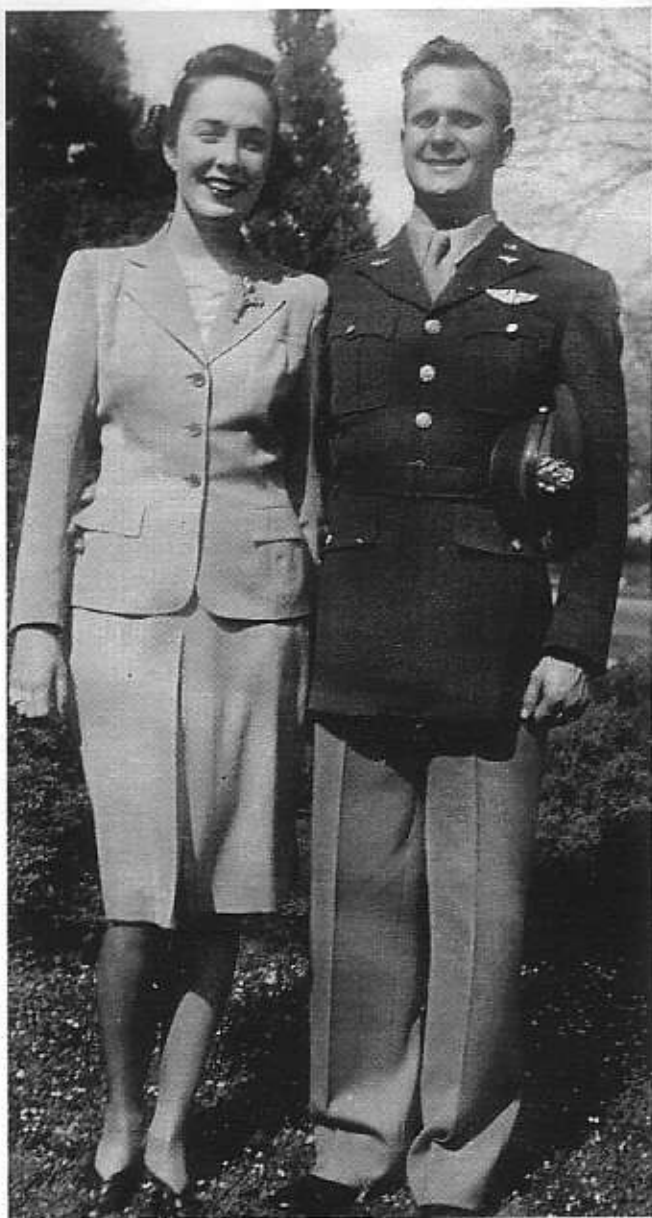


**Ask the Reason Why
Before You Do or Die!**



George Earl Defenbaugh



George and Dorothy, 1944

The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the plane was the cold, crisp air. It felt like a fresh blanket after a long, hot journey. The ground below was a vast, flat expanse of white, stretching as far as the eye could see. In the distance, a few small figures could be seen, and the faint outline of a building. I felt a sense of awe and wonder, as if I had just discovered a new world. The silence was broken by the sound of my own footsteps, and the occasional creak of the plane's landing gear. I took a deep breath, feeling the cool air fill my lungs. It was a moment of pure, unadorned existence, a reminder of the vastness of the universe and the smallness of our place within it.

To all the men and women who have the courage to ask the reason why before they blindly proceed to do or die.

I have often thought about the people who have the courage to ask the reason why before they blindly proceed to do or die. They are the ones who stand up to authority, who speak their minds, and who do not let themselves be easily intimidated. They are the ones who have the strength of character to face whatever comes their way, and who do not let themselves be easily discouraged. They are the ones who have the wisdom to see the bigger picture, and who do not let themselves be easily misled. They are the ones who have the courage to stand up for what is right, and who do not let themselves be easily silenced. They are the ones who have the strength of conviction to hold their ground, and who do not let themselves be easily swayed. They are the ones who have the courage to ask the reason why before they blindly proceed to do or die.



George E. Defenbaugh

This is Lieutenant George E. Defenbaugh, O-717020. For part of my military service I was a squadron bombardier for the 743rd bomb squadron of the 455th bomb group, 15th Air Force located at San Giovanni Airbase, about six miles west of Cerignola, Italy. I was born in northeastern Oklahoma on July 28, 1921. My birthplace was four miles north, one mile east, and 3/4 of a mile north of Dewey, Oklahoma. Technically I was in the Copan Oklahoma School District. At my birth only a midwife was in attendance. The oil field house in which I was born was close to a little cold water spring. I've heard that when I was born the midwife

bathed me in warm water, then I was taken out and 'sent off' in the cool water spring.

I have never had much sympathy for all the cry babies who are wanting government help in housing and all of the fine things; telephone, electricity, air conditioning, etc. The house in which I lived until I was ready to go to college did not have electricity, inside running water, or plumbing. We used an outhouse. There was no telephone or radio, and TV had not been invented. Our school bus was a four-wheeled horse drawn wagon with a top on it, enclosed back door, and a coal stove in the center. We had to meet the wagon at five o'clock in the morning to make a six mile trip to the school in time for eight o'clock assembly. This is all I am going to say about my early life at home. However, I want to place on record that my father and mother only had 8th grade educations. At the time of their marriage, mother was age 15 and dad was 21. My father was from a little town, Wayside, Kansas. His 8th grade graduation test, which is of record, was so difficult that most of our present day college graduates could not pass it. My father started in the oil fields as a roustabout, became a pumper, then a foreman, and finally a district superintendent. During the time that I was at home, we lived in three different school districts; Dewey, Bartlesville, and Copan. I do not have close high school chums. As dad would transfer to a new oil district, we moved across school districts lines. That changed everything.

As a child I would visit my grandparents on my mother's side. They lived near Bartlesville, Oklahoma. They had a stereoscope with pictures of World War I. They were the most horrifying pictures; dead horses bloated, dead men bloated, floating in water and lying in mud filled trenches, some going over the top of the trench and some would be hit with fire. They'd throw their arms up in the air and fall back into the trench. Those were horrible pictures and I felt sorry for those fellows in World War I. I made up my mind that if I ever had to serve in the military I would do everything I could not to be a foot soldier.

I do not like to take orders. I do not believe in the old phrase that "yours is not to reason why, but to do or die." I studied the maneuvering of the Civil War around Gettysburg. Such a mass slaughter. It was conducted with appointed generals directing the attack. I have never been a great follower of Robert E. Lee, General Pickett, and the others. To send men into open fields to face northern canons and secured infantry emplacements was nothing but a condemnation of death. As a young man I said, "No" to military service as a foot soldier in the infantry. I did not like to take orders, salute, and put up with all that authoritative crap. I did take a fancy to flying. I said to myself that if I ever had to serve I would try to get into the Army Air Corps.

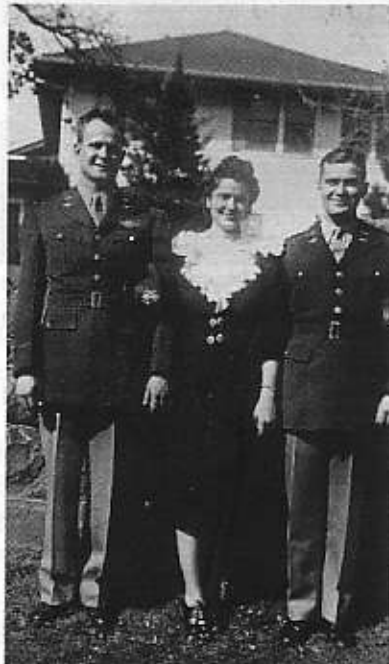
When World War II selective service started, I decided to volunteer and become an Aviation Cadet. Being under age, I had to secure permission of my mother and father to join the Air Force as an Aviation Cadet. In doing so, I would not be called to military duty until the Air Corps had a place for me in the training program. I was able to avoid the foot soldier proposition.

I mentioned earlier the meager living conditions that we had at home. This was during the depression years. We always had a roof over our head, and while we didn't have electricity, we had lots of natural gas. Our lights used natural gas, and in later years after it was developed, we had a gas operated refrigerator. We always had a cow which I had to milk and water. In addition, we always raised a calf or a pig for butcher. Some of my



Dad, Mom, and George, 1944

heartbreaks were when I would make a pet out of a pig or calf. When it came time, I'd crawl under the bed as dad and others proceeded to butcher it. There were several employees involved in the butchering, each taking part of the meat. We always had a huge garden, sometimes it would cover about an acre. We would grow everything possible in that climate. It was my duty to till, maintain, and water it. We had a seasonal crops starting with beans and peas, going into corn, and then the vine stuff; the gourd, watermelon, pumpkins, peanuts, and potatoes. Even



George, Katie, and Herb

though we were miles from a grocery store, and too poor to buy produce, we maintained a large produce garden and mother canned a lot. I think my parents, who did not have a high school or college education, were the smartest, most intelligent people I have ever known. In 1924 dad invented an oil well sand pump for which he was given US Patent# 1507989, the principles of which are still used today all over the world. They educated their three children with college degrees.

I went to the University for about three years before I was called to active duty in the Air Force. After the war, I finished my education under the G.I. bill. I obtained a BA degree in law and a Doctorate of Jurisprudence from the University of Oklahoma Law School. I started practicing in 1948 and have been a member of the

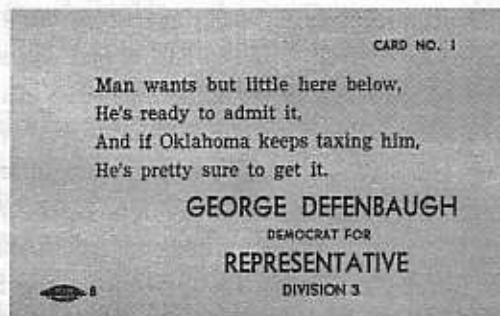
Oklahoma Bar ever since. I became involved in real estate development some years ago. Now I'm retired from the practice of the law and look after our commercial real estate. For all of which I give thanks to the encouragement of my wife, mother, and father. Along the way, I served two sessions as a State Representative in our Oklahoma legislature (1951 and 1953). I did not seek a third term. I became disillusioned with the legislative process. I, along with 100 other representatives from all over the state, were nothing more than figure heads. Whatever we proposed fell on deaf ears. Also, there were a lot of scandals which involved the speaker of the house, and some of the chairmen of various committees.

Beginning in 1940, my wife has played a very important part in my life. In September 2002, we'll have been married 59 years. In 1940 I was attending summer school at the University of Oklahoma and I was working at the library for 25 cents an hour. I also worked at a little café called the Dutch Mill three hours a day for my meals. I was taking accounting at the business school. One day when I was going to class, I entered the building and walked down the hall. The most heavenly smell a perfume came from some place down the hall. I wondered, "where could this be coming from." I turned down another hall toward the classroom, and the smell continued (the perfume was French, "Toujours moi"). I entered the door to my classroom which was built like a theater with rows of seats higher than the row in front, etc. I observed a lovely young lady wearing a bright yellow pants suit surrounded by four boys. They were laughing and having a good time. For some reason, I decided to sit in front of the group on the row which was below them. I was right in front of the young lady who smelled so good. During the conversation that was going on, the subject was whose turn it was to provide the gum. They had been chewing gum and each day a different one had to bring the gum. For some unknown reason she immediately included me in the group. She tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Do you have your gum?" I said, "No" and she said, "Well, this is your day to bring the gum." I said, "Oh? I'm sorry I can't accommodate you," or something like that. I said, "I spent all my money buying this art gum eraser" which was a brand new eraser and at that time they were somewhat expensive, 25 cents I think. I held it up over my shoulder and she

immediately grabbed the art gum and bit it in two and put the two pieces back in my hand. Well, I was shocked. I said to her, "I have spanked people for less than that." She quickly replied, "Well, would you like to try." I said, "Why yes,



GEORGE
DEFENBAUGH
Representative
Division 3



1950

name the time." She said, "Well, over at the sorority house (she was a Kappa Kappa Gamma) we're having a fried chicken party tonight, why don't you come over and get some fried chicken?" I said, "I'll be there, what time?"

We met at the sorority house and they had lots of fried chicken. All the girls had boyfriends. I met her and we had fried chicken, potato salad, etc. I suggested to her, "Well, lets go outside and sit on the curb. It's dark and the moon's up, we can go out there and visit." She consented. We went out to the curb. Sitting on the curb talking chit chat, I felt her mind had been turned off of us and on other things. I put my arm around her and flipped her over on my lap and pounded her fanny really good. This surprised her. I don't think she'd ever been spanked before. She sat up, wide eyed and said, "Oh!" but she didn't run me off. During the 60 years we have been married I have never spanked or hit her again - arguments, yes, but never physical violence. We began to date after that, about every day and every night. That's the way I really met my wife.

I was at the sorority house having Sunday dinner on December the 7th when the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor. They had a radio at the sorority house. We heard President Roosevelt's announcement to the nation. We were at war. We had to devote our lives to that problem. Fortunately, I had joined the Army Air Corps to avoid being drafted as a foot soldier walking through mud. During the first two years of my attendance at OU, I had to sign up for ROTC. The OU ROTC unit was a calvary and artillery unit. All training focused on getting horses hooked up to a canon, etc. To me it just looked like a continuation of the pictures I had seen of WWI in France on the stereoscope at my grandfather's place. I was so thankful to be signed up for the Army Air Corps. They told me there was just no place for me to go for training, therefore they left me in school and at home for quite some time. During which time I had met Dorothy as I said. The government was building two big naval bases at Norman, Oklahoma, where the University of Oklahoma is.



