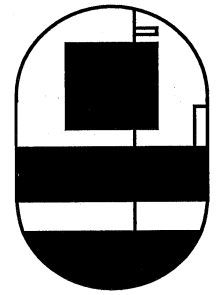


# PANTANELLA NEWS



JULY 1995

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NUMBER 41

## APULIA - ITALY Home of Pantanella Army Air Base

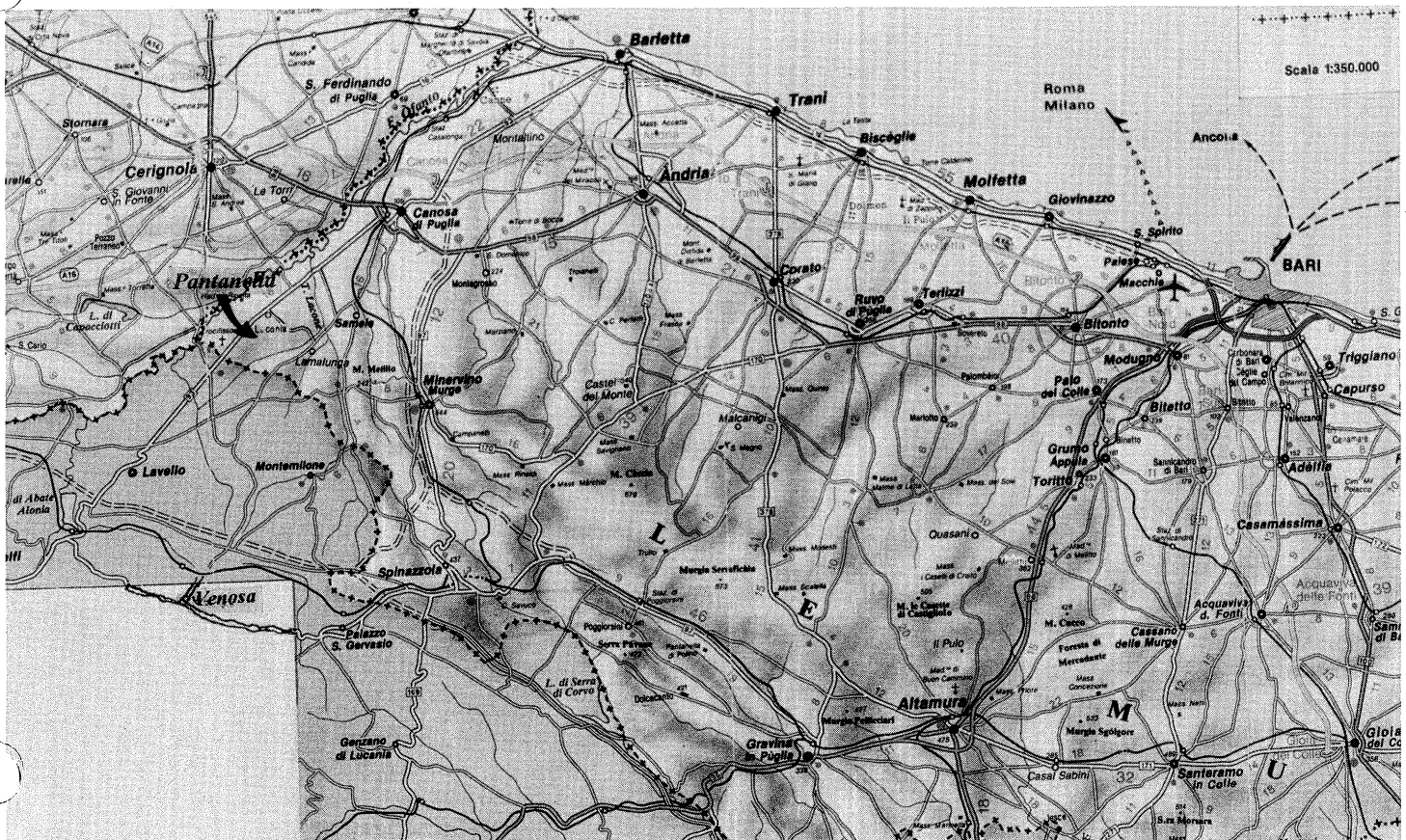
*When Jim Althoff suggested that it might be interesting to learn something about the history of the area in Italy where Pantanella Air Base was located I hesitantly volunteered to pursue it. Hesitantly, because my memory of the area suggested that there would be very little of sufficient interest to justify the effort. Harry Carl and I took a short Jeep tour of the area near the end of our war and, in spite of that or perhaps because of it, I had concluded that there could not be much history in what had seemed to me to be a Godforsaken area without much past and very little*

*future....I was pleasantly surprised.*  
—Byron Thompson.

The immediate area in which the base was physically located is called Apulia (Puglia in Italian) and has a present population of about four million people. It is one of 20 administrative Regions of Italy (probably much like our states), each of which is further subdivided into Provinces (similar to counties?) and Communes (cities?). The Apulia Region contains five provinces — Foggia, Bari (wherein Pantanella was located), Taranto, Brendisi, and Lecce. In ancient times it included

part of what is now Calabria and it has had many rulers through the centuries.

