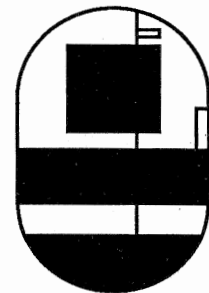




# PANTANELLA NEWS



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NUMBER 26

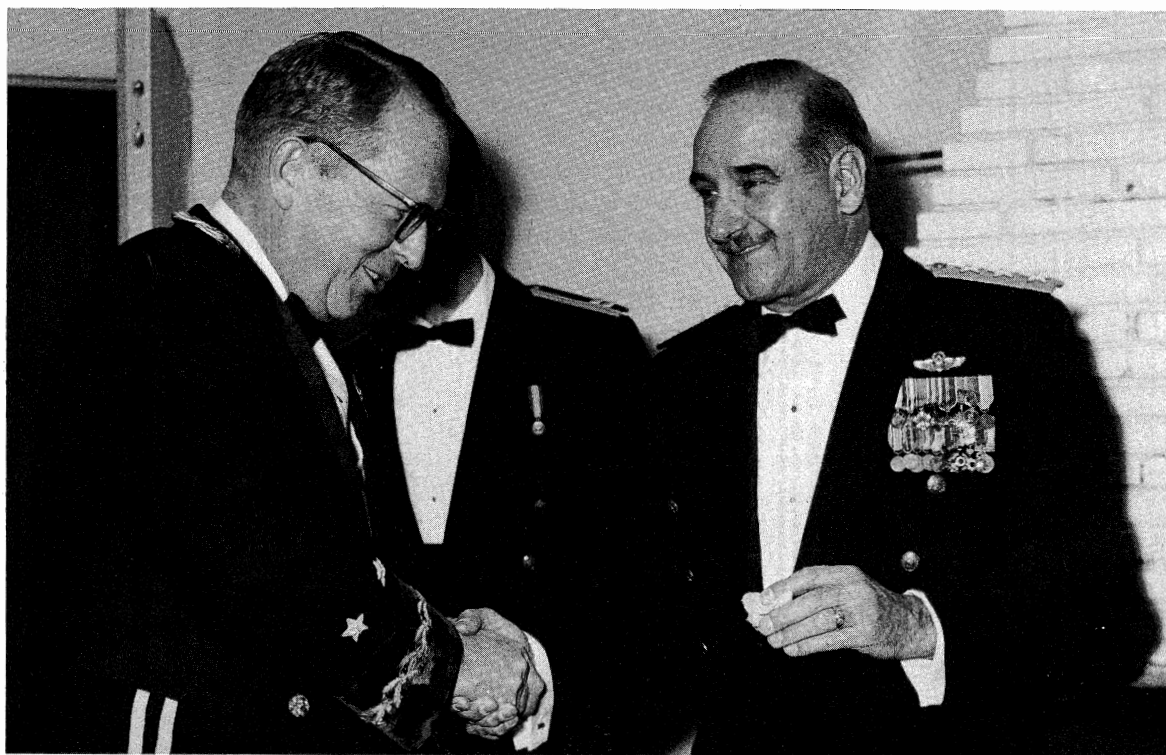
## **The Military Service after the 465th Bomb Group of Lt. Gen. Elmer J. Rogers JR., USAF Ret.**

I enjoyed receiving your letter of 21 February 1991 and the accompanying copy of the Pantabella News. You and your squadron mates are indeed enterprising.

When I began to recover from my wound in 1944, I was given command of the 97th Bomb Group, the oldest group in the European Theater. I led it on its 300th mission, which was interesting. It was equipped with B-17's. I checked myself out on the B-17 and the next day led the group and the wing against targets on the north edge of Munich. Later, I won a Presidential Unit Citation for my group by destroying the cracking tower of Romano-Americano Refinery at Ploesti, despite heavy smoke cover and severe AAA. In a later mission that I

regarded as important, I led my group to a landing on a pasture on the Island of Corsica. We took off at 3:00 AM with the help of a searchlight from AAA (US) and neutralized the French heavy coastal guns at first light just as the troop transports arrived for the invasion of southern France. General de Gaulle was on one of those transports and of course had first hand knowledge of how deadly those guns would have been to the enterprise of which he was a part. He awarded me the French Croix de Guerre with Palm for that exploit.

Later I became Director of Operations of the 15th Air Force, and a little later, of a British element, and thus was decorated as an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. I wrote the Field Order every day and set in motion a vast armada in an increasingly complex of missions, personally flying before dawn the weather reconnaissance on some of them. I was the final commander of the 15th Air Force and turned all its property back to the Italian Government.



*The above photo was taken while Gen. Rogers (right) was serving as the U. S. Representative to the Central Treaty Organization. Gen. Rogers retired in Turkey after his 40 years of service. At the retirement ceremony he was awarded two Distinguished Service Medals to add to the one he received during WWII while with the 15th Air Force.*

Returning to the Pentagon, I became Chief of the Policy Group. I then spent a year and graduated from The National War College in its second class. (I had previously graduated from the Air War College).

The next two and one-half years were spent as Director of Operations of the Alaskan Command. Two events stand out in my memory. In the month of January when there are 24-hours of darkness above the Arctic Circle I participated in an 18-hour weather reconnaissance flight from Fairbanks to the North Pole and return. To my surprise the

outside temperature at 18,000 feet over the Pole was 10° to 15° warmer than readings I noted at 23,000 feet over Germany on mid-winter missions. When we received our first long-range helicopter, I landed several times far out on the sea ice from Barter Island, much beyond the first open lead and far beyond where Eskimos dared to venture. I don't think any other General Officer had done this at that time.

In December of 1950, I was returned to the Pentagon to be the Air Force member of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, the senior Committee under the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Our Committee consisted of three two-star officers (Army, Navy & Air Force) and we each took on projects of highest policy import of such magnitude that we were labeled by the New York Times as the "Little Joint Chiefs of Staff." I undertook to write one study which my colleagues said could not be written. I urged that until atomic weapons were removed from the custody of the Atomic Energy Commission and assigned to the Department of Defense, the services would never be prepared to use them swiftly and adequately in time of emergency. The problems of special equipment, transport, arming, maintenance, surveillance, and training of personnel to perform at peak effectiveness under the War Plans were so great as to require the development over a lengthy period of time. The AEC, long entrenched, opposed this view. My study was accepted by my committee, by the Joint Chiefs, by the Secretary of Defense, and then by an Ad Hoc Committee consisting of General Marshal and Secretary of State Dean Acheson. It was then sent to president Truman who, they say, kept it in his desk bottom drawer and read it every day for two weeks, at length writing in the upper right hand corner, "OK HST." As is now well known, it was a historic decision that radically changed the nature of our preparations to defend our nation.

