experience to good effect in Korea, was Captain Walker H Mahurin. 'Bud' Mahurin from Fort Wayne, Indiana, racked up 24.5 victories in the flame-filled skies over Festung Europa.

Frederick J. Christensen Jr., of Watertown, Mass., really hit the jackpot on 7 July 1944, when on this one day he added no less than 6 German fighters to his score.

'In the Mood' was the nickname lovingly bestowed on Gerald W. Johnson's P.47 serial No. 42-7877, and Johnson was really 'In the Groove' in this machine, chalking up an impressive total of 17 victories.

His namesake, Robert S. Johnson, tied with 'Gabby' Gabreski for the highest number of kills confirmed – 28 – and was the first American pilot in Europe to shatter Rickenbacker's WW I record of 26 E.A. destroyed. Johnson, from Lawton, Oklahoma, remained with the 56th from

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WOLFPACK

(Continued from Page 1)

his initial posting in July 1942 until his return to the U.S. in May 1944, by which time he had flown 91 combat missions, and completed a stint as Operations Officer of the 62nd Squadron. His 'bag' included 16 FW 190's, 8 ME 109's and the remainder were big twin-engined fighters ME 110's and 410's.



"Gabby" Gabreski and his ground crew.

Francis S. Gabreski — better known as 'Gabby' — had originally decided to take up medicine as a career, but as with so many others, his life was changed utterly in September 1939. Leaving Notre Dame University pre-medical school, he enrolled in the Army Air Force Aviation Cadet

program. Commissioned in March 1941, 'Gabby' was in America's shooting war right from the start, flying an interception mission from Wheeler Field, Pearl Harbor on the day of the Japanese attack. Seconded to the RAF he flew with 315 (Polish) Squadron — with a name like Gabreski, what else! By the time he joined the 56th, 'Gabby' had plenty of combat experience under his belt, and the combination of Francis S. Gabreski and the P.47 soon became legendary, not only amongst his own colleagues, but amongst the pilots of the GAF. It can hardly be doubted that had he not been forced to land in enemy territory on 20th July 1944, 'Gabby' would have racked up many more victories.

Finally, on 21st April 1945, the Group flew its last mission, two years and eight days after its assignment to the Eighth, and with this operation, the 56th left an indelible record in the annals of American Air Force History, which record included 2 Distinguished Unit Citations, 447 Missions, and the greatest number of air-to-air victories of any 8th AAF Fighter Group. It also had a greater number of individual aces than any other Group, and its loss to kill ratio of 8 to 1 was the best achieved by any 8th AAF outfit.

The East Anglian skies no longer echo to the snarl of Pratt and Whitneys, but as the USAF Phantoms from Alconbury, Lakenheath, or Bentwaters, hurtle overhead with their hollow, thunderous roar, many of us — particularly those who are 'Friends of the Eighth' — often pause, and think of that distinguished company of Zemke's 'Wolfpack', and wonder where they might be now.

INSTRUMENT FLIGHT IS FOR THE BIRDS

(Thanks to: Vintage Aeroplane Club of England)



Submitted

by

E.A. 'Rick' Rokicki
(458th BG)

Recently we have done a considerable amount of research on the 'Cat and Duck' method of

blind flying. We wish to say that it is highly overrated.

You are probably familiar with this 'Cat and Duck' dodge which sounds like simplicity itself. All it takes is a cat and a Duck and you are on an instrument flight. The cat is placed on the cabin floor, and, on the theory that a cat always remains upright, he or she is used for a needle and ball. Merely watch to see which way the cat leans to determine whether a wing is low. The duck is used for the instrument landing. Because a duck will not fly in instrument weather, all you need to do is throw it out a window (or cockpit) and follow it to the ground.

After several experimental flights however, we find this system has some serious

pitfalls, and the pilot using 'Cat & Duck' for the first time would do well to observe some important rules:

CATS

Get a wide-awake cat. Most cats do not want to stand up at all at any time. A large, fierce dog should be carried to keep the cat at attention.

Make sure your cat is clean. Dirty cats will spend all the time washing. Trying to follow a washing cat usually results in a tight snap roll, followed by an inverted spin. You can see that this will lead to an unsanitary condition rather quickly.

Old cats are best. Young cats have nine lives, but an old used-up cat with only one life left has just as much to lose as you have and will be more dependable.

DUCKS

Be sure the duck has good eyesight. Nearsighted ducks sometimes fail to realize they are on the "gauges" and will go "flogging off" to the nearest hill. Very near-sighted ducks will not realize they have been thrown out at all and will descend straight down in a sitting position. This is extremely difficult to follow in an airplane.

Use land-loving ducks. It is very discouraging to "break out" and find yourself on final for a rice paddy — particularly if there are duck-hunters around. Duck hunters suffer from temporary insanity when they are sitting in their blinds freezing, and will shoot at anything that flies.

Choose your duck carefully. Many water birds look very much alike and you may get confused between ducks and geese. Geese are very competent instrument fliers, but are seldom interested in going the way you want to go. If your duck heads off for Canada or Mexico then you know you have been given a goose.

Beware of cowardly ducks. If a duck discovers that you are using a cat to stay upright, he will refuse to leave the cat. Ducks are no better on instruments than you are.

Remember these points and instrument flying will be viewed in a totally new concept.

(ed. note: This article is for those of us who still make like the Wright brothers. Our apologies to all cats, ducks, geese and really competent instrument jockeys.)

NOTICE

Our good friend Roger Freeman has a problem one of you might be able to help him with.

Roger needs a photo of B-24H 27638, 66th BS 44th BG lost on December 22, 1943. Can anyone come up with a shot of this plane?

Also, was "Brass Bowl E" a call sign during the late '43 and early '44 period or was it the name of one of the 44th planes. Any information on this will be greatly appreciated. Send whatever you have to the Newsletter and we'll see to it that Roger gets it. Many thanks.

STANLEY LANGCASKEY ALIAS

ETIENNIE JEAN LE MOAL – DEAF MUTE



by
William G. Robertie
(44th BG)

On May 12, 1972 Stanley Langcaskey, taking a brief respite from the 2nd AD Reunion being held in Norwich, stepped off the elevator on the 9th floor of an

apartment house in La Roche-Sur-Yon (France) and came face to face with Madame Annonier. Madame hesitated for about one second then greeted him with "Good morning Etiennie". For both of them the memories of 29 years ago came flooding back.

On the cold, dismal morning of Dec. 30, 1943 S/Sgt. Stanley Langcaskey and the rest of the crew of "Bull of the Woods" left the runway at Shipdham to join with a formation of B-24s heading for Ludwigshaven.

The flight across the channel was relatively uneventful – most of them were – but as the formation penetrated deeper over the continent the famous "Yellow Nose" fighters hit the 44th formation and hit it hard.

"Bull of the Woods" was rapidly reduced to a flying junk pile. The "bail out" order was given and Stan, wounded in the head and arm, went out with the rest of the crew. He used the short interval between bailing out and landing to develop his one thought of the moment – escape.

Fortunately he landed in a wooded area and quickly burying his parachute hid in the brush. His wounds, while painful, did not incapacitate him, but he knew he couldn't travel far in that condition without help.

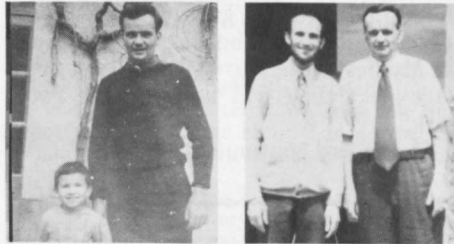
Waiting until dusk he headed for a small village in the distance which he later learned was Vezzapson, approximately 75 miles N.E. of Paris. Here he took refuge in the first building he came to which happened to be an "out house". What better way to make contact!!

It was inevitable that he should meet the owner of the property and this event took place about an hour later. The property belonged to a Ms. Pestal who quickly ushered Stanley into the house where his wounds were dressed. Communication immediately became a problem as they didn't speak English and Stan didn't speak French. This was solved when they obtained the services of a 75 year old woman from the village who spoke fluent English. She acted as interpreter.

Due to the number of Germans in the area it was quickly decided that Stan, in company with their 12 year old grandson, would ride bikes to Soissons. Riding a bike with shrapnel wounds in the head and left arm is not the easiest thing in the

world to do, but with constant encouragement from the boy they arrived in Soissons at the home of the younger Ms. Pestal without incident.

A Doctor was quickly located who again treated Stan's wounds. Then, with the aid of a dictionary, Ms. Pestal and Stan discussed what the next step should be. Surrendering did not enter into the conversation at all.



Maurice Claude Bertin (4 yrs. old) and Stanley Langcaskey – Then and Now.

Stan felt that he could get to Spain. "Impossible," said Ms. Pestal. "The Channel Ports?" "Ridiculous," countered Ms. Pestal. "Paris?" Stan asked. "THAT'S possible" Ms. Pestal replied.

