



THE PYRAMIDIERS

The Newsletter of the 98th Bomb Group/Wing Veterans Association

May 2016

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Pieces of My Mind

Greetings to All,

As I write this on the first Sunday in April, we are enjoying near perfect weather. The sun is shining, there is a light southerly breeze, temperature is 74 degrees with very low humidity and the forecast for the coming week is more of the same. Houston is hosting the NCAA men's basketball final four this weekend, and today is the final round of the Shell Houston Open golf tournament. All in all, life is good. I hope your day is also fine.

Unfortunately, I must now address a matter that is not so pleasant. In February we mailed about 550 newsletters to individual members and of this total approximately 300 went to dues-paying members. The other 250 copies went to our honorary members. Now here is the crux of the problem, only 150 members actually helped defray the cost of mailing the newsletters. In fact, those same 150 members are providing all of the funds available to manage our association. That's correct, half of our dues-paying members are delinquent with their dues—one member hasn't paid dues since 2010. In all fairness to those who are delinquent, your leadership hasn't done a lot to remind you that your dues are going unpaid. So please check the year shown on the envelope's mailing label in which this newsletter arrived; that is the year through which your dues are paid. If the date is 2016, you are current. If the date is prior to 2016, you are in arrears at least one year. Our dues are \$20 per year and we would really appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

The November 2013 and February 2014 newsletters contained articles on the crew of "*Miss Fortune*," a B-24 assigned to the 343rd Bomb Squadron. The articles were written by John Torrison. John and William



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Pieces of My Mind *continued from page 1*

Boyce with John DeMers have published a book which I reviewed. That review has been posted to our web site. Please visit thepyramidiers.com if you would like to read the review and learn more about their book.

John has recently updated a web site devoted to the history of "Miss Fortune." If you would like more information on this fascinating story, you will find it at: <http://missforuneslastmission.com>

I've been talking to Dennis and I'm beginning to get excited about our forthcoming reunion in San Antonio. I think the schedule has the perfect balance between

group activities and personal time to do as one wishes. You will find the schedule and the registration sheet in this newsletter. Please join us, and register early.

Finally, but importantly, as you read this please make plans to observe Memorial Day at the end of the month. Millions of Americans have given their lives in order that we may enjoy the freedoms that are ours. The very least we can do is remember them one day of the year.

With Warmest Regards to All,

Bill Seals

Message from the VP/Reunion Advisor

Well, folks it's that time again. I have started sweating bullets! I do hope you are not going to leave me holding the bag. I really do not want to explain to Bill and Susie how I could have put the 98th Veterans Association in such a predicament. I do not want to hear them ask, "Posey who is going to pay for all these plans you have made for our reunion?" Therefore, once again, I am counting on you to bail me out.

Please folks get those registrations in soon! After all, I have already bought airline tickets. In case you have not noticed, we are going to Lackland AFB for our Banquet. Maybe we will get to see some of those guys in Blue we used to look like . . . *Slim, Trim and Good Looking.*

LIFE IS GOOD ESPECIALLY WITH FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES!

FOR THE RECORD

NEW ADDRESSES

LAST NAME	FIRST	M.I.	ADDRESS	CITY	ST	ZIP	AC	SQD
Asher	John	G	1815 Belmont Dr	Grinnell	IA	50112	B-24	343
Bailey	Luther	N.	PO Box 1866	Weaverville	NC	28787	B-24	344
Brown	Ken		12 Hemsing Dr	Lumberton	NJ	04048	B-47	OMS
Elkin	Russell	T.	1751 N Mockingbird Ln	Midlothian	TX	76065	B-24	345
Pesek Jr.	John	T.	1801 20th St RM Hcc	Ames	IA	50010	B-24	344
Pitts	Denny	L.	925 Porteus St	New Orleans	LA	70124	B-29	345
Smith	Ernest	R.	123 Washington St	Saint Augustine	FL	32084	B-47	OMS
Smith	Jack	O.	315 E Bush St	Fort Bragg	CA	95437	B-29	344
Torney	Jack	L.	506 N 192nd St Apt 109	Shoreline	WA	98133	B-29	345
Victor	Donald	B.	45 Castle Hill Ave	Great Barrington	MA	01230	B-29	345
Lauzon	Robert		79 Court St	Alfred	ME	04002		
Mangum	Joseph	T.	7510 Guess Rd	Hillsborough	NC	27278	B-24	415

Message from the Secretary/Treasurer

Spring has finally made it to Michigan!! As the days grow warmer, the sun seems to shine brighter, and convertible weather is upon us; I always wonder if we would appreciate spring as much had we not had winter to deal with. (But I wouldn't mind finding out!!)

Plans for our San Antonio Reunion are set, and we are already receiving many registrations. Please get your hotel reservations in early. The home of the Alamo and River Walk, San Antonio offers much to see and do. Obviously, the highlight for us will be the chance to once again be together. With so many members from Texas, and its surrounding states, I hope we will have a "Texas-size" turnout.

With May around the corner, I can't help but think of the Decoration Day of my youth and the Memorial Day of my adulthood. It was always a major event in our town and in our family, and I would help my Grandmother put flags on the veterans' graves. There was a big parade starting at the bridge in the center of town where a wreath of carnation—with red, white and blue ribbons—was tossed into the river as a remembrance. Then the parade continued on from downtown to the cemetery, where the band played, prayers were offered, volleys were fired, and taps were sounded (by a real trumpet!). I remember vividly my Grandmother Simons in her Blue Star Mother Uniform marching with her group, my Dad putting on his uniform to march with the other veterans (who would sometimes include his brothers), and the children (myself included) gathering flowers from people and gardens along the way to be laid on graves when we reached the cemetery.

