

THE 99TH BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

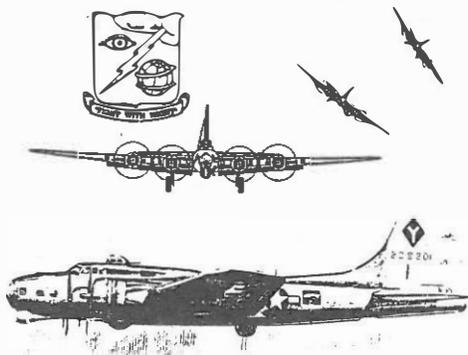
The Group Flew B-17 Flying Fortresses
For A Total Of 395 Combat Missions From
North Africa & Italy To Bomb European
Targets During 1943, '44 & '45



**Second Lieutenant
Fred Leiby
347th Squadron
Navigator/POW**



**Staff Sergeant
Morton G. Magee
348th Squadron**



Vol. 19, No. 3

AUGUST 1999

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

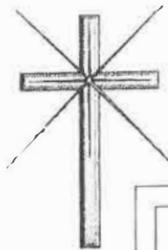
Dear Members . . . Another great reunion has ended. For those attending, thanks for coming. For those who couldn't be there the attending members missed you. . . . I thank Len and Adrienne Smith for the great effort in planning and hosting. It's hair pulling at times! Additionally, I thank Bill Sommers, Vic. 'Fab' Fabiniak, Arkie Clark, and all who helped with this event. 'Fab' never worked so hard in all the jobs we've been on as he did in Tucson. (Just a little leg pulling.) . . . The Board approved the next Reunion in Jacksonville, FL for May 2-6, Y2K at the Holiday Inn. The Registration fee is eliminated, saving at least \$20.00 per person. Edmond Marlow will host. He would like to get the number planning to attend as soon as possible. He has arranged for a tour of a Navy Nuclear submarine which is restricted to rather few visitors at any one time. It's also helpful to know as soon as possible how many plan to attend for setting up other activities. Our November '99 issue will have details on all activities. Please respond as soon as possible there after. . . . At the Business meeting luncheon the membership approved the nominations by the Board of Directors of Directors Warren Burns, Dick Drain, Don Lawhorn, Fred Leiby, and Leonard Smith. Also approved by the members was the nomination of Bernie Barr and Walter Butler as permanent members of the Board. . . . We heard an interesting presentation on the Twelfth Air Force Readiness as the U.S. South American Operations and Strategic Defense Command. . . . The Board of Directors meeting after lunch elected Robert Bacher, President, Donald Lawhorn, Vice P., Walter Butler, Treasurer, H. E. Christiansen, Secretary, and Dick Drain, Historian. At this meeting I appointed Denzel 'Arkie' Clark, Hospitality Room Chairman, and Don Lawhorn, Site Committee Chairman. . . . I have talked to Fran Grantz and Bernie Barr recently. They are both feeling better. In fact, Fran wants to continue as our Group Chaplain, and Bernie said he can continue as our newsletter editor. Please continue to send your stories and photos to Bernie for the newsletter. Walter Butler will continue to lend Bernie a hand.

I WISH EVERYONE GOOD HEALTH & HAPPINE ES.

(SEE PAGE 28 FOR MEDAL REPLACEMENT.)



Robert Bacher President



IN MEMORIAM DAVID C. CONNER



Miss Me - But Let Me Go

When I come to end of the road
 And the sun has set for me,
 I want no rites in a gloom filled room,
 Why cry for a soul set free?
 Miss me a little - but not too long,
 And not with your head bowed low,
 Remember the love that we once shared,
 Miss me, but let me go.
 For this is a journey that we all must take,
 And each must go alone,
 It's all a part of the Master's plan,
 A step on the road to home,
 When you are lonely and sick at heart,
 Go to the friends we know,
 And bury your sorrows in doing good deeds,
 Miss me, but let me go.

Author Unknown



Members send sincere prayers and sympathies to the families and friends
MAY OUR COMRADES REST IN PEACE

Jules Horowitz asked me (Bob Bacher) if I would announce again in the newsletter that he would like to set up a cruise for 99th members. If you are interested please contact him at 3507 Oak Way, #911, Pompano Beach, FL 33069 or Phone # (305) 973-1677 or e-mail him at jules449@juno.com.

Dear Walter: . . . Mary & I told Frank English that we would be in Tucson. . . . I had quadruple by pass surgery that was not bad at all. Six days after surgery I developed a strep infection and had to be cut open again. . . . They gave me two shock treatments after my heart stopped. Thirty-three days in the hospital. Six weeks of antibiotics three times daily and Mary changing my chest bandage three times daily. . . . I went to hell and decided I did not like hell, so I came back!

My best regards to you all. May the Good Lord bless and keep you all in Good Health. Hopefully we can make the next one.

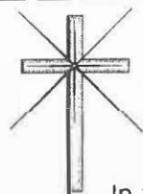
We have lost three of our crew members in the past three years.

Sincerely,



Jim Flex
347th Crew 12

Dear Jim: If your deceased crew members' names have not appeared in our newsletter for the past three years please send their names to Bernie or Walter for the 'IN MEMORIAM' section of our November '99 issue.
 (rhw)



THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



In the last edition of our newsletter, I shared a short message about the path on which I am currently traveling. In these three months since, great improvement has become the story. I know you have had much to do with that! You have blessed us with letters and cards of greeting, sharing your concerns. The words 'Thank You' travel from our home to yours, for we have received more than we could have asked from so many. Nel and I are very grateful for your friendship and love, so eloquently expressed. I have found a new meaning in the words 'we are praying for you'. I can only say 'Thank You'.

This happening is typical of so many that we have had part in. A couple of weeks before the Tucson Reunion, I wrote a letter to Dwight Reigert, in Gresham, Oregon, telling him that Nel and I wouldn't be at the Reunion, and explaining the why. I closed the letter with a request for prayer. In a few days I received a letter from Dwight, thanking for the letter and then sharing of himself some things I had never heard before: that he had me on his prayer list since February 27th, 1945 when we bailed out over Augsburg on fire; that he has continued with that resolve ever since; and would like to know if he could place my name on his church's prayer list, read each Sunday. I called him with an o.k. and a week later, got a copy of the bulletin with my name listed among about 25 others, for whom that congregation prayed. I know that God hears the prayers of God's children, and I am grateful for yours. Thanks, Dwight! We share a new and different relationship!

A few words about Prayer seem appropriate at this point. Early in June, after receiving Dwight's bulletin, I came across this item and used it at Trinity's Worship Service:

"At 10 p.m. every night, tens of thousands of people of good will all over the world link up in prayerful thought for God's healing influence to reach all who are sick in body or mind, and for divine guidance to be with the leaders of all nations for the coming of world understanding and peace.

"The Healing Minute was inaugurated by the Harry Edwards Spiritual Healing Sanctuary in May 1954, and has its origin in the 'Big Ben Silent Minute' introduced during the Second World War by Sir Winston Churchill at the time of the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940. Since then, the names of thousands of these 'Friends of the Healing Minute' have been enrolled as Observers in the Healing Minute Register kept in the Healing Sanctuary at Shere."

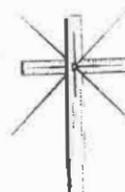
At Trinity, we have started the 'Moments in Prayer For Those In Special Need' In Sunday's Worship. Perhaps you may wish to be a part of this there where you are! Write and tell me about it! I'll be glad to help!

Until next time, God bless you and may you travel safely through your life!

Chaplain Fran



I received a note from our President, Bob, about the Mini-Reunion in Cincinnati, October 20-24. Nel and I are looking forward to being there. Thanks, Bob!



Leonard E. Rose
8103 E. 50th Street
Lawrence, IN 46226-2018

April 26, 1999

Dear Leonard: . . . I'm the 99th Bomb Group Historical Society's quarterly newsletter composition editor and printing manager and mailer. . . . I'm sent items to include in the newsletters from the Editor, Bernie Barr and/or the Treasurer, Walter Butler, both reside in Albuquerque, NM. One of them, I'm not sure which, one sent me your listing of 99th BG personnel serving PWO time in Stalag Luft IV. In any event it will be interesting to include in one of our newsletters. I did not include it in the current issue, May '99, because the print was too light to reproduce satisfactorily. . . . I made a copy with darker print but ran short of time to get it into our May '99 issue which had to go to the Printer today to be printed, addressed and mailed the end of April. . . . In making the darker copy I looked for the names in our current dues paying members and found the group squadrons of four of the group squadrons in which the men served. I included the squadron numbers of each man on the list I typed. (See the copy for you I've enclosed herewith.) Your copy is made on my FAX machine which is not as dark as desired for printing, but my master is. However, if you can furnish me the squadron numbers of the others on the list I would include them before printing in our August '99 issue. . . . I'm sending you a copy of our May issue by our bulk mail route so you may not receive for a couple of weeks. I'll send you a copy of our August '99 issue which will include your list of Stalag Luft IV POWs. Please let me know before the end of June '99 if you can give me the squadron numbers of the others on the list you sent us. If I don't hear from you I'll use the list I've enclosed with the four member's squadron numbers. . . . Thank you for the list it will be of interest to all current dues paying members of the Society whether or not they were POWs. . . . If you are interested in POW stories I recommend a very interesting account of one of our members, George Perry. He is a graduate of Stalag Luft 1. He has put together an interesting, detailed account of his mission terminating in ditching, capture and imprisonment. George Perry's address is 6236 SW 47th Place, Portland, OR 97221. I recommend his 88 page story very highly. . . . If you were a member of the 99th Bomb Group we would very much like to print 'Your Story' in a future newsletter. If interested please send a type written copy (dark print if possible) to our Editor Bernie Barr, 7408 Vista del Arroyo, Albuquerque, NM 87109. If you were a 99th BG member and care to join our Society the annual dues are \$15.00. Send check made out to 99th BGHS to Walter Butler, 8608 Bellehaven Place, N.E., Albuquerque, NM 87112.

My very best regards,

Roy W
Roy Worthington, Composition Editor
16786 Thomas White Drive
Air Force Village West, CA 92518-2925

I WAS in the 459th BG 758 B Sq.