My next assignment was to the Far East Command in Tokyo. I rose through three positions to become Chief of Staff. The Korean hostilities

were in progress, so this was the largest concentration of our forces, and I was proud to be the first Air Force Officer to be Chief of Staff. The Far East Commander commanded all the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine forces in the Far East. I commanded all United Nations forces. It conducted combined planning with the Japanese Self Defense Forces. It carried out Economic Rehabilitation of Korea at the rate of one billion dollars a year. And, it was responsible for the Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands. All this kept us busy.

For the next three and one-half years, I was the Inspector General of the Air Force. The extension of my office was at Norton, requiring monthly flying visits which I made as pilot of my B-57 jet, logging over 400 hours, summer and winter and mostly at night. On one flight which I remember vividly, I encountered control failure at 42,000 feet over Memphis, diverted to Barksdale, flew out my fuel load, ventured to lower the gear at 5,000 feet not knowing whether the plane would go into an uncontrollable roll, then spiked it at that speed on a 11,500 foot runway, using every foot of it to stop my roll. After coffee and a hamburger, I continued to Norton in, and piloting, a replacement plane (B-57), flown down from Andrews.

My ultimate assignment was as the U. S. Representative to the Permanent Military Deputies Group of the Central Treaty Organization and I functioned as Chairman of the Group for a year. My area of responsibility was Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, the U.K. and the U.S. In Ankara I had a representational house and a plush 4-engine airplane in which to travel. On one occasion, Lord Mountbatten was the honored guest at a seated dinner for 14 persons in my home. Several times I had the pleasure of dinner at the Shah's palace in Tehran and on one occasion was his honored (and only) guest, seated at his elbow for five hours to watch demonstrations to celebrate armed forces day. He spoke of what he had done for his people, raising per capita income from \$250 a year to \$2,500, break-

**781st Bomb Squadron Association**  
2 Mount Vernon Lane  
Atherton, CA 94027  
(415) 325-8356

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James C. Althoff  
2 Mount Vernon Lane  
Atherton, CA 94027  
(415) 325-8356

#### Historian

Harry S. Carl  
550 Creek Road  
Chadds Ford, PA 19317  
(215) 388-2562

#### Treasurer

O. J. Cowart, Jr.  
1003 Londonderry Lane.  
Friendswood, TX 77546  
(713) 482-1884

#### **781st BOMB SQUADRON**

as part of the 465th Bomb Group, Fifteenth Air Force, flew B-24 Liberators from Pantanella Airfield located near Canosa, Italy, during WW11 (1944-45). During it's 191 missions over Southern Europe it dropped thousands of tons of bombs, shot down 23 enemy aircraft (German) and received two Distinguished Unit Citations.

ing up large estates and making land available to others, building roads, schools and hospitals, improving agriculture, etc., a far cry from the later eight years of useless debilitating combat and fanatical effort to spread Islamic Fundamentalism.

During my two years in Ankara, I flew to Wheelus every 60 days and borrowed one of their B-57s, thus remaining current in jets until the day of my retirement. No other officer was privileged to have hours allotted and to remain on piloting status so long.

I retired on 31 December 1961, having served 40 years and flown as pilot for 10,000 hours. I regarded it as a great honor and a privilege to serve my country in its Air Force. My service enabled me on numerous occasions to meet and to know the personalities who were "the movers and the shakers" of the World in my lifetime. What better life could one have, even if he were permitted to write the script in early childhood.

My best wishes.

Most sincerely,

/s/ Elmer J. Rogers

Lieut Gen USAF (Ret)

*Thank you General Rogers for your letter to let us know of your achievements after commanding the 465th Bomb Group. The men in our group respected your leadership and carried on after your departure to give credit to its leaders and to our country.*

*General Rogers, we salute you.*

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## VIENNA MARCH 22, 1945

by Wendell Galbraith

*(Wendell was a member of the 782nd Bomb Squadron flying aboard a 781st plane. Details at end of the story.)*

My first recollection of this mission was of standing at the hard stand prior to take off, and my complaining to our pilot, Capt. Richardson. How come we always get the hard ones? This was to be

our fourth trip to Vienna, and as you recall it was not a favorite place "to visit" at that time. His reply was, "No guff - no glory", which I think subsequently proved rather prophetic.

Our particular target that day was the Heligenstadt Marshalling Yards in the northern quadrant of the city. Nothing unusual occurred on the way to the target, but upon reaching the I.P. we found a seven tenths cloud cover below us. It soon became apparent that we were experiencing difficulty in locating our primary target due to the underlying clouds. As I recall there was some discussion on the interphone as to whether we should bomb the alternate, Florisdorf Oil Refinery, using our radar. Finally, Capt. Richardson made a command de-



Wendell Galbraith in 1944

cision - bomb one or the other as the flak was really busting around us. Just as he said this the bombardier yelled, "I've got the target," and very soon thereafter our forty, one hundred pound bombs were dropped.

Immediately thereafter one of our navigators (we had three aboard) said to take a certain degree heading from the target. No sooner did I

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there was a terrific explosion, and simultaneously the entire bomb bay was afire

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hear these words then there was a terrific explosion, and simultaneously the entire bomb bay was afire.

Since then I have often thought how fast the human mind works under extreme danger such as this. My position as radio operator was immediately behind the copilot on the command deck, and my mind raced to come up with some alternate escape route. I considered the top escape hatch, or perhaps making an attempt to get to the nose compartment which I immediately discarded because a portion of that route was already ablaze. By this time, probably seconds after the explosion, I could see the pilot and copilot in unison fighting the controls. Now the plane really began to pitch, and Col. Hamilton, who was flying as observer, standing between the pilot and copilot position, was thrown to the deck. I observed Lt. Alden, the radar navigator opposite me, rise to his feet and then sit down again. He had apparently not been hurt by the blast. It was apparent that my worst nightmare was now a reality and that my survival depended upon as speedy an exit as possible from the burning plane. I immediately decided that it was better to burn than die in either an explosion or in the imminent crash that awaited us. So, I went into the burning bomb bay preparing to jump when I suddenly realized I had my chest pack only half secured to my harness. Standing on the fiery cat walk I fastened the chest pack and jumped from an altitude of 25,500 feet. Now a well trained brave airman would have free fallen to the recommended 10,000 and then opened his chute. Since I was neither I almost immediately pulled the rip cord - mistake! The chute opened, thank God, but I was still almost at the bombing altitude and the 88s were popping all around me. It was at this time that I saw our bomber (Yellow X) in a slow spin below me, afire from the bomb bay to tail, disappear through the under-cast.