The next morning the Pestals took Stan to the train station and while he and Ms. Pestal walked up and down the platform seemingly in deep conversation Madame Pestal bought his ticket. He was on his way.

Arriving in Paris Stan strode off the train with the purposeful stride of someone who knew where he was going. Germans were everywhere and to hesitate would have invited questions which would inevitably lead to capture. Spotting a cafe he headed towards it as if this was his original destination. Once inside all he had to do was start speaking English and contact was immediately made. Two members of the underground hurried him to their apartment where they supplied him with French Identification papers using his escape photo. They then obtained medical attention for his wounds.



Etiennie Jean Le Moal – deaf mute.

From there, in company with one member of the underground unit, it was a

trip to Brest to see if they could get Stan on a boat back to England. No luck. From Brest they traveled to Nantes then to La Sable-de-Ione. Again no contact. His companion had to leave him at this point, but he gave Stan the names of people to contact. After two more days, during which time Stan slept in empty buildings, he again made contact with the underground. They were certain they could get him out of France and took him 25 kilometers inland to La Roche-Sur-Yon and the home of Monsieur & Madame Annonier where he was to stay for one month.

Here Stan was given excellent food and accommodations. Monsieur Annonier would take him for walks and Stan was supposed to be his deaf and dumb cousin. EVERYBODY has a deaf and dumb cousin! The only trouble was that Ms. Annonier had a deep hatred for the Germans and often let this feeling come to the surface at inopportune times.

He would see German soldiers approaching them on the street and look at Stan saying quite loudly "stupid Germans." Monsieur wanted Stan to stay with him until the invasion when they could have a war of their own with the Germans. Monsieur showed Stan the sub machine guns he had hidden under the floor boards in his shed and on his farm. There was no question that given the opportunity he could be a one man army.

Stan eventually left La Roche in company with a Madame Evelyn Depinay to go to Pau in the south of France. Here they contacted another resistance group and arrangements were made to get Stan to Spain.

After a week in Pau he was taken into the Pyrennes Mountains where he met with other escaping American airmen, and in a group they walked over the mountains into Spain. After spending six weeks in a local jail the group was sent to Gibraltar from where they were flown back to London on May 30, 1944 – just five months to the day when "Bull of the Woods" left the runway at Shipdham never to return.

These were the events that Stanley and Madame Annonier were recalling as they embraced after that first greeting.



June 1972 [L to R] Madame Annonier, Stan, Madame's daughter Michel and her husband Ms. Maratier

When Stan said 'Goodby' to the Annoniers in 1944 he said he would be back to visit them again at some future date. It took 29 years but he kept his promise, and for a brief period Stanley Langcaskey once again became *ETIENNIE JEAN LE MOAL – DEAF MUTE*.

EPILOG OF THE 492nd



by Sebastian H. Corriere
(492nd BG)

On August 5, 1944 the 492nd Bomb Group (H) under Col. Snavelly, was given the sad news that they had been reassigned. A last mission, the 66th for the Group, was posted for the 7th of August – but all the planes returned with their bomb load due to heavy cloud cover over the target. With the landing of the last plane the Group was no longer on daylight operations and a new life was to start for the 492nd.

Why was the unit picked for a change? Why was the unit having its personnel shuffled? Was it because no other Bombardment Group in U.S. history ever lost as many airplanes in combat in so short a time? The 492nd had lost 52 planes in almost three months. No other Group in the ETO, once it had been committed to action, had ever been “pulled out of the line”.

With the reshuffling of the personnel, and the transferring of aircraft to some other Groups, the move to Harrington, Station 179, was completed. To many the continued designation as the 492nd meant the establishing of a permanent base. The old unit had been moved from base to base always sharing their fields with some other unit. However, with the new assignment the 492nd was *still* a Liberator outfit.

The planes were the old “D” models in comparison to the “J” models which had been used on the daylight missions from North Pickenham and these planes were painted all black.

Many of them had seen better days, but because of the excellent ground crews maintaining them they were still able to do their job whatever that might be. We were soon to find out, and it was comforting to learn that we were not to be left out of the war.

If orders should come through for a “maximum effort” the bomb dump was still full of 500 pounders and incendiaries. The main job, however, was dropping leaflets and on other occasions, spies when the O.S.S. needed transportation. In addition we were frequently called upon to supply underground units on the continent with the equipment they needed in order to continue their harassment of the Germans. Sometimes a dull routine, but not always.

The thought that we had been “pulled out of the line” still rankled, however,

until a message from General Leon Johnson was made public. It follows: “It is with deep regret that I lose your unit from my Command. As you know, we in this Wing waited a long time to have you join us. I had promised the Division Commander that your unit would be a credit to the Division. I am sure that you have fulfilled my promise. Some unit had to go and yours was selected. I am sure the 492nd Bombardment Group was approaching its peak of performance and its promise for the future was great. The experience carried by your Group to the new units which your personnel joins will undoubtedly reflect greatly to the credit of you and your subordinate Commanders. My best wishes go with the personnel. We expect they will keep up the good work.”

The 492nd continued to fight.

44th RESIDENTS AT ‘HOTEL SWEDEN’

by Torbjorn Olausson

There were at least six aircraft from the 44th Bomb Group that had to make a forced landing in Sweden. Below are photos of all but two of these planes.

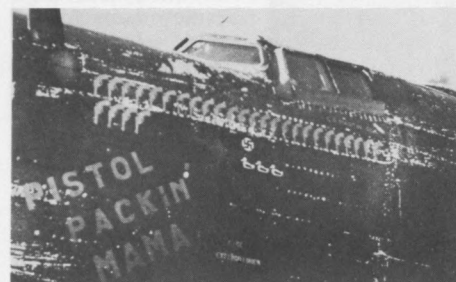


42-63962 “Princess”. Landed at Bulltofta airfield in the southern part of Sweden on the 29th of May 1944. She had small damage in the wings and was later flown to the military airfield of Vasteras and was brought back to England on the 25th of June 1945.



42-63971. Crashed outside the town of Trollhattan on the 18th of November 1943. The plane had been hit after attacking Kjellner airport in Norway. The

a/c was put on fire by her own crew just after landing, but the Swedish authorities managed to save parts of the plane. The motors were sent to ABA (the Swedish Civil Aircompany). The machine had been circling over Trollhattan and the crew had fired signal flares to tell the Swedes that they intended to land. There was still quite a bit of fuel left but no bombs were to be found.



42-72858. “Pistol Packin’ Mama”. Landed at Bulltofta airfield on the 9th of April 1944 because of damage in the wings and nose after an attack against Berlin and Marienburg.



42-73500. Landed at Save military airfield just outside of Tothenburg on the 29th of May 1944. The a/c was sighted by Swedish fighters in the air above the town of Halmstad and was forced, or led, to Save. The a/c had been on a mission to Stettin and some oil refineries there. This plane was brought back to England on the 29th of May 1945.

42-94892. This plane landed at Bulltofta airfield on the 20th of June 1944. The only thing I know is that the aircraft was brought back to England on the 19th of June 1945. I do not have a photo of this one.



“Tower to Jamison – come in, Jamison – oh, you are in!”

Attlebridge Notes

11

(466th BOMB GROUP)

Editor:
Lt. Col. John H. Woolnough
7752 Harbour Blvd.
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OUR MAN IN NORWICH

Chris Gotts (one of the founders of the "Friends of the Eighth" organization) began corresponding with us about a year ago. He first sent some details on some of our crashes in England. Then he sent a list of the 466ers now buried in Cambridge.

He made the mistake of including this note in one of his letters: "As Attlebridge is only a ten minute car ride away, please let me know if you require any photographs or information in the area. My wife, Pat, was born at Attlebridge and knows the locality and most of the 'natives' well."

Naturally I asked several things of Chris. I wanted to pin-point the location of the water tower (the one standing near the flight line now was not there during the war). I also sent Chris a copy of Ken Underwood's "Pub Map" and asked him to take some pictures of several of the pubs shown on the map. Chris found that there were two water towers on the south side of the airfield. He really showed his true colors by sending pictures of 19 of our pubs. Some of these appear here.

In another letter I asked about Eddie Brighty (a mascot, fire setter, etc. of 785th flight officers). So Chris found him for us (I am looking for those that remember Eddie for a future story).

In short then, we can say that Chris Gotts is a Friend of the 466th BG. This is a point worth remembering on your next trip to Norwich.



ANOTHER ATTLBRIDGE VISITOR REPORT

John P. Morvillo (785th Prop Specialist) writes to remind us of his visit to Attlebridge in 1973. "As I stood there looking at the old base, I could almost hear the roar of the B-24 engines. It was a feeling that is hard to describe. Trying to pinpoint the exact location of my barracks was just about impossible after all the years.

