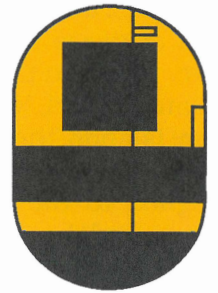




# PANTANELLA NEWS



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NUMBER 35

## V GRAND

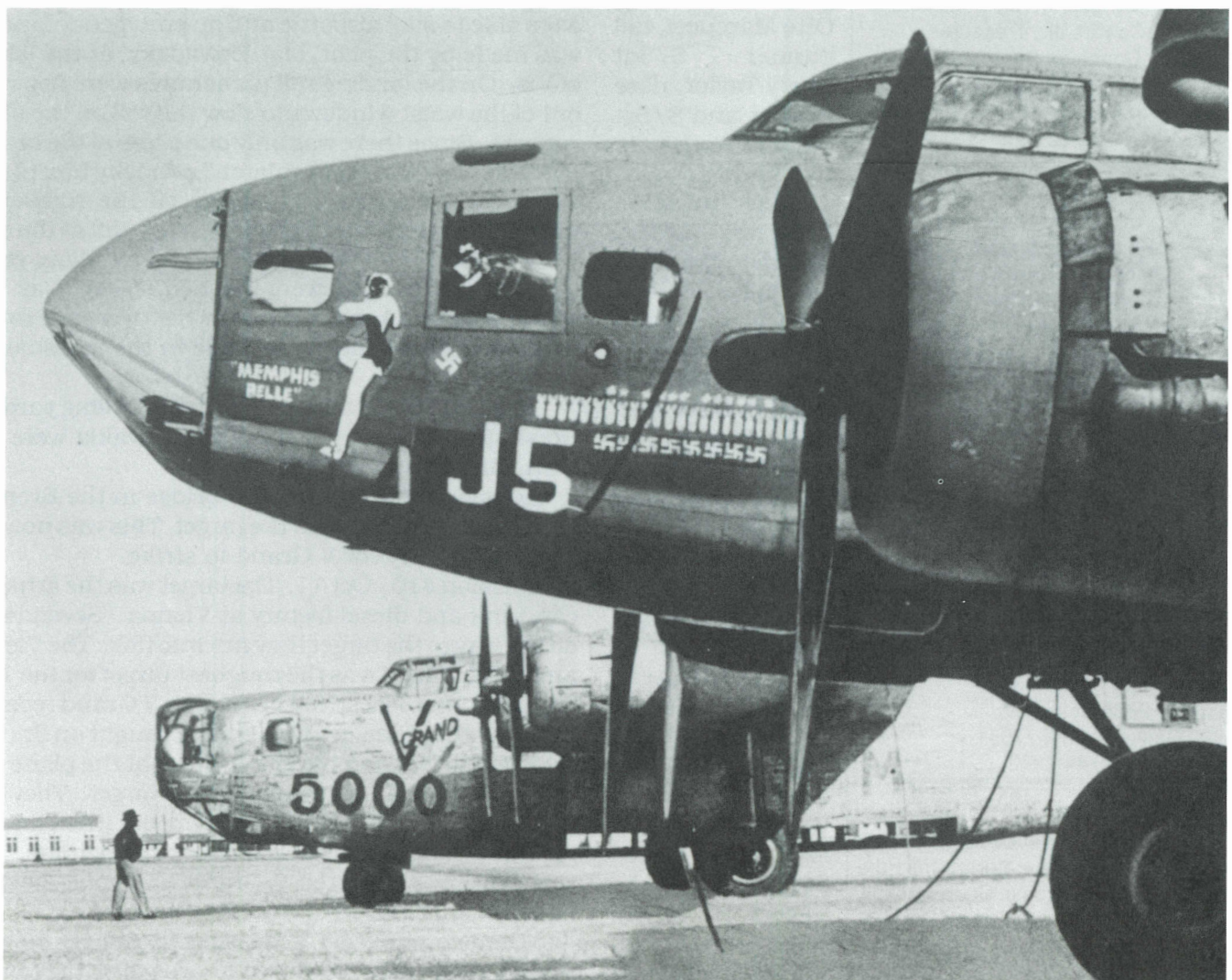
### First Mission Flown by 781st Bomb Squadron

The most famous B-24 in Italy, and probably the most famous of all B-24s, was V Grand. She was number 5000 built by Consolidated Aircraft plant in San Diego. Consolidated had built 7000 by this time, but V GRAND was the 5000th at the San Diego plant. The Liberator was a 24J-195-CO with serial number 44-

41064 and was built under contract #AC40033 for \$220,563; however, a publication at the time noted that she was donated to the Air Corp.

The famous Liberator was completed on Monday morning, June 12, 1944 at 8:36 and delivered to the Air Corps at San Diego on June 22. It flew to the Tucson modification center the same day. The completion date and time was known 6 months before V Grand rolled off the line as the line moved at constant motion of exactly 8 1/2 inches per minute.

On July 12 V Grand was flown to Mitchell Field, New York. It was assigned to 2nd Lt. James D. Ayres, and



*A 1946 photo of the two famous WWII bombers at the scrap yard at Altus, Oklahoma. One will be saved for a museum, the other sentenced to be scrapped. . Photo from Dr. Harry Friedman.*

on July 22 Jim Ayres and crew began the first leg of their flight overseas with a stop at Grenier Field, New Hampshire. Then on the 25th to Presque Isle, Maine, the 29th to Gander Field, Newfoundland, August 6 to Lagens, Field, Azore Islands, the 7th to Marrakech, the 8th to Tunis, and the 9th to Gioia, Italy. On August 11, 1944, V Grand was assigned to the 780th Bomb Squadron, 465th Bomb Group, and the Jim Ayre's crew was assigned to the 782nd Bomb Squadron.

On August 14th V Grand flew its first combat mission to support the 7th Army invasion of the south coast of France near St. Tropez. The target was coastal gun positions. Bomb load was 5 1000 pound bombs.