It was also at this time that I experienced probably the lowest point in my life. One of our squadrons was rallying from the target going one way and I was heading into an opposite direction down into a burning, boiling city. Now as I hear of our

planes going down over Baghdad or Hanoi I have some appreciation of our airmen's fear and feeling of complete vulnerability.

As I said I opened my chute far too prematurely, so I had a long, long uncomfortable ride down. When I finally got down to what I would estimate an altitude of 2,000 feet I spotted two chutes below me and I hoped and prayed they were crew members from our plane. Until that time I really thought I might be the lone survivor, but as it turned out ten of our twelve man crew survived.

When I finally floated to an altitude of somewhere around 1,000 feet or less I could see civilians running into the middle of intersections pointing up to me while their voices clearly carried to my height. It was at this time that I realized I had left my 45 in the plane, since it was too uncomfortable to wear under a parachute harness during a mission. It was also at this time that I could see the limits of the city with the famous Viennese Woods in the relatively near vicinity. My hope was to land somewhere near them and make a dash for them - wrong again!

Since, as a radio operator I had a G. I. watch issued to me, I knew I had been in the chute over 35 minutes. Anyway, when I got very close to ground I saw how fast the ground was coming up to me or so it seemed. My landing spot turned out to be an apple orchard within the city enclosed by a brick wall probably 12 feet tall. I hit really hard and since the ground was very uneven, I broke my ankle on impact. There was no doubt in my mind that all thoughts of escape and evasion were gone, and all I could do was wait for my captors and hope for the best. Immediately two civilians came through an entrance in the brick wall and they spoke to me in French which I don't understand, but I could distinguish it as that language. Being in a shocked state from second degree facial burns, a broken ankle, and not to mention a 35 minute parachute ride. I thought for a moment I had drifted all the way to France. They picked me up under a leg and arm each and began

carrying me from the orchard to the adjoining street. I thought escape via the underground - wrong again. Oh yes, it turned out that these Frenchmen were forced labours so as it turned out I couldn't have picked a much better reception committee.

As the two civilians carried me to the street, there were I swear at least forty armed military men awaiting us all in assorted uniforms. They shouted something in German, and I was hastily set on the ground by the Frenchmen. Then began a body search for my 45 firearm, which must have been repeated at least ten times - Teutonic efficiency. Finally convinced that I didn't have it on my person, one of their party walked up to me while I was helplessly seated on the ground, pulled a Luger

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he pulled a Luger from his holster, jammed a shell into the chamber and put it to my temple.

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pistol from his holster, jammed a shell into the chamber and put it to my temple. To this day I have no idea why this was done and at the time my only fervent hope was that some war crimes tribunal would punish him at war's end. However, since I'm writing this now, he obviously didn't pull the trigger. I often wonder though if I had pleaded with him just what the outcome might have been.

Shortly thereafter a flat bed truck came by to pick me up, and it was then that I discovered most of our crew had survived, a little the worse for wear. I remember the German soldier guarding us on the truck ride into a more central location in Vienna. He kept shaking his head and talking as we passed burning demolished buildings as well as many emergency vehicles. He also didn't neglect to mention that we had killed over a hundred civilians that day. I thought of London, Warsaw, Rotterdam, etc., however, not being of heroic mold I kept quiet and maintained as low a profile as possible under these circumstances.

The truck stopped at some loca-

tion inside the city and we either walked or were carried to a building some distance from the street. It was there that the German military formed a double cordon from the truck to the building to keep the enraged citizens from getting even with us. Even now I must admit the German Military conduct was quite correct, but I sometimes wonder to myself if our capture had taken place earlier in the war, would our treatment have been the same.

The building we were taken to was evidently some sort of police station, and after a short time a German soldier in a nifty black uniform, polished black boots, shoulder belt and blood red swastika appeared. I remember thinking at the time - this can't be real - this is a Hollywood production, these people really do exist! Anyway he spoke faultless English and the said, "Where do you come from?" One of our intrepid officers said according to the rules of the Geneva Convention we are only required to give our name, rank and serial number. The interrogator gave him a disgusted look and said we know you come from Foggia, Italy. End of interrogation.

I was then taken by some conveyance to a first aid station in the city. It was here that a doctor in a blue military uniform splinted my leg and started breaking my facial blisters with a pair of tweezers. He sopped up the fluid from the broken blisters and applied an ointment to my face. Finally ending up by bandaging my entire head like a wrapped mummy, cutting out opening for my eyes and mouth. At the time I was sure that I would be facially scarred for life, but happily he must have known what he was doing as I suffered no disfigurement. While he was in the midst of his treatment, he leaned over me and whispered, "We all hate Hitler - he is a beast." Mindful of previous warning I quietly agreed as I knew the enemy often feigned sympathy so that the P.O.W.s would become friendly and perhaps reveal some information.

We were all gathered up again on a flat bed truck and then around 7



PM we began a very painful trip for me and perhaps the others. They took us many miles out into the countryside and every half hour they would drop one or two of our crew members off at some P.O.W. location. Finally after many hours of painful traveling since I'm sure the truck had no springs, Lt Osborn, the bombardier, and I were the only ones left on the truck. At about 3 AM we arrived in a city which turned out to be Vienna again, back to the exact location from which we had departed long hours before. Lt. Osborn's thigh bone had been shattered when the plane was hit, so I guess he and I as leg cases, ended up in Luftwaffe hospital in Vienna.

It was here I learned my first two German words: Warum (why) and Schmerzen (pain). The Germans couldn't understand why we bombed hospitals. (We had blown one wing off this particular hospital on our raid that day). I never did learn the German word for mistake. There were around twelve to fourteen of us American P.O.W.s at this hospital. It was about this time that the infrastructure of Vienna was becoming unglued and every night we could hear the sound of Russian artillery in the distance - like distant thunder. A little louder each night. I believe the German medical staff treated us as well as possible under the circumstances; X-raying all of us with broken bones, however, those with open wounds almost without exception suffered infections. It was here that we first heard the famous phrase, "for you the war is over." Hah! The next day after our capture the air raid sirens went off in the city and cannons (probably 88's) cut loose in the park across the street from the hospital. Luckily, no bombs were dropped by the 15th, at least not on Vienna, but I could not help but think how ironic it would be to die at the hands of our own Air Force.

After about a week it became apparent that the Germans were abandoning this hospital as they were removing all the medical equipment they could. We P.O.W.s were then gathered up and transported to a different hospital, Lazaret 2G.

This was a real P.O.W. facility, more primitive than our first location and the P.O.W. patients here represented practically every European Nationality on the continent. It was here that we first experienced the German theory of racial superiority. As Americans and British I must admit we had the best of what was available. The French probably fared second best, then the other nationalities were accorded treatment according to their ranking by the Nazis. The worst treatment was reserved for the Slavs, especially the Russians.

