



CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

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Message from the President

By
Norman Crum

I'm happy once again to offer a few words of introduction to this edition of the *Cerignola Connection*.

In prior introductions, I have remembered the aircraft and the men who flew and maintained them. I've also referred to the countryside that hosted the airfields and facilities.

In this edition, I'd like to reflect upon the targets ... the reason why our country spent so much blood and treasure on its strategic air forces.

Early in the war, the Eighth Air Force initially focused on enemy submarine pens and air fields along the French coast. The so-called *Battle of the Atlantic* was in full swing and the Allies desperately needed all the

food, fuel, equipment and munitions that could be shipped from west to east across the dangerous and deadly Atlantic Ocean.

By the time the Fifteenth Air Force was created in late 1943, priorities had shifted to industrial and economic targets deeper in continental Europe. The famous raids on Ploesti and other oil refineries were added to missions in support of U.S. infantry landings at Anzio, Italy.

Enemy aircraft factories at Wiener Neustadt and other locations were attacked.

But many of the 1944 missions of the 455th Bomb Group focused on General Dwight D. Eisenhower's controversial *Transportation Plan* that successfully cut-off Nazi supplies and reinforcements from reaching the battlefield on D-Day in Normandy. Bridges, rail centers, and railroad repair shops were all heavily bombed with the goal of limiting German movements toward the English Channel.

Many high-ranking Air Force officers didn't want strategic bombers diverted from their primary missions against German industry, and only

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reluctantly ceded temporary control to General Eisenhower after he threatened to quit.

Did the plan work?

By mid-June, 1944, the German air ministry reported, "The raids have caused the breakdown of all main lines. The coastal defenses have been cut off from interior supply bases. The situation threatens to have serious consequences. Large scale movement of troops by rail is practically impossible at the present time."

The Allies were pinned-down in Normandy for six long weeks after the landings on June 6; it's an unpleasant thought to reflect on what might have happened to them if Eisenhower's *Transportation Plan* hadn't worked.

My wife and I recently visited the city of Lyon, France, and toured the former regional headquarters of the Gestapo there. As we entered, I noticed that the building is near some major rail lines. While in the museum we read about how, in 1944, bombers from the Fifteenth Air Force destroyed the railroad facilities near the Gestapo headquarters.

Besides destroying the rail facilities, the raid ruined the building itself, and surrounding neighborhoods, too.

My dad's flight records show that he had flown a similar mission to Grenoble that same day ... all part of the *Transportation Plan*.

The museum display mentioned the many dozens of French civilians that were killed in the Lyon attack, a very sad

and lamentable fact.

However, I remembered reading of General Walter B. Smith's 1944 discussion with General Pierre-Joseph Koenig, a representative of the Free French government in Algeria, on the subject of possible French casualties in the *Transportation Plan*.

General Smith reported to Eisenhower, "To my surprise, Koenig takes a much more cold-blooded view than we do. His remark was, 'This is war. And it must be expected that people will be killed. We will take the anticipated losses to be rid of the Germans.'"

In this edition of the *Cerignola Connection*, we pause once again to remember and honor the brave young men who flew, fought and maintained the bombers of the 455th Bomb Group. We thank them for their faithful service, and are grateful for the freedoms they defended.



Tons of Bombs

Between 1939 and 1945, the Allies dropped 3.4 million tons of bombs, an average of 27,700 tons per month.

Should Army aviation in WWII be identified as the Army Air Corps, or as the Army Air Forces?

U.S. Army personnel have traditionally been assigned to branches. The Air Corps became the branch for Army aviation in 1926. Then, in 1935, General Headquarters (GHQ) Air Force was created for operational aviation units. This arrangement existed in the period leading up to United States entry into WWII.

There were two aviation organizations: the Air Corps managed materiel and training, and GHQ Airforce had operational units.

The Army Air Forces (AAF) came into being on June 20, 1941. The AAF initially had two subordinate organizations: the Air Corps, for training and materiel, and Air Force Combat Command (replacing GHQ Air Force) for operational forces.

In the course of wartime expansion and reorganization, the Air Corps ceased to be an operating organization. All elements of Army aviation were merged into the Army Air Forces.

The Army Air Forces thus replaced the Air Corps as the Army aviation arm and, for practical purposes, became an autonomous service. All WWII Army aviation training and combat units were in the AAF.

WWII Army Air Corps personnel had a strong sentimental attachment to their branch. The Air Corps had an aura about it that seemed to set it apart from other Army branches. Now, 70 years later, many WWII servicemen still proudly identify themselves as veterans of the Air Corps. However -- although the Air Corps was their branch -- they actually served and fought in the Army Air Forces!

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Editor's Note:

Over the last 12 years, as newsletter editor, I have had readers occasionally ask questions about my personal life, career background, family, hobbies, etc.

In editing the Cerignola Connection, I have tried to make sure the content is about the veterans of the 455th BG, and not about Craig Ward.

Yes, I have occasionally featured comments about, and pictures of, my father (Lt. J. T. Ward, co-pilot, 740th squadron). He is my greatest hero. Thanks for allowing me that latitude!

Being involved with the 455th BG Association, Inc. has been one of the special highlights of my blessed life. I appreciate those who have expressed an interest in knowing a little about myself and my wife in our earlier years.

Here, for what it's worth, is a short Craig Ward bio:

I am 60 years old, and my beautiful wife Marsha is 64.

My dad, Lt. J.T. Ward, was a pilot in the 740th sq., 455th BG. Dad flew to N. Africa from Langley, via Brazil, in Dec., 1943.

He received credit for 50 missions with the Jack Seine (740) and Carlton Hansen (740) crews, among others.

Marsha's dad was also in Italy in 1944. He was in a big-gun artillery unit of the US Army that fought their way up from the south of Italy to Rome, kicking the Hun out of Italy, at tremendous cost. I believe he served under Gen. Patton at some point.

Marsha and I both have our Bachelor degrees. I went to the University of Texas at Arlington, and Marsha attended Texas A & I.

I have commercial,

instrument, and multi-engine pilot certificates. One of my fondest memories was flying a cross-country trip in a Cessna 172 with my dad in 1980. At the time, he had not flown any airplane since a B24 in 1944. We arrived at cruising altitude, & I took the Cessna off auto-pilot. Dad took over the controls, and hand-flew the plane better than I did. 36 years later, and he never lost his ability to fly a plane. He remarked that flying was much more pleasant when he wasn't being shot at!

I currently own a small company called Texas NETrans (www.texasnetrans.com). We provide non-emergency transportation, in the DFW-area, for folks confined to wheelchairs (doctor visits, family gatherings, dialysis, etc.). Marsha works in sales in a boutique in Ft. Worth.

My career, before Texas Netrans, was in corporate and commercial aviation. I flew as a cabin crewmember for the original Braniff Airlines from 1977 to 1982, and then went on to sell services on business jets (Learjets, Falcons, Gulfstreams, etc.). I sold jets, charter, maintenance, fuel, hangaring, management, etc. to private aircraft owners.

The money was great, but the stress was killing me! I got out of that racket in 2005. I have been in elder care since then. I took a big pay cut, but at least that "killer stress" is no longer an issue.

