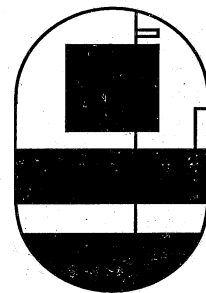




PANTANELLA NEWS



APRIL 1996

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NUMBER 44

464TH's BLACK NAN GOES DOWN A Tragedy on a Milk Run

In the closing days of World War II in Italy many of the missions for the heavy bombers changed from strategic to tactical targets. For the 464th Bomb Group three tactical missions in successive days began on April 8th, 1945 with a bombing mission to the demarcation line not far from Lugo, Italy in support of the Eighth Army. Bombing altitude was

18,000 feet, the weather was clear, and the Group placed their bombs right on target. There was no enemy opposition. It was a milk run.

On the following day, April 9, the operations order was received calling for a maximum effort for the same type of mission. On this day the 465th Bomb Group joined in the attack on the same target. Another

milk run.

On April 10 another maximum effort was ordered for the 464th and 465th Bomb Groups for the same target area in support of ground troops near Lugo, Italy. Bombing was scheduled for 18,000 feet on another clear day. For the 465th Bomb Group it was a milk run, however the 464th sustained a great



Photo #4 shows the flak shell exploding in the left wing causing the wing to rip off burying #1 engine in the turtle-back of the airplane. The bomber flips over and goes into a flat spin. Lt Walsh, the only survivor, is hurled out of the bomb bay where he is standing with his parachute on watching the bombs being dropped. See photos on page 3.

loss - ten of eleven men in the lead plane of the second attack unit were killed when a direct hit sent their aircraft spiraling to earth.

A review of the make-up of the aircraft and crews who were lost on this mission found an unusual situation. Since it was the closing days of the war and a desire by some to get in another mission that promised to be a milk run there were some last minute changes for the 464th Bomb Group. One change occurred when Maj Lacey Morton, 779th Squadron Navigator, who was briefing navigator that day learned of the "milk run." He went to the lead aircraft of his squadron, ordered 2nd Lt. Jack W. Bosley, the navigator who was scheduled to fly, out of the plane, and he took his place to fly in the nose turret as pilotage navigator.

The mission for the 464th Bomb Group began at 0845 hours when 42 aircraft took-off for their target near

Lugo in Baker area in support of the 8th Army. The first attack unit and group leader was Col A. J. Bird, Jr., CO of the 464th Bomb Group and Maj Martin (now Maj Gen). The second unit was led by Lt Col James Gilson CO of the 779 Bomb Squadron.

Col. Gilson flew as command pilot in the right seat of his own aircraft named *Stevonovitch II* for his son. The squadron identification of the letter "N" was painted in black on a white field on the side of the aircraft for squadron identification. It was a new gray pathfinder (radar) B-24L #44-49710 and had not yet had the group identification painted on the rudders.

The crew on Black Nan at take-off, in addition to Lt Col James Gilson, included Capt Charles H. Foote, Co-pilot; 1st Lt Robert J. O'Leary, Navigator; Maj Lacy P. Morton, Squadron Navigator; Capt George R. Wall, Squadron Bombardier; 1st Lt Edward F. Walsh, Radar Bombardier; T/Sgt Jerrold R. Ruben, Engineer; S/Sgt Charles F. Montegut, Radio Operator; S/Sgt Robert C. Rogers, Gunner; S/Sgt Norman S. Cope, Gunner; and S/Sgt Melvin C. Thomason, Gunner.

Rendezvous was over Spinazzola at four minute intervals led by the 464th at 1026 B, then 465th, 460th and 485th. Wings followed in close column; 5th, 304th, 47th, 55th, and 49th wings. Bombing altitude 19,000 feet for the 464th increasing one thousand in each successive group.

On the Group form-up the second attack unit was cut out by the 465th Bomb Group just before Andria, delaying this attack unit which departed Spinazzola at 1023 hours.

The formation flew up over the Adriatic and opened bomb bay doors to test fire the guns ten minutes after clear of the Italian Spur. This prevented flying over land to avoid accidental dropping of some bombs over our own troops. From the IP over land the route target markers were clearly visible. The course into the target area was made good over the panels which served as excellent guides. Both "T" panels and localizer beam insured positive identification

of front-line positions. The huge marker panels had a "T" on the end acting as an arrow and were painted white.

All 42 aircraft proceeded on course and were over the target at 1207 hours and 41 aircraft dropped their clustered frags (fragmentation bombs) from 19,000 feet. One aircraft did not release at the target due to an intervalometer failure and returned the bombs to base. There was no enemy fighter opposition. Later photos showed the first attack unit hits were 1 1/4 miles southwest of the briefed point of impact. The second attack unit hits were 1 mile southeast of Massa Lombarda, directly on the assigned target area.

Unlike the previous two missions flak was encountered. After bombs away and for a period of 2 minutes flak was described as moderate, accurate, and heavy. Crews reported that the flak was very accurate with all bursts in or in close to the formation and following the course of the formation on the rally. It was very likely the German ack-ack gunners anticipated the direction of the rally due to the two previous attacks on the prior two days on this target area.

Within seconds after bombs-away the second attack unit lead aircraft, Black Nan, sustained a direct hit near #1 engine causing the left wing to collapse, burying #1 engine in the turtle-back of the aircraft with parts blowing off the wing and impacting the tail of the aircraft sending the bomber into a flat spin. Since the visibility was clear Lt. Walsh, the radar bombardier, was not needed at the radar scope and had put his parachute on his harness and was standing on the catwalk watching the bombs fall to the target. He was either blown out or thrown out by the sudden gyration of the aircraft as it began its fatal spin to earth. The chute opened, but was torn when it got caught on the fuselage causing a large hole in the chute and an extremely high rate of descent. He landed on an olive tree and fell right through striking the ground with such a tremendous impact that he broke both legs. German soldiers nearby immedi-

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781st BOMB SQUADRON

as part of the 465th Bomb Group, Fifteenth Air Force, flew B-24 Liberators from Pantanella Airfield located near Canosa, Italy, during WW11 (1944-45). During it's 191 missions over Southern Europe it dropped thousands of tons of bombs, shot down 23 enemy aircraft (German) and received two Distinguished Unit Citations.

ately rushed him to a nearby hospital in the city of Ferrara. The hospital was full of German soldiers and POWs. Centrifugal force prevented eviction of any other crewmen from Black Nan and all were killed.