By this time the Red Army advance was obviously getting quite close and soon artillery shells and nightly Russian air raids were in progress. I must admit that many times "I shook with patriotism," and we all prayed for the timely arrival of the Red Army. Finally the Russians fought to the outskirts of Vienna and we were taken down to the subcellar of the hospital. The fighting raged overhead and finally Russian shock troops appeared at our location in the cellar on April 9th to greet the "Americanskis." These front line troops were very friendly to us and would clasp both hands together while shouting, Roosevelt, Stalin, "Choorshill." I must hasten to add here that these were the wildest, most barbarous, most primitive individuals I ever encountered. Soon these front line troops moved on and the political commissars took over. From that time on we were in an isolated position, not exactly P.O.W.s but since most of us were incapacitated we could go nowhere even if there had been some place to go.

Again we were rounded up supposedly by the Russian authorities and transported to probably the best medical center in Vienna. By this time relations between us and the Russians were deteriorating and we discovered that Molotov had walked out of the San Francisco Conference.. By this time the war had officially ended, and our commanding officer, Major Ben Ash, a P-38 pilot, would daily request an audience with the Russian Commandant of Vienna to try to secure our release

to Allied lines. The Russians seemed almost pathological about permitting anyone behind their lines. However, on May 17th a medical officer from the 11th Armored Division was allowed into Vienna and he showed up at our hospital. The next day an American ambulance convoy was allowed to pick us up and we were evacuated through Linz, Austria. I often think back to our departure from Vienna, the entire medical staff turn out to see us off, presenting us with bouquets of flowers no less. Of course, all this time the Russians had displayed a ruthless "get even" policy of rape, pillage, etc., toward the civilian population. To tell the truth my sentiments were more with the Viennese than the Russians upon my release.

As long as I live I will never forget my first sight of Old Glory at Linz when we were finally safely in American hands. I think of this every time I see the Peaceniks on TV, burning our flag - forgive them for they know not what they do.

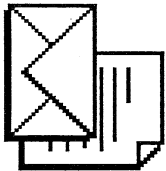
We were evacuated by B-17s from Linz to England, and it was from this American hospital in England that I was able to send a telegram to my parents to let them know I was alive. They had heard nothing since receiving the Missing in Action telegram.

The only lingering regret of this experience that I have is for the loss of my two crew members. Al Maas our top turret gunner was killed by the flak explosion, and I think Lt. Alden perished during bail out. These two men were located in closest proximity to me on the plane - another example of the vagaries of war.

Just as an after thought, I was discharged from the Air Force November, 1945; arriving home I was promptly refused bar service - I still had two months to go until my twenty-first birthday!"

*Most of you will recall March 22nd as the day Col. Hamilton, Group CO, wrote about his one-half mission. Also aboard was Paul Durckel, Group Navigator and Alfred Maas originally with the 781st. and Ernest Alden from the 781st.*

# MAIL CALL



From **William Bauer** (Engineering) - "I appreciate all the work you and the others in the Association do to hold our squadron together."

"Last year I saw the *All American* at Teterboro airport, here in New Jersey, and I was able to go through the "Beautiful Bird" with my wife, a son, and my three grandchildren. I'm sure you can understand the feelings I had. All those years ago, over there at Pantanella, none of us could imagine an experience so far in the uncertain future ever happening. We're fortunate!"

Mrs. **Joe H. Simon** replied for her husband **Joe** (Engineering). "This is in regard to the picture Lewis Coghill sent in (page 9 of the July *Pantanella News*). My husband is one of the men. He has made a list of the names and home addresses at the time of the picture. The four of them lived in this tent in Italy."

We really enjoy reading the *Pantanella News*. Thanks to all who work on this news. Hope this information helps you.

Left to right, Lewis Coghill, Kirksville, MO - August J. Gutwerk, Union City, NJ - Joe H., Simon Albany, IN - John T. Roberts - Greenville, GA.

From **Frank Hyla** (Cable Co-pilot) "I enjoyed the last copy of the *Pantanella News*. All the stories are great."

"I just talked to Mrs. Paul Brady from Las Vegas. I had just looked over a copy of the Ex-Pow Bulletin and I noticed a memorial sent to Andersonville in memory of **Paul Brady** who belonged to the Las Vegas Chapter. Paul passed away on April 12, 1991 of a brain tumor. He was our nose gunner on the Cauble crew, and was shot down with the Tipton crew. At our reunions he was always dressed in his mess dress uniform."

"I'm sorry I missed the last reunion, but with the good Lord willing

I'll make the next one. I talked to Jolicouers wife and I guess she had a hell of a good time at your last one. She lives only 35 miles from us so we get to see each other quite often."

"Jim, we had a hell of a session here last spring. My wife had angioplasty in her feritorial artery and also in the left side of her heart. She is coming along OK, chews me out four times a day so I know she's OK."

"Another thing, when I was shot down I had at least 5 rolls of 8mm movie film. I got only one back. There were some great shots in the movie that was shown in San Antonio. I believe it was of Cauble when they took him out of our plane. Was I the only one that had a movie camera? I wonder."

"Also, my daughter-in-law is making up a book of my POW diary and it's a honey. It's really not a day-by-day, because some days there was nothing to write about and we had to watch what we wrote in case the krauts got hold of it."

*I know of one other man that took movies - Leonard Goldstein, radio operator on my crew. It was converted to video. If you haven't seen it I will have it at the next reunion. Does anyone else have WWII movies?*

**Conrad Croston**, Engineer on Poole Crew, writes, "The *All American* is going to be within three hours driving time from me and I can't go as I am so tied up in preparations for our County Fair. I hope the tour is successful. I am sending the story to you from the paper along with a donation to help with the newsletter. I never want to miss an issue."

"I am still enjoying good health, help in a lot of civic organizations and do a lot of fresh water fishing. Sorry I'll miss seeing the *All American*, but maybe there will be another opportunity."

