

**815<sup>th</sup>****816<sup>th</sup>****817<sup>th</sup>****840<sup>th</sup>**

# 483RD BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION

(1943) Ephrata, WA – MacDill Field, Tampa, FL – Sterparone, San Severo-Pisa, Italy (1945)

**VOLUME 43**

**December 2020**

**NUMBER 4**

## President's Message

Dear 483rd Members,

We will all remember 2020 as an incredibly challenging year. We unfortunately missed our annual reunion that was postponed but it will certainly be held next September 9-13, 2021 at the same venue in Albuquerque New Mexico. We continue to pray for the health and safety of our veterans and families knowing that we will come together again.

Some of you may have received the November American Legion Magazine. The cover story had a wonderful article and photos about Harvey Pratt, our guest speaker at our 40th Reunion Banquet in Oklahoma City in 2018. As you may recall, Mr. Pratt is a Vietnam Marine veteran and recently retired from the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation where he had a prolific career in forensic law enforcement. His latest grand achievement was being selected to design the National Native American Veterans Memorial that was just dedicated at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC. You can watch Harvey Pratt's memorial design inspirational video online at [legion.org/magazine](http://legion.org/magazine).

We had hoped to visit the Museum of Aviation in Warner Robins this year to see the 483rd Bombardment Group exhibit and meet the staff, but we decided that the meeting should be delayed until it is safer to travel. The 483rd Bombardment Group Association board held a Zoom conference call meeting on October 10th. We discussed pertinent issues, but these video calls are not as effective as in person meetings.

Nancy and I continue to spend limited time with our family helping our adult children and watching our three beautiful grandkids while the parents try to balance their jobs, home school and daycare. With the recent virus surge those family visits are less frequent as we must all be diligent not to get sick. We sadly postponed our traditional Thanksgiving dinner with my mother in Ohio for the first time in decades. We continue to miss spending time together with both Ken (Hoff) and Dolores as they are confined to their adult residences. We can schedule short outdoor "porch" visits but with Chicago winter arriving we must bundle up to chat through a window. We trust that these precautionary measures will be lifted soon as the national vaccination program progresses. We hope you are remaining optimistic during these stressful times. Our veterans lived through the Great Depression and World War II. This pandemic is another generational life challenge, but this too shall pass. We count our blessings daily.

In closing, I am proud to continue to serve as your 483rd Bombardment Group President. Please contact me with any questions or suggestions or just have a friendly chat. Happy Holidays!

**Jay Clifton,  
President**



## Heros of the 483rd Books & CDs Available

Dennis West has a few of the printed Heroes of the 483rd book available for sale to 483rd members for \$200 each (or \$250 for non-483rd members). He has seen them on E-Bay selling for \$450, so this is a bargain for the books. Dennis also has CDs of the book for \$25 each. Proceeds will go to the 483rd treasury.

If you would like to purchase a book or CD, please contact Dennis by email at:

[ironman8x@yahoo.com](mailto:ironman8x@yahoo.com)

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## Notes from the Publicity Chair...

It is the holiday season and I hope that you are safe and well in this, the end of a very difficult year. It will be great to have September of 2021 roll around so we can once again share with everyone.

I thought it might be a good thing to give you a run down on the weather in Albuquerque in September. The climate in Albuquerque is considered high desert and it is still warm during September. The average daytime temperature is 84 degrees. The hottest day on record was September 6, 1976 when the temperature reached 99 degrees.

The average nighttime temperature is 57 with the lowest temperature recorded was 37 degrees on September 30, 1965. It has never frozen overnight in September.

The average monthly rainfall in September is 0.66 inches with rain usually falling between 8 and 9 days. 1942 was the driest September with no rainfall and the wettest September was in 1974 with 3.20 inches of rain. The wettest single day in September was on September 23, 2010 when 1.86 inches fell.

I give you all that information to basically say it should be very pleasant while we are there.

Happy Holidays!!!

