

# MEN OF

*Official Journal of the Men and  
12<sup>th</sup> Air Force, United States*

Issue No. 4

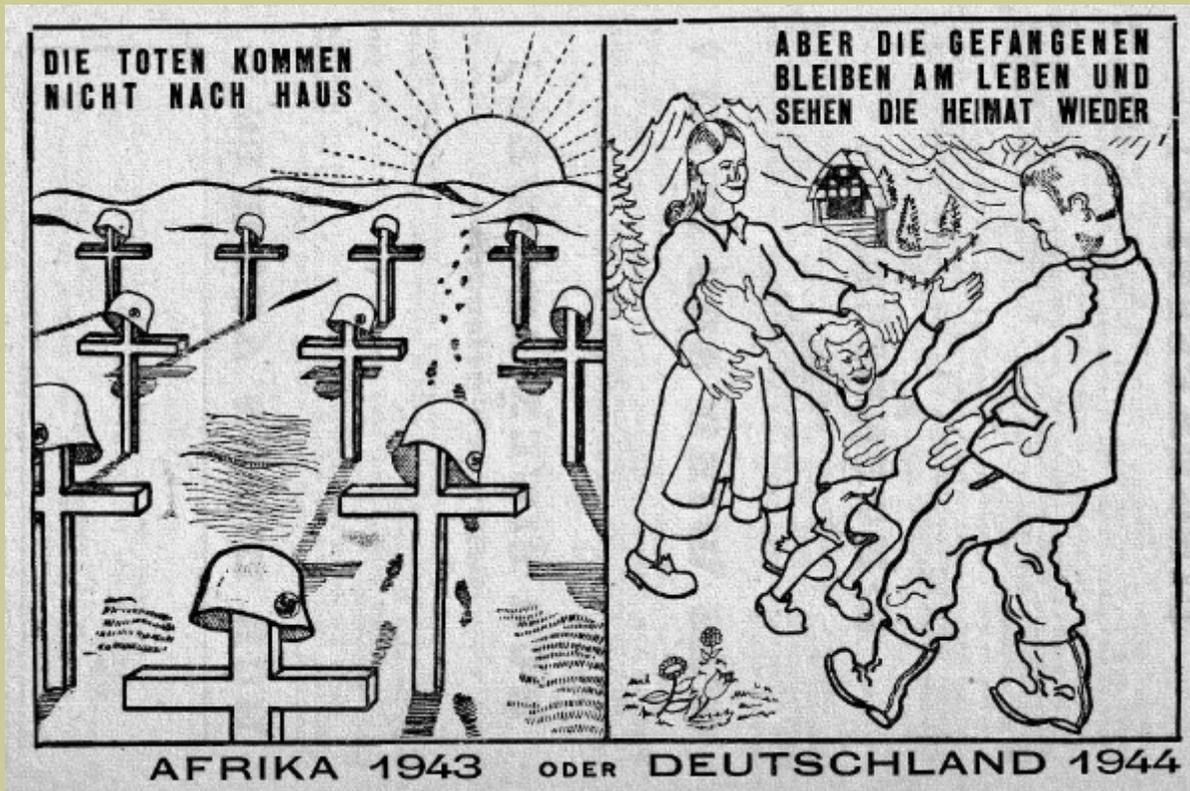


# THE 57<sup>TH</sup>

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

Winter 2025

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The dead don't go home

But prisoners remain alive and see  
the homeland again

## NICKEL

Code word for the propaganda leaflets we dropped  
on enemy troop concentrations

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Millard Rives



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

Eighty years ago, in February 1945, in Corsica, I was escorted into a tent and introduced to its two occupants, another young Bombardier like me and the Squadron Intelligence Officer. This was to be my new residence since arriving and joining the 486th Bomb Squadron.

My new tentmates were in the process of assembling clothes and equipment and packing the stuff into two suitcases. They explained that this equipment belonged to a pilot<sup>1</sup> who had been shot down a few days ago along with his entire crew and there had been no survivors. I was to take the pilot's bunk. Apparently, a few days ago, he had been leading a trio of ships which had preceded a main bombing formation that was headed for a particular target near Lake Garda. His group was dropping white phosphorus on the target's gunners below when an 88mm blew the ship apart.

I do not recall the names of any crew members<sup>2</sup>, but its Bombardier had been the subject of a woman who came to talk to me several years ago. She was relative<sup>3</sup> who came into possession of many war letters written to the Bombardier's mother and was in the process of writing a book about him and his brother, a B-17 crewman out of England who was fatally shot down over Holland a few months prior to his brother's death. Both brothers' letters to their much-loved mother were superbly written showing a very high standard for youths of their age. I read parts of her book, which are very interesting.<sup>4</sup> And it truly exhibited the closeness of the family.

Finally, my new tent mate and fellow Bombardier, was shot down following the day of my arrival but apparently somehow made it out alive. I never heard from him again.<sup>5</sup>



Chris Gilley Photo

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(1) Charles R. Ross, pilot. Shot down on February 3, 1945.

(2) Otis O. Outlaw, co-pilot; C. R. Fisher, Thomas D. Cahill, bombardier; N Vasil, radio gunner; J. T. Decker, E. B. Sichling, tail gunner.

(3) Michelle Cahill, grandniece of Thomas D. Cahill.

(4) *Dear Mom: A Family Finds Its place in World War II Letters Home*, Pleasant Street Publishers 2015.

(5) Either Roger L. Siman in Yankee Doodle Dandy (6Y), or Elroy C. Roseburg in Idiot's Delight (6W). Both ships shot down during Mission Glassknob. Read more about this disastrous mission in the following pages.



# Mission “Glassknob”

Submitted by

Nick Loveless 486th Squadron

*(Reprinted from the Fall 1990 edition of the Men of the 57th Newsletter)*

On February 13, 1945, the 340th Bomb Group attempted a new technique in bombing rail lines in the Brenner Pass. The actual target, near San Ambrogio, was a steep mountainside directly above the main tracks of the railroad that brought supplies from Germany to the German Troops in Italy. Well placed bombs were making it more difficult to repair than as if the lines were bombed directly.

Six B-25's of the 486th Squadron were assigned to the mission, with this writer flying in the #3 position, or left wing lead element, as gunner/photographer. All six of the aircraft sustained flak damage, and when coming off the target 6W (#2 aircraft and 6Y (#5 aircraft) were shot down. 6Y sustained a direct hit in the left engine blowing a portion away. This writer observed the explosion and took this photograph immediately after the hit and just prior to 6Y going down. [See page 11]

The crew members of 6W were [Marshal W] Knighton (pilot), [Jerry C] Smith, [Elroy C] Reseburg, [J. R.] Long, [Robert] Chappius, and [A. A.] Cropp. The crew of 6Y were [Roman H] Figler (pilot), [J. V.] O'Conner, [Roger] Siman, [Cecil R] Claflin, [N. R.] Lewis and [James R] Davidson.

The story of MISSION “GLASSKNOB” continues in the words of the pilot of the #4 aircraft. Lieut. Walter Wooten wrote this account of the mission. Ironically, as noted in his diary, the avalanche did not occur, and the rail lines remained intact...at least for that day. Walter Wooten passed away just prior to his intended first reunion in Fort Worth. His family submitted his written account.

6W

*Idiot's Delight*



I awoke suddenly, as I always do on mornings when I'm scheduled to fly. I'm not aware of having heard anything. The tent is pitch black, with a slightly lighter triangle at the end where the flap is pulled back. My sleeping bag feels warm and cozy, and I'm wide awake.

A shadow darkens the entrance, and the Officer of the Day calls very softly "Woot"?, I answer, I'm awake," and I hear the crunch of gravel as the O.D. goes on to the next tent to awaken another man scheduled for this morning's mission.

I unzip the sleeping bag and roll into a sitting position on the side of the cot. Now that it's winter we've taken down the mosquito bars, and getting up is less like fighting our way out of a fishnet.

Somebody has turned on the phonograph up at the Officer's Mess. They're playing the Wiffenpoof Song," which seems pretty appropriate. "Damned from here to eternity, God have mercy on such as we," I feel a shiver run up my spine.

I pull on my OD's, GI shoes, and fleece lined jacket, then walk up to the mess hut. After the darkness outside the mess seems uncomfortably bright. They have pancakes, bacon and coffee for us today. I'm not usually hungry before a mission, but today breakfast tastes awfully good. The eighteen officers scheduled to fly this morning's mission are here. The rest of the squadron will eat later, after daybreak. There's very little conversation at breakfast, I guess it's just too early.

I go to the latrine and wait in line, as usual, there's always a line before a mission.

While walking back down to my tent, I notice

that the sky on the eastern horizon is slightly less black now. Trigger (Tom Phelps, my tent-mate) is still asleep, so I try to move quietly. I get into my flying suit, put my jacket back on over it, pull on my boots, and gather up my notebook, pencil, gloves and earphones. I kneel and shoot up a short prayer, then go out and over to the Operations tent to check out an escape kit. Escape kits contain gold money, a silk map of the area we are to be in, Benzdrine, and emergency rations. These kits had better still be sealed when we turn them back in. I stow the escape kit in my shin pocket along with my cigarettes and lighter, then go outside and climb aboard one of the three 2 1/2 ton trucks parked in a line there.

[Merit L] Espy climbs aboard carrying a bulging musette bag. Someone says, "Hey, Airspeed, you planning' to RON?" Everybody laughs except Espy, who doesn't think it's funny and looks sour.

The trucks start, and we lurch down the unpaved road about a half mile and stop outside the briefing hut at Group Headquarters. No trucks from the other squadrons are there. Apparently this is to be the 486th's show.

Inside the Quonset, bomb-fin crates are lined up to serve as seats facing a raised platform at the end. At the rear center of the platform is a curtain. It covers a map which will show our route and target by means of a red twine pinned on the map. Briefing starts, as always, with a time hack, "In thirty seconds it will be zero six four four.....ten, nine, eight seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, hack!" All watches are synchronized to the exact second. Now comes the read-off of times; Start engines 0728, taxi out 0730, take-off 0734 reach I.P. 0942, time over target, 0946." I scribble these in my note pad as they are read out.

I've already headed the page with the flight information taken from our Operations bulletin board last night after the mission was posted: 6Z in the lead, 6W in #2 on his right wing, 6L in #3 on his left wing. I'm flying 6A in the #4 spot, leading the second Vee, with 6Y in #5 on my right wing, and 6C on my left in the #6 position.