"After leaving there we headed for the village of Hockering. We were looking for a pub, "The Cock Inn", that I had frequented during the war. We managed to find it only to learn that the pub had closed just six months before. After a few inquiries we learned that the previous owner, Alice, lived just around the corner from the pub.

"We stopped to see Alice and spent two wonderful hours talking of old times. I think she knows more stories about the old 466th than any of ten guys. She is quite a woman. She wants any of the 466th boys to stop in and see her. Just ask anybody where Alice, from the Cock Inn, lives. They all seem to know."

Ed. Note: John Morvillo took that picture of Munafo and Gigante (Sep 74 Newsletter). He says that Munafo is the tall one, on the left.

THE TRIALS OF GETTING THE 466th SUPPLIED

by George Parker, 472nd SD

I had almost forgotten the blood I sweat to get the 472nd ready for the 466th. We had only three weeks (they gave us 3 months in Bungay to get ready for the 446th).

We worked 16 hour days. There was one notable exception. The officers of Attlebridge (only about 8 to 10 were on the inactive airbase at that time) were invited to a party at the nearby British Battle School - in celebration of the end of a school term. We took the Sub Depot staff car to the event. I made the sad mistake of letting some one take their girl home in the car.

The party rolled on in the British tradition till 0300 hrs when everyone was on the floor. The Attlebridge CO and I upheld the honor of the USAAF by somehow remaining on our feet throughout. When we dragged ourselves outside, we discovered that the car had not returned. So we walked back to the base in the fog (visibility zero). At 0500 we came to the end of a runway and staggered in to our quarters at 0530, and to work at 0700.



466th Pub Haunts (on left and top to bottom, above) "The Bridge," Lenwade; "Honingham Buck Inn"; "The Victoria," Hockering; and "The Five Ringers," Weston Longville. Photos by Chris Gotts.

REGIONAL RALLIES

Don't forget to set aside a few days this summer to attend the 466 rally in your area. The address of the contacts listed below may be found in your 2nd AD Roster.

- West: 1-3 Aug, Newport Beach, Cal., C. V. Meconis.
- Central: 1-3 Aug, Dallas/Ft. Worth, J. M. Daniels.
- East: 15-17 Aug, Cocoa Beach, Fl, J. H. Woolnough.



CASTLES ON THE PERIMETER

Flight crews liked to refer to particular planes as, "our plane." This was the B-24 they were assigned. Most often, when they weren't flying, another crew would take it. In reality the plane didn't belong to any crew, it "belonged" to the Crew Chief and his assistants. They babied it, cleaned it, and saw that it was fueled and armed. They patched it up, adjusted, tested, cursed, and cried over it.

There can be no argument, the crew chief owned the plane. He had to live with it day and night. He was there on take-off and when it returned. After missions he worked on it. He preflighted the plane before missions. He had to be with "his" plane all the time. This led to a little village of huts along the perimeter strip. The huts were built of scrounged material (bomb bay baggage racks, bomb crates, etc.).

George Parker (472nd Sub-Depot, AC Supply Off.) has written of the crew chief's huts at Attlebridge. "Some were classics of architecture, convenience, comfort, and style. I can remember one 2 story job complete with hot and cold running water, electric lights, and a heated sack (casualty bag connected to a/c batteries). All the huts were heated with used engine oil (should have been turned in for recycling but Col. Ligon OKed the use of this oil for heating, but only for crew chief's huts).

"(In April and May 1945) when life became a little dull, we would get the Provost Marshal out of the sack and raid the crew chief's huts to look for unauthorized AF equipment. We were looking primarily for Put-Puts, which were in short supply. Sometimes it was a bit embarrassing to find a female resident."

Several hut views are pictured on this page.





by
Col. Myron H.
Keilman
(392nd BG)

I Remember: THE BIG WEEK

I remember the Big Week and the day the 392nd earned the Distinguished Unit Citation.

General Jimmy Doolittle took command of the Eighth Air Force on 1 January 1944. At group and squadron level we were quite impressed. We all felt we knew the famous aviator, if not from his airplane racing days, from his leading the famous Tokyo bombing raid. We didn't realize that at that moment his orders were "Win the air war and isolate the battlefield." In other words - destroy the Luftwaffe and cut off the beaches of Normandy for the Invasion.

By 20 February our group had been alerted, briefed, and taxied for take-off nearly every morning since General Doolittle took command. There we waited for hours in the dense fog before the red flare signal of "Mission Cancelled" was fired from the control tower.

Then back to the airplane's dispersal pad; back to the dank Nissen huts; back to the damp, ice-cold cots for needed sleep and tomorrow's alert. "Damn the foggy weather, damn the war, and damn General Doolittle, too." After those early hour breakfasts, the mess sergeant had to pick up the General's portrait from a face-down position in the middle of the floor and rehang it in its respected place. Disrespect? Yes, but who wants to be rousted out at 0300 hours day in and day out just to sit in the fog? We couldn't win the war doing this, and you didn't have to be a general to see that the weather was unfit to fly a bombing mission - were our glum thoughts.

The weather had been so adverse during January and to the 20th of February, our group had flown only sixteen missions; most of them were No-Ball strikes against buzz-bomb (V-1 missiles) launching sites. Then came a streak of decent weather and an all out air offensive against the German Luftwaffe factories. Five great air battles were fought over Germany on 20, 21, 22, 24, and 25 February 1944. They have gone down in Eighth Air Force annals as the "Big Week".

A maximum effort by Eighth Air Forces 1,000 bombers (B-17s and B-24s) were made during those five days against airplane manufacturing and component plants at Tutow, Rostock, and Straslund on the Baltic Sea coast; Magdeburg, Augsburg, Bernburg, Oschersleben, Leipzig, Brunswick, Gotha, Furth, Halberstadt, Schweinfurt, Regensburg, and Stuttgart in central and eastern Germany. More tons of bombs (precisely 7,935) were dropped by Eighth Air Force during those five days than had been dropped in the entire past year. 550 German fighters were declared shot down. 170 B-17s and B-24s, and 33 friendly fighters were lost.

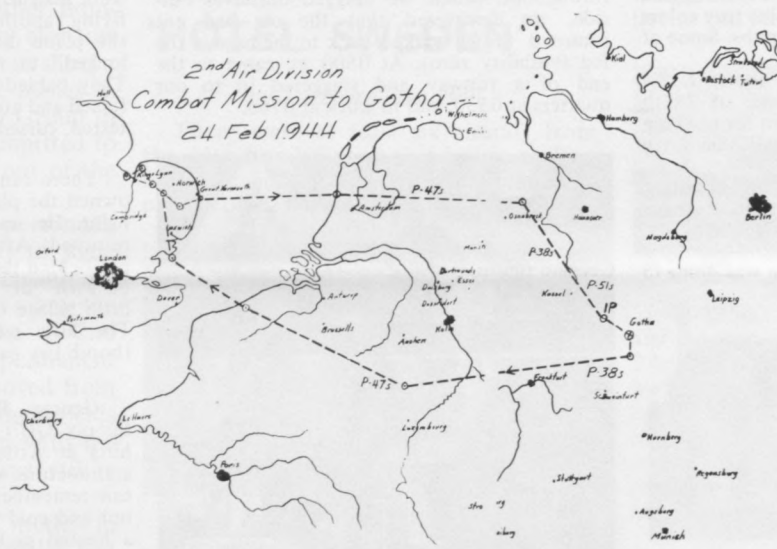
The Royal Air Force (RAF) Halifax and Lancaster bombers got in their "licks", too. At

night, they dropped block-busters and fire bombs on the cities of Leipzig, Schweinfurt and Augsburg, causing great fire storms and devastation.

On the first day, Sunday 20 February, the 2nd Air Division's B-24s struck at Brunswick and Magdeburg. Cloud cover was a big problem. The 392nd had to bomb Helmstedt as a target of opportunity. The results were rated as fair and we lost one airplane. The B-17s managed to get in destructive strikes on airplane plants at Leipzig, Bernberg, and Oschersleben. 25 bombers and 4 fighters were lost; 153 Germans shot down.

On the 21st, clouds covered the big targets; so the main scheduled targets were airfields. My group bombed the fighter base at Vorden, Holland, northeast of Arnhem. The bombing results were good, but we lost another airplane and crew. 19 bombers and 5 fighters went down with 60 Germans.

The 22nd, our target was Gotha, but the mission was recalled because of weather conditions, and no bombs were dropped. Some B-24 groups did strike targets of opportunity in Holland and West Germany. The B-17s did the same. Fifteenth Air Force in Italy struck the Regensburg plants.



Weather in England on the 23rd caused a stand-down for all of Eighth Air Force; however, the Fifteenth Air Force struck Weiner Neustadt factories.

