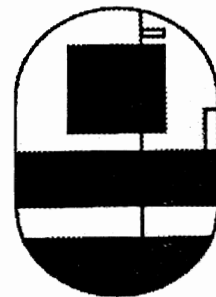




PANTANELLA NEWS



JANUARY 2000

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NUMBER 59



Gordon T. Ellison Crew, L to R

Rear—Gordon T. Ellison, Pilot; Glen Haywood, Co-Pilot; Eugene C. Fallon, Bombardier; Massis M. Santigian, Navigator.

Middle—Tileo P. Giammarc, Engineer; Fred W. DeWitt, Top Gunner; Lowell E. Myers, Radio Operator

Front—Donald S. Hamilton, Nose Gunner; Raymond C. Hall, Ball Gunner; Charles J. Kremer, Tail Gunner.

This is a letter I received in 1986 from Glen Haywood, Co-Pilot on Gordon Ellison's Crew. It has been sitting in my files just aching to get published.

I have been meaning to get a letter off to you for some time, but I fear there is truth to that old saw about procrastination being the hand maiden of the devil, or whatever it is that they say. In any

event I now take computer in hand!

If the ravages of time have had the same effect on you as on me, you may not recall that I joined the 781st as co-pilot on Gordon Ellison's crew some

time in October 1944. In fact when we reached the group there was a shortage of tents and we moved into yours, although some of your crew were at Capri at the time. While we were in training

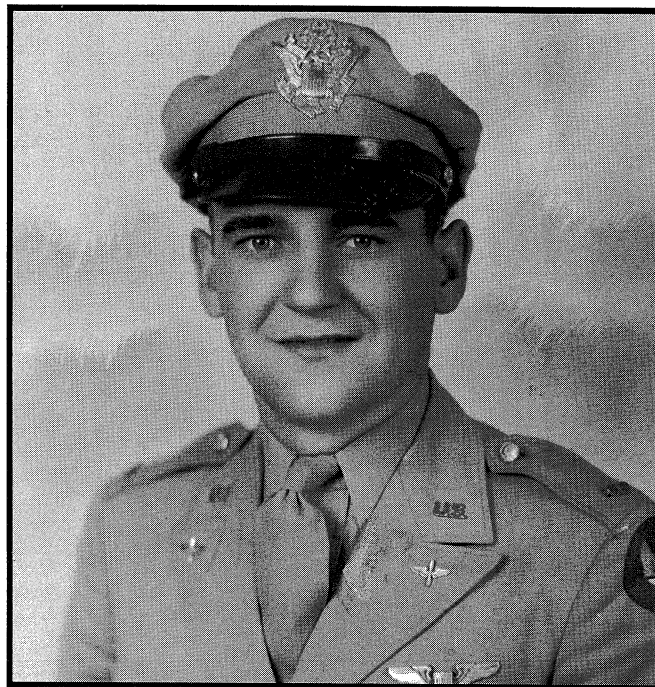
Gordon used to tell about his good friend John Fernival with whom he had gone through transition training at Smyrna, Tennessee. By a strange quirk I happened to see that same name in your 50 mission cap one day when I mistook it for mine. You said you had found it as the last on the rack at some club in Arizona. As was common practice in those days, you took it to replace the one you had worn into the club. To compound the strange chain of events, a few days later a stranger walked in and said that he was John Fernival (From some other group in the area) and had learned that Gordon was now stationed there. So, after many miles and months man and cap were reunited, although I believe you got to keep the cap as he had

picked out a better one that night in Arizona.

Having caught a late case of the reunion bug, I took a shot in the dark and tried Jackson, MS info and got Gordon Ellison's wife. I was saddened to learn that he was killed in a plane crash at Hilton Head, South Carolina on April 26, 1975. Seems he had flown a group of eight over to see the Master's, and their Beechcraft lost an engine on take-off. Five of the passengers survived; he did not.

After the war he was with the Highway Patrol and got the job of flying the Governor around but got called back into the service at the time of the Korean war. Later, he was Provost Marshall at Ellington Field and I saw him from time to time as my travels took me to Houston. He had since mustered out and was flying for the local Caterpillar dealer. His wife also told me that our nose gunner, Donald Hamilton, had died from a heart attack several years ago.

I also tried the Fresno info and located our Navigator, Marty Santigian,. Marty went back to school and got his doctorate and taught in the college there as well as several foreign assignments. Unfortunately he has Menieres disease which affects his sense of balance and



Lt. Glen Haywood—Ready for Combat

as a result can not make the trip to Colorado.

As a heavy equipment salesman to the railroad industry I traveled for a number of years and ran into several of our old squadron. At New Orleans I spotted Assistant S-2 Gerry Shaefer in the hotel coffee shop one day. He was with Grace Steam Ship at the time. In Chicago I ran into Jack Hudson who was flying for Braniff at that time, although I believe he later joined the FAA.

In Shreveport I found the one and only Ack Ack Zalk checking into the hotel ahead of me. I was sorry to spot his name on the folded wings list as he was indeed quite a guy. At Safford and Ajo, Arizona I saw Dave Orr several times. He was with Phelps Dodge Copper in a responsible capacity.

