



THE 99th Bomb Group Historical Society Newsletter



Vol. 5, No.2

Mar. 1, 1985

SOCIETY OFFICERS

PRESIDENT, Bernice Barr
TREASURER, Walter Butler
CHAPLAIN, Harvey Jennings

VICE-PRESIDENT, Lew Boatwright
HISTORIAN, George F. Coen
NEWSLETTER EDITOR, George F. Coen

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Here it is the end of January and George is insisting that I get this to him in a couple of days---Well I did hold him up in December so that I could give you the good news of the reduced airfares when flying to Seattle, WA in July for our reunion. Just^{as} I had just bought and had my tickets delivered on United's 30% reduction when lo and behold all airlines got very generous and all reduced their fares another 30% below the first reduction if you buy your tickets 30 days in advance. So you guessed it I immediately changed my first tickets for a further reduction. Now with these super reduced fares PLEASE GET YOUR TICKETS NOW--LET US MEET IN SEATTLE, WA IN JULY 25-28, 1985. We will be at the HYATT SEATTLE-call toll free (800) 228-9000 and make your reservations, or send in the reservation form that was in the last newsletter.

You may make your airline reservations by calling the Convention Desk of the airline you choose:

UNITED AIRLINES, as official carrier, call toll free (800) 521-4041, Mon-Fri 8:30-AM-8:00PM EST-give special account number 546M.

DELTA, call toll free (800) 241-6760-8:30AM-8:00PM EST-give account No. E0095.

EASTERN, call toll free (800) 327-1295 (Florida-800-432-1217) identify NO. EZ7P23. Your travel agent can also get tickets for you also-if fares are raised be sure to go to the convention desk for reservations.

Joe Chance is working at long distance DETROIT to SEATTLE to make detailed arrangements. He says that everything will be ready when we arrive-just get there-and he will give more details latter.

Alwyn Lloyd returned the photo's I sent him and said "One of the pictures showed the tail markings for "BAD PENNY", an aircraft which is one of the subjects in a painting being done by a Boeing artist especially for the 50th Anniversary. The tail markings will add an interesting touch to the painting. Thanks again for your assistance....."

There is a story and a history behind each name placed on our aircraft-we would like to get those stories and pass them along to you through the newsletters. By accident as I looked through the pictures that I sent Al Lloyd I found the interesting facts about the wayward airplane named "WEFT". PETE BROMMEL reported, "This B-17 was "STOLEN" from 99th in summer 1945. It had 4 new engines but was very unstable therefore unfit for combat. One of the pilots of the 99th BG, Sq unknown said at a certain time of the day-this B-17 would on the line at 99th BG Foggia airfield with engines running. At precisely 1300 hrs. this A/C, on the line, with engines turning over was picked up by a former pilot of the original Cadre (99th BG) and flown to 15th AF HDQRS, Bari, Italy. There it was stripped of turrets, armor etc. This B-17 was named "WEFT" During briefings as ident. A/C were flashed on a screen, Pilots and Crews were supposed to ident. the quick flash of the enemy A/C-As we all jokingly yelled "Wrong Every F-- Time" 1946 this 200 kt B-17 was scraped at Bari, Italy." Thanks Pete, you may have broken the ice and encouraged others to send in their stories.

In a note that I just received from Gen Uppie he stated that he did not want us to change the newsletter-he wants us to continue to "report the first hand story of the group adventures and stories before its too late. People are dying all the time and personal stories are the most interesting historically. I would hate to see the newsletter shoved aside....." General Uppie you really hit the nail on the head! We need those personal stories, please send them to us-we, George, might even publish it. Hear from you soon?

I also received a letter from Ben Franklin, Executive Director, of the 15th AF Assoc. He asks that we join, no he didn't, he invites us to join the 15th AF Assoc. We will include an application form on the next to last page for your use. I put my initials in the corner so that Ben will know it comes from us. Many of us are already members.

Since my corner was so long last time George had to remove item from the letter. So I will stop now and give him extra space- So long for now- **LET'S MEET IN SEATTLE!**

Your friend,
Bernie
7413 Vista Del Arroyo
Albuquerque, New Mexico
87109

NEWS, DUES & VIEWS

We have just furnished 99BG reunion notices to 35 publications.
See you in Seattle. gfe

The 17th Bomb Group informs us that in the present-day Air Forces the navigator no longer dispenses flare-tubes full of frozen urine over the target. That's progress???

Comrades, if your address label reads 1984 it is time to send some funds to Walter. We will use the dues to tell the world that the 99th was the only non-drinking, non-womanizing outfit in the service. Geo.

Do you remember the time, probably in July 1943, when the First Fighter Group failed to come up from Cape Bon to accompany the 99th on a little trip to Foggia? About 50 miles inside Italy we saw about 100 single-engined aircraft below us, keeping pace and climbing. They sure were welcome, at least until they had climbed to where we could see that they were not the First Fighter. When we saw the well-known black crosses we were not so enthusiastic. We could see the pilots' heads as they rode out there at 1000 yards. The Germans' heads were about half as large as the bead of the front sight, so I took one ring of deflection ahead of one pilot and aimed at his head for a burst or two. This did not scatter the formation as I had hoped and expected, so I finally decided to save my ammunition for the main event. As it happened I did not get many shots at eleven o'clock and had ammo to spare, but all our rear-firing guns had lots of targets. I lent a few hundred rounds to Bradfute for the top turret, making the exchange while we were near Foggia, but we were not attacked after the target. And now, comrades, is that how you remember it?

STATEMENT 1984

EXPENSES	Printing of Newsletter	\$ 2700.50
	Typing for Newsletter	1176.32
	Miscellaneous and Research	907.24
	Postmaster, stamps	670.90
	File Cabinet	80.00
	Total	<u>5534.96</u>
INCOME	Dues and Donations	5832.92
	Bank balance, 31 Dec. 1984	1320.74

FUSES

The German and Italian shells were fused to burst at a predetermined distance; hence one might fly right through a line of 20mm or 30mm shells bursting one after the other in a lovely artistic line. The American fuses, some of them made by my family at Arkansas Ordnance Plant, instead burst upon impact. The German shells would sometimes pass through two layers of aluminum and burst on the far side of the plane, but the American and British shells would burst within the plane, as we found out when attacked by P-38s or Spitfires.

Your editor has returned to the work force as a result of disgustingly good health. I have engineering supervision of a 240-acre luxury development right here in Albuquerque near our house. We expect to construct two large hotels in time for the next Albuquerque reunion of the 99th. Thanks to all well-wishers.
George

Hans-Heiri Stapfer
Bergstrasse 35

CH-8810 Horgen/ZH

SWITZERLAND

Horgen, 3rd October 1984

Dear George:

First, the latest Newsletter contains a lot of very useful information about 99th Bomb Group. I really enjoy to read all the stories about the men who flew with this outstanding Group in North Africa and later in Italy.

The reason I write to you is not SUGAR FOOT, or 99th Bomb Group planes in Switzerland. It is a mystery about a particular B-17, nicknamed SHADY LADY.

A lot was written about her, but it is still unknown with which Bomb Group flew this aircraft missions. The Bundesarchiv held a lot of pictures about this lady, but none will tell us something about the Unit of this plane.

First, I believed that the plane belonged to the 486th or 398th Bomb Group, since these units used a two letter code on the fuselage. Only the "3" on the fuselage is fact, but it could be a 0 or an R, or another digit.

Since any research with this two Bomb Groups was unsuccessful, I believe that the plane belonged to the 99th BG. It is a silver Boeing B-17 G. The 99th Bomb Group used also sometimes a two letter code on its planes.

So I am very interested that you could publish my photo in one of the next Journals. I would be very glad to hear from anyone from the 99th BG concerning this plane.

Sincerely,

Heiri

Told by S/Sgt Marion D. Pratt

As we approached Italy, the sky was becoming very cloudy. When we turned inland, the ground batteries opened fire on us, but we ignored them and flew on. Shortly after, a couple of German fighters appeared, but didn't cause much trouble. We fired a few rounds at them and they left.

Soon we were flying through dense cloud formations. Whenever we found an opening in the clouds, we could see that we were flying over mountains.

It seemed that we flew for hours through the clouds. We saw no enemy planes. Then at 12:15, just as the sky began to clear, a formation of enemy fighters appeared at our level, which was about 19,00 ft. We could tell that we were over the alps, because of the great height of the mountains.

It wasn't long after we sighted the enemy that we discovered that they meant business. They flew into position directly in front of our formation, and at 12:25, they made a head-on attack.

We were flying on the extreme left of our formation, and the enemy singled our plane out to concentrate on. The first attack was made from three to five planes, one following the other and firing all the way.

On the first attack, our ship was hit by many machine gun and cannon-shells. It must have caused a lot of damage to the front of the plane.

A minute or two later, the next attack came, one was seen diving at us from above. This time we got everything, and the front, the waist, and the tail was riddled with bullets and cannon shells were bursting everywhere.

Suddenly the plane gave a lurch and I was thrown to the floor. This may have saved my life, for just as I went down, a great many bullets went through the waist and into the tail.

On this attack, I believe that most of the five men in the front of the plane were wounded or killed. I also think that our tail gunner was killed by the same burst.

The plane was on fire, but I did not know it at the time. In the meantime we had also crossed the Swiss border and they were firing at us also. I found this out later from a Swiss officer.

Just as I was trying to get on my feet again, the plane exploded. I can't say for sure whether it was the gasoline or the oxygen that exploded.

With the explosion the plane nosed forward and started toward the earth at a tremendous speed. The plane was going down so fast that King and I were pinned to the top of the plane in the waist. I was quite sure at that time that it was all over for us.

Suddenly, what was left of the plane, or at least the part that King and I were in, leveled off a little, and we fell back to the floor. Everything was a turning and twisting dream. Equipment, ammunition, and everything was flying through the air. I was lying on the floor on my back, waiting for the plane to hit the ground at any second.

My mind began to clear a little, and I started to wonder if I might have time to get out. Through a haze, I saw the waist window, with the gun off the mount. I summoned all my strength and rolled toward the window. I reached it and placing my foot at the edge of the window, I shoved myself clear and out into space.

Just as I left the plane, something struck me. I don't know if it was a piece of flying wreckage or the tail, but it turned me over and over and then I was away and free.

I grabbed for my ripcord and pulled it, but nothing happened, the chute did not open or even come out of the pack.

I was wearing a chest chute and the pack was on my chest. I was falling toward the earth on my back with my feet slightly higher than my hand.

When the chute failed to open, I started digging at a corner of the pack with my gloved fingers. A moment or two, but it seemed like ages, and I would see some silk showing. I gave it a yank and then the chute came out of the pack with a swish.

Almost instantly, the chute opened, and I was jerked upright with a terrible force. I felt pains shoot through every part of my body.

For a second or two I held my eyes closed and wondered if it were true that I was still alive. I was thanking god that I was.

I started looking for other chutes to see how many of my comrades had gotten out. I saw just one chute about 500 ft. below me, whom I thought was King. It was then that I noticed at what a great height I still was. I must have been between ten and twelve thousand feet when my chute opened.

