



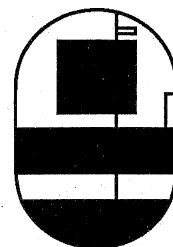
781st BOMB SQD.

PANTANELLA NEWS

781st BOMB SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

NUMBER 10

OCTOBER 1987



465th BOMB GRP

COLONEL LOKKER AWARDED SILVER STAR

REUNION '87 - Our second reunion will be as hard to describe as the first one was. The outpouring of friendship and camaraderie made us all proud to have been a member of the Fighting 781st. Comments came in before the reunion, from those who attended last year, that they hoped it would be as good as last year. From comments after the reunion it's unanimous - there was the same joy to see an old comrade, to relive some of the experiences of yesteryear. One of my observations this year is that there seemed to be more time spent visiting with each other. Everywhere, in the cafe, around registration, in the spacious halls near the hospitality and in the hospitality room, many small groups having a grand time visiting. More got to know each other and conversations were quick to begin. And it seemed a more boisterous group - really enjoying themselves.



PRESIDENT
JAMES C. ALTHOFF
2 MT VERNON LANE
ATHERTON, CA 94025
(415) 325-8356

1st VICE PRESIDENT
JAMES MARCEL SNYDER
1226 ROYAL OAK DRIVE
WINTER SPRINGS, FL 32708
(305) 365-7938

2nd VICE PRESIDENT
WALTER M. LONGACRE
2046 EAST 8TH STREET
FREMONT, NE 68025
(402) 721-3557

TREASURER
RUSSELL T. MAYNARD
721 RUTHERFORD DRIVE
FREDERICKSBURG, VA 22401
(703) 786-8951

SECRETARY
BEN DONAHUE
385 OAK STREET
MT. VIEW, CA 94041
(415) 967-1855

HISTORIAN
HARRY S. CARL, JR.
550 CREEK ROAD
CHADDS FORD, PA 19317
(215) 388-2562

REUNION NEWS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

It all began when Marcel Snyder, Harry Carl and myself arrived early on Tuesday (Marcel on Monday) for reunion planning and found early registrants already there. Then on Wednesday 98 were scheduled to arrive, but over 130 showed up, so the hospitality room was opened at noon and it all began. The registration was opened in the afternoon for the early registrants. That evening there was one added attraction - a 9:45 PM fire drill! It was everybody out and some got caught in their pajamas. The small fire was hastily put out.

Thursday began with reveille piped over the public address speakers. Then some more bugle calls, and marches. No one fell out and hit the line, but you could see the gaze in their eyes that it brought back memories of a time when they had to. Registration was open all day and a total of 337 finally registered. There were 177 men, their wives, eight guests, one from group and one 782nd member. Hospitality opened in the morning and it was a popular place all day long. Many pictures were reviewed and Harry Carl was busy working on the squadron history. If you had not met an old buddy during the day the cocktail hour was the time to see who was there. After an enjoyable dinner there was a full program including Harry Carls' slide presentation of "Tales from Sacajawea." The squadron spirit was rekindled and we were well on our way for a joyous reunion.

Friday's schedule was a full one. The early reveille calls found many already in the cafe as 75 of the first registrants had the opportunity to board the old B-24 at Wright-Patterson at 0800. Then for all it was the dedication of the plaque adjacent to the Air Force Museum at 0930. Assembly began shortly after 0900 and there was concern that the flyover might not take place due to a thin low overcast. But your prayers for satisfactory weather were answered and at precisely 0930 the missing man formation of A-7's roared low overhead and the dedication began. It was an emotional time during the remembrance of our comrades who gave their lives for us and for our country. After introduction and posting of the colors our own James Downs gave a beautiful invocation, Harry Carl gave the squadron history, and the first hymn, Faith of our Fathers, was sung with accompanist Bonnie Rowe playing the accordin. The plaque was unveiled by Vincent Beeson and Jim Wray. A sharp salute was given by Jim Wray and Earl Leinart place a lone flag next to the plaque. After presentation of the plaque and tree to the museum, and acceptance by the museum, a hymn was sung, benediction by Chaplain Davidson, taps, the firing party and retiring of the colors.

Many lingered in the Memorial Park to view

other plaques, others visited the museum. The "Good Morning America" filming was due at 1100, and I began to find a place to hide when it seemed it would go awry. Finally the crew arrived, a "cherry picker" was commandeered and the shot was taken in front of the B-50 with the Museum in the background. At the same time the group photo of all the men and then all the ladies, was taken.

BRONZE PLAQUE DEDICATED TO THE REMEMBRANCE OF OUR COMRADES WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR US AND OUR COUNTRY

Then it was back to the hotel for lunch and afternoon program at 1330. Many donned WWII uniforms and the spirit was right for another outstanding briefing. Thanks to John Kennedy we had a copy of the target map on the briefing room wall at Pantanella. Byron Thompson did the usual great job for intelligence, Hank Willett, operations, Jack Ertel, navigation, Walter Sutton, bombardier and James Downs, chaplain. The program ended about 1600 and it was hospitality room time and a free evening after a busy day. Saturday was free to visit the museum and join in the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Air Force. The blue caps could be seen all over Wright-Patterson. All enjoyed the many aircraft out on display and finding fellow comrades they had not seen at the hotel functions. In the afternoon it was eyes skyward for the many flyovers. Some returned early to take in the hospitality room before the cocktail party, followed by the banquet.