Because much of the area of Apulia is dry, from 1906 to 1939 water was transported to the region by the Apulian aqueduct. And Apulia is presently receiving water by a great aqueduct — whether by reestablishment or replacement of the earlier one, I don't know. The Appian Way, a military road which the Romans began to construct in 312 B.C. from Rome to Capua, near Naples, eventually was extended through Apulia to Brindisi on the



Area of Puglia where Pantanella Army Air Base was located.

Adriatic Coast. Two stone columns still stand in Brindisi at the end of this ancient road.

The region is primarily agricultural with the following products: wheat, barley, oats, olives, grapes, almonds, figs and vegetables. Also, tobacco is grown in the southern part near Lecce. The wines of Apulia are said to be the strongest in Italy and are used to fortify other wines. (Remembering some 781st club parties, I was not too surprised to learn this). The port of Barletta, as well as Monopoli and Taranto are important fishing ports. The port of Bari is also the main industrial center and Foggia, the principal rail center. Probably the best known native of Apulia (at least to Americans) is Rudolph Valentino, born in Castellaneta in 1895.

As I began to research Apulia Region it was very difficult to understand the background of any given

city without some picture of the history of Italy. So I have tried to put together a thumbnail sketch since obviously the complete subject is much too extensive to try to cover here. This is largely true because Italy did not exist as a unified country until 1870, although the Peninsula had been known as Italia for centuries. It consisted until then of many autonomous city-states which were either conquered by myriad invaders to whom they then swore allegiance or sometimes they declared allegiance to external powers for political reasons without being conquered. Some of the city-states were very powerful in their own right. Rome, Milan, Venice, Naples are examples.

Italy has been at the center of history longer than any other Western nation. Old Stone Age man was present on the central plains as long as 30,000 years before Christ was born. In the following centuries before Rome was established many cultures appeared in Italy including Neolithic, Terramara, Villanovan, and Etruscan. And, between 753 B.C. and 1876 A.D., areas of Italy were invaded by Greeks, Goths, Ostrogoths, Gauls, Franks, French, Austrians, Byzantine, Germans, Saracens (Arabs and Berbers), Normans, Lombards, Macedonians,—you name it.

But probably the greatest mark on Italy by pre-Roman peoples was made by the Etruscans who appeared, primarily in northern and central Italy, in the 1200s or 1100s B.C. and later by the Greeks, who established powerful city-states in 800 B.C. to 300 B.C. along the coast from Naples down and around to and including the heel of Italy (and including Sicily).

Mythology teaches that the city-state of Rome was founded in 753 B.C. It was ruled by a series of kings, probably mostly of Etruscan extraction, until 510 B.C. when a republic

was established. Weak at first and surrounded by hostility, the republic was at war for most of its first 200 years. By about 266 B.C. however, Rome had defeated many of its enemies and controlled most of the peninsula.

By this time Carthage, an ancient North African city on the Bay of Tunis, established in the ninth century B.C. by the Phoenicians, was a major trading center and the foremost maritime power in the world. It had established itself on a number of Mediterranean Sea islands and dominated the Mediterranean as far west as Spain. Rome did not feel secure with this situation and a long struggle, the Punic Wars, began in 264 B.C. to eliminate the influence of Carthage. The word Punic came from Poeni, the name by which the Carthaginians, being of Phoenician descent, were known to the Romans. The First Punic War, which lasted from 264 B.C. to 241 B.C. was fought mostly for the possession of Sicily. Rome soundly defeated Carthage in a great naval battle in 242 B.C. west of Sicily and the war thus ended in the following year.

Unable to match Rome at sea Carthage turned to building up its power in Spain (led by Hamilcar Barca, a great general of the First Punic War). Hamilcar's son, Hannibal, was named commander of the Carthaginian forces in Spain in 221 B.C. and, in 219 B.C. captured Saguntum, a Spanish city aligned with

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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.



*Byron Thompson beside Harry Carl's jeep between Pantanella and Lavello, looking toward Pantanella.*



*The arch along the road between Canosa and Cerignola. We understood that this was built by Romans honoring Scipio Africanus for defeating Hannibal at Carthage. Byron Thompson is on the right under the arch and Dick Crutcher is next to him. Arnold Schutzman is on the far left and unknown man next to Crutcher.*

Rome. This precipitated the Second Punic War, which was fought from 218 B.C. to 201 B.C. In the spring of 218 B.C. Hannibal marched a large army (with horses and 48 African elephants) up through Spain and Gaul (present-day France) and, in 15 days, across the Alps. The route taken was particularly difficult because the Roman Legions had secured the main passes between Gaul and Italy. He attacked the Roman forces in northern Italy and established a position before Rome could finish preparations for war.

In 217 B.C. Hannibal won a major victory over Consul Galus Flaminius at Lake Trasimeno, located between Florence and Rome. He wintered at Gerontium and in the spring of 216 B.C. he moved on the town of Cannae about 5.6 miles southwest of Barletta. Current English language maps show Cannae and Italian language maps show Canne. Cannae is about 8.1 miles northeast of Canosa di Puglia (ancient Canusium.?) which is located on the Ofanto River about 11.25 miles northeast of the spot where

Pantanello Army Air Base was located.