There was not a single sound of any kind. There were no planes to be seen or heard, and I did not seem to be going down at all but just hanging in space, swinging back and forth. I was swinging so much that I began to fear that I might tip over in the chute.

As my head began to clear and the shock wore off I began to notice more things. I could see that I was going down in a large beautiful valley, with a large river running through it. At this time I was hanging directly above the river. I began to fear that all were dead but the two of us.

I could see wreckage from our plane floating towards the earth, bits of wings, tails, and other parts floating through the air. By this time the main parts of the plane had crashed and was burning against a hillside on the left of the river.

My helmet was gone, but I still had my oxygen mask on. I reached up and pulled it off, and after thinking second, let it drop towards the earth. I knew that I'd never have use for it again. I thought sure that I was going down in Germany.

It seemed that we were in the air for a terribly long time, but I could see the river and the earth getting larger and larger. By this time I could see that we were going to land well on the left bank of the river. Finally, the other chute hit the ground in a nice open place, but I saw that whoever it was must have been hurt badly, because he made no effort to get up and the chute seemed to drag him a short distance.

Now the ground was rushing up to meet me, and I could see that if I didn't turn around, I was going to hit the ground backwards. I made a frantic effort to turn, but failed, and then I hit the ground.

I hit the ground backwards, and with an awful jolt. I went over on my back and head and on over to my knees. I got up instantly, and started unhooking my chute. Then I heard a plane and thought of course that it was German. I thought that he might shoot me on the ground, so I started rolling my chute up so he couldn't see it. Then I didn't hear the plane anymore, so I started over to my friend who had landed about 150 yards from me. I had taken perhaps twenty or thirty steps when I saw some soldiers in green running towards me. Of course I thought they were Germans.

As the soldiers came up to me, I told them that my comrade was down in the valley a little ways, and that he was hurt. Two or three of them could speak very good English, so they understood and we all started to my friend.

We had gone about half-way when one of the soldiers said, "You know that you are in Switzerland?" I can't explain just how very pleasantly surprised I was to hear that. I had been thinking that it was strange that they acted so friendly.

When we came in sight of my friend, we saw that there were about twenty people around him. There were soldiers and civilians, woman and a child or two. They were bending over him, and I was sure he must be badly hurt. When we got there the people let us through, and I saw that it was not King but Carroll.

His face was all bloody, but he greeted us with a smile, and then he told me that he was not hurt badly. I almost cried, and to be truthful, maybe I did a little.

There they dressed our wounds, I had one cut on my nose right between my eyes and had quite a lot of blood from that cut on my face.

They gave us cigarettes, and then brought us a cup of coffee and a small shot of cognac. They asked us a million questions and made a record of it. There were a lot of questions that we could not answer, because we had orders not to tell.

They fixed a cot for us on the porch, and we lay down. Carroll's leg had begun to get stiff, and my back and hip gave me a lot of pain.

It was while we were there that an officer brought the good news that another one had gotten out of the plane and had a slight brain concussion. He did not know who it was, but said that he was going to be alright. He said that he would find out who it was, and an hour or so later he came back and told us that it was Sergeant King. We were all very happy to know that even one more had escaped the plane and would be alright.

Many people were waiting outside the building to get a glimpse of us. They had never seen an American soldier before.

The officer told us that Joe and I were going to eat supper with them and that we could have anything we wanted to drink, beer, whiskey, cognac, or wine. We had not had a good drink of beer for months so our mouths began to water in anticipation, but, alas, we were not to get the beer.

An officer and a soldier came for us in a car. They took us to another village named Bad Ragaz two or three miles away. We were taken into a large building and into another office. By this time Joe could hardly walk, and the soldiers had to help him. My own back and hip were getting more painful all the time. In the office more officers gave us cigarettes and asked a lot more questions. Then they told us that King was in the hospital there, and we would have to go there also for a check up.

A few minutes and we were back in the car and on our way to the hospital. Everywhere people were staring at us and crowding around to get a look at us. We must have been a sight with patches, dirty torn clothes on and still traces of blood on our faces. I know that Joe was a sight and I doubt that I looked a bit better, although I had fewer patches on my face.

We soon arrived at the hospital and were taken to the room where King was. When I saw him there with a grin on his face I came very close to shedding tears again. He looked very pale, but very much alive, and would remain among the living for a long time to come.

The doctor and nurse gave Joe and I orders to take our clothes off and get into bed. The nurse gave us a night shirt which would have been way too big for Tony Galento. We got in bed and a few minutes later the nurse brought in our supper. We had fresh milk to drink for the first time since leaving the States.

The three of us lay there and talked over the whole horrible mess. King told us why we had never seen his parachute. After talking it over we came to the conclusion that I was the first one out of the plane. Joe got out a little later, and that is why he was below me in the chute.

When the plane exploded and started down Joe, who was at his gun in the radio room, like Norris and I floated on the roof of the plane until it leveled off a little. Then a life raft that we carried in the radio room fouled him up. It was on top of him. He finally freed himself and opened the radio room door that led into the bomb-bay.

Either Lt. English or Lt. Patten had seen what was coming. Probably when the plane started burning one of them opened the bomb-bay doors and salvoed the bombs out. This saved Joe's life. After getting the doors open Joe got into the bomb-bay and dropped out through the open doors.

Now the reason why we never saw Norris' chute. When he and I fell back on the floor when the plane leveled off things were falling and tearing apart everywhere. Things were falling on top of him. He thinks that something hit him and stunned him. Then he tried to get out of the plane. A wing must have been torn off and the plane was going down on its side. There was one waist window up and one down. He saw the upper window and tried to climb up to it, he slipped and fell back. He got up and tried it again, and again fell back. Then he saw the lower window and managed to jump out. He just barely got out in time. He jumped and pulled the rip-chord to his chute, and it opened instantly. The chute had hardly more than opened when he landed in a tree very close to the main wreckage of the plane. His chute hung in the tree and broke his fall. He managed to grab a limb, free himself from his chute and climb to the ground.

Even the people that ran to the wrecked plane had not seen his chute open and did not know that he was there. Of course he also thought he was in Germany and his first impulse was to try to escape. He soon discovered that he would not have the strength to do this, so decided to give himself up.

They soon had him in the hospital and was being given the same excellent treatment that they gave to all of us.

We talked over everything again and again, but it was painful to discuss the other boys. We knew in our hearts that they were dead. All of us had been together constantly since we made our first training flight at Boise, Idaho on February 11, 1943. We had all gotten on splendidly. A finer, braver bunch of fellows never lived.

We could not sleep that night, the whole painful mess kept swimming before our eyes. The nurse came in and gave us each a sleeping tablet. Even this did not work, so later we were given another. Finally one by one we dropped off to sleep. We all felt better mentally, but not one of us could move with any ease. I was better than the other two, and I could hardly raise up in bed.

We had our breakfast of hot cocoa and hard toasted bread that the Swiss soldiers call Zeigel (shingles). They were good, but we felt that it was a proper name for them.

A little later the doctor came in and confirmed our fears. They had found all the boys, and it hurts now even to say it: they were all dead.

This is the end of our twenty sixth and last mission. The Germans killed seven of the finest friends any man ever had.

They killed them, but the result to the Germans will be the same. They will pay and pay and pay. The end for them will still be ---- DEFEAT. For our boys ----VICTORY

G. F. Ruegg-Stoecklin

Tel. 061 9113 40

4410 Liestal - Grünhagstr.



Liestal, December 10th, 1984

Dear Mr. Coen,

It was a great surprise for me to hear something about SUGARFOOT after forty years. The fate bothers me for ever and ever including what happened to the flying fortress in Switzerland during World War II.

For you to collect all reminders of the 99 Bomb Group in your NEWSLETTER is of great merit and I study the facts with great interest and especially what happened on the historical day of October 1st, 1943. I think that the question on page 2 (NEWSLETTER) asks for an answer.

I will clear this question in a few sentences, "Something about Swiss Neutrality". I send this article to Mr. Heiri Stapfer for translation and I hope you will publish these facts in your next NEWSLETTER:

I am glad to become a member of your esteemed 99 Bomb Group Historical Society and I look forward to receiving your subsequent NEWSLETTERS.

A happy festive season to you and all your members.

Sincerely,

Ruegg

Enclosure

Membership application

1985 dues \$ 10

Hans-Heiri Stapfer
Bergstrasse 35

CH-8810 Horgen/ZH

SWITZERLAND

Horgen, 3rd October 1984

Dear George:

First, the latest Newsletter contains a lot of very useful information about 99th Bomb Group. I really enjoy to read all the stories about the men who flew with this outstanding Group in North Africa and later in Italy.

The reason I write to you is not SUGAR FOOT, or 99th Bomb Group planes in Switzerland. It is a mystery about a particular B-17, nicknamed SHADY LADY.

A lot was written about her, but it is still unknown with which Bomb Group flew this aircraft missions. The Bundesarchiv held a lot of pictures about this lady, but none will tell us something about the Unit of this plane.

First, I believed that the plane belonged to the 486th or 398th Bomb Group, since these units used a two letter code on the fuselage. Only the "3" on the fuselage is fact, but it could be a O or an R, or another digit.

Since any research with this two Bomb Groups was unsuccessful, I believe that the plane belonged to the 99th BG. It is a silver Boeing B-17 G. The 99th Bomb Group used also sometimes a two letter code on its planes.

So I am very interested that you could publish my photo in one of the next Journals. I would be very glad to hear from anyone from the 99th BG concerning this plane.

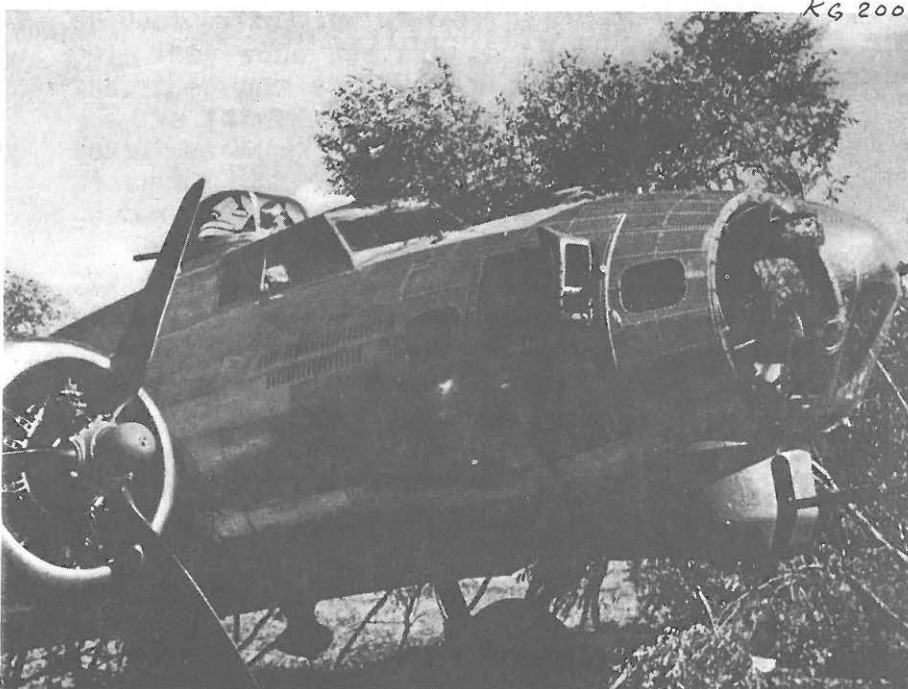
KG 200

Dear old Kampfgeschwader 200.