After my dad died in 1986, I got interested in his war experiences. I was only 31 years old when he died, single,

and unattached. All I wanted to do, at the time, was chase girls and ride motorcycles (I currently own and ride a Harley-Davidson Electra Glide Ultra, and a classic 1971 Honda CB750, 4-cylinder motorcycle).

I very much regret not asking dad about the war when I had the opportunity. My father was, and IS, my greatest hero.

I joined the 455th BG Association, as an associate member, about 16 years ago. Being a member of this great organization has been an honor and privilege.

In 2003, the previous editor of the *Cerignola Connection*, Tom Ramey, passed away. Mr. Ramey was a fine man, and a wonderful newsletter editor.

It was requested that I be the newsletter editor going forward. I was also asked to be a member of the BG Association's board of directors.

The job of newsletter editor is a lot of work, but it is a labor of love. I have had many nice messages from the veterans who say kind things about the content, and how they enjoy each issue. I know it means a lot to them to have this written "connection" to one of the most meaningful periods in their lives. It is my honor to be a small part of that.

I love America. And, I love the US military, without which there would BE no America.

I have a special affection for my dad's Army comrades, the veterans of the 455th BG.

God bless you all!

World War II

World War II started on Sept. 1, 1939, when German forces under Nazi leader Adolf Hitler invaded Poland.

Britain demanded that Germany withdraw, but Hitler refused, and the United Kingdom declared war, along with France, on Sept. 3, 1939.

When the UK declared war, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain said he would fight injustice and oppression caused by Hitler, adding, "His action shows convincingly that there is no chance of expecting that this man will ever give up his practice of using force to gain his will. He can only be stopped by force."

World War II was the most destructive war in history. About 15 million soldiers, and 45 million civilians, died during the conflict.

The Soviet Union lost the most people to the war, with an estimated 24 million dead.

The Axis Powers included Germany, Italy and Japan. The Allied Powers included countries like the Soviet Union, the U.S., China, Australia, Brazil, Canada, South Africa, Greece and the Netherlands.

The Allies dropped 3.4 million tons of bombs during the war.

Hitler's nephew, William, fled Nazi Germany and ended up in the U.S., where he joined the Navy. After the war, he changed his last name and lived in New York.

The war officially ended on Sept. 2, 1945, V-J Day, when Japan signed surrender documents to the U.S. on the battleship *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

President Harry S Truman dedicated the victory to his predecessor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who died April 12, 1945, weeks before the war ended in Europe.

Final Flight

This is to inform you that my husband, Herb Simon passed away. He was also known as Herman Simon (743).

Herb frequently talked about his experience in the Army Air Force.

He was a tail gunner on a B-24. Herb was wounded and received the Purple Heart and the Air Medal.

Sincerely,
Gladys L. Simon
glad3348@bellsouth.net
Delray Beach, FL

Dear Editor,

I am a French author, and WWII aviation historian.

I have been collecting USAAF photos for many years.

I have recently acquired some documents and photos which belonged to S/Sgt. Bernard Bloom, who was assigned to the 743rd BS.

Please see the photo (below) showing the crew to which he was assigned.

Left to right : Lt. Snook (Pilot), Lt. Frost (Copilot), F/O Berman (Bombardier), F/O Reddy (Navigator) - Allen (Left waist gunner), Boudousquie (Tail gunner), Delgallo (Ball turret gunner), Bloom (Right waist gunner), Garland (Nose gunner), Betti (Engineer top turret gunner).

I would like to obtain some information about the combat missions flown by Bernard Bloom and his crew.

Thank you.

Best regards

Gregory Pons
gregpons@yahoo.fr





Photo courtesy of:
Victor E. Murray (743)
vemurray@cfl.rr.com

Seated, left to right

Capt. David Thayer, Squadron Commander / Pilot
1st Lt. Howard Helfer, Co-pilot
1st Lt. Joe Gross, Navigator
1st Lt. Frank Randell, Bombardier

Standing, left to right

Leroy Catt, Ball Turret Gunner
Ben Owen, Tail Gunner
Victor Murray, Radio Operator
Duane Bush, Waist Gunner
Duane Vance, Waist Gunner
Robert Ingalls, Engineer, Top Turret Gunner

Fishing

The rain was pouring and there was a big puddle in front of the pub just outside the Air Force Base. A ragged old Army Helicopter Pilot was standing near the edge with a fishing line in the puddle.

A curious young Air Force fighter pilot came over to him and asked what he was doing. "Fishing", the old broken down pilot simply said.

"Poor old fool", the Air Force officer thought and he invited the old aviator into the pub for a drink.

As he felt he should start some conversation while they were sipping their whiskey, the haughty fighter pilot asked, "And how many have you caught today?"

"You are the eighth", the old Helicopter Pilot answered.

70 Years Ago



An American soldier hugs an Englishwoman as crowds celebrate Germany's unconditional surrender at Piccadilly Circus, in London, on May 7, 1945, in this handout photo provided by the U.S. National Archives. Reuters



Gen. George S. Patton acknowledges the cheers of the welcoming crowds during a parade on June 9, 1945, in this handout photo provided by the U.S. National Archives and Administration. Reuters

70 Years Ago

Seventy years ago, a B-29 Superfortress named the *Enola Gay* dropped an atomic bomb (named *Little Boy*) on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, killing upwards of 100,000 people. The US demanded the next day that Japan unconditionally surrender, or receive more of these bombings. No response was received from Japan.

It took the atomic bombing of Nagasaki (approx. 60,000 killed) three days later to convince the Japanese emperor to stop the killing.

There are thousands of people that are alive today (descendants of WWII veterans that would have otherwise died in the invasion of the Japanese home islands), that would never have been born if the USA had not utilized the nukes. That is because the alternative to nuking Japan was an invasion of the Japanese homeland by the Allied forces.

Estimates of casualties in that potential invasion (both Allied and Japanese killed and wounded) could have been upwards of half a million !

Two atomic bombs over two Japanese cities saved hundreds of thousands of lives in the long run.

Thank God for the nuclear strike force veterans (Col. Paul Tibbets and his B-29 comrades), and the scientists of the Manhattan Project. **They helped speed the end of the most destructive war in history ... 70 years ago.**

70 Years Ago

March, 1945 brought some significant moments in World War II, as the Allies were back on the offensive after recovering from the German Ardennes Offensive.

In the Pacific, the flag had been raised on Iwo Jima in late February, the fighting continued in March as the Marines secured the airfields that would launch missions to Japan as well as serving as emergency landing fields for B-29s that could not make it back to Tinian and Saipan.

In the Mediterranean, the 15th Air Force heavies continued their strategic campaign with emphasis on marshalling yards at Linz, Vienna, Regensburg, Weiner-Neustadt as well as targets in Yugoslavia and Germany. Their mission was to choke the flow of men and material to Italy.

In central Europe, the 8th Air Force continued hitting targets in Germany. The 9th Air Force Troop Carrier Groups prepared and carried out their mission in *Operation Varsity* that would deliver the paratroops of the 17th Airborne Division and their drop across the Rhine River on 24 March.

The end was near for Nazi Germany and the airmen continued to do their job with aplomb.

2015 is the 70th anniversary of the German surrender (V-E Day) and Japanese surrender (V-J Day), ending World War II.

This year, on the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII, America once again thanks the veterans of this war, along with the people who worked in the factories and secured the homefront.

