



\*\*\* We were the 1st, and still serving \*\*\*



# SECOND BOMBARDMENT ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

### "Second to None"

[www.2ndbombgroup.org](http://www.2ndbombgroup.org)



## Volume 28, No. 1, February 2012

### President's Corner

Greetings from the "Old North State" (North Carolina). A Happy New Year to you all! I trust that your holidays were happy and healthy. For those of you who may not have heard, my father, Earl W Martin, editor emeritus, was diagnosed with cancer in late October 2011. He remains his positive and inspirational self, though confined to bed. Fortunately, he is pain free and stable for now. We all spent Christmas and very much good time with him.

As your new president, I will do my best, and with the support of our able officers and directors, to keep things running smoothly. I give thanks to you veterans for all you have done for our country.

We enjoyed a wonderful reunion in Colorado Springs in August. I hope that those of you who were able to be there, enjoyed it as much as I did. It was an honor to have General Michael Ryan speak at our Saturday banquet. Also, it was very fitting that we had a contingent of Air Force cadets as our guests at the dinner.

The tour of the Air Force Academy was an outstanding experience. The grounds are set on the eastern foothills of

the Rocky Mountains with Pikes Peak in the background. We were fortunate to tour the Cadet Chapel and to marvel at its beauty and magnificent acoustics. A few of us even got to see the Cadet Athletic complex, its gymnasium and the myriad programs available to every cadet.

The outdoor barbecue dinner at the Flying 'W' Ranch was a delicious and fun evening. The suns of the pioneers style entertainers livened the program.

Being able to witness the beauty of the Garden of the Gods and the majesty of Pikes Peak, Colorado Springs was fine setting for our recent reunion. I hope that those of you who were able to attend, enjoyed it as much as I did.

Our next reunion will be at Omaha in September 2012. Plans are have been set for another interesting and enjoyable get together for all ages. You will find details and registration information elsewhere in these pages. Please plan to be with us. Bring all of your family, they will enjoy it and deserve to enjoy the company of wonderful people

Until next time,  
Nancy Martin



## SQUADRON AND/OR GROUP PATCHES

### PLEASE NOTE THIS CALLS FOR A RESPONSE

I have a source for Squadron and/or Group patches. The approximate cost would be \$10.00 each, including shipping. If there is enough interest, I will order a small supply. Specify the Squadron, the number wanted and if the 2nd Bomb Group patch is desired.

Also, contact me if you are interested in obtaining a hard copy of the book, "The Second Was First" by Charles Richards. If the price is reasonable, we may be able to have the book reprinted.

Thank you.  
Lew Waters

Call or email Waters at 937-629-0897  
email to [enon2212@sbcglobal.net](mailto:enon2212@sbcglobal.net)



Chuck Childs and Lew Waters welcome our speaker, General Mike Ryan

## Editor Notes

In 1944 I had the bad luck to be shot down over Czechoslovakia. There was also good luck since on that same day I made two life-long friends. Mojmir Baca found me and took me to his family's farm house where they put me up for one night. We did not meet Jirik Fleischer until much later. He was 5<sup>1/2</sup> years old when he and his father witnessed my parachute descent near their home town of Bojkovice.

Baca and his wife, Eliska, had four daughters and ten grandchildren. The two oldest, Jana Turcinkova and Lenka Vaculinova visited us and fellow crew members during visits to the U.S. Jana came as a Rotary Exchange Student in Denver and went on to earn PhD in Economics in Brno. Lenka has a daughter whose name is Skye and lives in Slavacin. We have adopted both of these young

women as our own. Mojmir Baca, 87, died last September in Slavacin.

Fleischer was a notary public and lawyer who lived in Brno. Jirik kept track of me and we visited each time we returned to the Czech Republic. In every instance he photographed the numerous commemoration events that took place. Jirik and his good friend, Vlastimil Hela, came to our reunion last summer at Colorado Springs. They stayed with Karol and me several days after the reunion. It was a great pleasure for all of us. Jirik Fleischer, 72, passed away last October.

My valediction to all is to maintain your friendships and value them above all temporal things.

