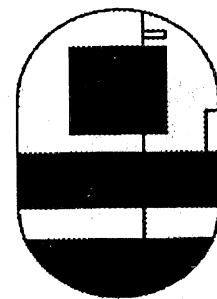




# PANTANELLA NEWS



OCTOBER 1999

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NUMBER 58



Francis M. Maccani Crew, L to R:

Rear:— John T. Russell, Bombardier; Eugene G. Martis, Radar Navigator; Raymond E. Dale, Co-Pilot; Francis M. Maccani, Pilot.

Front: — Don Myers, Top Gunner; Dennis A. Daniels, Jr., Nose Gunner; John C. Header, R/O; Herbert O. Graves, Engineer; Harry J. Barrett, Ball Gunner; Norman G. Stenersen, Tail Gunner.

*This is Part I of two parts of the Pantanella Diary of John C. Header, Radio Operator on the Francis M. Maccani Crew. The second part will be printed in a later issue of the Newsletter.*

Sept. 22, 1944  
Sept 24, 1944  
Sept 26, 1944  
Sept 27, 1944  
Oct 4, 1944  
Oct 11, 1944

Left Topeka, Kansas with new B-24 for P.O.E. on East coast.  
Left Grenier Field, New Hampshire for our first leg of flight to Italy.  
Left for Gander, Newfoundland for the Azores Islands in mid-Atlantic.  
Left the Azores Islands for Africa.  
Left Marrakech, French Morocco.  
Left Tunis, Africa for Italy.

**Mission No. 1 - Oct 21, 1944.** Arose up in the cold bleak morning at 3 A.M. Got to the briefing at 4 A.M. Target was Munich marshalling yards. Flew as radio operator with Lt. W. J. Smith crew with my pilot, Francis Maccani, as co-pilot. Took off at 7:10 A.M. Headed straight up the Adriatic for Northern Italy. On the way up two airplanes in our Group came together. They went out of control and created a sickening sight as they went crazily into the sea. No chutes opened. Over the Alps—which were beautiful with snow capped peaks and tiny villages within the mountain ranges. As we came off the Alps I donned my flak suit and strained my eyes for German fighters which we anticipated. As we flew further the cloud cover increased and we decided to hit a railroad yard near the small city of

Erding, Germany. We dropped our 500 lb bombs with no flak. The hits were not observed and headed home the way we came. A soft mission. My first landing, hoping they all will be that way.

**Mission No. 2 - October 24.** Briefed at 5 A.M. and was flying as radio operator and left waist gunner for Capt Blankenship's crew. I was the only man on my crew to fly today. Target is Vienna, Austria, Florisdorf oil refinery. Flew up the Adriatic and over the Yugo coast.. Went thru 2 or 3 small flak areas until Vienna was in sight in the distance, but up above it was a flak barrage that looked like storm clouds. We avoided Vienna, I don't know why, but I think because of low thick clouds over the target. They rallied and decided to hit the Graz, Austria railroad yards. We went over 23,000 ft, then through heavy and accurate flak and dropped our 8, 500 lb. bombs. Graz smoking and burning. Five or six direct hits on yards and many hits and buildings on fire through the city. A factory near the yards were demolished. Sweated out the return. Quickly running out of gas. Approaching the runway number 3 engine ran out of gas. Landed on 3 engines and number 2 engine ran out of gas as we taxied. Cold sweat hit me. Flak wasn't our only opponent.

and started to heave out chaff to throw off the Krauts radar guns which fired at us heavily and accurate. You could hear it pop like shot guns. Sweet ol' flak alley. We were in it for 4 or 5 minutes.

As we came off the target no. 4 engine was hit and caught fire and we couldn't feather it. We were afraid she might take the wing off as it was going 3200 RPM, normal is 2500. She stopped and we lost speed and straggled out of formation. We spotted 4 ME 109s, but those sweet P-51s were chasing them. One P-51, I think one of the boys from the colored squadron, was doing a sweet job of escort for us. I could kiss that boy for that. He helped us into the Yugo coast. We sweated out the whole thing and Mac decided to head for the Yugo Island of Vis. Martis, our Navigator, done a sweet job and we hit Vis right on the head. We sweated out the landing and Mac made a beautiful landing on a 2,000 ft runway! We got out and I kissed the ground and thanked the Old Man for bringing me down safely. We stayed at Vis overnight and met a few Yugo's and they are fine people with self respect.

**Mission No. 4 - Nov 17.** Briefed at 5 AM for Munich, Germany. Took off at 7:50 AM. Full crew with Maccani and company. Headed up the Adriatic. Never saw so may B-24s in all my life. Hit Italy right at Venice where we encountered slight flak and saw about 20 Me 109s and Fw-190s which didn't attack us and flew the other way as fast as they could go. When we got up over the Alps I saw 4 Ma-202s, Italian

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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 (1944-1945). 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.

fighters off in the distance which were going the opposite way. My gun was ready and I was ready to use it although not anxiously.

As we came off the IP and into the target at 25,000 feet and 45 below zero we expected flak. It didn't come until all at once it seemed the world let loose. I never saw so much or was so scared in all my life. Flak thick and heavy every where. A liberator on our left got a direct hit in No. 3 engine and exploded in mid-air. No chutes. A sickening sight as it plunged earthward out of control and on fire. We were in it it seemed for hours yet only 8 minutes. We finally got through with all engines going miraculously. How we got through is an act of God. I prayed on that one. We got back OK and had some satisfaction in knowing that the navigator and bombardier said we dropped on the target, although it was cloud covered. The ship had 3 flak holes. One missed the navigator by 2 feet. Everybody safe and ship OK. This must be total war!

