

Brookfield, WI
Dear Bud:

The maps you provided were most helpful in steering my group of 25 around on our recent visit to the Cerignola area. Naturally, of even greater help was Professor Umberto Albanese, with whom we spent a delightful day on Sunday, October 16. I had written him earlier, then telephoned him on October 15 from Bari. He met us at a prearranged place and then spent the day with us in and around Torretta.

A few days before our meeting, the professor received a phone call from a man he has known for many years and who, as a teenager, worked in the mess hall of the 765th (461st BG) unit. Learning that we were coming, he drove the 550 miles from Milan to spend the day with us. It was a special treat for Linzy Davis - and to see them embrace was a treat for all of us. The 765th headquarters buildings (2) are intact and one still bears lettering from WWII. Linzy felt right at home in the area.

The 825th buildings were largely intact, those who served in the 825th reported. The family now living in the structures made us welcome (thanks in large part to the Professor). Intact on the curved walls of a clay barn were decal-like images of a Petty girl and a Vargas girl from 1944-45. Prowling around an adjacent structure which apparently had housed a bar, I came across the remains of an army fatigues uniform.

Torretta is just about gone. While there were highway signs elsewhere pointing to Torretta, there was no identifying sign of any kind at the place. One ingenious farmer was using steel grid from the wartime runways as flashing on the fence around a livestock enclosure. There were some cattle and goats at Torretta.

All traces of my squadron (824th) buildings were gone, although the landscape looked mighty familiar. In general, the farmland looked rich and profitable, a far cry from its appearance in wartime.

Russ Hayhurst took a lot of video footage which might be of value for the 1995 reunion. I took mainly color prints, a few black & white.

Hope your Caribbean reunion is a huge success.

Sincerely
Bruce Smith

Austin, TX
Dear Bud;

As promised on the Cruise Reunion, here is an account of how our crew was transported to Italy by sea,

We left on a Liberty ship, USS Robert Dale Owens from Newport News, Virginia January 17, 1945 arriving Naples, Italy on February 12, 1945. We were caught in a violent hurricane losing a number of ships in the convoy and considerable damage to our ship, but were able to keep up.

We went by truck from Naples to Bari, then the most unpleasant train trip one can imagine over the mountains in 40 by 8 cars. They had taken all our belongings and locked them up in another car. We nearly froze at night so we proceeded to pick up coal and bits of wood along the way and built a fire in the middle of the car actually burning a hole clear through until we found a large metal can at one stop and kept a fire burning the whole trip. One can imagine what we looked like when we finally got to base on February 19, 1945.

When we arrived at Torretta it was raining hard and too late for

supper. They gave us a six man tent and said good luck. Pitching that big tent in the dark, in the rain, in gumbo mud is another story by itself. To this day I have never forgiven the 825th squadron for this welcome but I guess it prepared us for what was to come later.

We flew our first mission to Moosbierbaum, Austria. They never did check us out with an older crew or send any experienced pilot. Just told us to fall in tail end Charlie's position and do what the lead ship did. This was the worst mission that I remember, taking the most hits we ever received on any other mission. From then on it seemed like a piece of cake in comparison. I believe the ship was Stud Horse an old H model. The rest of the missions went well with no injuries to any of the crew. The last mission was on April 26, and I believe the 15th Air Force also flew their last mission this day or perhaps the next day, April 27.

Our trip back to the states was much more enjoyable. We picked up a new B-24M in Gioia, Italy and flew the Northern Route to Bradley Field, Connecticut

We sure enjoyed the cruise, thanks again for everything,

Best regards,
Bill Wilson 825th Sq.

Our crew (From Orders) 825th Squadron (H)

2/Lt (1092) Carl P Allen	0782450	P
2/Lt (1035) Nicholas Czytajio	0929546	N
2/lt (1051) Harry Schaller	0779231	C/P
F/O (1034) Joseph F Bullock	T135048	B
Cpl (0612) Edmund Synar	38590465	G
Cpl (0757) George Cesario	16138699	R/O
Cpl (0748) William F Wilson	12209526	E
Cpl (0611) James M Hunter	38522303	G
Cpl (0611) Charles L Kern	17136736	G
Cpl (0611) Nicholas Curcon Jr	35608649	G

North Wales, PA
Dear Bud

On page 9 Torretta Flyer 26 I came across the article "Our Longest Mission" that was submitted by Jack Robson. The story brought back memories of nearly fifty years ago. At the Harrisburg reunion in 1993, I met with Jack Robson and Henry Walrond for the first time since the October 14, 1944 mission. Stories of that eventful mission were rehashed over and over. Frank Oliver, Tom Reimer, and Vince Fornier were ill and couldn't make the reunion. Since then Frank Oliver has passed away. Making contact with other members of our crew has not been fruitful.

The loss of the aircraft that day was not the responsibility of any crew member. It was infinitesimal in comparison that all eleven of us finally returned to our unit in one piece. The runaway propeller was of a mechanical failure and just one of those things that could not be rectified in flight. What happened to all the fuel? There was no mistake in fuel transfer as Fred Dodge our engineer did a perfect job. The fact is that we were trying to return to base on three engines with an aircraft that was fuel hungry,

In all our missions I always kept book on fuel consumption. It so