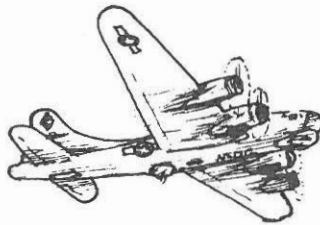




S/Sgt. Albert C. Henke. See Page 20 for his story.

THE 99TH BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

The Group Flew B-17 Flying Fortresses
For A Total Of 395 Combat Missions From
North Africa & Italy To Bomb European
Targets During 1943, '44 & '45



T/Sgt. Richard N. Hyle. See Page 4 for more information.

Vol. 19, No. 4

Published Quarterly by the 99th BGHS

NOVEMBER 1999

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members & Associates;...by the time you read this our mini reunion in Covington, KY will be over. I talked to Donald Lawhorn and he inform me he has received almost forty reservation, so we should have a real good time. Will let you know in the next newsletter.

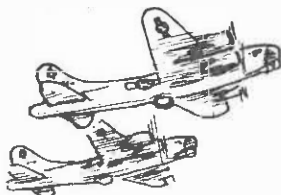
I was informed that the Turner Publishers have around forty books of (The History of the 99th Bomb Group (H)). and they will sell them for \$31.50 +S&H, they were \$54.95 S&H about \$6.00 for S&H. To contact Turner Publishers Co. P.O. Box 3101 Paducah, KY. 42002-3101 OR Telephone 1-800-788-3350 The book is called THE DIAMONDBACK. Visa, and Mastercard accepted.

Dick Drain our Historian inform me that he has copy all the information the Archives in Maryland had on the 99th BG, and is now in the process of putting it in the computer. He told me it took five trips to his van to haul all the papers in. Dick sent me a picture of two stack of material setting on his desk, they look about five feet high, but you know how tricky us Buckeyes can get with a camera. I'll see Dick at the reunion in KY. and I'll get the latest on how he is coming.

I also received a report from Ed & Marguerite Marlow on the Jacksonville, FL. Reunion in May 2000 and what they have line up, I don't think those who show up will be disappointed. I am not going to say what they have line up, because I think the persons who work so hard lining every thing up should be the ones to announce it. I have heard some good news those members I talk to who were sick are coming along great. So take good care of yourself, so we can meet again.

Good Health

Robert J. Bacher Pres.



"WHO WROTE WHOM"

Just a line to say I'm living that I'm not among the dead,
 Though I'm getting more forgetful and mixed up in my head.
 I got used to my arthritis, to my dentures I'm resigned.
 I can manage my bifocals, but I sure do miss my mind.
 For some times I can't remember when I stand at the foot of the stairs,
 If I must go up for something, or have I just come down from there.
 And before the fridge so often, my poor mind is filled with doubt,
 Have I just put food away, or have I come to take some out.
 And there is time when it is dark with my nightcap on my head,
 I don't know if I m retiring or just got out of bed.
 So if it is my turn to write you, there's no need for getting sore,
 I may think that I have written you and don't want to be a bore.
 So remember that I love you, and wish that you were near.
 But now it's nearly mail time so must say good-bye, dear.
 There I stand before the mailbox, with a face so very red.
 Instead of mailing you my letter, I had opened it instead. ANONYMOUS

IN MEMORIAM

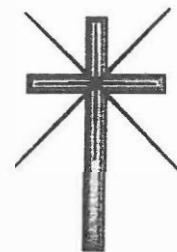
WITT SHIVELE

SAM CRISLONE

BUD HENMANN

BOB CARLTON

CHARLES E. HUDSON



Members send sincere prayers and sympathies to the families and friends
MAY OUR COMRADES REST IN PEACE



THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Stay with me for a few moments to reflect upon just who we were and what we did, 'way back when' - in those days of 50 + years ago!

Two thoughts come to mind - we were flying crews and support personnel; we were officers and we were enlisted men - and we were persons each assigned to special responsibilities, jobs if you will, fitting our particular MOS. In the flying crews, to get us to target and home again, pilots, co-pilots, navigators, engineers and radio operators had responsibility; to get us 'bombs away', bombardiers and toggliers had responsibility; and gunners were responsible for action against enemy fighter attacks.

Each person had a job - each person was responsible - each person was accountable! However, my wandering in thought bring me to isolate a factor which in reverie we may overlook!

An article in the current issue of the *National Wildlife*, published by the National Wildlife Federation, talks about 'Animal Navigation' and "Navigating with a Built-In Compass". The author cites studies made with the bobolink, a bird which travels from south to upstate New York in its yearly migrations. Sharon Levy wrote:

"Earth's magnetic fields likely played a big role in helping the bobolink find its way from Argentina to upstate New York. The bird not only has cells in its head that seem to detect magnetic fields, it may actually see magnetism: Pigments in its eyes may behave like weak magnets perceiving magnetic fields as hues.' ... 'Like any good pilot, (and navigator, Fran add) the bobolink carried a compass. Recent research suggests that cells in the bird's head contain magnetite, an iron oxide crystal that aligns with magnetic north like a tiny compass needle. Scientists think these cells may serve as receptors that send directional information to the brain. Many other animals apparently also have such cells: Magnetite has been found in the heads of migratory fish, sea turtles and humpback whales. Of all the wildlife navigators, birds so far are the best studied."

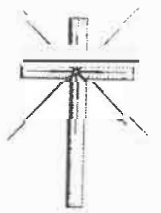
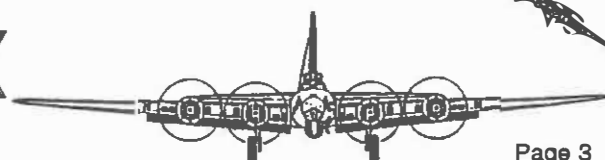
I wonder - have you thought about God's gift to our human capacities! We are not animals as these studies show. We are given gifts by our Creator! Our pilots, our navigators were a special class with varied responsibilities toward mission success. However, back on the ground we were human beings - all of us - recipients of God's gifts of talents, alas, often unused! But a gift of God nonetheless to be used as God's child in a world so needful of joy, peace and goodwill.

God bless you each, my sisters and brothers of the 99th! Remember only *YOU* can celebrate *LIFE* in all its fullest! Go out my friends and have at it!

As your chaplain and friend, my only thought for today and always is - everyday!

TRY GIVING YOURSELF AWAY ! Enjoy the giving! Until next time

Chaplain Fran *Fran*



NEWS, NOTES, LETTERS & IMPORTANT INFORMATION

NEW MEMBERS

JOHN A. GULDON, 300 North Main Street, Hudson, OH 44236 - 416th Sq.

WILLIAM KATZIG, 15430 Tulsa Street, Mission Hills, CA 91345-1350 - 346th

HARRY TANNER, 2923 Roy Bunch Road, Sulpher, LA 70663, Associate Member

WILLIAM TAPPEN, 2315 N. Sarasota Point, Hernando, FL 34442-5312, Assoc.

NORMAN TIERNEY, 558 Vestry Circle, Philadelphia, PA 19128, Associate

%%%

ADDRESS CHANGE

TOM McLAUGHLIN, 108 Cole Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1116

#####

99th BGHS Plaque

Yes, the foundry did pour a plaque for our 99th BGHS. But they made it in the wrong size. We had ordered and had expected to get a 12X18 but they made a 13X13 which was not accepted. The foundry has agreed to make one the size that had been ordered. Delivery?? Soon we hope.

#####

Dear Walter: . . . Enclosed are my dues for 2000 & 2001. 8/19/99

Thought you could use this picture & article for the newsletter.

Best regards,

Dick, congratulations on your heroic performance. Thanks for sending along the newspaper article. Newspaper articles and photos the age of yours don't print too well but I couldn't resist trying. I did type the article so members could read it easily. RW

Dick Hyle, 348th Sq.



DECORATED FOR STICKING TO SHIP DESPITE BLAST DANGER

15TH Army Air Force - At a 15th Air Force Bomber Base in Italy, Tech. Sergt. Richard N. Hyle, 20, (below) of 269 Neptune Avenue, Jersey City, receives the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement as a Flying Fortress engineer and top turret gunner. . . . a veteran of 50 bombing mission in which he has shot down three German fighter planes, Hyle was cited for his action January 19 in sticking with his ship after it was struck accidentally by 18 fragmentation bombs from another ship. Some bombs lodged in the wing and could have exploded. . . . He helped the pilot and co-pilot land their plane at a friendly field after other crew members had parachuted to safety. Hyle received his high award from Wing Commander Colonel Charles W. Lawrence.



NEWS, NOTES, LETTERS & IMPORTANT INFORMATION CONTINUED

Aug 2, 1999

Dear Walter, I had heard there was a 99th BGHS but for some reason never bothered to look into it it's function. On a recent visit to Conn my home state I tried to contact a cousin who flew with me out of Foggia back in 1944-45. Unfortunately he had passed away last Dec 1998.

His wife sent me a copy of your May issue which I enjoyed. She told me his obit was in the Feb issue. Back in 44 the Stars and Stripes had a picture of us stating that as cousins we flying in the same squadron. Unfortunately the picture was in a water leak. I had 32 sorties covering about every area including a run over Poleisti. Was hit by ground fire on Dec 29 over Innsbruck but was back to flying the first part of Jan, 1945. The tents pictured in the May issue really brought back some old memories. I was the tail gunner on Wilber Tracy's crew with the 346th squadron. Most of my crew has passed away but still talk to the few that are left. Enclosed a check for \$15 as I would appreciate being added to your mailing list. s/ Bill Katzing

From Delbert Laudner . . .

7/28/99

Dear Roy: . . . Thanks much for returning the photos, etc. I have copies of the newspaper article so you can do with it what you want. . . . In early June my wife and I took the grand tour of Italy. Part of the tour was a night at Manfredonia. I found a waiter with a car and hired him to go see if I could find what was left of the 99th area. . . . All I could find was what was left of the rail road station as shown in the enclosed photos. All the rest is farm land. I recall going by this station on the way to the flight line. I do not need to have these photos returned. . . . Thanks to you and Bernie for putting my article in the newsletter.

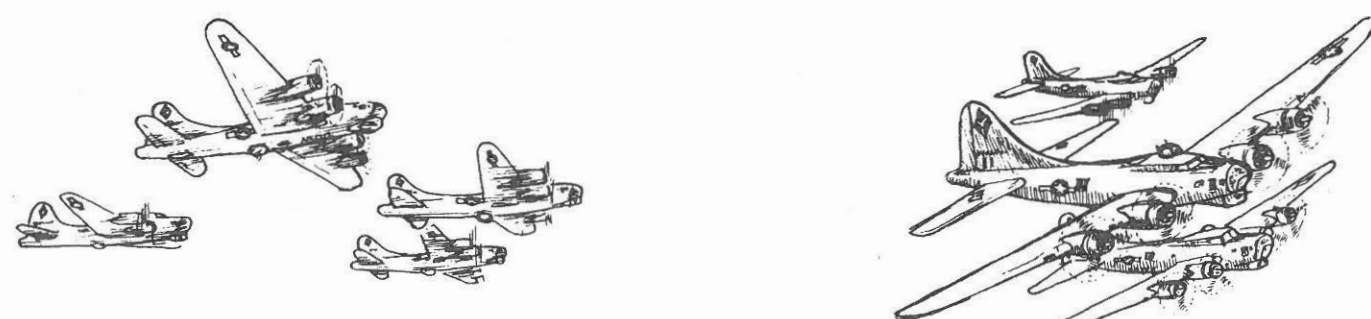
Best regards, *Delbert* Please turn to page 15

for Delbert's photo of discovery.