**Mission No. 5 - Nov 18.** Briefed about 5AM for airfields and fighter strips in No. Italy near Udine. It was more or less a milk run. Flak was scant to moderate although they had our range. We carried 180 fragmentation and anti-personnel bombs and dropped them on a fighter strip. I took pictures of smoking airfields, etc. Mission very successful. Wish they all would be like that. Later reconnaissance planes took pictures and they say we destroyed 33 aircraft on the fields.

**Mission No. 6 - Dec. 6.** Briefed at 5 AM. for Bratislava Czechoslovakia just inside the border of Yugoslavia in direct support of the Russians on Lake Balaton. Target a marshalling yard loaded with 600 cars bound for the Germans on the Russian front. While taxiing out to takeoff a ship from our group collapsed when it's nose wheel gave out. It skidded and burst into flame. Everyone killed



**John C. Header**

and wreckage scattered over about 5 acres. Only one victim had his body identified as a complete unit.

Going up we ran into bad weather. Half of our group was to hit at the North end and we were to hit the south end of the yard. The north end of the group dropped their bombs effectively and successfully. Our mission ten minutes after we came off the target 22 Me 109s attacked us.

They hit two stragglers which they got, but the B-24 got two of the 109s. Only one chute opened from the two Liberators.

The fighters rallied and made another attack on our left wing at another ship. I got one in my sights and fired 100 or more shells into it and he crashed and burned. Boy, I felt good! They then decided to attack us with 7 of their fighters. We gave them a hail of lead and tracers. One Me109 started to smoke after the tail gunner hit it. I know he never got back. A probable and a damage. I spent all my ammunition but they ran away. So I was lucky in that respect as if they had attacked my gun would have been empty. God was surely with us. Our group shot down 5 fighters and 2 probables. We got back safe and sound about 3 o'clock. Thankful and tired.

**Mission No. 7 - Dec. 11.** Briefed at 5:15 AM for the South Ordinance Depot at Vienna, Austria. This depot is a storage place for guns, vehicles and general war stuff ready to be shipped to the Russian front. Perfect hits will greatly impede the German Army. They told us there would be many heavy guns to defend it and flak will be heavy and accurate. A rough target and we knew it. There wasn't a guy who wasn't scared stiff as we climbed into the Lib and taxied out with 2 1/2 tons of incendiary

bombs.

On the way up it was perfect weather. We headed out over the emergency landing strip of Vis where we once before made an emergency landing after being shot up from a previous raid to Vienna. Our escort of P-38s and P-51s were all over the sky. Boy, it sure looked good after what we went thru on the last mission. About 150 miles from Vienna the pilot, Maccani, called back and said, "the weather over the target is clear, men." We shuddered as we knew the flak would be terrible since they could see us on our bomb run.

Soon ahead there was Vienna smoking from previous hits by earlier groups. A terrific wall of anti-aircraft shells exploding over the city at just our altitude.

and then down into a slow spin. Two more from our group went down in flames just after bombs away. From none to 8 chutes were seen to open from the 3 planes. Only God knows what happened to them.

Coming off the target after being in that barrage for 6 and 1/2 minutes. I looked back at the area of the depot. It looked like a large forest fire with smoke hundreds of feet high. We obliterated the target which burned for two days. On our way home we got perfect escort by our fighters and we landed at 3:30 after over 8 hours in the air. Another mission behind me and a very successful one.

**Mission No. 8 - Dec. 16.**  
Briefed at 6:15 AM for the

knowing how hard pressed the Germans are for oil we knew what the flak would be like. Also, each Liberator would have a new radar jammer on which should counteract the radar guns of the ack ack outfits below. The jammer would be turned on at 15 minutes before the target and 5 minutes after we came off the target.

We were scheduled to fly with Fifield and Bassler. The latter on his last mission. Before take off our engineer became very sick and was replaced with another. Took off at 8:30 and settled down for the long haul. Went up Yugo coast and up over the Alps. Soon over Germany itself and I put a vigilant outlook for fighters which never came.

Soon there was Brux with a solid wall of flak up over the clouds which completely covered Brux and the refinery itself. Our jammers were on and as we came nearer we lost oil pressure in No. 2 engine and feathered it while salving our bombs to keep up with the formation as we came over the target the flak was not there. We cleared the entire area and saw smoke from the hits below us rise into and over the cloud at least 10,000 feet. We must have hit something.

Struggling to stay in formation we soon got behind from loss of power but had 8 P-38s escort us to the Alps. Our gas began to get very low and we worried about making it. As our gas almost ran out we sighted land and a B-17 base. We made an emergency landing there about 70 miles from home. Had supper at this base and got a truck to take us home where we



Over the Alps

We turned into the city on 63 degrees heading and headed straight for the ordnance depot which was full of flame and smoke. Yellow "O" of the 781st squadron was hit by a direct flak hit and went straight in the air

Synthetic Oil plant at Brux way up in Central Germany. A long, long haul and a very, very rough target. This is the source of half of all Germany's oil within range of the 15th Air Force.



arrived about midnight. Glad to see home and the sack felt good.

**Mission No. 9 - Jan 10, 1945.** Briefed for Vienna Marshalling Yards but weather looked bad. Took off in solid weather and made rendezvous with formation in dangerous flying conditions. Flew up the Adriatic into Yugo and northern Italy, but weather was too bad so we returned to base.

**Mission No. 10 - Feb. 8, 1945.** Almost the same as Mission 8. Returned after flying all over Northern Italy trying to get over the Alps. One place they fired a few bursts at us. The weather was too bad to go on so we returned to base.