**Sandee Maeda**  
**Publicity Chairman**

## Did You Know?

*This section contains reprints of selected stories and other interesting information from newsletters published during the past years and other 483rd BG publications.*

### **GROUND SUPPORT CREWS GET REPLACEMENT PARTS THE HARD WAY**

By Clyde Barnes (840th)

*(reprinted from 483rd Newsletter, Vol 8, No 3, June 1988, pages 5-6)*

On arrival in Italy, the 483rd Bomb Group's aircraft was temporarily assigned to bases being used by other B-17 Groups. The Groups assigned to these airfields quickly "took over" the ownership of many of our Group's new B-17Gs and gave us in return, old worn-out B-17Fs, some having been on over 100 missions, and all were badly in need of constant repairs.

Not long after our base at Sterparone became operational (April 23, 1944), aircraft replacement parts were in very short supply in all squadrons as the base supply depot had not by "Operational Day" been able to firmly establish all of the pipelines from their sources of supply. It soon became necessary (in a few cases) to temporarily remove parts from planes awaiting major replacement parts.

With this problem facing all 483rd Squadrons, an "incident" took place on the 840th's Flight Line that helped us through this period of extreme shortages and made it possible to get many aircraft back on flying status.

This incident had its beginning when a lieutenant drove up in a 6x6 truck to a group of men engaged in making an engine change. The lieutenant jumped out and began asking for men with specific training backgrounds, he wanted a crew chief; one aircraft mechanic; an instrument man, an electrician; two armament men; a communications man; and a bombsight specialist (eight in all). I was the electrician and was told to come along with the others. The truck raced off down the back road to San Severo, then on to the Coast Road along the Adriatic Sea. It was at this time that word was passed back to us that we were

on our way to a salvage job of a four-engine plane that had cracked up.

After reaching the Coast Road we continued on to Termoli. As the truck slowed on the up-grade into town, we saw a most unusual sight—an Italian signorina who was not wearing one of those full-length black bags with a head opening and two long sleeves. This signorina was unbelievably dressed in a brightly colored, form fitting dress that ended at her knees. She also wore silk stockings with high heeled shoes! Not one of us realized that such clothing existed in Italy at that time. Our "GI gang" was so thunderstruck that such a creature existed in all of Italy that it took half a minute before the mating call whistles began. The signorina responded with a not unexpected, typical gesture of the arm.

We continued along the Coast Road for several more miles until we reached a roadblock manned by Canadian troops, showed our trip ticket and were advised we had reached the front lines, to turn left and go as quietly as possible along a dirt road through a forest area for about a mile where we would be met by another trooper. As we approached the end of the road where it entered a large field, another Canadian soldier stepped from behind a tree and stopped us and pointed at the open space and there set a B-24. The trooper said that the plane had run out of fuel and the crew had escaped into their lines.

Our informant also said it would be advisable to keep the plane between our truck and a cluster of trees on the other side of the field as there was a German machine gun emplacement there and that every once in a while the Germans would get off a burst of gun fire hoping to blow up the plane, but as they had not succeeded, that most likely they had sent for a mortar crew to do the job, so if we wanted to salvage anything, we'd best get busy!

Our truck was driven onto the field and approached the B-24 near its tail section window, where we crawled into the plane and began to strip everything we could use. (The B-24 used many of the same parts as the B-17 as you will recall.) You never saw such a busy bunch of GIs once we got inside the plane. We took everything we could find that was loose enough to pick up, and in many cases we pried things from their bases. Soon there

was a steady flow of spare parts going into the truck. Among the things we were able to salvage were: flight instruments; 50 caliber guns; parts of turrets; whole radio consoles; headsets, microphones; bombsight and bombsight panels; electrical voltage regulators and meter panels; turbo supercharger control elements with their electronic regulators, motors, spare ammunition; and the portable generator that all B-24s carried to assist the power supply when starting engines.

No one told us to hurry, we were all expecting a burst of machine gun fire or hearing the "whoof" of a mortar launcher. I don't believe that a four-engine bomber was ever cannibalized any quicker than that B-24. I also know that not one of the salvage party took a deep breath until we had returned to the Coast Road and were headed south to home base.

The good things that came from this worthwhile undertaking was not only the spare parts we obtained, but that we were able to get a number of our planes back on flying status. The use of B-24 parts on a B-17 brought forth the question of whether the B-17s using B-24 parts should be identified as B-17 Liberators - or B-24 Fortresses. This question has not been suitably answered to this day.