Canosa was, as I recall, off limits to the U.S. Military. However, we had to drive through it and I remember it as a very dirty and poverty-stricken place, but it turned out to have more history and more importance than I ever imagined. It is said to have been a Greek city originally founded by Diomedes, a companion of Odysseus. It had voluntarily accepted Roman sovereignty and was loyal to Rome during the Punic Wars. In those times, it was an important trade center for agricultural products, wool and ceramics and until the 6th century A.D. was one of the most important cities in Apulia. Canosa was destroyed in the 9th century by the Saracens and rebuilt in the 11th century by the Normans. Chaplain Blough's Tour Guide says, at Canosa there is "...an old castle - which was the principal Castle of Puglia - built in B.C. when Canosa was called Little Roma. The conquerors through the ages have used this castle as their headquarters. Hannibal was said to have lived

there when his troops were camped in the valley below." The present population of Canosa is about 30,000.

#### Sources:

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

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

"Short History of Italy", Header & Waley.

"A Short History of the Italian People", Jane Trevelyan.

Microsoft "Encarta" Multimedia Encyclopedia.

Tour Guide, Chaplain H. Blough. Chris Murphy.

Harry Carl.

Photos from Harry Carl.

*This covers about one-quarter of the history of Apulia. We will have the remainder of the history in future newsletters. In addition, we will print a separate booklet of the entire article with additional photos and mail to all members.*



## BOMB DUMP EXPLOSION

### Fifteen men from 464th Bomb Group Killed

On late afternoon of March 1, 1945 the 781st Bomb Squadron Ordnance Section received orders for the type and number of bombs to be loaded for the mission on March 2 to attack the North Main Marshalling Yards at Linz, Austria. The bomb load scheduled was ten 500 pound RDX.

The bomb dump was located adjacent to Pantanella Army Air Base and was used by both the 464th and 465th Bomb Groups. Bombs arrived by rail to a nearby station and were trucked over to the bomb dump. When the Ordnance Section received their orders late in the day they would go to the bomb dump to pick them up and return to load the planes for the next day's mission.

This particular day the orders came in around 5 PM and the men decided to have dinner before going to the bomb dump around 6 PM. While having dinner Loren Foote recalls one of the other squadrons from our group leaving the mess hall for the bomb dump, but they did not arrive before he heard the explosion.

When the tremendous explosion occurred it could be heard as far away as Cerignolia and at our Group Headquarters it caused buildings to shake violently. The concussion followed the contour of the hill up to the buildings. O. J. Cowart, Jr. was on duty at group headquarters and had a clear view of the disaster. He recalls, "I will never forget the occasion. I was up high and looking down at an incredible sight. It looked like the Fourth of July fireworks display. The only thing missing was a band playing and someone

singing 'The Star Spangled Banner' since there was plenty of 'rockets red glare bursting.'"

When M/Sgt Brush heard the explosion he was worried that one of the 781st crews were at the dump. He sent Bob Freed to the theater to locate Harold Schuster's ordnance crew and have them stand by on the field while he and others went to the



*Ordnance truck from the 783rd Bomb Squadron. Note unexploded bombs under and beyond truck. Ofanto river in the distance.*

dump. Brush took Thielke, Loren Foote and Ed Kapusta to the dump where they helped in rescuing some of the injured as well as getting them to ambulances.

When Brush, and the men he took with him, arrived they parked on the road by the dump as they could not drive in the entrance due to the huge crater, smoke and fire. Small metal fragments were flying around from ammunition or fuses still exploding from the heat.

From the road they could hear men groaning who had been hurt. Kapusta and Foote crawled on their stomachs and were able to pull one man out and put him in the ambulance that had arrived. Kapusta remembers, "I saw a bomb dump truck with a G.I. behind the wheel and he could not move. Somehow we improvised a stretcher and started to move toward the road. I saw an ambulance and yelled to the driver to come closer, which he finally did. There was no stretcher or medical equipment. We put him in

the ambulance and he remained in shock. The last thing I remember was Thielke roaming the area looking for casualties like he was on a Sunday afternoon walk." Kapusta stayed with the casualty in the ambulance.

Foote and another person crawled back to where they heard groaning from the other man that was injured. As Foote recalls, "I remember he had the skin stripped from his chest to his waist about six inches wide. We found a board lying close by, slid it under his back and pulled him back to where the ambulance was. I have always wondered who those two men were and if they survived."

The following day the Ordnance men were restricted from the bomb dump until the next day's mission was called, except for some who were sent to the dump to pick up whatever human remains they could find in the area.

Confirmed casualties are the 15 men who were killed from the 464th Bomb Group. Most of the Ordnance men remember hearing that about 20 Italians were killed. However, there are no confirmed casualties given in the official reports and it may be that the total was 20 including the 464th Group men and the Italians. The Italians helped unload bombs when they were trucked to the dump. After the explosion the Italian survivors all left.