Decoration Day was established as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers some three years after the Civil War ended, on May 5, 1868, by an organization of Union veterans the—Grand Army of the Republic. It is believed that May 30 was chosen because flowers would be in bloom all over the country. The first large observance was held that year at Arlington National Cemetery, across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. Then, as now, small American flags were placed on each grave—a tradition followed at many national cemeteries today.

To ensure the sacrifices of America's fallen heroes are never forgotten, in December 2000, the U.S. Congress passed and the president signed into law "The National Moment of Remembrance Act," creating the White House Commission on the National Moment of Remembrance. The commission's charter is to "encourage the people of the United States to give something back to their country, which provides them so much freedom and opportunity."

Lastly (from my 'soap box') we all need to remember to be teachers to the younger people in our lives, as they need to know and respect the original meaning of Memorial Day so that as Lincoln said at the end of the Gettysburg address: "that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion, that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

Susie

DECEASED

LAST NAME	FIRST	M.I.	ADDRESS	CITY	ST	ZIP	AC	SQD	DOD
Fergus	Edgar	W.	2088 Estero Blvd, Apt 3C	Fort Myers Beach	FL	33961	B-24	343	01/28/2016
Sechler	Ronald	L.	304 Eagle St	Meridan	IA	51037	B-29	345	04/07/2013

Preparing for . . .

By Royal Elmore

Editor's Note: This is one of the articles written by Royal Elmore that Bill West gave to me at our Dayton reunion. Bill's father, Allen, was the Radio Operator/Waist Gunner on Elmore's crew. The crew was not assigned to the 98th, but were in a sister wing assigned to 15th Air Force, and flew many of the same missions the 98th flew in late 1944 and early 1945. In fact Bill's Father-in-law, Phil Tarpley, flew a lot of missions with the 98th that were similar to the ones Bill's Dad flew.

In World War II the Army Air Force supplied combat units with trained and equipped crews to replace losses and to expand offensive operations. For units equipped with B-24 bombers, ten pre-trained specialists were selected to become one crew. These specialists were: Pilot/Aircraft Commander; Copilot, Navigator, Bombardier, Radio Operator/Waist Gunner; Engineer/Waist Gunner; Second Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; Nose Turret Gunner; Ball Turret Gunner; Ball Turret Gunner, and Tail Turret Gunner. Lead aircraft were equipped with radar, which replaced the ball turret with a radar antenna. The Radar Officer flew at a console located on the flight deck behind the pilot. *(Editor's note: Radar equipped heavy bombers began appearing later in the war. Elmore's crew arrived in Italy in late 1944.)*

Each member of the crew was trained specifically to be able to perform their job in combat. This procedure took months and was conducted at many different locations. The training of the pilots was the most extensive and progressed through small incremental steps, each adding required skills and testing the ability to perform. The student could be "washed out" at any stage of training.

I was in college when Pearl Harbor made it clear that I would be involved in the war. I had read Billy Mitchell's

book "Victory Through Air Power" and was convinced that I should become a pilot for strategic bombing. My college credits qualified me to take the tests used to select Aviation Cadets. A full day of testing at the Old Post Office Building in Pittsburg resulted in being accepted for training.

A train load of us were assembled in Pittsburg and taken to Miami Beach for basic training. We were housed in old hotels and fed in a cafeteria at the south end of the beach. We attended classes, wore blisters marching on the streets and in parks, stood watch on the blacked-out beach at night, and got a lot of shots.

Some of us were selected to go to Tampa University in a new College Training Detachment. We lived in a spooky old mansion built by some railroad magnate, marched in the football stadium, took classes and were flown in Piper Cubs doing stalls and spins over Tampa Bay in rough air. This proved it was easy to get air sick.

The next step was the San Antonio Classification Center where the testing was designed to create maximum stress and determine your ability to perform tasks. The objective was to decide if you should be trained as a bombardier, a navigator or pilot. The resulting classification was strongly biased by what was needed to keep the training system filled and I was

COMBAT!

classified to be a navigator. I do not know how I was allowed to refuse the classification, but a few weeks later I was sent to pilot training by a sympathetic Major who confirmed that I was qualified for both pilot and navigator.

Flying had become fun and I was becoming confident that I would make it through cadet training. I particularly liked the instrument procedures and night flying.

The next move was across the road to the Basic Training area. There was vigorous physical training both on the parade grounds and in cross country PT, but most of the time was in classroom instruction learning Morse Code, flash recognition of aircraft and vessels, meteorology, map reading, and navigation with the E6B computer. Now it was time to get down to the serious business of proving you could fly an airplane. We knew that many of us would be "washed out" in the next steps.

The only time I got to see San Antonio was when I went to the medical Arts Building overlooking the

Alamo to get my eyes tested, and when I went on the bus to Randolph Field where I participated in research on motion sickness. This procedure put you on a swing until you got sick. They recorded how long it took. Every cadet did get sick.

Primary training was at Bonham, Texas which was known as the home of Sam Rayburn, longtime Speaker of the House of Representatives. Jones Field was on the edge of town with a grass strip, but we also used other larger fields, where we had our first solo flights. The instructors were civilians who flew in the rear seat of the open cockpit PT-19, the student always flew in the front cockpit. You were particularly aware that it was an open cockpit when you flew inverted. We were taught stalls, spins, loops and slow rolls. We made a lot of landings, and practiced many emergency approaches when the instructor unexpectedly cut the power.

My first instructor was a belligerent older man who swore constantly and beat my legs with the joy stick, made me feel that I was on my very last flight as a cadet. Fortunately, my instructor assignment changed and I had a pleasant and capable instructor to finish the training.

