

MEN OF

*Official Journal of the Men and
12th Air Force, United States*

Issue No. 3



THE 57TH

*Women of the 57th Bomb Wing,
Army Air Force in World War II*

Fall 2024



Another book regarding the air war in Italy has come to our attention.
We give you some of the highlights of this U.S. Army Publication

57TH BOMB WING ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 2024

Title	Name
President	Richard (Dick) Reed (340th/486th Veteran)
1st Vice President	Gregory Wichtowski, Jr (310st/381st - Leonard Wichtowski)
2nd Vice President	Pam Cosbey (310th/379th - Bernard T. Peters)
Secretary	Patty Koenitzer (310th/380th - James Moffitt)
Treasurer	Louise Bourg (340th/489th - Harry DeBoer)
Web Admin/Editor	Dan Setzer (340th/HQ - Hymie Setzer)
Membership Coordinator	Linda Buechling (340th/489th - Millard E Rives)
Wing Historian /Archivist	Dan Setzer (340th/HQ - Hymie Setzer)



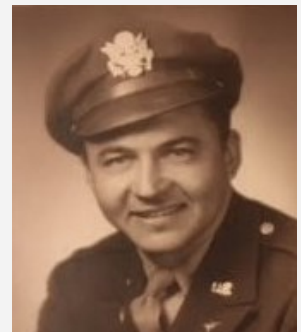
Dick Reed



Len Wichtowski



Bernie Peters



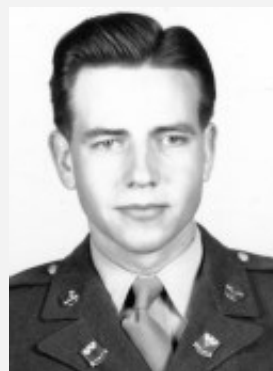
James Moffitt



Harry DeBoer



Hymie Setzer



Millard Rives



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER - DICK REED 340TH/486TH

I just celebrated my 100th birthday with my family and many many friends and want to think back on my wonderful years with "The Men of the 57th".

I thoroughly enjoyed my time as President and will always remember my many friends all joined together in this organization.

My best wishes for its future and hope it will continue on for many years to come.

I will always be at your beck and call for as long as time permits. ★



Chris Gilley Photo

Dick Reed flew his last mission of the war in 6-G on April 26, 1945

6G-069
1st Lt. R.E. Abel, P.
F/O. M.H. Mack, CP.
2nd Lt. R.L. Reed, B.
T/Sgt. T.W. Fogle, R.
S/Sgt. W.T. Pringle, G.
Cpl. R.A. Comee, T.



Blockade

The Isolation of ITALY from the Reich by Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force - 29 August 1944 – 1 May 1945



We recently became aware of this book published by the 941st Engineering Battalion in July of 1945

“Blockade” goes into great detail regarding the efforts of the Army Air Corps to cut off supplies to the German Army in Northern Italy. In some cases it offers an almost day-by-day account of the bombing raids and the incredible efforts of the German repair crews and defenders to keep the Brenner Pass and other rail lines open.

The account is quite comprehensive, running 247 pages. It is written in four parts:

Part I -- Situation

Part II -- Planning

Part III – Operations

Part IV – Enemy Reaction

These parts are followed by 100 pages of appendices: maps, diagrams, charts and photos.

Here is a selection taken from the Forward:

““Blockade” is the story of the efforts of MATAF [*Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force*], ably supported on many occasions by MASAF [*Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force*], to completely seal off the German forces of Army Group “C” in North ITALY from rail connections with the Reich.

It is the story of the dogged execution of a carefully planned program of rail interdiction in the most difficult terrain our airmen have ever faced, the ALPS. It is the story of flak, the very heaviest concentrations the Germans could muster, and what we did to counter it.

It is the story of attacks on large bridges whose destruction caused permanent blocks of the lines and, more frequently, the story of attacks on small bridges and fills which though hit and destroyed would have to be attacked again and again in the furious, never-ceasing battle between our air forces and the German repair crews.

It is the story of perseverance, determination, and success --- success because it is generally conceded by the senior German personnel on the staff of General Von Veitinghof, C-in-C of the Wehrmacht in ITALY, including the General himself, that the interdiction of sup-

ply lines and the destruction of stores of ammunition and fuel were the main reasons for the quick defeat of the Germans in ITALY.”

Needless to say the activities of the 57th Bomb Wing figure heavily in the narrative.

“The heavy bombers were not alone. Except for five scattered days after D Day, MATAF’s mediums maintained a steady offensive against the whole length of the BRENNER Route. It is a tribute to the capacity of the 57th Bomb Wing that it succeeded in putting as many as six mission of B-25’s on BRENNER targets in a single day while at the same time satisfying the tremendous demands of the battle area. At the end of the month adverse weather grounded the mediums, and their long six month campaign against the BRENNER came to an end. On 25 April [1945], B-25’s, 87 strong, attacked the Route for the last time, leaving it more firmly interdicted than ever before. From PARONA, just North of VERONA, to STEINACH, nine miles within AUSTRIA, the railway was blocked at 18 places.”

The men of the 57th BW managed this in spite of enormous efforts by the enemy to halt the onslaught:

“With the withdrawal and elimination of the Luftwaffe in ITALY as an effective fighting machine, the defense of targets in Northern ITALY from air attacks rested entirely with the Flak troops of the GAF, as the sporadic activities of the two Italian-manned fighter groups were never considered a threat to our air operations.

To accomplish this mission of target defense, the Germans had over 1400 heavy flak guns and over 3000 light flak guns with the necessary fire control instruments, manned by approximately 45,000 troops. The majority of these guns were used in the defense of the important communication lines – along the BRENNER and in the Northeastern sector.”

The book details how furiously the enemy worked to repair especially the small bridges and diversions, sometimes restoring them to service overnight or in a couple of days. This required our boys to return to the same targets again, and again, and again.

“The enemy’s chief reliance in his struggle against MATAF’ interdiction was a vast and efficient repair organization. Characterized, at first, by versatility, energy, and determination, it proved a redoubtable foe which could not be wholly immobilized but only gradually outclassed and exhausted.”

This book is an excellent resource for researchers and enthusiasts interested in the history of the 57th Bomb Wing.

On the following pages you will find some maps and charts extracted from “Blockade.”

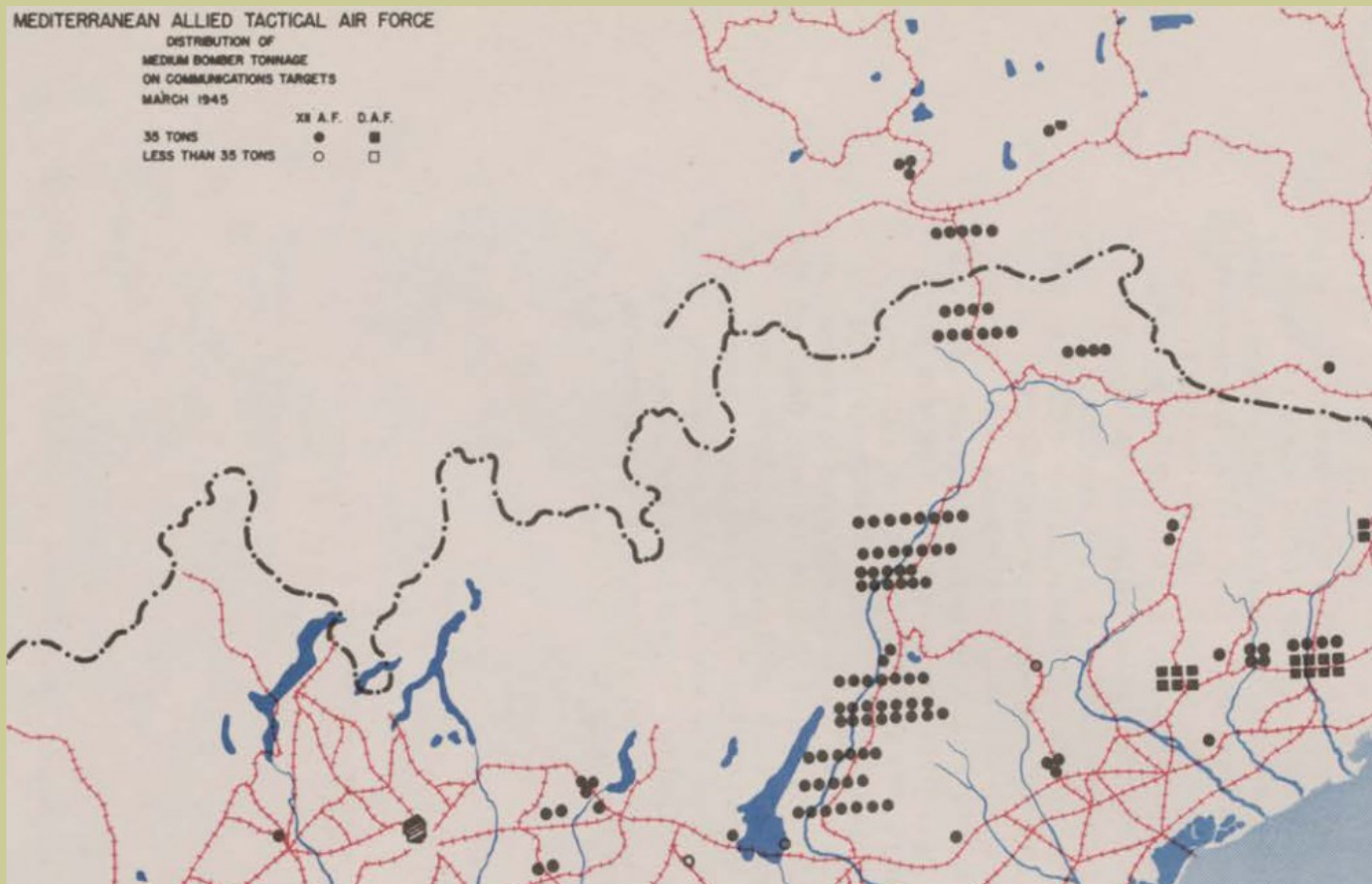
We have added “Blockade” to the ‘Books’ section of the 57th Bomb Wing website.

