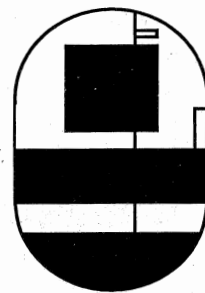




PANTANELLA NEWS



OCT 1997

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NUMBER 50

MISSION #56 FRIEDRICHSHAFEN, GERMANY

Part #2, ENEMY FIGHTERS SURPRISE ATTACK DOWNS 8 BOMBERS

Part II. Continuing on the Narrative Mission Report after bombs away over the target. Report by Paul J. Smith Capt., AC, Ass't S-2. Ed.

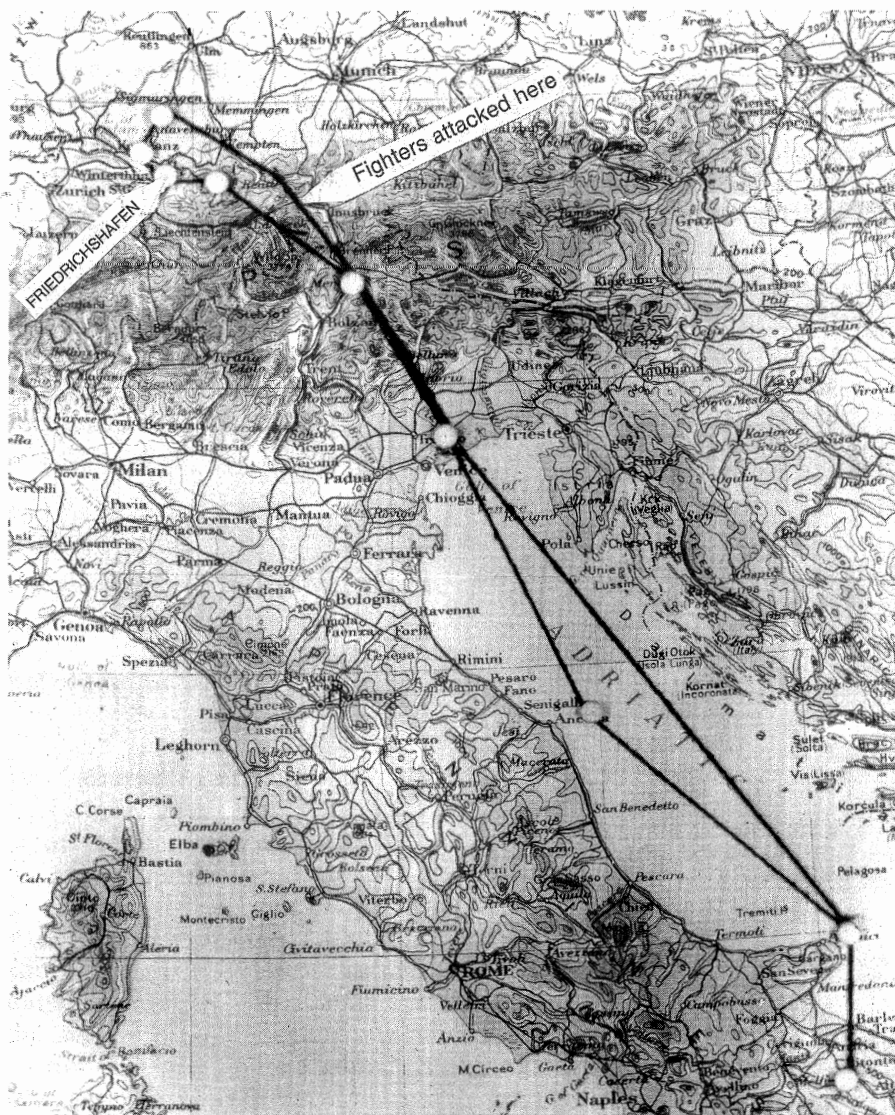
Forty ME 109s and FW 190s came up through the overcast at 1137 at 47 23 N - 10 50 E while the formation was at 20,000 feet. They came up on C box, which was still trailing, so fast that the gunners were not able to see them. They attacked in waves of four, low from 4 to 7 o'clock with each wave of four slightly V-shaped. At times waves were almost parallel with each other and gave the impression of as many as sixteen fighters attacking in line abreast. Break-offs were accomplished in various ways; one break-away consisted of two breaking right and two planes breaking left; another consisted of one plane breaking right and one plane breaking left and two diving down. Each group of four planes appeared to pick an individual bomber to concentrate its attack on. The entire formation of forty planes attacked C box and then attacked D box with the exception of a few planes which bypassed D box and attacked E box. It is believed that only one pass was made. It is apparent that the fighters took full advantage of the undercast because reports showed some of the bombers to be damaged before planes were visible above the undercast. It appeared that they had followed the formation under the undercast until they found an opening and they came out and attacked the formation. At the time the attack was made the escort was ahead, when they were called, they returned and drove the attacking fighters off. The other three groups were flying in wing formation at the time of the

fighter attack.

The projectile used by the fighters was self-expanding. It burst prior to impact similar to flak, and it is thought that it was either rocket fire or pre-fused 20MM cannon. The fighters were bluish green and some were silver. Tracers from our planes seem to

bounce off the nose of the attacking fighters.

6. Weather enroute: Practically clear to southern slopes of Alps where .3 alto-cumulus was encountered which increased to .8 to .9 over highest ridges and then decreased to .5 in the



The above photo shows the route to and from Friedrichshafen and the point near Innsbruck where the fighters attacked.

target area with tops from 17,000 feet to 19,000 feet. Over the lake the clouds became more scattered and the target was easily visible. There was a slight buildup in the clouds on return. Visibility was over 20 miles for the entire route decreasing with a light haze over the Adriatic. Winds were lighter than briefing.

7. The following observations were noted:

a. One unidentified plane went down in flames in lake in target area.

b. 30 to 35 SEF (Single-Engine-Fighter) at Rovederoro A/D, probably FW 190s.

c. 3 seaplanes at seaplane base at target.

d. 1 B-24 seen heading for Yugoslavian coast.

8. Twenty aircraft landed at 1422,

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781st BOMB SQUADRON

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

mean landing time. Eight aircraft are missing:

a. Red "H", 42-78308, Lt. CLARKE: a/c observed to crash. 3 to 7 chutes.

b. Red "F", 42-52498, Lt CRANE: Last seen under control, at least 7 chutes were seen to leave a/c and while a/c was burning it is possible that all got out.

c. White "C", 42-51137, Capt. PACE: Seen burning and descending; 6 or 7 chutes observed.

d. Blue "Y", 41-29377, Lt. ELLIOTT: Enemy a/c crashed into tail, 10 chutes observed.

e. White "P", 4128904, Capt. FAVOR: Observed to be on fire and burning slowly but still under control. 2 chutes were seen and all had time to bail out.

f. White "A", 42-95284 Lt. FIECOAT: On fire, observed to drop landing gear and descending into clouds under control. 4 chutes seen, and all should have gotten out.

g. White "I", 44-41017, Lt. POOLE.

h. White "Z", 44-41011, Lt. DODD: No information on later two ships, although it is believed possible that one ship may have crashed without chutes.

9. Enemy aircraft claimed: 8 ME 109's and 2 FW 190's destroyed, 6 ME 109's and 2 FW 190's probables and 1 ME 109 damaged.

