



CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

Spring 2003 – Editor, Tom Ramey, 1211 Montclair Ct., Appleton, WI 54915 (920) 731-2500

Legislative Report

Congress returns after this Labor Day to finish legislation for the new fiscal year beginning October 1st and to campaign for the November 5th elections. TROA is focusing on the FY2003 Defense Authorization Bill and resolving differences between the House and Senate versions passed earlier this year. A joint conference committee that may have to continue into a lame-duck session after the November elections will address these issues.

Now is the time to contact your national legislators to make your voice heard on these issues to include the end the unfair retired pay reductions imposed on our disabled military retirees.

The Senate's FY 2003 Defense Authorization Bill would end the offset for all retirees with 20 or more years of service.

The House Bill would phase out the offset over five years, but only for 20-year plus retirees with at least 60 percent disability ratings.

The House passed HR4954 – Medicare Modernization and Prescription Act of 2002 but the Senate is still negotiating possible action. TRICARE eligible members should note a provision of this legislation is to increase Medicare payments and offer an open season for older Medicare eligible military beneficiaries to enroll in Part B without late enrollment penalties. This would help change the formula for setting payments to help reverse the trend among doctors against accepting new Medicare patients. An additional benefit would promote doctor participation in TRICARE as it is tied by law to Medicare.

TROA's website has prepared messages for legislators and the White House at:

<http://capwiz.com/troa/home/>

Wisconsin Eliminates State Tax on Retired Pay

Beginning in 2002 military retirees may choose to end state tax withholding on their retirement pay. The state biennial budget, signed by Governor Scott McCallum will provide more than 8 million dollars in savings to exempt military retirees, veterans and surviving spouses in Wisconsin.

Those who wish to end withholding of state taxes from their retirement pay should contact the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) by mail to: **DFAS-Cleveland Center, PO Box 99191, Cleveland, OH 44199. FAX 1-800-469-6559.**

For additional information contact the **State of Wisconsin, Department of Veteran's Affairs 1-800-947-8387 or any County Veteran Service Office (CVSO) or www.dva.state.wi.us.**

TRICARE for Life (TFL)

The implementation of TRICARE for Life on October 1, 2001 along with the Senior Pharmacy Program April 1, 2001, has been successful for the military retiree community age 65 and older.

TFL acts as second payer to Medicare-eligible military retirees in Medicare Part B, and their Medicare-eligible family members. All military retirees must make sure their military identification card (E.D.) is not expired and that eligibility information in DEERS (Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System) is up to date.

To update or reverify eligibility information, visit a nearby I.D. issu-

ing facility.

Still have Questions?

Call **TFL at 1-888-363-5433**

Website at **www.tricare.osd.mil** or you can check on Social Security at **www.ssa.gov.**

(See Reunion insert in Centerfold for more info)

Mario Capocéfalo Is Asked to Be Our Guest At Our Forthcoming Reunion

Mario who? You may not remember the name Mario Capocéfalo, but you might remember the name Mario. Mario was one of our "tent boys" when we were stationed at Cerignola. He was then 13 years old. At our last reunion, Roger Ward showed a video he made during his visit to Cerignola, where he was escorted around by Mario, and was shown the museum Mario has developed using pictures and many other articles about our sojourn at San Giovanni in 1944 and 1945.

Mario, with his most helpful assistant, Giovanni Montingelli, and the assistance of Professor Rosella Rinaldi, the General Manager of Culture and History at the Cerignola library, have assembled a memorable tribute to "The Americans in Cerignola". Parades, ceremonies and exhibitions were held from 1 June through 6 June, 2002. This event was covered extensively by the press and Italian TV. The Italian Army band from Bari performed in the main squares of the town. The event was attended by many local citizens, military and religious leaders. Mr. Giannanatempo, Mayor of Cerignola, and Professor Rinaldi, provided introductions to the many exhibits.

America: The Good Neighbor This from A Canadian Newspaper

Widespread but only partial news coverage was given recently to a remarkable editorial broadcast from Toronto by Gordon Sinclair, A Canadian television commentator.

What follows is the full text of his trenchant remarks as printed in the Congressional Record:

"This Canadian thinks it is time to speak up for the Americans as the most generous and possibly the least appreciated people on all the earth.

Germany, Japan and, to a lesser extent, Britain and Italy were lifted out of the debris of war by the Americans who poured in billions of dollars and forgave other billions in debts. None of these countries is today paying even the interest on its remaining debts to the United States.

When France was in danger of collapsing in 1956, it was the Americans who propped it up, and their reward was to be insulted and swindled on the streets of Paris. I was there. I saw it.

When earthquakes hit distant cities, it is the United States that hurries in to help. This spring, 59 American communities were flattened by tornadoes. Nobody helped.

The Marshall Plan and the Truman Policy pumped billions of dollars into discouraged countries. Now newspapers in those countries are writing about the Decadent, warmongering Americans. I'd like to see just one of those countries that is gloating over the erosion of the United States dollar build its own airplane. Does any other country in the world have a plane to equal the Boeing Jumbo Jet, the Lockheed Tri-Star, or the Douglas DC10? If so, why don't they fly them? Why do all the International lines except Russia fly American Planes?

Why does no other land on earth even consider putting a man

or woman on the moon? You talk about Japanese technocracy, and you get radios. You talk about German technocracy, and you get automobiles. You talk about American technocracy, and you find men on the moon—not once, but several times—and safely home again.

You talk about scandals, and the Americans put theirs right in the store window for everybody to look at.

Even their draft-dodgers are not pursued and hounded. They are here on our streets, and most of them, unless they are breaking Canadian laws, are getting American dollars from ma and pa at home to spend here.

When the railways of France, Germany and India were breaking down through age, it was the Americans who rebuilt them. When the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New York Central went broke, nobody loaned them an old caboose. Both are still broke.

I can name you 5000 times when the Americans raced to the help of other people in trouble. Can you name me even one time when someone else raced to the Americans in trouble? I don't think there was outside help even during the San Francisco earthquake.

Our neighbors have faced it alone, and I'm one Canadian who is damned tired of hearing them get kicked around. They will come out of this thing with their flag high. And when they do, they are entitled to thumb their nose at the lands that are gloating over their present troubles. I hope Canada is not one of those."

Stand Proud, America!
This is one of the best editorials that I have ever read regarding the United States. It is nice that one man realizes it. I only wish that the rest of the world would realize it. We are always blamed for everything, and never even get a thank you for the things we do.

Submitted by Bill Crim

True Feelings!

They pay me to tease shades of meaning from social and cultural issues, to provide words that help make sense of that which troubles the American soul.

But in this moment of airless shock when hot tears sting disbelieving eyes, the only thing I can find to say, the only words that seem to fit, must be addressed to the unknown author of this suffering.

You monster. You beast. You unspeakable bastard.

What lesson did you hope to teach us by your coward's attack on our World Trade Center, Our Pentagon, us? What was it you hoped we would learn? Whatever it was, please know that you failed.

Did you want us to respect your cause? You just damned your cause. Did you want to make us fear? You just steeled our resolve. Did you want to tear us apart? You just brought us together. We are a family.

Let me tell you about my people. We are a vast and quarrelsome family, a family rent by racial, cultural, political and class division. We're frivolous, yes. We're wealthy, too, spoiled by the ready availability of trinkets and material goods, and maybe because of that, we walk through life with a certain sense of blithe entitlement. We are fundamentally decent, though—peace-loving and compassionate. And we are, the overwhelming majority of us, people of faith, believers in a just and loving God.

Perhaps you think that any or all of this makes us weak. We are not weak. Yes, we're in pain now. We're still grappling with the unreality of the awful thing you did, still working to make ourselves understand that this isn't a special effect from some Hollywood blockbuster.

Both in terms of the awful scope of its ambition and the probable final death toll, your attacks are likely to go down as the worst acts of terrorism in the history of the United States and indeed, the

history of the world. You've bloodied us a we have never been bloodied before. But there's a gulf of difference between making us bloody and making us fall. This is the lesson Japan was taught to its bitter sorrow. When roused, we are righteous in our outrage, terrible in our force. When provoked by this level of barbarism, we will bear any suffering, pay any cost in the pursuit of justice.

Sad, but determined. In days to come, there will be recrimination and accusation, fingers pointing to determine whose failure allowed this to happen and what can be done to prevent it from happening again. There will be heightened security, misguided talk of revoking basic freedoms. We'll go forward from this moment sobered, chastened, sad. But determined.

You see, there is steel beneath this velvet. That aspect of our character is seldom understood by people who don't know us well. On this day, the family's bickering is put on hold. As Americans we will weep, as Americans we will mourn, and as Americans, we will rise in defense of all that we cherish.

Still, I keep wondering what it was you hoped to teach us. Maybe you just wanted us to know the depths of your hatred.

By Leonard Pitts Jr.

Mario Capocéfalo Continued from Page 1

The US Ambassador sent a special dedication to the event. Mario has been interviewed by Tom Brokaw and Stephan Ambros to get information for their books.

In addition the US Ambassador wrote Mario a special letter of appreciation for his efforts.

The 455th Bomb Group Association is "Dedicated to Preserving Its Memory and Heritage. The Officers of the Association felt that Mario deserved some type of recognitions for his efforts. Mario Capocéfalo was made an "Honary Life Member of the Association", and we are inviting him to our reunion in Orlando. When you see him you'll probably not recognize him, but, thank him for "a job well done".

Chaplains Corner



One rainy afternoon a mother and her son were driving along one of the main streets of town, taking those extra precautions necessary when the roads are wet and slick.

Suddenly, little Matthew spoke up from his relaxed position in the front seat. "Mom, I'm thinking of something."

This announcement usually meant he had been pondering some fact for a while and was now ready to expound all that his 7-year-old mind had discovered. Mom was eager to hear. "What are you thinking?" she asked.

"The rain," he began, "is like sin and the windshield wipers are like God, wiping our sins away." After the chill bumps raced up her arms, she was able to respond. "That's really good, Matthew."

Then her curiosity broke in. How far would this little boy take this revelation? So she asked, "Do you notice how the rain keeps on coming? What does that tell you?"

Matthew didn't hesitate one moment with his answer: "We keep on sinning and God just keeps on forgiving us."

Matthew is, indeed, on the right track. Someday he'll add to that formula confession and repentance. The apostle Paul said, "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!" (Romans 6:12). Sin, and expect forgiveness. Expect also to confess it with sorrow and repentance, expect to avoid the occasion of sin. How dreadful to live life in the rain, when the prayer of confession can clear away the clouds!

Thoughts!

* To be filled with God one must be emptied of self.

* If you do not want the fruit of sin, stay out of the orchard.

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21 Reasons Why The English Language Is Hard To Learn

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The farm was used to produce produce.
3. The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
4. We must polish the Polish furniture.
5. He could lead if he would get the lead out.
6. The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
7. Since there is no time like the present, he decided to present the present.
8. A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
9. When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
10. I did not object to the object.
11. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
12. There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
13. They were too close to the door to close it.
14. The buck does funny things when the does are present.
15. A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
16. To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
17. The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
18. After a number of injections my jaw got number.
19. Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
20. I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
21. How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

EdVest

Jack Voight, Wisconsin State Treasurer, discussed the hottest tax shelter in Wisconsin, EdVest. EdVest is a qualified state tuition program that helps families save for their children's education. When you open an account, you own and are the beneficiary of that account. If your child doesn't attend college, you can transfer the account to another family member or even yourself. Contributions to your EdVest account are placed in a trust consisting of market based investment options containing different allocations of stock, bond and cash management funds depending on the personal risk tolerance and length of time. Strong Capital Management Inc., a registered investment advisor, manages the EdVest program. Earnings in your account grow state and federally tax deferred until your child is ready to go to college. When the funds are withdrawn, you pay no Wisconsin state income tax and beginning in 2002 these withdrawals will also be federal tax-free. The funds are available to be used to pay for qualified higher education expenses such as tuition, books, fees and room and board at any eligible school including technical, vocational and graduate schools in the United States and even some abroad. Contributions of up to \$3,000 per dependent child per year are deductible from Wisconsin taxable income. An EdVest account can be opened with as little as \$25 and you can invest up to \$246,000. Parents, grandparents and even non-relatives can contribute to an account.