On the fifth day, Thursday, 24 February, most of Germany was clear of clouds, and formations of 860 B-17s and B-24s struck deep. Nearly 800 P-47s, P-38s, and P-51s provided protective fighter cover for the bombers. The 2nd Air Division target was the big Messerschmitt airplane plant at Gotha, 420 miles due east of the White Cliffs of Dover.

Our briefing for the attack on Gotha was at 0630 hours. It was our group's fortieth mission; so we took it all in stride. To most of us it meant another mission to be accomplished against a total of twenty-five - then back home to the safety of the ZI (Zone of Interior). Remember? The intelligence officer briefed on the importance of the big plant to German's ability to carry on the air war; on the fact that it was heavily defended by big 88 and 110 millimeter anti-aircraft artillery like we faced over Bremen, Keil, and Wilhelmshaven, and we were certain to encounter heavy fighter attacks all across enemy territory - 400 miles in and 400 miles out.

After drawing our escape and evasion kits, donning our heated flying suits, gathering up our oxygen masks, flak helmets, maywests, and parachutes we climbed aboard 2½ ton trucks for a cold ride to our airplanes dispersal pad. It was still very dark as we made our airplane inspection, checking all the engine cowling for loose Dzus fasteners; the turbines of the superchargers; the propeller blades and pushed them through to release any piston hydraulic lock; the fuel cells for being "topped-off" and their caps for security; the guns and turrets; ammunition quantity of 500 rounds for each of the ten 50 caliber machine guns; the Sperry bombsight; the twelve 500 pound bombs, their shackles, fuses and safety wires; the oxygen supply and regulators; signal flares; camera; and many other things. Remember?

At 0810 we started engines. At 0815 the lead ship taxied to take-off position. At 0830 the green flare from the control tower signaled "Take Off!" It was breaking dawn.

Lead crew pilot Jim McGregor "revved-up" his engines, checked the instruments, released the brakes and rolled. Thirty-one B-24s followed at thirty second intervals.

In the clear at 12,000 feet, the lead ship fired red-yellow identification flares. Flying

deputy lead, I pulled into position on his left wing, and the group formed over radio beacon "21" into three squadrons. Then it flew the wing triangular assembly pattern to Kings Lynn.

Leading the 14th Combat Wing, we fell into number two position of the 2nd Air Divisions bomber stream over Great Yarmouth. Heading east over the Channel and climbing to 18,000 feet, our gunners test fired their guns. We penetrated enemy territory just north of Amsterdam. At 235 miles an hour true air speed over the Zider Zee, our streaming vapor trails signaled our presence and our intent. It was a thrilling moment. Onward over Dummer Lake, past our future Osna-

bruck target, southeast past Hanover's bombed-out airfields our big formations hurried.

Paralleling our course to the right were the B-17 formations of the 1st Air Division heading for their tough old ball-bearing works at Schweinfurt. Over the North Sea, the 3rd Air Division "Forts" were enroute to their Baltic coast targets. P-47 fighters covered us to the vicinity of Hanover, then P-38s and P-51s orbited over us to Gotha. Luftwaffe fighters made attempts to penetrate our formations but "our little friends" kept them at a distance and, when opportunity prevailed, dove in for a "kill". Using our thick vapor trails as a screen, the Germans often struck from below and from behind to shoot up any lagging bomber.

Bending southeastward toward Gotha, the white, snowy earth looked cold and lifeless; only the large communities, rail lines, and an autobahn stood out in relief. Fighter attacks became more persistent. By the time we reached our initial point (IP) to start our bomb run, the sky about our three squadrons was full of busy P-38s and P-51s fending off the Germans. I remember how they dove past the lead ship in pursuit of Messerschmitts and Folke-Wulfe making head on attacks. Our gun-

(Continued on Page 7)

I Remember: THE BIG WEEK

(Continued from Page 6)

ners got in a lot of shooting, too. The staccato of the turrets' twin fifties vibrated throughout the airplane. It was real scary.

The weather was "clear as a bell" as we turned to the target. Red flares from the lead ship signaled "Bomb-bay Doors Open". The bombardier removed the heated cover blanket from the bombsight. (Bombsights had heated blankets before people did. Remember?) He checked his gyroscope's stabilization, and all bombing switches ON. Our high and low squadrons fell in-trail and all seemed great. — Then Pilotage Navigator Kennedy in the nose turret observed the lead wing formations veering from the target heading. A fast and anxious cross-check with Lead Crew Navigator Swangren and with a recheck of compass heading and reference points, they assured Command Pilot Lorin Johnson that the target was "dead ahead". Thirty years later, I don't know where the 2nd Air Division leader wound up, and I've forgotten which group and wing it was, but at that moment the 392nd, leading the 14th Combat Wing, was "on course — on target". Within minutes Lead Bombardier Good called over the interphone, "I've got the target!" Lead Pilot McGregor checked his flight instruments for precise 18,000 feet altitude and 160 miles per hour indicated air speed, and carefully levelled the airplane on auto-pilot. Then he called back: "On airspeed, on altitude. You've got the airplane." Making a final level of his bombsight, Good took over control of steering the airplane with the bombsight.

The bombardier's target folder didn't contain a snowy, winter view of the Messerschmitt Aircraft Works. He had to use his keen judgment and trained skills in discerning the briefed aiming point. Only his one eye peering through the bombsight optics could determine where to place the cross-hair. He could and did give a commentary to the command pilot and crew of what he saw and what he was doing in steering the lead airplane and formation of bombers to the bomb release point, but only he — the lead bombardier — "knew for sure" what was viewed through that bombsight.

At 18,000 feet, it was forty (40) degrees below zero, but the bombardier never felt the cold as his fingers delicately operated the azimuth and range controls. He cross-checked all the bomb and camera switches to the ON position, especially the radio bomb release (RBR) signal switch that would release all the bombs of the other airplanes in the formation simultaneously. There wasn't a cloud in the sky.

When the flak started bursting near the formation, Lieutenant Good had already attained a synchronized bombing run with the wind drift "killed" and the cross-hair holding steady on the aiming point of the great manufacturing complex. The bombsight indicies crossed and "Bombs away!" Beautiful!

While the camera was recording the impact of the bombs, Lieutenant McGregor took over and swung the formation to the outbound heading and the rally point.

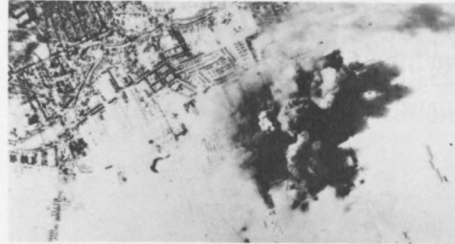
In spite of the new accurate flak from the 88



Vapor trails were pretty — if they were yours!

and 110 millimeter antiaircraft artillery, the second and third squadron bombardiers, Lt. Ziccarilli and Lt. Jackson, steered their squadrons to the precise bomb delivery points, too. Of thirty-two B-24s that took off that morning, twenty-nine delivered 348 500-pound bombs precisely on the Gotha factory as briefed. Outstanding!

The bombs were smack "on target", but the battle wasn't over. No sooner had the wing left the target's flak than we were accosted by



Right down the pipe!

German fighters again. Strung out in-trail and with some planes slowed down from flak damage, our three squadrons became vulnerable to vicious attacks. For the next hour and more, Messerschmitt, Folke Wulf and Junker fighters worked us over until our fighters could fend them off.

As deputy command pilot, I frequently changed off flying formation with the airplane commander to keep occupied and not have to watch the Jerries press their blazing gun attacks. The interphone was alive with excited calls of enemy action. Head on passes and tail attacks; in singles and in "gaggles"; rockets, 20mm cannon, and even some cables were thrown at us. Seven of our B-24s were shot down. Many of us were shot up, but it was not all one-sided. The gunners of the twenty-two airplanes that returned accounted for sixteen German fighters.

At 1530, seven hours after take-off, the battle weary group landed back at Wendling. Eighth Air Force lost 50 bombers and 10 fighters; 155 German fighters were shot down.

The very next day, Friday, 25 February, the target areas were again clear, and the 2nd Air Division struck the aircraft plant at Futh, near Nuernberg. The 14th Wing with the 392nd's two squadrons of twenty-two B-24s bombed it with excellent results. In spite of the nine hour long deep penetrations, our group did not suffer a loss. The "Forts" successfully struck aircraft plants at Regensburg, Augsburg and Stuttgart. The Eighth lost 33 bombers and 3 fighters; the Germans lost 70.

This ended the famous "Big Week". General Doolittle had struck the Luftwaffe a devastating blow and all but won the air war. Within a couple more months, through persistent bombing of air fields and railroad marshalling yards, shooting the German fighters in the air and on the ground, in France, Belgium and western Germany, the battlefield of Normandy was isolated. The stage was set for the great invasion of the Continent on D-Day, 6 June 1944. Remember?