The following is from the 464th Bomb Group narrative history;

"Tragedy struck on 1 March 1945 when a terrible explosion engulfed the bomb dump adjoining the base. Killed while engaged in their ordnance duties were fifteen (15) members of this Group. Cause of the tragedy has not been specifically determined as yet."

Some reports indicate all bombs



exploded, however, several men remember unexploded bombs at the dump when they were rescuing survivors. There apparently were enough bombs for the mission since the records show the mission proceeded as scheduled the next morning. In some cases bombs were brought to our planes directly from the rail station. This could have occurred to keep our planes supplied with bombs.

The cause of the explosion may never have been found. One likely cause would be an unstable bomb. The bombs arrived by truck unarmed and were unloaded by Italians. Rather than unload one at a time the Italians took a shortcut by backing up the truck fast, apply the brakes hard and the bombs would roll off the truck harmlessly onto the ground. However, it was told that one in a million bombs would not solidify, but jell when manufactured. This created a situation where explosives acted like nitroglycerine and would explode from a jar or jolt without being fused.

O. J. Cowart remembers that after the explosion the FBI investigated if there was sabotage.

On the lighter side the May 5, 1945 Flim - Flam had the following:

#### **782nd BALONEY by the Creep**

Locket, Nichols and Santillo, three little cogs in our Ordnance Department, were awarded the Soldiers Medal "for saving a trailer load of bombs during the bomb dump explosion." Nichols tells us they used the truck for a faster getaway and the trailer just followed.

#### **Another Theory of the Bomb Dump Explosion!**

From "Hoot" Hossier, "In the last newsletter you asked what we were doing when the bomb dump blew up. Our planes had just come back from a mission I think. My partner and I were

standing on the hard stand and the plane was making a 180 degree to park. I was facing away from it to keep blowing dirt out of my eyes and was watching a B-17 flying away from our base when it suddenly rose up, straight up in the air a 100 feet or more.

"Now my theory is that the B-17 dropped a bomb on the bomb dump and he was directly over the explosion as he was blown straight up. I don't know if records are still available but I would look for a B-17 with bomb fragments in its belly and underneath the wings."

*Hoot, I assume you mean the bomb which was dropped was accidental! I don't believe rivalry between that "other plane" and the B-24 ever got serious enough to bomb each other's bases!*

#### **Sources:**

Loren Foote, Bob Freed and Ed Kapusta, Ordnance, 781st Bomb Squadron.

O. J. Cowart, Jr., Communications, 781st Bomb Squadron.

Tony Cappello, Ordnance, 464th Bomb Group.

Gene Moxley, Associate member 781st Bomb Squadron.

Photos: John Zadrozny and Tony Cappello.

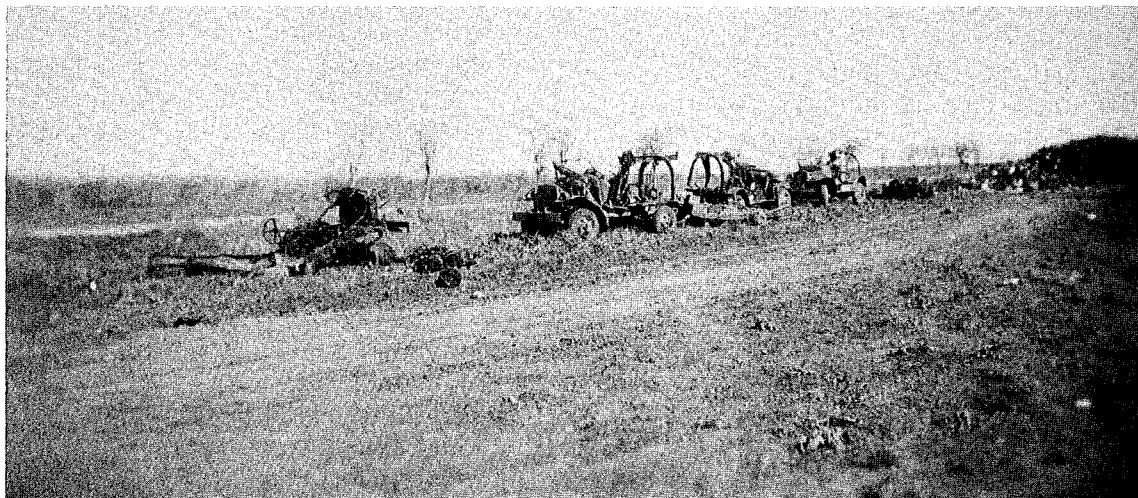
And finally, thanks to George Har-teloo for his request which got this story started over one year ago. More than a dozen letters and dozens of phone calls later we have a fairly good idea of another day at Pantanella over 50 years ago.

## **APRIL 1945 REPORT ON 465TH BOMB GROUP**

*From the microfilm received from the National Archives in 1986 I found the following record written about our group on April 30, 1945.*

Most of the efforts of the group this month were in direct support of the ground forces. Targets included ammunition dumps, bridges and railroad targets in northern Italy. What was the last strategic target of the group, Linz Marshalling Yard, on 25 April was more nearly a tactical target. On the next day the Russians were but 25 miles from Linz and before a week was to pass artillery of the American 3rd Army was to shell the city.