B-17 G - Shady Lady, picture taken somewhere in Germany.

This a/c flew later with KG 200 and was probably shot down by her own aa-gun on 9th April 1945.

Friendly Fire, you know.



PRESS RELEASE

FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.

THRU: 5th Wing (US)

Nov. 5, 1943

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

AN ADVANCED NORTH AFRICAN AIR BASE--Celebrating 100 missions during which it dropped 12,956,320 pounds of bombs on enemy targets, a Flying Fortress heavy bombardment group in North Africa recently received the plaudits of top air leaders in the theater, including Lt. Gen. Carl Spaats, chief of the newly formed 15th Air Force.

Before assembled personnel of the group and guests, Gen. Spaats told the group that its record since beginning operations March 31, 1943, was "good."

"I hope," he said, "that your next hundred missions, if it takes that to win, will be just as good."

Also congratulating the group was Maj. Gen. James H. Doolittle, popular chief of strategic operations in North Africa, who summed up the reasons for the group's success.

"It was due," he said, "to proper training in the States, next to the skill and courage of your flyers, next to your leadership, and last, but just as important as all the others, to the mechanics who keep the planes in the air."

His tribute to leadership referred to the group's commanding officer, capable, 38-year-old Col. Fay B. Upthegrove of Row, Pa. Col. Upthegrove, who has flown 50 missions and will go back to the States for a rest before returning to active duty, reviewed the records of his group, pointing out that in piling up 100 missions the Fortresses had ranged over North Africa, Pantelleria, Sicily, Sardinia, Italy, Southern France, Austria, Germany and Greece.

Attention: Omaha, Neb. Papers

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE -- Decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with nine Oak Leaf Clusters, Major Henry R. Burrell, 25, of 5002 Parker St., Omaha, Neb., has completed his allotted 50 bombing missions as pilot of a ASAAF Flying Fortress and commanding officer of a Fortress squadron.

Burrell will be sent back to the States for a rest. He was one of the outstanding pilots and leaders of his bombardment group, and was awarded the DFC for "endurance and fortitude on many high altitude missions which have resulted in great damage to enemy personnel, shipping and military installations."

Flying lead ship, Burrell had the distinction of directing his group in battle on the occasion of its 100th mission. He began combat flying March 12, 1943, with a raid on Sousse, Tunisia, and finished up November 18 with a mission to the Eleusia Airdrome at Athens, Greece. In between were smashing raids on targets in Italy -- including the historic Rome attack -- Sicily, Sardinia, Pantelleria, France and Austria.

The pilot recalls best the mission of September 5 to Viterbo Airdrome, Italy, -- one for which he has been recommended for the Oak Leaf Cluster to the DFC. On that day Burrell's ship was attacked by enemy fighters whose fire wounded two crewmen seriously, frayed the control cables, knocked out the radio equipment and damaged the landing flaps. The major managed to get away from the fighters -- while his gunners blasted down three -- and landed safely in Sicily where his wounded could be treated.

Burrell flew overseas February 4, 1943, as a captain and squadron operations officer. Soon he was entrusted with leading his squadron in battle, and later his entire Fortress group. He became squadron commanding officer September 17, and was promoted to major September 27.

A native of Omaha, Burrell was graduated from Central High School in 1936, and in 1940 received a B.S. degree in economics at Creighton University. He went immediately into the Air Force, enlisting as a cadet June 28, 1940, and winning his wings at Maxwell Field, Ala., Feb. 7, 1941. He is unmarried.

Vernon E. Fairbanks,
Major, Air Corps.,
S-2, 99th Bomb Gp.

Press Release: Cutlines
From: 99th Bomb Gp.
Thru: 5th Wing (US)
Nov. 25, 1943

Official Army Air Forces photo
By S/Sgt. Leonard Y. Trapp

From a 15th Air Force Bomber Base -- A formation of USAAF Flying Fortresses of the 15th Air Force wing toward a target in France against a background of heavy clouds. The Fort in the foreground is "El Diablo," a veteran of many high-altitude missions. Note its belly turret guns in position for action.

ATTENTION: Minneapolis, Minn., Star-Journal, Tribune
University of Minnesota Daily

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE -- 1st Lt. Howard J. Blum, 28-year-old AAF Flying Fortress navigator and one-time Minneapolis high school football star, who lives at 2606 Morgan Ave. N., Minneapolis, Minn., had completed 50 bombing mission with the 15th U.S. Air Force.

Blum began combat flying June 28, 1943, with a raid on Leghorn in Italy, and flew his 50th Mission December 19 to Innsbruck, Austria. He had been awarded the Air Medal.

A native of Minneapolis, Blum was graduated in 1932 from North High School, where he starred in football, and also played at the University of Minnesota which he attended from 1936 to 1937.

The navigator, who is single, was an employee at the main post office in Minneapolis until entering the Air Forces as a cadet Feb. 23, 1942. He won his navigator's wings Feb. 29, 1943 at Hondo Field in Texas.

Press Release: Cutlines
From: 99th Bomb Gp.
Thru: 5th Wing (US)
Nov. 26, 1943

Official Army Air Force Photo
By Cpl. D. F. Sehon

From a 15th Air Force Bomber Base -- Against an ominous sky, USAAF Flying Fortresses of the 15th Air Force swing over their home coast and head out to sea enroute to a target in southern France. Weather seldom stops the big Forts. If there's a hole in the clouds over the target, they'll drop their bombs.

--bb--

The photos are not readable, but we thought that you would enjoy the titles. *geo.*

Dec. 2, 1943

Attention: Quincy, Fla., Papers

From a 15th Air Force Bomber Base -- On his way back to the States is 1st Lt. Edward P. May, 23, of 430 W. Jackson St., Quincy, Fla., a USAAF Flying Fortress bombardier who has completed his allotted 50 missions with the 15th Air Force.

May began combat flying June 30, 1943, with a raid on Boco di Falco Airdrome, Sicily, and finished up November 29 with a mission to Fiano Romano Airdrome, Italy. He has been awarded the Air Medal with nine Oak Leaf Clusters.

A native of Quincy, May was graduated from Gadsden County High School in 1938 and attended the University of Michigan two and a half years until 1941. Unmarried, he enlisted as a cadet March 2, 1942, and won his bombardier's wings October 10 of the same year at Albuquerque, N.M.

Press Release
From: 99th Bomb Gp.
Thru: 5th Wing (US)
Dec. 4, 1943

Attention: Milwaukee, Wis. Papers

From a 15th Air Force Bomber Base -- Staff Sergeant Clare C. Kaschinska, 27-year-old USAAF Flying Fortress waist gunner of 2768 N. Oakland Ave., Milwaukee, Wis., today was officially credited with destroying a Messerschmitt 109 fighter plane -- one of six shot down by his Fortress group in a raid on Turin December 1.

The gunner's victory -- his first -- was substantiated by two other members of his crew who saw the enemy aircraft go down in flames.

"The enemy plane came in at 3 o'clock high and fell off to a skid at 6 o'clock," Kaschinska said in describing the aerial battle. "I first saw him at 700 yards and began firing at 500. I pumped about 150 rounds until he burst into flames from cowling to tail and started down."

The gunner is the son of Mr. and Mrs. August Kaschinska of Nocodah, Wis., and is married to Eleanore Kaschinska of Milwaukee.

--bb--

Dec. 4, 1943

Attention: New Bedford, Mass., Standard
Fall River, Mass., Herald

From a 15th Air Force Bomber Base -- Technical Sergeant Russell S. Manchester, 23-year-old USAAF Flying Fortress engineer-gunner from Westport/Point, Mass., today was officially credited with destroying a Messerschmitt 109 fighter plane -- his first victory -- in the skies over Turin December 1.

"The enemy plane came in straight from 7 o'clock high," Manchester said in describing the battle, "and I started firing when he was within range. He came to within 300 yards and then rolled over and started smoking." The other members of Manchester's crew saw the enemy ship crash on the ground below.

The gunner, a former Westport High School baseball star, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer B. Manchester of Westport Point, and is married to Bertha J. Beaulieu of Westport.

--bb--

Dec. 2, 1943

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE--A sidelight of the December 1 USAAF Flying Fortress raid on Turin was the story of a Fortress pilot who, forced to turn back short of the target because of engine trouble, picked out a German held airdrome for his own objective and blasted a hangar and three planes to bits.

Executor of this successful piece of individual bombing was 2nd Lt. Donald E. Frye, 23, of 1910 Lexington Ave., Lawrenceville, Ill. He is a veteran of 34 mission.

Turning back from Turin, Frye headed south for home. Near the coast he passed Villanova Airdrome.

"I spotted three planes parked in front of a hangar," the pilot said. "Two were pursuit ships and the other was a big, multi-engined transport."

Frye circled and started a bomb run on an axis calculated to cover the planes and hangar. The bombardier, 1st Lt. Earl W. Cork, 24 of Clarksburg, W. Va., sighted carefully and sent the bombs away.

"It was a perfect pattern," said Frye. "The hangar and the airplanes just blew up. I only wish I had had a camera along to prove it."

--bb--

VERNON E. FAIRBANKS,
Major, Air Corps,
S-2, 99th Bomb Gp.

PRESS RELEASE
FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
THRU: 5th Wing (US)
Dec. 4, 1943

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

ATTENTION: Easton, Md., Star-Democrat

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE--Sergeant Norris L. Harrison, 21 year old USAAF Flying Fortress tail gunner from Easton, Md., today was officially credited with destroying a Messerschmitt 109 fighter plane--one of six shot down by his Fortress group in a raid on Turin December 1.

Harrison's victory--his first in aerial combat--was substantiated by two other members of his crew who saw the plane crash on the ground.

"The enemy plane came in from 6 o'clock level," Harrison said in describing the battle. "I started firing when he was about 1000 yards away and followed him until he was 60 yards below me. He went out of control and headed down.

The gunner, a former track, softball, soccer and basketball star at Easton High School, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred S. Harrison of Easton.

--bb--

Dec. 4, 1943

ATTENTION: Nogales, Ariz., Herald
Nogales, Ariz., International

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE--Staff Sergeant James A. Mabante, 23 year old USAAF Flying Fortress waist gunner of 211 Loma St., Nogales, Ariz., today was officially credited with destroying a Messerschmitt 109 fighter plane--one of six shot down by his Fortress group in a raid on Turin December 1.

Mabante's victory--his first in aerial combat--was substantiated by another member of his crew who saw the plane crash in flames.

"The enemy plane came in at 3 o'clock low, and I first saw him at 1300 yards out," Mabante said in describing the battle. "I started firing when he was at 900 yards and continued until he was within 500 yards, firing about 100 rounds. The plane rolled over and caught on fire along the fuselage and started down."

