



THE 99th Bomb Group Historical Society

VOLUME 4, No. 6

NEWSLETTER

Editor, George F. Coen

NOVEMBER 1, 1984

SOCIETY OFFICERS

President, Bernice Barr
Treasurer, Walter Butler

Vice-President, Lew Boatwright
Historian, George F. Coen

Chaplain, Harvey Jennings

President's Corner

I don't think we should put CORTESI'S "ROMMEL'S LAST STAND" to rest until we read Fay "Uppie" Upthegrove's review of the book. In a letter to George and I, Fay made the following comments.

OPERATION FLAX

Lawrence Cortesi sent me a copy of his new book "Rommels Last Stand" about operations in April 1943 which were under way when the 99th first arrived in the N A Theater. We flew our first shake down mission on 31 March. We were not concerned with the planning of Flax by higher Hq's. Our mission orders came from 5th Wing the day before and we carried out the mission as best we could. The 5th Bomb Wing consisted at the time of 97th, 301st, and 99th Groups, with the 2nd BG to join us shortly. We had just arrived at Navarin and begun to ready our camp in a wheat field, with no Service Group, no ground echelon, and operating with about 100 maintenance men borrowed from the 97th and 301st. The flight crews had to maintain their guns and help load the bombs. An Army photo section stranded at Oran joined us when ^{WF} they moved up. They only had one K-17 camera which took all the good bomb strikes of our first missions.

The pictures of the Milo-Trapini raid, at Hq's all the way back to Washington D.C. created a sensation and made our reputation of bombing and formation flying, which we owe to one K-17 camera, as sole proof.

There was one big plus in those early days. We had no record keeping personnel to pile up the paperwork, and just had to load and drop bombs and shoot down fighters.

Cortesi covered the plans of both Allied and German Hq's very well and makes interesting reading but is not exactly correct and should not be as historical fact. Mistakes were made about units and individuals. For instance Ford Lauer, although he commanded the 2nd BG ^{and} led it to N A, never commanded it in combat and never came to the 99th until late January 1944. Radio conversations on missions were mainly invented or used by fighters. The 99th kept radio silence when I commanded. The only time I broke silence was at Gerbini when Bob Elliott called me to say, with tears in his voice, "I only got three planes left". My reply was "keep coming you can't do anything about it now". Also when returning to Navarin after a mission I would call Notary Tower when about ten miles out, for wind direction and velocity for landing info.

Upthegrove

8-6-84

Fay also reported that Ford Lauer, Commander of the 99th Bomb Group from late Jan. 1944 to early Jan. 1945, passed away some time ago. Those of us who served under his command and leadership knew him as a great combat leader and as an individual of kind understanding. I remember that he and I lived in the same building at Gp. Hq. and to take a shower we went to another building for a community bath. One afternoon I had completed my bath, dried off, and had dressed as Ford entered to bathe. After I had returned to my room he entered with an excessively wet bath towel and said "Here is your wet towel! Where is my dry one?" Another time the group was divided into two formations to attack two different pinpoint targets in the same area. Ford led one formation and I led the other. On the return to our base my formation got ahead of his and as I approached the landing strip I called "SANDFLY" for landing instructions. Before the tower could reply Ford came on the air and said that he was the commander of the formation and that he would control landing procedure. After I informed him that I was the second formation and that he would control landing procedure. After I informed him that I was the second formation and would circle until his formation had landed he insisted that we land first. This is just a couple of small examples to show that he was truly an understanding man and a GREAT LEADER. MAY HE REST IN PEACE!

Our thanks "Uppie" for your continued support and inspiration that you give to us.

I asked a friend, a German teacher, to translate the material George included in the last newsletter on the downing of our B-17 over Switzerland. Here are the thoughts of Mr. Ruegg, Commander of Flab Det 21 that shot down our aircraft, on the day that the event occurred (1 Oct. 1943).

"Deeply disturbed we stood on the evening of the eventful first of October 1943 at the crash-site of the Flying Fortress, and greeted our dead comrades, who gave their young lives for freedom. A mild evening spread over our lovely countryside, and quietly we accepted in our disturbed souls the consequence of our oath of allegiance and performance of duty. They also carried out their orders and, perhaps, the same day killed more people than we did.

"But our course of action was clear, and that, our neighbors on land and in the air, must know and feel. The neutrality of weapons has spoken. Our hearts tremble and our emotions deep within us are moved and sincere."

As you can see he had a great deal of remorse but at the same time a feeling of pride in the accomplishment of their duty.

The question still lingers in my mind - Why did a neutral county deliberately shoot down airplanes that no doubt showed signs of distress and were in need of assistance? Why? And I also would like to know how many German and Italian planes were shot down under similar circumstances.

Since Commander Ruegg is now on our mailing list he may be able to provide some thoughts on this subject. Mr. Ruegg can you assist? Or Gino? or Heiri?

Art Knipp has made video tapes of our last couple of reunions. He has promised to make some of the better tape available and show at our meeting in Seattle next year. Thanks Art and also for the info on the Mt. Cassino raid. We will put it in our files and use it in the future as required. The info does help enhance our records.

My thanks to H.C. (Chris) Christiansen and B.C. Rogers for the photos of the May reunion. Also just received a call from Rex and Edith Greathouse saying that they were burning up in Kansas and can't wait until WE MEET IN SEATTLE next July so they can cool off and meet with friends again. I have received info from other B-17 groups that plan to be in Seattle and I will give a listing of those units in a latter report.

It's nice to see that my great nephew, Norman Lee Barr III, a recent graduate of high school has joined our organization as an associate member. Welcome aboard Norman. His grandfather and father were both Navy Medical Doctor.

Jim Flex has informed me that those of you who ordered and paid for the 1984 May Reunion Book should be receiving it now. If not contact: Reunions Inc. 2208 E. Hillcrest St. Orlando, Florida 32803-4906.

I'm happy to report that our Albuquerque members met in an informal get together for drinks, food, lively conversation, and just plain enjoyment and fun. Including spouses fourteen of us had a most enjoyable evening and we plan on doing it again. I do hope that in areas where members can meet conveniently you will do so. It's this kind of friendship that keeps the OLE comrades together.

Since this is the last newsletter for 1984 the Officers and Board of Directors wish each of you a MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Also, if you want to join in the rush to pay your 1985 membership dues Walter Butler will be happy to accept them. The way George is expanding the newsletter our dues are necessary to keep us going. Thanks from your friend.

"LET US MEET IN SEATTLE"

Bernie Barr
7413 Vista Del Arroyo
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109

From the Veep

Our Vice-President, Lew Boatwright, was too busy answering students' questions at the University to prepare a blurb, so here are a few good letters from the file.

545 Oahu Lane, #407
Pompano Beach, Florida 33060
April 2, 1982

Dear George,

Enjoyed reading the March newsletter. Also, enclosed find my dues. (Sorry I'm late.)

Perhaps I can help answer some of the questions posed by Steve Birdsall -- also some comments in the 99th log.

1. September 2 mission to Bologna the aircraft lost was #396, pilot - Carrabiris, copilot - Dean. My crew said they saw #2 engine burning somewhere near the coastline.

2. Re Major Whitmore bailing out of #494. The date was September 7, and we went to Foggia. The bombardier killed was in #467, the left plane in Whitmore's element. I was flying #842 on his right wing, and we got off lucky; we had 2 men wounded.

3. "Never Satisfied" was #388 and not #389. My tentmate, Stan Samuelson, flew it over from the states. After he left, I flew it many times. Incidentally, Sammy finished his tour and went back to the states. He eventually got a crew and flew a B29 to Saipan. He was in the 500 BG, 881 Squadron. He left Kearny, Nebraska in October 1944 and was shot down over Tokyo on February 19, 1945 after completing a number of combat missions. (I have a diary that his uncle sent me after the war.)

4. I was a replacement for one of the crews shot down over Gerbini, Sicily. The plane I flew from the states was "Lucky" Lady #393, which remained in the Squadron.

5. "Queenie" #790 was my first (7/19/43). I flew copilot for Bob Elliot, when Rome was bombed for the first time. On board for this flight, we had Richard Tregaskis of International News Service.

6. I believe that Sgt. Warmer's pilot was Max Davis.

7. About December 19, on mission to Augsburg, Germany, #832 was shot down (My ship - I was in rest camp in Capri; another crew was flying it.)

Since Gen. Upthegrove reads the letter, I'm reminded of a funny incident that he may also recollect. Before I moved into my tent, the fellows had two terriers that sort of belonged to the Squadron. The dogs lived in my tent. When we were in Tunis, the briefings were held in a central courtyard surrounded by a house. Our two dogs attended each briefing faithfully. However, one morning when the General came to the front of the room there was a big gob of dog droppings. He raised his voice and admonished Samuelson and told him the dogs couldn't come to briefing anymore. Sammy stood up and answered the General saying that his dogs wouldn't do such a thing. Sure enough, it was soon discovered that another dog took the honors. A good laugh was had by all the attendees.

Enough now. Will close wishing you all the best, and keep the newsletters coming.

Jules Horowitz
348 Squadron

P.S. Extra \$5 to help with the postage....

6 October 1982
Bernard Raftery
1921 Brewton Street
District Heights, Maryland
20747

Dear Frank,

I received 1 September edition of the 99th Bomb Group Newsletter. It certainly brought back many memories and gave me the incentive to write.

First of all, the article on Jim Raley. I was on that mission to Pireaus Harbor near Athens, Greece that day in A/C 42-5470 as navigator (my 45th mission). This mission was made up of a composite from all four Bomb Groups of the Fifth Wing-- seven aircraft from each Group. As we reached the western coast of the Peloponneses, we were in a climb between two layers of clouds, flying in elements of seven. The 99th was in the right element high, our aircraft was in the seventh, or swing position. In the cloud, while spreading out to the left for separation, we probably encountered icing and started a diving spin to the left, hitting the seven planes in the low element that Jim Raley was in. All eight aircraft went down. There was a total of 15 survivors. Jim and some of the others had a hard time of it physically during the three months we spent in Greece. We finally made it back to Italy on an Italian gun boat. As I recall Jim was in the 301st or 2nd Bomb Group. I kept a diary on most of our stay in Greece - if you are interested, I will send you a copy for your records. Personally, I was very fortunate on this raid, we had run out of airplanes and ours was an old E model with a plexiglass nose with the 30 caliber guns removed. Apparently when we exploded on impact with the other aircraft, the Bombardier, Tom Lilly and I were blown through the nose. I recovered consciousness about half way down.

Our original crew of the Plummer Provisional Group which joined the 99th in Tunis, had the misfortune of losing two aircraft that were not on your table of combat losses. On 1 October 1943 we were on the mission to the messersmitt factory in Augsburg Germany. We were hit heavy with ME 109's that had drop tanks. We bombed Innsbruck instead. The small formation was scattered, three made it to Switzerland. We made it back to Sardinia and wiped out the plane in landing. This aircraft was the one we had taken overseas - No. 491. Marvin Charak, a current member of the 99th Historical Society was the Bombardier. He was severely wounded when an explosive shell ripped out the nose and his bomb sight. (an interesting note - the Italians who were holding Sardinia had just surrendered on 28 September).

