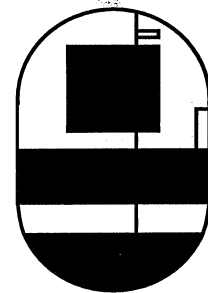




# PANTANELLA NEWS



OCT 1995

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NUMBER 42

## WHAT WAS S-2 ALL ABOUT?

The Official Guide to the Army Air Forces described the functions of S-2. "S-2 keeps the commander informed as to the situation and capabilities of the enemy. This office is concerned with photographic intelligence, reconnaissance, interrogation of pertinent maps and charts, interrogation of pilots after return from missions and intelligence training of all personnel. It also makes studies of enemy targets, handles policies and regulations relating to security and counter-intelligence and advises the commander on public relations matters. A most important function of a Squadron intelligence officer is to brief combat crews prior to mis-

sions, providing them with relevant information on the enemy."

S-2, (Intelligence) in the 465th Bomb Group (H) functioned as a Group activity, combining the Group S-2 and the four Squadron S-2s into one unit for operational purposes. All S-2 offices were located in what formerly was the farm granary (located above the old hay barn which served as the crew officers briefing room) and for work activities of all 21 S-2 enlisted men and 11 officers who were under one roof sharing the work and responsibilities. The office operated 24 hours per day and seven days per week. Of course, this required three shifts of officers and enlisted men and an

organized schedule of working personnel. Capt. (later Lt. Col.) Richard C. Pease was the Group Intelligence Officer during the entire time the Group existed.

The Squadron S-2 Sections were not transferred to Group for administration, however. Each was still very much a part of its individual Squadron for staff responsibilities, personnel administration, mess, supply, social activities, et cetera. First Lieutenant (later Major) Byron W. Thompson was the 781st intelligence officer during the entire time.

The primary assignment of S-2 at Pantanella was to receive combat information, maps, photos and any other material necessary to organize



*Group Headquarters S-2 Personnel - Standing L to R - Lt. Irving (Rosenberg) Roberts, Lt Archur McUmber, Capt Richard Pease and Lt John Herd. Kneeling - Sgt Raymond Hanson, S/Sgt Alfred Brown, T/Sgt Ralph DuBois, S/Sgt Russell Loberg and Sgt Miles Cunningham.*

target data and disseminate this information to the crews at an early morning briefing along with the officers from communications, operations, weather, and the chaplain, previous to take off for the mission of the day. The mission information was transmitted from Wing headquarters to S-2 on the Sigcum Code machine the day before so that Ordnance had time to load and fuse the bombs and Operations had time to assign the required number of crews and aircraft.

Immediately after the crews returned from the mission trucks picked them up and brought them directly to the S-2 building for interrogation. Every man on the crew had his chance to tell what he could about the many aspects



*Group and various squadron personnel. L to R - Unknown, Schutte, Capt Byron Thompson (seated) Lt. William "Buck" Weaver, Unknown (seated), Lt Irving Roberts, Smith, Unknown, Lt John Herd, and Maj Richard Pease.*

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

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

of the mission. All of the S-2 officers participated in the interrogation of the crews until every member had been questioned. This was a rather hectic time since crews were tired from their long flight and were anxious to get to their quarters and relax. Every possible attempt was made on the part of S-2 to accomplish the interrogations as quickly as possible and still gather all the facts.

Upon completion of interrogations S-2 officers assembled all the data obtained and consolidated this into a mission report form. A special courier picked up the report and took it to 55th Wing Headquarters and thence to 15th Air Force Headquarters. Some time after this work was completed orders for the next mission would arrive and the S-2 crew would start preparing for the new mission for early A.M. briefing the next day.

Another responsibility of S-2 was the photo lab and this also functioned as a Group activity. Enlisted men from the lab loaded film into the cameras and placed them in the aircraft before the mission. They met the planes as they reached the hardstands after returning from the mission, removed the cameras, rushed them to the lab,

processed the films, and made the prints which were necessary for analysis by the photo interpreter specialists who identified bomb strikes and marked these and other pertinent information on the print. Many times prints came from the lab in time to show the crews during interrogation. Copies of the marked prints were assembled with the mission report which was sent to the 55th Wing Headquarters.

A third responsibility of Group S-2 was public relations. In the 465th Group this was a Group function with no personnel from the squadrons on the table of organization for this purpose. And this activity was located in one of the other headquarters buildings, apart from the main body of S-2. They identified items which might be newsworthy to the newspapers or radio (no television) or for direct communication to family members or others in the home areas of group and squadron personnel. Such items might include unusual photographs, mission news items, and promotions or decorations of personnel. Public relations personnel had to judge whether security consideration would permit release of these items and their decisions would necessarily be subject to review by the Group

S-2 officer, Lt. Col. Pease, and sometimes higher levels of command.

In addition, at least in the 781st Squadron, S-2 officers also were responsible for censoring mail. Few commanders generally had this responsibility, of course, for their crews, but S-2 had it for the remainder of the squadron.

**Irv Roberts** explains his Public Relations Section:

"As PR Officer I worked with personnel from the squadrons and with Al Nagel, 781st Squadron S-2 Section Chief, as my chief assistant. Incidentally, Al was invaluable in gathering material. In particular he helped develop stories on outstanding combat action by flight crew members. Stories and pictures were forwarded to Wing Headquarters along with crew members' home addresses and names of newspapers to be covered in the States.

"You can be sure that these stories always reached print. Proof of this was the thanks and actual newspaper copies we received constantly. Wing regarded them as important morale builders.

"We also had the photo lab send us interesting mission photos including bomb strikes, fighter attacks etc. which were OK'd for security and forwarded to Wing. One such, unfortunately, was a shot of Jack Lokker's plane exploding just after dropping his bomb load. I sent it to Wing that it be forwarded to all news services. We later learned that it made the front page of several hundred newspapers and magazines on December 7, 1944. Jack was a fine person and we all missed him.

"My PR office was also responsible for writing up decorations for the Group and Group personnel, including the two presidential citations we received. Generally all stories of men, flying and ground crews, who received decorations were written up in our PR office and sent to Wing with pertinent data, home address, etc."

Sources: Ralph DuBois  
O. J. Cowart, Jr  
Irv Roberts  
Harry Carl

## APULIA - ITALY, PART II

By Byron Thompson

Hannibal, with an army of 40,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 cavalry, (which included Spaniards and Gauls, many of whom were not likely to have been volunteers), captured Cannae, including a Roman food depot.

Recognizing that an attack by Hannibal on Rome (Roma) was probable following this victory, the Romans had an army of about 80,000 men in Apulia, apparently between Cannae and Canosa, and along the northwest bank of the Ofanto River and probably about 15 to 18 miles northeast of where Pantanella came to be located. These troops were under the leadership of Consuls Servilius and Atilius and two more Consuls, Paulus and Varro, were sent to join them. The Carthaginians, certainly with the intent of moving toward Rome following the capture of Cannae (as anticipated by the Romans), apparently proceeded along the southeast bank of the Ofanto to the location of the Roman troops — and the battle was joined.