You can download the full book (109MB) at: [Books about the 57th Bomb Wing](#)



MEDITERRANEAN ALLIED TACTICAL AIR FORCE
DISTRIBUTION OF
MEDIUM BOMBER TONNAGE
ON COMMUNICATIONS TARGETS
MARCH 1945

35 TONS ● ■
LESS THAN 35 TONS ○ □



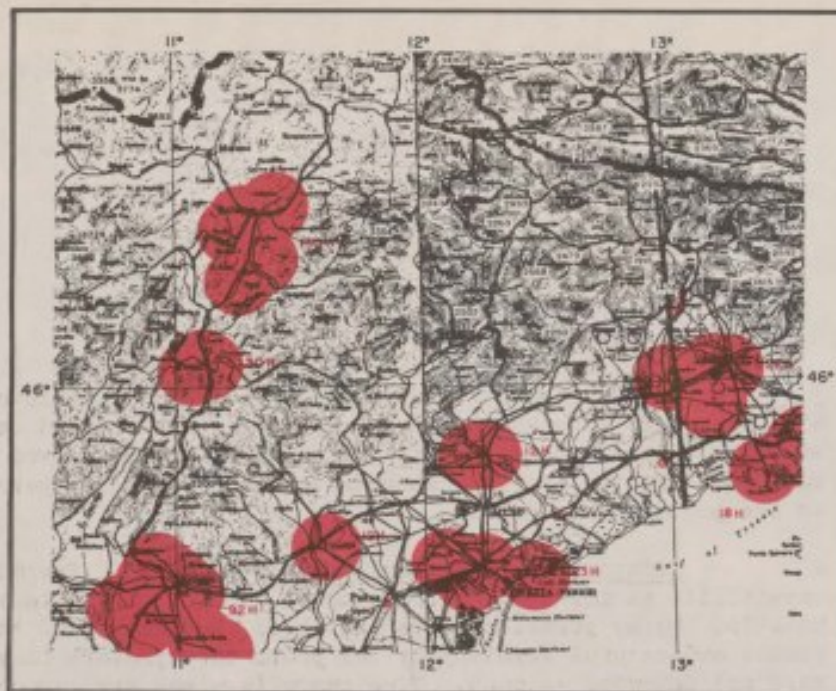
This chart shows the tonnage of bombs dropped by the B-25 Medium bombers during the month of February 1945. Note the massive concentration along the entire length of the Brenner Pass.



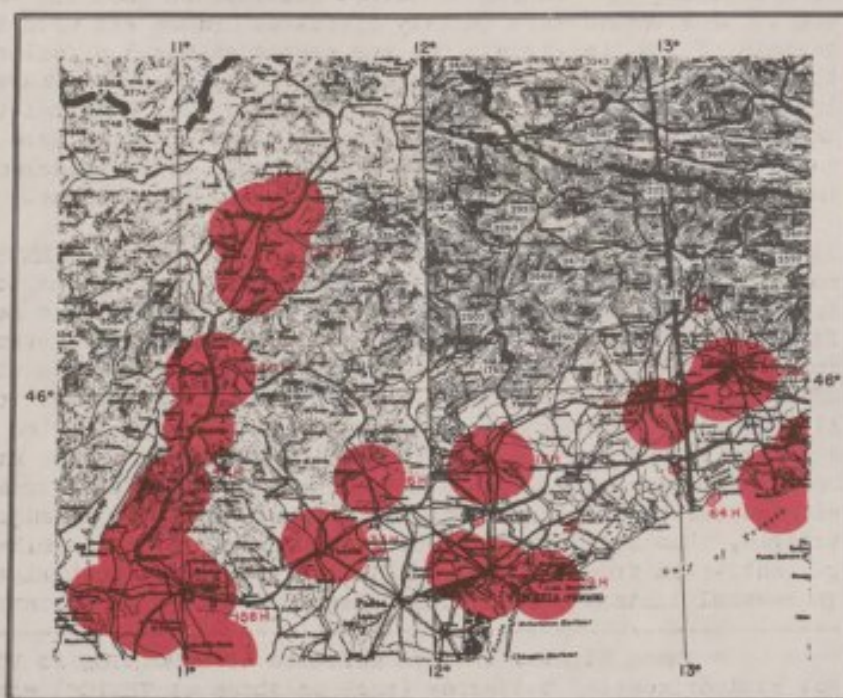
Photos No. 8-9

PADUA EAST RAIL BRIDGE

This important bridge over the ERENTO River was in the first line of interdiction on the Venetian Plain. It was attacked on 7 November by 18 B-25's of the 319th Bomb Group, 57th Bomb Wing, dropping 60 x 1000 GP bombs. Only two of the original six spans were left standing, and these were severely damaged.



20 OCT. 1944



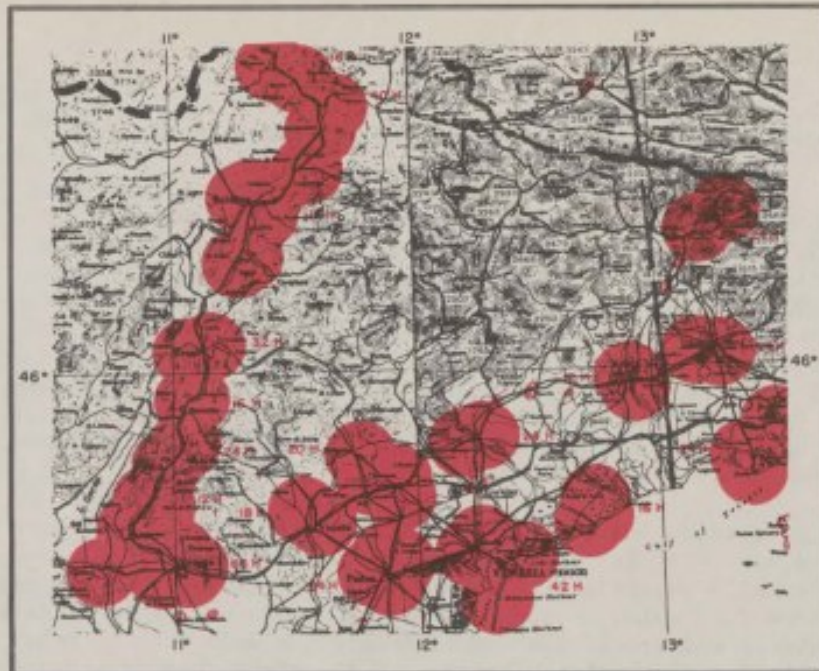
24 NOV. 1944

16 H - NUMBER OF HEAVY GUNS IN AREA

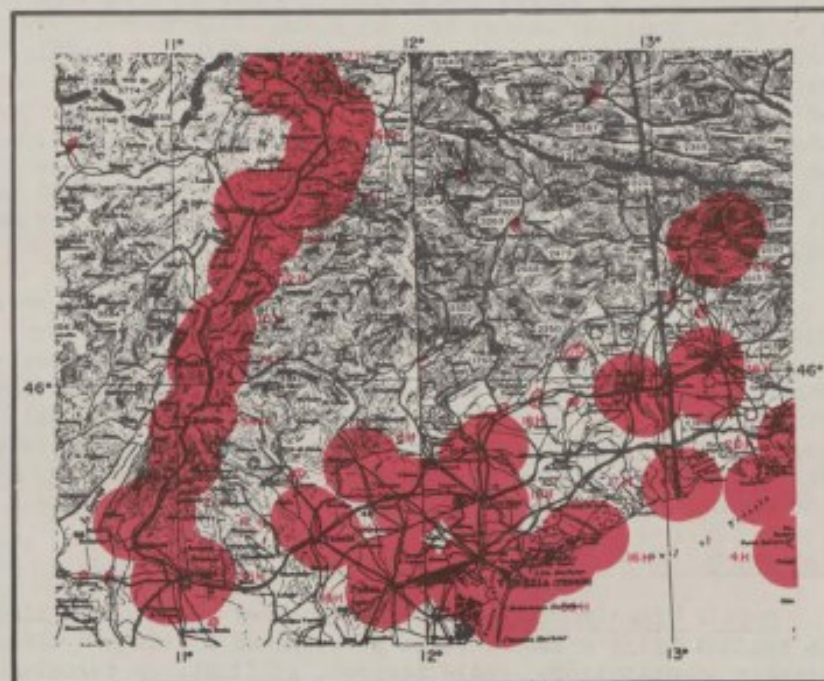
● - AREA OF HEAVY AND LIGHT FLAK

FLAK BUILD-UP ON BRENNER LINE

- 84 -



7 FEB. 1945



27 MAR. 1945

16 H-NUMBER OF HEAVY GUNS IN AREA

● - AREA OF HEAVY AND LIGHT FLAK

FLAK BUILD-UP ON BRENNER LINE

- 85 -

Jet Aircraft in Italy 1945

By Frank B. Dean, 380th Bomb Squadron

The book "Blockade" is full un unexpected gems. For example it mentions German jet aircraft being used for reconnaissance. We were unaware that jets were active in the MTO. But then we found this article published in the Fall 1997 issue of the Men of the 57th Newsletter:

As an aircraft mechanic in the 310th Bomb Group, I did not personally encounter an enemy fighter intent upon my destruction. However, we mechanics in the 57th Bomb Wing were the first persons outside of the combat crews to know that a strange looking aircraft had been seen in the skies of Northern Italy.

The combat crew's description of the airplane was vague and not concise other than it was a "fairly large"

German aircraft with no propeller that did not attack but zipped past the bomber formation going like "a bat out of hell". There were other sightings by other formations of other groups, but the war would end with little other information on the "Mystery Airplane."