The gunner, a former Nogales High School basketball and baseball player, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Mabante of Nogales.

--bb--

Dec. 4, 1943

ATTENTION: San Jose, Cal., News, Mercury-Herald

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE--Sgt. Joseph R. Caggiano, 20 year old USAAF Flying Fortress waist gunner of 652 Auserais Ave., San Jose, Cal., today was officially credited with destroying a Messerschmitt 109 fighter plane in the skies over Turin December 1.

Caggiano's victory--his first in aerial combat--was substantiated by another member of his crew who saw the enemy aircraft crash to the ground.

"The enemy plane came in from 7 o'clock high, and about 700 yards out," the gunner said in describing the battle. "I fired about 75 rounds while he came in to about 200 yards. He started smoking, and the last I saw of him he was headed straight down."

The gunner, who was a farmer before the war, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Caggiano of San Jose.

VERNON E. FAIRBANKS,
Major, Air Corps,
S-2, 99th Gp.

PRESS RELEASE
FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
THRU: 5th Wing (US)
Dec. 4, 1943

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE--Sergeant Hayward B. Steele, 37 year old USAAF Flying Fortress ball turret gunner of 6629 Jackson St., Pittsburgh, Pa., today was officially credited with destroying a Messerschmitt 109 fighter plane in the skies over Turin December 1.

Steele's victory--his first in aerial combat--was substantiated by another member of his bomber crew who saw the enemy aircraft crash on the ground and explode.

"The enemy plane came in from 6 o'clock low, and firing all the way," Steele said in describing the battle. "I fired 75 rounds into his belly at 400 yards and continued firing at maximum until he straightened out.

"At 9 o'clock he nosed downwards at a 45 degree angle with white and black smoke pouring out. He continued in a steep dive and crashed."

--bb--

Dec. 16, 1943

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE--Sergeant Max C. Goodwin, 22, of 497 L Street, Idaho Falls, Id., an AAF Flying Fortress ball turret gunner, has been credited officially with destroying an enemy fighter plane--one of three shot down by his Fortress group in a raid on the Eleusis Airdrome at Athens, Greece, December 14.

Goodwin's victory--his first, was verified by two other members of his crew who saw the fighter exploded after its pilot had bailed out. The plane was one of Germany's speedy Focke Wulf 190's.

"The enemy made a pass at our group below and to the left and then swept up to the level of my plane," Goodwin said in describing the battle. "I started firing when he was about 800 yards out--and then my guns jammed. I reloaded fast while he continued to come in, and then a few more rounds sent him down smoking."

The gunner is the son of Mrs. George Goodwin of Idaho Falls.

--bb--

Dec. 22, 1943

Bursting with pride, "Bugs Bunny," who adorns the side of an oil-splattered 15th Air Force Flying Fortress, wears the Purple Heart over the spot where he got shot by a German fighter plane. Ford crew members conferred the "decoration" on him, plus the Purple Heart and Air Medal ribbons on his chest. The impish Bugs, namesake of the movie cartoon, has seen this Fortress safely through 30 missions.

--bb--

(Photo)

Dec. 16, 1943

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE--Sergeant Jack V. Pipkin, 21 year old AAF flying Fortress tail gunner from Oklahoma City, Okla., (1004 West 25th St.) has been credited officially with destroying a Messerschmitt 109 fighter plane during a raid on the Eleusis Airdrome at Athens, Greece, December 14.

Pipkin's victory--his first in aerial combat--was verified by another member of his crew who saw the enemy plane go down in flames and explode.

"The enemy attached from by left and slightly below the level of our plane." Pipkin said in describing the battle. "I started firing when he was about 800 yards away and continued blazing until he reached 600 yards. Suddenly the plane rolled over on its left wing and exploded. The right wing flew off and the plane tumbled down out of control and burning.

The gunner, a former University of Oklahoma student, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter L. Pipkin of Oklahoma City.

VERNON E. FAIRBANKS,
Major, Air Corps,
S-2, 99th Bomb Gp.

PRESS RELEASE
FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
THRU: 5th Wing (US)
Dec. 16, 1943

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE--Sergeant Arthur K. Lincoln, 24 year old AAF Flying Fortress ball turret gunner from Trenton, N.J., (RFD 45) has been credited officially with destroying a Messerschmitt 109 Fighter plane--one of three enemy pursuit shot down by his Fortress group in a raid on the Eleusis Airdrome at Athens, Greece, December 14.

Lincoln's victory--his first in aerial combat--was verified by another member of his crew who saw the enemy go down in flames and crash on the ground.

"Three ME 109's in perfect V formation and all firing attacked from slightly below our level," Lincoln said in describing the battle. "I picked out the nearest one and fired until he shot under our airplane. When he came out on the other side he was smoking and went into a slow spin in flames. I was so busy with the rest of those Jerries that I didn't have time to think much about getting him until some time after he went down."

Lincoln has a wife living at 135 Dickenson St., Trenton.

--bb--

Dec. 19, 1943

FROM A 15th AIR FORCE BOMBER BASE--When AAF Flying Fortresses raided Innsbruck, Austria today, one pilot flying his 50th mission waded into a horde of enemy fighters whose fire crippled one engine and knocked out a second, but he came home and landed safely despite the fact that propellor flew off just as his wheels were about to touch earth.

The pilot was 1st Lt. Thomas J. Davis, 24 of Piedmont, MO. He was flying lead ship in his Fortress II squadron when the huge bombers turned off the target and were met by a force of 50 Messerschmitt 109's.

"From my seat I saw a good 15 or 20 fighters and I knew it would be hot," Davis said.

"Flak was coming up and some of it hit us. And then seven ME 109's wheeled in on us."

Fighter fire hit the No. 1 (left outboard) engine and tore a hole in its gas tank, but it kept churning. A 20 mm. shell crashed through the No. 4 (right outboard) engine, tore a 12-inch hole and lodged in the wing.

"The oil pressure on No. 4 dropped to zero," David said. "The cowling flew off and for a few minutes the airplane vibrated so hard I couldn't read an instrument in the cockpit. Right about that time we were all ready to get out in a hurry. I gave the order to prepare to bail out, but the engine smoothed out a little and the propellor began to wind-mill under air pressure.

"Meanwhile the fuel was running out of No. 1 gas tank. It quit at 50 gallons and I guess the shell went in at that level. Anyway the engineer had to pump gas from another tank all the way home to keep at least 30 gallons in No. 1."

All this time Davis was losing speed, causing his squadron behind him to forge ahead. The enemy fighters began to fade as more and more of them went down in flames under the Fortress guns.

"My boys got at least two Jerries and maybe more," the pilot said. "My air speed dropped to 135 MPH and the squadron dropped back to cover me. Then we settled down to sweat out the windmilling propellor, which I figured would fly off any time. Just in case it went the wrong way, I ordered the boys in the nose of the ship to get back in the waist."

The crippled Fort lumbered back to its base and circled for a landing. As it leveled toward the runway the useless propellor whirled off its shaft, sailed down and out toward the wingtip and crashed harmlessly to the ground.

"And after that I'm ready to go home," Davis said. After 50 missions, the pilot is eligible to return to the States for a rest.

--bb--

VERNON E. FAIRBANKS,
Major, Air Corps,
S-2, 99th Bomb Gp.

We continue the extracts of the Official microfilms of the 99BG War Diaries. These records are not in chronological order on the film, and there is repetition, but it is mostly good stuff.

Special Account

The night of May 3, 1943, was one to live long in the memory of the 99th. The target was Bizerte, the weather terrible. Nobody could find the target. Reluctantly the ships turned back with their bombs, crews hoping they'd be able to find their home field. Only three ships did, others landed at alternate fields; but from four ships came tales of heroism, courage and death.

Two whole crews -- 20 men -- "cracked silk" after they were unable to find a place to set down. The pilot of one, 1st Lt. Edward P. McLaughlin, Richmond, Cal., caught a brief glimpse of a North African town, made a perfect bombing run and dropped most of his men down the main street. The pilot of the other ship, Capt. Max E. Davis, of Pasadena, Cal., scattered his men over the North African countryside. But by truck, mule, donkey or foot all 20 men made it back to their base. One suffered a broken leg, another five broken ribs from the parachute jump.

A third ship had a tougher time. The pilot, 1st Lt. Sidney E. Buck, of Kensington, Md., and his crew decided not to bail out, but to ride down their ship laden with 12 500-pound demolition bombs. They flew around until the gas was almost gone. Once they touched a mountain slope and part of the horizontal stabilizer was clipped off. Then a lightning flash brightened up the only safe landing place in miles around. Lt. Buck started to let down. His landing lights wouldn't work. Vaguely he saw a mountain in his path, managed to zoom over it. The landing was hard -- two engines caught fire and the plane began to burn. The crew scrambled out, started to run from the plane, had to return to help a man who was injured and couldn't walk. They reached the safety of a sand dune 300 yards away when the bombs let go.

A fourth ship, piloted by deputy commander Lt. Col. Leroy Rainey, crash landed in the Mediterranean. Col. Rainey let down about 15 miles offshore after first radioing Air-sea rescue, which promised to send two boats. They never showed up. The crew survived the landing, then assembled in and hanging on a five-man life raft (the other raft could not be pried loose). Several hours later the raft capsized and could not be righted. The men hung grimly. Drained of strength, the radio operator finally let go and went down. The assistant radio operator set out to swim to shore. He was never seen again. Then the co-pilot, supported by two others, died by the boat and slipped away.

In mid-afternoon of the next day the bombardier and engineer decided to swim for it when the life raft was about 500 yards offshore. There was a strong offshore current; they disappeared. At dusk the raft swept by a reef. Col. Rainey and three others jumped and grabbed for the reef, managed to hang on. The navigator and tail gunner failed to reach the reef and were swept out to sea. Weak, sick, half-dead, the four survivors came back home to tell about it.

Special Account

On July 5, 1943, the 99th set out to raid the main airdrome at Gerbini, Sicily. It was a memorable day, chiefly because more than 100 enemy fighters attacked the group in 30 minutes of hell in the air. Three of our planes went down; 38 of the enemy were destroyed, with many more probables and damaged. But the honors of the day belonged to S/Sgt. Benjamin J. Warmer, of San Francisco, who, on his seventh wedding anniversary, shot down seven enemy fighters.

Later awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his feat, Warmer pumped better than 1,200 rounds of ammunition in less than 15 minutes as he knocked off the seven pursuits.

"They came at me and I bagged as fast as they came," Warmer said in explaining the day's activities. One by one he knocked them off until after his fifth prize his ammunition box ran out. Looping extra rounds over his shoulder to feed the gun, he got two more.

With two other earlier victories to his credit, Warmer qualified as North Africa's ace aerial gunner. He is also Uncle Sam's largest gunner -- six-foot-six, 275-pound former University of California boxing and football star.

Special Account

On July 16, 1943, the 99th Bombardment Group celebrated an anniversary -- of its first 50 missions completed against the enemy. The saga of the first 50 men was one of individual and collective courage and skill in times of stress, but it was also an impressive collection of statistics.