Loy Dickinson

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## OUTGOING PRESIDENT

These past three years have been very rewarding for me. My time in office has been educational, informative, interesting and inspiring, although not necessarily in that order. Since this is my last official message as your president, I wish to thank all of the officers and board members for their guidance and assistance these past few years. Everyone has contributed to the benefit of the association at one time or another. I wish to especially applaud Loy Dickinson for all of his assistance during my term of office, particularly for his accepting the position of Newsletter Editor upon the retirement of Earl Martin. As some of you realize, Earl is currently in hospice care, so please keep him and his family in your prayers.

The next generation is assuming leadership as of January 1, 2012. Your incoming president and vice-president, Nancy Martin and Karen Nelson respectively, are both daughters of veterans. They join others of their generation who retain their positions of leadership, combining with the veterans to ensure that the group's history remains viable. Kingman Loomis is our newest addition as a director.

Again, I want to thank John and Barbara Bryner for their joining Ann and me in Cedar Rapids this past June, for the memorial service and internment of S/Sgt. Marvin Steinfeld, a member of the 429th Squadron who had been M.I.A. for 65 years. Also, on behalf of the association, I need to thank Chuck Childs for his efforts in arranging for General (Ret.) Michael Ryan, former Air Force Chief of Staff, and son of General John Ryan, to be our speaker in Colorado Springs. In addition, Chuck arranged for a graveside service to honor General John Ryan, one of our group commanders in Italy, who is buried in the cemetery at the Air Force Academy.

I would be remiss if I didn't publicly thank my wife Ann, for her patience and understanding, due to the many hours I spent on the computer and telephone these past few years. And thanks to our daughter Jan Coyle, for her companionship and assistance, helping Ann and me in traveling to the past five reunions.

Happy New Year! Arrivederci,

Lew Waters

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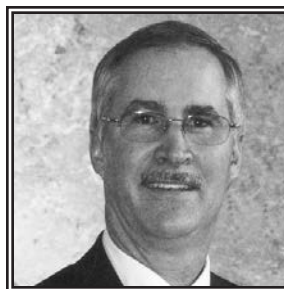
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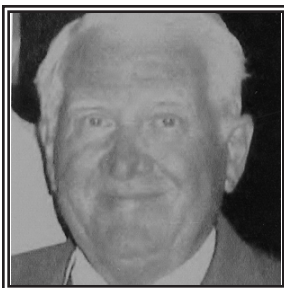
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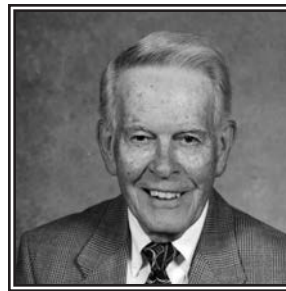
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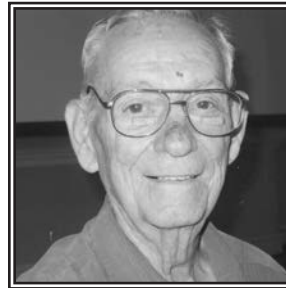
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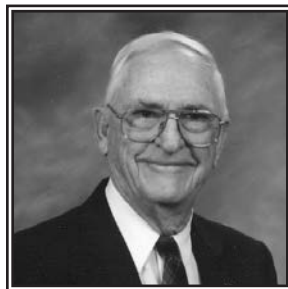
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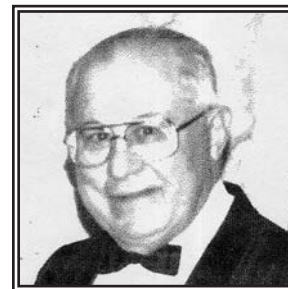


**Directors Emeritus**

Fred Fitzpatrick



Earl W. Martin



## EDWIN C. WADE

### B-17 RADIO OPERATOR 2ND BOMB GROUP, 49TH SQUADRON

I served in WWII as a radio operator on a B-17 in the 2nd Bomb Group, 15th Air Force in Italy. We were shot down on my 26th mission while bombing the target Florisdorf Oil Refinery, near Vienna, Austria. I was assigned to the lead crew for this mission. It was one of the roughest targets we had. My pilot was a full Colonel and the commander of the 2nd Bomb Group. Our plane had been hit hard on other missions, and we always managed to get back, but this was worse. Flak tore us up on the bomb run. Part of the left wing was shot off, the two left engines were gone, oxygen was shot out, hydraulics were shot out and our plane was shot up with hundreds of holes. We got rid of our bombs, but we started going down very fast with only two engines still running. We crash landed near Sasd, Hungary, just over the Russian/German battle lines.