Often the crew of an aircraft hit at 18,000 feet have an opportunity to bail out. In this case the aircraft started in a flat spin almost immediately due to the portion of the wing blown off, a portion of the left tail assembly missing, and loss of #1 engine, all on the left side. With the two engines going on the right side it would begin the spin and centrifugal force would pin the crewmembers in their positions so that no one could bail out.

Shortly after the attack the Germans were forced to retreat from the area as the Allies were breaking through the demarcation line. All wounded in the hospital who could walk were evacuated. Before departing, the Germans surrendered the hospital to Lt. Walsh. Upon liberation, he returned to the U. S. and remained in the hospital for almost one year. Lt Walsh remained in the military service and retired as a Colonel from the Air Force on July 31, 1970 and died a few years ago.

Credits - Maj. Donald E. Evett, USAF who interviewed Lt Walsh in 1970. From Tony Schneider, Secretary of the 464 Bomb Group, photos of Black Nan and crew and formation information. Gene Moxley for the Missing Air Crew Reports.

Photos taken by Leland Conrad, Radio Operator on the John Tomlinson crew with a K-20 camera from the waist of their plane flying number three position. He did not know he had taken these historic photos until they were developed back at the base.

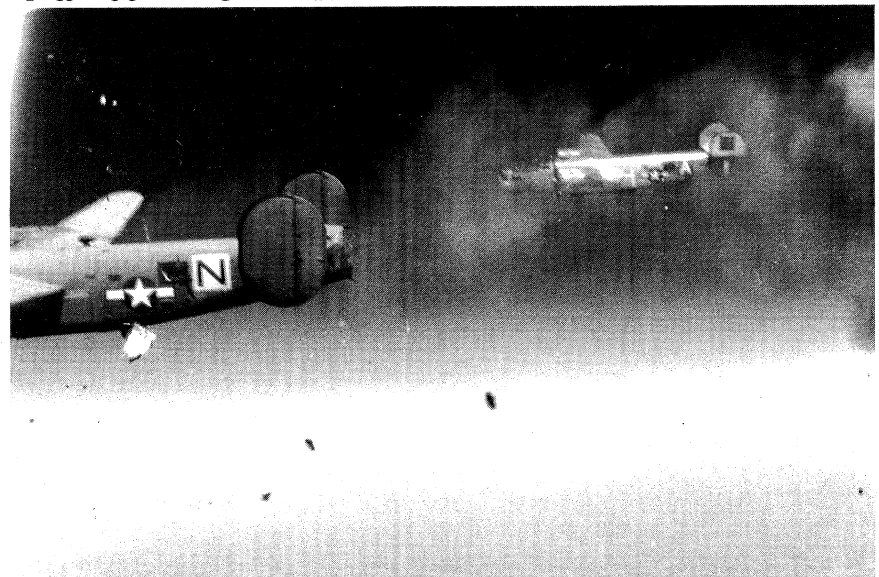
The 464th and 465th Bomb Groups were closer than the normal bomb groups in the 15th Air Force. We were in the same Wing (55th), shared the parallel runways, shared the bomb dump, base personnel lived at and operated from adjoining hills. Capt. Harry Carl, 781st Communications Officer, operated the tower used jointly by both groups, many radar mechanics were trained at the 465th and transferred to the 464th, and our 781st Bomb Squadron CO, Col. Charles F. McKenna III was transferred to 464th as Deputy Group Commander.



#1 - The 464th Bomb Group is over the target near Lugo, Italy dropping its bombs. There is no fighter opposition and visibility is excellent.



#2. The rally is to the left as the bombers head for home. Black puffs of flak begin to appear.



#3 - The portion of the left wing is not shown in this photo, but it received a direct hit. Smoke is beginning to trail and pieces of the wing are breaking away. A piece, probably alcad, masks out the ball turret.

APULIA - ITALY, Part IV (final)

By Byron Thompson

The next six hundred years of Italian history seems to be a litany of battles between Rulers of City-States and Popes, Kings and Popes, Emperors and Popes, Popes and Popes, Germans and Popes, Dukes and Popes, Austrians and Popes, Spanish and Popes, French and Popes, Austrians and French, Russians and French, and occasionally Italians and Popes. And the history of Apulia and the rest of southern Italy was dominated by these forces since it was a part of the Kingdom of Naples. But most of the action occurred in the central and northern areas.

In 1789, Lombardy in northern Italy, and thus close to France's border was under the occupation of Austria, a long-time enemy of France. The French Revolution began in July of that year and the Directory, the ruling body of France, determined that Austria must be removed as a threat on the Lombard plain as well as on the Rhine. In 1797, led by General Napoleon Bonaparte, French armies drove Austria out of Lombardy and conquered Savoy, Milan, Mantua, and Venice.

The Directory also had directed that the Temporal Power must be abolished and the Pope exiled, if possible. Napoleon drove onward into the Papal States but stopped short of Rome. The Pope sent a deputation which met all of Napoleon's demands but he allowed a greatly diminished Temporal Power to survive and Napoleon returned to France in November.

In December, clerics in Rome rioted against the French Embassy and Genet Duphot was killed. The Directory sent General Berthier to sweep the Vatican and set up the Roman Republic. He accomplished this with no difficulty and exiled the Pope.