The first crew to fly V Grand was from the 781st Bomb Squadron. The pilot was 1st Lt George Leggate. Other crew members were: - 2nd Lt. Harry Nolen, Co-pilot, 2nd

Lt. John Stark, Bombardier/Navigator - T/Sgt Jess O. Edge, Engineer - T/Sgt Oscar Baumgardner, Radio - S/Sgt Harold Grant, ball gunner - S/Sgt Otto Marcucci, tail gunner - S/Sgt Harry Taylor, nose gunner and S/Sgt Sidney Rothman, top gunner.

The invasion fleet was sighted by the bombers 100 miles south of Toulon on its way for the invasion the next day. The mission was a success and all planes returned. V Grand did not receive any damage.

Mission #2 - August 15. The target was bridge emplacements on the Southern Coast of France (Le Teil). It was D-Day for the Southern France invasion. V Grand began to fly for its assigned squadron, the 780th Bomb Squadron. All planes returned and V Grand came through again

without damage.

Mission #3 - August 18. Romano Americana oil installations at Ploesti, Rumania were hit. The first target for V Grand to receive heavy flak. The target was hit for the last time before it was over-run by the Russian Army.

Mission #4 - August 20. The Dzudzico Oil Refinery at Czechowice, Poland less than 100 miles from the Russian front was hit. The mission was very successful with photos showing extensive damage throughout the plant.

Mission # 5 - August 21. Frag bombs were dropped on the air-drome at Nis, Yugoslavia. Another good mission with some direct hits.

Mission #6 - August 22. to an oil refinery at Korneuburg, Austria, in the Vienna area, inflicted heavy damage to V Grand and it had to leave formation. No. 1 and No. 2 engines were feathered with flak damaged rocker-box sump on No. 1, fuel line shot off on No. 2, hydraulics shot out, a shattered nose and ball turret and a hole in the flight deck. With two engines out V Grand had to drop out of formation. Fighter escort was called and accompanied the aircraft until the fighters ran low on fuel. The crew threw out everything they could spare and stood by to bail out. They were able to stay airborne and an emergency landing was made by the pilot, Maj. Zewadsky, at the Island of Vis. On the landing roll parachutes were deployed out of the waist windows to slow the roll on the short runway. Since there was only one press of the brakes possible from the accumulator Zewadsky had to gun the two right engines to swerve off the runway to prevent the plane from running off the cliff at the end.

Mission # 7 - October 4. The marshalling yards at Munich, Germany were bombed. Heavy flak was encountered. Bomb strikes on the overpass to the yards and direct hits were made in the marshalling yards.

Mission #8 - October 7. The marshalling yards at Ereskujvar (Nove Zamke), Czechoslovakia were hit. Many hits in marshalling yards.

Mission #9 - Oct 10. Rail bridge in the Brenner Pass, Northern Italy was the target. This was now the seventh country for V Grand to strike.

Mission #10 - Oct 11. The target was the armored car, tank and diesel factory at Vienna. Seven times on the way to the target they ran into flak. The Vienna area, "flak alley," was the roughest target for the 15th Air Force after Ploesti fell in August. V Grand received considerable damage. One engine caught on fire and the bombardier and navigator thought the plane was going down and bailed out over the target. They had to drop out of formation, put the fire out, then headed for the clouds for cover from German fighters. Returning crews reported V Grand had gone down in flames.

They couldn't get a bearing to Russia so they stayed in the clouds for two hours when they broke out over Budapest. They headed back in the clouds and came out over the Adriatic sea. They then headed

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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 its 191 missions over Southern Europe it dropped thousands of tons of bombs, shot down 23 enemy aircraft (German) and received two Distinguished Unit Citations.

for the Island of Vis. The landing gear had to be cranked down by hand and on landing the brakes were out, so they hung parachutes from the waist windows to act as brakes. This was not enough and V Grand ran off the runway filling the bombardier and navigators compartment with grape vines and mud. It remained there for a month while the nose section was covered temporarily with sheets of aluminum and then flown to a Fifteenth Air Force Service Squadron in Italy for completion of repairs which included the installation of a complete forward section from the tip of the nose to almost the pilots seat, a new hydraulic system and landing gear.

Mission #11 - Feb 7, 1945. The Florisdorf oil refinery at Vienna was hit with 100# frag bombs. Many hits in the target area.

Mission # 12 - Feb 16. Obertraubling Airfield at Regensburg, Germany. Twenty-two enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground. V Grand received flak damage.

Mission #13 - Feb 17. The target was oil storage at Pola, Italy. The following article from March 1, 1945 *Flim-Flam*, the 465th Bomb Group newsletter tells it all:

V Grand, the most publicized plane in the 15th Air Force, has been having a run of excitement lately. She's taken quite a battering on her last mission and is currently undergoing repairs at the Service Squadron. Flying as engineer with V- Grand was T/Sgt. Joseph Kruger of the 780th. What happened is best described

by Kruger's words, "We were flying in Dog Box and drew quite a bit of flak. You've heard rain-drops bounce off a roof - that's how V Grand's three minute massage sounded.

"Just before bombs-away, we were hit in the belly three times. The hydraulic lines were hit in five different places, the bomb bay door wouldn't close, the rudder cables were shot out, the left aileron was shot out and the elevator cable was severed so badly it was held together by just two strands.

"We were forced to drop behind the formation to make repairs. I spliced the rudder and elevator cables together and believe it or not, I had to cut part of the plane away to do it.

"Then our oxygen system failed. We dropped from 20,000 feet to 12,000 feet. The pilot, Lt. Kron, was having plenty of trouble trying to fly her home but remembered the theory that V Grand always came back! He yelled over the intercom a couple of times to be on the alert to bail out, but I told him that most of the damage and everything that could be repaired was fixed and I crossed my fingers when I said 'I think we can make it back to our home base.'