We remember and honor your bravery and sacrifice.



U.S. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower (left), commander of Allied forces in Western Europe, sits in the back of a jeep with U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. George C. Marshall, as he waves to spectators at the Washington National Airport, in Arlington, Virginia, on June 18, 1945, in this handout photo provided by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Reuters

FINAL FLIGHT

It is with great sadness that I would like to inform you of the passing of my father, Robert William Hardy (742), on May 15th 2015, at the age of 94. Robert served as the flight engineer for Lt. William King's crew, aboard the *Cowtown Blonde* in the 742nd bomb squadron.

After returning home from Italy, he married the love of his life, Wilma Marie Passeno. Together, they raised a family of 5 children in Detroit Michigan, and eventually had 9 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. Robert was a wonderful husband and father, and will be sorely missed by all who knew him. Robert is back row, left in the photo below.

Sincerely,

William Hardy

whardy_1@charter.net

Dear Editor,

Recently, at Selfridge Air National Guard base in Detroit Michigan, at 0500, a B-24 Liberator made its last pickup of its Flight Engineer, Robert W. Hardy (742), who was 94 years of age. After 50 missions in WWII, he returned home to Detroit, Michigan, his home town, and also the birthplace of the famous B24's (the famous Willow Run factory). Willow Run built a bomber every every 63 minutes, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week..

Robert was born on December 13, 1920, and passed away on May 15, 2015. To his children, he was the rock of the family. He was our Hero, the hand that helped destroy the evil Axis of Europe. Dad earned a Purple Heart and other war medals. His stories will live with each of us. Like most veterans, he never retold the worst, but we knew they were there - sounds and sights to be forgotten, when he paused for a moment, with tear-filled eyes, and then he continued.

I was able to ride on a B24 flight this past Spring, in Scottsdale Az. and returned to Detroit to tell dad. It indeed excited him that I kept my promise to sit in his jump seat and also the side gunners seat, to see what many Army Air Corp's crewmembers saw looking out the side openings with a machine gun in hand.

I keep in contact with our Yankee Air Museum (located in the old Willow Run plant), where the B24's were built by so many of those *Rosie the Riveter* ladies in coveralls and red bandanas. We shall not forget them, either.

Thank You.

Robert J. Peters USNR (R), Navy Squadron VP93, Son-in-Law of Mr. Hardy

Email: rjpv93@gmail.com



Dear Editor,

I am trying to compile a list of the call signs / tower names for all of the groups that were part of the 15th AF in Italy.

I believe the 454th and 455th BGs shared the tower at San Giovanni, but I cannot find any references that give the call sign / tower name for the field.

If you or any of your colleagues with the 455th can fill in a gap or two in my list, it would be greatly appreciated.

Shown at right >>>>>>>> is a list of the call signs / tower names that I have been able to find. Feel free to post it, or pass it around.

Sincerely,
Marty Upchurch
Marty_Upchurch@efiglobal.com

AF	Wing	Group	Tower	Location in Italy
15	5 BW	2 BG	Darn thing	Amendola
		97 BG	"	Amendola
		99 BG	Sandfly	Tortorella
		301 BG	Longskirt	Lucera
		463 BG	Seasick	Celone
		483 BG	Lattice	Sterapone
	47 BW	98 BG	Curry	Lecce
		376 BG	Latepass	San Pancrazio
		449 BG		Grottaglie
	450 BG		Manduria	
	49 BW	451 BG	Hiccup	Castellucia
		461 BG		Torretta
		484 BG		Torretta
55 BW	460 BG	Dolly	Spinazzola	
	464 BG	Racecard	Pantanella	
	465 BG	"	Pantanella	
	485 BG	Lightweight	Venosa	
304 BW	454 BG	"	San Giovanni	
	455 BG		San Giovanni	
	456 BG		Stornara	
	459 BG		Coffee	Giulia
305 FW	1 FG	Spacebar	Salsola	
	14 FG		Triolo	
	82 FG		Vincenzo	
306 FW	325 FG		Lesina	
	31 FG		San Severo	
	52 FG		Madna	
	332 FG		Ramitelli	
90 PW	5 PRG		San Severo	
154 WRS			Bari	
2641 SG	885 BS (H) (S)		Brindisi	
	859 BS (H) (S)		Brindisi	

- BW Bomb Wing
- FW Fighter Wing
- PW Photo Wing
- BG Bomb Group
- FG Fighter Group
- PRG Photo Reconnaissance Group
- WRS Weather Reconnaissance Squadron
- SG Special Group
- BS Bomb Squadron

FIVE RULES TO REMEMBER IN LIFE

1. Money cannot buy happiness, but it's more comfortable to cry in a Cadillac than on a bicycle.

2. Forgive your enemy, but remember the SOB's name.

3. If you help someone when they are in trouble, they will remember you when they're in trouble again.

4. Many people are alive only because it's illegal to shoot them.

5. Alcohol does not solve any problems, but then neither does voting for the Democrats.

Enola Gay & Bock's Car

The *Enola Gay* became well-known for dropping the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, but few people know the name of the B-29 that bombed Nagasaki. It was *Bock's Car*, named after the plane's usual commander, Frederick Bock.

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**AS I AGE,
I REALIZE THAT:**

- 1.** I talk to myself, because sometimes I need expert advice.
- 2.** Sometimes I roll my eyes out loud.
- 3.** I don't need anger management. I need people to stop pissing me off.
- 4.** My people skills are just fine. It's my tolerance of idiots that needs work.
- 5.** The biggest lie I tell myself is "I don't need to write that down, I'll remember it."
- 6.** When I was a child, I thought nap time was punishment. Now it's like a mini-vacation.
- 7.** The day the world runs out of wine is just too terrible to think about.
- 8.** Even duct tape can't fix stupid, but it can muffle the sound!
- 9.** Wouldn't it be great if we could put ourselves in the dryer for ten minutes; come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller.
- 10.** If God wanted me to touch my toes, he would've put them on my knees.
- 11.** When the kids text me "plz" which is shorter than please, I text back "no", which is shorter than "yes".
- 12.** At my age, "Getting Lucky" means walking into a room and remembering what I came in there for.

Editor's Note:

This is the third entry in a series from the first Cerignola Connection newsletter, published at the San Giovanni airbase in early 1945, before the war was even over!

As editor of this publication, I usually try to make the spelling, punctuation, and grammar of all content as correct as possible. (My English teacher at Haltom High School would have had it no other way!)

However, in this case, I will include the text and flow of the content, just as it appeared in the publication in Italy in 1945 ... enjoy !

743rd BOMB SQUADRON

By Sgt. Ray Perry

We wish to welcome our new Executive Officer, Capt. Paul Livingston, and trust he will like it over here.

The winterizing program is almost complete, everybody is all set for cold weather. We now know how the civilians feel with fuel rationing catching up on us. War sure is hell!

Our E.M. Club is about to be enlarged and when completed will be the best in the Group. Now furniture will be installed, so please fellows, take it easy. Everybody enjoyed the recent gift to our Officers and want them to know that it tasted swell. Multo gracias--we appreciate your generosity.

Another group of our men are going home after completing an excellent job over here. Lots of luck fellows and hope you make it in time for Christmas. Captain Richard Haney, Training Officer, and one of our original boys from Langley Field leaves with this group.