Dear Mr Barr,

Certainly appreciated your note, and notice from the magazine that there seems to be a definite shortage of B-17 "clip art". I drew some more little "Forts" to add to your art. Since I drew the original, you may use these any way you like-they are good little fillers in those page corners, in case your broadside and the head on schematic get a little "war weary". Daddy called in great excitement last night to say his newsletter had arrived (and he was delighted with it)! I had to laugh; he's very involved in his relationship with his computer. I can't type and don't want to be bothered with one, however I know all the services by the U. S. Mail Service as if I "owned the store" so had already heard from you all twice weeks ago by snail mail. Daddy was still tippy typing around on his computer trying to find the 99th on the internet...Thank goodness he finally took pen in hand! s/Mary Duke Guldan

Dear Mary Duke: Thanks for your "Fort" art work. I'll send them to Roy Worthington to use as he needs fillers as he arranges the material for publishing our newsletter. I'm happy that your dad finally took pen in hand and joined our 99BGHS. Some of your art appears below. bernie



ROY, ^{photos} ^{7/26/99}
Here's a photo and a draft of an article that you may want to place in one of the 99th newsletters. It was obviously a great privilege for me to get to meet the commander of the 15th and get to talk with him at length. I'm also pleased that our company has been able to do something for improved communications among the different units within the AF.

ASSOCIATE MEMBER MEETS COMMANDER OF 15TH AF

99th associate member Mike Hayman was given the opportunity to meet and speak with the current Commander of the entire 15th Air Force at Travis AFB, California on June 10th during a ceremony of a new communications system. Mike met Lt. Gen John Sams as he and other dignitaries dedicated a new communication system that networks many different wings of the Air Force with headquarters called the Strategic Automated Command & Control Desktop Terminal (SDT). It replaces an old less efficient SAC system that cost 30 times as much to install and will save the Air Force several million dollars over the next year. Mike's company, ITT Aerospace, helped develop, install and write the software for the new system which will currently link refueling aircraft. Plans are underway to link bombers and other strike forces with the new system. It provides real time communication that in the past could take hours between the different commands to relay. Lt. Gen Sams commented that the new system is a vast improvement over the old technology and congratulated everyone who participated. Among Sams were two other Generals, several Colonels, Lt Colonels and Majors who attended the event at 15th Headquarters. Several engineers from Offutt AFB and Mike's manager of In-Service-Engineering located at Offutt also attended. "I had an opportunity to speak with the General one-on-one and we talked about bombers and the 99th flying B-17's in WWII" said Mike. Sams was a real down to earth type of individual and the kind of person you feel very comfortable around and confident of his knowledge and leadership. The General, as a pilot, has over 5000 hrs in many aircraft including the B1 and B-52 and served in Vietnam. It was truly an honor and especially nice because of supporting the 15th Air Force."

Mike Hayman Meeting Lt. Gen. Sams

regards, Mike



Please turn to page 15 for Mike's photo of 15th Air Force Headquarters Building.



99th Bomb Group Historical Society
Walter H. Butler, Treasurer
8608 Bellehaven Pl. N.E.
Albuquerque, N.M. 87112

Edward Kaplan
5780 Fernley Drive West, #134
West Palm Beach, FL 33415

Dear Mr. Butler:

I am most appreciative of you sending me the 99th Bomb Group Newsletter, which I think is remarkable in its professionalism. It certainly illustrates a first rate rendition of the 99th's capabilities.

I have responded to the reunion notice published in the last edition of Veteran's Of Foreign Wars because I have been trying to hook up with some past memories. Actually my background came from the 463rd Bomb Group which I entered in the states in 1942, and went overseas with them to Foggia. Some time near the end of the war I was transferred to the 99th.

I wish I could recall some of the men and memories from the 99th but I can't.

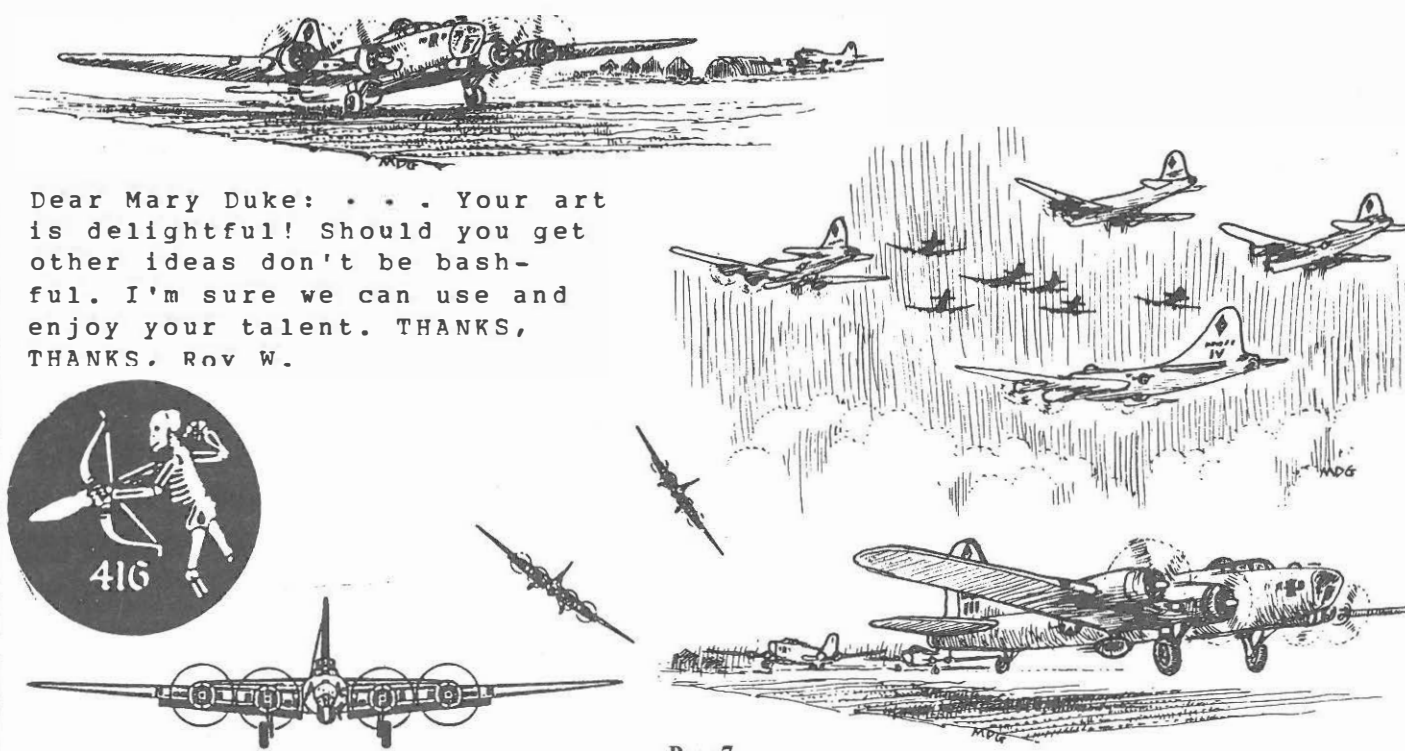
However I am glad to send you the dues for 1999 and wish all of the 99th God's speed for continued good health.

Sincerely,

Edward Kaplan
Edward Kaplan

Dear Ed: . . . Welcome to the 99th BGHS. We hope you & your bride will join us in Jacksonville May, Y2K. Details in Feb. Y2K issue. Regards, Roy W.

P.S. I did join the 463rd last year



Dear Mary Duke: . . . Your art is delightful! Should you get other ideas don't be bashful. I'm sure we can use and enjoy your talent. THANKS, THANKS. Roy W.

September 6, 1999

Dear Bernie

Glad to hear in the August Newsletter that you are no longer on sick call. GOOD NEWS! Hope to see you again in Jacksonville.

I thought this letter of mine might be of use for the November-before christmus- newsletter. I sent it to close friends and relatives last year and to my former crew members, Bill Sommers and Don Power who are members of our 99 Historical Society.

The card is one that the Air Force Association put out and I doubt that they would mind if you reproduced it in our letter as we are not doing it for profit or charging for it, etc. Do hope you can use it.

Best Regards

s/John "Red" Patterson
3210 Lucinda Ln
Santa Barbara, CA
93105

'Red', please forgive my urge to place a larger B-17 on your Christmas card. RW



Christmas Letter 1998...

"Christmas Eve will find me--"

I was very touched and moved when I first saw the painting on this card of a W.W.II B-17 Flying Fortress in a Christmas scene entitled, "If only in My Dreams." So, I had to order some and share this 1944 Christmas Eve memory with you. That memorable year I was a member of a close-knit B-17 bomber crew and a small part of the 15th Air Force located in the countryside near Foggia, Italy. The much written about wet Italian winter had begun and there was no mission flown that day before Christmas. It was a great time to lay back

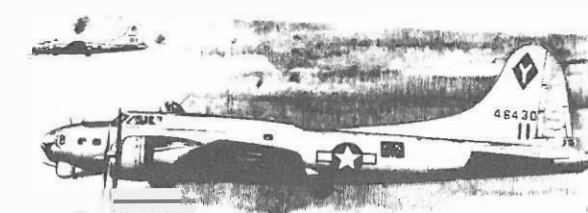
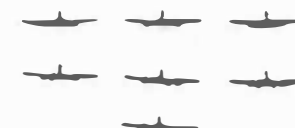
and party, so in the late afternoon I left my five fellow tent mates and walked the short distance to our enlisted men's club to have a glass or three of something or other alcoholic (the choices were not great--probably vermouth, or brandy or some kind of wine) with a fellow tail gunner buddy of mine named Jesse Reilly. It was understood that I would return in about an hour so that the six of us tent mates could hit the mess hall together for Christmas Eve chow. We would party with our four officers in their tent afterward.

It was getting quite dark as I returned to our tent. I was expecting to see light from our single light bulb and the five of them sitting around there as I opened the door, but instead I found the space empty of buddies and the tent in darkness. In the seconds that it took me to take this all in I realized they had left the radio on (a real, no, no, as our power came from small portable generators and could go up suddenly and blow our precious radio tubes) and out of its small speaker via Armed Forces Radio came the voice of Bing Crosby, loud and clear, singing "I'll Be Home for Christmas." That was a new song then but I am sure you all know the lyrics by now. Well I sat there in the dark listening to Bing and feeling mighty sorry for myself being so far from home and all--and probably needing another drink. It's possible I could have shed a tear or two as there was no one there to see me. But soon my tent mates came boisterously and laughingly home. They had been invited over to the tent of another crew for libations and some kind of thrown together punch and it was time for chow.

That song became a part of Christmas for me that night and every Christmas Eve since I have returned in memory to that tent home in the 348th Bomb Squadron on the Foggia Plains and the dear young faces of my fellow Aircrewmen.

"...you can count on me..."

John "Red" Patterson





Florida State University
 Institute on World War II & the Human Experience
 Department of History
 Tallahassee, FL 32306-2200 U.S.A.

Director: William O. Oldson

August 17, 1999

Col. Bernice S. Barr, Director
 99th Bomb Group Historical Society
 7408 Vista Del Arroyo Ave., N.E.
 Albuquerque, NM 87109-2941

Dear Colonel Barr:

Thank you very much for your letter as well as for the complete run of the 99th's newsletter which arrived this afternoon. I am delighted to have this donation with its comprehensive overview of the experiences of your unit's personnel. Your interest in and support of FSU's WWII Archive are greatly appreciated.

On a more personal level, the newsletter will be an immense help in my own publication program on behalf of the WWII Institute. I'm in the process of editing a wonderful set of letters written by a member of the 348th Sq.; namely, Captain Joe Upchurch. I have a very promising contact with a university press which may want to publish this correspondence both because of its literary character and due to its description of the experiences of a B-17 pilot serving with the 99th in Italy. Your newsletter will enable me to provide more background and perspective for the audience I'm aiming at.