Dorothy, 1941

Dorothy and I got summer jobs. She was working in the payroll department and I was on janitor detail, in other words, a potty cleaner for a while. Finally, I was transferred to the payroll department. Dorothy was a year ahead of me in school. When Fall came, she graduated as a dietitian and left for an internship at Duke University Hospital. She was required to complete a year internship before she could become employed by a hospital. Duke was a distance from Oklahoma. I knew that my time of freedom was about to end and I wanted to see her one more time before I went into military service. My mother provided enough money for me to take the great southern railway back to Duke. I went by way of Cincinnati, Ohio, and Greensboro, North Carolina. Dorothy had arranged for me to stay with a student who was studying pharmacy. He had a car. Once in a while we could sneak out with his car. That year Bing Crosby's White Christmas was very popular. On one of our dates, this pharmacy student and his date, also a dietitian taking her internship with Dorothy, went out for dinner. We had a great time. We even bought champagne. We decided that Dorothy would bring a bottle of that champagne back to Oklahoma, a dry state, save it, and when we got together and perhaps married, she would have this bottle of champagne for celebration.

In a little while I was called for service. I went to San Antonio for my physicals, mental examinations, and educational examinations. I shipped out from Oklahoma City with about ten other fellows who were also aviation cadets. When I got into San Antonio, I took all of the examinations. I qualified for training as a pilot, navigator, or bombardier. When I got around to taking my physical, I was held there for five extra days. The rest of the fellas shipped out to different air bases for training. The reason for my delay was they had discovered a heart murmur. It didn't bother me in the high altitude chambers or the other physical tests. But it caused them concern. After continuing physical examinations they finally concluded that it must have been something with my heart at birth. I was able to perform all the tests and they decided to send me on to boot camp. After that I was sent to Hicks Field at Fort Worth, Texas. My primary flight instructor was a civilian. His name was Moss. He was an excellent fellow and I really enjoyed primary training on a PT-17, a low wing open cockpit plane. I could do everything a person could do with an airplane, spin, logs, rolls. I had a great time. One of my dear friends crashed in his plane. I was sad about that. At the time I was at Hicks Field, George Gobel was there. He gave performances Saturday night in the hanger. From Hicks Field I was sent for basic flight training to Vauce Air Base, Enid, Oklahoma. Training was in a BT-15, a stub nose, single wing air craft, with

a 450-horsepower motor. It had an electric start on the engine. I was never able to get the feel for that aircraft. I did solo it one time and I did a very poor job. I didn't damage the aircraft but I certainly didn't fly it with any respect.

In the meantime I had learned that this was a training field for four-engine aircraft. I really didn't like that. I had my heart set on being a fighter pilot. They were grooming me for four engine aircraft. The rumor was four engine bombers with a crew of ten. I did not like that. I did not want the responsibility of flying an aircraft with ten others under my direction. It was beyond my mind set. I went to the commanding officer and asked that I be relieved from flying duty. Because I had been proved to be qualified to be a navigator or bombardier, I asked to start my training again in one of those fields, preferably bombardiering. He was somewhat surprised and had long conversations with me trying to give me courage to continue. Finally he said okay he'd let me go. I had to wait quite a while to obtain an assignment off of that base. In the meantime, I had communicated constantly with my Dorothy. We agreed that we would be married, not knowing what my military duties were going to be. We were sent to Houston, TX, and I was assigned to Randolph Field for basic training. This was a surprise to me. I thought I had been through basic training.

Dorothy found a job at Rice University, and I went to training camp. Because of my bullheadedness and stubbornness, I had to walk the ramp two or three times on Saturdays. This was when Dorothy was free to come and visit me on the base. We went through these hard times. From Houston, I was assigned to Laredo, TX, for gunnery school. They'd already figured me to be a bombardier. The bombardier was the gunnery officer on the plane. We bivouacked at a place

called Eagle Pass. We lived in tents and trained in dirt and grime. I had to learn how to keep the machine guns cleaned and in working form. We had to fly and shoot the flying target while being pulled behind a tow plane. There were different colored 50-caliber tracer ammunition. Three cadets would fly at a time. Each had 100 rounds of different colors.



Primary at Hicks Field (George on right)

The nose of my 100 rounds were red, the next guys were blue, and the next were yellow. If you hit the target sock, the bullet would leave its color. Back on the ground, they would count the different strikes that had been made and give you a score. My score was sixty out of one hundred (very good!). I learned the 50-caliber machine gun, how to take it apart and put it back together blindfolded in less than three minutes. I could name each part of the gun. Another thing we did was skeet shoot from the back of a moving pickup. At home I was a good shot with a 12-gauge shotgun. I was able to break the clay birds as we drove around the circle at 15 mph. As we would drive by the pull stations, they would shoot out a clay pigeon. The object was to hit the clay bird moving in a different direction. I broke 90% of my birds in the four days that we were doing this. I qualified so well they took me off of the project. Those who couldn't hit the clay birds were left going around and around.

We were headquartered at Laredo. Across the Rio Grande River was Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. In that Mexican town was a bull fight ring. There were Sunday bullfights, real bullfights, where they killed the bull etc. Dorothy came to visit me one weekend and one



Married September 11, 1943

of the things that we wanted to do was to go to a bull fight. She had courage, so Sunday afternoon we went across the river. We stopped at a Mexican restaurant, had something to eat and two or three highballs. At about show time, we went to the bull ring and bought our tickets. We entered the bull ring on the lower level. There were rows and rows of seats. The lower rows were already filled with Mexicans. They didn't look too clean and they didn't look friendly. We decided we would climb to the very top of the arena and take seats there. The first bull came out, was killed, and drug off. The Mexicans were hooting it up and hollering. They gave the matador the tail and the ears for his good performance. I recall it was on the 6th bull that the matador was not as agile as he should have been and the bull gorged him, tossed him up over his head, and flung him down on the ground. When that happened, Dorothy, who almost cried every time they slaughtered a bull, stood

up, clapped, and hollered and hooted. All the Mexicans down front turned around and looked up at her. I pulled her dress and said, "Honey please sit down. You're going to get us killed." We decided it was time for us to leave and we quickly left the arena and got back across the border. That was an experience I have never forgotten and I don't let her forget it either (laugh).

From Nuevo Laredo, I was assigned to Big Springs, Texas for training as a bombardier. Dorothy went to Big Springs with me. She found a position at the hospital and clinic. She lived in the hotel and I would come in on weekends. We had a good time. When graduation time came, Dorothy's mother, a friend of her mother, and my parents, came to Big Springs, Texas. I don't know where they obtained the gasoline stamps and the tires to get to Big Springs. I graduated and received my 2nd Lieutenant commission as a bombardier.

From Big Springs, Texas, I was sent to El Paso, Texas. There I was to be selected as a member of a bombing crew. My pilot, Bill Loffer, from Bartlesville, Oklahoma, selected me to be part of his crew. Bill Loffer and his co-pilot, Bob Wolters, were dedicated to the B-24. Many could fly it as a single aircraft on auto pilot, but to fly it in formation for as much as eight hours required skill and endurance. When flying wing, they would set there with eyes fixed on the wing of the B-24 next to us. Bill would have one hand on the wheel, his feet on the rudder pedals, and his other hand on the four engine throttles. Wolters would follow Bill's every move so he could take over if Bill could not for any reason continue to fly the bomber. On every mission I flew with them, they were completely exhausted and soaked with sweat. Because of losses or finished tours, the 743 Bomb Squadron was hard pressed to have a ten ship box every mission. As we started our tour, we flew 18 straight missions. We were glad to go to Capri for rest. I was glad I got out of training to be a four engine pilot. (See appendix for a list of list of my missions showing date, target area, and time in flight.)

After Loffer selected his crew, our training began in a B-24. Dorothy came with me to El Paso where we shared an apartment with another couple—lovely people named Schick, just like the razor. We would go over to Mexico on weekends, have dinner, and be entertained. Many US entertainers, afraid of being drafted to serve in the military, fled to Mexico and performed in the night clubs. Our favorite Mexican drink was a pretty thing. Different colored liquor were floating on top of each other to form a striped drink, potent as the devil. When we went to Mexico, we enjoyed eating at a nice restaurant. An example was baked quail with dressing. I enjoyed that and every time we went over I would order that.



Loffer's Crew: (back) Robert Hicks, ball turret gunner; Paul Elsen, radio operator; Robert Riley, waist gunner; Stuart Bemis, engineer; Maurice Murphy, nose turret gunner; James Connelly, tail turret gunner (front) Robert Ferris, navigator; George Defenbaugh, bombardier; Robert Wolter, co-pilot; Bill Loffer, pilot

Dorothy is a very good cook. She liked to do chicken, mashed potatoes, and gravy, etc. To get really acquainted with the members of our crew, she would invite them to our apartment to a buffet supper with fried chicken. Our crew was training at flying night missions. We had no idea D-Day was coming. The United States blocked out news of what was taking place in Europe. On D-Day, we were flying a night mission to the smelters at Yuma, Arizona. The plane was equipped with a bomb sight and a camera. I would synchronize on the flames coming out the top of the smelters. I could see them in the dark of night. The bomb release would happen even though no bomb was dropped. The Norton bomb sight release mechanism would work. At the appropriate time, if you'd done all your figuring right; altitude, drift, air speed, etc., the camera would take a picture. When the picture was developed, your instructor could see if you missed it or didn't do it right or something. After going over the target at Yuma, we were headed back and pilot Bill Loffer had the radio turned on. We had our headsets on. All of the sudden

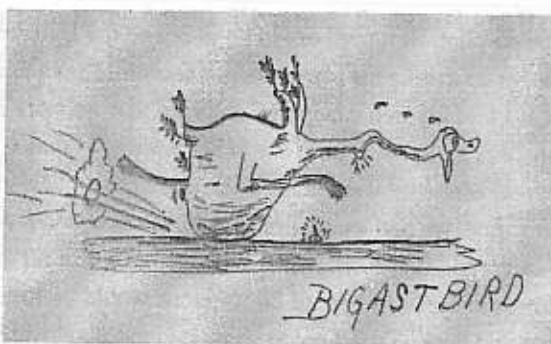
they began to announce about the invasion. Oh, we were so glad to hear that. We had a feeling that it wouldn't be long before the war was over and we wished it would be over before we got involved. It was not to be. It was 4:30 or 5:00 a.m. when I got back to the apartment. Dorothy was asleep. I woke her up by asking her, "Hey, do you have any idea what day it is?" Well, she got up real quick and we decided we would go to Mexico and celebrate. We dressed and went to Mexico. We had several colored liquor drinks. We listened to every little bit of news. Frankly we became well looped. It so happened that night she had invited the whole crew to have another one of her fried chicken dinners. We were in no shape to have them, but they came and we enjoyed whatever we put together for them to eat.

We finished our training at El Paso. The time came for us to be assigned for overseas duty. Our crew was sent to Topeka, Kansas to pick up the aircraft we were going to ferry somewhere. Again, Dorothy, her mother and friend, and my mother and father, came to Topeka, Kansas to say goodbyes and to wish us well. Before we were married, Dorothy and I agreed that we would not have children until I got back—if I came back. We felt it would be a mistake if something happened to me and she were to have a child. At that period of time, more so than



Loffer's Crew

now, women who were widows with children had a very hard time getting remarried, finding work, or having somebody look after the baby. It just wasn't the thing to do. So we agreed that we would make sure that Dorothy was not expecting when I went overseas. At Topeka my mother was



Logo on a Plane

completely fascinated with playing the slot machines in the officer's club at the air base. These were nickel slot machines. She enjoyed getting a roll of nickels and playing. She ended up losing her nickels. You may not think that was much, but in that day and time a nickel was worth something. It would buy a loaf of bread.

The secret was where we were going to be stationed. There were direct orders that we not reveal the theater of operation to which we were going. We could not write home and tell anyone what mission we had been on. As I said earlier, I am a bullheaded fellow. I devised a coding system that would help Dorothy to know where and when our missions were. What I did was to go buy two atlases of the world. Although small, they did show all the countries. I figured out I would use the code of the Bible; page, chapter, verse, etc. I could therefore tell her the field of operation and what missions we were on. This worked very well. I wrote her every night, before a mission and after a mission. Not being able to say what the mission was, I would code it as a phrase from the Bible; chapter, verse, and page. She was able to coordinate my letter with the Air Force bulletins published in the paper, such as a raid on Belgrade, Ploesti, or wherever.

There was a great deal of speculation at Topeka as to where we were going. We were there for three days and while they were getting the air plane ready, our pilot Bill Loffer had designed an insignia to be painted on it. It was a "ruptured goose." It showed an old goose taking off and hitting a big tact on the runway. The expression and everything was just fantastic. The cost was \$10. We all had to chip in to get that done. Again, in those days \$10 was pretty good money. We were under strict orders not to reveal our theater of operation, whether it was England, the Balkans, the Phillipines, or whatever. Loffer was given a letter of destination at the last minute. He got to take a peek at it. He didn't tell anybody except me and

the co-pilot. It turned out to be Italy and the Balkans. The way we were to go to Italy was to take the plane there. I couldn't figure out a way to tell Dorothy except that I told her in a whispered embrace that we were going to the land of spaghetti and that's all that I could say to her without violating the military obligation to not reveal where we were going. The goodbyes to take off to fly were very tearful. At this time, we had learned of the tremendous losses of aircraft and crews of the 8th Air Force. It seemed that at least two-thirds of all those engaged in flights out of England during a tour of 25 missions would be lost. We probably would not be coming back. I tried not to show it in my goodbyes to the family and to Dorothy.