Engineering has now

moved to a new location on the line. The way things are shaping up they should have a fine set-up.

Our boys have been listening to Axis Sally but her records and chatter are getting old. Sally, you'd better get a new line, but of course, we all realize you haven't much to talk about these days. Perhaps you'd better lose your voice the way Hitler has.

We are glad to see this paper take on a new lease of life and are confident that ye editor will do a good job - he being very adept at digging up all the dirt. (Editor's note: We resent that - this is a family paper.)

Results of the ANNUAL TURKEY SHOOT held 23 November at our Skeet Range:

RATED OFFICERS: Lt. Williams of the 456th BG and Lt Dixon of the 43rd Service Group tied for first place. Lt Williams won the shoot-off..

GROUND OFFICERS: Won by Captain Callahan of the 304th Wing. **BRASS HATS;** Colonel Russell of the 456th and Colonel Boutz of the 459th tied for first place with Colonel Russell winning the shoot-off.

ENLISTED MEN GUNNERS: Five-man tie for first with Sgts Barret and Thomas of 456th, Fagan of 459th, Taylor of 43rd SG and Alexander of 455th. Alexander saved our noble warriors from a whitewashing on the home grounds by finally winning this event.

Capt Trbovich, who staged and produced this mammoth tournament, called

the final event off on account of darkness and confiscated the last turkey.

WHO HAS THE LONGEST SERVICE IN THE OUTFIT? We submit T/Sgt Olin Vann, Ordinance Inspector, with 16 years of Army life (and still sane).

MYSTERIES: Who sent Captain James Farrier the brassiere all the way from the States? Why do they call Sgt Russ Granzow "Curly"? Is "Little Caesar" Gangi really as tough as he sounds? **WE MISS THE MUSTACHIOS** from the upper lips of Sgts Carrigan and Smith, the two big wheels from S-2 (and lets have no cracks about some of the spokes being missing).

Smitty's might pass muster back in Oklahoma college circles but Irish Jack's shrubbery was ferocious enough to scare the hell out of the Italian laborers. It even surpassed the foliage that Captain Crowley, ex-741st Navigator, used to tie behind his ears before eating.

CAPT PEDRO GUERRERO AND HIS BOYS in Photo certainly did a neat job on his "Unit Citation" Cover. We forgive them for beating us into the chow line as all good artists are proverbially hungry.

WANTED: Short, snappy, sarcastic items for the next edition. See WTG in S-3

Col. Ambrosen's tour of combat duty is finish. Expect our CO, who's been with us since activation, will be Statesward-bound in the near future.

Reports from combat men who've been on DS in the never-never land say that life in the U.S. doesn't suffer by comparison with life at dear ole San Giovanni.

S/Sgt. *Swede* Anderson, former member of the model crew, says: "Life in the States is very rough. Nothing to eat but big thick steaks, nothing to drink but old American whiskey, nothing to date but pretty American girls". Wonder how he stood it.

If there's a record for trapping mice, Sgt. "Red" Sybell claims he has broken it. Ace for the 455th in this department, he's put the blast on 37 rodents in his tent, apparently a rich hunting ground. He said, "I didn't mind them chewing on my cigarettes, but when they ate an O'Henry bar, that was the last straw !".

First, last and only testimony to the worth of C-rations came to the 742nd on the Thanksgiving holiday. Approximately 50 percent of the personnel was smitten with a common gastronomic disturbance after the Thanksgiving feast. Looks like the foods of the Pilgrim Fathers are too rich for the GI stomach trained on C-rations.

There's a touch of something in the nude that Lt. "Windy" Reynolds painted over the bar of the Officer's club, but there is room for debate on what that something is. "Taint what he learned in anatomy class, that's a cinch. She looks positively eager !

Hot times these eves at the Officer's Club have an added feather. Capt Griffith, engineering chief, installed stoves in the club recently, and so far two have blown up !

A fair score, captain, a fair score.

The first blow caught Lts. Brown, Eber and Kutz, all too close for comfort. Lt. Kutz came off with a severe case of singed eyebrows, and they weren't helped much when the second explosion caught him, too. "I'll sit by my fireplace in my tent. It may not give much heat, but it's a big morale builder", were the lieutenant's embittered words.

The 742nd grid squad, pursuing our victorious softball team for sporting laurels, is having a solid and righteous season, as the up-town cats would say. So far, wins have been scored over the 740th, the 741st, and the 454th (by default), and a crucial tilt for the Wing championship is scheduled soon. Capt Morrison, mentor of the local scrappers, is cracking down on training rules and practice sessions, they say.

A word for the photo club. Nearing completion, the lab is almost ready to operate. Plans call for negative development and printing if paper is furnished.

Ace of Aces

The ace of all fighter aces of all nations is German fighter pilot Erich Hartmann ("*The Blond Knight*") with 352 kills.

Famous People Who Flew Combat Missions in B-24 Liberators

ROBERT ALTMAN (B-24 Co-Pilot)
Producer/Director/Screenwriter

LLOYD M. BENTSEN Jr. (B-24 Pilot) - U.S. Senator, & Secretary of the Treasury

JAMES E. COUNSILMAN (B-24 Pilot) - Swimmer/Coach

WALTER MATTHAU (B-24 Radio Operator/Gunner)
Actor/Director/Producer

GEORGE McGOVERN (B-24 Pilot) - United States Senator

JIMMY STEWART (B-24 Pilot)
Actor

THOMAS J. WATSON, JR. (B-24 Pilot)
President of IBM / U.S. Ambassador to Russia

JAMES C. WRIGHT, JR. (B-24 Bombardier)
Speaker of the House

LOUIS ZAMPERINI (B-24 Bombardier)
1936 Olympian / Inspirational Speaker

JOSEPH P. KENNEDY Jr. (PB4Y Pilot)
Brother: John F. Kennedy

TYRONE POWER (PB4Y Pilot)
Actor

ROBERT STACK (PB4Y Gunnery Instructor) - Actor

Dear American Friends,

I have finished the manuscript for *Amazing American Airmen*, and I am now focusing my energy on finding a good American publishing company.

This isn't an easy time for book publishers, but I am hoping that a company that specializes in military history will be interested in the book. I have a list of some publishers, but please don't hesitate to send me the name of a military-history publisher you think might be interested.

To get ready to send the manuscript to publishers, I re-read all the stories last month, and I must say I feel privileged to have met so many American veterans.

When I started thinking of writing a book about American flyers, I wasn't sure how they would feel about talking to an author who wasn't American. My concern was unfounded. If anything, I think being a Canadian has been an asset, perhaps because by being Canadian, I reminded the veterans that Americans have friends and allies in what is often a difficult world.

A few weeks ago, I received some very pleasant news when I learned that the Florida Writers Association has decided to include in a book it is publishing a piece I wrote about how I managed to interview Senator George McGovern.

Senator McGovern, 1972 Democratic presidential candidate, survived several ordeals during World War II,

including one in which he landed a B-24 with 110 holes.

Again, being a Canadian might have been helpful. I think Mr. McGovern had particularly warm feelings toward Canadians because his mother was born in Toronto. Regardless of whether Americans today agree or disagree with the positions Mr. McGovern took as a senator and presidential candidate, I thought all Americans could agree that he risked his life for his country during the war.