We took down several trees in the ordeal and the plane acted like a plow scooping up dirt inside and I thought we were going to be buried alive. We finally came to a stop and managed to get out of the plane. After getting out we saw a number of peasants at some distance and they were just looking at us. We didn't know if we were in German or Russian held territory. It wasn't very long before a military vehicle drove up and an army of women soldiers with fingers on the triggers of their machine guns. A Russian

commandant was riding in the vehicle. After we showed him our identification written in Russian, we were greeted warmly and escorted to a nearby village. Here we drank wine and made toasts to Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill, in that order.

Eventually we joined up with 28 other crewmen who had also been shot down. We stayed in Hungarian homes and finally ended up on an old German train heading east. We were on that train for more than a week living on what little food we could get by trading parachute silk with farmers on the wayside. In Bucharest, Romania we got our only decent meal, furnished by the Red Cross. We finally ended up in Odessa, Russia on the Black Sea. Here we managed to board an English transport ship on its way back to England. It was returning English soldiers who had been repatriated by the Russians. Finally, after six weeks of staying alive and losing 20 pounds, we were dropped off at Naples, Italy. Shortly I was back at my 2nd BG base and later was flown back to the United States.



*Kingman Loomis receives Peace Crane origami from Tai Dickinson*



*Bonnie (left) quizzes Pres Lew (right) during intense Board Meeting in Colorado Springs*

# FOOTBALL SPECIAL NEBRASKA VS ARKANSAS ST.

Saturday, September 15, 2012 at Lincoln, Nebraska not far from Omaha where we are celebrating our Bomb Group Reunion. A terrific opportunity arranged by Bonnie Hellums and Carel Stith. (Carel is a member of the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame). We will car pool from the hotel to the game. If you have never been to a football crazy place, this will be your best shot. Lincoln is one of the most important football towns in America. Tickets are \$55.00 – Make out your checks to Bonnie Hellums and send them to her at: 3030 Eastside St. Houston, TX 77098.

Exact details about tickets will probably not be known until July 2012.

## PAST REUNIONS

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1983 – San Antonio, TX | 2001 – Omaha, NE       |
| 1985 – Sacramento, CA  | 2003 – Covington, KY   |
| 1987 – Norfolk, VA     | 2005 – St Louis, MO    |
| 1989 – Tucson, AZ      | 2006 – Dayton, OH      |
| 1991 – Dayton, OHX     | 2007 – Houston, TX     |
| 1993 – Houston, TX     | 2008 – Washington, DC  |
| 1995 – Kansas, MO      | 2009 – San Antonio, TX |
| 1997 – Las Vegas, NV   | 2010 – Tucson, AZ      |
| 1999 – Orlando, FL     | 2011 – Colorado, CO    |
|                        | 2012 – Omaha, NE       |

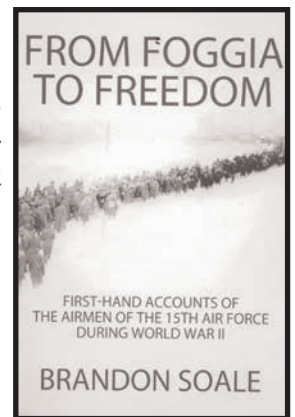
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## FROM FOGGIA TO FREEDOM

Soale is a bright young historian in Camden, Ohio. He has published a fine book about aspects of the 15th Army Air Force in and around Foggia from 1943 to 1945. Brandon still seeks interview opportunities with bomb group veterans, both flyers and ground crewmen.

He can be reached at P.O. Box 12, Camden, OH 45311 or phone - (937)-733-7188 or email [soalebm@yahoo.com](mailto:soalebm@yahoo.com) Contact Brandon directly if you

wish to purchase his book. The paper bound edition - priced at \$12.00 + \$3.00 s & h.



*Winkler's waiting to board the "Connie" surveillance planes.*



*Getting the B-17 Lecture in the theatre just before the short movie*

# PLOESTI ROMANIA

## (continued from July 2011)

It would be nine months before Allied forces recommitted to neutralize Ploesti, Romania, its oil riches and its importance to the German effort to defend itself. It had to take its place among the multitude of prime concerns of Allied political and military leadership.