The above details are not recorded in any history books I found but they seem logical with the facts that are known. However, It seems

well settled that Hannibal formed a crescent with his infantry facing the Romans across the river and his cavalry, under his brother (Hasdrubal) along the side and somewhat back of the infantry. When the Romans attacked he allowed them to sag into the pocket thus formed, the cavalry rushed around the sides of the Romans, and closed the trap. This maneuver crushed the Romans and inflicted a disastrous defeat upon them. There are various estimates of the casualties, but the figures most commonly found say that the Romans lost an estimated 56,000 men, including Consuls Paulus and Servilius, and that 10,000 more were taken prisoner. The Carthaginians are estimated to have lost about 6,000 soldiers.

Current maps indicate there is an ancient monument located near Cannae. In addition, they show a large area of level land along both sides of the Ofanto River between Cannae and Canosa and this probably is where the battle took place.

As a matter of fact, the exact location of the site seems open to debate. Harry and I believed from



*Plains of Cannae and Ofanto River. This might have been the scene viewed by Hannibal and his troops. I presume that they would have been looking at swarms of Roman troops coming across.*

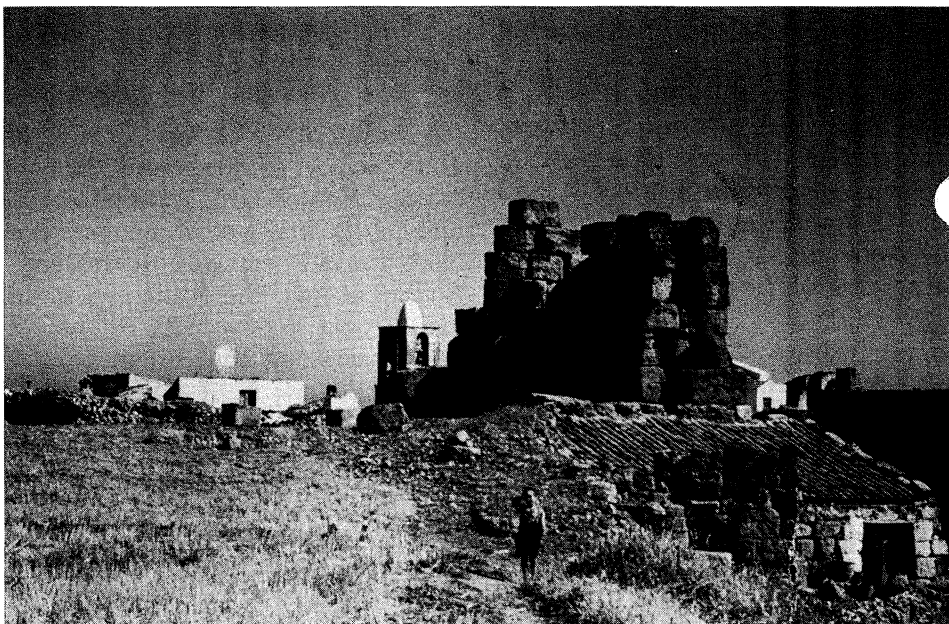


our short tour that it occurred near Canosa overlooking the Ofanto River (to the Romans-the Aufidus). We took a picture of a grave marker for one of the Carthaginian soldiers at this spot, there were none for the Romans. In one source, there were some modern pictures of the battle-field area which were much like the area that Harry and I had viewed 50 years ago. See the accompanying photo on page 3 which we took at that time. Also, John Warry in "Warfare in the Classical World" locates the battlefield about where we thought it occurred. However, the Encyclopedia Britannica places it a few miles from the Adriatic Sea and near Barletta, while the National Geographic map of Italy, puts it much nearer to, but east of Canosa. In any event, the battle occurred along the Ofanto River and certainly not far from Pantanella. And, with so many men stretched out along the river, the actual battle-field could well have covered quite a distance.

I would like to think that the Carthaginians marched up the Ofanto past our base, but the facts as we know them, seem to say otherwise. It is far more likely that the Romans may have followed this route, but on the other side of the river from Pantanella.

The significance of the Battle of Cannae is not so much that it occurred, but that it is considered one of the earliest classic examples of the tactical movement of troops known as "double envelopment" and one of the reasons Hannibal is viewed as one of the outstanding generals of all history. Incidentally, at one time, if not at present, the Battle of Cannae was included in the study of "The Great Battles of the World" at West Point.

After the Battle of Cannae Hannibal attempted to take Naples and Rome (211 B.C.) but Carthage had refused to send him badly needed reinforcements and he failed. However he continued his presence in southern Italy for several years. Meanwhile, the Roman General Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, known as Scipio Africanus the Elder (who was reported to have participated in the Battle of Cannae but



*Ruins of a castle at Canosa. Hannibal may or may not have used this when his troops were at Cannae.*

escaped), had totally defeated the Carthaginians in Spain and, in 204 B.C., he landed an army in North Africa. Hannibal was recalled to defend Carthage and, leading an army of untrained recruits, he was decisively defeated by Scipio at the Battle of Zama in 202 B.C. This marked the end of Carthage as a great power and the close of the Second Punic War. Carthage lost all its holdings in Spain and Mediterranean Islands and gave up its navy.

A Third Punic War was fought from 149 B.C. to 146 B.C. This was instigated by Rome to eliminate Carthage as a source of irritation. The Romans, led by Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Numantinus (Scipio the Younger), captured the city of Carthage, razed it to the ground, and sold the surviving inhabitants into slavery. Thus ended the Punic Wars and Rome now dominated the western Mediterranean.

There is a large triumphal arch dedicated to Scipio Africanus and located, as Harry recalls it, along the road between Canosa and Cerignola. Research suggests that it was built about 2000 years ago. He has a color slide of the arch with Dick Crutcher and myself standing beneath it (See Pantanella News #41). He also has a slide of the ruins of the castle at Canosa (above). Since most of our generation were subjected to Latin in high school, the name

Scipio, a prominent Roman family, may sound familiar.

Following the Punic Wars the Roman Empire experienced a long period of external expansion and then internal upheaval. Between 67 B.C. and 63 B.C. Julius Caesar rose to prominence, ultimately defeating all rivals, and was made dictator for life. He was assassinated in 44 B.C.

In 293 A.D. Emperor Diocletian divided the empire into four segments for stronger administrative control. He retained direct control of Thrace, Egypt, and Asia. Maximian was delegated control of Italy and Africa, Constantinus (father of Constantine the Great) Gaul, Spain, and Britain and Galerius the Danubian provinces.