"Anyway we did make the field but we circled it three times when I discovered we still needed some more repairs made on the rudder cables. When fixed, Lt. Kron brought her in beautifully with no flaps and brakes on one side.

"When the plane touched the runway, the nose-gear



*V Grand on the Island of Vis. Three Yugoslavian soldiers are guarding the aircraft. The GI mechanic is giving a clasped hand signal because he is happy number 2 engine has started. The bombardiers nose is covered with sheet aluminum for the flight back to Italy. Photo from Dale Messimer.*

seemed to give way. It wasn't until we stopped that I discovered the gear had a flat from a hit by a piece of flying debris over the target. Anyway it helped stop us. The pilot pulled the plane to the side of the runway and we all hopped out expecting her to explode. The bomb bays were smoking badly.

"We found that the smoke was caused by friction. V Grand had 150 holes in her, 50 of which were large enough to put your hand through."

"The intersection of V Grand's left wing is being replaced. She'll lose a batch of names and telephone numbers but there is one thing about V Grand - she always does come home."

Since V Grand received considerable damage, and had major damage previously, there is no record of any more combat missions. After repair it remained in the squadron for training flights until its return to the U.S.

V Grand left Pantanella, with Lt. Steiner of the 780th as pilot, on May 23, 1945. They flew to Manduria then to Gioia on June 3rd. On June 5th they began the trip to the U.S. with stops at Marrakech, the

Azores (2 days) then to Harmon Field, Newfoundland. They ran into weather on this leg, a 10 hour flight. The rookie navigator on board was not experienced in celestial and the radio-compass malfunctioned. They finally found the vicinity of Harmon Field and could hear the tower. They began an instrument descent and discovered the air-speed indicator was froze-up and not working. They went down on the deck and flew around in circles and finally found the field. After landing they ran out of gas on two engines while taxiing. After refueling they continued to Bradley Field, Connecticut arriving five hours later. The crew left the plane and headed for their assigned military camp near their home town to receive a 30 day leave.

V Grand was flown to Ypsilanti, Michigan (Willow Run) on June 29, 1945 for processing and turned over to the Reconstruction Finance Corp. at Altus, Oklahoma on October 26, 1945 where it was later scrapped.

V Grand's fuselage and wings were covered with thousands of signatures from employees on the as-

sembly line. Many had addresses or phone numbers. Some of the crew wrote letters to workers telling them about the successful missions and how much they appreciated flying this well-built aircraft. The Consolidated employee newsletter published a letter from Lt. Leggate after his first mission. Lt. Leggate noted he was looking forward to seeing X Grand.

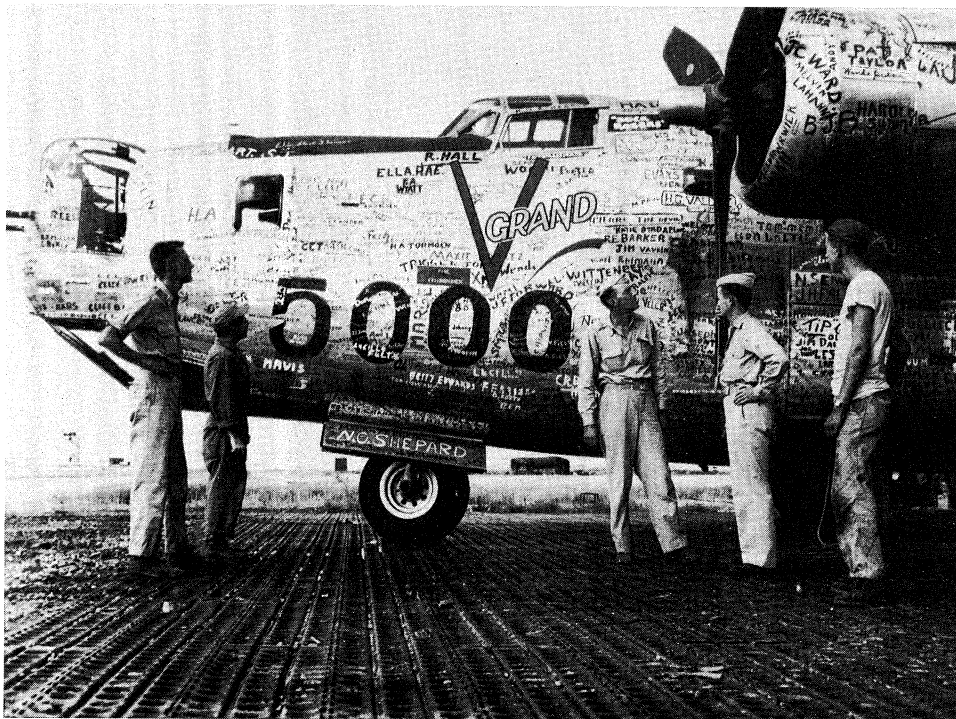
Evidently the 465th Bomb Group decided that the signatures of Consolidated employees on the tail rudders should be preserved - no black and yellow group markings were ever painted on the rudders. Some names disappeared as repair to flak damage had to replace portions with new aluminum skin.

The photo from Dr. Harry Friedman on page one is more than just a photo; it is a story about the two famous WWII heavy bombers. They represent history of aerial warfare, the kind of battles that were never before fought nor will ever be fought again. It also shows how the publicity of one aircraft over the other influenced attempts by the Air Corps to preserve some history of WWII. Here was a great opportunity to save a representation of both of the heavy bombers, but the Memphis Belle went to a museum and V Grand was sentenced to the chopping block.

Information on V Grand came from the 780th Bomb Squadron newsletter, records and photos from General Dynamics (Consolidated-Vultee) obtained by Dale Messimer and loaned to me, 465th Bomb Group Flim-Flam, George Leggate, John Stark, Bill Zewadsky, Jim Alter, Everett Kron, and from the 781st Bomb Squadron records.