The one that startled me the most was one day in Houston, Texas while having

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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 WWII (1944-1945). 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.

Sunday lunch I glanced over a table of a man, wife, and two children. I was certain I knew him, so went over to their table. Sure enough he was from our squadron, and I thought he certainly had been lost. You will have to forgive me that after all these years I can not dredge up a name. Perhaps you can fill in on one. He was a big fine looking fellow who had played football for Stanford. At any rate he was navigating pilotage from the nose turret on Col. Lokker's plane that day at Blechhammer.

(Paul Durckel played football at Stanford but he was not on this mission. Milt Duckworth, 783rd Squadron, was Lokker's Co-Pilot on the Blechhammer Mission and he survived.)

From his size we all felt that he could not have had a chute in the tight confines of the Emerson turret, a fact which he confirmed to me. He said that he was the last one out, found one chest pack left. He told me that he doubted if it would still work, but it was all he had to go with. He was taken prison after landing. When I told him we had heard rumors that Col. Lokker was alive and well he said not true, that he had been killed while trying to escape.

After lunch he drove me out to where he was building a new plant for his company, a California firm named Best Fertilizer. Your account indicates the name should be Rice, but that doesn't ring a bell. However, since I can't come up with a name I am on rather shaky ground. *(Grosvenor Rice was the*

Navigator and was KIA on this mission.) Hope someone can check further. It is possible I am wrong about it having been the same mission, but the other facts are basically correct, and the pilotage thing would indicate a lead plane position. (11/10/99—I was indeed wrong. The correct name was Paul Durckel, and the plane was the one which Col. Hamilton went down in! My mind does strange things now and then and age hasn't helped.)

We ran a mission to Udine on Nov. 18th, and caught some close flak and as a result staggered in to Ancona with two engines feathered. Col. Lokker came up to pick us up. This was a British installation with parking at a premium and some Captain from another group parked in behind Lokker's plane. In trying to get turned around one wheel got off the matting and blocked us in. After much digging and tugging it was starting to get dark, and we still hadn't made any progress. I suggested to Col. Lokker that we R.O.N. He said no way. That he was posted to lead on the next day's mission and he was going to be there.

We finally got a crawler type tug over and, after the operator managed to poke a hole in the rudder of the Captain's plane we got free and flew home in the dark. Don't know what the Captain told his C.O., but it was a new Mickey ship, and expected to fly lead in their group or squadron the next day. I am wondering if our group might

have stood down on the 19th due to the weather which wasn't uncommon at that time of year. That might account for the mission to Blechhammer not going until the 20th.

As to our own tour of duty, after having lost five engines in the first seven trips, I began to dislike war. Then there was the day that we got jumped by 109s at Bratislava, although, they concentrated on the 464th and took down four planes in short order.

The real cold to me was the day we hit 55 below either scale, and no one could even muster a peep-hole through the iced-over windshield. Planes were going in all directions but with no mid-air and the Germans missed a chance to pick off the entire 15th, one at a time.

Maybe the worst was the morning we blew a jug on a rebuilt engine on take-off and just beyond the point of no return. We had a slight tail wind, and when we hit the piled-up prop wash at the end of the field, it was a hectic few seconds. Ironical that Gordon was eventually to have another engine fail at that most critical time. It always seemed to me that the newer crews got the old war weary planes, which was probably as it should have been. After a while we got the faithful Yellow Mike and a super crew chief called Kramer. As a result, our future took a turn for the better.

Following is the second and last part of John Header's WWII Diary.

Mission #20, March 2, 1945. Linz, Austria. Went up here to hit the railroad yards. When we got up we found the target completely obscured by clouds. We made a P.F.F. instrument run on it and the first two boxes dropped. We didn't. Flak was moderate but inaccurate. We dropped on the marshalling yards and hit some rolling stock. Almost ran out gas, but got home OK.

Mission #21, March 12, 1945. Vienna. Took off to hit the Florisdorf Oil refinery. We expected heavy and accurate flak. As we came onto the target we threw out a lot of chaff and had all our radar jammers going. They started firing at us, but we could see that it was way high and far off. We had their radar guns directing devices all screwed up. They didn't know where we were. We dropped our bombs by instruments through the clouds. We missed the oil refinery, but hit the railroad yards knocking it out and destroying many tank cars loaded with gasoline.

Mission #22, Mar 14, 1945. Nove Zamke. Our target was to hit the railroad yard in this town right on the Russian front in Hungary which was supplying the Germans. It was cloudy all the way up and we could see the ground and thought we could drop our bombs, but 20 miles from the target it was clear and we came in on our bomb run. Flak was heavy and very accurate. Our bombs fell in the center of the

town, but the attack unit right behind us hit the yard and destroyed 60 units of rolling stock and destroyed the yards. As we came off the target, #2 ship in our box got a direct hit by a flak burst and crashed in flames. I saw one chute come out before it crashed. I also got a picture of it after it got hit by flak. We were the only crew in the box who didn't have wounded on board. Our unit got shot up bad, but our ship received only two little holes which did no serious damage.