After introductions, telegrams were read from our Commander in Chief President Reagan, and one from Vice President Bush. After some remarks by myself I had the honor to announce that the Silver Star was awarded to Lt. Col. Clarence J. Lokker, posthumously. Marcel Snyder read the citation and the Silver Star was presented to Sybil Lokker Wilson who was accompanied by Frank Lokker, brother of Col. Lokker. They accepted the award with a great deal of pride. We were all grateful that this high honor was bestowed on our gallant leader. It was a West Point classmate of Col. Lokker, and the first Squadron Commander of the 783rd Squadron, Col. Burt Andrus, who, with great personal effort, brought about this recognition. Due to other commitments Col. Andrus was unable to attend.

Three squadron men were then recognized for their dedication during the founding of our association. O. J. Cowart, Jr. was honored for computerizing the rosters, newsletter layouts, name tags, and other help over the past two years. Walt Longacre was honored

for his dedication in finding our lost comrades, finding over one-third of all the men who were located. Marcel Snyder was honored for his help as co-founder and 1st Vice President. He resigned as Vice President to devote more time to his government job that will take him out of the country for extended periods. He remains as a director. All three received a beautiful plaque. Following this

we had a short program on the Air Force Museum. There were other happenings that are hard to describe; Malvern Barner singing "The 781st Will Shine Tonight" and Bonnie Rowe playing some tunes, a faltering toy helicopter charade and soon it was time to say a sad farewell (I made it this time!) and to say God Speed and a safe trip home.

During the past two years I have been close to the reforming of the 781st and I made some remarks as to my thoughts about our proud squadron. I thought maybe those not in attendance would like to know my thoughts and of those expressed to me by other members. "It has been one year since our last reunion and time to give a report to the 781st members. There is no need for a financial report - you have been most generous in your support for the newsletter that we have not had to assess dues. I don't have to report on the membership - you know the numbers and that we have exceeded all expectations. But, what I can report on is our assets - YOU - the honorable members of the 781st. So, I would like to share with you a few words about the 781st. We were a squadron of pride and spirit, a squadron forged under great leadership. We never failed to do our share and more. What team work that was. And you never forgot your fellow man. Our planes were always ready to fly by a great ground echelon and the air echelon carried out their duties in many successful bombing raids; along the way being challenged by Herman Goering's fighters but, our gunners made them pay the price. And in spite of heavy flak our bombs hit the targets. So, now it gives us great satisfaction to recount those days, to share our memories. I never had a dream that we would ever have this opportunity for so many of us to share our memories. I guess, at the outset, if I were asked how many I thought we would locate I probably would have said 100 to 150. But we grew, and many in their own way, for their own reasons, helped. We probably have a record for the number of men found in such a short period of time, but we're not particularly interested

REUNION (CONT'D)

in records now - we're interested in each other and that's what counts. Men like Robert Gaston, here for his second reunion and totally blind. He just wants to be with some of his old comrades and hear their voices. And our honorary members are here to share with the comrades of a lost father or husband or brother. Now to restate our purpose: To locate all former members of the 781st Bomb Squadron, to reunite them together with us in our common bond, to publish a quarterly newsletter and a history book, to honor our fallen comrades, to hold periodic reunions, to maintain a high level of conduct within our association and provide an informational program for our members."

"GOOD MORNING AMERICA" An opening salute was taken during the reunion and 781st Sqd. will be on ABC national television between 7 AM and 9 AM, Tuesday, November 17th. Usually it comes on at the beginning hour or half hour.

An excerpt from a letter from **MILT LEVINSON**, "To many of us WWII was something in our far distant past that we thought about when something triggered our mind, such as a movie or newspaper article, on the Air War of WWII. After attending the reunion, it restored a great deal of pride in myself as to what I had contributed to my country. It was something that no one can ever take away from me and it was a revelation to my wife about the world and times under which we lived and fought. When you add that to the comradeship of the men who had flown together, and had not seen each other for these many years, it brought tears to my eyes to see the emotions well up in the faces of these men as they slowly recognized faces."

WHERE ARE ALL THE PICTURES? - It just takes time to get them all together, make half tone copies and fit them into the newsletter. So, rather than wait a few weeks longer we'll be somewhat "bare" in this issue and make up for it next time. Photos and more reunion stories in next issue right after the first of the year.

THANK YOU - To Dollie Snyder and all that helped at registration. Ruth Belik, Carolyn Maynard, Donna Carl, Judy Willett, Teddy Levinson, Dot Robinson, Dot Baum, Esther Cowart, Ellen Cooper, Marjorie Clark, and Mamie Braud spent many hours helping out. And to Ben "Kitty, Kitty" Donahue for his help in the hospitality room and ably assisted by

Dick Crutcher. And to Fred Aboud for helping out on the photo sales. Thanks Bonnie Rowe for the many times you played a tune for us. The officers and directors are remembered for all their help in their planning and work at the reunion.

Many others helped in various ways and I must single out Roland Soucy for the great job he did in arranging for the plaque and for the dedication arrangements. The flyover would not have occurred, had it not been for Roland.