I'm passing your interest in being interviewed along to Dr. Robin Sellers, Director of FSU's Oral History Program. Also, if the 99th is ever looking for a speaker for one of its reunions, please keep me in mind. I'll do my very best to arrange my schedule in order to honor such an invitation.

Enclosed you will find copies of the WWII Institute's brochure. In brief, FSU's archive concentrates on the lives and experiences of the average man and woman during World War II. We're in the process of amassing as large an archive as possible from which adequate social history can be written. The Institute is not a museum, but rather a collection of the personal reflections (in many forms) of the "Willies and Joes and Janes" and "Rosies the Riveters" who won the war. Besides simply saving the irreplaceable memoirs, diaries, letters, and photos, we want to make them available to both the scholar and the general public. I'm hoping that by providing more in the way of personal and anecdotal history, I can interest the current generation of students who in some cases do not even know which side we were on (as hard as that may be to believe for some who fought so long and hard or worked equally diligently in the industries that produced the material that won the war!).

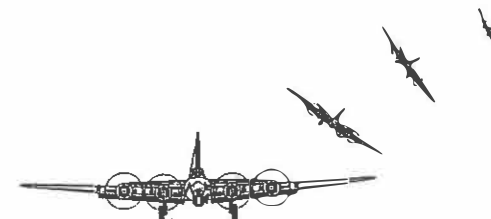
I'm also enclosing a copy of the current "fact sheet" which we hand out to the media and a copy of the letter to veterans and their families which we use on a regular basis. If you or the other officers of the 99th would like to have more detailed information about our project or the

services we offer to veterans' associations, please let me know. Along this line, I spoke at the May reunion of the 494th Bombardment Group (H) [PTO] in Philadelphia, where the vets voted to make FSU their official depository. If you and the others in the 99th would be interested in contacting the 494th leadership to explore their reasoning for this most generous donation, I'll be glad to provide the names and addresses you will need.

Once again let me say how much I appreciate your support and interest. Please, pass the word for us to any WWII vets and defense workers you may know.

Yours truly,

William O. Oldson
 Professor



PS: My father served in both England as a B-17 crew chief and later in North Africa as a maintenance officer. Unfortunately, I don't know which units he was with. My wife's uncle flew B-24s out of Foggia for about four months.

In our last newsletter George Perry wrote that no one had ever given him a satisfactory answer to the numbering of squadrons within the 99th Bomb Group. This may answer his question. When I was assigned to the 7th bomb group in 1940 there were three bomb squadrons—the 9th, the 11th, the 22nd and the 88th Reconnaissance squadron making the four squadrons in the group. So the numbering continued in the planning of future Bomb Groups. Therefore the 416th squadron would have been a reconnaissance squadron. During WWII the planners found that a separate Reconnaissance Group could do a better task of gathering information—so the odd number squadrons became a bomb squadron....???!!!

The story of Florida State Institute of WWII History is covered in this newsletter. When Walter Butler and I heard about we mailed all back issues from 1980 to present to Florida State. The Director Dr. William Oldson made a speech in Santa FE, NM on Sept 17, 1999. Enroute he joined the Albuquerque gang for lunch and a most informative discussion. With the concurrence of Ed Marlow our host for our next reunion in May 2000 in Jacksonville, FL we invited Dr Oldson to be our speaker at the banquet. He accepted. On Sept 22 he wrote me the following letter.

Dear Bernie:

Just a quick note to thank you for your hospitality and for introducing me to the other members of the 99th. I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I'm having the video copied and will return it to you as soon as I have it back from the shop. Your generosity in this area is greatly appreciated.

How about something like this to include in the 99th's announcement of the Jacksonville reunion (?):

Traveling to Jacksonville by car? Stop and tour Florida State University's Institute on World War II & the Human Experience (in Tallahassee, FL; on I-10 on the way to JAX). The Director, Dr. Bill Oldson, who is also our speaker for the reunion, has issued all members of the 99th a standing invitation to visit with him and his staff. The WWII Archive's Reading Room, with its extensive collection of letters,

photos, and artifacts, is open for your enjoyment. Bill would also like to encourage everyone to consider taking this opportunity to be interviewed about their WWII experiences. He will then provide you with a typed transcript which he says families love to receive as a present. Bill can be reached at 850-644-9541 or woldson@garnet.acns.fsu.edu for further information & a brochure.

Once again, thanks for your time and effort in this regard. Looking forward to talking with you again.

Yours truly,



William O. Oldson
Professor

Tel: (850) 644-9541 Fax: (850) 644-6402
E-mail: woldson@garnet.acns.fsu.edu

The Institute on World War II And The Human Experience
Department of History Florida State University Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2200
Director: William O. Oldson, Ph.D.

Phone: 850-644-9033 fax:850-644-6402 e-mail: men5406@garnet.acns.fsu.edu

With the approval of the Florida Board of Regents, Florida State University has established the Institute on World War II and the Human Experience to collect, preserve, and make available to the general public the insights of all those who participated in WWII. Obviously, the emphasis here is on the experiences of the some sixteen million men and women who served under the colors from 1941 until 1945. In addition, the WWII Institute is attempting to collect the papers of defense workers and those on the Home Front who can provide a glimpse into how daily life was carried on.

The WWII Institute is not a museum. We accept artifacts such as uniforms and equipment only on an occasional basis and when the item is unusual or has a close connection with the documentary sources we stress. Our principal goal is to collect and then make available to all who are interested the letters, diaries, memoirs, pictures, service records, etc. whose vivid recollections help make the war years "real" to the younger generation. Dr. Oldson, the WWII Institute's Director, mines the insights and anecdotes contained in this correspondence for stories which will help his students realize what their grandparents went through. He is determined that never again will he be asked "Dr. Oldson, which side were we on?"

The daunting challenge which the WWII Institute faces is two fold. First of all, almost ten million veterans have already died. With them disappeared most of their papers. No institution in this country possesses a representative sample from which authenticated generalizations about what these men and women went through can be made. What was so obvious then, what seemed so everyday, has all too often been lost or forgotten. FSU currently has 1,400 individual donations ranging from the diary of a medic in the Pacific trying to save the life of a Marine rifleman to the unit archives of Navy ships and Air Corps bomb groups. In addition, we have approximately 100 interviews ranging from an LCI helmsman at D-Day to a USO Tour singer. We are attempting to get this material into the classroom so that high school and college students will see the war as more than Pearl Harbor and "the Bomb."

Secondly, an on-going challenge is the need to overcome this "Greatest Generation's" innate modesty. Often we hear, "I didn't do anything important, wasn't a hero, wasn't in combat, etc." We hope that all who served--regardless of how, where, or how long--will understand that we want their insights and recollections as well. We need to learn more about the seven or eight individuals it took to get each fighting man into the line. Even harder to locate and convince are the defense workers and those on the Home Front. Their memories are needed also, because the average student knows nothing of censored mail, gas/food rationing, the draft, blackouts, etc. We hope through the compilation of this

wide range of experiences to be able to draw a compelling picture of America at war. In short, we want to remind this county's children of something good and very important that their grandparents accomplished.

Taking as its motto "Recognition and Remembrance" [a refrain whose importance has been acknowledged on the NBC TODAY SHOW and on C-SPAN as they did stories on our project] the WWII Institute at FSU is gathering these irreplaceable and invaluable materials into a professionally run archive. Once accessioned and indexed, these WWII memorabilia are then available for use in the Institute's Reading Room. All donations are kept intact with the donor (and family) being recognized both by letter and in the cross-referenced data base.

9651 Green Spot Place NE
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110
January 15, 1999

Dear Walter:

Enclosed is a check for \$30.00 to cover my 99th B.G.H.S. dues for 1999 and 2000. Sorry that this is late but it seems that I'm getting a little forgetful, a condition that a lot of us old duffers suffer from.

Am also enclosing a poem that I copied back in 1944 when I was stationed in Italy with the 99th. Wish that I had found it sooner but maybe you can use it in a future issue of the newsletter.

Reading the poem again brought back memories of the Christmas Day mission in 1944 to the Brux oil refinery in Czechoslovakia. It was my 21st sortie and also became a very memorable one for me. All went well on the mission until we were leaving the target area when an anti-aircraft shell put a hole in one of the plane's elevators. That changed the plane's flying characteristics so much that the two pilots had to brace their legs in order to hold the wheel back enough to keep the plane from losing too much altitude. Eventually, we had to fall out of formation and try to make it back to our base alone. To make matters worse, we were running low on fuel so it was very doubtful that we could make it all the way back. In northern Italy we spotted an emergency airfield but it had a B-24 sitting in the middle of it so that eliminated that option. We kept going but the crew, in the meantime, was getting prepared for a wet landing in the Adriatic. Fortunately, there was an R.A.F. base in the vicinity of Ancona (if my memory is correct) that was willing to share their petrol with us. We landed, gassed up and didn't even need a credit card. It was pretty dark when we arrived back at the base but a turkey dinner with the trimmings was waiting for us. Needless to say we were all very thankful that we could partake of it.

My wife and I are planning to attend the reunion in May so hope to see you then.

Sincerely,

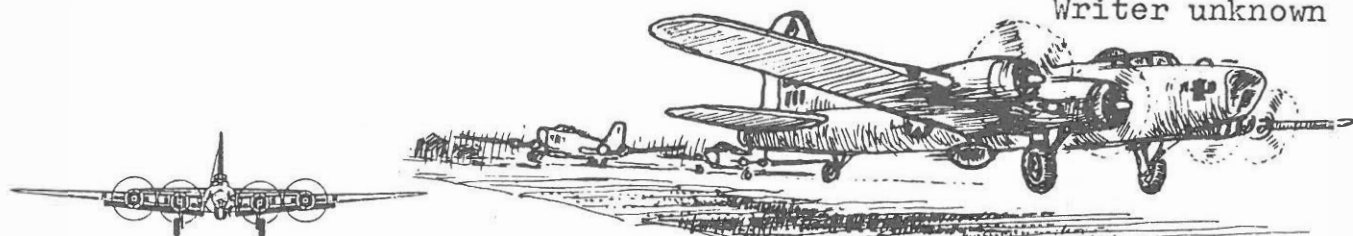


December 1944

'Twas THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

'Twas the night before Christmas and all thro the group
 The big-wigs and wheels were grinding our poop.
 The bombers were parked on their hardstands with care
 Waiting for armament soon to be there.
 The fliers were nestled all snug in their beds
 While visions of milk runs danced in their heads.
 When out of the darkness there came a loud knock
 We cussed the O.D. and looked at the clock.
 "Briefing will be in two hours" he said
 We threw him out and went back to bed.
 Time marched on and the minutes are dying
 So it's out of the sack and make with the flying.
 We rushed to the mess hall quick as a flash,
 Ate cold powdered eggs and hideous hash.
 Then a long bumpy ride to the group briefing room,
 Where the big-wigs preside and dish out our doom.
 The target is told and the first six rows faint,
 For lo and behold, Vienna it ain't.
 The brain has slipped up - oh my poor aching back,
 We're bombing a place that throws up no flak.
 So it's back in the truck and off to the line,
 The road is now smooth and the weather is fine.
 The crew is at stations - the check list is run,
 The engines run smoothly as we give 'em the gun.
 Then suddenly the pilot wails in despair,
 "Look at the tower, they just shot a flare".
 We dash to the windows with a heart full of dread,
 The pilot was right and the darn thing is red.
 So it's back to the sack and we sweat out our fate,
 For there's practice formation at a quarter past eight.