The mysterious airplane that had arrived in Italy in mid-March, 1945, was actually three Ar 234 jet aircraft belonging to a German reconnaissance unit sent to Northern Italy to gain information on the Allied force's preparation for the attack on the Gothic Line. These aircraft were based at Campoformido, Italy, where they remained until the end of the war.

The Arado-Ar 234B-2 "Blitz" bomber (Lightning in English) was originally programmed as a single seated jet powered, high performance reconnaissance aircraft, with a range of 1,340 miles and a high speed of approximately 460 miles per hour. The bomber version had a range of 684 miles with a 3,300-pound bomb load and speed of 430 miles

per hour. Drop tanks could extend the range but reduced the bomb load. Both versions were equipped with an ejection seat, automatic pilot, and provisions for drop tanks. Neither aircraft was designed as an attack aircraft. Defensive armament were two fixed rearward firing, 20 mm cannons sighted by periscope and fired by the pilot.

The Ar 234 with a wingspan of 46 feet and length of 42 feet was slightly smaller than the B-25 which had a wingspan of 67 feet and length of 53 feet. Both the bomber and the reconnaissance versions were active from September 1944 until May 1945 when the war ended.

The intent of the Germans to place jet fighters in the hands of the Italian pilots of the National Republic Air Force was obvious. Changes were made on the two airfields at Ghedi and Villafranca to accommodate twin engine Messerschmitt Me 262 Jet Fighters. Only the German surrender prevented the deployment of these jet fighters against the Allied bombers in Italy.



Frank Dean

The American project to produce a jet fighter resulted in the development of the Bell P-59 Air Comet. Used primarily as a trainer, only thirty were delivered before the contract was cancelled in favor of the Lockheed P-80A in October of 1944.

It is possible that the threat of the German jet fighters in Italy triggered an American response to counter such an event. Two P-80's would arrive in Italy prior to V-E Day, but neither would fly combat. ★



The Arado Ar 234 B-2 at the National Air and Space Museum.

Photo credit: By Kogo - Own work, GFDL, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2855975>





BONDS bought these
planes.
WASTE FATS helped
arm them.
WASTE PAPER helped
ship them.
GASOLINE flies them.
WILL YOU help deliver
the next squadron?

Jack of all Raids

Target of opportunity, the long suit of any B-25 Mitchell, and when the target does not readily present itself, you can depend on American pilots to make the opportunity. Whether it's a bombing mission requiring pinpoint preci-

sion or busting up a jungle troop concentration with lawn-mower efficiency, the B-25 takes them all in stride. To the Japs, this rugged plane is nicknamed The Flying Pillbox; to American pilots, it's the work horse of the Army Air Forces.

THREE MODELS OF THE B-25 MITCHELL—EACH DESIGNED FOR A SPECIAL TYPE OF COMBAT OPERATION



PINPOINT

This is the bomb-sight nose of a B-25 Mitchell. This model is used for pinpoint precision bombing from medium altitudes.



PENETRATION

B-25 Mitchell with eight 50-caliber machine guns in the nose. This model used for penetrating jungle undergrowth.



PUNCH

Famed 75 mm cannon nose of the B-25 Mitchell delivers knockouts to pillboxes, punches holes in Jap communications.

North American Aviation Sets the Pace

PLANES THAT MAKE HEADLINES...the P-51 Mustang fighter (A-36 fighter-bomber), B-25 and PBJ Mitchell bomber, the AT-6 and SNJ Texan combat trainer. North American Aviation, Inc. Member, Aircraft War Production Council, Inc.

ANR Fighters Attack

In May of 1944 the German Luftwaffe launched a very successful raid against the 340th Bombardment Group at Alesani, Corsica. It was to be last major action by a German bomber group in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations (MTO). Shortly after the raid the Lehrgeschwader 1, the bomber group that carried out the raid, was transferred to the Eastern Front to help hold back the Russian army onslaught.

By September 1944 the Germans had withdrawn all of their fighter squadrons from the MTO and shifted them to the Eastern Front also. The Luftwaffe was essentially out of the

incorporate the ANR into the Luftwaffe command. The proud Italian pilots refused to go, one squadron even burned its airplanes rather than let them fall under German control.

The Germans relented and replaced the airplanes. However, by this time the Germans themselves were having trouble supplying their own aircraft with fuel and replacement parts. That also became a problem for the ANR which was only able to mount intermittent defence against the Allies.

That is not to say that they were totally ineffective. Their pilots were very aggressive when they could get into the air and did inflict



Messerschmitt Bf 109G with the markings of the Aeronautica Nazionale Repubblicana

MTO, with the exception of a few squadrons of reconnaissance and night fighters.

Axis fighter defense fell to the Italian Fascist Air Force the *Aeronautica Nazionale Repubblicana* (ANR).

The Germans provided aircraft, mostly Me-109's and Fw-190's, to the two ANR fighter squadrons. They also trained the pilots.

The ANR fighter squadrons had a very rocky time. At one point the Germans attempted to

damage on the bombers of the 57th Bomb Wing.

One such occasion was on the March 23, 1945 mission by the 310th BG against the bridge at Pordenone, Italy.

The 380th BS lost ship #238, named "Sitting Pretty," to the ANR fighters. Here is the crew list and the description from the 380th War Diary:

James J Summers	Pilot
Alexander Zebelian	Co-pilot
Donald K Soderlund	Bombardier
Jack B Gordy	Turret Gunner
Clarence E Smith	Radio-Gunner
Basil F Millican	Tail Gunner



Basil F. Millican

----- SUMMARY -----

The aircraft piloted by Lt. JJ Summers was attacked by 10-20 enemy aircraft, ME 109's & FW 190's, just after B-25's broke from the target run. The aircraft was hit by 20 mm shell fire in the left engine and left wing, which caused the engine to start smoking. At the same time the landing gear fell out of its housing station, & the B-25 started to fall out of formation, under good control. As the B-25 left the formation, three (3) parachutes were seen to come out of the damaged aircraft and open. As the plane was rapidly descending 5-6 enemy fighters jumped it and started an attack on the crippled plane. At this moment the left engine was seen to catch fire, and the enemy aircraft left the B-25 as the Spitfire escort came in to cover the B-25. The Mitchell Bomber was last seen at about 4000 feet under a controlled glide heading West toward the distant hilly country. The attentions of the crew members of the other aircraft were centered on the attacking enemy fighters and therefore unable to follow the damaged aircraft further. (Latest report from ground sources tell of some members of this crew safe in enemy territory. More details in following months history)

Bailing out over enemy territory, the crew survived the attack, three as POW's, but the other three evaded capture. Each crewman would have quite a story to tell, but, unfortunately, only one story has come down to us.

In the pages that follow read the account of the incident from the point of view of Donald K. Soderlund. ★

My Last Mission — March 23, 1945

By Donald K. Soderlund, 380th BS, 310th BG



Donald Soderlund

As a last-minute substitute bombardier on a routine mission, I was driven to the end of the runway where 21 planes were ready for take-off. Someone dropped open the front escape hatch of one of the 380th squadron planes and I crawled in. It was to be my last mission, leaving Corsica for good with a crew I had never met.

The original target was cancelled for some reason, and we went for the alternate target, a bridge at Prodenone in the Po Valley, Italy. The time consumed sent our English escort of Spitfires home, and down on the ground the six or more little dust spots came up – Me-109's and Fw-190's.

They attacked out of the sun. The gunners got a couple before our left-wing gas tank caught fire. We all bailed out.

On my way out I met for the first time, co-pilot 1st Lt. Alexander Zebelian, my constant companion for the next six weeks. Our second meeting on the ground an hour later, He was peddling a bicycle along the top of the numerous Po Valley canals. I wasted my best line on him, I said, "Dr. Livingston, I presume?" and he didn't get it. Maybe it wasn't too appropriate.

Bailing out at about 7000 feet I pulled the rip cord on my chute and nothing happened. Had to open the front flap, throw out the small lead chute before the main parachute opened. Years later, my barber, a paratrooper, told me that's how it was done with a small 22-foot chute. Nice thing to know – 20 years later.

An Italian farmer and his son got up very early that March 23rd morning and had plowed a nice soft spot for me to land on and a good place to hide my chute and heavy flight jacket. They directed me down a dry canal away from the area at the end of which I met a young boy with a pitcher of water. After half a glass, I knew it was whiskey. From then on, solving problems was easier.

Lt. 'Z' and I were picked up by an old man and poled down a canal in a very small boat. Lt. 'Z' had a sprained ankle, otherwise we were OK. We were guided to a group of Italian Partisans hidden in some tall reeds and since they wore various parts of German uniforms, I thought we had had it. Instead, after conveying our appreciation for our rescue in very limited and bad Italian, we had a nice lunch of roast goat meat, cheese, wine, and bread. By sundown we moved out of the area and after a very long walk we stopped at a farmhouse where we were quickly introduced to the family and hid in an upstairs room for several days.

A visit by some German officers, who the family apparently convinced they knew nothing of our whereabouts, prompted another move that night. This time the transportation was bicycles and since I had never ridden one before, I had a hell of a time keeping up with the rest and staying out of the canals.

We arrived at our new residence in the middle of the night. This was the home of the Sparetta family, father, mother, daughter, and some kids. They were tenant farmers living more or less in one building. The first floor was for farm animals, in this case only two friendly oxen, second floor for the family, top floor was the grainery where we slept. Its windows had no glass and the owls visited us most nights looking for the rats who were there for the corn. During the day we hid in the chicken coop or out in the fields when someone arrived that the family didn't trust. The kids acted as lookouts.

After about a week, top-turret gunner S/Sgt. Clarence E. "Smitty" Smith joined us. He had been living out in the open, sleeping in haystacks.

Living with the Sparetta family was very pleasant, and we spent a lot of time gathered around the hooded fire platform with dried corn shocks for fuel. The women baked us special bread and the men provided us with 'roll your own' cigarettes.