10. Three (3) aircraft attempted photographs.

11. The route was flown as briefed.

PAUL J. SMITH
Captain, AAC. Ass't S-2.

ED. Lt. Poole, one of the first radar pilots in the 465th Bomb Group, was assigned to the 781st Bomb Squadron, then transferred to the 782nd. He was KIA after bailing out. German reports stated the chute did not open. Also KIA was the tail gunner. Hill. Missing Air Crew Reports state he was either killed

or wounded in the turret and did not get out of the plane. All other crewmembers survived and became POWs.

NARRATIVE

CLAIMS: By bombers, 10 destroyed. By fighters, 10 destroyed.

VICTORIES:

S/Sgt Harvey E. Nickels, Tail
1 FW 190 Destroyed.
S/Sgt Dennis B. Flaherty, Tail
1 ME 109 Destroyed.
S/SGT Gerald W. Shoemaker, Ball
1 ME 109 Destroyed.
S/Sgt Romeo Lebel, Tail
1 ME 109 Destroyed.
S/Sgt J. J. Jakoby, Waist
1 ME 109 Destroyed.
S/Sgts William G. Poulos, Ball
1 ME 109 Destroyed.
Sgt Miguel M. Garcia, Waist
1 FW 190 Destroyed.
Sgt Miguel M. Garcia, Waist
1 ME 109 Destroyed.
Sgt Joseph J. Korf, Tail
1 ME 109 Destroyed.
S/Sgt Kenneth Kopp, Ball
1 FW 190 Damaged.
S/Sgt Olen R. Morris, Tail
1 ME 109 Damaged.
S/Sgt Leo (NMI) Seitz, Ball
1 ME 109 Damaged.
T/Sgt Gerald F. Stenger, Waist
1 ME 109 Damaged.
Sgt James Bolsano, Tail
1 ME 109 Damaged.
Sgt John F. Ramsey, Tail
1 ME 109 Damaged.
Sgt Theron R. Robinson, Tail
1 FW 190 Damaged.
Sgt Miguel M. Garcia, Waist
1 FW 190 Damaged.
Sgt Robert T. Haught, Tail
1 ME 109 Damaged.

Remembering August 3, 1944

By Stanley C. Pace

On August 3, 1944, I was a Captain and Flight Leader in the 783rd Bomb Squadron, 465th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force, U.S. Army Air Corps. The target for that day was a factory in Friedrichshafen, Germany, on the banks of Lake Constance, which was on the border between Germany and Switzerland.

A squadron leader from one of the other three squadrons of the 465th

Group was assigned to lead the Group formation. Specifically, the Group was formed of 36 B-24's in six flights of six aircraft each. I was the leader of the last 18 B-24's in three flights of six aircraft each.

My crew on that day was my regular crew except that my co-pilot, was on "sick call" and John Allen from Duckworth's crew was assigned as my co-pilot. Also, Lt. Eicher was with us as "Pathfinder," or radar operator.

After take-off and during merging into our formation and during the first third of our trip north, eight of our thirty-six B-24's returned to Pantanella Base because of mechanical problems or other reasons. Upon observing this and in the interest of "tightening-up" the formation, I radioed the Group Leader and suggested that our Group of 28 B-24's form into four flights of seven aircraft each. This was approved by the Group Leader and was done.

During the Intelligence Briefing before take-off one of the briefing officers gave the flight path of the 15th Air Force from southern Italy to Friedrichshafen and return. This included a right turn off the target after bombing. Then it was suggested that such a right turn was a mistake because it would take us over the heaviest concentration of flak batteries. He suggested we continue to fly straight ahead after dropping our bombs. I ignored his "suggestion" and assumed everyone else would because it was counter to the 15th Air Force directive.

The flight to the target was normal and dropping our bombs was normal. We had heavy flak over the target and one of the B-24's in my flight of seven lost an engine because it was hit by flak.

To my surprise the

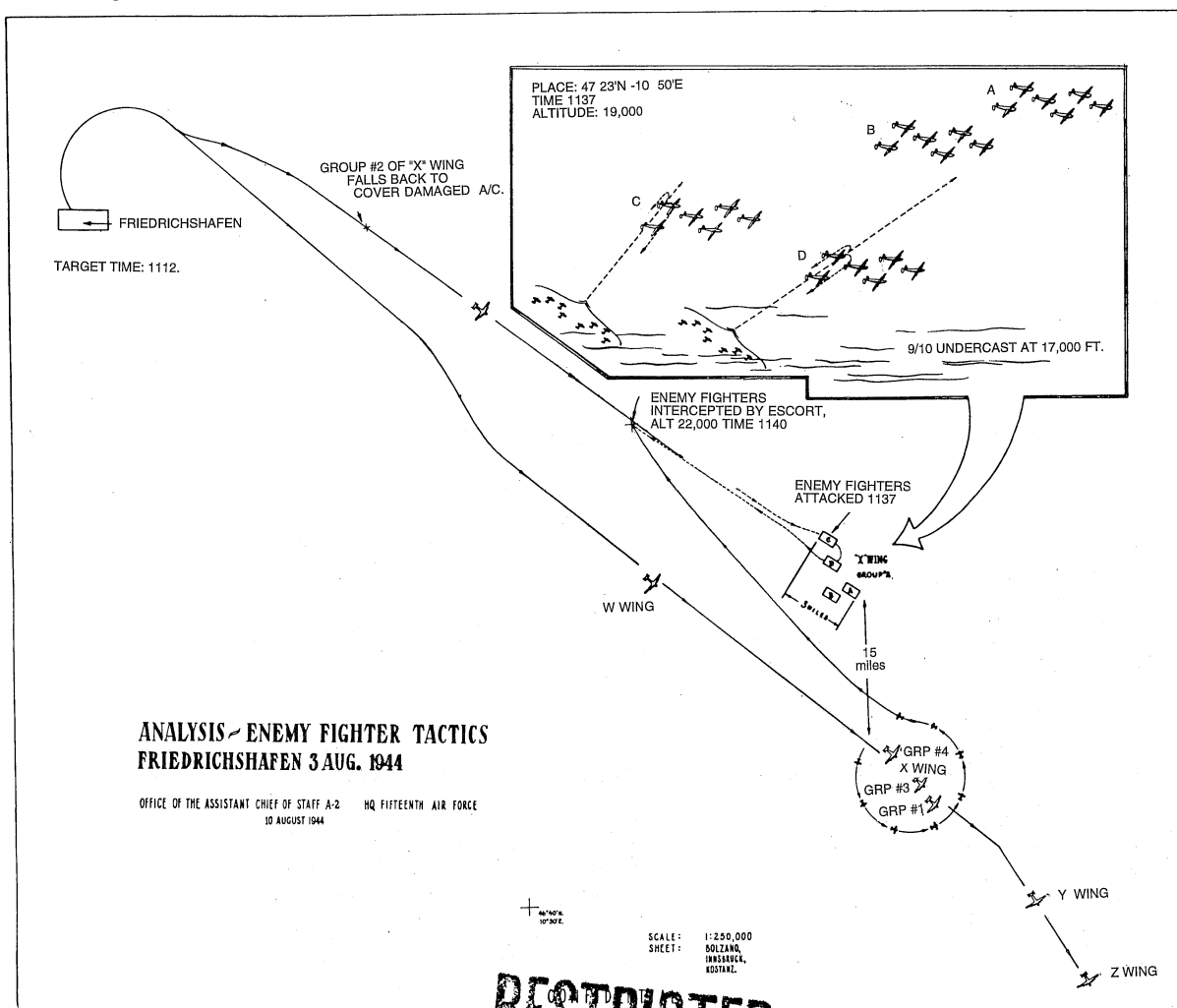
Group Leader, after the bomb drop, continued to fly straight ahead, while the rest of the 15th Air Force "train" turned right off the target and then turned right again to return to Italy. So for a few minutes our 465th Bomb Group of 28 B-24's was flying straight ahead and the rest of the 15th Air Force was flying in the opposite direction heading home.