Writer unknown



15TH Air Force Headquarters Building (Travis AFB)

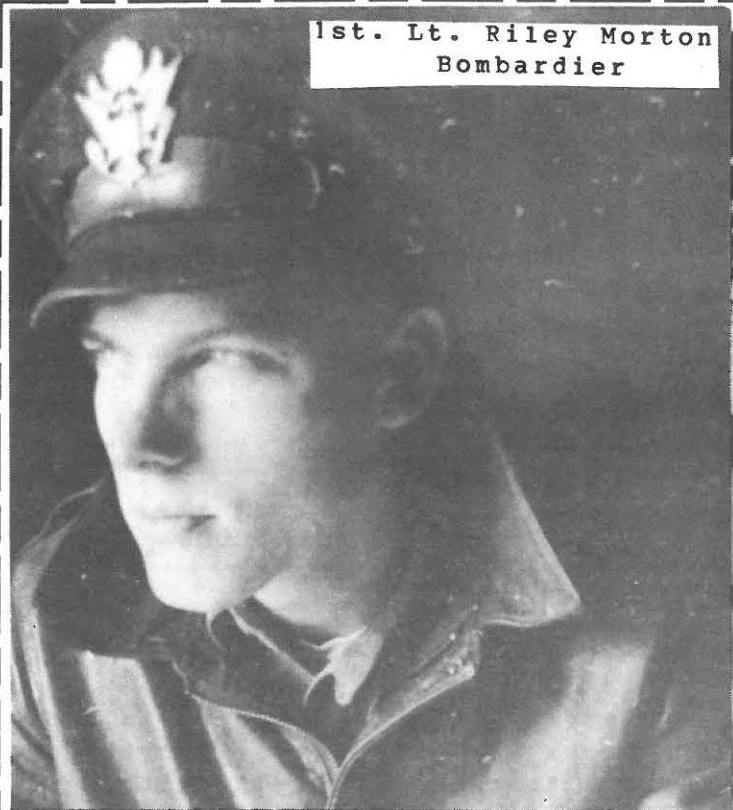


Delbert Laudner at the Railroad Station.
 Our air crews always relaxed when they
 cleared the tracks on take off with 2½
 tons of bombs aboard. . . . (Thanks
 Delbert for the interesting/nostalgic?
 photos.)



TORTORELLA STATION





1st. Lt. Riley Morton
Bombardier



1st. Lt. George Null
Navigator



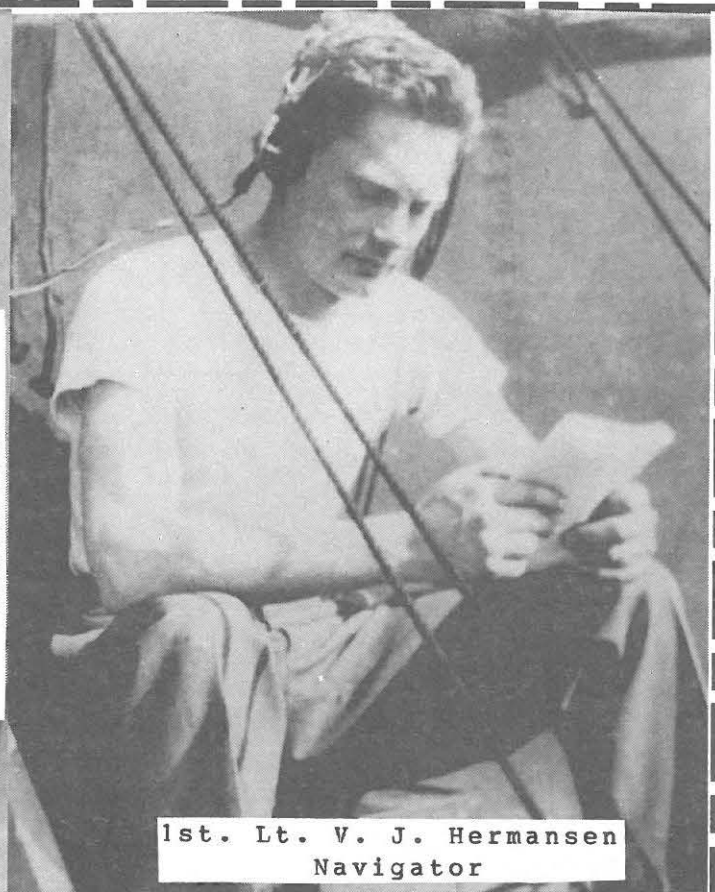
1st. Lt. Frank Pearce
Co-Pilot



1st. Lt. Warren Schokmiller
Pilot - - Receiving D.F.C.
Awarde Unknown



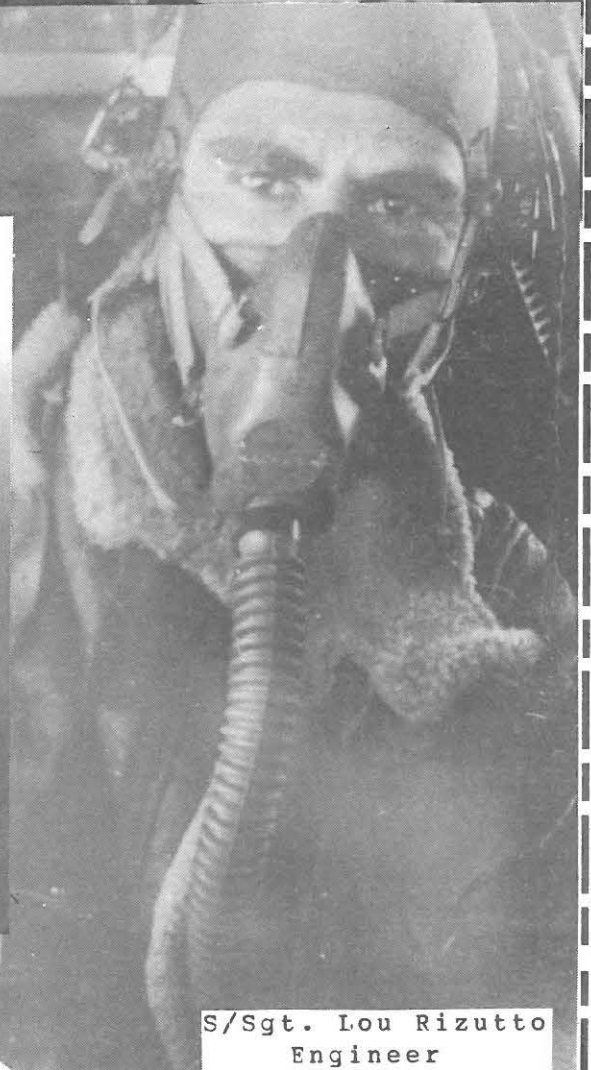
'News From Home'
1st. Lt. Riley Morton
Bombardier



1st. Lt. V. J. Hermansen
Navigator



'Mission Returning'

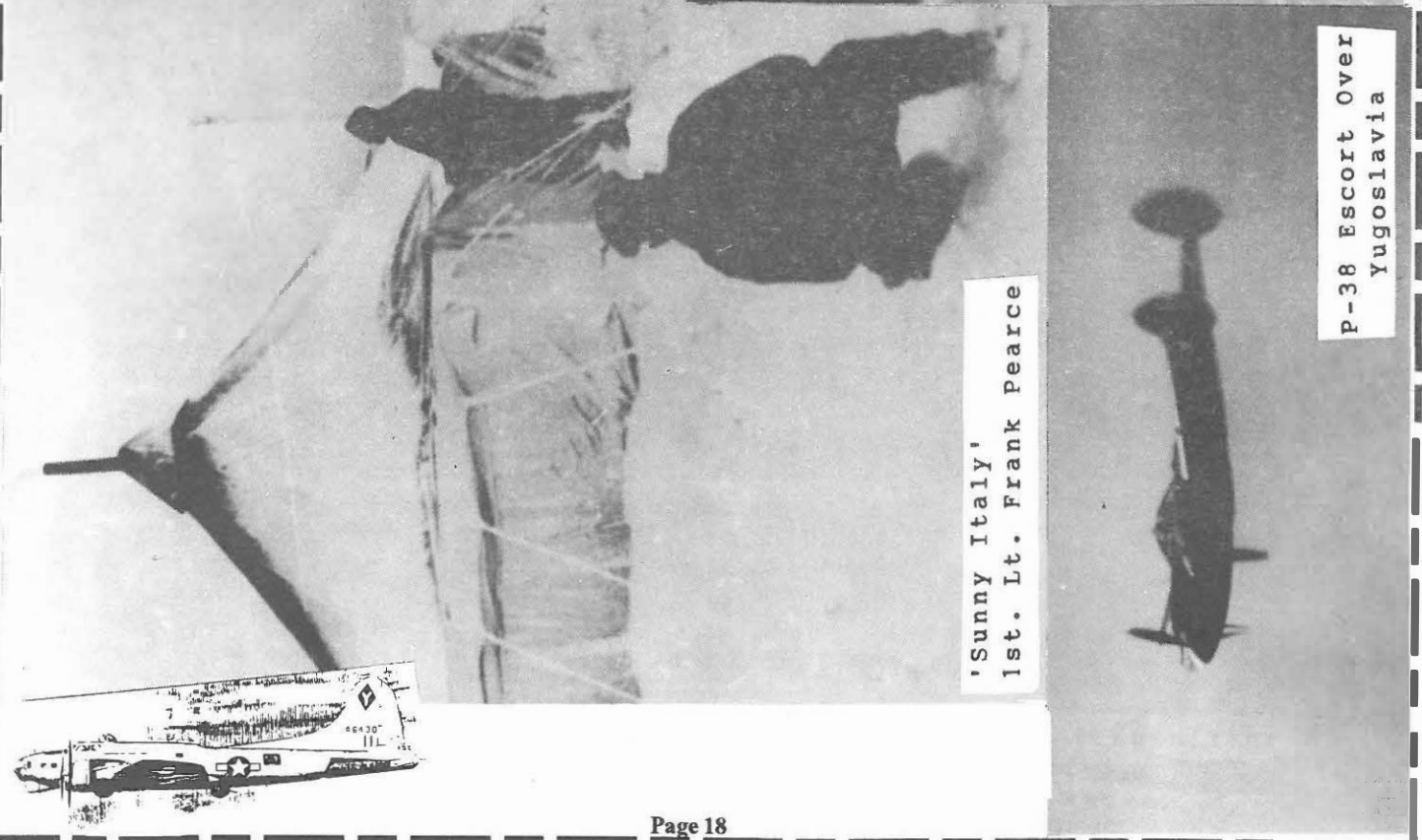


S/Sgt. Lou Rizutto
Engineer



S/Sgt. Paul Weberg
Waist Gunner

S/Sgt. Bob Landis
Tail Gunner



'Sunny Italy'
1st. Lt. Frank Pearce

P-38 Escort Over
Yugoslavia

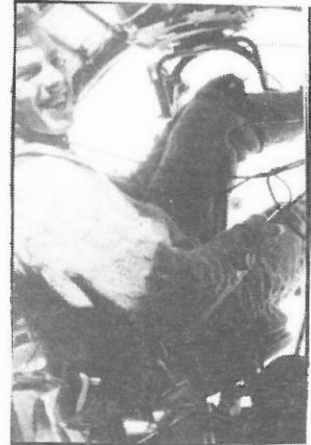
REPLACEMENT SET OF MEDALS

All honorably discharged veterans of the Air Force, Army Air Corps, and Army Air Forces are entitled to a one time, free of charge replacement set of their authorized medals and ribbons from the U.S. Government. Submit request in writing to: **National Personnel Records Center, Attn: NRPMF, 9700 Page Ave., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100.**

Request must contain veteran's full name, service or social security number, branch of service, and dates of service (approximate dates are OK). Also, the request must be signed by the veteran; If deceased, the veteran's next of kin can sign the request on his/her behalf. Ensure that information on the request is clear and easy to read. It is helpful to attach copy of discharge certificate to request, but not required. It is best to use Standard Form 180 (Request Pertaining To Military Records) to send request if possible. These are available at

VA offices and from most veterans organizations.