The attack on Linz was a good one and added more damage to this often-hit target. It also ended the job of the group in Europe. The group had been in operation just ten days less than a year. It had accomplished what it was designed to do. A machine made for destruction - it had destroyed. It began operations as a killer, killing 500 German troops of a headquarters billeted at Podgorico, Yugoslavia. It ended up killing Germans before the 8th and 5th Armies, and destroying German railroads. It had knocked out Germany's oil refineries, razed her aircraft and arms factories, shot her fighters from the skies, knocked out her gun positions in France, paving the way for the invading 7th Army. It had destroyed, as it was designed to destroy, with skill and precision. It had twice earned the



*A view of four or five trucks destroyed in the explosion*

nation's highest honor, The Distinguished Unit Citation. It cost several hundred American lives, but the job was done. The 465th Bombardment Group had made history."

## MAIL CALL



**Lowell Myers**, "I certainly enjoyed the get-together in Tucson and hope to attend the future ones.

"I connected with Telio Giammarco (Ellison Engineer) for the first time since 1945. Also, again with co-pilot Glen Haywood. I did see Glen at the only other reunion I attended in Colorado Springs."

A letter from **Julia Cato (widow of Lewis Cato)**. "I just can't tell you how grateful I am that you contacted me in 1988 and that I have been able to come to the meetings since then. I'm already looking forward to 1996 and if it is as close as Montgomery, I hope our two sons, Lew & Steve, and their families can come.

Tucson was just great! Especially since we were there in 1944, and I got to know most of Lewis' crew and others like the Moellers and Pitts. In fact, Inez Moeller and I drove Lewis' co-pilot, Roy Rice's little 1934 car with curtains instead of windows from Tucson to Topeka when they were on their way overseas. Roy's mother met him in Topeka and drove his little car on home to Ohio.

We were married in San Marcos, Texas, on July 31, 1944. I had gone out to see Lewis graduate from Navigation school and we thought we were coming home to South Carolina afterwards for his leave. Instead they were for the most part being sent on to Lincoln, Nebraska, and then to Tucson. I was staying with a lovely lady in San Marcos who taught at LBJ's college or university there, and when we decided on Sunday night to get married Monday afternoon after the graduation, she got busy and helped us with a church wedding with a reception including the works.

When we were sent to Tucson I

couldn't have been happier as I knew only one person West of the Mississippi and that was Minnie Carter Williams, who lived in Tucson. We were from the same little town of Cope, SC, in Orangeburg County, about 40 miles South of Columbia, toward Charleston. We were really glad to see each other. She had gone out to Benson in the late thirties and married Lloyd Williams, whose family lived on a ranch near Benson. Since Lewis was flying often and her husband worked at Davis-Monthan we spent much time together including time at the Ranch.

It was my good fortune to come a little early this year to spend some days with Minnie, which included a trip to "the ranch" and to Benson at my request - then Minnie attended the meeting as my guest.

Incidentally, I got to know Bonnie Rowe at McDill Field when they came home from Italy in 1945. I also have just noted in the newsletter that Pitts died in November last year and that Thomas Carmody also died in November. I got to meet him also as he and Lewis were both on Hy Newman's crew."

A note from **Samuel P. Shelby** (Stenerson Engineer) to say "hello" and thanking us for the *Pantanella News*.

A letter from **Lollette Tucci** after she received the Life Membership certificate, "There is no word which can express my pride and gratitude for this gesture. I know Joe would be very proud too. I had the certificate framed and I put it in the living room so everyone could see it."

She also commented, "Maybe one of your next squadron reunions will bring you to the French Riviera." Wouldn't that be great!

I received a copy of a note to Harry Carl from **Bill Jostworth** commenting on the 781st Video. "Thank you for your 'second' excellent 781st production!

"Mary and I fully enjoyed our copy of the video tape. We have reviewed it twice, and further plan to show it at our next big family reun-

ion. It is a real "keeper" and one to be treasured I'm sure for our future generations. Thank you again for your unselfish time and efforts that you have devoted to the squadron history. It's admirable!"

***With that reminder on the video, I'm surprised at the low response! Especially for those of you that have been unable to attend the reunions. This video was made from slides taken at Pantanella. It is about our everyday lives, about each section, and some of the crews. Everyone will be interested in it since it touches on the entire squadron's activities.***

***To order this priceless video send \$16 (includes shipping) payable to Harry Carl at 550 Creek Road, Chadds Ford, PA 19317. Be sure to include your correct address for mailing.***

### **Some memories from Murray Knowles**

Recently the second appearance of *All American B-24J* was scheduled to arrive in our area. Unfortunately, I missed the first one, but I sure didn't want to miss the second chance.

I spent an enjoyable, memorable afternoon touring *All American* as well as the B-17 *Nine-O-Nine*. Both aircraft played a significant role in my USAAF flying experiences.