Unescorted and lightly armed RAF bombers were dead meat in the face of enemy fighters. The Brits were forced to the relative safety of night strikes. They were able to continue their operations with a more sustainable loss rate, but it cost dramatically in terms of carrying out their pre-war strategic objectives. The darkness that provided some measure of protection from enemy fighters also shrouded its intended targets. RAF bombers had difficulty locating the town or city where targets were sited, much less the targets themselves.

When American bombers arrived on the scene in 1942 they depended on heavily armed bombers. Daylight bombing by US Army Air Forces was their strategy. The two Allies agreed to disagree. Fighter cover was from two front-line American fighters, the Lockheed P-38 Lightning and the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt. A system was devised where successive relays of fighters met the bombers along the bomber route. Once joined with the bombers, the fighters crisscrossed overhead in a protective formation. The use of external drop tanks was adopted in July 1943 to improve the range of fighter airplanes. By the spring of 1944 P-47 was replaced by the more suitable P51 Mustang which sported far better range.

Of all the aircraft types that Germany and her allies used to defend Ploesti and its approaches, the most effective and most used in greatest numbers was the German ME109. The world was stunned by its appearance overhead during the Berlin Olympics in 1936

In the fall of 1943 Lt Gen James H Doolittle was placed in command of the new Fifteenth Air Force. It was initially composed of the 5th Heavy Bombardment Wing with four B-17 Groups (2nd, 97th, 99th and 301st.) and two B-24 Groups (the 98th & 376th). It was rounded out with two medium bomb groups and a fighter wing. It was to grow considerably. In late 1943 and early in 1944 Lt Gen Carl A Spaatz promoted to Eisenhower the Oil Plan, a strategy which contended the defeat of the German

war machine was to disrupt and destroy its resources of oil production.

April 5, 1944 witnessed the first raid directed at Ploesti, Romania since "TIDALWAVE", the low-level mission of August 1943. The 15th Air Force inflicted substantial damage to marshaling yards and oil refineries. The Second Bomb Group was tasked with attacking marshaling yards at Ris, Romania which happened to be adjacent to the Astra Romana oil refinery.

It has been said many times but it bears repeating that the aircraft maintenance men were largely unheralded heroes of this war. They worked extraordinarily long hours in all types of environment and conditions. Quite often they put maximum effort into getting an aircraft ready for a mission only to see it return in tatters or --- not at all. This took a psychological toll. Particularly if they began to second-guess whether something they did or didn't do played a part in the airplane's loss. But there was nothing they could do except to pick up their tools and move to a different airplane. And that's what they did.

Over the next 4<sup>1/2</sup> months the Ploesti campaign was intensified. The 2nd Bomb Group took part in 13 missions over Ploesti the last of which was on August 19, 1944. It was a dreaded target because it was so heavily defended. By that time Russian troops had overwhelmed Romania and it was out of the war.

Let us examine the experience of the 2nd Bomb Group during the Ploesti campaign. It took part in 13 of the Ploesti missions during spring and summer of 1944. On these 13 missions there were 379 2nd Bomb crews of which two did not complete their missions. On July 22nd the 20th Squadron lost an airplane when pilot 1st Lt Norman Austin's bomber experienced engine failure. It dropped out of formation and was promptly shot down by fighters. Nine men were made POW and Sgt. Carl Jones was killed. The second loss was a 20th Squadron airplane piloted by F/O Robert Rogers. Its No. 4 engine had been hit by flak and belatedly caught fire over the Adriatic. All of the men parachuted into the sea. Seven were later rescued by the crews of PBY Catalinas, Air-Sea-Rescue amphibian airplanes. Three of the men drowned. 3,790 crewmen flew on these missions and there were four casualties. The war would last another 269 days.

# WORDS, WAR, WORRY

By: Linda Gartz

ON THIS VETERANS DAY, thousands of mothers are aching with worry about their sons and daughters in uniform in foreign lands. Newspapers display photos of trained and tough young men and women, but the mothers know it was just yesterday that they held these warriors as children, cooked them a favorite meal, nurtured them through illness, advised them through troubles, and kissed away their sorrows.