I recall this was about the time they brought back the crew of the Memphis Belle. They had finished their 25 missions. It was done for public relations to bolster the feeling about the Air Corps. Air Force cadet recruiting had dropped off because of tremendous losses sustained in England. There was good reason for me to have great anxiety about whether or not I was going to return. I was so glad that Dorothy was not expecting when I left. We flew to Banger, Maine. Because of bad weather, we were delayed there. There was something wrong with one of the engines and it had to be fixed. While at Banger, Maine we slept in barracks that had been built as part of the base. One day I came back from a walk around the air base and on my pillow and on the pillows of all the crew, was a genuine fresh four leaf clover. To this day, I don't know how they were able to find so many four leaf clovers. Before I left Topeka, mother gave me two things. First was a bible which had a steel plate on the cover. I was to carry it in my shirt pocket. The second thing was a little bottle that had a lucky penny in it. I put the four leaf clover between the pages of the bible to press and save it. I carried it on every mission and after pulling the bomb safety pins, I would read and pray a silent prayer.

Somewhere, either at Banger, Maine or Goose Bay, they loaded our plane down with boxes of K-rations. We had all kinds of K-rations. The idea was to turn them in at the air base when we arrived in Italy. Goose Bay was the



Paul Elsen, Radio Operator

take off point for a great circle route to the Azores. We were to fly from Goose Bay to the Azores at night. At Goose Bay, we waited four days until the weather was right before we could be cleared for the Azores. It was very cold at Goose Bay. We didn't have our winter flying clothing. We shivered. It was cold in the big old barracks. Goose Bay hangers were built by the Germans before 1940 for the purpose of serving dirigibles. They were coming back and forth from Germany. I don't think I had a good night's sleep for the several nights we were there. I was shivering and cold.

We finally were cleared to fly to the Azores. We took off late in the afternoon. By the time we were in position to go across the Atlantic, the sun had set and it was beginning to get dark. Bob Ferris, our navigator, did an excellent job. We had to spot a little island in the Azores upon which we were to land. The radio navigation we had was silent. The Germans were working overtime in the Atlantic with their subs, etc. But, little Bob, we called him, followed the stars, read the charts, and got us to the Azores in great shape. We were at the Azores for two or three days and then they cleared us to go to Morocco. From there we went to Tunisia. From there we went into the boot-toe of Italy. There we got an assignment as to where to deliver our crew. We were assigned to the 455th bomb group at Cerignola. We had become attached to our aircraft. We had it painted, etc. When we got to Cerignola we lost it. We almost cried. The group decided that another group needed the plane worse than our group. We unloaded all of our gear, and all of the K-rations. We were taken to the 743rd bomb squadron of the 455th bomb group. There were four bomb squadrons; 70th, 71st, 72nd, and 73rd. They were scattered all around this air base which was built on a plantation owned by an Italian general called Giovanni. Air Force engineers had to take out wheat fields and olive trees to make runways. They took over the headquarters of Giovanni, including a chapel, a castle-like building, and a large cellar for wine. This became group headquarters. Our squadron area was about a half mile out to the south and a little west. There were farm buildings that the workers for Giovanni lived in. They took these over. This area was a big olive grove. They had made a dirt road through the olive grove and they lined it on both sides with big tents. These tents were large enough to have ten to twelve cots in them. Our crew was assigned to the sixth tent in row B. It was vacant. I was told that the former crew was lost on a mission. Operations had cleaned this tent of personal possessions that they were going to send home to crew member families. The rest of the items in the tent had been put up for grabs. The tent was vacant, but we could tell that it had been lived in. We



Crew in front of tent: (back) Connelly, Elsen (middle) Wolter, Riley, Bemis, Murphy (front) Defenbaugh, Hicks, Loffer, Ferris

couldn't get rid of the K-rations. We thought the group might be short on food stuff and supplies, but apparently they weren't. We tried to give them away when we landed, but nobody wanted them. We took them up to the squadron headquarters, nobody wanted them and couldn't tell us what to do with them. We unloaded them in our tents and stuck them under our cots. We had K-rations for a long time.

We landed at our air base at Giovanni in early July. We were there when they had a fourth of July celebration. Unfortunately, I had a little bit too much to drink. In July, it is hot as the devil in Italy. At that time of year it is dry and dusty, almost as bad as Oklahoma. The squadron flight surgeon was a very understanding guy. He had requisitioned some five gallon drums of medical alcohol. The big drink that everybody seemed to enjoy was to mix cherry brandy with half water and about a fourth of medical alcohol. It produced a very delightful drink, probably equivalent to 80 proof. The flight surgeon was able to round up ice in Cerignola. He obtained a pretty good sized block of ice and a wash tub. He put the ice and his mixture of cherry brandy and medical alcohol in the tub. He had enough in there to take care of everybody in the squadron. We literally lived it up. I'm ashamed to say that I had a little bit too much and I found myself over in another area, I think the 741st. But this was the fourth of July, I figured it would probably be the last time I would have the opportunity to enjoy a good drink.

After everybody sobered up on the fifth of July, our crew began a training session. There was a theory that you had to be broken into combat. The way to do

that was to fly a few practice missions. This would give the pilot and crew the opportunity to fly in formation and practice bombing on a little island in the Adriatic Sea, all of which we did. Our first combat mission was on July 12th which was not quite two weeks from the time we got over there. The number of the mission for the group was 76. It was to Miramas, France. It required about eight hours of flying time. I checked my records to see what was written about the mission.

I am a religious fellow. On each mission, as soon after takeoff as I could, I read the bible that my mother had given me. I have never been one to follow the ritual of church prayer. I believe one can pray any time and any place he happens to be. One does not need to be a member of a religious order or faith to pray to his maker. Neither is it necessary to have someone pray for you. To pray while looking at a statue is repulsive. It is heathenism. It is stupid to repeat a pray over and over while counting beads.

It was my duty to 'pull' the bomb pins before going to my station. The fuse to explode the bomb on impact was located on the nose of the bomb. While being carried in the bomb bay, the fuse had a safety device secured by a cotter pin. When this pin was removed it allowed a propeller attached to an arming rod to spin as the bomb fell. This backed the arming rod out of the fuse and thus allowed the fuse to explode the bomb on impact. I saved the cotter pins from each mission I flew. There was a tag on each pin and I wrote the name of the target on the tag. I have bomb pins from every mission I flew. A real souvenir.

Because of the small crawl space, I would not be able to get out of a falling B-24 wearing my gear. A 45-automatic was issued to me when I drew my supplies from the air base supply. It was a new gun packed in a greasy substance, wrapped in oiled paper. I was issued two 45 caliber clips, a box of shells, and a holster. I am proud to admit I never cleaned that gun. It was not capable of firing until it was cleaned. I said at best it would be for trading purposes if I were able to survive a loss of the aircraft. I think that I would have had an aversion to using it if everything had been all right and I was on the ground and in the



"Flak Happy" Our Squadron Dog

process of being captured, etc. I don't believe I would have had the courage to use it in my defense, so why clean the damn thing. I left it just the way they gave it to me.

Once we started flying missions on July the 12th, we flew July the 13th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 25th, 27th, and on my birthday, July 28th, 31st, and again August the 3rd, 6th, and 7th. Our squadron was short on crews, so operations worked our tails off. We were getting awful tired. Our second mission was to Porta Marghers, Italy. Our 3rd mission, mind you, was to Ploesti, Romania. Those were long missions. The day after Ploesti, we went to Munich, Germany.

Our fourth mission was on July 16, 1944. The target selected by the high command of the 15th Air Force was an air dome at Munchendorf, Austria. It was completely covered by a thick bank of clouds. Under fighter attack, our group flew into the clouds. The clouds were thicker and more dense than expected. Not being able to see the wing of the plane next to us in the formation, our pilot, Bill Loffer, decided to split from the squadron. After several minutes we broke out of the clouds. Our group and squadron was no where to be seen. We determined the alternate target also was covered with a thick bank of clouds. Our navigator, Bob Ferris, got us headed toward our base which was some 600 miles away. The next question was what were we to do with 6000 pounds of live bombs in our bomb bay. It was dangerous to land with bombs in the bay racks. A hard landing might cause one or more to come loose and explode. It didn't seem right to dump them in the sea. As we were flying out of Austria toward our base, we flew over a large industrial plant. After a quick discussion over the intercom with all crew members, we decided to dump our bomb load on this plant. At debriefing we told the intelligence officers of our efforts to fight the war. They were very disturbed and said our crew would be punished for not following orders to bomb only designated targets. I told them I had never heard of such a restriction. I thought anything in enemy territory was fair game when the targets were covered with clouds. Their response was that they would have air reconnaissance report what our target was before deciding what our punishment would be. The report came back that we had bombed a German army rain gear factory. It made rubber boots and rain coats. Except for our pilot, our crew was not punished. Loffer was required to do extra flying on supply missions to depots in southern Italy.

The day after that to Avignon, France. The next day was to Fredrickshaffen, Germany. We went to Brux, Czechoslovakia; Back to Ploesti Romania; then to Linz, Austria. Next we went to Budapest, Hungary. As I told you

earlier, I questioned military judgement. At a briefing in the wine cellar, I remember very distinctly the group intelligence officer getting up on the stage and explaining about the mission. He made the point very vividly that we were not to expect any opposition on our mission to Budapest. We were going to carry fire bombs. These were bomb clusters. Each B-24 carries ten big 500 pound clusters and each bomb cluster contained 50 or 60 little incendiary bombs to start fires. I must read you the briefing for this mission.



James Connelly, Tail Turret Gunner
Credited with three ME109 kills during the
time I was flying with my crew

“Mission 85 with the group was flown on July the 27th. We were briefed to bomb the marshaling yards and the Mansfield West

Armament works at Budapest, Hungary. Twenty-eight B-24's loaded with 500 pound incendiary bombs. We were the last group in wing formation. Not only was the target obscure by smoke, but the fighters were waiting for us as well as the usual flak. We were attacked by as many as 90 enemy fighters and they were very aggressive. We had a running battle for over 30 minutes. We lost five planes in the battle and 51 crew men were missing in action—one of our biggest losses to date. We claim 17 enemy fighters shot down and 14 probables. Seven of our planes received serious damage from flak and fighters, and two suffered slight damage.” I remember this mission very well. We were carrying these fire bombs. I was not squadron bombardier on this mission. I was a toggler. I was to release my bombs when the lead plane's bombs fall. The bomb bays were open, getting ready to go on the target run, when the fighter attack took place. Mind you, we had been briefed that we were not to expect many fighters, if any, and that the ack-ack would be light. They made a big point that the fighter pilots would probably not be German. If anything, they would be Hungarian. There was intelligence saying that Hungarian fighters were not aggressive. All of this turned out to be false. I looked

out the side window of the bombardiers compartment, and I saw a plane in C-box take a hit directly into its bomb bay. It set off the incendiary bombs. In less than ten seconds the plane burned in two pieces and started falling to the ground. No parachutes were observed. I said to myself, and over the intercom to the pilot Bill Loffer, "Bill, I'm going to salvo these damn bombs" and I did. I salvoed that whole load of bombs. I'm sure the bombs fell on the city of Budapest rather than the target area. I didn't care. It lightened the load. We left the formation and Bill was able to maneuver the plane into a cloud bank. We got the hell out of the area really quick. The fight broke off, nobody pursued us, and we lived to fight another day. But I'll never forget the lack of intelligence, especially in their estimation of what the Hungarian fighters would do. Years later in visiting Budapest, I went up on the bluff of Buda, which is on the other side of the river from Pest, and I wondered if the bombs that I unloaded had done any damage up there. Of course our guides and everybody else on tour had no recollection of the war. Most of them were born after the war. I do know the Germans had a headquarters building which was being used as a police station at the time I was there. The German headquarters were on the Buda side of the river. I secretly hoped my bombs had given them a little trouble.

Our third mission was on the 15th of July. We went to Ploesti. On the 22nd day of July we bombed Ploesti again. Next we went to Linz, Austria and to Budapest as I was just telling about. Then we bombed Ploesti on my birthday—July 28th. Three missions to Ploesti! No sooner would we destroy one of the refineries it would be back in operation within a week. They were very capable at hooking up new pipeline, putting in new cracking units, etc. We never did put the Ploesti oil and gasoline production out of business. We would try every way in the world. They had lots of flack guns and had lots of fighters. They put up big smoke screens. They even built up dummy refineries to decoy us. Until the Russians came, near the end of the war, Ploesti was still operating. I know it was operating when I had finished my missions in the early part of 1945.

Blechhammer, mission number 90, was a synthetic oil producing refinery. The Germans had proceeded to a point where they could make oil out of anything. It was a synthetic type of oil like Mobil. I bombed this refinery twice. It was heavily defended. It was as bad as Ploesti. The first time I bombed it was on August the 7th. On August the 10th I bombed Campina, Romania. About this time I became squadron bombardier. This meant that the only time I flew missions was when our squadron was leading the group. This slowed my tour of duty down quite

a bit. The rest of my crew had finished their missions and had been sent home for Thanksgiving.

At the time I'm talking about, it was August 10th, Campina, Romania. Two days later on August the 12th, I was scheduled to lead our squadron, the 743rd squadron of ten planes. On August 12th, we were briefed for a slightly different target for this day as we bombed gun positions in southern France along the coast. This signaled the start of another ground offensive. It was an easy mission as we encountered no opposition either from flak or fighters. All planes returned safely.

The thing that I wanted to put in record was this. Off the coast of southern France, there is a little island on which there were six big coastal guns and three huge pill boxes. Each big pill box had two 18 inch guns which could hit ships miles away. My target was to bomb those things and put them out of action. We were softening up the coast for the southern France invasion, which was to come in a day or two. The 743rd squadron had ten planes, each loaded with ten 500-pound armor piercing bombs. My mission was to hit this little bitty island and destroy those huge coastal guns. Why I was selected to lead as a bombardier for our squadron, which I had never done up to this point, I will never know. This meant that I was going to be flying with another crew. Our regular squadron bombardier was a young fellow, we called him Captain Brown. He went with us to the briefing. The navigator and the bombardier received pictures showing this tiny spec of an island. As I left the wine cellar briefing room, Captain Brown met me outside and suggested where I should aim my bombs. By the time togglers were able to toggle, it would create a bomb pattern that would flow over this island and hitting these gun



Lead bombardier, coastal gun emplacements on island off French coast

emplacements with armor piercing bombs. I didn't know whether I would be able to accomplish this mission or not. When the mission was cancelled the first morning, I felt greatly relieved. But, the mission was called the second morning. I went to briefing, same target and everything. Then I really had a burden, I was flying with a pilot whom I had never flown with before (he was a handsome chap named Leland Young) and a crew of gunners I had never met. Fortunately the mission was a milk run in the sense that there was no flak and no fighters defending this southern France coast line.

