



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



SECOND BOMBARDMENT ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

"Second to None"

www.2ndbombgroup.org



Volume 23, No. 2

July 2007



President's Corner

As promised, here is some information so that you will know the other officers better.

The Vice President is John Sisson who retired as a Lt. Col. from the USAF after 26 years of service. He and his wife, Irma, have three grown children, 6 grandchildren and one great grandchild. They live in Mill River, Massachusetts.

Our Secretary is Lew Walters. He and his wife, Annie, live outside of Cincinnati, Ohio. He was born in Idaho but grew up in Indianapolis. He joined the Army Air Corps in 1943. After the service, he attended Indiana University and got a BS in Education in 1950. He retired in 1990. He and Annie have three kids and three grandchildren. Lew is wonderful on researching and helping folks find out about men who were in the 2nd Bomb Group.

Our Treasurer is Matt Bryner. Matt lives in Denver, Colorado and is married with two children. His grandfather, John Bryner, was a tail gunner who was shot down in '45 over Germany. Matt is a civil engineer who is interested in WWII history.

Earl Martin is our tireless newsletter editor. He was a pilot in the 20th Squadron and has a wonderful account of his adventures during the war. He spent more than a year in Stalag Luft III. He has edited the newsletter for more than nine years. He comes to the reunions with his lovely wife and son and daughter each year. He also helps with questions from folks who find us and want information about some of the men.

Paul Skalny serves as the Historian and has done so since 2002. He is the son of John Skalny, a waist gunner for the 20th Squadron who survived being down during WWII. Paul is the Director of the Army's National Automobile Center, part of the Tank - Automotive Development & Engineering Center located in Warren, Michigan.

Sid Underwood is our webmaster, having taken over that job from David Carlock who died in

July, 2006. Sid and his wife, Francyne, have been married 36 years and live on the far northeast side of San Antonio, Texas. Francyne is now retired from Colgate Oral Pharmaceuticals and Sid has given 27 years to Southwestern Bell/AT&T. Sid's father, C.E. Underwood, who is now deceased, was a pilot with the 429th Squadron.

Last, but certainly not least, is the wonderful leader, Loy Dickinson who spent several years as president of this group. He lives part of the year in Arizona and part in Denver, Colorado. He joined the war effort as a navigator candidate and when he graduated at Hondo, Texas, he joined the Bill Garland and Leo Zupan crew at McDill Field, Florida. He was in the 20th Squadron and flew 22 sorties (29 credits) before being shot down with Bill Tune and others over Czechoslovakia in August, 1944. He is a great wealth of knowledge for me and many others.

As you can see, we have some great heroes leading the organization and others who are the children and grandchildren of these heroes. Kemp Martin is one of those heroes and he has worked very hard to plan a wonderful reunion for you; Oct. 11-14, 2007. Please come and meet these wonderful men who fought for our freedom or come to meet those guys you fought with. We have a special guest coming for the whole conference and she wants to talk to as many of you as she can get to. I promise you a warm Texas welcome (not just the weather).

Please register today, get your room reserved and encourage your children and grandchildren to come and meet folks who made and lived history. *Mia casa es su casa.*

Have a safe and healthy summer and make your plans for Houston - Now!!

Sincerely,
Bonnie Blackford Crane Hellums

The View from the Farm

The infusion of younger members into the Second Bomb Association is having a great effect. The participation of members of the baby boomer generation and even some of the grandchildren of the old vets has brought a spark to the organization. Some of the baby boomers have taken positions of leadership and are bringing new strength and energy to us. The work of Bonnie, Matt, Sid and Paul as officers and others in various places is a great help in keeping our organization running.

Thank you's are in order to all the youthful ones who are pitching in to help the aging ones whose memories and energy may be drifting away.

Perhaps that is a sneaky way of your editor asking for help. I have been handling the job of editor since 1998 when it was handed to me at the time the very capable Rudi Kohler needed to give it up. I enjoy the work as editor, but as the years advance, I feel a need for some help at times. I do not yet need to give up the job, but feel a bit of help in putting the newsletter together would be of benefit. Anyone interested in doing a little writing, let me know.

The change to having a reunion every year is a challenge for the staff of association officers, but it appears to generate a great amount of interest. Especially among the younger generations. The coming meeting in Houston (Bonnie's hometown) promises to be a good one and plans are moving along toward the one next year in Washington, D.C. Be sure to put the dates on your calendars, and talk to your younger generations about attending. Travel is sometimes a problem for us older guys, but maybe you can use that as an excuse to bring them along to help out.

We have received several good stories for the newsletter. Thank you to those who have sent them in. We encourage all veterans to place on paper or recordings, their experiences. Remember, when you are gone, you will not be able to tell those tales any more. And keep those good stories coming in to the newsletter headquarters.

Have you former "Kriegies" received your POW medals? Of course, you did not want to earn that one, but it is available and you should have it for you and yours. If you have not received your POW medal, contact your friendly neighborhood VA office.

See you in Houston!.

Earl Martin
Editor

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Did You Know?

1. That more than 15,000 P-51s were built and about 1 percent of them are still flying more than 60 years later?
2. That Delta Flying Service (crop duster) eventually became Delta Air Lines.
3. That more than 35,000 Me-109s were built by Germany.
4. That Tom Landry flew 35 missions as a B-17 copilot in the 8th Air Force. He survived a crash landing in which both wings were sheared off.
5. That actor Rock Hudson was a Naval aircraft mechanic after graduating from high school in 1944.
6. That the early Military Aviators were awarded a badge showing an eagle dangling from a gold bar. Gen Hap Arnold always wore his along with his other decorations.

