



THE 99th Bomb Group Historical Society



NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 4, NO. 4 July 1, 1984 Editor, George F. Coen

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER.....

What a great time we had in HOUSTON! JIM FLEX and his family really went to great lengths to make each of us welcome and entertained. Thanks JIM! LEW BOATWRIGHT'S comments on the meeting follow. This was the first reunion that Dick Dempsey went to and he said "...I was so happy that I went and enjoyed every minute of it. It was great seeing some of my friends after such a long time. I certainly hope I can make Seattle in 1985 ..." If you have been hesitating in joining with us, you too will be happy that you did. LET'S MEET IN SEATTLE IN 1985!

In reading some of our previous newsletters you know that we have a great friend and supporter in Italy. GINO KUENZLE has provided us with a lot of information on B-17 crews that had to go to Switzerland during WWII. Doris and I were in Italy in April this year and Gino was kind enough to invite us to visit with him, his family, and friends. We were in Milan and Gino arranged transportation to get us to COMO where we enjoyed one of the most memorable evenings. A terrific dinner cooked by his aunt, informal visiting with his friends, reviewing Gino's records and photographs of downed crews made this visit the best part of our trip to Europe. Gino is a young man with a great knowledge of our 15th Air Force operations out of Italy. He too thinks that the 8th AF gets undue credit and not enough for the 15th. We are sending him all of our past newsletters to give him a little of the personal touches of us and our organization. Gino, thanks for your kindness and hospitality.

Joe Kenney has given me some of his observations. "... First, wasn't that a great reunion? I am most pleased with the outcome of that fine meeting ... I took the time to not only renew all of my own very great friendships with the 99th, but I went out to seek others that I have not known. I ran across a couple of fellows who were on the ground crews and they seemed to believe that this was of the flyers, by the flyers and for the flyers and more slanted to the flying officers than anything else. I did try to point out that we do not have any thing like that in mind at all ... but we need to encourage some real substantial input from the crews that kept our planes flying. I can remember many times when we went down on the flying line to fly and those men had worked all night long getting our planes ready, repairing those that needed repair, fueling them up, loading the bombs and all the things necessary to keep us in the air. I've often thought that their plight, to remain with the group until the whole war was over, was no bed of roses either and certainly their contribution to the war was every bit as great as any of the rest of us. As far as officers and the enlisted men on the Board, it looks like six of each. Ten of us did fly our missions and the other two were ground personnel ... Hope your trip (to Miss.) was a success, give our regards to your wife -- Oh yes to Topsy Turvy too ..." Topsy is our Lhasa Apso who attended the reunion with me and she fell in love with Betty Upthegrove and visa versa. Joe is our Secretary and flew his combat missions as a radio operator.

Joe you have given our ground personnel a challenge and I hope that we get a lot of material from them. Up to the time of the Houston meeting there were two pilots on the Board -- now we have three. At Houston many of the ladies attended the general meeting -- I think that was great. This organization belongs to all of us and we need your inputs to help keep it going. I will admit that the Board must keep it going and we are doing our best. This is a labor of love -- no pay, little praise, all work so that -- we can recall our history and enjoy the fellowship of people that we served with during the dangerous years of WWII. We have a great organization going so we should all work together and enjoy.

Hank Parks, one of the original nine members of this Society, has tendered his resignation from the Board of Directors. Our thanks to Hank for his help when we were struggling to get off the ground.

Your Friend,
Bernie

REPORT ON THE 1984 REUNION OF THE 99th BG HISTORICAL SOCIETY
by V.P. Lew Boatwright

Headquarters for the fourth reunion was Nassau Bay Motor Inn, Houston, Texas, on May 4, 5, 6, 1984. Chairman and host, Jim Flex, had everything under control -- even the early arrivals on Thursday, May 3rd, were "well-oiled" when the majority of members arrived on Friday.

The Motor Inn was located across from NASA Space Center. Many members and their spouses went on a tour of the facilities there and were not disappointed. Mission Control was most impressive and fully measured up to its many TV appearances.

Another highlight of the reunion was the presence of General Upthegrove. "Yours truly" had not seen "Uppy" since completing the "famous fifty" in October 1943. Believe me, he has changed little in 40 years; a great officer and gentleman.

The annual membership meeting of the 99th BGHS was called to order by President Barr on Saturday Morning, May 5th. Generals Upthegrove and Schwanbeck and Mr. Allen Schroeder were welcomed. After receiving committee reports, the members elected Walter Butler, Art Knipp and Allen Schroeder to the Board of Directors. Walter will serve as Treasurer of the society. Earlier this year, George Coen requested that he be relieved of this duty. He wants to devote more time to historical research, new member contacts, and desert backpacking.

Joe Chance reported the 50th anniversary of the Boeing B-17 will be celebrated 25-28 July 1985 in Seattle, WA. Friday, 26 July, is scheduled for tours through the Boeing Museum by all the bomb groups. He proposed that a block of rooms for the 99th be reserved at the Hyatt Seattle-Tacoma Motor Hotel. The members approved above dates and location for the 5th reunion.

Jim Sopp proposed the 1986 reunion be held at Dayton, Ohio -- Wright/Patterson AFB. This location was approved by the necessary majority. President Barr called for all members to look forward to 1987 and come to the next annual meeting armed with ideas.

Tom Gamm reported on financial arrangements for reunions. These funds are separate from the general fund. Also he suggested that several hundred dollars be approved for a 99th Bomb Group flag. This was so moved by Gene Agnew, seconded and passed.

In accordance with the 99th BGHS bylaws, the board of directors met after the meeting was adjourned. It was moved, seconded and passed that Bernie Barr be reelected as President. Another motion continued the current officers in their present positions. The board established two new positions -- Chaplain and Historian. Harvey Jennings was appointed Chaplain and George Coen Historian to serve at the pleasure of the board.

NEWS, DUES, AND VIEWS by George
Reunions, Inc., 2208 E. Hillcrest St., Orlando Florida, 32803-4906, is
publishing a booklet of the 1984 Houston Reunion of the 99BG. Price \$10.

The 99BGHS caps are a real asset to the Group. They are available from Jack Field, 1126 Washington, Glenview IL 60025 for \$8 each while they last, with extra caps on the same order at \$6 each.

From 17th SORTIE, Newsletter of the 17th BOMB GROUP REUNION ASSOCIATION (A B-26 outfit)
"MONEY, MARBLES AND CHALK"

"Since I retired from practice, I have been going out to the Vets Hospital twice a week examining old birds who are on disability pensions. The other day this big guy -- about six three and well over two hundred pounds -- comes in for a checkup on his problem. He had bad frostbite of the legs back in 1944.

I asked him if he was caught in the Battle of the Bulge, and he says, no, he was a bombardier in a B-17. I asked him how come it is that bombardiers always are great big guys who don't fit in the nose, and he says his pilot chose him on account of he gave maximum protection from flak from the front. I reckon old John White wasn't so dumb in getting Jeff Townsend for the same reason.

Anyhow, this guy allows as how he was in a B-17 outfit flying out of Foggia and they sent his crew and twenty-four others on a night mission after some oil refinery in Czechoslovakia one night and two of them came back. I didn't ask about the refinery, him being from a B-17 outfit and all.

Well, it seems his crate took some early flak which knocked out all the glass in his greenhouse and riding around in the open air at 35,000 feet for a typical B-17 haul ended him up with frozen legs which are still a mess -- skin all indurated and brawny and swollen about like a football.

To make conversation, I mentioned that I had been a gunner on a B-26. He got a horrified look on his face and allowed as how nobody but a crazy would fly around in one of them damn things.

As he left, I casually mentioned that we never, ever got frostbite." Bill Baird

From the 483 BGA News:

"NON-PROFIT STATUS ACCORDING TO THE I.R.S."

" At long last we have been approved by the IRS as qualifying for Non-Profit Status. The following letter has been prepared by our Treasurer Louis Pellegrini CPA(840) for the general information of our membership. Lou has researched the subject extensively and has been kind enough to express his professional judgment.

TO: ALL MEMBERS

We are considered a qualified organization under Sec. 501(c)(19) of the I.R.S. Code.

Generally, you may deduct your contributions of money (Dues, fees and memorial contributions) or property that you make to or use for the use of the association. If property is given, you may deduct the fair market value of the property at the time of the contribution.

You may deduct certain amounts you pay in giving services to the Association. The Code states that 'if you are a chosen representative attending a convention of the qualified organization, you may deduct actual unreimbursed travel and transportation. You may also deduct a reasonable amount for meals and lodging while away from home overnight in connection with the convention.' 'You may not deduct personal expenses for sightseeing, fishing parties, theatre tickets or night clubs. You may not deduct travel, meals and lodging and other expenses for your spouse or children.'

