

the airbase and would like to hear from any of the members who might remember me. I cannot remember any specific names except for one Nelson Biaggio, who was of Italian descent, and was originally from California. My address is: Davenia, Matteo, Via Savona W 108, Milan, Italy.



Chula Vista ,California
Dear Bud

I ran across some interesting information pertaining to our WWII experiences.

When I read the article about George McGovern it struck a bell. I looked into my records and sure enough I had a flimsy for the mission and the date listed in the article. I flew most of my missions as Group Staff.

The process of elimination would indicate that McGovern may have flown with either the 451st or 484th. Please check your records.

(Editors Note: We did check the records and found that McGovern flew with the 455th Bomb group that was based at San Giovanni just a few miles north of Torretta. See the book by Robert Sam Anson, " McGovern, A Biography)

The McGovern Article

Former Senator George McGovern said in a talk at the National Air & Space Museum May 18, 1989 that he was haunted for 40 years by the fear, which proved unfounded, that he had killed an innocent Austrian farm family when he jettisoned a loose bomb from the B-24 bomber he was piloting near the end of World War II.

McGovern, who was defeated by Richard Nixon in the 1972 presidential election, flew 35 combat missions against Nazi German industrial targets as a pilot of the "Dakota Queen" a B-24 Liberator with the 455th Bomb Group 15th Air Force.

Returning to his home base from a bombing run over Austria on March 14, 1945, McGovern said that his crew reported that the plane still carried a live bomb which had caught in its rack and was dangling from the bomb bay. The crew finally succeeded in dislodging the bomb before the plane landed.

"We saw it fall and hit in the middle of a farm yard just as the clock showed 12 noon," he said. "The house, barn and other buildings flew in all directions. I envisioned a young farm family sitting down for their noon meal blown to pieces. "

"When I landed back at our base in Italy, I was handed a cable saying that Eleanor had given birth to our first child, our daughter Ann. The thought went through my mind that we had brought a child into the world and that same day I had killed someone else's children."

In 1985, while he was a guest professor at the University of Innsbruck in Austria, he said he recalled the incident, "that still haunts me many years later" during a taped interview for an Austrian television documentary about World War II.

After the interview was broadcast he said, "an elderly Austrian farmer telephoned the TV station and said that the farmhouse I had described bombing was his. "He saw the bomb coming and sought safety," McGovern continued. "No one was hurt. We hated Adolph Hitler' the man said, ' and if bombing our farmhouse helped in anyway to bring him down, tell Senator

McGovern we are grateful.' "So after 40 years I was exonerated from the incident that had bothered me since World War II."

Earlier in the war, McGovern's plane lost two of its four engines during a raid on the Skoda ammunition works at Pilsen, Czechoslovakia. The 22 year old pilot nursed the crippled plane to a safe emergency landing, despite flames in a third engine, on a short runway on an island in the Adriatic Sea. That feat earned McGovern the Distinguished Flying Cross.



Montrose, Colorado
Dear Bud

For all those interested, I received a note from Bob Picken, 764 Squadron, telling me that Rockford, Illinois has a combat fliers club which meets monthly for breakfast with about 190 attendees. Members living nearby can drop in and perhaps meet an old buddy

TV Stradley 764 Squadron



This letter was recently sent to the editor of Smithsonian Air & Space Magazine by one of our members, John H Williamson 766 Squadron, regarding the effects of oxygen starvation.

Lebanon, New Hampshire
To the "Letters" Editor:

"The flight of the Bumblebee," (October-November issue) is of significance to me for two reasons. First, it provides me with the name of a 332nd fighter pilot to whom four and half decades later I can extend my thanks for making those rendezvous with our B-24 formations on the far side of the Alps. Even though German fighter activity had declined by the time I arrived in Italy in late 1944, the sight of those beautiful little P-51's gave such reassurance to everyone inside those lumbering Liberators. So to Louis Purnell, and perhaps other members of the 332nd, here is a belated salute from one of those you protected so well.

Secondly, I have the dubious distinction of also suffering loss of oxygen on a combat mission. Louis reports that he heard music, so did I and I remember humming along with it. I also remember trying to touch our wing tip to that of the lead plane in our box, a feat that seemed inordinately amusing to me. When the euphoria suddenly stopped, something made me glance down. I saw the nose of my oxygen mask dangling free, hit the other pilot and passed out.

A savage burst of pain in my head accompanied by a simultaneous bright red flash were my next sensations as the engineer gave me oxygen from a portable bottle. I assume that the difference between Louis' recovery and mine was due to his gradual re-oxygenation as opposed to my "quickie."

At the recent 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association reunion, the Association president and I talked about inviting members of the 332nd to a subsequent get-together. I am sending a copy of this letter as a reminder. During the war, there were many in my unit who wanted to meet the guys who flew the fighters. I am sure they still do.