I had 75 hours stick time in B-17s as well as 48 hours ground school in engineering when attending co-pilot training at Tyndall Field, Florida. I was flying gunnery students in training missions, so this plane had a special place in my memory.

It also brought back many memories, not so happy as combat flying could not be construed as "happy" hours.

The last time I was in a B-24 was as George Gaines' co-pilot, Yellow "N" was the plane and it was Friday the 13th of October, 1944, and the target was Blechhammer Oil Refineries.

As I walked through the bomb bay section I recalled the last thing I saw before bailing out was this area

of the plane. It brought back more vividly what that moment was like.

For your information the *All American* still carries our group markings on the right rear rudder and vertical stabilizer. It also carries many names from the 781st and 465th Bomb Group. I also spent an enjoyable afternoon chatting with crew members from WWII, many of whom were also EX POWs like myself.

The "happy" memories were not the combat missions, but the comradeship of the crew members, officers and enlisted men. We were family back then and still remember each other with letters at Christmas.

Also, happy memories were the hours at the officers club playing ping-pong with Col. Lokker, swapping my coke ration for Mel Farber's (our bombardier) beer ration, R & R at Capri, a two-day pass to Rome, mud skiing on the rutted road down the steep hill in a "borrowed" jeep on base, George Gaines trying to shoot a fly on the tent ceiling with his '45 after we had celebrated our first bottles of American booze flown in from Egypt, the whiskey ration after each mission from Doc Rapoport (God Bless Him), listening to Vann Reynolds (Navigator) play a borrowed violin from a musician at the hotel in Capri, eating a hard boiled egg at the Officers Club at 50 cents a pop, and letters from home were just a few of my favorite things.

*Murray, you covered a lot of memories. I remember Friday, October 13 also - it was my 13th mission!*

*The group tail markings on All American are due to the donations by many of the 781st men. Our squadron donated more to All American than any other WWII squadron. With the help of our sister squadrons it puts our group as number two in donations, thereby having the group markings on the right vertical stabilizer and rudder.*

Several months ago Bob Collings called me to see if there might be any "volunteers" in North Carolina. I suggested **Wilton Carter**, former squadron navigator. Later I received a newspaper clipping with Wilton smiling by *All American* and a long



*When I arrived at Stockton I was surprised to find Richard Bilger among the visitors to see All American. Note the new nose art, the Schlitz "Golden Girl."*

newspaper interview about Wilton's WWII service.

After the east coast tour *All American* (and *Nine-O-Nine*) headed westward. O. J. Cowart coordinated the Houston stop and when it came to Northern California I coordinated the San Jose stop. Some other 781st men helped like Curt Reed and Ben Donahue, and Bernie Badler helped at the Livermore stop.

I had a dream come true during the San Jose visit. I usually fly a leg or two during the Northern California visit and during this tour the first opportunity came with a dusk patrol out of San Jose. Flying copilot on *All American* I received some familiarization from the pilot, Jon Rising, and handled the controls for most of the flight. After landing Jon said he needed me for the flight to Stockton the next day.

The next day we had a bang-up crowd at San Jose and after closing the gate it took two hours to allow the line of visitors to climb through the planes before we were ready to start engines for departure. After taxiing out and run-up I was informed that I would make the entire flight.

It would be a thrill for the first time in 50 years that I would pilot a

B-24 from take-off to landing, including two low passes (buzz jobs).

After take-off we circled and made the low pass over San Jose to the audience of hundreds who waited patiently to see the two bombers fly. We then requested a flight over the Golden Gate bridge, circled the area several times for photos, and proceeded on course to Stockton with *Nine-O-Nine* flying formation with us.

After a low pass over Stockton I circled onto downwind and made a landing which I received many compliments for. I don't know if it was that good, or if the crew and passengers were just happy to have made a safe landing. All had been informed before departure that I would be at the wheel.

I've been asked what it felt like to be at the controls after so many years. There was not time to think about it during the flight. I concentrated on flying to make a smooth flight for those on board and for *Nine-O-Nine* flying wing. I got refreshed on the weight of the controls on maneuvers like the climb out from a low pass and keeping the nose up to maintain altitude when you lose airspeed in a climbing tight turn onto downwind. And the strength needed to hold back the wheel to keep the nose wheel off of



the runway until the airspeed is reduced, then drop the nose wheel onto the runway without feeling a thump. Pilots will know what I mean.

I also have to reflect how I had this opportunity to fly this very rare airplane. To think that I got to fly the only one in the world brings back memories when I first heard of the possible restoration. I asked my crew's tail gunner, Pierre Kennedy, if he would contact the Collings Foundation to get me an opinion if this project would go forward and if it would be a worthwhile contribution. At the time it was only pieces and parts that had been shipped in from England. From Pierre's favorable reply I became a supporter and want to take this opportunity to thank all of you that have so generously supported the Collings Foundation and for Bob Collings to have the vision and the financing to give all of us B-24 lovers the satisfaction of seeing such a beautifully restored plane. It just wouldn't look right if it did not have the 465th tail insignia.