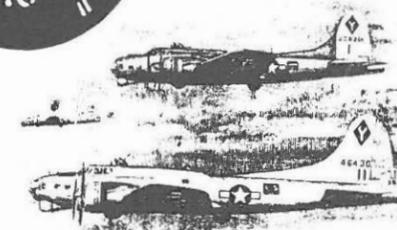
Leonard



99th Bomb Group POW Members in Stalag Luft IV

Last Name	First	MI	Address	City	State Zip
Brandanger	Merlyn	W.	230 Peach Palm Lane 347th Squadron	Naples,	FL 34114
Crider	Paul	N.	2527 Letterenny Rd. 346th Squadron	Chambersburg,	PA 17201
Ester	Ernie	I.	1189 Holz Avenue 347th Squadron	Cincinnati,	OH 45230
Gardner	Val	R.	2512 S. 91st East Pl. 347th Squadron	Tulsa,	OK 74129
Hoskins	James	P.	225 Patrick Henry Cr1. 347th Squadron	Kingsport,	TN 37663
Jernigan	Wilbur	R.	Box 220 347th Squadron	New Brocton,	AL 36351
Laudner	Delbert D.		3105 Jamacha View Dr. 348th Squadron	El Cajon,	CA 92019
Pinkard	Charles F.		Route 1, Box 335 346th Squadron	Kosciusko,	MS 39090
Romontio	George J.		3070 Stratmoor Drive 346th Squadron	Canon City,	MS 81212
Segars	Dudley	R.	735 Tala Drive 416th Squadron	Roswell,	GA 30076
Sughrue	Allen	P.	1519½ Crawford Road 348th Squadron	Modesto,	CA 95355
Wright	Hardin	M.	Box 511 348th Squadron	Crystal Springs,	MS 39059

This list was submitted by Leonard E. Rose
8103 E. 50th Street
Lawrence, IN 46226-2018
459th BG, 758th Squadron



February 28, 1999

Dear Bernie,

At the Huntsville reunion on Saturday morning in the lobby of our motel Dan Ives called me over to meet a former P-38 pilot who started his missions in August of 1943 in North Africa. Nathaniel "Nat" G. Raley, 408 Pearson Drive, S. W., Huntsville AL 35805, was shot down while on an escort mission with us to Cisterna. It was his 46th mission. One engine had been damaged by flak. He hoped to make it to Anzio which was 15 miles away. Flak hit the remaining engine and he bailed out and was immediately captured. The date was February 10, 1944. The Germans put him against a wall and he thought that was IT. They searched him and asked if he were wounded. He had a little bleeding. He felt very good when the officer started to treat the wound, not that it was bad but he was happy that concern was being shown. He said the Germans were conducting themselves according to the GENEVA ACCORDS. They didn't take his wallet right away. He had laundry slips and other information that would reveal where he was from. They left him in a room for a few minutes alone. He quickly cleaned out his wallet of everything except money and threw the contents in the stove. When they examined the wallet, no revealing information was found. Nat spent the remainder of the war in Stalag #1. I told him how beautiful those P-38s were weaving back and forth above us. He said escort work was boring. They had orders not to leave us under any circumstances. He said it was difficult to fly over landing craft the Germans were going to use while retreating to the north. The P-38 pilots could only look at them and stay with the bombers. I read this same thing, DOOR KNOB FIVE TWO or THE FORK TAILED DEVIL. Once when the P-38 pilots were cut loose, they shot down over 100 enemy troop carrier planes. ***** Nat said he watched the bombers on their run over the target through flak and said to himself, "THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD GO I." He said at one group meeting the P-38 pilots were asked if they would like to go on a bombing mission in a bomber. They all in unison yelled, "HELL NO!" Nat said once when he was returning home with the bombers, the situation was safe, he decided to relax and eat his lunch. In a little while he found himself looking straight over at the bombers at the same altitude. Then he noticed all the guns were pointed straight at him. He gave the gunners a smile, waved, and turned away. I said that smile and wave weren't enough, you were lucky. ***** Nat related one of the pilots in his squadron, while doing escort work, had one engine shot out. He pulled ahead of the bombers while displaying no offensive maneuvers. One of the gunners shot into his good engine. He managed to make it back to his field by nursing the engine. He went to his tent, got his 45 and headed for the tent area of the bomber group which was a short distance away. The other pilots had to physically restrain him, convincing him they were all on the same side. Cool heads finally prevailed. ***** I told Nat how two P-38s had driven off e/a who were attacking Pete Boggs' plane, MOONBEARM MCSWINE, after it had been badly damaged by flak over Wiener Neustadt. Pete's bombardier, Pace, was killed. This was Pete's last mission. Nat wondered if Pete knew which P-38 group was involved. He, himself, was already a POW. I gave Pete Nat's address.

Another Huntsville story: Lou Walker, who bailed out of a severed tail of a B-17 at about 5000 feet, said the British had a thing for digging escape tunnels from his German prison camp. When the Germans found the tunnels, they flooded them with water, drowning any who were still in the tunnel. Once the British dug a tunnel beyond the fence and under the guardhouse. They made it easy for the Germans to find. The Germans flooded it and the guardhouse collapsed.

I thought these 1990 Huntsville items would be of interest to our members.

Best regards

Wallace Bush

Wallace Bush
308 N Red Hill Rd
Martinsburg WV 25401-2016

Ford J. Lauer III
P.O. Box 203
New Cumberland, PA 17070
(717) 657-9437

Mr. Bernie Barr
7408 Vista Del Arroyo
Albuquerque, NM 87109

May 24, 1999

Dear Mr. Barr,

Please find enclosed a short biography of Colonel Lauer for the newsletter. Now please keep in mind that I am not a professional author by any stretch of the word. I do not even consider myself to be an amateur. Therefore, if you do not consider the story fit for publication in the newsletter, I will not be offended.

I have also enclosed a photograph of Colonel Lauer, taken in 1926 when he was a flying cadet at Brooks Field (San Antonio), Texas. He was a young twenty-one years old. You can see that proud "Look at me, I'm a pilot!" written all over him. (See Page 13.)

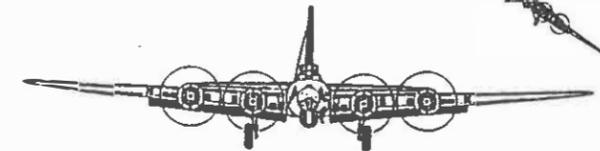
Lastly, I have enclosed some photos from Operation FRANTIC. There are no names on the backs of the originals, but maybe you or some of the fellows will recognize someone.

(See Page 14.)

Take care, and I will keep shoveling things your way.

Sincerely,

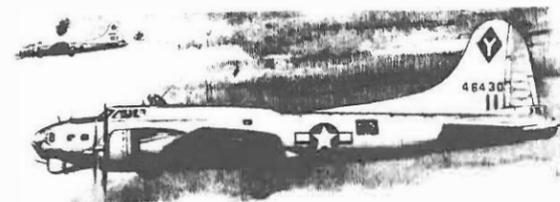
Ford Lauer



Dear Ford-Thanks for your story about your Grandfather who was our favorite commander. This will bring back many memories that each of us remember of Col Lauer and his leadership. He took his turn leading the 99th no matter where the target was located no waiting for a milkrun-he took them as they came and we each admired him for that trait of bravery.

Thanks again.

Bernie



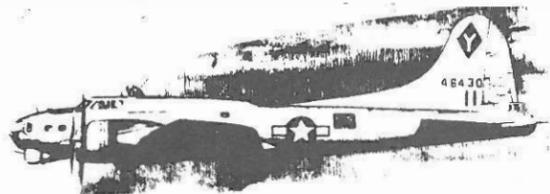


Colonel Ford J. Lauer
Commanding Officer, 99th Bomb Group
February 14, 1944 to December 31, 1944

Col. Lauer at the CO's desk

Colonel Lauer was born August 18, 1905 at Wawaka, Indiana. He enlisted as a flying cadet in the predecessor of the US Air Force in 1925, known then as the US Army Air Service. Colonel Lauer was one of the military aviation pioneers who transformed the fledgling service from a role of observation and support, into the powerful strategic air arm that helped to win World War II. Not being one to give up after he was severely injured in a fiery crash, Colonel Lauer became an extremely proficient pilot. Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, the air service had to beg for both funding and recognition. The pilots were looked down on by the rest of the army officers. The popular opinion of the day was that "no respectable officer would choose to pursue a career in the air service."

In 1937 at Langley Field, Virginia, a new era of military aviation was born. The 2nd Bomb Group was assigned the first thirteen brand new Y1B-17 airplanes fresh from the Boeing factory. Colonel, then 1st Lt., Lauer was assigned to the 2nd bomb group. Another pilot assigned to the 2nd Bomb Group was a young Lieutenant by the name of Curtis E. LeMay. During the next five years, the 2nd Bomb Group reached many milestones with the new B-17s. They made long range formation flight practical.



Col. Lauer talking business

They also perfected precision navigation in all weather, and group bombing tactics. Though none of the members of the 2nd Bomb Group realized it at the time, they were instrumental in developing American bombardment aviation for the coming war.

After the United States entered the war, Colonel Lauer was assigned the task of forming and training new bomb groups. After forming the 303rd Bomb Group in 1942, Colonel Lauer flew missions in the Pacific Theater during the Japanese invasion of Dutch Harbor, Alaska. In September of 1942, Colonel Lauer assumed command, and began training the 304th Bomb Group. Colonel Lauer later had the 304th's designation changed to the 2nd Bomb Group. (The original 2nd BG took the 304th designation, and was later disbanded.) Colonel Lauer took the 2nd Bomb Group to North Africa in March of 1943. He was relieved of his command however soon after arriving, and replaced with an experienced combat veteran. Prior to departing the states, Colonel Lauer had authorized his men a ten day "absence" to go home, even though his formal request to give the men leave had been denied. The men had never been given leave throughout training. Additionally, while in Orlando preparing to depart the states, Colonel Lauer's men had "borrowed" several items from the base (while never sanctioned, such borrowing was common), and caused some trouble. The base commander was very upset. This "borrowing" happened again soon after the group arrived at Marrakech. Though a more insulting possibility has been published, the above incidents appear to be the most likely cause of Colonel Lauer's being relieved. (In the end, the 2nd Bomb Group's loss later became the 99th Bomb Group's gain.) Colonel Lauer was then assigned to Headquarters, North African Theater of Operations, at Casablanca, Morocco from April, 1943 through February, 1944. His duties there were as a flight instructor. He also flew some combat missions with the 97th Bomb Group. In February, 1944, he was placed in command of the 99th Bomb Group, 5th Wing, 15th Air Force, located at Tortorella, Italy. While with the 99th, Colonel Lauer flew

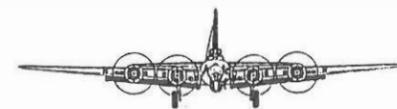
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Col. Lauer sitting in jeep, driver unknown



Lt. to Rt. Unknown, Col. Bernie Barr
 Col. Lauer



left to right- Col. Lauer, unknown, unknown



fifty combat missions as both air force commander and wing commander. He was awarded the Silver Star for his performance on the mission of February 25, 1944, and the Distinguished Flying Cross for the mission of April 23, 1944. Colonel Lauer also commanded the shuttle mission to Russia, known as "Operation FRANTIC," on June 2 through 11, 1944, and was awarded the Legion Of Merit. Colonel Lauer was a very caring leader, and earned the respect of officers and enlisted men alike. Several pilots have stated with confidence that they have never known a more naturally talented pilot than Colonel Lauer.