No matter where I go, I find there are many people who are interested in World War II. The age of the veterans may be a factor behind this interest.

Of course, the veterans who are still with us are now in their late 80s or 90s. This interest was demonstrated recently when Matthew Munson, a British businessman, paid \$79,100 to fly from Hamilton, Ontario, to England in the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum's Lancaster bomber.

The museum is close to my home in Waterloo, Ontario, but, alas, I couldn't match Mr. Munson's winning bid because I don't have quite as much money as he has ... :)

I also wanted to mention that I received an interesting email note a few months ago from Brian Shaw, whose dad was on the SS Anselm, the British troop ship my dad was on when it was torpedoed during the war. Brian sent me a copy of his father's war-time diary. I wrote about my dad's ordeal on the Anselm in my Canadian

book, which Brian had seen on the internet. I couldn't help but wonder when I read Brian's email note whether my dad and his had known each other on the ship.

I do know they were the lucky ones. They survived when 254 of their comrades did not.

I have several speaking engagements set up for the fall, one of which will be a new experience for me. I have been asked to appear on a panel in Vancouver that will discuss, *How to Make Your Military Characters Real*.

What is unusual for me about this discussion is that it will be at a conference of science-fiction writers. I don't write science fiction, but apparently a lot of science-fiction writers are interested in military matters.

Presumably, some of the research techniques I have used to learn about World War II might help fiction writers. I must say I did feel honored to receive this invitation.

Cheers from Canada,
Ian Darling
Email:
author@amazingairmen.com





György Debrody
The Survivor

Courtesy: Author Csaba Becze

The photo above was taken on the eastern Front in early March, 1944, about the 5/2 Squadron's pilots. The Hungarian pilots are, from left: Senior Aircraftman Sándor Tanács (3 kills), Captain József Kovács (back), the Squadron commander (4 kills), 2ndLt Kálmán Szeverényi (7 kills), 2ndLt György Debrody (26 kills), Sergeant János Mátyás (5 kills). This snap was made by a Hungarian officer, Emil Terray. When I met with this kind elderly man, I got this photo from him, and now this photo is in my collection.

He was born in 1921 in Lajoskomárom. Since his young

age he was a keen boy scout, and he was very interested in flying.

After his high school graduation in 1939, he continued his studies at the Hungarian Military Flying Academy in Kassa, and graduated as a 2nd Lt. in June, 1942. After his graduation, Debrody was relocated to the 5/1 Fighter Group's 5/2 Fighter Squadron, and in December he went to the Eastern Front. At first he flew fighter-bomber missions, and didn't meet Soviet planes, but this situation changed the next summer.

During the battle of Kursk he claimed 6 victories and became an ace.

On 25th September, 1943 he had a dangerous affair. In that morning, he was downed by a Soviet Yak, 915 km behind the enemy lines. Debrody had to make an emergency landing near a Soviet AA battery.

After an adventurous escape and evasion, he reached the German lines.

On 1st February, 1944 his squadron had a fierce dogfight against five Soviet GvIAP's La-5's. One La-5 hit his

plane, and the Messer's engine failed.

Debrody had to make a belly-landing behind the enemy lines! His best friend, 2nd Lt. Miklós Kenyeres, with 19 air victories, downed Debrody's attacker, and landed near the dead Messer on the snowy and icy unknown field. Some Soviet soldiers were running towards the Messers, but Kenyeres managed to take off with some PPS machine-pistol hits in his plane.

Two days later, Soviet AA fire downed Kenyeres' plane behind the enemy lines. He had to bail out over a forest. Debrody was desperately circling around his parachute, but he was not able to help his friend. Kenyeres was taken POW.

From the 3th of April, 1944, the American 15th AAF attacked Hungary, and the Hungarian military high command ordered home some veteran fighter pilots, including György Debrody and László Molnár. At this time Debrody had 173 combat missions, and claimed 18 confirmed air victories on the Eastern Front. Debrody was relocated to the Hungarian 101/3 "Puma" Squadron based in Veszprém.

His first fight against the Americans was on 14th June, 1944. On that day the Hungarian 101th "Puma" Group attacked the 94th Squadron of the 14th FG. The Hungarian fighters downed 5 P-38's, while the Hungarians lost two planes and a pilot, Lt. Gyula Király.

In this fierce dogfight, Debrody downed 1st Lt Louis Benne's P-38J. The American pilot, who was an ace with 5 kills, was wounded and had to bail out. Benne was taken POW.

Two days later, Debrody claimed another P-38J. His victim was 2nd Lt George F. Loughmiller. The American's plane crashed near Kapoly, and the pilot was killed.

On 2nd July, 1944, eighteen Hungarian and 80 German fighters attacked American planes over Budapest. After this fight, Debrody claimed a P-51D over Pilisvörösvár. It was 1st Lt George Stanford, who had four air victories. The American pilot was taken POW.

Five days later, he downed a B-17G near Megyercs, assisted by Ensign András Huszár. On 27th July, 1944 he downed a B-24 near Mór. This B-24 Liberator, the *Raleigh H*, (SN: 42-94993, 15th Air Force, 455th Bomb Group, 742nd Squadron) with a crew of eleven, was shot down on approach to their target, south of Budapest, Hungary. It crashed in a forest near Mor, Hungary, west of Budapest.

Ten of the eleven American crew members died in the fiery crash.

Later, the Hungarian fighters concentrated their forces against the Red Army, because the Soviet forces appeared near the Hungarian border. On 1st November, 1944, Debrody was promoted to 1st Lt.

Three days later, his Squadron leader, Captain

József Bejczy (5 confirmed kills) was killed by Soviet AA fire, and Debrody was promoted to the new Squadron leader.

On the 5th of November, 1944, the last big "Puma" grouped sortie against the 15th AF took place. During this combat mission Debrody claimed one B-24 (451st BG) shot down.

On 16th November, 1944 he took off on his last combat mission as a squadron commander. The 101/3. Squadron attacked SE of Jászberény some La-5's of the 5th Vozdushnaja Armija (5th Soviet Air Army), and Debrody downed one Lavochkin.

Later, he made a frontal attack against a Soviet Yak-9, north of Nagykáta. His shots hit the Soviet plane, and the Yak exploded, but meanwhile some of the Yak's bullet hit Debrody's Messer.

The Hungarian pilot got a serious wound. A 20-mm shell punched his stomach, but despite his terrible wound, he made a successful emergency landing near Hatvan. The doctors saved his life, but it was his last (203rd) combat mission.

Later, he was awarded with the Tiszti Arany Vitézségi Érem (Officers' Gold Medal For Bravery), the highest Hungarian military decoration.

After the war, he immigrated to Spain with his friend, Miklós Kenyeres, and later to Canada, and finally to the USA.

In 1967, doctors operated on him again, and eliminated from his body, near his spine, a

Soviet bullet. It was a "souvenir" from his last combat.

He passed away in 1982, and was buried in Cortland, New York.

Editor's Note:

This article was forwarded to me by a loyal reader and valuable contributor to the Cerignola Connection.

I share his serious concern that an enemy fighter, who is responsible for the deaths of dozens of brave American airmen in WWII, was allowed to enter the USA after the war, and was allowed to live out the remainder of his life in our great republic.