Our crew with the exception of Marvin was on the 6 October 43 mission to Mestre. We were hit by a top notch ME 109 unit on our way in and were lucky enough to make it back and crash at one of the Foggia Airfield that had just been taken by the British. I don't recall the tail number of the plane but it wasn't the one listed on your combat report (another note of interest - I met a German pilot at a German Airfield in 1964 who was flying against us in one of the ME 109 on the Mestre mission.

I retired from the Airforce in September 1964, lived in Europe for awhile, and have been with the Government in Washington, D.C. area since 1966. I certainly enjoy your newsletter and commend you, George Coen and all others for conceiving the idea of the 99th Bomb Group Historical Society.

Sincerely,



FROM THE FILES
courtesy of General upthegrove
FORTRESS GROUP BATTING .333 AGAINST AXIS PLANES

Enemy aircraft not looking for trouble should steer clear of one Flying Fortress Group which has had an almost .333 battling average for the past week. Last Monday this Group shot down 35 out of 100 Axis planes over Gerbini; yesterday, in supporting the invasion of Sicily, the Fortress sharpshooters bagged six out of twenty in a twenty minute running fight after bombing Catania.

The claims were as follows:

ME 210 each; S/Sgt. Emmett F. Hamilton, Prairieville, La., T/Sgt. Michael Yarina, Homestead, Pa.

ME 109 each; S/Sgt. George P. Harris, Lacona, Mo.; T/Sgt. M.A. Harper, Wood River, Ill.; Sgt. T.E. Gaertner, Sharon City, Ohio; Sgt. Henry E. West, Hodges, Alabama.

From another Group, a claim of an RE 2001 by T/Sgt. James F. Conway, Attica, New York.

8426 Lopez Drive
Tampa, Florida 33615
15 September 1984

Mr. George F. Coen
2908 Aliso Drive, N.E.
Albuquerque, N.M. 87110

Dear George:

Reference the 99th Bomb Group War Diary contained in the Newsletters of July 1 and September 1, 1984. There might be some interest in hearing the Rest of the Story as Paul Harvey would say.

Under the date of August 9, 1943, aircraft 42-5948 was assigned to the 348th. Lt Howard C. Carver was the 1st pilot on that aircraft and crew and I was his co-pilot. The squadron policy at that time was to move an combat experienced co-pilot to the 1st pilot slot, move the incoming 1st pilot to the right seat and the incoming co-pilot was assigned to combat experienced crews as needed. Lt T. J. Davis was the experienced co-pilot that took over Carver's crew. Subsequently, the two waist gunners on Carver's crew, Sgts Burge and Kovacs, were shot up and taken off combat ops, at least for the rest of my time with the squadron. They were replaced by Sgts Brown and Donnelly. Aircraft 42-5948 was named THUNDERBOLT by our ground crew and was sent to the 97th Bomb Group when the exchange of Fs for Es took place on November 14, 1943.

After completing 15 missions as a co-pilot and check-out missions as a 1st pilot I was made 1st pilot of Lt Highfills' crew when it was assigned to the squadron. The first mission we flew as a crew was the mission to ~~THE~~ ME works at Wiener-Neustadt, Austria on November 2, 1943. That also was the first mission flown by the 15th AF as I recall.

Prior to moving to Foggia, Lt Carver was hospitalized in Africa with jaundice. As a result of that, I began to alternate missions as 1st pilot with his crew and my own - Highfills' crew.

Under the date of December 19, 1943 the diary states, "Two of our planes were lost - - #832 piloted by 1st Lt C. C. Stidd of the 348th, and #223 piloted by Lt. A. J. Simpson of the 346th." It also states #832 went down afire over the target, with eight chutes observed. #832 was the aircraft assigned to Lt Horowitz and was named War Bird II. That thing had 110 bombs painted on it and that last mission made it 111. My own airplane had belonged to Major Max Davis who had finished his tour and it was in maintenance for new engines and other repairs. Horowitz and his crew were off to the Rest Camp on Capri so I was using his plane.

I was flying Carvers' crew on December 19 with one change in crew assignment. Lt Copseys' crew had all flown 49 missions except the tail gunner, Sgt Mabante. He replaced Carvers' tail gunner, Sgt Harwood, for the mission so that all of Copseys' crew could finish their tour together as a crew.

My aircraft position for the mission was No. 2 in the third element which was led by Major Murphree. We came off the target in pretty good shape. There may have been some "skin" damage from flak but nothing more. We had no injuries to the crew and no mechanical problems although we had to crank the bomb bay doors open on the run in to the target. At that time the Group would go into a Company Front coming off the target and that put us out on the right in the Group and a tad behind in the squadron formation.

The fighters hit us right after the target and #832 took it from the Plexiglas nose, that was shot out, to the tail. Number 3 engine caught fire instantly and we had a runaway prop. Almost instinctively I went for that feathering button but the pressure was gone. The airspeed fell right off to 110 MPH and it was a fight to keep that airplane straight even with full left trim and full left stick. We were at 23,500 feet, my oxygen was shot out and it felt as though we were in a wind tunnel from all the damage in the nose. I headed for a lower altitude and momentarily thought of a heading for Switzerland but the fire in Number 3 had spread and intensified - it was time to leave that bird. I radioed the squadron leader we were going down and had started the crew to bail out.

The bomb bay was nothing but fire so I sent the co-pilot, Lt Lawrence Selander, down to the nose hatch to be sure the bombardier, Lt Lou Green, and the navigator, Lt Jim Kozumplik, got out. I was not certain that the warning bell was working or that I could be heard over the intercom.

The co-pilot had tugged on the leg of the top turret gunner, T/Sgt Theodore Campbell, on his way out. Campbell got himself tangled up with an ammunition case in the nose hatch after the other three had jumped and was probably trying to throw it out so it would not be in my way when it came time for me to jump. (We had put extra ammunition on board because the primary target as briefed was the ME plant at Augsburg, the secondary was Munich while Innsbruck was the tertiary.) One of the ME-109s was off my left wing with his wheels and flaps down to stay with me. The leading edge of his wings were all lit up like firecrackers and he was scoring hits - the windshield went and so did the window behind my head. I could not turn into the SOB and my gunners that were still alive were bailing out as they were told. I was one of those fighter pilot trainees that was sent straight to B-17s and had some gunnery training by none other than Capt. Barry M. Goldwater so I tried to avoid that fighters' bullet path by diving and then pulling back up as sharply as I could. This maneuvering could have given Campbell ~~DIFFICULTIES~~ with the ammunition box and getting out of the nose hatch.

It was during one of those maneuvers that the Number 3 engine and/or the right wing exploded and blew Sgt Campbell out of the nose hatch. He woke up in his chute minus his shoes and a broken leg. I had my chest pack chute on with the safety belt unbuckled and was ready to go as soon as Campbell cleared the nose hatch. But that never happened. When the plane exploded I was thrown straight up against the overhead window while the nose fell straight thru and down. (The right wing was gone flush with the fuselage and the fuselage was in two pieces breaking just forward of the ball turret.) The remainder of the plane went into a flat spin and I was pinned down on my back somewhere on the flight deck. I could clench my fist but I could not raise the back of my hand from whatever surface it was pinned against.

It was not long before I felt a collision with something else. I knew it was too soft to be the ground and thought it another piece of my airplane or somebody else. Then I started to feel like I was being bumped from one side to another and at the same time to be thrown around bodily on the flight deck. After just seconds all movement stopped and everything was quiet and still. The fire was still burning in the bomb bay and around the top turret. I could see trees around and the fuselage was right side up against the side of the mountain. The left wing was cocked up at about forty five degrees with the two engines still attached but the outer section was gone. I've always thought that left wing hit the tops of those tall pine trees on the eastern side of that mountain while ~~it~~ the plane was spinning to the right and when that happened what was left of the plane bounced on down through the trees and came to a stop.

You can bet the first thing I wanted to do was get away from that fire and get out. The left side was too far off the ground so I tried the co-pilots' window and it would not move. I looked around for something to break it out but no luck. I guess I started to collect myself about this time and took my chute pack off, deliberately laid it on the right seat then reached over and slid the co-pilots' window all the way back. I threw the chute out the window onto the ground, climbed out and got away from the plane.

Three of the enlisted crewmen were killed. Sgt Mabante, the tail gunner from Copeys' crew; Sgt Garcia, the ball turret gunner and Sgt Brown, one of the waist gunners. The radio operator, Sgt Martin, and the other waist gunner, Sgt Donnelly bailed out and were not injured. All four officers eventually were sent to Stalag Luft I near Barth, Germany. The enlisted crew members were sent to a camp near Linz, Austria. Lt Green lost the sight in one eye and was repatriated in January 1945. T/Sgt Campbell also was repatriated at that time because his leg ~~was~~ not healing properly.

Coincidentally, the 97th BG lost our old airplane, 42-5948, on the December 19 mission. While we were taking our lumps, there was a B-17 below us and to the left that was on fire with the crew bailing out. I met the 1st pilot, Lt Dawson, in a hospital in Merano, Italy the next day. He told me that it was his plane and gave that tail number. He said that his whole flight deck had been on fire and he went out the pilots' window to get away from it.

The rest of my crew met at Camp Lucky Strike enroute home in June 1945 all in pretty good shape and glad to be free again. I have some photo negatives that are 8X10 with each having four 4X5 photos of life at Stalag I while we were still POWs and after being liberated by the Russians. If you can use any or all of them I will be happy to loan them to you. Please advise.

What about this two for one credit on missions flown? I went to Augsburg once and Wiener-Neustadt twice - do they count?

I will end this like my tour with the 348th - abruptly. Thanks for listening.

Cordially:

Cyril C. Stidd
CYRIL C. STIDD, Lt Col, USAF(Ret)

Hans-Heiri Stapfer
Bergstrasse 35

CH-8810 Horgen/ZH

SWITZERLAND

Horgen, 26th July 1984

Dear George:

A week ago I met Mr. Ruegg at Liestal. He was commander of the Flab Det 21 that shot down "SUGAR FOOT" and the other airplane, B-17 F 42-8565.

It was very interesting to talk with him, and Mr. Ruegg showed me several parts of SUGAR FOOT, also the tail art of this plane. Unfortunately, we only have a part of this, it shows a nude lady, with blond hair.

The girl is riding something but we don't know exactly what it is. Mr. Ruegg means it is a Pig, but we have no proof, other says it was a bomb she was riding.

The tail art remember the 416th Squadron. Enclosed please find a drawing of this tail art. The yellow surrendered part is taken from the original part, Mr. Ruegg is still holding. The other parts are just a guess.

I would be most grateful in getting some more information about the tail art, and it would be great to obtain a picture of the tail. I am sure there are some people remember this tail art.