*Clarence E.
"Smitty" Smith*

We exchanged our uniforms for rag-tag civilian clothes. I was dressed as the poorest peasant in the Po Valley. Lt. 'Z' got a pair of black velvet pants that made him look very Italian and important. 'Smitty,' a late sleeper got the rest, but then he looked good in anything.

We were visited frequently by a New Zealander, Archie Scott, from Christchurch, New Zealand. He had been captured by the Germans in Egypt, brought to Italy, escaped, joined the Partisans. He spoke rather good Italian and it was through him we learned there were a number of New Zealanders hiding in the vicinity.

During this time, we were visited by other tenant families that the Sparatta's knew, a gregarious bunch, especially if wine was available. Once, one of the women picked me up and more or less tucked me under her arm and said she was taking me home. She'd have a hell of a time picking me up today and come to think of it – "what for?"

After weeks of this dangerous and perilous living we got the word to move out. Happy as we were to hear this, we didn't expect to walk out in broad daylight, but that's what we did along with the New Zealanders. Why the Germans who we met on the roads didn't become suspicious of our "goodbyes," I will never know. All the women and other members of the families piled out of the houses with wine, hugs, & kisses. The New Zealanders had been here much longer than we had and most of the attention was for them, but it seemed to me Lt. 'Z' and especially 'Smitty' got their share.

We walked 50 miles, or so it seemed, picking up shadowy figures along the way. Two I remember talking to were fighter pilots. The Partisans were very noisy, they were spoiling for a fight because they now felt they had the upper hand.

Hours later, on the beach of the Adriatic Sea, where we were to be picked up by PT boat, we waited & worried about the coming daylight and hoping to pick up our rescue signal “the Jersey Bounce,” when the sky was lit up by flares and 40mm shells dropping into the surf. Seems our PT boat ran into a German patrol & faked an attack. I can still remember seeing the shadowy outline of the rafts silently moving toward shore, and I also remember ‘Smitty’ didn’t wait to be picked up and neither did I as we both swam out to the PT boat.

Our trip down the coast was swift and uneventful, landing in Ancona. Later a dusty truck ride to Rimini rejoined us with the 380th Bomb Squadron.

It certainly would be interesting to meet the other three members of the crew and hear their stories, but what I have always wondered was...

Who it was that I had replaced on this my 67th and last mission?



“Flak Happy” 428th Bomb Squadron



BESTELLNUMMER 102

Adler- Luftverteidigungs- spiel



Children Playing at War



We recently came into possession of an interesting artifact of WW2.

While the men of Germany were fighting in the war, the children of Germany were playing at war.

We found a children's board game called "*Adler – Luftverteidigungsspiel*," or, "*Eagle – Air Defense Game*."

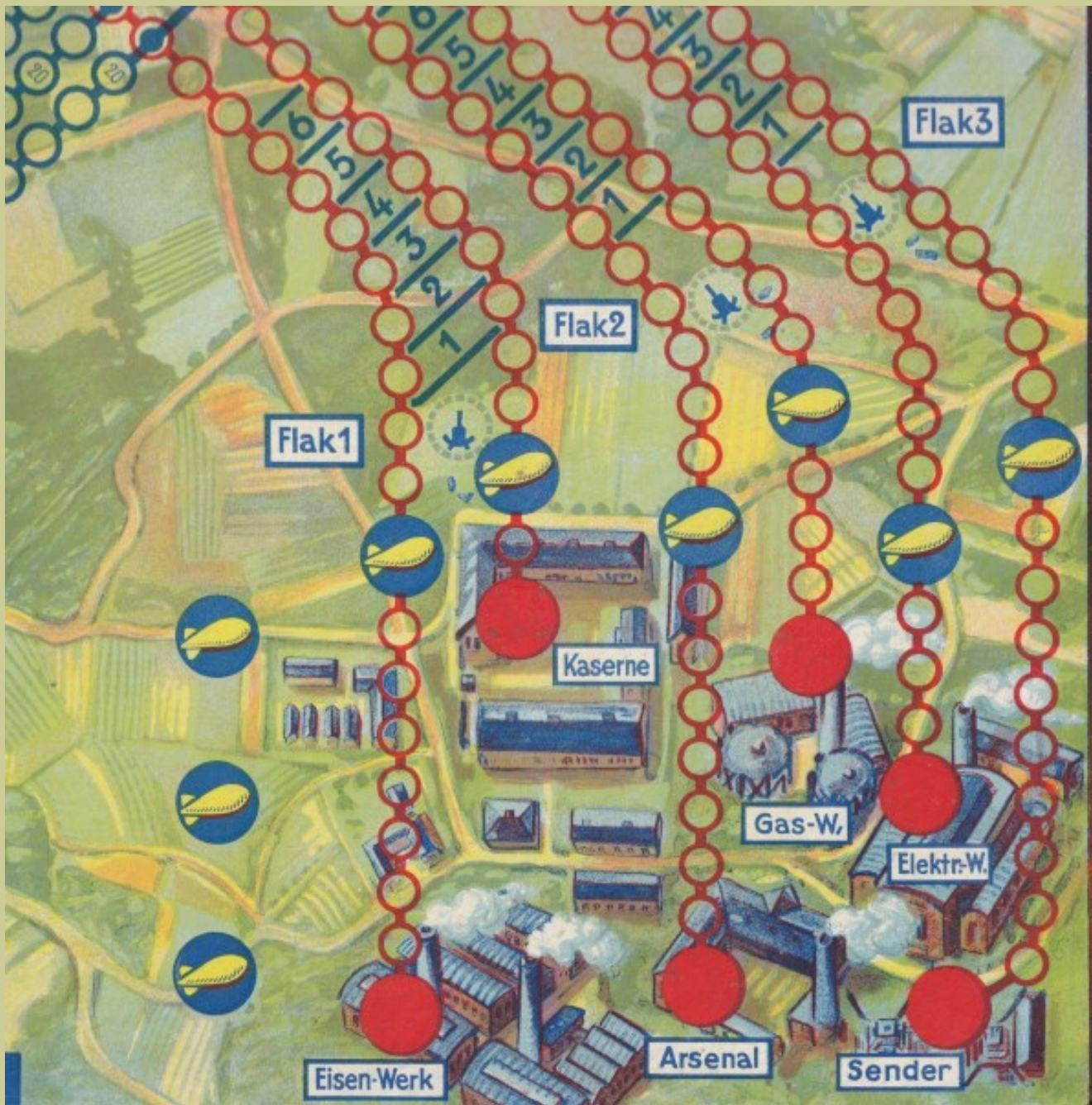
The preface to the game's instructions assures us that it was developed by an officer in the Luftwaffe. It also stated that:

"This game shall and will remain only a game. But the deeper meaning of the game lies in the ever-watchful thought of protecting the homeland."

The game was produced by the Verlag Hugo Gräfe in Dresden in 1941 when the Germans were still winning the war.

Each player gets six bombers and six fighters. Play is controlled by five multi-colored dice.

The pieces advance hoping to avoid enemy flak and fighters to reach their targets then return back to base.



The numbered circles indicate that you are in range of the Flak guns. A throw of the dice determines a miss or damage.

The targets (L-R) are the steel works, barracks, arsenal, gas works, radio transmitter and electrical power station.

Game pieces, fighters and bombers.



GUNNERS OF THE AIR

Words and Music by W. G. HANSEN

Strict march tempo

Oh, a pi - lot comes in hand - y, when you're fly - ing thro' the air. And a bom - bar - dier's just dan - dy, He's a guy we just can't spare, A nav - i - ga - tor ra - di - o to keep you on the beam, but where the hell would they be with - out gun - ners on the team? O - ver

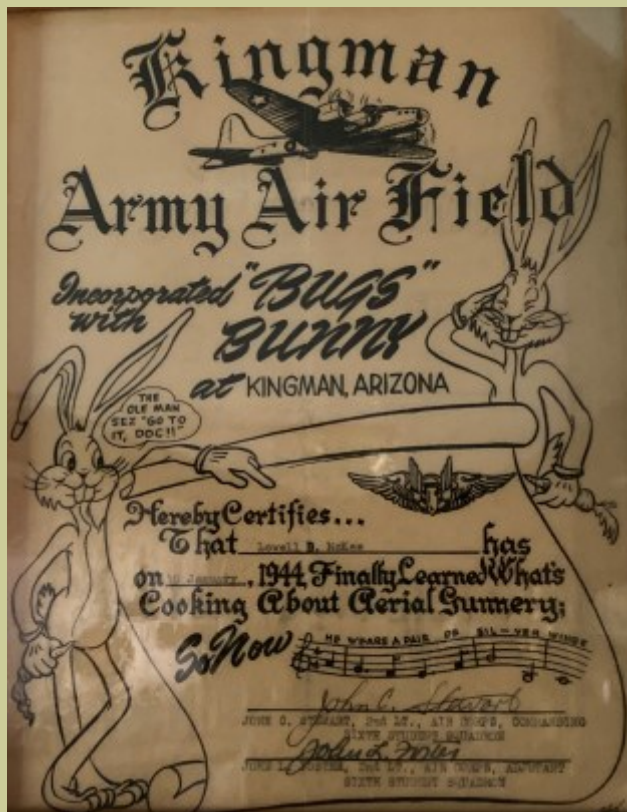
Used by permission of composer, W. G. Hansen.
28

Refrain

land, o - ver sea, in the skies ev - ry where We are the gun - ners of the air. We're the guys in the skies, take 'em up in a dare. We are the gun - ners of the air, we're just the root - in', hoot - in', toot - in', gun - shoot - in' guys, We'll blast those Japs and Jer - ries out of the skies. Send us there an - y - where, What the hell do we care 'cause we're the gunners of the air.

29

From the “Air Force Airs Songbook” published 1943. [Joan DeBoer Heath Collection]



Virgil Prichard
380th BS

Running on 100 Octane Aviation Fuel

And 80-Proof Alcohol

The story of the Officer's and Enlisted Men's Clubs

The "O" Clubs and the "EM" Clubs were an essential element of the 57th Bomb Wing groups and squadrons.