The spirit demonstrated by the ground support personnel in this case and in many others where an extra effort was required was evident in all squadrons of the 483rd Bomb Group throughout the period we served in Italy and their dedication then is one of the reasons why even today we are so fond of all of those we served with overseas. It is my feeling that this strong measure of camaraderie exists in no other Bombardment Group Association as strongly as it still does in the 483rd.

## **STERPARONE AIRFIELD IS BORN**

*(reprinted from 483rd Newsletter, Vol 7, No 4,  
August 1987, page 4)*

Company "A", 1st Btn, 21st Engr Avn Regt, arrived at Sterparone on 7 December 1943 and remained until 22 January 1945 when relieved by detachment of Company 'B'.

Sterparone was an agricultural site, heavily cultivated at the time of assignment. The site had a highly active black topsoil, beneath which was a limestone caprock. It was uncertain as to whether or not this would prove an adequate base for the heavy bombers to be based on the field, but as insufficient suitable base material was available to gravel the whole field, it was decided to add a gravel base to those portions of the runway and taxiways most requiring additional strengthening. Construction of the 1 10' x 6000' runway, fifty-six heavy bomber hardstands and connecting the taxiways, started 13 December 1943 with heavy equipment working on the runway subgrade; grading the surface for the pierced steel plank, and removing obstacles. Pierced steel plank laying operations were started 28 December, and the runway was operational 2 January, though the first plane did not land until 22 April. Drainage was constructed coincidentally with pierced steel plank laying operations. After the field had become operational, it was decided to remove the pierced steel plank from the taxiways and replace it with gravel. A second gravel pit was located and this project undertaken. Buildings were constructed for housing personnel of the Bomb Group and a Butler hanger was constructed for the repairing of planes. On 3 September 1944 construction began on a dry weather runway 150' x 5800' parallel to the pierced steel plank runway. This runway was constructed so the planes could operate while repairs were made to the pierced steel plank runway. Under the heavy traffic of the bombers, the natural soil base of the runway had failed and the whole runway was rapidly deteriorating. The dry weather runway was completed 1 October 1944 and the planes shifted to it immediately. The pierced steel plank on the runway was rolled up, a gravel base added and the pierced steel plank rerolled into position again. Because the rainy season had arrived and the possibility of the dry weather runway becoming inoperational at any time, it was necessary to roll only limited sections of the pierced steel plank runway so that it could be made operational in 12 hours should the need arise. Work was completed 24 December 1944, and the general maintenance carried on until 22 January when Company "A" was relieved by a detachment

from Company "B". Company "B" continued with the maintenance of the field until 20 June when work on the removal of the pierced steel plank was started. All pierced steel plank was removed and is being rehabilitated and shipped. Buildings are being dismantled, and other salvageable materials collected.

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### \*\*\* Fundraising Appeal \*\*\*

This Holiday season we give thanks for many things in our lives - including our freedom & democracy. Without the courage of the American military in World War II, including the 483<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group, we may not be here to enjoy the fruits of their sacrifice.

The **483<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group Legacy Fund** is dedicated to preserving the memory & the legacy of the heroic men who bravely comprised this B-17 bomb group during World War II. Without their determination and sacrifice the World War II may not have had the same outcome as it did.

The **483<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group Legacy Fund** is an IRS recognized 501(c)3 organization that will provide a long-term vehicle to continue the goals and purposes of the already existing 483<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association. These goals and purposes include, financially supporting the wonderful 483<sup>rd</sup> display at the Museum of Aviation at Warner Robins Air Force Base in Georgia and providing annual scholarships to college students who are pursuing a future career in military aviation.

We are asking you to consider making an end-of-year contribution to the **483<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group Legacy Fund** to help us continue their legacy! There are two ways that you can make a charitable contribution:

- You can write a check for the **483<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group Legacy Fund** and send it to: Mr. David Raffel, 612 Central Street Apt #102, Kansas City, MO 64105.
- You can also go to [www.gofundme.com/483rd-bombardment-group-legacy-fund](http://www.gofundme.com/483rd-bombardment-group-legacy-fund) and contribute using your credit card.