Mission #23, March 16, 1945. Graz. Took off to attack an oil refinery in Vienna, but were told if we got up there and found it covered by clouds we shouldn't attack. Well it was and we decided to attack Graz 70 miles to the Southeast. Graz was clear as a bell and we started on our bomb run. They started firing at us and the flak was moderate and accurate, however no one was hit very bad. We laid our bombs right in the railroad yards knocking it out with 165 units of railroad stock. We also hit a factory setting it on fire and knocking it out. A very profitable day. I got a very good picture of Graz after it was hit by the ship behind us. The picture was telephotoed to the states where it was in the papers the next day.

Mission #24. March 21, 1945. Munich. We were sent up here to attack an airfield with jet propelled Me-262s on it. It was clear all the way. but over the target they tried to cover the field with a smoke screen which was very ineffective. Our frag bombs fell

over the revetments around the planes and into the personnel buildings. The raid was very effective.

Mission #25, March 24, 1945. Neuberg. We went up to hit this airfield 50 miles north of Munich. They tried to cover the field with a smoke screen. We dropped our frags all over the place. I saw several jets burning. We knocked out 25 of them. A beautiful job. We had no flak and plenty of fighter protection.. We saw FW-190s but they escort drove them off. A swell mission.

Mission #26, March 26, 1945. Bratislava. We went up here in Czechoslovakia on the Russian lines. to help our friends fight the Germans. Flak was intense, accurate and heavy. We dropped our bombs right in the marshaling yard. I saw a B-24 from another outfit up ahead go down in flames over the target due to flak. Our group got through OK. We completely knocked out the place and left explosions and large fires. No encounters with fighters going home, although we saw an ME-110 which didn't attack us. We got home to find a 40 mile an hour gale instead of the nice weather we left that morning, but we landed without mishap despite the crosswind

Mission #27, March 28, 1945. Verona, Italy. Briefed to attack the Verona railroad yards in Northern Italy in support of the 5th Army. Verona is a direct supply station along the route

from the Brenner Pass to the German lines. The yard was supposed to be filled with 600 cars. The weather was pretty good all the way up the Adriatic Sea. We went up over the Italian coast where the coastal batteries threw up some flak at us without incident. We went up to the Alps and cut south to Verona instead of flying directly to it. As we came into the city they opened up on us. The flak was heavy and accurate. Our bombardier picked up the yards and synchronized on it. Then the flak was really coming up and all around us. The stuff began to tear through the ship. We dropped our bombs on the target towards one side of it overlapping some of the rolling stock. At bombs away we made a sharp turn out of it. Pretty successful day. The ship was shot up a bit, but OK. Another mission over and coffee and doughnuts at the Red Cross shack on return.

Mission #28, April 1, 1945. Munich. Took off to hit a railroad in a small town near Munich in an effort to paralyze the German transportation system. Weather was good all the way up the Adriatic and partially over the Alps where the weather started to get soupy. We tried to get thru it, but the further we went the worse it got. It got so it was dangerous we turned around and came home and got back OK. We got credit for an ineffective sortie. It was worth it because of the bad weather flying.

Mission #29, April 3, 1945. Casarsa. Briefed to attack a railroad bridge at Casarsa in Northern Italy. The

bridge is 400 feet long and very important to the Germans as it is a main line coming from the Brenner pass from Austria thru to the 5th Army lines and essential as a supply aid. We had five one thousand pound bombs aboard. We flew up Italy and over the 5th Army front on the way up. There were 4 German fighters which we saw but failed to attack us. We were flying a tight formation and it would have been suicide for them. As we approached the target we expected that we might not be able to bomb as there were quite a few clouds. Closer to the target we saw a break in the clouds and the bridge. About that time the Krauts opened up with 88mm guns and some 120 mm. It was hitting very close. One piece narrowly missed me by about 3 feet. We were in it for about 4 minutes. As we pulled off the target I tore off my flak suit and looked out the waist window and saw two center spans sitting down in the water. We got home OK.

Mission #30, April 9, 1945. Rosenheim. Briefed to attack a target up in Czechoslovakia but the weather was too bad so we headed for this target about 40 miles East of Munich. The railroad yards were packed with cars, but there were too many clouds to make a visual bombing run so we attacked by instruments. As we got practically to it our bombardier picked up the target between the clouds. We were leading one of four formations of seven ships each. On the instrument run we were going to bomb on the lead ship of the whole group. The bombardier told the pilot he saw the target

and told him to give him control of the ship which he did. We veered off from the other three boxes and dropped squarely on the target. The other three small formations missed. Our bombs fell across the choke point damaging and destroying many cars and tracks.