No rendezvous time is announced, so there'll be no fighter escort. Next comes the codes for the day: mission "Glassknob;" wounded aboard "Eagle;" dead aboard "Flower;" tower "Gable." The briefing officer cautions us, as always, to observe strict radio silence until we cross the Italian coast coming home. As usual, the emergency signal is a red flare. We should be back on the ground by noon.

"Now the curtain hiding the map is drawn back, accompanied by the sound of a sigh. It's a reflex action, I suppose, this group intake of breath when the target is uncovered. The target is deep into the Alps, well beyond Lake Garda, near the Brenner Pass. The Major explains the purpose of the mission today. Our flight of six B-25s is to drop twenty-four 1,000-pound semi-armor piercing bombs into a mountainside above a rail cut.

This will cause a landslide, or avalanche, which will bury the rail line under tons of rock and keep the line cut effectively for a long time. This is the rail line from the Brenner Pass. Lately, the Krauts have rebuilt the bridges we've knocked down within days, sometimes overnight. Today's raid will make things a little more difficult for them. The Major is gleeful at the prospect. We're not! It's a long way for only six airplanes with no fighter escort. There are Me-109s and MAC-CI-202s up there. And we know that they've got helluva lot of 88s along that river.

The Mission Commander is to be Lieutenant Colonel from Group Headquarters. He'll be flying 6Z the lead airplane, with the regular pilot in the right seat. When I checked the Squadron Bulletin board last night I wondered why no co-pilot was posted for 6Z. This explains it. Number four, (that's me) is to take the lead if anything happens to number one.

Known flak positions are pointed out on the map. Our flight path is routed away from all of them except those in the target area. We'll cross the Italian coast at La Spezia, follow a meandering course to Lake Garda, then turn north and follow the river up to the target. We'll cruise at 9,200 feet, indicated airspeed 200 mpg. The Mission Commander is to radio a coded mission report when we reach Lake Garda on the way back.

With a "Good Luck!" from the Major the briefing is over and the pilots, bombardiers, and radiomen gather separately for short briefings for those groups. Co-pilots leave to pre-flight the aircraft. At the pilot's briefing the five of us (The Colonel from Group doesn't join us) are given a weather analysis, suggested power setting for climb and cruise, and told to maintain a listening watch on Channel B, reminded to observe radio silence, conserve fuel, and to be sure to turn on IFF (a radar identification device). We'll each be carrying four 1,000-pound bombs, and a full load of fuel and ammunition. We'll need every inch of runway to get off since there's no surface wind this morning. I hope we won't need a few more feet than we've got.

We go out to the trucks and are driven another half mile to the airstrip, down the taxiway to the equipment Quonset. It's pretty light outside now. We jump over the tailgate and go inside the hut to the bins. I take out my Mae

West, check both CO<sub>2</sub> cylinders and valves, then strap it on. Next I check the seals and ripcord on my chute, then shrug it over the Mae West.

My airplane, 6A, "Sahara Sue II" is parked on the hardstand nearest the equipment hut so I walk over without waiting for the truck that serves as a line taxi.

I do a walk around check of the ship with my co-pilot, Red Allison [*The author's recollection is faulty. His co-pilot that day was James "Red" Martin*]. Red has already completed the preflight checklist. The crew is all here, and the six of us sit on the ground and smoke, waiting until it's time to get aboard. Every few minutes someone gets up and goes over to the weeds beyond the hardstand to relieve himself. I marvel that so much water can be passed by so few. But it's always that way before a mission...it goes with the job.

Finally, after checking my watch I say, "Let's turn the props over," and we all get up and take turns putting a shoulder to a propeller blade and pushing it as far as we can until the man behind catches the next blade and keeps the rotation going. We count aloud to six, meaning we've rotated the propeller twice, and the engine three times (gearing is 16:9). This drains any oil which has run down into the bottom cylinders which might crack a cylinder head when the engine is started. We repeat on the other prop and now it's time to go.

My tension has been mounting steadily since I first got up this morning, but I know it will leave as soon as I get the engines started. It always has, and this is my forty-sixth mission. But right now my stomach feels like I've swallowed a cannonball.

I snap my flak vest on over my chute and

climb aboard. I hear both hatches slam shut behind me as I settle into my seat, fasten my seatbelt, and plug in my throat mike and ear-phones. Red and I run through the checklist. At 0708 I hit the energizer and primer switches...throttles cracked, prop control full forward, mixture full rich...I shout out the window, "clear left," and hit the starter switch. The big prop turns over and over, then catches with a roar, throwing a great cloud of blue smoke. I follow the same sequence with the right engine, which starts quickly, and the B-25 trembles as if she is anxious to get going.

6L, "Rinky Doo," is #3 today, so I watch for her to come down the taxi-strip so that I can fall in behind. Here she comes! I glance at my watch, it's 0711. I let off the brakes and taxi out behind 6L. Figler, 6Y's pilot, has slowed down to allow me to turn into the line ahead of him.

We stop near the end of the runway to check the mags and run up the engines. I'm dimly aware that the tension I've felt all morning is gone. The lead airplane, 6Z "A.W.O.L.," is on the runway and rolling. It's exactly 0714. Now 6W starts to roll and 6L moved ahead to the end of the runway and holds. "Rinky Doo" starts rolling and I taxi out onto the end of the runway. Booster pumps "ON," 15 degrees of flap, I advance the throttles slowly to 44 inches, release the brakes and we start our run. The control van flashes by on my left...we're halfway down the strip. I ease the control column back and get the nosewheel off. At takeoff power the engines sound as if they're tearing themselves out of the nacelles. Good old 6A flies herself off the ground with a hundred feet to spare. I jerk my right thumb "up" and the gear starts up. Red had his hand on the handle, waiting for the signal. I reduce the power, then Red reduces the RPMs while I

start milking up the flaps. We're over the Mediterranean at 75 feet, straining to climb with the weight of the armor plate, bombs, ammunition, fuel and men. Ahead of me the lead plane has started a shallow climbing turn to the right. The number two and three ships start turning too, leading 6Z so as to slide into position on his wings as he comes around. I bank to the right, keeping my nose aimed just ahead of number three. I'll be flying formation in reference to number one, but to watch him instead of two and three during the join-up would be inviting a mid-air collision. I get closer to number three in the turn, since I'm turning inside of him, and get just behind and below number one.

Shapes to my left and right, at the edge of my peripheral vision, let me know that 6C and 6Y are in position on my wings. The formation is tight. I can count the rivets in 6Z's belly. It's physically painful to fly the number four position. Your head is tilted back and you're looking up through the top window behind the windshield. My neck muscles begin to protest after a while. Our squadron has lost more airplanes in number four than any other formation position. This fact doesn't bother me particularly. Although I'm not overly optimistic about my chances of completing this tour. I've never believed that any particular position is worse than another. The Krauts aren't that accurate.

I nod to Red to take over. His left hand closes over my right on the throttles and I release them and the control column, and drop my feet flat on the floor. Martin is good. The airplane doesn't waver during the transition and he keeps us socked right in there. I shake my head to uncramp my neck, light a cigarette, and make a crew check on the interphone: Tail Gunner, Radioman, Top Turret, and Bom-

bardier. Each reports everything okay. I check the engine instruments, then the flight instruments. We're climbing through 8,000 feet at 0729.

I jerk violently at a series of explosions much like a truck engine with no muffler. It's only the top turret testing his guns and the smell of cordite seeps into the cockpit. I hope Red didn't notice my startled jump...sounding and appearing calm is the prime rule of the game.

We level off at 9,200 feet. I reach over Red's left hand and pull the prop levers back to 2,100 RPM, making minor adjustments until the engines sounded synchronized. I check the fuel gages and flip two switches to transfer fuel from the auxiliary tanks, out at the ends of the wings, to the large main tanks in-board. I like to transfer the reserved fuel just as soon as we've burned enough out of the main tanks to accept it all. Some of the fellows won't transfer fuel until they've left the target and are on the way home. They believe, correctly, that a full tank is less apt to blow up than a tank full of fumes. But I believe that a hit on the fuel transfer pump or lines is just as likely as one in the reserve tanks and that extra fuel out there won't get you home if you can't transfer it. Furthermore, the tanks are vented, and if you transfer as early as possible the fumes should be gone before you get shot at. This question is the subject of one of the running arguments, night after night, back in the tent. Nobody ever convinces anybody on the other side. I'll never understand how the Army overlooked this question. There's a regulation on absolutely everything else.

Allison's neck is bound to be bothering him by now. I grasped the wheel lightly, put my feet back on the rudder pedals, put my right

hand over his left, and take the throttles as he slides his hand away.

Looking fixedly at the lead plane a few feet away, I can't see the horizon and am never quite sure of our attitude, whether we are turning, climbing, or straight and level. In formation this tight you don't want to risk letting your eyes stray from the airplane you're "flying on."

After Red and I have exchanged the controls another few times, Bray, the Bombardier, calls on the interphone, "Five minutes from I.P." (The I.P., or Initial Point, is where the final turn toward the target is made, and is the beginning of the Bomb Run.) At the I.P. you roll out of the turn on a heading to the target. The bombardier then has to find and recognize the target visually...then get it centered and tracking in the crosshairs of his Norden Bombsight. Today he will have 240 seconds to do this. During the final 30 seconds of the run we'll be flying straight and level at a constant speed. This half-minute is the most dangerous time. More than half the planes lost during my tour have been hit during this fraction of a minute before the bombs are released, and you can begin to take action of any kind. Just hold it in tight.

I nudge Red and he takes over. I bob and turn my seat for my steel flak helmet, and put it on. I check the engine instruments and fuel gauges, glance outside at the incredible beauty of these magnificent mountains, and fight off a tremor brought on by the cold...or is it fear? I take the controls from Red and from the corner of my eye see him don his flak helmet and lower his seat to "full down." His job is to watch the instruments during the bomb run, and he says he can concentrate on them best if he doesn't see outside too well.