If you use your automobile to attend the reunion, you may deduct the cost of gas and oil. You may not deduct any part of general repair and maintenance expenses. Instead of using the actual costs, you may use the standard rate of 9 cents per mile to figure your contribution for travel. In either case, you may deduct parking fees and tools. You may not deduct depreciation and insurance.

Because of the nature of the 483rd Association, all members are considered a 'chosen representative attending the Reunion and Meetings.' In summary, the following are deductible:

1. Dues
2. Donations for special projects such as the Memorial.
3. Registration fee and cost of the evening functions arranged by the association.
4. Hotel room.
5. Cost of air fare, car expenses, taxi, limousine, parking, tolls and tips.
6. Meals not included in 3 above.

The I.R.S. specifically states that you cannot deduct the expenses for your spouse or children."

October 27, 1983

Dear Bernie:

As an original member of the 348th Squadron and as a crew member of one of the 3 planes shot down over Gerbini on July 5, 1943, I would like to share some reminiscences and clear up a couple of questions in the September newsletter.

First of all, the questions. Eldon R. Garner of Cornwallis, Montana is listed in the "Lost Column". Lt. Garner was the co-pilot on the "Ramblin' Wreck" and was one of four crew members able to bailout on the July 5, 1943 mission over Gerbini. Others were T/Sgt. Albert Shafran, radio operator, and S/Sgt. Alden Grantham, waist gunner. Lt. Garner was just behind me on the "cat-walk" of the bomb-bay as I bailed out. He did not appear to be wounded at that time. The next time I saw him was the afternoon of the 5th in a bed next to mine in a hospital in the small city of Noto, Sicily. At that time his right leg was missing and he was unconscious. He died sometime in the early hours of July 6th without regaining consciousness. How he lost his leg, I don't know. I suspect that he was shot by Italian soldiers while trying to escape after reaching the ground. However, I am not sure of this.

The other question in the newsletter that I'd like to address concerns Sam Levine, bombardier. Our regular bombardier was ill and unable to go on the Gerbini mission. We had a substitute whose name I knew at the time, but cannot recall now. It could very well have been Lt. Levine, particularly if he was not a member of a regular crew.


Our crew members who did not survive the July 5th mission were Lt. Charles Graham, pilot, Lt. Eldon Garner, co-pilot, Lt. Paul Dobmeyer, navigator, S/Sgt Walter Edwards, tail gunner, S/Sgt. James Ciavacco, ball turret gunner, Sgt. Kenneth Lloyd, the other waist gunner and possibly Lt. Levine, bombardier.

We also had aboard a British Naval Officer, observer, whose name I Never knew. I was the top turret gunner.

Grantham and Shafran were not injured and were therefore sent to Germany, where they spent the rest of the war.

I stayed in the hospital in Noto until I was liberated by a Commando Unit from the British 8th Army. I eventually was sent back to the States and spent the rest of the war as a gunnery instructor on B-29's at McDill Field in Florida.

Please keep up the great work you are doing. Enclosed are my dues for 1984.

Very Sincerely,

 John "Pat" Finnegan
 5363 Ogan Road
 Carpinteria, CA 93013

(805)684-8045

Jan. 9, 1984

Hi George:

... On receiving the 99th Bomb Group H.S. Vol. 4 No. 1, Jan. 1, 1984 I read the article that our Gem. Upthegrove had in the Newsletter of the Secret Night Flight or Mission of July 9th, 1943.

Sgt. Norman R. West and I were also on that mission. We often talked about that mission and both of us, as I can remember never received credit for that mission.

The both of us were put on the same bomber - I recall the pilot, (but I do not recall who he was.) I thought it was Windrum at the time, but he said he never flew that night of July 9th. The pilot called me on the intercom and said "Tell the rest of the fellows to hang on, we're getting the hell out of here", and we climbed, and we then banked very sharply. I saw lots of C-47s being hit by the English Navy. I even fired the colors with the pistol - there must have been 7 or 8 C47s and the gliders in tow go down. Lots of gliders left the tow rope and landed in the sea, never made it to shore. Sgt. Norman R. West saw it all too.

All I know is I was scared spittleless; those bluish and yellow flames when the Navy opened up, and we weren't very high. I never found out the full crew on that flight. Only Sgt. West and I were at the waist of that bomber that night.

I wish I'd have paid more attention to the mission so I could tell you more; all I know is I think I'm awful lucky to be here, thinking back of some of the things I did. One day after coming off a raid North into Italy we already were off oxygen, about 10,000 feet, going back to Africa when our bombardier, Don Hemmingsen came into the radio room, he stuck his head up through the radio hatch and the propwash caught his cap and it flew off, catching onto the antenna post halfway between the waist opening and the radio hatch. Don felt so unlucky losing his cap that West and I said we would get it for him, so after Don Hemmingsen went to the front compartment through the bombbay catwalk I told West to hold me by the feet when I crawled along the skin of the bomber and got the cap and crawled backwards into the ship without a chute on. When I think of it now - if we had hit some rough weather just then West would have never been able to hold me; I'd have been gone with no chute. I shiver every time I think of doing that, but I didn't want Don to be unhappy or unlucky - ha!

Will close for now

As ever

Wally of the 416th

Walter Klukas, Rt. 2, Box 5, Coleman WI 54112

You know, Wally, I think we might have behaved a little differently if we had known we were going to live to be grandfathers.

We are setting up a filing system to bring these personal accounts together in a system such that we can make them available to authors, for History has overlooked several of our interesting missions. And this Secret Mission gets priority. It would make a good short for the Legion Magazine.

george

Juraj Rajninec
SA 41/55
911 01 Trencin
Czechoslovakia

1 May 1984

Dear George,

Thank very much for your letter as well as for the excellent Group newsletter.

I would be very glad in assisting you on research on 99th Bomb Group aircraft and crews downed over my homeland.

I am very proud, your Group made me an Associate Member in recognition of my research work.

According my notes there were two 99th Bomb Group Fortresses that crashed on the territory of Czechoslovakia. The one piloted by Lt. SHAFER went down on October 13, 1944 near the town NOVA BANA in Central Slovakia, while the second plane piloted by Lt. CLARK crashed on December 18, 1944 near the town of OLOMOUC in NORTHERN MORAVIA.

Since I have not the MACR's relating to both aircraft and crew, there is impossible to continue for me in research for more details.

With best wishes
/s/ Juraj Rajninec

Dear Friend Juraj;

We too have difficulties obtaining MACRs, and after we get them they do not always have much information, at least not as much as our fellow fliers can furnish. Perhaps some of our members can remember these missions.

george

79 Boght Road
Watervliet, NY 12189
Apr 19, 1984

Dear George:

Thank you for your letter of 4 April and the photos. I'm not sure I'll be able to use the pix anywhere, but I made copies of them and am returning them to you.

As for other pix concerning 99th activities in Russia, I frankly don't think I can use them, but thanks anyway. I do not have any plans to do any books that would entail flights to Russia during WW II.

I hope you enjoy reading both BATTLE FOR MANILA and PACIFIC HELLFIRE. My latest book, PACIFIC SEIGE, the story of the air war in New Guinea in 1942, is now on the stands.

I was talking to my editor today and she said the book on the Operation Flax, which they will title ROMMEL'S LAST STAND, should be out in July. I have featured the 99th BG quite heavily on this one and have included several of the pix that you were kind enough to send me. You can be sure that I will send you a copy when it comes out.

Yours cordially,
/s/ Larry Cortesi

Jan. 18, 1984

Dear George;

On page 18 of the 1 Jan 84 Newsletter the man on the right looking at the photo is Sgt. Pratt.

I did not know him in the 99th BG but met him while both of us were interned in Switzerland.

I believe his first name was Donald. His hometown was Zanesville, Ohio.

I sure enjoy the newsletter.

C.E. Miller, 10 Gibson Ct., Tiffin, Ohio.

Dear Clarence;

Thanks for the tip, which we followed up immediately, with results noted elsewhere in this issue.

George (Sherlock) Coen

* * * * *

July 19, 1943

History was made today, history which drew comment from the four corners of the earth. Today's events may alter the entire war program of the Axis as well as the Allies. For the first time in many years warfare was carried into Rome. It was the initial air bombardment of the Holy City. The 99th Bomb Group was first to drop bombs on this city. In preparation for this event, H-hour was at 0515 hours. Forty of our aircraft took off at 0807 on the start of Mission number 54. Two aircraft returned early to this base due to mechanical failure and a third landed at Bizerte with two engines out. Thirty-seven of our planes went over the target, the Lorenzo Marshalling Yards and dropped 432x500 bombs (108 tons), the heaviest load we have ever dropped on any one raid. The target was well covered and many hits were observed on the yards and on surrounding railroad buildings. The neutrality of the separate Vatican State was carefully observed and no stray bombs fell therein. Flak over the target was heavy, moderate and accurate. Five enemy fighters were seen, but none of them dared come close to our formation. All 37 of our aircraft returned unharmed to the home base at 1502. Along with our group were three war correspondents, Raymond Clapper of the Scripps - Howard Papers, Mr. Matthews of the New York Times and Mr. Tregaskis of International News Service. In addition, there were two official movie photographers. Thus ended another eventful day in the 99th's history.

