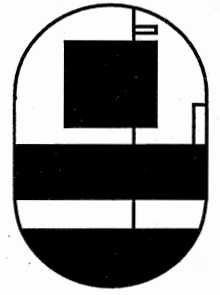




PANTANELLA NEWS



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NUMBER 43

MARSTON MAT Better Known as "The Steel Mat Runway"

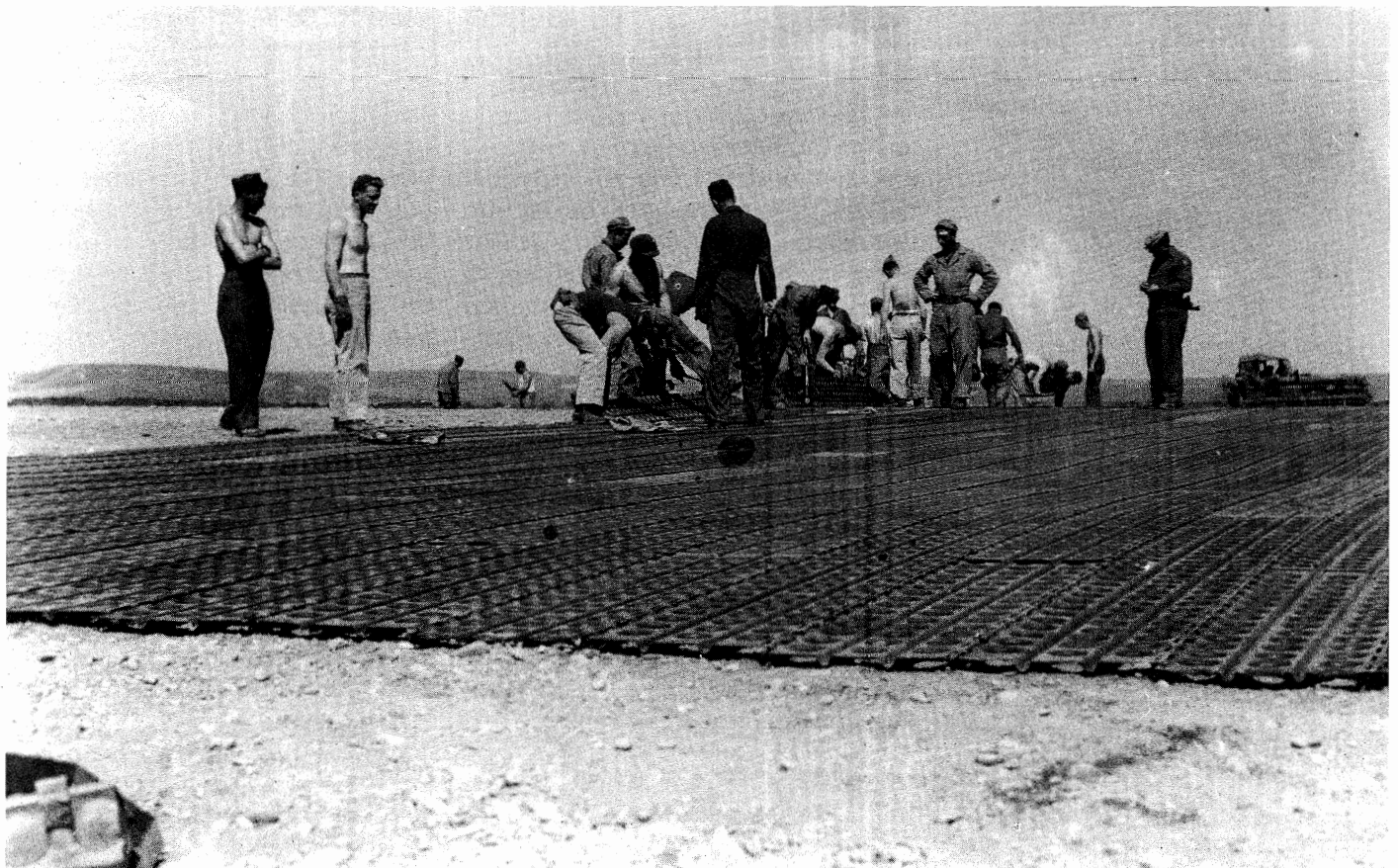
The earliest photos of Pantanella Army Air Base show the laying of the steel mat runways. The 464th and 465th Bomb Group were assigned to Pantanella, but held up in Africa until the runways were completed ready for the heavy bombers. The ground echelon arrived March 28, 1944 and, among other things, helped the 517th Air Service Group attached to the 464th Bomb Group and the 518th Air Service Group attached to the 465th Bomb Group lay the Swiss cheese stamped steel

mats. The first aircrews arrived on April 20th. Ken Sutton remembers it took quite awhile to grade the runway area, but less than two weeks to lay the steel mat.

Each mat was ten feet long, fifteen inches wide, covering 12.5 square feet, weighing 66.2 pounds with a surface resembling Swiss cheese stamped out of steel. When locked together with steel clips 60,000 of them created a durable all weather surface 5,000 feet long and 150 feet wide. The mats routinely

accepted punishment from the 65,000 pound B-24 and frequently stood up under B-24 crashes when returning heavily damaged from a bombing raid. The only occasional damage occurred when a steel clip would give way and damage the belly of a B-24 or go off whistling in the air and make the ground personnel look for cover.

During WWII many airfields were constructed with this material. One of its greatest assets was the speed in which an airfield could be



Men from the 517th & 518th Air Service Group laying the steel mat runways at Pantanella Army Air Base. The simple design of the mat made it easy to install and repair. Locked together by a hook-and-slot design and secured by steel spring clips, sections of runway could be removed with a pry bar.

built. It was generally known as "Marston mat" and led many to believe someone named Marston invented it. Others thought because it was invented in England and manufactured near Marston Moor, England. The name comes from a whistle-stop on the Seaboard Coast Line Railway, thirty-five miles west of Fort Bragg, NC.

The planning for the Marston mats was begun by the Army Air Corps in 1939. The Army Air Corps was aware of experimenting by France and Britain with steel grids, but with the heavy fighters and heavy bombers the U. S. needed a more rugged mat than was being tested.

The Marston mat was designed by Gerald G. Greulich of the Carnegie Illinois Steel Co. and by many contributions by the Army Corps of Engineers. In 1940 it was tested at Langley Field, VA.