The underside of 6Z's wings flash with reflected sunlight...We're turning on the I.P. Those wings ahead and above are shaded again, and I know that we're headed toward the target. 6Z's bomb bay doors open and I can see the long, fat bombs inside. A puff of jet black smoke flashes by the window, then another, and another. Flak! There's a loud "CHUNG" with another simultaneous sound like a fistful of stones flung against corrugated iron. That means we're hit. Everything feels okay, the engines sound fine. Red would have already told me. I'm aware that my anxiety is completely gone, replaced by an exhilaration beyond anything ever experienced outside of combat. I have a sense of being wholly, completely alive. All by sense are acute. Time seems to slow down.

I can see flak bursting dead ahead, then hear the "CHUNK" of another hit. We're still making small turns, climbs and dives, and haven't yet settled down for the last straight and level run. Damn! The Krauts are accurate today! They're putting their 88's in our hip pocket and we're still twisting and turning!

My mind is racing with many thoughts: the sound of the engines, our position in the formation, the intensity and accuracy of the flak. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me." Those words always pop into my mind, unasked, on the bomb run.

Now we are flying straight and level. I hold 6A very tight just behind and under 6Z's tail stinger. Flak is bursting just ahead of 6Z; it's right on our altitude but they're leading us a little too much. Suddenly 6Z's four big bombs break free and, wobbling slightly, fall straight down in front of our nose. The seat thrusts upward as our own 4,000-pound load

is released and the airplane responds with a swooshing lift.

“Okay, Colonel, let’s get the hell out of here,” I think, and tense up on the controls anticipating a violent turning dive to get out of the flak. 6Z’s bomb bay doors close...nothing happens! The Colonel maintains our creeping airspeed, then starts a gentle 15-degree turn. (I learn later, from his crew, that he’s watching the mountainside and wants to see, personally, the avalanche which is to cover the rail line with tons of rock. It’s the tail-gunner’s job to do that and report to him by interphone.)

There’s a very loud “BLAM,” more black smoke flashes by. Red tugs my sleeve and I steal a glance away from 6Z to him. He’s ashen...“Did you see it?” he shouts at me. I shake my head, not understanding, and tilt my head back to hold position. It’s not hard to do, we’re still doing 200 mph in our gentle turn. Something draws my attention over to Kington’s ship, 6W in #2 position on 6Z’s right wing. He’s above me at about one o’clock. His left fin and rudder, flat olive drab with a big white “6W,” slowly turns a glossy black, changing color as I watch. I’m flabbergasted never having seen anything like this. Now his left propeller slows and comes to a stop, feathered, then I realize that the shiny black color came from the oil pouring out of his left engine, and being blown back onto the stabilizer and rudder.

6W skids to the right, smoking and losing altitude. Kington must be literally standing on his right rudder to keep his good engine from turning him into the formation. He slides down and out of sight, leaving a trail of smoke. We’ve completed 270 degrees of turn and roll out level, plodding along at 215 mph.

At last we’re out of range of the 88 batteries and are headed for home.

Red leans over and slides the interphone off my right ear, gets up close and tells me that Figler got a direct hit back when I heard the “BLAM!” and has gone down. Most of Red’s original crew were now assigned to Figler while he gets combat experience flying co-pilot with me. He watched from a few yards away when they “bought the farm,” I glance at Red again. He looks 20 years older than he did a couple of hours ago.

Two ships down out of six!...Twelve good men gone! I think, “Thank God it wasn’t me,” then fell a flood of remorse at the selfish thought.

I tap Red’s arm and he takes over. I look out to the left at 6C, catch the co-pilot’s eye, point to 6Z’s right wing, then hold up two fingers. He nods and turns his head to shout something to the pilot. 6C begins to drop down, then crosses underneath me and climbs up into the #2 position. Now we’re a diamond formation where a few minutes ago we were two VEE’s.

I light a cigarette, then get on the interphone and make a crew check, starting with the tail-gunner. With nobody on our wings now he’s all alone back there and I know his head is swiveling constantly, looking for fighters. Everybody reports everything is okay. Our only damage seems to be lots of holes in 6A’s skin. She’s pretty well patched up already. A few more won’t even be noticed. No one adds any comment to his brief report. The usual banter is missing.

I tune the Command Set to Armed Forces Radio at Caserta so that the fellows can listen to some music on the way home. It doesn’t

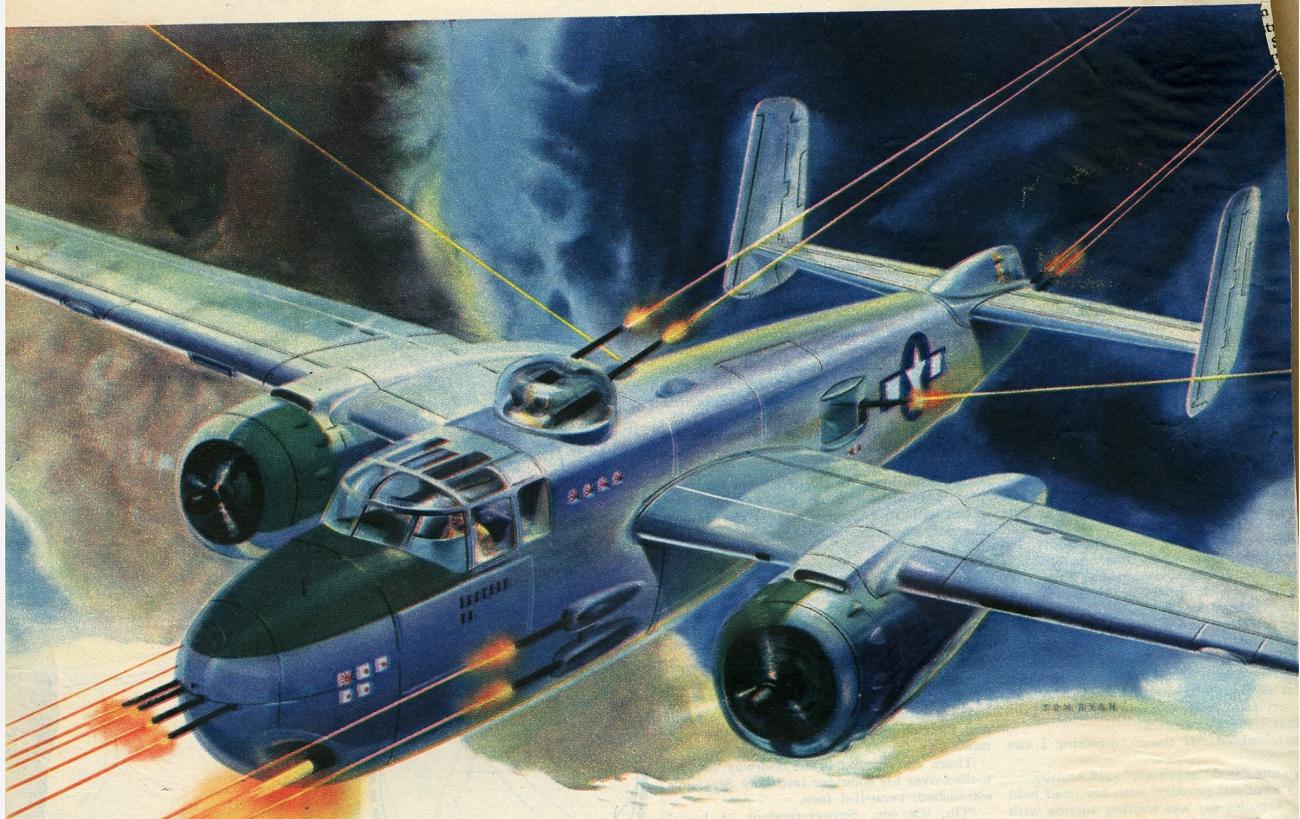
sound very good to me. And while I was fiddling with the Command radio, I missed the mission report on VHF. Red hears it, leans over and shouts, “Mike Fox Nan, George.” The mission was a failure! There was no avalanche!

### **The rail line is still open!**



*Below: Nick Lovelace's photo of 6Y with damaged left engine.*



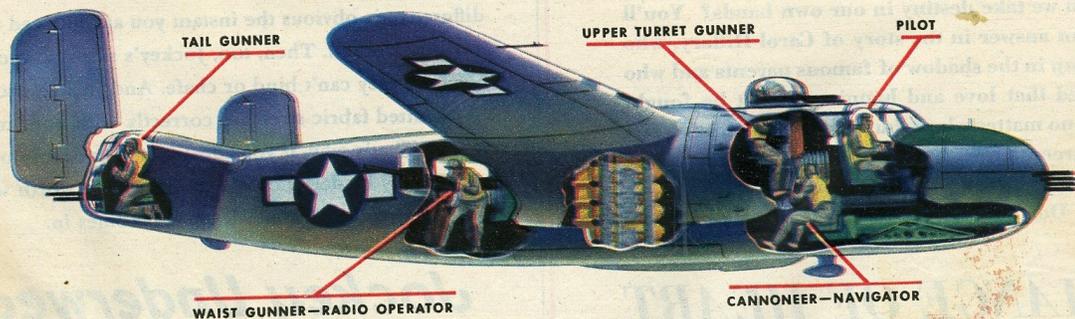


## 15-gun salute from American flyers

There's "no future" for Japs and Nazis who tangle with the crushing firepower of the 15 guns packed by the new B-25 Mitchell bomber. Today's Mitchell—6000 design improvements more deadly than the model in which General Doolittle bombed Tokyo—bristles with heavy armament. From the 75-mm. cannon in its nose

to the "stingers" in its tail, the Mitchell's guns blast the enemy on land and sea, protect its five-man crew against air attack. As they shoot to win on eleven fronts of this global war, the victorious B-25s are helping mightily to soften up the enemy, to make the job of American fighting men all over the world easier, safer.

North American B-25 Mitchell



**FIREPOWER PLUS MANPOWER!** The B-25 Mitchell and its 5-man crew fight together as the world's hardest-hitting medium bomber team!

## North American Aviation Sets the Pace

**WE MAKE PLANES THAT MAKE HEADLINES**... the B-25 Mitchell bomber, AT-6 Texan combat trainer, P-51 Mustang fighter (A-36 fighter-bomber), and the B-24 Liberator bomber. North American Aviation, Inc. Member, Aircraft War Production Council, Inc.

# Operation Bingo

November 6, 1944

Most see Operation Bingo as being the opening shots fired in what came to be known as The Battle of the Brenner.

The 57th Bomb Wing played a key role in the mission along with elements from other bomber groups operating in the region.