It is possible to publish the drawing in one of your next issues? This would be very helpful for my work. Or perhaps you remember what the girl is really riding.

By the way, Mr. Ruegg would be interested to become a member of 99th Bomb Group Historical Society. Can you send him some information? His address is:

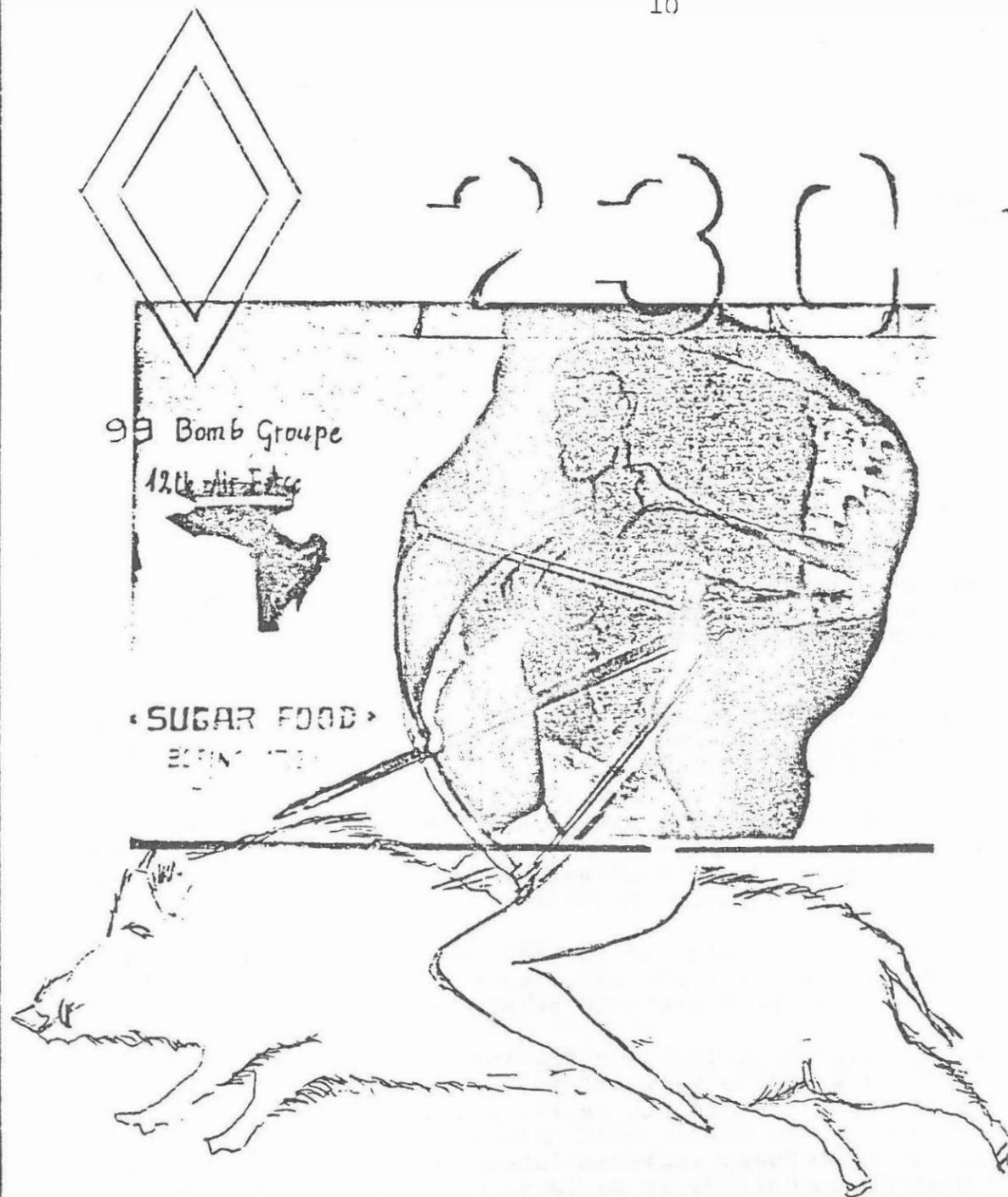
Mr. G.F. Ruegg-Stoecklin
Grünhagstrasse 7

CH-4410 Liestal/BL
SWITZERLAND/SCHWEIZ

Well, George, this is all for this time. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Heine



Boeing B-17 F-85-B0
Serial Number 42-30126
shot down by Swiss anti aircraft guns on
1st October 1943.

Dear Hans-Heiri;

Our best to your and to Mr. Ruegg. The 'razorback' hog is the totem of the State of Arkansas, my native state. Therefore I would have remembered any of our planes decorated with such an animal, and I have no such memory. I think it must have been a bomb that the girl was riding, but I await clarification from our members.

geo

see p. 11

Goz.

PRESS RELEASE: Outlines
FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
THRU: 5th Wing (US)
Nov. 19, 1943

Official Army Air Forces photos
By F/Sgt. A. D. Cox

Using a dummy bomb, Staff Sergeant George A. Streetman, 28, of Harlem, Ga., shows how he pried loose a live 20-pound fragmentation bomb which had lodged in the bomb bay of his Flying Fortress in the raid on Eleusis Airdrome at Athens, Greece, yesterday. Streetman, a flying photographer, used a spare machine gun barrel to pry the bomb loose. He had 47 seconds to free it before it became fused and subject to detonation at the slightest touch

PRESS RELEASE
FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
THRU: 5th Wing (US)
Nov. 19, 1943

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

ATTENTION: Augusta, Ga., Herald
Mitchell, S.D., Papers

AN ADVANCED NORTH AFRICAN AIR BASE -- Another story of American heroism in the skies was told today by a Flying Fortress combat photographer who--racing against seconds--prried loose a 20 pound fragmentation bomb which had lodged in the framework of the bomb bay, threatening to blow the airplane to pieces.

It was on yesterday's Fortress raid on the Eleusis Airdrome at Athens, Greece, that Staff Sergeant George A. Streetman, 28 of Harlem, Ga., met the greatest test of his 41 missions.

He was crouched in the camera well, just aft of the bomb bay, taking pictures of the bomb fall when the plane's radio operator mentioned violently that one frag bomb had separated from its cluster of six and lodged in the framework under the bay's catwalk.

Abandoning his camera, Streetman was faced with a difficult choice. He had approximately 47 seconds to pry the bomb loose before it became fully fused and subject to detonation at the slightest touch. Or he could let it go, knowing that any later jar of the ship would set it off, almost certainly on landing.

"My first instinct was to run like hell to the back of the ship," the tall, slender, drawing Georgian said. "But I know that if I didn't go in there a lot of boys would get hurt--maybe killed."

Streetman had to take off his oxygen mask to get into the bomb bay, since its hose connection wouldn't reach that far.

"I just stopped breathing," he said. "I wrapped my legs around the catwalk and tried to get the bomb out. It was stuck tight."

The little propeller in the tail of the bomb, which must make some 700 revolutions before the fuse is set, was turning, turning.

"I figured I had a little time left," Streetman continued. "I remembered there was a machine gun ramrod in the radio compartment, so I dashed back for it. It was gone. But there was a spare gun barrel there. I grabbed it, went back in the bomb bay and jabbed four times at the tail of the bomb. It fell out."

Streetman shuddered. "All the time I could see maybe 500 pieces of metal flying through the ship from that bomb. It only took seconds, but it seemed like a year. For the first time I really knew what prayer meant."

The flier is married to Florence Streetman, of 414 S. Montgomery St., Mitchell, S.D., and is an expectant father.

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



"GO HOGS. GO"

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS INSIGNIA
from Red Hagness of the 97thBG

PRESS RELEASE

FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
THRU: 5th Wing (US)
Nov. 2, 1943

ATTENTION: Denver, Colo., Papers

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

AN ADVANCED NORTH AFRICAN AIR BASE -- Staff Sergeant Edward P. May, 22, of LaSalle, Colo., a Flying Fortress gunner who survived a crash landing is the Mediterranean by clinging to a capsized life raft 30 hours, is on his way home from North Africa after completing his allotted 50 bombing missions.

May met near disaster the night of May 3, 1943, when his Fortress group became lost in pea-soup weather over North Africa. Unable to find a landing field, his pilot made a crash landing in the sea a few miles off the African coast.

The Fortress sank in 45 seconds and there was only time to release one of the two life rafts carried. May and 10 others of the crew clung to the raft in icy water throughout the night. Two men died and were buried at sea. Five others were lost, some of them attempting to swim to shore.

"It was 30 hours before I could get a place on top of the raft, which had capsized," May recalled. "Four of us finally drifted ashore toward evening of the next day. We were completely exhausted by this time and slept for 12 hours. Then we worked our way up into the mountains where we found an Arab who fed us and went for help. British soldiers came and carried us out to a road on stretchers."

May has been awarded the Air Medal with 10 Oak Leaf Clusters and the Purple Heart. He began combat flying March 31 with a raid on Villeclidro Airdrome, Sardinia, and finished up October 30 over Turin, Italy.

Born at Littleton, Colo., May was graduated from Iliff, Colo., High School in 1940, and was employed as a steel constructionist with the Union Pacific Railroad in Denver until entering the army June 29, 1942. He is unmarried.

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

S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

PRESS RELEASE

FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
THRU: 5th Wing (US)
Nov. 2, 1943

ATTENTION: Pasadena, Cal., Independent
" " Post
" " Star News

AN ADVANCED NORTH AFRICA AIR BASE -- On his way home after completing 50 bombing missions in Major Max S. Davis, 24, of 460 E. Madison Ave., Pasadena, Cal., a Flying Fortress pilot to whom everything in the book has happened, including a mid-air collision, an emergency parachute leap and many a crucial moment over enemy targets.

Maj. Davis' crew set a world's gunnery record over Gerbini, Sicily, July 5, 1943, when they shot down 12 enemy fighters, seven of them falling to one man. The pilot recalls sadly that he wasn't at the controls that day, although since his crew increased their bag to 23 planes.

A Fortress squadron commander, Davis had trouble early while enroute from the States to North Africa. Over South American jungle in a February storm, his plane collided with another B-17 and the stabilizer was clipped off. He managed to land safely and had to wait two months for repairs.

Joining his Fortress group in North Africa, Davis flew his first mission May 3, 1943, in a raid on Bizerte harbor. Weather closed in before the bombers could reach their target and they scattered to hunt for landing places.

Davis cruised until his gas was gone before giving the signal to bail out. He scattered his crew over the North Africa countryside, landed safely himself and rode to civilization on a donkey.

It was over Messina, Sicily, June 25 when Davis had his worst brush with enemy flak and fighters. Two engines were shot out, control cables severed, and the pilot just barely make it back to North Africa. For this piece of flying he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, and also has been decorated with the Air Medal and nine Oak Leaf Clusters. The plane suffered more than 100 flak and cannon shell holes and lived up to its name "Patches."