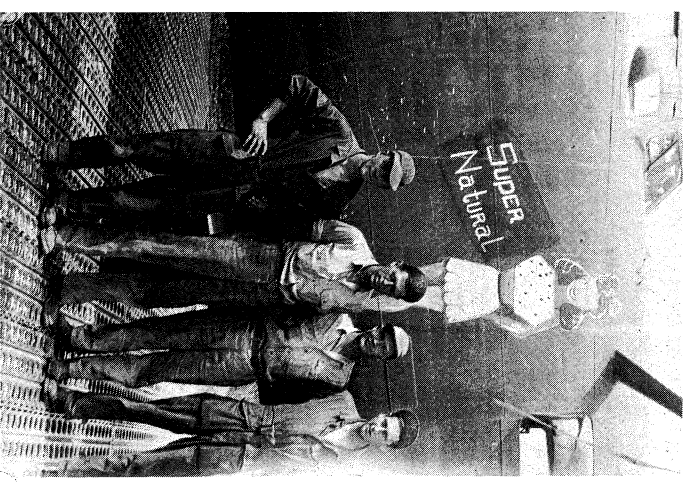
From **Vance Hutsell** (Engineering), "I am sending some pictures of the Charles Kramer crew and our plane was *Super Natural*."

"In the picture on page 9 of the July 1991 *Pantanella News* #3 is Joe Simon, and #4 is John T. Roberts. "I talked to George Keener (Engi-

neering) this past winter and he said he was in bad health and was staying with his daughter in Florida."

*Super Natural was brought over by John Dickey and Crew and crashed Feb. 19, 1945. Does anyone know details of the crash?*

*And thank you Vance Hutsell and Mrs. Joe Simon for responding to the photo of the engineering men*



In the photo L to R, Charles Kramer, Milton Storecamp, Vance Hutsell, and Jaems O'Neil, the crew of Super Natural

**Richard Burgin**, Radar Navigator. "Friends, I have appreciated and enjoyed receiving and reading the *Pantanella News*."

"I was with the squadron only one month, flew a total of three missions, two of them with other squadrons. As one of the early "Mickey Operators," I was not assigned to a crew. I have no memory of any close friendships established there. I did go through crew training at Charleston, SC with Harry Leggate's crew. I was separated from them during crew training and sent to radar school at Boca Raton, FL. A month or so later I was sent to Langley Field and shipped over. I believe I flew over with the Leggate Crew, or was it with the Smiths? I was moved around so often that I have difficulty recalling some of the events. Somewhere in my training I did spend time with Vernon Burda.

"On my third mission, the only one with the 781st I believe, I was on Roberts crew. We bailed out over Switzerland after being hit over Friedrichshafen. I spent four months there before escape into Southern France.

"I never met any of the crew until we were picked up in Switzerland. I was awakened about 0430 and informed that I was to fly. Briefing was over. I was to grab some breakfast, see the briefing officer for information. I was put on a jeep and delivered to the plane at the runway. I was barely on board when we took off. I had never met any member of the crew before. Never did get to know anyone until after being picked up by the Swiss Army and brought together at Dubendorf Air Base in Switzerland.

"About a month ago, Sunday, July 9, 1991, my son, my granddaughter and I learned that the *All American* would arrive in Millville, NJ airport that evening. We went down to see it. It arrived with a B-17, the *Nine O Nine*," a C-47, and a P-47. We had the opportunity to go through the *All American* and the *Nine O Nine*. It stimulated many memories over the following week. I have been in a plane only twice since 1945, both commercial jets. The B-24 and B-17 seemed smaller than my memory of them. My son was surprised at how little room there was inside. The event was emotionally stimulating for me. I am glad to have had the opportunity to show my son and granddaughter a piece of that part of my life.

"One thing that impresses me is that young men twenty to twenty-five years old many who had never been near an airplane before were trained in less than a year into very capable crews. Having employed many young men in my small construction business, and taught them to operate equipment, I can appreciate the fantastic job that was done in getting together the Air Force of WWII. That efficiency, discipline and sense of responsibility to each other could be a great help in our society today.

"Ah well! Just the musings of an old man."

*Thanks for your letter Richard. I'm sure you would revive many more memories if you attended a reunion. Many attendees flew only two or three missions, but find that getting to know more of what went on has been very satisfying. Why not give one a try? And your comments about young men of the 40's and the young men of today could make a lively discussion.*

## FOLDED WINGS

**John Hartshorn** (McDaniel Ball Gunner) July 7, 1991.

**Paul B. Brady, Sr** (Cauble Nose Gunner) April 12, 1991.

**James P. Carroll** (Communications) March, 1991.

**Petro Botch**, (Armament Section Chief) July 12, 1991.

**Bruce Miller** reports on **Petro Botch**, "I have some sad news to deliver at this time. Armament Section Chief, Master Sergeant Petro Botch died 12 July 1991, of a massive coronary hemorrhage. He was 76



Petro Botch checking the waist gun of a B-24 at Pantanella

years of age. He was buried 16 July 1991, and William George and I represented the 781st Armament Section.

"I have contacted and visited the son of Sergeant William W. Bond, who was the engineer on Grant A. Benson, Jr. crew. Bill died of a heart attack at age 55 in late October 1978."

*The Armament Section lost a fine man. I did not know him as well at*

*Pantanella, but I was able to spend some time with him at the reunions. A fine man and a respected chief of the Armament Section.*

*Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of our comrades.*



Paul Brady in his Mess Dress at our reunion in Dayton Ohio.

From Penny Hartshorn, "I have sad news to pass on to you. John (Jack) passed away Sunday, July 7th from a heart attack in his sleep. On June 24th a heart pacemaker was put in his chest. We thought that would help him. But, the good Lord has other plans for him. He was a wonderful husband and father. We loved him so much.

I will miss him terribly - his great sense of humor and his winning smile. I am grateful we had 47 years as husband and wife."

*Those of us that knew John will miss his notes and phone calls. He was so happy to be in contact with his Pantanella friends. Penny's health prevented John from attending the reunions. He will be missed by us all. A photo of John will appear in our next issue.*

Minds are like parachutes. . . . they only function when open.

## HISTORY BOOK SPECIAL

As noted in the October issue of *Pantanella News* we have a limited number of the 781st History books left after filling all orders to date. In order to move these books out of Harry Carl's basement and into the hands of someone who may enjoy them the board has decided to sell them at a very substantially reduced price - to anyone who has already purchased a book or books at the regular price.

Everyone agreed that the book was a great bargain at the \$35 per copy necessary so far to be sure the sales covered our production expenses. That cost has been essentially recovered. Accordingly, the board has set a price of \$15 each to move the remaining books, a reduction of \$20. But, remember, the lower price is available only to those who have purchased a book or books at the regular \$35 price.

Orders will be filled on a first come, first served basis so get yours in. Send a check or money order to Harry Carl and he will ship your book, postpaid. His address is shown in the list of Association officers.

There are less than 30 books left so this will be the last notice - ever.

There were 575 History books printed! That makes over 500 sold. We had to make a serious decision as to how many to print since we knew it would not be economical to make a second printing. We began with the number 300 to print and increased it from there in discussions with board members, etc.

At first it was 160 pages, then increased to 180 when Tom Arthur's cartoons showed up and finally we said - let's go for 200 pages.