Mission #31, Torazza. Another bridge job in Northern Italy. This bridge is an important highway link and didn't seem like a rough target at the briefing we got. We went up the 5th Army lines and soon were in the general target vicinity, but couldn't see it. All the boxes of planes were supposed to follow the leader over the target. We sighted the bridge and headed for it. The other boxes were unable to pick it up. We started down on our bomb run and they started to shoot at us but the flak puffs were low by about 500 feet. Suddenly some other formations sighted the bridge and came over crowding us off our bomb run. In order to avoid a collision of the two formations we veered off dropping our bombs on a highway overpass in the vicinity. The bridge was hit very good by the other boxes, destroying two spans.

Mission #32, Fumiglio. Another bridge job in Northern Italy. This was a 400 by 40 foot highway bridge crossing the Po River right behind the German lines. In order to get these we flew across the Adriatic and up the Yugo coast and came into the bridge from the East. We were lead ship of seven planes and had a bombardier who was flying his last mission, Bob Bas-

sinette, A good buddy of mine. As we started in on the bridge they started to fire at us. Moderate and accurately, but only lasted for a couple of minutes. We got a few holes in our ship but no one scragged. As we went in the bombardier said he had it in his sights and it should be good. At bombs away I watched them go down. Right into the bridge. I looked again and two spans were in the water. The rest of the boxes missed. A good job for us.

Mission #33, Firazza. Another bridge job in Northern Italy. This is a railroad bridge across the Po River behind the German lines. The Germans are retreating and we are trying to cut off their escape to trap them. This was really a milk run. They only fired a little flak at us on the bomb run and it was mostly off. We dropped our bombs a little to the left of the bridge due to crowding by formations on the bomb run.

Mission #34, Pisan. Another bridge job. I like 'em. They are all milk runs. Maybe I'll finish my missions and live through this after all. We went up the Adriatic and headed for the Alps. We

turned on the Alps and headed down into the town. The bridge was on the edge. The guns opened up on us. and the flak started to pop all around. And the stuff was tearing thru the ship. Soon there was the target and bombs away. We hit it very well as the whole thing blew up and collapsed. I think every box hit the target. Came home happy only one to go so I can go home to Ruthie.

Mission #35, Linz. My last mission and I was a little afraid something might happen. I hoped it would be another bridge job as they are not as bad as an industrial target. When I found out the target was Linz, Austria, I was shaking in my flying boots. They told us at briefing we could expect, heavy intense, and accurate flak. We flew up the Adriatic over the Alps and came into Linz from the West. The target was the Linz main marshalling yards. All of a sudden there was Linz before us. I turned on the radar jammer and we started to throw chaff. Up came the flak - very accurate and a terrific barrage. I could hear it explode all around us and could feel the stuff tear through the ship. This flak was the most accurate barrage I had

ever seen. One ship was hit and started to burn and go down, but nine parachutes came out. Then bombs away. Through the barrage I watched the bombs go down. They hit the right in the railroad yard which was filled with locomotives and cars. I could see ammunition trains exploding with tracers popping out into the air. Lots of flame and smoke. As we came off the target another ship was hit. They radioed saying they had a wounded man and two engines knocked out and were going to try to make the Russian lines. We haven't heard from them yet. 2000 railroad units of rolling stock were destroyed. We were hit in the #3 engine which caught fire. We put it out and limped dome on three engines. We couldn't make home so we landed in Yugoslavia. The place was filled with damaged airplanes and I saw them carry many wounded men out of some of them. Some crews afraid to crash land their planes bailed out over the base. We brought another of our group ships back which had been left there two weeks ago and got home five hours late. My last mission and lucky to be alive and lucky to have finished OK. I'm going home to

CORRECTION

In my haste to complete Pantanella News No. 57 I neglected to double check the B-24 donor list. After a friendly reminder I checked and found I overlooked a "Sponsor" who also is very helpful in organizing the stops in the Connecticut area for the "All American" (now "The Dragon and It's Tail".)

Therefore, add to the list

of Plane Sponsors, Adrian "Dan" Martin and Frank Rochette.

Following is excerpted from a recent Adrian Martin correspondence. "Frank Rochette, (not a 781st member) who has helped me for the past six years when the planes come into our area and was the main organizer for the past two years, did a tremendous job and was totally taken with the B-24 and

B-17. So much in fact that he became a DFC and requested that the 781st be credited for this donation. As you know we get 7-10 days notice from the Collings Foundation, which around here is never enough. Frank does a great job getting everything in place for the showing of the planes.

"So, if you update your records, there will be another \$6,000 for the 781st."

ACCORDING TO THE
OLD CLICHE, MEMORY IS THE
FIRST THING TO GO-BUT
APPARENTLY NOT FOR
EVERYONE

**PIERRE J.J. KENNEDY Re-
members:**

Soon after arriving in Italy in late August, 1994 some of us new aerial gunners were flown to a "practice shooting range" near the Italian coast. We were told to use up the old 50 caliber ammunition in that old plane. The plane flew at a low altitude on an oval course around this "range." The pilot banked the B-24 so that most of us could find a target to shoot at. I had no trouble in the tail turret trying to blast a couple of old abandoned German observation towers, made of cement and bricks. However, in my haste to use up ammunition, I held the trigger down longer than for the prescribed two- to three- second bursts. Orders are orders, and I had a lot of ammunition to dispose of, so it was not long before the gun barrels overheated, and perhaps burned out the ridging grooves in the barrel bores. Anyway, from my seat in the tail turret, I began to see bright flashes emerge from the front of the barrels when I fired those twin 50 caliber machine guns. Finally, all of my ammunition was gone, and the ends of the barrels seemed to be drooping a little.