It was in November, 1941 on a low hill a mile east of US Route 1 and two miles northeast of Marston, NC where the material was first put to use. That was during the Army's Carolina Maneuvers just before Pearl Harbor.

The test strip was 150 feet by 3,000 feet and was operational for only a few weeks. When maneuvers ended, the runway was dismantled and hauled to Langley Field, VA—taking with it the name of Marston. From then on it became known as "Marston mat." Today, it is simply known as "PSP"—PIERCED STEEL PLANKING.

Besides the advantage of being made into a runway in a short period of time it was convenient to ship. A bundle of thirty pieces stood less than twenty-eight inches high. Enough mats for a runway 150 feet by 5,000 feet weighted 1,986 tons and occupied 41,600 cubic feet or about 21 percent of a Liberty ship's payload.

The material was easy to handle for the installers. One man could lift a section and as a rule the only tool necessary was a sledge to beat it into the earth. They locked together along each edge of a mat's length with thirty slots and thirty L-shaped hooks cut and bent from the mat's edge and secured by steel spring clips after they were attached.

In addition to the many airfields constructed with Marston mats in Europe they also performed well in Africa and the South Pacific. They were great to prevent dust in the African service where airplane engines had only half the life between overhauls. In the South Pacific the mats worked well even though on soft ground caused by rains.

In 1941 a 3,000 foot runway was cleared and laid in eleven days. Later the time was shortened as techniques improved.

No other country produced any similar type runways. It is ranked as one of the most versatile and ultimately devastating "secret weap-



Photo by Harry Carl is believed to be Captain G. H. Scott, CO of the 518th Air Service Group.

ons" of World War II.

Any aircrew member will remember their first landing on the Marston mats. I will never forget my first landing on the Azore Islands. We left Newfoundland early on the morning of August 21, 1994 and ran into a violent Atlantic storm about an hour out. We were in the storm and clouds for most of the 8 hour and 40 minute flight. The crew was nervous from all the bad weather, but we broke out just a few miles before the Azores. I made an approach from out over the sea and touched down at the beginning of the runway. We experienced the noise of the steel mats, but I knew about them and don't remember being frightened. Later after we parked on a hardstand and got out of the airplane I learned that back in the waist the men had the side windows open and were looking out over the ocean when the wheels touched down. All they could see was water as the runway was extended out beyond the land and into the ocean. My ball gunner, Joe Cox, heard the noise and thought we had crashed at sea and began climbing out of the window. One of the other crew members knew what was going on and grabbed him before he got out!

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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.

APULIA - ITALY, PART III

By Byron Thompson

In 1003, a band of forty Norman pilgrims recently arrived from the Holy Land helped repel a Saracen raid on Salerno and joined the service of the prince of Salerno. From then Normans continued to arrive in increasing numbers climaxed by the coming of three sons of Baron Tancred de Hauteville. In 1025 these three accompanied the byzantine General Maniakes in an attack on the Saracens in Sicily and there were credited with great deeds of valor. When they returned to the mainland they felt justified in seizing several towns of Apulia as their reward. They bestowed the title of Count of Apulia on the eldest, William Bras de Fer, and organized, in 1043, a military constitution for the new state, whose capital was Melfi. Shortly after this they were joined by a fourth brother, Robert Guiscard.

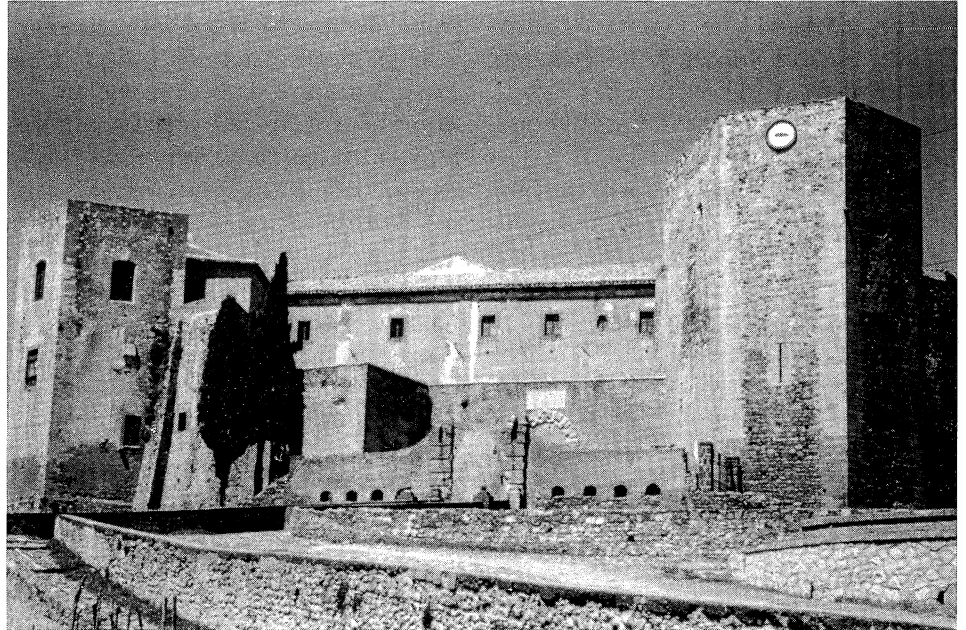
Melfi, just 13 miles to the south and west of Pantanella is an important agriculture, forestry and tourist center, producing, cereals, olive oil, wine, and fruit, especially apples. It is located in what is now Basilicata region, rather in Apulia. The town suffered earthquakes in the nineteenth century and was rebuilt in 1851. Its cathedral was built in 1153 and rebuilt in 1281. Chaplain Blough's tour guide says "...the castle of Melfi, built originally about 1000 and rebuilt in 1250. It is now (1944) owned by a lady who is a descendant of the early lords. She is married to an American Army Official and lives in Rome. Her modernized apartment in the castle, with its electric hot water heaters, tile bath and modern furniture, make quite a contrast with the rest of the castle. The caretaker will act as our guide and will take us through the entire structure pointing out such places of interest as the dungeon, torture chambers and banquet hall." The estimated population of Melfi (1944) is 16,000.

In 1041, the Lombards and Normans defeated the Byzantines in three battles on the mainland and possessed impregnable fortresses at Melfi and Aversa (just north of

Naples) and were rapidly mopping up the whole of south Italy. All Apulia north of a line between Taranto and Brindisi was in open revolt against the Byzantines. In

brother Humphrey consolidated the Norman rule in Apulia.