In reviewing the History Book recently to verify some *Pantanella News* item I noticed a photo on page 50 with an unidentified person. Isn't that Albert "Shack" Myers? No one wore a cap quite like Shack and that has to be him. I got to know him slightly when I flew with him on his last mission to Ersekujvar on 7 October 1944.

## REUNION '92 TO BE HELD AT OMAHA, NE

Sept. 10-13, 1992, is the date and the beautiful Marriott Hotel is the site for our '92 reunion. It is easy to get to and has plenty of free parking. Across the street is a major shopping center. And loads of restaurants nearby. Everything to make '92 another great reunion.

Plans call for a visit to SAC Headquarters at Offut Air Force Base to visit their underground facilities. Also a museum nearby with lots of aircraft. And we will have a lot of activity at our hotel and some surprises as usual.

So plan now to attend the '92 reunion. Relive some of your days at *Pantanella* with your WWII comrades.

Full details in January *Pantanella News*.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

I got a blank one. Some one cut out the return address from *Pantanella News* and sent it to me on a address corrections card. Nothing filled in on the back. So, if you sent in your address correction and its not listed please send in again. Also, if you change address and want your new phone number listed you should send it in also.

**James Kienitz**, Phone 602 895-0088

**Robert L. Williamson**, 4777 Casey Plaza, Kingman AZ 86401

**Royal A. Wilson**, 2828 Amberly Rd, Bloomfield Village, MI 48301.

**Frank Hylla**, 17213 Big Fish Lake Rd, Cold Spring, MN 56320.

**Kennard R. Wiggins**, 626 Oleander St, Sebastian, FL 32958.

**Richard Perkins**, 609 Baugh St., El Dorado, AR 71730.

**Henry Glick**, 2150 Shadow Ridge Dr., Deltona, FL 32725.

**Wayne N. Grubauagh**, 1154 Inverness Lane, Stow, OH 44224.

**Leonard Emmel**, 17824 Cameron Parkway, Orland Park, IL 60462.

**Homer Moeller**, New phone (Unlisted) 612 866 4614.

**Walter T. J. Day**, 104 Springdale

Ave., Neptune City, NJ 07753.  
Phone 908 775-4140

**Bernie Badler**, Phone 510 278-2946.

Remember many zip codes and phone area codes are changing in heavily populated areas. If you have a problem getting through contact the phone company for new codes and post office for new zips.

## DUES

As noted in the *Pantanella News* previously, we have established dues at \$10 per year. Your mailing label will have a number after your name to indicate the latest year you have paid. If no number appears it means that you are over a year delinquent in dues.

We try to keep our records up to date, however, we may not have recorded your dues or contribution correctly. If you do not agree with your dues number after your name please let us know so that we can correct it.

If you have not contributed and are interested in the Association and want to continue receiving the *Pantanella News* please respond with your check for \$10.00 to cover the next years dues. The check should be made payable to the 781st Bomb Squadron Association and sent to O. J. Cowart whose address is on page two.

A few who have never responded to questionnaires, ever attended a reunion, or purchased a history book or indicated in any way any interest in the association will be put on inactive status and dropped from the *Pantanella News* mailings.

## PAY DAY

An item from **Albert "Shack" Myers** diary. "Pay Day 1 June 1944. I intended to finish my letter yesterday afternoon but Bill Ellett asked me to witness his payroll so I did. We worked from 1230 to 1930 last night with about a half hour off for supper and then for about two and a half hours this AM. We paid out \$42,086.47 and came out 1¢ to the good." *In those good old days we were paid in cash.*



781st Bombardment Squadron (H)  
AAF A.P.O. 520  
Office of the Mess Officer  
THANKSGIVING DINNER MENU

Cocktail

Tomato Cocktail or Grapefruit Juice

SALAD

Hawaiian Pineapple Salad with Mayonaise  
Apple and Heart of Grapefruit Salad with French Dressing

ENTREE

Roast Vermont Turkey  
Cranberry Sauce Chestnut Dressing  
Baked Idaho Potatoes

VEGETABLES

Buttered Birds Eye Peas - Parsley - Creamed Golden Cauliflower

DESSERT

Golden Nut Cake Home Made Mince Meat Pie  
Fresh Fruit  
Hot Buttered Sun Kist Rolls  
Sliced Cheese and Crackers

CANDY\*\*\*\*\*NUTS\*\*\*\*\*CIGARS

BEVERAGE  
COFFEE

WILLIAM C. ELLET  
1st. LT. A. C.  
Mess Officer

EDWARD F. SOCHOCKI  
Staff Seargent A.C.  
Mess Sgt.

Since it is near Thanksgiving I thought you might like to think about Thanksgiving at Pantanella. The menu sounds like we had a feast. Did you know William Ellet was Mess Officer at that time?



Jack Van Slyke, right, and Jack Ward in North Africa showing their fuel tank for their "O.S.H.A. approved" tent stove. Jack notes it seems sad that so much seems to be missing from this period of our History. How about it - let's hear about Africa. Jack you do want to start it??

## MISSION REPORT 12 OCTOBER 1944

Leafing through some of the mission reports I came across an item on the mission to the storage depot in Bologna, Italy.

*Thirty-one aircraft landed at 1328 hours. Two aircraft received slight damage from flak and there was casualty of minor nature when the co-pilot of one aircraft was hit in the face by an un-exploded .50 caliber bullet which apparently came from the aircraft ahead.*

In recent years I have wondered who this was. I remember flying just behind the aircraft that was hit. We loosened formation over the Adriatic to test fire the guns and evidently there was a loose shell in the bomb bay of the aircraft ahead and it fell out when they were opened. The co-pilot was reported as temporarily blinded by flying glass, etc. A call was made for permission to return to Pantanella. I am not certain if the request was granted. Our squadron history book shows nine crews dispatched from our squadron and two returned early. The crews of Capt. Stenerson, and Lts. Rice, McDaniel, W. J. Smith, Blakita, Dahl, Gaines and Althoff completed the mission, a milk run.

Does anyone know who the co-pilot was and did his plane return early?

## PADRE PIO

You may recall in the October 1989 (Number 18) *Pantanella News* there was an article submitted by Bill Coonan about his Christmas in 1944 serving Mass for Padre Pio. I recently saw an article about the Centre for Padre Pio. I wrote for some books and information and sent along the 1989 *Pantanella News*. They are very interested if any of the other men that spent Christmas 1944 with Bill Coonan at that mountain top church have anything to add. They are keeping all information for their Archives.

The center has a new address - National Center for Padre Pio, R.D. 1, Box 134, Barto, PA 19504. If you are interested you can write to them for literature and information.