Diocletian and Maximian abdicated in 305 and Constantianus became emperor in the West. He died in 306, naming his son, Constantine, to succeed him. Constantine the Great reunited the Western Empire under his control and, in 314, he defeated Licinius, emperor in the East, and became sole ruler of the Roman Empire. He adopted Christianity and made it the official religion of the Empire. He also established a new seat of Roman Government at Byzantium and called it Nova Roma. It ultimately was renamed Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey). Constantine died in 337.

In 395 the Empire was again



divided into an Eastern Empire and Western Empire. The Western Empire suffered internal wars and foreign invasions which it was unable to put down and finally, in 476 A.D., it fell to Odoacer, an invading Germanic chieftain. Odoacer was overthrown in 488 by Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, who remained the sole ruler of Italy until he died in 526.

In 535 Justinian I, emperor of the Eastern Roman (or Byzantine), Empire sent the great general Belisarius to drive out the Germanic invaders. The war which followed lasted until 553 and the Byzantines ruled all of Italy until 568, when another Germanic tribe, the Lombards, drove them out of Italy except for the far southern provinces of Calabria and Sicily, and Rome, Ravenna, and Naples in the north. The Byzantine Empire from time to time included large parts of Asia Minor, the Balkans, southern Italy, Ravenna, Greece, Syria, Egypt, and parts of Spain and North Africa.

The Lombards ruled northern Italy until 754 when they had begun to encroach on Papal territory, threatening Rome, the seat of church authority. Pope Stephen II called on the Franks for help and Pepin the Short and his son, Charlemagne, defeated the Lombards in 774. Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the West by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day, in the year 800.

All through the ninth century Saracen invaders made plundering raids into southern Italy. They wrested Sicily from the Byzantines in fifty years of conflict (827-878) and overran southern Italy. They were finally driven out of the area south of Rome in 916 by a league of Byzantines, Lombards, and Neapolitans. By the beginning of the eleventh century the ancient Lombard Duchy of Benevento had gradually been parcelled out into several principalities. Capua, Salerno, and Benevento were the most important of these. The Byzantines had succeeded in driving the Saracens out of Apulia and gave the name "Theme of Apulia" to that whole region.

*Parts #3 and #4 will follow in future newsletters.*

## A Remembrance

by Fred and Elinor Morley

In the late Spring or early Summer of 1994 I received a letter from a Vernon Burda of Wilsonville, Oregon. In his letter he wrote he had been a POW in Germany during World War II. He said he was in the Center Compound of Stalag Luft III. Mr. Burda wondered if others, who were liberated at Moosburg, Germany on 29 April 1945, would be interested in a trip to the POW camps where we were held and to end up at Moosburg on 29 April 1995 to celebrate the 50th year of our liberation. I wrote back and said Elinor and I would certainly be interested in such a trip.

Before long details of the trip were arranged, we were provided the projected cost and 310 former POWs, including wives, sons and daughters, signed up for the journey. The trip would begin on 18 April 1995 when we would fly to Berlin. Wilsonville Travel, Vernon Burda's wife's business, arranged the tour with a firm called GLOBUS. Not long before we left on the trip Elinor and I received a package from GLOBUS which contained our tickets, a detailed itinerary of tourist sights we would be seeing, and a red nylon GLOBUS carryon bag for each of us.

On 18 April we went to Dulles Airport. As Elinor and I waited in the lobby it soon became dotted with red GLOBUS bags. Before long those with the red GLOBUS bags gathered together to introduce ourselves, to learn what compound each had been in at Stalag Luft III and to discuss the coming junket. We found there were people from all over the United States gathering at Dulles Airport for the trip to visit the POW camps of the Second World War where they had been held as Prisoners of War.

Our first stop was Heathrow Airport at London where we transferred from United Airlines to Lufthansa. We were herded like sheep from one airport terminal to another. Heathrow Airport is quite large and disjointed, it seems, if the passenger has to change terminals. We walked and walked only to learn

Lufthansa was having trouble coping with the size of the group. They only had one small bus to run passengers from the terminal to the waiting aircraft.

Before long we were on our way to Frankfurt, Germany, a one and one half hour flight. Again we faced a very long walk as we changed gates to change aircraft. We went quickly through German immigration and customs and this time we were met and led by a Lufthansa employee to expedite our transfer. All of us agreed we had walked all over the terminal only to end up at an aircraft that was parked very close to the aircraft on which we had just arrived.

After a short one hour flight, we were in Berlin. We found our luggage, which thankfully, had been checked through from Dulles Airport. We carried our luggage to a waiting fleet of GLOBUS busses for the trip from the airport to our hotel, the Forum, in the former East Berlin. The hotel was new, it was first class and our 15th floor room was excellent.

The evening we arrived there was a dinner for all of us. It was a chance for the POWs to meet and discuss who remembered who and to renew old acquaintances. At the dinner we were briefed on the details of what was planned for the next two weeks. The Mayor of Zagan, Poland (formerly Sagan, Germany) and the Mayor of Habelau, Poland were guests of honor at the dinner. The blessing was given by the young Catholic priest from the church at Habelau, where many of the POWs stayed during the forced march in January 1945.

From our hotel room we had an excellent view of what was once East Berlin. An absolute forest of building cranes was apparent. We learned that Germany has a major effort underway to bring the former East Berlin up to the standards of the former West Berlin. They are tearing down the ugly buildings which were built by the Communist of East Germany in the 1950s and 1960s, to replace them with the

architecture which existed prior to World War II.

In addition to visiting the POW camps, GLOBUS included as part of the tour, visits to many of the historic places and monuments in or near the cities we'd be visiting during our POW journey. In Berlin we saw the Brandenburg gate (many times as it turned out because you have to go through the gate to get from East to West Berlin, which we did daily), The Wall (what's left of it), the famous Under den Linden street lined with Linden trees and the Reichstag.

We visited the impressive Pergamon Museum with the Pergamon Altar and Schloss Bellevue in the Tiergarten District. As we moved about in Berlin we went past the Goddess of Victory many times and the Russian monument with the two tanks which first entered Berlin. We drove to Potsdam to see the Neues Palais, the palace of Sans Souci and Cecilienhof Castle.

After 3 very busy days in the Berlin area we were taken by bus to Zagan, Poland (formerly Sagan, Germany) to visit Stalag Luft III. We had a difficult time getting through the German/Polish border. It was obvious that there is little friendship between the peoples of these two adjacent countries and long time enemies. Finally, after a hour and one half delay at the border we were on our way.

At Zagan we were met by the mayor of the city. We went to a memorial site that had been constructed by the people of Zagan to the former Prisoners of War. At this memorial site there is a small museum and a memorial monument to the 50 POWs from 12 countries whom Hitler had executed after the 75 POWs escaped in March 1944 from Stalag Luft III. This was the escape know as the "Great Escape" of movie fame.