Then, when the Group Leader turned right and saw the rest of the 15th Air Force was miles ahead of him, he increased his speed to try to catch up. Two aircraft flying in 180 degree opposite directions separate at twice the speed of the aircraft. This maneuver of the Group Leader including his "corrective action" of more speed, turning and descending spread our 28 aircraft into a "looser" than normal formation as well as separating us from the 15th Air Force by miles. Clearly, the Germans, with their radar seeing this disorganization, selected our spread, out-of-position group as its target for their fighters.

We were ten to twenty minutes off the target when the FW 190's attacked. We were flying at about 20,000 ft. altitude and there was broken cloud cover below us. The German radar brought the FW 190's up through the clouds after the radar had seen our U.S. fighter cover "S" forward over the 15th Air Force "train."

The FW 190's were climbing through the broken clouds and attacking in three waves from our rear. Thus the "rate of closure" between the FW 190's and our B-24's was very slow relatively speaking. So, it was a deadly battle. The "slow rate of closure" made both the FW 190's and the B-24's easy targets to hit. We lost eight B-24's out of the twenty-eight in about one minute. I have read that thirteen FW 190's were shot down in this action.

As the FW 190's attacked us, we called for help from our P-51 fighter cover. They came quickly and attacked the second wave, which was attacking us, and broke up the third wave, which never attacked us.



If thirteen FW 190's were shot down that day, I don't know how many were shot down by the B-24's or how many by the P-51's and P-47's, our fighters.

Our B-24 was hit by FW 190 20mm cannon in the aileron, causing it to stick in one position and my copilot and I could not rotate the wheel to activate the ailerons. Both John Allen and I were trying to force it loose by turning the wheel. Finally it came loose and I looked over to John Allen to signal that I now had control. As I looked at John, He was looking over his left shoulder to the bomb bay and his eyes were wide with amazement. So I looked over my right shoulder to see what he was looking at. It was a large, roaring gasoline fire in the bomb bay.

Upon seeing this fire, my first thought was to bail out. My second thought was to inform the crew to "bail out." I sat down and called the crew on the intercom instructing them to "bail out." Then I got up and stepped into the flight deck. I immediately saw John Allen spread-eagled on the floor of the flight deck. He must have slipped as the folding door in the floor had closed and had probably caught his parachute harness under him. My first thought was that I should go out the top hatch. My second thought was that I should help him get loose. I grabbed him by the seat of the pants and reached under him to pull the door open. The door came open, John

immediately went through the gasoline fire in the bomb bay to the air outside. I followed right on his heels. Both of us were severely burned on the hands and face from the fire.

In what I have just described, please note the strong natural human nature reaction for self-preservation which came first, while help for others always came second.

After clearing the aircraft, I pulled the ripcord of my back-pack parachute. It opened and I floated to the ground in this small valley. As I hung in my parachute, the skin from the back of my left hand was flying straight up as I dropped through the air. There were many, many parachutes in the air with me, probably eighty or more.

My chute caught on the top of a small fir tree and broke my landing, making it easy and soft. I unbuckled my parachute and the German Army was there. I didn't have an opportunity to run. Also, I was burned sufficiently that I really wanted medical treatment.

The soldier took me to a farm house where I sat on a bench outside the house. Several citizens came by to see me. They brought one of my gunners to me. The pain of my burns was increasing. I asked my gunner to open the morphine packet, which we all had, and inject it into me for relief. He tried to do it, but his hands were shaking too much. So a woman took it from him and injected the morphine

into my arm. Pain relief was almost immediate.

After waiting one-half to one hour, the German soldiers took us by car or truck to a nearby army camp and put us in a barracks. My burns were very obvious and they took me to a dispensary where salve was applied and I was bandaged - face and hands.

There was some food that evening and the next morning for breakfast. After breakfast, I was taken to a dentist in Innsbruck, who used his dentist drill to cut my West Point ring from my left hand, which was tremendously swollen, in order to avoid loss of blood circulation to my finger. The dentist put the two parts of my ring in a small manila envelope and put the envelope in my left shirt pocket. I kept the ring for the next nine months as a POW. Upon my return to the states, I sent the two parts of the ring to Baily, Banks, and Biddle in Philadelphia and they repaired it beautifully. I wear it today.

Stanley Pace spent nine months in German hospitals and prison camps. After being freed from POW camp he returned to the U. S. and remained in the Air Force. He served at Wright-Patterson as deputy chief of Air Force Material Command. He was promoted to Colonel, USAF, in April 1953 after less than 10 years service. He retired from the Air Force in 1954.

After his military service Stanley had a long and varied business career. From TRW as sales manager and division manager of a west coast division to President and Chief operating officer of TRW, then on to General Dynamics. He retired in 1990 as Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of General Dynamics.

Stanley also served as director General Dynamics Corporation, TRW Inc., Consolidated Natural Gas Company, Republic Steel Corporation, National City Corporation, National City Bank and the Lamson & Sessions Company.

He also found time to head United Way Drive in Cleveland, raising \$44 million in 1984, and many other community and charity foundations. Ed.



Stanley C. Pace back row far right, with his original crew. Three of his crew members were not with him when he was shot down on his 39th mission.

Remembrances of Friedrichshafen by Russ Maynard .

I was co-pilot on the Jack Frazier crew assigned to fly the Guardian Angel (Yellow "M") in position A-3 in the lead box of the second attack unit. I liked to fly "Guardian Angel" because it had a welded sheet-steel about 1/8 inch thick around the back of the pilot seat that extended about six inches up the sides and over the head of the pilots. We referred to them as "coffin seats."

A part of the briefing that got everyone's attention was the intelligence gathered concerning defense of the target. It was expected that anti-aircraft ground fire would be heavy and intense, that the Nazis would put all the fighters they had in the area in the air to try to lessen the numbers of bombs that may be rained upon the target, and that we would bomb at 24,000 feet.

My memory does not recall the geographic point the enemy fighters were first sighted by our formation, but we were at about flight level of 24,000 feet with a low layer of broken clouds under us, and our escort fighter group was not in sight. Crew members in the waist section and tail turret first called out about a dozen enemy fighters appearing through the undercast at about 5 o'clock position! Jack Frazier, our crew commander, had been monitoring the intercom while flying the airplane. I was monitoring Channel "B" on the VHF radio, our communication between our units and our escort fighters.

On first report of enemy fighters, Frazier did two things. He instructed me to fly the airplane and to call our escort to report our imminent attack. This, while he coordinated the actions of the rest of the crew. Attack they did. Our gunners fired on the fighters as instructed. They reported 8 B-24s being shot down or otherwise forced to drop out of the formation. They were out of the lowest boxes in our formation.