**Mission No. 11 - Feb. 8, 1945.** Briefed for Vienna and took off. Had engine trouble all the way up to within a half hour of the target where the pilot decided to return because of the engine trouble.

**Mission No. 12 - Feb. 13, 1945.** The 13th and unlucky. Briefed for Vienna Marshalling Yards. Took off in

bad weather which got better and clearer and perfect weather at target. They threw everything up at us they had. We really flew thru it. One very close burst close to the plane knocked out the window in the co-pilot's side of the cockpit. He was lucky. We hit locomotive repair shops and blasted it to hell. The ship wasn't shot up too bad and we got home OK.

**Mission NO. 13 - Feb.15, 1945** Briefed for Weiner Neustadt in Austria to attack the Marshaling yards. The trip was nice all the way. We threw out enough chaff and used our radar equipment to throw their guns off and they never fired a shot because they didn't know where we were as the city was obscured by clouds and we dropped our bombs by instruments.

**Mission No.14 - Feb. 16, 1945.** Briefed for Pala in North Italy. The enemy has a lot of submarine pens there. I flew with another crew. It was a brand new one and I was a little scared as I didn't think I could trust them. We went up without

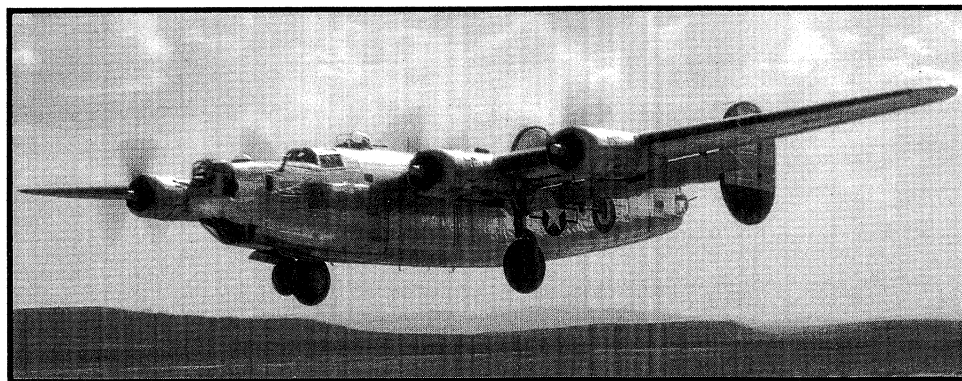
trouble and dropped our bombs all over the place. The flak was only moderate but very accurate. We got home without trouble.

**Mission No.15 - Feb 20, 1945.** Briefed for Trieste, Italy. Docks and warehouses, etc. We got up OK, but just before the target lost no. 4 engine. All the oil had drained out. The No. 2 wasn't operating OK, so we fell out of formation losing altitude and made a bomb run alone. We dropped our bombs on a set of factory buildings. I was flying with a new crew and the navigator didn't know the way home. I had to get bearings all the way. We got back OK on 3 engines. The flak at the target was light and accurate. One small piece of flack struck me on the eye brow. The place was really burning and making smoke from the previous hits. Many docks and ships were hit in the harbor. And a lot of damage was done.

*Missions 16 through 30 will be covered in a future PANTANELLA NEWS.*

## OUR AIRPLANES

The next two pages contain updated information about the B-24s assigned to the 781st Bomb Squadron. The first listing of these was in NEWSLETTER #26. Please review this list carefully and let us know of any errors or additions you may find.