And Roland and Frank Maccani selected the site for the plaque. Did you notice when viewing the plaque that you could see the museum in the background, and the planes and missiles in the outdoor display?

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER - We have decided to print one complete roster with all men listed and mail it out separately. We expect to do this in the next month or two.

SICK CALL - Dean Jones is very ill in the Veterans Hospital. Jim Wray left the reunion on the sick list and not fully recovered according to the last report I received. Charles McKenna's wife, Virginia, is also requiring medical attention and Col. Mac remained home to care for her during the reunion. David Orr's wife, Nancy, is not well. We missed the Orr's at the reunion. Les Wheeler had to cancel his reunion reservation due to illness. How about a card or call from those of you who know these members and their wives. A prayer is also in order.

TAPS - In memory of our comrades who now rest in honored glory - Sam Bodgan, Luther W. Smith, Chandos Russell, Chestor O. Jesionek and John Hughes. Our heartfelt sympathy to their family and friends.

SQUADRON INSIGNIA PINS - They were a big hit. We'll have some available for the next reunion.

CAPS - This beautiful cap almost sold out - about 20 left at \$10, including shipping. Order from Treasurer Russ Maynard.

PHOTOS - The group photo is still available at \$8 for an 8 x 10. (This is slightly more than at the reunion - sorry). Send check direct to: D. E. Gulbransen Photography, 407 Grant St., Fairborn, OH 45324. Orders must be placed within 30 days.

VIDEO - We have some good copy and are working on having a good Reunion 87 video put together at a reasonable price.

REUNION BOOKLET - Just a few left of Reunion '86 and there is still time to order Reunion '87. Both for \$15 and order from Russ Maynard, Treasurer. Reunion booklets are edited and put together by Harry Carl. If you have anything you might think is of interest for the reunion booklet, please contact Harry Carl.

MAKE A DATE FOR '88!

- Reunion '88 will be at the Menger Hotel in downtown San Antonio, September 14 to 18, 1988. We will be joined by other squadrons of the 465th Bomb Group and some group personnel. It promises to be the biggest yet! Full details in next Newsletter.

The following describes how Jim Althoff finds stories for our newsletter

PAUL DURCKEL STORY - I have to begin with a contact from Glen Haywood over a year ago. He had met someone in Houston after the war and could not remember his name. He thought this man went down with Col. Lokker's plane. I then sent him Lokker's crew list, etc. He replied, "Some time ago you wrote in answer to my letter and I am now convinced that my memory is playing tricks on me and that the person in question was not a member of that crew. However, I am sure the facts are pretty much as I outlined before. He was a big strapping guy of at least six foot two and over 200 lbs. He had brown eyes with a rather pronounced nose, and I think dark hair with maybe a slight wave to it. I am sure he played football at Stanford, and I believe played in the Rose Bowl against Nebraska. The reason I think so is that I knew a guy in cadets from Nebraska team and I thought it unusual to know someone from both sides. He lived on the hill not far from where your tent was located. I now think that he was lost on a later mission, but he did not know the fate of Col Lokker because the last rumor I had heard was that he had made it out of the plane and had been taken POW. Could be he met up with someone in the Stalag who filled him in.

While at the meeting I talked with several people and drew a blank with all but Roy Byrd, who remembered him as a real gung-ho guy, and said at the time he was lost we felt he would try to shoot his way to freedom, rather than be taken. After much thought I think he must have been a member of one of

the older crews (McDaniel, Frazier, that circa) and had been made group navigator (it was bombardier) and that he went down in the lead plane some time after the first of the year. I can't say if I was on that mission, but I remember a count of four chutes, which led us to believe that, due to his size and location, his chances were nil. My interest is to set the record straight, and I am sure he had friends among us who would be interested in knowing that he survived such an ordeal."

JOHN S. HARTSHORN writes the following letter: "On page 5 of your last Pantanella News you requested information for Glen Haywood, co-pilot on Ellison's crew, regarding a man he met in Houston after the war and was hoping someone could come up with his name. If this man is not Paul Durckel, then it has to be his twin brother. Durk was the navigator on Clayton McDaniels crew and was in the fertilizer business after the war and had asked me to join the company. Durk played football at Stanford and I played at U.S.C. and we played against each other. Durk was shot down on a mission to Vienna on March 22, 1945 while flying with Capt. Richardson. Durk was a POW.

I got home and was discharged in August 1945 and about a month later I had a call from Santa Ana from an air base in that area, and it was Durckel who was waiting to get processed out. He stayed with us for awhile and we located Dick Grantham, McDaniels co-pilot, and we had some real great visiting hours - and headaches - it has been years since we have had any contact with Durk or Grantham.

By the way, Jim, I'll tell you a little note I jotted down in a small book I had overseas - "Friday, October 13, 1944, Target was Blechhammer to destroy oil refinery - Flak heavy, accurate, intense. We were hit by flak in 3 areas of the plane and gas leaks resulted. Plane ahead of us was blown up - we flew with Lt. Althoff. Just thought you would enjoy this note. By the way, Ben Donahue and I played ball together at Glendale High in the good old days. Regards to you and all the gang at the coming reunion." John was ball gunner on McDaniel's crew. And I remember that mission - it was my thirteenth!