By 1055, the Normans under Robert were well on their way to once and for all eliminating the Byzantine



Castle at Melfi, built about 1000 AD and rebuilt about 1250.

April of 1042, George Maniakes, now a Capitan (the highest Byzantine rank outside the Royal family) arrived in Italy. He moved mercilessly against the rebels and just when he appeared to be victorious he was recalled to Constantinople.

In 1051 Pope Leo IX had acquired the city of Benevento and the dispossessed Lombard prince had called in the Normans to plunder and harass his former principality. Pope Leo gathered thirty thousand Lombards and Italians to drive out the Normans, who were led by Robert Guiscard.

In a battle at Vivitate in 1053, Guiscard defeated the Pope's forces and captured Pope Leo IX. In a spirit of cooperation (and in return for his freedom) the Pope agreed to bless Robert's troops and confirm their conquests, past and future. This agreement was the beginning of the Norman role of Protector of the Church which brought them much honor and profit in later years. Armed with the Pope's blessing, Robert set out to win the whole of the Calabrian peninsula, while his

presence in Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily. In 1056 Robert, upon the death of Humphrey, declared himself "By the grace of God and St. Peter" the Duke of Apulia and Calabria and three years later he was confirmed by Pope Nicholas II. By 1071, the Byzantine rule in the southern provinces was finished. By 1080, Guiscard had subdued the last Greek cities along the Apulian coast, from Bari to Tarrentum. The republic of Amalfi made him a Duke, on condition that her municipal freedom be respected.

Robert Guiscard was a fascinating character. His name appears frequently in the histories of the Apulia region and with good reason. He was born in Greece in 1015, one of twelve sons of a Norman crusader, Baron Tancred de Hauteville. His center of operations was Venosa, but we know he visited Canosa where his son, Bohemond I, was born (cal057). Of course, the towns were not far apart and he may have been there recruiting soldiers for his mercenary army whose principal occupation seems to have been loot-

ing and stealing. His admirers, and he had a few, characterized him as a man of great counsel, talented, daring and most astute. His detractors, of which there seems to have been many, were less charitable and called him a robber and cattle rustler and gave him the name of "the weasel". He is claimed by many to have been the most dazzling military leader between the time of Julius Caesar and Napoleon. Robert died in 1085 on the Greek island of Cephalonia and his body was brought back to Venosa for burial.

Meanwhile, during a war lasting 28 years (1062-1090) the Norman King Roger (son of Tancred and brother of Robert Guiscard) won all of Sicily from the Saracens and ruled until his death in 1101. He was succeeded by his son, Roger the Younger (King Roger II).

The successors of Robert Guiscard proceeded to eliminate the last vestiges of republican independence in southern Italy and lay the foundations of a grinding feudalism that would drain the lifeblood

of the area for the next seven centuries. In 1127, on the death of Guiscard's grandson, William, Roger II sailed to the mainland and forced the Barons to acknowledge him Duke of Apulia and Calabria. In 1130 he assumed the title of King and this, as well as his right to Naples, was recognized by Pope Innocent in 1138.

In 1152 Frederick of Swabia, nephew of the last King Conrad III, was elected King of the Germans and, on June 18, 1155, Pope Adrian IV crowned him Holy Roman Emperor. He gained the derisive name "Barbarossa" following a particularly bloody siege of the city of Crema in 1159. Frederick I Barbarossa participated in the Second Crusade and initiated the Third

crusade. According to Chaplain Blough's tour guide, Frederick made Venosa his headquarters and left for those crusades from Venosa. While on the Third Crusade he drowned in the Calycadnus (now Gökku) River in Cilicia (now in Turkey) on June 10, 1190.

Venosa (called Venusia by the Romans), is located about 30 miles from Pantanella. It is a very old town, settled by an ancient Italian tribe, the Lucanians. It was taken by the Romans in 291 B.C. and became an important garrison town as it was located on the Appian Way. It was the birthplace of the poet, Horace,

four. Constance died the following year and Frederick was placed under the guardianship of Pope Innocent III. Following numerous concessions (including a vow to go on a Crusade), Frederick was crowned by the Pope Holy Roman Emperor in 1220.

He delayed for many reasons the promised Crusade and was excommunicated by Pope Gregory IX (in 1227) for the delay. He finally led the Fifth Crusade from Brindisi in June of 1228, with the Ban still in effect. Gregory excommunicated him again for this affront and sent an army of marauders into Apulia.

Frederick obtained the surrender of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth and assumed the crown of the Latin kingdom. He then returned to Apulia to deal with the Pope's marauders and was greeted by a third excommunication. Finally (in 1230), he brought the Pope to terms at San Germano and obtained absolution from him.

Frederick merged Apulia (which at that time included Basilicata) into the Kingdom of

Naples during his reign. He spent most of the next five years (about 1230 to 1235) in Apulia, between his castles at Foggia, Melfi, Castel del Monte (near Andria), and Lago Pesole in the central hills.

Foggia is located about 21 miles from the site of Pantanella. Its present (1994) population is about 157,000. This was first a Greek and then a Roman town located near an earlier town called "Arpi", the ruins of which are nearby. It was named for ancient grain storage pits known as "foveae". Frederick II built a castle here which was destroyed by an earthquake in 1731 which leveled most of the town. William the Good of Sicily built a cathedral here in the 12th century. The city is known as a major wool market and also as a



Castle at Venosa. Said to have been built by Frederick II, about 1250 AD.

and the burial place of Robert Guiscard and family members. Its Abbey Church of Santa Trinita was built in 1059 and its cathedral in 1740. Its castle was built in the 15th century and there are Jewish catacombs near Venosa which date from the 4th and 5th centuries.

In 1186 Henry VI, son of King Frederick Barbarossa, married Constance, heiress of the Norman kings of Sicily and southern Italy. When he was crowned Emperor in 1190 he proceeded, with assistance from Genoa, to successfully assert his rule over Sicily. He died in 1197, before he could consolidate his power over the Empire and the crown of Sicily and Henry's claims to other lands of the Empire passed to his son, Frederick II, at the age of



Water point and local gossip center at Lavello.

vegetable and fruit center. It also has a paper mill and a reputation for being plagued with malaria. The latter may, of course, no longer be true. William the Good was the son of William the Bad, and he was the last Norman King of Sicily. If my recollection is correct, Foggia was the headquarters of the 12th Air Force until just about the time we arrived at Pantanella when it was moved to Caserta, north of Naples.