Upon his return to the states in January of 1945, Colonel Lauer was assigned to Fort Worth, Texas. His duties there involved flying and evaluating the Consolidated B-32 Dominator Bomber. Not long after beginning these duties however, eval-

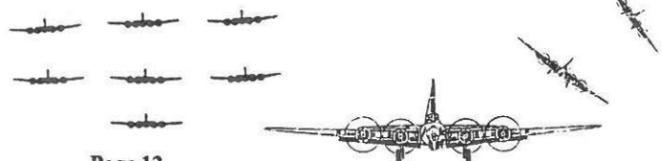
uation of the B-32 was cancelled. The Boeing B-29 Superfortress was in full production and was fulfilling it's mission in the Pacific Theater. Colonel Lauer was subsequently assigned as Base Commander at Liberal, Kansas.

After the war ended, Colonel Lauer attended the Staff Officers School For Asiatic Studies at Yale University, in preparation for assignment to the far east. In 1947, he was placed in command of the 35th Fighter Group, 5th Air Force, located at Johnson Air Base, Japan. This assignment was like a second childhood for the forty-two year old Colonel. As the group commander, he could strap himself into one of the sleek P-51 Mustangs, and tear up the sky at his leisure. 1947 was a historical year in itself, because the US Air Force was created as a separate branch of the military by act of congress.

In 1948, Colonel Lauer was assigned to Olmstead Air Force Base at Middletown, Pennsylvania. It was there that he retired on March 31, 1949.

During Colonel Lauer's twenty-four year career, military aviation evolved from using canvas covered biplanes to using supersonic jets. Colonel Lauer accumulated over eight thousand hours of flying time in over a hundred types of airplanes. In addi-

Lt. to Rt. Col. Lauer, Capt. Snyder, Col. Bernie Barr



tion to his previously mentioned decorations, Colonel Lauer was awarded the Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters (he should have received a fifth oak leaf cluster, but it is assumed that this was overlooked because of his transfer to the states). He also received the EAME Campaign Medal with five battle stars, Distinguished Unit Badge, American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Theater Ribbon, EAME Theater Ribbon with three bronze stars, American Theater Ribbon, and World War II Victory Medal. Colonel Lauer was also awarded the French Croix de Guerre with Palm.

In his retirement, Colonel Lauer traveled a great deal, and was a member of numerous veterans groups. He passed away unexpectedly in 1964, and is buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, San Antonio, Texas. Colonel Lauer's wife, Marion (Talbot) Lauer passed away in 1972, and is buried with him. Colonel Lauer is survived by four sons, Hugh, Ford Junior, Steve, and Richard. Ford Jr. and Steve, having followed in their father's footsteps, are both former military Aviators.

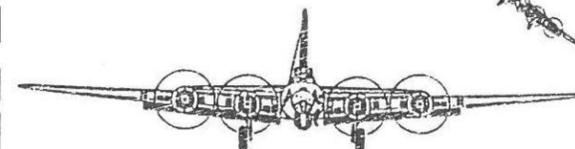
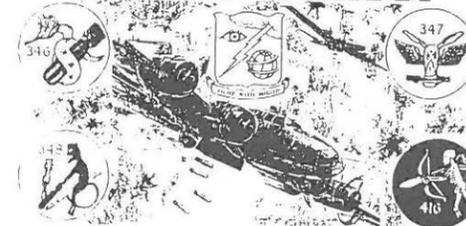
All Photographs were taken with the 99th Bomb Group during World War II.

Written and submitted by:
Ford J. Lauer III
P.O. Box 203
New Cumberland, PA 17070
Phone (717) 657-9437

Aviation Cadet Ford Lauer, a 1926 photo taken at Brooks Field, (San Antonio), Texas. Ford was age 21 years.



99TH BOMB GROUP



Anyone recognize these crew members?



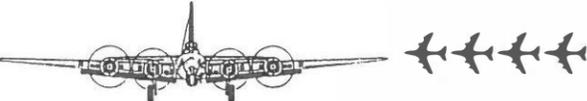
Anyone recognize this briefing room or briefer? Do not believe it was a pre-mission briefing with everyone dressed in kakhis.



It's pretty safe bet no one could name these Russian military folks. The Air Force Officer with a cigar is Lt. General Ira Eaker.



Anyone recognize one or more of these three crew members? What is the airplane designation?



Dear Mr. Barr:

I write a column called "Holy Smoke" for a local newspaper, the *Sublette County Journal* and as you can see from the enclosure, I wrote about the reunion in Tucson which my husband and I attended in May.

The newsletters I have seen from the Historical Society of the Bomb Group are most interesting. I realize my column was written with a different slant but I am sending it for you to use if you wish to do so. We need to acknowledge that it is reprinted from the *Sublette County Journal*, if you use it.

I am enclosing a copy of the newspaper article, a typewritten copy of the article, and a picture of the men in my husband's crew. I'm also enclosing a SASE for you to return my material.

Thank you for considering my article.

Respectfully,

Helena Linn

Helena Linn June 1999
Box 308
Big Piney, WY 83113
e-mail - helenal@trib.com



HOLY SMOKE!
HELENA LINN

Composition Editor's Note:
Quite by happenstance Frank Pearce sent a photo of the crew with which Helena's husband (Bob Linn) flew. It's the same photo in Helena's newspaper article. See Page 23 for the photo. I used Frank's photo since it prints clearer than the newspaper photo. (rhw)

THE WIFE WHO WASN'T THERE



By Helena Linn

My husband, Bob Linn, flew 30 missions during World War II. Bob was an aerial gunner on a B-17 in the 416th Squadron of the 99th Bomb Group stationed in Italy. In May, we attended a reunion of the 99th Bomb Group in Tucson, Arizona.

I didn't know Bob back then. I do know that my life today is the way it is because Bob survived the war.

What I can't help thinking about is the wife who wasn't there - at the reunion - because the man she would have married died on one of the missions over Germany. He is the husband who didn't survive.

(Continued on next page.)

Together, Bob and I share 45 years of memories. We have eight children and through them and their children, we have a legacy that will live on for perhaps hundreds of years.

But, for that lost aircrewman and the woman he didn't marry, all of this was lost.

Wives who attend these reunions renew acquaintances or make new friends. Our husbands, who at home seldom talk about their experiences "over there", spend hours in conversations with comrades who shared their duties, fears, and anxious moments.

Often, a wife listening to her husband talking about these war experiences hears something she hasn't heard before - even after decades of marriage. We try to imagine the fear our husbands felt when the plane, loaded with bombs, lifted off the ground to become someone else's target.

We know that even when the crew did everything right, men were killed. Men just like Bob Linn, my husband.

Certainly, there are interesting and humorous stories. But, many of the conversations are about planes being hit by enemy fire, the crew parachuting from planes that were going down, and about soldiers who became prisoners of war or died in the line of duty.

Watching these men reunite with each other, it's clear they forged unspoken bonds during their wartime experiences. This bond unites them even though they seldom, if ever, meet again.

In the end, most wives feel as I do - we are not part of that time in our husbands' lives. After 45 years of marriage, eight children, and lots of grandchildren, I know there is a side to Bob that I can only glimpse when he is with the men who shared those months of war.

But, at least I get that glimpse. Unlike the wife who wasn't there, because her husband didn't survive.

Helena Linn
1999



Helena's article was published in the Sublette County Journal.



ATTENTION WORLD WAR II AIRCREW MEMBERS

THINKING OF SELLING YOUR WARTIME
UNIFORM ?

I AM A COLLECTOR, NOT A DEALER. I AM A
VFW MEMBER AND A U.S. AIR FORCE VETERAN

YOUR UNIFORM WILL BE:

1. PROFESSIONALLY CLEANED AND RESTORED TO WARTIME CONDITION (IF NEEDED)
2. FULLY DOCUMENTED FOR HISTORICAL RECORDS
3. CAREFULLY PRESERVED

TOP PRICES PAID !! DON'T LET YOUR WARTIME EXPERIENCES BE FORGOTTEN LIKE SO MANY

HAVE ALREADY !!

CALL ED HEACOOK (609) 894-4184

LEAVE MESSAGE

OR

CALL COLLECT IF YOU LIKE



SUMMARY REPORT

REUNION '99

TUCSON, AZ - MAY 4-9

Dear Members of the 99th...

On behalf of your Host Committee, THANK YOU for being a part of the Tucson Reunion - YOU are what made it a success. We have received numerous notes and comments telling us you enjoyed the hotel, tours and evening functions... our efforts were worthwhile if you are left with such positive memories.

Probably the highlight of the reunion for many of us was the Memorial Service held at the Davis-Monthan Chapel prior to our business luncheon at the Officers' Club. Major McFarland, Chaplain, conducted a very moving and inspirational service. A copy of the letter sent to him, along with a check for \$200, can be found in this Newsletter.

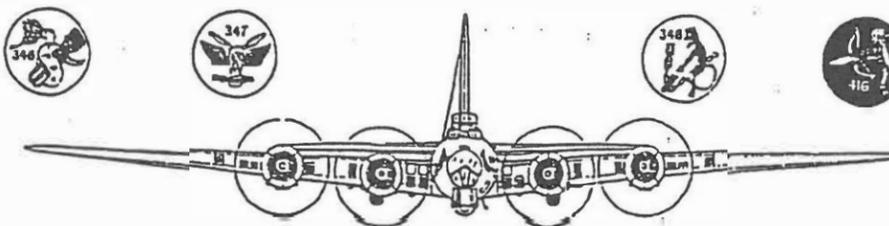
There were the usual hitches - last minute cancellations which caused some concern - but, again your cooperation and participation off-set these concerns. Cinco de Mayo, for example, came together at registration and, in fact, we had to limit the number attending at the request of the hotel. The weatherman gave us a beautiful evening on the pool patio and the mariachis provided outstanding entertainment - not to mention the Mexican buffet and those delectable chocolate cakes!

We initially had 214 registered but by the time May 4th rolled around we had lost 20 due to illness and/or family problems - to them we wish our very best and trust we'll see you in 2000. We might note that all cancellations have been refunded in FULL and all tours that we found it necessary to cancel have been refunded. Some of you switched tours and if there was money due to you we have made every effort to reconcile the records and issue refunds.

Despite the loss in numbers and the need to cancel several of the optional tours, we finished in the black - thanks to your overwhelming support, participation and patience AND the much appreciated cooperation of Mt. View Tours in making it possible for us to shuttle buses which in itself resulted in a major portion of the surplus. At this time we have returned the \$1500. advance to the Treasurer and, in addition, sent over \$2300. in surplus funds. We expect to be able to send an additional check when we finally close the books. There were also 10 Room Credits given back to the membership plus a \$50. US Savings Bond courtesy of Bank One Arizona's Sun City West Branch. Most impressive of the give-aways was the lovely hand-made afghan donated by Mrs. Billingsley - to her a sincere "Thank You".

YOU, the members of the 99th, made Reunion '99 one to be remembered.

Sincerely,
Your Host Committee



99th BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE GROUP FLEW B-17 FLYING FORTRESSES FOR 395 COMBAT MISSIONS
from North Africa and Italy to bomb European targets from 1943 To 1945

14171 Desert Glen Drive
Sun City West, AZ 85375
May 17, 1999

Davis-Monthan Air Force Base
355 WG/PA
5275 E. Granite Street
DM AFB, AZ 85707-3010

Att: Major McFarland, Chaplain

Dear Chaplain McFarland:

It would take someone far more eloquent than me to adequately express the appreciation and gratitude we of the 99th BGHS felt at the memorial service you conducted at the Davis-Monthan AFB Chapel on Friday, May 7th. The comfort we received made the service, in my opinion, the most memorable occasion of our reunion.