If you have any questions, or want more information, contact Dave Raffel at [DaveRaffel@Gmail.com](mailto:DaveRaffel@Gmail.com). Also, please feel free to



share this appeal with your family and friends thru e-mail and social media.

THANK YOU, and HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

\*\*\* Donations are tax-deductible. \*\*\*

**\* Support the 483<sup>rd</sup> in Your Estate Plan \***

You can provide vital financial support for the 483<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group Legacy Fund even after you're gone, so that we can continue our mission of perpetuating the legacy of our heroes from the Greatest Generation.

This can be done by a "bequest" in your estate plan.

A bequest is a gift from your estate, made by including language in your will or living trust, that names the **483<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Legacy Fund** as a beneficiary. The bequest can be made as a specific dollar amount, percentage of your estate, or specific property.

Here is some sample bequest language:

*"I, (your name), of (your city, state, zip), give, devise, and bequest to the 483<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group Legacy Fund (specific dollar amount, percentage of your estate, or specific property) to be used towards fulfilling the mission of the organization."*

Whatever amount you would consider giving would make a huge difference in our long-term efforts. Your bequest will not only keep our organization vibrant, but it will also help us perpetuate the legacy of the 483<sup>rd</sup> at the Museum of Aviation at Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins, Georgia. We also will be distributing annual scholarships to ROTC students pursuing careers in military aviation.

For more information on how this can be done, we encourage you to consult with your personal accountant or estate planning attorney. If we can also be of help to you in achieving your planned giving goals for the 483<sup>rd</sup>, please feel free to contact Dave Raffel at [DaveRaffel@Gmail.com](mailto:DaveRaffel@Gmail.com).

**In case you're interested** – The NTSB has opened a docket on the ill-fated Collings Foundation B-17 crash that occurred in October 2019. You may recall the B-17 crashed and burned while flying 10 passengers and 3 crew on a living history flight in Connecticut – 5 passengers and 1 crew survived the crash. The plane's #3 & #4 engines developed issues upon takeoff and the B-17 was unable to maintain sufficient altitude to return to the runway. An article on the investigation can be found at <https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2020/december/16/ntsb-opens-docket-on-collings-foundation-crash> and the NTSB investigation documents, including hundreds of pages including witness interview reports and findings from detailed examination for 2 of the bomber's engines can be found at <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=100356>.

## **YOUR 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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## **PAST PRESIDENTS**

Phillip A. Luetke (Deceased) 1980  
William A. Haskins (Deceased) 1981  
James V. Reardon (Deceased) 1982-83  
Lynn M. Borders (Deceased) 1984  
Joseph W. Gawthrop (Deceased) 1984  
M.L. "Bob" Hottman 1985 (Deceased)  
Harry K. Keller (Deceased) 1986  
Donald R. Speegle (Deceased) 1987  
James "Russ" Heflin (Deceased) 1988  
Evan M. "Jack" Edwards (Deceased) 1989  
Ralph H. Simpson (Deceased) 1990  
Harry P. Millnamow (Deceased) 1991  
William P. Dunn (Deceased) 1992  
Edward T. Cotton (Deceased) 1993  
Harry D. Whye (Deceased) 1994  
Ray H. Whitaker (Deceased) 1995  
Harold D. Leveridge (Deceased) 1996  
William I. Jeffs (Deceased) 1997  
George F. Stovall 1998 (Deceased)  
John A. Campbell (Deceased) 1999  
Verne H. Cole (Deceased) 2000  
Benjamin H. Adams Jr. (Deceased) 2001  
Robert W. Mitchell (Deceased) 2002  
John P. Nobel (Deceased) 2003  
Curtis B. Clark 2004  
Fredric A. Hicks (Deceased) 2005  
Wilfrid Hebert (Deceased) 2006  
Stanton "Mike" Rickey 2007  
Ellis Maxey (Deceased) 2008  
Jim Ashley (Deceased) 2009  
Dennis West 2010, 2011, 2012, 2017  
Sandee West Maeda 2013, 2014, 2015  
Harold Chubbs (Deceased) 2016  
Russell Daniel 2018  
Mark Halebsky 2019