In Memorium

Gene L. Armstrong, 49th Sq.
Nov. 27, 2007

John H. Clepper
William J. Cook, 96th Sq.
Dec. 30, 2006

Roger C. DeClements, 96th Sq.
John Gearhart, 20th Sq.
July 16, 2005

Edward S. Jablonski, 96th Sq.
James L. Lang, 96th Sq.
Jan. 8, 2007

Arden O. Lannigan, 49th sq.
Oct. 21, 2006

John R. Specker, 429th Sq.
March 17, 2007

Randolph M. Steelman, 96th Sq.
2005

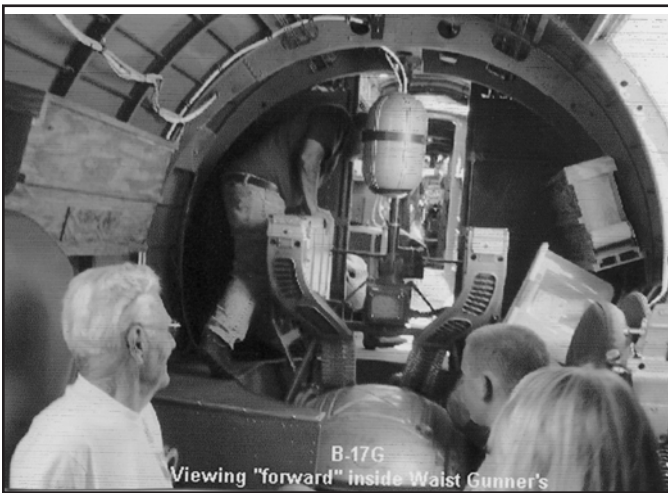
Leland R. Swanson, 20th Sq.
Jan. 6, 2007

David Tynner, 49th Sq.
Aug. 21, 2006

So Sorry : The January Newsletter pictures.

Due to unusual circumstances, the pictures in the January 2007 Newsletter were of very poor quality. Please accept our apologies for such sloppy work. We want the newsletter to be of the best quality and assure you it will be in the future.

Your Editorial Staff



B-17G; viewing "forward" inside Waist Gunner's station.

Letters

Hello all:

I just want to let you know you've been a big help in my research on my Uncle Eugene Fawls.

Tomorrow, 5/22, a friend of mine is going to ride in a B-17 (like Gene's) and he will toss out a bouquet of flowers and Gene's picture over San Francisco Bay in his honor. This will be at noon, Pacific time if you can remember to be there with us in thought.

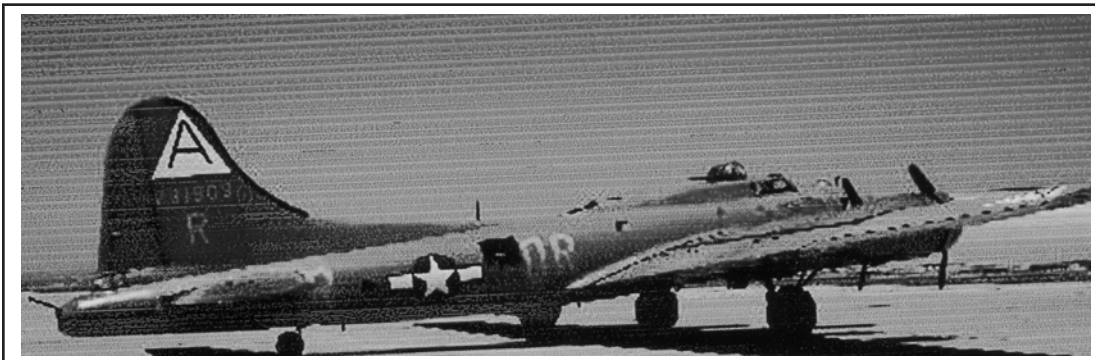
Lew, your envelope arrived today and thanks so much for the information from the book. A lot of people are sharing this information with me and are so amazed at the whole story. This surely keeps the memories alive.

Ed. Notes: Sgt. Eugene F. Fawls, LWG, 96th Squadron, was killed by flak on mission number 220.

*B-17G Boeing Flying Fortress
Aircraft "Nine O' Nine
May 22, 2004 Moffott Field, California*



*Left to right, back: Joseph Sacco, ball turret; Melvin M. Rudnick, engineer; J.R. Isaman, tail; H.L. Forman, radio; P.H. Kramer, waist.
Front: Ronald Thompson, pilot; Edward Hardy, co-pilot; Wayne LaPoe, navigator; Ernesto G. Balloni, bombardier.*



Here is how my dad describes his experience and the two pictures I am sending you. "I was a member of the 15th Air Force, 2nd Bomb Group, 96th Squadron stationed near Foggia, Italy.

I was born 6-10-24

Left to right: Ronald Thompson, pilot; Maurice Edward Hards, co-pilot; Wayne LaPoe, navigator; Ernesto G. Balloni, bombardier.



and was in the class of 44D pilot school. My training was in California.

Because of sickness, I spent two months in the hospital before earning my wings. Because of this delay, I did not go to England and the 8th Air Force with my original class but went later to the 15th Air Force.

The hospital stay probably saved my life. I arrived in Italy August '44 and the war ended June '45. I flew 11 missions.

I have enclosed two photographs. One shows the crew members plus our plane in 1944. It was taken just before we left for the war. The other photo shows the four officers while at a reunion in New York City in 1984 posing the way they did in 1944. Note even the hand positions are the same as the original picture."