On behalf of our entire organization, I say "Thank You". I am enclosing a check to the DMAFB Chapel for \$200. which we hope will help to continue your services so other groups may enjoy the wonderful experience the 99th BGHS had at your chapel.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention the impressive posting of the colors and "Taps" by the Honor Guard. Please extend our thanks to Sr. Airman Hutnick for his efforts on our behalf.

We are proud of you all and the job you are performing.

With sincere thanks,

Len Smith
Len Smith
99th BGHS Reunion
Host Committee

Dear Sir: (Bernie)

Enclosed is an article written about me in my home town paper (Rockford, Iowa).

I joined the 99th Bomb Group, 348th Squadron, in September 1943 in North Africa as an extra gunner. I was one of about 120 gunners sent to North Africa straight from gunnery school. I flew as an extra tail gunner with several crews and was shot down July 2, 1944, on my 36th mission. The target was Budapest.

The following is the crew I flew with on my last mission:

Pilot	2nd Lt	Harry O. Reuse
Co-Pilot	"	Lloyd Stockton
Navigator	"	Matt Redding
Bombardier	"	Robert F. Waller
Engineer	T/Sgt	Rondo D. Edler
Radio Operator	S/Sgt	Alfred Bachman
Asst. Engineer	"	Donald E. Erikson
Asst. Radio Operator	S/Sgt	Allen D. Sughrue
Waist Gunner	"	Hardin M. Wright
Tail Gunner	"	Delbert Laudner

Sincerely yours,

3105 Jamacha View Dr
El Cajon, CA 92019
February 9, 1999

Delbert Laudner
Delbert Laudner

Rockford native recalls European "Death March"

Veterans Day, marked this week, has come to be less and less observed as the years have passed by, though the "Day to Remember" still holds a lot of significance for those who've served in the armed forces.

Memories of military service burn strong for Delbert Laudner, a Rockford native who now lives in El Cajon, Calif.

During World War II, he served as a tail gunner on a B-17 Flying Fortress that was shot down on July 2, 1944, on a raid to Budapest, Hungary, Laudner's 36th mission. He was captured by the Nazis, and spent the next 10 months as a prisoner of war, including being put

Liberation day, April, 26, 1945, at Bitterfeld, Germany. Liberators in photo are part of the 104th Infantry Division. See photo, Page 22.

on an 87-day forced march before being liberated.

Laudner naturally has maintained a keen interest in his experience, and visited Germany three times since, most recently in May of this year. In a 1992 visit, he helped establish a memorial at the former site of the Luft IV prison camp where he was first taken after being downed.

He also began corresponding with a young man from Gyor, Hungary, who happened to have some old pictures of Laudner's downed plane by way of his grandmother, who's pictured in the photos and sent them to Laudner earlier this year.

Laudner recently provided a recollection of the march he and 6,000 other Air Force servicemen were forced to undergo during the winter of 1944-45 that survivors feel is the forgotten European equivalent of the famed Bataan Death March the Japanese forced prisoners to undertake in the Philippines.

The tale provides some insights into why Veterans Day is still important in the minds of many. Here are some of the excerpts from the article written this year by George Guderley, another survivor of the march:

(At Luft IV) "The POW's shoes were taken from them, they were chained in pairs — many of them ill and wounded — then double-

timed three kilometers through a cordon of guards who used bayonets, rifle butts and dogs to keep them moving. They had neither food nor water for five days. The next day, they were given water and driven through a gauntlet of armed guards and guard dogs, then strip-searched and had most of their clothing and possessions taken from them."

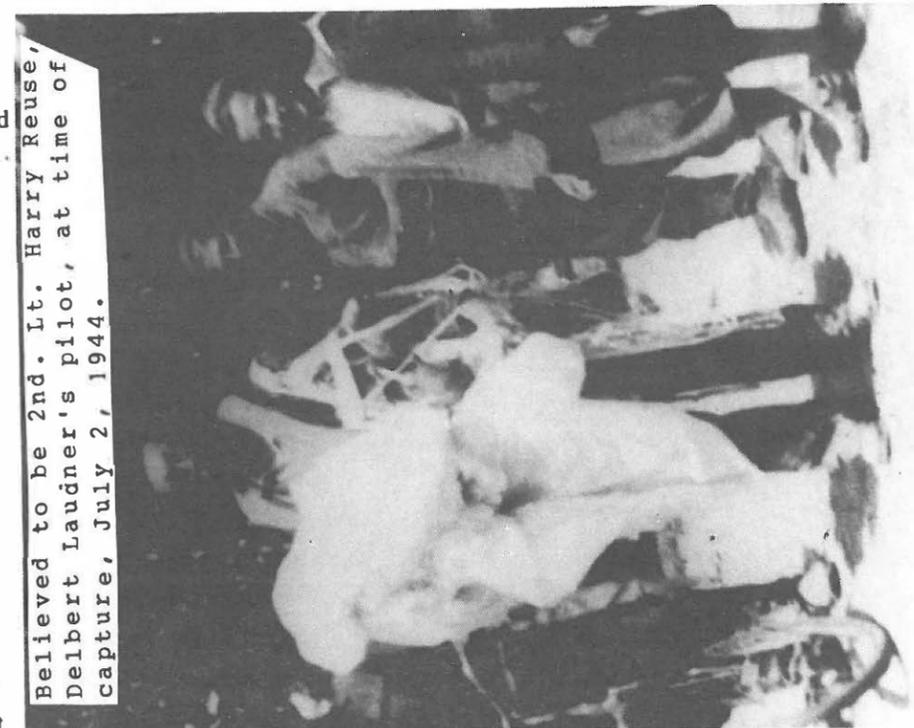
"Early in 1945, as the Soviet Forces continued to advance after their breakout at Leningrad, the Germans decided to evacuate Stalag Luft IV. . . On Feb. 6, with little notice, more than 6,000 U.S. and British airmen began a forced march west in subzero weather for which they were not adequately clothed or shod.

"Conditions on the march were appalling. There was a total lack of sanitary facilities. Coupled with that was a completely inadequate diet of about 700 calories per day. . . As a result of the unsanitary conditions and near starvation diet, disease became rampant — typhus fever spread by body lice, dysentery that was suffered in some degree by everyone, pneumonia, diphtheria, pellagra and other diseases. A major problem was frostbite that in many cases resulted in the amputation of extremities. At night the men slept on frozen ground or, where available, in barns or any other shelter would be found

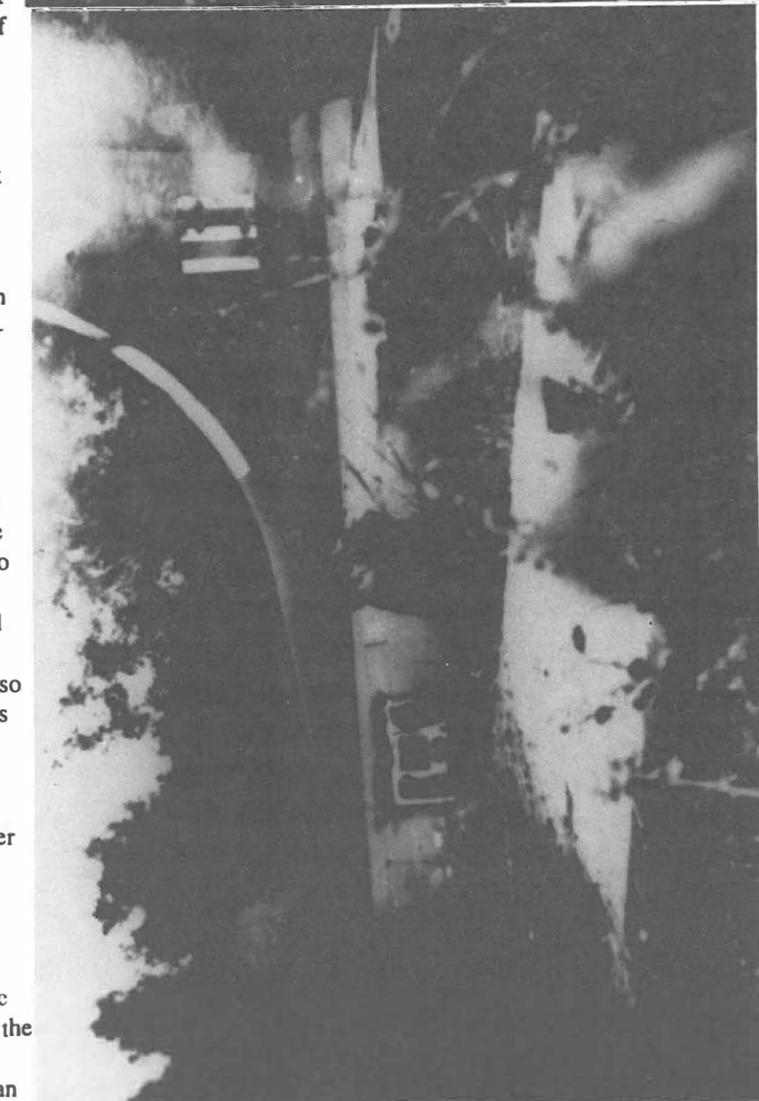
"Acts of heroism were virtually universal. The stronger helped the weaker. Those fortunate enough to have a coat shared it with others. Sometimes the Germans provided farm wagons for those unable to walk. There seldom were horses, so teams of POWs pulled the wagons through the snow."

"Of those who started on the march, about 1,500 perished, either from disease, starvation or at the hands of German guards while attempting to escape."

Laudner shared this story, since he feels it might be of interest to the people where he grew up — and what better time to remember than on Veterans Day.



Believed to be 2nd Lt. Harry Reuse, Delbert Laudner's pilot, at time of capture, July 2, 1944.



Delbert Laudner's plane after his crew was shot down July 2, 1944. Photo sent to him by a grandson of a Hungarian who knew of and took photos of the site.



Delbert's Liberators on Liberation day.

Frank Pearce

6/2/99

Walter —

Here are a couple of pictures
you may use for the newsletter.

We enjoyed being with you
at Tucson.

Best regards,
Frank



PRISONER OF NAZIS



LT. FRED LEIBY

Second Lieut. Fred Leiby, previously reported missing in action as navigator aboard a Flying Fortress in the Mediterranean theater, is a prisoner of Germany, according to word received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Leiby, 28 Montgomery street.

Lieut. Leiby is a former employe of the Bullard cutting department of the Bullard company. His brother, Pvt. Frank Leiby, also a former Bullard employe, is serving overseas with an infantry unit.