When I got into the aircraft which was a strange aircraft, I nearly fainted because it was equipped with a Sperry bomb sight. I had a little training on the Sperry bomb sight in bombardier school, but I never had experience with them. To be frank about it, I think I had forgotten how to operate the darn thing. We got into the aircraft and took off. We flew across Italy by Rome and Corsica, and headed for the southern coast of France and this little island. About 50 miles out, the navigator called for us to assume the heading for the bomb run. I turned on the bomb sight. The automatic pilot wouldn't work. I was really rattled and didn't know what to do. Finally, I told Captain Leland Young that he was going to fly the mission manually under my direction. He said, "Okay." That was the most wonderful job of flying I have ever witnessed. He was an exceptional pilot. Of course, there was no flak and no fighters, and at 30,000 feet, the air was pretty smooth. I located the target through the Sperry bomb sight and I focused on a point 800 feet off the coast as Captain Brown told me to do. Then I salvoed my bombs. The other bombardiers toggled theirs. Low and behold, the bomb strikes flowed directly across that island covering it. We banged it to death. The perspiration was dripping off my face. When we finished the mission, I thanked the pilot for his good flying. I still thank him for it.

Back at the squadron, I removed my flying gear and went to the officers club to have a drink. To my surprise, there were the group officers. All of them wanted to shake my hand. They had all witnessed the destruction of that little island. They wanted to know how I hit it. I accepted their congratulations.

The sad thing was on the next mission, on the 13th, mission 93 to Avignon, France. The mission was being led by our squadron. Captain Fredrick Brown was the lead bombardier. I can't remember all those on that plane. We had trouble with fighters and flak. Brown's plane was hit, it had to drop out and head back to our base. They flew so low they were hit by ground fire. The plane was destroyed and the crew with Captain Brown was lost.

Our squadron commander was David S. Thayer. He was a good 'ole Texas' boy. He was on the Texas football team that played Oklahoma's football team. It is a great rivalry between states. Major Thayer had a great deal of respect for the Oklahoma football team because he had lost his front teeth. He played against "Tree top Sharp". Sharp got the best of Thayer. For some reason, Major Thayer took a liking to me. On August the 27th, about four days after we lost Captain Brown, I was appointed squadron bombardier on primary duty. The sad thing, I could fly a mission only when our squadron flew group lead. That meant about every fourth mission. Everybody else on my original crew finished their missions and were home before Thanksgiving. I was still having to stay.

The next thing that happened of any real consequence, was on September the 24th, mission 123 to Athens, Greece. Our squadron was leading and I was lead bombardier. The bomb load was 100-pound demolition bombs. We were to attack the air base at Athens, Greece. The Germans were using this air base; flying all their personnel in that area back into Germany for defense of the homeland. This air base, which is the main air base today, was in a valley outside of Athens, far enough away that we didn't bomb any of the treasures, such as the Parthenon, etc. We were headed down the valley where the airport runways were. Ack-ack guns were on both sides of the mountains of this valley. I believe we were at 28,000 feet. We were getting peppered with ack-ack. I had the bomb site set up for delayed 100-foot releases, which meant bombs were released so they would hit the ground about every 100 feet. All the planes were set up for the same release pattern. The mission was to pot mark the air field and the runways to the extent that they couldn't be used for some time, and to catch any planes that were on the ground. The release point was fairly close. I remember it, like it was yesterday. All of a sudden the



Lt. Rodenick W. Clark
Radar Operator

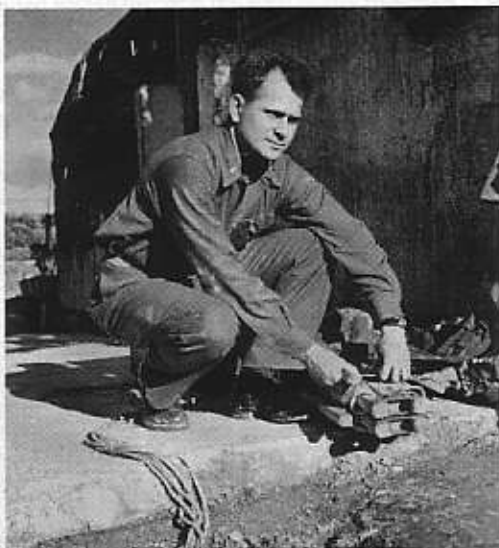
plane got hit with a big, big, jar. Major Thayer, our squadron commander, was pilot. He said to me, "Hey bombardier, how about us doing a little zig zag here." I called back and said, "Hell no, I'm about ready to release the bomb." I was flying automatic pilot. On the bomb run, the lead bombardier takes command of the ship. He is god-almighty until the bomb run is finished. I said, "No, in a second or two I will be releasing." We bombed the heck out of that air field. When we got back to base and unloaded, I turned white and thanked God a thousand times. Between the number one and number two engine, we had been hit with an ack-ack shell that apparently was a dud or had a slow timing mechanism. It did not explode. A three gallon water bucket was pushed up and down in the hole in the wing. The point where there was no fuel line, or electric line. It was a small dead space. It missed a fuel tank and went higher before exploding. That wing and motor stayed attached and it didn't hurt the struts. We were able to fly back to base. Everybody on the ground (crew chief, crew members) wondered how we survived. I wondered too. I think it was because of my little bible, and my prayers before we flew the mission, and while I was on the mission. For this mission, I was awarded the distinguished flying cross. I felt pretty good about that. Of course, as I now know, distinguished flying crosses were freely given. But I am still proud of the fact that I have one.

After the Athens Air Field mission, my next mission was Blechhammer, Germany. After that I went to Milan, Italy. A week after that we were called upon to bomb the marshaling yards at Szombathely, Hungary. This was in October. The weather had already began to change a little, winter was coming on. I led the mission. There were twenty-five B-24's to bomb the marshaling yards at Szombathely. We dropped 62 tons of 500-pound general purpose bombs. Over 57% fell within a 1000 foot range. People to this day do not really understand what pattern bombing was all about. While all bombardiers were trained in bombardier school to hit targets or pickle barrel targets, when they came to bombardment, pickle barreling was out and pattern bombing was in. Consequently, in heavy formations, the lead bombardier never was a pickle barreler. After I caught on to what a lead was to do, at 28,000 plus feet I aimed 800 to 1000 feet short of the target. By the time the toggles were able to do their job the bomb drop created a pattern that flowed over the target. If I were to pickle barrel the target, the bombs that the toggles dropped would be way over target and out of the bombing area. We had to give and take on that and I did the best job I could. The Szombathely marshaling yards, was a big marshaling yard and a point of accumulation of several railroads throughout the Balkan area. At the time we made our strike the Germans

had moved six locomotives and about 130 freight cars, railroad cars, the type in which they were hauling the Jews and other people into this marshaling yards. Our briefing was to the effect that the yard was loaded with trains and freight cars and couldn't move out because on the main line going back into Germany there was damage or a bridge knocked out so they were held up and we were able to catch them at that point. Because of our success in destroying these locomotives and 130 freight cars, our group received a communication from the CO of the 304th wing that informed the group, "General Twining was very pleased with the results of our bombing effect. The group's attack on this marshaling yard did a great deal of damage. It was a feat of bombing by the lead bombardier and the group as a whole." There was no flak at the target and all planes returned safely.

I wonder, and I have always wondered whether or not those box cars contained German soldiers and their families that had been stationed down in the deep area of the Balkans, or whether they actually were carrying Jews back to Germany. I can say frankly that I, and I don't believe any of our intelligence officers at that time knew the story about the Holocaust, about the slaughter of the Jews, the concentration camps, etc. This did not come out until after VE day. The thing we heard that aroused our fighting spirit was the Germans were trying to control the world. They were taking over everything and the Japs were taking over everything in their area. The Germans were going to capture everything in Europe

and when they finished there they would be coming right on across the Atlantic to the United States, etc. Of course, we had the usual pictures of the rape of women and the slaughtering of men, etc. Nothing was ever mentioned about the concentration camps and the program of Jewish destruction. I did learn later that such was known by our leaders, Franklin Roosevelt and members of Congress. They kept real quiet about it. I don't understand why. But it was the old philosophy, "It was not my duty to reason why,



George

but to do or die" I suppose. So, I can't say, whether on this mission we destroyed a bunch of Germans or a bunch of Jews. All I know is on this mission we really tore up that marshaling yard and the concentration of railroad engines and box cars.

After Szombathely, I had a mission to North Italy; a mission to Vienna; a mission to Vicenza, Italy; a mission back to Vienna; and the last mission was to Brod, Yugoslavia. The missions to Vienna were somewhat unusual because they were done with a Micky ship. A Micky ship was one which bombed by the use of a radar. A radar operator would tell me when to release my bombs based on what he saw from the screen. This meant we could bomb through cloud cover, smoke obscured targets, etc. I had two missions using radar operators. On most missions we used what was called chaff. The waist gunners throw out packages of aluminum foil. They would scatter and leave a trail. The purpose of this was to confuse the enemy's radar that was operating the ack-ack guns. It would indicate we were flying at an altitude lower than what we were. This was very successful. We had to do this on each mission.

My last mission was January the 19th, 1945. My next to last mission was November the 19th, 1944. I didn't fly during December and most of January. There was a reason for that. Colonel Thayer, he was a Lieutenant Colonel by this time, told me because my missions were about over (I only had one to go) they were saving me for a low altitude mission on troop concentrations at Milan. They were going to use fragmentation bombs at low altitude. They wanted me to lead the mission. I accepted it from him as being true, so I was willing to wait during the winter; during the battle of the bulge; when it was so cold. Finally, I couldn't wait any longer. I was so homesick. I wanted to see my wife and family. I was drinking too much and smoking too much. My health condition was not the best. Finally I confronted Colonel Thayer and told him I wanted to fly my last mission, and if I survived, I wanted to go home. That's when he leveled with me that the reason they were keeping me was the policy of promotions to Captain had been changed. Before I could be promoted, I had to be in grade for six months, and



James Connelly Shaving

he was holding me so he could promote me to Captain. I told him I didn't give a damn about being a Captain, I wanted to go home. I was virtually ruining my health and I just needed to go home. He scheduled my last mission on January the 19th, 1945 to Broad, Yugoslavia. He flew it with me. I believe it happened to be his last mission on this his second tour of duty. I got approval to go home.

When I was promoted to squadron bombardier it became necessary, according to protocol, to move into the squadron officers tent that was on the ridge back of the officers club. It had a beautiful overview of the valley. In the tent was the squadron navigator. The day that "Brownny" was shot down, we also lost our squadron navigator. Sol Feltzer, who was a 1st Lieutenant, was designated as the new squadron navigator. I was designated as squadron bombing officer. Our squadron intelligence officer, Tom Mitchell, was living in the tent along with his assistant, Lieutenant Harrington.

It was an unusual tent. Around the edge of the floor to a height of five feet was a wall. On top of that we a canvas tenting. In one corner of this walled area was a fireplace. The floor extended out a ways in front, like a little porch. In the fireplace we burned 100 octane aviation fuel. We had Jerry-rigged a five-gallon gasoline can like they used on motor vehicles and tanks. I would go to group headquarters which was a quarter mile away and fill this five gallon can with 100 octane gasoline. I would lug that back to the tent and hook it up to copper tubing which was on the outside and extended inside through the wall to the fireplace. On the end of the copper tubing there was a heavier copper tubing with holes in it to use as a burner. At the back wall there was a little valve with which I could turn the gas on and off. The gasoline would come down the tube and I would light it. It would provide light and a little heat in the tent.

The winter in Italy was harsh. That was the year of the Battle of the Bulge. All over Europe they were having a very severe winter. I mentioned earlier about the K-rations. When I moved from the first tent, which was the crew tent in the olive grove, into the officers tent, I took as many K-rations as I could. I liked the dinner and the lunch ration. Each ration had cigarettes, toilet paper, matches, and cans of food. The one I liked best was the one that had sausage and chopped egg and a concentrated chocolate bar. The story was one of the chocolate bars would sustain you for several days should you be shot down.

The thing that I liked about this very concentrated and hard chocolate bar was the fact that it was the best bait that I could find to catch enormous rats. Our tent was overrun with these huge rats. I would say they must have been at least a

foot long and probably 18 inches from nose to tail. They were monsters. I had never seen rats that big. At night they would come and get on top of the tent wall under the canvas top. They would run along that wall and get into everything. On my bed I had a bed roll. It was a heavy canvas, and inside were blankets. I would crawl in and buckle up the bed roll. This would keep me pretty warm during the cold, cold, winter nights. The rats were so bad that I went to Cerignola and bought big rat traps. The people in Cerignola knew about huge rats being in the area. They had these big wood planks

made into huge rat traps just like an ordinary mouse trap. I bought three of them for something like five dollars. Back to the tent I would bait them with pieces of the concentrated chocolate bar. I caught rats. They were monsters. They were so big when the trap caught them, they would run. They didn't get loose but they would drag that big rat trap out of the tent and up on the side of the hill. I would find them. The policy was to not dispose of the rat, leave them on the side of the hill, or around the tent outside to deter other rats. It didn't work. We had rats, rats, rats. But, they weren't eating or chewing on us. I had one try to do that. I could feel him. I hit the bed roll with a stick that was in the tent for this purpose. This was the coldest, damndest winter.