The Castel del Monte, just 11 miles from Andria and perhaps 30 miles from Pantanella was built by Frederick II sometime in the 1200s. It may have been built as a show-place, for certainly it has been that ever since. The castle is situated on a very high hill where it can be seen for many miles and it also provides a stunning view of the surrounding countryside. Andria boasts a cathedral where two of Frederick's wives are buried.

Frederick II was a man of considerable understanding and culture. He could converse with Arab philosophers in their own tongue and he made his court the meeting place between scholars of East and West. The clergy looked at him as an atheist and free-thinker. He founded the University of Naples in 1224. Dante called his Sicilian court the birthplace of Italian poetry.

After leaving Apulia about 1236 he spent the remainder of his reign

trying to recover the north of Italy for his empire and fighting the Popes in the process. On March 20, 1239 he was again excommunicated by Pope Gregon. Frederick prevailed militarily, however, and by the middle of 1240 he had occupied almost all of the States of the Church (almost all of central Italy) Gregory died in 1241 and was succeeded by Innocent IV.

Innocent IV was not innocent but, then very few of the Popes of the middle ages were and probably not many since. He secretly went to Genoa and then to France where he summoned the Council at Lyons in June of 1245 and (on July 17) he, also, excommunicated Frederick and declared him deposed. Conflict with the Church continued until Frederick became ill, in November of 1250, and died at his hunting lodge near the fortress of Lucera.

Of Frederick's six sons only Manfred, Prince of Taranto, his bastard and favorite, was present at the Emperor's death and Frederick left to him the regency of Apulia and Sicily in the name of Conrad, the legitimate heir. He cooperated loyally with Conrad when the latter came to Italy to take up his inheritance. However, when Conrad died at Lavello (ca 1254) Manfred proclaimed himself Regent for his young nephew, Conradin, and four years later he assumed the crown of

Apulia and Sicily.

Lavello is located about ten miles southwest of Pantanella and pretty much on line with our runway. It would have been slightly off to the left of our aircraft continuing on a straight line from takeoff. It is a very small village atop a very steep hill. I was unable to find any claim to fame except for Conrad's death there.

As Manfred began to develop broader territorial interests Pope Alexander IV called for help from France and he was answered by Charles, Count of Anjou and brother of King Louis. The Pope crowned Charles King of Sicily in January of 1266 and in February Charles defeated Manfred's forces on the plain of Grandella, near Benevento, and Manfred lost his life in the battle.

Part #4, and final part, will be in the next Pantanella News.

Thief takes mom's purse

BARI, Italy — An Italian who turned to snatching handbags to finance his drug addiction robbed his own mother by mistake, police in the southeastern port of Bari said Thursday.

They said the mother, who was walking along the street when her son sped past on a motorcycle and snatched her bag, was so angry that she immediately reported him to the police. He was later arrested.

"We were rather surprised by the whole episode, I must admit," a police spokesman said. "It seems he approached her from behind and didn't see her face until it was too late."

This appeared in the Houston Chronicle and was sent in by O. J. Cowart, Jr.

From Flim Flam ROME-ing in ROAM

I followed her ten blocks or more,
A figure trim and neat.
And then at last I saw her face
As she turned off down the street.
And now I'm roaming far and wide
And blood is in my eye;
I'm looking for the guy who said
That figures never lie.

V - J Day 50th Anniversary

By Rick Church, son of
Sam Monroe

In September my wife and I went to Hawaii to participate in the 50th anniversary of the V-J day festivities. What great experiences we had. I hope some of the Squadron Association members had a chance to go, because it was really something to have been part of. Since I did not see anything about this in the last newsletter, I thought I would recount some of our experiences.

On the evening of September 1, we attended a USO style music show at the outdoor amphitheater in the park in Waikiki. The entrance to the amphitheater was bustling with beautifully maintained classic cars from the thirties and forties, dropping off military dignitaries and guests of honor. Military bands played swing music from the thirties and forties. Then, quite unexpectedly, Bob Hope and his wife Delores came on stage and entertained for fifteen or twenty minutes. They are both quite old now (He is 92, I believe), but still able to "do their stuff" — what a thrill. You could almost imagine that it was 1945, and what it must have been like to celebrate the end of the war.

The next day we attended a parade in honor of all World War II veterans. Having friends in Honolulu who are well-placed socially, we were able to view the parade from directly across the street from the reviewing stand where President and Mrs. Clinton, their guests (including the Hopes), military and political dignitaries were seated. It was quite an experience with Marine One flying the president a few blocks away and motorcading him to the reviewing stand. As you might imagine, security levels were very high.

That evening we attended a "hanger dance" on the hangar deck of the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier docked at Pearl Harbor. Again, what a treat. All naval officers were in their dress whites, ladies in their evening gowns and civilian guests dressed appropriate

to the occasion. You could imagine what it must have been like to attend such a function in the hey-day of the military. There were intricate ice sculptures of ships and aircraft. The hangar deck was decorated in fine military fashion, with a buffet, tables for dining and a great dance floor in front of the navy band, again playing dance music from the forties. Later there were private tours of the bridge and carrier tower. The moonlit night from the carrier deck made Pearl Harbor and the Arizona Memorial dazzling sites across the channel. What an evening, and occasion, to remember.

On Sunday, President Clinton presided over a moving ceremony at the Punch Bowl. (Regardless of one's political persuasions or one's feelings about President Clinton not serving in the military, I think you have to give him credit for reconciling his lack of military involvement with the respect such occasions merit when he does preside over them). Later that day there was an air show at Barbers Point.

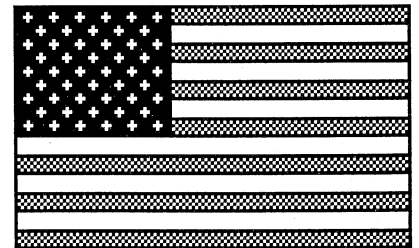
On Monday, September 4, we did a general tour, open to the public, of the USS Carl Vinson, where the hangar dance had been two nights before. Thanks to friends in the Navy we were able to take a private tour of more of the carrier and spent a great deal of time talking to crew members about life aboard an aircraft carrier today. We then went over to Hickam Field for an exhibition of modern military aircraft. A full day of reviewing military hardware, flying and afloat.