July 20, 1943

Today was a non-operational day in which the combat crews and others rested for future missions.

July 21, 1943

This day 3 squadrons, 346, 347 and 416th took part in a raid on the Grosseto Airdrome in Italy. At 0821, 21 of our planes took off. There were 3 early returns and 18 planes went over the target, dropping 432 x 120 frags (25.92 tons). Flak over the target was heavy, slight and inaccurate. No fighters were seen. All of our planes returned undamaged. As for the target, it was well peppered and fires were noted.

July 22, 1943

Mission Number 56 was flown today with not too cheerful results. The target was the Foggia Marshalling Yards in Italy. At 0621, 39 of our planes took off. During the course of the day we had 6 early returns. Over the target there were 33 planes which dropped 396x500 bombs (99 tons). The target area was well covered and many hits were noted. The target area was covered with dense smoke. Heavy, moderate and accurate flak damaged 3 of our aircraft. 25 fighters were encountered and we suffered the loss of plane 42-30119 which was hit by pursuit, burned and disintegrated in the air. Five men were observed parachuting. In all, 10 are mission including the pilot, Lt. Frank Hunter of recent fame. The remainder of our aircraft returned to this station, one bearing a top-turret gunner with arm wounds. The return was at 1415 hours. Thus, another raid ended, even though it was not cheerful.

July 23, 1943

This was a half holiday, with the morning off. However, bombs were loaded and on short notice a H-hour was called at 1500 hours. It was the start of mission number 57. Twenty-nine of our aircraft took off at 1820 for the advance base at Djeidieda in Tunisia. The crew, including Lt. R. T. Jacobs, Assistant Operations Officer, on his first mission, stayed overnight at the advance base.

July 24, 1943

Mission number 57 took up today where it left off last night at the advance base. The target was the Marshalling Yards at Bologna, up in Northern Italy. The planes took off at 0620. Five of them returned early. Twenty-four went over the

target and dropped 288 x 500 bombs (72 tons). The target area was well covered. Many fires and explosions were seen, including an ammunition train. Flak was heavy, very slight and inaccurate and no fighters were encountered. Consequently, all of our planes returned to the home base, with the exception of 482, which was left at Djedjeda for supercharger repairs.

July 25, 1943

A holiday - very little activity. The big news of the day was the report that Benito Mussolini resigned as leader in Italy.

July 26, 1943

Another holiday. The advance party left overcoat for the new station in Tunisia, at Mohamedia.

July 27, 1943

After a two day lay off, three of the squadrons, 346, 348 and 416th participated in mission number 58. Twenty-one of our airplanes took off at 0822. In the early afternoon, three of our planes returned early with mechanical trouble. However, they all received credit for the mission. The remaining 18 planes failed to find the target due to an overcast. Bombs were dropped on targets of opportunity. The railroad at Lioni, a bridge nearby, the marshalling yards at Montello and the railroad at Calitri. Only 72 x 500 bombs were dropped on these targets. Slight, heavy and fairly accurate flak was encountered. Fifteen enemy fighters engaged our aircraft, damaging 3 of them. Six of the enemy were destroyed and one additional was probably destroyed. Our 18 planes returned at 1548, except 502 which made a forced landing at Bone with two engines out and four others who had to refuel. They all returned later.

July 28, 1943

A holiday today. Much discussion was made concerning our moving date. Col. Upthegrove, Major Semans and Captain Fairbanks flew to our new location at Mohamedia to inspect the field. They returned in the evening with very good reports about the place. We transferred plane 42-3389 (347th squadron) to the 368th Service Squadron. A new airplane, 42-3383 and crew arrived and were assigned to the 346th squadron.

July 29, 1943

The only event of note was the receipt of 3 new planes and crews. 42-30339 to the 347th, 42-30446 to the 348th and 42-30470 to the 416th. Our total of planes now is 53.

July 30, 1943

We flew mission number 59 today, starting with H-hour at 0535 hours. The target was Grottaglie Airdrome in Italy. Twenty-seven of our aircraft took off at 0815. There were, however, 8 early returns, to reach a new law in maintenance. Nineteen of our planes went over the target dropping 304x300 bombs (45.60 tons). The target was well plastered. Post holes were dug on the runways, hangers and other buildings were hit, 18 enemy aircraft on the ground were damaged or destroyed. Flak was heavy, moderate and fairly accurate. No fights were encountered. None of our aircraft was damaged. The first planes landed at 1620 and others came straggling back after gassing on the coast. Today we received two new planes with crews, 42-30416 and 42-30343, both assigned to the 346th Squadron.

July 31, 1943

This was a non-operational day with little or no activity. Preliminary preparations were being made to move to the new airdrome.

August 1, 1943

H-hour this morning was 0500 for mission number 60. Twenty-eight airplanes took off at 0737 to bomb the dock area at Naples, Italy. There were 5 early returns, leaving 23 to go over the target, dropping 276 x 500 bombs (69 tons). The dock area was well covered. Two vessels in the harbor were probably hit. Many hits were made on buildings and maritime installations on the waterfront. Flak over the target was moderate, heavy and inaccurate. Twenty-five fighters of the enemy attacked our formation. Three of them escaped. Two were damaged, six probably destroyed and 14 destroyed for certain. Our aircraft, 42-3129 of the 346th Squadron was badly hit by fighters, but made its way to Djedjeda where, in attempting to make a landing it crashed, killing Lt. Ebbers and his entire crew. Two of our aircraft were damaged by flak. All of the planes returned by 1430. We gained one new crew with plane 42-30474 which was assigned to the 346th Squadron and another plane 42-5856, assigned to the 347th Squadron.

August 2, 1943

A holiday today. Many trucks arrived on base to move the group equipment to the new base. Preparations were made for a large mission tomorrow, but late at night it was cancelled.

August 3, 1943

As the large mission for today was cancelled, we had another holiday. A small portion of the motor convoy left for the new base. In the afternoon 30 aircraft moved personnel to the new base. By nightfall only a few tents remained at the Navarin field. Orders came through for a mission tomorrow, but a short while later, the mission was cancelled. As night fell, a heavy wind and rain storm dusted and drenched the area and caught many with their tents down.

August 4, 1943

At 0700 hours a large motor convoy departed Navarin for the base near Mohamedia. All day long our aircraft took off with their crews and baggage for Mohamedia. The new airdrome is located on the following co-ordinates 36° 38' 15" N by 10° 5' 30" E. Only a handful of our men were left behind at Navarin. The Arabs came in droves of nearly 2500 to pick over the remains of the camp, and in some cases, to steal some of our material.

August 5, 1943

Another holiday from warfare, but not a holiday from work. Everyone worked hard setting up the Headquarters in a cool farm building; setting up tents, digging slit trenches and trying to keep cool. It is very hot in the afternoon here.

August 6, 1943

Today we flew our first mission from Mohamedia. Mission number 61 had for its target the Messina Crossroads in Sicily. At 0928, 28 of our aircraft took off for the target. Two planes returned early and 26 dropped 312 x 500 bombs (78 tons) on the target. It was well covered, although there was much smoke from the bombing of the lead Group. Flak was heavy, moderate and accurate, damaging 4 of our aircraft. One plane 42-29527 had 2 engines shot out and made a forced landing at Comise Airdrome in Sicily. Three of the crew were slightly wounded by flak. The remaining planes landed at 1326. The plane in Sicily was transferred to a Service Group there. During the day news was received that we captured Catania in Sicily and that the Russians had captured the German fortress of Orel -- two stepping stones in the direction of victory.

August 7, 1943

A holiday. In the morning there was a small air raid in the Biserte area which caused discussion as to our safety at our present location. We received two new aircraft and crews, one, 42-30462 to the 347th Squadron and the other, 42-30459 to the 416th Squadron.

August 8, 1943

The only event on this non-operational day was the arrival of a new plane and crew, 42-30491 to the 346th Squadron.

August 9, 1943

Today we flew mission number 62 to the Messina Cross roads in Sicily. Twenty-eight of our aircraft took off at 1440 and they all went over the target. The visibility over the target was not the best and as a result, only 3 squadrons dropped 252 x 500 bombs (63 tons). As far as could be seen, the bombing was good, but the weather prevented good photointerpretation. As a passenger in Major Orance's airplane, Major General Davenport Johnson, Commanding General of the Second Air Force flew with the Group. All of the planes returned in perfect formation and landed at 1853. They met a little flak and no fighters. There was no damage done to planes or personnel. We gained another new plane and crew, 42-5948 to the 348th Squadron. The only loss during the day was an enlisted man on the 346th Squadron who was killed when an enemy explosive he found went off.