455th E-Mail Roster

Below is a listing of e-mail address' of 455th members that were sent to us for publication in the Cerignola Connection. If you want your e-mail address included in this roster, please send it to:

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(Dr.) Stanley Vogelfang (741), Houston, TX. **stanvog@aol.com**

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A True Flag Story

In March of 1942, Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) 3 brought General MacArthur out of Corregidor to the southern Philippine island of Mindanao for his onward flight to Australia to lead the Allies back to the Philippines and Japan. After his successful escape, the PT squadron remained stationed in the area around Bugo and Cagayan on northern Mindanao for the duration of the war, carrying out more missions from there. Two of us from our outfit were on detached service at Bugo at the time. Roderick McKay was in charge of the pier at Bugop; I was in charge of convoys running supplies from Bugo to various parts of the island.

Living among these gallant men (in fact we were quartered in the same building as ten or fifteen of them), we learned a lot about their earlier exploits while operating in the Corregidor-Luzon area before, as well as missions in the southern Philippines after coming down to Mindanao, Navy Lt. John D. Bulkley was the Squadron Commander, and his flag ship was the "41 Boat" was the only boat remaining. But they had accomplished a lot – even single-handedly sinking a Japanese cruiser of the large Kuma class in one of their last engagements. McKay and I used to thrill to watch them go out on a mission, as they wheeled out of the bay with the flag fluttering from the "41 Boat".

All of this came to an abrupt end at the fall of the Philippines to Japanese forces May 10, 1942. Some of the specialists of PT Squadron 3 were able to get out to Australia by plane at the last moment. A few of them were in a position to join up with the guerrillas on Mindanao and Leyte, but most of them ended up in the Davao Penal Colony (Dapecol) with the rest of us.

*Carl S. Nordin
1473 Daman Dr
New Richmond, WI 54017*

Robert Bigelow Writes...



I wanted to write you a note for publication in your newsletter in the hope that one of your subscribers would have known my dad or be aware that a member of his crew was still alive. My dad, Robert E. Bigelow, flew with: Clyde Brunson, Pilot Atlas Molnar, Co-Pilot Robert Bigelow, Navigator William Parker, Bombardier A. Peterson, Nose Turrent Gunner T. Johnson, Waist Gunner Arthur Powers Elmer Shulz, Gunner Edward Coslett, Engineer Wesley Moore, Tail Turrent Gunner

My dad was part of the 743rd Squadron, and was shot down on April 2nd, 1944, as part of Mission 18. His plane was No. 42-52271

If anyone knew Bob Bigelow Sr., please call me collect, or write to:

*Robert E. Bigelow, Jr.
1075 E. Radcliff Avenue
Englewood, CO 80110
Phone 303/761-0819 (Home)
800/845-0057, Ext. 1200 (Office)*

Little Known Facts About the Cerignola Connection

- First issue...Fall 1989.
- 27 issues have been printed.
- Original issue...8 pages.
- Present issues...28 pages.
- Jim Shumard president when first issue printed.
- Tom Ramey first and only editor.
- Computer prepared, Spring 1991.
- 821 copies distributed.
- 2nd recommended name "Carol Tower Calling".
- 208 miles driven to produce an issue.
- Copies mailed to 82 libraries and museums.
- Copies mailed to 126 widows.
- 6 copies sent overseas.

POW/MIA

POW/MIA car-window decals are available at a cost of \$40 per 100 by sending a check to the League office at 1005 North Glebe Rd, Suite 170, Arlington, VA 22201. POW/MIA lapel pins are also available at \$3 each or 2/\$5. For added information please contact the League's web site at www.pow-miafamilies.org or call the national office at 703-465-7432. If no one is available to take your call, please leave a message.

Signs of Getting Older...



- * I'm very good at telling stories; over and over and over and over...
- * I'm aware that other people's grandchildren are not nearly as cute as mine.
- * I'm so cared for — long term care, eye care, private care, dental care.
- * I'm not really grouchy, I just don't like traffic, waiting, crowds, lawyers, loud music, unruly kids, Toyota commercials, Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather, barking dogs, politicians and a few other things I can't seem to remember right now.
- * I'm sure everything I can't find is in a safe secure place, somewhere.
- * I'm wrinkles, saggy, lumpy, and that's just my left leg.
- * I'm having trouble remembering simple words like...
- * I'm beginning to realize that aging is not for wimps.
- * I'm sure they are making adults much younger these days, and when did they let kids become policemen?
- * I'm wondering, if you're only as old as you feel, how could I be alive at 150?
- * And how can my kids be older than I feel sometimes?

Roll Call

Here are additions for the roll call section of your 455th history book "Flight of the Vulgar Vultures". Colonel Lou Hansen spent hundreds of hours researching copies of orders, pictures and other items supplied by individuals; war diaries of squadrons and individuals correspondence and visits with former members, this for the original roll call and now this update addition. Still the listing is not presented as being complete and correct. The rank listed is the highest rank found in doing the research. Many likely held higher rank. In some cases it is the retired rank of the individual.

GP indicates group headquarters. Individuals who reserved at both squadron and group level are listed at squadron level. If more than one squadron, a random selection has been made. For brevity last name designations, i.e. Jr., Sr., Etc., have been eliminated.

Incompletes found in the original listing have been filled in when new information is available. Unknowns and corrections made where ever possible, thus an individual may be repeated in the original and the supplement.

Adair	Donald L	2nd Lt	740	Benjamin	Irving J	Sgt	741
Adams	Harry	Pvt	743	Berman	Harold D	1st Lt	743
Adams	John P	2nd Lt	740	Bernier	Gaston D	S/Sgt	Hdq
Adamson	Howard E	Pfcl	741	Bessee	Robert F	Cpl	743
Agnew	Clark	T/Sgt	742	Betti	Louis J	T/Sgt	743
Alfino	JW	T/Sgt	742	Binkley	Wendell W	2nd Lt	740
Allen	Everett E	S/Sgt	741	Birdsell	Arvil C	2nd Lt	741
Allen	Harold R	S/Sgt	741	Bishop	Charles F	Sgt	742
Allen	John T	S/Sgt	742	Black	Womble E	T/Sgt	743
Ames	Gordon W	1st Lt	UK	Blackdier	Floyd L	Sgt	740
Anderson	Donald E	1st Lt	742	Blackwell	Homer D	Cpl	740
Antes	Daniel	Sgt	740	Blazer	James N	2nd Lt	740
Antone	Michael J	T/Sgt	740	Bletz	Harold R	Cpl	743
Applin	Arthur C	S/Sgt	741	Bloemendaal	Ralph	1st Lt	743
Artman	Vernon E	Sgt	Hdq	Bloom	Bernard	T/Sgt	743
Attinger	Charles J	Cpl	740	Blundy	Walter H	S/Sgt	743
Auld	Ustace	S/Sgt	443	Bogseth	Edward J	S/Sgt	740
Bailey	Donald M	1st Lt	741	Bolbee	Frank J	Cpl	740
Bailey	UK	Lt Col	Hdq	Bosau	Walter	Sgt	740
Baker	Robert L	1st Lt	741	Bose	Frederick C	Sgt	742
Ball	Norman	T Sgt	740	Boucher	Arthur R	T/Sgt	742
Ball	Robert	T Sgt	740	Boudousquie	Ingram E	S/Sgt	743
Bamberg	Jack E	2nd Lt	740	Bowers	Kenneth P	S/Sgt	743
Banks	Ralph	UK	UK	Boyd	James M	M/Sgt	743
Bareham	John M	1st Lt	UK	Boyd	Thomas E	Sgt	741
Barker	Robert F	Cpl	740	Brady	Frank J	S/Sgt	740
Barshov	Emanuel R	1st Lt	742	Bramson	Edward S	2nd Lt	741
Bartholow	Ralph	Cpl	743	Bray	George M	F/O	743
Bach	Jerome	2nd Lt	740	Breaud	Richard O	T/Sgt	743
Bassett	Norton R	S/Sgt	743	Brennan	Francis J	S/Sgt	740
Beckner	Robert P	1st Lt	741	Bressler	Lee	1st Lt	740
Bell	Jack S	S/Sgt	742	Brewer	Robert E	Cpl	741
Beltrani	Alexander P	1st Lt	743	Brienen	Francis P	Sgt	741
Beltz	George W	2nd Lt	743	Briston	Lawrence W	Sgt	741
				Brizendine	Raymond A	Sgt	741
				Brower	Alvin J	Capt	741
				Brunew	Charles P	S/Sgt	743
				Brush	Bennie J	Pfc	740
				Cadioux	Victor	S/Sgt	740
				Caldwell	C.L.	T/Sgt	740
				Campbell	Lynn H	T/Sgt	740
				Cancienne	Phillip J	Sgt	742
				Carney	John	UK	740
				Carpenter	Fred	Lt	741
				Champney	Guy R	UK	743
				Charlton	William C	St	740
				Ciccone	Raymond J	S/Sgt	740
				Clairmont	Arthur N	Cpl	740
				Clark	Ray E	Sgt	740
				Clarke	Richard W	2nd Lt	741
				Clarke	Roderick W	UK	UK
				Cleland	James R	2nd Lt	740
				Clifford	Amos W	2nd Lt	740
				Cober	Charles E	Cpl	741
				Coffin	Richard A	S/Sgt	Hdq
				Collette	Robert D	2nd Lt	740
				Collins	Albert R	Cpl	741
				Colson	James H	Sgt	740
				Coltri	Arthur L	Sgt	740