The cafeteria food was good and we had freedom to go to town, to church and for visits. I met the Londons who became long term friends.

Basic training was at Perrin Field, Sherman, Texas. Here we flew fixed gear BT-13s and had instrument training in Link trainers. The instructors were military and facilities were typical Army Air Force. The BT-13 felt like a big airplane and was fun to fly. We were

trained in formation flying, had our first night flight including “British” landings on unlighted grass fields, and did some daytime cross country trips.

The Londons had moved from Bonham to Sherman and I was able to see them several times on weekends.

Flying had become fun and I was becoming confident that I would make it through cadet training. I particularly liked the instrument procedures and night flying.

The next move had to be twin engine training to meet my objective, and fortunately I was qualified. At Ellington Field in Houston, Texas we flew AT-10s which were a twin engine Beech with plywood wings. We did a lot of night cross country trips to Austin, which had the “freshman moonlight” towers giving the city an unusual halo of light at night. We practiced formation flying and had a lot of instrument training both under a hood and in the Link trainers. There was much emphasis on emergency procedures and single engine flying. The check rides were very thorough and any accidents like a gear up landing was cause for “wash out.” As we approached graduation, we went to Houston to be fitted for officer uniforms. Graduation provided pilot wings, Second Lieutenant gold bars and a celebration dinner at a Houston hotel with an instructor. We had a short leave to go home after graduation.

I was fortunate to be able to choose B-24 phase training and went to Liberal, Kansas. There were four students on each training flight. We had pleasant young officers check us out, and it was a real thrill to fly the big heavy airplane. We practiced emergency procedures all the time, and had extensive classes on the hydraulic and electrical systems. We flew old B-24Es which had very stiff controls and sensitive hydraulic controls on the superchargers. On a check ride, a crazy Major pulled off the power on both the left engines just as I was lifting of the runway on take-off. This left no room for error or delay to keep from crashing and I had to push with both feet on the right rudder peddle while handling flaps and trim controls. We were lucky not to scrape the left wing tip and crash. This completed the training as a heavy bomber pilot.

Our crew training was at Pueblo, Colorado. Each crew position was filled with a graduate of a specialized

training school. Most had been sent to Lincoln, Nebraska’s Crew Replacement Depot for processing and assignment. I went to Lincoln to meet and help select candidates for our crew. It was very important to fill each position with members who were not only competent, but compatible with others in the crew and motivated to fly with us. In this process, two original choices were dropped and filled with better alternatives. The system worked and we ended up with a crew that functioned well together.

The crew training program attempted to simulate the conditions we would face in combat. This included air to air gunnery practice where the gunners fired at targets towed by other airplanes. We flew long distance missions at night and in bad weather, and were encouraged to get experience with thunderstorms.

We encountered a very large thunderstorm late at night over Kansas, and I decided to fly through the center of it for experience. Airspeed was reduced to a minimum with 10 degrees of flaps, rpm was increased and landing gear dropped before we entered at about 20,000 feet. The ride was rough, with alternating rapid descents and climbs. You could hear the thunder and rain and hail hitting the plane. The electrical display was spectacular. St Elmo’s fire made halos with the tips of all fur props, tongues of fire danced from the side windows and jumped over to my face from the side window, and the atmosphere changed from lavenders, to yellows and greens. It was great experience, but once was enough to develop a serious respect for the forces active in a storm.

Bob Valker, the co-pilot had wanted to fly fighters, but came directly to our crew after graduating Ellington as a twin engine pilot. He had to learn to fly the B-24 in our time at Pueblo. He felt frustrated with the big plane.

We practiced instrument procedures on all flights, and one night I made decisions that came very close to killing all of us. Our planes had ADF (automatic direction finding) systems which indicated where a radio station was in reference to the plane. However, it was ambiguous and you did not know from the direction of the needle if it was pointing to or from



the station. You had to fly a pattern to prove which direction was correct.

We were west of Pueblo at about 8,000 feet late at night. Bob was flying an ADF procedure, and he turned west to prove the station location. I was maintaining visual reference to towns and intended to keep at least a twenty-mile separation from the mountain range at Canyon City, which left enough distance for him to complete the procedure. What I did not know was that there was a small thunderstorm between us and Pueblo which was hiding a couple of small towns I was counting and we had no reserve space. I thought I saw a mountain, pushed all four throttles to the firewall while making a violent climbing left turn, turned on the landing lights to see trees going by! My incorrect assumption almost killed all of us.

At Topeka AFB we were given a new B-24, #717 to fly to Europe. Extra fuel cells were installed in the bomb bays to increase range for crossing the Atlantic, and we were issued supplies including K rations for the trip. The plane was much more sophisticated than the training planes, it had VHF radios added, and had electronic controls on the superchargers.

Elmore's training prepared him to fly B-24s, like the aircraft shown above.

This photos comes from the website: [collings foundation.org](http://collingsfoundation.org). The stated purpose of the non-profit Collings Foundation is to organize and support “living history” events that enable Americans to learn more about their heritage through direct participation.

We were scheduled for departure at 0200 to fly to Gander AFB in Newfoundland. However, our departure was delayed by our first electronic failure.

The electronic controls for the turbo super-chargers controlled the position of the gates in the exhaust system going to the turbines on each engine. On each engine, one amplifier closed the gate and a second one opened the gate to control manifold pressure of the input to the engine. Run-up of each engine before take-off adjusted the electronic trim of the system on each engine to match maximum power with full throttle and permitted adjustment of all four engines with one large red knob control.