August 10, 1943

A holiday in which the planes were put back into condition and the crews relaxed.

August 11, 1943

Another holiday. Many men went to the nearby beaches to enjoy the sun and water.

August 12, 1943

A holiday again today. The only event of note was the return of 42-29527 from Sicily with the 416th Squadron.

August 13, 1943

Friday the 13th, but we are not superstitious. We flew mission number 63 to the Lorenzo Marshalling Yards at Rome, Italy. At 0835, 43 of our aircraft took to the air. The sky was filled with airplanes of all types this morning as they proceeded to this target. During the course of the morning, 10 of our aircraft returned early with mechanical problems. Maybe it was superstition after all. As the remaining 33 aircraft went over the target, their mission was obscured by smoke, dust and a smoke screen. Consequently, only 216 x 500 of bomb were dropped (54 tons). Hits were seen, however, on the railroad installations. Flak was heavy, moderate and accurate and 3 of our aircraft were damaged by it. Eighteen fighters were encountered and we destroyed one and probably another. None of our personnel were injured. One of our aircraft which did not drop its bombs on the target made an attempt on a merchant, but missed. Our planes returned by 1400. General Baren flew as co-pilot to Col. Upthegrove. In the afternoon we received another new aircraft, 42-3389 plus a crew which was attached to the 347th Squadron.

August 14, 1943

A holiday, but there were many planes out of commission and there was lots of work to be done on them. Bob Hope appeared at the 301st Group.

August 15, 1953

A mission was planned, but cancelled, so today is another holiday. News reports are that Rome was declared to be an open city. Tonight we were treated to a 90% eclipse of the moon.

August 16, 1943

Today was a holiday. Due to an order limiting the group to 56 aircraft, five of our planes were transferred to the 368th Service Squadron. They were 42-30306, 42-29918, 42-3026 and 42-29527. The daytime weather at this base is quite warm. The temperature ranges in the mid- 90's most of the day. Conditions in the Headquarters Building, however are ideal. It is a good place to be during the day. Preparations this evening are being made for a super-all our mission tomorrow.

August 17, 1943

H-hour at 0630 hours was the start of an eventful day. For the first time the 99th Bomb Group dropped bombs on France. Using one runway it took 49 minutes to put 52 aircraft into the air. The average time off was 0925. During the course of the day there were five early returns due to minor mechanical faults. 47 of the planes went over the target -- LeTube A/D at Marsielles, France. They dropped 1101 x 120 frag clusters (66.12 tons). Flak over the target was heavy, intense and accurate. Five enemy aircraft were seen in the air, but they stayed away. In the ground it was another story. Our group alone probably destroyed or damaged 112 of the enemy aircraft on the ground. Practically all of the hangers were hit along with many other buildings. Several A/A batteries were hit. All of our aircraft returned with the exception of 42-29502 which landed at Bone with two engines out. None of our men were injured. It was a highly successful mission in every sense. One new aircraft was assigned to the 416th Squadron, 42-39449. At about 2100 hours the personnel on the base were attracted by distant rumblings. The sky in the vicinity of Biserte was red with flak. Later reports were that over 75 enemy bombers bombed the harbor at that city. After the raid which produced an alert here, all retired.

August 18, 1943

A holiday. Preparations were made for another super mission tomorrow. At 2356 many were awakened when a yellow alert was sounded. Biserte was again being bombed. A few minutes later a red alert was sounded. At the time the moon was bright, but no aircraft appeared over the base.

August 19, 1943

This morning H-hour was 0700 as we prepared for our 65th mission. At 0956, 49 of our aircraft took off for the target, the city of Foggia, Italy. Four planes returned early due to mechanical failure and two due to sick personnel. The remaining 43 went over the target and dropped 516 x 500 bombs (129 tons) on the target. Complete coverage was made on the city with very few buildings remaining untouched. The railroad yards were hit and severely damaged also. Flak was heavy, intense and accurate. Two fighters were seen but not encountered. Four of our aircraft received minor flak damage. Lt. Capsey was slightly wounded in the head by flak. The planes returned at 1536.

August 20 - 25, 1943

These days have all been holidays with nothing of importance happening.

August 25, 1943

This morning H-hour was 0420. Forty-three of our aircraft took off at 0715 hours for Foggia A/D number 2. There were 7 early returns. The remaining 36 aircraft went over the target and dropped 744 x 120 Frags and 57 x 500 demolition bombs for a total of 58.89 tons. Flak was heavy, accurate and moderate to intense over the target. From 60 to 100 enemy fighters were encountered. In the ensuing battle, we scored an overwhelming victory. Of the enemy planes, 41 were destroyed, 18 probably destroyed and 10 damaged. Fourteen of our aircraft were damaged and #42-5413 (416th squadron went down in flames over the target. Two parachutes were seen to open. Lt. Norris and his entire crew are listed as missing in action. The bombing was successful. Ten enemy aircraft were seen burning on the ground. Six of our planes carried 500 pound bombs with a delayed action (2 hours) fuse. In addition to the crew of Lt. Norris, Sgt. Bricker of the 348th was killed and 2 others wounded. The remaining 35 aircraft returned to home base at 1300.

August 26, 1943

This morning 22 of our aircraft took off on mission number 67, to the Airdrome at Capua, Italy. Take-off was 0900. There were two early returns. Twenty aircraft went over the target and dropped 480 x 120 Frags (28.8 tons). Flak was slight, heavy and inaccurate

and 30 fighters were encountered. Of these three were destroyed, two probable and two damaged. We suffered no damages or casualties. Five aircraft were left burning on the ground. The enemy fighters used rockets from 1000 yards. Our aircraft returned at 1400. During the day, Lt. General Spaatz and Maj. General Doolittle were present to award Sargent Ben Warner the Distinguished Service Cross.

August 27, 1943

This morning at 0835, twenty-one of our aircraft took-off on mission number 68, for Sulmona M/Y in Italy. Of these five returned early. Sixteen dropped 160 x 500 bombs (45 tons) on the target. Flak was slight, heavy and slight. Four enemy aircraft were seen, but no damage was done. Hits were made on the yards and repair shops. The formation returned at 1400 hours.

August 28, 1943

At 0921 this morning, twenty-one of our aircraft took-off for mission 69 to the Terni M/Y in Italy. One returned early. The twenty which went over the target dropped 240 x 500 bombs (60 tons). Smoke and clouds made observation of results difficult. Flak was heavy, moderate and fair. Nine enemy aircraft were seen, but none encountered. All of the planes returned safely at 1530. A new aircraft was received, 42-30689, and was assigned to the 416th Squadron.

August 29, 1943

Twenty-one aircraft took-off on mission 70 for Orte M/Y in Italy. One plane returned early. Twenty went over the target, dropped 240 x 500 bombs (60 tons). Flak was heavy, moderate and accurate and seven fighters were seen, but not engaged. Hits were made on buildings, trackage, rolling stock, etc. Nine of our planes were damaged by flak, but all returned to base.

August 30, 1943

A holiday. General Atkinson presented Col. Upthegrove with the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Silver Star. Several others received the D.F.C.

August 31, 1943

This morning the aircraft of the group participated in our 71st mission. At 0845, forty-two aircraft took off to bomb the Pisa M/Y in Italy. Two of these returned early. Forty aircraft passed over the target and dropped 479 x 500 bombs (119.75 tons), covering the target quite well. The airfield outside of the target area also was covered, causing considerable damage. Flak was heavy, moderate and inaccurate. All of the aircraft returned at 1600 to the home base with the exception of #477, which landed at Palermo, Sicily with two engines out. Our gunners destroyed one enemy aircraft.

September 1, 1943

Today there was no mission and activities were at a minimum.

September 2, 1943

Our 72nd mission was completed today. At 0700 forty-one of our aircraft took-off to bomb the Bologna M/Y. Five of these planes returned early. Of the remaining 36, 35 are known to have passed over the target. One, 42-30396, Lt. Caraberis, was last seen with engine trouble and is believed to be down in Italy. Those over the target dropped 310 x 500 bombs (77.5 tons) and covered the target well. There were hits on tracks, warehouses, repair shops and industrial buildings. Flak was heavy, slight and inaccurate, but there were enemy aircraft in the air. Nine of our aircraft were damaged and one gunner was wounded. Our gunners destroyed two and probably destroyed one enemy fighter.

September 3, 1943

A holiday today. Two new aircraft joined the group, 42-30504, 348th and 42-3244, 416th Squadron.

September 4, 1943

A SNAFU mission today was No. 73. 21 of our aircraft took off at 1345 for the Capodichino Airdrome, but when they arrived in the vicinity of the target there were heavy black clouds up to 28,000 feet. The formation returned with its bombs and landed 1840.