Colvin	Hpe J	S/Sgt	UK	Fichtner	Arden D	S/Sgt	740
Commerton	George	S/Sgt	743	Fischer	Martin	Lt	740
Conner	Kenneth C	1st Lt	UK	Fish	Oliver D	Cpl	740
Connolly	James J	2nd Lt	742	Fisher	George C	Cpl	742
Conrad	Frederick	S/Sgt	742	Fisher	Jacob H	S/Sgt	743
Contello	Samuel	Sgt	740	Fitzgerald	Edwrđ T	S/Sgt	743
Conway	Morris J	Cpl	741	Flechiss	Jack M	1st Lt	741
Cool	William T	S/Sgt	741	Flynn	Owen E	F/O	741
Corbett	Melvin C	1st Lt	743	Folk	George W	Sgt	743
Corbin	Richard	Cpl	740	Fontera	P.A.	Cpl	743
Corbin	Peter S	1st Lt	743	Foster	Keith	1st Lt	743
Corey	V.T.	S/Sgt	741	Fowlkes	Robert W	S/Sgt	741
Constantino	Michael S	2nd Lt	740	Francis	Joseph R	Pfc	740
Cox	JH	S/Sgt	743	Freeman	Bertram	Cpl	740
Craft	Jerry	1st Lt	Hdq	Fry Kenneth	UK	UK	
Crews	Theodore R	2nd Lt	743	Funk	Raymond P	S/Sgt	740
Cripps	John A	Sgt	740	Gaenzle	Jay S	2nd Lt	742
Crocco	Juklio C	Rfc	Hdq	Galati	John	UK	UK
Crosby	Orin E	T/Sgt	743	Gallagher	William L	S/Sgt	742
Crosby	D.C.	2nd Lt	740	Galli	Joseph T	Sgt	743
Crottie	George W	Cpl	743	Gamache	Harold J	UK	UK
Crow	William C Jr	Sgt	740	Garda	Ildo J	S/Sgt	740
Crumby	Billy E	Sgt	740	Garland	William A	S/Sgt	743
Crump	Clay K	Cpl	741	Gayken	Fred	Sgt	741
Cumback	William L	Cpl	741	Gidden	Word L	Lt Col	742
Cummings Ned C		Sgt	743	Giles	Robert S	1st Lt	743
D'Agostino	James S	2nd Lt	740	Ginsburg	Howard A	1st Lt	741
D'Amelio	Peter J	Sgt	741	Glidden	Arrin D	Sgt	740
Dalian	Allen M	S/Sgt	741	Goldberg	S.C	S/Sgt	740
Daly	James P	S/Sgt	740	Gooden	Danie	2nd Lt	740
Day	Robert J	T/Sgt	743	Ganell	UK	Lt	742
Del Gallo	ANthony	S/Sgt	743	Granfield	John T	2nd Lt	740
De Piano	Angelo W	2nd Lt	742	Green	Robert D	Cpl	740
Desantis	Frank	Pvt	740	Groh	George A	2nd Lt	742
Devee	EARL W	Capt	741	Grosier	Rex	1st Lt	743
Dias	Ronald A	2nd Lt	740	Guerra	Jesse	Cpl	741
Dias	Harold M	1st Lt	740	Guido	Joseph	Pvt	740
Duboyiez	Red T/Sgt	740		Gulbranson	Robert A	2nd Lt	743
Dodson	Robert G	Sgt	742	Guminski	Edward S	Sgt	740
Dolinsky	Joseph	1st Lt	741	Gunnel	William W	Sgt	741
Doody	Joseph W	M Sgt	740	Guy	Harland C	Cpl	740
Dorn	Russell F	Cpl	741	Guyton	Robert D	2nd Lt	740
Doyle	Joseph	Sgt	741	Haessly	Jame D	1st Lt	UK
Drysel	Douglas	Sgt	740	Hagemann	Albert H	M/Sgt	741
Duffield	James J	Sgt	741	Haile	Amon H	WOJG	1
Eastman	Albert	Lt Col	741	Halverson	Carl J	Pvt	742
Edgar	Robinson F	Sgt	740	Hammer	Robert J	T/Sgt	742
Edgerly	Robert G	Sgt	743	Hammond	Wallace	UK	741
Ehrenkrantz	William	2nd Lt	740	Haney	Ralph I.	Pvt	740
Eldridge	G.C.	S/Sgt	740	Hanna	Joseph G	2nd Lt	741
Ellis	George	UK	743	Hansley	Robert W	Cpl	1
Englert	Chales J	2nd Lt	741	Hardison	Hershel M	S/Sgt	740
Erickson	William P	S/Sgt	743	Hardon	Gerald	1st Lt	743
Fajens	Walter T	F/O	743	Hardwick	Jack L	S/Sgt	741
Fallert	Eldon E	2nd Lt	740	Harlow	Parker K	1st Lt	740
Fatheringham	Donald K	1st Lt	742	Hass	Richard	UK	741
Feig	Nathan	S/Sgt	740	Hassenstein	George A	Maj	1
Ferrarie	Louis R	Sgt	740	Hawkins	Orion	S/Sgt	740
Feyma	Jacob J	S/Sgt	740	Hays	David	Capt	1/740

Heisey	P.W.	S/Sgt	743	Krentzman	Louis N	2nd Lt	740
Hertkamp	William J	Cpl	743	Krueger	Rudy	1st Lt	743
Halmers	Ralph	UK	743	Kruger	Donald M	1st Lt	743
Hert	Herbert R	Sgt	740	Kuhn	Lawrence F	M/Sgt	740
Hermesmeyer	Robert W	Sgt	741	Kujawa	Leonard A	1st Lt	741
Hess	Paul W	Sgt	740	Kustenakas	Arthur	UK	740
Hester	Donald J	Sgt	741	Kyle	John K	UK	UK
Hicks	Paul L	F/O	741	Lacey	Rush L	PFC	I
Hildebrand	Clyde E	S/Sgt	743	Lance	William W	M/Sgt	740
Hill James R	Lt	740		Larmett	Donald J	1st Lt	743
Hill Waldo V	Sgt	740		Leaderman	Reuben D	T/Sgt	UK
Hindricks	John H	T/Sgt	740	Leary	Henry J	Cpl	I
Hines	Robert J	1st Lt	UK	Lee Walter P	Lt Col	741	
Hodge	Robert T	S/Sgt	743	Leonard	George	Pvt	1
Hodgson	John A	S/Sgt	740	Lerner	Jerome	Sgt	740
Hoffna	John H	Lt?	742	Levison	John R	Sgt	740
Horat	Raymond J	S/Sgt	743	Jewis	William J	Sgt	743
Hubbard Elmo J	J	Sgt	741	Licata	Joseph M	Cpl	I
Huyck	Edward C	S/Sgt	741	Lightle	Darwin D	S/Sgt	740
Iegrist	Raymond K	Capt	1	Liles	Henry W	Sgt	740
Irby	Donald M	F/O	741	Limb	Byron	Sgt	740
Isenstein	Harry	Cpl	740	Lockhart	Ray S	Cpl	1
Jackson	Carl H	S/Sgt	743	Loftis	Marcus L	2nd Lt	741
Jeffries	Herbert H	Cpl	742	Logan Samuel	H	1st Lt	743
Jenkins	Everett R	1st Lt	740	Luttrell	James W	Capt	1
Jones	Harry	1st Lt	740	Lyons	Louis	UK	741
Jones	Philip E	Sgt	740	Machofsky	John C	Sgt	742
Jordahl	Duane G	S/Sgt	740	Machuza	John E	S/Sgt	740
Jozefowitz	Ben	UK	740	Macinnas	Robert J	2nd Lt	740
Jureka	John F	Col	743	Mactulewicz	Fred S/Sgt	742	
Juza	Edward F	Cpl	740	Maddox	Carlton J	Cpl	740
Kablack	Thomas	Pfc	742	Maes	Donald J	1st Lt	741
Kafka	Robert J	Capt	741	Magiera	Leo T	T/Sgt	742
Kalb	Alvin H	Clp	1	Manel	Robert E	Cpl	740
Kanigowski	Walter W	T/Sgt	743	Mandeville	Donald A	Cpl	I
Kapp	Calvin	Cpl	1	Manik	Albert J	Sgt	742
Kaska	Robert Jq	Capt	741	Maranda	Charles F	T/Sgt	741
Kearns	Jesse W	Rfc	741	March	Harold UK	741	
Kelleher	Dana I	S/Sgt	740	Martin	Joseph	Capt	1?
Kelleher	James H	1st Lt	741	Martin	Paul	Pfc	740
Kelly	John K	1st Lt	741	Martin	Ray D	Cpl	742
Kemp	Andrew J	Sgt	741	Mattsinik	David	T/Sgt	742
Kennedy	John P	Pvt	743	McAfee	William	S/Sgt	741
Keopple	Jack R	Cpl	741	McAllen	Richard N	Sgt	740
Kerker	Barton G	2nd Lt	740	McAuliffe	Walter M	Cpl	I
Kerr	George C	Sgt	743	McCarthy	Cloyd M	S/Sgt	743
Kerr	John D	1st Sgt	743	McConnell	John H	Cpl	742
King	Cullen H	Cpl 1		McCord	Richard N	S/Sgt	743
King	Theodore	2nd Lt	740	Mc Culock	Robert L	Sgt	743
Kiriry	Thomas J	UK	743	McDaniel	Joseph E	Cpl	1
Kinkead	Robert	UK	UK	McDowell	Jack L	Cpl	741
Klepper	Frank B	Cpl	740	McGraham	William T	Lt	741
Knapp	Stewart S	Capt	741	McGee	James P	2nd Lt	UK
Kochaney	Edward J	S/Sgt	741	McGlory	James N	Sgt	740
Koehne	Charles F	Cpl	1	McClosky	Jarrard T	Cpl	1
Koepple	Jack R	Cpl	741	McHugh	Charles S	1st Lt	743
Kopp	Gail S	T/Sgt	741	Meanvelli	Avo R	UK	UK
Kotke	Paul E	2nd Lt	741	Medel	Pete	UK	742
Kraeuter	Warren J	F/O	740	Merritt	John I	1st Lt	741

Meril	Wayne D	UK	UK	Pissant	John W	UK	740
Meyer	Dorenz H	F/O	743	Pittman	James F	UK	UK
Michaelson	Herbert E	Cpl	741	Pokrzwinski	Robert F	T/Sgt	743
Middleswarth	James H	S/Sgt	740	Polsky	Nathan	2nd Lt	740
Middleton	Harry N	S/Sgt	743	Ponton	Harry L	Cpl	741
Miller	Billie V	Sgt	741	Powell	Harold	UK	741
Miller	Herman G	T/Sgt	740	Pratt	Glenn L	2nd Lt	740
Miller	Norman B	S/Sgt	740	Pressler	Frederick C	1st Lt	742
Miller	W.R.	Lt	743	Preston	Ethridge	T/Sgt	740
Minnick	William C	Sgt	740	Prince	William	UK	743
Moon	Wiliam	UK	740	Pulner	Warren E	Cpl	743
Moore	Ralph V	UK	743	Pyle	Melvin	T/Sgt	740
Moreland	Mack M	1st Lt	740	Quigley	Kenneth H	F/O	741
Moriarty	Walter J	2nd Lt	740	Quigley	Robert M	S/Sgt	740
Moss	Frank A	Sgt	742	Rathjen	Herman F	S/Sgt	740
Muise	George W	2nd Lt	742	Jaths	George A	S/Sgt	740
Muller Otto	2nd Lt	740		Redford	Marvin B	Pfc	1
Mulligan	Chester H	Pfc	742	Reese	Harold E	M/Sgt	741
Murray	John F	Cpl	1	Refinsky	Joseph V	S/Sgt	741
Myron	Billy E	2nd Lt	743	Reisig	Harold H	Cpl	1
Mazarchyk	Thomas	UK	743	Renner	Dorin I	Sgt	743
Neihoff	Charles A	Sgt	743	Riley	James C	1st Lt	740
Nelson	David L	S/Sgt	742	Riley	Leonard J	F/O	740
Nelson	James A	Sgt	741	Robbins	Forest J	1st Lt	740
Nichols	Franklin H	1st Lt	743	Roberts	J.D.	Sgt	740
Nick	Harry	1st Lt	743	Roberts	James M	Sgt?	1
Nickerson	Donald L	S/Sgt	UK	Robinson	Charles D	T/Sgt	743
Niederlander	Richard J	S/Sgt	UK	Robinson	Philip S	S/Sgt	741
Nila	Pete	Sgt	740	Roche	William B	S/Sgt	741
Noll	Richard H	S/Sgt	740	Rosa	Allan C	2nd Lt	740
Norford	Andrew W	UK	UK	Rosa	Tanielo A	Pfc	742
Nannally	Eugene	Cpl	743	Rosenberg	Charles H	1st Lt	741
O'Connell	Robert E	Cpl	741	Ross	William K	Sgt	740
O'Connor	James H	T/Sgt	742	Rovie	Ralph J	1st Lt	743
O'Leary	Joseph F	M/Sgt	741	Reible	Charles D	M/Sgt	743
O'Malley	M.D.	2nd Lt	740	Rudolph	Jack B	Sgt	743
O'Neil	Willard T	Sgt	742	Russell	Edmund C	1st Lt	740
Ochs	Clayton	Cpl	1	Russomand	Joseph W	S/Sgt	742
Olesky	William C	Sgt	743	Rutan	Alva L	Sgt	740
Olson	Ernest F.	Cpl	1	Ruyter	Edward W	2nd St	741
Olsowsky	Ernest E	S/Sgt	743	Ryan	Charles J	S/Sgt	740
Ostrander	Elijah	2nd Lt	741	Sabulis	John A	SSgt	743
Owenby	Chester M	M/Sgt	740	Sachs	Albert D	Cpl	743
Pack	Arthur	2nd Lt	741	Salkind	Isadore	Cpl	743
Panawash	Merrill P	T/Sgt	740	Sanders	Robert R	1st Lt	740
Park	Robert	T/Sgt	740	Schaffer	Jesse K	Cpl	741
Paskert	Leland W	Sgt	742	Schoo	Ollie J	1st Lt	740
Pasinski	Theodore A	Cpl	1	Schrumer	Earl J	Sgt	741
Patton	William E	2nd Lt	740	Schuyler	Stuart	UK	UK
Pealer	John W	S Sgt	741	Shaia	Leo E	S/Sgt	743
Pebley	Merle V	S/Sgt	740	Sheffield	Rubye F	Cpl	740
Perdue	John K	1st Lt	743	Shostack	Walter	2nd Lt	741
Perkowski	Wallace	1st Lt	740	Shropshire	Charles T	Cpl	741
Peters	David	S/Sgt	743	Siegel	Seymour W	1st Lt	743
Petersen	Steve A	1st Lt	740/2	Siegfried	Magnus J	Lt Col	742
Peterson	Alfred R	S/Sgt	743	Siles	Samuel B	UK	UK
Peterson	Harold	1st Lt	741	Siles	Joseph P	S/Sgt	742
Pheifer	Sigmund	S/Sgt	740	Simmons	George R	Cpl	741
Pifer	Wayne E	Cpl	743	Simmons	Thurman M	S/Sgt	743