Born at Meeker, Colo., Davis was graduated from Pasadena's McKinley High School in 1935 and from Pasadena Junior College in 1940, where he earned a letter in basketball. He went immediately into the Air Force as a cadet and won his wings at Kelly Field, Tex., in 1941. He is married to Margaret H. Davis of Pasadena, has no children.

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

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

PRESS RELEASE

FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
THRU: 5th Wing (US)
Nov. 3, 1943

ATTENTION: Georgetown, Ky., News
Lexington, Ky., Herald
" " Leader

AN ADVANCED NORTH AFRICAN AIR BASE -- On his way home from North Africa is Technical Sergeant Randolph R. Hains, 24, of Route 12, Georgetown, Ky., A Flying Fortress engineer-gunner who completed his allotted 50 bombing missions in 141 days.

A onetime Scott County, Ky., farmer, Hains participated in virtually every mission flown by his Fortress group from June through October, 1943. His first raid was to Spesia, Italy, June 5, and his last to an Austrian target October 24.

Veteran of the historic first raid on Rome, Hains recalls best a mission to Gerbini Airdrome, Sicily, July 5, when more than 100 enemy fighters attacked his Fortress formation. He shot up all his ammunition in helping hold the fighters at bay. One flak fragment tore through his turret three inches from his head and another missed him by six inches.

Hains was graduated from Oxford, Ky., High School in 1936 and was captain of the basketball team in his senior year. He attended Iowa State College in 1937 but returned to farming until entering the army Feb. 17, 1942. He is unmarried.

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

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

PRESS RELEASE

FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
THRU: 5th Wing (US)
Nov. 3, 1943

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 Spaatz, chief of the newly-formed 15th Air Force.

Before assembled personnel of the group and guests, Gen. Spaatz 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 fliers, 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 of floor, capable, 38 year old Col. Fay R. Upthegrove, who has flown 50 missions and will go back to the States for a rest before returning to active duty, reviewed the record 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.

PRESS RELEASE
 FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
 THRU: 5th Wing (US)
 November 9, 1943
 ATTENTION: Cairo, Ill., Papers

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

AN ADVANCED NORTH AFRICAN AIR BASE -- Staff Sergeant George W. Twomey, 21, of 2815 Sycamore St., Cairo, Ill., a Flying Fortress gunner whose plane once was so shot up by enemy fighters that it had to be scrapped, is on his way home from North Africa after completing his allotted 50 bombing missions.

Twomey had his worst scare in a raid on Greece when his Fortress and another fell out of formation and were attacked by 30 Messerschmitt 109's. The Forts managed to fight off the pursuit and limped home. "We had so many holes," Twomey recalled, "that they put our ship in the bomb-yard."

The gunner began combat flying in December, 1942, with a raid on Sfax, Tunisia, when the Germans still held North Africa, and finished up Nov. 2, 1943, with a mission to Austria. He has been awarded the Air Medal.

Born in Bardwell, Ky., Twomey attended high school in Cairo and was employed there until entering the army Sept. 5, 1941. He is unmarried.

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

PRESS RELEASE
 FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.
 THRU: 5th Wing (US)
 November 12, 1943
 ATTENTION: Salt Lake City, Utah, Tribune-Telegram
 " " " " Deseret News

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

AN ADVANCED NORTH AFRICAN AIR BASE -- On his way home from North Africa is 1st Lt. Duanne T. Hansen, 26, of 146 W. 6th, South, Salt Lake City, Utah, a veteran Flying Fortress bombardier who has completed his allotted 60 bombing missions with the 15th Air Force.

Hansen began combat flying May 3, 1943, with a raid on Bizerte when the axis was still in Tunisia, and finished up October 30 with a mission to Turin, Italy. Her has been awarded the Air Medal and four Oak Leaf Clusters, with five more Clusters pending.

The bombardier was graduated from Salt Lake City High School in 1935 and attended the University of Utah "intermittently" for three years, between times working in Colorado mines. Unmarried, he entered the Air Force as a cadet Jan. 3, 1942, and won his bombardier's wings in August of the same year at Albuquerque, N.M.

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

PRESS RELEASE
 FROM: 99th Bomb Gp
 THRU: 5th Wing (US)
 Nov. 18, 1943

By S/Sgt. William Brink Jr.

AN ADVANCED NORTH AFRICAN AIR BASE -- Thousands of miles away from home. Master Sergeant Ira Gordon today was probably the only native of Hunter, N.Y., (pop. 2,000) to know the outcome of the local elections.

Gordon, ground member of a Flying Fortress bombardment group, learned by letter that the election for town supervisor of Hunter had ended in a tie, with the town anxiously awaiting one last absentee vote. His ballot is on its way in the mail.

A tip to Hunter: Gordon's cousin, Harry Gordon, is one of the candidates for supervisor.

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

UNIT HISTORY OF THE 99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) HEADQUARTERS
MONTH OF JANUARY, 1944

A. ADMINISTRATION

There was no change in organization or station during the month, the 99th being still a part of the 15th Air Force stationed at Tortorella, Italy.

Strength on January 1 was 25 officers and 48 enlisted men, and on January 31, 26 officers and 48 enlisted men. The officer gained was Capt. John J. Morris, transferred from 5th Wing January 9 to our group S-3.

There was a good deal of shakeup in headquarters offices during the month. On January 2, Capt. Dent C. Davis, Jr., engineering officer of the 347th Squadron, became Group engineering officer, succeeding Major Martin Sorte, who was transferred to 15th Air Force the same day.

On January 3, Lt.-Col. Wayne E. Thurman, deputy group commander, went to 5th wing on detached service with A-3.

January 17, Capt. Philip J. Barnes, S-2 of the 347th squadron, was transferred to Group S-2, replacing Capt. John Hough, who assumed Capt. Barnes' position in the squadron.

On January 21, Col. Thurman was officially transferred to 5th Wing.

January 25, Col. Fay R. Upthegrove, our commanding officer since the inception of the group, arrived from the States after a rest period of several months. The same day, Col. Charles W. Lawrence, CO in his absence, went to 5th Wing as commander of the Wing.

On January 26, Col. Upthegrove left on detached service to the 304th Wing at Carignola. The same day, Col. Thurman came back to the group as acting CO.

Completing the juggle, Col. Upthegrove, on January 30, was officially assigned to the 304th as commander of the new B-24 Wing.

B. BATTLES

January was a month of record operation for the group. We flew 24 missions -- Nos. 122 to 146 -- to set a new record for any month since being in operation. Twelve of these 24 were flown consecutively, but this failed to top the record 13 -- in a row -- set last July.

In general, our activity was part of a vast air strategy to support the new allied landings south of Rome, which took place January 22. To do this, we smashed at railway communications feeding axis troops in the south, including Rimini, Arezzo, Prato, Poggibonsi and Fabriano. In addition, we pounded at airfields in the Rome area -- Quidonia, Ciampino and Cantocelle -- as well as in northern Italy and southern France. Sandwiched in these operations were three attacks on Sofia, Bulgaria, one of which was successful.

C. CASUALTIES

None for January.

D. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

In ceremonies at Group headquarters on January 8, Maj. Gen. Nathan Twining, new chief of the 15th Air Force, pinned a Distinguished Flying Cross on Col. Thurman for participation in a secret mission July 9-10, 1943. 1st Lt. Samuel B. Hess, Group communications officer, received a Legion of Merit for outstanding services last spring when the air echelon was separated from the ground echelon, but was not present to receive the decoration.

WAR DIARY OF THE 99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) HEADQUARTERS
MONTH OF JANUARY, 1944

January 1

The men who celebrated New Year's Eve with local liquor suffer hangover pains today. Fortunately it was non-operational. Bright spot of the day was the beaucoup turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Unbright spot--rains and wild wind which hit a new low for Italian weather. In the evening good crowds showed for the movie, William Powell and Myrna Loy in "Love Crazy."

January 2

It was mud and water at headquarters today after yesterday's heavy rains. In one of our buildings Italian laborers are building an EM mess hall and an officers' club.

January 4

The Group was host today to Robert Vermillion, a United Press war correspondent attached to the 15th Air Force who came expecting to get some good dope out of the Sofia raid. Unfortunately our planes came back with their bombs because of weather, and he went away empty-handed. The movie in the group theater tonight was Mickey Rooney in "Andy Hardy's Double Life."

January 5-6

After a brief spell of sun, we get blustery, rainy weather and on the 6th it snowed briefly. An event in this lowland, we are told.

January 13

Special Service promised us new movies and the first of these was James Cagney in "Johnny Come Lately." A huge crowd turned out and our small barn theater was packed for each of four performances. It's a free-for-all when the crowd at one performance pushes out of the door and locks horns with the crowd trying to get in for the next showing.

January 15

We get another new movie, Betty Grable in "Coney Island," and the crowd for this one was terrific.

January 21

The new EM mess hall opened, and a swanky one it is. Italians walled in the open end of a barn, leaving a door and a window, and knocked windows in other walls. They then tiled the floor. Modernistic lighting fixtures, tables with benches attached and a stove complete the hall. The Officers' club is also swank, with rugs on the walls, upholstered seats, a fireplace, and a bar with a mirror in back. It once was a barn, too.

January 22

The new allied landings south of Rome take the limelight today and lead some men to predict the Italian campaign will end too sweet. The invasion also raises great controversy with a pool of almost \$100 bet by Group men on their choice of an invasion date. The pool was supposed to apply to any large scale invasion of the European continent, but it was finally decided that this landing was an extension of the Italian campaign and the money was not paid off.

January 23-24-25

"Flying Jamboree," a G.I. variety show, played three nights to capacity crowds in the group theater. A year ago the same unit put on its first show before the 99th at Oran. Col. Upthegrove, our original CO, arrived here after a rest of several months in the States, and there was a big celebration at the Officers' club.

January 27

During the movie tonight, a big explosion was heard, and later the show was stopped while medical men were summoned from the audience. It developed that a Wellington caught fire and crashed near the 416th squadron area, and some of our men were hurt when the plane's bombs exploded.

January 28

A big crowd assembled near the 347th squadron area today to see Joe E Brown perform. Joe is a great trouper who has been all over the world's battlefronts and he got a great reception from the crowd. He said he was here to make us laugh--and he succeeded.

January 31

A big gap was filled when an air raid siren was installed and tonight it wailed the red alert about 21:30. Somehow the siren sounded more scary than the previous shouts of the

guard. And it was an authentic alert, although not directed at us. Later we heard that Beaufighters shot down a JU 88 near Manfredonia.

HEADQUARTERS
NINETY-NINTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ARMY AIR FORCES
Office of the Intelligence Officer

11 January 1944

MISSION NO. 129
HALON BASIN, PIRAEUS HARBOR
GREECE

SUPPLEMENTAL BATTLE REPORT

At 09:40 hours 21 B-17's of the 99th Bomb Group (H) took off to bomb Piraeus Harbor, (Halon Basin) Athens, Greece. Seven returned early and 14 A/C got over the target at 12:55 hours. Thirteen returned to base at 16:40 hours and one aircraft is missing. It was reported to have collided with a P-38 and went down.