FINALLY DURCKEL IS FOUND - As the roster becomes shorter for those not located we can zero in on some who have escaped our early searches. I had remembered Paul and made an early search for him since his original address was only 35 miles from where I live. Then Ben Donahue gave it a shot. A few days after I received John Hartshorn's letter it dawned on me that we could check out Stanford's Alumni Association. With reunion work I forgot about it until at the reunion when Ben Donahue told me he got Paul's old address in the 60's from Charles Zwerko. As soon as Ben got home he

wrote the Postmaster in Pecos, Texas and then phoned Stanford. Both gave him Paul's current address. Ben gave me his phone number and I had a nice chat with Paul. He

**...three were killed -
hung by civilians.
One of them was our
own Ernie Alden.**

informed me that three of the crew he went down with got killed - hung by civilians. One of them was our own Ernie Alden. We're waiting for Paul's story so we can find out how Paul was able to escape the fate of some of his crew and survive POW camp. Glad to have you back aboard, Paul.

OK let's have more of you zero in on some of the missing. How about Grantham or some of the other men who are missing??

EUGENE FENNER writes a couple interesting items. He notes that all of the things the 781st men have done will never be recorded but here are two items of interest; the Air Force Museum is where Lt. Marvin Rice crashed in 1945 in a B-17 while flying as co-pilot. He died a couple days later in the base hospital, the building is now quarters for medical personnel. And in the museum annex, where the planes are displayed, there is a KC97L, tail #630, this is the last 97 that I logged time on. After that I went on to KC135s.

GROUP PERSONNEL - As I mentioned earlier, since each of our squadrons have their own associations, we felt it appropriate to offer the group men to join with us for some memories. We have located 27 members and another 28 who have died. There probably were about 100 men total. One, Ray Tyler, joined us at Dayton and have received word from several others who expect to be in San Antonio.

Recently, I received a reply from **JAMES E. SUMMERS**, who was with group engineering. His comments, "What a flood of memories come to mind today when I received the information you sent me from the 781st. Although I was in Group Hq., and did not know many men in the squadrons very well, I really appreciate your remembering us and inviting us to join the activities of the 781st. Thank you for the list of group people and also the list of my deceased friends. I think it is a shame that those of us from those days, men who lived together as a family for about a year and one half, have not kept in touch. I have not forgotten these men and I hope they have not forgotten me."

LARRY TIEHEN WRITES - "After reading Col. McKenna's article about Stalag Luft I at

Barth, Germany, I remembered I have paper published by some POWs from our camp. It is dated May 5, 1945, three days after the Germans evacuated. I was in the hospital, which was only a few yards away from headquarters, and we watched them leave. You never saw such a happy group - yelling and screaming! Some Scottish boys were crying, they had been captured at Dieppe, France five years earlier.

I am enclosing the paper. I doubt there are very few copies left. I thought the POWs from Luft I would like to see it. Note the Vol I, Last I, Price I D-Bar. The D-Bar was a bar of chocolate that we used to barter with (we had no money). You could buy almost anything with a D-Bar.

Col. Francis Gabreski and Col. Zemki were part of the camp commanders. We were told to stay in place and not tear the barb wire fence down. In a day or so two Russian officers on horse back rode up to Headquarters. They had a heated discussion with Zemki and Gabreski (In Polish or Russian). One of the Russians pulled out his pistol and pointed it at them and the discussion was over. Gabreski turned around and yelled, "Tear the fence and the guard towers down." They were down in a matter of minutes and the POWs were free. They scattered in all directions, many jumped on Russian tanks and went with them. There was a female flak school close by and many a POW found refuge there (protecting the girls from the Russians?). Many came back with chickens, geese, cars, motorcycles, cows, horses and much wine. It was a wild time." Thanks for the letter, Larry. It was good to see you at both reunions.

THE POETS CORNER

From FLIM FLAM

Roses are red
Violets are blue;
If Daisy wears any
It's something new.

I'm thru with all girls,
They lie and they cheat;
They're digging us guys
To the end of our beat;
They make us miserable
And drive us to gin-
Good Gosh...look at that one
who just came in!
(Remember we were just boys then!)

THE CARL DAHL CREW ON THEIR FOURTH MISSION

THE CARL DAHL CREW ON THEIR FOURTH MISSION - The following story was submitted by Carl Dahl. "September 10, 1944, started out very much as any other day in the life of young fliers at combat in a deadly war. Our crew, along with others of the 781st Bomb Squadron, trudged half asleep up the hill toward the headquarters building to be briefed in the early morning hours to fly a bombing mission over the warehouses, manufacturing plants, and railroad marshaling yards at Vienna, a target well known to them and the rest of the Squadron as a very difficult mission. The preflight weather briefing indicated scattered clouds between our base and the target. Fighter escort was expected to pick us up on the way to the target, dropping off before we got to the target and picking us up again on the way home. Pretty much a standard briefing so far, and then the really bad news, Intelligence was reporting that the heaviest concentration of anti-aircraft guns in all of Europe was assembled at Vienna on that memorable day. With little inkling of the excitement, tragedy and good fortune that lay ahead, the air crews quickly loaded into the back of the waiting 6 X 6's and were transported to the flight line where each crewman quickly began a check of his equipment. That completed, engines were started and aircraft were taxied in order to the flight strip where they quickly took off to rendezvous in the pre-dawn darkness. As the dawn began to slowly break, we could see the numerous squadrons and groups of B-24's stretched out in a long line in front of us and behind us.