Here are some of Dad's Stories

On one of his training flights in a Steerman bi-plane, the cocky young cadet maneuvered splendidly with confidence and grace. No maneuver was beyond his young manhood. During his practice after takeoff, he did a chandelle with the wing up to the left and then a chandelle to the right ascending, descending and landing. Mission accomplished. Only then did he realize he had forgotten to fasten his seat belt. If he had tried to do a loop the young fighter pilot would have fallen right out of the plane. Never again did cadet Hardy forget to put on his seat belt.

Ed Hardy was determined to learn all that was necessary for any mission he was called upon to perform. During another practice exercise with instructors looking on, he maneuvered his steerman with precision. As the plane leveled parallel to the ground and he was coming in for a landing the tires

touched the ground for the first bump of landing. The entire plane flipped upside down tail over end with a body and soul jarring impact. The cadet was saved from death because he was in a Steerman and the upper wing prevented a crushing catastrophe. Upon investigation the brakes were found to have been locked. He was blessed by God to walk away from a mechanical failure.

During Air Force training our young men sometimes cut up and needed a little discipline. Our cadet got into trouble and when called before his commander his only response was "no excuse sir". The officer gave him a difficult punishment. He was to find the length and width of the airfield runway with nothing to measure except a stick. That should teach the young whippersnapper. The officer checked periodically and was puzzled when the cadet finished the project in a short time. Angrily he demanded he come up with the right answer from just walking around. Cadet Hardy responded that in the U.S. Air Forces they were taught to correct their stride so that each becomes uniform. "I measured the stick you gave me, then measured my stride according to the stick. Then I counted the number of strides for the length and width of the runway and multiplied, Sir." The officer had to admit the young man had made himself a clever way to measure.

After earning his wings, Maurice Edward Hardy was an officer in the 15th Air Force. He was assigned to a B-17 flying fortress crew which was sent to Foggia, Italy. According to his orders, he flew the missions his country asked of him. He was one of the country's youngest pilots.

Marion Grace

This story about association member, Lawrence Jenkins, was published by Gerard Pahl. It has been shortened (with permission) so it could be included in this issue of the newsletter. Larry is retired from RCA Electronics. He and his wife, Peggy, live in Galesburg, Michigan.

For you se vhar iz Over!

by Gerard Pahl

I knew we had been hit hard but I could not see as my eyes were 'flash burned.'

The fire was flaming as if a large blowtorch was going. Our oxygen tanks had burst and flames were whipping through the ship. I ripped my flak suit off, reached under my seat for my chute and fastened it, tore my safety belt loose and jumped up; but I didn't jump up - I tried, but my legs wouldn't hold me and I fell back down into my seat when

both legs collapsed. They were broken; splintered into pieces; both had a compound fracture.

Second Lieutenant Larry Jenkins did not die, but he was about to serve his time in hell. When his B-17, #932 - a shiny new Flying Fortress that had no camouflage paint - was shot down over Austria on 16 July, 1944, he had resigned himself to the inevitability of death. Anticipating the end, Larry had imagined the bomber hitting the ground.

"I felt a hand reach my shoulder and tried to lift myself up, but I was too weak to help. I could not see but I pointed in the direction of the bomb bay emergency release." The next thing Larry knew he was tumbling through the air.

Fortunately, gunner S/Sgt Ray Vos had not Gleft the ship. Ray tried to get Larry out of the burning plane, but because Larry had fallen deep down in the bomb bay well, the staff sergeant could not manage it. Vos had about given up hope and was going to hit the silk when he thought he had to try again. That was when Larry pointed to the emergency release.

"I was the one that helped (Larry) out, but by the time I got out we were about four miles apart. I knew (Larry) had (his) right leg broken from the way it was twisted. After that long ride down in the 'chute, I kind of gave up hope for (him) to pull out of it."

Somehow Larry did "pull out." He yanked the ripcord and vaguely remembered seeing the 'chute deploy. Then all went blank as shock, exhaustion, and stress overwhelmed his mind and it turned off to try to defend itself against an onslaught of sensory information.

"My 'chute was pulling my nose through a freshly plowed field as I heard voices and felt hands grab me." He could smell the rich earth and the sweet aroma of newly harvested wheat. It made him think of the farm fields at home. "For you se vhar iz over." Passing out again, Larry was carried in his blood soaked 'chute to a first aid station where he came to only to learn both legs would have to be amputated. He was in such pain that the thought of losing his limbs really did not have much of an impact on him...the rubbing of his broken bones together as German soldiers carried him was excruciating. His left arm had also been badly torn up by a bullet, as ground troops had been shooting at him as he dangled beneath his canopy. It wasn't until evening that he received an injection for the pain, but at least he could now see.

Back home, Larry's mother, Viola Smith received her telegram from the Secretary of War notifying her that her son was missing. A letter followed it from Major General Nathan F. Twining confirming his MIA status. "Larry's ship was severely damaged by enemy anti-aircraft fire...three parachutes were seen leaving the craft during the

Robert Smith, left. Lawrence Jenkins right. Pretty nurse between?? On the Danube River one week out of prison camp.



few moments it remained within the field of vision. If your son reached earth safely he is most likely a prisoner of war ...Larry has participated throughout a grueling aerial campaign constantly attended by extreme physical hardships and requiring the utmost in individual courage and sacrifice. He has contributed, without reserve, his full share toward our ultimate victory. You can be very proud of him." Three chutes, 33% odds he survived.

By this time during the war, Nazi Germany had very few resources and could hardly take care of its own men, much less its Prisoners of War. Larry's legs were swollen and "as black as the ace of spades". "My legs were wrapped in crepe paper strips with metal trays to support the bones. The swelling was so bad they could not put them in casts." Larry was in the hospital with five other Americans.