In the target area, intense, heavy, accurate barrage and tracking type flak was encountered from enemy vessels and these points:

37°51'N, 23°36'E

37°56'N, 23°42'E

S-U 13 to 16 on Map P/12

Concentration around RR station and around harbor.

As estimated 15 ME-109's and 10 to 15 FW-190's attacked the formation at 13:15 hours for approximately 20 minutes. Some were aggressive and came in as close as 100 yards, while others did not appear inclined to come in. The E/A were greenish gray colored with some sky blue. Some had white stripes painted behind the pilot's seat. There were six encounters reported with some elements reporting only one encounter and others three. Two ME-109's were claimed destroyed and one probably destroyed. Two 99th A/C were damaged by fighters and six suffered minor flak damage. One bombardier was wounded in hands when flak punctured the nose above his head while he was on a bomb run.

E/A came in in pairs abreast from high 12 o'clock at 12:36 hours at 37 degrees 44' north, 22 degrees 13' east at 20,000 feet on one A/C. Others reported attacks from 5 to 7 o'clock level and low with some high frontal attacks from 11 to 1 o'clock. A few of the E/A pressed attacks aggressively. A comparatively few attacks came from three and nine o'clock.

Escort P-38's engaged the enemy and one ME-109 was observed shot down over target.

At 12:37 hours, a B-17 of another group was observed attempting to fight off two ME-109's at 37 degrees 52'N, 21 degrees 36'E. B-17 was reported to have been blown up with tail flying off in one direction and the left wing in another. No reports of chutes.

At 12:35 hours at approximately the same position a 99th Bomb Group Fortress went down burning after collision with an escort P-38. Three chutes observed and one of those reported burning. Last seen headed down smoking. Still missing at time this report compiled.

1st Ind.

Hq. 5th Wing (US), A-2 Office, APO 520, 12 January 1944. TO: CG, 15th Air Force, APO 520. ATTN: A-2

- 1. Forwarded your information.

ARTHUR M. CLARK
Major, Air Corps,
A-2

UNIT HISTORY OF THE 99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) HEADQUARTERS
MONTH OF FEBRUARY, 1944

A. ADMINISTRATION

Station: Tortorella, Italy

Strength on February 1 was 26 officers and 48 enlisted men, and on February 29, 29 and 48 enlisted men.

Headquarters gained three officers during the month, chief of which was Lt. Col. Ford J. Lauer, who on the 15th became the new group commander (SO #53, Par. 1, Hq. 5th Wing). He succeeded Col. Charles W. Lawrence, who last month became commander of 5th Wing. On the 27th headquarters received two officers newly from the States. These were Capt. Gerald E. Van Bergen, a supply officer who was placed in Group S-4, and 1st Lt. Kenneth M. Mullis, special service officer.

On February 5, Capt. George J. Doyle, having finished 50 missions as Group bombardier, was transferred to duties at the 304th Liberator Wing at Carignola. He was replaced on February 7 by 1st Lt. Robert L. McCain, of the 347th squadron.

On February 8, a combat camera unit consisting of two officers and three enlisted men arrived to film documentary records of combat and were attached to headquarters for rations and quarters. The unit is headed by Capt. John F. Whalen.

B. BATTLES

Bad weather slowed down operations from a record month of 24 missions in January to only 10 in February -- Group missions #147 to #156. And yet it was an eventful month for the 99th. The difficulties of allied troops in the Anzio beachhead turned us to tactical work with three missions in support of beleaguered ground troops. One of those was the historic bombing of the famed Benedictine monastery atop Monte Cassino on February 15. In addition, we hit Modena, Italy, marshalling yards on February 14 as part of a large scale blow to knock out communications lines of the enemy in northern Italy. Beginning February 22, we opened up with our end of a double-barrelled assault on Germany in cooperation with the Eighth Air Force in England. In order to reach the prime German targets, we were forced to use only our limited number of B-17G's while our F's went elsewhere. Thus the first such missions on the 22nd sent the G's to Regensburg, Germany, and the F's to Zagreb airdrome in Yugoslavia. The latter mission was successful but the former was washed out by bad weather. We tried again on February 25, with the F's dropping on Pola Harbor, and the G's fighting through the heaviest fighter opposition in our history to plaster the Messerschmitt factory at Regensburg. We lost four planes on the German raid, but the target was knocked out.

C. CASUALTIES

None.

WAR DIARY OF THE 99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) HEADQUARTERS
MONTH OF FEBRUARY, 1944

February 1

Non-operational and warm spring weather, and many men take the opportunity to go to town. In the evening a big crowd packed the movie house to see "The Battle of Russia," a fine documentary film in the War Department's series entitled "Why We Fight." Most men agreed that Russia has gone through a lot in this war. We came out of the theater to find a thick fog that San Francisco could be proud of.

February 2

The fog was gone this morning and Col. Lawrence came aft from Wing to see the boys get off on the day's mission. But although the weather was fine here, it must have been bad elsewhere, because the ships came back without completing the mission. So there was another holiday in group.

February 3

Lots of passes to town again, with a sunshiny day and non-op besides. Biggest attraction in Foggia right now is the newly-arrived WAC contingent. Steak for supper tonight and afterwards the movie, Jerry Colonna in "Ice Capades."

February 4

A routine day.

February 5

We found it was still winter in Italy today when the wind howled out of the west and sent the mercury way down. Intermittent rains sometimes turned to sleet, and the mountains bordering the northeast side of the field turned white on top. Most men spent the day close to stoves, but a large crowd ventured out to see the movie, Francis Langford in "Cowboy in Manhattan."

February 6

The wind abated somewhat today but it was still plenty cold. A shivering visitor was Capt. George Doyle, former group bombardier now working with Col. Upthegrove's 304th Wing at Carignola. He brought several A-2 officers to inspect our S-2 setup. We had fried chicken for supper.

February 7

A routine day.

February 8

We were brought stark upright in bed at 2:30 this morning by a powerful explosion. First thoughts were of an air raid, but a single bright fire down on the airfield told of another local disaster. In the morning we found out it was another Wellington, this time one which developed trouble after takeoff and attempted a belly landing with a bomb load aboard. At the salvage dump, the remains of the Wimpy were shoveled off a truck in VERY small pieces. Show tonight was "You're a Sweetheart," with Alice Faye.

February 9

A routine day.

February 10

A good crowd saw the show tonight, Bob Burns in "Alias the Deacon."

February 11

Col. Upthegrove, our former CO and new commander of the 304th Wing at Carignola, visited and talked with top group officers.

February 12

A good crowd saw the movie tonight, Pat O'Brien in "The Navy Comes Through."

February 13

Very few complaints heard these days about chow. We've been having fresh butter three times a day and fresh meat at least once a day.

February 14

Headquarters enlisted men met in their mess hall and completed plans for a dance to be held in the Foggia Red Cross Friday, Feb. 18. Also at the meeting an action committee headed by S/Sgt. James Sheffield of S-3 and S/Sgt. John Rabaut of S-1 was appointed to get the enlisted men's clubrooms in shape for an early spring.

February 15

Tonight's movie was Tyrone Power in "Sea Fury."

February 16

Italian workmen today began to erect a brick-and-mortar addition to the headquarters kitchen. When it is completed, headquarters will have one of the best mess establishments on the base.

February 17

Big crowds swarmed to the theater tonight to see a new movie in Technicolor, "The Gang's All Here," with Alice Faye, Carmen Miranda, and Benny Goodman's Orchestra.

February 18

Vino flowed freely as headquarters enlisted men held their dance in the Foggia Red Cross. Music was by the 99th Orchestra.

February 19

The enlisted men's club is open. It has two rooms, one with a bar and the other with tables and chairs for reading or writing, and looks sharp in bright blue, yellow, and gray paint. Another movie tonight, Adolph Menjou in "Hi Diddle, Diddle." To accommodate the crowds, matinee was run in mid-afternoon.

February 20

A dull, cloudy Sunday relieved only by a stage show at the headquarters theater. A talented color revue of the 907th Air Base Security Squadron played to moderate crowds in the afternoon and evening.

February 21

Enlisted men held another meeting and laid final plans for the club. It was decided to hire a barmaid and sell drinks only over the bar. Other details were left to the club committee. M/Sgt. Larry Fridmeld of S-1 and Cpl. Bruno of the mess staff were named on a committee to buy liquor.

February 22

A throng turned out for a new movie, Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland in "Girl Crazy." A half hour before each showing, the 99th Orchestra, directed by S/Sgt. Irwin Porges of the 347th squadron played the latest hit tunes from the States. Both the band and the movie went over big.

February 23

A routine day.

February 24

There was near disaster in Group S-1 during the small hours of the morning when the gasoline stove clogged up and poured smoke into the office. The CQ, T/Sgt. Frank C. Fraser of S-1 nearly suffocated in his sleep, came bursting out of the office looking like an end man in a minstrel show. The entire office and everything in it was covered with oily soot, and the S-1 staff spent the day cleaning up. A big crowd tonight for the new and whacky movie, Olsen and Johnson in "Crazy House."

February 25

A rainy, blustery day but not very cold. The 99th finally saw the movie "Arsenic and Old Lace," tonight. It had been washed out in the first reel twice before in North Africa. Pat Conger, United Press correspondent now with the 15th Air Force, visited and picked up some dope from returning crewmen on the rough Regensburg raid.

February 26

A dull rainy day. In the evening the men sweated from 6:30 until 8:00 before the movie film arrived from wherever it had played before. As a result, there was only one showing of "Hit Parade of 1943," with Susan Hayward and John Carrell. Also tonight, the headquarter's officers held a dance in their club.

February 27

Sunday, and church services went off okay despite the fact that Chaplain Whitlock's new headquarters out in the squadrons burned to the ground. Another gasoline fire mishap.

February 28

A routine day.

February 29

Movie tonight was an impossible wartime air picture called "International Squadron."

SPECIAL ACCOUNTS OF THE 99TH GROUP (H) HEADQUARTERS
MONTH OF FEBRUARY, 1944

When enemy anti-aircraft fire sends a new B-17G to the junk pile after its maiden mission -- brother that's flak.

These were the sentiments of a fortress crew who went through so much flak over Cisterna, Italy, February 10, that they now say "every speck of dirt on a plane window looks like the stuff to us."

The new fortress was a sieve. Its control cables were severed, its gas tanks punctured, its oxygen system gone. Practically everything in the plane -- spare clothing, equipment, ammunition -- was riddled.

But the fortress got home to an Italian base, where groundmen stopped counting holes at 500 and waved it to the boneyard. The crew got home safely mainly because the pilot, 2nd Lt. Thomas G. Judge of the 347th squadron, used good judgment and whatever spare tire was handy. He used arming wires left in the bomb bay from the bombs, and the extension cords of the crew's electrically heated flying suits to splice the control cables.