We were somewhat at ease as we gradually climbed for altitude and passed over the beautiful Alps bathed in the early morning light. Shortly after we had suspicion of things to come when we heard the excited chatter on our radio that German fighter planes were attacking some of the other groups ahead, in force. But our group tightened formation and pressed on as we were expected to do. Then, before we knew it, Culhane, the navigator, was calling out the I.P. over the intercom, and, shortly after, we began the bombing run as planned. The sky was almost solid black and grey as we approached, and, over the target, the flak was so thick that you felt as though you could walk on it. Shell fragments "thunked" as they pierced the skin of the plane and rattle off like hail stones. Then suddenly from the waist came the shout over the intercom, "We're hit!" A quick check by the engineer disclosed oil pouring from the left outboard engine in a cloud of smoke and fire, oil pressure on that engine began to drop immediately, and I shouted to Beeson, the pilot, "Feather No. 1 and hit the extinguisher." While we were trying to get No. 1 under control, a huge hole suddenly appeared right in front of the pilot with a loud "thud" as a German 88 mm shell went right through the ship, entering from the bottom

and going out the top without exploding. It passed right between Rocky, the bombardier, and Culhane without touching either of them. "What was that?" Rocky grunted as he was poised over his bomb sight! No response from Culhane, then at long last, over the intercom the welcome "bombs away" signal was given as we held our position in the formation.

No worry about losing one engine. We knew we could make it back easily on three with the bombs gone. The Squadron began a right turn in its rally off the target. Then that dreaded shout over the intercom, "We're hit on the right side too, Skipper!" A quick check again, and this time it was a cloud of oil smoke and flame from the right inboard engine, the oil pressure began dropping immediately, and again I quickly shouted to Beeson to feather No. 3 and hit the extinguisher. Suddenly, we were sitting up there with two feathered props. Soon the rally was completed, the fires blew themselves out, and the terrible din dropped to a gentle roar, and we began to take stock of our situation. The rest of the squadron began pulling away from us because it was impossible to keep up with only two engines going. The decision at this point seemed fairly clear. Since we were slowly losing altitude, even though we were

carefully conserving every bit of fuel and altitude, try for the island of Viz; if we had enough fuel and altitude when we got there, cross the Adriatic; and if not, set down on the island. Only one small problem as I asked Culhane for a compass heading for Viz. From the early morning briefing, I knew that a large concentration of German fighter planes lay between us and Viz, at the Lake Balaton area. Fighter planes, I thought! Why not call our own since we were all alone. All other bomber formations were out of sight, and we were slowly limping along and gradually losing altitude. We knew the Germans might also hear our call, but decided it was a calculated risk worth taking and quickly made a distress call to anyone in our area. Almost before we knew it our own fighter escort appeared off our right-wing tip and we heaved a big sigh of relief. Our relief was short lived as our escort radioed, "Good luck, Guys, we have to leave you now, because we are short of fuel," and our security blanket was gone!

The left inboard engine was getting really rough and losing power badly as we skirted the Balaton area. It was beginning to look as if we might not even make it to Viz. Suddenly, there was no longer a worry. There they were - German fighters dropping out of the



Rear L to R - Carl Dahl, pilot - Mike Beeson, co-pilot - William Rachow, bombardier - Neil Culhan, navigator.

Front L to R - Howard Percy, radio - Frank Martinez, engineer- John Layne, ball gun - Richard Perkinsnose, gun - Jack Pettigrew, top gun - and Adrian Martin, tail gun.

sky primed for the kill! They could clearly see our two feathered props and considered us a sitting duck. All of a sudden, it was bedlam again, but this time fully coordinated as the gunners called out to each other over the intercom - Perkins in the nose turret, Pettigrew in the upper turret, Layne in the Bendix ball turret, Martin in the tail turret, and Percy and Martinez at the waist guns. Even though exhausted from continuous work patching gas and hydraulic lines, holes, bomb bay doors, guns and everything else, these men were ready to fight with a vengeance. Right in the middle of all this, one of them sang out over the intercom, "Don't put your wheels down, Skipper, (the sign of distress and surrender in this theatre at this time) we'll get 'em for you." Pass after pass was made by the German fighters from all directions, and each was met with a hail of 50-caliber lead. The first shout over the intercom was Pettigrew who said he got a hit, then Layne in the ball, followed by Martin in the tail, all getting hits and confirming each others kills. After losing three of their number, the German fighters apparently decided we weren't long for this world anyway, so they broke off leaving us with good and bad news. The good news was that not one of the crew had been hit in the furious exchange; the bad that the aircraft had taken it's share of hits and the left inboard engine was worse. We could see the oil flowing out the engine cowlings and oil pressure was fluctuating.