On September 5, my wife and I hiked to the top of KoleKole Pass, where the Japanese flew in on the north side of Oahu Island to make their attacking runs on Schofield, Ewa and Pearl. KoleKole Pass is accessible through Schofield Barracks. My wife and I are avid hardcore hikers with proper hiking equipment and a lot of experience hiking in all types of terrain. I tell you this because it was a two hour hike and climb to the top of KoleKole Pass, some of which was treacherous and rough. (We could tell that few people went up as far as we did). I felt like a coast watcher making my

way to a good vantage point for the purposes of reporting ship and troop movements. It just so happened that the soldiers were having automatic weapons practice at Schofield that day and far below us, as we climbed, it literally sounded like a battle taking place. Quite an enhancement to the setting and reason we were there. Once we attained the top of the mountain ridge, having climbed small rock facings and traversed ridges no wider than eighteen inches, the view was spectacular. You could see the north shore off to one side and the south off to the other. The view of the valley below was breathtaking, with cane and pineapple fields in the valley and military installations on both ends of the pass. We could imagine and visualize the flights of Japanese aircraft, including dive bombers and torpedo bombers, coming in over the coast, flying through the pass and breaking off toward their various assignments. Once more, an exhilarating experience and one worth the effort.

The hike and climb up KoleKole Pass ended our V-J Day activities. We spent the rest of the week relaxing and remembering. Having had the study of the Pacific Theater of World War II as a hobby for as long as I can remember, this was a truly moving and memorable trip. We saw things and had experiences which will never be repeated. Certainly, the next big celebration of this event, if there is one, will be without most of the people who were there to participate in this one. Will anyone get to see Bob Hope climb upon a military stage to perform again? I think not.

I think my wife and I got to be a part of the closing of a chapter, a very important chapter of our nation's and our military's history. I hope it was truly appreciated by all.



MAIL CALL



Lewis L. Coghill writes, "Just a few lines to tell you I am still reading the *Pantanella News* and for the most part enjoying it very much. I feel that a little more information on "Where are they now?" would be of interest to those of us still lucky enough to be hanging around. A lot more news about the ground crews would also be of interest to us in the Engineering section. Not all of the members of the Squadron are able to attend the reunions, but we are interested in the former members.

"Where am I? I still live in Chicago even though I retired in 1987. I survived a stroke in 1985. It hasn't slowed me down too much. I still do clowning for the Imperial Shrine Hospitals and the charities they support."

News is always welcome from ground crews or air crews. Others are interested in what you are doing now and what you have done since Pantanella days. If it hasn't been in the Pantanella News let's hear from you.

Lowell Myers sent in some information on a group member, compliments on the newsletter, and the following, "At this stage of my life, I guess I have to be thankful for each day I'm able to get up and about. Just as I figured I was getting pretty well over my back surgery (1992), I find now that I need a new hip and am scheduled for surgery later this month."

From **Ruth Bauer**, "In scanning through the September 1994 roster I noticed an error. William H. Baner is a typing error. The Fair Lawn address is where William H. Bauer lived upon discharge from service. I hope this clears up another "not located."

Thanks for the help. William H. Bauer, Ruth's husband, passed away April 16, 1995. He was with the Engineering Section.

Gale Graham, Group Information

and Education Officer, was the first Group member to join the Life Membership, a badge of honor. Gale added a note, "Please accept this for a life membership in your outstanding organization."

From **Louise Pease**, "The cover story on the *Pantanella News* was a delightful surprise. It was a fine article concerning the S-2 functions of the 465th Bomb Group in Italy, with some good pictures.

"Thanks to Ralph DuBois, O.J. Cowart, Jr., Irv Roberts, and Harry Carl. They were a close group and worked very hard together.

"I would like to have copies of the *Pantanella News* to send to each of our four children. They were very proud of their father and would appreciate some news of his career while he was at Pantanella. They knew him also as a musician, he played the cello in the Lake Charles Symphony, and also was director of Business and Industry, then as an appraiser."

Adrian A. Martin, "I am enclosing my check for life membership in the 781st Association. Having attended all reunions since inception I feel I have received much more than I can give. Just the camaraderie with my crew plus the friendship of others in the organization have made it all worthwhile."

From **Mrs. Ruby Flaherty**, "This is to notify you that my husband, Dennis, (tail gunner - R. J. Smith crew) passed away on November 7th.

Last June 18, 1995 the "All American" B-24 Liberator came to our local airport for public observation, the second year in a row and our community was so honored with its visit. The local TV station came to our home and interviewed Dennis about his B-24 experiences and showed it on TV in conjunction with the plane's visit.

On Veterans Day, November 11th, the day of Dennis' funeral, the TV station re-ran the tape ending it with the announcement of his death and an added special tribute to him as a veteran.

He enjoyed being a part of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association and attended all reunions except San Antonio."

From **Gene Krzyzynski**, "I just received your newsletter and was particularly disturbed about the story concerning Amanda. I passed the article around our P.O.W. support group and they were equally upset. We all congratulate Amanda for reciting the original text of Lincoln's address. We must continue to be vigilant and see to it that our children are taught historical facts correctly.

"I hope the boys in the squadron send Gene Moxley information he can incorporate in his books. I've been corresponding with Gene for a few years. He is really a dedicated individual and is doing a marvelous job of recounting our Group's history. I've read the first book and found it to be accurate and informative. Some of the facts he recounts were unknown to me before. I really looking forward to his future books.

"I'm hoping that I can make the next reunion. Missing the one in Tucson was a bitter disappointment."

Yes, Gene Moxley is doing a great job with his books. Most of the information is from the archives - what was written during the days of Pantanella. There is nothing more accurate.

A letter from **C.E. Ben Franklin, Lt Col, USAF, Ret.**, Executive Director, Fifteenth Air Force Association to Amanda Althoff in response to the article in October Newsletter on page 10.

"I have just read about your presentation of the Gettysburg Address at the Memorial Day ceremony and the misguided attempts of some unnamed revisionist to "improve" the wording of one of our nation's most treasured documents.

"I find it interesting and very revealing that the omitted passages speak of sacrifice for the good of our nation and acknowledge the sovereignty of God in the birth of our freedoms.

"I want you to know how proud

we are to hear of your courage in presenting the unaltered text of this historic address and how pleased we are to know that you are a patriotic American who loves our country and cherishes its heritage.