Everything checked out perfectly on run-up and we were cleared to position for take-off, and then for take-off. Take-off power was applied and everything was “go” as we accelerated down the runway, but about half way to lift-off, there was a loud explosion and fire in number three engine. We made an emergency stop using all of the runway, called for a fire engine and got out as fast as possible. The fire was contained successfully.

The following day we flew to Marrakesh, Morocco for an overnight, then to Tunis, Tunisia near the site of ancient Carthage. Here we saw destroyed German vehicles left after the North African campaign.

The engine had been blown apart by the pressure from the turbo super-charger. The explosion had been heard in the city of Topeka, several miles away. This was caused by a tube in the amplifier which opens the gate for number three turbo, which had failed after the run-up and before take-off. The good amplifier on engine had closed the gate and kept it closed creating pressures far beyond the maximum 56 inches for combat power.

The engine was replaced and we had a few more days in Topeka before departure.

Our planned flight path to the east took us over northern Indiana near my hometown of Upland. I called my family and told them that we would probably be flying over Upland about sunrise so they could watch for us. It was just before sunrise as we approached. I circled once and descended at high speed down to about 500 feet as we flew by, saw my folks out on the deck at our house, and rocked the wings as we climbed back up and departed east. It was an emotional experience for all of us.

As we flew on east, the weather reports from the western Atlantic reported deteriorating conditions. We were instructed to return to Syracuse for the night. This was a shared commercial and military base which had been prepared as a dispersal area. This meant that we were escorted by a jeep after we landed, taken off the base and across country on roads which were prepared to accommodate our 110-foot wingspan, crossed bridges over creeks, and parked in a barnyard next to some trees.

The next day we departed for Newfoundland, but were diverted to Manchester, New Hampshire for the night because traffic was backed up by the bad weather. The following day we did fly to Gander AFB where we would wait for several days for better weather over the Atlantic. We were able to use canoes to explore islands in the lake, gather birch bark on which to write letters. I used the time for more practice in the Link trainers.

We departed Gander after midnight so we would land at the Azores after sunrise. There was radio silence over the Atlantic, but we had an emergency channel to the British using the code name “stemstitch uncle” if needed. We were briefed that we would be penetrating a front during the flight.



Elmore flew the BT-13 during his training.

We flew at a comfortable altitude under 15,000 feet so we did not have to use oxygen. It was fairly turbulent for several hours, but became smooth at our altitude. I was flying on autopilot and was probably the only one on the plane who was awake when a red light appeared ahead of us. It enlarged like a passing light on another plane at our altitude, so while I was watching

it intently, I turned off the autopilot and was ready for evasive action. Just as I was ready to start a dive, it took a different shape. I then realized that I had my first UFO sighting while looking at an unexpected sunrise.



After flying the single engine BT-13 (opposite page), Elmore advanced to a twin engine craft like the one above. The aircraft sequence for pilots training to fly multi-engine bombers progressed as follows: PT-19, BT-13, AT-20.

Goldie’s navigation was great. I had the ADF pointing straight ahead of us while a volcanic mountain peak appeared through a lower overcast. We had found the little island in the middle of the ocean. We landed on a rolling steel strip, parked next to fences made with volcanic stone around patches prepared for gardening. Using binoculars, we enjoyed watching a pretty lady at a farm house, which was also made of volcanic stone.

The following day we flew to Marrakesh, Morocco for an overnight, then to Tunis, Tunisia near the site of ancient Carthage. Here we saw destroyed German vehicles left after the North African campaign.

The next leg took us across the Mediterranean to Italy. We flew past Mount Aetna on Sicily, which was smoking with a small eruption, on the way to Gioia de Colle in southern Italy. We were there for a few days before flying on to Cerignola to the 456 Bomb Group.

As a new crew in the 746th Squadron our first missions were in the rear of the formation with an experienced combat pilot in the right seat. With experience we progressed up in the formation, volunteered for few

single ship deep penetrations in bad weather and at night, we were trained to be a lead crew. I also flew the right seat checking out a new lead crew.

We flew #717 on 15 missions. It then blew up on a mission with another crew. We continued to fly using lead planes equipped with radar.

Bob Walker was seriously injured, then later survived a fire and blow-up while instructing another crew, and was captured by Germans. The rest of us returned to combat after being shot down and spending several weeks with the Russians. After VE day we flew back to the states in a new plane, expecting to be sent to the conflict in the Pacific. VJ Day eliminated that need and I went to Albany, Georgia to provide instrument instruction on B-25s.

While having a student do an instrument stall at about 6,000 feet, we quickly learned that a B-25 could do a snap roll. We were on our back with no air speed and had to use most of our altitude to do an instrument Immelmann to recover and settle our nerves.

I also learned that hypnosis does happen. The student was making a night instrument take-off when half way down the runway he froze staring at the instruments. I took over and flew until he recovered about five minutes later. Concentration, monotony of sound and visual repetition of passing lights had taken him under.

While stationed at Wright Patterson AFB in Dayton I attended an advanced meteorology school and advanced instrument training to qualify for Green Card privileges. I practiced a lot of GCA approaches to touch down while under the hood. I also rode the centrifuge researching various types of controls used by pilots under stress conditions.

Flying was all for fun the last few months. I checked out in the P-47 Thunderbolt fighter, flew AT-6s, C-45s C-47s and L-5s. Royal, Frey and I made a formation landing in AT-6s for our last flight.

Editor’s note: The copy of this article that Bill West gave me had a handwritten post-it note on the back. It read: “This was prepared by Allen’s friend, Royal Elmore, whom you met. Very interesting. Love, Mom.” Mom, I agree—hope our readers do as well.