Please note that the Government does not provide badges, insignia, unit patches, or miniature medal sets - these must be obtained through commercial sources at veterans' expense. Allow 90-120 days for processing.



416th Sq. crew housing area.

1st. Lt. Riley Morton in his nose seat.

Additional Frank Pearce 1945 photos: Top row - S/Sgt. Robert Phillips - 'Home Improvement' project (Lt. to Rt.) Lou Rizutto, Paul Weberg, Bob Landis, Bob Linn, Bob Phillips; 416th Sq. Area. Bottom row - Navigator 1st. Lt. V. J. Hermansen in sunny Italy snow storm; Bottom row center top - Schokmiller's Officer crew tent; Bottom row center bottom - 416th Sq. Headquarters; on the Isle of Capri sunning themselves with dark glasses are - (Lt. to Rt.) Pilot 1st Lt. Warren Schokmiller & Navigator 1st Lt. V. J. Hermansen; B-17 in take off position, ready for takeoff.



Albert C. Henke
5103 Mansfield Lane
Shawnee, Kansas 66203

"WHAT I WAS DOING ON D-DAY"

By Albert C. Henke

D-Day found me aboard the liberty ship "USS William S. Few." I was in the middle of the Atlantic on a 34 day cruise that started in Naples, Italy, destination New York City. At approximately 1:00 AM (our time) on June 6th, 1944, there was an announcement on the p.a. system, "**The Allies are landing.** The invasion is taking place!" THANK GOD, this day finally arrived! I remember that I was on the forward top hatch trying to sleep. My actual assignment was to sleep below deck. There were 500 men on rope hammocks, stacked 5 deep assigned to this area and the ventilating system was not operating properly. It was impossible to sleep there. So many of us opted to sleep on top deck.

I enlisted in the "Air Corp" on November 6th, 1942. My salary was the grand total of \$21.00 per month. Shortly after my enlistment the United States changed the name of Air Corp to Air Force. At that time we also got a raise in pay to \$50.00 per month. Little did I know that day of enlistment would be the last time I would see home for 22 months.

A person might question why on D-Day, our ship traveled west when most all other troop movements were traveling east. My original assignment was to the 12th Air Force. However, two months later the United States activated the 15th Air Force and the 12th Air Force became part of the 15th. At this time I became part of the 99th Bomb Group, 416th Squadron based in Tunis, Tunisia, North Africa. My first fourteen missions were from this base. These were long missions. Some of the targets were into Germany. We did not have fighter escorts because of the long distance. Fighter planes could not fly that far without refueling. After the allied command took Sicily, Naples, Foggia, and Barie, Italy, our outfit moved up to Foggia, Italy. My last 36 missions were from this base. Airmen of the 15th Air Force had to fly fifty missions before reassignment to the states, and for most of them their combat days were over. I had just completed my 50 missions and was on my way home.

My 50th and final mission was the Messerschmitt Factory located at Steyr, Austria on April 2nd, 1944. We lost 51 bombers that day., two out of our nine-plane squadron, the 416th of the 99th Bomb Group. My roughest mission of the 50 was mission 34, on February 22, 1944. History refers to this as "The Big Week." Our mission was to bomb the Messerschmitt Factory at Regensburg, Germany. This was a deep penetration raid, 1,300 miles round trip. Only ships equipped with Tokyo Tanks could make this trip. On this day we lost 53 bombers. Our 416th Squadron left Foggia, Italy with six B-17G's. Three of our aircraft returned early, and three reached the target. We ended up over Regensburg with our plane, the lead ship #889, piloted by Captain Shaw, our left wing, Lt. Perry's crew in #522 and our right wing Lt. McGee's plane #439. McGee's plane was on fire

after we left the target. The crew bailed out, and it exploded north of Augsburg. Lt. Perry's plane made it back as far as Polo, Yugoslavia, and was forced to ditch in the Adriatic Sea. The Germans captured all 20 men of the above two crews. They spent 15 months in Stalag 1 on the Baltic Sea. (I was not aware of the capture of these two crews until about 41 years later when I met McGee and Perry at a 99th Bomb Group Historical Society Reunion at Seattle, Washington.) We encountered a 55 minute battle with German fighters over the Alps. Our plane had to drop out of formation with the other squadrons. The German aerial rockets damaged our left wing making it vibrate. This vibration caused rivets to be torn throughout the plane. This made it necessary to fly at reduced speed. We hobbled back to Foggia, by ourselves, about one hour after the rest of the formation had returned. I think our plane went to the bone yard and never flew again. On the morning of February 23, 1944, THE KANSAS CITY STAR carried an AP released publication covering this mission and stated that I received credit for shooting down a ME210 German fighter.

Now back to my journey home. After completing my missions on April 2, 1944, I remained at the squadron awaiting orders that did not arrive until April 17th. I boarded a B-17 for a short hop from Foggia to Naples. We landed on a small airport in the city of Naples, a tight fit for a 4-engine bomber. Our next trip was by truck to the Replacement Depot located on the west side of Naples at the King's Race Track, a large concrete stadium. We spent 23 days waiting for a ship and dodging ack-ack shrapnel. The stadium proved to be a great protection from the ack-ack. Weather permitting once every morning a lone photo plane would fly down from Rome at high altitude and check Naples harbor for ships in or near the docks. We had action practically every night. Naples is approximately 125 miles south of Rome, and our forces were still on the Anzio Beachhead, and south of the Voiturno River. At last, on May 9th our shipping orders arrived and we boarded the liberty ship USS William S. Few by walking across gang planks laid over the sunken ships in the harbor. I thought it a strange time of day but we boarded the ship at 2:30 PM. Later that night we found out why. About 9:00 PM we sailed by the Isle of Capri, and as we looked back toward Naples we could see the Germans bombing where three ships had set earlier that day. One was the ship we called home for 34 days.

As we passed Capri and turned south I felt, at last we are on our way home but didn't realize the many sights and encounters we would meet before docking at New York. This first day out we headed for a point near Gela, Sicily. The ships were forming a convoy and waited until more ships coming north through the Suez Canal joined us. As we approached Sicily before daylight we sailed past the Stromboli volcano, which was erupting at the time. The red hot lava was streaming down the side of the mountain into the Tyrrhenian Sea. What a beautiful sight!

I had been to Gela once before seven months earlier. Our target November 2, 1943, was a Messerschmitt factory located at Wiener-Neustadt, Austria.

Because this raid was an eleven hour, twenty minute trip, we did not have enough fuel to return to Tunis, in North Africa. The Allies had just recently captured the southern part of Sicily, so our B-17's landed on a fighter strip in this area. We slept on a steel mat runway, under the tail of our plane. Parked next to our plane only 30 feet from ours was a plane that contained a dead tail gunner still in his position. I did not sleep too well that night.

As we continued on our journey the convoy began to grow in size. We sailed on to Algiers, Algeria and waited three more days for more ships to join us. Approaching Algiers harbor in the Mediterranean Sea, we noticed from a distance what looked like a dust storm. Instead of dust it turned out to be a seventh-year locust plague. Swarms of insects covered the water in the harbor (I would have called them grasshoppers). This swarm was flying from Spain and Portugal. (I still have the pass I used to go into Algiers. Written on the pass dated May 23rd, 1944 was a notation, "My last day on foreign soil." This day in Algiers was quite an experience. I can say that I was in the famous "Casbah.." We noticed people sweeping the locusts up and storing them in bags. The natives consider these insects a rare delicacy. They prepared them in several ways; boiled in milk like stew, toasted or fried or chocolate coated. How would this entree sound for your next dinner party?

I was in Algiers twice before; first by train in September 1943, when I began my tour overseas. This was a 1200 mile trip, on a 40 x 8 box car, lasting seven days that started in Casa Blanca, Morocco. The second time was as a crew member on a mission in which we flew General Joseph H. Atkinson to London, England for a pre-invasion meeting in January, 1944.

As we pulled out of the harbor that day, approximately 30 large porpoises escorted our convoy out to sea. They followed us for miles waiting for the ships to dump their garbage sanitary tanks, and trash overboard. They would really tear into those cardboard boxes. They were interesting to watch. Our ship sailed in the Mediterranean Sea past the Strait of Gibraltar, and on to the Atlantic Ocean. By this time our convoy increased to 170 ships. We also had 12 destroyers that constantly encircled the armada until we reached the New York harbor.

Four days after we entered the Atlantic Ocean heading due west to New York, we were under attack by a pack of German submarines. This experience convinced me that I would never make it as a sailor, and decided the safest place for me to be, weather permitting, was top side wearing a life preserver day and night. Our destroyers kept busy launching depth charges. These charges would arch in the sky, penetrate the surface of the water and after going down so many feet would detonate, causing a concussion that created a loud bang against the ship below deck. I was never able to distinguish if this blast was from our depth charges or from a U-Boat torpedo. (The Chicago Museum of Science and Industry has a captured U-Boat on display. I toured this U-Boat #505 and noted that it was captured intact within 100 miles of where we pulled into the Atlantic Ocean that day. The U-Boats were with us for three days and we lost several ships.

A day or so after the U-Boats left us we sailed into a terrific storm that lasted for three days. Liberty ships are small vessels and their construction could not compare to an ocean liner, so on high seas they bounced around like a cork. This same storm hit the European coast a day or so after the D-Day landing.

The final days of the trip were smooth sailing, as we approached New York City. We could see the sky scrappers from way out at sea, and before we knew it we were passing the "Statute of Liberty." What a beautiful lady! We docked as I remember at Pier 57 next to the ill-fated liner "Normandy," that had burned and was lying on her side at the dock next to ours. There was an announcement over the p.a. system as we docked for everybody to pick up your gear and prepare to disembark. That was an order that we complied with in a hurry. When we came down the gangplank some girls from the Red Cross handed each of us donuts and a full quart of milk, our first since leaving the states.

Next we boarded a ferry and crossed the harbor to New Jersey, then went by truck to Camp Kilmer. Upon our arrival there we were served a steak dinner and told us if everyone cooperated, processing would be completed and we would be on our way home by noon the next day. In my case this was to Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis, Missouri. At Jefferson Barracks I received a 21 day delay-in-route, my first furlough since enlistment. After the furlough, I was to report to the KANSAS CITY UNION STATION, to board the "Florida Special" train to Miami Beach, Florida. Two hours out of Kansas City the air conditioning system on the train malfunctioned. The windows were sealed and there was no way to open them. It was a long 1500 mile trip in July of 1944. We spent two weeks at the Atlantic towers hotel on the beach for "Rest and Relaxation."

The duration of the war, fifteen months, I was at a B-29 super fortress base at "Rattlesnake Army Air Base" in Pyote, Texas. My duty was to be in charge of an armament shop on the gunnery range. A few years ago while on a trip in Texas we drove by Pyote. The only remains of the base were one old rusty and deteriorating hanger off in a distance and a gate at the highway with a plaque stating, "The Enola Gay and crew trained here." I was not aware this famous crew was on the same base with me. Three days after the fall of Japan, my discharge papers came through and on September 12, 1945, I reported to Fort Leavenworth for discharge

END

Al, thanks for your very interesting 'story' I truly hope it will motivate our members to sit down and pen theirs for family and posterity. RW



416th



99th Bomb Group Historical Society
 Walter H. Butler, Treasurer
 8608 Bellehaven Place N.E.
 Albuquerque, NM 87112



I am an associate member, Joyce Finnegan, as my husband, John Finnegan was a member. I was going through his Service Record book that his mother kept for him. We did not meet until he came to the West Coast to attend college and we lived in the same community, met & married in 1948. I found a poem written when he was stationed at Jefferson Barracks, MO in 1942. Thought it might be of interest to other service men of the same period. So here goes!