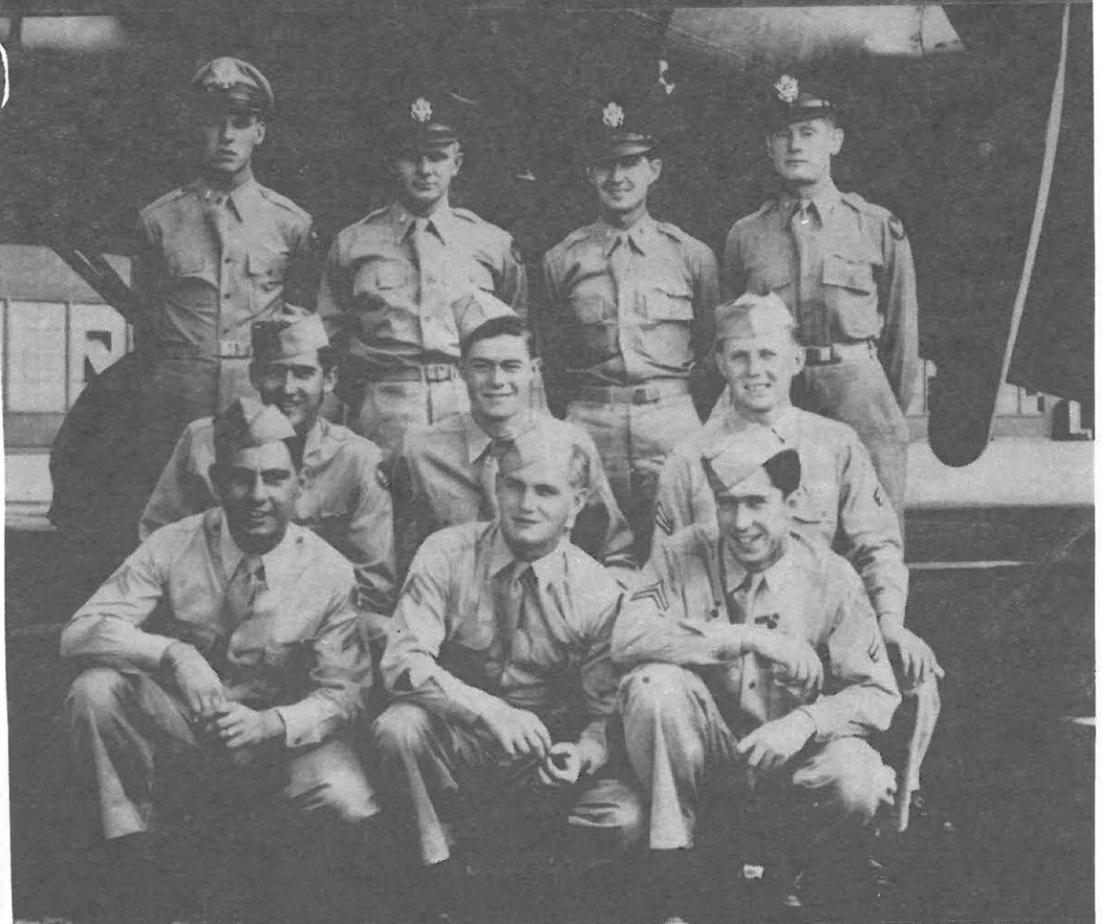
(Next page for Frank's photos.)



Lt. to Rt.: Schokmiller, Crew Commander, Hermansen, Morton, & Pearce.



Lt. to Rt., Front Row
Rizzutto, Kroll, Linn (Bob)
Lt. to Rt., Middle Row
Landis, Phillips, Weber
Lt to Rt., Top Row
Morton, Schokmiller, Pearce, Hermansen

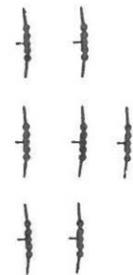


Marshalling Yard & Oil Refinery at Sete, France. Bernie Barr was 99th Lead for this mission.

JUNE 25, '44



99TH BOMB GROUP



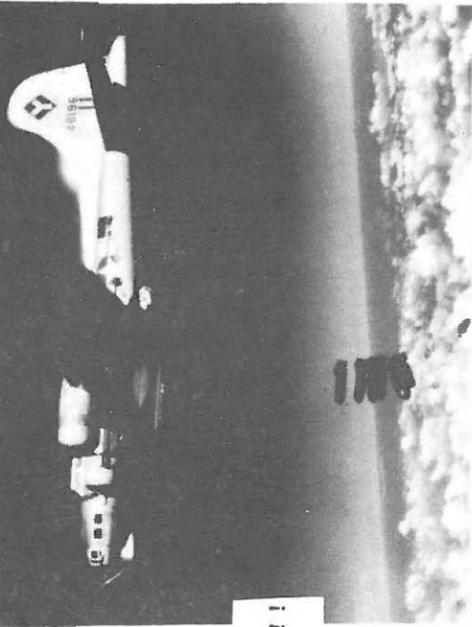
Board of Directors
99th. PGHS

I have completed an audit of our treasurer's books for the period of Jan. 1 1998 thru Dec. 31 1998 and certify that the receipts and expenditures are true and accurate and properly accounted for in conformance with normal accounting procedures.

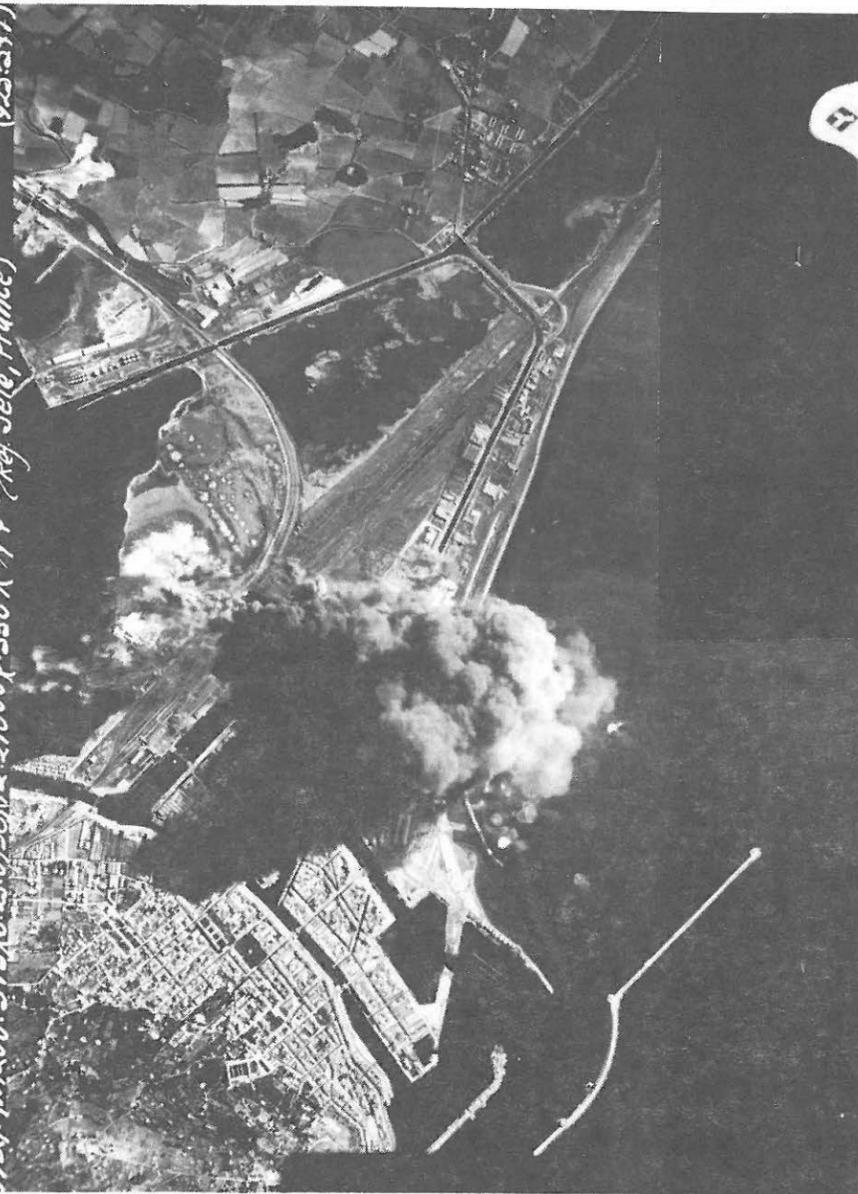
John H. Henry
John H. Henry

Bombs Away!!

99TH BG PHOTO



99BG-AM208:5V5(6:25:0158)(2:21000)(230)(NY & NY) (Sete, France) (025-377)



Hi, Bernie: . . . This is for the May '99 issue. Also sending in a few days some drawings by E. C. Karnes. (Editor's note: All but one of Karnes sketches were included in our May '99 issue. There was no room for the following submission until now.)

Roselle Lewis, (818) 343-2800

The B-17 Revisited
by Roselle Lewis

From my mother's sleep, I fell into the State

And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze

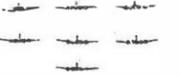
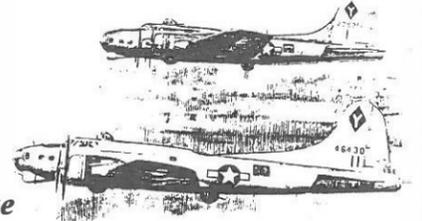
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,

I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters

When I died they washed me out of the turret with

a hose.

—Randall Jarrell



Brief, stark, and moving, this anti-war poem by Randall Jarrell is probably the most anthologized and best-known of WWII. The poet served as a B-17 navigator in the 8th Air Force in England. His poems describe the hardships of living at a base, combat flying, surviving a mission, and the mourning of fallen comrades.

In notes that accompany this poem, Jarrell points out the configuration of the Flying Fortress. He describes the ball turret as a "plexiglass sphere set into the belly of a B-17 or B-24 and inhabited by two .50 caliber machine-guns and one man, a short small man. When this gunner tracked with his machine guns enemy fighters, he revolved with the turret; hunched upside down in his little sphere, he looked like the foetus in the womb."

The ball turret would seem the fortress' weak point, making the gunner more vulnerable than when flying other positions. Perhaps, first-hand observations from ball turret gunners will provide more information. The B-17, according to some pilots was a "dream plane" in the way it handled. Whatever the case, it emerges as the most powerful, efficient bomber of the War. More than 12,700 were manufactured by Boeing and later by Douglas and Lockheed. The British used this aircraft for precision bombing, while 17 Fortresses flew the first U.S. mission in the Pacific.

In 1942, 12 Fortresses were the first to drop bombs in a U.S. raid from England over Rouen, France, and the aircraft is credited with shooting down the first German plane—and returning with no casualties. Further, the B-17 has the best record of "bombs away." Fortresses dropped more than 650,00 tons of bombs on European targets in daylight raids, while the aircraft downed 23 planes per 1,000 plane raids compared with 11 by Liberators and 2 by all U.S. medium and light bombers.