I went forward to the plane's waist, and watched the gunners there shooting the correct short bursts. Once, I looked down from a waist window and saw civilians running away from a nearby docked fishing

boat.

After we landed and armament officer read me the riot act, "Don't you know that each of these machine gun barrels cost American taxpayers twenty-six dollars?" I still wonder if we were even on a "practice shooting range" that day.

Another experience was on a return from a mission. Our pilot was racing back to Italy to have our plane be one of the first to land at Pantanella. The pilot flew us through a mountain canyon where we could see Italian houses perched on the tops of ledges. Those of us in the back of the B-24 were looking out the waist windows as we zipped through that canyon. I looked out and saw a woman hanging out her washing. She was higher than we were! Who was that dare-devil bomber pilot?

I remember "volunteering" to fly with other airmen to Bari to pick up some airmen. Perhaps they were forced to land at Vis, Yugoslavia and had taken a boat to Italy, or they may have been shot down on a Ploesti mission, and released after Rumania capitulated. Does anyone recall picking up airmen at Bari?

I used to enjoy making pencil drawings of people when in grammar and high school in the late 1930's. In Italy I copied a magazine picture of *Bernadette At The Grotto* while lying on my cot in our tent. Drawing was a release from the tensions of flying bombing missions. Thanks to the men who packed my belongings after I was shot down, I still have *Bernadette At The Grotto* with "P.K. Italy-Sept. 1944." This paper is old and wrinkled but precious.

**Ernie Van Asperen Remem-
bers:**

As additional duty Ernie was Custodian of Squadron funds. It carried the duty of managing the Officers' Club bar, buying the liquor, hiring bartenders, etc. and helping out with some food purchases for the mess hall.

When the dining room was short of silverware he posted a memo to the members to bring in a piece of silverware. The next day he received one fork! The following day he changed the price of a drink—no cash, only a piece of silverware. He then got all they needed!

And I Remember:

When Ernie finished his missions and returned to the U. S., Hugh Cooper took over the Custodian duties. A month or so later when I recovered from an emergency appendectomy I got the job. I had many pleasant trips to the local tiny distillers and wine makers. Always a friend or two went along. One trip stands out when John Zitis and Bob Bassinette (*I had dinner with Bob a couple of months ago*) were along when we forded the Ofanto River enroute to Cerignola. We were on a liquor buying trip and taking jackets in to have painted with squadron insignia, etc. The large trucks were crossing with no problem, but when I ventured in with the squadron Jeep it proved to be too low and the engine would not run on water. I had a metal trailer attached to it to haul liquor and it floated in the water and released from the hitch. Luckily I

had a chain to secure it also so it was held in tow. Soon a large truck came along and pulled us out. Upon return I selected a shallow spot in the river and made it back safely.

One other return trip proved more exciting. With a couple of comrades, Wilton Carter and John Zitis, we were cruising merrily along in the Squadron Jeep and the familiar trailer with some supplies for the Officers' Club bar. We had

samples of spumante (champagne) at the wine makers establishment and happened to have an open bottle in the Jeep. Someone? Was tipling the bottle as we passed the guard post entrance to the 485th Bomb Group. We had to go through the group to get back to Pantanella. I decided to eliminate the stop and keep on our merry way. A short distance beyond I looked back and a guard came out on the roadway with a

raised rifle. I decided it was time to recognize him. So I turned around to return to the guard post and give him the required information and expected to have some reprimand later. Some time later at the base Capt. Adler, Squadron Executive Officer, let me know he had received something from the 485th, but he conveniently lost it!

Liberator Stamp Petition

In a recent Second Air Division (B-24s, England) newsletter there was a request to join in on a petition to the Post Office to have published a B-24 stamp. How about joining in to give the B-24 the recognition it deserves. A sample letter below is an example, but use your own words as much as possible. You can write more than one letter, but try to space them out. Letters should have a return address and date. Proposed letter:

Dr. Virginia Noelke, Chairperson
Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee
Room 44743
475 L'Enfant Plaza S. W.
Washington, DC 20620-2437

Dear Dr. Noelke:

I am a member of the 45th Bomb Group of the Fifteenth Air Force, we respectfully request your support for the approval and issue of a "B-24 Liberator" postage stamp. This year, 1999, marks the 60th anniversary of the B-24 bomber. More than 19,000 B-24s, and variants, were built. Today, less than twelve B-24s exist, only two still fly.