Immediately after the mission, in December of 1944 the 941st Engineering Battalion published a 30-page report on the missions which we have now posted on the 57th BW website.

Download the book here: [Operation Bingo](#)



The trains on the Brenner railroad line from Verona, Italy to Innsbruck, Austria were electric. Electric power was ideal for operations over a landscape like the Brenner Pass.

The Brenner Line had the capacity to run 28 to 30 trains every day. Each train could move about 800 tons of supplies to the German army fighting south of the Po River.

The goal of Operation Bingo was to destroy the transformer stations along the Line in order to force the Germans to convert to steam powered locomotives. In addition to diverting steam locomotives that were much needed elsewhere, another disadvantage of transitioning to steam was the fact the steam locomotives had less hauling power, and it would reduce the number of trains to about 10 per day. Instead of moving 800 tons like the electric engines, steam could only move 675 tons.

Thus, just by forcing the enemy to switch to steam locomotion it would reduce the tonnage of supplies by 17,250 tons per day.

The system of transformer stations was resilient. If one station was taken out, the next station down the line could supply enough power to keep the trains running between transformer stations.

It would be necessary to take out multiple stations, preferably at the same time.

The medium bombers of the 57th Bomb Wing were assigned the targets at Domegliara, Ala and Trento.

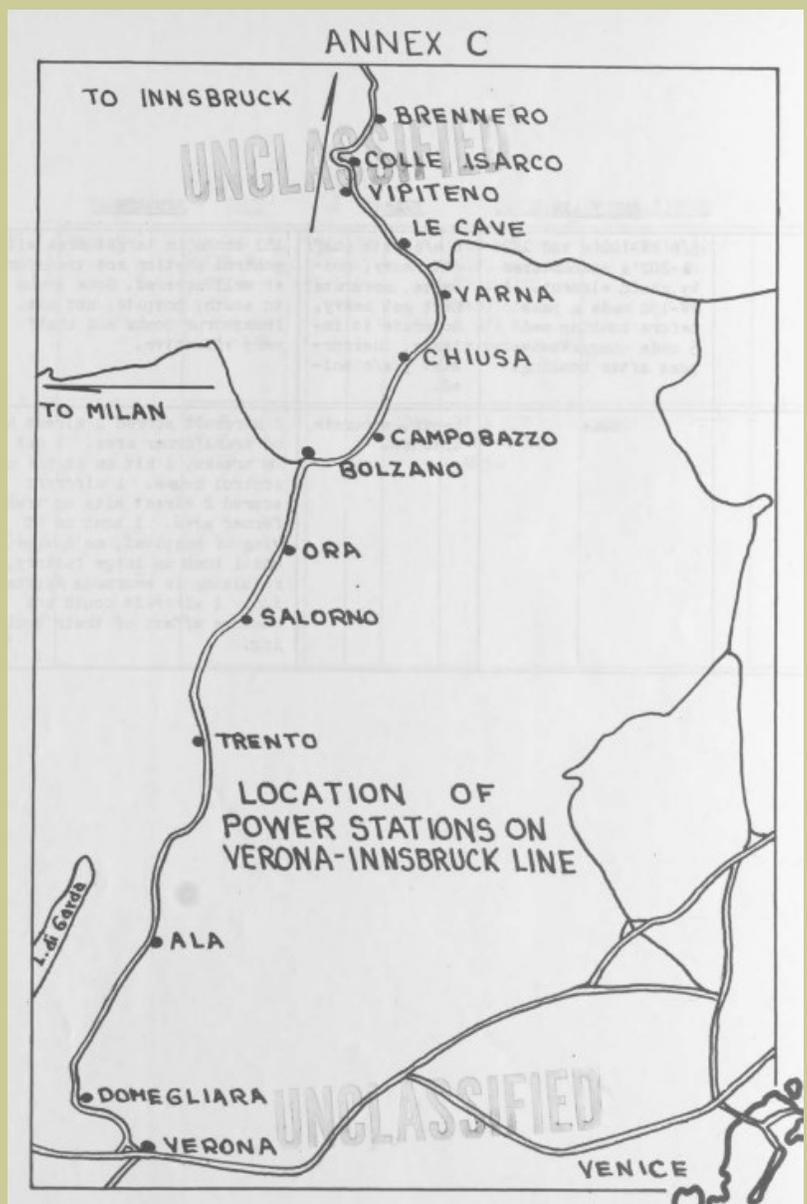
Domegliara was defended by 21 heavy anti-aircraft guns, Ala was essentially undefended, but Trento was defended by 30 heavy and 12 light anti-aircraft guns. Enemy fighters made an appear-

ance, but only made a few unaggressive passes at the heavily armed B-25s.

The mission was a huge success. All of the targets were rendered inoperable. In fact electrification of the Brenner Line was not restored until after the war.

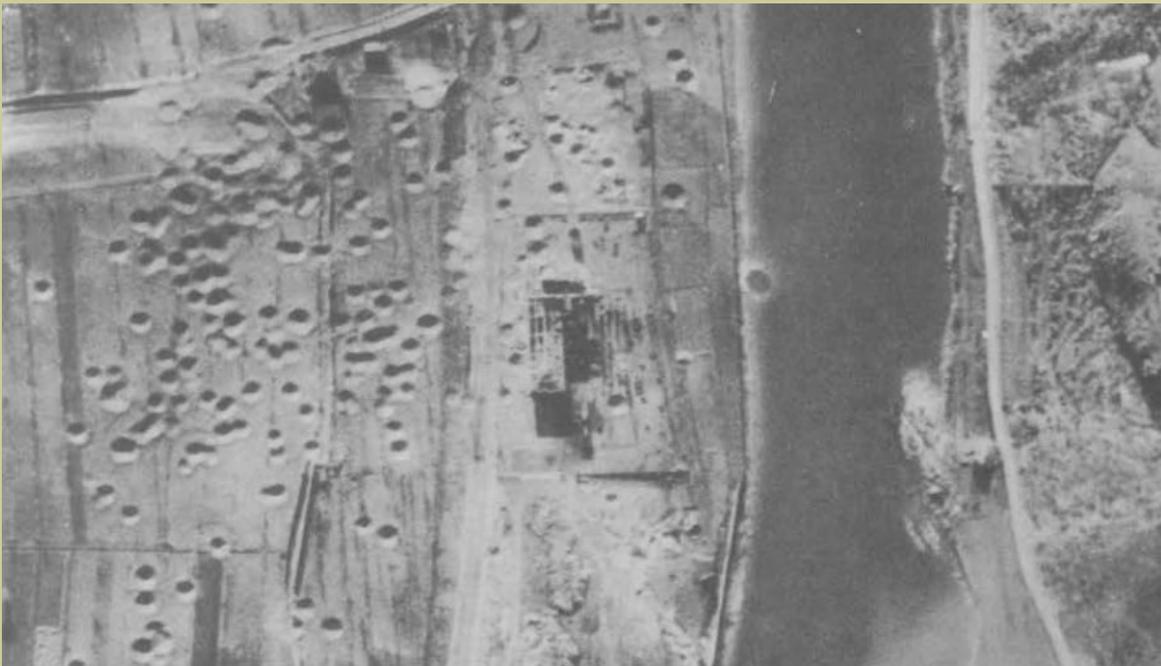
Following the attack there was *no* rail traffic on the Brenner line until the 12th of November.

The German repair crews rushed to repair the railroad tracks and, thus, began the Battle of the Brenner as our focus turned toward busting the bridges and returning to the same targets as the enemy repaired them.





*The electric transformer station at Ala following the Operation Bingo attack by elements of the 321st BG*



*View of the Ala transformer station by air reconnaissance the day following the attack.*



*The transformer station at Trento prior to the attack by the 340th BG*



*Trento transformer during the attack*

# Flaming Plane Ride Hot While It Lasted

(Like the U. S. Marines, whose combat correspondents have become famous in this war, the 12th AAF in Italy now has its own reporters, members of combat crews, writing about unusual missions. The following story, by Bombardier Russ Grigsby of Taylorville, Ill., is the first to be released.)

By Bombardier **RUSS GRIGSBY**  
Special to The Stars and *Stripes*

This article from the Stars and Stripes was collected and saved by Sterling Ditchey, bombardier with the 310th Bomb Group, 380th Bomb Squadron.

It tells the story of the loss of the ship "Puss n Boots" on the March 10, 1945 mission to bomb the railroad bridge at Ora, Italy in the Brenner Pass.

The crew consisted of:

Pilot	George F. Tilley
Co-pilot	Roy Snyder
Navigator	Lewis Ragle
Bombardier	Russ Grigsby
Engineer-Gunner	George McTavey
Radio-Gunner	Robert Martone
Tail Gunner	Efshathios Mamatas

On the following page is a transcription of the Stars and Stripes article:



*Puss 'n Boots with two unidentified GIs*

# Flaming Plane Ride Hot While it Lasted

By Bombardier Russ Grigsby

With the 12th AAF's 310th B-25 Group, March 14—The Germans are doing their damndest to win the battle of the Brenner. We can see this, and feel this, with every mission.



*Russ Grigsby*

My last attack, over Ora, Italy, is a good example. Two or three ships of our formation went down over the target, our ship caught fire, and our crew bailed out. And we are lucky that we didn't have to make the jump into "Death Valley."

We had broken away from the main formation a few minutes from the IP, when, "wham—wham—wham—wham" - several bursts of flak exploded a few feet below. The right en-

gine was smoking and on fire. Our instrument panel was shot out, leaving only the clock, altimeter, and one fuel gauge. Our main and emergency hydraulic systems were cut. Several gas lines were severed and gas began pouring into the turret gunner's and radio man's compartments. Meanwhile, a report came over the radio that other B-25s had already gone down over the Pass.

As usual, the Kraut flak gunners were happy ... and hot.



*George Tilley*

Our pilot, 1st Lt. George F. Tilley of St. Louis, Mo., called over the intercom for a report of the injuries. No one was hit although light poured into the ship from every direction.

Tilley feathered the right prop because the engine was blazing and saturated with 100 octane. We were losing altitude and air speed so rapidly that he had to make the decision: bail out over Jerryland or start the engine, taking a chance on having the Mitchell explode around us. We took the chance and headed for the lines.