Sislo	Bill	1st St	740	Wilson	Lawrence	Sgt	740
Skewes	Joseph	Cpl	1	Wilson	William H	1st Lt	740
Skuldt	Kenneth B	2nd Lt	740	Winkelhorst	Nicholas	1st Lt	741
Smith	Theodore	S/Sgt	740	Winter	Robert E	S/Sgt	740
Smorschok	Stanley J	Sgt	740	Wojtowicz	Frank C	S/Sgt	743
Sommerfeld	Jacob	Sgt	740	Woole	John P	Sgt	741
Sonnenchein	David W	2nd Lt	741/3	Woistenholme	James S	Sgt	740
Southworth	Paul J	Cpl	1	Hood	Edward L	UK	UK
Sparks	Ollie J	Sgt	741	Wood	Robert N	Cpl	1
Spencer	Edward G	S/Sgt	740	Woolley	Joseph V	T/Sgt	743
Spicer	Robert F	Cpl	741	Wynne	UK	Lt	741
Stamm	Neal E	Sgt	740	Wyrosdic	Samuel J	S/Sgt	740
Stella	John J	Cpl	741	Zanca	John A	Cpl	740
Stenard	Thomas	1st Lt	742	Zegeer	Arthur	UK	741
Stewart	William J	Capt	740	Ziock	Jack	UK	UK
Stiemsma	Alvin C	Sgt	740				
Stine	David E	S/Sgt	742				
Streifeld	Bernhardt	Cpl	1				
Stredt	Lloyd G	1st Lt	741				
Stuart	Linden	Maj	741				
Swanson	John L	1st Lt	740				
Swinney	Alton L	T/Sgt	741				
Szudajski	August C	Sgt	741				
Tacy	Elmer R	T/Sgt	740				
Tarshes	Bernard E	1st Lt	742				
Teal	Rodney	1st Lt	741				
Tellier	Stanely	Sgt	740				
Templin	Robert L	1st Lt	UK				
Teodorszik	John J	Cpl	741				
Testa	Louis D	S/Sgt	743				
Thomas	Joseph S	1st Lt	742				
Tietelbaum	Milton M	Pfc	740				
Totten	Sherman	Sgt	741				
Treadwell	Phillip W	S/Sgt	742				
Tuten	Randolph B	Sgt	743				
Underwood	James E	2nd Lt	740				
Valentine	William A	S/Sgt	743				
Valko	Michael J	T/Sgt	741				
Valuska	David	T/Sgt	740				
VanAllen	Roy	Sgt	740				
Vann	Olin	T/Sgt	1/742				
Vaugnan	Willie B	UK	UK				
Vineyard	Louis R	S/Sgt	743				
Wade	John R	Sgt	740				
Wade	John W	T/Sgt	743				
Wahl	Albert	S/Sgt	743				
Walker	Jamey M	Cpl	740				
Warhaftig	Irving	Lt	743				
Wayneth	Darnell	Sgt	741				
West	Marshall F	S/Sgt	742				
Wheeler	Schuyler J	M/Sgt	740				
White	Fred T	Sgt Maj	742				
Whitlock	Malcom	Cpl	1				
Whitman	Sidney D	Sgt	743				
Wiermaa	John J	S/Sgt	740				
Wigely	Robert R	1st Lt	UK				
William	Robert T	1st Lt	740				
Wills	Charles B	T/Sgt	740				
Wilson	Herbert E	S/Sgt	740				

Six More Weeks...

Three blondes died and are at the pearly gates of Heaven. St. Peter tells them that they can enter the gates if they can answer one simple question. St. Peter asks the first blonde, "What is Easter?" The blonde replies, "Oh, that's easy! It's the holiday in November when everyone gets together, eats turkey, and are thankful." "Wrong!" replies St. Peter, and proceeds to ask the second blonde the same question, "What is Easter?" The second blonde replies, "Easter is the holiday in December when we put up a nice tree, exchange presents, and celebrate the birth of Jesus." St. Peter looks at the second blonde, shakes his head in disgust, tells her she's wrong, and then peers over his glasses at the third blonde. He asks, "What is Easter?" The third blonde smiles confidently and looks St. Peter in the eyes, "I know what Easter is." "Oh?" says St. Peter, incredulously. "Easter is the Christian holiday that coincides with the Jewish celebration of Passover. Jesus and his disciples were eating at the last supper and Jesus was later deceived and turned over to the Romans by one of his disciples. The Romans took him to be crucified and he was stabbed in the side, made to wear a crown of thorns, and was hung on a cross with nails through his hands. He was buried in a nearby cave which was sealed off by a large boulder." St. Peter smiles broadly with delight. The third blonde continues, "Every year the boulder is moved aside so that Jesus can come out and, if he sees his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter."

Poems from Royce Hilliard

Christmas 1943

'Twon't be a merry Christmas this year,
The world is torn by war and strife,
But still there'll be love abroad
That is the hope of those who fight.

Shall that hope remain as dim
As it has for years in the past?
Will this Xmas eve be a mockery
of sin
And Christ's birth be lived in fact?

Shall that event be lost in sight
By those who make it just another day?
Ok let us not forget that other night
When the Christ child brought a ray

Of light that must still shine
Through all the ills and fears
Of a world that cannot be stilled.
Until the hate of years burns out in tears.

Friends

It must have been that cheery greeting,
Or that nice chat in a friendly meeting.
That perked me up and set me right
'Cause I'm up and full of fight.

So, thanks for sentiments, fine and gay
They helped me pass each dragging day,
I count myself rich beyond compare
Because of friends who show they care.

We've raised our voices in singing,
Rent the air with song,
The night's echoes keep bringing
New lilting voices along.

We've sat and looked at the stars
And gazed at the milky way,
Then silently loaded our car
At the close of Easter Day.

Understood

I plodded wearily through the day,
Eyes downcast and thoughts awry,
Feeling sorry for myself that fate
Had given me a life of hate.

Shutting out the world of men
I focused all on life within,
Upon this selfish will of mine
I found not the joy of human kind.

Until I tore the bonds away
And turned the light that way,
Then life became clear and good
When my own self, I understood.

Dayroom Smoke



Amid the haze of dayroom smoke,
That boils from soldier's cigarettes,
I sit me down to think and grope
For words to form this letter...no soap.

Find me a man with mind so rare
That can think and breathe this air,
Alas the whole big army through
There's none the smoke can't subdue.

If these words be tinged with smoke,
You'll know I tried with false hope
To write a letter that was fair,
But, Lord, give me a dayroom with clean air.

April 1943

A Prayer For Hills

Lord, when I'm prone to stray
And seem to stop and lose my way,
Lose heart and fail to climb,
Let me pause and look at time.

When the hills seem far away
And the going's tough each day
Then's the time, I ask of Thee:
"Faith, hope, light for me to see."

And if I'm prone to turn aside,
And forget the reason why,
God: raise up towering hills
So, I'll keep climbing still.

1947

Ups and Downs



When we come exhausted
To the end of our day,
And nothing seems right
That we've wanted to say.

And, our trials and troubles mount
And seem to reach the sky,
We wish that we could weep
So, we go ahead and cry.

We swear we're the lowest
Of all human throngs,
Then's where we go astray,
For we're always wrong,

And, no matter how low
Our spirits sink depressed, There's
always a voice
That says you're surely blest.

We all have our ups and downs
On this highway low,
We don't always walk the walk
That our feet would go.

So, I lay me down to rest
And dream of better days,
And the mornings always
Seem my thoughts repay.

And rising with new hope,
I face the golden dawn
Now walking on the HIGH highway
And greeting the day with a song.

Humility

If you think the world's down on you,
And things are looking blue,
Smile and turn a page over
You'll see a fresh one new.

If you think you're getting bad breaks
And nothing seems to be right,
Look at what the other fellow takes
And you'll be humble in his sight.

1943

Frank's War

I was fourth in a family of six children, of an industrious, but impoverished immigrant coalminer, grew up in Mahanoy City Pennsylvania, population 15,000. I had never driven a car or acquired a driver's license, or stayed in a hotel, or went camping. A big treat was, a railroad trip to New York City, about 125 miles, to vacation with my Aunt Helen, to see and taste big city life. My work-life began about the age of ten, picking wild blueberries to sell, or loading bottles onto a bottle washer for a local soft drink maker. Then as a teenager, graduating to deliver beer and soda to stores and bars, as a helper on a delivery truck. My week's pay of five dollars went to mom, to partially earn my keep. Turning your pay over to mom was a common practice at that time, and I understood the need. My twenty-five cent allowance, in return, many times was used to buy; balsa wood, tissue, and rubber band powered flying model airplane kits. My hours of delicate, exacting assembly were expended, within hours of the first flight, when they crashed. Airplanes fascinated me; my ambition was to fly some day.

Upon graduation from high school, in June 1942, I left Mahanoy City for Harrisburg, PA. I had taken, and passed, a Civil Service exam, to work for the Army Air Corps, at the Middletown, PA Air Depot maintaining, and repairing Air Corps planes. First we needed to learn the job. The Farm Show Building in Harrisburg had been converted into an aircraft repair school. On our first day we were given a battery of aptitude and intelligence tests. Based on the tests, we were offered our choice to learn one of the repair specialties, such as, engine repair, rigging, electrical repair etc.. I asked for electrical repair, but was told the course had started two weeks earlier. The interviewer reviewed my test results, and concluded that I could catch up with the class, and granted my choice. We learned our specialty during the eight-week course, using a combination of textbook theory classes, and hands on practice on actual aircraft.

During this time I volunteered to become a Flying Cadet. I passed all of the written exams. I was called for my physical exam, which was by the service physicians stationed at the depot. One of the first things examined were my eyes, which included a color vision test utilizing a book whose pages had patterned circular images, formed by a number of various colors and shades of smaller circular images. A pattern of related colors and shades of the smaller images resolved themselves into a two-digit number. We were asked to announce the number we saw. I saw and read out a number from each page. At the conclusion of the test, I was stunned, when I was told that I was colorblind. I had always seen, and identified all colors. I was rejected as a candidate. I was extremely disappointed. I entered service soon after.

After basic training, gunnery school, and "crew training", we picked up a factory new B-24 in Topeka KS, I was on my way overseas, into combat in August of 1944, as a tail gunner. We were replacements for casualties or crews sent home upon completion of their tour of duty for the 15th Air force.

We flew overseas via Newfoundland, the Azores, and Marrakech to Tunis. Here I watched, from the bomb bay deck through the side window as our wheels touched during a smooth landing. Soon the right landing gear strut began to wobble, then quickly broke off. We were just below flying speed and the tip hit as the wing dipped to the ground. The propeller in the outboard engine was ripped off; the three blades of the propeller on the inboard engine were bent. Using the interphone I informed the crew and pilot of our predicament, as it developed. I advised all to prepare for a crash landing. We, in the rear, braced ourselves, backs against a bulkhead wall. The aircraft skidded sideways, off the runway onto the earthen area. Fortunately no one was severely injured. When the W.A.A.F.s delivered a new B-24 to our field we continued on to our destination, Gioia, Italy.