Not only did they serve as a venue for rest and relaxation, they also served as a sort of venue for emotional therapy.

The Club was a safe place where you could tell the guy sitting across the table from you how scared you were on the last mission, and know that your statements will be received with sympathy and understanding because the listener would have had those same feelings on that mission, or another just like it.

When the squadrons moved to a new station, the first priority after getting the unit combat-ready was setting up the "O" and "EM" clubs. My father, Sgt. Hymie Setzer, brought back two photos of the EM club for the HQ Squadron. I believe the photos were taken shortly after arriving on Corsica because the EM club was just a tent with a dirt floor. The furnishings came from "Who knows where?"

Conditions did not stay this way. The War Diaries are full of stories about how the Clubs were under constant improvement. If they could not find an existing building to use, they would build one from the ground up.





340th BG HQ enlisted men's club on Corsica 1944

Lumber and building materials would be purchased or scavenged. In spite of the scarcity of materials some of the clubs were quite sophisticated and elegant.

After the club building or tent was in place the next step would be getting enough money for that initial purchase of inventory. Each Squadron had to come up with their own solution.

Some simply had everyone kick in a contribution. Others had a more formal procedure. They issued stock in the operation. The GI's would purchase a share of the operation which often had a full executive staff including president, vice-presidents, secretary, treasurer, etc. Even a board of directors.

If a soldier was transferred out of the organization he could sell his share to another, or the organization would cash him out.

As you will see in the following pages, another method was to borrow money from the squadron treasury, and pay back the loan gradually from the profits.

Once they had cash in hand, they would take one of the war-weary, but serviceable B-25's that had been taken out of combat and fly that aircraft to places like Alexandria Egypt, Malta,

Or Sicily to purchase a plane-load of whisky, wine and beer. Those aircraft were affectionally known as rum-runners.

One much-beloved, and, much-lamented after the unit moved on, EM Clubs was the 381st BS enlisted men's club known as the KuKu Nut Gruve.

Unfortunately, we do not have any photographs of the establishment, but we do have an affectionate ode to the Gruve in the December 1943 War Diary of the 381st BS. In January 1944 they left Philippeville in North Africa forcing them to close down the KuKu Nut Gruve.

Here is what they had to say:

BIRTH OF THE GRUVE

By M/Sgt. John E. McGary (*engineering, crew chief*)

One Candy Johnson, of fictional fame, gave birth to many virtuous ideas ..and ideals, too numerous to mention over one bottle of vin rouge, but his outstanding achievement, in the eyes of us who knew him best, was the Square Deal establishment...a haven where men could lose or spend their money honestly, whether at turning the pasteboards, galloping the dominoes or tilting a friendly glass of the available beverage

Red blooded Americans that we are, we appreciate these solid principles practiced by our frontier ancestor, and tho we find ourselves practically as forgotten men, in a remote section of Caesar's once famous African Empire, a place truly out of this world, we still stand by the rights of man to bend elbows with his cronies over a glass of spirits. *Reference: 1941 movie "Honky Tonk" fictional con-artist Candy Johnson (Clark Gable) and his "Square Deal" saloon.*

And thus it was, that with Boom Town currency in our pockets, and the inevitable fighter's craving for chance and the quenching of thirst, we were confronted with the problem of a temperate and sociable outlet for these inhibitions, under squadron sanction, but without the appearance of squadron domination. Tho many bull sessions on the subject were pervaded by doubt, as to authoritative frowns and possible down right objections, we found that our administration was solidly behind us in an appropriate solution to the problem. Our C.O. not only gave his permission to the establishment of an enlisted men's bar, he offered fullest approval and cooperation. Thus evolved the successor to the old Square Deal.

Cometh, Lawrence (NMI), Maj, pilot, Commander

We all know that Billy Rose is a past master at the after hour entertainment, in an alcoholic sort of way. But his ingenuity has been outstripped by our own organization. Altho we have no women... we have found that they are purely incidental anyway, after twelve months of abstinence...the Kuku Nut Gruve can hold its own among the big ten of all time night spots. All the adjectives thus far applied by the human race to objects of quality would fail to praise it justly.

Reference: William "Billy" Rose, theatrical showman and lyricist, known for his "Diamond Horseshoe" nightclub in NY City, and the song "Me and My Shadow", among others.

BIRTH OF THE GRUVE (cont'd)

A sheet metal barn, previously resided in by a family of French and their asses, proved to be the suitable location, after a thorough renovation. Situated as it was, on the outskirts of the squadron area, it offered all the convenience of the round-the-corner tavern. After an N.C.O. meeting, at which officers and directors for the club were elected, and the possible objections were refuted, a call for volunteers was broadcast, and the actual transformation of the building was begun. In spite of airplanes and guard details, a considerable number of talents were available, and after five days of arduous effort, a complete change had come to pass.

The walls and ceiling became alive with palm leaves, and a few trees of small growth were transplanted here and there in an uncivilized sort of way. A magnificent bar, stained to a rustic brown, filled one end of the room. Tables, made from scavenged scrap lumber, were painted white and green. The entire floor was carpeted with native woven, natural straw matting. With baskets of fruit placed picturesquely about, a bower of Melanesian splendor was the final result.

Reminiscent of one of its predecessors, in name only, the Boston Coco Nut Grove, the club was fully equipped with carbon-tet dispensers, so....when and if the wrath of God breaks loose upon us, if the fires of hell don't get you, phosgene will.

In order to obtain sufficient operating capital for the initial venture, the first three grades of squadron N.C.O.'s contributed five dollars each in the form of a loan, amounting to something over five hundred dollars, which proved to be enough for a beginning.

A fast and thorough search was made for liquor, soda water, ice, and citrus, and, with an ample and elegantly displayed supply of all, the bar was officially opened at 7:00 P.M., December 14.

The gala grand opening was complete...with smiles of approval and praise, as well as profound surprise, from Col. Hunter and his staff, present for the occasion, and Major Cometh and squadron staff officers; with convenient and appropriate jive tunes over the club radio; with photographers, and their ever faithful flash bulbs; with lucrative crap game to initiate the new dice table; and far from least in importance with a specially prepared Kuku Nut Gruve Special drink, which took like a grass fire but lacked the burn. Grins of pride and complete satisfaction adorned the faces of each and every squadron member present, all dressed in their Sunday finery for the affair.

Cometh, Lawrence (NMI), Maj, pilot, Commander

Hunter, Anthony G., Col, pilot, 310th BG Commander

Behind the bar, attired in white aprons, made tout suite by a local tailor from G.I. mattress covers, were the busiest and soberest men of the evening, Moon Morningstar, Wade Dawson, George Yousaitis, William Krasovec, and Joe Czajka, all with previous experience, who spent probably their most active evening as middlemen for those tasty beverages. Raking in the frog skins was Nels Johnson, treasurer, changing little ones into big ones as the profit rolled in. Myron Munson, club manager, and most active individual during construction, was hither and yon thru out the evening, acting the part of manager with perfection.

As president of the organization, and looking prosperous and important, as is expected on such occasions, Ellis Porter greeted visiting dignitaries with a hearty Texas handshake, as thousands cheers. Hud Tourtellot, secretary, and number two big wheel, was also here and there, tilting glasses and spreading pearls of wisdom with genial gesture characteristic of one Hud Tourtellot.

Wreathed in smiles and looking quite self satisfied were the other members of the club council, Hank Rumeau, who among other things does his bit as interpreter; Earl Sandstead; Frank Kiefer, who incidentally was responsible to a great extent for the wide selection of liquor obtained; Vilas Drew; and P.W. Ochs.

Bob Spradling and John Gullic, squadron artists among other things, can well be proud of their efforts. As well as the knotty pine effect on bar and cabinets, and green and white of the tables, numerous signs and price lists, they took additional pains to transform practice bomb cases into attractive cigarette receptacles, bearing the name of each branch of service in the squadron, and tin cans into classic ash trays bearing the names of each of the original combat planes possessed by the squadron.

Gullic, John F., S/Sgt, bombardier

Spradling, Robert L., Jr., Sgt, engineering

The air reeked with tobacco smoke and spirits, mingled with crap, ten or four and a call for double brandy. A convivial atmosphere, which made the hardships of global war remote, was ever present, and a spirit of brotherhood, so necessary to a wartime outfit, prevailed over all. You will shout when it gets you, but yes indeed, altho the shouting was held to a pleasing murmur, music to the ears of all confirmed reprobates, which fortunately, only a few of us can claim to be. A great deal more could be said to praise our contribution to the rebirth of social drinking, but we will personally carry our tales back to our homeland with jubilation when the time has finally come. So, with pride in our achievement, not only as an example of ingenuity, cooperation, and closer harmony, but as a job excellently done by the enlisted men, for the full benefit of the enlisted men, we bring another chapter of the squadron adventure to a close.



*

*

*

*

So, What's on Tap?

In the case of the KuKu Nut Gruve we are lucky to have a detailed inventory of the liquor on hand as well as the financial balance sheet.

The figures are quoted in both French francs, the currency of Corsica, as well as the equivalent in US dollars.

An online inflation calculator tells us that a dollar in 1944 had the purchasing power of \$18.00 today.

A hotel bar price list from the 1940's that I found online offered a beer for \$0.25. That would translate to \$4.50 today. We don't know how much the clubs charged for drinks, and the costs probably varied from one squadron to the next.

On the following pages you will see the balance sheet for operations of the KuKu Nut Gruve as well as a list of all of the drinks on hand as they closed down the club.

KUKU NUT GROVE CLUB
310TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M) AAF
381ST BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M)

SUMMARY OF
OPERATIONS AND FINANCIAL CONDITION
DECEMBER 12, 1943 to DECEMBER 31, 1943

From December 12, 1943 to December 31, 1943 the KuKu Nut Grove Club earned profits amounting to \$1114. on total sales of \$3926.