"Amanda, our country needs young people like you to study and prepare for the day when your generation will lead. My prayer is that there are thousands of Amandas scattered in every part of our country who will be ready to meet the challenges of the future and willing to take up the mantle of leadership.

"Please know that you are appreciated and respected. God bless you"

All American Gains Fame

The Stroh Brewery Company, brewer of Schlitz beer, was recently awarded the 1995 WORLD PRO AWARD for "The Best Promotion in the World," for its Schlitz World War II commemorative promotion which featured *All American* and WWII.

I'm sure most of you are aware of the classic Schlitz "Golden Girl" - a woman seated on the Schlitz Globe logo - appearing on the nose of *All American*. The Schlitz packaging for its beer used a color image of *All American* and the commemorative Schlitz cans were a replica of the 1945 classic Schlitz can.

The award was given by Promo magazine with competition which included 211 entries from 11 countries, from North America, South America and Europe.

Schlitz used the WWII theme to promote Schlitz beer since it is well remembered by the Veterans — one out of every four beers drank during WWII overseas was Schlitz! Dave Patterson, a 2nd Division B-24 pilot

with the 8th Air Force sent me the press copy on the award and added his own WWII formula from "Murphy's Law of Combat" that says, "Beer math is 2 beers times 37 men equals 49 cases." I'll take his word for it!

Books for sale

I recently received a book, "From Feather Beds to Straw Beds," from **Teri Tiehen**. It is the story about her father's, **Larry Tiehen**, last mission. He was shot down with the George Gaines crew and evaded the Germans for months, nearly starving to death from lack of food and water and the bitter cold. I found it very interesting - the kind of book you want to finish without ever putting it down. A 90 page soft cover with some photos is well worth the \$15 which includes mailing costs. Contact; Teri Tiehen, 3729 S. Ensenada St., Aurora, CO. 80013.

A letter from **Joe Ministrelli** comments on another book. "I took Bob Freed's advice and did visit B. Dalton's book store to purchase "Ghost of the Skies" only to find the **ordnance crew** in the photo with myself on the right side of that picture. It seems just like yesterday that we posed for that picture, and what memories returned to me about a bunch of great guys we lived with in the prime time of our lives in such a horrible period in history. I still can picture **Sgt. Thielke** writing that message on that 1000 pounder.

Bob Freed, always the happy, helpful, cheerful guy and now I must add brave; very brave. When I go shopping with my wife I wouldn't

dare leave her side free to roam the halls of those malls. Thanks Bob!

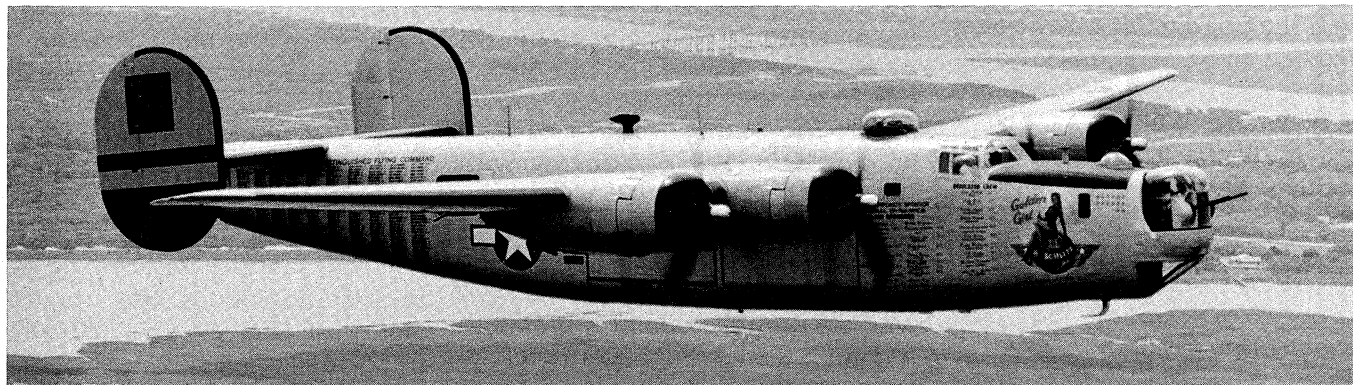
P.S. I purchased all the books for my friends that I could find. So far now, B. Dalton's inventory is cleaned out.

This great book with the great photos of WWII planes is available from Ghosts, 665 Arkansas Street, San Francisco, 94107. Fax 415 285-3656 or phone 1-800 331-8231. \$40 plus \$4 postage.

In addition to the Ordnance Section photo there is the famous photo of **Col. McKenna's** plane, Chief JoJon, with the side showing the bullseye over the cockpit and the wording "Come and Get Me You Bastards." And on the opposite page is *All American* showing our famous right rear rudder with the 465th Bomb Group markings. Thanks guys for all those donation to *All American* to keep our insignia on the rudder.

I have been receiving very favorable comments on the book put out by **Gene Moxley**, The 465th, "RE-MEMBERED." This 383 page book covers the period from mission #1 on 5 May 1944 through the mission on 12 July 1944. Four more books will be out later each covering a following period. Mostly copies of all the records kept by the group and squadrons covering all details with some stories and photos added. \$30 including mailing. Gene Moxley, PO Box 252, Wright City, MO 63390.

Don't forget the priceless video put together by **Harry Carl** from slides taken at Pantanella. The everyday lives, about each section, and most of the crews. \$16 includes mailing. Order from: Harry Carl, 550 Creek Road, Chadds Ford, PA 19317.



Partners For Over 50 Years

It all began in Italy in August 1944 when I arrived at Pantanella with a replacement crew. There were no tents vacant, so a new one was staked on the sloping hill south of existing tents. It had a grass floor and the slope of the hill made it

not get over the target (Vienna) due to engine failure in the Guardian Angel we were scheduled for another mission together to Munich. This time I got the whole show - flak and fighters on the bomb run and across the target, but we returned safely.

Ernie was in charge of the bar at the Officers Club, flew test flights,

did and Sgt. Miserlis in operations knew if he needed a flight crew all he had to do was contact Ernie.

Ernie also went to local Italian villages to procure alcohol (mostly flavored like bourbon, brandy, etc.), vermouth and other supplies for the bar. Ernie was finishing his missions in January 1945, so I received orders assigning me Custodian of Officer's Club Funds, etc. Before Ernie left he asked me if I would join him in business after the war. I said yes, but at that point I still had half of my missions to go and soon forgot about the discussion.