Now on the receiving end of Allied bombs, they were potential victims of their own force. More injured and wounded were brought into the hospital after each raid and sometimes Larry was lying beside his enemy. "Outside our windows were 'Eager Joe,' who fired the 88 mm gun when the bombers came close enough. At that time I would pull the sheet over my head as a reflex. I would shake and cry as the day instantly turned into night from the dust and debris which came flying through

the air.”

Catholic nuns, who were prisoners themselves as they refused to teach the Nazi philosophy, tended the men. Though the POWs and nuns were supposed to go to the air raid shelters during a bombing attack, because of his injuries, Larry could not go and head nun, Sr. Maria Admiabilis -otherwise known as “Calamity Jane” would come and take care of him. She had a special fondness for him because he looked a boyish 16 years old and she would sneak him some dark beer to calm him down. “The sound of the bombs was terrible and each one felt like it was funneled into my stomach!” said Larry, reliving the moment.

A close bond was established between Larry and “Calamity Jane.” She thought all Americans were cowboys. But she was a Catholic nun and she brought Larry his flight jacket, the squadron patch of which had the image of the devil dropping bombs. She made him cut the patch out of his jacket and what remained was so damaged that he used the leather to make a cover for his bible - something more acceptable to the sister.

On 15 August, 1944, Larry’s mother received a Western Union telegram: “REPORT JUST RECEIVED THROUGH INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS STATES THAT YOUR SON SECOND LIEUTENANT LAWRENCE L. JENKINS IS A PRISONER OF WAR.” Nothing was said about his condition, however.

“Food was scarce and terrible, therefore bones would not mend.” This was the biggest complication for Larry. He was young and strong. The doctors did wonders with the little they had and the nuns were very caring, but the nutrition was so poor, his body could barely keep even much less repair itself.

Even with the miserable food conditions, on the rare occasion when Red Cross parcels got through, the prisoners willingly shared their coffee and sweets with the nuns. Sister Maria wrote in 1997 after a friend of Larry’s tracked her down, “Coffee and sweets we had not tasted for a long time during the war.”

After four weeks, Larry finally got a tub bath; this was a mistake as the paper wrappers came off his legs. His third operation was almost his last. The doctor scheduled to do the surgery had developed a method of pinning the bones together with rods going into the lengths of the bones, but the doctor had lost his wife and daughter in a bombing raid and he went a little crazy. Larry was glad that he was removed from the surgical schedule.

Because of the terrifying bombing raids, Larry was determined to get to a POW camp so he wouldn’t end up getting killed in the hospital. He bribed his guards to get him out of there. Larry was removed to Stalag 17-B in Krems, Austria. He left

for the camp being carried from bus to bus and train station to train station wearing a pair of pajamas and the November weather was very cold. The buses ran off charcoal gas and the trains stopped so many times he thought they would never get out of Wein. “I had 1/4 loaf of black bread and some cheese which I gave to the guards. We spent all day getting out and half the night going 30 miles.” The Allied air raids were devastating to the rail lines.

“At Krems, they laid me on a dray where I lay for a long time (while they went for transportation to the camp). It was dark and starting to snow. I wondered if I would ever live through the night. About four o’clock in the morning a truck picked me up taking me to the Stalag. I was put in a room with a Romanian. He was very ill and I found out later this is where they put the men just before they died.” Larry did not die, but he says he didn’t get warm until spring, either.

The late William Chapin in his book *Milk Run* writes of his introduction to Stalag 17-B. “The Russian who carried me into the hospital dumped me on a bed in a large, dimly lit room full of men. I was totally bald and besides my leather jacket I was wearing unmatched Wehrmacht clothes. I was facing a row of seven patients. They stared at me inst-



Larry Jenkins, summer of 1945 back in Battle Creek, MI. Recovered at Percy Jones Hospital. Daniel Iyouye and Bob Dole were fellow patients.

antly, but didn't speak. Their stares made me feel like an insect, trapped and ready for dissection. My shaved head contributed to this helpless sensation. Finally one of them said experimentally, "cold outside?" "Yeah, I said, it's terrible". "The sudden, wonderful sound of an American voice, colloquial and rapid, established a communion. Here, goddamn Americans again. Those seven men staring at me and I was one of them and all was well again. Larry was one of Chapin's roommates and they became close friends.

According to Larry the conditions in the Stalag were terrible. "We were cared for by French doctors, but they had little to work with and even bandages were scarce. Often it was only four above zero in the room (they were given a little coal that did not last long. Otherwise, they burned anything they could, even Larry's issued wooden shoes he couldn't wear anyway). Everything was filthy and I didn't have a bath for six months. Often there was no water and we'd chew snow for water. We had nothing for pain and we could only keep the wounds clean. But there was no sulfa, penicillin or antibiotics. Indeed, Larry could not heal and his feet had become infected. Most of his roommates could not heal either. Several were missing an arm or a leg, suffered from frostbite, blindness, or enduring other injuries. Larry's best friend and father figure, Lt. Ernie McCabe, had a full length cast which he could move around a little.

Since the shattered bones in Larry's legs would not mend, new technique was tried. In 1946 Dr. M.E. Koziol, a Polish surgeon, wrote: "On 10th Jan. 1945 (it was actually 4 Nov, 1944) you were admitted to the camp's hospital. X-rays of the fracture sites showed very poor formation and non-union. We decided then in our facilities, the best way of treatment would be stimulation of the periosteum by drilling into the cortex above and below the fractures' level."