The photo on page one from Dr. Harry Friedman was obtained by O. J. Cowart, Jr. Cowart has been working on numerous projects for the Collings Foundation and on one project he met Dr. Friedman who was involved in the restoration of the original Memphis Belle in Memphis and loaned the photo to Cowart.

Some comments from some of the pilots who flew V Grand will be in the next newsletter.



The above photo from Harry Carl's (Squadron Historian) files shows, Left to right - ?, Sgt. Miserlis?, Maj. Ed Moodky, Capt. Harry Carl, and ?. When V Grand first arrived it received a lot of attention.

# THE GLENN MILLER STORY

By Thomas O'Connell

The mystery is solved. We now know quite certainly what happened to Glenn Miller. A Royal Air Force Lancaster bomber was responsible for his disappearance on a flight from England to Paris in December, 1944. The jettisoning of the "Lank's" bombs after an aborted mission to Germany accidentally caused a small plane flying below it to spin into the English Channel. The small plane was carrying Miller, everybody's favorite World War II bandleader.

Why in the world did it take 40 years for the truth to emerge? The answer lies in the word "aborted." If the RAF bomber squadron had completed its bombing mission to Germany, the crews would have been debriefed after the flight was over. At that debriefing, they would have been carefully quizzed by trained intelligence officers to find out everything that had occurred during the mission. The Lancaster pilot and navigator who have now come forward to tell the previously forgotten incident of their 1944 flight would surely have informed authorities of seeing the small plane going into the channel, if that had been the case. But neither RAF crews nor our US Air Corp crews had those debriefing sessions after aborted missions. Theoretically nothing happened to report.

The particular crew in question took off in England, got in formation and headed for their target, the railway yards at Siegen, Germany. Then the weather deteriorated and before the planes crossed into Germany they were ordered to return to base. Under such circumstances the procedure in both air forces was to jettison the bombs into the channel. It would have been dangerous to land back in England with all those heavy volatile bombs aboard.

There was apparently one key procedural difference between the RAF and US Air Corp; in aborted missions the RAF bombs exploded and ours were dropped unarmed.

Ours didn't explode; they sank to the bottom of the channel. I don't know why the RAF didn't do it the same way.

I was a bombardier on the crew of a US Army Air Corp bomber and flew missions from England to Europe similar to the one the "Lank" was on. I never armed our bombs until it was absolutely clear we were going to drop them on the target. In the event of jettisoning on an aborted mission the impact of our bombs on the friendly craft below would have been much less. Apparently it was the shock waves from the exploding bombs that caused the little Norseman aircraft carrying Glenn Miller to fall into the sea. If the bombs had been from a USAF plane, Miller might be playing his lovely music even now.

Apparently the weather was really terrible that day, December 15, 1944. An early inquiry to the RAF about its possible inadvertent, involvement in Miller's disappearance elicited the reply the "not even the pigeons were flying that day." But recently the RAF crew's navigator, who now lives in South Africa, wrote an article about his suspicion of his plane's involvement in Miller's disappearance to be published in a South African newspaper. He thus set in motion a sequence of events which resulted in a further investigation of RAF records. It turned out that, true, no RAF bombing missions were officially recorded for that December date, but, yes, there was this one flight of 150 Lancasters which had been sent out but then ordered back.

What prompted the navigator to remember now that his fellow crew members had seen a Norseman D-64 crash in the channel that day after their jettisoned bombs had exploded? He saw a rerun of the movie *The Glenn Miller Story* in South Africa. As a further irony, he had first seen the movie in 1954, and had realized then that his crew's bombs might have been responsible for Miller's death. But when he approached newspaper reporters on the matter then they didn't pay any attention.

## 8th AF Gunners transferred to 15th AF

*Sometime in mid 1944 the Eighth Air Force decided to eliminate nose gunners in the B-24s. We received some of these men at various times. Robert McGee wrote a letter to Harry Carl two years ago about his assignment to Pantanella.*

"I received the 1991 roster and thought I would make a few corrections and additions. You may want to enter them. I am one of five unassigned gunners that came from the Eighth Air Force during the Fall of 1944. We were never assigned to crews. As near as I can recall they were the following; Roy E. Hicks, Anthony F. Nocine, Andrew N. Marcellina, myself, and if I remember correctly, S/Sgt Corbin.

"We were five of a group of 500 that came from England on a Limey tub. We were in a convoy and as we were the slowest ship, we were afraid that the convoy would run off and leave us if anything happened. Some of us manned the 20mm AA guns. Nothing happened and we landed at Naples. I think we went to Bari by train, then to a replacement center and to the 465th.

"Our tent was at the bottom of the hill, across the road from the mess hall. I remember when the ammo dump blew up. We went up the hill to see the excitement. I believe it started when a couple 1000 pound bombs were being rolled off a truck and one let go. The biggest piece of the truck was the engine block and it was about the size of a watermelon. The remainder of the Italian laborers quit (of course) and were lined up at the road looking for rides. The incendiary cluster-bombs were putting on quite a show.

"I hope this letter can help you fill a few more gaps in the roster."

*I received a letter from Milt Levinson, another Eighth Air Force nose gunner reassigned to Pantanella. Here is his story.*

I arrived in England towards the end of August 1944 with my crew

and found we were assigned to the 393 Bomb Group at Warrington, England. We were given more intensified training and just prior to our first mission, I was given one hour's notice that I was shipping out to Italy with a group of nose gunners. The 8th AF had reduced their crews to 9 men with the navigator flying the nose gun position. I was quite agitated to say the least, after training together as a crew for over three months with men I had gotten to know and trust.

Thirty four gunners shipped out from our bomb group to Glasgow, Scotland where we met the British ship, Arundel Castle. The ship slowly boarded men and women from a variety of countries. There were over 500 gunners plus ATS girls from England and EFI girls, Wrens and many Canadians. It promised to be a very interesting voyage from the many smiles that were sent our way!