I returned home after the war, got discharged in September 1945, married, and settled down in Milwaukee. The following summer Ernie called me and reminded me of the offer. Within a few days I was on my way to San Francisco and liked what I saw. Ernie had opened his second "Ernie's Wine and Liquor Shop," so I decided to accept the offer.

We began to open more stores and in 1948 we both were called into active reserve flying on weekends. We got a chance to fly together again. Then I transferred to another unit which was later called in for the Korean conflict while Ernie stayed on to manage the business. After two years of flying B-25s, T-28s and F-80s I returned to join Ernie again.



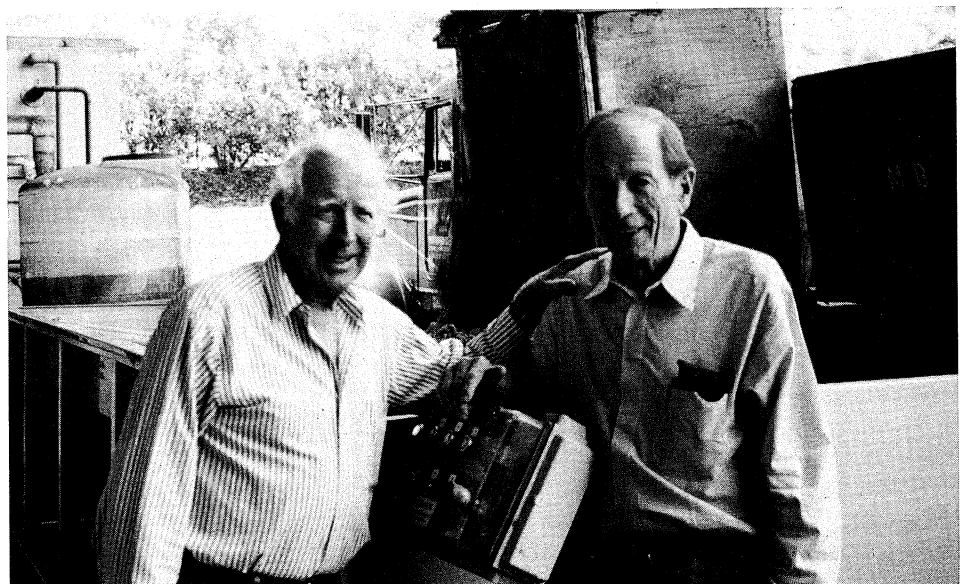
Over 51 years ago - photo taken with Ernie after my first complete mission. It was a rough day - not in the mood for a smile for the camera.

difficult to place the cot in comfortable position. But we managed and the next day I had the orientation ride with Capt. Willett. That evening our crew was posted for a mission for the next day with Ernie Van Asperen who would check me out in combat. Ernie had been Joe Athon's co-pilot, but was checked out and flying as first pilot.

During the night I got ill and did not fly. The next day, still ill, I checked in at the Group Hospital which was in a large tent to the south of Group Headquarters. While in the hospital Ernie took my crew on their first mission. Ernie became acquainted with my crew's officers and invited two of them to move in with him since his tent had a level tile floor and other amenities and his crew mates, Joe Athon, Tom Arthur and Harold Givens, had finished their mission and returned to the U.S.

When I returned from the hospital a week later I occupied the fourth cot. The next day I finally got to fly my first mission with Ernie. Since we did

and rest camp flights to Naples and Rome. He was always busy and needed someone to fly with him, so it was convenient for me to go along as we were always together. I enjoyed the flights as much as Ernie



Ernie and I at a recent board meeting at Round Hill Winery. Behind me what appears as a tall box is a container with freshly picked chardonnay grapes being dumped into a bin for crushing. A total of 375 tons producing over 26,000 cases of chardonnay!

We grew the wine and liquor chain to 90 stores in ensuing years. Although we both ventured in to other businesses, we maintained our interest in the wine and liquor business.

Ernie always liked the wine business, so he decided to start his own winery. He rented a warehouse, installed barrels and tanks and started out in a small way. Later he wanted to purchase some land and build a larger winery. I joined him, along with a few other investors in what is now Round Hill Winery. Those of you who have attended our reunions will recall Ernie provided Round Hill wine at two of our reunions. It is sold in 45 states!

Ernie still flies his Mooney and I fly my Buccaneer (#781BS). After 51 years we still fly, are partners in business, and still friends.

Do we have any other squadron members who teamed up after WWII? Let us hear from you.



Note: If you have seen the lower right corner you will see the 1945 February calendar. It is the same as 1996 except 1996 is leap year. The calendar is from Barney Russell's collection. I don't know what the circles mean around some dates, probably the days he flew. Wait 'till you see the calendar in April!!

INTERNATIONAL B-24 CLUB

The International B-24 Club is dedicated to preserving the history of the B-24 Liberator bomber. Consolidated Aircraft Company designed the Liberator in 1939 in response to the Army Air Corps' request for a long range bomber. Over 18,000 of the aircraft were produced during WWII at plants throughout the country including San Diego, California, Willow Run, Michigan and Ft. Worth, Texas.

The club keeps alive the memories of its designers, crews and admirers and has done so since its creation in 1969. Started by the late Robert McGuire, a former B-24 combat photographer, the club has defended the Liberator's reputation for over 25 years. The Liberator provided an incomparable service during the second world war.

The *Briefing*, the club's quarterly publication, is distributed to over 3,000 club members, as well as to schools, veterans organizations and museums worldwide. By sponsoring aircraft exhibits, flying displays and speaking engagements, the club continues to educate the public about an historic aircraft whose first mission took place long before many of today's citizens were born.

Club membership is \$15 per year for U.S. and includes a subscription to the organization's highly acclaimed, *Briefing*. For more information contact George Welsh, Manager, International B-24 Liberator Club, 15817 Bernardo Center Drive, Suite 102, Box 124, San Diego, CA 92127-2322. Phone/Fax 619/679-1957.

REUNION '96 HOWARD JOHNSON GOVERNORS HOUSE MONTGOMERY, AL SEPT 26 - 29, 1996 IN THE DEEP SOUTH ADJACENT TO MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE

Montgomery and Maxwell Field will be an interesting location. It will be our seventh reunion, and the eleventh anniversary of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association! Since many members have served at Maxwell early indications are that there will be 300 in attendance again.

Mark your calendars now for the dates. Details and registration will be in the April *Pantanella News*.