On the green at the memorial site were the school children and many of the residents of the town of Zagan. There was a Polish Army band and at least a company size of

Polish soldiers. The band played military music followed by the national anthems of the United States and Poland. The soldiers fired a three round volley over our heads as we watched the mayor and one of the former POWs (a retired General Davy Jones) place wreaths at the

Compound main gate location.

As with all the compounds at Stalag Luft III, all of the buildings are now gone. They originally were pre-fabricated one story buildings on concrete blocks raised so the German guards (we called them ferrets, could crawl underneath to stifle any



*One of many guard towers at Stalag Luft III POW camp. Photo from Gene Krzyzynski.*

monument. It was a very moving experience.

After visiting the POW museum at Zagan we were taken by bus to the cemetery which was built by the people of Zagan as the final resting place for the 50 executed POWs. In addition to the 50 graves there is another memorial monument to those 50 POWs. Again, the band played and the Polish soldiers fired three rounds over the graves.

From the cemetery we were taken to the former site of Stalag Luft III. In January 1945 Stalag Luft III was composed of five compounds, each holding about 2000 Prisoners of War. The North Compound primarily held British POWs and the other four compounds held mostly American officers. When we got to the site of Stalag Luft III there was a Polish soldier standing where the main gates into each of the five compounds had been located. The soldiers had arm-bands of different colors to indicate the compounds. I was in the West Compound and we soon found the soldier with the light blue arm band indicating the West

escape activities. Another fellow Clem Irons (he had been in the same barracks as me although we didn't remember each other), and I went looking for where barracks #167 was previously located. We found the "swimming pool", our nickname for the water tank used in case of fire, the foundation of the shower building, the foundation of the wash house and the foundation of the "theater". Since the main road in the compound remains and since the trees defining the camp's borders still exist, plus with the existing foundations, we were able to determine the approximate location of our barracks. We sat down where we thought it had been and ate our box lunches.

From Zagan we followed the roads we walked during the 30 degree below zero blizzard of January 1945 as Hitler moved us out of the way of the rapidly approaching Russian Army. We all recalled the many sights along the way and hundreds of refugees we saw who were also trying to flee. The noting of each new recall brought forward sto-

ries shared by all. We saw the church at Hablau where some of us stayed. At Bad Muskau we found the pottery factory where many found rest and warmth. I was told by the mayor of Bad Muskau that the brick factory where I stayed was now totally gone. We never went to that site.

In January 1945, when we reached the town of Spremberg, we were met by the people of the town who had made and gave us barley soup. It was an experience we all remembered. When we arrived in Spremberg in 1995 we were taken to a large hall where once again the town folks of Spremberg had barley soup they had made waiting for us. This time the POWs, instead of sitting on the cold ground, were able to eat their soup at linen covered tables, with hard rolls, great local cheeses and their choice of coffee, tea or beer. I don't know which barley soup tasted the best, but I do know every one of the ex-POWs, and their accompanying families, sincerely appreciated the gesture.

In 1945 the POWs were loaded on "40 and 8" box cars in Spremberg for the trip to Nuremberg. The designation was the capacity of the box cars of 40 men or 8 horses. We were loaded with 52 men in each box car. In 1995 we rode in air conditioned, first class, tour busses for our trip to Nuremberg, our next stop. On the way we stopped at Leipzig to see the tourist sights. As we left Leipzig we went quite close to the town of Merseburg. During the war synthetic oil plants were located at Merseburg and they were our target on 28 May 1944 when I was shot down and became a Prisoner of War.

At Nuremberg we were taken to the site of the previous POW camp, Stammlager XIIID. We learned that a town had grown where the former POW camp had been located. It was named Langwasser. We were introduced to some local German people who are researching the history of the POW camp. This camp had been used as barracks for Hitler Jungen in 1936 when they came to the amphitheater at Nuremberg for Nazi youth rallies. We were taken to an area of the new town that we were

told was the location of the main gate into the POW camp. Since my barracks was close to the front gate I was able to identify the home which is now located where my barracks, #126, stood.

The German researchers had many photographs of the camp taken while we, and the prior occupants, were housed there before and during the war. They had schematics of the camp layout which they showed us and they interviewed a number of the former POWs who were held captive in this POW camp.

From the POW camp we were taken to a nearby high-rise building, where from a rooftop over the 21st floor, we could see the layout of the entire area. As we looked about and began to share our memories we soon recalled much of the area surrounding the camp in early 1945.

We next went to the Zeppelin Tribune, an amphitheater where Hitler held the youth and other rallies in the mid 1930s, it is located within the huge area called the Rally Grounds. Many of us recalled being

returned to the look of pre-war Germany, this facility appears to remain untouched and is severely weather-beaten.

The Nazis planned and started construction of a facility called the Congress Hall in the area of the Rally Grounds in the mid 1930s, but it was never completed. We were told because they ran out of funds. We were driven right into the facility in our busses. This huge building sits unfinished and basically unused.

While I was a POW I kept a logbook recording many of the events that happened to me while being held prisoner. The logbook contains details of the blizzard march from Sagan to Spremberg, our stay at Nuremberg and the forced Springtime march to Moosburg. When people on the bus learned I had the logbook with me it became so popular I finally had to tell people I could no longer share it since it was starting to fall apart. However, when we were in Nuremberg the German GLOBUS Tour-manager, Jorg Leser, asked if he



*Scene at Stalag Luft III. The daily view consisted of barracks and wire fences.*

taken to this building once or twice for showers, four men to a shower head, while being held at Stammlager XIIID. We climbed all over the marble steps and many went to the podium where Hitler stood and preached to his Nazi loyalists. It was interesting that, although much of Germany has been

might read it. I loaned it to him overnight. The next morning he said he noted in the logbook that I had stayed on a farm with a family named Pflugler in the town of Gammelsdorf on the march from Nuremberg to Moosburg. In my logbook I had recorded I slept in a barn "above the cows" on the Pflugler farm. The



farmer's son gave me a small photograph of the farm which I had placed in my logbook. The tour was scheduled to stop in Gammelsdorf because the local Catholic priest, when learning we were coming that way, had planned a memorial service for the POWs in his church. Jorg (we

colored aerial photograph of the farm as it is today and a large aerial colored photograph of the town of Gammelsdorf so we could see the relationship of the farm to the town.

When the Pfluglers saw my logbook with the small photo of the farm there was much excitement. I

taken by Martin Pflugler and a friend of his who could speak English, to the farm where I had stayed two days and three nights in 1945. We met Martin's wife and his grandchildren. Elinor sat on a deck outside the home, it was a beautiful day, with Martin's wife and the grandchildren

as Martin motioned for me to follow him. He took me up a hill along side the barn to a loft over the cows. Through an open door he pointed to the floor and said, "You slept here!" He said the hill was covered with POWs in 1945 each with a little stove cooking something to eat. (Note: Those stoves were made from KLIM cans, milk spelled backwards, in which we had received powdered milk from the Red Cross while at Sagan).