PLANE #	LET-TER	PLANE NAME	PILOT	COMMENTS
FERTILE TURTLE				
		PLANES RET'D TO US PER LEO LUTGRING	A B C D E F G I J M N O P Q R U V W Y	PER LEO LUTGRING
3632	V			SHOWN IN HISTORY BOOK. MANY CREWS HAD PHOTO IN FRONT OF THIS PLANE
41-28756	??	MAD CAP MARGIE	BRANCH, RAE	• TRANS'D TO 450 BG, 721 BS AT OUDNA. • WENT DOWN OVER WEINER NEUSTADT 29 MAY 1944. (B)
41-28853	BLUE I	783RD PLANE	??	• COL. LOKKER PILOT WITH MIXED CREW. • DOWN 20 NOV 1944 - 783RD PLANE
41-28857	Q	??	??	• CRASHED ON RUNWAY AT PANTANELLA PER LUTGRING. 12-14-44 SNBD (B) (MEL BLYE FLEW ON FLIGHT)
41-28904	P	??	??	• CRASHED IN GERMANY 16 AUG 1944 DUE TO FLAK • JOCKO ROBERTS BAILED OUT OVER SWITZERLAND AFTER HEADING PLANE BACK OVER GERMANY
41-28915	N	LONG JOHN SILVER	BRANCH, RAE	• SHOT DOWN 30 JUN 1944 NEAR KAPROVNICA, HUNGARY - ATTACKED BY FIGHTERS. • CAUBLE DOWN WITH DICKEY CREW. GROUND CREW GEORGE SOROKA. (B)
41-28959	M *	GUARDIAN ANGEL (2)	HURD, RAY	• RETURNED TO THE U.S.A. BY GORDON ELLISON. • FLEW 50 MISSIONS (B) #2. #1 WAS TRANSFERRED IN AFRICA??
41-29356		CUSTER'S FOLLY		
41-29356	G	CUSTER'S FOLLY	SCHUSTER, PHILLIP	• SHOT DOWN 30 MAY 1944 OVER NEUDORF, AUSTRIA, PILOT LT PRINCE. • LT. PRINCE AND LT. CANYOCK KILLED, REST SURVIVED. MACR 5438 (B)
41-29357	O	PLEASURE BENT	ROBERTS, LEWIS	• CRASHED ON RUNWAY. THEN REPAIRED, STRIPPED AND RETURNED TO US BY JOHN KENNEDY (B) CREW CHIEF COATS, RICH SHAFFER ALLEGRETTI. OD COLOR. CHOPPED UP AT HUNTER FIELD.
41-29376	W	GUARDIAN ANGEL (1)		TRANSFERRED TO 460 B G (B). SHOT DOWN BY FLAK OVER TOULON APRIL 29, 1944 PILOT MAJ WM ORRIS, 450TH BG. PER EDWARD MOODY, SON OF CREWMEMBER IN LETTER TO PIERRE KENNEDY.
41-29376	??	JEO-GIA WOLF	ATHON, JOE	FLOWN TO AFRICA BY ATHON - TRANSFERRED TO 460TH WHILE IN AFRICA.
41-29414	E	CHIEF JO JON	MC KENNA III, CHARLES	• CLODFELTER TO BLECHHAMMER 18 DEC 1944, LOST TWO ENGINES ON RIGHT SIDE - DOWN NEAR DUNAFOLDVAR, LAKE BALATON IN RUSSIAN CONTROL AREA. CREW RETURNED VIA SOVIETS. EARL VIANDS, CREW CHIEF, WALTER GATES, GLEN KING, ARNOLD HEIMAN. (B)
41-29415	H	CRESCENT OF THE HALF MOON	TIPTON, DALE	• TIPTON CREW TO VIENNA. SHOT DOWN BY GERMAN FIGHTERS 16 JUL 1944 NEAR ZAGREB (LA TOUR DU AIGUES), HUNGARY. (B) CREW POW
42-50421	O	NOT NAMED	O'BRIEN	LOST IN COMBAT PER LUTRING. CRASHED 7-27-44 (B). WEST OF PANTANELLA BY O'BRIEN. WIGGINS SAYS JULY 19, 1944. CRASH SITE PHOTO DATE JULY 19
42-50723	G	OUR BABY	??	ORIGINAL PLANE RETURNED TO US (B). FROM 489 BG
42-51254	J	ANGEL OF THE SKY	SMITH, R. J.	• WARREN CARDEN CREW CHIEF. ORIG 12 TO FLY OVER. RAN OFF END OF RUNWAY
42-51260	H	??	LEGGATE, GEO	• LEGGATE TO VIENNA, FLAK, CRASED NEAR EDELSTAHL 10 SEPT 1944. • MACR 8304 (B)
42-51421	O	MISSION BELLE	(780th PLANE ?	DOWN DEC 11 OVER VIENNA PER HEADER. (780TH?)
42-51492	??	??	ALTHOFF, JAMES	• TRANSFERRED TO 460 BOMB GP. 460TH CREW WAS WAITING FOR PLANE WHEN ALTHOFF LANDED AT PANTANELLA AFTER FLIGHT FROM U.S. VIA AZORES, AFRICA AND GIOIA. CRASHED INTO A HILL AT 460TH BG AT END OF WARPILLTO WAS DOLE OR DONNELLY. (B)
42-51628 *	L	LOVEY'S DOVIES	LOVEY, ALEXANDER	• SHOT DOWN 13 OCT 1944 - HIT BY FLAK OVER BLECHHAMMER. CRASHED NEAR EHRENFORST • LOVEY & MORSE KILLED ON MISSION. MACR 9059 (B) ORIG OF PLANE FROM 451ST.
42-51629	??	??	SMITH, WILLIAM J.	• FLOWN TO GIOIA, ITALY, THEN TRANSFERRED TO 376 GROUP. (B)
42-51631 *	D	FLAMIN' MAMIE	FRAZIER, JACK	• WENT DOWN NEAR ESTERNBERG OR TRAUN, GERMANY, 16 DEC 1944. • ENGINE TROUBLE. • PILOT MICHAEL BLAKITA WITH PITTS CREW-ALL SURVIVED BAIL OUT. MACR 10763 (B). ADOLPH RINDALL, CREW CHIEF, WITH HOWARD HOPKINS, RALPH MAGUIRE AND ROBERT E. LEWIS.
42-51664	??	??	ZALK, ARTHUR	• TRANSFERED TO 489 OR 454 BG AT GIOIA 29 AUG 1944. RETURNED TO US (B)
42-51714	??	??	DAHL, CARL	• LEFT AT GIOIA 28 AUG 1944. TRANS. TO 459 BG (B)
42-51858	??	DRAGONASS	ZALK, ARTHUR "ACK ACK"	
42-51894 *	??	PRINCESS PAT	HENDRICKSON, RALPH	RETURNED TO US
42-52054	??	??	CLODFELTER, DONALD	• FLOWN TO PANATANELLA BY DONALD CLODFELTER 19 SEP 1944. • TRANSFERRED TO 451ST BG.
42-52321 *	F	JEO-GIA WOLF	ATHON, JOE	• BECAME WAR WEARY, STRIPPED AND USED AS SQD. TRANSPORT. • FLOWN BACK TO U.S.A. EX 464 BG PLANE
42-52365	??	ANGEL OF THE SKY	SMITH, JOSEPH	LATER TRANSFERRED TO 460 BG (B)