Included in the passengers were a number of French soldiers that had been repatriated from the Germans. Many were crippled or ill and they were bound for Algiers.

I was told that the route our ship was taking to Italy was a perilous one due to German submarines. This is the first time since the war started that a convoy would travel via the Irish Sea, around the Rock of Gibraltar, stopping at Malta, then to Naples, Italy.

I met a friend from Philadelphia who also was one of the gunners. We spent a lot of time together and met a pair of Scotch Wacs on deck one evening. I noticed many of the English and Scottish girls have very fair complexions, and have insatiable appetites for smoking and meeting the Yanks.

We departed Glasgow on October 7, 1944 and sailed through the calm Irish Sea. When we reached the Bay of Biscay, the seas became very rough and everyone lost their appetites.

Finally we reached the Rock of Gibraltar and all of us were ordered below decks. Our first sight of land was Oran. All that we could see were white flat buildings. Later Algiers and Tunis came into view.

We became acquainted with some of the ship's crew. One sailor from Scotland had a twin brother who was killed in the ill-fated raid at Dieppe. His older brother was shot down over Germany. His girl friend and her family were all wiped out in an air raid that demolished their home.

The Arundel Castle finally reached Malta in a bright burst of sunshine. A deep harbour ran through the center of the city. It looked like a city from another century. High seawalls and buildings were of Arabic or Turkish design. The area had been heavily bombed as evidenced by the masts of ships that were above the water line, the rest buried under the sea.

The ship finally dropped anchor in the harbour and immediately small boats rowed up to the ship from all directions holding up their wares and yelling about their fine quality and prices. The local small merchants knew there were a lot of GIs aboard anxious to buy a souvenir to take home. After much haggling, the item was bought for about one third of the asking price. The sale was transacted by exchanging the money for the item by a rope and bucket over the side.

All was serene until some young boys pulled up to the ship and started waving bottles and hollering, "Vino, one dollar." Business picked up quickly and the bottles came aboard like a hoard of locusts. By six o'clock it resembled New Years Eve. Men became drunk and riotous, then the C.O. confined all men to their quarters for the evening.

The ship docked within 20 feet of the sidewalk of the town. Forty seven men decided to visit the town and tied their

clothes on top of their heads and proceeded to swim ashore. The C.O. in desperation commissioned a few of our men as emergency MPs and sent them ashore to comb the local watering holes and bring the men back. That same evening relations became strained between the British and the Americans. Limies were having their evening bingo party in the mess hall. The Yanks visited the game and decided to have some fun. The local wine helped the situation along. Words were exchanged, a bottle was thrown and the fight was on!

Naples was reached a few days later. Liberty ships dotted the area and masts of sunken ships were visible, evidence of the severe bombings that had taken place.

I saw my first boat-load of German prisoners enroute to the States. After leaving the ship we proceeded to an area to wait for our trucks and a few of us started eating our K-rations and threw the excess on the ground. We were astounded to see the small Italian children scramble for the scraps. It was at this point the true impact of the war struck home.

A few days later our contingent of gunners were each given 4 boxes of K-rations and some burlap bags. We then boarded a string of wooden box cars that were German and Italian. I finally arrived at Bari and was assigned to the Carl Dahl crew as a replacement nose gunner. My true adventure was about to unfold.



*Did you know there were Italian POWs working out of Group Headquarters? The photo shows a truck load leaving Pantanella for their homes at the end of the war.*

## Pierre Kennedy Recalls a Mission.

In response to a letter about a particular mission I received a reply from Pierre J. J. Kennedy and this is what he recalls, "In response to your question, I never flew with a General. To my knowledge, Lt. Col. C. J. Lokker was the highest ranking officer that I flew with. It was on September 22 and the target was the railway work shops in Munich.

"While in my turret, I rarely turned to see what was happening in the waist, so I missed Col. Lokker coming back to take pictures. But I do vividly remember Col. Lokker calling me on the intercom, 'Tail gunner, how does our box look? Are our planes closed in? Take the signal lamp/blinker, and send out letter 'A' to tell the other pilots to close in.' A few minutes later he called, 'Are all our planes closed in yet?'"

"I had wondered what the contraption was that took half the floor space in my turret, and had decided to toss it out of the turret to make more room for my feet, when Col. Lokker called. Luckily, I had been a Boy Scout, and knew Morse Code, so I picked up the blinker, and very nervously tried to figure out that strange object. Finally, I discovered how it worked, so I began flashing out the letter 'A,' from left to right, through my turret plexi-glass. My answer to Col Lokker was perhaps, 'they look good to me, sir.' (With a sigh of relief).

"I have never seen any reference

to tail gunners signalling like this from the lead plane. Do you recall that command pilots had tail gunners do this?

"My parents kept all our WWII correspondence, so I have letters written to me by my Father & Mother which were returned to them from Italy, having a big red M on the envelop, with a handwritten "Missing, C. J. Lokker, Lt. Col. AC." A few weeks later, and he was also missing, and met his destiny."

*In a letter to Pierre, tail gunner on my crew, I had asked if he had flown with Ernie Van Asperen when he flew with a General from Wing Headquarters. I remember Pierre's mission very well since it was my fifth mission and I flew with Col. Lokker on this day also. The crew was made up of some of my crew with other 781st men.*

*I was nervous also since we were wing lead, and I believe Air Force lead, and as we were approaching the Alps Col. Lokker tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Take-over as I want to go back to the waist to take some pictures." It was an older plane with A-5 auto pilot which I was not as familiar with as the C-1 I trained with, and as soon as Col. Lokker left his seat the lead fighter plane called noting they would be late getting to the rendezvous. He wanted to know our position, etc. It was fortunate a good experienced navigator was aboard to help out.*

*And I don't remember the signalling in formation. Does anyone?*

## From Frank Hylla's Diary

*On 30 June 1944 Frank Hylla was flying with his crew, the Cauble crew, as co-pilot on a mission to Blechhammer. The pilot, Ray Cauble was ill and was replaced by John Dickey. They were shot down after an attack by German fighters. From his diary he notes that he did not make comments every day since there were many days nothing really happened - same old stuff.*

June 30, 1944- "I've had it!" Shot down over Lake Balaton at 10:30 A.M. Taken to the Hungarian Military Hospital at 4:00 P.M.