By now, I knew we were too low to make it to Viz, so I quickly asked Culhane to give us a heading for Yugo Partisan territory and to call out on the intercom as soon as we were there. "We may be there now," he said over the intercom. A few minutes later our worst fears were realized when the left inboard engine froze up with such a terrible vibration we thought it would tear itself off the wing. The engine was dead, but the prop continued to windmill in the air adding a strong drag to our plane which was already barely flyable. Now, over heavily wooded mountains, there was only one choice left as I ordered "Prepare to bail out" over the intercom. Rocky put two 45 slugs into his precious bomb sight as he had been trained to do, and I shouted, "Bail out." In a few seconds all but Beeson were gone. He wanted to stay and help me get out but was shortly persuaded to jump with the others. With full power on the remaining engine I climbed out between the seats and released the wheel to climb down to the bomb bay, but the plane immediately lurched violently pinning me between the pilot's seat and the bulkhead behind it. Fighting over the seat, I grabbed the wheel with both hands and wrenched it left with all my strength, turned, and dove headfirst through

the open bomb bay. Hitting the air below, I was suddenly tumbling head over heels, but, by spreading my arms and legs the tumbling soon stopped and I had a great sense of relief at being out of the plane and floating so freely in the air. "What a beautiful landscape below," I thought and then a small voice inside me said, "You better pull the string," and then heard the welcome pop of the chute opening. It seemed like I was falling awful fast, but, as I neared the ground I could see the dense forest of giant pines and also hear the frightening crack of rifles and whine of bullets from the ground. Now, I wasn't going down fast enough. By pulling on the shroud lines, I spilled more air from the chute and plummeted right into the very top of one of those giant trees. As my feet touched the treetop, my chute suddenly collapsed, and, from nearly 100 feet up, I fell crashing from branch to branch as I went. The branches pounded my back, face, ribs and, as the branches got bigger, I was mercifully unconscious. When I finally awakened I found myself dangling in my parachute harness about two feet off the ground. With a prayer of thanks that I was still alive, I quickly slipped out of the parachute harness, took a fix on directions, and headed in the opposite direction from the sound of the shots. Alternately trotting and walking, I soon came to a small stream and began wading upstream. After hiking for about 20 minutes in the stream, I suddenly heard the faint sound of voices in the distance and quickly jumped out of the stream and fell to the ground, listening intently while I tried to locate the exact direction from which the voices were coming. Cautiously crawling in the direction that seemed most likely, it was only a few minutes until I saw a clearing ahead that seemed to be under cultivation. Carefully moving forward, I could at last see a group of peasants gathered together at the far side of the field and speaking to someone on the ground in a strange language. Not knowing whether they were friend or foe, after watching a few minutes, I decided to take a chance that they were Partisans and stood up. They were so busy they didn't notice me walking toward them until I had almost reached them. As they turned toward me, I kept walking and began saying very loudly, "American! American!" and had almost reached them when the group parted, and there on the ground, with his ankle shattered in eight places, was my co-pilot Mike Beeson. After much gesturing and pigeon English, we established that the people were indeed Partisans, and we started off for their village some three miles away with two of their men taking turns carrying Beeson on their backs.

At the small village of about 10 homes, we

were the center of attention, and the men carried Beeson into one of the homes with me right behind and my hand on my 45. They slipped Beeson into the bottom of a two-tiered bunk and motioned for me to sit down, which I refused until I could exam Beeson's ankle to determine the extent of damage. It was very bad and he was in a lot of pain. Not long after they brought in a man we hadn't seen before, but who had lived in the U.S. for a bit and could speak a fair amount of English. He would, it turned out, stay with us the rest of the time we were in Yugoslavia. He told us we were in friendly Partisan hands and that they would notify their Russian Zone Commander of our presence and make arrangements to get us back to Italy. His reference to the Russian had ominous overtones to me and sent cold chills down my back, a feeling that was later to be fully justified.

While I was getting oriented to this new and unexpected Russian factor, we suddenly heard shouts and excitement from outside. As I ducked apprehensively near a window, in trooped more Partisans who had rounded up all the rest of the crew, with the exception of Rocky and Frank. They had learned via "jungle telegraph" where we were supposed to be hiding and had brought the other straight to us. After "hoots and back slapping" all around, our hosts provided bread and soup for dinner and a delicious liqueur made from prunes, as an apertif. Later in the evening we saw a man, not previously a part of our group, rounding the corner of the building with a horse-drawn cart. Our hosts unceremoniously began to hustle everyone down the stairs. They carried Beeson as he had been given morphine from a first-aid kit one of the gunners had the presence of mind to bring with him when he bailed out. Beeson was feeling a little better and was ready to do some traveling. With our interpreter and driver riding up front and us in the back, we took off. After a couple of hours of riding we came to another village of about 100 homes. As we entered the village, our interpreter, who insisted we call him Fred, decided to take us to the town square where the "bullet-pock marked wall" stood as mute testimony of the 300 men, women and children who had been massacred there by the Germany Army just six months before. From this grisly scene of the massacre, we went directly to the office of the Russian Zone Commander which was upstairs over one of the houses. The room had been partitioned, and his office appeared to be at the end of the room with a closed door.