\* ORIGINAL PLANES

PLANE #	LET-TER	PLANE NAME	PILOT	COMMENTS
42-52449	E	PATCHES	ASHLEY, GEORGE	• SHOT DOWN 6 JUN 1944 BY ME 109'S NEAR PLOESTI. • LT MARTIN, PILOT. • NAMED PATCHES FOR ALL THE REPAIRS TO COVER FLAK HOLES. (B) ORIGINALLY FROM 464 BG.
42-52470	B	SUPER NATURAL	DICKEY, JOHN	CRASHED 2-16-45 NEAR FLORENCE (RIMINI). NEWMAN CREW BAILED OUT, ENGINES OUT ETC. CREW RETURNED SAFE. CHARLES KRAMER CREW CHIEF, MILTON STORECAMP, VANCE HUTSELL, AND JAMES O'NEAL ON CREW.(B)
42-52494	F		RED F ?	• DOWNED BY FLAK OVER BLECHHAMMER 17 DEC 1944. (OUT OF FUEL) • LT ALFRED MULLAN & CREW SURVIVED BAIL OUT NEAR MAKO, LAKE BALATON, HUNGARY. CREW RETURNED VIA SOVIETS. (B) EX 464 BG PLANE
42-52503 *	D	BELLE RINGER	CAUBLE, RAYMOND	• WENT DOWN IN ADRIATIC AFTER RUNNING OUT OF GAS ON MISSION TO LINZ, AUSTRIA, FEB 25. • PILOT ROBERT JONES ON SECOND MISSION. • ENTIRE CREW OF 9 LOST. MACR 12065. M/SGT CHARLES KREMER CREW CHIEF (B)
42-52505	K	HELLS BELL I	VAN SLYKE, JACK	• DOWN 6 JUN 1944 FROM FLAK, PILOT MC FARLANE OVER PLOESTI. CRASHED NEAR CAJNICE • PER ADAMS RESEARCH (B) COATS CREW CHIEF
42-52521	I	PAPER DOLL	STENERSEN, CHARLES	STENERSEN FROM MC COOK TO PANTANELLA. RETURNED TO US AFTER WAR. CREW CHIEF DONALD SHAW, CREW ALBERT HONTHAS, DANIEL HERNANDEZ AND JOHN RIGGS. MIA 5-31-44 (MAYBE 42-52543).
42-52533	??	NO LOVE NO NOTHIN'	CAUBLE, RAY	SHOT DOWN NEAR ZAGREB WITH LT GEMMATO OF 782ND (B)
42-52558	D (OR L)	SACAJAWEA	SHETTERLY, ROBERT	LOST 5-31-44. GROUND CREW CHARLES FERICH.(B) (SACAJAWEA #1) BELIVED TO BE ORIG "D"
42-52762	T	THE SCORPIO	FRENCH, ROBERT	• WENT DOWN FROM FLACK NEAR AMSTETEN 2 MAR 45 AFTER HITTING LINZ AUSTRIA. • PILOT LT ROBERT FRENCH; CREW SURVIVED (B)
42-78218	D			SHETTERLY CRASHED 6-6-44 OR CRASHED 7-30-44 ??
42-78352	N	EASY MAID	CRUTCHER, RICHARD	• DOWNED BY FLAK OVER BLECHHAMMER 13 OCT 1944. CRASHED NEAR TARKOW • LT.GAINES, PILOT (B)
42-78401 *	R	??	??	LUTRING LIST. SALVAGE 3-21-45 (B)
44-41017			782ND PLANE	WENT DOWN AUG 3, 1944. FRIEDERICHSHAFEN. LT. POOLE, PILOT, KIA
44-41064	?	V GRAND		FIRST MISSION FLOWN WITH 781ST. ASSIGNED TO 780TH.
44-41106	BLUE N	783RD PLANE	??	• WENT DOWN FROM FLAK 19 DEC 1944 NR KERZYTILY • LT JAMES GRIFFITH PILOT. HAD BOMBED MARIBOR, YUGOSLAVIA (B)
44-41122*	C	HOT MATHILDA	BLAKITA, MICHAEL	• FLOWN TO PANTANELLA BY BLAKITA. GIVEN TO VAN SLYKE WHO FINISHED HIS MISSION IN THIS PLANE. REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN FLOWN BACK TO THE U.S.A. ABOUD/LEINART/ AND 2 PASSENGERS.
44-48861	Y	RED Y?	SMITH, W. J.	• DOWN AFTER HITTING MOOSEBIERBAUM, AUSTRIA 1 MAR 1945. • DOWN WITH WILLIAM J. SMITH, PILOT; CREW SURVIVED CRASH LANDING IN RUSSIAN OCCUPIED TERR. NEAR PECS(B)
44-48893	N	??	??	LUTRING LIST. ORIGINAL THAT CAME OVER. SALVAGE 8-10-45 (B)
44-49084	U	??	??	ORIGINAL PLANE. MIA 1-31-45. MACR 11809 - CAPT LILES, 780 BS WAS PILOT. MECH FAILURE (B)
44-49085	WHITE U	782ND PLANE ( Y?)	MARTZ, ROBERT	• SHOT DOWN BY FLAK OVER NOVE ZAMKY, HUNGARY 14 MAR 1945. • LT. MARTZ, PILOT; 11 OF 12 CREW KILLED. (B)
44-49380	J	SKIN WAGON		HAVE PHOTO WITH SQUADRON - NO TAIL MARKINGS EXCEPT NUMBER. NEW PLANE LATE IN WAR. RETURNED TO US PER MC GEE.
44-49512	U			ON PAGE 32 IN HISTORY BOOK. OR IS THAT WHITE U?
44-49566	WHITE X	782ND PLANE	??	• SHOT DOWN BY FLAK NEAR VIENNA 22 MAR 1945. • RICHARDSON (782ND) WITH COL HAMILTON (GP CO)
44-79877	??	??	CLODFELTER, DONALD	• FLOWN BACK U.S.A. • MAY NOT HAVE BEEN 781ST PLANE
X	A			JOHN T. PATRICK CREW CHIEF
X	??	FERTILE TURTLE	??	??
X	Y	NITE MARE	ALTHOFF, JAMES C.	• RETURNED TO U.S.A. BY ALTHOFF AND LEFT AT HUNTER FIELD, GA 15 JUN 1945. • WAS PAINTED OLIVE DRAB AND USED FOR LEAD RADAR PLANE AND NIGHT HARRASMENT MISSIONS. FIRST RADAR PLANE IN THE SQUADRON. PAGE 32 OF HISTORY BOOK.
X	??	WHAT'S UP DOC	BILGER	REPORTED BY FRANK PITEO
X		THE SILVER BUCK	PICTURED WITH LEGGATE CREW/	
X	?	FLYING BOX CAR	TRYON	
X	??		VAN SLYKE, JACK	B-24G, NO. AMERICAN, DALLAS. HAD RED STRIP AROUND FRONT OF COCKPIT AREA. NAME NOT PAINTED ON.
52543? 427				mia 5-31-44 COULD THIS BE PAPER DOLL?