The original Capital of the Club consisted of 82 members (enlisted men of the upper three grades) advancing \$5. per man totaling \$410. and in addition a personal loan of \$150. This loan was subsequently paid off in full.

The Assets, all current, include Cash on Hand \$1108., Inventory \$1025., and Deposits on bottles \$112. or a total of \$2245. to pay current liabilities of \$721. It was necessary to incur the liability of \$721., which was borrowed from the 381st Bombardment Squadron Fund, for the purpose of purchasing bottled beer. With sufficient cash on hand this liability will be liquidated inside a few days.

Purchases of Wine (keg) \$86., Wines and Liquors \$2090., Beer \$1473. and Oranges and Tangerines \$42. totaled \$3691. of which there remains in Inventory at December 31, 1943 \$1025. (A physical count of the Inventory was made and valued at cost). The balance \$2666. plus our Operating Expenses as Ice, Soda water, Bread and Mustard, etc., amounting to \$100. totals \$2766. which comprises our Cost of Goods Sold.

Total purchases	\$3691.
Less-Inventory 12/31/43	<u>1025.</u>
	\$2666.
Plus-Operating Expenses	<u>100.</u>
Cost of Goods Sold	<u><u>\$2766.</u></u>

Net Profits on Sales before Miscellaneous Expenses and Income were \$1159. Miscellaneous Expenses including: Glasses, Membership Cards, Rugs, Hardware, etc., were \$114. Income from the House Game was \$69. Therefore, the total Net Profit from December 12, 1943 to December 31, 1943 amounted to \$1114.

Net Profit from Sales	\$1159.
Less-Miscellaneous Exp.	<u>114.</u>
	\$1045.
Plus-Income from House Game	<u>69.</u>
	<u><u>\$1114.</u></u>

Summary of Operations and Financial Condition (Cont'd)

Assets on Hand:

Cash	\$1108.
Inventory 12/31/43	1025.
Deposit on bottles	<u>112.</u>
Total Assets	\$2245.

To Pay:

Due 381st Bomb Sq. Fund	\$721.	
Due Members 82 men @ \$5.	<u>410.</u>	<u>1131.</u>
		<u>\$1114.</u>

/s/ John J. Mason, Jr.
 /t/ JOHN J. MASON, JR.
 1st Lt., Air Corps,
 Custodian of Funds.

/s/ Nels R. Johnson
 /t/ NELS R. JOHNSON, Cpl.
 Treasurer.



Royal B. Allison (379th BS) at the "O" Club Tunisia North Africa

KUKU NUT GRUVE CLUB
STATEMENT OF INVENTORY
DECEMBER 31, 1943

WINE (keg)

Vin Blanc	75 liters @ 10 fr.	750.00	\$	15.00
Vin Rouge	90 " " 10 fr.	900.00		18.00
		<u>1650.00</u>	\$	<u>33.00</u>

WINES AND LIQUORS

Vin Rose	13 bottles @ 10 fr.	130.00	\$	2.60
Muscat	29 " @ 40 "	1160.00		23.20
Mango	53 " @ 40 "	2120.00		42.40
Cap Algiers	21 " @ 40 "	840.00		16.80
Vermouth	6 " @ 40 "	240.00		4.80
Quin Quina	15 " @ 40 "	600.00		12.00
Muscatel	13 " @ 50 "	650.00		13.00
Banana	29 " @ 80 "	2320.00		46.40
Cherry Brandy	40 " @ 80 "	3200.00		64.00
E. V. V.	16 " @ 80 "	1280.00		25.60
Prunelle	21 " @ 80 "	1680.00		33.60
Triple Sec	9 " @ 80 "	720.00		14.40
Cacao	9 " @ 80 "	720.00		14.40
Manderine	10 " @ 80 "	800.00		16.00
Old Brandy	45 " @ 100 "	4500.00		90.00
Cognac	21 " @ 145 "	3045.00		60.90
Rum	3 " @ 150 "	450.00		9.00
Annisette	17 " @ 220 "	3740.00		74.80
Prune Whiskey	11 " @ 225 "	<u>2475.00</u>		<u>49.50</u>
		<u>30670.00</u>	\$	<u>613.40</u>

BEER

Beer	79 cases @ 240 fr.	<u>18960.00</u>	\$	<u>379.20</u>
------	--------------------	-----------------	----	---------------

CONSOLIDATED

Wine (keg)	1650.00	\$	33.00
Wines and Liquors	30670.00		613.40
Beer	<u>18960.00</u>		<u>379.20</u>
Total Inventory December 31, 1943.	<u>51280.00</u>	\$	<u>1025.60</u>

Opening of the Enlisted Men's Bar on Corsica 1944



T/Sgt GOOLSBY, "EYETIE JOHN" ENLISTED MEN'S BAR OPENING NIGHT CORSICA 1944



BOXMEN'S CLUB

Officer's Club at Ghisonaccia

Pictured L-R: Brown (379th), William Neubauer (379th), Bill Bower (428th), Bill Alexander (380th), "Pop" Grow (380th), Royal Allison (379th).



War Diary of the 380th BS, June 29, 1944:

The 380th Officer's Club was officially opened this evening. The affair was a gala one, with the 41st Orchestra furnishing music. Spotlights were flashing over the entrance, and all the great and near-great attended. The name of the Club is "Alexander's Jagtime Bar," in honor of Major Wm. T. Alexander, the Squadron C.O. All who attended the bar declare that they've seen nothing to compare with it this side of New York, and that it brought back memories of the old days in the good, old, U.S.A.



The 428th BS opened their officer's club on April 8, 1944 on Corsica:

"This was a red-letter day. A month's preparation and a liquor supply hoarded no longer for our officer's party. Haig and Haig, Segrums, V.O., Gilbeys and Three Feathers were the basic refreshments. 42 quarts of the stuff. Add that to limitless coke, ice, and a carbonating device by courtesy of Captain Ramobsek and section and you have something. We hadn't seen its like since the other world. The band of the 41st Engineers supplied the music and perhaps a dozen nurses, two Red Cross girls, and a few local girls were a small but valuable ingredient in the night's festivities. A spanking, howling success. Lts. Clark and Slottje returned from the hospital in time to join the festivities."

**VICTORY WAITS
ON YOUR FINGERS—**



KEEP 'EM FLYING, MISS U.S.A.

UNCLE SAM NEEDS STENOGRAPHERS! • GET CIVIL SERVICE INFORMATION AT YOUR LOCAL POST OFFICE
U.S. CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

SHORT SNORTER

By 'RM' Johnston, 488th

(Reprinted from the Spring 2000 issue of the Men of the 57th newsletter)

From the left seat of the war weary B-25C the Limey brass nodded out the open window to a 'little' dirt strip off to port. Nestled on the lee side of a hill, from 500 feet it looked more like a cart path through an olive grove than a fighter strip. Letting go of the wheel, he pointed and ordered "Land at that Spitfire strip, old chap."

I almost asked "What? - - - "There?" as my common sense roared, "You gotta be out of your bloody 'limey' mind!" That dirt path looked like a tight fit for an L-5 as I hurried to drop the flaps and roll into a dragging, low, slow approach while thinking "How the hell did I get into this?"

An hour before I'd been lounging in the shade outside squadron ops. Back at Comiso. We had been waiting since morning to scramble on a close support mission, the target kept changing. I had been half asleep when our operations officer Homer Howard called, "Hey, RM! There's some limey brass on his way", "he wants to be taken up toward the bomb line somewhere." I didn't care who the limey was, it got me off stand-by and sure as hell beat flak and fighters.

Out at "8A" an open British staff car, with pennants flying and a roar of escort motorcycles, slid to a stop. A top-ranking limey officer, shoulders full of pips and ribbons to spare, bounced out of the car, passed my feeble highball and scrambled up the ladder into the aircraft. Since I was to be his chauffeur, I hurried to follow.

Before I could get up the ladder he had tossed his briefcase on the deck, jumped into the left seat, hit the starter switch for the left engine and asked, "I say, old chap, I haven't flown a Mitchell for yearsDo you mind?" No, I ask, "How th'hell does a 2nd Lt. Say no to an 'old boy' wearin' all that brass?"

Before I was settled in the right seat, he had both engines running and kicked off the brakes. We started to roll. This left Sgt. Mario Vuotto, my crew chief racing underneath, trying to get up the hatch when "my pilot" asked, "I say, which way to the strip?" I managed a curt, "Turn left sir." By then Mario, panting like a marathon runner, tapped my shoulder with a 'thumbs up.'

At the end of the runway the 'old boy' didn't look for traffic, slow down or check the mags. On the run he rammed the throttles to the firewall and let her go. Before I could get booster pumps, manifold pressure, etc. cleaned up, he horsed '8A' into the wild blue with no flaps at minimum speed in hot August air. Needless to say, we weren't climbing too well! We were a yard behind the power curve, and the town of Comiso on top of the hill was 'way above eye level straight ahead. I'm not Catholic but said a Hail Mary as I sneaked on some flaps and tried to reset my pucker factor below the red line. We roared right up main street, level with the second floor, while 'pizon' waved wildly from their balconies.

At 500 feet we wandered aimlessly along the bomb line looking at the sights like bloody tourists. I didn't mind the tour, only the ground fire we were drawing.

After twenty minutes of gawking, he flew a few sweeping circles and pointed out that short, SHORT little Spitfire strip in the olive grove and it was 'all mine!' His seat back, there, a half mile short of touchdown, he was ready to get out.

I slammed her down, nose high, full flaps and full power short of the markers and, braking hard, slid round a ground loop at the end of the strip in a boiling cloud of dust. Before I could shut down, the 'old boy' was in the car and motioning for me to hurry.

Leaving Mario to clean up, I rushed for his waiting car. Like a scalded cat, we took off to race through dusty back roads, roaring through a couple British roadblocks and through two dozen MPs into a stone walled olive garden crowded with rank.