A Flight To Remember

By Royal Elmore

Editor's Note: The article that follows is the second by Royal Elmore, provided to us thanks to Bill West.

It was a winter morning in Italy on February 7, 1945. We had a breakfast of pancakes, bacon and coffee. While the crew prepared our assigned plane #427, the pilot, copilot, navigator, bombardier and radar officer were taken to Group Headquarters for mission briefing. Capt. Eschberger [Esch] would fly the right seat since our copilot, Bob Walker, was still in the hospital recovering from flak injuries from a mission to Graz, December 18.

That encounter with flak had increased our respect for the capabilities of German defenses. We were flying on the right wing of the leader and had dropped our bombs on the Graz marshalling yards. We were briefed to make a quick left turn after dropping to get out of the flak area, but the leader instead turned to the right, taking us back into the flak range. I could not get the attention of the leader and had no alternative but to stay close on his right wing. The guns were fired in groups of four, with the bursts at about one second intervals exploding in a rising straight pattern. As I turned right, I could see a series of bursts and knew that the fourth one would be right on our plane. It exploded under our number three engine and a fragment entered Bob Walker's right arm near the elbow and travelled up near his shoulder. No others of the crew were hit.

The briefing today told us about weather, the location of the ground fighting and the strategic importance of our mission. The 456th Bomb Group would be Blue Force of fourteen planes, the target was Moosbierbaum oil refinery west of Vienna. We would drop 500-pound

rdx bombs from 24,600 altitude at approximately 1500 hours. The target was heavily defended with several hundred guns, and fighters were expected around the target. The Elmore crew would fly a radar-equipped plane in position A-2 as deputy group lead.

We had been to Moosbierbaum before on mission 32. On that mission we flew in position B-1 leading the second Squadron on the right of the lead Squadron, when we encountered very bad weather. We tried a radar run on the target but could not get enough radar returns on the target area to be accurate, so we abandoned this drop and decided to go to Graz as an alternate. Since we could not keep the Group together in the heavy cloud cover, it was standard procedure for each of the Squadron boxes to fly delaying patterns to separate the boxes into a string. As we emerged from clouds on the bomb run, I looked up to see 500 feet above us a formation of several planes with bomb bays open and a string of bombs dropping directly toward us. The 500 feet is far enough for the bombs to become armed for detonation upon touching anything. One string dropped just in front of our number two engine, another string went back of the wing and broke the antenna linked to the left tail. This was a frightening experience, demonstrating another risk of combat.

Weather was clear on the mission today as we flew from the "initial point" to the target, which was obscured by smoke pots. The target center was estimated by reference to offset landmarks. Flak was heavy and accurate on altitude because a spotter plane flew just

...and a Long Way Back to Base

beyond the range of our guns and reported corrections to the artillery crews. There is high vulnerability during this period because the formation is close and flying at a constant direction and speed, making a very predictable target for the artillery.

Just as our bombs were being dropped, a burst of flak under our number three engine severely damaged the engine and made a big hole through the leading edge of the wing where a major fuel cell is located.

More than three hundred gallons of gasoline flowed into the wing and into the open bomb bay, where it was blown onto the flight deck and flowed through the whole fuselage, saturating the entire crew. We expected to burn or blow up, so we flew away from the formation as fast as possible to avoid danger to the other aircraft and to be in the open for parachuting.

Getting out of the plane was always dangerous, and at 25,000 feet and -50 degrees without oxygen was a last resort. Since we did not immediately blow up, I decided not to bail out, and used intercom to tell the crew to stay with me. That was the last use of anything electrical as we departed for the nearest friendly territory. All other communication was direct talk and motions.

An individual plane out of formation was an inviting target for fighters with fewer defending guns to face. Our number three engine was dead and windmilling because the props would not feather. The bomb bays were open and could not be closed because sparks could have ignited the gasoline still flowing out of the

wing. We were at 25,000 feet and had combat power available on three engines. We did not have enough fuel left to fly over the Adriatic to Italy, so we flew southeast to get closer to friendly territory. Dissipating the altitude to get to warmer levels and continuing to run high power made it possible to cruise at fighter speeds and avoided interception. We opened all vents to dry out the fumes.

I had taken off my helmet and headset to eliminate the temptation to use the intercom and radio. The air from the window vent was cold enough to quickly freeze my ear. I learned that Tom Martin had gone out in the open bomb bay without oxygen or parachute while we were still at high altitude and stuffed rags in holes where the fuel was draining. This was a real act of bravery.

I had hoped that we could make it to Belgrade where we had a chance of finding a runway I could land on and still not be in the mountainous areas of the Balkans, but the weather was becoming threatening and number four engine had quit for lack of fuel and had to be feathered. Goldie found an area on the map indicating it as an airfield near Kaposvar, south of Lake Balaton. Ground fog was developing, but we were able to find the little strip with some fighter revetments when we looked straight down.

This was an "only one chance" landing, so we had to plan carefully. We buzzed the strip at high speed and used the speed to climb back up to a thousand feet. There was a pond on the approach. The strip looked

hilly and there was a big ditch at the end. The length was a half what we normally used to land a B-24.

Number three engine drove the hydraulic system used to lower the gear and operate brakes, but was not running. There was enough pressure in an accumulator to apply the brakes one time, but the gear had to be cranked down manually. Don Strube and Tom Martin dropped and locked the gear while I flew an instrument pattern around to approach the landing. Visibility was down to about one half mile as we approached. We did not know what winds were blowing at ground level.