In May of 1798 King Ferdinand of Naples made a secret alliance with Austria to intervene against the French in the cause of religion and the peace of Europe. A second alliance, between Austria and Russia,

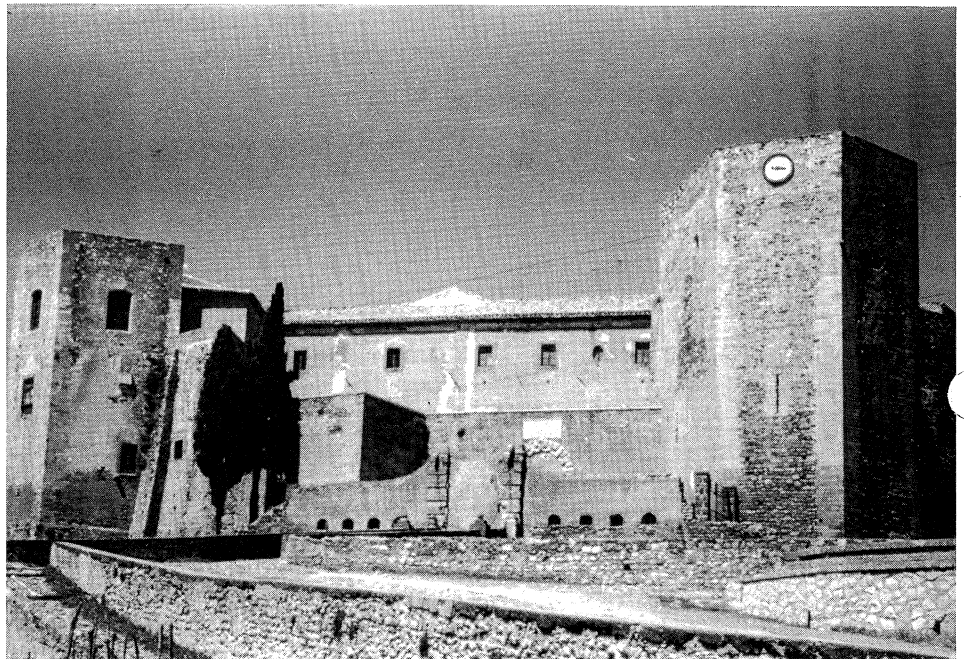
was concluded against France in the north and by the end of 1799 the whole Peninsula, except Genoa, had been cleared of the French armies. The Russian troops were recalled and Austria controlled Italy.

In May of 1800, Napoleon again invaded Italy and defeated the Austrian armies in less than one month. A treaty with Austria was signed on February 9, 1801 and with the Kingdom of Naples in March. The whole of Italy now was under the control of France.

During the first occupation

as President. Count Melzi, a Milanese noble, was named Vice-President. This did not give Italy a republic in any sense of the word as we know it but, for the first time in the history of the Peninsula, all the political bodies were united under one head and with a uniform administration. But Napoleon crowned himself Emperor of the French in Notre Dame in December of 1804 and he shortly thereafter assumed the title of King of Italy.

The kingdom of Naples, however, was allowed a precarious inde-



Castle at Melfi, built about 1000 AD and rebuilt about 1250. At the time we were in Italy it was owned by a woman descended from the early lords of the area. She was married to a U. S. Army official and they were in Rome when we were in Apulia.

Napoleon had set up in May-June of 1797 a constitution and laws of a new "Cisalpine Republic", patterned after the French Directory, which included all of northern Italy from the Piedmont to the Adige River and from the Alps to the borders of Parma, Tuscany, and the Papal States. Now, near the end of 1801 Napoleon introduced a new constitution, drafted in Paris, combining the remainder of Italy (except the Papal States) with the "Cisalpine Republics" and changing the name to "Italian Republics", with himself

pendence. In 1805 French troops were withdrawn from Apulia and Ferdinand IV soon brought in a force of English from Malta and Russians from the Ionian Islands (November 19, 1805) to garrison the kingdom. This treaty violation provoked Napoleon at a moment when he was not inclined to put up with it. The battle of Austerlitz was fought on December 2 and the Czar recalled his troops from Naples. At the Place Vendome in Paris there is a large memorial column celebrating Napoleon's victories. It has a spiral

band of bronze around it made from the cannons captured at Austerlitz and a statue of Napoleon, dressed as a Roman Emperor, on top.

Following Austerlitz Napoleon declared that the dynasty of Naples had "ceased to reign" and that his brother would lead the soldiers of France to its overthrow. Which he promptly did. Joseph Bonaparte and his troops made their entry into Naples unopposed. The King and Queen had fled.

During the two years of Joseph's reign he laid the foundation for reform in every department of the state. A decree abolishing the feudal rights of the Barons was issued in August of 1806. The Code of Napoleon was introduced replacing a tangle of codes, customs, and prerogatives. Roads were built, schools and academies set up, and order slowly evolved from financial chaos. He established a special court, the Feudal Commission, which tried and disposed of every case of litigation between the communes and the Barons. And the curse of feudalism was removed from Apulia and the rest of what had been the Kingdom of Naples.

By the beginning of 1806 all of northern and southern Italy was under the control of Napoleon, including Venice and its provinces, which had been sold to Austria by Napoleon during his first invasion of Italy. But the Papal States were not included and Napoleon proved unable to change this situation before his fall from power. He abdicated his throne on April 11, 1814.

With the fall of Napoleon the Napoleonic system in Italy fell apart. However, that system of uniform codes and laws for the Peninsula had gone far to help create a feeling of Italian nationality.

But in 1814-1815 much of Italy was forced by a Holy Alliance of Sovereigns at the Congress of Vienna to return to the oppressive systems of government that had existed before the Napoleonic Codes were introduced. And the Peninsula was divided into seven separate states with most of their old rulers. The Kingdom of Sicily and the Kingdom of Naples became the Kingdom

of the Two Sicilies under Ferdinand I (formerly Ferdinand IV of Naples and Ferdinand III of Sicily).

From 1815 to 1859 Italy seethed with uprisings and suppressions of uprisings throughout the Peninsula. Out of this cauldron emerged three leaders, King Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia, Count Camillo Cavour of Sardinia, and Giuseppe Garibaldi of Nice.