It was no different for my Romanian immigrant grandmother 68 years ago. Her youngest son, my father's kid brother, 19-year-old Frank Gartz, was stationed at Stevens Point, Wis., with the 97th College Training Detachment of the Army Air Forces. A year later, in 1944, he would be sent to Italy as a navigator, flying bombing missions in the last year of World War II.

Unable to "be there" for her child, my grandmother poured all the mothering she could muster into her letters, which remained boxed and buried in the dusty corners of basements and attics for decades. After my mother's death in 1994, they came to rest in my garage for nine years until, finally, a nagging inner voice drove me to bring them to the light of day. These long-ignored letters concealed insights into another era and, most important to me, into my grandmother's mind. If they had been left unread, old family myths would have persisted, and a side to my grandmother's personality would have remained unknown to me.

I remember Elizabeth Gartz as a hardworking, no-nonsense woman, long on will power but short on compassion. That last impression melted when I began reading her heartfelt letters to her son, whom she called by his middle name, Ebner. They are all the more poignant because she had to write them in a foreign language—English. My grandmother was from Romania, but she was an ethnic German, and that was her native tongue. During World War II, it wouldn't have done for a young American soldier to receive communication in German. More than likely, it would have jeopardized his standing, and perhaps even cast suspicion on his loyalty. Frank asked his mother to write to him in English.

After spending a long, hard day working with my grandfather in the many buildings they took care of as janitors on Chicago's West Side, my grandmother would sit down, usually late at night, with a German-English dictionary by her side, struggling to put into words what was in her heart and mind.

One of her letters was written exactly 68 years ago this Veterans Day, on Nov. 11, 1943, then called Armistice Day. Despite the letter's tortured syntax and misspellings of English written with a foreign accent, her devotion illuminates every page.

In a Nov. 6 letter to his mother, Frank had described a punishment he had received as a result of an altercation with his sergeant over supposedly not following orders. "He got hot and so did I, and we said many harsh words to each other," he wrote.

His mother seems to nod understandingly when she writes back in her broken English, "So the army is the same all over the world. You get blamt for someting not your doing." But then she adds some motherly advice, "Next time you get bawled out by a man higher than you, say these lines to God, 'Help me to speak calmly.'"

She passes on snippets of family gossip—"Pa goes to the dentist with his teeth. One hat to pull out"—and she shares the empty-nester melancholy of a woman whose three grown sons are busy with their own lives. "I am so lonesome. I stand often looking at the three pictures and pray for my boys." Like every mother separated from a child by wartime and training, she is desperate to hear from him. "Please write me as you can. I am glad for every bit."

She inquires into his studies. "How you getting along with your school? Is it too hard or not too bad?" She looks after his social life—"You got goot fellow for your friend?"—and after his love life. A girl he was seeing had to leave the area where he was stationed, upon which she writes, "I am glad you hat a swell girl and had a goot time. I wish you a sweller girl." She dispenses medical advice for his sore throat—"Use hot water and iodine"—and frets over his bout with dysentery, "Is your stomach weak? Watch what you eat." She promises him a special meal. "I have a veal steak or round steak ready if you come home for weekend. You will like it (I hope)."

She reports on the mundane—his at-home girlfriend, Cookie Karbach, has a cold—and the terrifying: their former Chicago Tribune delivery boy was shot down over Sicily: "... broken arm, broken feet, broken back & collarbone," she writes. Their pastor's brother "was badly stabt and shot tru both shoulder and hip." These stories must have struck fear into her heart, knowing that very soon, he, too, would be in combat. Throughout every letter, she turns to God for solace, "I pray for you morning and night."

I see my grandmother's letters as a kind of nurturing talisman, her desperate attempt to ward off the twin demons of fear and helplessness that stalk all parents whose children are in harm's way. Six decades later, mothers are still sending their soldier sons and daughters letters—and now, email—filled with family and neighborhood news, encouragement, advice, love and prayer. Each holds the ardent hope that if mom can't give "hands-on" care, perhaps these missives of mothering will keep danger and hostility at bay.