Four men held Larry down while the doctors gave him a spinal. They sliced into his legs and then drilled holes through the bones to stimulate the mending process. "The hole drilling didn't help as we got no food with the needed calcium." Finally they made walking casts for Larry's legs. On 10 March, 1945 Larry could finally stand up for awhile. After lifting weights for eight hours a day for a month, he could actually walk a little way on crutches. Dr. Koziol ended his letter, "I see you are walking and kept both legs which I consider remarkable, knowing the extent of your injuries in 1945."

Soon the men could tell the war was coming to an end. More and more Allied planes were overhead. A P-38 pilot waved at them one day as he flew over the Stalag. "We then knew they had been told about us."

The Russians liberated the camp and the

men who could walk surged into the town grabbing whatever food and items they could find. "The Russians gave us some food and wine or vodka." Later Larry got his first meal, a hamburger and a glass of milk.

Transferred to Linz, Austria and then Reims, France. Larry was on his way home.

After numerous operations in the United States, Larry could walk again, but his legs would never give him 100% service. He had looked into the face of war 14 times, flying 14 missions over enemy territory. He had dropped bombs on the infamous oil refineries of Ploesti, twice attacked Budapest and carried out two bombing runs over Vienna, the last one where his B-17 was shot down. He lived through the hell of the Stalag. Now he was free.

Larry Jenkins at Kalamazoo Air Zoo with his prison camp cast slippers.



The following article was submitted by Raymond Tuwalski.

Doc Ihle

During the final two months of my combat tour, I bunked alone in the stone hut. Lt. Stan Smorag, with whom I shared the hut, had completed his combat tour on the 29th of December, 1944 and two weeks later left for the states. So here begins a brief account in the life of our 20th Squadron Flight Surgeon, Capt. Lyman E. Ihle.

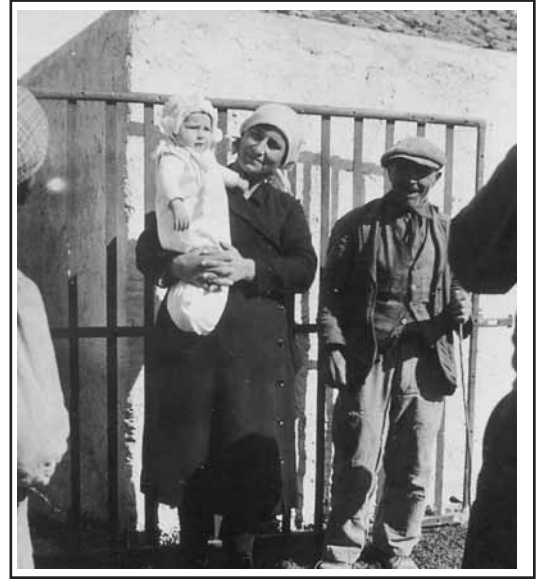
At times during my remaining combat days, I was required periodically to report to the flight sur-

geon to check the healing process of my mouth and teeth that suffered damage when we ditched during the return from our Lone Wolf mission. And sometimes, I expect, to check on my mental state. During one of those sessions, I was invited to share an evening in his quarters. The limestone block hut he occupied was three times the size of mine. He had a radio as well as a phonograph, which was playing when I arrived. I admired the space he had all to himself, compared to mine. We had been chatting for a short while when there came a knock on a door that I hadn't noticed located at the far end of the hut and to the right of the one I had entered. Captain Ihle opened the door and ushered in an Italian couple with a girl who appeared to be in her young teens. A hushed conversation took place and it was apparent to me that this visit was not unexpected.

Doc Ihle returned to clear the large table we had just occupied, saying he might require my assistance. Doc motioned to the parents to bring the child to the table where she was assisted to step up on a chair and to lay on her stomach on the table. Doc Ihle flipped up the skirt she was wearing to cover her head. The girl was now bare naked and had what appeared to be a huge festering boil on her buttocks. Doc began to lay out the tools he would need, looked at the parents (apparently, by his standards, not clean enough) and asked me to approach the table instead. He poured some antiseptic solution on my hands. I was to hand him a fresh gauze pad from a sterilized package when requested. The father uttered something to the girl before Doc cut into the infected area. The girl did not even whimper. The stench from the ugly bilious puss that burst from the incision, let alone the sight of it was enough to turn one's stomach. I kept handing gauze pads to Doc Ihle as he ordered until the wound was cleared. My assistance was no longer needed as Doc inserted a drain tube into the wound and taped it to her thigh and into a bulb. The father stepped out while Doc was attending the girl and returned with a cloth bag. Doc and I assisted the brave girl from the table into the arms of her mother while the father reached into the bag and pulled out a hind quarter of a goat or sheep and gave it to Doc Ihle. At that time, I truly felt my being there that evening was preplanned.

I was not scheduled to fly a mission the following day so Doc invited me to ride with him into Foggia. When we arrived, I was asked to carry one of the cartons from the back of the jeep and followed him to the second level apartment. As I entered, to my surprise, I recognized the young lady standing beside the dining room table, it was the one who entertained us with song while we ate our evening meal at the officer's mess. An older gentleman appeared with his wife and another daughter. They gratefully accepted the gifts we offered as I was introduced. One of the cartons contained the

Some of Doc Ihle's Italian patients.



hind quarter of the animal Captain Ihle was given the night before. Our stay was brief and we returned to the base.

I was invited to accompany him on two other occasions when he was making house calls throughout the countryside. In our conversations en-route, I learned that in civilian life he was a practicing gynecologist and pediatrician.

With this revelation of how Doc Ihle spent his free time, it was a privilege to have known him and to reveal, in a small way, his missionary work.

A number of years ago, I learned of his address in San Antonio. In corresponding, I shared with him some of the photographs I felt he would appreciate, we did not have the luxury of this present age, that is, easily duplicating photographs in drug stores and malls. Captain Ihle has passed on to his Heavenly reward and the photographs have gone into oblivion. The few remaining I share now with the 2nd Bomb Group Association.