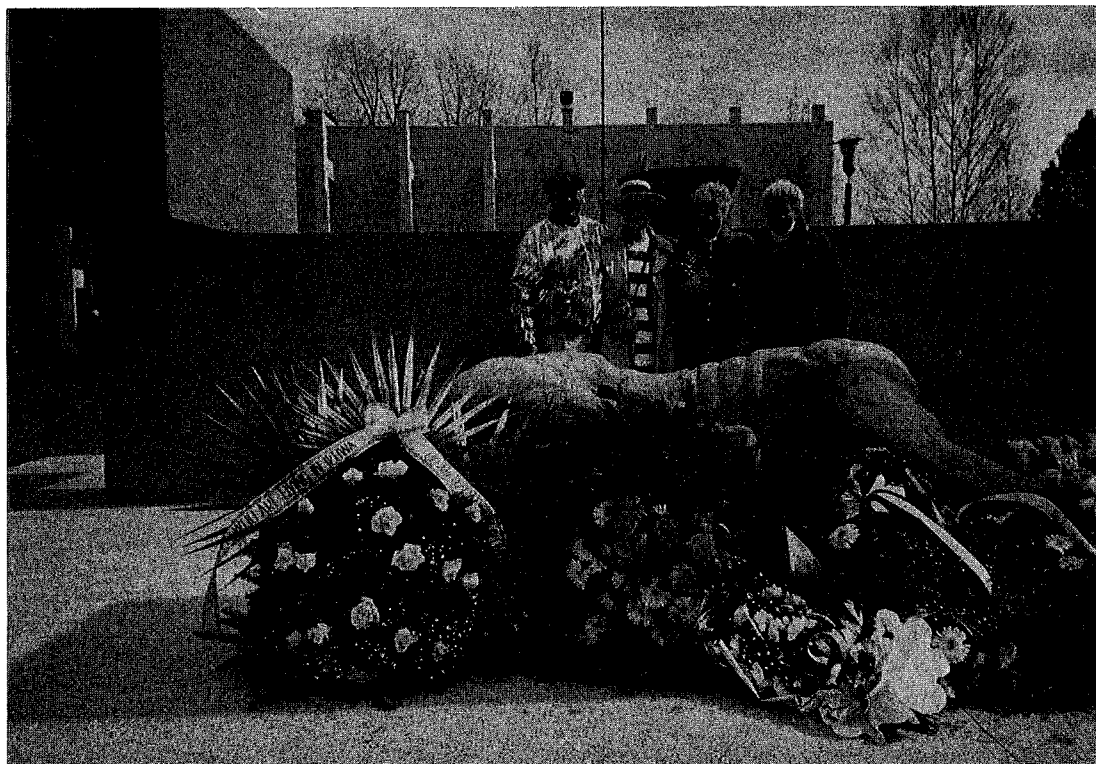
When we again joined the other three brothers, George Pflugler told the story that I had traded him cigarettes for a loaf of bread and he said the four boys took the cigarettes to the basement where they smoked them. Their father found them and

George said, "His father was very angry."

George gave us a photograph of his home which had four large garage door openings underneath. He gave us a book about the history of the town of Gammelsdorf and the people who lived there. He held open the book to the page that reported George was milk distributor and had four tank trucks. There is a photograph of two of his tank trucks in front of their home in the book.

In the history of Gammelsdorf book Joseph Pflugler is also listed. He is shown as a transportation (trucking) company owner.

The four Pflugler brothers joined us for the memorial church service. From the church we were taken to a hall where the town provided an excellent buffet lunch. The newspaper reporter who was interviewing me



*Stalag Luft III, the POW museum at Sagan, Poland. In the photo L to R; Vern Burda, Leslie Beach, (Vern's daughter), Pat Burda, (Vern's wife,) and LaDonna Hehn, (Vern's sister).*

called him George), our very knowledgeable German guide, informed me that he had checked the Gammelsdorf telephone book and there were four families listed with the name of Pflugler. He said if I would pay for the telephone calls he would call them to see if any remembered the POWs and would be interested in meeting us. The first call he made resulted in the announcement that, "Yes, he remembered us and he and his three brothers would meet us at the church when we arrived."

When we arrived in Gammelsdorf we were met by the mayor and the four Pflugler brothers, Martin, George, Joseph and Hans. They said they were 17, 16, 15 and 12 respectively in 1945. The brothers gave me a large 9" by 12" sepia photograph of the farm as it existed in 1945. They also gave me a large

removed the photograph from the logbook and on its back was the signature of George Pflugler.

George was most pleased and pointed to himself as the one who had signed the photo and had given me it to me. Only Hans of the four brothers spoke any English and his was limited, but there was an American who had married a German girl and now lived in Gammelsdorf who, as well as our German guide, acted as interpreters.

Elinor and I had our photograph taken with the four Pflugler brothers for the local newspaper. We went to a nearby store, much like a 7/11 store in the United States where we couldn't buy anything. Anything we looked at was given to us. It turned out George Pflugler's wife, Franziska, operated the store.

From the store, Elinor and I were

during the lunch told me it was a classic Bavarian buffet. It was one of the better meals on the trip. We found generally the meals we were provided on the tour were not very German. This was a disappointment. Soon, after many hugs, handshakes and good byes we were on the road again heading for Munich.

There was a mix-up in Munich regarding which hotel we were to stay in and which many of the others would be lodged in. As it turned out we were assigned to the older hotel, The Austrotel, but it was right in the downtown area across the street from the railroad station and therefore very convenient. The other newer hotel was on the outskirts and not near anything we later heard.

While in Munich we visited Amalienburg, went to Salzburg in Austria and saw the beautiful Alps, we visited Oberammergau and Linderhof Castle. We also went to Garmish, saw the Neuschwanstein Castle and dropped by the beautiful Wies Church. A number of times we drove by the 1972 Olympic stadium with its sail like roofs and we spent a rainy, gloomy afternoon at the concentration camp at Dachau. The gloom and rain were appropriate for the location.

One evening we went to the famous Munich Hofbrauhaus. We were entertained by their festival band, bell ringers, Alpine horn players and folk dancers. In addition to the American POWs, the place was filled with young Japanese. It seemed incongruous to see Japanese jitterbugging to the Beer Barrel Polka in a German beer hall as Americans sat and watched.

On 29 April 1995 we were taken by bus to Moosburg, the site of Stalag Luft VIIA and to the area where the camp was located. We were shown a couple of buildings, now in disrepair that we were told was all that was left of the buildings which held the POWs during the war. I was in a tent city on what previously had been a roll call (Appel) area in the camp. A town has grown up where the camp was previously located.