The 99th combat men looked at the records as of July 16 and discovered: 1. Of 518 enemy fighters encountered, they shot down, probably destroyed or damaged 162 or 31.27 percent. 114 of these were destroyed, 28 probably destroyed and 20 damaged. They have destroyed or damaged 433 enemy planes in the air and on the ground.

2. Their bombs had destroyed 3,089,740 pounds of bomb on enemy objectives, shot 704,995 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition.

In 50 missions the combat crews traveled 44,886 miles to and from the target -- nearly twice around the world. It took them 292 hours or more than 12 days and nights of combat flying to pile up this mileage.

Naturally the Fortresses didn't always come out with whole skins. Flak damaged 107 airplanes and enemy fighters managed to put holes in 31 of them. Up to July 5 only one plane had been lost in actual combat. On that three more were lost when more than 100 enemy fighters ganged up on the group. But many of these crews were seen to bail out and one ship was observed to crash land on the beach. And for revenge the gunners blasted down 38 enemy planes, with 14 more probables and damaged.

Throughout the 50 missions the group had the inspirational leadership of Col. Fay R. Upthegrove, commander, and Lt. Col. Leroy A. Rainey, deputy commander.

Special Account

On Sept. 8, 1943, the crew of Flying Fortress No. 494 was on its 50th and final mission. "Old 494" was on its 50th mission, too, and that without an engine change or major repair. So the crew and the plane ended together, for keeps. Here's how it happened.

With Major (now Lt. Col.) Warren B. Whitmore at the controls, 494 led a formation of 36 Fortresses in a raid on an Italian target. The veteran ship went into the bomb run, just as she had on the last 49 raids. But the heaviest flak barrage in a long time was breaking all around the Fortresses, and two score enemy fighter planes were attacking. 494 was stabbed painfully in the side. But she finished out the bombing run, mindful of the fate of 35 Forts behind her if she faltered.

Major Whitmore nursed his ship. The ailerons were gone, one wing hung down like a crippled bird. The pilot brought her back over her North African base safely but the plane was too unmanageable to land. So, on their last mission, Major Whitmore and seven of the original crew bailed out. A cameraman and two others not on their 50th mission also hit the silk. And old 494 -- she was allowed to bury herself into a mountainside.

A 15th AAF BASE---They began their basic training together a year ago, these ten members of a Flying Fortress crew, and this month they completed their 50th mission together, without suffering a serious injury or losing a plane.

The pilot of the crew--"the best damn pilot in the business," his men call him--is Capt. James L. Russell, Jr., Birmingham, Ala. The crew credits him with a large part of their good fortune, but they also acknowledge the part played by "consistently flying a tight formation" and "grand old Lady Luck." More than once prayers helped, too, they admit.

Other members of the crew are 1st Lt. John C. Shropshire, Ashland, Kansas, co-pilot; 1st Lt. Lawrence F. Craven, Woodhaven, NY, navigator; 1st Lt. Glenn Profitt, Louisville, bombardier; T-Sgt. Reese L. Starner, Westminster, Md., engineer; T-Sgt. Francis Kegin, Perry, Okla., and S-Sgt. Charles Pierce, Valparaiso, Ind., waist gunners; S-Sgt Edward P. Doolan, St. Joseph, Mo., tail gunners, and S-Sgt. Kenneth W. Clouston, Mandan, ND, ball turret gunner.

ORDINARY TEAM

All in all, they have been just an ordinary team, as far as operations go. The highest award received by any of the ten was the Purple Heart, which went to the bombardier who was nicked by a piece of flak over Foggia in August. They've all received their Air Medal with a hatful of Oak Leaf Clusters.

It's as a team that they've functioned. Together they flew a path of destruction over 50 different enemy targets in Sicily, Italy, Germany, Austria, Greece, France and Yugoslavia. Together they shot down four enemy fighters.

The crew was formed at Boise, Idaho, in March 1943, after the various members had completed training in their specialties. All through their "get-acquainted" period, they didn't suffer an accident.

Just before leaving the States in June, they were assigned a Fortress to fly across the Atlantic to Africa.

"We dubbed her Superstitious Aloysius," Lt. Profitt recalled, "and she stayed ours for most of the 50 missions, until she made a special trip back to the States. Losing Aloysius broke us up a bit--causing us to fly in whatever plane happened to have a vacancy, but we managed to get our 50 in anyway," he added.

FIRST MISSION

They tasted combat for the first time in a mission to Gerbini airdrome, Sicily, on July 5, and soon after, went through one of the toughest days of the entire 50 missions--during the German evacuation of Sicily.

Scheduled to fly over the Straits of Messina to hit the ports on both sides--Messina where the Germans were taking off, and San Giovanni where they were disembarking--Aloysius was about 5,000 feet below the rest of the formation when one engine went out.

"Capt. Russell feathered the bad engine and tried to climb up to get the protection of the rest of the formation," Lt. Profitt said.

But they couldn't recover and decided to make an individual bomb run over San Giovanni. In spite of a flock of enemy fighters concentrating on them and all the flak the Germans could throw at one plane, they completed the run and placed their bombs and personnel on the beaches. Aloysius came home "looking like something Mom used to strain our coffee through."

The 50th mission, of course, had the boys plenty worried, especially when they heard they were going to Istres le Tube, and airfield near Marseilles in southern France.

"We came back without a scratch," the bombardier recounted. "To tell the truth, I'm glad those 50 missions are finished because I personally never liked to push Lady Luck too far. She might get bored by it all."

6 April, 1944

ESCAPE STATEMENT

S/Sgt. Verne E. Trinosky, 3536956, 99th Bomb Group, 346th Bomb Sq.

1. Personal History.

Duty - Tail gunner

Age - 25

Missions - 45

Returned to Duty - 4 April, 1944

2. On 11 January, 1944, mission to Piraeus, Greece, A/C 25470 at approximately 1245 hours and 19,000 ft. went into clouds so thick that crew was unable to see adjoining ships. Evidently a collision occurred and A/C went into a diving turn, losing altitude very rapidly. Sgt. Trinosky bailed out and landed successfully in Erimanthos mountains about 1300 hours.

3. Never in enemy hands, hence no interrogation by enemy.

4. Three survivors of this A/C feel that Escape briefing at their group should have been more thorough, with emphasis on fact that missions are operating in Greece, that country and small town peasant-type people are very friendly and that Andartes, or guerrillas, are friendly and anxious to help. Escape purses were very helpful but in this particular case there was little use for Escape purses, since help was at hand.

5. Good straight-forward story.

Interrogator,

JOHN W. RICHARDSON,

Major, Air Corps.

Asst A-2.

2 Encls:

1 - Appendix A

2 - Ltr. 383.6

SECRET

1st Lt. Raftery

S/Sgt. V. E. Trinoskey

APPENDIX A

Navigator, Radio operator and tail gunner of A/C 25470 had bailed out approximately 1245 hours, 11 January, 1944 over Erimanthos mountains in Greece. Tail gunner, S/Sgt. Trinoskey, landed in snow covered mountains, stayed overnight at a shepherd's hut, was picked up by peasants the following morning, spent that night at their hut and next morning was taken to a British mission at Michaelsika. Navigator and Radio operator, Lt. Raftery and T/Sgt. Sherris, landed on Olenos mountain at about 1300 hours, were picked up by shepherds about 1430 hours and taken to village of Lacomata. Due to proximity of Germans they were routed out of bed during night and taken to town of Spelima. Lt. Raftery spent next 3 days locating 5 dead members of crew and burying their bodies (unable to locate bodies of Pilot and Engineer). About 16 January, 1944, Lt. Raftery and Sgt. Sherris were taken to

Michaelsika where they joined Sgt. Trinoskey. The letter left Michaelsika until 13 February and left there with party composed of about 16 persons, mostly U.S. evaders but including British mission Lt. and 3 Italian officers. Traveled through small places in Erimanthos mountains and in six days reach Andritsaina. Stayed one day and went on to South British headquarters at Gaditsa, where party rejoined Sgt. Trinoskey and Lt. Burry. Went to Zakhare, found it "too hot" moved to Arine (?), stayed till 20 March and went to Fsela-korea. Moved about in this area with several tries for contact at pin-point on coast. Finally evacuated at pin-point night 3 April, 1944, by Italian destroyer and brought to Taranto, Italy. SBS transported men to Bari evening of 4 April, 1944.

NOTE: Shortly after party left Sarditsa, about 1/2 of the town destroyed by Germans, who distributed announcements that this is what happens to civilians who help Andartes and Allies. As a result British Headquarters at Garditsa forced to move to Alvena, barely escaping with their lives. Germans also burned home of "head man" in Michaelsika, as a result of aid given to evaders.

SECRET

6 April, 1944

ESCAPE STATEMENT

T/Sgt. Sidney S. Sherris, 32255633, 99th Bomb Group, 346th Bomb Sq.

1. Personal History

Duty - Radio Operator

Age - 35

Missions - 45 MTO plus (30 U.K.)

Returned to Duty - 4 April, 1944.

2. On 11 January, 1944, mission to Piraeus, Greece, A/C 25470 at approximately 1245 hours and 19,000 ft. went into clouds so thick that crew was unable to see adjoining ships. Evidently a collision occurred and A/C went into diving turn, losing altitude very rapidly. Sgt. Sherris attempted to get of radio hatch and, when half way out, was blown clear. He observed blinding explosion with yellow flame. He opened parachute at about 7000 ft. and landed on top of Olenos mountain, in Erimanthos range, about 1300 hours.

3. Never in enemy hands; hence no interrogation by enemy.

4. Three survivors of this A/C feel that Escape briefing at their group should have been more thorough, with emphasis on fact that missions are operating in Greece, that country and small town peasant-type people are very friendly and that Andartes, or guerrillas, are friendly and anxious to help. Escape purse money was promptly spent for extra food and some cigarettes. Sgt. Sherris believes that some first aid material should be added to kits - sulpha drugs for example.

5. Straight-forward story.

Interrogator.

JOHN W. RICHARDSON,

Major, Air Corps,

Asst A-2

6 April, 1944

ESCAPE STATEMENT

1st Lt. Bernard M. Raftery, 0-801146, 99th Bomb Group, 346th Bomb Sq.

1. Personal

History.

Duty - Navigator

Age - 27

Missions - 40

Returned to Duty - 4 April, 1944

2. On 11 January, 1944, mission to Piraeus, Greece, A/C 25470 at approximately 1245 hours and 19,000 ft. went into clouds so thick that crew was unable to see adjoining ships. Evidently a collision occurred and A/C went into a diving turn, losing altitude very rapidly. Lt. Raftery was thrown from plane and regained consciousness about 5,000 ft. altitude. He opened parachute and landed on Olenos mountain, in Erimanthos Range, about 1300 hours.

3. Never in enemy hands, hence no interrogation by enemy.

4. Three survivors of this A/C feel that Escape briefing at their group should have been more thorough, with emphasis on fact that missions are operating in Greece, that country and small town peasant-type people are very friendly and that Andartes, or guerrillas, are friendly and anxious to help. Escape purses were very helpful but in this particular case there was little use for Escape purses, since help was at hand.