Doc Ihle with 20th Squadron medical team.



*This report was submitted by Association member,
Daryle R. Stuckey.*

Return from Popesti

Preface: The first air raid against the Popesti, Romania, oil complex was flown from Egypt in June, 1943. Thirteen B-24s participated, and only four returned to base. The second raid (most famous and disastrous) was in the summer of 1943, also from Egypt. One hundred sixty-three B-24s participated and 54 were lost. In early 1944, the 15th Air Force, based in Italy began frequent and persistent raids over Popesti until August, 1944 when Romania (an Axis partner) dropped out of the war. Oil production at Popesti was completely destroyed.

In August, 1944, the war in Europe was becoming a poor prospect for Germany. The Russians were advancing from the East, and in northern France the Allies had broken out of the beach heads. Among the huge number of American military units throughout the European Theater of Operations, was the 2nd Bomb Group (Heavy), 5th Wing, 15th Air Force. The 5th Wing was deployed at various air strips in the vicinity of Foggia in South Italy. A good many of the bombing targets assigned to the 5th Wing were oil and transportation facilities in central and southeastern Europe, including the Popesti oil fields of Romania.

In June, 1944, our B-17 crew departed the U.S. to join the 2nd Bomb Group. There was a constant stream of combat crew replacements and airplanes going to overseas theaters. This was an amazing example of the U.S. war effort. Our crew was issued a brand new B-17 at Savannah, Georgia. From there we flew to Foggia via Newfoundland, the Azores and North Africa. On arrival, we were separated from our new airplane and sent by truck to the 2nd Bomb Group bivouacked in an almond orchard near a tiny place named Amendola. Colonel John Ryan was the Group Commander. He later became Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force.

Group flying operations were from a nearby airstrip named Sandfly Tower, a few miles inland from the town of Manfredonia which was built around a 700 year old castle on the east coast of Italy. It is just under the "spur" on Italy's boot, an excellent landmark for aviators.

In August, 1944, Romania, an Axis partner, was caught in the collapse of Hitler's Third Reich. The Axis forces in Romania were retreating in the face of Russian advances toward the Balkans. The government of Romania was obviously going to encounter some sudden and radical political changes. What a predicament for the Romanians; from Der Fuehrer to Bloody Stalin.

Nobody ever told us 2nd Lieutenants anything, but we heard, after the fact, that a Romanian

Air Force colonel flying a German Messerschmidt - 109, bearing Romanian insignia, came to Italy in late August to do some dealing. With him, riding piggy-back, was a U.S. Army Air Forces officer, a prisoner of war of the Romanians. Don't ask me how this was possible in a Me-109.

There were hundreds of American fliers in Romanian prison camps. Most of those airmen had been shot down on raids over the Popesti oil fields. The Romanian authorities holding those prisoners were willing to turn them over to the Allies, for certain reasons, if arrangements could be made.

On the night of 30 August, 1944, we first knew that something unusual was up for the 2nd Bomb Group. Usually, flight crew rosters for next day's mission were posted by 10:00 pm each night. The odd thing was that instead of normal crews of ten men, crews of five were listed. These consisted of two pilots, navigator, engineer, and radio gunner.

Early morning briefing on 31 August, gave us the word. We were to fly to Popesti Aerodrome, a grass airfield near Bucharest, Romania. We were to land, and each plane was to load 21 American POWs for evacuation back to Bari, Italy. When we got to the flight line around sunrise, we found that each airplane up for the mission had been fitted with a rough wood floor in the bomb bay. The pre-mission briefing was that the German forces were involved in the retreat from Romania, the Russians had not yet arrived in occupation strength, and we were to expect changes in plans at any time since it was possible there would be complications around Bucharest if the Krauts were able to interfere. There was a hiatus of just a few days for cooperating Romanian officials to get the prisoners to Popesti and out of the country.

We flew to Bucharest without trouble. There was a lot of P-51 escort, more than was usually visible, even on bombing missions and they were staying close to us.

We arrived at Popesti, and saw only occasional low bursts of flak. Apparently, it was uncoordinated and small caliber and not in the vicinity of the aerodrome. We had radio contact with somebody already on the ground who cleared us to land. We landed and taxied up near a little ready shack on the edge of the field. While P-51s flew a loose circle over the aerodrome, we halted but kept the engines idling. As soon as each plane stopped, the men scrambled aboard. Behind us, more planes were landing and loading as we were taking off. We formed up in squadrons and headed for Italy.

Our en-route altitude was around 10,000 feet, since there was no easy way to go on oxygen with the passengers. It must have been chilly and uncomfortable sitting on the rough floor of the dark bomb bay, but who was going to complain. Two of the nearest passengers slipped up to the "office" to

chat a little. They may have been some of the happiest people ever aboard a B-17.

After 4:00 pm we landed near Bari, Italy. There were some Air Force brass on the flight line to participate in the welcome and in processing the returned prisoners of war. Again, we did not shut off engines, but unloaded and returned to Amendola.

The next day, on 1 September, 1944, the evacuation mission was repeated. We heard gossip in our (429th) Squadron, that on the first day, one airplane had blown a tire at Popesti and had to remain overnight in Bucharest awaiting another tire to be flown in. The Romanians, happy to be rid of the Germans, and not yet at the tender mercies of the Communists, had wined and dined the fortunate crew.

During the second trip to evacuate the POWs, again a few of them came up to the cockpit to talk and to tell some of their experiences. I remember thinking how fortunate I had been, compared to them. I learned later, that about 1,200 men were evacuated (History of the 15th Air Force).