In the meantime two FW 190s appeared just underneath of our position. They had just made a firing pass over our lower boxes of B-24s. At this moment a P-51 appeared right in front of our nose in a pursuit curve to pull in behind one of the FW1-90s. At that

moment among the chatter on "B" channel I heard one of the P-51s call his "buddy" to say "I've got a couple of "downers," "How are you doing?" At the moment I was watching the P-51 in front of us firing on the FW-190. Then in a very clear voice I heard the buddy's response, "I got one, no - two!" just as we watched the FW-190 go into a steep spiral smoking from a 20 mm hit. No chute was sighted. The P-51s went on to chase the remaining enemy aircraft away.

I do not remember how successful we were over the target that day. I entered in my log that there were 41 enemy fighters involved. During my entire tour of 35 sorties (58 missions) this was the most intense fighter attack of any mission I was on. I had notes that then Lt. Col. Ben Davis, "the Tuskegee" airmen group were our escorts that day, and their voices sounded so.

I remember Friedrichshafen by Henry Gick

The mission was flown as briefed up to and including the rally off the target.

We were briefed to rally right to an easterly heading for a short distance then to a generally southern heading for home. At this point, weather went from a broken cloud condition over the target to a solid undercast approximately 5000 feet below the group.

Our group did not turn to a southerly heading when the 15th AF did, but continued on east for approximately 5 minutes. I could see the 15th AF planes at 2 o'clock - probably 25 miles distance. Our group continued south for approximately 15 minutes - then we heard guns firing and reports of planes going down from the low squadron. The attack lasted about 15 to 30 seconds.

Henry Gick (Lt Col Ret'd), from the 782nd Bomb Squadron attended our reunion at Montgomery. He gave the above item as a result of our discussion at Montgomery.

Thanks to others who helped in the Friedrichshafen article; Jack Van Slyke for information on the fighter attack, Neil Horne, Chief Navigator on the mission (from 782nd Squadron) sent in the copy of the navigation log and Harry Carl for some photos.

The Last of the Breed

by Col Carson
WWII Fighter Pilot

Air war has been different from that on land or on the sea in important ways that don't occur to most people. Sea and land battles were fought in major engagements with all the forces available brought to bear on the objective, such as the Battles of Coral Sea and Midway, or those of Monte Cassino and the Ardennes. On the average these would last from a few days to a couple of weeks, followed by long periods of regrouping, maneuver, resupply and small-scale jousting back and forth while holding the line and looking for the next opportunity.

This was not the case in the air. Never did all of the Luftwaffe forces ever meet all of the Allied air forces in a single engagement over Germany, Russia or North Africa to force a decision by conquest in those areas. The air war was a war of attrition, the kind that no commander likes in principle. An air force is supported by air fields, petroleum, factories, chemicals, ball bearings, railroads and rubber industries. By its very definition it requires a battle of attrition to destroy it. Whereas, a sailor or soldier would fight 3 or 4 major engagements in a war, the airman would go out on a new engagement on every mission, 40 or 50 or more. Except for periods of leave, you had to fly each one as if it was a new war, different from yesterday. It might turn out to be a "milk run" but you wouldn't know that until you got back with your skin and your airplane all in one piece.

The ones that really caught it were the bomber crews. I don't think the public appreciates, even today, the living hell that a bomber crew under attack went through. I truly felt sorry for them. Unbelievable. Absolutely unreal to have half of your crew bleeding to death and not be able to turn back. No doctor on board, no medical corpsmen with stretchers to get them to the rear and a field hospital. It was fight or die, many times both. It was not unusual for a gunner to keep firing from his turret, and fix malfunctions of his guns, too, while his life ebbed away in a pool on the floor. The citations for decorations are replete with such incidents. Such valor and moral

fibre is being lost in a haze of receding time . . . but I know, my friend, I know. The whole thing is carved in marble in my mind's eye, it's a little like looking through the wrong end of a telescope, the image is far away, but clear and well defined.

The sky was a new frontier. For many it was a challenge and an escape from the trivialities and the mediocrity of urban life or a hard scrabble farm that didn't pay.

The airman is society's answer to the requirements of flight, differing from an era that preceded flight. There is an informal fraternity of military pilots and their crews.

It has been said that the sky, like the sea, is terribly unforgiving of carelessness or bad judgement. If you survive, however it is a great teacher.

Red Force, Blue Force

According to the Fifteenth Air Force History, maximum effort on maintenance during days of activity frequently resulted in a larger than normal number of planes being available, and it was often inadvisable to send the entire force deep into enemy territory, where enemy fighters, smoke screens or unfavorable weather might be encountered. The number of escort fighters was always inadequate for complete coverage of the entire force, and there was an insufficient number of bombers equipped with PFF to provide adequate leadership for a radar operation of maximum strength. Consequently, the Groups were split into two echelons: Red Force, composed of normal-effort groups, usually about twenty four aircraft with four PFF planes per Group, was given maximum available fighter escort and sent against a major target where air opposition might be anticipated; Blue Force, employing all available bombers beyond those required by the fixed strength of the primary mission, was dispatched, without escort, against objectives in areas where visual bombing could be expected with reasonable prospect of success and without definite risk of fighter interception.

An example was a mission on 2 March 1945. Red Force, the first unit, attacked the North Main Marshaling yards at Linz, Austria by Pathfinder and the Blue Force attacking the

Marshaling Yards at Amstetten, Austria. The crew of Robert E. French failed to return from this mission. They returned to base 16 days later after being rescued by the Hungarians and Russians. Other similar missions were flown on April 15 and 23.

The WASPs of World War II

They made a notable contribution to America's role in World War II and to the future of military aviation, yet they were not officially a part of our wartime air arm. They were the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs), and they freed hundreds of male pilots for combat duty.

The WASPs sprang from two roots that merged in August 1943. First was the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, approved in September 1942 and headed by Nancy Love, an experienced pilot and civilian member of the Air Transport Command Ferrying Division. Applicants to the squadron were required to have 500 hours flying time and a 200-horsepower rating.

Second was the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD), created in November 1942 and headed by Jacqueline Cochran. Located at Avenger Field, TX, the WFTD trained women with varying pilot experience, eventually down to a minimum of thirty-five hours, to fly "the Army way." Over time, the curriculum went through many changes to become a virtual duplicate of the Aviation Cadet program. Both groups were under civil service, but Cochran had in mind militarization with eventual commissions for her graduates, who would serve in many domestic flying roles, including ferrying aircraft.

Against the wishes of both women, WASPs initially were restricted to daylight flights in liaison aircraft and primary trainers. Nancy Love broke that barrier by wangling permission to check out in B-17s and P-51 Mustangs. Cochran did her part by convincing Gen. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, Commanding General of the US Army Air Forces, that her graduates could tow targets as well as ferry aircraft. At Camp Davis, NC, an antiaircraft training base, the WASPs flew tired, badly maintained A-24 and A-25 dive bombers. Two women lost their lives because of engine failure, and several

were hit by ground fire, but others volunteered for that risky business, which few male pilots wanted.

Now that barriers were down, the WASPs began flying every first-line fighter, bomber, trainer, and transport in the USAAF's inventory. By 1944, half of Ferrying Division's fighter pilots were WASPs, and they made three-quarters of all domestic fighter deliveries with a lower accident rate than male pilots had.