Visit Linda's blog at [www.familyarchaeologist.com](http://www.familyarchaeologist.com)





# MARCH 29, 1944: THE END OF A B-17

By: Giancarlo Garello



It was half past noon March 29, 1944, when hell broke loose over my hometown, Cairo Montenotte, not too far from the city of Genoa. A battle was underway above the clouds and the overcast hid the opponents from view. I was going home from school and when the echo of gunfire filled the sky over hill and dale I ran for the nearest air-raid shelter.

On that fateful day of Spring about a hundred heavies from the 2nd, 97th, 99th and 301st Bomb Groups of the 15thAF had just carried out a bombing raid against Turin marshalling yards. Four FIAT G.55 “Centauro” fighters led by Capitano (Captain) Giovanni Bonet, CO of the Italian Republican Air Force “Montefusco” defence squadron, scrambled from Venaria Reale airfield on the outskirts of Turin and attacked the mighty “armada” with great resolution. With Bonet were Lt. Giuseppe “Bepi” Biron, WO Gino Jellici and Sgt. Lucio Biagini, all skilled veterans with years of combat experience behind them.

Why Italian airmen would keep up the fight against the Allied Nations despite the armistice called by the Kingdom of Italy on 8 September 1943? Actually the unconditional surrender had come totally unexpected, bringing about the dissolution of Italian armed forces and administration and the traumatic break up of the country. On the northern side of the frontline a pro-German Italian Social Republic (RSI) was established, led by a reinstated Mussolini but the power was actually wielded by the former German allies, embittered by what they considered the Italian betrayal. In an attempt to enforce a semblance of State authority the RSI strove to reorganize its armed forces and grudging approval from the Luftwaffe was gained to form a small air defence force called the “Aeronautica Nazionale Repubblicana (ANR)” (National Republican Air Force), mainly to protect Italian cities and industrial areas. The “Montefusco” squadron, later renamed “Bonet” after its CO killed in action, was among the first ANR units to join the fighting.

The Italian pilots made repeated attacks against the USAAF bombers and scored many hits. Bonet and Biagini then noticed that a B-17G (serial number 42-97152 belonging to the 20th BS of 2nd BG) was becoming isolated from the main stream. It was 1stLt Edward Wronkoski’s ship, flying on two engines after being hit by the Flak over the target. With engines #3 and #4 dead and #1 overspeeding (the propeller would come off seconds later) the lone straggler was unable to withstand the concentrated assaults of the Italian fighters. Despite every effort to keep the B-17 straight and level Wronkoski soon realized that his situation was hopeless and ordered “abandon ship”. As soon as the crew began to bail out from the stricken aircraft Cpt Bonet held fire and watched the scene, rocking his wings at the American airmen hanging from their parachutes.

From my observation point I could see the parachutes shifting through the air. The shaken airmen hit the ground in the surroundings of Cairo and were soon rounded up by the Germans and taken into captivity. I recall seeing them piled in a German truck, lively enough to exchange a few words in broken Italian with the crowd. Only S/Sgt LaRouche was lucky enough to avoid capture. He was rescued by local farmers and kept in hiding for two months at their grave risk. LaRouche later joined the Partisans in the hills and even earned a Silver Star fighting the Germans.

Two crewmembers, 2nd Lt Sanvito and S/Sgt High, seriously injured, were rushed to hospital by the Germans and well treated. Sanvito even underwent surgery in the groin that saved his life. Both spent two months in a Cairo field hospital and came in contact with local people, mostly nurses and medical orderlies plus a barber whose father lived in Philadelphia.

The Italian fighters could press home their attacks because the escorting “checktailed” Thunderbolts of 325th FG arrived at the scene with a few minutes delay (or perhaps the bombers were slightly ahead of schedule). When fortyfour P-47s took over their escort duties the Italians could only break off the fight and take evasive action. Nevertheless WO Luigi Jellici, after a dramatic pursuit by four Thunderbolts, was forced to bail out of his burning G.55. Jellici landed almost unscathed but Cpt Bonet was not so lucky. Attacked at low level on the return leg he was caught off guard and hit in mid-air. Both pilot and aircraft disintegrated in a walnut copse near Alba, about 60 km from Turin. With a score of 12 victories Bonet was the holder of 4 silver medals for valour and had participated in every major campaign of the Royal Italian Air Force, from Spain to Russia. He was posthumously awarded the highest Italian decoration, the gold medal for valour. Cpt. Bonet was shot down by Maj. Herschel “Hersky” Green, CO of 317 FS, who concluded his tour of operations with 18 air victories, second top-scoring ace in the MTO.