September 5, 1943

Today, mission 74 was flown with results not much better than yesterday. 39 of our aircraft took off at 1034 for the Airdrome at Viterbo, Italy. At the target the weather was 8/10 overcast and less than half of the bombs were dropped: 432 x 120 Frags (25.93 tons). Three of our planes returned early and the remaining 36 landed at 1623 with the exception of Captain Burrel who landed in Sicily with two wounded men. Seven of our aircraft were damaged. The clouds were so thick over the target that only a few hits were seen. Twenty-three of our men finished their 50th mission today bringing the table to 64.

September 6, 1943

Mission No. 75 was flown today. At 1055, 39 of our aircraft took off for Pomigliano Airdrome in Italy. During the course of the day four returned early. The remaining 35 dropped only 32 x 250 bombs (4 tons). The reason was bad weather over the target. Some flak was encountered, but no damage to our aircraft or personnel was involved. Our aircraft returned at 1608. A new airplane 42-30471 was received and assigned to the 416th Squadron. An air raid during which paratroopers were dropped in the neighborhood caused excitement in the evening.

September 7, 1943

Today the target weather was better and our 76th mission was a success. At 0845, 40 of our aircraft took off for Foggia Airdrome. Of these, 3 returned early. The remaining 37 dropped 883 x 120 frags (52.98 tons) and did a very good job on the field. Flak was heavy, intense and accurate and from 60 to 100 enemy fighters attacked our formation. Of these enemy planes, 35 were destroyed, 3 damaged, including 42-29494. This airplane and its pilot, Major Whitmore were both on their 50th mission -- the plane had four of its original engines unchanged. While over the target the major's plane got shot up to such an extent that he could not safely land it at the base. All eleven members of the crew bailed out in the vicinity of the field, four wounded and Lt. Williams, Bombardier, 348th was killed. All of the aircraft returned to this base.

September 8, 1943

Today was a historic day in the war. Our 72nd mission was flown with marked success. The target was the town of Frascati, near Rome, where the German High Command was located. At 0915, 34 of our aircraft took off. There were 2 early returns. 32 of our bombers blasted the town with 64 x 1000 and 64 x 2000 bombs (96 tons). Hits were scored in most sections of town. Flak was heavy, moderate and accurate. Eight of our planes received minor flak damages. All of our aircraft returned safely at 1420. This evening at 5 PM, the Avalanch mission was cancelled just as the planes were to take off. At 5:30 it was announced that Italy had surrendered. Later it was learned that our troops invaded Italy in various places.

September 9, 1943

Another mission today, this being #78 to the town of Capua, Italy, where bridges were the targets. At 0623, 35 of our aircraft took off and 2 returned early. 33 hit the target with 347 x 500 bombs (86.75). Bridges were destroyed and some hits were made in the town and fires were started. Flak was heavy, slight and inaccurate, but none of our planes or personnel were hurt. They all returned at 1153.

September 10, 1943

At 0731 hours 36 of our aircraft took off for Isernia, Italy where the bridges and highway crossroads were the targets. Two returned early. The 34 which passed over the target dropped 408 x 500 bombs (102 tons). The crossroads were hit and destroyed. Hits were also made in marshalling yard and town. There was no flak and no fighters. All of our planes returned safely at 1259. Thus ended the 79th mission.

September 11, 1943

The group is continuing well on its way to its first hundred missions. Today the 80th mission was flown. At 1055 hours 19 planes from the 347th and 348th Squadrons took off for Benevento, Italy to bomb bridges and roads. All of the planes went over the target and dropped 228 x 500 bombs (57 tons). The target was well covered and near hits were made on a bridge. There was a small amount of flak which did no harm. All of our planes returned at 1638. A new plane was assigned to the 348th Squadron -- 42-5946.

September 12, 1943

At 0920, 39 of our aircraft took off on the 81st mission to bomb the Airdrome at Grosinone, Italy. Five planes returned early. 34 went over the target and dropped 816 x 120 bombs, frags, (48.96 tons). Bombs fell in dispersal areas and hangers were hit. Fires were observed. Flak was moderate, heavy and accurate. One man was lightly wounded by the flak. Our planes returned safely at 1444.

September 13, 1943

Today was a holiday, the first in 10 days. Planes were made in commission for future operations.

September 14, 1943

Our 5th Army in Italy is having difficulties in the Salerno area and NAAF is being called on to assist them in overcoming the German troops. On this account the 99th flew two missions today, numbers 82 and 83. At 0658, 37 of our aircraft took off. All of these planes bombed roads in the vicinity of Torre Annunziata with 432 x 500 bombs (108 tons). Direct hits were made on these roadways. A/a was heavy, slight and inaccurate, but no damage was inflicted on our aircraft. They all returned at 1320 and began to await the word to go on the second mission. At 1538, 20 of our aircraft again took off for the front lines. All 20 of these planes passed over the target near Eboli and dropped 480 x 100 bombs (24 tons) on the roads and troop concentrations there. Observation was made difficult due to dust and haze but it is believed that hits were scored on the target. All of our planes returned at 2118 and landed in the light of a full moon. A powerful homing light was in operation at our base which assisted our pilots in bringing the planes home. The day ended with us awaiting the battle order for another mission tomorrow.

September 15, 1943

Our crews were alerted for today's mission until about 1430 when we were notified that there would be no mission.

September 16, 1943

On mission No. 84, 37 of our aircraft took off at 0715 to bomb the Benevento, Italy, railroad yards and highway bridges. Two turned back through mechanical difficulties, and 35 aircraft went over the target at 1011 hours, 15,000 feet, to drop 408 500-pound bombs. Col. Upthegrove was leading. There was a slight haze over the target. Flak was moderate, accurate and heavy and five of our bombers were damaged. No enemy aircraft were seen. At 1230 all 35 planes returned safely after 5:15 combat hours and a round trip of 800 miles. Photointerpretation showed possible hits at the north end of the Hwy bridge and hits on adjacent roads. there was at least one direct hit on the north end of the RR bridge and hits on tracks adjacent to it.

September 17, 1943

Non-operational. Major Lewellyn T. Boatwright, Jr., CO of 347th squadron, departed after completion of his 50 missions and was succeeded by Capt. Harry R. Burrell, former Operations Officer. Capt. William A. Clark became new Operations Officer.

September 18, 1943

With Lt. Thurman leading mission No. 85, 38 of our bombers took off at 1030 to bomb Viterbo Airdrome, Italy. Two returned early because of mechanical trouble. In clear weather 36 aircraft went over the target at 23,500 feet at 1330 hours, dropping 1,004 100-pound bombs. No enemy fighters were seen, and the flak was heavy, moderate and accurate, seven of our bombers being hit. All planes returned safely at 1630 with no casualties. Photointerpretation showed 25 aircraft destroyed or damaged on the airdrome. There was an excellent bomb pattern all over the A/D, and hits were observed in the revetment area.

Today 18 B-24's, first Liberators seen in this theatre, arrived with flying and essential ground personnel. They were members of the 44th Bombardment Group, originally based in England.

Major Leon L. Lowry, who has finished his 50 missions, was relieved of his duties as CO of 346th squadron and went to Oran for return to the states. Capt. Cleo Aspergren became new squadron CO, and Capt. Richard Evans became new squadron Operations Officer.

September 19, 1943

Non-operational. Capt. Robert Elliott became acting CO of 348th squadron succeeding Lt. Col. Warren B. Whitmore, who has completed 50 missions.

September 20, 1943

Non-operational. Movie shown on base tonight was "Now, Voyager," with Bette Davis.

September 21, 1943

Non-operational for us, but the B-24's carried out a successful mission to Leghorn, Italy.

September 22, 1943

Our crews were alerted, briefed at 0800 and at their planes when the mission was cancelled because of weather. The weather looked all right to us until about 1000, when the wind rose to gale force, kicking the dust around and reminding everyone of Navarin. Some tents were casualties, including headquarters of the 44th Bomb p. (B-24's).

September 23, 1943

Our crews were alerted and briefed at 0915, then the mission was called off because of the weather. At 1100 the red alert sounded, startling the B-24 boys, but the all clear came at 1108. In the 346th squadron, Lt. Robert W. Masters was appointed adjutant, and Lt. Frank Bohenic appointed supply and transportation officer.

September 24, 1943

Non-operational for us, but the 44th Bomb Gp. accomplished a mission to the Pisa, Italy, marshalling yards. Movie shown on the base tonight was "Who Done It," with Abbot and Costello.

September 25, 1943

Both the 99th and the 44th took off for missions today. The B-24's had to return early because of poor visibility approaching the target. Of 36 of our planes taking off, one returned early because of mechanical trouble. Thirty-five planes reached the target, the eastern end of the Bologna marshalling yards, but two runs had to be made because of poor visibility. Three hundred 500-pound bombs were dropped, and 132 were returned by planes which couldn't see the target. Flak was moderate, accurate and heavy. From 10 to 15 ME 109's and FW 190's were seen, with 10 coming in for attacks. Four of our bombers were damaged, but three gunners made claims for E/A destroyed. We combined with the 97th and the 2nd for the raid. Photointerpretation showed hits on the marshalling yards bottleneck, hits on the tracks, hits on warehouses and in the industrial section adjacent to the tracks.