Many WASPs became test pilots at overhaul and repair depots, another dicey and anonymous job. Others were assigned to Training Command as flying cadet navigators, bombardiers, and instrument instructors.

About 100 WASPs were sent directly from AT-6s to B-26 Marauder transition. At that time, the B-26 was considered by some to be the most difficult and dangerous USAAF aircraft. The WASPs did as well as the men at flying the bomber and much better in ground school. After completing the course, many WASPs flew B-26s on tow-target missions to train aerial gunners. A few visited B-26 transition bases as a confidence-builder for male pilots who did not regard the Marauder as user-friendly.

In the early days, the B-29 had a bad reputation. Lt. Col Paul W. Tibbets, of Enola Gay fame, checked out two WASPs, Dora Dougherty and Dortha Johnson, in the B-29 and sent them to a heavy bomber base to reassure nervous B-29 students. The Air Staff, when it learned of Colonel Tibbets's ploy, directed that WASPs were not to fly the B-29 again.

Perhaps the most unusual WASP flying experience was that of twenty-nine-year-old Ann Baumgartner, who was sent to Wright Field, not as a pilot but as a consultant on new flying equipment. She soon persuaded the brass to let her fly P-51s, P-47 Thunderbolts, a Japanese Zero, and a Bf-109. Ms Baumgartner also got permission to fly the experimental Bell YP-59 jet fighter, becoming the only American female jet pilot, a distinction she held for almost a decade.

In December 1944, as the need for combat pilots declined, the WASPs were inactivated. In its twenty-eight month life, the WASP organization drew 25,000 applicants; 1830 were accepted, 1,074 won their wings, and

thirty-eight lost their lives taking part in a wide range of domestic flying duties. They ferried more than 12,000 aircraft of seventy-eight types, served without military benefits, and were paid two-thirds as much as the male Italian ferry pilots they had replaced. The WASPs frequently endured discrimination, yet many offered to continue ferrying aircraft for a dollar a year.

In 1949, the newly independent United States Air Force offered commissions to former WASPs. The 121 who accepted were assigned to administrative and support duties and did not fly military aircraft again. It was not until 1977 that Congress passed a bill, introduced by Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-AZ), that gave the WASPs honorable discharges and declared them veterans. Their accomplishments during the war reflected courage and determination, paving the way for women to be admitted to military flying training again, but it would be more than thirty years before the road was completed.



A letter from **Ric Church**, Sam Monroe's son, to OJ Cowart, "I continue to enjoy the Pantanella News and keeping up on the squadron members. Many of the names have become like old friends, even though I have not personally met them.

I keep the Pantanella News issues bound in a large three ring binder, along with various military documents of my late father (Sam Monroe). Recently I shared this collection of issues with a neighbor who worked with my father and knew him well. This gentleman also served in WWII, although not in Europe. He was greatly impressed with not only the information compiled in the issues, but with the diligence and dedication to the squadron's efforts in keeping its members and memories intact, which the Pantanella News issues represent."

From **Charles Bradley** (Ball Gunner on Newman Crew), "I am sending an

update on the Newman Crew. New address for Monroe Beebe (Tail Gunner) is 2 Bill Hill Rd., Lyman, CT 06731. I am sure he will be glad to get the newsletter.

"Chester Mijal (Engineer on Newman Crew) passed away two or three years ago after a long illness. His wife, Joanne, is at 79 Carolan Ave., Hampton NY 03842. Phone 603 926-5067."

Thanks for the information Charles. I wish more crews and section would check with each other and keep the office updated on everyone.

From **George Smith** (Armament). "I enjoy the Pantanella News. It gets me caught up on the latest news.

"Our Armament section is hoping to be with the 781st next year."

Post Office Goofs!

Ed. Recently I have been getting an unusual amount of address changes. Also, a number of members did not receive the last newsletter. So, I decided to do a little phone calling to find out why a current member's newsletter was returned. I called the phone number listed for Bud Ingram (Engineering) and Mrs. Shirley Ingram answered the phone. They still live at their same address in Milford, OH.

So, I took a few minutes and spent a few cents postage and gave the Post Office in Milford a notice to "shape up."

"A few days later I received the following letter from Shirley Ingram, "Thank you for your phone call and your concern about Bud not receiving his newsletter. Hope it reaches him this time as he always enjoys the news about the squadron.

"It has been a long winter and spring for Bud. He had lung surgery in January and contacted a viral infection called Guillian Barre' syndrome. We understand you can get this from a flu shot. He lost 95% of lower body motion and 20% of upper. After 4 1/2 months of extensive physical therapy and great nursing care he is home and able to get around with the use of a cane.

"Hope to see you in Dayton next year."

OK Engineering buddies. how about giving Bud a little cheering up?

Under Phone Calls I will note one from **Leo Fink**, bombardier on R. J. Smith crew. He said he had been wanting to write a letter, but there just were too many delays, so he made the phone call.

Leo's primary reason for the call was to compliment two of the articles in the April newsletter. He thought the articles about the POWs Experiences by Harold Farrar and Pierre Kennedy, and "A Different War Story, by Dodie Shallman were exceptionally well written. Also, they were stories of what really happened. He thought there should be some award for the editors.

Pierre Kennedy, (Tail gunner on Althoff crew) writes, "Thanks for you letter of May 13th and the article by Ken Decker about the August 3, 1944 mission and the map of P.O.W. camps. This was the only map where I've seen Luft VI, Heydekrug, located. It was at the northern tip of East Prussia, near Lithuania. Some ex-POW's think they were in Lithuania.

"The POWs at Heydekrug evacuated that camp in July 1944, and took a boat ride across the Baltic to Stettin, in slave like conditions, then were handcuffed together, and forced to run while chased and bitten by guard dogs about 3 miles from a RR station to Luft 4. I don't know of any of our 781st men who were at Luft VI.

"The July 1997, number 49, Pantanella News arrived July 1. A great issue. I read every issue 2 or 3 times so as not to miss anything. Rosemary's article came out good and she was happy with it. Today, St. Joseph's College is one of the foremost women's colleges in the U.S. Rosemary is active as an alumnae. "

Elwood Helfer (Intelligence clerk), "I enjoy the Pantanella News. It brings back the old memories. I recognize quite a few of the pictures of the squadron and group that we processed through the photo lab. Also many of the pictures taken by Frank Ambrose when he and I used to travel around together taking pictures of anything and everything."

From Peggy McElwain, wife of **Arno McElwain** (W. J. Smith Top Gun). "Five years ago Arno was 'downed' with a serious stroke. He

gradually recovered over four years and then had another stroke just over a year ago. He leaves the home only for doctors appointments.

"I hope we can move from my native state, Oklahoma, to his Ohio birth state to be near his three grown sons and their families. He will have to improve a great deal before that can happen. When we get into our last years we really need good, caring grown children nearby."

FLIM FLAM

by Al "Scoop" Nagel

#1 DIVERSIFICATION:

This column is written while under CFS(CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME), a VIRUS.

YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH "U"

Even if you are not a famous sports star, you can still count on having your number retired—your social security number, that is. According to the Social Security Administration, social security numbers are unique to the individuals to which they are assigned, and are never used again. One billion combinations are possible under nine-digit system. Only about one-third have been assigned so far.

The longest measured home run in a regular-season major league game was 643 feet by Mickey Mantle on September 10, 1960 at Briggs Stadium in Detroit.