5. Good straight-forward story.

Interrogator,

JOHN W. RICHARDSON,

Major, Air Corps.

Asst A-2.

2 Encls:

1 - Appendix A

2 - Ltr. 383.6

SECRET

10 January, 1944

Mission No. 128
Sofia Town Area, Bulgaria

Supplemental Report on Enemy Tactics and Flak

Thirty-seven B-17's of the 99th Bomb Group (H) were attacked by an estimated 35 Me 109's and Ma 202's for 25 minutes over and after leaving Sofia, Bulgaria on 10 January 1944. One B-17 was shot down and preliminary, unchecked claims were made for 13 E/A destroyed.

The attacks started just after the formation left the I.P. and half way along the bomb run. The group went over target in two waves, company front, echeloned right. The last squadron in the second wave received the heaviest attacks and it was from this squadron one B-17 was shot down by enemy fighters. This A/C was flying No.3 position in the lead element of a nine ship formation.

Enemy attacks appeared well coordinated and most of them were aggressive, with fighters coming in close as 150 yards. The squadron attacked most vigorously first saw four fighters at 10 o'clock, high. E/A came in out of overcast to left of squadron and pressed attacks in close. Some crews reported E/A came in as close as 50 yards, but this is doubtful. Other attacks were made in pairs and fours toward the nose. One crew reported an FW 190 aerial bombed them. The bomb burst to the right about 150 feet above the airplane. At the time the bomb burst two E/A were flying at 10 o'clock level, but making no hostile moves. They may have been spotting for the aerial bomber, who was about 1,500 yards above. The formation's bombing altitude was 20,000'.

Another squadron, the lead element in the first wave, reported most E/A's stayed out of range. Three frontal attacks and two rear attacks were made on this squadron from level altitude. E/A's attacked singly and in pairs. Some attacks were reported from 5 to 7 o'clock low and from 11 to 1 o'clock high. After making a pass E/A's broke off, circled and repeated attacks. Two attacks were made out of sun. These E/A's passed over top of group and came back in again at 3 and 9 o'clock. Two E/A's were reported diving through escort out of sun to attack bombers. Another attack was made by four E/A's from 6 o'clock. They fired simultaneously.

Some E/A's carried belly tanks during the engagement.

One crew reported rocket gun fire from a ME 109, which fired from approximately same level as formation. Bursts were large and black, but inaccurate as to range and deflection.

SPECIAL NARRATIVE REPORT

MISSION: 19 March, 1944 - Klagenfurt, Austria

I. ENEMY RESISTANCE

A. Fighters: Forty to fifty enemy fighters were observed by the 99th Bomb Group (B-17's) on its mission of March 19, 1944 to Klagenfurt, Austria. These were divided about two FW190's to 1 ME109. 20 - 25E/A attacked the group beginning at Calje, south of Zagreb and continuing for 35 to 40 minutes to the target.

All attacks were from the rear, five to seven o'clock and no frontal or side attacks were reported. The bulk of the attacks were with rockets from FW190's, flying in elements of four. The rockets were fired by one airplane at a time and not in volleys as occurred on March 18 at Villaorba. Most of the rocket firing E/A stayed out of range of 99th guns, usually 1,000 yards out. The firing procedure was the same as March 18. E/A flew low and to the rear and then drew up to level, pointing the nose of the A/C and lobbing rockets in toward B-17 rear. Home rocked attacks were in pairs, but most of them were in fours. The rocket-firers pulled off to the left in the break away and came back to reform. Some E/A, after firing their rockets came on in firing 20 mm shells.

Initial attacks appeared well-coordinated, but not too aggressive. They were, however, persistent. After initial attacks, the coordination was not noticeable and attacks were ragged. Two crews reported a formation of 12 FW190s attacking the group ahead (2nd Bomb Group) with rockets. This formation was flying in elements of four, company front. After firing rockets, they closed in with machine gun fire.

Some E/A were observed climbing in front of the formation and then flying to the rear of the group. They then attacked from the rear. No belly tanks were observed and most crews were of the opinion the fighters came from Yugoslavia. Photographs were taken of an airdrome near Zagreb, which held an estimated 40 E/A. Crews had not noticed this landing ground or airdrome previously. Coordinates are on photographs. No belly tanks were observed on E/A today.

The 99th group was flying at an average of 22,000' when attacked. One crew reported silver, incendiary discs being dropped, but there was no confirmation of this single observation.

A few of the new FW190's with the "in-line" engine with radial cowling were observed. Their markings and appearance looked like P-47's. They had a foot-wide white band ahead of the vertical stabilizer on the fuselage in about the same position as P-47 insignia. Some ME109's had red spinners with yellow bands around the middle of the dark colored fuselage. Some 190's were dark gray or black. Most of the E/A stayed so far away it was difficult to get accurate descriptions.

B. Flak: Over target this Group experienced moderate to intense, heavy accurate flak of both barrage and tracking types. In addition to the regular black bursts white bursts were observed at a higher altitude. Flak from Zagreb and Kaplovna M/Y along the tracks was light, slight and inaccurate.

Flak was also encountered from Celte midway between Zagreb and Klagenfurt, also from south of Klagenfurt A/D around city generally which was heavy, moderate barrage type. Some

SPECIAL NARRATIVE REPORT

MISSION: 22 March, 1944 - Verona M/Y

I. ENEMY RESISTANCE

A. Fighters: Shortly after leaving the vicinity of Rimini enroute to the target, 3 FW100s were observed but did not attack and soon disappeared from view. While on the bomb run and while about 6 miles from the target 3 ME109's were seen in the distance but did not attack. About the same time, at 1556 hours, a single FW190 made a frontal attack on one section of our formation. The E/AC came in from 12 o'clock high, diving below the altitude of the formation then pulled up to fire at our A/C from the front and low. This attack was unsuccessful and one of our gunners shot the E/AC down in flames.

The FW190 that attacked was silver colored while the ME109s seen were silver grey.

B. Flak: Over the target the Diamondback Group experienced intense to moderate heavy flak of the barrage and tracking type. Fair to accurate as to altitude and deflection. Four aircraft were slightly damaged by this. At target white bursts were noted bursting approximately five hundred feet above the black bursts.

Returning, this group received few bursts of light flak from Cesenatico (44°12'N, 12°25'E) 21,000' also at Ferraro at 1613 hours heavy slight inaccurate was encountered.

100 Flak guns along the coast between Rimini and Milanomar resemble artillery type guns dug into the sand, they fired but reached only 12,000 feet. Flak over the target was as briefed.

II. SIGNIFICANT OBSERVATIONS

C. Air: 1540-A B-17 ahead of our group, hit by flak, on fire then exploded. 2-3 chutes seen to open.

1545-2 B-17s of group ahead shot down by flak. A total of 3 chutes seen.

1554-A B-17 of group ahead burning and going down over Verona, no chutes.

1559-A P-38 in flames, seen to crash on ground in target area.

1600-A P-38 going down, on fire, at target. No chute.

SPECIAL NARRATIVE REPORT

MISSION: March 26, 1944 - Steyr

I. ENEMY RESISTANCE

A. Fighters: None.

B. Flak: This Group did not reach the target, as they turned back prior to it, due to weather. However flak was encountered at Ljubljana which was heavy, slight and inaccurate as to altitude and deflection. In the area of Novo Majto at 45°49'N, 15°10'E enroute to target, they encountered heavy moderate flak, accurate as to altitude out off on deflection.

SPECIAL NARRATIVE REPORT
MISSION: 28 March, 1944 - Verona M/Y

I. ENEMY RESISTANCE

A. Fighters: While nearing the target at 1140 hours, 8 to 12 ME109s and FW190s attacked the formation with rockets, cannon and machine gun fire at 20,000 to 23,000 feet. The E/AC attacked the formation from 12 o'clock high and level, coming in 4 to 6 abreast and firing what appeared to be two rockets from each aircraft. They then broke away in a wing-up to the left followed by a dive at about 500 yards. Some A/C then returned in 2's and 3's and made an additional pass from the front. The Group of 4 A/C attacked from a line return formation at 12 o'clock high. The E/AC fire was not especially accurate and before the escort broke up the attacks, which lasted 10 minutes, no damage had been sustained by our A/C.

B. Flak: Over the target this group experienced intense accurate heavy flak. Both barrage and tracking type. Twenty three A/C received minor damages from flak. Flak over the target was greater in intensity than experienced in prior attacks on this target, indicating the possibility of additional batteries.

SPECIAL NARRATIVE REPORT
MISSION: 29 March, 1944 - Turin

I. ENEMY RESISTANCE

A. Fighters: While approaching the target on the bombing run, 7 to 10 ME109's and FW190's were seen at a distance, approaching from the north. These E/AC did not appear to attack the formation although later, just over the target, two AC made a single separate pass at our formation coming in from high out of the sun. Each broke off the attack by a sharp turn and a dive while approximately 400 yards from our aircraft. One of our AC was hit by a 20 MM shell with minor damage resulting.

B. Flak: While over the target our formation reported getting moderate, heavy inaccurate flak. Some white puffs were observed. One of our AC was holed with little damage. Some light flak was encountered from Spezia and rather intense, heavy flak was observed at Elba Island.

SPECIAL NARRATIVE REPORT
Mission: 30 March, 1944 - Sofia

I. ENEMY RESISTANCE

A. Fighters: As our Group reached the IP, 10 to 15 ME109's and FW190's were first seen approaching from the East. Our A/C received a total of 9 or 10 encounters which were not particularly aggressive and proved ineffectual. The attacking fighters never made more than one pass, these coming in an uncoordinated manner from 11 and 1 o'clock high, 4, 6 and 7 o'clock low. Our escort drove the A/C off and furnished good protection. One E/AC fired rockets from 5 o'clock low at 900 yards, the other apparently not using them. FW190's painted silver color were observed, while the ME109's were painted dark green or black, some with red and some yellow spinners and a few had yellow wing tips. One FW190 had a yellow tail and two were painted a light sky blue.

B. Flak: Over the target only moderate, inaccurate, heavy flak was encountered. Enroute to and from the target heavy, slight to moderate inaccurate flak was encountered at Vranjo, Vladickihan, Skoplje, Priaren and Kriljevo. Two of our A/C had very minor flak damage.

Secret

War Diary of the 99th Bombardment Group (H) Headquarters

Month of April, 1944

April 1 -- Air echelon members of the new 483rd Bomb Gp. attached to us until they get their own field began training classes today, with our officers doing the instructing. At the same time plans were completed to give them our old F's in exchange for their brand ^{new} G's. The 483rd is having much the same experience that we had, in that the air echelon is separated from the ground echelon, the latter being somewhere on the high seas.

April 2 -- We made our first mission today with the new G's of the 483rd Bomb Gp. It was the first time we had seen so many new silver planes in the sky, although there had been a few around previously. Actually we need the G's badly to reach such targets as the one today -- Steyr, Austria.

April 3 -- The theater was crowded tonight for the movie, "Top Man," featuring juvenile players.