During the summer of 1944, I kept a skimpy diary of missions I flew. My diary shows that on 5 September, 1944, after the POW evacuations, our bomb group was on a raid to strike rail marshaling yards at Oredea, Romania. As I vaguely recall, we were briefed that the mission was to impede the German withdrawal from that area. I don't remember our losses, but know that if anybody went down in Romania that day, they were too late to catch the last plane back to Italy.

On 13 September, 1944, in a beat up airplane over Czechoslovakia, it was bail out time for our crew. I spent the last nine months of the war "in the bag" as a prisoner of the Luftwaffe. Even then, in Stalag Luft III, I sometimes recalled my previous conversations with the liberated prisoners and reflected on the rapid turns of the wheel of fortune in wartime. Many of them were somewhere flying while I was walking. It is possible that some of them returned to the war, and no doubt a few of them never came home at all the second time.

Return to Amendola: Around 1970, my wife and I were touring southern Italy so we went to visit Amendola and the old bivouac area. Most of the olive trees of "tent city" were gone. The old "hacienda" buildings were still there, very forlorn. The old chapel, which was our dispensary, was still there. The officers club was being demolished and quarried for building stones. The faded signs painted on the rocks "Rockefeller Center Music Hall" was still visible. The same herd of bay horses was in for a drink at the water tank. Eternal Manfredonia looked the same to me.

*Daryle R. Stuckey
Lt. Col. U.S. Air Force Ret.
429th Squadron*

Notice - POW Reunion

The Association of Former Prisoners of War in Romania will be holding their annual reunion August 8-12 at Dayton, Ohio.

Remember them? The Second Bomb Group helped fly them out of Romania in 1944. Some of you were there.

Contact Joni Baldwin and Hank Crenshaw at (937) 428-0774 or Joni Baldwin at 800 Rockcreek Drive, Centerville, OH 45458.

Harry B. Harris, Sr.

We received notice that Harry died on Feb. 24, 2007. Many will remember that Harry was the President of the Association of Former Prisoners of War in Romania, and that he spoke to our reunion and presented us with a gavel at one time thinking the Second Bomb Group for bringing the former POWs out of Romania in Aug. 1944.

So: I'm Old

I am the life of the party, even if it only lasts until 8 pm.

I'm very good at opening child proof caps, with a hammer.

I'm usually interested in going home before I get to where I'm going.

I'm awake many hours before my body lets me get up.

I'm smiling all the time because I can't hear a thing you're saying.

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 and dental care.

*purloined from newsletter of the
Assoc of former POWs in Romania*

German Aircraft Losses

41,452 Day Fighters
10,221 Night Fighters
6,733 Recon Airplanes
15,428 Trainers
8,548 Ground Attack Airplanes
22,067 Bombers
6,141 Transport Airplanes

*From: B-17 Flying Fortress
Association Newsletter*

Reunion 2007

Houston

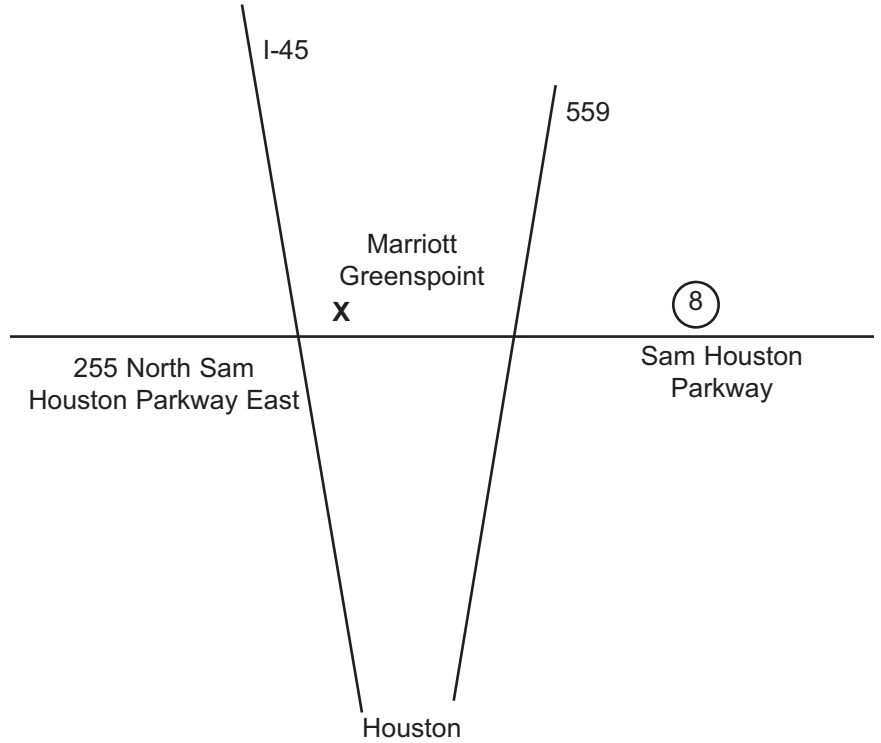
Thursday, October 11 thru Sunday October 14

Be There !!!

If you have not received the mailings -

Contact:

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Houston, TX 77024
Office (713) 467-5435
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Intelligence Officer, Norm Thomas congratulates, 96th Squadron Ball Turret Gunner, Thomas Moriarty on his shooting down a FW-190 over Greece. November 1943.

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- Heavy Bomberswww.heavybombers.com
- Army Air Forceswww.armyairforces.com
- National Archiveswww.archives.gov
- USAFUSAF.com
- B-17 Flying Fortress Assoc.www.airwarb17.net
- Honor Flightwww.HonorFlight.org

big guns.