Fortunately, we were lined up for landing as the strip became visible. I was able to use enough power on the two left engines to slow-fly at minimum speed, actually rounded out in the pond outside the strip, went through a farm fence into the field where we touched down on the up slope of the hill. The ground was mud covered with a light snow, and locked brakes had little effect, so I used power on number one engine to turn the plane into a ground loop. It slid sideways for several hundred feet and stopped just short of the big ditch at the end. It was slick enough that it did not damage gear or tires.

The next morning there was an air raid and a German plane was shot down.

We did not know if we had flown far enough to get out of German territory. We did not have side arms and felt there would be little chance of avoiding capture if it were in German hands. We had no more than gotten out of the plane and ready to leave it, when a lone Russian officer came hurrying down the lane to the field and greeted us. He led us back to the little village of Tazsar.

We were a curiosity and cause for celebration that night. The Russians had the local Hungarians prepare a roast pork and potatoes dinner with white wine, and made straw beds for us in a school room. It turned out that we

were less than ten miles from the front and were visited by Russian veterans of Stalingrad, wearing handlebar moustaches and carrying machine guns, hugging us and proclaiming we were “dobera Americanski.”

The next morning we all went back to the plane so we could recover parachutes and other things that we could take with us. Al West used the radio to communicate that we had landed safely. He was able to talk to a vessel in the Adriatic and gave them the information. We found out later that the information was never used because it could not be confirmed. The Russians were not able to help us communicate, so we were reported “missing in action” until we had returned to Italy.

The officer who met us arranged for an old Model A Ford truck to take us into Kaposvar where we stayed at a hotel and ate in the dining room with Russian officers for a day while they arranged for us to depart on a train to Dombovar, Hungary. The Kaposvar station had been bombed by our group in 1944, but was functioning now. As we arrived in Dombovar we could hear the artillery at the front.

Dombovar was blacked out when we arrived. The Russian “kommandant” found us to be an excuse to party with many toasts like “Russ dobera, Americanski dobera, Berlin kapoot.” We had some meatballs and dark bread with strawberry jam which was very good. The kommandant made Russian soldiers give up their places to sleep in the guard rooms so we could stay there for the night.

The next morning there was an air raid and a German plane was shot down. The Russians made lists of our names phonetically and recorded what type of work our grandfather did, gave us brown bread and garlic sausage and loaded us on three old Ford trucks. We travelled on roads that looked a lot like West Virginia, passed many labor battalions digging trenches. After we passed Pecsvarad, one of the trucks broke a universal joint, so we returned to Pecsvarad where the Hungarians were bitter about some past bombing. The Russian officer escorting us could not find any homes where we could sleep, but found a home where we were served a good meal. We slept on the floor of the Russian garrison.

Sunday morning we were given shaves at a barbershop and visited a catholic church on the top of a hill. The people we met were very clean and friendly. We had a pleasant meal at a home that appeared to be an inn.

The Russian officers we met represented a wide range of characteristics. The Major who had been escorting us was tall, athletic and handsome, was a college professor and his wife was a doctor. He was a real gentleman and the type person you would enjoy as a friend. We were disappointed that he did not speak English.

In contrast, the local kommandant used us as an excuse to have a dance with accordion music and several female soldiers attending. He cornered me and appeared to want to tell me how many were under his command. When I told him that I did not understand, using my very limited Russian, he repeated in a much louder voice, then produced an expensive pen with gold bands to write down a number. The pen did not have ink, so in complete frustration he threw the pen on the floor, and while yelling loudly he pulverized the pen by stomping on it.

That night it was arranged that we stay with local families. Esch and I were with a nice family in a farm home where the house is on the village street with barn and “closet” attached behind the house. The farm property continues a long distance back from the street but is the same width all the way. They had electric lights but no appliances. The house was heated by a built-in kitchen stove. There were pretty dishes displayed on the shelves in the kitchen. The family was parents, a daughter with a three year old granddaughter, two sisters thirteen and fourteen. They were all very clean, healthy and seemed to enjoy having us visit them, although they appeared to distrust the Russians. We slept in guest beds with large pillows and down filled covers which were more than a foot thick.

Trucks took us through Bonyhad to the west bank of the Danube, where we crawled into wooden boxes hung on a cable over the river to cross to Baja. While we were there, German fighters strafed the area, but there were no injuries. There were many German and Hungarian POWs here and we got to talk to some of them.

We spent much of the night on the trucks. We could hear gunfire and explosions in the distance. We had some breakfast at a Russian officer’s club before arriving at Csavoly, where they took us to a schoolhouse to get organized for a stay of about ten days waiting for a train to leave for Bucharest, Romania.

The Russians were very diligent about recording our identity, apparently because they were paid for our return.

Esch and I stayed at a Hungarian doctor’s home where a grandmother, mother and two little girls lived in what appeared to be servant’s quarters and kitchen. The doctor was a POW. We had the master bedroom and ate with the family sometimes when we provided eggs and potatoes we bought with some of our \$47 escape kit. They seemed to be comfortable having us there as a protection from Russian intrusions.

While in Csavoly we met many interesting people who had lived in the US or were displaced or escaped from other parts of Europe. There were some partisans from Serbia and Croatia around, but we could not understand whether they were Eustacia or Chetnicks.

We enjoyed the baths provided Russian troops. They typically were a tent with big wooden tubs, and we would take turns pouring hot water over each other. We also were shaved in barber shops several times. I had failed to include a toothbrush and toothpaste in my escape kit, so I spent a lot of time visiting pharmacies and dentists, all located in residences. I never did find anything I could buy. One family generously offered to give me the one toothbrush shared by their family, but I graciously declined.

We were joined by a Greek priest who had escaped from a German prison camp. He spoke Greek and German, so he talked with our nose gunner George

Macheras who spoke Greek, and the priest talked to the Russians who also spoke German. This helped us solve our communication problems.