From the former camp site we were taken to a village green where we were joined by 150 former French

Prisoners of War who were also held at Stalag Luft VIIA. Services were held on the green with speeches by the Mayor of Moosburg in German, representatives of the US Embassy in English and a former French POW in French. There was German and martial music by the local Moosburg band. In addition to the POWs and their families, many of the town folk joined in the celebration commemorating the 50th anniversary of our liberation.

When we were at the celebration on the village green we looked around and there was George Pflugler and his wife. We motioned for them to join us, which they did. They spoke no English and we spoke no German, but with sign language we were able to communicate in a limited manner.

That evening we were taken to a large hall in Moosburg where a dinner was held in honor of the POWs hosted by the people of Moosburg. In addition to a German umpah band music, there were long speeches in German, French and English and toasts abound.

While waiting for our dinner to be served, we looked around and at one of the tables we saw George Pflugler and his wife. Although the evening was at no cost to the POWs, the Pfluglers had driven to Moosburg and paid their way into

the dinner. We went over and talked to them for a few minutes then returned to our table. Not long after George came to our table with one of the commemorative mugs that were available for purchase. He presented it to me as a gift from him. A tearful and warm good bye followed.

We returned from the dinner to our hotel at about 11:30 PM only to be faced with a 3:30 AM wake up for the one hour flight to London.

This documents the events in Germany for which we made the trip. It was an enjoyable success which will long be remembered by both Elinor and I.

*There were eight buses (320 people) on the tour. Six of the buses took a side trip to Prague, Czech Republic. On this trip they were welcomed to the Castle at Prague, the residence of President Vaclav Havel, with a reception. The Chief of Staff, Gen. Tomacek, awarded a special medal to the EX-POWs and a certificate for their help in winning freedom for the Czech Republic..*

*781st members joining the tour were Vern and Pat Burda and their three family members in the photo on page 8, Frank and Florence Hylla and Jean Tipton, widow of Dale Tipton. During the tour Vern Burda was able to show Jean Tipton the exact spot in the church where Dale slept overnight on the POW march.*



*Another Stalag Luft III scene with POW's in small groups with many no doubt talking about home or when they think the war will end.*

## VETERAN'S REMEMBERED ON VE DAY

I had an article on the "Enola Gay" display at the Smithsonian Institute, however, I believe you all have seen it enough in the press. Instead here are two other reports on WWII in our schools today, one complimentary, one not.

### From Pierre Kennedy

"In May a local high school asked some veterans, POWs, and people who were civilians in Germany during WWII to give a talk, as a tribute to the 50th anniversary of the end of the European war. The teachers were concerned that the students only knew what they had quickly read in history books, and discussed in class. The teachers searched for people who had had unique experiences—people of our generation.

"I gave a talk which went well. Rosemary sat with some 50 students and listened also, as we were invited to stay for an entertainment. Contrary to what we've seen on TV, the students were very well behaved, and very polite. Many students in that area are Jewish, and hard working."

### From Jim Althoff

On May 29, 1995 my granddaughter, Amanda, was scheduled to give the Gettysburg Address in a Memorial Day ceremony in the Union Cemetery nearby. The cemetery dates back to the Civil War and is a National Historical Landmark. It was quite an honor for her to have been selected by her school.

On the morning of the ceremony my son asked his daughter, Amanda, if she would like to have him print, in larger type, a copy of the address on their home computer, as she was allowed a prop. She had been practicing on a copy provided by the school, where she was in the sixth grade. She thought it was a good idea and when she received the printout she discovered a difference. She called her Dad and sure enough they found the school's copy had left out half of two sentences, one with reference to those who gave their lives, and the reference to God. No one knows who or

why the change was made to one of the most revered speeches in the history of this great nation, but it happened.

My son told her the importance of the address and that regardless of what the school provided, she was going to give it correctly. She recited it in a loud, clear voice and received the loudest applause. I could not have been more proud as I sat in the audience, both of her performance and the fact she was true to the tradition of our country, something some don't seem to want to, or are not able to, teach anymore.

### The Gettysburg Address

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place **for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live.** It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; **that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom,** and that this government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the

earth.

**Bold print** was omitted by the school.

## Rae Branch's Son Malcom Branch Takes Command

From Rae Branch, "I attended the "Change of Command" ceremony on April 20th when Mal took over as CO of the USS George Washington. Quite a thrill for me, only sorry Marge wasn't with me but I know she was looking down on us.

"I just returned from 3 weeks in Germany with my youngest son and family. My daughter-in-law is a Navy Lt. Commander and is CO of the Naval Security Group Activity, Bad Aibling Station, 40 miles east of Munich.

"I spent 5 days in the Czech Republic plus time in Linz, Salzburg, Garmish and Oberammergau. It was a beautiful time of the year."

Rae included a press release on his son Capt. Malcom Branch taking over command of the USS George Washington, the newest, largest and most powerful flattop in the fleet. The command of this three billion dollar aircraft carrier is a job reserved for the elite.

As the commanding officer, Branch is responsible for the performance and safety of more than 6,000 sailors — a position with few parallels in the civilian world and one which Branch doesn't take lightly.

Branch was the Executive Officer (second in command) on the George Washington when it was newly commissioned in 1992. He has been a navy pilot since 1972 and has flown more than 3,000 hours in 19 different aircraft.

It is a great honor for Capt. Malcom Branch to receive this command and we know how proud Rae is of his son's high leadership position in the upper echelon of Navy leadership.



# MAIL CALL



**Forest Sinclair** sent a note regarding a mix-up in his newsletter. Several pages were duplicated and several other pages were missing. This is rare with the service we have been getting from our fine printer, however, if any others found the same error in the last news please let me know and I will send the missing pages.

**Richard Burgin** responds, "I was an 'orphan' in the 781st, having served only three missions during July and August, 1944 (My plane was downed on a mission to Friedrichshafen - I spent more time in Switzerland than in Italy. I was a new Radar observer (navigator - bombardier) and flew with a different crew each mission. Before being sent to radar school I was bombardier on the Leggate crew at transitional training at Charleston, SC. At Langley I was pulled from the crew and sent to Boca Raton, FL.

"I am enjoying the history of Apulia, Italy in the Newsletter — looking forward to its continuation. I did not know about the video until reading about it in the news and intend to order a copy.

"Although my combat experience was brief I was in the Army Air Force for three years and benefitted much from many schools; Pilot Preflight, Maxwell Field; Pilot Primary, Lakeland, FL; Nashville TN; Gunnery, Tyndal FL; Panama City, FL; Navigation, Selman Field, Monroe LA (I was married there); Holyoak, MA; Bombardier, Big Spring, TX: (commissioned); Transitional Crew training, Charleston, SC; Radar School, Boca Raton, FL; flew over Mid-Atlantic route via Azores.