We were assigned to the Fifteenth Air Force, 304th Wing, 455th Bomb Group, 740th Squadron. After orientation I flew my first combat mission, on the 4th of October against the Avisio Viaduct in northern Italy. My age was twenty years and twelve days.

We flew the Odertal oil refinery Mission October 14, 1944, it was my sixth mission, our position was tail end Charlie of the group. We developed a malfunction in two superchargers, and excessive fuel consumption developed. At the start of the bomb run the group began to leave us behind, we could not keep up with them. We dropped our bombs at the point we estimated where the group dropped. At this point we were alone, and dropped to the under-cast below for visual cover, and made a heading for the base. As we approached Yugoslavia the remaining fuel appeared insufficient to make it home. We parachuted over an area in Bosnia that was listed as having a high probability that we would meet with Partisans. As the youngest on the crew, I was selected to jump first. I wondered what faced me, and whether I would see my family again, or if they would ever learn of what had happened to me if I disappeared.

I jumped, pulled my ripcord, nothing happened. I was surprised at how quickly and calmly I could analyze what was wrong. I hadn't pulled the d-ring clear of its pocket before pulling the ripcord downward. The next pull opened the chute. I landed in, what I had judged on the descent to be a hillside covered with fir trees,

but turned out to be a sinkhole full of ferns that were about six feet high. I could hear voices above as I ascended the hole. At the top, nearby in front, a group of women and children approached. Further away in back, was a group of armed men. To reduce the chance of them shooting before asking questions, I put myself directly on a line between the women and the men, I reasoned they would withhold fire to avoid accidentally hitting the women

I introduced myself as an American and showed my identification. They greeted me with warmth, including a shot of their potent plum brandy "Rockia". Some spoke English reasonably well. They said nearby Germans garrisoned in the surrounding valleys may have witnessed my descent, and have sent patrols to take me. I was whisked to a barn where I joined another crewmember. We removed our flying gear, which was placed beneath a load of hay on the back of a two-wheel ox-cart. We were seated on the tailboard. Partisan patrols preceded us to the next curve in the road, and on the surrounding high ground. We went by a number of destroyed German military vehicles. Three days later we entered Sanski Most Bosnia. The town was relatively secure, used as a Partisan base. The British had sent in a radioman and equipment, he radioed information to headquarters. Within two days the rest of the crew arrived. Sanski Most now had forty-five allied airmen.

October 17, 1944 we walked at night, about two and a half miles from Sanski Most, to a grassy meadow, accompanied by Partisans, The British radioman brought a transmitter and receiver which he set up in the meadow. Two rows of Partisans had lined up, spaced apart about the width of an airfield runway, down the length of the meadow. We heard an airplane approaching in the dark night sky. The radioman made contact, identified it as friendly, and informed the Partisan commander. He shouted an order, and each Partisan lit a torch to act as a runway landing light, to outline a landing area for the plane. The plane swooped in and landed. As the C-47 passed each Partisan, he extinguished his torch, and the meadow was pitch black again. A British C-47 had arrived. First the injured or wounded were placed aboard, including our Bombardier Weinberger, with his broken leg, and Lipps, with a broken rib. Next to board was six of the British mission. Earlier that day a British officer had parachuted in as a replacement. Our pilot, von Schritlz boarded. Finally those with the longest stay in Sanski Most filled the remaining space. The C-47 held about twenty. The Partisan Commander called for the torches to be relit, the plane turned, and began its take-off run, as it sped past each individual torch they were extinguished in sequence. We returned to our town billet.

Weather conditions to retrieve additional aircrew, did not soon improve. It was getting colder and some needed warmer clothing. A few B-24's made a low pass over the meadow, and parachuted in clothing for us, and arms for the Partisans.

After about two weeks our turn came to return to our base. In broad daylight, we went to the meadow in the late afternoon. The radioman was with us. A C-47 appeared overhead, with an escort of P-51s. The radioman confirmed that it was safe for the C-47 to land. We boarded the plane and were escorted to Bari by the Mustangs.

After rest and training we resumed combat flights, now as a lead crew. Weather limited flights, but we did lead a mission on Christmas. I think its prime objective was to offer some measure of relief for our soldiers engaged in the Battle of the Bulge.

We narrowly escaped death on February 21st 1945. On a mission over Vienna, as we attacked railroad marshaling yards the plane was straddled by close bursts of flak on each side. In the same millisecond, the plane shook, and heaved upward. An 88-millimeter anti-aircraft shell hit our B-24 about three feet in front of the wing root on the pilot's side. It tore up a large wiring bundle as it peeled away a section of skin. It crumpled the upper escape hatch above and behind the pilot. Continuing, it hit the upper turret, destroyed the turret's Plexiglas dome, then hit one of the turret's .50 caliber machine guns, stripped away the perforated cooling cover, and bent the barrel into a 90 degree angle. It failed to explode. If it had we would have been blown from the sky. If our impact with the shell occurred a fraction of a second later, even as a dud, it would have hit, and ripped off, the left wing. Our speed was 160 mph., or 235 feet per second. We survived, to live one more day, because of a difference of ten feet, and less than five hundredths of a second. Walter Lipps was in the turret, when the shell tore off the Plexiglas and bent the gun barrel. A two-inch piece of flak, from the same salvo, missed me by inches. A photograph of the damaged plane with our radioman appeared in Stars & Stripes, in the next edition, as well as a news item. The picture is in the Bomb Group History. The combat photographer gave each crewmember a copy of the photo printed by the Stars & Stripes.

On March 12, 1945 we were sent to bomb the Florisdorf oil refinery in Vienna, this would be my twenty-fifth mission.

The Air Crew

Pilot: - Captain Richard J. von Schrittz
Co-Pilot: - First Lieutenant Andrew R. (Pete) Winters
First Navigator: - First Lieutenant Charles M. Brazelton
Second Navigator: - First Lieutenant John A. Coates
Radar Officer: - First Lieutenant Charles S. Adams
Bombardier: - Second Lieutenant- Edward H. Drabik
Engineer: - Technical Sergeant William H. Taylor
Radioman: - Technical Sergeant Walter W. Lipps
Armorer Waist Gunner: - Staff Sergeant Albert E. Beauchemin
Ball Turret Gunner: - Staff Sergeant Arthur S. Colton
Waist Gunner: - Staff Sergeant Craig F. King
Tail Gunner: - Staff Sergeant Francis J. Lashinsky

Selected to lead the Bomb Group for this mission, the B-24 designated for our use, was equipped with radar, replacing the ball turret. To guarantee better bombing accuracy our crew was beefed up. A first pilot, Winters, replaced our co-pilot, Iverson, who was to fly as a first pilot with a different crew this day. A second navigator, Coates, was added to assist Brazelton, for pinpoint target acquisition. A radar officer, Adams, operated the airborne radar, to assist navigation and bomb aiming. In the event the target was obscured by smoke or cloud cover, bombs would be aimed by radar.

The weather was good at take off, and assembly, and the flight to Vienna was routine. Everything was operating smoothly; the flight proceeded as planned, except that a complete under cast had built up. It would be necessary to bomb using radar. We turned at the initial point, and began the bomb run. Intelligence had forecast the presence of more than three hundred anti-aircraft guns at the target. Flak began to appear, it was however, for the most part less accurate than normal, few shells burst in our path at our altitude. We released our load of ten, five hundred pound RDX bombs. On this, our cue, the entire formation dropped in unison. We made a descending turn to the right, to exit the flak zone.

As we turned, we heard a loud shrill whine, which grew louder and much more shrill, by the second. It drowned out the sound of our engines. Either a shell fragment scored a hit in our number four engine and destroyed, or damaged, the propeller pitch control. Or it was a mechanical malfunction. The propeller was taking a very shallow bite of air. The engine RPM increased as it ran away, we feared the engine would tear loose from the mounts. The B-24 vibrated, as we dropped away from the formation. Our pilot von Schrittz, passed command of the group to the deputy lead. The co-pilot and engineer struggled, vainly, to regain pitch control. Failing, the engine was shut down, and they attempted to feather the propeller. Nothing worked, the engine continued to windmill, until it eventually froze.

Alone, losing altitude from the drag caused by the unfeathered prop, on number four engine, we decided to head for the airport behind the Soviet lines at Pecs Hungary. We gradually descended into the safety afforded by the under cast at eleven thousand feet. When we were within the cloud cover, the pilot ordered us to jettison weight in order to halt our descent and stabilize our altitude. Something jettisoned from the forward part of the plane damaged the radar dome, rendering it inoperative. Blind, without radar, we no longer knew our position, or flight path. We only had our compass, airspeed, and wind information from the morning's briefing, to guide us. Our ground speed, and true heading were unknown. We dismantled our machine guns, and threw them, and the ammunition overboard. We popped the rivets holding our oxygen tanks, discarding the tanks. Our efforts succeeded, we no longer were losing altitude, and were flying at eight thousand feet.

When both navigators estimated that we had arrived at Pecs, we began a spiral descent through the under cast, to visually identify our exact location. The pilot told Brazelton to call out our altitude, every one hundred feet of descent, using the radio altimeter. Brazelton called out, "seventy nine hundred, seventy eight hundred, and on into, forty two hundred, forty one hundred", over the interphone at regular intervals. Around four thousand feet visual contact with the ground was established. Everyone searched for the airfield, it was nowhere in sight. Ignorant of the effect of wind speed and direction on our plotted course, we were not where we expected to be. We saw two rivers, one of which must have been the Danube, the other probably the Drava. Based on this premise, the navigators gave von Schrittz a heading. He turned in the given direction to locate the airport.

We only learned later, around the late 1980's or early 1990's that we had stumbled into the area of a battle between German forces and Soviet-Bulgarian forces. The Soviet offensive was driving the Germans into retreat. We must have introduced more confusion, into the confusion that normally surrounds any battle. Our approach out of cloud cover, from a direction behind German lines, probably led the Soviets to assume we were hostile. The Germans, not expecting aerial support, and identifying the plane as a Liberator, also classified us an enemy.

Anti-aircraft fire, intense and accurate erupted around us. Three fighters came in to attack from about seven o'clock level. I was in my position in the tail turret, defenseless, without the fifty caliber machine guns and ammunition, left with only the skeletal remains of the perforated cooling barrels. I turned my turret and aimed the perforated barrels to fake a defense, for the attack coming from the fighters. I hoped that it would offer some measure of deterrence.

Gunfire began to inflict more damage to the B-24. Von Schrittz ordered a bailout over the intercom. I turned, immediately, to leave the turret. The aft section of the Liberator was filled with white smoke. A handful of something with the appearance of confetti was floating in the smoke. A shell must have burst in the belly radar turret; the confetti probably was the debris of paper radio capacitors. Al Beauchemin had been wounded in the buttocks, and the posterior area of his thighs, as he stood in the waist section. I moved fast, but others moved more quickly. There had been six men in the waist section, before the firing began. In the short time during my tail turret exit, the first five had jumped, and only Art Colton remained. He signaled that he would defer his exit to give me opportunity to get to the forward side of the escape hatch. I waved for him to jump, without waiting for me. He did, I was alone in the waist. As Art jumped, somehow the escape hatch fell closed. One of his flying boots was jammed between the hatch and its frame.

I had a mental picture of Art hanging out of the plane, held by his foot stuck in the hatch. I faced a dilemma. Had Art struck his head on the aircraft, was he conscious, or unconscious? How could I help? Recalling the strength I had mustered to pop rivets to unfasten the oxygen tanks, to jettison, I reasoned I could hold him from falling with my right hand, and open the hatch with my left. To this day, I still believe the feat was possible.

I grasped the boot, opened the hatch, and was relieved to have only the boot in my hand. It seems to me, during a life threatening situation, such as this and the prior bailout, a person's thought process is sped up.