Next to our tent, about fifty feet away was another tent. Colonel Thayer, the assistant squadron commander, Major Bellemere, and two others, had that tent. Their tent was fixed up nicer. Instead of having a fireplace, they had a small pot belly stove that sat right in the middle of the tent. They fired it with wood. It had a stove pipe that extended out the top of the tent. It was warm and decent. The radiation from this stove was much better than what we were getting from our



Lt. Col. David S. Thayer
Commanding Officer
743rd Bomb Squadron
455th BG, 15th AF

fireplace in the corner. We had a pretty good time in our squadron as I think in all squadrons. We had a mess hall and an officers club. I would spend a great deal of time there, especially during the time I wasn't flying.

I remember Colonel David S. Thayer, our commanding officer, had a birthday. I don't recall the exact date but I think it was in September. Everybody chipped in to give him a real birthday party. I believe they charged everybody who wanted to attend his birthday party five dollars. I put in five dollars. It was quite a party. We had a very lovely dinner with lots of wine to drink. Also you could buy a drink at the bar for 25 cents. After we had the dinner, the mess personnel cleared everything out of the way. Someone had arranged for a beautiful man and a very beautiful woman, presumably his wife, to put on a belly dance demonstration which led to a completely nude demonstration. We were all sitting in chairs in a ring and she was in the middle of the ring. They had brought a record player which had to be wound up to play the record. It was a beautiful performance. When she got down to being completely nude, I mean nude, shoes off and everything, she did the belly dancing in front of all the men as she went around the circle. She ended up at Colonel Thayer's place. She rubbed all over him, climbed up on his lap, and teased him a lot. I had never seen such in all my life and I was really aghast. But, it was good clean entertainment. There was no hanky panky permitted. This very beautiful lady was able to dress, put on her coat, kiss the Colonel goodbye, and she and her husband took off. Well, it was a wild evening.

I want to pass on that regardless of what a commander says in regards to sex, don't believe it. The prostitutes were extremely numerous in Cerignola. They had apartments in several places in town. I would estimate that there were 500 or more prostitutes operating in town. This was a time of war. Most had lost their husbands through Mussolini's military ventures and they had no way of making a living. They were available. The army recognized that and had a code. If you caught a venereal disease you would be court marshaled. Before going in town, if you were inclined to engage in sexual activity, you would take what they called a "pro," that's a prophylactic. They had little tubes which you could insert into the urinary canal, squeeze it and it would supposedly protect you if you didn't use a condom, but you were supposed to use a condom. It was mandatory. If you intended to engage, you would go by the flight surgeons office, advise him, and then when you came back on base you would go back by there to be cleaned up, so you would not catch a venereal disease. As a married man, I did not engage in that type of service. I don't know if I hadn't been married whether I would or not. I think

not knowing whether you were going to come back from any given mission would encourage you to use that type of service. I am sure non-flying personnel used the service.

Halfway through our missions we were given what was called a rest period of one week at the isle of Capri. This was before I became squadron bombardier and I was still with Loffer's crew. The whole crew got a week. We traveled in a troop carrier. The most horrible ride I can remember—bouncy roads. We went to Naples and caught a ferry boat to the isle of Capri. There we were assigned to rooms in a hotel on Ana Capri for a week. It was a lot of fun. I remember buying a little sterling set of cuff links for my wife. She had to wear a white uniform, full length, and cuffed in her duties as a registered dietician. This set of cuff links I bought at a little shop on Ana Capri. I saw them in the window. I inquired and couldn't resist buying them. She still has them in her jewelry boxes. I bought postcards, folders, and the history of the Isle of Capri. We still have those souvenirs.

When I was appointed squadron bombardier, on August 27th I believe it was, I had to move from the crew tent in the olive orchard to the officers tent on the



Col. Thayer's last 15th AF mission (fifth from the left). He had completed a tour in England with the 8th AF earlier. I am the fourth from the right and waiting for an order to go home.

not knowing whether you were going to come back from any given mission would encourage you to use that type of service. I am sure non-flying personnel used the service.

Halfway through our missions we were given what was called a rest period of one week at the isle of Capri. This was before I became squadron bombardier and I was still with Loffer's crew. The whole crew got a week. We traveled in a troop carrier. The most horrible ride I can remember—bouncy roads. We went to Naples and caught a ferry boat to the isle of Capri. There we were assigned to rooms in a hotel on Ana Capri for a week. It was a lot of fun. I remember buying a little sterling set of cuff links for my wife. She had to wear a white uniform, full length, and cuffed in her duties as a registered dietician. This set of cuff links I bought at a little shop on Ana Capri. I saw them in the window. I inquired and couldn't resist buying them. She still has them in her jewelry boxes. I bought postcards, folders, and the history of the Isle of Capri. We still have those souvenirs.

When I was appointed squadron bombardier, on August 27th I believe it was, I had to move from the crew tent in the olive orchard to the officers tent on the



Col. Thayer's last 15th AF mission (fifth from the left). He had completed a tour in England with the 8th AF earlier. I am the fourth from the right and waiting for an order to go home.

bluff. I occupied the space that was Captain Brown's, the former squadron bombardier. Others before me had acquired the services of two little Italian boys. They would come out to the base after school, come over to the tent on the bluff and would be cleaning up, sweeping a little, and supposedly guarding and protecting it. These little fellows were about ten years old. One was called Jessepi and the other Pietro. I do not remember their last names. They didn't speak English and I didn't speak Italian, but we had worked it out and could understand each other. Pietro's mother was in town. His father was lost serving Mussolini. I would have him take my dirty laundry to his mother to wash. This was a mistake. I sent my good wool pinks that went with my dress uniform. She literally ruined them by washing them. They should have been dry-cleaned but such services were not available. These little boys showed up one day and oh, the odor. I could hardly stand to be near them. I was pretty sure they hadn't had a bath for a long time. I gave them a note to go to the bath house where the officers went and gave them a bar of soap. I recall it was probably Lava soap. The note I gave them to take along requested that they be permitted to take a bath. They were tickled to death. I never saw two little boys who had more fun going down over the bluff and down to the bathing area and taking a bath. Coming back, they felt so good, and smelt so good. They developed the habit real quick. After three or four trips to bathe, the fellows running the cooling tower where the bathing took place refused to let them come in. They said they couldn't do that any more. They didn't have enough facilities. I didn't press the matter because winter was coming on. It was so cold. No one took a bath for quite a while.

My tent was on the ridge of a hill. Down in the valley the owner had an experimental operation going on. They were trying to develop a synthetic oil and rubber. At this experimental operation they were growing what I thought to be big sunflowers, tall and big stemmed. They were growing several other plants. The plot was about ten acres. They had a system which would spray water for irrigating. This was a permanent installation. The pipes had holes in them and were strung high through the fields. This big power equipment would spray this area with a mist like spray. They drilled water wells and had a cooling tower with a basin under it for water to keep the engines cool. It was in this basin under the cooling tower, which was about four feet deep, in which we would go and take a bath. That's where I had been sending the little boys. An unusual thing that occurred on these sunflower stalks, and in this area, were huge snails. They would crawl up these stalks and feed on these plants. Every morning at daybreak, I would look out and

there would be perhaps a dozen people. They would have #10 size cans salvaged from our trash dump. They would pull the snails off the stalks and fill their cans. Every once in a while I would see one of them, generally a woman, eat a snail alive and raw. I just almost gagged every time I would see one of them do that. They would take them to Cerignola. Cerignola did not have a sewer system at this time. People would throw the water they used to cook the snails in, the shells, and their bath and cooking water into the streets. Without sidewalks, I would side step and hop over it. They needed the food. I accepted everything and went my way. I think it was smart on the part of the Air Force commanders to let that experimental station continue to operate during the war.

Before I became squadron bombardier, I flew with the Bill Loffer crew for about fifteen missions. On the crew we had a flight engineer named Stuart Bemis. We called him Stu Bemis. He is currently living near the town of Winchester, Massachusetts. He was and is the most intelligent young man I have ever known. He was the youngest member of the crew. He knew all about the B-24 and how to operate it. The reason I am telling this is because he actually saved our crew on two different missions. The first time, we had been hit by flak. It had broken the fuel



Capt. Tom Mitchell and Pietro, our tent boy

lines on one wing tank. We were losing fuel fast. We had been flying off the other wing tank. He was able to transfer enough fuel from the tank that was losing fuel to the other one. This enabled us to get back to our base at Cerignola. While Bemis was doing this, we were at an altitude of 27,000 feet and the temperature was 40 below. He had to take off his gloves to do what he had to do. The gasoline was spewing all over him. It was 100 octane gasoline. At that altitude it vaporized real fast. It would leave you cold, very cold. He stood there and made the

transfer. Fortunately, his hands were not frost bitten. We made it back to our base. Bill Loffer, our pilot, told us that the ground crew filled the fuel tanks which held 2400 gallons with 2406 gallons. We landed with empty tanks. Another time Stu Bemis saved us was when we were hit with flak at 25,000 feet which cut the rudder cable behind the bomb bay. Stu had the job of splicing it together so Loffer could navigate the plane. Stu got it tight enough so the rudder was usable and Loffer was able to land.

When we finished a mission we would be debriefed. Everybody would be lined up in the order in which they were able to get to the debriefing room which was the wine cellar where earlier that day we had been briefed about the mission. As we stood in line waiting to be debriefed, sometimes for 30 minutes, the supply Sargent from our squadron, called Tiny, would be there. His purpose was to give anyone who felt the need for it, two jiggers of liquor. I think it was two jiggers to the man for those who wanted it. I took it because I enjoyed it. It was rot gut. It was made in Ohio and called Bellows. That was about all you could get over there. They had a contract with the military to supply this liquor. I never refused to take my two shots. Quite a few of the crew didn't drink and didn't smoke. I believe six members of our crew didn't drink or smoke. That presented a very fine situation for me. As we stood in line, one or two of those very pious fellows would say to Tiny, who was passing out the booze, "Let George have my shots." It wasn't infrequent that I would feel no pain by the time we got into the briefing room.

Once a month squadron supply passed out slips to everybody for a carton of cigarettes, four cigars, two cokes, and you could buy a bottle of rot gut whiskey. The fellows who wanted them would go by operations and pick up these slips. Several of the fellows didn't smoke, didn't drink, so I would go pick up their slips. I had a constant supply of cigarettes and alcohol. At the officers club, our flight surgeon kept it supplied with medicinal alcohol. The mess Sergeant obtained cherry brandy for the officers club so we could always get a drink there. I must give credit to the squadron operation officer, Captain Paul Livingston, from Paul's Valley, Oklahoma. He was in charge of the ground operations. He did a really fine job. We had a party for Colonel Thayer's birthday that I told about. We had a Thanksgiving dinner banquet, a Christmas dinner, and a New Years blowout in the officer's club. I enjoyed the holidays but I was wanting to go home.

The group, along with other groups had developed a club over on the Adriatic coast near Barietta. It had a very nice beach and it had large beach sand dunes, a kind of sand dune that you could hide behind. It was a great spot for



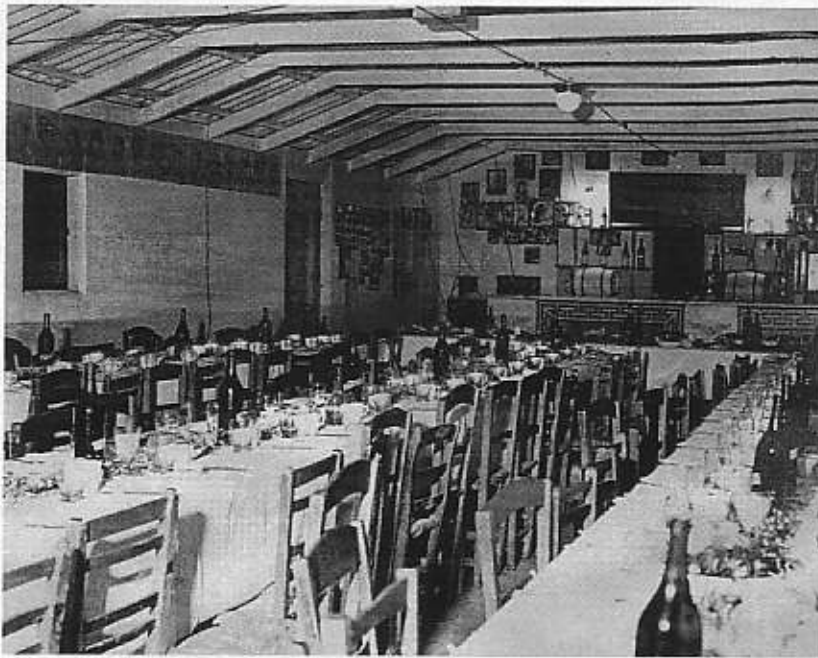
Jessepi, Capt. Mitchell, George, Clark, and Pietro

shooting ducks. The ducks would fly off the water and go inland to feed. As they would take off, they would fly across the sand dunes. We would try to shoot them when they flew over the dunes. The only thing we had to shoot was a 30-30 carbine rifle. I had never seen a 30-30 carbine rifle before. They were new, small, and semi-automatic. I would put in a clip of five shells and load one in the barrel. When it fired it would automatically load another shell. I tried to buy one after I left the service, but they hadn't started producing them for civilians. The squadron navigator, Sol Feltzer and I, arranged to borrow the squadron jeep and a couple of those carbines. We went to the club building near Barietta. I think we got in there on a Friday night, were there Saturday and then came back Sunday. We fired a lot of rounds at those ducks, but we could not hit them. I wish I'd had a shot gun. The club was managed by an Italian lady, very pretty. She and Feltzer got along pretty good. Again, being married, I didn't partake. It was a nice club and she was a lovely lady.