## MYSTERY UNSOLVED

I keep wondering who the enterprising young man was at Pantanella that talked me out of the K rations I had aboard the B-24 when I first landed at Pantanella in August 1944. We had 10 cases of the rations, one of which we broke into on the way over. After I landed and taxied over to the hard stand a truck pulled up and said he was from the mess hall and wanted the K rations. I complied. later on I learned that this was a bonus for whoever got to the plane first. They made nice snacks back in the tent. I've chuckled about it often and have wondered who it was.

I also got talked out of my airplane, B-24J No. 51492. Pilots were waiting and it was immediately flown away to the 460th Bomb Group. Their losses were heavier than the 465th and they needed the plane. The record shows it flew for the rest of the war and crashed on the runway after the last mission. *Jim Althoff*

My plate is getting empty. A noticeable lack of stories the past six months or so. There are still many, many out there if you would only put them on paper or a tape recorder and send them in. Wouldn't you like to see your crew or section story appear? Or an individual story to tell? We all like to read the stories in the *Pantanella News* and appreciate those that have taken the time to send them in. Maybe now it's your turn!

Following is a list of the aircraft assigned to the 781st Bomb Squadron, except for a few noted by color of the other squadrons they were assigned to. This is the best information available to us. Planes with a "B" included in the right column means the final disposition of these airplanes comes from John R. Beitling, a B-24 Historian. If you have any corrections or addition please let us hear from you. We would like to hear from the ground crews so that we can list the crews for each plane.

Number	Letter	Name	Pilot	History of Plane
41-28756	??	MAD CAP MARGIE	BRANCH, RAE	• TRANS'D TO 450 BG, 721 BS AT OUDNA. • WENT DOWN OVER WEINER NEUSTADT 29 MAY 1944. (B)
41-28853	??	BLUE I	??	• COL. LOKKER PILOT WITH MIXED CREW. • DOWN 20 NOV 1944 - 783RD PLANE
41-28857	Q	??	??	• CRASHED ON RUNWAY AT PANTANELLA PER LUTGRING. 12-14-44 SNBD (B)
41-28904	??	??	??	• CRASHED IN GERMANY 16 AUG 1944 DUE TO FLAK • JOCKO ROBERTS BAILED OUT OVER SWITZERLAND AFTER HEADING PLANE BACK OVER GERMANY
41-28915	N	LONG JOHN SILVER	BRANCH, RAE	• SHOT DOWN 30 JUN 1944 NEAR KAPROVNICA, HUNGARY - ATTACKED BY FIGHTERS. • CAUBLE DOWN WITH DICKEY CREW. GROUND CREW GEORGE SOROKA. (B)
41-28959	M*	GUARDIAN ANGEL (2)	HURD, RAY	• RETURNED TO THE U.S.A. BY GORDON ELLISON. • FLEW 50 MISSIONS (B)
41-29356	G	CUSTER'S FOLLY	SCHUSTER, PHILLIP	• SHOT DOWN 30 MAY 1944 OVER NEUDORF, AUSTRIA, PILOT LT PRINCE. • LT. PRINCE AND LT. CANYOCK KILLED, REST SURVIVED. MACR 5438 (B)
41-29357	P	PLEASURE BENT	ROBERTS, LEWIS	• CRASHED ON RUNWAY. THEN REPAIRED, STRIPPED AND RETURNED TO US BY JOHN KENNEDY (B) CREW CHIEF COATS, RICH SHAFFER ALLEGRETTI. OD COLOR
41-29376	W	GUARDIAN ANGEL (1)		TRANSFERRED TO 460 B G (B). WAS THIS TRANSFERRED IN AFRICA???
41-29414	E	CHIEF JO JON	MC KENNA III, CHARLES	• CLODFELTER TO BLECHHAMMER 18 DEC 1944, LOST TWO ENGINES OF RIGHT SIDE - DOWN NEAR DUNAFOLDVAR, LAKE BALATON IN RUSSIAN CONTROL AREA. EARL VIANDS, CREW CHIEF, WALTER GATES, GLEN KING, ARNOLD HEIMAN. (B)
41-29415	H	CRESCENT OF THE HALF MOON	TIPTON, DALE	• TIPTON CREW TO VIENNA. SHOT DOWN BY GERMAN FIGHTERS 16 JUL 1944 NEAR LA TOUR DU AIGUES, HUNGARY. CREW POW
42-50421	R*	??	??	LOST IN COMBAT PER LUTRING. CRASHED 7-27-44 (B)
42-50723	G	??	??	ORIGINAL PLANE RETURNED TO US (B). FROM 489 BG
42-51260	??	??	LEGGATE, GEO	• LEGGATE TO VIENNA, FLAK, CRASED NEAR EDELSTAHL 10 SEPT 1944. MACR 8304 (B)
42-51492	??	??	ALTHOFF, JAMES	• TRANSFD TO 460 BOMB GP AFTER ALTHOFF FLEW IT TO PANTANELLA. • CRASHED AT 460TH BG AT END OF WAR (B)
42-51628 *	L	LOVEYS DOVIES	LOVEY, ALEXANDER	• SHOT DOWN 13 OCT 1944 - HIT BY FLAK OVER BLECHHAMMER. CRASHED NEAR EHRENFORST • LOVEY & MORSE KILLED ON MISSION. MACR 9059 (B) ORIG OF PLANE FROM 451ST.
42-51629	??	??	SMITH, WILLIAM J.	• FLOWN TO GIOIA, ITALY, THEN TRANSFERRED TO 376 GROUP. (B)
42-51631 *	D	FLAMIN' MAMIE	FRAZIER, JACK	• WENT DOWN NEAR ESTERNBERG OR TRAUN, GERMANY, 16 DEC 1944. • ENGINE TROUBLE. • PILOT MICHAEL BLAKITA WITH PITTS CREW-ALL SURVIVED BAIL OUT. MACR 10763 (B) COATS CREW CHIEF
42-51664	??	??	ZALK, ARTHUR	• TRANSFERED TO 489 OR 454 BG AT GIOIA 29 AUG 1944. RETURNED TO US (B)
42-51714	??	??	DAHL, CARL	• LEFT AT GIOIA 28 AUG 1944. TRANS. TO 459 BG (B)