Our navigator, 1st Lt. Lewis Ragle of Massilon, Ohio took over. But with our instruments gone, we were lost and on fire. Our co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Roy Snyder of Limekiln, Pa., called our wingman, 1st Lt. Victor Irons from Newtonville, Mass., to serve as our eyes and ears, taking us in to the closest friendly field.



*Roy Snyder*

With gas streaming into our eyes and faces, S/Sgt. George McTavey, engineer-gunner from Mt. Kisco, N.Y., and I took turns pumping the wheels and the bomb bays in an unsuccessful attempt to close them. The gas was ankle-deep in both the forward and rear compartments. And with the fumes pouring in, we had to fight nausea as well as broken controls, flames, and incidentally, Germans.

“Do you want to bail out or stick?” Tilley asked over the intercom as we broke [out over] our own lines. He was so damned cool that we had no choice. We stuck.

### **READY TO BAIL**

Our “Instrument” ship tried to help us land but we couldn’t lower our wheels on the approach. Tilley pulled up the nose and told us to get ready to bail. In the rear compartment, the tail gunner, S/Sgt. Efshathios Mamatas of Verona, Pa., and S/Sgt. Bob Martone, radioman from

Troy, N.Y., were already flipping a coin to determine the priority.



*Efshathios Mamatas*

I pulled my 52-mission baseball cap down tight and left the compartment. The airflow caught the cap and blew it up into the navigator’s face. He caught it and stuffed it into his pocket on the way out. The co-pilot dove through the hatch just as the pilot trimmed the ship and headed it out to sea.

As he left the hatch, the plane fell into a spin.

My ride down must have lasted over ten minutes. For lack of other diversion, I sang the first few verses of “The Souse Family.” When I walked into operations at the nearest airfield, I was met by Tilley with outstretched hands, a cheese sandwich in one and a hot dog in the other. ★



# MECHS OF THE AIR CORPS

Words and Music by  
BOB CRAWFORD

Moderately (March tempo)

The Ar-my Air Force is fa-mous, of course and so are the men who fly; But  
think of the men, the en-list-ed ten, no aer-o-plane can de-fy! We  
rev up the mo-tors, we change the plugs, and all of the jets we drain, we  
know ver-y well when she's run-ning swell, you'll crack her up a-gain! Oh!

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We are the Mechs of the Air Corps, Nuts to you! mud in your eye!  
Fly 'em high! dive 'em be-low.  
We're the guys who make 'em fly, the grease balls of the Air Corps, It takes a crew like  
We're the guys who make 'em go,  
me and you to keep the planes up in the blue, Grease balls keep roll-ing the ar-my,  
We're the vi-tal "ten" and something more. You're hot on the stick when we make 'em tick, But  
you'll come home when the weather gets thick, to the Mechs, the grease balls of the Air Corps! Air Corps!

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The pi-lots have flown and start coming home in the fire of the set-ting sun, Their  
work for the day is o-ver, they say, while, hell, ours is just be-gun, But  
let no one say, As we ham-mer a-way and re-place a wing or two That  
an-y thing flies in the war-torn skies that can e-qual the Red, White and Blue! Oh!  
Lieutenants, Generals, Captains high,  
Say! Just how far do you think you'd fly?  
But for us, the greaseballs of the Air Corps!  
We wash the planes with many a sigh,  
But still thank God that cows don't fly,  
We're the Mechs, the greaseballs of the Air Corps!

*D.S. al Fine*

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



# 57th Bomb Wing and the Propaganda War

## Nickeling Missions

General purpose high-explosive bombs weren't the only ordnance dropped by Wing bombers.

There was another type of mission, the dropping of propaganda leaflets on enemy troop concentrations.

This was not a popular mission among the boys. If they were going to risk flak and fighters flying over enemy territory, they much preferred to carry and drop a much more lethal load.

The British started the practice of distributing propaganda to enemy troops before the US entered the war. They used the code name "nickel" for the leaflet drops. When the Americans adopted the practice, they kept the British term. In reading the Wing War Diaries you will see references to "nickeling" missions usually involving a flight of three ships.

The leaflets were developed by the United States Office of War Information (OWI) and printed on cheap, thin paper. Very few have survived due to the flimsy nature of the leaflets. Add to that the fact that the American GIs handling the documents were not allowed to send copies home. They were not even supposed to keep copies, though that was not rigorously enforced.

We are fortunate to have a number of examples of these propaganda sheets in our collection.

In addition to leaflets the Army also printed whole tabloid newspapers in German and Italian intended to counter Axis propaganda telling their troops how wonderfully the war was going for them.

Some of the propaganda sheets were very hard-hitting like the one on the cover of this magazine.

They almost always included a "Safe Conduct Pass." The Pass was perfectly useless. Enemy soldiers who surrendered were treated the same regardless whether they displayed the "Safe Conduct Pass" or not. Nevertheless, many of the enemy soldiers took them seriously. Enemy commanders expressly forbid soldiers from reading the leaflets and newspapers, or from possessing them, or even from picking them up off the ground. Yet many enemy soldiers were found to have the "Safe Conduct Pass" hidden in their uniform somewhere 'just in case...'

Here is an example along with the totally unnecessary 'instructions' translated for the Allied soldiers:

**PASSIERSCHEIN** | Der deutsche Soldat, der diesen Passierschein vorzeigt, benutzt ihn als Zeichen fuer seinen ehrlichen Willen, sich zu ergeben. Er soll entwaffnet werden. Er ist gut zu behandeln. Er hat Anspruch auf Verpflegung und aertzliche Behandlung. Er muss so rasch wie moeglich aus der Gefahrenzone herausgebracht werden.

**SAFE-CONDUCT.** To AMERICAN and BRITISH outposts ! The German soldier who carries this safe-conduct is using it as a sign of his genuine wish to give himself up. He is to be disarmed, to be well looked after, to receive food and medical attention as required, and to be removed from the danger-zone as soon as possible.

**LAISSEZ-PASSER.** Aux avant-postes français ! Le soldat allemand porteur de ce laissez-passer fait preuve de sa volonté sincère de se rendre en le présentant. Il doit être désarmé et bien traité. Il a droit à être nourri et à recevoir des soins médicaux si nécessaire. Il doit être ramené, le plus vite possible, de la zone des combats.

After a series of defeats in North Africa, Adolf Hitler ordered General Erwin Rommel, “the Desert Fox,” to return to Europe in March of 1943.

The Army propagandists at the Office of War Information were quick to capitalize on the situation.



The headlines read:

Rommel has fled.

You will be left in the lurch.

Now comes your last chance.

Get yourself to safety.

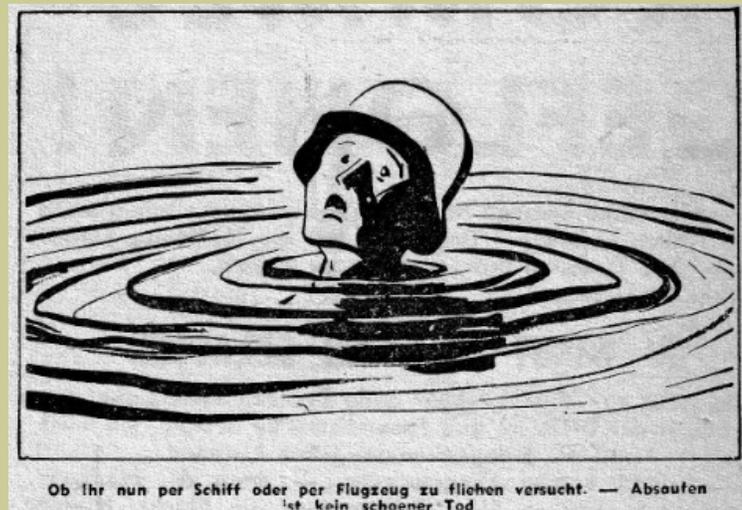
At the bottom:

For you there is only one way to get back home. Give yourself up as a prisoner.

On the back of the leaflet is the “Safe Conduct Pass” and this graphic:

The caption:

Whether you try to escape by ship or by airplane — There is no finer death.



Of course the Italian army was also targeted by propaganda:

## LA LINEA DELLA TUNISIA MERIDIONALE È SPEZZATA GABES È CADUTA ALTRI PORTI STANNO PER CADERE

L'OTTAVA ARMATA INGLESE HA DISTRUTTO LA LINEA MARETH. GABÈS È CADUTA. PIÙ DI 10,000 PRIGIONIERI SONO STATI FATTI IN DUE GIORNI. ROEMMEL HA AVUTO GRAVI PERDITE DI CARRI ARMATI - LA PIÙ GRAN' PARTE DELLA SUA ARTIGLIERA È STATA CATTURATA. I RESTI DELL'AFRIKA KORPS STANNO CERCANDO DISPERATAMENTE PER RAGGIUNGERE I PORTI DEL NORD. NAPOLI ED I PORTI SICILIANI SONO STATI FORTEMENTE BOMBARDATI DALL' AVIAZIONE ANGLO-AMERICANA.

GLI ALLEATI HANNO LANCIATO L'OFFENSIVA VENTI MIGLIA DA TUNISI NEL SETTORE SETTENTRIONALE. GLI AMERICANI ED I FRANCESI AVANZANO DAL SUD ASSIEME DEI BRITANNICI.

Questi fatti sono noti a tutti, salvoché alle truppe della Tunisia. Le vostre famiglie lo sanno e si domandano: —« Perché devono morire in quest'ultimo lembo di terra africana? »

### SOLDATI ITALIANI ! PERCHÈ MORIRE ? PER I TEDESCHI ?

Perché dovete imparare questi fatti da noi ? Perché i vostri capi non osano o dirvili. E hanno paura che, se conoscete la verità, vorrete da noi, perché volete vivere e vedere le vostre famiglie dopo la guerra.

April 5, 1943 Sicily

## AI PORTI ! MA NON PER VOI NON C'È RITORNO PER VOI ITALIANI VERSO L'ITALIA

Le navi nei porti di Tunisi e di Bizerta sono riservate per i Tedeschi.

BENCHÈ HITLER HA SMENTITO che i Tedeschi avranno le navi la realtà è che gli Italiani verranno abbandonati di nuovo, come nell' Egitto e nella Libia.

MUSSOLINI HA ANNUNCIATO che la flotta italiana è sotto il comando dell' ammiraglio tedesco Doenitz.