Tonight on the base the men relaxed at a stage presentation by the French Revue, Unit #2. A good four piece combo backed up by a snappy show of two male comedians and singers, a magician and three girls, including a strip teaser.

September 26, 1943

Our crews were alerted, briefed at 1730 and stood by for an hour, when the mission was cancelled because of weather at the target. Towards evening the sky was heavily overcast and it looked more like rain than almost anytime since we have been in North Africa. No rain.

September 27, 1943

Our crews were again alerted and briefed, but the mission was called off because of weather. Clouds are piling up thicker than ever. Show on the base tonight was "Stranger in Town," with Frank Morgan.

September 28, 1943

With Col. Upthegrove leading mission No. 87, 33 of our planes took off at 0833 to bomb the Bologna marshalling yards. One plane returned early because of mechanical trouble. There was solid overcast at the target and the planes returned with their bombs at 1450. Col. Upthegrove's ship blew a tire while taxiing. As the planes landed it began to rain. Night fell early and the rain brought chilling cold. There was a scurry for G.I. woolens and extra blankets.

September 29, 1943

Non-operational, and a swell day to rest in weather reminiscent of good old U.S. Fall. After last night's rain the sun was sparkling and the air cool and refreshing. Officers of the group were directed to appear before photography section for pictures. Jewish personnel celebrated New Year, and a group order giving them two day passes permitted attending services in town.

September 30, 1943

Non-operational. Clearing weather gives promise of operations. Best of all days -- pay day.

October 1, 1943

It was an historic operational day -- our first trip to Germany. The target for mission #88 was the Messerschmitt factory near Augsburg, a round trip of some 1,800 miles. Twenty-two aircraft took off at 0811 hours with Col. Upthegrove leading. Seven returned early because of mechanical trouble. But our ships failed to reach the target because of solid undercast, and they turned back 60 miles south of the target. Flak encountered on the way was generally heavy, moderate and fairly accurate. Twenty-five to 30 ME 109's and FW 190's attacked for forty minutes in aggressive frontal attacks. A bombardier of the 416th squadron, Lt. Lewis Franck, was credited with shooting down four. Among other claims, S/Sgt. Benjamin Warner of the 348th bagged one, his tenth so far. Ship #126 piloted by 2nd Lt. D. M. Prentice of the 416th squadron crashed and exploded 30 miles west of Innsburg. Five 'chutes, and possibly seven, were observed. Ship #356 piloted by 1st Lt. William J. Cantwell (flying his 50th mission) of the 347th squadron, may have exploded in mid-air -- not definite. Ship #491 piloted by 2nd Lt. James H. Crooks, 346th squadron, landed with no brakes at Cagliari, Sardinia, and plowed into another B-17 on the field. No one injured and 2nd Lt. Marvin C. Charak, bombardier who had been injured in the arm by 20 mm fire over the target, was treated and found out of danger. All pilots praised Col. Upthegrove for his skillful leadership when the fighters were encountered. Twenty-five of the B-24's attached to us went out to bomb a target near Vienna, Austria, and by evening only nine had returned. They ran into 80 to 100 fighters.

Capt. Cleo Aspergren, CO of 346th squadron, was promoted to major. Movie on the base tonight was "Canal Zone," with Chester Morris.

October 2, 1943

Non-operational and nothing much doing. The B-24 boys sweat out their lost ships, finally account for all but eight which were shot down over the target. Eight others landed in Sicily and Italy. The 44th got beat up but also dished it out, knocking down more than 30 fighters.

Crew of ship 1491 (see Oct. 1) arrived back at base and Lt. Charak, not too badly hurt, was taken to the 54th station hospital. The ship was a washout.

October 3, 1943

Non-operational. The 44th prepares to go back to England. The 346th squadron installed a PA system to broadcast official announcements over the bivouac area, also news and a couple of programs daily of jive records from private collections around the group.

October 4, 1943

The group split up today to accomplish two missions -- #89 to the Bolzano RR Bridges, and #90 to the Pisa M/Y. Teaming up with the 97th, 301st and 2nd, 19 of our ships led by Lt. Col. Thurman took off for Bolzano at 0720. They dropped 95 1000-pounders on the target from 22,000 feet, scoring hits on the bridge area, on tracks and rolling stock, and probable hits causing a landslide over the bridge. Fifteen to 20 ME 109's were seen but there were no attacks. Flak was heavy, moderate and fairly accurate. All our bombers returned

safely at 1540. Also teaming up with the 97th, 301st and 2nd 18 of our bombers led by Major Aspergren took off at 0815 to bomb Pisa. At 22,000 feet 264 300-pounders were dropped, scoring hits throughout the length of the marshalling yards. No fighters were encountered, flak failed to damage any of our bombers and all returned safely at 1440.

Five B-24's took off for England. Four more will leave after mechanical troubles are repaired. The 44th lost so many ships over Austria that they had to order transports to take some personnel to England. They'll all be gone in a few days.

Movie tonight was "Somewhere I'll Find You" with Gable and Turner.

October 5, 1943

For mission #91, 35 of our bombers teamed with the 97th to bomb the Bologna M/Y. With Major Burrell leading, our ships took off at 0800. Three returned early because of mechanical trouble. The remaining 32 dropped 371 500-pounders from 21,000 feet, scoring hits and fires in warehouses and marshalling yards, a direct hit on the roundhouse, hits on buildings in industrial areas, and hits on car shops and highway overpass. No enemy fighters were seen. Three of our bombers were damaged by flak which was heavy, moderate and accurate, but all returned safely at 1525. Maj. Gen. Doolittle visited the base to present decorations. A Silver Star went to Staff Sargent Eugene Cantley of 346th squadron, a gunner who shot down an enemy plane despite severe wounds over Messina June 25th. An Oak Leaf Cluster to the Soldier's Medal went to Staff Sargent Claude Cowart, 346th squadron, for heroism when a freight train loaded with gasoline and aerial bombs caught fire at Navarin. Gen. Doolittle then flew to the 35th station hospital where he presented a DSC to 2nd Lt. John W. Wylie, 346th squadron, who displayed exceptional courage when wounded in the same ship with Cantley. Wylie was co-pilot. He spent two and a half months in the hospital recuperating, got back to flying status last week, and had to admit to Gen. Doolittle that he was back in the hospital this time for the G.I.'s. The general was sympathetic.

II SAC presented its French Revue #3 on the base tonight. The revue included a six-man band, two clever girl dancers, a soprano, a swami who ate light bulbs and phonograph records, a male tap dancer and a male singer.

October 6, 1943

Col. Upthegrove led mission # 92 to Mestre M/Y, Italy. Twenty of our planes took off at 0735 and 19 went over the target at 1129. The whole target area was well covered. Before the target 25 to 30 fighters attacked. Two planes were hit and failed to return, one of them piloted by Lt. Crooks of the 346th who had hard luck on Oct. 1 and this time was seen turn toward the Adriatic with two engines smoking. All others returned safely at 1600. ^A_{to}

October 7, 1943

Non-operational.

October 8, 1943

Non-operational. Movie on base was "Golden Boy," with William Holden and Barbara Stanwyck.

October 9, 1943

The group split up today for a double mission, and for the first time in our history we raided targets in Greece. Fourteen ships led by Lt. Col. Thurman took off at 0731 to bomb Sedes A/D at Salonika, while 16 planes led by Capt. Evans took off at 0816 to bomb Larissa A/D. There were three early returns in the first group and 11 went over the target at 1205, covering the A/D with a heavy concentration of hits, firing the hangers and destroying four planes on the ground. There were no fighters, moderate flak and all planes returned safely at 1637. There were four early returns in the second group and 12 planes went over the target at 1225, scoring bomb hits extending across the field. There were no fighters, moderate flak and all planes returned safely at 1715. These were missions #93 and #94 and we're getting close to the century mark.

Lt Crooks and his crew straggled in by transport today from Foggia where they landed safely after the Mestre raid Oct. 6. No one hurt and the pilot did a swell job of bringing his crippled ship to earth -- for the second time in five days. Lt. Crooks reported that as a result of our earlier bombings the main Foggia airdrome was unservicable, the city completely covered with bomb hits and the marshalling yards a total wreck.

October 10, 1943

Our 95th mission again took us to Greece. This time led by Major Burrell took off at 0755 to bomb the Tatoi A/D at Athens. Two returned early and 17 ships went over the target at 1200, scoring a heavy concentration of frag hits on the runway and hanger area and destroying or damaging nine E/A. About 20 German fighters engaged and one of our ships was lost. All the others returned safely at 1625.