"On return to the States after 'escape' from Switzerland, I was radar navigator and bombardier instructor at Langley for seven months before opting out on 'points.' Gosh!! the memories it brings just recalling the places. And there were stopover places which

were not even mentioned.

"I went back to my job as a Lab Tech at DuPont, quit to go into landscape business & tree expert. Then paving business, tennis courts and recreational construction. In retirement I became a full time handy man.

"I have taught adult evening classes in hypnosis, relaxation, meditation for the past 25 years and am now engaged in Yoga and Tai chi over the past five years.

"Much of that I am I credit to my training and experiences in the AAF.

"And I repeat. . . I like the Pantanella history in the 'News.'"

*Yes, all of us received benefits from our Army Air Corp schooling and experiences. It is a joy to hear from so many of you that reflect a positive attitude toward the period of time we served our country so well. The hardships were overshadowed by the benefits.*

**Bob Freed**, "I took my wife to a local mall and while she was shopping I stopped at a B. Dalton book store. In doing so, I came across a 10 x 12 pictorial book of WWII planes ranging from fighters to bombers, ours as well as British. Called 'Ghost of the Skies' it had All American, Col McKenna's plane with Col Mac in the pilots seat above 'Come 'N Get Me You Bastards,' on the side of the plane, and a picture of the Ordnance section with the bomb inscribed in chalk about an Easter Egg present for Hitler. I was amazed at the clarity of the pictures."

"If anyone is interested the B. Dalton book store has them for sale, number ISBN 0811807428 on their computer or titled, 'Ghosts of the Skies.' Priced at \$40 for the 160 page book."

*Thanks Bob. The book is also available from Ghosts, 665 Arkansas St., San Francisco CA 94107. I have a copy and agree it is some of the finest aviation photography you will find. The three 781st photos have also appeared in the Ghosts calendars. Philip Makanna is the photographer for the photos of many of the restored WWII planes and produces photos the best I have ever*

seen. He received permission from the 781st and Frank Ambrose for the photos.

## Gene F. Moxley

A number of you have received a letter from Gene requesting information and material pertaining to the 781st Bomb Squadron or 465th Bomb Group. Noted in his letter was his reason he became engrossed in the squadrons of the 465th Bomb Group. His wife's uncle, Frank Hutchcraft, flew as Top Turret Gunner in the 780th Squadron.

Gene has been an associate member of the 781st and has been receiving our newsletter for about five years. He is in the process of copying the information from the microfilm onto his computer from the four squadrons records of the 465th Bomb Group. He has sent some material to me which has been helpful for the *Pantanella News*. Recently I asked him if he had run across any information on the bomb dump explosion. A week later he sent some information on the bomb dump that I had not been able to get after sending a dozen letters and making many phone calls to our members and some to the 464th Bomb Group. Our faded memories have to rely on the printed records.

It is up to each of you individually if you want to send information to Gene. Personally I have found him to be a responsible person and I believe the work he is doing will have more of the history of our time in his books he plans and will be a benefit to us all.

Gene has now completed his first book containing the records from the microfilm which include the Missing Air Crew Reports, mission reports, photos (41), and some individual stories sent in by 465th Bomb Group Veterans. It has all the detail on the missions that is available from any WWII records known. It covers the period from May 5, 1944 to July 8, 1944 in book #1 (382 pages) which sells for \$30 including postage. Books covering the later periods will be completed in the future.

To order the book contact **Gene Moxley**, PO Box 252, Wright City, MO 63390. Phone 314 745-2504.

## John W. Ogden Reports In

John Ogden, a former Armament Section member, has been trying to find the 781st Bomb Squadron Association. Finally, he contacted the Fifteenth Air Force Association and received my name and number. I returned his call which was on my recorder and found John was very interested in finding out about his buddies and about the 781st. He was sorry to hear Petro Botch has passed away, but I'm sure there are others he will be in contact with. Those of you that remember John why drop him a note or give him a call. His address is 3728 Evergreen Dr., Dickinson, TX 77539. Phone 713 337-3494.

**History Books** - We have two requests for history books. If anyone has an extra one or two and wants to sell them please let me know.

**WANTED - PX Officer.** We ran out of PX items after the last reunion. I do not have the time to take care of the PX in addition to my other duties. Let me hear from someone soon so that we can have a stocked PX for the next reunion. You will have help to get it started.

## Wives and Widows

In discussions with Harry Carl recently regarding the *Pantanella News* articles Harry suggested requesting wives or widows to submit articles on their feelings and concerns during WWII. We were away and did not have to contend with rationing of food items, gas, etc. The home front had these problems in addition to the worry about their loved ones returning home safely. Let's hear from you gals!

## Hats Off to Ben!

Recently I received a copy of the Hiller Aircraft Museum *Briefings*. The museum was started ten years ago a few miles from where I live. It will include aviation history of Northern California including many firsts; the first powered "aeroplane" to fly one mile under its own power in Millbrae in 1869, and the first landing and takeoff of an airplane onto a ship at sea took place when Eugene

Ely piloted a primitive Curtiss bi-plane to a rendezvous with the U.S. Navy Battlecruiser Pennsylvania in 1911 in San Francisco, and the first person, Robert Fowler, to span the United States by airplane in a Wright Model B in 1911.

Ben Donahue has been active in helping the museum since it started. I noticed an article in the *Briefings* which thanked the donors. Included was Ben for his generous donation of books and material to the Museum library.

## O. J. Cowart has a Question.

During WWII civilian business men were referred to as "feather merchants!" How did this expression work its way into common usage during the big war? Does anyone know what it meant?

Another pilot adds his name to the list of those who "visited" Ploesti 4 times - **Rae Branch**. During my search of the records I missed his name on one of the missions.