As editor of this publication, I sometimes take a risk of including stories of military personnel or combat action that might be regarded as inappropriate by some readers.

Inclusion of stories about enemy military personnel and their wartime experiences is not meant to glamorize these enemy combatants.

However, as a student of history, I am very interested in studying and presenting the wartime experiences of veterans of all sides of a conflict.

Enemies of the civilized world have, and will in the future, continue to commit atrocities and carnage in the name of their country, religion, or for whatever twisted reasoning they can think of.

Human conflict will always be a fascinating topic. Studying and presenting stories of warriors carrying out their duties, whether friend or foe, will continue to be my avocation.

Your comments are always welcomed and respected.



Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am trying to retrace the particulars regarding a pilot in the 455th Bomb Group. I myself am a Vietnam Vet as part of the VF-143 *World Famous Pukin Dogs* F4 squadron, and I am just now trying to re-connect with my old squadron mates.

My interest is in Robert A. Gulbranson, who was a pilot in the 743rd Squadron. I believe that he must have been my father's cousin, nephew of my Grandmother, Cora Gulbranson.

I have a picture of Robert Gulbranson in uniform with his flight wings on, that always sat in my Grandmother's living room. It was my childhood understanding that he was killed in WWII.

I have a newspaper clipping (no date) that his parents received the air medal in his honor, and that he was shot down July 27th, 1944 while on a mission over Budapest, Hungary.

He had been in Europe only one month.

I saw reference to that in the *Cerignola Connection* online, saying that he was on mission # 85. However, after further search through the *Cerignola Connection*, I found an article in the fall 2008 edition by Capt. Bill Loffer, going into great detail that Gulbranson's plane had been badly shot up on Mission # 84, and then on Mission # 85, he was shot down, but managed to parachute to safety. He eventually made it back to Italy, and was sent back to the states.

That part was totally news to me, and I don't recall anything from my childhood saying that he ever made it home alive.

I am not sure if I just did not get the facts straight, or if some other details were lost over time.

So, I guess my question is: where might I go to further fill out details on what actually happened?

I find the search for the info fascinating. Unfortunately, my father, a WWII submariner, passed away in 2008, so I have no one else to check my story. Any help would be appreciated.

Yours in good health,
Dave Murdock
fotobug2@gmail.com

Can You Help? Response

Hello, Dave,

Dave Ungemach here. I've attached a copy of the Missing Aircrew Report (MACR) in case you haven't seen it.

Unfortunately, it doesn't have much detail, but it shows that all of the crew were declared dead (DED), meaning that the bodies were never recovered, but there was sufficient evidence that the crew was killed.

At some point, their remains were recovered and returned to the US for burial:

Gulbranson, Robert A 2nd Lt
Ft Scott National Cemetery, KS.

Patrick, Robert K 2nd Lt
Ft Scott National Cemetery, KS.

Vocial, William O 2nd Lt
Ft Scott National Cemetery, KS.

Cox Jr., Robert F S/Sgt
Ft Scott National Cemetery, KS.

Barnett, Paul E Sgt
Lorraine American Cemetery
France

Broers, Donald J Sgt
Ft Scott National Cemetery, KS.

Costello, Martin J Sgt
Clymer Center Cemetery NY.

Hall, Melvin Sgt
Golden Gate National Cemetery

Taaffe, John M Sgt
Ft Scott National Cemetery, KS.

Here is the grave location for
2nd Lt Gulbranson:

<http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/index.html?cemetery=N893>

The aircraft they were in
was named *MISSION BELLE*.

Another thing to check is
the Individual Deceased
Personnel File (IDPF), also
called a 293 File. Below are
instructions for obtaining the file
from the armyairforces website
(<http://www.armyairforces.com/ResearchHelp.aspx>):

*If the veteran you are
researching was Killed in Action
you will definitely want to obtain
this file. This file documents the
activities of the Graves
Registration Command and the
Army to locate, identify, and
provide a final resting place for
the deceased.*

US Army Human Resources
Command
1600 Spearhead Division
Avenue, Dept 107
Fort Knox KY 40122
or via email (preferred):
hrc.foia@conus.army.mil

The requester should cite the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and provide when known full name of the individual, service number, and date of death (or whether the death was during WWII, Korea, or Vietnam).

"We provide electronic copies of the IDPF in most instances in order to save money on reproduction and mailing. We do not charge for our service since the files are important links to the past and may aid in genealogical research. We scan every file we retrieve from Archives so as to have a readily available copy for immediate release to a subsequent requester."

These are usually extremely detailed, and sometimes graphic, but it should answer many of your questions. Wait times vary, but last I heard they were responding within weeks instead of months (sometimes even years!).

Warm Regards,
Dave Ungemach
Warner Robins, GA
davetw1@cox.net



Dear Dave Ungemach,

I got up early this morning to review your email. Simply amazed at the detail that you have provided to me.

Last week, all I had was a photograph of Lt. Gulbranson and a newspaper clipping. I am eager to follow up on all of your leads.

You do an amazing job on tracking all of this down. I imagine that you must get many requests for information, so I really appreciate your taking the time to handle each request with such attention to detail.

It feels really good to honor our fallen heroes by knowing all I can about them. I thank you for making this possible.

Yours in good health,
Dave Murdock
Fotobug2@gmail.com
Sharpsburg Ga

Kamikaze

The Japanese *Kamikaze* ("divine wind") tactic was suggested on October 19, 1944, by Vice-Admiral Onishi in an attempt to balance the technological advantage of invading American forces.

Though the numbers are disputed, approximately 2,800 kamikaze pilots died. They sunk 34 U.S. ships, damaged 368, killed 4,900 sailors, and wounded 4,800.

Words of Wisdom From a Retired Person

1. I'm not saying let's go kill all the stupid people. I'm just saying let's remove all the warning labels and let the problem work itself out.

2. I changed my car horn to gunshot sounds. People move out of the way much faster now.

3. You can tell a lot about a woman's mood just by her hands. If they are holding a gun, she's probably pissed.

4. Gone are the days when girls cooked like their mothers. Now, they drink like their fathers.

5. You know that tingly little feeling you get when you really like someone you've just met? That's common sense leaving your body.

6. I don't like making plans for the day. Because then the word "premeditated" gets thrown around in the courtroom.

7. I didn't make it to the gym today. That makes 1,500 days in a row.

8. I decided to change calling the bathroom the John and renamed it the Jim. I feel so much better saying I went to the Jim this morning.

9. To: paranoid people who check behind shower curtains for murderers. If you find one, what's your plan?

10. Everyone has a right to be stupid. Politicians just abuse the privilege.

The Great B-17 vs. B-24 Controversy

Permission to use the following article in the *Cerignola Connection* was given, courtesy of the author: Tom Philo
17502 SW Kimmel Ct.
Beaverton, Oregon 97007-6877.

Yes, each plane is good - but very different in design philosophy, and how they came about.

The Question

Which is better? The B-17 *Flying Fortress*, designed by Boeing, or the Consolidated B-24 *Liberator*?

This question often comes up at meetings, discussion boards, and other locations, where aircraft-oriented people gather and talk about history, tactics, and flying characteristics of planes.