A common occurrence for the bomber crews was to roll onto the bomb run at the I. P. and look down the bomb run path at a sky full of flak bursts all the way to the target. The statement, "thick enough to walk on" was common.

The german 88 MM gun was probably one of the best weapons used during the war. It was a versatile artillery piece that was very easily made into an anti-aircraft weapon. It was the most common flak gun in the German's arsenal. A good gun crew could fire 5 or 6 shells a minute. Two other guns, 105 MM and 128 MM were also used but were not as common as the 88 MM.

All of these rifles were capable of throwing their heavy shells to the altitude at which the B-17s and B-24s flew. The shells exploded in the vicinity of the bombers and caused immense damage to airplanes and men. Seldom was a mission report made without notice that several returning planes had slight or severe damage from flak.

Some said they could tell which gun had fired the exploding shells by the color of the smoke. Also that German shell smoke had a very distinctive odor.

As the war progressed, the Germans became more competent in the use of radar so they could set their shells to explode at the exact altitude of the bombers. Some times, as well, if none of our fighters were around, a German fighter or medium bomber would fly along with the American bombers, just out of gun range to radio the information to their companions on the ground.

Once in a while a direct hit was scored by the flak guns. When that occurred, the airplane and crew had very little chance of survival. One interesting story about that is the saga of "Sweet Pea".

Enemy fighter attacks were fast and furious, but the bomber gunners had opportunities to shoot back and down the attackers. The flak attacks just had to be endured while the bombers were holding straight and level during the bomb runs.

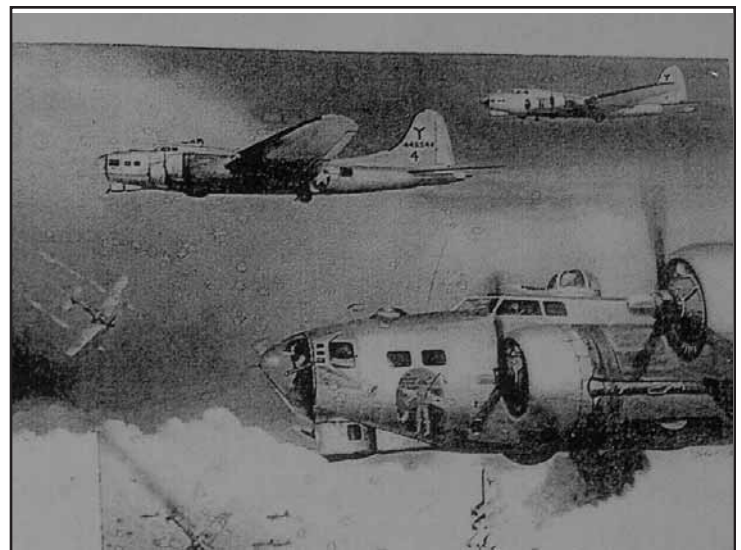


Flak: Flak: Flak:

Anti-Aircraft, Triple A, Flak, Wow:

As World War Two moved into the later half of 1944, the danger bomber crews faced from the German fighter forces decreased somewhat. The Allied campaign to wear down the Luftwaffe was effective, and though their fighter attacks were, at times, deadly, increased protection from friendly fighters and the bombing of aircraft factories and fuel supplies had been effective too.

The situation was not the same in relation to the other nemesis of the bomber crews, Flak. As the German military forces were pushed back toward their homeland by the Soviets from the East, and the Western Allies from the West, they moved their Anti-aircraft guns with them so some of the favorite Allied target areas such as the Vienna vicinity and the Popesti oil fields became more protected by the



THE FOLLOWING ADDENDUM ARE ALL CORRECTIONS TO THE ROSTER

Part 1 - Minor Changes Part 2 - Changes of address. Part 3 - Listing of New Members.

Part 1 - Minor Changes

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Vince WERNER	e-mail: sterlmyrt@peoplepc.com		

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	Gene KURZ	108 Portmere Dr.	Jesup, GA 31546-4738	jerrykbear@hotmail.com
	Nancy C. MARTIN	7941 Footman Way	Raleigh, NC 27615-7735	
	W. Harold PLUNKETT	7687 Ebson Dr.	N Fort Myers, FL 33917-6254	

Part 3 - New Members

Unit	Name	Spouse	Street Address	City, State, Zip Code	Phone
	Mrs. Russell BREEDING (daughter of James Lang)		3422 Pennwood Dr.	New Albany, IN 47150-2134	(812) 944-6893
20	Susan Gaddis McCABE		702 Willow Creek Cir.	San Marcos, TX 78666-5058	(512) 353-0628
	Robert R. KIRSCH		10851 Martin Dr.	N. Huntingdon, PA 15642-4259	
	H. Thompson KING III		PO Box 7155	Wilmington, NC 28406-7155	(910) 763-7318
	Helen KNOEBEL (daughter of Lloyd True)		1405 Rosewood Dr. #42	Charlestown, IN 47111-1642	(812) 256-3070
20	Warren P. MIGUES		119 S Pinaud St	Marinsville, LA 70582-4626	(337) 394-3105
49	John A. NIGBOROWICZ	Wanda	1160 Paul Ave.	Sharon, PA 16146-3551	(412) 347-2550
	Kelly ROSS (granddaughter of Lloyd True)		181 Forest Dr.	Jeffersonville, IN 47130-6840	
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	JoAnn SAWYER (granddaughter of Lloyd True)		977 Level St.	Charlestown, IN 47111-1544	(812) 256-2615



Second Bombardment Association
A Veterans Organization of the
2nd Bomb Group & Bomb Wing

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