The other day, I kept dialing the wrong number over and over again. Did you ever wonder why wrong numbers are never busy?

BOB FREED Notes - while people-watching, I always observe that men married 0 to 10 years go with their wives into women's wears stores; men married 11 to 25 years stand outside watching their wives inside the store; men married 26 to 39 years sit on the bench outside the store and eyeball the pretty girls walking by; men married 40 years + (YOU AND I) fall asleep on the benches outside.

CARL DAHL note - story of the B-24 of the 464th BG that blew up on the runway at take off in 1944.

COMING SOON - Tufa blocks story coming in the future.

Believe it or not. Terminal illness is not getting sick at the airport.

OTHO JACKSON COWART, Jr. asked Esther what time she would return from shopping for a new dress. She said, "Be back at \$200."

TID BITS...ERNIE VAN

ASPEREN delayed a Board of Directors meeting for his winery. He was snow bound in Arizona in his private plane. At 80 years young he still flies and says it is beautiful on the top of the clouds.

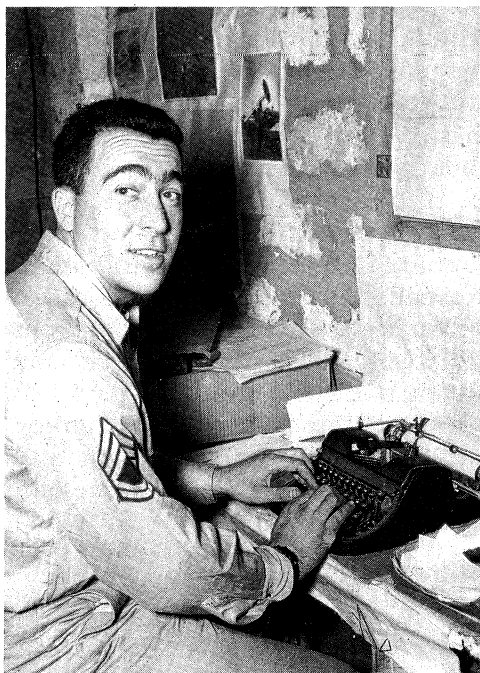
I'm looking for heroes. Special people with stores are needed.

We live among HEROES. Some times they dramatically tackle thieves or pull people from burning buildings. Sometimes they spend years feeding the homeless. Sometimes they merely turn in a wallet of cash without taking a bill as a reward.

Selflessness is the measure of their heroism.

I request you send in our questionnaire in order to have material for FLIM FLAM. Scoop.

OK men, lets help out Al by sending him Tid Bits for his column. This is Flim Flam 1997. Al's Pantanella era photo is below. Ed.



All American Visits Black Hills of South Dakota

by Frank Clark

The Wings of History Tour sponsored by the Collings Foundation of Stowe, MA spent the weekend of Jr 18-20 at the Rapid City Regional Airport.

The featured aircraft were the "All American" B-24J, which Collings has restored at a cost of 21.3 million dollars, and a B17G named "Nine-O-Nine." Both aircraft are four-engine bombers which were the workhorses of the Army Air Corps in WWII. The B-24 is the only aircraft of its type fully restored and is in excellent condition. There were 18,000 of these aircraft built during the early 1940s.

Local promoters of this event were Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Freed, local business people. Jerry's father was killed in a B-24 when it crashed in the English Channel., and he is a great history buff concerning B-24s. An interesting sidelight, the left rudder displays the markings of Mr. Freed's old bomb group, while as we all know, the right rudder carries the markings of our 465th.

An appropriate ceremony greeted the two old war birds as they arrived from Miles City, Montana. A local veterans groups provided a color guard and the National Anthem was played to quite a large crowd gathered on the ramp. The Base Commander of Ellsworth AFB and the Mayor of Rapid City officially welcomed the flight crew.

Many people toured the aircraft and several flights by both aircraft gave people the opportunity to view the beautiful Black Hills from these rare, historical vintage aircraft.

I assisted with the tours through the B-24. If this display is anywhere near you, I would encourage anyone in our squadron to volunteer your services. It is a real enlightening experience.

Frank Clark was Navigator on the Benson Crew. See his story in Pantanella News #17 about his mission to Blechhammer when his crew got shot down. ED.

B-24 Located

Another B-24 has been located. An article in Times-News Twin Falls Idaho sent in by Bill Bartlett reports a request by Hill Aerospace Museum for \$100,000 to restore a B-24 Liberator that was recovered from Great Sitkan Island in the Aleutian Islands.

The B-24s in Alaska during WWII were used primarily to locate and attack Japanese shipping in the North Pacific and to bomb Japanese troops that invaded Attu and Kiska islands on June 7, 1942.

This particular plane took off Jan. 18, 1943, with five other B-24s on a bombing mission, but two were forced to turn back because of mechanical problems. Then the other four became lost in the dense clouds and were never seen again. One made it to an American base, but the sixth, running out of fuel, was forced to crash land on Great Sitkan Island.

All the crewmen got out, but the plane sat there for 52 years, until the Utah museum could organize the recovery.

Another B-24 is being recovered from the water near Antalya, Turkey. The plane, Hadley's Harem, was returning to Italy from the low level raid over Ploesti.

And, you probably heard of the one that went down on Maoer Mountain, China. The wreckage and crew remains were found at 6,000 feet up the side of the mountain. It was lost on the way back from a mission to bomb a Japanese-held harbor.

Address changes:

Jim Althoff Phone (650) 325-8356.
Fax (650) 853-0322.

Vann Reynolds
35 Pollys Lane, Uncasville, CT
06382

Clara Rudeseal
4781 Camp Creek Rd., Mst. Airy, GA
30563.

Jean Allen Wood, 1113 Briergate
Dr., Naperville, IL 60563.

Howard Weistling, Phone 818 764-
97

Janey Russell's area code changed
to (870) 234-1537.

Royal A. Wilson Phone number (248)
646-3416.

From the FLIM FLAM issue of March 22, 1945

"G. I. Joe" HITS CELEBRITY ROW Story Given Nationwide Distribution

Joseph Caux, "G.I. Joe", is ten years old, a French Arab orphan from Algiers, and mascot of the 465th.

Joe is strictly one of the boys and a part of our every day existence. He speaks practically perfect English using G.I. slang with ease. He stands inspections, eats and bunks with the boys and makes himself generally useful. At present, Joe works in the 781st officers club.

Not long ago, the Public Relations Office submitted the story of Joe's adventures for publication. The story was gobbled up by the International News Service and has been released all over the States.

During the fight for Africa Joe's entire family was killed during one of the bombings and the eight year old kid found himself dependent entirely upon himself, doing pretty much as he pleased and eating only what he could beg or steal. Joe was just another war orphan in Africa: but to the kid with Arab blood this didn't make a lot of difference.

When the Americans arrived in Algiers, Joe picked up English from the soldiers and earned an odd nickel and dime by doing little jobs for them. Before long the boys of a service group, attracted to a curly-head, and a big smile, took him off the streets and out to their camp. Cleaning him up, they named him G.I. JOE, and he remained with them until they were ordered up front. They left him in care of an ack-ack outfit, and when his new outfit moved to Corsica, Joe went along.

He took part in invasions of Sardinia, and Sicily but found that too easy so he moved over to a Fighter Group then stationed in Sicily. He didn't like being a ground man so he ended up flying seven missions over enemy territory, before the official wheels caught up with him and put a stop to it.