For many years I had heard combat stories about this plane, read about it, and saw several memorable films: for example, "Twelve o'clock High," starring Gregory Peck, which remains the best patriotic and realistic film about the perils of combat and necessary courage

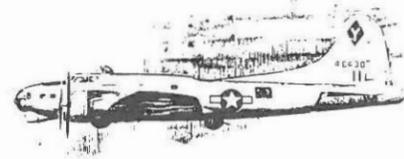
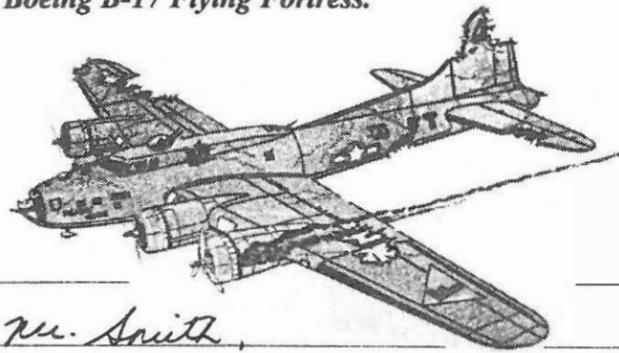
However, it wasn't until a few years ago that I saw a real B-17 on exhibit at the Van Nuys Airport, Los Angeles. Faithfully reconstructed over a period of years by members of the Confederate Air Force, the aircraft dubbed "Sentimental Journey" was formidable and impressive. Outside, a long line of people patiently waited. Inside, it smelled of oil, sweat, and the memory of warfare. It was smaller in size but much larger in its "history" and ambiance than any commercial plane.

The phrase "Queen of the Sky" came to mind as I reflected on those who lived through it all and those who did not survive

Sources:

Randall Jarrell, The Complete Poems: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, New York, 1945.

"Sentimental Journey," a pamphlet published by the Confederate Air Force, Arizona Wing. Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress.



February 9, 1999

Dear Mr. Smith,

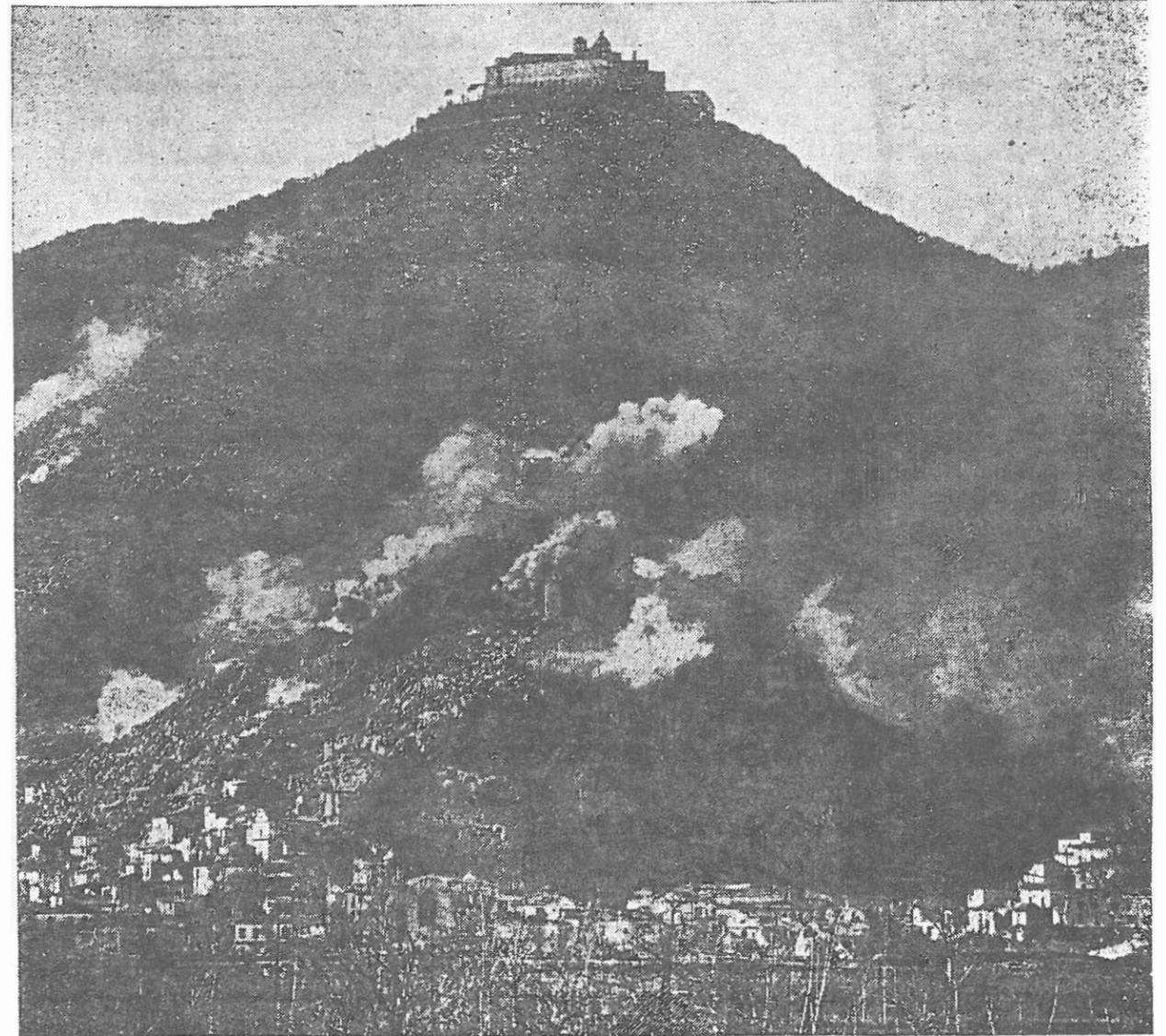
Enclosed you will find the flyer that I talked with you on the phone about. Like I said to you, I am only interested in the historical aspect of collecting these uniforms and want you to know that I am not doing this for profit.

Thank you for doing this for me. Thank you for your wartime services and sacrifices, and I hope that you enjoy your reunion.

(See Page 17 for Ed Heacooks flyer.)

Respect,
Edward Heacook
(609) 894-4184

Photographer Looks Down on Enemy-Held Town



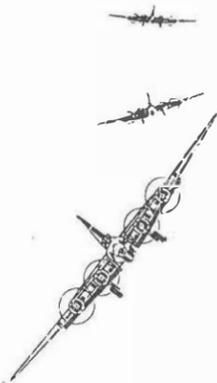
CASSINO—ONE OF THE most important, one of the toughest battles thus far in the Italian campaign. This unusual picture of Fifth Army artillery bursting on the German fortress town was taken during the height of the American drive to kick Jerry out of the fortifications which lay between us and a freer road to Rome. On the high hilltop is the Benedictine Monastery for which Cassino has been famous for centuries. Around it, Jerry dug himself in on commanding heights.—Photo by Goebel, Army Pictorial Service.

I am including a reminder of the Benedictine Monastery for which CASSINO had been famous and our action against it in 1944.

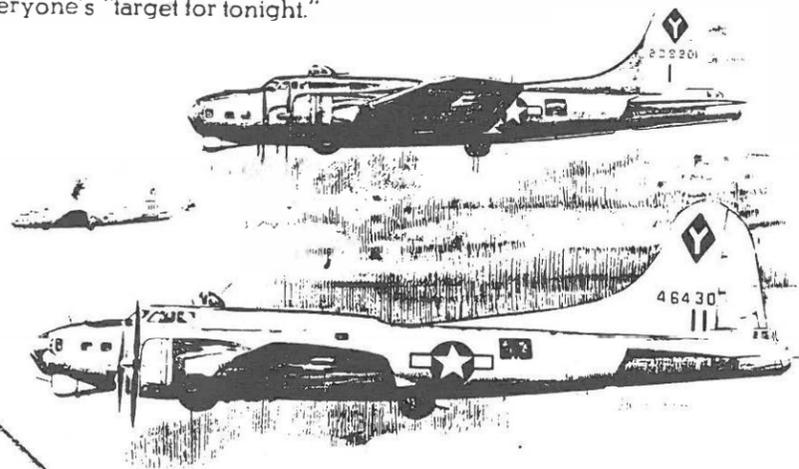
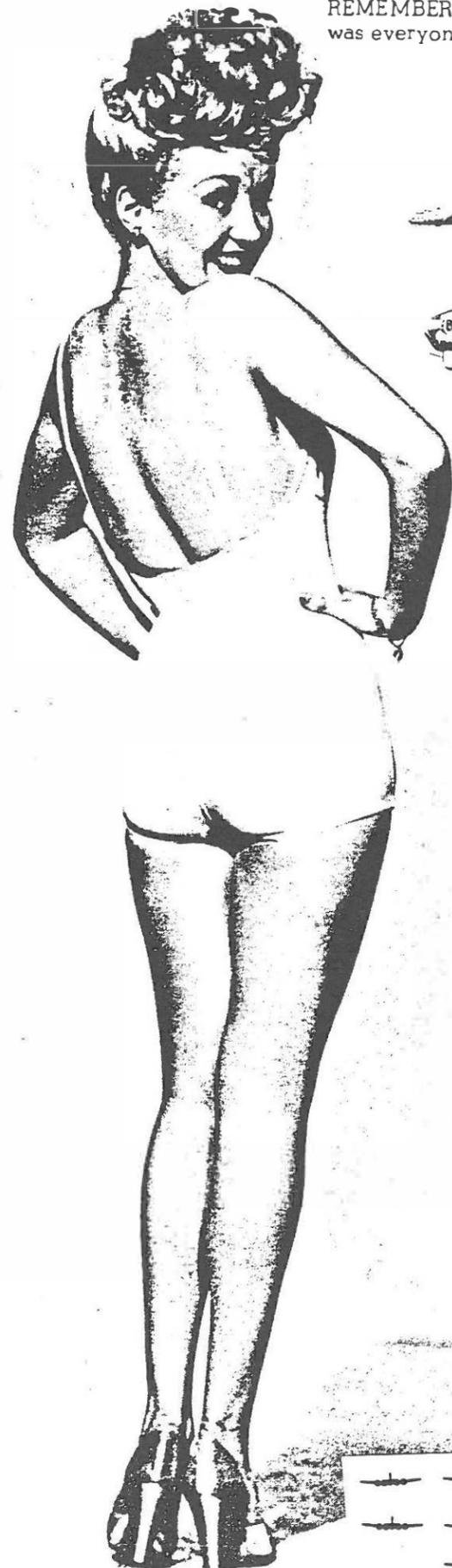
Look for photo of BETTY GRABLE—pinup of 194? ??? → See next page.

M A F HEADQUARTERS,
March 15—Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker, MAAF commander, in a short-wave broadcast to America, said today that his airmen flew more than 3,000 sorties against Cassino this morning, dropping more than 2,500 tons of bombs.
"Generals Alexander, Devers, Clark and I watched Cassino melted down today," General Eaker reported. "It was by long odds our greatest effort."
"Today we fumigated Cassino," he declared, "and I am most hopeful that when the smoke of today's battle clears we shall find more worthy occupants installed with little loss to our men."