I Tedeschi SPERANO che le navi italiane li porteranno sicuramente in Sicilia.

SPERARE ?

MA GLI ITALIANI ? ESSI MORIRANNO.

IL TEMPO È BREVE. AVETE COMBATTUTO CON ONORE E BENE. VOLETE SACRIFICARVI PER I TEDESCHI ?

IL SOLDATO SAGGIO SA CHE COSA FARE QUANDO VEDE CHE LA BATTAGLIA È PERDUTA.

## VENITE DA NOI

LASCIAPASSARE  
Laissez - passer  
Safe-conduct

THE EASTERN TUNISIAN LINE HAS BEEN BROKEN

GABES HAS FALLEN

OTHER PORTS ARE ABOUT TO FALL

THE EIGHTH BRITISH ARMY HAS DESTROYED THE MARETH LINE. GABES HAS FALLEN. MORE THAN 10,000 PRISONERS HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN TWO DAYS. ROMMEL HAS HAD GRAVE LOSSES OF ARMORED VEHICLES. THE MAJOR PART OF HIS ARTILLERY HAS BEEN CAPTURED. THE REMAINS OF THE AFRIKA KORPS ARE DESPERTELY SEEKING TO REACH THE NORTHERN PORTS. NAPLES AND SICILIAN PORTS HAVE BEEN HEAVILY BOMBARDED BY ANGLO-AMERICAN AVIATION.

THE ALLIES HAVE LAUNCHED AN OFFENSIVE TWENTY MILES FROM TUNIS IN THE WESTERN SECTOR. THE AMERICANS AND THE FRENCH ADVANCE FROM THE SOUTH TOGETHER WITH THE BRITISH.

These facts are known by all---except the troops in Tunisia. Your families know them and as' themselves: "Why must they die in this last stand on African soil?"

ITALIAN SOLDIERS

WHY DIE? FOR THE GERMANS?

Why must you learn these facts from us? Why do your leaders not dare tell you? They are afraid that if you know the truth, you will come to us, because you wish to live and see your families after the war.

TO THE PORTS! BUT NOT FOR YOU

FOR YOU ITALIANS THERE IS NO RETURN TOWARD ITALY

THE SHIPS IN THE PORTS OF TUNIS AND BIZERTE ARE RESERVED FOR GERMANS

ALTHOUGH HITLER HAS ASSURED YOU THAT THE GERMANS WILL HAVE SHIPS, ACTUALLY THE ITALIANS WILL BE ABANDONED AGAIN, AS THEY WERE IN EGYPT AND LIBYA

MUSSOLINI HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE ITALIAN FLEET IS UNDER GERMAN ADMIRAL DOENITZ

THE GERMANS HOPE THE ITALIAN SHIPS WILL BRING THEM SAFELY TO SICILY

DO THEY HOPE SO?

HOW ABOUT THE ITALIANS? THEY MUST DIE

TIME IS SHORT. YOU HAVE FOUGHT HONORABLE AND WELL. DO YOU WISH TO SACRIFICE YOURSELVES FOR THE GERMANS?

THE WISE SOLDIER KNOWS WHAT TO DO WHEN THE BATTLE IS LOST

This is the banner from a very rare copy of the newspaper dropped on German troops in North Africa:

April 11, 1943 17 miles south of Tunis

# AFRIKA-POST

WOCHENBLATT FUER DEUTSCHE TRUPPEN IN TUNESIEN

Nr. 5 den 8 Maerz 1943

## DIE SCHLACHT IN TUNESIEN

In den letzten drei Wochen haben die deutschen Armeen in Tunesien drei verzweifelte Versuche gemacht, aus dem Ring der alliierten Armeen auszubrechen. Aber es ist ihnen nicht gelungen.

Zuerst versuchten die noch uebriggebliebenen Teile der Panzerarmee Rommel von Sued-Tunesien aus, einen Schlag in nord-westlicher Richtung durchzufuehren. Am Anfang hatten sie einige Erfolge, und am 20. Februar waren die drei wichtigen Staedte Sbeitla, Kasserine und Feriana in deutscher Hand. Dann kam ein entschlossener Gegenangriff der alliierten Kraefte, und die drei Staedte wurden wiedereroert.

Dann am 26. Februar fing im noerdlichen Abschnitt noch ein weiterer deutscher Angriff an, dessen Ziel es war, die alliierte Linie durchzubrechen und die gegnerischen Truppen einzukesseln. Heftige Kaempfe dauerten fuer mehrere Tage, ohne dass die Deutschen, trotz sehr hoher Verluste, wesentliche Fortschritte machen konnten. Von der Zahl der Gefangenen zu beurteilen, scheint die geplante Einkesselung eher von alliiertes Seite durchgefuehrt worden zu sein.

Und schliesslich, am 6. und 7. Maerz, griff Rommel die britische achte Armee in Sueden an. Der schwere Angriff scheiterte vollkommen. Die Infanterie wurde mit der ueblichen Ruecksichtslosigkeit in den Massentod geschickt. Und von den nicht so vielen noch uebrig gebliebenen Panzern wurde eine weitere Anzahl zerstoert.

Jede mal hohe Verluste : jedesmal kein Durchbruch. Der Ring um die eingekesselten deutschen Armeen wird immer enger gezogen. Wird Hitler versuchen, Verstaerkungen zu schicken ? Oder wird er eher denken, es geht schon genug in Tunesien verloren ? Was er auch tut, kann es uns nur Recht sein. Je mehr deutsche Truppen in die Falle gelockt werden, desto zufriedener werden wir sein. Denn eines Tages klappt die Falle zu.

Teile der deutschen Einheiten, die besonders schwer in den

tege doch einsehen muesste, es kommen keine deutschen Truppen von Afrika zurueck.

## DIE R. A. F.

Im Monat Februar wurde Deutschland heftiger von der R.A.F. angegriffen, als in irgendeinem anderen Monat des Krieges. 25 Mal in 28 Tagen wurden deutsche Staedte bombardiert. Das Gewicht der in diesem Monat auf Deutschland abgeworfenen Bomben war um 50 % groesser als je zuvor.

Maerz fing auf gleiche Weise an. In der Nacht vom 2/3 d. M. erlebte Berlin den weitaus schwersten Angriff, dem es bisher ausgesetzt worden war. Sogar das Propagandaministerium gab zu, mehr als 200 Berliner seien dabei ums Leben gekommen, und diejenigen von Euch, die im Ruhrgebiet zu Hause sind, werden wohl wissen, was das bedeutet.

In der folgenden Nacht wurde Hamburg schwer angegriffen ; und am 4. Maerz belegten amerikanische Kampfflugzeuge bei Tag das Ruhrgebiet mit Bomben.

## IM PAZIFIK

Noch ein weiterer japanischer Geleitzug, der versuchte, Truppen nach Neu-Guinea zu bringen, ist von amerikanischen Streitkraeften voellig vernichtet worden. Am 4. Maerz wurde bekanntgegeben, dass 10 Kriegsschiffe und 12 Truppentransporte versenkt, und 102 Flugzeuge des Geleites abgeschossen wurden. Mit dem Verlust von 15.000 japanischen Soldaten ist zu rechnen.

## DIE FRAGEN, DIE WIR STELLEN

1. Welche deutsche Einheit, die erst am 6. Februar in Tunesien ankam, hat es bis Ende des Monats fertig gebracht, zwei ganze Kompanien tief in Algerien zu haben? (Zwar als Kriegsgefangene, aber immerhin !)
2. Wieviele deutsche Generale werden hier in Tunesien ...

Another newspaper directed at the Italian Army troops:

22 Marzo 1943 April 30, 1943 Tunis N° 4

# CORRIERE DELL'ARIA

## SOLDATI D'ITALIA!

Molti di voi sono già in Tunisia da quattro mesi. Durante questo periodo la carta dell' Africa ha subito dei cambiamenti. Tutto quello che abbiamo previsto nei numeri precedenti di questo giornale si è verificato. Tripoli è caduta due mesi fa, e la potente armata di Montgomery ha avanzato verso la Tunisia in cerca degli avanzi battuti dell' armata di Roemmel. Voi stessi avete incontrato dei compagni che si sono rifugiati in Tunisia, dopo l'evacuazione della Tripolitania. Questi hanno combattuto nella Libia. Sono meglio informati di noi sulle vaste riserve di cui dispongono gli Inglesi in Egitto. Ogni giorno l'armata di Montgomery diventa più forte. Due mesi sono passati e ormai i preparativi sono quasi terminati. Quindici giorni fa, in un attacco violento contro i Britannici, Roemmel ha perso più di cinquanta carri armati.

nite da noi. Sarete trattati bene e tornerete a casa a guerra finita. Questo giornale vi servira come un salvocondotto alle nostre linee. Usatelo e portate così la pace all' Italia ed alle vostre famiglie.

### La sorte delle truppe italo-tedesche in Tunisia

Tutti i tentativi di attacco delle truppe di Roemmel e di Von Arnim contro la prima e l'ottava armata alleate sono state respinte e ridotte a zero. Presto le forze italo-tedesche, assediata in Tunisia, si troveranno in una situazione tale che esse dovranno scegliere fra l'umiliante resa o il tentativo disperato di scappare per mare in modo di raggiungere la Sicilia. Tale tentativo sarebbe l'equivalente di un suicidio in presenza della superiorità navale ed aerea degli Alleati, e probabilmente finirebbe nella più spaventosa ecatombe della guerra.

Ora che le condizioni atmosferiche del Mediterraneo rendono la visibilità migliore i nostri aerei possono scoprire facilmente le navi dell' Asse mentre i nostri sommergibili possono attaccare queste stesse navi nelle migliori delle condizioni.

La traversata dall' Italia alla Tunisia diviene di più in più pericolosa. E possibile di apportare a Roemmel, per le vie dell' aria, una certa quantità di materiale di ricambio e del personale, ma i trasporti di munizioni e di pezzi di ricambio per i carri armati e le automobili devono farsi assolutamente colle navi, che diventano sempre più rare. Difatti, su ogni tre navi che partono dall' Italia soltanto due fanno ritorno, e questo dura già da quattro mesi. La marina italiana può constatarne le conseguenze.

Da tutto questo si può prevedere che Roemmel è forzata di resistere fino all' ultimo per delle ragioni di prestigio, sacrificando inutilmente centinaia di soldati e di marinai italiani per una causa perduta.