Sometime just before Thanksgiving, the management of our officers club located and brought out to the base an artist who specialized in caricatures. We were requested to pay two dollars and pose for him. He would draw our picture. I did and my picture was hung with all the rest around the walls of the officers club. I remember when he finished drawing and looked at it, he had enlarged my chin to the extent that I had this arrogant look and he said, "Ah, Mussolini." I was fortunate to have my drawing saved by the intelligence officer, Tom Mitchell. I have it framed and have enjoyed it all these years. Others of the boys that were shot down and those that had finished their missions and had gone home were not allowed to take their pictures until the base was closed. The officers club managers said, "No, we want them up here until the war is over and the base is closed." Fortunately, I made such a howl about having to leave my picture there, that when

I came home the squadron intelligence officer, Captain Tom Mitchell, saved it, rolled it up, and sent it to me. I am greatly indebted to him. There were other pictures of mine in the intelligence room. Bomb strikes with my name on them, as bombardier, he saved those, rolled them up, and sent them to me.

I would like to point out that my next to last mission was November 19th, 1944, to Vienna, Austria. It was a Mickey ship operation. We used a Mickey ship to bomb by radar from above the clouds. We could see our target through the clouds, an oil storage facility, located on the Danube river that runs through Vienna. The way we knew we had hit the target, was as we were making our turn to head back home we could see black smoke bellowing up through the clouds. We knew our mission was a success. I did not fly another mission for over two months. I could not understand why they didn't schedule me to fly my last mission. Finally I found out, like I said earlier, when I approached David Thayer, our squadron commander and asked him. The reason was, he was trying to hold me in the squadron at the 1st Lieutenant grade for a sufficient time to be able to promote me to Captain. He was holding me, even though I didn't do anything but just sat



Inside Officers Club set up for Thanksgiving dinner. Note the caricatures hanging near the roof line on the left side of the picture and above the bar.

around during that time and took care of a few little duties up at the squad room in the intelligence office for over two months. I was fit to be tied because I always heard stories about going down on that last mission, and there were many who did. I finally got to fly my last mission on January the 19th.

During this stand down time I was able to follow the battle of the bulge. How the weather had socked in the air support. Couldn't fly, cold, snowing, it gets cold in Italy in the winter time! I would spend a great deal of time, in order to keep warm, in the intelligence office and over in the operations room. I had lots of time to write letters. I wrote a letter home every day and Dorothy was sending me care packages. She sent such things as honey, jelly, cookies, and soaps all of which were very much appreciated.

When I first started my mission, the fighter escorts were P-51's. They did not have a range equal to our target distances. We would have fighter escort until we got across the Adriatic and across Yugoslavia. Then they would have to turn back. After a few missions they assigned a squadron of P-38's. They put on wing tanks and were able to go in a little further. They stayed with us at least two thirds of the way to the target. The last group that was assigned to us were P-47 thunder bolts. They had a long range and stayed with us completely through the target area. They were piloted by colored pilots. At this stage of history we were still involved with segregation, so these colored pilots had their own group and lived aside from all whites, which was a shame. I remember coming into the mess hall to get dinner. Major Thayer had the Major of the colored fighter escort group over for dinner. I thought to myself, how unusual. I was glad to see it. As a young man growing up in Northeastern Oklahoma I spent my summers in the wheat fields shocking wheat and in the hay fields bucking bales. I worked side by side with colored people all the time. I was getting about 50 cents a day in wages and a good black was making about \$3 which was all right. I was a kid, most of those fellows were married and had families. Segregation was still in effect when we were flying missions. We all were real pleased when they would join us in those Thunderbolts. We would be well into the target area. That's when they would join us and that's when we would be under fighter attack. They'd fly up close, wiggle their wings and smile. I could see those black fighter pilots smiling and waving to us, letting us know that they were there, ready to do business and then they'd take off and go up. The fighter escort generally was above us all the time. The trick of the German Air Force was to get up above us, have the sun behind them and in our eyes; then they would dive down and attack the formations from the top. At the same time, there would be a

group below us coming up from underneath. We were well covered by our flying formations. The German pilots faced a lot of artillery in making their attacks on our bombing units.

One thing I want to mention is during the period of our missions, we were able to witness the development of two things. On July 16th, 1944 we bombed Munich. In the debriefing room we were asked if we had seen any strange objects and we had. We didn't know what it was because it was moving so fast, but we saw the beginning of jet fighters. I very vividly remember this ball. It looked like a round ball that came shooting up through our formation at fantastic speed. We were going less than 200 MPH. This object was going 500-600 MPH straight up, not

George E. Defenbaugh

Enlisted as Aviation Cadet Aug. 18th, 1942, at Okla. City, Okla. Called to report Feb. 18th, 1943, at Okla. City. Took Preflight training at San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center, San Antonio, Texas. Primary training at Hicks Field, Ft. Worth, Texas. Aug. 1st arrived at Enid Army Air Base, Enid, Oklahoma, for basic training.

Married Dorothy Waldrep, Sept. 11, 1943, at Enid First Methodist Church.

Transferred to Houston, Texas, Sept. 16th, 1943, and to Gunnery School at Laredo, Texas, Oct. 1st, 1943. Received Gunner's Wings and transferred to Bombardier's School at Big Spring, Texas, Nov. 15th, 1943.

Received commission as 2nd Lt. March 18th, 1944 at Big Spring, Texas. Reported to Biggs Field, El Pas, Texas, April 1st for Operational Training.

Combat Crews reported to Topeka, Kansas, June 18th. Left Bangor, Maine for Italy. Reported to 15th Air Force in Italy July 2nd, 1944. Promoted to Squadron Bombardier, then 1st Lt. Received Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, Good Conduct Ribbon, Distinguished Flying Cross, Mediterranean Theatre Ribbon with 4 stars, and Presidential Unit Citation.

Completed missions Jan. 19th, 1945. Left squadron Feb. 9th, left Naples, Feb. 26th. Arrived Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, March 9th. Arrived home March 13th. Reported to Miami Beach, Florida, for rest and reassignment on April 6th, 1945. Arrived Midland, Tex. May 23, 1945, for further Bombardier's Training. Completed training August 4th, 1945, and assigned to Midland as a Mess Officer.

Discharged from Camp Chaffee Sept. 14th, 1945. Enrolled in Law School at University of Oklahoma Sept. 17th, 1945. Thus ends army career.

Synopsis of Military Service

maneuvering. It just went "zoom" and we didn't catch any fire power on our plane. I do not think anyone in our ten plane box suffered fire power. It went through our formation just like an arrow. I assume it was guided so there wouldn't be an air to air collision at 20,000 feet. The second time an unusual thing took place was on the mission to Fredrickshaffen, Germany. The old air ship plant was turning out Messerschmitt fighters. The debriefing officers wanted to know if we had seen anything unusual and we had. It was a sky bomb, in addition to ack-ack. This rocket came shooting through our formation. Fortunately its fuse was not set correctly. It went 2000-3000 feet above us and exploded. It was referred to as a sky bomb. A great big blast was scattering stuff. By the time the fall-out reached our elevation we had moved on. The theory was to explode a big bomb above, and the shrapnel would fall down and damage our formations, but it didn't work. We started throwing chaff out the windows to mess up the ground radar. They couldn't tell what our elevation was.

Though the years I have been asked at least a dozen times what we did on these missions so far as relieving ourselves when we had to use the bathroom. I am too old to be embarrassed to tell you about that program. There was no bathroom. Once we got underway I pulled the bomb safety pins so the bombs would arm themselves as they fell. Next, I would crawl through that small space under the pilots and copilots loft and by the retracted nose wheel and put on all my equipment; electric underwear, oxygen mask, portable oxygen bottles, flak helmet, bulky leather flying suit, flak vest, parachute backpack, and my chest parachute. I was so bulky I couldn't get back through the little crawl space that I had come through to reach the bombardiers compartment. When flying at 28,000 feet in a non-pressurized plane, it is 50 degrees below zero and you dare not expose yourself by taking off a lot of clothing. I would relieve myself in the nose wheel



Officer's Club, 743rd Squadron, Italy

compartment. The nose wheel would be retracted into the plane and the nose wheel doors would shut—that's where I would relieve myself. On an 8-hour mission I would have to relieve myself three or four times. This was due to the anxiety of the mission, the tenseness of it. Also, to keep excess body fluid warm required a lot of heat. Getting rid of that body fluid leaves more heat for the body. I wouldn't have to completely undress and crawl to the bomb bay. I remember a time or two when we would come back from a mission, I would have all my gear together and be leaving the airplane. I would hear the mechanic saying, "Ah Damn, somebody has been pissing in the nose wheel again." I guess it did create a mess for them to clean up. Throw a bucket of water on it and let it go. Anyway, these things are not written about very often. The waste gunners could relieve themselves in the bomb bay compartment. They were younger men and in shape. I don't think they had to urinate often. Our tail gunner would come out of the tail gun compartment. The ball gunner, once he was in the ball, was stuck until they wheeled him up and out of there.

I finished my last mission on January the 19th 1945. The mission was to Brod, Yugoslavia. Flight time was five hours and 20 minutes. Colonel Thayer was pilot and I was bombardier. It was Colonel Thayer's last mission on this his second tour. His first tour was with the 8th Air Force in England. Three of us went to Naples. That was the Port of Embarkation to go back to the states. Major Belemayer arranged to take the squadron jeep to Naples and I went along with all my gear. It was about a 200-mile drive over the roughest roads. Italy didn't have super highways as they do now. It took us a full day. We left early in the morning and didn't get to Naples until around five o'clock. We were able to keep the jeep while waiting for a troop ship to come. The jeep was to be taken back to the squadron by another crew that had spend rest time on Capri. We spent a few day traveling around Naples. I really did enjoy that. We went to Pompeii and to Herculaneum. We went up and down the coast and drove up on Vesuvius which had erupted again not long before. We were also able to go out at night to clubs. We thoroughly enjoyed that jeep.

Being a 1st Lieutenant, my assignment for housing while I waited two weeks on this troop ship, was downgraded in the housing program. Out from Naples on the side of a hill, a large chicken and swine farm was converted into sleeping quarters. They were low buildings. The sides had windows that opened all the way up. I could come in one side near my cot. They had nice evening concerts, Louie Caberello, the pianist, was there. I enjoyed him. I was a good

poker player. During the course of one evening I won \$1900. The rumor was you couldn't take more than \$250 home, which was a month's pay. If you had more than that they would assume that you had been engaged in the black market. This was a rumor and I believed it. What was I going to do with this extra money. This was script money, they called it 'Liera.' It was printed on script paper. I concluded that I'd just have to try and spend it. In the mean time notice had come that our troop ship was going to dock in a couple days and it'd be ready to go back. I got my gear together and checked the list to see if I was on the list to go. I was on the list. I didn't know what to do with this extra money but spend it. I went out on the street. There were street vendors, black market cameos. I bought cameo of all kinds. They were good cameo, but the metal on the frames of the pins and broaches was not very good. It was cheap tin like metal, but the cameos were real and good. I suppose I had a good pound of that stuff in my luggage. I'd spent the money. If that rumor had been true, they had a way of checking it because it was illegal to have American money, all I had was script money. That's all anybody was suppose to have. They had a way, I thought, of checking to see if I had gone over the limit of \$250.

The day came for me to go on ship. Our ship was the top passenger ship of Argentina. It had been converted to a troop ship. They had stripped most of the interior and in place had put support poles on which hammocks were strung. Between two poles there would be a depth of three hammocks. I was assigned the middle one in the area where I was to stay. The ship would rock as they did maneuvers against torpedoes or submarines. We had an escort for the first 100 miles. After that the ship was on it's own. At the speed it could travel and with the maneuvering it could do the hammocks were rocking constantly. Mess was served on a metal tray which had compartments. The constant swinging and movement of the ship caused me to be nauseated. I've never been nauseated like that before. It caused me to not eat and to be constipated. I don't hesitate to say that I was constipated the whole trip from Naples to the dock in New York—a period of ten days. I was really put out with everything and everybody by the time we arrived at New York. I resented it because everyone on board who was a major or above, and there were a lot of majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels, had separate sleeping quarters (rooms with nice beds) and when we docked in New York they were given shore leave for the night.

Not being able to get off the ship was really a blessing for me. I went to see the sick bay officer. I told him my problem and asked him to give me a good

dose of Epson salts. He didn't want to, but I insisted that he do it. In a little while I had the first relief I had in 10 days and I was hungry. I was starved because I hadn't been eating. The next day we disembarked into New York about two o'clock in the afternoon. We had to walk to a train station for a train to take us to Fort Dix.



First Car, 1944

I didn't know where we were going. Apparently the military or New York City was afraid that we would make a break for it being home. They had police lined almost shoulder to shoulder on both sides of the walk area. I felt like we were being treated like criminals. They said they are giving us a great welcome, but really they were keeping us together like prisoners until we got on that railroad train to take us over to Fort Dix. At Fort Dix they gave me a medical check up and arranged to send me home. The heart murmur was still there. There weren't many fellows from Oklahoma, a few from Texas, a few from Arkansas. They sent me to Camp Chaffee near Fort Smith, Arkansas. There they gave me more physicals and checked me over and arranged my leave. I was suppose to have ten days at home and then a month's R&R at Miami Beach. I checked out all right and got my orders, got on a bus and went to Shawnee. Dorothy had bought an automobile, a 4D Fleetline Chevrolet, 1942 model. She was very lucky to find one, I think she had to pay \$600 under the table. At least she had good wheels for that time. We took this opportunity to visit my parents, her parents, and we went to see all the family members that we could. We packed up and started driving to Miami Beach. I was a nervous wreck from combat. I would drive to the city limits, stop, and Dorothy would drive in the city. When we left, I would take over the driving to the next city.