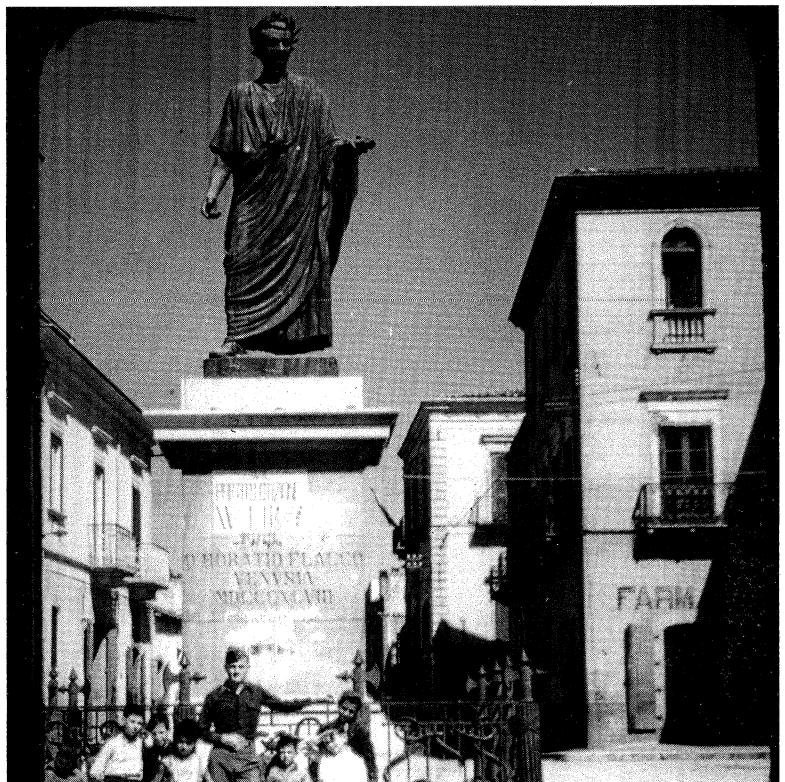
In early 1860 Garibaldi responded to a request by insurrectionists in Sicily to help them in an uprising against King Francis II of the Two Sicilies. He agreed, on the condition that their objective was "Italy and Victor Emmanuel". He landed at Marsala on May 11, 1860 with his thousand volunteers and marched inland to Palermo, defeated a greatly superior Neapolitan force at Calatafimi on the 15th, and, in a battle lasting only three days, obtained the capitulation of a garrison of twenty-four thousand regular troops at the capital.

Garibaldi, now heavily reinforced, crossed the Straits on the night of August 18 and began a march through the southern states with the Neapolitans in headlong flight ahead of him. He did not stop until he marched into Naples and had won the Kingdom of Naples. Cavour and Victor Emmanuel then sent the army of the Piedmont into the Papal States and lifted the oppression suffered there for centuries. As Victor Emmanuel approached Naples a

plebiscite was held to determine annexation of the Kingdom of Naples. It carried by a vote of 1,300,000 to 10,000 and Sicily voted 'Yes' in an even greater proportion. Finally the Kingdom of Italy was established.

The problem of Rome, specifically Pope Pius IX, remained, however—as long as France continued to support the Pope and resist any move by Italy to establish its capital at Rome. But, on July 19, 1870 Napoleon III declared war on Prussia. He suffered early defeats which reduced his capability to provide support to the Pope. The Italian army marched to Rome and, on September 20, entered the City. Pius refused to accept the existence of the Italian State, imprisoning himself in the Vatican, and the problem of Rome was resolved. In October the Roman people voted overwhelmingly for union with the Kingdom of Italy and Rome became the capital of a United Italy on July 2, 1871. Italy remained a Kingdom until June 10, 1946, when it became a de facto republic.

On 29 March 1944, ground units of the 781st Bombardment



Harry Carl and group of Italian children at statue of Horace, Latin poet who lived from 65 BC to 8 BC. He was born at Venosa.



Horse-power irrigation system on road between Canosa and Bari. Adriatic is in distant background.

Squadron (H) and the three other Squadrons of the 465th Bombardment Group (H) United States Army Air Forces set up a camp where the Corps of Engineers was constructing a facility to be called Pantanella Army Air Base, along the Ofanto River in Apulia about midway between Canosa and Lavello. These, as well as Melfi, Venosa, Foggia, and the Castel del Monte, have been commented on in the preceding narrative. A few other locations were of interest to members of the Squadron and bear comment.

The Fifteenth Air Force located its Headquarters at Bari, Apulia, a city of 355,000 (1994 figures) about 58 miles by jeep east of Pantanella. The city has been inhabited since about 1500 B.C., first by the Greeks and then by the Romans. The Romans called it "Barium" and records mention the harbor as existing in 180 B.C. at which time it was a significant fishing port. During Roman times It was the capital of Apulia. During the first Crusades, Crusaders departed from Bari. In 1071, Bari was captured by the Normans from the Byzantines who had made it the seat of their government in 885. It became a great city under Frederick II (1120 to 1150). It had been razed in 1156 by William the Bad of Sicily. A cathedral was

built there in the 12th century and Frederick II built another of his castles there during his reign (I question this. Chaplain Blough's tour guide says he built one there in 1250, but Frederick II died in 1250). The University of Bari was established in 1924 with about 20,000 students now and it includes a School of Veterinary Medicine. Bari is now a major Adriatic port and agricultural center. Commercial activities carried on there include food processing, petroleum refining textile milling, printing, production of tobacco, sulfides, building materials, machinery, aluminum, and iron work.

The 55th Bomb Wing established Headquarters at Spinazzola, about 35 miles (by Jeep) from Pantanella.

Cerignola (present population about 54,000) is located about 22 miles from Pantanella. Not much history, but in 1503, a battle was fought nearby in which the Spaniards defeated the French and it was a Spanish province for a long time. Opera buffs might be interested to know that Mascaeni composed the opera "Cavalleria Rusticana" here, in 1890. It is presently a market center as well as a communications center.

Barletta (present pop-

83,000) was about 25 miles from Pantanella. This city was called "Barduni" in Roman times and was a port and bathing resort for the residents of the Canosa area. Also, I believe it served members of our Group and other Groups in the 15th Air Force as a "swimming hole" during the hot months of 1944. It has had a lot of different occupiers. After the Romans, came the Ostrogoths in the 5th century, Byzantines in the 6th century followed by the Lombards in the same century and in the 11th century, it became a part of the Kingdom of Naples. A gothic cathedral was built in Barletta in the 11th century, which was enlarged in the 14th century, and in the 15th century.