When the Fighter Group moved to Italy Joe came along, and after a month ended up in the 4th Field Hospital. He liked the hospital gang so well he decided to remain with it. The field hospital moved to service the Fifteenth

Italy and Joe came along. Then the hospital moved to Lavello and Joe came back to the Air Corps - the 465th.

Joe says American chow is the best he has ever eaten. He's grown quite a bit since he joined the group. Like most husky boys, he likes baseball and football. The bomber crews in their turn have a real affection for Joe. They seem to feel that bringing him up is their responsibility.

Joe thinks a lot of the American soldier, and wants very much to go to the States when this is all over. School and eventually Notre Dame and their football team is Joe's outstanding goal. He hopes the boss, "President Roosevelt" as he calls him, will be able to make it possible.

REUNIONS 1998

465th Bomb Group. October 10, 1998. Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, OH. Group Headquarters personnel have been invited to join with the 781st Bomb Squadron as they have in the past, or with any of the other squadrons if you so desire. You may reserve with the 781st for their events beginning on October 7. The formal 465th day will be held on October 10th when all squadrons will gather together for daytime meetings, etc. and a banquet in the evening. More information on this in January when the other squadrons have set their reunion plans and agree on a program.

781st Bomb Squadron. Hope Hotel, Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, OH, October 7 to 11, 1998. The only Air Force Base to have a hotel! The room rates are \$50 plus tax! Our Thursday night dinner will be catered at the Air Force Museum! The Museum will be reserved exclusively for our squadron that evening. More news in January.

DUES

Dues are \$10 per year payable in advance. If your label does not read 97 you are delinquent. We will be discontinuing those who are delinquent. Dues merely pay for the cost of the Pantanella News. Send your check to O. J. Cowart, Treasurer, 2634 Beluche Dr., Galveston, TX 77551.

William Cassel

A page from the book "Zemke's Stalag" by Hubert Zemke about the death of William Cassel from the 781st Bomb Squadron.

With a body of men now swelled to more than 7,000 and existing on meager rations, it was remarkable there were few fatal medical cases. By the law of averages we could not all hope to avoid the grim reaper. On 12 March, 1945 Second Lieutenant William Cassel died in the hospital of leukemia, the first prisoner to die of natural causes since my taking command. Acting immediately to set up an appropriate military funeral, I was informed by the German headquarters that there would be no American flag or wreath on the coffin, even though these were made up by prisoners. Also no sounding of taps, a final send-off to the dead in our military tradition. In fact, anything to upgrade the last military dignity to the deceased companion was turned down. Perhaps my anger at this pettiness caused them to relent a little and allow pallbearers to give a hand salute at the graveside. All the same, we resolved to carry the ceremony along with as much military bearing as possible. Fifteen pallbearers were allowed; myself and another from Wing Headquarters, Lieutenant Colonel Gabreski and a party from North 3 where Cassel had recently lived, and the remainder a British contingent led by Group Captain Weir. Probably fearing of a demonstration of support, Germans ordered the funeral party to assemble at 0600 hours on 15 March, a time when it was still dark and the prisoners would be locked up.

The chilly morn found the burial party marching out of camp with the bare coffin loaded on the same four-wheel horse-drawn cart that transported our coal and vegetables. Taking our slow steps to the Barth town cemetery, we in turn were escorted by ten German guards toting submachine guns. It was just growing light when the wooden casket was lowered into the grave.

Walking back to Stalag Luft I, I turned my head skyward and winked at the guy up there whoever he may be and thanked Bill Cassel. For out of his passing had come some good in that a

few of us had been able to walk outside that oppressive barbed wire for the first time in many a long day. A sad thought, perhaps, but that young man was already freed from this precarious life. Unhappily, this was not the only funeral I was to attend, the next as a result of an alarming trend in our containment.

FROM LUFT IV TO LUFT I VIA 40/8

by Paul B. Brady (FW) - P.O.W. #6492

July 16, 1944. Our target was Vienna, Austria. We survived the bomb run but flak and fighter planes finally put us asunder and we were forced to bail out over Yugoslavia. After 10 days in a prison in Budapest we followed the routine procedure for downed airmen, which was off to Frankfurt am Main for interrogation, and then to Luft IV for internment.

The evacuation of Stalag Luft IV in January/February 1945. My situation was - I was unable to walk due to an injury to my left knee and shoulder. We were put in 40 and 8 box cars, 52 plus to each car. It took 8 days to reach Stalag Luft I, Barth, Germany. We were seldom let out of the box cars and only had 2 buckets for relief purposes. We bribed the guards with a few cigarettes to push snow through the cracks in the door. We would let it melt and then use it for drinking. Of course it was the same cracks we used to urinate through for the 8 days, in order to conserve the 2 buckets for the P.O.W.s who had dysentery to defecate in.

In May 1945 the Russians liberated Stalag Luft I. Colonel Gabreski issued passes to officers only from the section of the camp that he was in charge. The Russians told him that the enlisted men were no longer prisoners and if he did not let them out on equal terms as his officer officers they would run their tanks through the barbed wire fences. We tore a section of the fence down and camped in the woods.

After a short stay in the woods we spread out in the surrounding town and stayed with the German families. They were overjoyed to have us stay with them because the Russian Soldiers were breaking into the houses and raping the women. One

Russian soldier was pounding on the door of the house where I was staying and when he saw I was an American he left without any questions.

Several days later we returned to the camp and Colonel Gabreski was going to have us court-martialled when we got back to the U.S.A. for being A.W.O.L. Can you believe this chicken colonel?

In town I saw several P.O.W.'s drinking vodka with some Russians. The GIs were quite drunk after one or two drinks. One P.O.W. gave his watch to a Russian soldier for a raw fish!! I saw several P.O.W.'s sitting on the tailgate of a horse drawn wagon riding out of town. I still wonder to this day what became of them. The Russians looted the town completely.

I received a story from one POW, who preferred to remain anonymous, which told about his freedom when the British forces met up with the POWs still under German guard. The German guards were captured by the British and the POWs were their jurors in a sense. The British asked about each guard - if he treated the POWs satisfactory he was taken prisoner. If not the death sentence was carried out immediately. Many of the POWs were not there to answer - they died or were killed on the march.

DO YOU KNOW?

Who took the photo of Lt. Col Lokker's plane going down? It was S/Sgt Francis T. Mulrooney, radio operator and waist gunner on the Lt. Harold Shoener crew from the 783rd Bomb Squadron.

Sgt. Mulrooney was generally assigned to take photos while manning the waist gun. On January 20th Lt. Shoener was returning from a mission with one engine out and low on fuel. He headed for the island of Vis, turned on the final approach by turning into the dead engine, then stalled out and crashed in the Adriatic before the end of the runway and killed all but one. Sgt. Mulrooney was one of those killed.

The above information was received from Al Honey of the 783 when he was still alive.

FOLDED WINGS

Wayne Pry (Co-pilot) passed away Mar. 13, 1997. Reported by his wife.

Chester F. Mijal (Engineer on New-man Crew) passed away 2 or 3 years ago. Reported by Charles Bradley.

Our thoughts prayers for our fallen comrades who have found everlasting peace, — you served your country well. We will remember you forever.