On 20 April 1945, our group adjutant, Major "Jack" Fritsche, sent the following notice to all units of our group:

"1. The 392nd Bombardment Group has been awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy on 24 February 1944, when the group virtually destroyed their assigned target at Gotha, Germany. —"

War Department General Order Number 37, 1945, that awarded the Distinguished Unit Badge to all individuals who were assigned to the 392nd reads in part "—The destruction of this high priority target (Gotha) was a serious blow to the German Air Force and was a contributing factor to its impotency during the invasion of Continental Europe. —"

CHEMICAL WARFARE WW II



by

Bro. R. J. 'Roxie'
Marotta SDB
(44th BG)

This article might be a bit mis-titled in that there was no chemical warfare in WW II, thankfully, but many times I have been asked "What was the role of the Chemical Warfare Squadrons in the 8th AF. The answer is 'many and varied'."

To begin with it was absolutely necessary that we be prepared to retaliate had the Germans decided to employ gas as a weapon of war, similar to what they did in WWI.

If such an event occurred we had just 24 hours to respond. The planes would have been equipped to disperse various gases with bombs and spray type tanks. On the ground, mortars would also have been employed using a 4.2 size shell that had exceptionally long range. During the Italian campaign these mortars were used to lob white phosphorous shells and the enemy thought they were being hit by Howitzers!

Three times, if I remember correctly, the use of gas was indeed contemplated. Our Intelligence Sections reported large shipments of Chemicals being moved about by the Germans — during the Normandy invasion, the battle of the bulge and during that period when even the Germans knew that the war, for them, was over.

Decontamination was our defense system on each field. Our DECON buildings were large, concrete showers. These became very popular because they were much better than the ordinary showers and we always had plenty of hot water. We received many requests, I should say volunteers, to see if they were working properly. This was not necessary, really, as I took that 'hazardous' job myself!

Hitler did give us many anxious moments and let us all hope that some other madman in another era does not decide to employ this vicious weapon against mankind.

FINAL DUES NOTICE

Unfortunately it takes money to run an organization of this magnitude — over 2200 members to date — and our only source of income is that amount we obtain from dues.

Evelyn Cohen advises that there are still quite a few who have not sent in their dues for this year. This is the last Newsletter we will be able to send to those still in arrears. We are sorry to have to take this step, but we really have no other choice.

This notice DOES NOT apply to those who have written to Evelyn giving economic reasons as their inability to pay.

453rd BG NOTES



by
Don Olds
(453rd)

In my continuing search for ex-453rd Bomb Group personnel, I've located and written to a couple of the groups former commanders, Col. Ramsey Potts and Col. Larry Thomas. Col. Potts served as CO from March '44 till July '44. Col. Thomas relieved him and then turned command over to Col. Edward F. Hubbard in Jan. '45 who was still CO when hostilities ceased. Col. Hubbard's daughter wrote to tell me that her father had passed away in Dec. of '73. Does anyone know the whereabouts of Col. Joseph A. Miller? He was the original CO and was shot down 18 March '44, but according to records did return to duty.

From the April 15th, 1945 issue of "Wing Wash", the Old Buck base newspaper, it's noted that one plane 'MALE CALL', still remained from the original force and sported 95 combat missions. However, 'MY BABS' was the leader with 120 missions. Any disputes? Did any of our members fly or crew this aircraft and does anyone have a photo of it?

Would encourage everyone to send me the names and addresses of their 453rd friends so that I might get in touch with them. From the few that did respond to my earlier request we've had good luck in finding people and several have joined the 2nd ADA. There's a lot of people out there yet who would like to join, but nobody has told them we exist. If you don't have any current addresses send to their old wartime hometown. Lots of the guys still live in the same town they did when they entered the service.

Some people have written asking if a 453rd BG history was ever published. As far as I know none was ever published. Now this would be a good project for someone to undertake!

Want to thank everyone who has written and helped in getting the 453rd off the ground. A special thanks to Ken Ferland of Presque Isle, ME. for his kind donation to help offset postage costs.

U.S.A.F. PHOTOS OF 2nd A.D. B24s (Part 2)

by Tony North
(Associate Member)

After coverage of the 44th B.G. in the March Newsletter we move on to the 93rd B.G. There are several out-standing photos of this group on file at Arlington including some in color which I have listed first.

93rd BOMB GROUP (HARDWICK)
K.E. 925 (Color) - B-24D "Joisey Bounce" (41-24226) in flight with three other aircraft.
K.E. 923 (Color) - "Joisey Bounce" in flight. Not as good as previous photo.
K.E. 978 (Color) - An outstanding ground shot of B-24D. "Jerks Natural" (41-23711)

53028 A.C. - A good photo of a B-24J (42-99949) of the 328 B.S. in flight.
62530 A.C. - Nose of B.24D "Bomrang" (41-23722)



62570 A.C. - Three B.24J's in flight with 42-100294 in foreground.
62574 A.C. - A B.24D (42-72869) in flight.
67414 A.C. - B.24D "Hellsadroppin II" (41-23909) landing at Hardwick.
A-72533 A.C. - Two B.24's of the 409 B.S. in flak en route to Ausberg.
75790 A.C. - Three B.24's bombing Magdeburg 16th August 1944.
79074 A.C. - B.24D landing at Hardwick.
79075 A.C. - B.24D taking-off at Hardwick.
79079 A.C. - Crew pose in front of B.24D "Exterminator" (41-23717). Listed as 1/LT. Roper, 1/LT Stewart, 1/LT White, 1/LT Brannon, T/SGT Lloyd, T/SGT Lee, T/SGT Craighead, S/SGT Lemoine and S/SGT Defreeze.
79342 A.C. - Maintenance on B.24D "Shoot Luke" (41-23729) April 1943.
81200 A.C. - A B.24M (44-50537) of the 328 B.S. dropping smoke markers over Zossen 15th March 1945.
85539 A.C. - B.24D Assembly ship "Ball of Fire" (41-23667) in flight.
88597 A.C. - An aerial view of Marakech airfield showing parked 93rd B.G. B.24's.

Copies of photos in various sizes and prices can be obtained from 1361ST. Photo Squadron, Aerospace Audio-Visual Service (M.A.C.), 1221 South Fern Street, Arlington, Virginia 22202.

I would welcome any queries, comments or additions to these listings, addressed to 9 Irving Road, Norwich, NR4 6RA, England. I would also be most grateful for the loan of any material to add to my collection. Photos would be copied and returned immediately in good condition.

HETHEL LINKED TO U.S. HISTORY



by
Earl Zimmerman
(389th BG)

A branch of the Townshend family held land and property at Hethel and Bracon Ash in the 16th century. The 'Townshend chain' was put across the Hudson River to keep out the British men-of-war by a descendant of Thomas Townshend of Hethel.

The chain is mentioned in the Marchioness of Townshends' memoirs titled "It Was and It Wasn't", in which she writes of Thomas, who left Bracon Ash area to settle in America. Some of his descendants subsequently became Quakers and built another Raynham Hall in memory of the familys Norfolk cradle.

The Quaker head of the American Townshends was bitterly opposed to British Policy during the War of Independence. Hearing that the British intended to bombard West Point he caused the cable to be made in secret and stretched across the river.

Information from the Archives, US Military Academy, West Point, New York, reveals the following information:

"The chain that stretched from West Point to Constitution Island was put in place shortly before April 30, 1778. It was forged at the Sterling Iron Works in Orange County, NY. Each link weighed about 300 pounds, was about two feet long and three and a half inches square or thick. There was a swivel and clevis every hundred feet. From West Point to Constitution Island it was buoyed by large logs sixteen feet long, slightly pointed at the end to resist the tide. There was also a boom immediately downstream which consisted of logs united to each other by an iron band, and by two links of chain of nearly two inch bar iron. The boom served the double purpose of obstruction and bridge. This chain remained in place until the autumn of 1783.

It is true that a few links of the chain are located at Trophy Point on the edge of the Plain and overlooking the Hudson River."

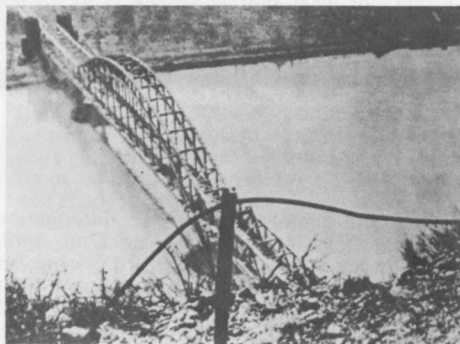
For any of you Sky Scorpions who attended West Point, you must have tripped over the chain at one time or another while charging around the grounds. It is indeed a small world.

SOMETIMES IT WAS BETTER TO MISS THE TARGET



by
George A. Reynolds
(458th BG)

Things were looking better for us in the Battle of the Bulge, but the enemy was not yet on the defensive 2 January 1945. Reinforcements were still coming across the Rhine into the combat zone on rolling stock primarily via the Ludendorff, a War One vintage railroad bridge at Remagen, Germany. Hq. said destroy it. At dawn, 755th Squadron's Capt. Harold B. Dane (Okla. City) led an element of 18 B-24s off AF Station 123 at Horsham St. Faith. Weather was cooperating beautifully for the sortie — CAVU.