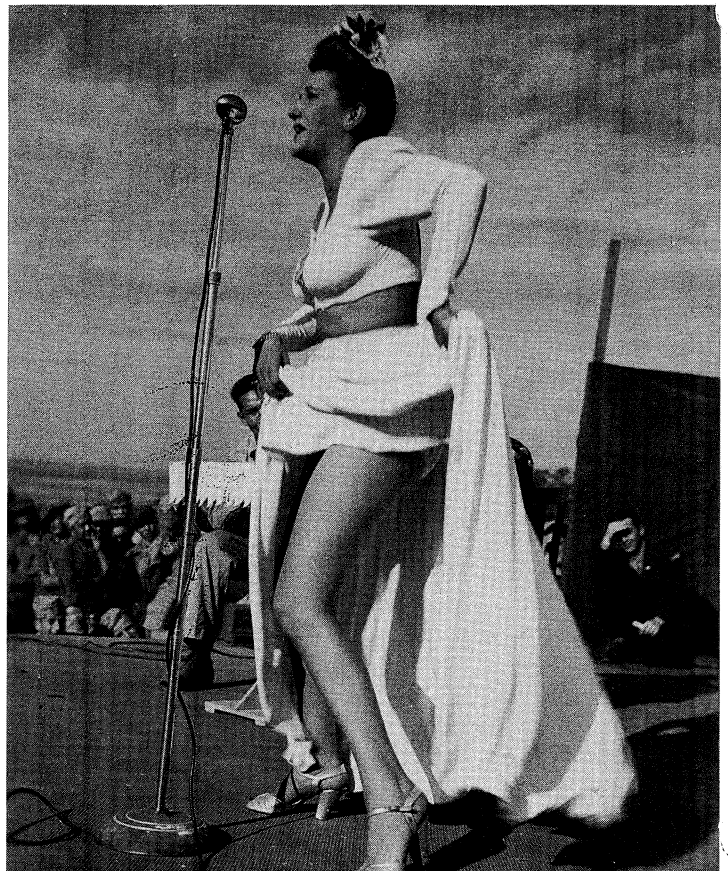
Recently letters were sent to members delinquent in dues for some time and generally inactive in the association. I expected to find some in *Folded Wings*, and there were a few. Many others became current, however, there are a number from which no reply was received even though a self-addressed stamped envelope was enclosed. If any of you know of members that have moved or for some reason are not active please let me know. I will ask that one from

each crew and each section be responsible for keeping their members roster current. I would like to hear from crews or sections that have a responsible member that I can keep contact with.

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

The interest in our next reunion is starting to build. I am surprised at the inquiries and the number that have reported they attended Maxwell Field during their training. Also, some took B-24 transition there beginning in late 1945.

Nich Schaps will have a report in the January Newsletter. Room prices will be in the low \$50 range!



*Cha-Cha-Cha. All eyes are focused on the dancer at the USO show at Pantanella.*

# FOLDED WINGS

**Aurelius A. Becnel** (Engineering) passed away May 24, 1995.

**Daniel R. Dugan** (Group Bombar-dier) passed away May 30, 1995.

**Mrs. Daniel Dugan** notified me by phone of the passing of Daniel. They were in Puerto Rico when he had a heart attack. Daniel was working part time at his occupation, industrial engineer. We will miss him at our reunions, but Marge plans on representing Daniel with their friends they have in the 781st Bomb Squadron and 465th Bomb Group.

**Albert LeBlanc** notified us of the passing of a friend, Aurelius "Bec" Becnel. Al writes, "We are adding too many too fast to the Folded Wings. We lost a good friend and member of the 781st. I was very close to "Bec" as he lived in Norco also. He was a mechanic on the Shetterly's plane, Sacagewa. (Also a crew chief). "

## From MILT LEVINSON

"You have heard the expression, what goes around, comes around! I have been trying to get in contact with the original crew that I was with in training in the states, the flight overseas, and training in England. Before we flew our first mission, I was given three hours notice, along with several hundred other nose gunners and ball gunners, to ship out to Italy.

"I recently discovered my former co-pilot was living in Delray Beach, FL about 30 minutes from our condo in Jupiter! I have a meeting with him next week. In the meantime he was in contact with the pilot who lives in your part of California.

"His name is Philip Rose, PO Box 67, Richvale, CA 95974. The crew finished up 35 sorties in March of '45 and had many hair-raising experiences. About a week ago I received a three hour video from the pilot that he had made during all their missions and photos of crew members. It was very interesting. Then I received your letter a few days later.

"Yes, it was true that they did remove the ball turret and that is why I was shipped out as the small ball turret gunner and was given the

nose position. Only 9 men were needed!

My former pilot stayed in the reserves and flew in the Korean war, Vietnam, and then resigned as a Major. He and his brother farm 1200 acres in a family farm raising rice in addition to 25,000 acres for grazing.

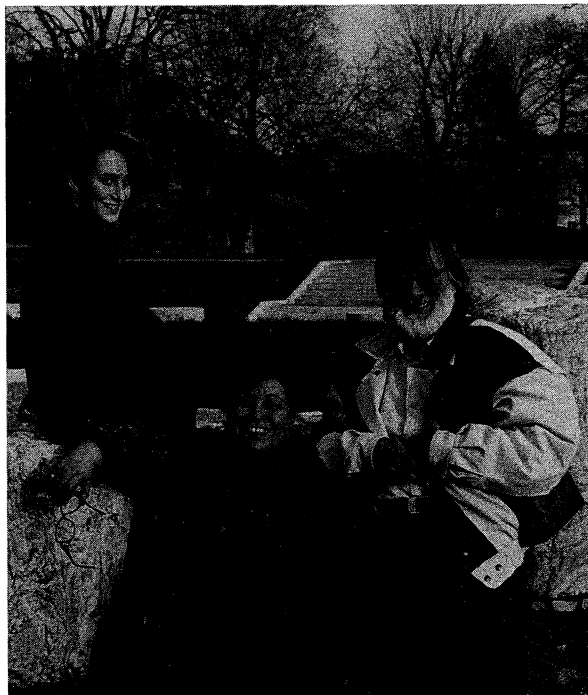
*Milt, I knew Philip Rose when we flew B-25s at Mather Field, CA in the early 1950s in the reserves. Then we were recalled for the Korean affair and I have not seen him since. I called him after your letter and we recalled some of our days during the Korean War.*

## EDITORS CORNER

I boxed myself into a small corner so I will have little to say. Just a message for you to keep me informed of address changes, or if you are away and want the newsletter mailed to a temporary address. And don't forget to do your part by sending in comments or a story for all of us to enjoy. It is early, but the next newsletter will be in January, so Happy Holiday Season to you all. You will be hearing from me next year.



*Richard Grantham at Pantanella in 1944*



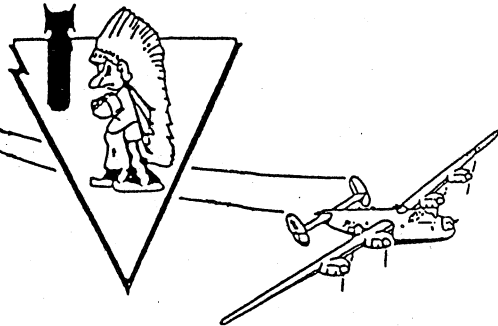
*Richard Grantham today, a retired professor in France with his wife Claudie and daughter Magoli. Let's hear from you Dick!*





*The British Ack Ack gunners stationed at Pantanella. As far as I know these guns were never fired at the enemy. The emplacement was just beyond the turn off on the road up the valley between the two groups. Bill Ellet remembers falling in the emplacement one night on a walk to the 464th when there was a black out.*

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