At the time I was only ten but the event became engraved in my memory.

It was this that would eventually lead me to want to reconstruct the air combat in every detail in a book entitled "Centauri su Torino" (Centauri over Turin) first published in 1998 and recently re-issued.

Wronkoski's crew were sent to Stalagluft I and III.



They all survived the war. When I started my research around the year 1987 I was a pilot with Alitalia, the Italian airlines. Flying on intercontinental routes I had the opportunity to check through the US phone directories, and with the aid of helpful switchboard operators I got in touch with almost

the entire crew and met personally Ed Wronkosky, Frank Sanvito, Allen High, George Lawrence, Maurice LaRouche, Dick Zeugin's sister Jeanne Marie, a catholic nun. After retirement I attended quite a few 2nd BG Association reunions all over the States (Las Vegas, Orlando, St Louis, Washington, Kansas City).

In the Nineties Ed Wronkoski and Frank Sanvito

visited Cairo Montenotte at my invitation and were my special guests. We became very good friends and our relationship went on until they passed away because of illness or age.

May they rest in peace in the aviators hunting grounds.

In June 1993 I flew the Pope John Paul II to Denver, CO, and there on the apron Sister Jeanne Marie Zeugin was waiting for me: a big hug sealed a friendship cultivated through years of affectionate correspondence. Though she is now 96, we still keep in touch.



Working RC Model of the B-17 featured in the movie built by the real pilot who flew it and was shot down



Winkler chow table at the Flying W Ranch



Unloading the Flying W

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## CZECH VISITOR REMARKS AT OUR REUNION

Ladies and Gentlemen – Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Jirik Fleischer, I live in the city of Brno. I am a lawyer by profession. I am deeply honored to take part at your reunion.

In 1944, I lived with my parents in the small town of Bojkovice in eastern Czech Republic, not far from its border with Slovakia. I was staring wide-eyed at the bombing squadrons flying overhead, gleaming in the blue sky like small silver fish leaving white trails of hot air behind. Fighter planes were circling around the bombers like small silver flies. My parents and neighbors were very happy. My father told me then. “The end of the war was coming, the Americans are the lords of the air.” Older friends of my sister were waving to the planes and one of them whooped joyfully: “Handsome young American boys are sitting in those planes!” Everybody was waving to the planes, despite the fact they knew they could not be seen from the sky.

What a surprise, then, on August 29, 1944 when German fighters attacked the American bombers! My parents, neighbors and I, were standing in front of our house. Gunfire from machine guns could be heard from the skies. Gleaming empty shell casings were falling. Everybody was startled by the explosion of James Weiler’s bomber at the town of Krhov. The next moment, a roar of engines and another explosion

was heard, and a wing of a plane came slowly falling down, rotating like a leaf that is falling from a tree. It seemed to be falling down onto our back garden but actually, it crashed about four miles away from us.

Suddenly, a part of the fuselage appeared and rotated downwards. All the onlookers fell silent and turned serious. All of a sudden, a friend of my sister exclaimed: “parachutes, look, parachutes!” My friend Loy Dickinson came down in one of them. Each of us was happy that those flyers saved their lives.

You might have been feeling lonely when flying high up. However, it was not so. Thousands of eyes were watching you from the ground. Thousands of hearts were beating for you, rejoicing at the thought that the end of the horrible war was coming soon and the people of my country would be free again. Those standing below wished you to succeed in hitting all the targets and to make a good flight to your base in Italy. Those people were praying for you. Even 67 years later these events cannot be forgotten! Every war causes civilian casualties. The city of Brno, where I live, was bombed twice by the 15th Army Air Force in 1944. Even then however, the anger of the people of Brno was not directed against the Americans but against the Germans alone as the originators of all the evil and suffering that necessarily resulted from it.

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## IN MEMORIUM

Alva Flowers    20<sup>th</sup> Squadron  
January 17, 2012

Aruther ‘Bud’ Hunt    20<sup>th</sup> Squadron  
July 2010

Jesse ‘Jake’ Killian    429<sup>th</sup> Squadron  
October 14, 2011

Charles A. McEwen    429<sup>th</sup> Squadron  
January 21, 2012

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