Other Reunions

782nd, Reno, September 2 to 4, 1996

783rd, St. Louis, October, 1997

DUES

It's that time of the year again - annual dues are due. Check the number after your name to see if you are current, if it is not 96 you are not current. The 96 dues are due January 1, \$10 per year. Many send in extra to help keep the dues at \$10 for those that cannot afford to send more. Don't risk missing an issue of the *Pantanella News*.

If you do not want to worry when dues are due why not join the Life Membership club — \$100 for life.

Address Changes

David H. Orr, Jr., 111 West 3rd Ave #208, San Mateo, CA 94402.

Nick Schaps, 4800 Centerville Rd Apt 223, White Bear Lake, MN 55127. 612 653-2020.

Richard Bilger, 4339 Mallard Creek Circle, Stockton, CA 95207.

FOLDED WINGS

William Yurek, (Tail Gunner/Bilger) passed away September 29, 1995.

Rev. James L. Kipp, Jr. (Ordinance) passed away August 28, 1995.

Vincent A. Beeson, (Engineer/Martz) passed away November 9, 1995.

Dennis B. Flaherty (Tail gunner/R. J. Smith) passed away November 7, 1995. (See Mrs. Ruby Flaherty letter under Mail Call).

A letter from **Robert Elliott** notified me that Bill Yurek's wife, Claire, called him to let him know Bill had a massive stroke. He was 75 years old. He attended our first three reunions and attended the crew reunion last November. He is the second crew member to pass away since the November reunion.

John Zadrozny informed me that Mrs. James L. Kipp notified him of the passing of her husband James. John and Helen Zadrozny and Robert and Rose Ann Freed will visit Mrs. Juanita Kipp as she lives within 100 miles.

Ben Donahue called me after he learned from Bonnie Rowe that **Vincent Beeson** died of a massive heart attack.

Vinnie and his wife, Bessie, were taking their normal daily four laps around the track field at a nearby high school. This time after the second lap Vinnie decided to rest and Bessie continued. As she passed after the third lap he gave a thumbs up. Returning from the fourth lap she found Vinnie slumped over. Help was called, but he could not be revived.

We remember Vinnie from his regular attendance at our reunions and always with a cheerful smile. And we remember him as the only survivor that terrible day over Nove Zamky with the Martz crew when 11 others lost their life.

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

Sick Call

Don Rymal notes he has not been able to work the past seven years due to lung cancer.

A letter from Constance Zurawski notes that **Raymond Zurawski** has Alzheimer's disease.

Nick Schaps is seriously ill and has returned to his Minnesota home to be with his family. His wife, Marion, called me December 2nd.

An avid golfer Nick developed a back problem a year ago and an operation gave him his health back and he returned to the golf course. In November he developed a hip problem and returned to Rochester later in the month and found he had cancer in his hip and lung. His prognosis is not good.

He has not been well enough to receive calls, so it is suggested that his friends send a note or card to wish him well.

Nick volunteered at our last reunion to serve on the board of directors. He further volunteered to take over the duties of reunion chairman. He is terribly disappointed that he cannot perform his duties.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Nick and his family.

NEW PX OFFICER

Barney Russell Volunteers

Barney will be ordering and shipping PX items for the squadron. Right now the PX is about zero on items, so he will have to be ordering before we can have a list of items for sale.

We know the caps and pins sold real well and have a supply of leather jacket patches and shoulder patches, but we would like to know if there is a demand for other items. If you have any comments or suggest let Barney know. He would like your input. Barney was navigator on my crew so I know he will do a good job. He can be reached at 1014 N Washington St., Magnolia, Ar. 71753. Phone 501 234-1537.

Editors Corner

In the previous news Bernie Badler provided the USO dancer photo, Richard Grantham's photo came from Curt Reed, the British Ack Ack Gunners and Apulia photos from Harry Carl. The Stalag Luft III photos from Gene Krzyzynski via Harry Carl.

The newsletter is made up from information, articles and photos from many of you and from some other sources like other groups and associations. I intend to give everyone credit when the information is run, but sometimes I slip up. My apologies.

SNOW BIRDS! You folks who travel south in the winter PLEASE let me know if you want to receive the *Pantanella News*. Our non-profit postage does not have forwarding privileges. If you notify me I can have it sent direct to your vacationing address or send it "first class" so it can be forwarded.

There are still many of you who would like to have your story told. It's time to do it now. I have contacted a number of you this past month and received some favorable replies. Send it in the best you know how and we will give you help if needed. Only you can tell your own experiences.

If anyone would like have a specific topic covered in the newsletter please let me know. Harry Carl suggested "The Role of the B-24 in WWII." If you want to contribute to that subject, or any other one just send it in.

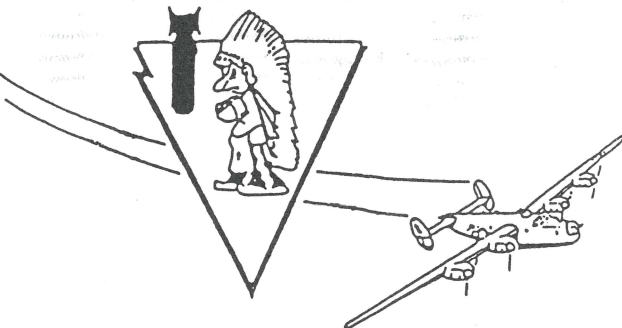
IMPORTANT - We are looking for a record approx. 16" X 21" titled, **"BATTLE RECORD OF THE 465TH BOMB GROUP."** We have the 3 pages including 150 missions, but we are looking for the 4th page for the last 41 missions. Those of you who worked at Group may be able to help. Also we would like any flimsys and formation layout from missions. If you have any send a copy and you'll be a hero.

Wishing you a healthy and happy 1996. And make your plans for a great reunion in Montgomery, Alabama.



The Howard R. Wilcox crew. L to R rear - Howard R. (Bob) Wilcox, Pilot; John C. Zartman, Co-pilot; Richard D. (Dan) McGahan, Bombardier; Willis S. Gould, Jr., Navigator. Front - Ralph J. Deacon, Engineer; Harold E. Rogers, Radio Operator; Richard S. Seabridge, Ball Gunner; Christopher A. Murphy, Top Gunner; James P. Gingrich, Nose Gunner; and Joseph T. Pera, Tail Gunner. Our file is thin on the Wilcox crew. Let's hear more about this crew.

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