April 4 -- Chief topic of interest in group now is the character of our missions. Yesterday we blasted Budapest and laid a beautiful pattern of bombs over a group of factory buildings turning out Messerschmitts. Today it was Bucharest, and this battering of the weak-kneed Balkan capitals, especially in view of the closeness of the Russians, met with wide approval.

April 5 -- We continued our battering of the Balkans today by hitting the railroad yards at Ploesti in a highly successful raid. After four days of major operations it was called non-op for tomorrow. This afternoon a USO stage show played in the open air in the 347th squadron area, and featured a MC, a magician, an accordion player and a girl singer. Movie tonight was "Rationing," with Wallace Beery and Marjorie Main.

April 6 -- The 483rd Bomb Gp. is continuing its training program with practice missions, and the veterans around note that they fly good, tight formations.

April 7 -- It looks like spring is here to stay and we shed heavy under-wear and begin to think about khakis. Good Friday services on the base and in Foggia drew great crowds. There was a red alert about 4 a.m. in the morning, but the all clear came quickly.

April 8 -- Another USO stage show in the squadron area this afternoon was much like the one a few days ago, featuring the inevitable Magician, accordion player, singer, etc. Movie tonight was "Jack London," which drew big crowds in anticipation of a good show, but turned out to be pretty weak. There was a red alert at about 11 p.m., but again the all clear came quickly.

April 9 -- Easter Sunday, and most men's thoughts turned to church. Catholic services at the group chapel were packed to the doors and beyond, while throngs gathered in the open air for Protestant services, held in the shadow of a wrecked JU 88. Being non-op, it was a lazy day, only mar being the overcast skies that shut out the Easter sun. Before

T/Sgt. Arthur D. Cox, genial enlisted chief of group photo, was sworn in as a second lieutenant in the adjutant's office. Another red alert at about 11 tonight, but no enemy planes.

April 10 -- The ground Echelon of the 483rd Bomb Gp. has arrived after a 24-day boat trip, and the new outfit is prepared to operate, using our field and our facilities. They have their own field, where most of the ground echelon is stationed, but apparently it is not ready for use yet. The newcomers got their taste of a red alert at 10 this morning, but the all clear came soon. Show tonight was a documentary, "Battle of Britain."

April 11 -- Italians are making progress on a shower house, being erected close to a well in back of one of the farmhouses used as an EM barracks. When this is completed it will do away with the necessity of making trips to Foggia for showers.

April 12 -- With the hot sun pouring down every day the roads and airfield taxiways of our base are turning into a fine dust reminiscent of North Africa. Take off and landing now raise a huge cloud of dust over the base, just like old times last summer. And anyone who tours the squadrons by Jeep comes back looking like he's been through a flour mill. Large crowds tonight saw the Orson Welles melodrama, "Jane Eyre," with the great man himself and Joan Fontaine.

April 13 -- The 483rd mounted its first mission today, attacking a cement plant at Split, Yugoslavia, with good success and no losses. A MAAF photographer came out to take pictures after their planes were down and Col. Barton, their CO, obliged with a few flak holes in his ship. Although he flew a new B-17G, most of the ships on the raid were our old veterans, and it seemed odd that they should be considered making a first mission.

April 14 -- Headquarters enlisted men threw a dance tonight in the combined officers club and EM mess hall. There was plenty of free beer and music by the 99th Group orchestra.

April 15 -- Only small crowds for the movie tonight, "Is Everybody Happy," with Ted Lewis and his orchestra.

April 16 -- The heaviest combat blow to group came today when the deputy commander, Lt. Col. William J. Headrick, was lost leading a raid on Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Other pilots, reporting the worst flak they's experienced in some time, said Col. Headrick's ship was hit in the wing and sent plunging straight down to crash in a burst of orange flame. Only two chutes were seen.

April 17 -- Wonder of wonders, some Coca Cola showed up today, enough for a bottle per man. Bottled in Bari, it lacked the carbonation of U.S. coke, but tasted good anyway, especially since it was our first in a year. Movie tonight was John Carradine in "Gangway for Tomorrow."

April 18 -- A routine day.

April 19 -- Movie tonight was "We've Never Been Licked," a story about Texas A. & M. College and its contribution in turning out soldiers. Col. Lauer, our CO and himself a Texan, professed to be baffled that the heroes of the movie, after graduating from a school traditionally army, wound up flying for the Navy.

April 20 -- A powerful explosion along about dusk sent everybody hurrying to look at a glow in the sky in the direction of Foggia. We found out later two Wimpys had wrecked at Foggia main airdrome.

April 21 -- What we hope is the last word in group insignia began to be painted on rudders today. Fortunately the new one retains the diamond that gives the group its nickname, "Diamondbacks." At the top of the rudder now goes a big Y inside a diamond, black Y on a white diamond for camouflaged planes, and white Y on a black diamond for silver planes. At the base of the rudder we go back to the old system of Roman numerals denoting squadrons -- I for the 346th; II for the 347th; III for the 348th and IV for the 416th. Along about 2 a.m. this morning a Wimpy crashed near the 348th area, but fortunately missed the tent area.

April 22 -- The 483rd Bomb Gp. pulled out today with their planes and what ground personnel had been stationed here. Their leaving took a severe strain off our mess halls. Movie tonight was Kay Kyser and his band in "Around the World."

Dear George:

This is my version of two missions that I flew on. I'm sorry after 40 years I can't remember names or places too well.

After we were shot down we were waiting around for a new plane. Major Lowry, who was in charge of the 346th, sent word down for me to fly waist gunner. I loaded up my gear and went to the plane. It was a new one that had never gone out on a mission before. I looked at the waist guns. The metal feed was too long, reaching from the ammunition box. I told the other waist gunner that if they didn't fire, I would let him fire and I would feed. Just then the engineer walked through and said "I can't find my parachute! Remember, if we have to bail out, I'll ride the last man down piggy back."

After we took off, fighters hit us for a short time. When we went through the target area we didn't drop our bombs. We turned again and came around for the bomb run. The fighters hit us for a few moments. Then there were no longer fighters but flak as we dropped our bombs. As soon as the flak stopped the fighters came in again. Like I predicted, the guns would not fire until I would feed the bullets up by hand. Back and forth, from window to window I would feed the ammunition and he would fire.

After we landed the engineer tripped getting out of his turret and hurt his back. I never heard or saw him after he left for the hospital.

This same crew was the one that crashed a few days later, except Major Lowry who was not flying or the engineer who was laid up.

There was a plane and crew that had gone on its first mission and the tail gunner got shot up pretty bad. They took the day off so our crew took over. The tail compartment and the bullet-proof glass had been hit by 20mm's and made it hard to see through.

Our mission was south of Leghorn, Italy and it was July 21, 1943.

On the way back fighters hit us from the tail. We moved our formation to a company front. That meant we were flying wing-tip to wing-tip. That let all the tail gunners have a crack at it. Four came at us at a time with their exploding 20mm's. Four picked us and four picked the end of the line. As soon as they would peel off, four more would hit us with exploding 20mm's. I glanced over at the other side of the line and the last plane was losing power and backing off from the formation. I fired until one gun quit and the fighters quit too. I raised up my armor plate to reveal the guns and there were only 10 rounds left in each gun. One had a broken belt; it took two seconds to fix.

Just then the pilot called and asked where was that plane that had been hit. "He is about a mile behind and to the right", I said. "He looks like he is heading for Sicily." But he was heading for Africa instead.

The next morning we heard what had happened. They were making a landing on a field on the coast of Africa and just about touchdown when a B-25 was taking off in the opposite direction. The pilot gave it the gun and stalled out and the B-25 passed underneath. The B-17 crashed head on into the ground and caught fire. ... All crew members were killed. Their tent was right next to ours. We went in and made piles of things that belonged to them, like money, etc.

About six months later, back home in the States, I was assigned to B-24s and taught the Emerson nose turret. They sent me down to Laredo, Texas from Mountain Home, Idaho. Crews were coming in from Europe by the train-load. I was in the PX one day and a fellow I vaguely remember from about a year ago came up to me and said, "I got a letter from (the ball turret gunner)" "I thought he was dead." I said, "Yes, I'm sure he's dead."

He about-faced, walked away, and disappeared into the crowd. On the back of his A-2 jacket was printed in bold letters "RICTERS VICTERS).

Yours, Ted.

Theodore R. Haid, 1800 Elizabeth St. NE, Albuquerque, N.M. 87112

Dear George;

I got the latest bulletin yesterday and I see you are looking for information regarding our "Shuttle Run" into Russia. I happened to be on that run and will give you a rundown from my diary and what ever else I can remember.

My missions 15 and 16, June 2, 1944. Col. Ford Lauer Pilot. Brig. Gen. Laurence Co-Pilot. We led the 5th Wing and this was the first of an operation called F.R.A.N.T.I.C. First target - Debreczen Hungary. Destination - Poltava Russia. This flight was comprised of 140 B-17s, the complete 5th Wing of the 15th Airforce. We hit the Debreczen marshalling yards with excellent results. The force of our bombs was so concentrated and so great that the entire red roof of the station was seen to rise a significant height before it disintegrated. We did have some flak over the target and heard a number of bursts with the characteristic rattle of the shrapnel as it either glanced off or went through the wings and fuselage. A B-17 from the 97th Bomb Group exploded just off the target area for unknown reasons. We flew on into Poltava which is located in the Ukraine and about 65 miles southeast of Kiev. A most interesting operation to say the least.

Our stay in Russia was an experience all its own. We were appalled by the incredible amount of damage and destruction which Poltava had suffered and the plight the citizens had been placed under during the period of time when they were being occupied by the Germans. The city itself, was pretty much in rubble, yet, the citizens of Poltava had carefully cleaned up and repaired the Town Square which was a beautiful park. They had flowers blooming and the grass was well kept. One other thing that impressed us was the fact that all the children were clean. We could not help but notice the single track the Russians were on then. Women using pinch bars to move railroad freight cars into positions where they were unloading them. They were off loading steel mat runways and these are extremely heavy. Yet, these Russian women were handling these baled up steel mats without the benefit of any type of machinery. I met a Russian pilot who was a woman, a tall person, and as strong as any man. Even at the tender age of twenty I could see where they were going and the awesome control that the Russian government had over those people. Really had them between a hard place and a rock, so to speak. Germans on the one hand with their terrible treatment, and their own government which literally owns them lock, stock and barrel. Certainly not the American way of life and a very definite and powerful example of what we have as citizens of the United States of America.

June 6, 1944, my mission No. 17. Radar ship 232733. Pilot Col. Ford Lauer. Target - Galeti Romania airfield. This mission was pulled from Russia and was the second F.R.A.N.T.I.C. mission. Our bomb load was of frags. We got excellent coverage of this airfield and caught a number of German aircraft on the ground. We did have a problem with clusters of these frags hanging up in the bomb bay with an awful load falling helter skelter from the bomb bay when the Bombardier salvoed the load to clear the bay. When we returned to Russia the Russians seemed greatly elated. I did send the bombs away message in and thought for a few fleeting moments that maybe we had really helped their cause. Of course, the reason for all this elation was the landing of our troops at Normandy.