Kneeling face to the rear I dove head first out of the stricken plane. This time I knew what to expect from the experience of my first jump. I left myself fall freely, tumbling, looking for my position with regards to the bomber. In one of these twists and turns I saw the Liberator, about a thousand yards above and ahead of me. Someone had just jumped from the open bomb bay. At that moment there were two black shell bursts, encasing orange flame, just below the wing. The landing gear dropped out of the retracted position. Whoever jumped at that moment would need a lot of luck to escape unharmed.

For a brief instant the thought of not pulling my ripcord crossed my mind. I wearied of coming face to face with death, so many times, in my short lifetime. Realizing it amounted to suicide, I dismissed the thought.

I pulled my ripcord. And felt relieved as the jerk slowed me down. I removed my flying helmet, and realized there was an unexpected new hazard. I could hear the swish, and snap of bullets as they passed close-by, I was their target. I grasped the shroud lines to spill air first from one side of the chute, then the other. I wanted to oscillate, and increase my rate of descent. I prayed that they would miss. In retrospect, if we had jumped from a greater height, and I had pulled my ripcord immediately, as in the first jump, there is a greater likelihood they would have found their mark.

I was to learn later that day that Bill Taylor was wounded, as he descended. The round pierced his back from above his right rear pocket and exited his abdomen at his watch pocket.

I saw the ground coming up to meet me. The jolt was hard, undoubtedly by spilling air, I hit at a faster velocity. My legs and ankles folded beneath me. Later my left ankle would swell so much; that I felt it would be unwise to remove my shoes for the next three weeks. I didn't think I'd get them back on, once they were taken off. I looked to see what my surroundings were.

I was amongst a field of barbed wire. Twenty yards away there was a trench. A bareheaded face appeared above the parapet, he crooked his finger, and beckoned me to come his way. The face disappeared. I unfastened my parachute harness, and ran his way. I reasoned that, since he did not shoot, this was the way to go. Later events, led me to believe, he lowered his head because the area was mined. He was saving his own skin in the event I triggered a mine. I ran towards him, and jumped into a trench. The first

thing I saw was the outstretched hand of the soldier who had signaled me. It was held palm up, and he said, "Pistol". Then I saw the Nazi eagle and swastika embroidered above his left tunic pocket. There were about ten additional uniformed men, with rifles, bayonets attached, pointed my way. I unzipped my jacket, reached into my shoulder holster, removed and surrendered my .45 caliber automatic. They did not pat me down, or search me.

Moving through the trench system, I was escorted from the front lines. An armed guard, whose age I estimated at sixteen years, led me along a dirt road heading further to the rear. He spoke in English, and said, " If you can survive for two months you will be a free man." German troops heading towards the front lines, passed us on the opposite side of the road. I still wore my fleece-lined flying boots. My leather combat boots were tied to my chute harness. I noticed a number of the front-bound troops, eyeing my combat boots with envy. Rather than risk having one of the enemies confiscate them, I decided to change footwear. Besides which, the pain in my ankle got steadily worse, and I hoped the combat boot's support would ease the pain. I just sat down on the road shoulder, and without saying a word, made the switch. The guard watched me, amazed at my independent act. I would be thankful the switch was made, my left foot became so grotesquely swollen, I wore the shoe constantly, day and night, for three weeks before I had confidence that I could get it back on again, after it was removed. Within minutes we arrived at a small timber roofed, underground bunker or dugout, where the guard handed me over to the officer inside.

The officer, seated on the dirt floor, was working at a small portable metal field desk. He motioned me to sit, on the dirt floor, across from him. For much of the four or five hours I spent in the dugout, I was ignored, as he busied himself. One time he opened his canteen, poured what appeared to be ersatz coffee, and offered some to me. I tasted a sip, but drank little. My thoughts flashed back to my breakfast, earlier that day, in the kitchen. As the hours passed, I wondered how long I would be kept in this place. I also had a greater concern, my right hand trouser pocket held about fifty rounds of 0.45 caliber ammunition, which I had not surrendered. I was sure they would be displeased when they discovered them, when they finally decided to search me. I searched for ways to rid myself of them, discreetly, so they did not discover them. It seems they were waiting until dark, to move me further

During this time, I wondered about the fate of our crew. It would be five decades before I learned some details that finally filled in missing information. My reconstruction of our flight path during the final moments is based on known facts about our individual crewmen. Basically, it probably was a shallow oblique angle to the Soviet-German front lines, starting behind the German side, going over into the Soviet side. Men in the waist section jumped before those up front. Taylor was first to jump from the front section of the B-24. Winters and von Schrittz worked to get a chute on Lipps, who had been severely wounded. They pulled Lipps' ripcord, and pushed him out of the open bomb bay.

The three earliest departures from the B-24 landed farthest from the front lines, in German held territory. King, first out, became entangled in a tree deepest behind the Nazi front. His shroud lines held him, suspended upside down. He struggled to free himself, failed, and fell asleep. The Germans came, freed the entanglement, and took him prisoner. Drabik and Beauchemin landed on an island in a river. The Germans, at rifle point, forced them to swim to them to surrender themselves. Taylor and Colton, fourth and fifth to jump, landed amongst some German foxholes, were taken to a dugout other than the one occupied by me. I landed in no-mans land. Five from the waist, and Taylor the only one from the front, became prisoners-of-war. The prisoners were Drabik, King, Beauchemin Taylor, Colton and Lashinsky.

The Prisoners-of-War who were wounded or injured;

- King was hit in the head by a small piece of flak while in the waist.
- Beauchemin was hit by flak in the leg, and buttock before he jumped
- Taylor was hit in the thumb, and leg by flak before he jumped via the bomb bay, then by rifle fire as he descended.
- Colton delayed opening his chute for a long time. He hit so hard, his head snapped forward, his chin hit a parachute harness buckle with enough force to thrust one of his upper front teeth up, and through his gums, and then pierce his upper lip.

The sum total of all the medical treatment given by the Nazis was, a few bandages, for us to wrap Taylor's abdominal wound.

The order of exit from the forward part of the craft is not established with certainty. Taylor was first out. Probably, the next three to leave, in whatever order, was Adams, Brazelton, and Coates. These three were all killed. Taylor thought he saw Adams about to exit next behind him.

- Adams' body was located by graves registration teams in the late 1940's
- Russians, near Siklos Hungary, picked up Coates, severely wounded. He received care in a front line hospital, but died during the early morning hours that night. Winters and von Schrittz witnessed his death under Russian medical care.
- Graves registration teams located the remains of Brazelton in 1948. The remains, originally, were identified as X-8016 unknown. Dental charts established identification. A Hungarian farmer Oszlar Ferenc witnessed his chute landing, and his death. Graves registration units list Ferenc's address with two variations:
 1. Gordisa, Baranya County, Hungary
 2. Dazsony-Puszt, Gordisa, HungaryOszlar Ferenc saw Brazelton descend in his chute, and land near a highway. He saw Brazelton crawl about forty yards, collapse and die from wounds in his abdomen. Oszlar opined that the wounds were inflicted during the descent. After the battle was over, Bulgarian allies of the Soviets buried Brazelton in Oszlar's farm fields. The remains have since been re-interred in the United States Military Cemetery, St. Avold, France near Metz, Plot # 0000, Row #10, Grave # 230.
- The flesh covering the rib cage below the shoulder blade of Walter Lipps was torn away by flak before he made his exit. Winters and von Schrittz latched on his chest pack and pulled his ripcord and pushed him from the plane. The Soviets recovered him, near death from loss of blood, and took him to a field hospital. The doctors, except for a woman physician, thought the wound was mortal, and decided not to treat him. The woman treated and stayed close to Walter for three days, until his condition improved from critical, and he began to mend.
- Winters and von Schrittz, last to leave, were recovered, unscathed, by Russians. After their national identity was established, they received a warm welcome by the Officer staff, and transferred to the airfield at Pecs. They were fed at the officer's mess, and plied with bountiful vodka, and were pressured to drink to inebriation. This happened on several occasions. Several Liberators were on the field. They selected one in good condition, which landed because of fuel shortage, and organized other Americans to refuel the plane, with gasoline drained from the tanks of other planes. When they had sufficient fuel aboard, they assembled a crew, and together with Lipps, returned to Bari Italy.
- Graves registration teams located the wreckage of the bomber near Gordisa, Hungary. It had burned and all markings were obliterated. It was identified by serial numbers on portions of two machine guns, still in the wreckage; the serial numbers were 1316543 and 1549623. The Missing Air Crew Report for B-24-L #44-49366 listed these as part of the armament.

At dusk, as darkness fell, a guard took me from the dugout. We walked along a dirt road. Facing us, moving forward, to the front, a column of several Panzer tanks approached. We moved to the road's edge on our side, and continued making our way. As we drew along side the third tank in the column, silently, without warning, it suddenly burst into flames. The flames lit up our area. My guard yelled, "Schnell, Schnell", and began to run down the road, away from the tank. The flames were alongside me; I took one step off the road. With this the guard began to gesticulate, point and yell. I turned to see what his finger pointed to, and saw barbed wire close to the road. I also saw a small red sign, a skull and crossbones was painted on top, below was the word "MINEN". Obviously he did not want me to endanger both of us. I stayed on the road, and we both ran until we were out of the illuminated area. I guess he assumed that the fire probably would attract Soviet shellfire. The barbed wire, and sign made me realize what danger I faced when I ended my parachute jump in the trench region. It also explained why they ducked their heads until I jumped into the trench.

I kept looking for an opportunity to rid myself of the 0.45 caliber cartridges but nothing presented itself. It had become pitch black by the time we reached the riverbank. There were ten or fifteen soldiers gathered, waiting, at this point. A rope attached to a tree, stretched from our side across the river, and was fastened to something across the river. The rope was threaded through eyelets on a large flat-bottomed rowboat to keep the current from pushing it downstream. They seated me next to one side. Most of the soldiers stood. A number of those standing used poles to propel the boat, in complete silence, to the other side. I realized I had the opportunity to dispose of my cartridges. I took a handful, from my pocket, and stealthily placed my arm over the side of the boat. I could not touch the water. I opened my fist and let go of the cartridges. The plunk they made, when they hit the water, must have sounded like thunder to the soldiers, since up to then it had been completely silent. They stopped poling, and everyone froze, as all listened for further sounds. I don't know if they suspected Soviet Frogmen had made the noise. After a period of watchful silence, progress resumed. It took two more handfuls to empty my pocket. Each time their response was the same.

We landed in a small town, and walked to the town square. Entering one of the larger buildings, I was led upstairs to a spacious open room on the second floor. This was, evidently, the command post for the unit, in battle on the front line. A number of desks were sprinkled around the area. A steady stream of Wehrmacht approached one or another of the desks, to give reports or deliver correspondence.

In the center of the room there was a large pot bellied stove, its sides aglow from the brisk fire burning inside. We crossed to the opposite corner, the activity, here, was more subdued. It was furnished with a couch, similar to the one in our parlor back home. The head end gently sloped upward for about one third the length, and was higher, and rounded, than the flat two thirds of the couch. Ours were stuffed with horsehair, and prickly ends often protruded. Laying flat on his back, on the sofa, was a uniformed Wehrmacht officer wearing knee high leather boots. I was up to the officer, and two more Germans, one of whom spoke English. He told, me to undress and hand my clothing to his colleague standing nearby.

I did as I was told, and stood stark naked amongst them. Unclothed, I felt more vulnerable, and solitary, than I had minutes earlier. Scenes of torture from movies I had seen, or from books I had read raced through my mind. Nearby there was a potbelly stove. Did they intend to use it to torture me to make me talk? I fully realized that the Fifteenth Air force would not have the slightest notion of our fate, or where we were. I also did not know if others were captured, killed, or had evaded. If they decided to execute me the world would never know. We had heard rumors earlier, later confirmed, that Hitler ordered captured airmen executed, because they were gangsters. They ordered me to open my mouth, which they searched. They also ordered me to bend over and spread my buttocks, which also was searched.