Said Judge, who is 22 and lives at 62 Forest St., Boston, Mass.: "I had a hell of a time tracing the cables so I wouldn't hitch the rudder to an aileron. And the first cable I touched came off in my hands."

The ship snapped into fairly level flight by automatic pilot after the flak hit, but it was the emergency repairs to the cables that enabled Judge to fly the bomber in for a landing at 140 M.P.H.

"We were flying all over the sky for a while," Judge said. "The ship nearly ran into its own formation and then nearly ran into a bunch of B-24's heading somewhere else."

The crew also sweated out fire from gasoline streaming out of two punctured tanks in the wings. Hundreds of gallons poured out during the trip home. The flak, in a series of four bursts, hit just after the Fortress dropped its bombs and was turning off the target.

"I heard a terrific woomf and the ship bounced up and reached for the sky with its nose," Judge continued. "When I hit the stick and nothing happened, I knew the controls were gone."

"A big piece of flak tore through the ball turret and passed between the arm and body of the gunner without touching him."

"No. 2 and 3 gas tanks were hit and leaking like hell. The ship was wobbling and sliding, and heading out in front of the formation as it came out of its turn off the target. I hit the rudder bar and it went all the way down to the stop and nothing happened. So we started fireworks, shooting off all the flares we could find and the formation pulled up over us."

Judge ordered his men to the waist to prepare to bail out. In the waist a riddled spare box of 50-caliber gun ammunition was exploding. Judge added: "We headed south and from then on everything was teamwork. The bombardier and navigator took a look at the waist gunners, who reported they had had their rear ends stung by flak. The engineer and the copilot flew the ship with their knees braced against the stick because the ship wanted to climb. I went back into the waist to try to fix the cables. All the boys helped. We got the cables straightened out and spliced, but there wasn't much tension on them. We were still heading south over water and trying to turn inland."

"A bunch of B-24's came along in formation, right at us. I guess they expected us to get out of the way, but we couldn't, and somehow we missed them. We finally got the ship turned inland and headed home. The boys elected to land with her instead of bailing out."

Other members of the crew were: 2nd Lt. Harold Klein, copilot; 2nd Lt. Harold C. Schaller, navigator; 2nd Lt. Chester W. Mitchell, bombardier; T/Sgt. Paul V. Messina, radio operator; T/Sgt. James C. Borland, engineer; S/Sgt. LeRoy M. Heuf, tail gunner; S/Sgt. Charles A. Moore, waist gunner; S/Sgt. Frank J. Kscinski, waist gunner; and S/Sgt. George Thurston, ball turret gunner.

SPECIAL NARRATIVE REPORT

MISSION: 14 February, 1944 - MODENA M/Y

I. ENEMY RESISTANCE

A. Fighters

The 99th went over the target in 9 ship V's; javelin down in trail. The enemy planes were over the target when the group arrived. Some were mottled with camouflage colors and had yellow bottoms while others had yellow noses. One red spinner was observed.

Only a few of the e/a fired although they approached within 800 yards, it is believed that their guns were frozen. Some attacked in lines of three from the rear, level and high. There were a few not too aggressive attacks by twos and threes from the nose, high and swooping under the formation. The e/a were engaged vigorously by the P-47 escort, who shot down some 6 or 7 of them.

B. FLAK

There was no flak over Modena but moderate, inaccurate and heavy flak was encountered over Verona. This was of the tracking type.

SPECIAL NARRATIVE REPORT:

MISSION: 17 February, 1944 - BEACHHEAD INSTALLATION NORTH OF ANZIO

I. ENEMY RESISTANCE

A. Fighters

Three to five unidentified enemy fighters were reported by the 99th Bomb Group near Lake Albano. These fighters did not attack and stayed out so far it was impossible to identify. Entirely possible that they were friendly. One a/c reported five ME 109's attacking, but insasmuch as only one a/c reported this out of 39, the report should not be given much credence, although one of the crew members was finishing fifty missions.

B. Flak

Just as the formation crossed the bomb line, it was subjected to very intense, heavy and accurate flak. The bulk of the flak came from a ridge south and east of Lake Albano and on the east side of the lake. 32 out of 39 a/c were hit with varying degrees of damage. One a/c was hit before reaching the target and radioed it was crash landing. Efforts to contact him were futile. Two chutes were reported from the stricken craft. It is not known definitely whether he landed in friendly or enemy territory, although subsequent messages via Malta stated that an A/C had landed in friendly territory. The flak was barrage and tracking type. No evasive action was reported because the a/c were on their bomb runs. The flak continued after leaving target and as far west and south as Littorie. On a previous mission over this area, moderate accurate flak was encountered, but crew members report that many new batteries evidently have been moved in. The previous trip was on 12 February, 1944.

99th B.G. hymn

I must get up again at dawn to raid the Jerry and Wop
And all I ask is a Flying Fort and a Load of frags to drop
And all I ask is a target fat and the flak around me breaking
And a copilot bold to take the stick while my goddam knees are shaking

HEADQUARTERS FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE
APO 520, U. S. Army

17 June 1944

ESCAPE STATEMENT

1st Lt. Herbert O. Perry, 0-729655, 99th Bomb Group, 348th Sq.

1. Personal history.

Duty - Navigator

Age - 29

Missions - 32

Returned to duty - 9 June 1944.

2. On 5 July 1943, our plane was attacking Gerbini A/D's. Intense accurate heavy flak from IP to target blew large holes in both wings and knocked out #4 engine, causing us to fall behind the formation along with both wing planes. All this time we were aggressively attacked by 4 flights of 12 ME 109's each. We dropped bombs on the target and, while turning off, lost both wing planes. We turned towards Malta but by now E/A fire had destroyed all controls, set the plane afire and killed the Co-pilot (Lt. Emalt); tail gunner, Sgt. R. W. Mills; and ball turret gunner, Sgt. Esposito. Sgts. Fleming and Huckabee were wounded. Sgt. Mills left the tail position when it was shot up and his own intestines were practically hanging out. While in this condition he helped feed ammunition to the waist gunner until falling over dead. The consensus of our crew is that we destroyed 7 ME 109's. At 12,000 ft. we bailed out. On the way down one E/A made a pass but did not fire. After I landed near Comise, Sicily and had satisfied the natives that I was an American they were very friendly and subsequently tried to prevent Carbinari from taking me. I requested medical aid of the latter - having received a few flak splinters in my left shoulder. They ignored me but provided prompt care for Fleming and Huckabee.

3. a. At the interrogation by Carbinari all clothes and personal effects were removed except my shorts. Later, part of the clothes were returned. A printed interrogation form was submitted but I only complied with Name, Bank and Serial number. An unopened fountain pen was offered me but something about the manner of presentation made me refuse to use it. This caused the Italian Col., who was interrogating, to break into a tirade accusing me of knowing the pen was a booby trap. He claimed that Allied airmen had dropped large numbers of such pens - without explaining the damaging nature of the pen.

b. At Foggia Mateo, a short distance north of Rome, we were again interrogated - this time by an Italian who had lived in England 14 years. He asked the usual questions and when I stuck to the standard answers he abandoned further efforts.

c. At Chisti, the interrogators tried to work on our sympathy - saying that Rome was pressing him for results and that he would lose his job if we refused cooperation. He produced a photo of a B-24 with all it's crew - saying that this plane had mistakenly followed a beam into Sicily and landed intact including bombsight. Finally, after my continued polite refusal of information, he said that he wished Italian airmen were as closed mouth when captured. I am not aware of any microphones having been used altho Foggia Mateo was later reputed to be a "hot spot" for their use.

4. Escape Aids: the escape box was left in the plane and the purse fell out when I parachuted. Briefings had been reasonably adequate.

5. Comments: Lt's Davis and Shank and Sgt. Withrow are believed POW in Germany.

Interrogator
BERT W. MORRIS,
Captain, A. C.

13 August 1984

4 Incls:

- 1 - Appendix A
- 2 - Ltr. 383.6
- 3 - Identification paper
- 4 - Identification paper

1st Lt. Herbert O. Perry, 0-729655, 99th Bomb Group, 348th Sq.

APPENDIX A

The Italians moved me from Sicily on July 9th, along with Lt.'s Davis and Shank and Sgt. Withrow. We went direct to Foggio Mateo (just north of Rome). From there we were taken to Rome and quartered in a former Bishop's home, about 1000 yds. south of the Vatican. The senior officer was an alledged former British Commando named Richardson, whose own background didn't ring true. I became acquainted there with a Mosquito pilot, Lt. G. W. Barnes, shot down at the same time and place as ourselves. Officers and enlisted men were separated at this point and on July 28th we were taken by train to Chisti, where we stayed until the Armistice. At that time the senior British Officer - Lt. Col. Marshall claimed to have definite orders that POW were to remain in camp, further stating he had an Italian Colonel's word that we would not be delivered to the Germans. We therefore organized our own guard to keep the 1200 British and 240 American officers in camp. On September 15th German parachute troops appeared, set up M/G's and took off guard. On September 23rd they packed us in trucks and took us to Salmona. After reaching there, Lt. Max Gooles said the Germans were definitely taking us to Germany. I asked for and received his permission to make an escape effort (he having previously told us we would be court-martialled). With F/O Glen Wilson of the RAF, I escaped on September 23rd. We found large numbers of escaped British soldiers in the hills. After living in the hills from September 23 to 28th, during which time Italian peasants brought us food and civilian clothes, we were caught by a German patrol and forced to join a working party along with 300 Italians -our true identity not being discovered. This work consisted of digging ditches and preparing the ground for fortifications. October 23rd we escaped and were given refuge by the family of Anna e, Via Salmona. At this time I was presented with an Italian Identification card, also a forged certificate of release from labor details - given to those who were ill (both certificates are attached to this report). On 13 November I drew a plan of the mine fields, tank traps, etc. in this area and gave it to a girl (name unknown) to take to Rome - with instructions to give to a Priest - hoping it would reach Allied hands. One month later the Germans came with a party of laborors and removed all the mines. At this time a reward of 20,000 lire was placed on my head, forcing me to change residences frequently. On 22 December, a lone German caught me at the home. I pretended to go meekly but slugged and strangled him to death - later having Italians bury his remains. On 23rd of March I took 2 Italians and tore up 2 sections of rails south of Salmona - later hearing that it caused derailment of a train of oil and gasoline. June 9th at 4 A.M., the Germans blew up the bridge on the main highway north of Salmona. At 8 A.M. I went openly into Salmona and informed the Italian police I was taking command of the city in the name of the Allies, giving instructions that they were to round up all Fascists. My chief assistant at this moment was Mario de Cesare (known to the British as Mario Terni or Mario 3). He had previously done effective work in helping evaders and escapees. The worst Italian offender was a man called "Tac-a-ma-tack", and his sisters. I believe the former, a dangerous Axis informer, is now in jail at Salmona. On 12th June I met Major Tony Smith and returned to Allied territory.