We were suppose to have a month of R&R at Miami Beach. They didn't put that in writing. The orders just said assigned to Miami Beach for R&R. We took our time in driving all the way from Oklahoma through Louisiana, to New Orleans, and finally to Miami Beach. On the way down, we enjoyed the big fifty cent shrimp cocktails everywhere it was advertised. Fifty cent cocktails, fifty cent

high balls. In New Orleans we were introduced to Ranmose gin fizz. They are delicious. Those colored bar tenders would shake them up until they would be frothy. We arrived at Miami Beach, reported in, and were assigned a room at the Lord Tarlton Hotel, a disco type at that time. Beautiful, nice, and filled with military people there for the same reason I was. In checking around I learned that flyers like me were coming in and in less than a week they were shipped out on reassignment to the Pacific. I said, "No way are they going to do that to me." I told Dorothy, "We've made all this effort to come down here thinking we were going to be here for a month and now it looks like they want to get rid of us in less than a week." I said, "I'm not going to have it."

To show how bull headed and independent I am, when I showed up for my physical everything checked out fine. The heart that had a murmur when I went into the Air Corps still had the murmur and it showed on my medical records to that effect. I got down to the final test and I know I had to do something to show that I wasn't physically fit. The last test was for depth perception. For a bombardier or a pilot, perfect perception is a must qualification. I was taking the test and lining up the sticks about 25 feet away. Pulling on one string and the other string, I intentionally pulled them so they wouldn't be directly lined up. The testing nurse had me try two or three times. She called for another nurse. She was an officer, a first lieutenant or something like that. She came in and had me do that test. Each time I'd pull it off so the sticks wouldn't line up. Finally, they brought in a captain, a medical officer and he had me do it. They checked my eyes and went over the chart a dozen times. Finally they said we want you to go in and have a talk with the head of the medical staff.

He was a full colonel. I sat down and he said, "Now young man, we've checked you everywhere and we can find nothing wrong. What is your problem?" I sat there a moment. I know they had me. I said, "Do you want the truth?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, the truth is, by God I just



North view of Miami Beach from roof of The Lord Tarlton Hotel, 1945

finished a tour of duty in Europe flying those damn missions. I learn now, after they had promised me that I would have at least a 30 day rest period down here, that they are shipping us out as soon as we finish our physical and assigning us to go to the pacific. I understand the bombardiers are being sent to train on B-29's and I'm not for it. I made an effort to bring my wife down here and we were going to have a wonderful time for at least a month and I'll be damned if I'm going to leave here." He said, "I see your point. The only thing I can do is have you report to the hospital in the mornings and have your temperature and your blood pressure taken. After a couple hours you can check out and spend the rest of the day with your wife. But then you have to come back to the hospital around 10 o'clock in the evening." That's what we did for the whole month. We had that time on Miami Beach going swimming, running up and down the beach having a real good time. Dorothy was permitted to stay in the room at the Lord Tarlton for ten days. The hotel gave her notice that she would have to vacate and find her own room. We went to the North end of Miami Beach and found a little motel and rented a room for a couple weeks. We stayed there. In the morning she would drive me down to the hospital for a couple of hours and come pick me up. We were able to complete our 30 day stay. When we were in Miami Beach, President Roosevelt had died and Harry Truman became President.

I was reassigned to Midland, Texas. When I got to Midland they assigned me as a mess officer. I wasn't qualified for that job and I wasn't about to go throw my weight around. Those boys were enlisted men, some of them had been in the military for years doing mess work. In Midland, Texas we were able to rent an upstairs room from Mr. and Mrs. Burl Guyton; wonderful, wonderful people. We had a wonderful time with them. They liked to cook out and used Texas mesquite to smoke up the BBQ. The weather was hot. We had the use of a little electric fan to try to make the room half way bearable. By late night it would cool off. Dorothy and I wanted to have a picnic out in the country. We bought a watermelon and a six pack of beer. We found one little tree way out in the country. It had just enough shade for the two of us to sit under it. We spent the day drinking beer and eating watermelon. Oh, it was good, but we ate so much watermelon we were in misery.

Dorothy had to go back to the University of Oklahoma for the fall term. We discussed this quite a bit. She didn't want to lose her job. It was a very fine job and she had taken a leave of absence until the fall term. We decided she should go back. She took the car and went back to the University at Norman. There she acquired an apartment. Before she left, the two A bombs had been dropped on

Japan. Everybody celebrated. It was unbelievable. We couldn't understand what this new bomb was about. They tried in their meager way on the radio to explain what had taken place and how much damage had been done. We celebrated and celebrated and finally the Japanese surrendered.

After that, Dorothy went back to her job at OU. I had to stay on until my name came up for release from the military and I believe I had to have at least 36 points. Each month of service counted a point, I had 36 points and I put in for release. They sent me back to Camp Chaffee to have a physical and be released. I had the physical and picked up my release papers. I rode a bus from Camp Chaffee, near Fort Smith, Arkansas to Norman, Oklahoma. The roads were bad. The bus stopped at every little cross road to let people on and off. I finally arrived at Norman, Oklahoma late at night. Everybody had gone to bed. I could get a taxi. I called Dorothy to tell her that I was in town, she hesitated to get the car out at that hour of the night to come and get me

and wondered if I could catch a cab. I said, "I'll do my best." Eventually I did and showed up at her apartment in the Logan apartments. As I recall, it was one or two o'clock in the morning when I got there. She greeted me at the door. We had our usual hugs and kisses after I set down my luggage and everything. Abruptly she said, "Well, have you made up your mind what you're going to do or be doing?" I said, "Well, no, I understand they have a GI bill of rights and I thought I'd just relax and enjoy life a while." She says, "Well, I'm going to tell you what you're going to do." I said, "Oh." She said, "Yes, you are enrolled in law school." I was a week late for enrollment, classes had started. She said, "You are enrolled in law school and your first class is Monday morning at eight o'clock." I blinked and I said, "Oh." She said,

BACK IN THE STATES

Lieut. George E. Defenbaugh, of Dewey, who was a squadron bombardier with the 15th airforce in Italy, has completed his bombing missions and returned to the United States.

He participated in bombing 10 different European countries while stationed in Italy and has been awarded the air medal, three oak leaf clusters, the good conduct medal, the Mediterranean invasion bar with one star, the distinguished flying cross and the presidential unit citation. He returned in March and has been at a rest camp in Florida and his new assignment takes him to the Midland, Tex., bombardier school for additional training. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Defenbaugh of Thrall, Kan., who are formerly of Dewey.



Newspaper Account

"Yes, I have heard you say that you wanted to be a lawyer and this is your opportunity." What could I do but agree to that. Come Monday morning at eight o'clock I was at the law school. I must confess, I knew absolutely nothing about the practice of law. I just thought it was fascinating from what I would read in the paper once in a while. I didn't even know what a plaintiff or a defendant was. I didn't know what motions were. I didn't know anything. I was completely ignorant.

I went and I enrolled and most of the other students were sons of lawyers. They had the upper edge; knew the legal lingo and the dictionary terms. They knew how to read the law and how to brief it. The law school taught by the case method. When studying a subject, any subject of the law, there are cases that you could research dealing with that subject. There were different phases of that subject. I had to read them, then brief them, pick out what was the main point of the case and be able to stand up and recite it in class if called upon. I must tell you that I had the shakes, I could hardly speak when I was in class. I would choke up. I never worked so hard at a school proposition as I did for those three years at the University of Oklahoma Law School. I did graduate, I got my JD degree and I've been a member of the Oklahoma bar since 1948.

I practiced law, in reality, for very few years, from 1948-1963. In 1963 I had starved long enough, I found out that to be a private practitioner of the law was not a good thing financially. I found out some other things that there's no use to go into now. I became very discouraged with the law profession but I have not given up my Oklahoma bar registration. I made a little deviation, I became licensed to practice law in New Mexico. There was an oil play in the San Juan basin near Farmington, New Mexico. I went there, housed with a very good friend from Law School, and tried to make a living. I learned two things. First, if you were not a Catholic you would not be employed. Everybody was involved with that religion. The second thing was the only legal work was for government and the Indians. If you didn't speak Navajo or the Ute language you had to have an interpreter. It was a heck of a mess. I stayed for six months until I got my New Mexico law license. I left and came back to Shawnee.

My next step was to be a 'kept' lawyer. I was employed by the Mid Continent Oil company to develop service stations for the marketing department. I worked at that for about six years. During that time I received a very extensive education in commercial real estate. I bought property, mortgaged property, built

service stations and bulk plants. By 1963 I felt I could do this on my own. I left the company, put together a few deals, and sold them. Eventually I acquired enough money to buy commercial locations and build commercial buildings. Since 1970 I have been renting our own buildings. Life has been good. I wouldn't have it any other way. I've been bullishly independent.



Operations Headquarters, Italy

Through the years many people have asked me if I've ever been over to the old base from which we operated. I've told them yes, I have a very interesting story I'd like to share with you. Dorothy and I have traveled all of the United States, going to all 50 states. We have been very active in the elder hostel program. We've been to all of the countries of Europe and to Australia and New Zealand. In one elder hostel program in 1990, we went to Sorrento, Italy for a two week stay. Lovely, wonderful, I got to visit Pompeii again, Herculaneum, and Vesuvius (we tried climbing that). We went down the Amalfi Way and had a wonderful time. While we were there, I arranged for someone at Cerignola who would be able to take us out to our air base. I wanted to see what was left of the old 455th Bomb Group headquarters and squadron areas. It was a great trip. We had a Mercedes limousine take Dorothy and me and my sister and her husband, who had gone with us to this elder hostel, across the boot to Cerignola. We were to meet a professor of law at the university. The professor took time off to take us out to where the old air base used to be, which was about six miles west of town. The four of us were riding in the back seat of the limousine. When the professor got in, he held up a piece of paper. On it was, "If you offer to pay me anything I will get out of this limousine right now." We said, "Okay, I guess we better not offer him anything." He took us out to the old group headquarters. The chapel was there, the lime well was still there, and all of the headquarter buildings were still there. We went down in the wine cellar where our briefings took place. It was filled with rubble, but it still had the markings on the side walls that said, "Do not walk on the seats or table. Do not smoke." It had been there all these many, many years. Painted on the

outside of the building, were the words "operations," "intelligence" and the numbers "455th." Somebody had come along and scraped into the block "1943-45." We found the 743rd headquarter buildings. All the old markings were still there indicating the group, the squadron, the operations, the intelligence, and engineering. Unfortunately they had removed the building which had housed the officers club which I've mentioned earlier. They had expanded and enlarged the building we used for our mess hall. On the bluff where our tent sites were, they had planted olive trees. Down in the valley they were still irrigating from wells that were down there.

I must tell you about this professor. His name is Umberto Albanese. He is a professor of law and economics. He lectures on Italian television, teaches at the university, and has written books. I mentioned that we had two little tent boys that came out every day after school. Umberto was a little 6, 7, 8-year-old boy when WWII was going on. He had lost his father with Mussolini. In 1944 he was living with his mother. He would come from school about noon or one o'clock, his mother would give him a sack of fruit and eggs and whatever she could scrounge up in town. He would ride his bicycle the six miles from town to a neighbor bomb group, The 484th. It was located about 3 miles from our 455th bomb group. He would trade this produce for such things as candy and cigarettes. He bartered the goods and took the proceeds

to his mother. We worry about children left without a father. Here is a fatherless man who became famous. He obtained his law degree, became a professor, and when we were in Cerignola, he had the finest apartment in town over a new furniture store across from the opera house. It had an elevator in it.



Mess Hall, San Giovanni, Italy

At his insistence, we met his wife. She put on a beautiful lunch. We had not expected this. We were due at our elder hostel program at six o'clock 200 miles away. We were having our last-night party and goodbyes. The professor insisted we stay for lunch. His wife was so proud. She didn't speak much English and didn't have to. She came around and showed everyone what we were having for the

first course. It was a package of American Skinners spaghetti. She put it on to cook and we were served drinks. We ended up having a nine-course lunch. It took three hours to get through lunch. All the time we were on needles and pins wondering if we would be able to get away and back to Sorrento.

Our driver, of course, was drinking lots of wine. Italians drink wine instead of water. My wife, sitting across from our driver would say, "Giovanni, don't drink too much, you've got to drive." He would say, "Oh, don't worry ma'am, don't worry, I'm used to this." I couldn't tell that he had consumed a considerable amount of wine and also several shots of a very delicious lemon flavored brandy. Umberto said his wife Antonietta made this lemon flavored after-dinner drink. We tried to get Umberto to come to the United States for several years. He always said he'd probably come next year. He wanted to go to the reunion of the 484th bomb group. They have a reunion every year—generally in California. It's been my understanding that for several years after the 484th bomb group reunion was organized, they have been sending Umberto enough money to provide scholarships for deserving young fellows or ladies from Cerignola to go to college. I think maybe three or four students a year.

Ever since our meeting in Cerignola in 1990, we have communicated with Umberto. He has sent me a text book that he wrote. We are hopeful that he might come to America this year (2000). The 484th bomb group is having a reunion in Dallas Texas in October. We invited Umberto and Antonietta to come early and stay with us. We would show them

sites around Oklahoma. We would make sure that he and Antonietta would be taken to Dallas, Texas. *(Umberto and Antonietta did spend a week in our home in 2000. They plan to return October 2002. In October 2002 Umberto and Antonietta did return for the second time and spent another week in our home. They have become acquainted with our family and are true friends. They plan to return in 2003 and bring their son Roberto who is an attorney in Italy.)*



**Umberto and Antonietta Albanese
Dorothy, Umberto, Antonietta, George**

I remember after we had our experience of getting acquainted and going out to the old base near Cerignola, the 455th bomb association made up a trip to Italy. They had about fifty members of our old bomb group. I told them all where they could find our old air base and showed them pictures I had taken. I showed them a picture of Umberto and gave them his address. They got in touch. Umberto did meet them and he went out with them to the old air base. They had a dedication and put up a plaque in the chapel. All this was because of me having the experience of having him show me where the old air base was. I was surprised to see that much of it was still there. The runways had been dug up and planted in grain. The metal stripes, which were for touch-down landing at the beginning-end of the run way, had been taken up and used for fence posts. I was surprised to see them after all these many years being used in that fashion. I'm sure they weren't stainless steel, but they didn't look rusted. They brought back memories of how we would touch down; the plane would shake and skid out onto a dirt runway.