42-51848	??	DRAGONASS	ZALK, ARTHUR "ACK ACK"	• FLOWN BACK TO U.S.A. BY ZALK (HUNTER FIELD, GA). • LANDED AT HUNTER FIELD 13 JUN 1945
42-51858 *	B	HEAD OF BEAR	??	ORIG 12. RETURNED TO US. NOSE PAINTED A 'BEAR' MIA 11-6-44
42-51894 *	??	PRINCESS PAT	HENDRICKSON, RALPH	RETURNED TO US
42-52054	??	??	CLODFELTER, DONALD	• FLOWN TO PANATANELLA BY DONALD CLODFELTER 19 SEP 1944. • TRANSFERRED TO 451ST BG.
42-52308	??	??	MACFARLANE, JOHN	• CRASHED AT WALLER FIELD TRINIDAD, 15 FEB 1944 - TOTALED. • PILOT, MCFARLANE. RAN OUT OF GAS AND OFF END OF RUNWAY.
42-52321 *	F	JEOGIA WOLF	ATHON, JOE	• BECAME WAR WEARY, STRIPPED AND USED AS SQD. TRANSPORT. • FLOWN BACK TO U.S.A. EX 464 BG PLANE
42-52365	??	??	SMITH, JOSEPH	TRANSFERRED TO 460 BG (B)
42-52449	E	PATCHES	ASHLEY, GEORGE	• SHOT DOWN 16 JUN 1944 BY ME 109'S NEAR PLOESTI. • LT MARTIN, PILOT. PER ADAMS RES. • NAMED FOR ALL PATCHES OVER FLAK HOLES. (B) FROM 464 BG
42-52470	??	SUPER NATURAL	DICKEY, JOHN	CRASHED 2-19-45 CHARLES KRAMER CREW CHIEF, MILTON STORECAMP, VANCE HUTSELL, AND JAMES O'NEAL ON CREW.(B)
42-52494	??	F	??	• DOWNED BY FLAK OVER BLECHHAMMER 17 DEC 1944. • LT ALFRED MULLAN & CREW SURVIED BAIL OUT NEAR MAKO, LAKE BALATON, HUNGARY. (B) EX 464 BG PLANE
42-52503 *	H	BELLE RINGER	CAUBLE, RAYMOND	• WENT DOWN IN ADRIATIC AFTER RUNNING OUT OF GAS ON MISSION TO LINZ, AUSTRIA, FEB 25. • PILOT ROBERT JONES ON SECOND MISSION. • ENTIRE CREW OF 9 LOST. MACR 12065. M/SGT CHARLES KREMER CREW CHIEF (B)
42-52505	K	HELLS BELL I	VAN SLYKE, JACK	• DOWN 6 JUN 1944 FROM FLAK, PILOT MC FARLANE OVER PLOESTI. CRASHED NEAR CAJNICE • PER ADAMS RESEARCH (B) COATS CREW CHIEF
42-52521 *	I	??	??	ORIG 12, RETURNED TO US
42-52558	??	SACAJAWEA	SHETTERLY, ROBERT	MIA 5-31-44. GROUND CREW CHARLES FERICH.(B)
42-52762	T	THE SCORPIA	FRENCH, ROBERT	• WENT DOWN FROM FLAK NEAR AMSTETEN 2 MAR 45 AFTER HITTING LINZ AUSTRIA. • PILOT LT ROBERT FRENCH; CREW SURVIVED (B)
42-78218	D			CRASHED 7-30-44
42-78352	N	EASY MAID	CRUTCHER, RICHARD	• DOWNED BY FLAK OVER BLECHHAMMER 13 OCT 1944. CRASHED NEAR TARKOW • LT.GAINES, PILOT
42-78401 *	R	??	??	LUTRING LIST. SALVAGE 3-21-45 (B)
44-41106	??	BLUE N	??	• WENT DOWN FROM FLAK 19 DEC 1944 NR KERZYTHLY • LT JAMES GRIFFITH PILOT. HAD BOMBED MARIBOR, YUGOSLAVIA (783rd plane)
44-41122*	C	HOT MATHILDA	BLAKITA, MICHAEL	• FLOWN TO PANTANELLA BY BLAKITA. GIVEN TO VAN SLYKE WHO FINISHED HIS MISSION IN THIS PLANE. REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN FLOWN BACK TO THE U.S.A. ABOUD/LEINART.
44-48861	??	Y	SMITH, W. J.	• DOWN AFTER HITTING MOOSEBIERBAUM, AUSTRIA 1 MAR 1945. • DOWN WITH WILLIAM J. SMITH, PILOT; CREW SURVIVED CRASH LANDING IN RUSSIAN OCCUPIED TERR. MEAR PECS(B
44-48893	N	??	??	LUTRING LIST. ORIGINAL THAT CAME OVER. SALVAGE 8-10-45 (B)
44-49084	U	??	??	ORIGINAL PLANE. MIA 1-31-45. MACR 11809 - CAPT LILES, 780 BS WAS PILOT.
44-49085	??	WHITE U	MARTZ, ROBERT	• SHOT DOWN BY FLAK OVER NOVE ZAMKY, HUNGARY 14 MAR 1945. • LT. MARTZ, PILOT; 11 OF 12 CREW KILLED.
44-49380	J	SKIN WAGON		HAVE PHOTO WITH SQUADRON - NO TAIL MARKINGS EXCEPT NUMBER. NEW PLANE LATE IN WAR. - SLIGHT CHANCE COULD BE 44-48380
44-49566	X	??	??	• SHOT DOWN BY FLAK NEAR VIENNA 22 MAR 1945. • RICHARDSON (783) WITH COL HAMILTON
44-79877	??	??	CLODFELTER, DONALD	• FLOWN BACK U.S.A. • MAY NOT HAVE BEEN 781ST PLANE
X		THE SILVER BUCK	PICTURED WITH LEGGATE CREW/	
X	??	FERTILE TURTLE	??	??
X	??	HELLS BELLE II	VAN SLYKE, JACK	B-24G, NO. AMERICAN, DALLAS. HAD RED STRIP AROUND FRONT OF COCKPIT AREA. NAME NOT PAINTED ON.
X	??	PAPER DOLL	STENERSON, CHARLES	??
X	??	NO LOVE NO NOTHING	CAUBLE?	??
X	Y	NITE MARE	ALTHOFF, JAMES C.	• RETURNED TO U.S.A. BY ALTHOFF AND LEFT AT HUNTER FIELD, GA 15 JUN 1945. • WAS PAINTED OLIVE DRAB AND USED FOR NIGHT HARRASMENT MISSIONS.
X	J	ANGEL OF THE SKY	??	• WARREN CARDEN CREW CHIEF



What a way to fight a war! Ernie Van Asperen looks mighty relaxed in front of his tent, circa June 1944. Note aircraft armchair and drum for 100 octane gas for stove. Ernie was Joe Athon's co-pilot, had additional duty overseeing the officers club, then checked out as first pilot, then lead pilot, and stayed on to fly extra missions and went home a Captain. He didn't relax all the time.

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



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