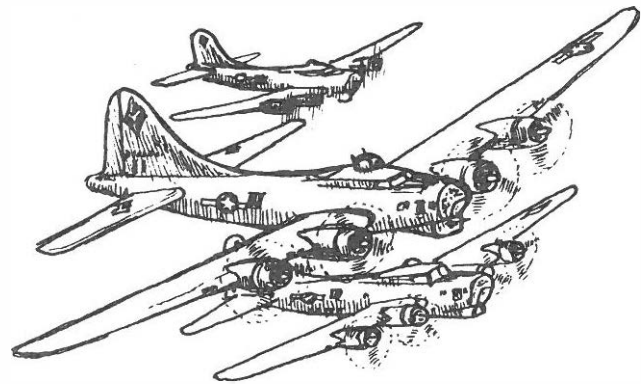
Ode to Jefferson Barracks

I
 Twas the month of February in '42"
 Hardly a man lived the winter thro
 They carried them out in 2's and 3's
 and laid them to rest beneath the trees.

II
 Strong and able when they came
 No one now can say the same
 Day and night they coughed & sneezed
 Night and day they shivered & froze

III
 The ambulance came, the ambulance went
 and collected men from every tent
 Meningites, pneumonia, also the flu
 Whether they lived or died we never knew.

By boys in John Finnegan tent J.B.



John reported for service at Camp Devens January, 1942. He tried to sign up when war broke out but he had to have his birth certificate as he was 20 years old. He sent off for it and signed up as soon as he received it. He was born in Portland, Maine. Lived there for a few years, eventually lived on Martha's Vineyard from age eight until signing up in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was attached to:

348 Bomb Sq., 99 Bomb Group, 12th Air Force

John flew 28 missions before his plane, the Ramblin' Wreck, was shot down over Sicily July 5, 1943. His mother received a telegram on his birthday, August 3, telling her that "regret to inform you your son Technical Sergeant John S. Finnegan was seriously wounded in Action on five July in the North African area report states making normal improvement You will be advised as reports of condition received s/the adjutant general

Hope you can use at least the poem. Our grandson, Patrick Finnegan also reads Grandpa's "Newsletter" when he visits. He is 9 years old & has a great interest in planes & flight.

Sincerely, Joyce Finnegan
 944 Tyler Drive
 Santa Maria, CA 93454

E-Mail Joymurfin@aol.com

Dear Joyce: Thanks for your letter and all its contents. We need just such information about our members. For Patrick I've included a Group illustration on this page showing a B-17 in a heavy flack filled sky dropping its bombs over the target. . . . Should you have a WW II photo of John and tell us his crew position we could print it in a future issue. We will return the photo.

Dear Walter;

7/29/99

Re the photos etc in the May 99 newsletter enclosed is a picture of me in my return from mission outfit.

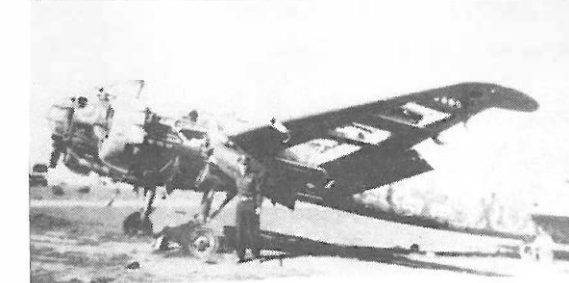
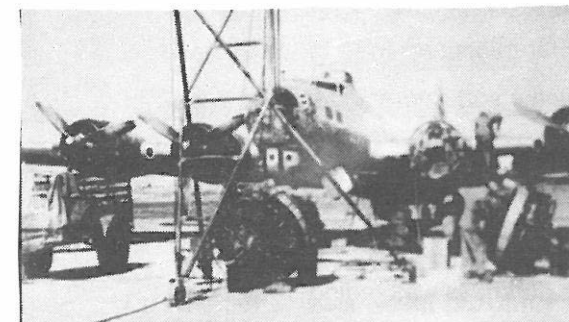
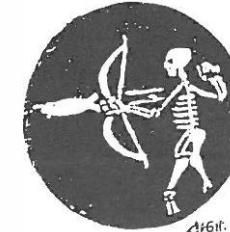
Lt. Muto in the picture at Ajaccio, Corsica was our bombardier. We were in Corsica due to old 507 running out of gas again coming back from bombing Toulon France 2/4/44.

Travis C. Briggs Navigator

1st Lt. 416th

Travis, thanks for identifying Lt. Muto's job.

Travis



This home town news release is printed here for its historical value. See front cover photo.

Decorated for Sticking to Ship Despite Blast Danger

15TH ARMY AIR FORCE—At a 15th Air Force bomber base in Italy, Tech. Sgt. Richard N. Hyle, (right) 20, of 269 Neptune Av., Jersey City, receives the distinguished flying cross for extraordinary achievement as a Flying Fortress engineer and top turret gunner.

A veteran of 50 bombing missions in which he has shot down three German fighter planes, Hyle was cited for his action January 19 in sticking with his ship after it was struck accidentally by 18 fragmentation bombs from another bomber, some of which lodged in the wing and threatened to explode.

He helped the pilot and co-pilot land the plane at a friendly field after other members of the crew had parachuted to safety. Hyle receives his high award from Wing-Commander Col. Charles W. Lawrence.



RICHARD N. HYLE

Three 1945 photos sent by Frank Pearce. #2 engine change; bomb pattern on Weiner-Neustadt Aircraft Factory; shot up JUBB on field at Tortorella.

"FOR YOU DER VAR ISS OFER"

By

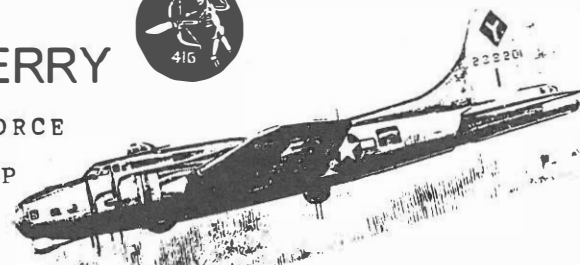
GEORGE F. PERRY



FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

99TH BOMB GROUP

416TH SQUADRON



This is the second installment of Perry's well written, interesting story.

Dedicated to the airmen who flew the B-17 and the ground crews who made it possible.

Number 522 turned out to be a B-17G called "Spoofers" with a chin turret. All of our previous missions had been in F models without that added protection up front. The chin turret had been added when it was found that German fighter pilots preferred to attack head on, giving them full target but minimum exposure time. Bigley and Andrezjewski had been trained in the use of this weapon, unfortunately it froze up on them in the heat of battle. The six crewmen who had arrived first had checked the plane over and readied their guns and ammunition. Kyrouac and I made a thorough check of the plane and climbed into the front office. It was almost 7 a.m. and, while it was still dark, the darkness was fading. The time had come for the lead squadrons to start their engines. Our engines wouldn't start for another ten minutes as we were to be the last squadron off the ground . . . Tail End Charlie, the last squadron in the overall formation of some 300 planes and, therefore the last over the target (the most vulnerable and least-desirable position in the formation.) The taxi strips were full of planes, nose-to-tail waiting to take off; the noise must have been heard in Berlin.

At last it was time to start our engines. Capt. Burnham E. Shaw, pilot of the lead plane preceded us down the taxi strip to the head of the runway. Each engine was run up to high speed and the magnetos checked. Finally we were ready and Shaw was in takeoff position. With he and Copilot Capt. John J. Morris standing on their brakes and the engines running near full throttle, he waited for the preceding plane to clear the runway. Runway clear! They released their brakes and started their takeoff roll as we pulled Spoofers in behind them. In the fifteen seconds it took for a plane to clear the runway, the next plane was to be ready to start its takeoff roll. The next fifteen seconds were ours. Brakes, full throttle, runway clear, release brakes, full boost, and we were on our way. The plane gathered speed slowly as Charles E. McGee pulled into position behind us to be ready. Kyrouac called out the airspeed as we gathered momentum. Forty, fifty, sixty, and the tail came up; seventy, eighty, ninety, and it was time to ease the yoke back. The plane still felt heavy on the runway. Ninety-five, a hundred, one oh five, one ten and Spoofers staggered off the runway. Wheels up; we slowly gathered more speed. One fifteen, one twenty, one thirty, we were still low but, with flying speed, we could start climbing at about two-hundred feet per

minute. It had taken about fifteen seconds to get each plane off the ground. Shaw flew straight out for three minutes climbing as he went then made a left turn of ninety degrees. Ten seconds later I made a left ninety. One more minute and Shaw took another left ninety and I was able to pull right in beside him on his left wing with another left turn. McGee pulled in on the other side by doing the same. The other element of our six-plane formation followed the same procedure and the 416th was formed up ready to join the overall formation of the 99th Bomb Group in the Tail End Charlie position.

With 300 planes in the air trying to form up at the same time, it was not always possible for the Squadron Leader to go exactly where he would like. The sun was up and visibility good at about 4,000 feet, except for a few fluffy clouds, the kind I loved to buzz in basic training. Shaw found himself in a position where he was headed for one of those clouds and unable to maneuver to miss it. He was able to clear the cloud with the lead element, that is McGee and Perry, but the second element flying behind and below were unable to avoid the cloud. Taking evasive action to avoid colliding within the cloud these three planes were separated from the formation and returned to Base. We completed the formation of the entire 15th Air Force out over the Adriatic Sea and headed north climbing on course. The sky was full of airplanes and Shaw with his three-plane squadron was filling his assigned tail-end position.

Strict radio silence was in effect, and though I wanted Shaw to pull into formation with, or at least closer proximity to the next flight forward, I could say nothing that he could hear. There was safety in numbers as we had discovered long ago. On that mission all B-17s were G models and had 13 caliber 50 machine guns for protection; therefore, the standard eight- or nine-plane formation had 104 or 117 guns against any fighter that approached. Our three-plane formation had 39. If you were an enemy fighter pilot with orders to attack, which formation would you tackle?

We were over the Adriatic Sea, a narrow arm of the Mediterranean separating Italy and Yugoslavia, and heading north. Airspeed 135, rate of climb 150 feet per minute, would get us to the north end of the Adriatic in about two hours at an altitude of 20,000 feet. It was getting colder and as we climbed through the 10,000-foot level, Kyrouac warned the crew to don oxygen masks. We might have survived for a short time without the added oxygen at the higher altitude but thinking would become more labored and reactions slower as we went up. Ahead of us the lead elements had broken through into a layer of air that caused the exhaust from their engines to form tiny ice crystals that streamed out in long con (condensation) trails. Each engine put out its own white stream which merged with the other three to form the white ribbon we often see from below, and then those ribbons merged into long white clouds as they expanded to join together behind each formation. It was an awesome sight. We reached contrail level and watched our engines put out what some might have thought to be smoke.

It was cold . . . extremely cold. Unlike today's pressurized aircraft, the B-17 seemed more like a convertible. No, the top was not down, but there were enough holes and cracks

to let the wind whistle through at an uncomfortable rate. Some crew members had heated suits, but that was not a luxury afforded the two pilots. I think I must have asked about this blatant discrimination and found that it was because Mr. Boeing failed to put electrical outlets in the office; besides we didn't have to leave our windows open as did the gunners. The waist gunners particularly were standing in a 3' X 5' opening and when the temperature reached 52 degrees below in the driver's seat, the wind-chill factor for Dudley Segars and Ernest Hettinger, in the open air, must have been beyond imagination. At least they had the luxury of being able to move around. Don Gregory in the cramped quarters of the ball turret could not even change position and Eddie Goldstein, back at the tail gun, was squatting on a bicycle seat with no room to maneuver.