In just a few minutes, Fred knocked on the door and went in at the sound of an intimidating Russian voice only to emerge a few

CARL DAHL (CONTINUED)

seconds later to say that the Captain would see us in a little while. Without being obvious, I could clearly see through the open door, the "dour" visage of the uniformed Russian sitting by himself behind a large desk. Clearly, the delay in seeing us was intended as an affront and a slight. Calling our group together in a corner, I explained what was happening and that I would likewise delay when the Captain finally saw fit to see me. He finally called me after about 20 minutes. Then it was my turn to stall. I talked with the crew for about 10 minutes telling them to stay close to the door when I went in, to come in with their guns ready if I called, and not to give up their guns to anyone for any reason. Marching into the office in my best military style, I saluted briskly in front of the Captain's desk. He studiously ignored the salute and barked something to Fred in Russian. Fred then turned to me and said, "The Captain wants all your information about your home airfield, your target, your airplane, and how many planes took part in your bombing mission. For an instant, I was startled by his questions but careful not to let him see it. I said to Fred, "Tell the Captain my name, rank, and serial number, and that is all he is

....there we stood, face to face, with guns pointed at each others belly...

going to get." When he heard this from Fred, he colored with rage, and rose from his chair, began to pull his Luger from its holster, and at the same time told Fred that I was ordered to hand over my gun and all the weapons of my crew. At this point, he was in such a rage that he was shouting at Fred who appeared to be scared to death.

Anticipating what was about to happen, I had already pulled my own 45 and cocked it as the Captain had pulled his Luger. There we stood, face to face, with guns pointed at each others belly, and, suddenly you could hear a pin drop anywhere in the building. "Tell the Captain," I told Fred, "He will be dead before his bullet hits me if he pulls that trigger, we want to be returned immediately to Italy according to the U.S./Russian Treaty." Poor Fred quickly translated, and the Captain saw that we meant business even if he had never heard of such treaties, but then neither had I. A few seconds more, and the stare down was over. The Captain holstered his Luger, turned his back, picked up his field phone, and began talking to some one presumably in Russian. We were dismissed! Fred quickly motioned for us to follow him, which we were glad to do. As we went down the stairs and

loaded on to a wagon again, we gave a huge collective sigh of relief.

When Fred climbed up beside our driver, there was a new look of respect in his and the drivers eyes as we continued through the village. After riding about three miles out of the town our driver quietly detoured down a side road without any explanation and shortly came to a clearing in the trees where colorful lighted lanterns and the sound of music announced that a folk dance was in progress. Everyone was in peasant clothes and dancing with a lot of enthusiasm and joy on a wooden platform about 50-feet square, raised about six inches off the ground. Nothing would do but we join them in the dancing. After repeated assurances that we had plenty of time, we all joined in, with the exception of poor Beeson who could only watch from the cart. About 2 am I insisted we must be on our way. Before leaving, Fred showed us their best kept secret. Under the dance floor in a huge pit covered by a tarpaulin was their harvest of grain, about two boxcar loads hidden from the Germans. Resuming our cart ride, we returned to the main road, such as it was, and had traveled about two hours when we stopped and Fred told us that we would soon be leaving the forested mountains and had to pass a German checkpoint. Not good news to us, because, at this particular time, Beeson was running a high temperature, the morphine was all gone, and he was becoming slightly delirious! I asked, in a somewhat mocking manner, just how our two friends proposed to accomplish this minor miracle. They seemed indifferent to the whole matter and said we must all lie down flat on the bed of the cart while they piled straw on us, and then not to make a sound while they drove through the check-point. This was madness, I felt. The Germans would never buy such a simple ruse. With a lot of misgiving, I ordered all the crew to draw and cock their weapons and breathe as little as possible when we approached the guard. Then added, that, if we were discovered, shoot every guard in sight but not to waste a single shot. Further, they were to jump into the ditch beside the road after me and begin a retreat as fast as possible back down the road we had just come from. I would take care of Beeson with Neil Culhane helping.

Everyone followed instructions perfectly, the sentry stopped the horse cart, and then began a lot of conversation. We held our breath, mostly afraid Beeson would begin moaning with the pain he was suffering and give away our hiding place. Peeking through the straw and watching the whole proceedings, we saw the sentry begin walking toward the cart. We froze like steel springs! In-

stantly, Fred jumped down from his seat on the cart right in front of the sentry. From the intensity and tone of the conversation that ensued, I'm sure Fred was putting his life on the line for us at that very moment, and he finally prevailed. The sentry waved us on as Fred got back into his seat on the cart, and our journey was resumed once more. Our travel was over a fairly flat plain now, and

...shoot every guard in sight but don't waste a single shot...

soon came to a large town with paved streets and lights. This came as a real surprise to us. No way did we ever expect to be riding around a lighted town somewhere in the middle of Yugoslavia. Let me tell you the sound of the horses' hoofs on the paved street at 5:00 am resembled cannon shots, because there was not another sound in the entire town. We traveled only a few blocks when our cart stopped in front of a little one-story white house that was totally dark. Our two guides quietly slipped down from their seat and hustled us all inside with Neil and me carrying Beeson. Once inside, the place was a blaze of light which was shut off to the outside by blackout curtains. We shortly learned from Fred that we would go the rest of the way by truck, which I could not believe. Within 10 minutes, a short, burly, moustached man was admitted quietly to the house, and we were informed that he would be our driver. At Fred's signal, we all quietly slipped outside, and, surprise again, we see and hear a German lorry waiting for us. Carefully, Neil and I wrestled Beeson into the cab with us while the others crawled into the back. I'm sure all of us were thinking, at that moment, this was too easy, and wondered if this last leg of our trip were to be our final betrayal. The stocky driver crawled in, and the lorry started out with hardly a whisper. The driver soon guided it out of town with skill and totally without lights. Once outside the town, he began rolling along the deserted road about 40 miles an hour, still without lights, and I swear I could hardly see the end of the lorry's hood. We traveled about 50 minutes in total silence; the driver apparently spoke no English. Then the driver slowed up as he swung the lorry off the road to the right, and we began to bump across an open field. After a few minutes of bumps and groans from Beeson, who was in terrible pain by this time, we began to see a large light about 3/4 of a mile away. As we got closer, our hearts raced! We could see it was the lighted interior