They began a minute search of my clothing, every pocket, and every seam. I felt relieved that the ammunition had been discarded earlier. One pocket held the little prayer book that I carried on every mission. When it was found, they used it to slap my face, at the same time they said I bombed women and children yet carried it shamelessly. They confiscated my escape kit, with all of its contents. I did not carry anything else, per standing orders, except the tri-fold pamphlet, which had a photo identifying us, and contained paragraphs, in the languages common to the region, asking for assistance in evading capture. It mystifies me as to why they returned it, later, with my clothing. It may have been useful in an escape.

At the same time, they were questioning me. The reclining officer, speaking in German, phrased a question to the interpreter, and he translated it to English. First, he asked who I was. During our training we were told, the Geneva Convention required us to give our name rank and serial number, and no additional information. We also were told that we were duty bound to only give this information and no more. I answered, giving, my name, rank, and serial number. Where are you from, he asked? What is your base? What did you bomb? Each time I answered with my name, rank, and serial number. The interpreter relayed my reply to the lounging officer. As the questioning progressed he became more and more agitated when I persisted in answering each of his questions, by giving my name, rank, and serial number. Each utterance, in the questions he phrased to the interpreter was louder, and increasingly angry.

I was called a liar, even though the only words I spoke were my name, rank, and serial number. They insisted I was a Captain. They said they knew that a Captain commanded our craft. They said I was the last to undergoing interrogation, and none questioned before me was a Captain; therefore I had to be the Captain. I was struck with the thought that someone preceding me had revealed this information, or it was a trick to get me to talk. It so happened that our pilot was a Captain, I wondered if they knew his name was von Schrittz. I answered with my name, rank, and serial number. The recent firestorm bombing of Dresden, with casualties of nuclear magnitude, was an attack of which, at that time, I was ignorant. He asked if I participated in the attack. My reply was my name, rank, and serial number. He sprang to his feet, instantly, like a spring uncoiling. A torrent of loud, strong, and I presumed Teutonic curses were hurled at me. Even though I did not understand a word of there was no question that I had provoked his extreme anger. I wondered what effect; this anger would have, on their treatment of me.

Next they asked what I would say when they said I would be executed. Frightened, naked, and alone, I was sure that my life was drawing rapidly to a close. My mind raced, searching for alternatives. I concluded, the only honorable reply I could give was my name, rank, and serial number, and in any event, if they had already decided to shoot me, nothing would alter the decision. I repeated my name, rank, and serial number. Without a further word, they gave me my clothing and told me to dress.

When I was dressed, the guard led me down the stairway, and out into the open plaza of the town square. Across the street there was a brick wall, in a few strides we he marched me over to it. It was a scene from the movie executions I had previously seen. Silently I said, a few, I felt sure were my last, prayers. We reached the wall, turned, and took a few more steps, turned onto another street, and made our way along it. I was flooded with joy to still be alive.

Halfway down the block he led me into an unfurnished house, through the front room, and into the next. Inside, stretched out on the floor was, Colton, Beauchemin, Drabik, Taylor, and King. They jumped to their feet, and we hugged each other. What a relief it was to no longer be alone, and to see familiar faces. We spent the hours talking about the experiences we had lived through that day. They were as overjoyed to see me, as I was to see them. We tried to piece together, different bits of the puzzle we each possessed, to flesh out the story of what had happened.

This room was our world for the next four days. Food rations each of those days was four rye crackers (Knackebrot) per day. I have no recollection, of when or what I drank, or going to the bathroom. Day by day our hunger increased, and our thoughts dwelt more and more on food, reminiscing of the past. Day and night, we heard the whoosh of artillery fire overhead, Soviet Katusha rockets fired in the distance, and Axis fire in return.

We were transferred a short distance from the front, to the town of Slovanski Brod, and Dulag No. 161. It was a prison camp, and most unusual. Barbed wire extending out about 10 yards, perpendicular to the face of a cliff about 30 feet high, enclosed an area about 200 yards long. Tunnels excavated into the cliff wall, provided rooms with dirt floors, ceilings, and walls, to house the prisoners. We sat and slept on the floor. The camp held an assortment of prisoners. Very few wore uniforms, and probably were political prisoners, Jews, and captured Partisans. This was the region in which Kurt Waldheim, as a German officer, was implicated in the holocaust, for treatment of prisoners in this area. Post war, for a while he held a senior position for many years in Austrian government, and then the United Nations before this role was exposed.

One meal per day was issued. Each of us was given a tablespoon, and an emptied tin can, about the size of a peach or tomato can. Around noontime the prisoners lined up to be served from a large pot. My can was halfway filled, with thick apple green porridge, resembling watery mashed potatoes. It tasted like dried pea soup, and was boiling hot, so much so, it was too hot to eat. I decided to let it cool off. Soon it had hardened, encasing my spoon. I broke out lumps and ate them.

Camp conditions, were so primitive, dirty, and crowded that we were relieved when heard we would leave a few days later. The six men from our crew, together with ten men, captured, from another 15th AAF bomber, sixteen officers of the Bulgarian Army, and a Soviet captain, were selected to leave Dulag # 161. We marched to a railroad siding where a train was parked. It was made up of a mixture of boxcars, passenger cars, flatcars carrying panzers, and flatcars outfitted with manned anti-aircraft guns. The Germans were in retreat, and we were going with them. I've often wondered about the fate that befell those who remained in Dulag # 161. They may have been massacred as the Nazis retreated.

A faded barn-red boxcar was our home for the next six weeks. Rather, I should say, one half of it became our home. This was the equivalent of the "Forty and Eight" familiar to the doughboys of World War I. Its name derived, in that it was designed to carry forty men or eight horses. It was used in World War I to transport the American Army to frontlines in France.

Ours was modified. In the center of each side there was a door, each slid open in opposite directions. A wall of barbed wire was built from the latch end of the door on one side, diagonally across to the latch end of the door on the other side. It divided the car in half, in effect the car was converted into a double "Twenty and Four". The thirty-three prisoners filled one side. The other half held our guards, the captors for this trip. They were armed with rifles, and also carried holstered side arms. Three of them were elderly men in Wehrmacht uniforms; in a similar uniform there were four women. Four wore an Italian army uniform. Our side was unfurnished. Theirs was furnished sparsely, with a few items of bedding, probably stolen from the local area. At each end of the car there was one opening about five and one half feet above the floor. It was about twenty inches long by nine inches high. A steel frame, with bars spaced an inch apart, was in the opening secured in place by screws. One anti-aircraft flat car in the train was coupled onto to our car.

Within the space our quarters were cramped. During the day there was barely enough room per man, to provide a backrest against the wall, as we sat on the floor. I spent a lot of time during our confinement, looking through the barred window, to the freedom denied to us, just outside the car. During each night, our feet intertwined with each other's, as we lay on the floor, our head to the wall. There was not enough space, for thirty-three prisoners to lie on our backs, we all had to sleep on our side. Over time, the pressure points where my bones pressed against the floor (ankles, knees, hips, and shoulders) became calloused. The pain from lying on the hard wood floor on one side would cause you to awaken. To relieve the pain, you flipped

from your left side to your right side, alternately, often during the night. This awakened everyone, since our bodies touched, and then everyone changed position. Sleep was intermittent and not very restful. Surprisingly, the train began to move, during daylight hours, about two in the afternoon. The situation on the front lines must have been rapidly deteriorating, for them to chance traveling in daylight. It was the first and last time we did. After two hours of movement, the anti-aircraft guns on the train opened fire. I looked through the barred window, and saw two fighters, about fifty feet above the ground coming towards us, rapidly closing the distance between. Tongues of flame flickered from their nose and leading wing edges, as they fired at the train. The locomotive, nor our car, was hit. Other cars, containing German SS units, suffered casualties. The SS wanted to retaliate by executing, "the flyers". Our guards talked them out of it. This was the first of at least three occasions that the SS threatened to execute us during the next month. Executions by the S.S. were commonplace during the Nazi retreat into the homeland. Any suspected deserters were summarily put to death. As time went by it became increasingly apparent, the prime object of most Germans was to survive long enough, and to be in an area captured by western allies, preferably Americans. Any except the Soviets! I think our guards viewed us, more or less, as live safe conduct passes to be used for their eventual surrender. The SS, fully expected death because of the ruthless wartime acts their organization had committed. Their only hope for survival was to hold everyone in line on the slim chance of victory, or a negotiated peace.

We watched, through the barbed wire car divider, as our captors ate, most meals were inch thick slices of black pumpernickel bread, spread with about a quarter inch of margarine, and supplemented with canned fish or meat. They did not have canned meat and fish often. We went unfed for days on end. Thoughts of food became our obsession. Mentally everyone planned their meals, if and when they were free once more. Most of our conversation, revolved around food as the theme. Universally, we all pledged never to waste food, if we survived. Our family only had desert on rare occasions, after dinner. Now most of my dream meals ended with desert.

We were bombed in a marshalling yard in Maribor, and missed being bombed by hours in Salzburg. Finally about April 10 we were bombed in the marshalling yard in Regensburg.

We knew where we were, and the high priority given to bomb this marshalling yard. The yard was full of military trains retreating from the east into Bavaria. Air raid sirens began to wail about noon. Our guards went to the door on our side, untwisted the wire securing the latch, opened the door, and let us out. With them, we ran across about ten sets of tracks, to a nearby quarry, and jumped in. There was silence for about fifteen minutes, then an air raid siren sounded. Our captors assumed it was the all clear, and returned us to the boxcar, and wired the door shut. They walked around the car to their side, and climbed into the car. Within minutes we heard the sound of airplane engines, with a surprised look, the guards ran off to the quarry, leaving us behind, locked in the car. The bombs rained down, amongst the trains surrounding ours. Fires erupted, started by exploding bombs, on many sides surrounding our car.

During the weeks we had spent in the car, looking out of the barred window, we loosened, or removed many of the window's retaining screws. We Americans discussed, among ourselves, the course of action we should follow, as the bombs fell and of being locked in our car on the target. Most felt we should wait out the raid, and hope for the best. A few of us were for breaking out. Many, of the others, felt, if we did, the Germans would shoot us. I was willing to risk being shot, and in fact preferred that to being incinerated, which seemed more likely every second. Fires burned everywhere, munitions were exploding, it got increasingly hot. Fortunately, one of those also opting for breakout was the Bombardier from the other crew. He was the smallest of all of us. Three of us grasped the bars, and pulled out the window with one mighty tug. We boosted the bombardier, feet first through the opening, and held his hands to lower him as low as possible to the ground, then let go. He landed on his feet, ran to the door, removed the wire that secured the latch, and opened the door.

Now everyone decided to join us. We jumped from the boxcar, and ran to the quarry. As we ran, we looked up to the sky. I noticed the falling bombs were visible, and their trajectory could be estimated. We fell to the ground, when we expected close impact, otherwise we continued to run, until we got to the quarry and jumped in. It was filled with a large number of men in the Wehrmacht uniforms. Our guards saw us and came over with a sheepish look on their face, I assume for abandoning us. They never said a word regarding how we accomplished getting to the quarry. The raid seemed to last for hours.

Our train and the tracks were destroyed, our rail travel ended, we began to walk, we didn't know it but our destination was Stalag VIIA in Moosberg Germany. We took about two and a half weeks to get there. We walked at day, and usually spent the night in a farmer's barn. The food situation improved slightly. We got

an occasional loaf of bread to share. It was black bread, and production dates showed that it had been baked as much as a year earlier.

There also was a period of about ten days when we subsisted on just boiled potatoes. We were given three or four, once a day. We ate one while it was hot, and pocketed the rest, to eat one at a time later. Within days we began to all suffer from diarrhea. The guards gave us pills that were plain charcoal. They worked somewhat, but soon the supply was exhausted. To provide a substitute, we baked the potatoes, in open fires, when we stopped for the evening. We ate the blackened skin to provide the charcoal.