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## Memories

### by Wendell Galbraith

I could not let the opportunity go by without responding to the two narratives that were included with the April '95 newsletter. Naturally I was very interested in the March 22nd mission account, and the fact that the flak explosion had struck between the #3 engine and the bomb bay. Since I was seated at the radio table behind the co-pilot it is no wonder that the exploding shell concussion felt like the swat of a baseball bat.

I guess I can shed a little light regarding the other 465th plane that went down that day. As you may recall in the account of my experiences I mentioned that we were moved to three different Viennese hospitals in my stay there. It was at the third hospital that we joined one of our POWs already there. I am not sure of the spelling of his surname, but as close as I can come he was Lt Kern McIlhanay from the 465th and he had also been shot down March 22nd.

As I recall the Lieutenant was the navigator on his plane, and he had been very seriously wounded, losing one leg either in the plane explosion or from a flak explosion while in his parachute. Of course, he had lost a tremendous amount of blood during his descent and he had evidently been rushed to this particular hospital.

At that time the German military authorities had ordered that any and all medical procedures were to be taken, but blood transfusions for wounded POWs were verbotten. One of the lady staff doctors at the hospital recognizing that his blood loss would prove fatal, slipped out of the hospital in the middle of the night and rounded up a blood donor for a life-saving transfusion.

Somehow the Gestapo became aware of this and she was arrested and incarcerated in a Viennese jail. It was there that the Russians found her, subsequently freeing her to return to her duties at the hospital. Personally I think this gal should have been given a medal for the bravery she displayed at that time.

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## John T. Patrick

### Crew chief on Yellow "A" writes a letter to Harry Carl.

After receiving and reading the *Pantanella News* #39 I felt I just had to drop you a few lines. Letter writing just wasn't for me after the war.

After reading McKenna's secrets and the death of my dear friend Leo Lutgring, I felt I was a little at fault in getting Leo into the 781st.

I worked with Leo in Tucson and got to be a good friend. I was a 747, buck sergeant, so I went to see the master sergeant in charge of our group about the master rating. In order to get another rating my M.O.S. had to be changed to 750. I was on the list to be going out which was to be with the 781st, so he told me he would see what he could do for me. At that time a sergeant by the name of Gunther, I believe, was to be in charge, but he had just married and was not too keen about leaving. Leo told me several times he would have to go sooner or later, so I told the sergeant about it and he later called Leo in and Leo agreed to join

the 781st if he could pick out his men that he wanted. His wish was granted with Miller, Rudeseal and Thomas going as his flight chiefs and he also picked some of his crew chiefs. He was to go to the Army Air Corp school of Applied Tactics in Orlando, FL, but ended up in the hospital with a very swollen ankle and I went in his place to Orlando and Pinecastle for the training.

We later got back together at McCook. Leo said he had to get out of the hospital because a doctor wanted to take his leg off, but everything worked out and he never had any more trouble with it.

We were always good friends, but after the war I never got to see him. It was one thing or another and the last time I talked to him he called just as he was about to leave for the reunion in Omaha. I always received a Christmas card from him, Miller and Rudeseal. It was this last Christmas that Miller told me about Leo passing away. Leo and I always went to church together.

It was the same with Rudeseal who lived in Georgia. I used to write him as I have a daughter in Charlotte, NC. Then when I planned to go to see him I got word from his wife that he passed away.

I visited Miller in Illinois several times as I had a sister who lived west of Chicago and it wasn't too far to Miller's home. He visited me a few times as his granddaughter works in Washington D. C.

I see Jostworth about once a year as my daughter lives only a few houses from him. It was good to hear McKenna talk about how he used to ride among planes ready to take off and send a Lt. back to his barracks and he would fly in his place. All I can say he was one hell of a good pilot. He gave me my first plane ride in McCook.

When we were putting 100 hours on the planes and then shipping them to Lincoln, some radio equipment was left out of one of the planes and McKenna came to me to get this other B-24 to fly to Lincoln. It was my first flight and I was a little at ease, but after that I flew every chance I got.

I wish I could make a reunion

one of these days. I missed the boat at Dayton since my daughter lives in Cincinnati. After I checked the list of names, there are few that I know. Those who I flew with I may have seen once or so and that was it. Joe Athon's crew I knew, also Zalk's crew. Those I knew because I went to rest camp with them to Cairo and the Holy Land.

"I am enclosing my dues as I want to continue the newsletter. I enjoy reading it, but not so much about those with Folded Wings."

## FOLDED WINGS

**Alfred Keith Brown** (Group) passed away February 7, 1994.

**Marjorie C. Gibbs** (wife of Robert C. Gibbs) passed away January 1, 1995.

**Sammie O. Griffin** (Radar Mechanic) passed away January 15, 1995.

**John W "Jack" Ertel** (Navigator Bilger) passed away February 7, 1995.

**Jesse C. Edge** (Leggate Engineer) passed away April 11, 1995 from Lou Gehrig's Disease.

**Edward O. Tietz** (Engineer) passed away in 1993.

**John Skolones** (Radar-Maintenance) passed away March 28, 1995.

**Sidney Weiss** (MacFarlane Navigator) passed away October 12, 1994. We were notified by his son William, Capt USAR.

**William H. Bauer, Jr** (Engineering) passed away April 16, 1995 after a long illness. His wife noted that he had not been feeling well enough to attend the reunions.