July 3 - Jerry (Jolicoeur) and I were transferred to a civilian hospital

July 10 - One of the saddest days, Jerry died at 4:10 P.M. from burns received.

July 11 - Jerry was buried.

July 20 - I was transferred back to the military hospital.

August 8 - Went out to visit Jerry's grave. Also see where bombs were dropped.

August 9 - Left for Budapest for interrogation. Not a bad trip.

August 13 - My first interrogation. Confined to solitary.

August 22 - My second interrogation. Full of surprises. Left for Stalag-Luft 3.

August 26 - Arrived Stalag-Luft 3. Met Willie Hunt, Boy! What cakes and pies these Kriegies make.

August 28 - Wrote my first letter home.

December 20 - One of the happiest days - my first letter from Florence.

December 25 - Had quite a bash. Sixth Christmas from home. Went to midnight Mass. The Red Cross Christmas parcels really are the



Lt. Col. C. J. "Jack" Lokker in the control tower

thing.

January 1, 1945 - Happy New Year! Morale of the camp was zero, zero.

January 20 - Rumors! Rumors! We might evacuate to Sagan. Hell no, they can't do it.

January 27 - It happened!! Show was going on when Colonel Goodrich steps up on the stage and says, "We leave in 30 minutes!" What a flap! Left at 10:30 PM.

January 28 - We hiked 30 kilometers 'til 9:30 AM. Slept in an old barn, ate, etc.. Cold as hell, pushed out again at 7 AM for Muskrau, 35 kilometers away, surprising everyone. It was one of the toughest hikes in my army career. We holed up in an old glass factory at 2 AM.

January 30 - We stayed at the glass factory today, resting up. Some of the boys made sleds, saw a lot of civilian evacuees.

January 31 - Left for Spremberg at 8:30 AM. Arrived at 2:30 PM. Had some hot barley soup - all you wanted. Marched to train station and got on train at 6:30 PM.

February 3 - Arrived at Moosberg, slept in a barn two days. Got deloused, and got to our new quarters. Two hundred eighteen men, 35 foot by 80 foot, hardly any cooking facilities. Happy day! Red Cross parcels! First one since Sagan.

February 4 - Got my sack pretty well fixed up. Have one of the best in the block. Getting optimistic again.

February 19 - Went back through the delouser.

February 22 - Came back to the barracks, saw P-38's, P-51's. Also heard bombs, air raid on.

February 25 - More P-51's. Also saw a lot of heavy bombers, someone saw one ship explode. Must have hit Munich.

February 26 - Sad news. Only

enough Red Cross parcels for one week.

February 27 - Air raid again, late soup. Went to see the Doc about repatriation.

March 2 - Went before the German Doc. I'm in, simply pass the Swiss board (like hell).

March 4 - One hell of a day. Strictly goon rations - no parcels! Morale zero, zero.

March 8 - Rumors of parcels in, everyone is looking forward, found to be Pukka.

March 10 - Happy days are here again. Four men to a parcel. Morale 100%. First time I was full for a week. Potatoes, meal and beans, a quarter can made into a stew bread pudding and a sauce made of Klim (canned milk), sugar, water and jam. Red Cross is a wonderful organization. Also wrote to Mom; listened to boys singing until 1 AM.

March 11 - Had the best meal so far - spam and eggs, potatoes with milk cheese, raisin pie with whipped cream. There are Germans crossing the Rhine. Let's keep up the good news! It won't be long now, we hope!!

March 12 - Rumors that 40 Red Cross GI trucks came in from Switzerland with Red Cross food parcels.

March 13 - Another air raid on. Seen lots of planes - B-24's, several P-51's. Someone saw one chute come out. Ho, Hum, another unhappy Kreigie.

March 15 - Boy! What a flap! FULL PARCELS!! Never a better day in goonland. Air raid.

March 19 - One rumor that turned out to be a fact. Actually saw white GI trucks! Also announced that good rations were to be cut. Air raid held up parcels.

March 21 - First full parcel issue - are we happy. Air raid again. One of the longest. Noon soup arrived at

3:45 PM. Chocolate layer cake topped with apricots and a fudge layer. Yesterday, apricot pie with fudge icing and condendo. Boy, its wonderful stuff. Must have some when I get home. By the way, made a grill for sandwiches. Grilled spam and cheese sandwiches which are out of this world.

March 22 - Big flap! Three hours evening appeal - someone missing. God, we are hungry.

March 23 - Picture parade. Stayed out during air raid. B-24's and P-51's go to the target and back. Had big scare, some square-head bombardier kicked out a couple of bombs. We all hit the deck. They landed a half mile from us. One boy upset a big pudding he was cooking. Now we know how the people feel. First Canadian parcels.

March 28 - Went to confession. It certainly is wonderful to go in a place like this.

March 31 - One helluva big flap. Someone missing from morning appell. Took four hours again preparing big bash for Easter Sunday. Next time I help prepare a holiday bash I hope I'll be helping my darling wife. Everyone is optimistic as heck. The war should be over in two weeks, April 15. P-51's do a strafe job.

April 1 - Easter Sunday, went to Communion. Eggs, corned beef, potatoes, grilled sandwiches, corn for breakfast. Corned beef stew, gedoing cake for dinner. Moved into Mess 2.

April 2 - Really filled up for the first time for a long time, sure had a treat. Beans for supper, boy, I feel this damn war will be over before April 15.

April 5 - Another picture parade. Boy, I really do want my picture now. Luftwaffe has taken over the camp.