In front of a familiar looking caravan was a long table with white linen and full silver service. I recognized Monty standing aloof amid a dozen white coated waiters serving drinks. I knew the drill.

Standing aside with a drink, I watched my 'old boy' being welcomed like a long-lost son. With a warm Scotch and water in hand, I sniffed the aroma of good food and tried to blend in with the hired help. Halfway through my second Scotch the mess bell rang. To my amazement the 'old boy' motioned for me to be seated with all that rank! ME a 'second john,' needing a shave, wearing an old 50-mission crush and in sweaty, dirty suntans with the sleeves rolled up!

Seated, I recognized General Montgomery, far down the table. He had briefed us at times, back on the desert before an operation. **But then I gasped!** I couldn't believe it! The head of the table was awash with Monty, Churchill, Sinclair, Wilson, then I heard my 'old boy' addressed as Air Marshall Tedder! I had only read about him and wasn't too sure that the Scotch wasn't playing tricks on me. Me, at the lunch table with all that brass, like a page in a history book and I was looking at it.

Head swimming, I listened to the conversation, and it was then I understood what was going on.

I was sitting in on a coordinating meeting of the British High Command as they reviewed final plans for the 8th Army and RAF in Sicily and the tactical and political plans for Italy.

The lunch lasted two hours. After one more toast the Air Marshall and I were roaring back to the aircraft. He was pour-



Tedder on the Italian coast in December 1943.

ing through a sheath of papers and scribbling notes on the margins while I was figuring how to get old '8A' off 1000 feet of dirt and over the ridge at the end of the strip.

When the Air Marshall bounded into the aircraft, this time he settled in the right seat and continued working the papers. After I started the engines, he suddenly looked up as if he had just discovered where he was. Talking to no one in particular he directed, "Take me to Malta."

With full power and a running 180-degree turn, I headed down the strip, hauled 8A into the air at the last moment and we were on our way to Malta.

With no charts, the heading to Malta was by the TAR formula. Remember? You hold up a thumb and sight along it, and guessing, say: That's About Right.

Again, the flight was in complete silence. The Air Marshall, deep in paperwork, was probably planning missions for old 8A. I didn't care. I was enjoying the memories of that first class Scotch and chow back in the walled courtyard.

As we made landfall on Malta, I pointed out Spitfires queuing up and, just to be sure, dumped the wheels to show my intent and we went straight in. It was then I remembered the IFF* hadn't been turned on all day.

I swung 8A around and parked beside a batch of MPs at a staff car beside the sand-bagged entrance to operations. The Air Marshall again rushed to get out, but this time the 'old boy' waited in front of the aircraft as the props wound down. I thought, "Oh, Oh! What now?" and hurried out.

Walking toward him, I tried to put some words together, but he beat me to it.

Hand out, he stepped forward. "Thank you old chap, I'll be on my way now...good luck!"

I shook hands and managed to say, "Thank you sir!" I gave him a typical British high ball. Just like he had arrived in the morning, MP escort, sirens wailing and pennant snapping on the fender he was on his way in a cloud of dust. I filed a clearance, turned on the IFF, and Mario and I headed old 8A back to Sicily. With Mario doing the flying and me feeling relieved, I recounted the lunch story and joked, "Damn! I wish I had asked all them 'old boys' to sign my short snorter.

Notes:

(*) IFF. Identification Friend or Foe. A system that uses a transponder to identify friendly aircraft.

Ma, They're Tracking Me

(Oh, Ma)

Ma, they're really tracking me,
Ma, they're throwing flak at me:
I can see the puffs going by —
More and more they're slowly filling up the sky;
Ma, they're sending fighters, too —
What am I to do?
Every moment seems a lifetime,
Now they're fooling with my lifeline —
Ma, they're tracking me.

Ma, they say I can't go home.
Ma, they're sending me to Rome;
Brussels(*) says I'm good for ten more,
Can't he see that I am sick and tired of war?
Oh Ma, I've really seen the light,
I can't sleep at night;
In my dreams I often wonder,
Is it flak or is it thunder —
Ma, they're tracking me.

(*) Albert Brussell, 340th Group Flight Surgeon





An extraordinary photo of a B-25 of the 321st Bombardment Group flying low over Rovereto with two fighter escorts. Note the crumbled remains of the Rovereto Bridge at the lower left.

SWITCH ON! CONTACTS!



We received an interesting contact from a fellow named Ryan Cheney. He had purchased this watch at a local shop and contacted us to find out more about this watch and more about the 57th Bomb Wing.

We had not seen this logo watch before, but after a short search we discovered that the watch along with other items were being sold up to 1995.

These items were being sold by Loren Glasford, 445th Bomb Squadron.

In the Summer 1995 issue of the Wing Newsletter we found notice that Glasford was discontinuing his shop and was liquidating his inventory.

Here are the items he had been carrying in his shop:

You will see that the watch cost \$21 in 1995.

All that is quite interesting but here is the kicker:

The watch was purchased from a shop in:

AUSTRALIA!

Wouldn't you like to know how this watch found its way to Australia?

WING SALES SHOP QUITTING BUSINESS

57th MEMORABILIA ITEMS

✓ 50 yr. Anniversary Medal	\$ 1.50	✓ Lapel Pins	\$ 3.50
✓ Blazer Crests	20.00	✓ Money Clips	4.00
✓ Bolo Ties	7.50	✓ Necklaces	3.50
✓ Bracelets	3.50	✓ Stick Pins	3.00
✓ B-25 on a Pedestal	32.00	✓ Tie Bar	5.00
✓ Cuff Links	5.50	✓ Tie-Tac, B-25-B	5.00
✓ Bumper Stickers	.50	✓ Kopper Kards	.30
✓ Caps - Summer	4.00	✓ B-25 Vesuvius Picture	1.50
✓ Caps - Winter	4.50	✓ B-25 Color Post Cards	.20
✓ Decal - Inside Window	1.00	✓ Sun Visors - Decorated	1.25
✓ Decal - Outside Window	1.00	✓ Sun Visors - Plain	1.00
✓ 57th Directory - 1988	2.50	✓ Sweat Shirts-Med-XXL	17.00
✓ Golf Shirts - S-M Tan	3.00	✓ T-Shirts-XL-XXL	6.00
✓ Golf Shirts - L-XL-Navy	13.00	✓ Tote Bags	5.00
✓ Jackets-L-XL-Lt.Blue	17.50	✓ Umbrellas	9.00
✓ 50 yr. Anniversary Book	10.00	✓ Watches-Ladies-Mens	21.00

Price includes our cost of Postage and Packaging
Make Check Payable to 57th Bomb Wing and order from:
Loren G. Glasford

4917 Ravenswood Drive
San Antonio, TX 78227-4344
If any items you order are out of stock
your check will be returned to you.

Since Memorabilia Sales have declined the past few years it has been decided to discontinue this service to the Wing. Please note Loren Glasford's new address. He and Ann have moved into Air Force Village and will occupy much smaller retirement quarters. We do owe these two fine folks our hearty thanks for their years of faithful service. Thank you Loren and Ann.

CONTACTS! (cont'd)

Here is another interesting contact:

Lee Kissel, son-in-law of Stanley Greiff, 321st BG, 448th BS, sent us a deck of playing cards.

They are in mint condition, never used. The cards are still sealed in the original cellophane wrapper:



Thank you, Lee! A great addition to our Archive.

We heard from Shawn Guinn, the grandson of Everett E. Weller, who trained as a bombardier with the 310th BG, 381st BS. Shawn wrote:

“He passed away a while back, but I remember camping as a kid and listening to his stories over the campfire. He was basically my father related to my mom and dad were divorced when I was 3 and my mom never dated again. So, I was with my grandfather all the time, and he was so proud to serve as a airman.

I absolutely Love your site and love reading all the information you have come across .”

Shawn included some interesting photos along with the email message.

See the next page...

CONTACTS! (cont'd)



Everett E. Weller



381st BS Patch



Good photo showing combat box formations

CONTACTS! (cont'd)



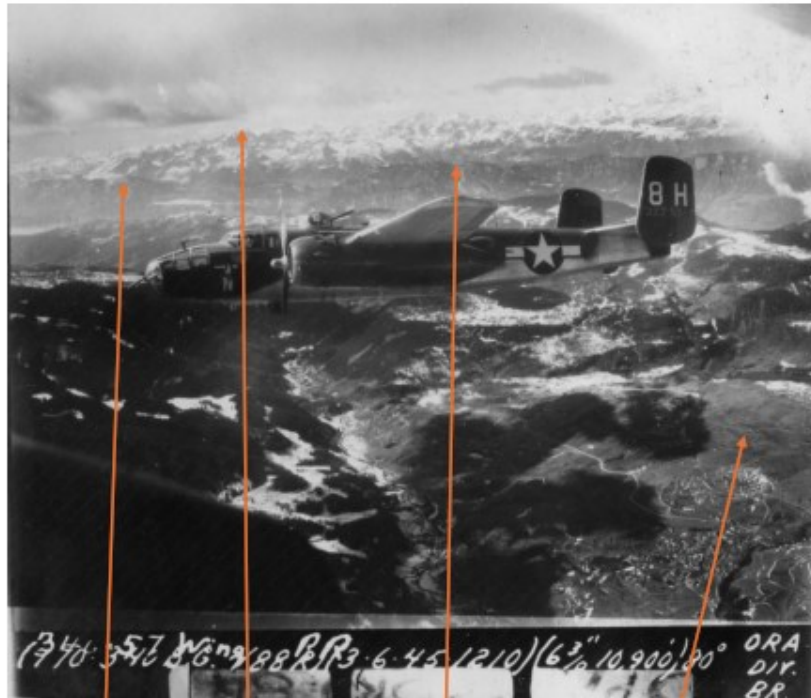
Ship: The Irish Washer Woman



CONTACTS! (cont'd)

Our good friend, the Italian Engineer, Stefano Merz continued to surprise us with his uncanny ability to identify the exact location of photos of our aircraft flying over the Brenner Pass.