Our group in Csavoly now included several others who had been shot down. The Russians were very diligent about recording our identity, apparently because they were paid for our return.

A Russian female doctor examined us carefully for VD and lice before we departed on the train for Bucharest. This was apparently a standard Russian procedure.

We were given twenty pounds of sugar cubes, ninety loaves of dark bread and two cases of salami to eat on the trip. Our cars were hooked on the back of a hospital train.

Our first stop was in the marshalling yards at Subotica. We decided to walk to a market square in the town not far from the tracks. As we passed a house still standing next to the bomb damage around the tracks, a Serbian girl called to us from a window asking if we spoke English. She had learned English by listening to BBC

on the radio, invited us in for liqueur and cookies. She exchanged \$1.00 for 2,000 dunad so we could buy some food at the market. She explained that 2,000 homes had been destroyed in one bombing and 150 railroad cars in another attack. She said that one and a half million Yugoslavs had been killed by the Eustacia.

Our 456th Group had successfully destroyed the bridge at Szeged on 9-3-44 and now on 2-23-45 we crossed on a temporary bridge next to the remains of the old bridge. All the industries along the river were also destroyed. We were now far enough away from the front that they dropped off the anti-aircraft gun cars from the back of our train.

While stopped in the marshalling yard at Timisoara we went into the center of a nice clean city with a lot of nice looking people, all of whom were curious about us. I had an omelet at a restaurant, got a haircut and shave at a barbershop, and was taken into a local bank to meet the president.

Two locomotives were required on our train as we approached mountainous country around Caransebes. There were many long tunnels and it took four locomotives to get us over the hump near Severin. At Craiova we saw a lot of American trucks and artillery on the trains going to the front. The trains were now using their lights. Travel was much faster through the flatter country approaching Bucharest.

T/Sgt Jim Reaves met our train in Bucharest and took us to quarters at a French Catholic hospital where the nuns wore the large triangular hats. This facility was set up by Headquarters 15th Air Force. We got fresh clothes to wear and had all meals at the hospital. A bus took us downtown for visits during the day.

There were political problems and the government was overthrown the first day we were in Bucharest. Russian tanks and trucks with machine guns were visible all over town. Guards and military police stayed in small groups and there were political parades and demonstrations. We were not allowed to be out of the hospital at night.

This did not keep us from freely enjoying the city during the daytime, and the situation delayed our departure for Italy so we had more time to get acquainted with

this interesting city. We used the Athenee Palace Hotel on the central plaza as a base of operations for our sightseeing and shopping in the city.

I immediately visited all the camera shops hoping to be able to get a good camera. New cameras and guns were the most stable currency and readily available if you had money. We had used most of our escape kit dollars to buy food, but I was able to borrow some from others in our group to improve my chances of getting a camera. It became apparent that I would not be able to get my first choice of a Leica or Contax.

Fortunately, I met Olga Hascalovici, a Jewish girl who spoke English, at one of the shops. She became a friend and helped me sell enough of the nylon panels from my parachute to buy a miniature Rolliflex. She also took enough time off work to show me the bomb damaged areas of the city, introduced me to a nice restaurant, and took me to spend a day with her parents, who lived in a high rise apartment in the center of town. When we were departing for the airport for the trip back to Italy, she made a special trip to the hospital to deliver the last of the photo processing so we could take it with us. I also brought back messages from several people who had survived the war, letting their families in the States know where they were.

A C47 flew us from Bucharest back to Bari, Italy, and the Group sent a plane down to Bari for us to fly ourselves back to our base. Spring was coming to Italy and fruit trees were blooming. It was great to get back to familiar surroundings.

Our tent and personal things had been preserved at our Squadron. However, we were saddened to learn that Bob Walker, our copilot, had returned to combat while we were gone and had been shot down in flames over the Brenner Pass. It was much later that we heard he had survived and was in a stalag.

We were given a great week of R and R at Capri and then got a new B-24J model to fly in continued combat until VE Day. A few weeks later, we flew ourselves back to the States, chose the southern route across the Atlantic to South America.