\* ORIGINAL PLANES

## Yugoslavia

*By Jim Althoff*

In a previous newsletter I indicated I would have a report on the Ustachi and Yugoslavia. I didn't know what I was in for. I have had to learn some of the Balkan history.

In reading various intelligence reports I find there were four political parties in Yugoslavia. The four political factions were the Ustachi, Dobrevoché, Partisans and Chetniks. We know that there are primarily Serbs and Croations in this area and there are strong political differences between them. There are also religious differences (Christian and Moslem). Then, over the years there have been boundary changes with Hungary, etc. that further created political problems.

The Ustachi were mostly Croations and were sponsored by the Italian Fascists who were located primarily in the Northern area of Yugoslavia. They committed the worst atrocities and often tortured their victims to horrify those watching. Recently Ben Donahue and I were together and Ben commented on the saying going around at Pantanella, "Swing and sway the Ustachi way." That had reference to the way Ustachi used to hang some of the men - with a meat hook under the chin. A gory reference, but later in the war some of the atrocities filtered back and some were making a joke of it, it was a way to shrug off our fears. The Ustachi were also known to pay bounty to their soldiers for dog tags. Their religion was mostly Catholic.

The Dobrevoché were Serbian and were sponsored by the

Germans and were in the area bordering Albania. They were mostly Serbs and Orthodox.

The Partisans were mostly Serbs and led by Tito (who was Croation). They were considered communists. Tito was supplied and backed by the United States, and had some ties to England.

The fourth faction were the Chetniks, led by Gen. Mihailovich, a Serbian. They were also known as Royalist. Mihailovich had been in the Yugoslavian Army.

So how did an American airman fare after a bail-out over this territory? Which faction gave him the best chance of survival? The air crews were briefed on which faction was most friendly and gave them the most chance for survival. The areas over which to bail out were defined on maps given the navigators.

If you remember in some of the stories in previous newsletters, the crews would refer to bailing out when they were over Partisan area. Our best bet were the Partisans (Tito). Mihailovich (Chetniks) was questionable, but when U. S. airmen were identified they usually had a good chance to survive. The Ustaschi were avoided if possible, however, later in the war some received safe treatment from them.

A group of American airmen who were helped by Mihailovich are trying to get an approval for a monument for him on Federal Land. But it does not look favorable for the Serbian guerilla leader who once graced the cover of Time magazine. To others, including Croation-Americans, he's a villain who collaborated with the Nazis, slaughtered untold num-

bers of Croations and Moslems, and thus deserves nothing short of infamy. During WWII a British Officer reported back to Churchill to back Tito and not Mihailovich. He said Tito was killing more Germans than Mihailovich who had made pacts with the Nazis. During this period Tito was also killing Mihailovich's troops.

If you remember history, towards the end of the war, Mihailovich was put on trial in Belgrade by Tito on treason charges, from which U.S. fliers were barred as witnesses, and Mihailovich was found guilty and executed after the trial and that virtually ended the Chetniks.

Richard Felman, a retired Air Force major is waging a lonely battle for a memorial for Mihailovich. Felman estimates 500 U. S. fliers were rescued by Mihailovich.

Yugoslavia is the size of Wyoming and the biggest nation in southeastern Europe. In reality it is the home to two alphabets, three major religions, three main languages, and "23 million contentious people."

I discussed the Yugoslavian situation with Al Honey, a member of the 783rd Bomb Squadron in 1988 before he passed away. Al became very familiar with the political situation in the Balkan area after serving with the occupation after WWII. He had a number of the Ustachi and others working for him in Germany. Al's wife also spoke Yugoslavian fluently as well as German. In 1988 Al wrote me the following letter. "A tree was planted honoring Mihailovich on Dec. 7, 1988 on the grounds of the National Cemetery on the Presidio of San



Francisco. The word Chetnik was commonly used and still is by many to designate the forces of Gen. Mihailovich, but he himself preferred to call his forces by their correct title which was "The Yugoslav Army in the Homeland." Mihailovich had an army of sorts being built up in England, but it was never put to any serious use that I know of. Mihailovich was deputy commander of all Yugoslav forces. He was also minister of war in King Peter's government.