SICK CALL

Earl Viands (Engineering) is in Leavenworth VA Medical Center. Letters can be sent to his daughter, Earlyne Mercer, at his current address

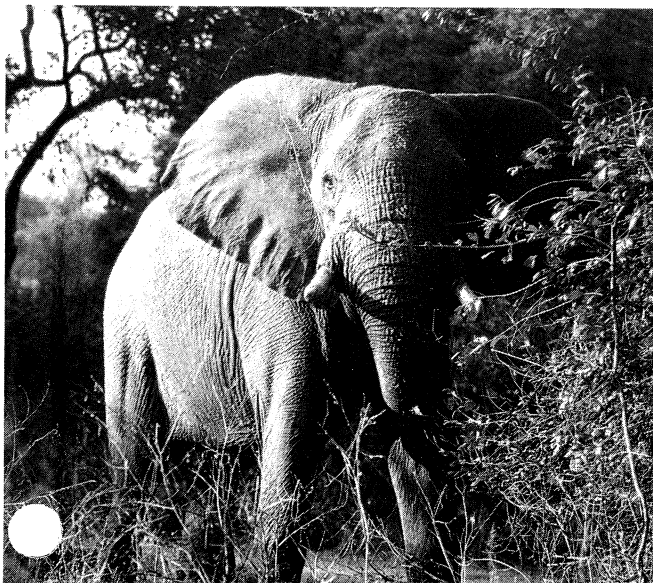
Lucille Donahue (Ben's wife) spent a few days in the hospital and is now recovering nicely with some help from Ben.

Pantanella Tour??

So you missed the last trip to Pantanella? Better not wait too long and miss another opportunity. Marcel Snyder and Ralph Hendrickson are planning a tour for sometime in May of 1998. The proposed itinerary includes Venice, Florence, Pisa, Pantanella, Naples, the Isle of Capri, Pompeii, the battlefields around Monte Cassino, Anzio Beachhead area, and Rome.

Are you interested, contact either Marcel Snyder, 2339 Westminster Terrace, Oviedo, FL 32765, Phone 407 365-7938, or Ralph Hendrickson, 1713 Independence Ave., Melbourne, FL 32940. Phone 407 255-4932.

As soon as details are available, either Marcel or Ralph will send them to you. Don't let this opportunity slip by.



An elephant looking us over. We saw hundreds of elephants, many times 10 or 15 in herds.

Bits & Pieces

On July 31 I called **Lt. Gen. Elmer Rogers** to say hello and see how he was. He answered the phone and we had a nice conversation. I mentioned the 465th was going to have a reunion at Wright-Patterson in Dayton and he was pleased to hear about it. He asked to have his greetings sent to his comrades of WWII. Gen. Rogers is now a young 94. Ed.

An article in the Wall Street Journal, "While Twentymile's coal reserve remains rich, the Homestake Gold Mine in Lead, S.D., has seen ore quality sink. The underground mine, discovered in 1876, was losing money fast in the early 1990s, and its parent, Homestake Mining Co. of San Francisco, was questioning its economic viability. The mine has since turned profitable again, in part because the company installed a computer system that allows one operator to control ventilation, pumping, fire detection, and seismic monitoring - critical functions that let miners more safely exploit otherwise dangerous areas. "It helped to make the mine cost effective again," says **Steve Orr**, Homestake's vice president of U.S. operations.

Steve Orr is the son of Dave Orr. Like father like son, Dave was in the mining business after serving as Engineering Chief at Pantanella. Ed.

Editors Corner

I'm running out of articles so I'll tell you about my vacation.

An Adventure in Africa

I finally went on the African Safari I had planned. It was planned for last year, but a trip to the hospital got in the way.

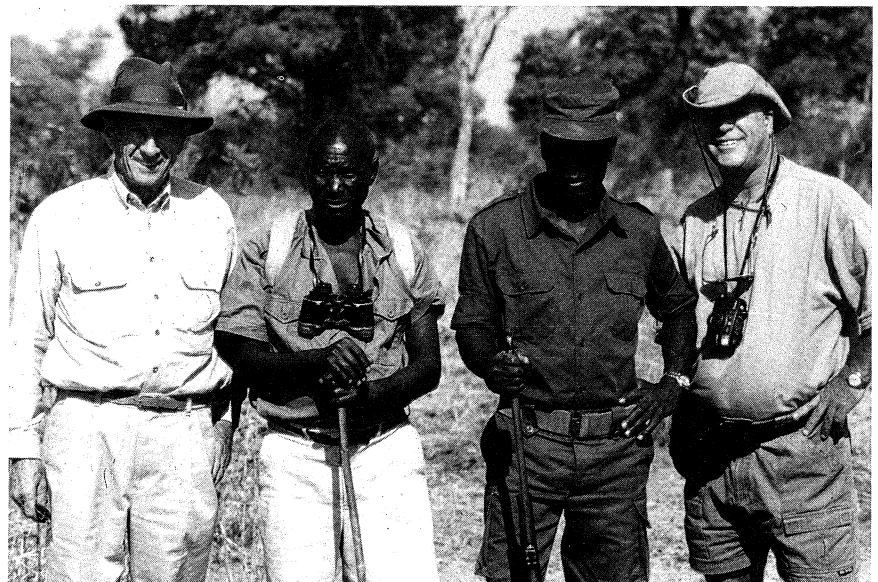
My son-in-law, Richard Smith, accompanied me on the trip. We spent two weeks in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana. Previously I went on three Safaris with Agnes and friends.

This safari was different than my previous ones. I had seen most of the normal wild game areas, but never seen the Okavango Delta. It so happens that a couple from South Africa live near me and arrange safaris. They specialize in the Okavango Delta and Zambezi river area. A great part of this safari is using a private plane (Piper Navajo) to fly between camps and a limit of 8 people to a camp. Our group was a total of 7.

Once in the camp we hiked on the animal trails in the "bush" most of the time to view the wild animals and birds. You can get much closer that way. We got to see the big ones eye to eye; elephant, giraffe, zebra, hippos, impala, cheetah, lion, waterbuck, etc. etc.

We also had some open Land Rover drives and some night drives with spot lights to see some of the nocturnal animals.

We did our shooting with cameras and returned with many photos and a lot of memories.



A pause in "the bush". L to R myself, our guide, the gun bearer and Rich Smith, my son-in-law.



The photos on the left were taken by Lewis Perkins of the 464th Bomb Group. The plane is a 465th plane which just returned from a mission. A crew members survived.

I talked to Lewis Perkins who was Flight Officer that day and was in his jeep near the runway when it occurred. All four engines were going, but the plane got out of control and crashed. The date was sometime in January or not later than February 14, 1945. He said the crash crew did a great job of getting everyone out of the plane.

OK, who can identify the plane?

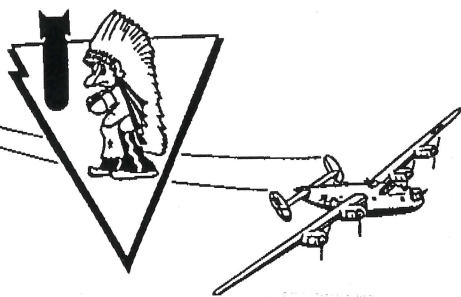


NOTICE

O J has a corrected
E Mail address -
OJCOWARTJR@aol.com

New E Mail addresses
should be sent to OJ.

781 St BOMB SQUADRON ASSOC
2 Mt. Vernon Lane, Atherton, CA 94027



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