The Ludendorff railroad bridge at Remagen, Germany as it appeared to members of the 27th Armored Infantry troops on March 7, 1945. (U.S. Army photo)

Over Belgium, at altitude, one Lib dropped out of formation to effect minor repairs, and tacked onto a 44th BG unit going to Coblenz. The other 17 crews noted some "scarecrow" flak, low level dogfights and six contrails from enemy jet fighters above. But it was a milk run all the way. At the German border, Lt. Howard W. McMorris, lead crew bombardier from Indianapolis, noted haze over the terrain with his bombsight, but visibility remained excellent. Over the IP, the formation turned on its bomb run heading, southeast bound roughly paralleling the Rhine.

Now some small puffs of cumulus far below began floating past the air armada. McMorris called for the bomb bay doors

to be opened, and then it happened. Unbelievably, an undercast suddenly obscured the target area completely.

Omaha's Lt. Richard C. O'Brien, the Mickey man, was following through on the run and cued the release of 51, 2000-pound firecrackers right on schedule. Turning for home, the crews could only speculate about results, even though they all agreed the bombs were "on target." Later, strike photos confirmed their speculations. The bombs were indeed on target — several near-misses. But the bridge still spanned the Rhine.

On 7 March, the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion approached the bridge and found it intact but mined for demolition. After a rugged two-day battle, the ground forces secured the bridge, and five Divisions with an abundance of supplies poured across the river to establish a beachhead on the eastern shore. This is said to have shortened the war by at least three full months.

The 458th is thought to have flown the only mission scheduled to destroy this bridge that had a date with destiny. Cloud coverage which shielded the target was restricted solely to the Rhine Valley. The bombs missed, and explosives set by a retreating enemy were finally detonated upon it, yet the span stood until it collapsed 17 March under the weight of six Army engineers. Who knows why? But perhaps those who walked across the Rhine rather than swim would gladly recommend a commendation for an outfit that missed their target.

Coming up . . . Horsham was WoXoF, yet a mission was flown. Ever have a mid-air — collision or bombing? No? Then how about an Azon mission . . . Tell me your haunts. Photos? Let's see 'em.



"What's botherin' me is — do we still get flight pay?"

A REAL, LIVE B-24!!

by
Ian McLachlan
(Associate)



I recently saw my first live Liberator, the ex-Indian ship currently at Duxford. All I had seen until then had been broken ones in bits and pieces. Never did I imagine that I

would have the opportunity to examine a complete B-24, even if she didn't have a good pedigree being composed of several different ones and put together Frankenstein fashion.

In this Jumbo era she was physically smaller than I had thought, but what size of character!

At first I wandered slowly 'round absorbing the shape, looking at a main undercart with plane still attached for a change. Turbosuperchargers actually in a wing and not being laboriously hauled from some obnoxious quagmire.

Having been involved with unearthing six Libs I've done my share of hauling Pratt and Whiteys around, and as for the props — how beautiful they looked with an airplane behind them. The blades straight and powerful, not bent and sad as so many I had seen.

Following several minutes of external adulation not, may I add, under any illusions of aesthetic appeal, I clambered inside. She had undergone a bit of internal surgery. The radio compartment had been moved but the intrinsic impression remained essentially undamaged, and my admiration for you people, as you were heaved heavenwards and shot at clad only in thin dural, reached a new peak.

I found it difficult enough to move wearing normal garb unfettered by airman's bulky attire. Various parts were familiar but here, inside this great bird, the jig-saw was complete and the pieces relative to each other.

I sat for long moments in the cockpit recalling the account Dick Watters had given me when his 448th ship had been clobbered by an Me 410 following the infamous intruder action during the late return from Hamm on April 22, 1944. Getting out of the cabin with the bird at rest on a calm, Sunday morning proved awkward enough. Sturrgling clear from a burning ship plummeting earthwards as Dick had done on that black Saturday over 30 years earlier must have been a tremendous feat. He escaped at less than 2,000 feet, and then was nearly mown down by his assailant as the Me410 hurtled by in the darkness. His B-24, serial 42-94744, buried itself on impact

(Continued on Page 12)

LETTERS

Dear Evelyn:

I would like to hear from others in 389th BG or 491st BG transportation. Didn't know about the reunion in Norwich soon enough to make arrangements. Looking forward to Valley Forge in '76.

Sincerely,
William C. Coalson
1450 Marsh Way
Riverside, Cal. 92501
389th BG & 491st BG

Dear Bill:

Just a note of thanks for your efforts in tracking down information on the caterpillar club. I have written the party you referred to in your letter of March 28th.

George Reynolds of Birmingham wrote a superb history of my Group, the 458th, and it sort of brought this thing 'up front' in reading the book. Again, an appreciative thanks for your extraordinary efforts. Bill, you've made me remember how great the guys were.

Sincerely,
Ted Urbano
458th BG

Dear Evelyn:

This last summer I visited England and our old air base at Flixton. The biggest shock was when I visited Flixton Hall. The only part left is the main floor. You can't recognize this once beautiful place. What a pity. This was done because of the taxes on the estate.

The roads leading to the old squadron sites are still there but only a few buildings remain and they are in disrepair. The cities of Bungay and Beccles have not changed a bit and I even had a pint in the old Pub "Bear and Bells".

Sincerely,
Homer Van Fleteren
446th BG

Dear Bill:

This is the first time that I've had the occasion to write to you. I've previously corresponded with Miss Cohen either by mail or via phone.

Well Bill, first of all let me thank all of you for the effort you put forth to make these reunions as wonderful as they are. I went to the Norwich reunion in '72 and I certainly enjoyed it. I looked up some of the people that I knew there and I was very fortunate in being able to locate them. You can imagine the surprise they had when they saw me.

Well Bill, I'll sign off for now and once again thanks for everything.

Sincerely,
'Big' Joe Avila
44th BG

Dear Bill:

Received your letter with the needed information and here is my check for the trip to England. I hope my nerves hold out to make the trip as I am one of those 'white knuckle' passengers. In the Newsletter would you ask if anyone has the 'tape' or 'record' of the C.B.S. Radio broadcast from England Christmas of 1944. My brother was on the program.

Sincerely,
Dorothy A. Norman
Associate

Dear John (Woolnough)

I have enclosed a list of all former crew members that I have talked to in the past two weeks. Also there is a check enclosed to enroll each member in the 2nd Air Division Association - and a check for the 466th fund. We are planning a June 1975 reunion.

Sincerely,
H. E. Paulson
466th BG

Dear Bill:

Thank you for your recent letter and also for the March Newsletter received yesterday.

It almost took me all evening to read it. This issue must surely be the best yet! Not because you ran my 'Liberty Run' piece - far from it. But you crowded so many different items of news in it and managed to find space for two pages of letters. I thought the cartoons you used with the article were great. That isn't you in the center picture looking for the truck is it? The face looks familiar. But then you were not old enough to drink in those days were you?

Sincerely,
John W. Archer
(Associate)

(ed. note: Naturally it wasn't me John because, naturally, I never touch a drop. Try playing that on your pipes!)

Dear Evelyn:

I would like to make a request. Will the fortunate people of the 389th who attend the Norwich reunion please send me a photo of Hethel today. It would be most interesting for me.

Sincerely,
Robert W. Doney
1311 West "A" St.
Iron Mountain, Michigan
389 BG

Dear Bill:

Thanks for sending me the Newsletter. Here is a check for \$5.00 for the Newsletter. You people sure put out an excellent paper. Our Newsletter (our first) should be out this month. I will send you a copy. Could you put in your next Newsletter "anyone ever identified with the 359th Fighter Group to please contact me."

Thanks again,
Tony Chardella
105 Mohawk Trail Dr.
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15235

(ed. note: Many of our members served in more than one Group Tony and it's possible a few might have spent some time with the 359th.)

Dear Evelyn:

Please accept my application for membership (like welcome home). I was attached to 328th Sqdn. of 93rd BG. I was delighted to receive the Newsletter and had my timing been right we would have joined the reunion in Norwich. I am also enclosing the first of my annual contributions to the Library and Memorial Trust Fund.

Sincerely,
Murray D. Friedman
1000 Detwiler Drive
York, Pa. 17404
93rd BG

Dear Members:

Have tuned in the marker beacon again and hope to reassemble with old friends for a "Milk Run".

Was CS 2nd Combat Bomb Wing 3/44-6/77 and CO 453rd Bomb Group 7/44-3/45.