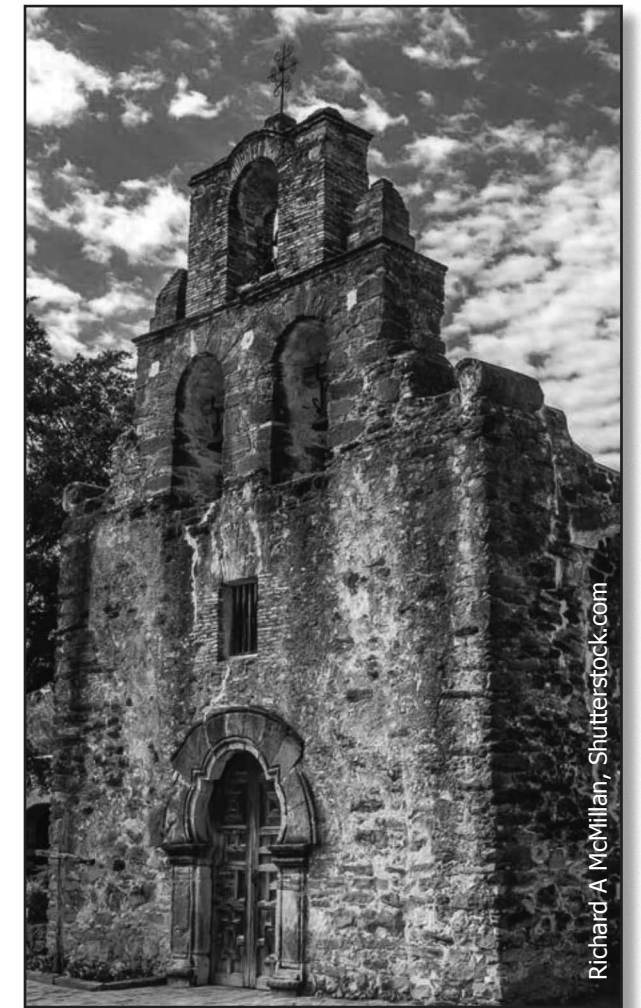


The map above is from 2016, not 1945. It was generated by the search engine Google with the beginning point of Kaposvar, Hungary and the endpoint of Bucharest, Romania. It shows three potential routes by car. The route colored in black (not gray) most closely resembles the route taken by the Elmore crew after their emergency landing at the small airstrip in Kaposvar. The distance that took them weeks to travel in wartime (by truck and rail) could be covered today in less than a day.

Scenes *from* San Antonio

We hope you can join us in October for what promises to be another memorable reunion. The photos here and on the opposite page are courtesy of the San Antonio Visitors Guide. Pictured below are views of the wine country around Fredericksburg.

Pictured on the opposite page, beginning top left (and moving clockwise) are a river cruise, the Briscoe Cultural Garden, Mission Espada, and the Torch of Friendship (foreground) and Tower of the Americas (background).



Reunion Schedule • October 10–14, 2016

98th Bomb Grp/Wing Veterans Association

Hotel: Holiday Inn Riverwalk, 217 N. St. Mary's Street, San Antonio, TX 78205

Reservations: 1-800-Holiday (465-4329) or (210) 224-2500

Hotel Rate: \$139.00 inclusive – Guaranteed until August 15th, 2016.

Complimentary self-parking

Day 1 Oct. 10 Welcome Dinner

Welcome to San Antonio, the Alamo, home of Air Force Basic Training and lots of smiley-face memories!!!

Day 2 Oct. 11 Free Day!!! — No events scheduled

Remember, we are right on the river, and the river tour boats stop at our hotel!!!

Day 3 Oct. 12 9:00 a.m. — Buses depart for City Tour (with guide) and Lunch

Let's all go see why San Antonio is so important to Texas and all American History. Did you know San Antonio's Spanish Mission (1718) is halfway (1150 miles) between the first American-established Spanish Mission in Saint Augustine, Florida (1565) and the first Spanish Mission in San Diego, California in (1769).

Now that's trivia you needed to know!!!

Day 4 Oct. 13 9:00 a.m. — Buses depart for Fredericksburg, Texas Tour (with guide)

We will tour the Admiral Nimitz Museum/National Museum of the Pacific War.

Fredericksburg is a really nice German town — lots of shops and great food.

Day 5 Oct. 14 Association Meetings, Banquet & Ladies Event

9:30 a.m. Executive Board Meeting

10:00 a.m. Association General Meeting

10:00 a.m. Ladies Event — Bus Departs 10:00 a.m.

6:00 p.m. Buses Depart for Lackland AFB

6:30 p.m. Cash Bar Opens

7:00 p.m. Association Banquet

Please Any question or concern regarding the San Antonio Reunion Contact:

Dennis Posey Tel: (770) 971-3972 Email: dennis_posey@att.net

Bill Seals Tel: (281) 395-3805 Email: colbillyseals@hotmail.com

Reunion Registration

98th Bomb Grp/Wing Veterans Association

Registration Fee \$80.00

Last Name _____ First _____

Name as you would like it to appear on your name tag _____

Address _____ E-Mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Sqd _____ Years _____ A/C _____ Duty _____

Spouse/Guest Last Name _____ First _____

Spouse/Guest Name as you would like it to appear on name tag _____

Address if different _____

Banquet Food Choice: This information will appear in our May newsletter, but please register now if you plan to attend as it will help us with many planning details. We will obtain your meal preference when the choices are finalized. Your choice later will NOT increase your costs.

Reunion Registration Fee \$80.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____

Banquet Food Choices _____ #1 Roasted Stuffed Chicken Breast

_____ #2 Prime Rib

Oct 10th Day 1 Welcome to the 2016 98th Veterans Assoc. Reunion

6:30 p.m. / Cash Bar Opens – 7:00 p.m. / Welcome Reception (Heavy Hors d'oeuvres)

Oct 11th Day 2 Free Day, No scheduled tours

A day to roam far and wide and spend money!!!

Oct 12th Day 3 9:00 a.m. – City Tour + Lunch \$25.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____

(Lunch IS included — and enjoy a wealth of Texas and American historical sites)

Oct 13th Day 4 9:00 a.m. – Fredericksburg Historical Venues/City and Museum Tour

We will see historical sites in the city and the Admiral Nimitz Museum.

\$12.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____

Oct 14th Day 5 9:30 a.m. Executive Board Meeting

10:00 a.m. Association General Meeting

10:00 a.m. Ladies Event (Dressy Casual)

\$20.00 x _____ Ladies = \$ _____

6:00 p.m. Buses Depart for Lackland AFB

6:30 p.m. Cash Bar Opens

7:00 p.m. Association Banquet

Scholarship Fund (donation) \$ _____

Annual Association Dues \$20.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Make checks payable to: **98th Bomb Grp/Wing Veterans Association**. Please return completed registration form & check to: Ms. Suzanne Mioduszewski, 1137 Joyce Lane, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Safe travel; see you in San Antonio!!!



San Antonio

Oct. 10–14, 2016

**Hope to see you there!
Please see info on
pages 16-19 and register
as soon as possible!**