"Sometime in 1943 a decision was made, primarily by Winston Churchill, who was under great pressure from the Soviet Government to back the forces of Marshall Tito, even though he was a known communist of long standing. The reasons stated were that Tito was killing more Germans. Not a true statement at that time. Churchill was further influenced by false reports from British Intelligence that strongly backed Tito and accused Mihailovich of collaboration with the Germans. Those reports were the work mainly of three men in very high positions in British Intelligence. They were; Kim Philby, Guy Burgess and McClean who all eventually defected to Russia and died there. During the war, however, they effectively carried out the orders they received from Moscow and Mihailovich was abandoned by the U.S. and the British and a country was lost to communism that didn't want it. All the accusations put forward by the communists against Mihailovich have proved to be wrong."

"In 1948 President Truman secretly signed a citation awarding Gen Mihailovich the "Legion of Merit" in the degree of Chief Commander. No other re-

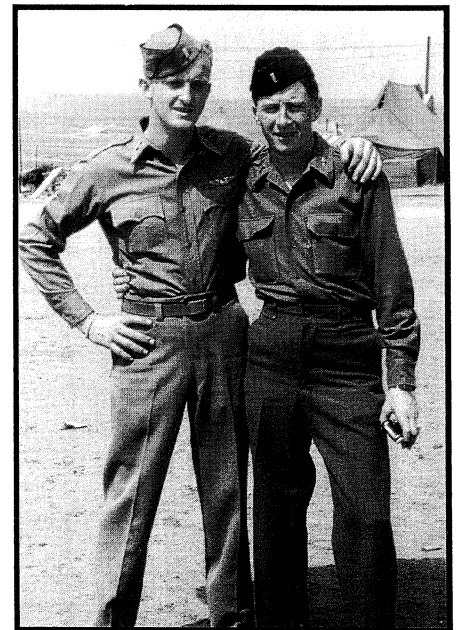
sistance leader of WWII was so honored."

The Ustashi were uniformed Fascist Militia in the service of the Italian supported puppet state of Croatia. They were worse than either the Germans or Italians. I have several intelligence reports from airmen who were interrogated after bailing out over Yugoslavia. From Capt. Clowder, 783rd, (Lt Lane) last seen at airdrome 60 mi s/s/w of Glina; has information of U.S. airmen who were killed by Ustachi. Report by nine 783rd Bomb Sqd members including Harry Bartels, "Reports of atrocities by 'whites' against partisans - slit throats." "Ustashi reported in hills about 23 miles south of airfield." Report by Homer Lane, 783rd.

The Dobrevoshe were about the same thing in German controlled Serbia. They wore the prewar Serbian (Yugoslav) uniform almost identical to that worn by those of Mihailovich's men who were lucky enough to have uniforms. The Dobrevoshe were under German control. That similarity of dress did cause a lot of confusion in identity in some instances giving rise to the canard that Mihailovich collaborated.

A word about Al Honey, a gunner on the B-24 with the 783rd Bomb Squadron. Al first went down on a disabled B-24 returning from a mission on Sept 12, 1944 when five crewman were lost at sea. Al said it was a hell of an experience - a long cold swim with winds of 35 knots after they crashed in the Adriatic Sea. On a later mission on Feb. 16, 1945 to Regensburg, Germany to bomb Obertraubling Airdrome with 216 20# frag bombs to hit the Me 262s on the

ground, Al was not as lucky. As I recall the mission the bomb run for another squadron did not go off as planned and one element was still dropping a few bombs when it was on the rally and over another element. One of the lower planes caught a frag bomb in its wing and began smoldering. Other planes, knowing the volatile situation, were screaming at the pilot to bail out. I could see the plane very clearly as I was higher and off to the right as deputy lead. After a few moments the B-24 suddenly burst on fire and the entire plane became engulfed. At altitude the colors are different making it an orange and pink flame. Only two chutes were seen coming from the plane, and then almost as fast as the fire erupted it went out and the blackened B-24 was exposed as it spiraled down and crashed. Al was one of the two men to get out, was captured by the Germans and spent the rest of the war as a POW. He said he was blown out of the bomb bay.



Bill Mullan and Jim Althoff  
near Sqdn Headquarters

## Address changes:

**Gene F, Moxley** 165 Holly Ct.  
Warrenton. MO. 63383., Phone  
1-636-456-0921.

**John Stark** 152 NVV 15TH St  
Grisham, OR 97030

**William West** 411 SE 35th St. #115  
South Beach, OR 97366.

## SICK CALL

**Fred Maute** checked in after having back surgery. He said he had a "ruff" year," but is recovering and now just looking thru his pile of mail.

## FOLDED 'WINGS

**Alfred W, Rodman**, Navigator on Branch crew, passed away June 26. Bernie Badler called in the report.

**Bertel E, Stigberg** passed away August 9, 1999. Notified by Argene Barnett, crew pilot.

**Roland Pharis**, ball gunner on Barnett crew passed away on July 26, 1999. Notified by Argene Barnett, crew pilot.

**Ronald Hill**, Radio Operator on Athon Crew, passed away June 17, 1999. Notified by his wife, Karen.

## **Jim's Corner**

### Comments Requested:

There has been a request for information on how our quarters at Pantanella got winterized for the winter cold and rain. Send in what you remember about winterizing so we all may hear about how some devised ways to keep warm and dry during the winter of 1944-45. How you acquired materials for the floor, walls and roof, and who did the work, etc.

**Francis Walborn** (Dickey Top Gunner) requests information. "Something that happened during my tour in Italy, Capt. Dickey was flying with another crew. His plane was hit and set on fire. Capt. Dickey flew the plane out of the formation and parachutes started coming out. Witnesses said the plane blew up before Dickey bailed out. We presumed he was dead. After an extended period of time, the Red Cross reported him injured and in a Budapest hospital."