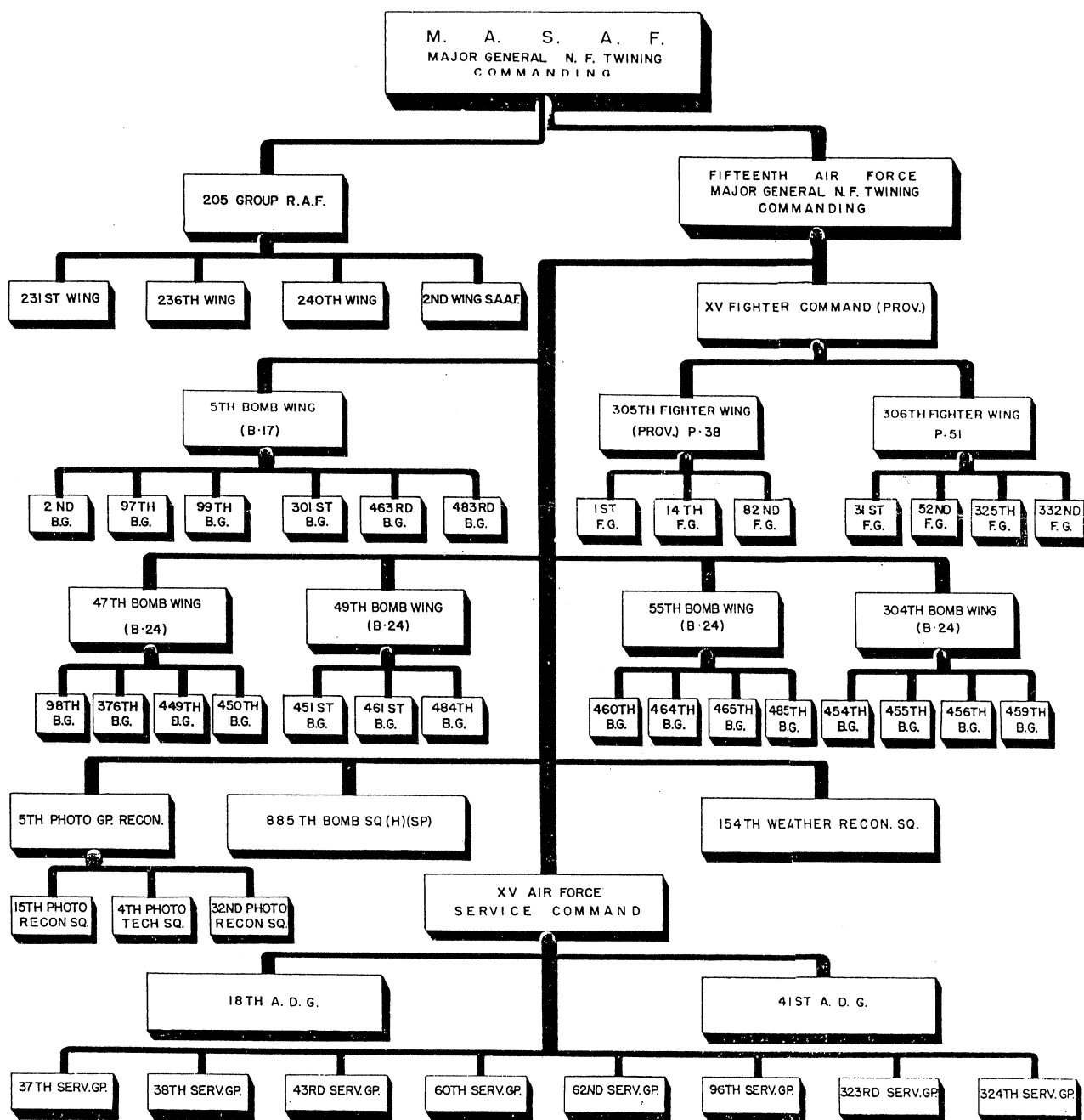
In our considered opinion, the B-24 has never been recognized for its role in defending world freedom. The hundreds of men who were killed in war in the Liberators have never been honored as they should have been long ago.

We seek nothing unusual or special, only equality and fairness. We recognize and understand the rules and procedures for suggesting stamps. However, most of our WWII veterans no longer have long lives ahead. Our average age is 77. Also, many of us have been writing the stamp committee for almost two years, with no success. Accordingly, Dr. Noelke, we solicit your understanding and compassion. It seems to us that the year 2000 holds much promise for our country. There can be no better time for a commemorative stamp issue of our beloved B-24 Liberator. And, no better time to make a lot of old men happy at last.

Sincerely,

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE ORGANIZATION

Most of us at Squadron or Group level had limited knowledge of the size and structure of the Fifteenth Air Force. This Organization Chart may be of interest and help to expand that knowledge.



- AS OF OCTOBER 1944

Address Changes

Thomas Scalese: 10 Primose Lane, Reading PA 19608.

Marge Dugan: 9022 Acorn Path, Wonder Lake, IL 60097.

Roy Byrd: Box 87 Loup City, NE 68853.

James Culbertson: 211 Harmony Road, Ware Shoals, SC 29692. Phone (864) 961-3857.

David Orr: Phone (650) 342-9164.