As we mentioned above, our crews were not thrilled to be assigned nickeling missions. But, perhaps the boys of the 381st Squadron felt a little better about it after receiving this praise.

September 23, 1944 entry in the War Diary of the 381st BS:

*"To combat crews who have dropped propaganda leaflets in both France and Italy, OWI's bulletin praising the effectiveness of their work, came as a pleasant surprise to these men who sometimes doubted the worth of this type of bomb as compared to the more lethal variety which makes up the bulk of their business."*

57TH WING GROUND LIAISON SECTION  
2689TH GROUND LIAISON DETACHMENT (OVHD)  
c/o HQ., 57TH BOMBARDMENT WING  
APO 650, U. S. ARMY

12 March 1945

SUBJECT: Nickelling results.

TO : GLO's, 310th, 321st, and 340th Bomb Groups.

The following radio broadcast justifies the effort made by 57th Bomb Wing, 232 Wing RAF, and 3 SAAF Wing in dissemination of IT/18 "General Clark's Warning to the Italian People." Though couched in terms somewhat unfavorable to our Commanding General, the broadcast by the Italian Fascist Radio has served the major point of our propaganda in repeating our warning to the people.

"RADIO REPUBBLICANA In Italian to Italy 610 Kc 0800 Hrs March 9.

"Clark, the Benefactor" (A Commentary)

"The American General Clark, justly famous as the soldier who set fire to the ..... public library, has taken care to ensure his own name a worthy and memorable place in history by the scientific destruction of the Montecassino Abbey. But that is not all. Now he wants to act for the benefit of the Italian people, who are very dear to President Roosevelt and General Clark. The latter perhaps loves them even more than his President does. Did you ever read the leaflets scattered everywhere in our fields? They contain a little homily, more or less as follows: 'Be on your guard (which means that this is a bomb-proof friendship); but owing to the necessities of war our air forces must hammer the columns of the German Army so as to shorten the war. We do not want to hit civilians, and civilians must help us by keeping away from communication lines, bridges, and railways.'

"It is quite clear: Clark is trying to justify in advance some impending action by the air criminals or to justify those already carried out. As far as we know, the Apennine front has not yet collapsed, and there is no sign of a German withdrawal from Italy. This did not prevent the air criminals from bombing the center of Brescia three times in eight days. And yet, who knows, there might perhaps be some jester who, reading the leaflet, cries out: 'Clark is really a great benefactor.'"

WILLIAM H. BULLARD  
Major, CAC  
GLO, 54th Bomb Wing

The final missions of the 57th Bomb Wing took place in May of 1945. The weather turned bad in the last days of April grounding the bombers. German General Heinrich von Vietinghoff surrendered his army on April 29th which became effective on May 2nd.

As soon as the weather cleared, the Wing dropped leaflets on the German and Fascist Italian troops informing them of the surrender and ordering them to remain in place to await further orders.

# BEKANNTMACHUNG

Der Oberbefehlshaber der deutschen Armeegruppe Südwest, Generaloberst Heinrich von Vietinghoff, hat sich mit sämtlichen unter seinem Kommando stehenden—deutschen und faschistischen—Truppen übergeben. Er hat dementsprechende Befehle erteilt, denen unverzüglich Folge geleistet werden muss.

Ihr habt den Kampf sofort einzustellen und auf Eurem gegenwärtigen Standort verbleibend, weitere Anordnungen abzuwarten.

H. R. ALEXANDER

Feldmarschall

Allierter Höchstkommandierender  
Mittelmeer-Kriegschauplatz,

# COMUNICAZIONE

Il Comandante in Capo del Gruppo d'Armata Sud Occidentale Tedesco, Colonnello Generale Heinrich von Vietinghoff, si è arreso con tutte le truppe — Tedesche e Fasciste — sotto i suoi ordini. Egli ha emesso ordini in questo senso che devono essere ubbiditi immediatamente.

Dovete cessare il fuoco immediatamente e rimanere dove siete in attesa di ulteriori ordini.

H. R. ALEXANDER

Maresciallo.

Comandante Supremo Alleato  
Teatro di Guerra Mediterraneo

Before leaving the topic of propaganda leaflets, we should also mention that the Germans were active in this area also. We do not have any record of the Germans dropping leaflets on our airfields, but they certainly did drop on infantry positions.

Some of the graphics could be quite salacious, almost bordering on pornography. Here is an example of one of the milder propaganda sheets.



American GIs were pouring into England preparing for the D-Day invasion. The text that goes with this picture is directed toward British troops. It suggests to them that the “Yanks” are busy having their way with the English wives, girlfriends and daughters of the Brits while the Brits are fighting and dying on foreign soil.

*“Obviously, the “blooming Americans” are much braver in England than at the front where you, poor devil, have got to fight German crack troops alone.*

*No wonder they are looking upon the war as something quite amusing?”*



# THE ARMY AIR FORCES

## *Want You!*

*Wacs keep 'em flying*

*Go to your*  
**U.S. ARMY**  
Recruiting Station  
**NOW!**



# Poems from “Pupent Poets of the Stars and Stripes, Mediterranean”

## Situation Normal

I'm a six-foot t'ree from Brooklyn,  
A hunnert eighty when I'm bare.  
Me hands is big as hammers  
And me chest's a mat o' hair.  
I uster be a boxer,  
In de Dead End I wuz tops.  
I wuz raised on lemon extract,  
T'hell wid whiskey slops.  
De Moider, Inc., boys wuz me pals,  
I scare guys wid me puss.  
To your sixty-four buck question,  
I'm a typist, pal, t'ank youse.

— Sgt. Hank Chernick



## Situation Still Normal

Six Years I pounded typist's keys  
And copied shorthand notes with ease.  
Before the Navy took me in -  
A rag, a bone and dreadful thin.  
No bulging muscles I display,  
One hundred twenty pounds I weigh;  
No beefy brawn' on my physique -  
I'm not a guy that makes gals weak.  
My 'plaint runs quite the other way.  
I slave with heavy tools all day.  
Wracked with pain, my body bruised -  
The Navy too, is all confused.

— RM 3c A. J. Betonti



# SWITCH ON! CONTACTS!

## Louis Alexopoulos (MIA)

We received an interesting inquiry from a researcher in Greece. Dimitrios Vassilopoulos has a website with an unusual twist. [GREEKS in Foreign Cockpits](#) seeks to identify air crew of Greek extraction who flew in World War I and World War II. He tells their story on his website and tries to locate family relatives who may still be in Greece.

He contacted us because he saw a photo of the ship "ATHENA" which belonged to the 489th Bomb Squadron, and he wanted to learn about any Greek connection. We were unable to find any background on the naming of this ship.



However, I did stumble upon a Greek-sounding name in one of our rosters, Louis Alexopoulos.

We had no information on him except that he served in the 319th BG, 440th BS and was listed as MIA.

We found the MACR on Fold3 and sent it to Dimitrios to see what he could make of it. That same day, he located photographs and other information about Louis Alexopoulos and his tragic story.



## CONTACTS! (cont'd)

On February 3, 1944 elements of the 440th Bomb Squadron took off from their field at Decimo, Sardinia and headed their B-26 Marauders out to attack the railroad bridge at Civita Castellana, Italy.

Here is the description of the horrific incident from the point of view of the Pilot, 1st Lt. Daniel H. Callahan:

*“Just before leaving the Italian Mainland heading back to the base with the rest of the formation, we were attacked by enemy aircraft. My left engine was shot out and my right engine was smoking. I therefore had to leave the formation and headed south into the clouds with intentions of landing at Nettuno, the American bridge head south of Rome. I tried to call the gunners on the interphones, but received no reply. Evidentially, the interphones were shot out. Rafferty came forward for a water landing. I then told Rafferty to inform the other men in the tail of the circumstances, and at the time Sgt. [Michel O.] Jenkins informed Rafferty that Sgt. Alexopoulos had already bailed out. Jenkins and [Albert L.] Eagles, failed to comply with the orders and remained in the tail. Prior to the water landing, Sgt. Rafferty laid flat on the floor in the navigators compartment and Sgt. [Thomas C.] Lane, the bombardier, sat on the step adjoining the pilot's compartment in preparedness of releasing the life raft.*

*Lt. Williams the co-pilot, Sgt. Rafferty and I immediately got out of the plane with the dinghy in position to float. We waited for Sgt. Lane to come out. The plane was sinking fast. Sgt. Rafferty noticed Sgt. Lane's hand sticking out of the navigators hatch weakly grabbing for a hold. Sgt. Rafferty grabbed his hand, and with the aid of Lt. Williams, tried in vain to get Sgt. Lane out of the sinking plane. He went down with the plane. Apparently, Sgt. Lane was seriously injured as he appeared very weak when Lt. Williams and Sgt. Rafferty tried to bring him from the ship.*

*The ship landed in the water at 1310 hours and we were picked up by an American submarine chaser who had been informed by Allied Spitfires who spotted the aircraft hit the water, at 1750 hours. We landed north of the Tiber River, approximately 13 miles from the Italian coast. We rowed for five hours through heavily mined waters. The night was spent at Anzio. The next day we were taken to Naples in a LST which took 18 hours. We remained overnight at Naples and the next day also. Then returned to our base in Sardinia via C-47.”*

Louis Alexopoulos' body was never found. He was listed as Missing in Action.

# CONTACTS! (cont'd)

Dimitrios' research was not done, however. Amazingly, he was also able to identify the German fighter pilot who took down Louis Alexopoulos' ship.

Herman "Puschi" Puschmann was a renowned German fighter ace. He was credited with 57 "victories" including the B-26 carrying Alexopoulos. He flew over 500 combat missions.