Th...th...th...that's all, folks.

I wish to give special recognition to Harry Carl who modestly declined to take his share of the credit for these articles. Without his editing, providing of historical data, suggestions as to format and language, they might never have been finished - particularly as to part III. His photographs from our days in Italy certainly added not only to the history, but to our recollection of the area around Pantanella.

Sources:

World Book Encyclopedia, Encyclopedia Britannica, Americana Britannica, Columbia Encyclopedia, and Random House Encyclopedia.

"Warfare in the Classical World", John Warry. "Travellers History of Italy," Valerio Lintner.

"Short History of Italy," Header & Waley "A Short History of the Italian People," Jane Trevelyan.

Microsoft "Encarta" Multimedia Encyclopedia

Tour Guide, Chaplain Herbert R. Blough Chris Murphy.

Photos from Harry Carl.

In the future there will be a complete booklet on Apulia with many pictures taken by Harry Carl during our days at Pantanella.

465th Bomb Group

Squadron Reunions in 1996

780th Sept 13-17, Las Vegas, NV

781st Sept 26-29, Montgomery, AL

782nd Sept 2-4, Reno NV

783rd Mini Reunion Hampton, VA

'96 Reunion Registration Begins!

Planning in final stages

It's time for you to begin serious planning for the 781st Bomb Squadron reunion in Montgomery, Alabama, September 26 to 29. Included in this newsletter is your registration form. Register early so you can "take-off" in September for another great reunion.

This will be our 7th reunion — ten years since our first reunion in Colorado Springs.

Ken Sutton, Reunion Chairman, reports all basic arrangements have been made with the Governors House Hotel in Montgomery. One change you will like will be the addition of free coffee and soft drinks in the Hospitality Room which will adjoin the Trophy Room. When we are not at our meeting or on a tour "the place" to be will be the Hospitality Room or Trophy Room. Special interesting videos will be shown in the Trophy Room in addition to the PX and display of memorabilia we have collected.

The hotel, on the edge of town, consists of a number of two story buildings in a large area giving an open feeling with many green lawns and flowers. It is a small hotel, so we will "own" the place, occupying most of the rooms. It will be easy to get around.

Our program will be similar to the past. We find over half are early birds arriving on Wednesday. Hospitality will be set up mid-day so you will have a place to see who has checked in. There will be reunion registration available Wednesday afternoon in keeping with our commitment of no waiting lines. As usual we have the pre-payment available with your mail-in registration. Remember any pre-payment is fully refunded if you find you cannot attend.

We also have arranged for a choice of menu items for two of the meals. For the banquet you can select broiled stuffed flounder or prime rib of beef, for example.

We have noticed many are bringing their children or grandchildren. They have been enjoying our reunions and are most welcome.

Our next newsletter in July/August will be the final one before the reunion. It will include more on Montgomery, our program, and the history of Maxwell Field. It was here where Capt. Glenn Miller, personnel officer at Maxwell Field, organized Maxwell's band. I'm sure we'll have some of his music to listen to during the reunion. Also, many of you trained at Maxwell as Aviation Cadets and some later in B-24 transition and navigation.



Charlene Simon (Widow, Joe Simon, Engineering), "I look forward to the *Pantanella News*. My daughter has a scrapbook she is keeping up to date. She started it for her Dad before he passed away. Thanks so much."

Harry Fike (783rd Squadron) sent a note with his dues noting one of the stamps on the envelope was a grim reminder. It was a 3¢ WWII stamp with 4 chaplains pictured above a sinking ship with the wording, "These Immortal Chaplains - Interfaith In Action."

James H. O'Neal (Engineering), "I am enclosing my dues for the next couple of years. I don't want to miss any of the *Pantanella News*. It's the one thing that keeps us of the 781st a "close knit" family in between our reunions. I enjoy it very much. Hope to see every one in Montgomery in September.

Bill J. Barrie (Armament Section) writes a note with his dues, "I enjoy the *Pantanella News* very much. Keep up the good work. The ground crews of the 781st helped lay the runway. I think the picture laying the Marston Mat is the 781st armament section. The guy on the left is Milton Reed, the big guy on the right is Alvin Marshall, I think. The one walking with his hands on his

hips is Tom Kyle. I can't tell who the rest of the guys are. I was in the armament section. I have been to four armament section reunions so I have seen quite a few of the guys.

Bill, thanks for identifying men in the photo. I'm sure this will help others to remember these men. I did note that the ground echelon helped lay the Marston mats, but failed to do the same under the photo.

A phone call from **Jerry Cottle** (Engineering) also identified several of the men.

Another phone call from **Ray Tyler** (S-2). On February 11th he had not yet received his January *Pantanella News*. I promised one post-haste.

From far away France—a reply from **Richard Grantham** (pilot), "Thanks for the publicity in the *Pantanella News* of October. To keep you up to date on my activity, here's a recent work sample."

Dick's sample is a writing which will be in a future news.

Robert R. Leasure (Group Operations). "Thanks so much for your continued good work on the 781st Newsletter. I have enjoyed reading about old times and old friends through the years. The news in recent months has touched some of my closest friends. When I arrived in Italy I was assigned to a tent with Bob Hawley, Sal Molinaro, A. Keith Brown and Ray Hanson. Hawley, Molinaro and I worked in Group Operations and Brown & Hanson worked in Intelligence. My boss was Dan Dugan, Group Bombardier. Shortly after the war was over I learned that Bob Hawley died in Chicago and some years later Molinaro died in Indianapolis.

"In July newsletter I read of the death of A. K. Brown on February 7th, 1994 and in the October issue there was an article and picture of the Group Intelligence personnel which included Hanson and Brown. Under 'Folded Wings' I noted that Daniel R. Dugan died on May 24, 1995. Just this week I received a letter that Ray Hanson died on August 12th, 1995.

"It was my privilege to have worked with these fine men. A great group that made life at Pantanella

bearable.

"Time flies and we keep losing friends but your efforts to keep us posted and informed are appreciated. You have done a good job of reminding us of our days in Italy and the accomplishments of the 465th Bomb Group. Keep up the good work."