*Frank Hylla's diary will continue in a future news. His spirits pick up as Patton overruns the German Army and liberates the camp.*

# MAIL CALL



**Ernest Magmore** (Ordnance) from Tomball, TX writes to O. J. Cowart, "The Pantanella News is great. Lots of information many of us didn't know about the B-24. Old pictures bring back many memories.

"I've been busy with my garden, the lawns, flowers and trees. I have over an acre and keep it groomed.

"My wife had aneurysm and surgery, but is doing well. I had quadruple by-pass, but staying on the go. I have two sons living here. We fish, hunt and loaf together. We're working on the coming deer season now. We make sausage by mixing in some wild hog meat.

"My grandson is visiting now. He is on leave from the Carrier USS George Washington.

"The people here are so close and friendly. I've enjoyed it since I moved down in '85 from Ohio."

**Robert F. Arnold** (Engineering) suggested in a letter that the 781st give a calendar to each member as they pay their dues each year. He also inquired about other PX items. We will take his request under consideration.

**Lou Kurek** (Dickey Engineer) sent a note along with his dues, "Thanks from an old soldier for the memories of our wonderful 781st and its gallant men."

**John Kennedy's** (Pilot) note, "Thanks, all of you for your outstanding effort and work on holding this old gang together. We are really looking forward to Tucson in 1994."

**Andy Getsy** (Communications). "I enjoy reading news about the men I know. John Messmore, our First Sergeant, came to see me last year. He is in good shape and hasn't changed much. He called and came to my home. I felt bad we could not do much as I had a stroke a month before. I had open heart surgery

with four by-passes and a valve."

From **John Fountain**, (Radar Navigator). "I just received my *Pantanella News* and time stopped for about an hour while I devoured every word. Enclosed is my check for my current dues and some to help out any way needed. You guys have done a magnificent job in allowing a lot of us to relive a piece of our lives that we wouldn't want to experience again, but one that we will always cherish and feel proud of.

"I called Hal Nease, Jr., another radar navigator, when I saw in the news that he was located. I hope to see him in Tucson."

**Stan Winkowski** wrote he is heading for the east coast again for Christmas and returning in March. Stan and Alice are our two most traveled members!

On their last trip east in July their son and daughter in Rochester, NY, surprised them with a 50th wedding anniversary. Stan said it was a far cry from their base Chapel wedding at San Antonio (SAAC) where the attendance was the bride and groom, two cadet buddies and the chaplain! The 50th had 70 adults, 30 children, a Judge to renewal of vows, and a feast catered under a tent.

A letter from **Connie Hamilton** (Widow /Donald Hamilton). "I enjoyed the October '93 *Pantanella News* - especially the photo of Telio Giammarco. I had the picture ever since 1944 in Don's photo album. When we met in San Antonio reunion I gave Al Nagel the picture. I wondered why it was never used. I asked him at the time to return it to Telio or to me. Don and Telio were both on the Ellison crew and have stayed very close friends through the years. We never went "home" to Massachusetts without a visit with Telio and Anna.

"Also, I enjoyed the article from Glen Haywood of the Ellison crew, and the note from Lowell Myers, also on the Ellison crew.

"Now you see why I especially enjoy the *"Pantanella News"*

## BITS & PIECES

The IXth annual reunion of **Bombardiers, Inc.** has been changed to a new date and place: 27 Feb - 4 Mar 1994 on shores of Mobile Bay. Contact Ned Hunphreys, 500 Jackson St, Apt 1407, Daphne, AL 36526-7029. Tel: 205/626-3920.

Also, Bombardiers, Inc. have a Bombardiers History Book available for \$54.95 including shipping.

## AIRCRAFT STATISTICS

John Beitling, B-24 Historian, has been keeping records and has the B-24 combat losses for our squadrons as follows: 780th, 19 - 781st, 17 - 782nd, 16 - 783rd, 29.

What is lacking in his records are the planes flown back to the U.S. If you have any specific letter, name or number please let us know.

## BADLER - MISSION #10

**Bernie Badler** would like to write up mission #10, **May 22, 1944 to Valmonte**. To do so he would like to hear from anyone who was on that mission and remembers some details. Bernie remembers Jack Van Slyke as one pilot. As Bernie recalls it, they encountered a lot of clouds and when they broke out on top there were only four planes, Maj. McKenna and three others. McKenna wanted to know if the others wanted to go to the target with him. All did and they dropped to 15,000 feet, got a real reception from flak over the target, but they all made it home.

Bernie was co-pilot on Ray Branch's crew. His address is 18449 Crest Ave., Castro Valley, CA 94546. Drop Bernie a note to help him fill in his story!

## ADDRESS CHANGES

**Melvin L. Derry**, 130 Lewis St., Edgewater, FL 32141. Phone 904 345-0339

**Thomas L. Williams, M.D.**, 1008 Stone Stack Rd., Bethlehem, PA 18015. Phone 215 838-2817.

## IT'S A SMALL WORLD

Recently I had to go to San Diego for a business seminar. At the reception the first evening I met several people associated with the meeting. One was a lady representing a company which sells products to some of the members. After a short visit we exchanged cards before separating for the evening. Later I looked at the card and the name was Joann McKenna. I immediately thought of Col. McKenna since he lived in the area. I looked at the address and then I was quite certain she was Col. Mac's daughter.

The next morning I visited her sales booth and questioned her about her brother, Jonathan, etc. She was very surprised, but then she said she had seen my name and thought I had something to do with WWII. I then showed her a copy of the *Pantanella News*. She immediately called Col. Mac - we had a nice chat, and later I enjoyed a pleasant evening with Col. Mac, Virginia and Joann. A lot of memories were recalled from the days at Pantanella.

I'm sure you all recall Col. Mac's plane and our squadron insignia, Chief Jo-Jon. The name was made up from the names of his daughter,

Joann, and son, Jonathan. It was ironic that the meeting was the annual meeting of the Indian tribes of California and Nevada.