censored by george - Oct. 1984

Dear George -

Hans-Heiri Stapfer sent me a letter with copier pictures and numerous questions about the 1 Oct. 43 raid against Augsburg which was a failure due to a solid overcast north of the Alps. The pictures were of Platt and Connaly at the funeral held at Bad Ragaz. There seem to be only 8 caskets at the funeral. I really don't know what happened in Switzerland, we later got word that parts of two crews lost in fighter battle were interned there. I will relate what happened on the mission as I saw it. Capt. Evans was my co-pilot. I think we were 3rd or 4th in Wing and as we reached the Alps we passed a Group or two returning and we wondered why they were aborting. North of the Alps all of Southern Germany appeared to be covered with a thick overcast. I decided to proceed further to see if there were any holes thru which we could bomb. Not finding any we too decided to abort and turned to fly back when about 30 or so of yellow nose ME-102's appeared and proceeded to make frontal attacks in groups of 4 to 6 abreast. I thought I had an idea how to combat this and as they wheeled around to start their strafing or firing run I would dive down about 200 feet. They flew right thru our formation and after they passed I would climb back up 200 ft., this was repeated over and over until the fighters used up ammunition and withdrew. We continued and the navigator tried to get a position report but the over cast prevented until we reached the Alps again. We missed two planes and thought them crippled and would try to land or bail out over Switzerland. We heard that part of these two crews survived and were interned in Switzerland. Not long after I finished 50 missions and was grounded by the Air Force and sent to the States on 30 days R&R. That over I picked up a new B-17 in Washington and Engineer, Navigator and Pete Remington who had been flying sub patrol in the Caribbean and who was wandering around the Pentagon trying to get his orders changed from New England to the war Zone. We had been together at Mitchell Field in the 99th squadron and I took him to Col. Wetzell in Personnel to get orders changed. Italy 12th AF and signed him on as co-pilot. At Trinidad we picked up a B-24 crew stranded there and flew all back to Tortorella. I was at the 99th only one night when AF called and ordered me to take over the 304th Bomb Wing at Cerignola. Stapfer says the Swiss ack-ack shot down the 2 planes. I never saw any flak bursts unless the 2 planes with trouble got below the overcast and were picked off or what. I didn't jettison any bombs and most brought them back to Oudna but some planes could have, but nobody bombed Feldkirch intentionally. Augsburg and Munich were not attacked that day. In the spring of 1944 I got a phone call from Caserta and it was from one of the survivors who was being repatriated from Switzerland and returning to the U.S. I think maybe it was Cantwell or one of his officers who wanted to thank me for saving his life. They were about to depart so I got no further news from them. Perhaps Platt, Connaly, or King could shed some light on what happened in Switzerland. They were interrogated at Caserta I think and some record of that should be in the archives of the AF somewhere. I don't have many facts to answer his questions and I wish you would look over his letters and stuff and advise me as to whether or not I should try to send him anything. We didn't bomb Augsburg or Munich nor Feldkirch unless it was a bomb jettisoned thru the over cast. A Bombardier Lt. Frank E. claimed 4 and Ben Warner one fighters shot down for a group total of 10 or 12. Without the records I am stymied and don't know what to do but a lot of speculating. Please advise.

Gen. Upthegrove

from
 George F. Coen
 2908 Aliso Dr. NE
 Albuquerque NM 87110

9 Sep. 1984

Dear Hans-Heiri;

General Upthegrove has kindly sent me a copy of your letter to him of July 26th. We always enjoy your letters, and this one is no exception.

You asked about the bombing of Feldkirch in Austria. I doubt that we can ever find out what transpired, but later we will make an attempt to do so. That will take some time, but we will begin searching the records now.

Meanwhile, I think that I can explain the matter of target selection, although I was not on the October 1st mission.

You are 22 years old, the same age as my youngest son, so I will try to write for him, for the 99th, and for all the 22-year-olds of this world. I will try to write without exaggeration and without humor.

First, consider the B-17, a marvelously complex assortment of wires, gadgets, motors (50 or so), tubes and engines.

Second, consider the crew, with an average age of perhaps 21 years. 18 months earlier most of these men were probably civilians. Now each is in a job where death may come any second with only the briefest of notice. Death in the air comes in a multitude of forms, but the weather is the most deadly killer. The crew must also watch for flak, fighter attack, bombing from the air, fire, collision, anoxia, and many other dangers.

Now remember that this average crew has flown 20 or 25 missions. By now they are screaming in their sleep, they may have to use two hands to get a forkfull of food to their mouths, and they are probably weak from prolonged dysentery and are vomiting every morning at 0400 from combat fatigue.

At this point I will describe from my own experience how targets are sometimes selected. The date was July 25, 1943 and the target was Foggia Aerodrome. The planned bombing altitude was probably around 24,000 feet (8,000 meters). The weather over the target was terrible with massive cumulus clouds all around. The clouds forced our aircraft down to about 4000 feet (1000 meters), and when I was able to look around I found that our plane was leading a 6-plane formation and that the rest of the Group was 40 miles away. We could not see them, but we could see the line of explosions as they jettisoned their bombs under fighter attack. At this low altitude we were extremely vulnerable to light flak or to attack from fighters, so we needed to get rid of the bombs. First we set course for the nearest bit of sea, which happened to be the Bay of Salerno. Next, we looked for a target. Directly on course was the small hamlet of Andretta. The bombardier coordinated a bomb run on a highway bridge there and the six planes were able to achieve a good pattern. We then continued our flight to our home base, where the non-flying Intelligence Officer tried repeatedly to get me to say that we had bombed the marshalling yards at Montello. I refused to agree, and anyway our photos proved otherwise, but the Intelligence Officer nevertheless stubbornly reported Montello bombed, and so it reads in the War Diary. The Base Personnel had a distressing tendency toward this sort of thing.

So Feldkirch was probably selected in this way on the spur of the moment by some harassed crew member with seconds to make the decision, with clouds all around, German fighters on the prowl, and the Alps to be crossed to relative safety. And if this crew did everything just right they would be one day closer to attaining the age to which you have already survived.

As our General Sherman said, "War is brutality, you cannot refine it." This is just as true today as it was in 1864. War is no damn good!

With best wishes
George

REUNIONS

JULY, 1985, SEATTLE WASHINGTON. 50th Birthday of the B-17. The 15th Air Force Association will be there. Joe Chance is coordinating for the 99th. Full details will follow.

October 17-20, 1985, WICHITA KANSAS Another Birthday Party for the B-17 with the 8th Air Force Historical Society in attendance and with a B-17 fly-in, an air-show. This is the 11th Annual 8thAF Reunion.

News, Dues, & Views.

Our genial President, Bernie Barr, will be one of two artists to be featured for the month of November at the New Mexico Art League here in Albuquerque. Bernie's watercolors are delightfully delicate; in fact when I first saw one of his works I thought that it was a Japanese landscape.

We hope to persuade Bernie to bring a sample to Seattle. gfc

A WORD ABOUT PICTURES

We are very grateful for pictures of historical significance. Conversely, we can make very little use of small snapshots of groups at dances, parties, and so on.

A glance at "Romell's Last Stand" will show what we mean. Pictures showing work on planes are especially welcome. We also would like more pictures of plane nose art and pictures in which individual planes can be identified. Best of all are identified groups in front of a plane.

If you wish your photos returned, please note so on the back of the photo in soft pencil, along with your name.

Author Lawrence Cortesi did a marvelous job with the photos which we sent him; his copies in the book were as clear as the originals. geo.

A WORD ABOUT OUR LISTS

We have now reached the end of the Group War Diary microfilms, and with that we have no more names for the Prospect List and The Search. From here on we must depend on your old address lists. Send us the home towns of record and we will fire postcards at them. Meanwhile we are still locating stragglers through the 60 postcards per month which we have been able to prepare. Note also that we do not have complete phone directories, so if your buddies live in small towns we may be unable to pursue them. You might wish to try a phone call or two on your own. gfc

OVER THE HILL

This office has had no success in obtaining the lyrics to "Over the Hill".

So far we have:

"When you're asked for an encore and say you are ill,
You're over the hill, buddy, over the hill

.....
"When the mind has wishes the body can't fill,
You're over the hill, buddy, over the hill

dum du dum dumpty dum.....

"With a glass full of water and a little pink pill,

...

The last two came from Ann Landers' column, but we have not been able to get through to Ann. Does anybody remember another verse?

Emma has moved and a copyright search has gotten us nowhere. Perhaps this tune did not compare to Brahms, but it should have lasted these few years. And more than any other this was the tune to which the 99th flew away to war.

Incidentally, I learned at the 15AFA reunion that Lili Marlene is not the national anthem.

March 19, 1984

99th Bomb group H. S.
2908 Aliso Dr.,
Albuquerque, N. Mex.

Dear George:

First of all I want to thank you for getting out to me the back 3 yrs. of newsletters..I found much of interest to read about. Now that I know what you really want in the line of history etc. I will try to give some of the material I have saved over the years.

I have a list of former 99th, 416th people which I do not see on the roster in any of the newsletters to date. The list is enclosed separately. I also enclose a copy of a letter sent to me from Edward Bilinsky. He and I came over to the 99th from the 3rd Photo Group (Elliott Roosevelt's outfit). I believe we were the first enlisted men to transfer, but many followed. Two Officers came to the 99th before we did. They were Maj. Wayne Therman HQ. and Capt. Bernard Shaw 416th C.O.

I also enclose a copy of some travel orders to England. Most of these men were in the 416th I believe, including Maj. David V. McDonald (later Col.). I am especially interested in the whereabouts of Maj. McDonald, Maj. Shaw and Maj. John Morris.

The two names which Bilinsky mentioned in his letter, McGee and Perry, I saw go down in the Regensburg raid. They were left and right wingmen to us that day. We were a one plane squadron after that and never did catch the group. Capt. Shaw was pilot and Maj. Morris as co-pilot that day.

I also enclosed a copy of a letter of recommendation, signed by Maj. Morris. (I never did go to O.C.S., but it was a good letter and I appreciated it.) I thought you might get some helpful information from it.

Ed. Bilinsky and myself had traveled throughout the states quite a bit and through England, Scotland and Africa and Italy. Ed and his charming wife Mary came to visit us in the seventy's, we made some tentative plans but unfortunately Mary informed us that Ed. had passed away July 3, 1978, of a heart attack in the hospital while awaiting gall bladder surgery. A deep loss of a good friend! Ed. had retired as a Jersey City Cop a year before that. I neglected to mention that Ed. was RO on Lt. Charles K. Carrol's crew, but Lt. Carrol flew with another crew that day and I believe he saw his own crew go down. I remember talking to him about it later..