McHenry Hamilton (465th Bomb Group CO) wrote about his problem with walking pneumonia, then a relapse put him in the hospital. He went to Mayo's in Jacksonville for a complete physical and "they found nothing wrong except longevity." He is in fine shape now and doing some traveling.

From **Bernie Badler** (Branch crew co-pilot), "I finally decided to become a life member of the 781st. It's not that I couldn't afford it, I just told myself that for a change I won't buy myself another tool. This past year I bought a 3 1/2 HP air compressor, a spray outfit, a biscuit joiner, a nail gun, a 1/2 in. router, a wet and dry sharpener, and many hand tools so now I'll take a respite. As you can surmise by all that you are aware that I am a very serious do-it-yourselfer. In fact I just finished a counter for a gift shop that I made some money on so before I spend it on something else I put the 781st on the top of the list."

Fred Maute (Radar mechanic) checks in again from Florida. "We were lucky and left New Jersey in January just hours ahead of the blizzard of '96. Weather all over has been crazy, rain on West coast, snow and ice in the North East! It was a bit cool here in January, better in February and now in the 60's to 80's. The only ice is in my martini."

From **Lionel Lasseigne** (Hazel/Nose Gunner, with 485th Bomb Group), "As I have mentioned in letters of the past, I never flew with your outfit, only transferred into it at the end of the war, hoping to finish my tour of 50 missions, but the war ended before I flew again.

I have enjoyed the *Pantanella News* very much, having flown many of the same missions. In the recent issue, January, 1996, the story of the Marston mat was of great interest. So is the continued story of

the Apulia area by Byron Thompson. The mere mention of the Venosa area where the 485th Bomb Squadron was stationed of which I flew with, was interesting. Mr. Thompson must have done a lot of research, and rightly so since he was the Intelligence Officer. But, on page 5 his remarks about the Popes, I found very offensive. It may be true that some of the early Popes may have been improper, but to say the present Popes may not be either is not historical fact, only an opinion of his.

Regardless, please find a check for \$10 to cover my dues for 1996. I do enjoy the news very much.

I remember Venosa very well. In November, 1944 I spent two or three weeks there in the hospital. It was an old school building in town. Also, I made a trip there to buy supplies from a local wine and liquor merchant for our Officers Club. I found your guards at the road crossing through your Bomb Group very strict. I attempted to ignore the guard post upon return and received a citation. I guess the samples from the merchant had some effect on my lack of attention to the rules.

Pantanella Comrades Enjoying Life

From Morris R. "Doc" Rapoport.

Last Saturday night, February 3, Blanche and I were privileged to be invited to attend the 60th wedding anniversary of **Ralph and Pat Hendrickson**, which took place at the Airport Hilton Hotel in West Palm Beach, Florida. Since we come to Palm Beach during the winter months, we have had the opportunity to visit each other down here.

It was a wonderful party especially since the guests of honor, Ralph and Pat, looked so young and spry. They have two sons and 2 daughters, and many beautiful grown grandchildren and great grandchildren. We were seated with Ralph and Pat and her brother and sister-in-law.

The program started with the reenactment of their wedding vows and the exchanging of their original wedding rings. Their son, Ron, who is a Deacon in the Grace Community

Church in Los Angeles presided over the ceremony. This was followed by a very "liquid" cocktail hour, delicious hors d'oeuvres, and an excellent dinner.

After dinner, the program continued with a talk I gave telling of our life and work at Pantanella, and the excellence of Ralph as Pilot and his great crew. Everyone was enthralled especially the grandchildren, as they never realized how important a man their "Bampus" was. All found the history of our Squadron equally fascinating, as well as the story about the "search" for members of the 781st Bomb Squadron and our subsequent reunions.

Then two lovely young granddaughters gave us their version of their grandparents' life together in music and dance. The evening continued with non-stop dancing — it's great to be young. And somehow we also got caught up in the festivities and managed to keep in step with the dancing too.

Fond farewells were made, and we went into the balmy Florida night, having taken part in a most unusual event.

A note was received from **Rae Branch** (Pilot) along with a poem we'll publish later. Rae had the pleasure of joining his son, Malcom, on the aircraft carrier George Washington that he commands. Rae notes, "The George Washington just spent four days in Trieste, Italy's harbor. It is hard to realize that 52 years ago on June 10, 1944, on our 15th combat mission we blew the hell out of the harbor of Trieste. The George Washington, CVN 73, just finished spending 4 days shore leave anchored in that same harbor.

Ernest Magmore (Ordnance) checks in to report he is well and looking forward to the next *Pantanella News*. He notes, "After seeing the Blizzard of '96 he enjoyed Texas much more.

Some time ago **Bruce Miller** posed the question, "Are there any photos of the stockade?" He noted the stockade was one pup-tent and barb wire perimeter located up the hill from the 781st squadron orderly room. Does anyone have a photo or know more about the stockade?

FOLDED WINGS

Nicholas V. Schaps (Bombardier on French crew) passed away Dec. 27, 1995.

Virgil H. "Spec" Christian, Jr.

(Co-pilot on Clodfelter crew) passed away Dec. 31, 1995.

A note from Donald Clodfelter reported "Spec" Christian passed away after a heart attack. Also a report from Robert W. Elliott.

Stephen J. Mariniak (Ball Gunner on Stenerson crew) passed away Jan. 1, 1996. The notice was received from a friend of his, Robert F. Cutler, from the 460th Bomb Group.

Karl K. Brown (Radio Operator on Gaines crew) passed away October 29, 1994.

Raymond T. Frank (Radar Mechanic) passed away January 28, 1996. Jack Van Slyke sent in the information on Raymond Frank. He noted that he visited Raymond last summer and he was not well then as the result of a stroke. Jack attended the funeral and extended our squadron sympathy to the family.