**James Stewart** (Engineering) passed away May 10, 1995. A note from his wife reported he had been ill for five years. She desires to continue the *Pantanella News*.

**Mrs. Griffin** wrote, "Sammie O. Griffin

passed away in his sleep on January 15, 1995. He really enjoyed receiving the *Pantanella News* to read what the rest of the fellows had been doing and to hear of the reunions. He had a heart condition for a good while, but we sure were not expecting him to pass away. We are still in shock, but I suppose time and prayers will help to ease the pain."

A letter from **Bob Elliott** reported Jack Ertel's wife, Ruby called him to report Jack's death. He had been sick for awhile, but attended his crew's reunion in November at Panama City, Florida.

### Address Changes

**Carl Dahl**, 4226 Gailey Circle, Cameron Park, CA 95682.

**June Baird Frazier**, 1003 Southbridge Ln., Chattanooga, TN 37405.

**Donald A. Barrett**, new zip code 34684.

**Walter Day**, 611 Elephant Way, N. Fort Meyers, FL. 33917.

**Herbert Schlossin's** phone number is 716 633-6625.

**Roy W. Wile**, PO Box 62 Redwood Falls, MN 56283.

**Oliver M. Nelson's** new phone number 360 373-0791.

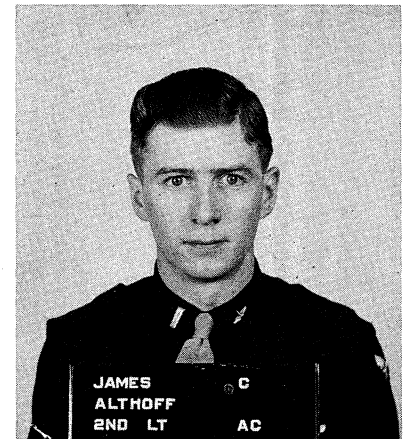
**Jack Hudson**, 13311 Sea Island, Houston, TX 77069. Phone 713 580-2699.

## LIFE MEMBERS

Since April Newsletter

42. Warren L. Beeson
43. Thomas L. Williams
44. Harry Reuss
45. John R. Dickey (Memorial)
46. Jack W. Smith
47. William B. Bartlett, Jr.
48. Joe P. Ministrelli
49. John P. Layne
50. Leo A. Fink
51. Homer L. Moeller
52. George W. Sinner
53. Kenneth E. Sutton, Jr.
54. Eugent M. Young
55. Daniel E. Bailey
56. Calvert L. Crawford
57. Dennis B. Flaherty
58. Jack Van Slyke
59. Adrian A. Martin
60. Bonnie G. Rowe
61. Walter N. Longacre

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



## EDITORS CORNER.

Recently I was sorting some of my photos and came across this one when I was commissioned at age 20. It reminded me of several years ago when I located the navigator on my crew when we returned to the U.S. after the war. He was group navigator, Capt. Talon, and said, "Oh, you were the kid who flew me back from Italy!" Those were the days!

A Reminder to check your label to see if you are current on your dues. There should be a number on your label opposite your name — 95 means you are current through 95, etc. Dues are \$10 per year. Life member's labels read LIFE.

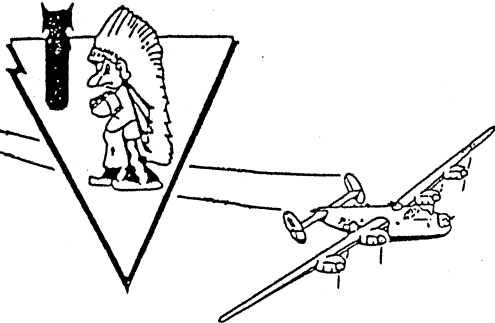
Another reminder—keep those stories coming. I expect to see some of those promises.

**Volunteers** are the corner stone of our association. Currently I am in need of a volunteer to handle our PX. We sold out of almost all of our items at the reunion, so at the present time we do not have an operating PX. Our items are pins, patches, and caps and could include a few other items like T shirts, etc. The job entails ordering and filling orders for the items. Help available to get set-up. For further information write or give me a call.



Arthur A. Zalk Crew. L to R. Rear - Walker H. Shipley, Navigator; Floyd N. Trudeau, Co-Pilot; Arthur A. Zalk, Pilot; Joe I. Degen, Bombardier. Front - Glenn A. McCabe, Nose Gunner; Selmer E. Hansen, Gunner; Orville Quail, Gunner; George Kurkouski, Tail Gunner; Jack F. Pulite, Radio Operator; Alan Chessher, Engineer. I'm sure everyone serving during the time "Ack Ack" Zalk's crew was at Pantanella will remember the crew. More crews will be featured in future newsletters. Let's hear from your crew for a story to accompany the photo. We started at the end of the alphabet, so W's are next. Let's hear from you. And the Zalk crew story will be run when received.

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