One of the problems we all faced on those missions that most people have experienced was the need to urinate more frequently during cold weather. There were other factors that caused the same phenomenon. One was fear and excitement, as experienced by Tail Gunner Eddie Goldstein on the Sofia raid. (His wet pants froze to the bicycle seat he sat on.) Another was the physics of atmospheric pressure . . . as the pressure on the outside of the container was reduced, the pressure on the inside was exaggerated. Undeniably, it was cold . . . at times 65 degrees below zero. Anyone who suggests that we all were not excited and fearful is not keeping up with the story (or playing with a full deck.) The principle of the altimeter was the atmospheric pressure difference between sea level and higher altitude caused the needle to register how high one was. Each man aboard was a king-sized altimeter. With these factors operating, it was necessary for each man to relieve himself often. Not only was the Air Corps negligent by not providing stewardesses, Mr. Boeing had failed to provide a lavatory.

The one concession made for that contingency was a "relief tube", a small, black funnel attached to a small, rubber hose that somehow found its way to the outside of the plane. Theory was that the liquid would be drawn out and atomized in the slipstream, never to be heard from again. Fact was that at those temperatures the liquid became ice before reaching the slipstream and stopped the flow through the hose causing it to back up on anyone unwary enough to try to use the contraption. Good ol' Yankee ingenuity entered the picture; each man, including the pilot, wore a fleece-lined cap covered by a plastic, helmet liner, covered by a combat-infantryman's steel helmet. The accepted procedure was to remove the steel helmet, shield oneself to avoid frozen pipes, and use the helmet, which was set aside for the few moments it took for the liquid to freeze solid. The helmet was then inverted, the ice dropped and was thrown out the window while the helmet was returned to its intended use. I often wondered how Italian farmers regarded those donations from Heaven, considering the fact that 300 airplanes each carrying ten men passed over in such a short time.

Where were we? Oh yes, we were approaching the coast line at the north end of the Adriatic at approximately 20,000 feet and suddenly there were a few little puffs of black smoke contrasting with the white contrails. Passing over San Dona we were sent some

88mm greetings. The Briefing Officer had mentioned that we might encounter flak, light and inaccurate. He was right and it was of short duration. Still climbing, we were dazzled by the splendor of the Austrian Alps in midwinter. Other than our contrails, the day was bright with sun and blue sky. The mountains were breathtaking in their size and beauty. We reached our bombing altitude of 22,000 feet and leveled off, picking up another 10 mph. Our target was only one hour ahead.

To bomb accurately, it was necessary to pick the initial point (I P) from which the bomb run was started. This was done to avoid cross winds that could deflect the bombs and to line up the specific target items for best coverage. Our I P this day was about twenty miles north and east of Regensburg. As we approached the I P from the south we could see several formations making the bomb run and a cloud of black smoke at our altitude over the target. The cloud resulted from the heavy and accurate antiaircraft fire directed at planes over the target. The intercom came alive with reports from Goldy at the tail-gun position that bandits were coming up from the ground.

Don Gregory in the ball turret confirmed, "Lots of 'em."

The Navigator chimed in with, "Fighters at twelve o'clock high."

Kyrouac noted that the sky was "full of 'em."

I was busy holding formation in our turn at the I P and noted that it seemed Shaw had dropped back a bit more at the rear of the pack; close formation was very important now for a bombing pattern and protection. My right wing tip needed to be even with Shaw's left wing tip and back just far enough to line-up with his tail.

Reports came of enemy fighters everywhere overhead but for some reason they had not spotted our three planes bringing up the rear. The wing of a B-17 in the formation ahead seemed to explode and drop off while the plane started a flat spin towards the ground.

"Bomb bay doors open."

We would drop our bombs at the same time as Joe Joffrion triggered those in Shaw's lead plane. The flak got thicker. The appearance of flak burst was first a small, intense, red ball of flame followed by thick black smoke that resembled the unfolding of a kernel of black popcorn. The 88 mm guns on the ground were in batteries of four and, with the help of overhead observers, were timing their fuses very accurately. We counted a string of fiery, black bursts ahead and to our right, another not quite as far ahead and a 100 feet left and below. One, two, three, four . . . too close. There was one out ahead and fifty feet below us, two was closer, three was closer yet, and the fourth we did not see. We did feel number four lift the plane and saw several blossoms out on the wings as shrapnel came up through, leaving the kind of mark a 22 caliber bullet would make passing through a tin can. At the same time I noticed a jagged piece of metal, roughly the size and shape of my little finger, lodged in the nacelle of number two engine just outside my window. I made a mental note to get it before the Crew Chief did.

"Hey, when do these bombs go?" Bomb bay doors on the lead plane closed so we followed suit. Bombardier Andrezjewski on the intercom explained that the target was

obscured by fog.

We flew out of the flak barrage and noted that the formation had turned east toward the alternate target. But no . . . the lead planes were headed north again toward the I P. At least things quieted down for a bit. This was like a Sunday drive in the park . . . no flak, an umbrella of enemy fighter planes overhead ignoring our tiny three-plane formation, no injuries, and the good old Spoofer humming along in great shape.

Shaw closed up a bit as we turned on the I P for the second time. A horrendous explosion ahead and to our right as a B-17 took a direct hit in the bomb bay and ten 500 pound bombs exploded. The plane disappeared and several other planes near it went down in flames. In that instant at least ten men, probably more, had died a fiery death. Bomb bay doors were opened but, again, the target was obscured so there was no drop and the doors were closed. The flak repeated, heavy and accurately. Individual planes dropped out of formation and headed for the ground, some directly, some in flames, others were crippled.

As the flak barrage terminated, we saw a strange sight. Several of the last bursts showed not black smoke, but green and red, as if to signal the fighters that they could come in and not fear getting hit by their own guns. And come they did! Twelve o'clock high; six o'clock low; everywhere. Our 50's came alive and the whole plane vibrated with the recoil. The fighters set-up a pattern in which they flew ahead and above the formation, twelve o'clock high, and then dove head-on through the big planes coming as close as possible. There were ME-109's, ME-210's and FW-190's armed with 20 mm cannons and aerial rockets in the wings. As they came through the formation very fast, perhaps 500 mph, Armando Ruiz, standing in the top turret directly behind and above the pilots, fired his twin 50's at them and they fired back with their much heavier 20's. Quite naturally the fighters concentrated on a formation of three planes rather than take on nine at a time.

Kyrouac announced, "They got McGee."

I saw the left wing of McGee's plane burning fiercely. The gasoline in the wing tip Tokyo tanks fed the flames and the wing quickly melted away to the nacelle of the number-one engine. The flames died out but the plane could not fly on half-a-wing; he spiraled down to the right. Our number-one engine was hit and lost power but the propeller did not feather to reduce the drag. Number-two engine was hit and lost power. This time the propeller did feather (turned the edge into the wind) and we dropped back rapidly. The formation turned east toward the alternate target but we turned south to get out of the action.

As we turned I told the crew to prepare to bail out. We took another raking from a fighter plane that was coming in head-on until we turned. Now he was coming in from the left side and when Segars reached for his parachute it was shredded by shells from his ammo belt which had been hit by a German round. Other rounds came through the radio room and Hy Koffler took several fragments in various parts of his body; one in his forehead which caused considerable bleeding but did not put him out of action.

For a reason that I will never understand but for which I will always be thankful, the

fighters did not return to our crippled plane to get credit for knocking it out of the air.

Perhaps they had simply followed the formation away from us or, looking from above, were unable to see our camouflaged plane against the landscape, or they were running out of fuel, or God turned them away. Dudley Segars came forward with what had been a parachute but now resembled an armful of rags. It was my chance to be a hero . . . all I had to do was to reach under my seat, give my parachute pack to Dudley, and say, "Here, take mine."

In my mind's eye, I could see me alone in the plane coming in for a crash landing. Instead I said, "Dudley, it looks as if you and I will have to take this plane down together."

Kyrouac said, "Just flex you knees when you land, Dud."

Then to the crew I announced that Dudley and I had to stay with the plane due to circumstances beyond our control but they were free to jump anytime or stay with us to see what would happen. I warned them that we would be over the Alps shortly and would certainly perish if they jumped or if we went down there.

It was the time for heroes! All decided to cast their lot with us and stay. The next order of business that we had discussed as a crew several times, we would lighten the ship to get better mileage. Out went the guns, the ammo, the armor plating . . . everything not essential to flight. What about that ball turret? The crew had assured me on several occasions that they could drop it to lighten and streamline the ship. Andrezjewski salvaged his bombs over what we hoped was an unpopulated area and the plane seemed to jump ten feet in the air.

Heros, yes! Unknown to me at the time was the offer made by Navigator Bigley to Segars that, if necessary to jump, they would ride the same chute since Bigley was one of lightest weight men on board!

PILOT TO NAVIGATOR, GIVE ME A HEADING FOR HOME

VII

"Pilot to navigator, give me a heading for home". It seemed certain that we could not make it but it was worth a try. The two engines on the right wing were humming their homecoming tune, working perfectly.

There was a short silence on the intercom and then, "I can't do that, Sir."

"Come on Nav, you can do it. We are all scared but you can handle it."

"But, Sir, you said to lighten ship. Everything is gone." In deference to the navigator, he was on his first combat mission at the worst possible time. He had been looking the German fighter pilots right in the face as they tried to kill him. His guns had frozen up and he couldn't even shoot back. He had followed my orders to the letter when I said, "Lighten ship, everything goes."

We were approaching the Alps at a much lower altitude than when we had crossed them earlier and were losing altitude at an unacceptable rate. Had I been a student of geography, I might have remembered that Alps and Switzerland were almost synonymous and were neutral territory. The lightened plane should have been holding altitude better, but there was something I didn't know. The crew, after assuring me they could get rid of the ball

turret, were reluctant to let me know the job was only half done. The ball was hanging outside the plane like a giant pendulum and would not budge farther. This, of course, created greater drag on the plane and caused Kyrouac and me some concern later when bringing the plane down. The Alps were no longer just below us. They were, also, beside us and in front of us . . . we were turning at times to miss mountains in our path!

Fortunately, the lower we became, the slower was our rate of descent. Then we were over the hump and the mountains fell away to hills and turned green; there was water ahead. Which side of Italy were we on? To the west of the boot was the Mediterranean, and to the east was the Adriatic Sea. It was my job to know, but I wasn't doing my job 100% this day. Good old Spoofer was now holding altitude at 1000 feet over the water.

Now there was a glimmer of hope, but how was the fuel supply? Plenty in the left wing with the two dead engines but the live engines had just about consumed their fair share. I called Engineer Ruiz to transfer fuel from the left to right; if we could make the transfer, we might make it home yet. But . . . the problem was that the transfer could not be made, due to damage inflicted by the enemy fighters.

Having decided that the water was the Adriatic Sea, we had some choices to make; i.e., did we want to get wet? No! One of our crews had found it necessary to ditch just offshore from Bari in friendly territory a week before. In the hour it took to rescue them, two of the men had died from the cold. Another choice was to turn east and hope to crash land in Yugoslavia where partisans had been known to get some crews out and back to their units. The third choice was to turn west and crash land in German-held Italy and be taken prisoner immediately. Kyrouac and I talked about the choices and decided east was our best bet.