October 11, 1943

Non-operational. Toward evening 24 B-25's of the 310th Bomb Gp. arrived for attachment until they move to Italy. So again we're hosts to furriners. Movie tonight was "Road to Moscow," with the Hope-Crosby-Lamour combination.

October 12, 1943

A mission was scheduled but called off because of weather over the target. 346th squadron this afternoon went up on a practice flight and Lt. Joseph Donahue couldn't get his wheels down to land. He made a beautiful belly landing without injury to himself and the four others aboard. Cloudy and chilly today and intermittent rain.

October 13, 1943

Non-operational. Movie on the base tonight was "Margin for Error," with Joan Bennett and Milton Berle. The movie schedule has been upped from two to three a week, which makes nobody mad.

October 14, 1943

Mission #96 to the Terni M/Y, Italy. Led by Lt. Col. Thurman, 20 of our planes took off at 0650 with a load of 500-pounds. Five planes returned early, and 15 went over the target at 1000, scoring hits on tracks in the west end of the yards and on a steel works, causing fires and explosions. Flak was moderate and fairly accurate, and when our ships came off the target they were attacked by 35 pursuit. But all got back safely at 1245 and that's when the excitement began. The old "Axis Ass Ache," a plane that has flown 64 missions was in trouble. The pilot, 2nd Lt. Charles Wardwell of the 347th, ordered eight men to bail out. They all landed safely. Then the pilot and co-pilot brought the ship in. It dipped sharply toward the runway but pulled up for a good landing. Afterwards it was learned that they had come in at 160 MPH with a ship whose controls were virtually gone. It had been hit by flak and fighters and had a tendency to climb and loop. Combined strength of the pilot and co-pilot couldn't hold it level until they wired the controls in place with a piece of shot away cable.

October 15, 1943

Non-operational. Major Robert Elliott, having finished 50 missions, left for home and Capt. Max E. Davis became CO of 348th squadron. Movie on the base tonight was "Orchestra Wives," with Glenn Miller's ork.

October 16, 1943

Non-operational. This afternoon USO and Special Service presented a stage show with glamorous Anna Lee of the movies, several good G.I. performers and Adolphe Menjou. Opinion was divided on Menjou, but a good part of it was to the effect that he might just as well have stayed home.

October 17, 1943

Again non-operational. A lazy Sunday, sunny and warm, in which everyone relaxed and took it easy. Towards evening the first contingents of some new combat crews arrived by transport from Casablanca.

October 18, 1943

Non-operational. The remainder of 20 new crews came in and were assigned to squadrons. They came from Casablanca after making the trip from the States by boat in 18 days. In the 416th squadron, Sgt. Arnold F. Eydenberg, an orderly room clerk, was eating chow when a K.P. told him to go outside and meet a surprise. He walked out, found himself face to face with his brother, one of the new flyers. He is 2nd Lt. Monte Eydenberg, Jr., a pilot. Monte said he had a choice of joining the 99th or the 2nd, but his assignment to the 416th was "pure luck". Movie on the base tonight was the "Amazing Mrs. Holliday," starring Deanna Durbin. The movies are really packed now, what with the B-25 outfit and 200 new combat men.

November 11 1983

31 Parkland Road
Mona Vale 2103
Sydney, AUSTRALIA

Dear George:

Thanks firstly for the various items you have been sending down.

I have enclosed a check for 1984 dues; though I don't qualify for membership, I feel I should contribute to the production of the newsletter, which is an excellent publication.

I've been working on the draft of the section of my book dealing with the 5th Wing, and a few queries regarding the 99th came up.

Firstly, I urgently need to borrow a print of the photo of the 347th Squadron B-17G over Ploesti on July 9, 1944, which appears on page 4 of the reprint of the "Mission Log" in the upper right corner. Although it doesn't specify it in the caption, this was the July 9 mission, and the first use of PFF techniques to try to beat the Ploesti smoke pots. This is a significant mission, and that's a magnificent photo which really tells the story, but I can't seem to find a good print of it.

Second, I'm trying to find out the plane name and crew of 42-5439, which was hit in the tail section by a rocket over Villaorba on March 18, 1944. Apparently the gunner was blown free of the mangled tail and his chute opened. I don't know the fate of the rest of the crew, but they were carried as MIA.

Finally, I'd like to know exactly which bases the 99th staged through for the Wiener Neustadt missions of October and November 1943.

I'll be grateful for any help with the above items. Naturally any photo loaned to me will be copied and returned in original condition.

That was a great idea to reprint the 300 Mission newspaper - I really enjoyed it and there was much valuable information in there.

Best wishes,

Steve Birdsall

* * * * *

Dear Steve;

Thank you for the compliments and the check. You are now an associate member with all privileges of membership except voting. Welcome!

We will search for a copy of the picture, but our membership of Ex-Combat Photographers is the best source. How about it, Frank English?

We did not know that you were working on a 5th Wing book. We will be delighted to assist in any way.

We have just this hour received the Squadron War Diaries as far as February 1944. We will research them for the answers and will copy the pertinent pages for you. A quick search shows that two of the squadrons put the W-N raids into a Secret File and the other two did not identify the alternate fields. We have only one file, the 348th, for 18 Mar 44. It mainly states that the movie for the day was "The Man From Down Under", so we will obtain prints of the other squadrons and check them. Should take about 3 weeks.

With best wishes

George

BOOK REVIEW

The Password Is Courage by John Castle, Bantam Books, 1954

The story of British Sgt. Major Charles Coward, a POW from 1940 until 1945. Coward, an inveterate escaper, was sent to Auschwitz, where he organized a barter ring. For chocolate and cigarettes from the Red Cross packages he purchased corpses from the German guards. He was then able to switch the dead for living inmates enroute to the crematorium. The live escapees were sent into the Polish Underground outside the wire. The book also details the bombing of Auschwitz, where the advance notice of the bombing allowed the Germans to move POWs into the target area. Coward later testified at War Crimes trials and helped convict some of the lesser defendants. A real rouser and highly recommended.

geo

1 September 1944

ISSUED BY AAF-RAF PUBLIC RELATIONS
SPECIAL HANDOUT FOR RELEASE AT 2200 HOURS:

SIDELIGHT -- FIRST LANDINGS TO ARRANGE EVACUATION

Making the first scheduled landing of AAF heavy bombers in Rumanian territory, two 15th AAF Flying Fortresses, strongly escorted by Mustangs, flew into an airdrome near Bucharest Tuesday, Aug. 29. At the time the capital was held only by the Rumanian Government forces.

Instead of bombs, the bomb bays were filled with signal equipment and medical supplies. A special party, headed by a famous pre-war pilot, got out of the planes to stay to handle the details of the evacuation. No personnel was removed on the first trip. The men were being held some distance from the field for safety's sake and the Mustangs were able to cover the operation for only a limited time.

The trip was uneventful, with the bombers flying across the Balkans at medium altitude, encountering no flak or fighters. The first B17 to touch down was piloted by Maj. Allen W. Schroeder, 611 North Lincoln Street, Aberdeen, S. D. It was followed by a Fortress flown by Capt. E. C. Karnes, 8404 Naylor Avenue, Los Angeles, Calif.

The Mustangs did not land. The bombers were on the ground for 20 minutes, with their engines running all the time, and with one exception were the first American aircraft to land in Rumania.

In the course of an all-fighter shuttle to Russia August 4, F/O Richard T. Andrews, 916 SE 35th Street, Portland, Ore., landed in a Rumanian pasture to pick up a fellow Lightning pilot who had been forced to crash-land. Both pilots flew on to Russia in one cockpit.

The planes were prepared for the first step in the operation by removing the bomb-sights and bomb shackles. All guns were manned and each B17 carried a full crew. The radio equipment and signal flares were carried in one craft; medical supplies, with Capt. Edgar O. Hughes, 505 Hamilton Street, Washington, Ill., a flight surgeon, went with the other.

Members of a special force, commanded by an AAF colonel with years of experience pioneering civilian and Army air lines, went along to set up communications and establish liaison in Rumania. With them went a supply of Red Cross packages.

Shortly after crossing the Yugoslav coast, the two bombers picked up the Mustang escort and flew at 12,000 feet to Bucharest. The course was plotted to avoid any known flak positions and no anti-aircraft fire was observed. No enemy fighters were seen.

Arriving over Bucharest, the formation dropped to 2,000 feet and circled for a landing. The escort covered the field, some planes flying at 50 feet to make sure that nothing untoward happened.

"We sweated out the trip over the city," said 2d Lt. John J. Headrick, 318 Terrace Avenue, Albuquerque, N.M., a bombardier on Capt. Karnes' plane. "We were just praying that everything worked out okay. That place used to have plenty of flak. When we let down, we thought of putting on our flak suits, but we decided that if anyone wanted to shoot at us from 2000 feet, the shells would go clean through us."