Each plane is different, but considering all the Hollywood movies ever made about air combat during the Second World War, the B-17 is the most well-known. This is due to many fortuitous happenings for the Boeing aircraft:

It was the first well-known bomber in combat, in the Philippines.

The Memphis Belle movie, made in 1943, had only B-17s in it.

The only deep offensive method to hit Germany was with the heavy bomber, and that meant the B-17. Military politics ensured that the message was always in the public news.

Not until mid-1943 did

enough B-24s get to the UK to fly missions (and the first dozen or so flown were diversions due to 'teething problems' that all planes go through).

Not until the August 1, 1943 *Tidalwave*, low-level Ploesti oil refinery mission did B-24s get any real press.

However, it was not sustained. There were not many press corps personnel in Africa.

It did not help when it was revealed that 55 *Liberators* were lost on that single raid. The location of the future 15th Air Force combat operations, Africa, also was not very good ... the press corps did not like the primitive conditions.

The happier the press was, the better the press reports were. Based on their reports, the press did not like Africa much.

Background about "Common Knowledge"

When you consider that almost EVERY Hollywood movie ever has the B-17 as the star (one exception is *Sole Survivor*, with Richard Basehart, based upon the *Lady Be Good* B-24 discovered in Libya in 1956), the *Flying Fortress* is the most well-known World War II bomber to the worldwide public.

The movie *12 O'Clock High*" (based upon Col. Armstrong's management style when he took over the 306th on 4 Jan 1943, with the actual history almost written verbatim as it occurred into the movie during the inspection by General Eaker), and the TV show of the

same name, add in the *Memphis Belle* 1943 movie, and the 1992 movie version, publicity has made the 12,726 Boeing B-17s that were produced (6,981 By Boeing itself, 5,745 by VEGA & Douglas), much more well known than the 18,188 B-24s that were produced.

The press corps in England also got off to a bad start with B-24s. The teething problems were well-known, and so the flying press-people wanted to fly on an aircraft that had less operational problems ... so most went on B-17s.

It did not help that the first few times that a non-military War Correspondent flew in a B-24 Group to targets which were also being visited by B-17s, the B-24 they were in was shot down and they were killed or captured. Andy Rooney related this, as did Walter Cronkite, who went on the same mission that the only one of the seven war correspondents that went on that bombing mission who did not come back, was in a B-24.

This ties into the the private / public nature of the press. Each reporter had to be approved. The military only wanted so many, so that their stories were easier to censor.

If a press person had a choice of going to England, with beer, women, high level command ranks to talk with, and easy access to the men fighting, or going to a dusty desert where there is none of that, and at the end of the supply chain, they naturally choose England.

The local military press person did a lot of work to let people know what was going on - but all THEIR articles were at the mercy of the private firms to publish, and centered around the individuals. Most of their stories ended up in the local papers.

Also, the military people had the disadvantage of only seeing their bit of the world. They were not allowed to roam and talk to many different groups.

The Planes

Different planes can be designed for the same purpose, but with different philosophies. Look at the number of different fighters produced (over 150 different types by all sides).

All had the same purpose, which was to shoot down enemy planes.

Heavy bombers are less numerous in number of designs created in Germany, Russia, France, England and the USA. But all show the same design traits (except the Avro *Lancaster* and Boeing B-29 *Superfortress*).

B-17 & B-24 Design Goals

Completely different planes designed for the same purpose, but with different design philosophies.

A B-24 flew faster, farther, longer, and with a 3-ton larger load than the B-17 ever could. If a B-17 tried to fly as far as a B-24, then they lost 1/2 of their bomb bay, for the extra bomb bay fuel tank).

The B-17

The B-17 was developed out of the first world war, and the military theory developed from Germany's use of the 4 engined Gotha bombers. It was stated by the leading air war theorists in the world, Lord Trenchard in Britain, and Gen. Giulio Douhet of Italy, and believed by all, that the heavy bomber would always get through, and would be able to destroy the enemy factories, cities, and people, and would bring any war to a quick conclusion. The H.G. Wells movie *Things to Come*, is centered around this premise.

Boeing company came up with a design, using 1932 technology, to take a 1 1/2 ton bomb load over 400 miles to a target and return. The extreme distance was necessitated by the oceans around the USA.

Other nations never thought of designs with this type of range (except Russia). The bombers were being built to fly out and sink enemy ships before they could get close to the USA.

The B-17 design team then had to use a wing that would lift a LOT of weight on what horsepower available. That meant a thick wing that generates a LOT of lift, but the top speed is sacrificed for that lift. This was of no concern since they would be flying from the protection of the mainland so it did not matter.

Not enough enemy fighters could be around from enemy carriers and the original 11.50 caliber guns would easily defend off a plane attacking with just four .30 caliber machine

guns that fighters had on them at the start of the design.

The B-17 wing is a pre-war era design and is THICK for heavy lift efficiency. The power of the engines available dictated this thick wing design. The wing is a lot like those found on C-152 Cessna. And like that wing, you cannot get a lot of speed due to the heavy drag it causes.

B-17s flew at 155 indicated in formation while B-24s flew at 165 indicated.

The B-17 also was designed during an era when air racing and aircraft design was rapidly evolving. One main feature of most every air racing plane during the 1930s (and private planes, too) was they all had rounded wings. Part of this was the handling characteristics that a round-edged wing provides, but just by their function they also LOOK GOOD.

The B-17 flew first on July 28, 1935.

The B-24

A Two Week Design

The Davis Wing

Early in January, 1939, Fleet called designer Frank W. Fink into his office and told him they had decided to build a better bomber than the Boeing B-17. They informed Fink that he was to be project engineer for the new design and that a wooden mockup was to be ready in two weeks.

When Fink asked what the new bomber looked like, he was told that this was to be a completely new project, and the design hadn't even reached the

basic drawing stage. He was then given a quick description of the new bomber. He would use the Model 31's Davis wing, its twin tail, four engine nacelles from the PBY Catalina and he would design a new fuselage with two bomb bays, each as large as the bomb bay of the B-17.

He had 14 days to create the mock up, while Fleet and Laddon went to Washington to sell the new bomber to the U.S. Army.

Source:

http://www.fourays.org/features_2005/great_combat_aircraft/b_24/b24_1.htm

December 28, 1939 was the first flight for the B-24 prototype. And you thought the 90 days to design and build a P-51 from drawing to first flight was fast.

The US Army, after getting a look at the B-17, and with the chances of war in China and Europe likely, looked at the bomb load, the distance to targets in Germany, Japan, Italy, that would have to be hit to fulfill the theory of air victory, had asked the aviation industry for a plane that could carry even more bombs and fly farther than what the B-17 could achieve.

The design team chose a wing, the *Davis Wing*, that is thinner when compared to the B-17, but generates more lift. However, the plane is heavier, and the plane has to fly faster to achieve takeoff speed. However, the Davis wing on the *Liberator* creates an altitude design limit. By using the efficient wing, it limited its high altitude ceiling, since it used the

same horsepower as the Fortress. Thus, with a combat load, it could not get to the same altitude as a B-17. The pre-war thick B-17 wing is more lift efficient at a slower speed in thinner air.

Formation Speeds

Ten MPH does not seem like much of a difference, but at ALTITUDE, that 10 MPH can translate into an extra 10 to 30 MPH TRUE airspeed difference. Thus, they get there faster and are subject to less time over the enemy territory, making them safer.