We sighted land rising out of the water ahead and, as we approached, it rose higher and higher. It became evident that our altitude would not permit us to go ashore to land so the order was passed to the crew to prepare for ditching. Wet won out after all. Eight members of the crew assembled in the radio room as practiced and sat on the floor in two rows. The first man in each row sat with his back to the front bulkhead with his legs apart. The next man sat in front of him with back to chest. It must have looked like a couple of bobsled teams headed for the tail of the plane. The radio-room door was closed.

Our objective was to fly as close to land as possible and set the plane down in the water. There were several unknown factors in this operation. First, we did not realize we were approaching the entrance to the busy harbor of Pola, Italy, a facility guarded by German guns because of the submarine base there. Second, I still did not know that, when lightening the ship, the crew had been unable to get rid of the ball turret.

This memory so vivid: the crew, except for Bernie and me, were in the radio room ready for ditching; we approached the water at a reduced speed, cut the two engines that so faithfully had kept us in the air for the last 6 hours, and glided in for a water landing. Little details were extra important then. Wheels were up and, with fifteen degrees of flaps, we held the plane up 'till the last possible moment so we wouldn't stall too high above the water. It was so quiet with the engines dead; we heard only the whistle of the wind and then a

small bump and a loud crash from the radio room. What was that? We were still in the air. Had we just skipped like a flat rock? Were we too fast? We were below flying speed and the belly of the plane made contact with the water. A moment later we were decelerating very rapidly somewhat like a carrier landing when the tail-hook grabs a giant rubber band. The plane seemed to bob completely under water and returned to the surface to float like a rubber duck. All was now quiet except for lapping water against the partially submerged plane.

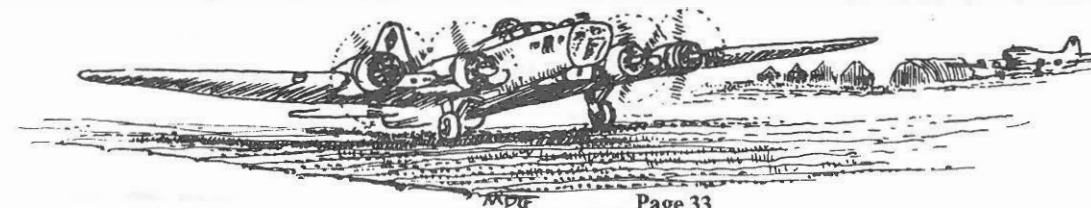
The bump and crash were the result of the ball turret making first contact with the water. It was jerked violently out of its hole, smashing the radio-room door in the process and showering the crew with splinters. Ernest Hettinger caught one of the splinters in his forehead causing him to bleed profusely. Radioman Hy Koffler remembers, "As water poured into the radio room from the open hatch, we were all huddled on the floor and thought we were going to drown." When the plane came to rest, I recalled reading somewhere about a pilot having trouble getting out his plane until he remembered to unfasten his seat belt. I reminded Bernie to unbuckle, but he was way ahead of me and gave me a searching look that questioned my sanity. I suggested that he leave his caliber 45 pistol in the plane rather than try to win the war at this level; he followed my suggestion. We pulled ourselves out through the side windows and onto the wings. The rest of the crew went out the top hatch of the radio room after releasing the life rafts.

Should I have been angry at the crew for not informing me of the dangling ball turret? I was disappointed that our altitude did not allow us to land ashore. What would have happened if we had tried to bring the plane down on land with that dangling appendage? It is my belief that such a landing would have ended in total disaster with the ball bouncing up and sending the plane out of control. I have heard it said that, "God looks out for drunks and fools." I wasn't drunk, but I am convinced he was looking out for me that day. Let the reader draw his own conclusion

Hy and Ernie were bleeding considerably, therefore they were the first into the partially inflated life rafts. Each raft was designed to hold five men when fully inflated, however, they inflated very slowly. My theory is that the CO2 with which they were inflated formed dry ice around the nozzle choking the gas to a trickle.

After less than two minutes the plane decided to head South. It put its tail in the air and quickly went to the bottom. The eight of us who had been standing on the wings tried to walk on the water. Failing that, we inflated our May Wests and went swimming. What looked like a short distance to the shore from the air now looked like a three-mile swim, and in February, Alps water felt like ice that forgot to get hard.

(TO BE CONTINUED. MUCH HARROWING EXCITEMENT AHEAD.)



UPDATE ON THE Y2K JACKSONVILLE REUNION
Tuesday, May 2nd thru Saturday, May 6th

Your Reunion Committee members are:

Host: Ed Marlow
Co-host: Don Lawhorn
Banquet & business luncheon coordinator: Bill Smallwood
Hospitality room host: Arky Clark

In evaluating motel accommodations it was decided that the Airport Holiday Inn best meets our needs for both rooms and reunion activities. Favorable considerations were:

- a- Room rates were negotiated to a special rate of \$68.00 plus tax per room.
- b- The motel is located approximately 2-1/2 miles from the Jacksonville International Airport, and they provide free airport shuttle vans on request at all hours.
- c- It is also located at the intersection of I-95 and I-295 which makes for easy access by auto.
- d- They have several good restaurants and a bar and there are fast food shops in the area.
- e- space and available menus for our banquet look good.
- f- Our hospitality room will be large; and it, as well as our business luncheon room, will be located in a just completed convention center adjacent to the motel. The center has an entry separate from the hotel lobby, out of the flow of traffic, and with adequate parking adjacent.

In view of these the committee felt it wise to finalize a contract at an early date. This has been done.

The following is a proposed agenda for planned activities. While we have firm proposals for activities on the days as shown; with the exception of the submarine base scheduling which is firm, we will not finalize negotiations for other activities until our registrations are complete. This will be after February.

Tuesday PM: Registration.

Wednesday: Group 1 (limit 100 people). Visit to the Naval Submarine Base at Kings Bay, Georgia.

Group 2. Visit to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge near Folkston, Georgia.

Wed. night: Both groups. Boat cruise with dinner and music on the St. Johns River in Jacksonville.

Thursday: Group 1. Visit the Okefenokee.

Group 2. Visit Kings Bay (limit 100 people).

Friday: Group 1. A day in St Augustine.

Group 2. A day of free time in Jacksonville.

Business Luncheon.

Saturday: Group 1. A free day in Jacksonville.

Group 2. A day in Saint Augustine.

Sat. night The banquet.

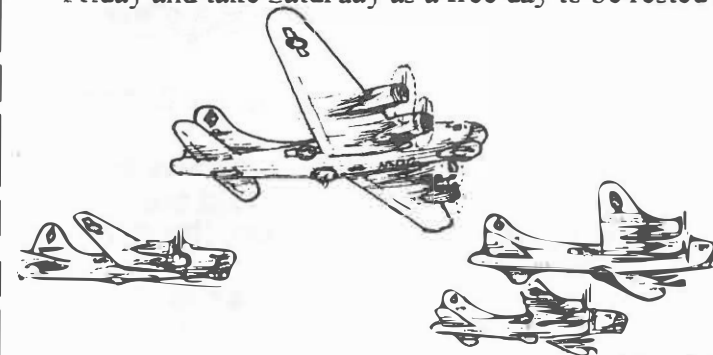


What does the 99th have in common with a group of sailors? Just as in WWII when the B-17 was on the cutting edge of strategic warfare; if a major conflict were to erupt today the Navy's ballistic -missile nuclear-powered submarine will be foremost in that role. We pray that such will never happen. These vessels operating in the oceans throughout the world are the major deterrent for any would be nuclear attacks on our country.

We will go aboard one of these submarines for a 1-1/2 hour tour. After lunch at the base mess, we will visit their training facility. Unlike the small diesel submarines of WWII which were referred to as boats, these Ohio class submarines are ships which are 560 feet long and displacement 18,700 tons. However, entry is through a conning tower hatch and down a vertical (but short) stairway (ladder) and there are similar stairways between the decks. Therefore, anyone with a physical problem might want to avoid this activity. Unfortunately, we must stay together as a group during the entire visit since we will be under security surveillance (incidentally, picture IDs are required). If you do not elect to go to Kings Bay, it would probably be best for you to take Wednesday as a free day and be ready for the boat cruise dinner that night.

Groups going to Okefenokee on arrival will be further divided into two groups. In the morning, one group will take a 2 hour boat trip into the swamp and the other will visit a restored home-stead of an early settler on the edge of the swamp. After lunch the groups will rotate.

We will continue with groups 1 & 2 at Saint Augustine in order to avoid congestion at the attractions and permit the groups to lunch at a quality restaurant. We will as a group make a tour of the city on street trains, making a stop at the Fountain of Youth (a drink there didn't work for Ponce de Leon, but maybe it will for you), and a museum. After lunch, individuals can tour the old city area and board and reboard free of charge trains which run all day and visit attraction you saw in the morning. If you tire easily, it might be best to go to St. Augustine on Friday and take Saturday as a free day to be rested for the banquet that night.



99th Bomb Group Historical Society
Walter H. Butler, Treasurer
8608 Bellehaven Place, N.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87112

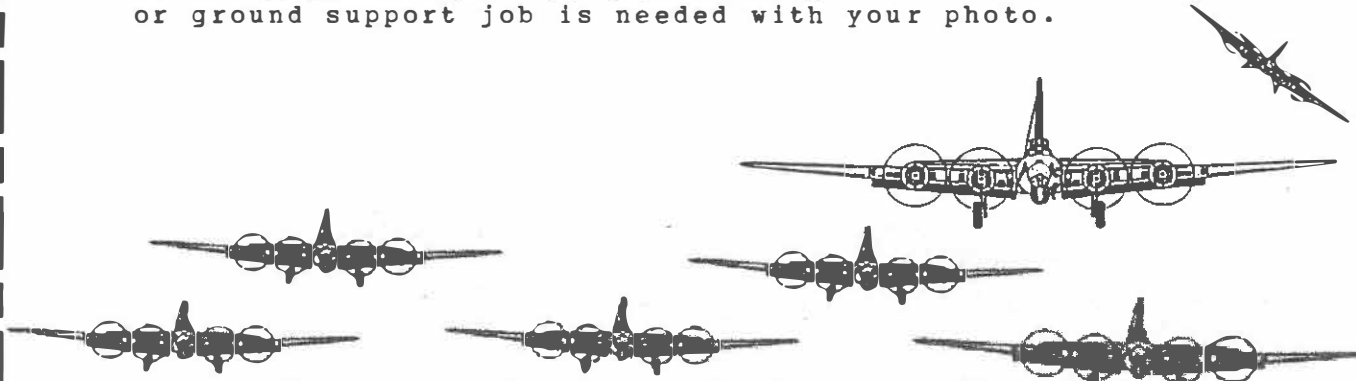
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559 Old Squaw Pass
Evergreen, CO 80439



Good news for the production of our Y2K February issue. I have acquired a good computer/printer to replace the lighter face typewriter fonts I've been using for several issues. Please continue to send Bernie Barr dark faced copy if at all possible. It will save much time and stress. If, however, one cannot furnish a dark faced copy, please do not hesitate to send any readable material. We do not want to discourage anyone from sending their stories, etc., also their WW II photos. We will reproduce unprintable submissions in darker, larger type for our aging eyes, and return you photographs.

To keep our newsletter interesting we need more and more stories. Keep them coming! It would be nice to have your WW II photo for use on the front page of future issues. Don't worry about size. They can be reduced to fit the space. Your photo will be returned. Your rank and crew or ground support job is needed with your photo.



Information to be included in your quarterly newsletters issued February, May, August & November must be sent to Bernie Barr or Walter Butler no later than the first of January, April, July or October.

Member information and stories are needed regularly to keep the newsletter interesting. Everyone has a story or information that our members would enjoy reading. Keep it coming! If at all possible send type written information, the darker the better.

Walter's address is in the top left corner above. Bernie Barr's address is: 7408 Vista Del Arroyo, Albuquerque, NM 87109