Dachau was nearby, along the route of our march, which took us through Straubing, Landshut, Freising, Erding, and finally Moosberg. Early one morning, as we walked along a narrow road, a truck similar to the stake body truck used by the U.S. Army called the five by five passed, heading the same way, and disappeared up ahead. It was loaded, packed full, of a sorry looking lot of upwards of fifty or more passengers. They were emaciated, and dressed in blue and white horizontal striped uniforms. About a half hour later, we passed by a farmer plowing a field, next to the road, using an ox to pull the plow. About ten yards in, away from the road, there was a body, lying on its back, a trickle of red flowed from his ear, and mouth. He was clothed in the same blue and white striped uniform and probably had been one of the truck passengers. The tracks made by the plow swung around both sides of the body, within inches of touching it. It was as though the body was a rock or other natural obstacle. The cold, seemingly unfeeling, action of the plowman, illustrated the German psyche at that time.

Finally, on Wednesday April 25, 1945 we reached Stalag VIIA. The guards turned us over to the commander. It was the last we saw or heard of them, I sometimes wonder what became of them as the war ended. We were assigned bunks in a barracks. The camp was packed, overloaded in fact. I wonder how we were fortunate enough to get a bunk. I say fortunate, because it was better than the floor, or ground. The bunks were stacked six high and the upper bunk was about seven feet above the floor. The vertical distance from bunk to bunk was about fifteen inches. My sleeping accommodation consisted of no mattress, no pillow, no sheets, and no blankets. It consisted of five or six bed slats spaced to support the ankles, hips, torso, shoulders, and head.

Stalag VIIA was a well-established camp, and held nationals from all the allies opposed to the Reich. Some of the prisoners were captured in North Africa, others during the defeat of France, others from the Bulge, others from the Dieppe raid

Sunday morning April 29, 1945 was a beautiful sunny day, even to a POW. Al Beauchemin and I learned that two French Chaplains would celebrate Catholic Mass in the space between two barracks. It was well attended. Just after communion was given, right near the end of mass, a flight of P-51 Mustangs crossed the prison camp low overhead. They proceeded to do some aerobatics. We all cheered. They were warning us that attack was imminent, but we never got their message, until they began to dive, and strafe the perimeter of the camp. The assembly broke up, and dispersed to individual barracks. We lay down on the floor of ours. Other than psychologically, this provided little shelter. Gunfire, small arms and light cannon, had erupted surrounding the camp. It lasted about one half hour, and then stopped. After a minute or two of silence, we risked looking outside. My view was down the street to the main gate. Few of the guards had their empty arms raised above their head. A Sherman tank charged through the unopened gate destroying it. Infantry was close behind. We learned our liberators were the Fourteenth (14th) Armored Division, and the One Hundred Ninth (109th) Infantry Division, units of Patton's Army. They proceeded to the flagpole, lowered the Swastika, and raised the Stars and Stripes. Unless you've experienced captivity by a foreign power, you never have experienced this singular thrill, to see your own flag raised, restoring your liberty. Reliving this event in memory even today, during a flag raising ceremony, can choke me up, and bring tears to my eyes. It's beyond my ability to adequately describe the sensation.

It wasn't long before a flag representing each of the countries involved in the struggle against Nazism flew above the barracks roofs. The captives must have secretly assembled them from cloth scraps.

Twenty seven thousand were freed that day, the largest single liberation of allied captives in World War II. We learned the next day, that Hitler had committed suicide in his Berlin bunker. April 29, 1945 was memorable.

It took until May 8th to organize the evacuation of Stalag VIIA. We boarded five by five trucks, and were driven to an airfield in Landshut Germany. Soon C-47s began to arrive, we boarded and began the flight to Dieppe France, and Camp Lucky Strike. I was the only airman in the passenger area; all other Ex-POWS had been ground troops. I discovered a number of C-rations stowed below the seats, just as a crewmember

walked by. I asked if I could have one. He said, "Eat them all". The ride was at low level over the Black Forest, and rising and falling air currents, so called air pockets, buffeted the plane. Fear of flying was more common in the 1940s than today, and for most men aboard, this was probably their first flight. The rough ride did not help calm their fears. I was so hungry I polished off two C-rations. No one joined me they were all airsick.

At Camp Lucky Strike we showered, shaved and were re-outfitted. We got a cursory medical exam. I weighed 145 pounds. I had lost thirty pounds. I was anxious to be on my way home, and didn't want to risk delay by the medics, so did not report any injuries. We filled out V-Mail letters and sent them off to home. The meals were meager; they said our digestive system had to slowly learn to handle food again.

Epilogue

Having survived, despite facing death up-close so often, was a subject of discussion amongst our crew. I, and I believe most others; felt we were spared for some future mission to do some good in our life. I saw an opportunity open itself to me when the G.I. Bill was passed. Up to then a college education seemed out of my reach.

However, it was not clear sailing, even with the G.I. Bill. My military service was just short, of enough, to cover four years of college. During my high school years I felt that college was out of reach economically. Consequently I did not follow a college preparatory course. I had a general course of study, based on commercial subjects, which included bookkeeping and business courses. Because of curiosity and the fact that I could use study periods for class work, rather than study, I also took general science, biology, physics, chemistry and elementary algebra.

I decided to become a Chemical Engineer. I had to overcome a few obstacles:

1. I needed to study and get credit for three mathematics courses, intermediate algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. I worked full-time, took, and was credited with, all three subjects, simultaneously, in accelerated night school courses, held for one hour each, five nights per week, in one semester.
2. I worked each summer and saved, enough money to cover the balance of my tuition costs. I lived at home while attending college, and paid my board.
3. Lacking prerequisite language credit, required by most colleges, I located a school, which did not require language.
4. I deferred marriage, and family until earning a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering, and working to save enough money to afford the responsibilities of both.

I worked a few years at a vegetable oil refinery, producing salad oils, and shortening, before the job opportunity I really wanted materialized, one that would fulfill my ambition to benefit mankind, and do some good with my life. I worked for Pfizer Inc. the rest of my career, manufacturing pharmaceuticals, antibiotics, and other medicines.

Dorothy Patricia Byrne, and I were wed on April 19, 1952. We remained childless, despite medical treatment. We adopted a child, James from the Angel Guardian Home in Brooklyn NY. After his adoption we asked to adopt a girl from them. They asked if we would accept two young sisters who lived in an orphanage in Turin Italy. We said yes, they joined our family.

During the fourteen years of retirement, Dorothy and I have volunteered most every Wednesday at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Connecticut. We work in the pharmacy, I pre-pack thirty day doses of prescriptions, she files the forms for the filled prescriptions.

I served years as chairman of the Elks Lodge Veterans Committee, we brought hospitalized veterans to our lodge for a days outing, and distributed Christmas gifts at the V. A. Hospital.

I've held one office or another in the Connecticut Chapter of the American Ex-Prisoners of War during the last fourteen years.

I've been a Director of the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society (AFEES) for years, and maintain the roster database, and issue labels for the mailing of the newsletter. AFEES raises money to defray the cost of hosting "Helpers" (citizens of France, Belgium, Holland Yugoslavia, etc who assisted downed airmen to evade capture) at our annual reunion. Dorothy and I have operated all aspects of an annual members only raffle (writing the letter, getting the letter and raffle tickets printed, mailing them, recording the individual

returns, maintain the account, hold the raffle, distribute prizes, and send the proceeds to the treasurer) for the past three years. We clear about six thousand dollars annually. AFEES uses the funds to pay for "Helpers" re-union expenses.

I am a Life member of the Fifteenth Air Force Association.

I am also a Charter Life member of the Old Lyme CT VFW, and have held various offices.

*Credit Frashinsky
Pres 455th BCASSN*

It Needs Your Action!

Currently, military survivors who attain age 62 see their Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities cut by almost one-third – to 35% of SBP-covered retired pay vs. 55% before age 62. This is just wrong on several counts. First, the Pentagon admits that the congressionally-intended 40% subsidy for SBP has dropped below 17%. Second, many retirees who enrolled in the 1970's weren't told of the age-62 benefit cut. Third, federal civilian SBP survivors get far higher subsidies, and their SBP plan pays them 50% to 55% of retired pay for life.

When the military SBP subsidy previously dropped below 28% in 1989, Congress addressed it by reducing the premium to help retirees. Now that the subsidy has dropped even lower, it's time to help older widows by raising their very modest annuities.

S. 451 would balance cost and equity concerns by phasing in increases in the age-62 annuity over five years – to 55% of retired pay by October 1, 2007. To help offset the cost and protect more survivors, it would authorize an "open season" so retirees not currently enrolled would be reduced by \$524M over five years. With an October 1, 2004 effective date, S. 451 entails no cost for FY2004, and only \$45 million for FY2005 (after

open enrollment savings). This makes it far less expensive than the amount the Budget Committee approved last year for concurrent receipt. However, it must be included in the FY2004 Budget Resolution to allow lead-time for the open season.

Your military constituents are depending on you to exert your strongest personal effort to help uniformed services widows by seeking budget "headroom" for S. 451 in the FY2004 Budget Resolution.

Write your Congressmen today.

So Much...Too Late!

Mrs. Theresa Wittman McLaughlin, of Hollywood, Florida, is proud to announce that her late husband, Major William Wittman, Jr. has been awarded the "Distinguished Flying Cross" for "Extraordinary achievement while participating in enemy territory, all over Europe during the Second World War.

He had enlisted in the U.S. Air Force to fly but learned early on that he was too young to and would have to wait.

One week later, after the Japs had bombed Pearl Harbor, he was on a train traveling west to San Francisco, packing a gun. We even had enemies in our country then, they called them saboteurs. The saying was, "A loose lip, could sink a ship". We wanted to be ready for them. Some of the Servicemen carried guns. He served first in Aus-

tralia and then New Guinea.

It was while he was serving in New Guinea he was transferred back to the U.S. to begin training for Flight School. He graduated in a year or so and "I pinned the silver wings on his chest." "Oh, Happy Day!" as he would say.

After flight training, he was shipped overseas again, without leave. He was now part of the 455th Bomb Group (H) and stationed in Italy, flying fifty missions, all over Europe, over enemy territory.

The accompanying document with the Medal reads:

The United States of America, To all who Presents Greeting: This is to certify that the President of the United States of America, Authorized by Act of Congress, July 2, 1926 the Distinguished Flying Cross to First Lieutenant William Wittman, Jr. for extraordinary achievement in aerial flight.



Flag Folding Tradition Has Deep Meanings

The military honor guard pays meticulous attention to correctly folding the American flag 13 times before handing it to the next of kin at the burial of a veteran. The following are 11 of the 13 reasons why:

- The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life.
- The second fold is a symbol of our belief in eternal life.
- The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veterans departing our ranks who gave their life in the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.
- The fourth fold represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn to in times of peace as well as in times of war.
- The fifth fold is a tribute to our country.
- The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.
- The seventh fold is a tribute to our Armed Forces.
- The eighth fold is a tribute to the one entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor mother, for whom it files on Mother's Day.
- The ninth fold is a tribute to the father.
- When the flag is completely fold-

ed, the stars are uppermost reminding us of our nations motto, "In God We Trust." When the flag is folded and tucked in, it reminds us of those in the Armed Forces of the United States who have fought to preserve for us the rights, privileges, and freedoms we enjoy today.

There are some traditions and ways of doing things that have deep meaning.

You will see many flags folded in the coming weeks, and now you will know why.

Ed- reprinted from the Appleton Post Crescent, letters to the Editor, ie Bob Lace, Neenah, WI

21 Reasons Why The English Language Is Hard To Learn

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The farm was used to produce produce.
3. The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
4. We must polish the Polish furniture.
5. He could lead if he would get the lead out.
6. The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
7. Since there is no time like the present, he decided to pre-

sent the present.

8. A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
9. When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
10. I did not object to the object.
11. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
12. There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
13. They were too close to the door to close it.
14. The buck does funny things when the does are present.
15. A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
16. To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
17. The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
18. After a number of injections my jaw got number.
19. Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
20. I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
21. How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