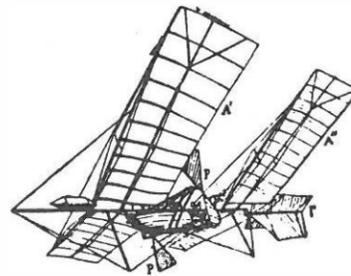
Today's bombing operation of Cassino reached an intensity unequalled in the history of aerial warfare. Every ten to 15 minutes from 0830 to 1200 hours, heavy, medium and light bombers sent explosives crashing down into Cassino. Sixteen separate attacks were made this morning on the ancient Italian town nestled at the hills rising above the Rapido River valley.
In a departure from usual Allied air tactics, one bomb group sent against Cassino was instructed to attach whistling devices to as many of its bombs as possible. Thus a leaf was torn from the Luftwaffe's book. The planners of the Cassino operation aimed to see how the Germans would stand up under the screamers used for psychological effect on so many of their victims.



REMEMBER THIS WWII PINUP? Blond Betty Grable was everyone's "target for tonight."



99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)



REPLACEMENT SET OF MEDALS

All honorably discharged veterans of the Air Force, Army Air Corps, and Army Air Forces are entitled to a one time, free of charge replacement set of their authorized medals and ribbons from the U.S. Government. Submit request in writing to: **National Personnel Records Center, Attn: NRPMF, 9700 Page Ave., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100.**

Request must contain veteran's full name, service or social security number, branch of service, and dates of service (approximate dates are OK). Also, the request must be signed by the veteran; If deceased, the veteran's next of kin can sign the request on his/her behalf. Ensure that information on the request is clear and easy to read. It is helpful to attach copy of discharge certificate to request, but not required. It is best to use Standard Form 180 (Request Pertaining To Military Records) to send request if possible. These are available at VA offices and from most veterans organizations.

Please note that the Government does not provide badges, insignia, unit patches, or miniature medal sets - these must be obtained through commercial sources at veterans' expense. Allow 90-120 days for processing.

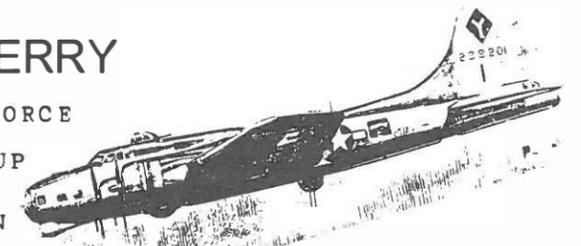


"FOR YOU DER VAR ISS OFER"

By
GEORGE F. PERRY

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE EXCERPTS FROM GEORGE PERRY'S WELL WRITTEN, INTERESTING STORY.

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE
99TH BOMB GROUP
416TH SQUADRON



Dedicated to the airmen who flew the B-17 and the ground crews who made it possible.

PREFACE

This is primarily a war story. It's about a small-town boy who had incredible luck. Though I met and associated with many Heros, the title has never been mine. That must have been part of God's plan for my life because I have been in so many situations where men have died while I survived. Yes, I believe in God with my whole heart, and in his son, Jesus, the Christ my Savior.

This would not have been written without the encouragement of Al Henke and his lovely wife, Mary. Al was the tail gunner in the lead plane of our squadron on the day we got shot down. We were within one hundred feet of each other for the four hours it took to reach and fly over the target. He saw other planes go down in flames, and then watched as we dropped back out of the formation under attack from German ME-109, ME-210, and FW-190 fighters. Forty-one years later Al found me at Boeing Field in Seattle at the Fiftieth Birthday Celebration of the B-17. He is a real historian of the 99th Bomb Group and supplied much information that otherwise would not have been available. I started writing at his urging.

Mary, bless her, took my first rough copy, organized it, and got it into her computer. Several revisions and many corrections later, she was urging me to continue and finish the job. Alas, I let her down.

Enter my brother, Bob, with his computer, and his persistence. He was as relentless as an ME-109. Without him the job would not have been completed. A B-17 pilot himself, he had a large part in shaping the final product.

Finally, after Bob and I had finished our jobs of writing and recording, along came our articulate, artistic, and resourceful cousin Venita Lobdell to edit our efforts into something we can share.

The reader will notice all reports do not agree concerning numbers and locations, eyewitness accounts do not agree with one another, and Associated Press releases gave differing accounts of the same event. For these reasons please then be patient as I report what I remember, though it may not conform to recorded history.

We boarded the train for Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, where the weather was gorgeous and our stay was short. Soon we were once more on our way . . . but this time by ship. The SS Monticello had been a luxury liner in the Atlantic until she was captured by the Allies. Her Italian crew preferred to continue in their regular employment rather than to be interred for the remainder of the war. Of course there were some differences in the services rendered between a luxury liner and a troop ship.

The trip to north Africa was not a luxury cruise either. With approximately five-thousand troops aboard, the space per passenger was severely limited and time on deck was at a premium. Most of the men aboard were required to stay below deck except for the daily, abandon-ship drill. I immediately volunteered and was put in charge of one of the crews of volunteers who manned the few defensive guns on board. This allowed me full liberty to be topside and gave the crew eight hours of fresh air every day. That was about all the good that came from being protected by those guns during the entire week as I was unable to obtain any ammunition or information regarding their operation. I suppose seeing the guns and gun crews was of some comfort to our troops, even though they were unaware of their operational capacity.

We were not hampered by being in a convoy which of course meant we were not protected by an escort. The weather was beautiful and the SS Monticello being fast, was able to zig-zag across the Atlantic in six or seven days. Seasickness was minimal and the food was not at all bad considering the conditions.

We arrived in Casablanca the third week of October to find our living facilities were army tents with dirt floors and no bunks. The native Arabian children who swarmed around us were treated warmly until we was discovered that, due to their extreme poverty, their purpose was to run away with anything they could get their hands on. They were nearly naked and were extremely dirty. Someone hired a horse-drawn cab and we took a tour of the less damaged parts of the city. My most lasting memory of that tour was the profusion of bougainvillea that bloomed all over.

Again we were on our way; this time by an old train across north Africa, . . . not just an old train, it was The Old Train pulled by steam locomotives on a narrow-gauge track with 40 & 8 boxcars of World War 1 fame, named for their capacity to carry 40 men or 8 horses.

One day enroute we slowly passed another train about three feet from us consisting of a string of coaches headed in the opposite direction and loaded with 10- to 15-year old Arabian children who seemed happy to see us. They were waving, cheering, and hanging out the windows 'till I thought they might be in danger of falling. As I stood in the doorway of our car waving back, a hand snaked out and snatched the flight cap off my head; other hands grabbed at anything within reach.

Halfway across North Africa we changed to trains on regular-gauge tracks with coaches still of an ancient vintage. Thus we arrived at the war zone near Tunis in North Africa in the last week of October 1943. Our air base was at Dudna, about thirteen miles southwest of the city. I use the term air base loosely because the 416th Squadron of the 99th Bomb Group to which we had been assigned was just a small tent village sitting beside a large piece of desert called a runway.

Our first week was spent in orientation flights to familiarize ourselves with the area so we could find our way home and in a check flight with Major MacDonald, our Squadron Commander. On that flight I did a bit of whistling which apparently annoyed the good Major. When he called me on it I told him that some people smoked to relieve tension, others chewed gum or bit fingernails, but I just whistled. This seemed to assuage his feelings, as he approved me for active flight, and it was leaked to me that he said he had found his new flight leader.

Joe Joffrion and I took some hikes in the vicinity of our base which had been used previously by the Germans. There were several piles of bombs on the ground but not much else to remind us of its recent occupants. There was an interesting relic, however, a long aqueduct built by Roman conquerors centuries before which stood as evidence that military conquest is not permanent.

I got into Tunis twice while we were there. On one occasion, looking for a ride in a military vehicle, we were picked up by a civilian in a small French car who proceeded down the unimproved road at a speed which caused us to hang on to keep from being involuntarily ejected from the kind man's chariot. Looking at his speedometer didn't help my state of mind when I saw it register 60. Having no previous experience with kilometers, it didn't occur to me that we were only going about 40 mph, however, on that rut that passed for a road, it was still too fast.

The 99th Bomb Group was composed of four squadrons, 346th, 347th, 348th, and the 416th. No one ever satisfactorily explained why we were not the 349th, or the 345th. At any rate our first mission came at the end of our first week with the 416th. The 99th was assigned the target of railroad marshalling yards at Bolzano, Italy. Disruption of supplies to the German troops in Italy would be a big factor in the ground war. Turin was located in the northwestern part of Italy and the mission would take five-and-a half to six hours in the air. There would be about 300 planes flying to that target. Since this was our first mission, a combat-experienced pilot was assigned to fly with me as co-pilot, and Bernie flew in another plane.

We took off in the early morning of October 30 and formed up as a squadron, joined the other three over the Mediterranean, and headed north toward Italy. Our flight leader kept us well off the Italian west coast to avoid possible anti-aircraft fire but we saw no enemy aircraft as had been predicted. The sea was a beautiful blue, reflecting the clear sky, and Italy off to our right looked quiet and peaceful, belying the fact of Allied landings and hard fought battles on the ground.

As we passed through the 10,000 foot level, all the crew donned oxygen masks and the temperature took a nose dive. Dudley Segars and Ernest Hettinger were the most exposed with their caliber 50 machine guns mounted in the open waist windows. However the rest of us also felt the bite of frigid air. We reached bombing altitude of 24,000 feet about thirty minutes before coming to the initial point for the start of the bombing run. At the same time we entered a layer of air just right for the formation of contrails. Each of the 300 planes put out four white streams, all of which melted together to form one huge, white, banner. It wouldn't be hard for the antiaircraft gunners to spot us even though we were five miles above their heads. Since each squadron in succession flew behind and below the preceding squadron, no one had to fly in the cloud so there was a clear view of the target. Also, clear was our first look at the explosions of antiaircraft shells from the 88mm guns on the ground. Fortunately for the most part, they were exploding below our flight path with only a few at our altitude. As each squadron passed over the target in turn, we would drop our bombs in unison to effect a strike pattern that was concentrated on the target and large enough to cover considerable territory. This was one reason for flying in close formation.

Coming off the target weighing 5,000 pounds less because of the ten 500-pound eggs we had just laid, and heading downhill all the way home to North Africa, it felt good to pick-up an extra 15 - 20 mpr and get out of the range of those flak guns. Besides, it was getting warmer as we lost altitude and that was a welcomed feeling. The remainder of the trip was unevenful and we arrived in time for supper.

Nine days later we flew our second mission as a crew, to Turin to destroy the ballbearing plant that turned out essential parts for the making of Hitler's war machines. This was, in most respects, similar to our first mission with the exception that this time we sighted some enemy aircraft. We were happy that they kept their distance and gave us no trouble.