Folded Wings

Ralph Leath: Top turret gunner on Pitts crew passed away August 8, 1996. Reported by Homer Moeller.

Jack Hudson: (Pilot) passed away of heart failure November 2, 1999. Notice came from Jack's daughter, Liz Decker.

Clarence Hilleman: (Barnett Top Gunner) passed away November 9, 1999. Notified by Gene Barnett.

NOTE A CURRENT ROSTER OF ALL ACTIVE MEMBERS WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER. MAKE SURE WE HAVE YOUR CORRECT ADDRESS AND PHONE FOR THIS MAILING FOR APRIL 1, 2000 !!!!.

SICK CALL

Bernie Badler: A long time cabinet and furniture maker had a little accident with his circular saw. In a moment of neglect he chopped about an inch off of his left thumb. Now he is called Stumpy by his neighbors.

David Orr: Has Lou Gehrig disease (ALS). He would enjoy mail from old friends.

Robert Freed: Got ill, had to be flown by helicopter to a special hospital where he had a six-bypass heart surgery on August 21. He is now home recovering nicely and getting in shape for

reunion 2000.

Don't forget your comrades who are ill. Let them know you are thinking of them, by mail or calls.

REUNION 2000 NEWS

In about eight months we will be enjoying Reunion 2000 in Sunny California. September is noted for its beautiful sunny, warm days and cool evenings. Rains do not begin until November.

Now is the time to think of your Comrades from Pantanella and make your plans for the reunion. The friendships of 55 years or more have deepened and we have made new friends with the wives and family of our comrades.

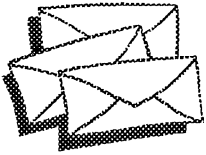
As you know, the dates are September 15 through 18, and the location is the Holiday Inn Select at Fairfield, California just a block off Interstate 90, midway between Sacramento and San Francisco.

Ken Sutton and Carl Dahl are working on transportation to Fairfield from these cities and they badly need your help in terms of letting them know as promptly as possible what your needs are. They especially need to know how many people will be driving their own cars and how many will require public transportation. For the latter they are setting up chartered facilities to minimize the costs to attendees. But they cannot do this without your help.

We are enclosing again the questionnaire included in Newsletter #58 to make it easy for you to tell us what we need to know. There were just 32 responses to that request, plus 25 spouses. Seventeen say they will be driving. Ten responses are from California members.

Remember, our Squadron Reunions do not just happen. They require considerable effort on the part of those who are making the arrangements for you. And this time your help is greatly needed in terms of completing and returning this questionnaire if you have not already done so. Your response is not a commitment. Please give us this help..

Detailed plans for the meeting will be covered in the next Newsletter.



MAIL CALL

From Gene Krzyzynski (Tipton Bombardier): "First let me say how much I enjoyed our reunion in Dayton. It is always so wonderful to be together with all our squadron members. Including the 465th and the other squadrons made it more memorable.

"I belong to a POW support group our local VA hospital sponsors. A couple of months ago a new member joined our group. His name is Gene Kulczynski and to my delight I learned he was a tail gunner/engineer on the Lt. Jumpers crew from the 783rd. It took a lot of years to meet and now we have each others company and swap tales.

"I attended the Stalag Luft III reunion in Cincinnati in May 1995. We were taken by bus to the museum in Dayton to dedicate the monument and plaque.

Thank you again for a wonderful reunion. I pray that we may continue to have them for a long time. Best wishes and the best of health. *Gene enclosed photos of the monument they dedicated with a very large plaque for Stalag Luft II with many more plaques remembering organizations and individuals."*

From Donald Clodfelter: "The Clodfelter crew got together in Asheville, NC the third of April. Present were: Pilot, Donald Clodfelter and wife, Wilma; Bombardier, John Wilson; Engineer, Lex Shelby and wife, Melba; Radio

Operator, Charles Joubanc and wife, Penny; Tail Gunner, Royal Wilson; Engineer (Bilger crew), Robert Elliott and wife, Betty; and our hosts, Top Turret Gunner, Charles Ray Hemphill and wife, Doris. Robert Elliott was a substitute for Lex Shelby on the December 1944 flight when the crew had to bail out. All living crew members were present, except Ball Turret Gunner, Robert Munson, who was unable to attend."

From Mary Lou Hugus (Widow of Bill Hugus): "On August 23, 1999, the B-24 'The Dragon and His Tail' landed at the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport five miles from my home. On the morning of the 24th, armed with my camera and the July '99 issue of the Pantanella News, I headed to the airport. I spent about two hours taking pictures, touring the plane and talking to members of the Collings Foundation. They looked over the newsletter and were happy to read the article on the 465th and its support of the plane.

"The gentlemen commented that of all the men donating to the cause you are the only one he has met personally. He spoke highly of you and the group. I have enclosed some of the pictures I took and hope you enjoy them. It was both an interesting and emotional experience for me. As they departed to the airport on the 25th they did a fly over and flew directly over my home. It is difficult to describe how I felt, but I am happy to have had the opportunity to

be a part of it." (See photo and story on Bill Hugus on page 6 of July 1988 Pantanella News).