Tidbits

During the balance of this memoir, I'm going to talk about several things that are not necessarily in order but I do want to make some record of.

The losses of our aircraft during the first 100 missions were 53. Each aircraft had 10 men. Thus 530 men were lost. There were 53 bombardiers. I have often wondered how many bombardiers were able to bail out of their aircraft because of the small crawl space. I know I couldn't. I would have had to ride the plane to my death. Several men did get out. However, at debriefing not many chutes were reported. We were always asked how many parachutes did we see.

When we arrived, and before I had to move to the squadron officers tent on the bluff, we had a big tent long enough to hold our crew on olive row. There was a road running through the olive trees and there were tents on both sides of it which were marked. The truck came at 4:00 a.m. in the morning. If it was my day to fly a mission, the officer of the day would awaken me. I would shave, get my gear, walk to the mess hall and eat breakfast, pick up a thermos of coffee, water, and a brown bag lunch. Generally it had sandwiches on hard bread, an apple, and maybe a candy bar. A troop carrier would take us to the wine cellar for briefing.

The drinking water was in canvas bags hung on a big olive tree. They held about a barrel of water. They had spickets on them so I could get a drink or take some in a bucket. They added Atabrine, a substitute for quinine. Quinine was impossible to obtain. The Japanese were in control of most of the quinine areas.

This medication was developed and used. If you consumed too much Atabrine, your complexion would become yellowish and your fingernails and eyes would be discolored. Therefore, most of the ground crew fellows would drink beer and pop. The truck would come by once a day and fill those big canvas bags. There was a little evaporation through the bag which helped keep the water a little cooler than the normal.

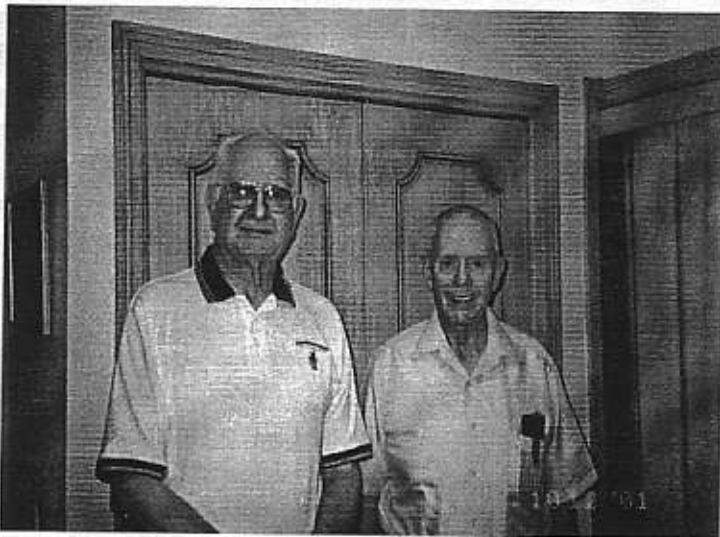
About a mile from my tent on a hill was an ack-ack gun. I had an opportunity to see what it was like over where the gun was. I found the fellows were from Australia and they had a British accent. They slept with that gun. They were required to provide for their own food, drink, so forth. In other words, they lived off the land. The day I went to visit, I took some cigarettes which they were grateful to get. They had acquired a chicken and had prepared it for cooking. They were boiling tea, and offered me some. I said, "No thank you." It looked like green tea. We passed a few minutes of pleasantries. I could hardly understand their talk. I believe they were from Australia. They spoke English as the English do. The reason for this ack-ack gun was when they were first setting up the bomb group in 1943 they had a few air raids, some strafing, and low altitude bombing. These guns were located about a mile apart.

In the mess hall was a big barrel of olives. It held 50-60 gallons with green olives, not pitted, just pulled from the tree. There were some black ones which indicated they were riper. The soaking brine was very salty. Acquiring these olives was a mistake on the part of the mess officer. He was offered this barrel of green olives, in the curing stage, for a very nominal price and felt he had to buy it to help the farmer who had picked it. The olives were with us through Thanksgiving and Christmas season. Nobody could eat them they were so salty. During the war, our food stuff was very plentiful. Some of it was not as palatable as I would have liked it to be. Instead of fresh eggs, we had powdered eggs. This was probably good. Much disease is carried by local fresh eggs. Our powdered eggs were very granulated and dry. I had to put a lot of ketchup on them to eat them. The coffee was instant powdered coffee. 'Nescafe' was developed just before WWII by a Swiss company. I remember having had it before I went into service. It was most unusual, freeze dried coffee. It was like what we have today. Our pancakes were always tough. The boys never learned how to mix them to make them light. There was a three-gallon bucket with a dipper in it for syrup made with artificial flavoring. The butter was like a cheese spread. It came in #10 size cans. They would take the top off and set it out with a knife in it. It was almost like Cheeze Whiz. All the

milk was canned milk. The cheese was artificial, made from cheese whey. We did have lots of turkey for Thanksgiving and Christmas, it came frozen.

One other thing I have thought of is the informality in the aerial combat area. We were very relaxed. We did not have to salute, 'pop to,' or any of that crap—even if it was a general. Everybody was equal in combat. Before going to combat, I would have to salute every time I would meet a superior officer. I was not able to get back into that sort of mind set when I came home. I just ignored the salute. If somebody would salute me, I'd return it, but as for me saluting superior officers, I didn't. When I was discharged the army tried to promote me into staying in the reserves. The only thing they could promise me was that I'd probably be a sergeant or maybe a master sergeant. I told them, "No thank you." I wanted no part of military service. I am glad. When the Korean war came, the United States called up the reserves. Not being in the reserves, I didn't have to go. It all goes with my hard headed attitude.

I did not take a camera overseas. Cameras were expensive, I had no idea where I could develop film. I do not have pictures of me at the 455th/743rd bomb squadron. I do have some pictures, not very many, that were taken by Bob Ferris, our navigator. He had a camera and he and others took their film to the 455th photo department. The boys there would develop and print it. Thus some pictures did come out.



George Defenbaugh and Stu Bemis, 2001

Dorothy's Comments

George was in the Army Air Corps stationed in Enid, Oklahoma when on September 11, 1943, we were married in the First Methodist church with family (who were not in service) attending. I had just finished a dietetic internship at Duke University Hospital, Durham, North Carolina.

During the next months we went together to a couple of Texas airfields. When he was sent overseas in June, 1944, I returned to Oklahoma and got a job as dietitian at the University of Oklahoma. I found an apartment in Logan apartments, worked, and read newspaper accounts of the 15th Air Force's bombing missions. He had managed to tell me they would be stationed in Italy. I assumed he would come home. I really didn't worry much that he would not; maybe I should have.



Dorothy, 1941

We all watched carefully the reports of the 15th's heavy bomber's missions. One would read of bombing raids on Ploesti and many places I had never heard of. We really didn't know what they were going through. At that time I had not even been up in an airplane. There was much secrecy. It wasn't like today when everybody knows every move that goes on in the war.

The rest of the crew finished, and they were home by Thanksgiving. Various ones called and said, "George will be home in a month." But he did not get home that soon. They had a mission on the Po valley they wanted him to fly as squadron bombardier. He returned in March, 1945.

He wrote almost every day. I made a medal out of the top of a tuna or soup can and tied on a red and blue ribbon. Imprinted in the medal was "For the World's Best Letter Writer." It could hang with all his other medals.

I wrote almost every day and sent boxes of goodies, especially those Vienna sausages, honey, and soap. Letters were the main thing I looked forward to. When we received a letter we knew that he was okay on that date. Since there was

so much secrecy (and rightfully so) I get impatient with some of the young folks today. Many of them think they have to know everything that's going on in the present war and exactly where their loved ones are and what they are doing.

Rationing was difficult at times, but everyone was in the same boat. We got 3 gallons of gas a week, so we didn't use the car much. We learned about rationing of gasoline, tires, beef, pork, sugar, Crisco, and shoes. Some ration stamps are saved here now. I don't remember chicken or fish being rationed, nor clothes. But we weren't buying many new clothes anyway. Nylon hose were not available. But nylon fishing line was available. We made do or did without.

When the guys were in training on B-24's in El Paso, we had the crew over for dinner. Only one other crew member was married, the co-pilot, Bob Wolter, whose wife was in Michigan. We had the officers and non-commissioned guys who were members of the crew. No rank was observed. They were all working together and going to the same place together to fight the war. We've met them all in various places through the years. (George tells the story of Stu saving their lives twice, but that's his story to tell.)

We were in El Paso on D-day, 1944. We went across the border to Juarez, Mexico to celebrate, and celebrate we did! To us that was the beginning of the end of the war.

When George was sent to Miami, Florida for R&R after overseas duty, we stayed in the Lord Tarlton hotel and had meals in the Cadillac hotel next door. (They are not in existence any more.) We drove to Miami and stayed there about six weeks. It was during the time that FDR died and VE Day happened. Then we were sent to Midland for the summer. There we lived in the home of the Guytons. She loved to make pie crust with Crisco. If we wanted any pie we had to bring our own rationed Crisco.

When George came home from overseas he called first from New Jersey, then from Camp Chaffee. Finally he got to Norman by bus. I was so very happy to see him. All those things go without saying! We had married, he had survived the war, and now he was back safe and sound. He looked good. All the crew was now home safe and sound.

After VE Day in June, 1945, it was time for me to return to Norman to work at Oklahoma University since VJ day was coming soon. (I had just taken a leave to go with George those few months.) Then George was discharged and returned to school for the fall semester.

Family



2001

Back Row: Timothy Yearout, John, George Jr. and Kristie Defenbaugh
Front Row: Michael and Louise Yearout, Dorothy and George Defenbaugh,
Rebecca Yearout



Grandchildren: John Mark Defenbaugh, Christine Defenbaugh, Rebecca Yearout, Michael Yearout

Hobbies

Dorothy and I have traveled over most of the world—all fifty US states, Puerto Rico, all the countries of Europe, North Africa, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. My love of rocks has been an interesting hobby plus an economical way to have souvenirs of our travels. My granddaughter Rebecca loves to look at my rock collection and listen to stories about where they were found.

My interest in rocks is not just in their age, texture, formation, or material, etc. It has been more in their use—when and where. For example, when I hold a piece of Roman brick and mortar from the Coliseum in Rome, I wonder if it is true that the blood of Christians was mixed with clay and lime to make them. So it is with ash that destroyed Pompeii, and hot mud that destroyed Herculaneum.

On each cruise I have tossed several bottles with money and return notes overboard. Of at least 50 bottles, two have been returned by young boys. Each case has resulted in years of communication. The hobbies of bottle tossing and rock collecting may be the material for another booklet in the future.



George showing granddaughter Rebecca part of his worldwide rock collection, 2001



**George and Dorothy
60th Anniversary, 2003**

Authors note: The original contents of this booklet were provided by audio tape to Dr. Stephen Ambrose to assist in the writing of his book *The Wild Blue* (2001). At my request, the tapes were transcribed and put into booklet format by *We Preserve Memories*. Very few WWII flyers are living and few aircraft exist.

All who can should preserve their memories for family and friends. When thinking back, I am reminded of the words of the song *My Way*, "To think I did all that, not in a shy way, but in my way." – George E. Defenbaugh

Appendix

RESTRICTEDNAME GEORGE E. DEFENBAUGH RANK 1st Lt USAF O-717020 POSITION Sq. Bombardier

MISSION				
DATE	NO	TARGET	TIME	MISSIONS (LBS)
7-12	76	Miramas, France	8:00	3
13	77	Porta Marghera, Italy	4:40	4
15	78	Ploesti, Rumania	7:10	5
16	79	Munich, Germany	6:15	4
17	80	Avignon, France	7:40	5
20	81	Fredrickshaffen, Ger.	6:50	6
21	82	Brno, Czech.	7:30	7
22	83	Ploesti, Rumania	7:50	8
25	84	Linz, Austria	6:50	9
27	85	Budapest, Hungary	5:40	10
28	86	Ploesti, Rumania	6:50	11
31	87	Bucharest, Rumania	6:30	12
8-3	88	Fredrickshaffen, Ger.	6:50	12
6	89	Lyons, France	8:10	14
7	90	Blechnhammer, Germany	7:10	14
10	91	Campina, Rumania	6:55	16
12	92	Gun Positions, France	6:50	17
13	93	Avignon, France	7:20	18
Sq Bombardier 27 Aug 23	103	Ferrara, Italy	4:35	19
27	104	Blechnhammer, Germany	7:30	20
29	106	Kravska-Ostava	7:00	21
9-2	108	Nis, Yugoslavia	4:25	22
4	110	Tagliamento, Italy	5:00	23
8	113	Brod, Yugoslavia	5:10	24
13	116	Oderal, Germany	7:50	25
18	119	Czegled, Hungary	6:40	26
24	123	Athens, Greece	6:00	27
10-12	130	Blechnhammer, Germany	5:35	28
13	131	Bologna, Italy	8:00	29
21	137	Szombathely, Hungary	6:20	30
23	139	North Italy	4:00	31
11-6	145	Vienna, Austria	6:35	32
18	153	Vienna, Italy	6:05	33
19	154	Vienna, Austria	5:05	34
1-19	178	Brod, Yugoslavia	5:20	35

RESTRICTED

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

David G. Bellemere
 DAVID G. BELLEMERE,
 Major, Air Corps,
 Operations Officer.

743 B. Sq. - 455 B. Group - 304 B. Wing -
 15th AF - Base near Cerignola, Italy
 Wing Hq at Foggia, Italy

Flight List