Have revisited the area many times including a tour, '51-'54, as CO Mildenhall AB located between Attleborough and Newmarket. My wife (The former Lt. Margaret Brevig ANC, 231st Station Hospital, Morley Hall) & I were able to visit there again last October and saw the 2nd AD Memorial for the first time. Found it to be interesting, informative, and done in extremely good taste - a lasting Memorial we can all be proud of. Would like to hear from any of our friends. Hope to be in Norwich for the reunion and also Valley Forge in '76.

Sincerely,
Lawrence (Larry) M. Thomas
Col. USAF (Ret)
127 Garden Hill
Redlands, Ca. 92373

Dear Bill:

I need a little help. I am trying to put together a collection (display would be a better word) of my Air Force days. Somewhere along the way I lost all my patches etc. I am looking for an 8th AF patch, 2nd Div. patch, Engineering patch, overseas stripes and most other patches of this period. How about a little free advertising in the Newsletter? Maybe I'll get lucky and come up with this material.

Sincerely,
Ed Goldsmith
467th BG (Plus!)

(ed. note: We aim to please. Now am't you sorry you didn't keep your old uniforms? Me too!!!!)

Dear Bill:

I was real glad to receive a copy of the Newsletter. It sure made me think back a ways. Enclosed is a \$5.00 check for my dues in the Association. I have lost all addresses of my buddies I knew in England, but I'm hoping I find some of them in the Newsletter. Waiting for the next Newsletter from you.

Sincerely,
Edwin Wagner
711 North Third St.
Arkansas City, Kansas
93rd BG

Dear Bill:

The March issue of the Newsletter was superb. I particularly liked "Liberty Run" with Valkyrie a close second. The former article brought back many memories as I was on many occasions "The Disgruntled Convoy Officer".

The return trip to the base with a driver who had had one too many, plus the narrow and winding roads, was often terrifying. Many a time I held my breath and prayed that we would not meet another vehicle as we roared down the roads. I remarked to some of my companions that a combat ribbon, or battle star, should be awarded for those runs. Keep up the good work. Your Newsletter is getting better all the time.

Yours in Don Bosco,
Bro. R. Marotta SDB
44th BG

Dear Bill:

As you know, I am gathering information on the Hamm/Koblentz raids of 22nd April, 1944, when intruders followed the Second Air Division home and destroyed several over their bases. I have details from US, British and German official records but their terse terminology does not fully convey the human angle.

Many 2 ADA members must recall the confusion as Liberators lumbered about in the darkness being fired upon by friend and foe alike, the chaos on base as Me 410's swept over strafing and bombing or the igneous end suffered by those ships less fortunate. There was pathos in the skies of East Anglia that might yet, as in all things human, I have found tales of humor amidst tragedy, such as the elderly British Bobbie frightened half to death as this wraith-like figure loomed out of the darkness towards him.

The investives produced from under the stumbling, silken folds were, however, all too human as the irate 448th BG pilot tried to extricate himself from a tangle of cords, loudly cursing the Limeys for shooting him down. He had, in fact, been clobbered by an Me 410 of Kampfgeschwader 51 as his co-pilot could testify only too well - the Hun had virtually chewed him up so close had it been when he jumped.

Many similar tales are unrecorded but if this letter can prompt some old memories I would appreciate hearing them.

All the best for now,
Ian McLachlan
Hill House, 81 High St.,
Chesterton, Cambridge,
England

Dear Evelyn:

Just a little note from me. I trust you received my membership fee and hope the amount is correct.

I am very pleased to be a member of the 2nd A.D. and look forward to the next "newsletter". If there is any additional charge for postage to the U.K. please let me know.

Also, I have received news regarding my father Lt. Hank J.H.B. Dykstal of the 44 BG and I am very grateful to Bill and of course all of you for your excellent work and help.

Yours truly,
Hank Dykstal
3A Edinburg Drive
Wisbech, Cambs.
England
Associate

Dear Evelyn:

Enclosed find my \$5.00 for my membership dues in the Second Air Division Association. I have had some correspondence with Bill Robertie and I am anxious to become an active member of the Association.

As you can see I currently live in the U.K. and am in regular contact with most of the British historical authors and research groups developing histories etc. on various units of the Eighth Air Force. I recently had the honor and privilege of being the guest of honor at R.A.F. Lakenheath where together with Roger Freeman, author of The Mighty Eighth, I spoke on the P-51 Mustang and my personal experience with it in the 375th Fighter Squadron, 361st Fighter Group, Second Air Division, Eighth Air Force.

I look forward to receiving your regular newsletter and if I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Regards
Urban L. Drew
"Kayalana", 3 Beaulieu Close,
Datchet, Slough SL3 9DD
Bucks, England
361st FG

Dear Bill:

I hope you will forgive my immediate use of your christian name but having heard so much about you from Tom Eaton I feel I know you well enough for this familiarity.

I am indeed greatly honored to have been placed on the board of the Second Air Division Association and will certainly do my very best to further its objects.

Thank you for sending me the News Letter under cover of your letter of January 25th and I look forward to gaining much background information about the Association from future issues.

As Chairman of the Norfolk County Libraries, may I say how appreciative we are for the unrivalled service your organization is rendering to the people of Norfolk.

I much look forward to meeting you and your colleagues when you come over here in June.

Yours sincerely,
M. E. Cheyne
Board of Governors

Dear Miss Cohen:

I also was a former member of the 44th Bomb Group, 506 Squadron in 1943. I was shot down on my 13th mission on December 20, 1943 while bombing Bremen and was taken to Stalag 17-B (Krems, Austria). Needless to say I have lost contact with all former flying buddies.

I am enjoying a newsletter which was given to me by a member, Bill Creedmore.

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$5 for the annual dues.

Very truly yours,
Joel Parker
17 South Street
Manasquan, N.J.
44th BG

Dear Evelyn:

Where has everyone been, as the ostrich said to the other ostriches in the yard with their heads in the sand (and locked) all these years?

My old friend whom you no doubt know, Jim MacNew of Philadelphia, sent me a short note as he went through Cleveland not so long ago and told me of the association, the 453rd contact man Olds whom I immediately contacted and who as readily replied, and some of the nice things you all have done to perpetuate fond memories - and some of the funds I sent into Norwich as we disbanded the outfit. I had been Club Officer after I finished my tour and we had to dispose of surplus funds - in a legitimate manner!

Yes, I was with the 453rd from its inception to dismemberment. I believe I saw as many come and go as anyone in the outfit.

Right now I am VERY interested in hearing details about the planned trip in May. This bit of news was very welcome, and God and my wife willing I'd like to join the merry throng. The wives are welcome? If you say "no" in writing I'd be much safer at home in announcing my trip!

Seriously, please send me the details as soon as is practicable, since I would like to go.

Enclosed is my check No. 1159 for the yearly dues, as mentioned in the December issue of the newsletter.

A Charter member of the "Battle of Buncher 6" Club of Ole Buck, near Attleboro, I'll do my best to get back into the flight pattern.

Sincerely yours,
J.G. "Jim" Kotapish
15813 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44112
453rd BG

Dear Evelyn:

Please add my name to the Membership Roster of the 2nd Air Division Association. My \$5.00 check for membership dues is attached. I was assigned to the 453rd BG during 1944 and 1945.

I guess I live too far out in the boondocks as I had not heard of the Association until I received a letter from Don Olds telling me about the 1976 reunion. Otherwise I would have joined sooner.

Sincerely,
A. J. Gehrt
1728 Winne Drive
Manhattan, Ks. 66502
453rd BG

Dear Bill:

As I think you know I am endeavoring to compile a book giving details of all aircraft crashes and force-landings which occurred in the County of Essex during the Second World War.

There is one such incident involving a B-24 Liberator which I have failed to identify, and I wonder if any Second Air Division members can throw any light on it. Basically the information I have is this:-

During the afternoon of 11th December 1943 a B-24, after circling the airfield at Gosfield several times, landed, over-ran the runway and finished up on the edge of a wood with it's nose in a ditch. At the time this occurred the airfield had only just been built, and the 365th Fighter Group were in the process of taking up residence.

Should any of the readers be able to assist me with any information, or the loan of photos, of this or any other incident that occurred in Essex, I would be very pleased to hear from them.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Ian C. Mactaggart
Craig-y-Llyn,
Braintree Road
Gosfield, Halstead,
Essex, CO9 1 PR

Dear Evelyn:

Please mail a copy of the March 1975 Newsletter to Desmond P. Mulligan, R.D. No. 1, Upper Black Eddy, Penna.

Des crash landed in Sweden in the summer of 1944 and I am certain he will be interested in the article by Mr. Torbjorn Olausson.

I do not know what Group Des was with, but he was in the 2nd Div. and this will be a good opportunity to recruit a new member.

Des was with me in training in the States and came to see me at Old Buckinham after he was liberated in late December of 1944. They had to exile him.

Thanks.

Regards,
Bob Murray
453rd

P.S. Have been in correspondence with Don Olds and glad to see some writeups on our Group.