FOGGIA AND THE BRITISH WELLINGTON

V

Our move from Tunis to Foggia, southwest of the spur on the Italian boot was made aboard an LST (Landing Ship Tank). There were not enough planes to ferry all the squadron equipment, supplies, and men in the time frame allowed; consequently, we traveled by sea from Tunis to Naples where we brought our convoy ashore and started overland to Foggia. Everywhere along the route we were greeted warmly by the Italian people. Foggia in December was a wet, cold, inhospitable place. I was not feeling well and my skin was turning yellow. Bernie, Joe, Howard, and I hired some Italian laborers to dig a tent-size hole about four feet deep over which we pitched our tent. Lined with slate and tile obtained from the locals and heated by a contraption that burned aviation gasoline, we were quite comfortable. Comfortable, that is, except for my extreme gastric distress which was diagnosed as yellow jaundice precipitated by the atabrine tablets we had been taking to ward off malaria. I was sidelined for a couple of weeks while the crew continued to fly as fill-in for other crews.

The British were sharing our field with us flying night missions while we flew daylight. Their missions were far more dangerous than ours for several reasons . . . the first of which was their aircraft. I was amazed and horrified when I climbed into one of their Wellington bombers which we called "Whimpies" after a Popeye character. It was literally of match-stick construction covered with fabric. It could carry a blockbuster 2000-pound bomb if the bomb bay doors were left off. Another danger was the bomb nearly dragging on the runway at takeoff. If the bomb was not delivered, it was to be dropped unarmed into the sea before returning to base. One night we were awakened about one o'clock by a monstrous explosion on the flight line. It was reported that a Whimpy had returned with a bomb hung up and tried to land gently. Many of our planes were put out of commission for the next few days. The only ones that escaped were protected by bunkers. Our planes were unable to fly for a while anyway because of the huge hole blown in our runway. Had they not been parked a considerable distance from the runway, the British may have accomplished a big air victory for the Germans. Other dangerous factors were the missions they flew alone at night, to say nothing of the German night fighters which were nigh impossible to defend against.

Another evening just after supper we heard the Whimpies taking off and one flew over our tent area which was approximately two miles from the flight line. We were looking up, as one passed overhead, and noticed a small flame on one wing. The fabric took no time to burn away and gravity took over. From three- to four-hundred feet in the air, the plane came down about a football field away from our tent area. Our 1st Sergeant Peter B. Hurey of the 416th was closest to the crash scene and, seeing the tail turret gunner was still alive, made a dash to extricate him. Most of us were aware that the only exit from that turret was from outside at ground level. He was almost to the plane when a five-hundred-pound bomb exploded. He and all crew members of the plane perished in the explosion that knocked down tents and left a large crater near our camp. Later when our semi-permanent mess hall was built it was named after that heroic man.

For \$200 I was able to obtain a like-new Harley Davidson motorcycle with a striking resemblance to the ones used by the military police. I am sure that it was stolen but why it was not confiscated by the MP's, I don't know. The seller was a GI who assembled it from parts that he said were from wrecked bikes discarded by the military. At any rate, I owned it long enough to ride it down to Bari, spend a couple of days on leave, and return before it was restolen, probably by the same guy from whom I bought it. That could have been one of the more propitious happenings of my time at Foggia.

On my way to Bari I came up behind a convoy of military trucks on wet pavement. Being a novice on a motorcycle, my stop turned out to be a long slide ending with the bike lying on its side with only a light bump against the rear axle as the truck continued slowly on its way. Inasmuch as my father had died in the line of duty as a policeman when he was 29 while he was riding a Harley, it seems that I was being saved from my own foolishness. Shortly after that even my handlebar mustache was gone.

We called any short mission without opposition a milk run and it counted toward the

50 required before we could go home. I vividly remember two milk-run missions we made.

The Germans had been able to dig in at a line roughly fifty miles north of our base at Foggia . . . a line that ran through the monastery on Monti Casino. The high command had been reluctant to bomb the historic sight because of its religious significance, but it was quite evident that, contrary to their promises, the Germans were using the sight for observing Allied activities. As it was a key to unlock the door to further Allied advances, we were ordered to bomb the monastery on February 15, 1944. With our complete air superiority in Italy there was no opposition from enemy aircraft; only a few puffs of smoke spoke of the 88mm antiaircraft guns as evidence of our mission. Two days later, February 17, 1944, with the infantry ready to start driving north again, we were ordered to hit the German troops north of Anzio with fragmentation bombs. This was delicate business. With the lines so close, it was important to bomb on the enemy side of the line without any bombs falling short. We were told that we did a good job and the battle lines started moving again.

We flew the following seventeen missions. The first five were flown from Tunis in North Africa where it was necessary to cross the Mediterranean to reach our targets. The weather was usually good even though wind and blowing sand were problems at times.

Date	Location	Target	No. of Hrs.
30 Oct 43	Bolzano, Italy	Marshalling yards	5:45
08 Nov 43	Turin, Italy	Ball bearing factory	6:35
10 Nov 43	Bolzano, Italy	Marshalling yards	9:00
22 Nov 43	Foggia, Italy	Military	4:35
29 Nov 43	Fiano Romano, Italy	Ammunition depot	6:40

At this juncture the 99th Bomb Group moved up from Tunis to the Air Field at Foggia, Italy, a town we had previously bombed.

19 Dec 43	Innesbruck, Austria	Marshalling yards	6:00
02 Dec 43	Udine, Italy	Marshalling yards	4:40
04 Jan 44	Sofia, Bulgaria	German Southern H.Q.	6:35
07 Jan 44	Maribor, Yugoslavia	Aircraft factory	5:30
08 Jan 44	Reggio Emilia, Italy	Aircraft factory	5:35
09 Jan 44	Pola Harbor, Yugoslavia	Sub Base	3:50
10 Jan 44	Sofia, Bulgaria	Factories	6:05
07 Jan 44	Prato, Italy	Marshalling yards	5:25
20 Jan 44	Commpiano, Italy	Airdrome	4:05
05 Feb 44	Cassino Monastery, Italy	German observers	3:05
07 Feb 44	North of Anzio, Italy	German troops	3:50
22 Feb 44	Regensberg, Germany	Aircraft factories	MIA

The unsung heroes of this operation were the ground crews who put the planes in shape to fly and kept them flying. They worked night and day repairing and fine tuning these magnificent machines. While the airmen got all the glory, it was these men who made it possible with their knowledgeable dedication. Not enough has been said about their contributions.

REGENSBURG, GERMANY . . . FEBRUARY 22, 1944

VI

Morning didn't just break on February 22, 1944, it shattered the quiet with a jeep's lights and horn and voices calling, "H-Hour" for Perry's crew to roll out at 4:30. This would be my 17th mission. After gathering our flight gear, we stopped at the mess hall and by 5am were on our way to the 99th Bomb Group Briefing Room where we sat in rows of ten. Our Squadron, the 416th was to put up only six planes that day. The other three squadrons of the 99th were to put up at least six* each, which meant we would contribute a minimum of 24 planes to the approximate 300 that the 15th Air Force would fly. The first Briefing Officer filled us in on what kind of opposition we would encounter. "The flak will be heavy and accurate, enemy fighters will be present in maximum numbers. Watch for and carefully observe any fighters that might be jet propelled; i.e., ME-262's. And Gunners! Don't shoot your neighbor and don't shoot any pieces off your own plane. Gunners dismissed! Plane assignments . . . Perry #522.

As the Gunners filed out to their waiting trucks for a quick trip to their planes, Bernie Kyroutac and I got a big surprise. "Leading the 416th will be Captain Shaw, lead navigator Lt. Bauman, lead Bombardier Lt. Joffrion." (Now wait just a doggone minute; they are part of my crew.) Bauman and Joffrion had become the Senior Navigator and Bombardier due to several crews completing their fifty missions and a few that had not returned from a mission that were either MIA or POW. At the same time I had missed a few due to my bout with yellow jaundice. "Flying with Lt. Perry will be Navigator Lt. Bigley, and Bombardier Lt. Andrezjewski." It turned out that Bigley had just arrived with a replacement crew and had not yet flown a mission. Andrezjewski was a veteran of three missions. Bigley, being new, was apprehensive. The rest of us, having some experience to draw on, were just plain scared.

* Dudley Segars and Al Henke are in agreement on 8 planes to start the mission. The squadron diary reported six planes. The important fact is, only three planes from our squadron flew over the target.

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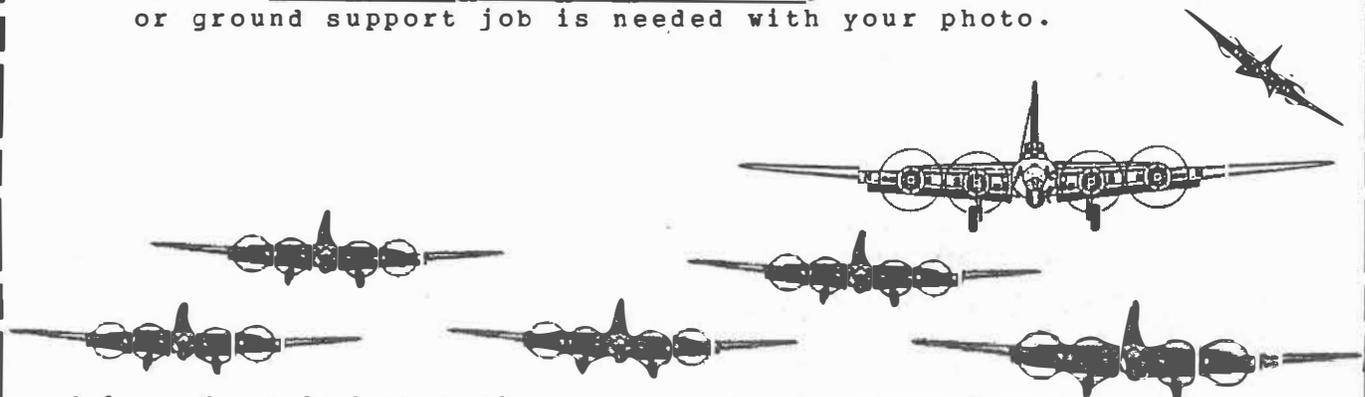
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By then the gunners were all out of the building and for the first time the target for the day was disclosed. "Today the 15th Air Force is flying a maximum-range mission to Regensburg, Germany to destroy Messerschmitt Assembly Plants and Marshalling yards, choked with war materials bound for Italy due to our British friends disrupting their flow through the Brenner Pass". The Eighth Air Force flying out of England was to bomb the same target, hopefully at a different time. Other briefing information was given; i.e., time check for engine start, taxi out, form-up procedure, course altitude, etc.

(TO BE CONTINUED. MUCH HARROWING EXCITEMENT AHEAD.)

To keep our newsletter interesting we need more and more stories. Keep them coming! It would be nice to have your WW II photo for use on the front page of future issues. Don't worry about size. They can be reduced to fit the space. Your photo will be returned. Your rank and crew or ground support job is needed with your photo.



Information to be included in your quarterly newsletters issued February, May, August & November must be sent to Bernie Barr or Walter Butler no later than the first of January, April, July or October.

Member information and stories are needed regularly to keep the newsletter interesting. Everyone has a story or information that our members would enjoy reading. Keep it coming! If at all possible send type written information, the darker the better.

Walter's address is in the top left corner above. Bernie Barr's address is: 7408 Vista Del Arroyo, Albuquerque, NM 87109