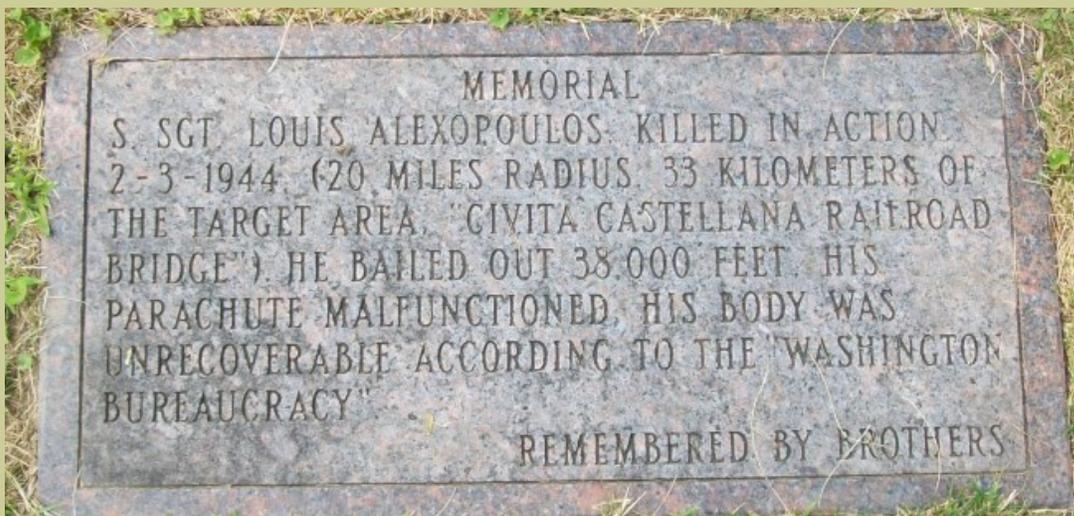
But this was to be his last. Puschmann was shot down by one of the other B-26's when he returned to the fight after taking down the bomber.

He perished in the crash of his aircraft.



\* \* \* \* \*

Louis Alexopoulos' loving family was devastated by his loss and his brothers commissioned a memorial stone for him.



[The altitude would have been closer to 3,800 feet, not 38,000]



# CONTACTS! (cont'd)

*We received a request by the niece of John F. Hastings, navigator with the 489th Bomb Squadron. In researching information about her Uncle we came across a delightful story recounted by his buddy, fellow navigator, Paul Gale, and published in the Fall 2000 edition of the Wing Newsletter.*

John Hastings with the 340th BG, 489th Sq. passed on this past winter. John lived with his wife, Evelyn who survives him in Katonah, NY. John's career included service in the Air Transport Command, Troop Carrier, and an Air Sea Rescue detachment as well as the 57th Bomb Wing.

On one occasion, having made a one-way trip, he found himself stranded in Algiers. He went to the base operations office looking for a ride back to his squadron.

When he entered the office there was a spirited discussion taking place between the operations officer, who was a Major speaking to a Brigadier General. The Major was doing his best to convince the General that he was powerless to comply.

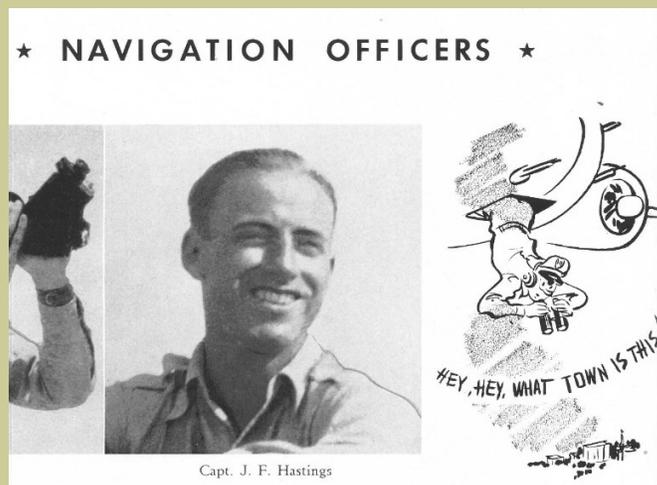
Johnny stood quietly in the back of the room as the Major looked up and said, "There's a Navigator, General." The General turned around, said, "You're now on temporary duty with me."

Johnny's job was to help ferry VIP's between Algiers and London. One of the trips Col. Jimmy Roosevelt was the passenger. When they arrived, Col Roosevelt thanked Johnny

for a job well done and invited him to dinner.

When they arrived at the Clairidge Hotel, where both the crews and the VIPs billeted, Roosevelt asked the Maitre d' for a table. The Maitre d' told the Colonel that there were no tables available. The Colonel identified himself and was told that there were still no tables available. At this point the Maitre d' looked up and saw Johnny. "Lt Hastings!

When did you arrive in town?" Johnny said, "Just now." "Have you had dinner?" the Maitre d' asked?" Johnny replied, "No," and the Maitre d' said, "Come, sit down Johnny." "I'm with the Colonel" Hastings replied, "Fine bring him with you!"



Capt. J. F. Hastings

Now how did this happen?

On Johnny's first visit to the Clairidge he requested a "Lime Rickey" and was curtly told there weren't any limes in England, in fact there were not any limes in the whole of the UK.

So, on Johnny's next trip and on each subsequent trip, he showed up with a bag of citrus fruit!

From that time on, Johnny Hastings was treated as Royalty.



# CONTACTS! (cont'd)

## Clifford N. Winkle, 379th BS

Another interesting contact came from Steve Winkle, nephew of S/Sgt. Clifford N. Winkle, radio-gunner with the 310th Bomb Group, 379th Bomb Squadron.

On the May 24, 1944 mission to bomb Arezzo, Italy his ship was hit by flak. The blast tore the entire tail assembly off the fuselage sending the bomber into an uncontrollable spin quickly falling out of the sky and spiraling down to the ground.

The crew consisted of: John H. Woody, Jr, pilot; Francis R. Stewart, co-pilot; William A Anderson, bombardier; Clifford N. Winkle, radio-gunner; Gerald J Mulick, gunner; James E Ballard, tail gunner.

Steve had a copy of the MACR, but wanted more information about the other members of the crew. He provided us with a photo of his uncle:



Clifford Winkle is on the left. Other crewmen are unidentified.

# CONTACTS! (cont'd)

## Clifford N. Winkle, 379th BS

Thanks to Patti Johnson's posts on Fold3 we were able to supply Steve with some information about the other crewmen who went down with the aircraft.

**LAKWOOD FLYER  
MISSING SINCE MAY 24**  
Lt. William A. Anderson Was  
Bombardier-Navigator on  
Mitchell B-25.

Jamestown, June 12—According to word received by the war department, Second Lt. William A. Anderson, 20, son of Mr. and Mrs. O. Albert Anderson, 33 Sunset avenue, Lakewood, has been missing in action on the Italian front since May 24 when his plane failed to return from a mission. He is a bombardier-navigator on a B-25 Mitchell bomber.

**Lansdowne Flier  
Missing; Three  
Youths Wounded**

The War Department today announced that Second Lieutenant Francis R. Stewart, son of Mrs. Elizabeth D. Stewart, of 116 North Highland avenue, Lansdowne, is missing in action from a raid over enemy occupied territory in Italy since May 24.

When we downloaded Clifford Winkle's draft registration card to share with his nephew, we were struck by a very chilling irony.

Before being called up to serve in the Army Air Corps, Winkle was working at the North American Aviation plant, building B-25 bombers.

The same airplanes he would fly in, fight in and die in.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)

SERIAL NUMBER N. 409	1. NAME (Print) CLIFFORD NOEL WINKLE (First) (Middle) (Last)	ORDER NUMBER 12562
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 4549 So Benton Kansas City Jackson Mo. (Number and street) (Town, township, county, or city) (County) (State)		
[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 3 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]		
3. MAILING ADDRESS Same (Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)		
4. TELEPHONE hi 4950 (Exchange) (Number)	5. AGE IN YEARS 18 DATE OF BIRTH Dec 25 - 1923 (Month) (Day) (Year)	6. PLACE OF BIRTH Middletown Ohio (Town or county) (State or country)
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs Edith Baumez Route 3 Luana Ill. (Mother)		
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS North American Aviation		
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Fairway Kansas City Jackson Mo. (Town or county) (State)		
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.		
D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 6-1-42)	(over)	e16-21030-3 Clifford Noel Winkle (Registrant's signature)



# 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](#)

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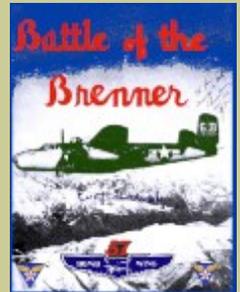
Our friend, Ken Breland, at the 12th Bombardment Group Facebook page alerted us to a book he had written about his father's experience in the 81st Bomb Squadron.

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](#)

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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 57<sup>th</sup> 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](#)

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# WHAT'S NEW ONLINE (cont'd)

The 57th Bomb Wing website continues to be a very busy place. Here are the statistics for 2024:

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2024	1,012	1,611	4,768	34,739	35.23 GB
Feb 2024	1,698	2,451	5,174	38,011	25.62 GB
Mar 2024	1,553	4,904	7,792	37,521	27.34 GB
Apr 2024	1,559	2,467	6,164	23,879	19.80 GB
May 2024	1,149	1,815	5,240	33,579	26.99 GB
Jun 2024	1,138	1,820	5,433	28,126	16.00 GB
Jul 2024	1,130	1,836	6,304	29,247	14.97 GB
Aug 2024	1,039	1,642	6,217	27,625	19.13 GB
Sep 2024	1,140	1,767	4,990	27,431	20.25 GB
Oct 2024	1,311	1,938	5,060	22,948	18.54 GB
Nov 2024	1,278	2,199	8,057	36,377	20.17 GB
Dec 2024	1,336	2,022	4,044	23,394	25.29 GB
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,343</b>	<b>26,472</b>	<b>69,243</b>	<b>362,877</b>	<b>269.34 GB</b>

And the top 10 downloads for the month of January 2025:

Downloads (Top 10) - Full list		Hits
Downloads: 742		
 /321stHistory/321_BG_1944-02.pdf		82
 /340th_History/488th_History/transcripts/1_Hist_Transcript_Aug42...		68
 /381st_History/HistoryApr45.pdf		62
 /321stHistory/321_BG_1944-01.pdf		49
 /321stHistory/321_BG_1944-12.pdf		42
 /379th_History/transcripts/History%2022%20October%201944.pdf		35
 /448th_History/WarDiary_19420801_19430930.pdf		34
 /319th_History/319-BG-1943-11.pdf		33
 /447th_History/19450201_19450228.pdf		33
 /321stHistory/321_BG_1944-05.pdf		33

On our Facebook page we now have 928 members!



# LET'S KEEP 'EM FLYING



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