Col. Mac is looking forward to the reunion in Tucson.



As you know the 15th Air Force Headquarters moved to Travis AFB from March AFB. However, nothing else has changed at March. The 15th Air Force Association is operating at March as usual along with a major reserve unit and Air Guard operations.

The 15th Air Force Memorial reached a major milestone with the dedication of the first phase of the Memorial on the 50th anniversary on November 1. The first phase includes a large bronze casting of the 15th Air Force WWII insignia, a bronze memorial plaque, and a bronze bust of General Doolittle.

The March Field Museum has been moved to a new site - still on March AFB, but more visible from the nearby freeway with a direct

access ramp. With its location adjacent to the San Diego freeway which is traveled by hundreds of thousands of tourists each year, they expect the Memorial will have high visibility and our service and sacrifice will truly "be remembered."

The Fifteenth Air Force Association is inviting your membership. I signed up for the life membership many years ago and find their publication, *Sortie*, interesting with information on our days in Italy. Regular membership is \$20 per year. Contact **Fifteenth Air Force Association, Box 6325, March Air Force Base CA 92518.**

## FOLDED WINGS

**Joe H. Simon** (Engineering) passed away May 31, 1993.

**Glen A. McCabe** (Zalk nose gunner) passed away June 10, 1993.

**Lyle A. Hermanson** (Nelson Guner) passed away August 5, 1993. Reported by Harry Reuss.

**James J. Lyons** (Roberts' Bombardier) passed away November 24, 1993.

Mrs. Charlene Simon reported her husband, Joe, had open heart surgery March 8, 1993, had many complications and died in the hospital.

Mrs. Nancy McCabe reported Glen's death in a letter to Harry Carl. She noted that Glenn had been very sick for a year with lung cancer and the very last gift he received, and treasured, was a book of the aircraft - his beloved B-24.

Don Barrett sent a note on Jim Lyons death.

In a phone conversation with Jim Lyon's wife, Emma Lou, I learned he lost a three year battle with cancer.

*We extend our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of our comrades whom we loved and respected. We give them a final salute.*



Col. McKenna, on left, with his plane Chief Jo-Jon. And you all know what is on the other side - *Kommen Holen Zie Mir Er "Misgeborn."* - in English, "Come 'N' get me you bastards."

**REUNION 94  
HOLIDAY INN PALO VERDES  
TUCSON, AZ  
OCT 13 to 16, 1994  
BIRTHPLACE OF THE  
781st BOMBSQUADRON and  
465th BOMB GROUP  
OUR FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

## More About Tucson

An article from a brochure on Tucson gives the following details on more sights of interest.

A favorite excursion is the wonderful Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, just 14 miles from town and called "the most distinctive zoo in the United States" by the *New York Times*. A good way to go is by the scenic route from the north, driving west on Speedway and over Gates Pass. Most of the exhibits - more than 200 animal species and 1,200 kinds of plants - are on display outdoors, in the natural desert setting, with the blue Arizona sky as a roof.

The museum displays are arranged in complete communities of plants and animals. They focus on the Sonoran Desert and nearby ecosystems, and display only native species - from invertebrates and reptiles to larger mammals. There

are javelinas and jaguarundis, coyotes and coatimundis, margays and ocelots, and more. There's a riparian habitat with playful otters and hard-working beavers you can view from both above and below the waterline. In a dark limestone cave are cutaway views of burrows and dens where animals retreat from the heat of the

desert day.

A walk-through aviary houses Sonoran Desert birds and plants. It's fascinating. The "convergent evolution" display is an eye-opening look at how plants from completely different families and from halfway around the world have evolved very similar survival characteristics. It is advisable to visit the museum early in the morning to see the animals before they seek cool shelter from the sun. However, just about closing time, we were lucky enough to watch an old jaguar stir and begin his evening pacing.

Just about 10 minutes drive from the Desert Museum is the second most popular visitor attraction in Arizona, after the Grand Canyon. Old Tucson Studios has been a Western film location for over 300 films, TV episodes, and commercials. Staged gunfights, featuring

stunt men and old sets from television shows like "High Chaparral" and "Young Riders," and movies like "Rio Bravo," "Three Amigos," and "Young Guns II" will thrill you. Lots of food, fun and frontier fantasy.

Future news will have more on Tucson including Pima Air Museum, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, and other points of interest.

**Ken Sutton**, Reunion Chairman, has just returned from a trip to Turkey and is back to work and ready to complete plans for the next reunion. Registration will begin in April. All information and the registration form will be in the April *Pantanella News*.

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## SPECIAL PX ITEM

We have a new item that many of you might be interested in. It is a white cowhide garment leather 781st insignia, the "Pissed-off Indian". It is just like the original ones at Pantanella, the same size, 7 inches tall, full color, etc. Ready to sew on your jacket! \$10 plus shipping charge of \$1 for a total of \$11.

Thanks to Calvert Crawford and Frank Ambrose who have worked a year on getting this project completed. Send orders and check made out to: **Calvert Crawford, 5515 Beech St., Fair Oaks, CA 95628. Phone 916 961-7298.**

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## TWO RED FLARES

(Tune - Three Blind Mice)

Two red flares, Two red flares  
See how they shine, see how they shine  
They shoot from the tower  
They blossom out like a flower  
You're back in the sack within an hour  
With two red flares.  
*In case you forgot, two red flares are a stand-down.*





*Once again the 465th Bomb Group markings will adorn the right rudder of All American. The 465th Bomb Group was one of the two largest donors for 1993. Thanks to all of you who helped, including Group Headquarters men and our sister squadrons, the 780th, 782nd, and 783rd Bomb Squadrons. The photo shows All American flying over San Francisco in 1991.*

**781st BOMB SQUADRON ASSOC**  
2 Mt Vernon Lane, Atherton, CA 94027



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