155 MPH indicated at 21,000' at 55 degrees below equals a true airspeed of 205 MPH over the ground. Going at 165 MPH comes out to 220 MPH ground speed. So the B-24s are flying 15 MPH faster than a B-17 at the same altitude.

The 10 MPH difference in formation cruise is the main reason why they never flew in the same combat formation. They tried it in 1943 and it was just too difficult. This is why after initial tries at flying in mixed formations they stopped it.

This often meant the B-24s could take off later, fly the same distance to bomb a target, and were already on the ground before the 17s ever got back to the English shore.

Functionality

The B-24 design is very war functional. It gives what the pre-war planners wanted: in a long-range, heavy-load bomber. This functionality does come at a price. The bigger the plane,

the heavier it is, and to save weight, you design to just the specs. No extra parts, since every part is more weight.

The thinner wing by 1930 design standards means a less strong wing. There is less need to cross-brace, and you need thinner material to achieve the same stress goals. The B-17, being a thicker wing, needed more, stronger material to support the wing, and thus had to be designed stronger. So, in combat, this helped the B-17.

The Loss Rate

All loss rates are misleading. The B-26 Marauder had the lowest loss rate in the ETO, but they SELDOM went more than 120 miles behind the front line, and thus were almost never intercepted. One time, they were jumped by an organized Gruppe of Fw-190s (around 40 FWs), and they lost 26 out of 36 aircraft, in 20 minutes. This was during the Battle of the Bulge.

As a percentage by mission, there is almost no difference in the loss rate between B-24s and B-17s in the same timeframe. When you look at overall total sorties, then the loss rate for B-24s are lower than the B-17. This occurs since from 1944 onwards there were twice as many B-24s flying than B-17s, and so the sheer numbers skew the overall WW II ETO percentage downwards.

100 B-24s fly and they lose 3 a/c so there is a 3% loss rate. 50 B-17s fly and they lose 3, then it is 6% loss rate. This is one of the normal problems

when looking at percentages reported based on the numbers of aircraft engaged

The B-24 really started arriving en-masse in the spring and summer of 1944. By then, most of the problems with the B-24 had been corrected, but some design problems would always remain. Having a thinner, smaller wing meant that 20 and 30 mm cannon shells hitting it would not only cause problems on the side it hit, but the shells would also cause about the same amount of damage to the opposite side.

It also meant that a few shells in the smaller wing cross section would cause the wing to fail faster than the much longer chord, and thicker, B-17 wing.

Other areas of the plane, being bigger and with twin rudders, meant that the B-24 could take some hits and not be affected, pretty much like the B-17.

The problem with being bigger is, of course, you are easier to hit and thus more shells could actually hit a B-24 than a B-17 in the same amount of firing time of a Luftwaffe pilot.

Summary

The two U.S. heavy bombers of World War II that flew in the 8th, 11th, 5th, and 15th Air Forces were designed years apart, using different aeronautical ideas, because of competition to get military contracts. All were influenced by the ideas of the 1920s and early 1930s, that the "Bomber would get through" on its own without escort due to massed defensive

firepower carried by them.

The airpower proponents also expected that they could target industries and cripple the enemy's war effort through precision strikes on key targets (enemy aircraft plants, rail transportation, electric, fuel, some key industries ... think Schweinfurt ... and general war production factories), enough to disrupt the whole economy that it would make them unable to wage war.

The B-17 *Flying Fortress* and B-24 *Liberator* both accomplished these same tasks in the same manner, and at the same level of efficiency.

Tracers

It was a common practice on fighter planes to load every 5th round with a tracer round to aid in aiming.

This was a big mistake.

Tracers had different ballistics so (at long range) if your tracers were hitting the target 80% of your rounds were missing.

Worse yet, tracers instantly told your enemy he was under fire and from which direction.

Worst of all was the practice of loading a string of tracers at the end of the belt to tell you that you were out of ammo. This was definitely not something you wanted to tell the enemy.

Units that stopped using tracers saw their success rate nearly double, and their loss rate go down.

Tragic Losses

According to the AAF Statistical Digest, in less than four years (December 1941-August 1945), the US Army Air Forces lost 14,903 pilots, aircrew and assorted personnel, plus 13,873 airplanes ... inside the continental United States!

They were the result of 52,651 aircraft accidents (6,039 involving fatalities) in 45 months.

The numbers average 1,170 aircraft accidents per month---- nearly 40 a day. (Less than one accident in four resulted in totally destroyed aircraft, however.)

Almost 1,000 Army planes disappeared en route from the US to foreign climes. But an eye-watering 43,581 aircraft were lost overseas including 22,948 on combat missions (18,418 against the Western Axis) and 20,633 attributed to non-combat causes overseas.

In a single 376 plane raid in August 1943, 60 B-17s were shot down. That was a 16 percent loss rate and meant 600 empty bunks in England. In 1942-43, it was statistically impossible for bomber crews to complete a 25-mission tour in Europe .

Pacific theatre losses were far less (4,530 in combat), owing to smaller forces committed. The worst B-29 mission, against Tokyo on May 25, 1945, cost 26 Superfortresses, 5.6 percent of the 464 dispatched from the Marianas.

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A Message from the 455th Bomb Group Association's Executive Director, Greg Riggs

Several of the 15th Air Force heavy bombardment groups met in Kansas City from September 24-27, 2015 for another joint reunion. Tom Boyd and Ormond Buffington led the charge for the 455th with a total entourage of 17. Ormond took the reunion sweepstakes with an amazing 15 family members in attendance! Total attendance for all groups was about 250.

There will be another joint reunion in Dallas from October 13-16, 2016. Look for details in the spring edition of the *Cerignola Connection*. Participating bomb groups will include: 451st, 454th, 455th, 461st, 465th, 484th, and 485th.

We currently have 305 people on our mailing list. 180 of those are listed as surviving veterans; however, we continue to discover that many of our listed veterans have passed away and we were not notified. Several of our veterans are currently MIA, and they will be dropped from the mailing list if this edition of the *Cerignola Connection* comes back undeliverable. I always wait for two consecutive issues to come back as undeliverable because several times a newsletter marked as undeliverable has been a post office error. 92 of those on our mailing list are widows of men who were life members at the time of their final flight. The rest are other family members, plus a few special category recipients of our newsletter.

The 455th Bomb Group Association is projected to have a total of \$3,964 at the end of our fiscal year (31 October). The *Cerignola Connection* continues to cost in the neighborhood of \$2,200 a year to print, mail, and pay for forwarded and returned copies which were not deliverable. Beyond that, our next biggest regular expense is \$132 for annual rental of our post office box, up \$4 from last year. Other miscellaneous expenses typically total less than \$100 a year.

We've picked up one more member paying dues annually. If you are one of the four members who pay your Association dues annually, don't forget that dues for 2016 are due by December 31, 2015.

I've enjoyed another six months in a free country. Thanks for your part in making that possible!

Good Point

Adolph Hitler visits a lunatic asylum, where the patients all dutifully perform the German salute. Suddenly, Hitler sees one man whose arm is not raised. "Why don't you greet me the same way as everyone else?", Hitler hisses at the man.

The man answers: "Mein Führer, I'm an orderly. I'm not crazy!"