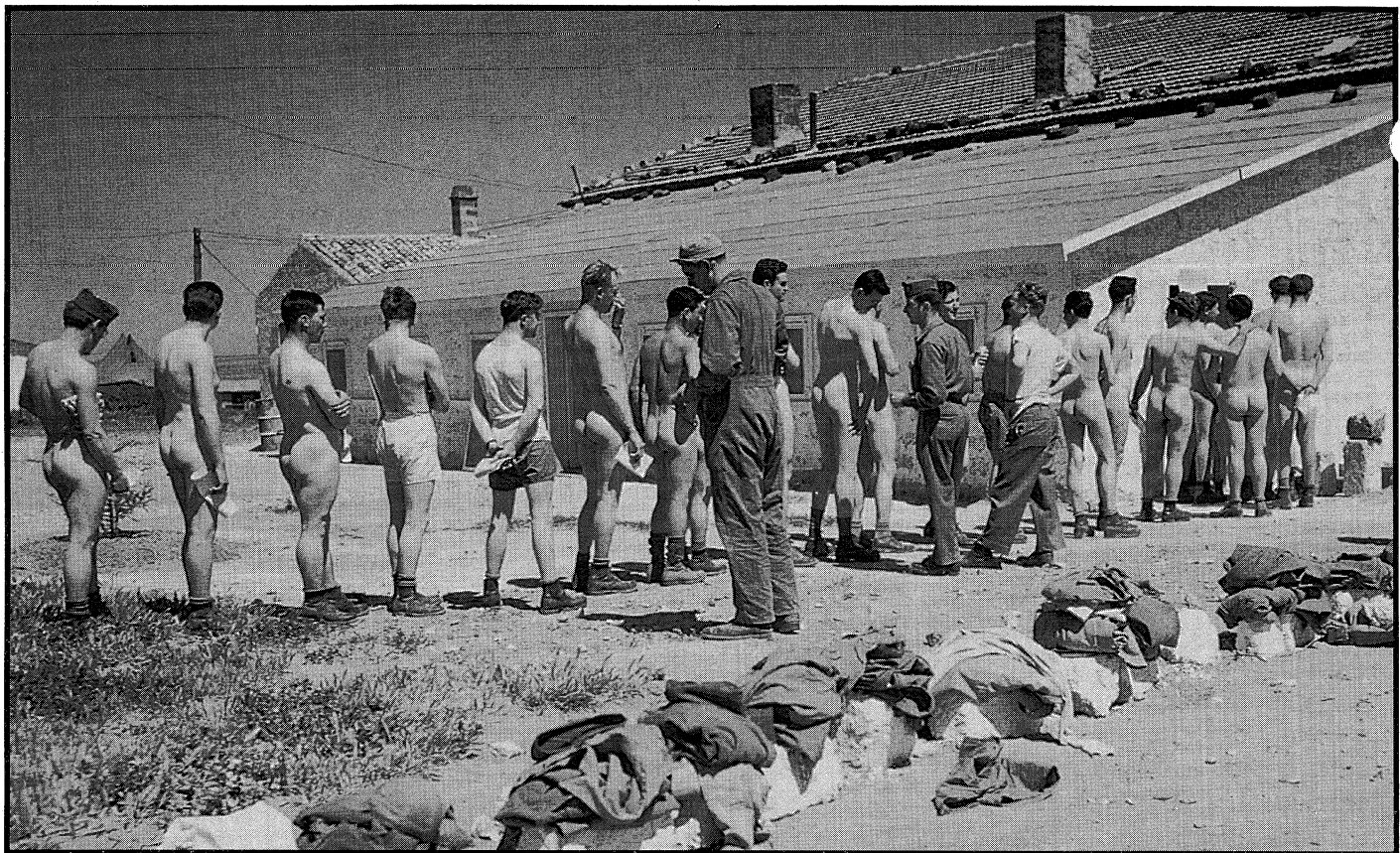
From Francis J. Walborn (Top Gunner on Dickey's Crew): "You guys are doing a fantastic job and I truly enjoy the newsletter you send. I am enclosing a check to prevent the lapse in membership for another few years.

"Something that happened during my tour in Italy; Capt. Dickey was flying with another crew. The plane was hit and set on fire. Capt. Dickey flew the plane out of the formation and parachutes started coming out. Witnesses said the plane blew up before Dickey bailed out. We presumed he was dead. After an extended period of time, the Red Cross reported him injured and in a Budapest hospital.

"This sounds like an interesting article for your paper and I would also like to know what actually happened.

"Since this is the computer age, I would guess that a very large number of us have computers and access to the Internet. If all member's e-mail addresses were published, this just might help us keep in touch with one another better. Could you give this some consideration?"

Yes, Francis Walborn's e-mail address is fwalborn@columbia-center.org.



Short Arm Inspection at Group hospital in background. Photo by Frank Ambrose, Official 465th Bomb Group Photographer. 781st Squadron inspections were normally held at the 781st Medical Section building.

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