A little more about myself. I flew my first mission with the 99th 416th Oct. 5, 1943, Bologna, Italy and my last March 28, 1944 M/Y Verona, Italy. I flew with Col. Wayne Thurman, Col. David McDonald, Maj. Bernard Shaw and Maj. John Morris, while completing my 50 missions. I was sent back to the states (by boat) and after going to Atlantic City, N.J. I went to Galveston, Tex. for instructor school in radio and gunnery. Went to Ardmore, Okla. where we trained many B17 crews. On June 7, 1945 I was discharged from the service because I had so many points. My charming wife and myself were married one month later. We are still living at this address in the house I built.

Hope you can use some of this information for your files..

Sincerly,
Ross E. McKinney

6 October 1982
Bernard Raftery
1921 Brewton Street
District Heights, Maryland 20747

Dear Frank,

I received 1 September edition of the 99th Bomb Group Newsletter. It certainly brought back many memories and gave me the incentive to write.

First of all, the article on Jim Raley. I was on that mission to Pireaus Harbor near Athens, Greece that day in A/C 42-5470 as navigator (my 45th mission). This mission was made up of a composite from all four Bomb Groups of the Fifth Wing--seven aircraft from each Group. As we reached the western coast of the Peleponeses, we were in a climb between two layers of clouds, flying in elements of seven. The 99th was in the right element high, our aircraft was in the seventh, or swing position. In the cloud, while spreading out to the left for separation, we probably encountered icing and started a

diving spin to the left, hitting the seven planes in the low element that Jim Raley was in. All eight aircraft went down. There was a total of 15 survivors. Jim and some of the others had a hard time of it physically during the three months we spent in Greece. We finally made it back to Italy on an Italian gun boat. As I recall Jim was in the 301st or 2nd Bomb Group. I kept a diary on most of our stay in Greece - if you are interested, I will send you a copy for your records. Personally, I was very fortunate on this raid, we had run out of airplanes and ours was an old E model with a plexiglass nose with the 30 caliber guns removed. Apparently when we exploded on impact with the other aircraft, the Bombardier, Tom Lilly and I were blown through the nose. I recovered consciousness about half way down.

Our original crew of the Plummer Provisional Group which joined the 99th in Tunis, had the misfortune of losing two aircraft that were not on your table of combat losses. On 1 October 1943 we were on the mission to the messersmitt factory in Augsburg Germany. We were hit heavy with ME 109's that had drop tanks. We bombed Innsbruck instead. The small formation was scattered, three made it to Switzerland. We made it back to Sardinia and wiped out the plane in landing. This aircraft was the one we had taken overseas -No. 491. Marvin Charak, a current member of the 99th Historical Society was the Bombardier. He was severely wounded when an explosive shell ripped out the nose and his bomb sight. (an interesting note -the Italians who were holding Sardinia had just surrendered on 28 September).

Our crew with the exception of Marvin was on the 6 October 43 mission to Mestre. We were hit by a top notch ME 109 unit on our way in and were lucky enough to make it back and crash at one of the Foggia Airfield that had just been taken by the British. I don't recall the tail number of the plane but it wasn't the one listed on your combat report (another note of interest - I met a German pilot at a German Airfield in 1964 who was flying against us in one of the ME 109 on the Mestre mission.

I retired from the Airforce in September 1964, lived in Europe for awhile, and have been with the Government in Washington, D.C. area since 1966. I certainly enjoy your newsletter and commend you, George Coen and all others for conceiving the idea of the 99th Bomb Group Historical Society.

Sincerely,
Bernie Rafferty

QUOTES

BDA INTERPRETATION

Bomb-damage assessment was a major activity for many P.I.s. It involved analysis of structural damage, impedance of the process performed, and estimation of this loss to an enemy's overall war-making potential. As usual, comparative was invaluable to a detailed appreciation of the damage and its impact on production. . . . Plotting impacts was an integral part of BDA, which didn't make P.I.'s especially popular with bomber crews. When bombs missed the target, it somehow became the P.I. who was the bad guy, but a good interpreter was like an umpire - he had to call them like he saw them. When bombs were scattered all over a target area or fell on the wrong target, it was the P.I. who had to tell the decision-makers (who never wanted to hear that sort of news), and many an intelligence officer incurred the lasting wrath of some senior operations type by telling him the mission was a bust.

from WORLD WAR II PHOTO INTELLIGENCE BY Col. Roy L. Stanley II

Among other goodies this volume shows photos of Auschwitz during the processing of a trainload of inmates who can be seen filing toward the crematorium. We quote: "Nothing on the photography printed at 200,000 and more people crammed into those huts."

May 7, 1984

Dear George,

I am here at the typewriter, thinking of the good times and renewal of friends that took place at the Reunion. I think each Reunion is getting better! (BIGGER for sure!!) Jim Flex did a fantastic bit of work, along with all his relatives. I did not know too many, however, I met quite a few, and I hope everyone was as impressed as I was. I'll know quite a few more next time.

Bernie Barr suggested I write out the continuation of the history of the 99th as I lived it, so here goes.

The 99th was reactivated at Fairchild AFB, Washington on Jan 1, 1953 as the 99 Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (H) equipped with the RB-36, which had four bomb bays; (the no 1 bay had been modified into a full photographic darkroom and had a large number of K-17 cameras), which later was also further modified with a viewing window at the lower bottom aft so as to be able to operate the pickup boom for a RF-84K Fighter to be carried along much as the Dirigibles of the 1930's. This was known as the FICON project and the RB-36's were then known as GRB-36's. Only one squadron was equipped with the GRB version, (348th), the 346th and 347th were equipped with the RB-36. During the time with the 99th at Fairchild AFB, I was assigned to the 99 Organizational Maintenance Squadron, which was the so called "Dock" Squadron. (We performed the 400 hr inspections on the aircraft.)

In the fall of 1956, the 99th was redesignated the 99 Bomb Wing (H JET) (SAC) and was transferred to Westover AFB, Massachusetts and equipped with B-52's. I extended my enlistment to accompany the wing in its move. I left the 99th in July 1963 and was reassigned to Fairchild AFB, Washington, and retired in 1965. Joe Upchurch of Orlando, Florida will have to verify and continue this epic saga as I understand he transferred with the 347th Squadron when the 99th was dispersed to other bases. This was done under the SAC dispersal concept at the time, and by assigning one squadron to a Base, rather than an entire Wing, allowed the use of multiple runways, thereby, NOT being "Runway Limited"..... I.E. many more aircraft could get off the ground within the 15 minutes allotted (before the enemy missiles would knock out the capability to launch sufficient retaliatory aircraft).

I did not suggest a possible site for a Reunion here in Phoenix, as I wanted to approach the other members living in the area. Also, I will see if there is enough interest in organizing a get-together on a regular basis.

I really appreciate the answers and correspondence with you, George, and I am patient, I know you are busy.... I would still write even if you did not answer, if I were sure you were getting my letters.

I will follow up on the matter of the squadron logos, also and determine the cost of manufacture here in Phoenix. I think I can get the small ones blown up at a Alphagraphics near here, and go from there. As I mentioned earlier, there is a shop run by someone from Asia who will make them at a reasonable cost.

Again, I personally thought this last effort at the Reunion was a resounding SUCCESS !!!

Sincerely,



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL - NOVEMBER 1984

1985 Dues, \$10 _____. This includes the 1985 Newsletter.
We have back copies of newsletters for \$5 per year for '81-'84

81 82 83 84

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

Mail to Walter Butler, Treasurer, at 8608 Bellehaven Place NE, Albuquerque
NM 87112

Make check payable to 99BGHS.

Rt. 2
Ripley TN 38063
Aug. 13, 1984

Dear George,

It's a small world! I signed my name next to yours in a Confederate Air Force Ghost Squadron magazine Monday.

The "Sentimental Journey" was flown into Dyersburg, Tenn. airport and I went up and spent the day. One of the pilots flew for Delta Airlines and knows one of the pilots I flew with in Africa. They were having a good turnout.

Margaret and I had a super time in Houston. We hope to see every-one in Seattle.

For the newsletter, George McCloskey of Carrigan, Texas passed away about the first of April. He was a tail gunner on Cotton-Eyed Joe. I stopped in Carrigan and talked with his aunt on my way to Houston in May.

sincerely
Joe Capparulo

* * * * *
The 99th BGHS * * * * * Centerville Iowa
Aug. 16, 1984

Writing in regards to whereabouts of Lt. John McKowen. Last known address was 348th Squadron, 99BG, APO 520. He was on B-17s.

His home address was 443 Forrest, Shreveport LA. His wife's name was Jerry.

Surely somebody should remember him. . . .

Thank you
Sandy Cortesio
906 Drake
Centerville IA 52544

* * * * *
Dear Sandy;
We will give John the standard Search Treatment and will let you know of any results. We have no post-1945 information on him.
geo.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Fred Z. Harris

10424-1 N. 11th Place

Phoenix AZ 85020

99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2908 ALISO DRIVE NE
ALBUQUERQUE NM 87110



J.O. Grizzell
15 Mohican Cove East
Lake Waynoka
Sardinda OH 45171
1983

RETURN POSTAGE
GUARANTEED

NOV 84

TAPS

JOHN M. NEGRA ... I regret to inform you that my father, John M. Negra, passed away August 5, 1983. I know that had my father lived he would have been delighted to have heard from his old buddies as he very often spoke of his Army Air Corps experiences and friends.

Sincerely,
Judi Negra
42 Edgar Place
Nutley NJ

GEORGE McCLOSKEY ... George McCloskey of Carrigan, Texas passed away about the first of April. He was a tail gunner on Cotton-Eyed Joe. . .
Joe Cepparulo

FOUND

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| 311 Dr. Antonio Santoro | 1330 New Hampshire Ave. NW Apt. # 902 | Washington DC 20036 | Assoc |
| 496 Frederick J. Shorten | 16405 Henry Dr. | Gaithersburg MD 20877 | 346 |
| 497 Conrad E. Headley | Rt. 4, Box 20 F | Old Fields WV 26845 | 346 |
| 498 Edward M. Nowaczyk | 8427 Gallant Fox Trail | Flushing MI 48433 | 346 |
| 499 Henry L. Lewandowski | 391 Willet St. | Buffalo NY 14206 | 348 |
| 500 William P. Brierty | 5695 Blythe Ave. | Highland CA 92346 | 347 |
| 501 Victor A. Fabiniak | 2310 E. Liberty Ave. | Vermilion OH 44089 | 346 |
| 502 Joseph G. Celline | Rt. 1, Box 193 | Montgomery PA 17752 | 347 |
| 503 John E. Gardner | 2899 So. 8500 W. | Magna UT 84044 | 347 |
| 504 Richard L. Freeman | Box 247 A | Land O'Lakes WI 54540 | 347 |
| 505 Donald W. Pius | Rt. 5, Box 384 A | E. Stroudsburg PA 18301 | 348 |
| 506 Ambrose La Tour | 325 S. York St., Apt. #622 | Bensenville IL 60106 | 416 |
| 507 Burnham Shaw | 5117 Northern Trail NW | Albuquerque NM 87120 | 416 |
| 508 William I. Craton | Rt. 1, 2001 Corner Rd. | Powder Springs GA 30073 | 348 |