*This sounds like an interesting article for the Pantanella News and I would also like to know what actually happened."*

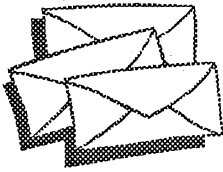
**Francis Walborn** listed his e-mail address Walbor@columbia-center.org. Contact Francis or the 781st office and we will get the story out to you. It is noted that Frank Hylla's Diary in the Pantanella News #35 and #38 cover some of the story. Can anyone else add to it?

**Reunions:** The **782nd Bomb squadron** is holding it's 15th Annual Reunion in Albuquerque, NM October 14 to 16, 1999. For further information contact Dean Ottaway, 16 pine St., Port Crane, NY 13833. 607 648-5155.

The **783rd Bomb Squadron** is holding its reunion 7 though 9 October 1999 in Kansas City, MO. Contact is Dick Rogers, 114 Ridgewood Dr., Fredericksburg, TX 78624

**Help needed!** We are trying to locate all the Pilot's Flimsies. We have been working with some other squadrons on this to get all the copies and make them available to all the squadrons. Program started by John Charlton of the 782nd squadron.

Flimsy's located so far: Mission #8, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 80, 94, 172 183, 187 190. So, you see, we only have 176 more to find.



## **MAIL CALL**

**From Charles Shoults** ((Wheeler Engineer). " I missed the reunion in Dayton. I made my first at Omaha in '92, Tucson in '94 and Montgomery, Al in '96, just 50 miles from my home in Selma. I sure plan on making the next one.

I was Leslie Wheeler's engineer. There are just four of the crew left; myself, flight engineer, Leslie Wheeler, pilot, Ron Saucy, bombardier and Ed Schriener, ball gunner.

We sure had a swell bunch of guys on the crew. I had a pretty tough time as I was the only one from the deep south. They tried to teach me not to talk so slow and get rid of my southern drawl, but they didn't have time enough to train me better.

I have a very short story about one of our missions. We got shot up real bad and had to drop out of formation and try to head back to base on our own. We tried to call for some fighter escort, but no luck. They were all busy so we hid in the clouds as much as we could and flew several different directions trying to stay in the clouds and get back to Pantanella safely. It took us a long time and I think we landed on a field and got some more fuel. Anyway, we didn't get back before the whole group had returned and they had us down as Missing-In-Action.

Another short story is about our stay in Tunisia. While

I was there I found two British motorcycles. I managed to take them with me to Pantanella for some transportation. I got them OK and got them both running and we used them to travel all around Pantanella.

Getting back to the mission, since we were reported missing they cleaned out my belongings at my tent. By the time I got back my two motorcycles were claimed by others. In the end everything worked out OK and we were all back safely.

**From Richard Burgin** (Radar Navigator). "Thank you for your response to the information you sent regarding the August 16, 1944 mission on which I had the experience of being shot down and bailing out. It was interesting and I remember it was Captain Roberts who piloted the plane. He became American Commandant in Davos, Switzerland. And I can still see that bomb bay as it filled with white smoke, the thousand pounders swinging on one hook, the propeller on fuses on the bomb spinning, the broken and dangling cat walk and the stream of gasoline pouring from a hole in the wing inside the flight deck, the several inches deep of gasoline covering the flight deck and escaping out through the bomb bay. It all happened right before my eyes from my position as mickey operator.

I am now starting my 79th year. I work a full schedule as a handyman, doing almost anything - carpentry, electrical, plumbing, repairs of all kinds and enjoying it. In 1989 I sold my paving business to an employee. I expected his payments from the operation would provide my retirement.

Since he had no capital, I accepted responsibility for operating expenses while he got his start. Well, he went broke and left me holding the bag. I became a self-employed, sole operator handyman (Wish I'd done it sooner).

I am fortunate to be able to do most anything and physically able to do it. Happiness for me is working and solving problems.

In 1978 I and a friend sailed from Cape May, NJ to Baltimore Harbor in Ireland on a 30 foot ketch. 35 days on the North Atlantic, seven storms with over 60 knots wind and 35 foot waves. One storm lasted over 72 hours - an opportunity at another form of navigation.

I've been involved with Yoga and Ta Chi for ten years and still attend classes by Chinese masters 2 to 3 times each week and attend classes in Chinese languages at Rowan University- I'm busy!

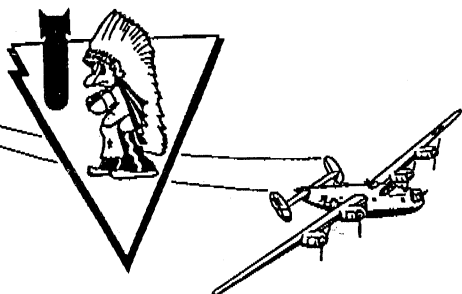
My health is good though I have had bladder cancer which was treated by experimental Chemo and apparently gone, had an overactive prostate thyroid eliminated by radioactive iodine and I am on my second pacemaker.

And I was planning to go meet some Tuskegee airmen who were having a reunion at our local county college - and I forgot the date. It was yesterday and I missed them. Just thought I'd go to meet some of those "red Tail" P-51 pilots who flew cover for us in 1944.



**ALL AMERICAN** has a new paint job and name change. It is now named **THE TIGER AND IT'S TAIL**. It is named after the last B-24 salvaged after WWII. It served in the South Pacific flying 85 combat missions. Photo taken by Philip Makanna from the Confederate Air Force AT-6. Pilot was Paul McDonald. Philip Makanna photos of Vintage WWII aircraft can be seen in the Ghosts calendars and many books that Phil has produced.

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