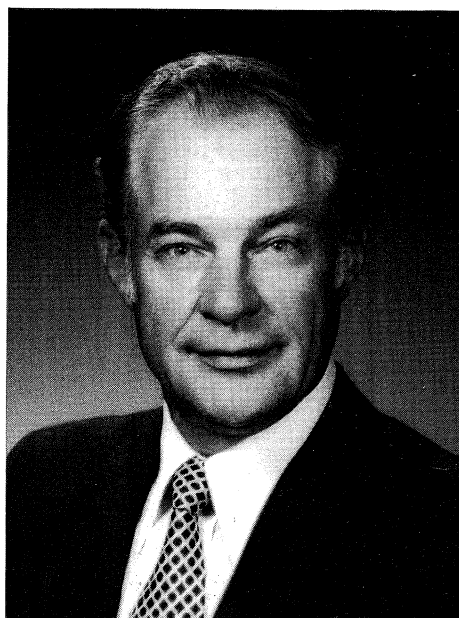
Walter Day (Radio Operator on the McDaniel crew) passed away January 12, 1996.

John Karduck (Top Gunner on the McDaniel crew) passed away in January, 1993.

John L. Crowley (Radio operator on the Prince Crew) passed away January 24, 1996.

From **Andrew F. Dobek** (Engineer on the McDaniel crew). "I wrote to you a couple of days ago telling you that Walter D. Day passed away January 12, 1996. I called John Karduck to let him know and I found out that he passed away in January 1993. He was the turret gunner so I am the only enlisted man left on McDaniel's crew. All of the officers are still around. It looks like old age is catching up with us. I just had a birthday a couple of days ago and I reached 83 years.

I suppose this will be in the next newsletter and Clayton McDaniel, Charles Zwerko, Paul Durckel, and Richard Grantham will know."



Nicholas V. Schaps, Sr.

Nick was elected to the board of directors at our last reunion in Tucson. He also volunteered to be reunion chairman and had been working on the '96 reunion until he passed away.

It was a real shock to me and to those who knew him well. Last fall he began to have a hip problem and did not feel well. In November a trip to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN led to the discovery of cancer with only weeks to live.

He is survived by his wife, Marion, one daughter, and four sons. Another son, Nick Jr. preceded him in death.

Nick was bombardier on the French crew during his tour of duty at Pantanella.

After the war he worked in the investment field specializing in bonds. He retired Regional Vice-President of Merrill Lynch Capital Markets.

Last year Nick joined the Life Membership roster with the note saying that if anything happened to him he desired to have the *Pantanella News* continue to his wife, Marion, and their children. He loved the squadron dearly and wanted his family to keep in touch with friends he knew.

Another gallant comrade who no longer can answer the call.

Thanks to those of you who sent in information on the passing of some of our comrades. Please keep this up as others would like to know about their friends.

A letter from **Robert W. Elliott** (Engineer on Bilger crew), "Just a note to inform you of the death of Virgil H. "Spec" Christian, Co-pilot on the Clodfelter crew. Speck suffered a heart attack on December 30, 1995.

"Although I was flight engineer with the Bilger crew, I substituted for Cader Shelby with the Clodfelter crew on a mission to Blechhammer on December 18, 1944. We lost two engines on the way to the target and had to drop out. We headed east and bailed out over Lake Balaton, Hungary. We were picked up by the Russians and were eventually taken to Bucharest, Romania. After about 30 days, we finally got back to Pantanella. I have enjoyed several reunions with the Clodfelter crew in recent years as an honorary member."

"Also, I would like to know if there are any more copies of the 781st Squadron History book available and the price."

Sorry, no history books available. If anyone has an extra and wants to sell it please let me know and we'll find an anxious buyer.

A letter from **Harry M. Smith**, "I have some sad news to forward to you. My fellow crewman, Mr. John L. Crowley passed away on Jan. 24, 1996, at the Helen Ellis hospital in Tarpon Springs, Florida. He died of congestive heart failure.

"John and I kept in touch after the war and have managed to get-together a couple of times each year. He and Lee always came down every year during deer season. He loved to hunt with me here on my farm. We had great times together and John will be greatly missed by his family and mine."

Our prayers to our fallen comrades who have found everlasting peace, — you served your country well. We will remember you forever.

A well known WWII Aviation hero, **John W. Mitchell**, passed away Nov. 15, 1995. Although he served in another theatre and flew the P-38 he was well known to all of us. He led the longest fighter intercept mission ever flown on April 18, 1943 when the Commander of the Combined Japanese Fleets, Adm. Yamamoto, was shot down. It was Yamamoto who planned the Pearl Harbor attack that started WWII.

During WWII and the Korean War Mitchell was credited with 15 enemy aircraft including 4 Mig-15s.

On January 20, 1996 I attended the Memorial Service for John Mitchell which was held at Hamilton Field, CA.

A famous WWII Luftwaffe fighter pilot, **Gen. Adolf Galland**, passed away Feb. 9, 1996 at Bonn, Germany. Gen. Galland was head of the German Fighter Forces and one of their leading fighter pilots with 104 Allied planes to his credit.

I first met Gen. Galland at the "Gathering of the Eagles" in Las Vegas in 1986. I also met Jim Finnegan, who shot down Galland, and saw the video about the Me 262.

I have visited with Finnegan since that time to hear more of his story how he shot down Galland and his friendship with Galland since their meeting.

The video will be shown at our next reunion for those interested. An amazing story about the Me262 and how a P-47 shot down the latest fighter in the German Air Force, the Me262 jet. Finnegan was flying above 20,000 feet when he saw Galland shoot down two B-26's at about 12,000 feet. He then dove his P-47 "Jug" straight down and got a passing shot at Galland in his Me262. At the time Finnegan only thought he had possibly damaged the Me262 since it went into a cloud cover after being hit. Finnegan did not know it was Galland he shot down until a local researcher pieced it together and notified Finnegan about 12 years ago.

Another well know American fighter pilot passed away — **Col. Hubert**

Zemke. A P-47 pilot Zemke had 17 planes to his credit. He also initiated the Zemke Fan, a tactical plan that sent fighters out well in advance of the bombers. As a result bomber losses declined and fighter victories increased.

On his last scheduled combat mission he lost a wing on his P-51, parachuted over Germany and was taken prisoner. He was sent to Stalag Luft 1 and was senior officer in command of 7,000 Allied prisoners there.

He died August 30, 1994 at Oroville, California.

Sick Call

I received a call from **Charlotte Zartman** informing me that **John** has been in the hospital for several weeks and will remain there for some time. She said he was very weak and they felt they could not make the reunion at Montgomery.