The fighters buzzed the field first to receive flare signals and assure themselves that the way was clear. After the bombers landed, the Mustangs remained in the area, indulging in acrobatics and watching for signs of trouble. There were no incidents.

On the ground, the liaison party was met by the Rumanian ace who flew out Col. Gunn in an ME109, and a host of Rumanian air force personnel and civilians. With the captain was Maj. William H. Yeager, Hepbronsville, Texas, only American in the welcoming party. When Col. Gunn took off he had been left in charge of the evacuees.

"When we got there," said Capt. Karnes, "people were driving up from every where. They were driving up in trucks, American made passenger cars and German jeeps. A lot of them were right on the field. Outside the fence were a lot more, mostly peasants, who had come up in carts."

"The field had a lot of German planes on it," said 1st Lt. William H. Lorrz, 21305 39th Ave., Bayside, L.I., Maj. Schroeder's co-pilot. Most of them were ME109's, belonging to the Rumanian Air Force. The field wasn't bad, except that it fell away at one end."

Maj. Schroeder described the reception given the 15th AAF crews. "They wanted us to stick around awhile, but we could only stay 15 minutes. We weren't about to do without the escort. They offered us an escort of Me's for 150 miles. That would have been a new experience all right, but it wouldn't have lasted long enough. Some of them tried to refuel us with 87 octane gas, but we couldn't let them. Our engines are built for 100 octane. All in all, they were very friendly."

"They appeared to be nice people," said T/Sgt. Fred Matias, 111 Gansevort Ave., Rome, N.Y., engineer on Capt. Karnes' Fortress. "They were well dressed, and most of the ones we saw seemed to speak good English. Bucharest looked good. Remembering some of the missions our boys flew there, I'd say I like the place from the ground."

After remaining on the ground for 20 minutes, the Flying Fortresses took off and returned to Italy without a cargo. In the meantime, communications with 15th AAF headquarters were established and the plans for the mass evacuation perfected.

Other crewmen on the first AAF scheduled landing in Rumania are as follows:

Major Schroeder's crew ... Capt. Marshall Hanson, 805 E. Melendy, Ludington, Mich.
1st Lt. Stanley C. Millner 934 Greenwood Ave., Trenton, New York.
T/Sgt. Benjamin A. Audia, 6508 S. May St. Chicago, Ill.
Sgt. Harry N. Maronpot, 170 Saddle River Rd., Fair Lawn, N.J.
T/Sgt. T. J. Wright, 553 N. Parkside Ave. Chicago, Ill.
S/Sgt. Roy C. Fowler, Route 1, Box 59, Montrose, Colo.
S/Sgt. Charles C. Mettner, 6206 Grandville Ave., Detroit, Mich.
Capt. Karnes' crew ... 1st. Lt. Donald D. Sibley, 65 Ccatherine St., Cornell, N. Y.
1st. Lt. Charles H. Jeffers, Jr., 156 W. Main St., Elkton, Md.
S/Sgt. Alce J. Cortez, Jr., 15th St., Port Arthur, Texas.
T/Sgt. William H. Aspengren, 1838 Capitol Ave., Des Moines, Iowa.
S/Sgt. Howard C. Brown, 1022 Hoover Ave., Hamilton, Ohio.
S/Sgt. Leo H. Drouin, Ladd Hill, North Carolina.
S/Sgt. Rudolph J. Cuginin, 49 Railroad Ave., Westerly, Rhode Island.

TAPS

WEBB, George H.

It is with regret that I inform you that George H. Webb passed away in March of 1979. He is survived by his wife and three sons.

It would have pleased him greatly to have known that the "boys" were sticking together.

sincerely,

Mary H. Webb, 1304 Burke Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21220

* * * * *

HOLDERN, Buck

Buck Holdern from Bedford, Va. died from a heart attack about 1980. He was in the 347th Squadron. He was in Walker Booth's ground crew.

* * * * *

JEFFERIS, EDWIN W.

Mail to Edwin Jefferis was returned. We have no details.

* * * * *

HAYES, ROBERT H.

I would appreciate it if you would let the other men know that Uncle Bob Hayes died Feb. 23, 1984. Thank you

Andrew Mandella, Westwood Apt. B-7 A8, McKeesport PA 15133

* * * * *

JACKSON, MALDEN M.

Jack died Wednesday, the 28th of March, at Veterans' Hospital in Loma Linda of massive internal bleeding.

He had been sick since February and had been in the hospital on the Base for nine days then, three of them in Intensive Care. They were able to control the bleeding then.

He had lost 35 pounds and was very weak, had no appetite and was very sick, but he never gave up.

Thought you might like to know.

Sincerely

Vi Jackson

* * * * *

SHIVE, VERNE E.

Verne died Feb 27, 1984 in V.A. Med. Hospital, Salisbury, NC., of a heart attack.

Mrs. Verne Shive, 2609 Pinewood Road, Gastonia NC, 28054

* * * * *

LARSON, FLOYD

Floyd passed away in Oct. 1980.

Thank you for your interest. I'm sure he would have enjoyed having the newsletter.

Sincerely

Mrs. James E. Larson
1333 N. Prospect, Colorado Springs CO 80903

* * * * *

WINGFIELD, JOHN W.

John W. Wingfield Jr.
507 Crosby Street
Chester, PA 19013
PVT U.S.A.R.
9 April 1984

Mr. George Coew
99th Bombardment Group Historical Society
2908 Aliso Drive., N.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87110

Sir,
The S/SGT John W. Wingfield that you are inquiring about is my father. I am so glad that there is a society that is about the 99th Bombardment Group as I have been in contact with the U.S. Air Force in the hope that I could obtain information on this illustrious unit.
I am sorry to announce that my father died on 27 December 1980 at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Elsmere, DE. He is interred in Chester Rural Cemetery in the "Soldiers Circle" section.
If it is possible I would like to become part of the 99th Bomb Group Historical Society, I am currently serving in the U.S. Army Reserve.
If you please I would like some information on the B-17F "Sweater Girl," my father was photographed in front of her after he completed his 50th mission on May 19, 1944. The target for that day was the oil refineries at Porto Marghera, Italy. Also, my father, I believe, appears in a photograph taken near the rear starboard waist window of a B-17 with the number 51 over the serial number 25010 on the tail, the date that this photograph was taken is unknown. When I inquired with the U.S. Air Force about this photograph they could not help me. I have enclosed copies of the photographs that I have mentioned.
If possible could you send me information on the 99th Bomb Group and the 416th Squadron. The reason I am asking for information on the 416th Squadron is that this was the squadron that my father flew with. Also, I would like to hear from people who knew my father the time he was overseas. Also please put me on your mailing list for the newsletter.
I sincerely remain

An admirer,
John W. Wingfield Jr.
John W. Wingfield Jr.
PVT U.S.A.R.

Zanesville, Ohio
Feb. 18, 1984

Dear Comrades:

I have received complimentary News Letter Vol. 4 No. 1, Jan. 1, 1984, and I thank you very much.

On page 16 of this News Letter there is a picture of two men with a request for identification. That I can do.

The man on the left is Joseph R. Carroll, T/Sgt. Radioman on the plane called Sugarfoot, shot down over Switzerland Oct. 1, 1943.

The man on the right with the big nose and hatchet face is myself, Marion D. Pratt, same crew.

Norris King, the third survivor was in the military hospital at Bad Ragaz, Switzerland.

In this picture, we were not being interrogated, but were attending the funeral of fourteen American airmen killed on Oct. 1, 1943. We, at the time of the picture were standing in front of the mass grave.

The funeral was the most beautiful that I have ever seen, with the greatest show of respect and love that it is possible for people from many countries to bestow on other human beings.

The funeral was held in Bad Ragaz on Oct. 5, 1943.

We were not from the 347th but the 416th Bomb Squadron.

Deepest respect and best wishes

M. Dale Pratt
627 Pershing Road
Zanesville, Ohio, 43701

Dale;

Letters like yours make it all worth-while.

* * * * *

geo.

We have been searching without success for a book which detailed the Bulgarian cooperation in the Nazi program. It seems that Bulgaria had not participated in the assembly of death trains until 1944, when the Bulgar government did begin gathering Jews for a shipment to some concentration camp. The US government sent word, according to this book, that this was unwise. The Bulgarian government continued. 48 hours later the B-17s appeared over Sofia and massaged the marshalling yards, which settled that argument. If anybody recalls the book, please let us know the title. Oh yes, the Bulgars protested the loss of civilian lives, for logic is logic.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL, JULY 1984

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THE 99th BOMBARDMENT GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2908 ALISO DRIVE NE
ALBUQUERQUE, N. M. 87110



J.O. Grizzell
15 Mohican Cove East
Lake Waynoka
Sardina OH 45171

1983

July
1984