Here are his latest discoveries:



B25 8H approximate position 46°17'44"N 11°28'18"E

CONTACTS! (cont'd)



B25 9Q approximate position 46°12'48"N 10°51'25"E

CONTACTS! (cont'd)



B25 8U approximate position 46°14'02"N 10°58'56"E

CONTACTS! (cont'd)



B25 (?) approximate position 46°16'12"N 11°09'23"E

WHAT'S NEW ONLINE

The illustrated transcriptions of the War Diaries of the 428th Bombardment Squadron have been posted on the 57th Bomb Wing website. This joins the transcriptions of the other three squadrons of the 310th Bombardment Group.

The transcriptions make it easier to do computer searches for names, places and other key-words. The transcripts are illustrated with photos culled from our Digital Archives and other sources. Even if your interests are not centered on the 428th BS, we think you will enjoy seeing the many photos from our Archives.

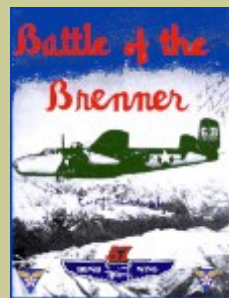
The 428th BS War Diaries are here: [428th Bomb Squadron War Diary](#)

Our friend, Ken Breland, at the 12th Bombardment Group Facebook page alerted us to a book he had written about his father's experience in the 81st Bomb Squadron.

We added a link to that book in the 12th Bombardment Group page on the 57th Bomb Wing "Book" section.

Look for it here: [12th Bombardment Group References](#)

Speaking of books...We have added a link to the quintessential book on the Battle of the Brenner which raged through the last six months of the war. The Germans filled the Brenner with over 700 heavy flak guns. Enemy engineers rebuilt the bridges as fast as the 57th Bomb Wing destroyed them, forcing the boys of the 57th to return again and again and again.



The story of the German defense of this vital supply route is fascinating.

The Battle of the Brenner is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand role of the 57th Bomb Wing in ending the war in Italy and learning about the danger they braved to get the job done.

Go to: [Books about the 57th Bomb Wing](#)



...and, of course we have added a link to download the book "Blockade—The Isolation of Italy from the Reich," subject of the cover story in this issue.

Go to: [Books about the 57th Bomb Wing](#)

T A P S



Martin B Biener

321st Bombardment Group, 448th Bomb Squadron



Unlike many of the men who signed up for flight school without ever even being in an airplane, Martin Biener had his pilot's license before he enlisted. He was determined to fight this war in the air, not on the ground. He retained a life-long love of flying, owning his own airplanes and continuing to fly them until he was 75-years old.

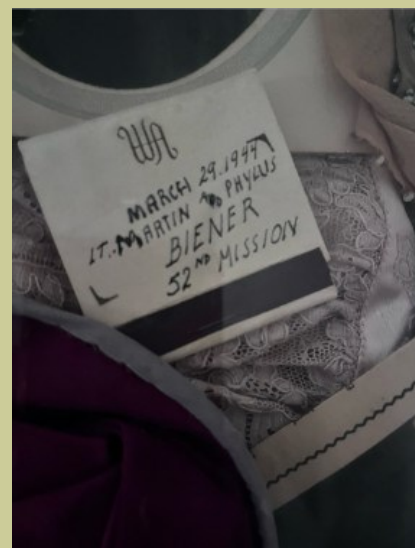
He was born in 1922 in Flushing, NY. After the war he joined his father working in Great Neck, NY as Biener Pontiac. Martin was going to college in Boston when the war broke out. His father went with him to the Army recruitment center where he enlisted at the age of 19. That was in 1943.

Martin was in the war early, flying the incredibly dangerous sea-sweep missions from North Africa, then moving on to tactical bombing.

He completed his tour of duty with 51 missions. After going home he commenced what he always referred to as his long awaited mission #52: marrying the love of his life, Phyllis.



Martin Biener piloting Hawkeye



Wedding matchbook cover. 52nd Mission

T A P S (CONT'D)



Martin B Biener

321st Bombardment Group, 448th Bomb Squadron

In the Summer 2006 edition of the Wing Newsletter he posted the following story:

* * * * *

RATS CAUSE CANCELLATION OF FLIGHT ACROSS SOUTH ATLANTIC

Martin B. Biener, 321st, 448th, writes: "I enjoy reading the Men of the 57th. On May 5, 1943 I was assigned as co-pilot to B-25C 42-64525 in a flight of 6 B-25s from Homestead Army Air Field thru South America, Ascension Island to the East Africa Gold Coast.

We were stuck in Belem for 5 days for bad weather. One of our crew had a load of candy stored in the plane. When we fired up the engines we found that there were a lot of rats. They had eaten some of the coverings on some of the electrical wires. The crew had their '45's out and were ready in case they were attacked by these large rats. Worried more about the rats than reaching Ascension Island.

Our crew was issued a different B-25 that was being updated to afford more protection for the pilots. They also cut gun ports in the rear for 50 caliber guns as the original had a 30 caliber in the tail. We believed that our old plane was damaged due to the wires eaten up in the wings and that it might have been used for spare parts.

After arriving at our new base we went on 3 low-element sea sweeps at 8-10 feet above the water and skip bombed to sink two freighters. We dropped the bombs and then pulled up to get over the top of the ship before the bombs exploded.

After 51 missions as co-pilot and pilot, I flew co-pilot for General Knapp. I had one trip from Foggia Main with General Knapp to Egypt to pick up turkeys and booze for Thanksgiving 1943.

In 1944 I was made Commanding Officer of Alchua Army Air Base in Gainesville, Florida, then Commander of Cross City Air Base in Cross City, Florida.

* * * * *

Martin was the youngest commanding officer of the Alchua Army Air Base.

More photos from Martin Biener's collection:

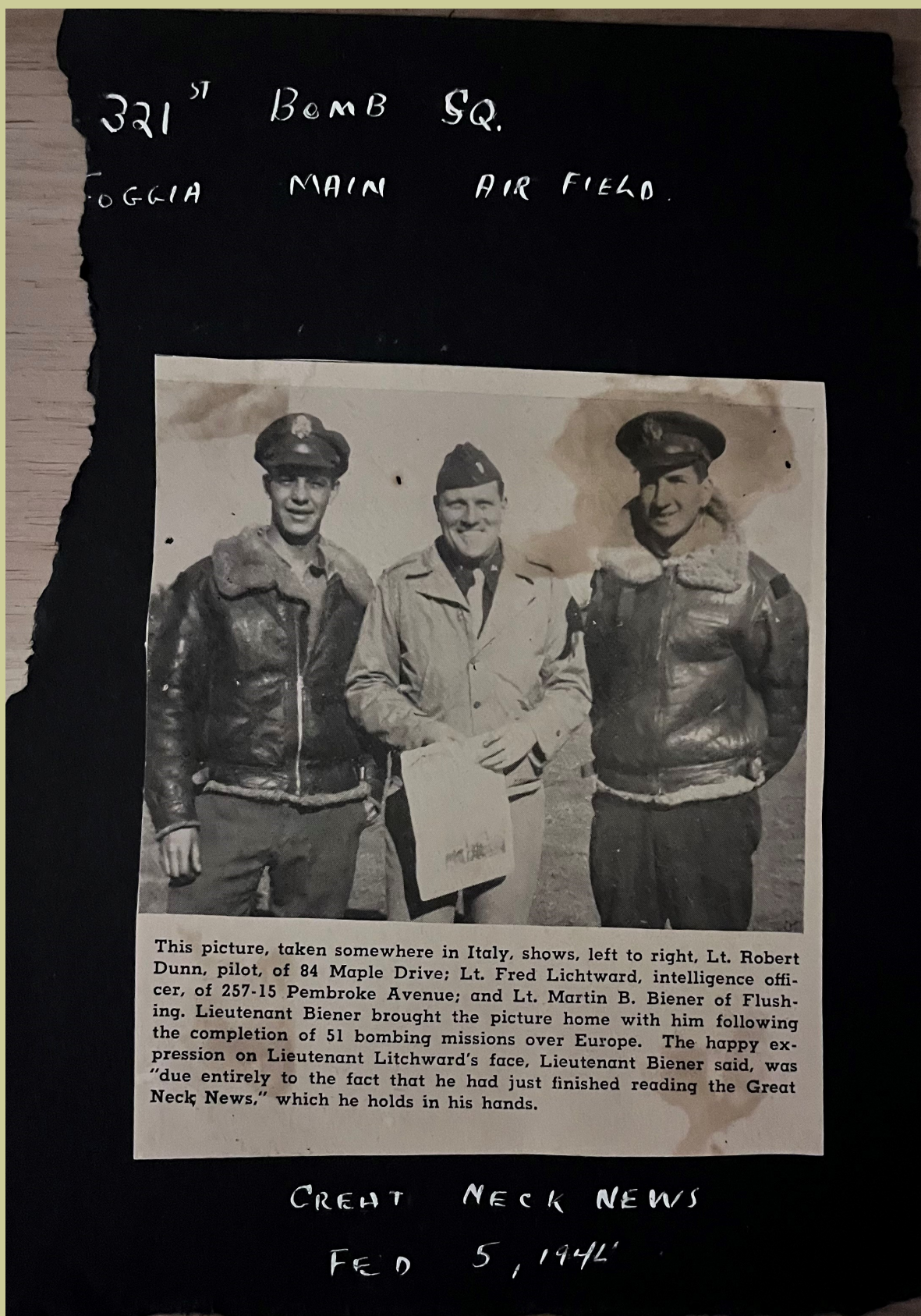


Martin Biener with crew of "The Boyd Toyd"



Martin Biener with the crew of "Hawkeye"

More photos from Martin Biener's collection:



Martin Biener, Robert Dunn and Fred Lichtward

LET'S KEEP 'EM FLYING



WWW.57THBOMBWING.COM