DAHL (CONTINUED)

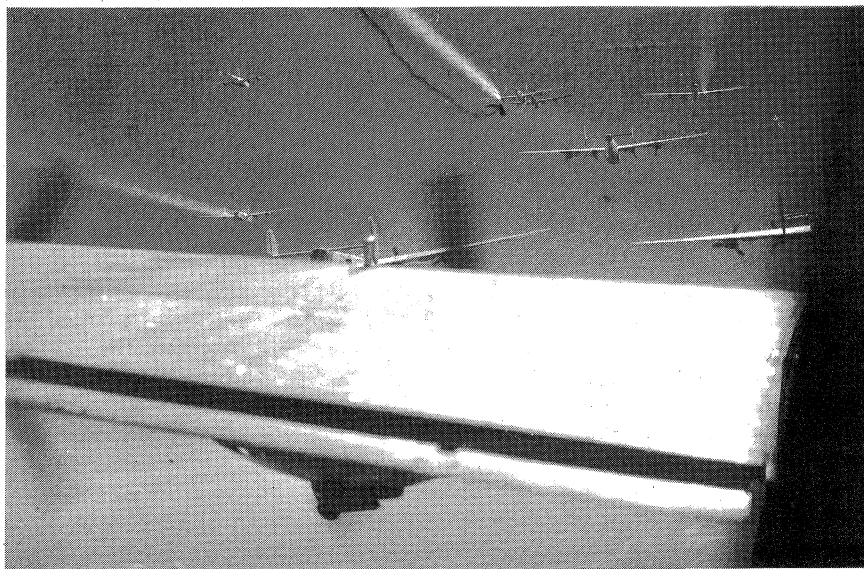
of a C-47 with its cargo hatch open, just waiting for us.

Safety at last! The crew jumped out of the back of the truck and scrambled into the waiting C-47 like it was their mother. Culhane and I began getting Beeson out of the cab and into the C-47. Just as we had him loaded, our lorry driver suddenly began shouting, "Go! Go! Go!" As I turned to identify the problem, I could see headlights of a car coming from the direction we had just come, men in the car started shouting, and some shots were fired. No more needed to be said, Culhane and I jumped into the C-47, and both shouted to the pilot, who already had his engines running. "Go! Go! Go!" We were all sure that it was Germans after us. Without further adieu, the pilot advanced full throttle while we finished pulling Beeson in and the plane crew closed the hatch. The C-47 was airborne in seconds, and, as the pilot banked left, we could see, by the light of the plane's landing lights, our lorry heading for the far side of the field with the car in hot pursuit. Was it a car full of German soldiers? We never found out, but we were sure many of those Partisans risked their lives to save us. Once in the air, several of the crew immediately went sound asleep and never stirred until we put down in Italy. At the request of the pilot, ambulances were waiting at the airfield to take us to the hospital, we all were deloused, fed, and put to bed for all of us were near the point of exhaustion. And so our September 10th mission ended the afternoon of the next day. After the doctors examined Beeson, they immediately sent him back to the United States. Two days later, the rest of us were sent back to our Squadron to resume flying."

NOTE; Six of these men were at reunion '86 and four at Reunion '87. The enemy planes shot down are not a part of the squadron record due to the fact that no other planes were in the area to confirm the kills. Franklin Martinez and William Rachow were separated and evaded for an additional five days before returning to Italy. In reviewing the story with group intelligence records I have found a notation that the Me 109's had U.S. markings and were painted silver with a red nose.

Not in Carl's story is the fact that five days earlier on his third mission, with two engines shot out by flak, his luck ran out short of the base near Foggia, where Gen. Twining was making an awards presentation at another base. He executed a beautiful crash landing in a wheat field. The ceremony was stopped and the MP's were dispatched to the scene, which was minutes away. Gen. Twining then called Col. Lokker to report the landing and the crew received a commendation.

Finito



Vienna was always rough. Dahl's plane indicated by the arrow was already in trouble. One of the other's smoking is Leggate with the Nelson crew and they went down over the target and all were taken POW.

CONTRIBUTIONS/DUES - The board of directors voted to continue voluntary contributions and not assess dues. Those that can afford a \$10 or \$20 bill should send it to Russ Maynard, Treasurer, to help defray the cost of the Newsletter.



The above photo is Col. McKenna's going away party at the enlisted men's club when he was transferred to the 464th. With him is Col. Lokker, the new squadron CO, Doc Rapaport and a lot of happy faces I don't recognize.

In closing I would like to remind you that this is your association. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact any of the officers or directors or myself. We want you to continue to think about those we have not located and let us know if you can come up with information on any of them. Good Health and Best Wishes for the coming Holiday Season from your Officers Directors.

Jim Althoff