Dear Bill:

Thank you for taking the time to reply to my note.

Until 1972, or 27 years after I returned to civilian life, I had not heard from hardly anyone that I was with in Europe. It was a very pleasant experience to open up the Roster and see names like Earl Parks from Florida, and Dale T. Corder from McCook, Nebr. In fact it took my former crew members those 27 years to locate me since I have moved around the country considerably. Now that I have got back together with the flock (as they say) I would like to attend some of the annual get-togethers. Norwich would have been a wonderful experience, in fact I have seriously considered a trip on my own.

For clarification for my friends who may wonder which W.E. Cobb is which I was Squadron Navigator for the 714th, 448th Group for a short time (3 or 4 months).

Anyway it is great to be back in contact with the Second Air Division and I'm looking forward to the Newsletters.

Sincerely,
Will Cobb
P.O. Box 208
Dexter, Maine 04930
448th BG

Dear Evelyn:

Enclosed is my check for \$5.00 to add me as a member of the Second Air Division Association. Because of Lt. Col. Woolnough (who lives only a mile and a half from me) I found out there was such an organization.

I was a member of the 453rd Bomb Group, 732nd Squadron, Station 144 at Old Buckenham near Norwich. I plan on dropping Mr. Donald J. Olds of Rolla, Missouri a line and getting back into the thick of things, as I have lost all contact with even the members of my crew.

Thank you for adding me to your list of paid up members.

Sincerely
John R. Hildebran
6350 SW First Court
Pembroke Pines, Fla. 33023
453rd BG

Howdy (John Woolnough)

I may have been the youngest aircraft commander in combat in the 466th. I became 21 in December of 1944. I may have also been the smallest AC in the Group. When I checked in for B-24 transition I stood 5'8½". That's just ½ inch over the minimum. After flying some missions with the 453rd BG I flew one mission with the 466th - the last one the Group flew.

Sincerely,
Lt.Col. J.E. Davis
466th BG

"RONNIE"

The story of a man and a Liberator*

by
John W. Archer
(Associate)



The story of "Ronnie" is both inspiring and tragic. It started at Lowry Field, near Denver, Colorado, June 1943. The 446th Bombardment Group (H) had recently been formed, flying Convair B-24 Liberators. Training was in full swing in preparation for service overseas. Among the crews was a tall, good-looking waist gunner named Ronald Gannon, of Zanesville, Ohio. Ronnie was a well-liked boy, and above all a brilliant marksman.

Suddenly, just as the group were ready to embark for overseas, something happened to Ronnie. His co-ordination seemed to have gone. On the firing range he would miss targets which previously had been easy for him. Ronnie was admitted to the base hospital. Within a short time a paralysis which rendered useless his nervous and muscular system proved to be fatal.



B-24H Liberator 41-29114 "Ronnie" at Bungay after completing 100 missions and showing the scars of war. "Pappy" Zyne, crew chief, and his assistants pose in front of their charge.

His crew named their aircraft "Ronnie" and flew it across the Atlantic, arriving at A.A.F. Station 125, Flixton, Suffolk, during the third week of November 1943. Strangely, the aircraft seemed to follow the tragic pattern of its namesake. On four occasions "Ronnie" had to abort the scheduled missions with engine trouble.

Working around the clock, the ground crews struggled to keep "Ronnie" in the air. One of those who knew Sgt. Gannon was M/Sgt. Michael P. Zyne. "It's too bad he couldn't come over here," said the crew chief. "He was a swell kid, but 'Ronnie' is doing the job for him."

Gradually the ship began to settle down. During the period 5th January - 11th March 1944 "Ronnie" never missed a scheduled take-off, although there were some anxious moments.

One morning the pilot who flew the plane most frequently took it on a mission and had an oil line shot out. The same afternoon he started to take off on a second mission in another aircraft, skidded and crashed before leaving the runway. He and his crew were killed.

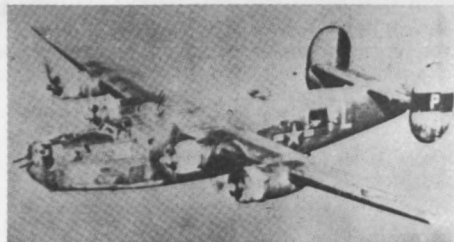
In June "Ronnie" set a new E.T.O. (European Theatre of Operations) Liberator

record for consecutive missions - 54. Twice on D-Day the veteran ship flew over the Channel to hit targets in the St. Lo area. "Ronnie" became the pride of the 704th Bombardment Squadron, and every member of the group had great respect for the B-24H. "Ronnie" continued to extend its string of consecutive completed missions to 79. It came back for the first time on its 64th consecutive mission, but only because of personnel error.

While taking off on its 80th combat mission "Ronnie" had a setback which almost ended its career. Its future was in doubt. The nosewheel gave way, causing serious damage to the nose section. Although the 460th sub-depot recommended that the aircraft be salvaged, the group's C.O., Col. Jacob J. Brogger, was most anxious that it be repaired and returned for further missions with the group. The sub-depot agreed to tackle the job. The entire nose section was removed and replaced by the nose section, including turret, of another salvaged aircraft. This involved removing, replacing, and modifying electric wiring and hydraulic and oxygen lines. The sub-depot repair crews successfully completed the task, and once more Hitler's war machine felt the power of "Ronnie's" bombs.

August proved to be a busy month. On the 8th, 10th, 11th, and 13th the gallant ship, oil-stained, and showing the scars of combat, hit targets at Dijon, La Roche, Coulloumiers and Rouen in France. Flak knocked out No. 3 engine on the Rouen mission. More loving care by the ground crews was needed.

At the end of the year, on 30th and 31st December, "Ronnie" completed its 100th and 101st missions. The B-24H, which was so familiar to the 460th men, had twice been condemned by 3rd Strategic Air-Depot but had been an inspiration to all the sub-depot personnel. January 1945 saw "Ronnie" forced down in France, on its 102nd mission, but eventually the aircraft returned to Flixton.



"Ronnie" over the North Sea heading for Germany.

"Ronnie" continued to take its place among the now almost all-silver Liberator formation, until tactical targets suitable for heavy bombers were hard to find. The final mission of the war was flown on 25th April 1945 in an attack on a bridge at Salzburg, Austria.

Two months later the battered old B-24 was washed down with 100-octane petrol in hopes that it would make it back across the Atlantic with twenty men (double crews) and baggage. It did! Few men in the 446th Bombardment Group knew Ronnie Gannon - only the originals who started out at Lowry Field. Many of the crews who flew with him in the States completed their tours early and left the group; others were killed in action.

Too bad that Ronnie couldn't have been on the scene at Flixton, but the Liberator carried out his mission for him.

*"Ronnie" was a B-24H, serial 41-29144, of the 704th Bombardment Squadron, 446th Bombardment Group (H). Group letter "H." Squadron code "FL." Squadron letter "P." Tail colors: deep yellow with horizontal black stripe (from April 1944).

A REAL, LIVE B-24!!

(Continued from Page 9)

and remained so until excavated by us in 1969.

I struggled into the upper turret's claustrophobic environment. No 50's to play with but the sight and fittings were there and the mind's eye conjured up both weapons and a '109 to shoot at. Then I realized that, if real, he would be shooting back - and that took the novelty away.

Going aft I became aware not only of the aura of the machine, but its aroma as well. The peculiar mixture of high octane, metal and paint permeating to produce a nasal poignance found only in real airplanes.

Time was against me now, but contemplating the rear turret I decided to accept the challenge. How to get in! I found it quite simple once I had mastered grasping the correct appendages and swung in. Looking at where you had been rather than where you were going offered little, and there was the additional sense of being cut off from the rest. I recognized several parts including a section of structure that reposed in my back garden at home and from which I had removed the weight distribution warning label. I had often wondered where that came from. Mine was picked up more as an afterthought when the digger had been busily filling in the 25 foot hole we had dug to disinter the Nayland Liberator. Now I could proudly boast that it had been fitted in the rear turret and impress the ignorant with my expertise on B-24's.

Having borrowed the boss's car and having promised to return it ten minutes ago I reluctantly disturbed my reverie as I swiftly, and accurately, dispatched another harmless '109. Feeling like James Stewart I jumped out through thirty years and landed, myself again, in 1975. Not bad, I thought, considering I wasn't born until 1947.

The time I spent on that ship was invaluable to my appreciation of the tasks performed by ordinary men doing a hazardous job. In 1939-45 the world had a cancerous growth and to rid it of that black tumor involved a painful, costly operation. The only good thing that war does bring out is a latent quality in man which surfaces when he is called upon to fight a common foe. The spirit of comradeship felt then has maintained the 2nd A.D. ever since, and was imbued in the machine they flew.

The hammer and the sickle on the Russian flag signify: "Mow 'em down and keep 'em that way!"