I'm sure John would appreciate hearing from "old buddies."

Notes from a number of other men that have been ill and are now on the mend; **Lowell Myers** had a hip replacement last October - **Richard Seabridge** just out of the hospital after an illness.

LIFE MEMBERS

Since the last newsletter

67. James Marcel Snyder
68. Loren W. Foote
69. Bernie Badler
70. Nicholas C. Belik
71. Melvin L. Derry
72. Frank R. Jasicko
73. Leonard H. Emmel
74. Donald E. Toomey
75. Albert P. LeBlanc
76. Denly J. Thompson

Gene Moxley notified me he can now sell his book "**THE 465th REMEMBERED**" for \$22 postpaid. Those of you who paid more should have received your refund by now. The first book is for the period May 5 to July 12, 1944. Order from Gene Moxley, PO Box 252, Wright City, MO 63390.

McCook Army Air Base Plaque

by Walt Longacre

The McCook Army Air Base Historical Society has established a Memorial Garden at the former McCook AAB. All of the Bomb Groups, with the exception of the 465th, who took their training here have presented plaques to represent their groups and squadrons. These plaques are bronze on a marble setting on a cement base.

I have made a commitment and ordered a plaque for the 465th Bomb Group. Our plaque will be bronze on a mahogany colored marble setting. There will be a B-24 on top with the inscription below, "This plaque is dedicated in honor of all our comrades of the 465th Bomb Group who served and to those who lost their lives in defense of our country during World War II. Bomb Squadrons 780th, 781st, 782nd and 783rd."

Walter Longacre attended the last McCook reunion and made a commitment to have the plaque installed. The cost is \$1,000 and each squadron has been asked to contribute \$250 for their share.

I understand the plaque is now installed and will be officially dedicated September 28, 1996.

ALL AMERICAN

I was concerned that we would lose our group rudder markings on *All American* for 1996. In November I was aware that our donations were running behind and I called some of our squadron members and notified the other squadrons.

I did not know the 465th Bomb Group insignia would remain on the right rudder until I saw the Collings Newsletter. Thanks to **George Goodwin of the 782nd Bomb Squadron** for putting us over the top in late December!

I called George to congratulate him and found him to be a first class guy. He can make us all feel proud that we are members of the 465th Bomb Group.



465th Bomb Group Association

There has been some discussion regarding a 465th Bomb Group Association. From what information I have it appears that we are the only group in the 15th Air Force that does not have an Association. Our group was our fighting unit and it would be nice to have the group identified as a unit again.

The directors of the 781st have agreed in principle to pursue the matter.

The first reaction is always, "We do not want to give up our-squadron." I can tell you other squadrons do not want to either. The group affiliation will not change the squadron identity. Simply, we would meet as squadrons at the same hotel, have our own meetings and tours and set aside one day for the group affair.

Presently a committee of the four presidents have been the contact for the group discussions. All have agreed in principle.

The first group reunion could take place in 1997 or 1998, then every other year. Two squadrons presently meet every year and two every other year.

Drop me a note if you feel strongly for or against a 465th Bomb Group Association.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT PANTANELLA

by O. J. Cowart.

One of my duties before I went off duty at midnight was to take Hyman Ruben down to the switchboard located on the line in the Control Tower. One night Hyman said to me, "Would you let me drive (the Jeep)?" I pulled over and let him drive.

Hyman was from New York city and to my amazement had never driven a vehicle before. The stiff clutch on the Jeep was not a good training machine for a first time driver. He jerked to a stop a number of times before we finally got rolling.

At midnight, I was not fond of taking Hyman down to the line switchboard. He finally started driving himself down on the line. I came on duty one day at noon and was told Major Milburn (Group Communications Officer) was mad as hell. A big mystery had developed; how did the front of the group communications Jeep get caved in? One of the men had taken it upon himself to keep this Jeep in undoubtedly the best condition of any at Pantanella. It was a lot quieter and smoother riding than the regular Jeeps. Later in the day the mystery was solved.

Hyman Ruben had been flagged

down by someone at night to get a push. Not being familiar with how to do this, he backed up to get a good running start and came charging down on the unsuspecting disabled machine. Someone probably had a big headache the next day; and so that, my good buddies, is how the front of the Jeep was caved in.

WWII Memorial Site Approved

The National Capital Planning Commission voted to approve a proposal to place the WWII memorial on a 5.5-acre site between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. It is scheduled for completion by 2000.

Maybe some WWII vets will still have the opportunity to see a memorial during their lifetime!

EDITORS CORNER

It appears that many more are reading the fine print in the newsletter. There has been a flood of '96 dues payments, many with comments, "I don't want to miss an issue." And there are comments on articles and some help on new articles. The cooperation will keep the news coming along with some interesting articles. \$10 per year is the best buy in town.

I have been researching information on rumors I heard when I was at Pantanella regarding sabotage of some B-24s at another group. Recently two other newsletters had requests for information on the subject. I contacted these two men and have received some mixed reports about planes blowing up after take-off. One 464th man reported they were briefed to closely observe items that appeared to be "tapped on" to the rudders or placed in landing gear compartments and were not a part of the plane.

Does anyone remember a briefing about this? or any other specific information? If any one has facts or leads on the sabotage please contact me.



From Barney Russell's collection of calendars in the Officer's Club - nice.

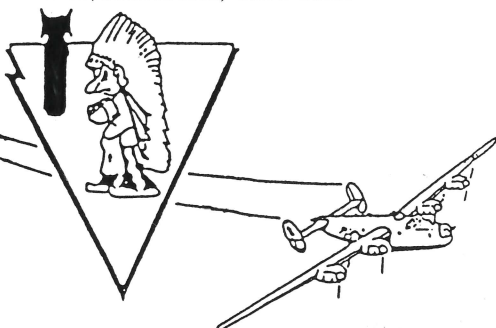


Yellow "A" and friend dropping bombs on a clear day on unknown target. Probably late in the war when we bombed tactical targets like bridges.



Col. Foster just presented the purple heart to S/Sgt Walter D. Day who received flak wounds a few days earlier.

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