On June 11, 1944 we flew back to sunny southern Italy. Our pilot, Col Ford Lauer, General Laurence, co-pilot, Airforce lead again and the final mission of F.R.A.N.T.I.C.. Target was Facsani Romania. We hit this target with good results running into some flak over the target. A B-17 from the 97th Bomb Group apparently took some battle damage and became a straggler. An enemy fighter closed in and shot them down. Nothing out of the ordinary except that it was a little rough. It was certainly some contrast to get back to the heat and dust of Foggia from the cool green of the Ukraine of Russia.

George, maybe this'll help. Hope this finds you better, we're praying for you and we plan to see you and Martha in Houston.

Sincerely;
Joe Kenney

Dear Secy.

In your last News Letter you expressed the desire for information on the Shuttle Mission to Russia. I flew on that mission as did several other HQ department heads. As Group Communications Officer my job was to help set up a Communications System at the Russian Airfield.

I am sending you a copy of my version of the shuttle mission obtained from my diary. I hope that it will be of some use to the Society.

Best Regards:
Samuel B. Hess

SHUTTLE TO RUSSIA

A shuttle service of bombers from Italy to Russia and back again was inaugurated this week. Bombers of the Fifth Wing (16th Air Force) left Italy on June 2, 1944, remained in Russia for nine days, then returned without loss to Italy. The Balkans were heavily bombed on both journeys.

The whole operation had been planned ahead in close cooperation with the Russians. We got up at one o'clock on the morning of the second of June and were briefed carefully for two hours on the target we were to hit enroute to Russia. General Twining was present at the briefing and let us know that this was to be the most important mission of the war to date. He said that future operations in Russia depended largely upon the results of this mission.

We took off at the crack of dawn and our assigned target was a railroad yard and junction north of Budapest. It was a clear day and the sun was shining. We were deep in enemy territory and nearing our target. That is a critical time, as you can expect anything, fighters, flak, or both at a moments notice. We were two minutes from the target and the bomb bay doors were already opened. We could look down thru the doors and see the city below. It looked to be a quiet place, with no activity on the streets, of course from nearly five miles up in the sky not much could be seen. At last the Bombardier shouted over the interphone, "Bombs Away", and the bombs started to drop out every few seconds. The first bomb could be seen hitting the corner of the assigned target and the roof of the building blew off. About three hundred tons of bombs were dropped on the assigned targets by the four participating groups of Bombers. When the photographs were made, it was found that the target area was well covered. No flak or fighters were encountered on the mission.

It was impossible to see any signs of action as we crossed the Russian border, but as we came down from high altitude we began to see signs of action below, wrecked towns and villages which had been razed in the Russians' "Scorched Earth Policy" when they were retreating.

It was raining as we approached the city of Poltava, our shuttle base. From the air we could see the people come out to greet us. We went down low. The great square in the town and every street was black with figures. We could see them waving and supposed they were shouting too.

The first thing that impressed us was the greenness of the country. It was very, much like the country in the states. This city was located in the heart of the Ukraine which is the bread basket of Russia. We saw red clover growing there and plenty of potato patches, even in the streets of town.

The landing field was large and up to date. It had been used by the Russians as a training field before the war. All of the main buildings were destroyed, and we lived in tents that were waiting for us. The actual runway was made of steel matting, which had been laid for us principally by women. Two of them would carry a large section of matting as if it were play. We had heard a lot about the work the Russian women are doing, and we found that nothing had been exaggerated. They do the same work as men, and do it cheerfully.

Russia has its WAACS too. They are husky, well built, have no make-up, and wear servicable uniforms along with sturdy black boots. These women did most everything that men soldiers did, including guard duty. It looked funny to see girl soldiers march around with long rifles on their shoulders. The rifles had fixed bayonets, and the total length must have been six feet. The men looked rather raggedly clothed, but their uniforms were clean. Two things in particular stand out about these Russian service men and women. They

The Germans fell into the trap of trying to operate their fighters in formations of up to sixty strong, the same size as one of our Balbos of five squadrons. These cumbersome gaggles denied to the enemy fighter pilots those essential and inherent qualities of their aircraft - speed, surprise and maneuverability - and they fell easy prey to the ranging and aggressive American fighters. p. 48

I have found it possible to make a detailed check of some of the claims of a well-known German who has been called 'the unrivalled virtuoso of the fighter pilots'. His greatest day in the Western Desert was on 1st September 1942, when he claimed seventeen victories, eight of them in the space of ten minutes. But our own records show that on this day we lost a total of only eleven aeroplanes, including two Hurricanes, a type which the German pilot did not claim. In fact, some of our losses occurred when he was on the ground. p. 265

Next door to the beer-cellar was a lavatory with the usual conveniences; but there was something which puzzled us for a few moments. There were a line of porcelain basins about three feet apart and smaller than the usual hand-basins. These basins had large outlets and no plugs and on either side were chromium handles which were obviously meant to be gripped by the hands.

"What the hell are those things?" demanded George.

"Don't know," I answered as I gripped the two handles. "Surely they can't be to vomit. . . ."

"They are, you know," exclaimed our knowledgeable Scot. "The Krauts called them Brechbrecken. When they got full of beer they staggered in here and got rid of it. The Romans used to do the same thing after tickling their throats with a feather! Very handy, you know!"

"And then staggered back for more," I said.

"I've seen everything now," said the Canadian.

I thought that we should never fully understand the mentality of a people who deemed such things necessary in an officers' mess. But if Celle was a typical example of the German forces' pre-war standard of comfort and living, we could fully understand how Hitler had swung the generals to his cause. p. 280



BULL-ETINS



HORRIDO Toliver 1968

The story of Marseille's most remarkable day in combat is best told by quoting a contemporary German document. The book Die Wehrmacht (The Armed Forces) was published by the German High Command in 1942. This account has a sense of immediacy to it, and faithfully records some of the feeling of those days on the German side:

A SINGLE MAN FIGHTS A BATTLE

THE BIGGEST DAY IN THE LIFE OF CAPTAIN MARSEILLE

The accomplishments of the Luftwaffe in the North African campaign will require a special page of glory when the history of this war is written someday. . . . Only a single day in the life of this flyer will be described: 1 September 1942, the day on which Marseille succeeded in shooting down seventeen enemy aircraft by himself, an achievement unparalleled in the short history of aerial war, . . . p. 106

For obvious reasons I get this guy's books at the second-hand store. Anybody who can ignore Wing Commander Johnson's book while writing the history of the German fighter force is a bit too single-minded for me. But perhaps it is expecting too much; after all only 12 years intervene. There's always somebody who doesn't get the word. geo.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL - MARCH 1985

1985 Dues, \$10 _____. This includes the 1985 Newsletter. Back copies of the Newsletter are available for \$5 per year for '81-'84 '81____ '82____, '83____, '84____

NAME _____ SQUADRON _____ NEW _____ ADDRESS _____ RENEWAL _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Mail to Walter Butler, at 8608 Bellehaven Place NE, Albuquerque NM 87112 Make check payable to 99BGHS.

Again, we invite you to be part of the fellowship and camaraderie of those who served and are serving in the Fifteenth Air Force. You will be most welcome and certainly among friends.

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New Member _____ Renewal _____ Date _____

Name _____ Rank _____

Mailing Address _____ Number/Street _____ City/State _____ Zip Code _____

- Annual Membership (\$15) Check Enclosed (Tax Deductible)
 Life Membership (\$150) Check Enclosed (Tax Deductible)
 Life Membership Installment Payment \$ _____ Enclosed
 Active Retired Separated Friend of Fifteenth

15th AF Unit _____ Date _____ 15th AF Unit _____ Date _____

Mail Check and Application to: Fifteenth Air Force Association • P.O. Box 6325 • March Air Force Base, CA 92518

Handwritten initials: B & B 99th BG

Viva El 99th BG.

Our 15th Air Force Association is now well-established, but there are a few stragglers who haven't gotten the word. geo.

TAPS

GONDER, LEROY C.: aka LEROY C. GUSHROSKE

1257 NW 98 Terrace Pembroke Pines, FL 33024

Dear Members of the 99th:

I regret to inform you that my husband, Leroy C. Gonder (aka: Leroy C. Gushroske) passed away October 22, 1984 of a heart attack.

He flew 51 combat missions as a radio-operator gunner with the 416th - 99th Bombardment Group.

He has been inurned in the Columbarium at Arlington National Cemetery. Doris E. Gonder

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



For forwarding and
Return Postage
Guaranteed

J.O. Grizzell
15 Mohican Cove East
Lake Waukena
Sardinda OH 45171

1985

Mar 85

Change of Address

E.E. "Mike" McClow	P.O. Box 2229	Frisco	CO 80443
Adrian P. Wilson	358 Greenway Rd.	Memphis	TN 38117
Claude A. Wilson	Rt. 3, Box 577	Cooperstown	NY 13326
J.H. Bradford	Rt. 1, Box 199 C	Sheffield	AL 35660
Vincent E. Shank	P.O. Box 848	Pahea HI	HI 96778
Richard A. Staek	P.O. Box 877	Appleton	WI 54912
Raymond L. Nestor	191 La Reina	Newbury Park	CA 91320

FOUND

519 Joseph Chonody	3787 Collinwood Lane	West Palm Beach FL	33406	347
520 G.F. Ruegg-Stoecklin	4410 Liestal-Gunhagstrasse,	Switzerland		Assoc.
521 Chester F. McPherson	3112 168th St. SE	Bothell	WA 98012	416
522 Jeff Millstein	10 Montague Terrace	Breoklyn	NY 11201	Assoc.
523 Joseph C. Freeland	3639 Redfern Dr.	Indianapolis	IN 46237	348
524 A.D. Terrel	1213 S. Harvard	Perryton	TX 79070	
525 Alee J. Cortez	Box 656	Woodville	TX 75979	346
526 John G. Toth	3935 S. Ironwood	So. Bend	IN 46614	347
527 Andrew A. Huy	511 E. Melbourne Ave.	Melbourne	FL 32901	
528 Nevis W. Wemack	2615 Crestline	Big Spring	TX 79720	348
529 George Ardelean	1885 Orlando St.	Indianapolis	IN 46208	346
530 Hal M. Terry	601 Shadow Wood Dr.	Kosciusko	MS 39090	348
531 Merritt Morrison	131 Exmoor	Pontiac	MI 48054	348
532 John F. (Jeff) Waguespack	1423 Tulip Ave.	McAllen	TX 78504	346
533 Alvin M. Suemnicht	603 19th St.	Belleville	IL 62221	
534 Joe Gonzalez	1930 W. Magnolia	San Antonio	TX 78201	416
535 Simon Deraan	1000 Roosavelt Ave.	Noblesville	IN 46060	
536 Joseph R. Carrell	P.O. Box 5130	Grove City	FL 33533	416
537 Clarence W. Brown	3101 E. Colorado Ave.	Denver	CO 80210	347
538 Fred G. Hueglin	18 Massa Lane	Edgewater	NJ 07020	346