

A Summing up of the History and Activities of the 484th Bomb Group Association, 1981-2001

After twenty years of bringing people together, the 484th Bomb Group Association will close all activity as of the end of the year. The 2001 reunion is the last of twenty reunions held from 1981 to 2001. They were: 1) Torrance, CA-1981 Holiday Inn, 2) Dayton OH-1982 Sheraton Hotel 3) Williamsburg, VA-1983 Hilton Hotel, 4) Orlando, FL-1984 Hyatt Hotel, 5) Torrance, CA-1985 Annual Meeting Holiday Inn, 6) San Antonio, TX 1986- Marriott Riverwalk Hotel, 7) Colorado Springs, CO 1987-Clarion Hotel, in conjunction with the 15th Air Force Assn. reunion, 8) San Francisco, CA-1988, Airport Marriott Hotel, 9) New Orleans, LA-1989, Marriott Hotel, 10) Nashville, TN 1990-Marriott Hotel, 11) Kansas City, 1991-Crown Plaza Hotel, 12) Dearborn, MI 1992- Marriott Dearborn Inn 13) Harrisburg, PA-1993, Marriott Hotel, 14) Cruise-Carnival Cruise Lines-1994, 15) Dayton, OH 1995-Marriott Hotel, 16) San Diego, CA-1996, Hilton Hotel.17) Washington, DC-1997, Marriott Hotel,18) Tucson, AZ, 1998-Hilton Hotel 19), St Louis, MO,1999- Airport Marriott Hotel, 20) Dallas, TX-2000, Airport Marriott Hotel, 21) Atlanta, GA 2001, Airport Marriott Hotel. We have held one singular annual meeting in 1985, one cruise reunion in 1994, and eighteen regular place reunions in the ensuing years.

The association has published 39 Torretta Flyers, 29 each in the new magazine slick paper format and has granted scholarships to 105 Italian high school students and 8 high school students at Harvard School and one student in Washington, DC in the USA. A total of \$53,000 dollars has been awarded for scholarships, from monies contributed by members.

The association has installed a bronze plaque and tree in the Memorial Park adjacent to the United States Air Museum, and a plaque and tree in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA.

With the support of our members, the association has gathered historical data from the National Archives in Washington DC, as researched and copied by member Joe Shugrue, consisting of Mission Reports, and Missing Air Crew Records. From the Military Record Center in St. Louis, Missouri, researched and copied by member Orville Hommert and his wife Katie, the association received the Morning Reports. General William B Keese provided the association with monthly Intelligence Reports and other documents pertaining to the war effort. The story starting on page 12 came from Gen Keese.

Historical microfilm reels were purchased from the Albert E Simpson Memorial Library at Maxwell Field, Alabama, and printed. The summarized history of the 484th Bomb Group was drawn from these reels and printed in the Torretta Flyer No 25 , Winter- Spring 1994.

A master data base was drawn up containing some 5300 names of personnel who passed through the 484th Bomb Group from its inception in Harvard, NE, on 14 September 1943, its deployment overseas late winter, early spring 1944, and to combat operations flown between April 1943 and, May 1945. The number of ground echelon troops such as, armorers, orderly room NCOs, COs, cooks, drivers, fuelers, guards mechanics, storekeepers, to name a few, stayed fairly constant .

On the other hand, flight crew numbers varied each day depending on operational needs, and who was available for any

mission. Provision had to be made for losses due to combat and illness and the number of serviceable aircraft. Flight crews often flew long tiring missions exposed to enemy fire from flak, fighter or both, and therefore could not fly consecutive missions over a long period of say two weeks or more without nervous exhaustion and shell shock. Two to three crews were assigned to each aircraft to relieve each other. As each crew member finished his tour, others were assigned out of replacement depots, or arrived via new aircraft being flown over from the States.

Before the computer and the internet were available, searching for new members was reduced to primitive methods, many potential members could not be found easily in the early years of the Association. When we became computerized, many of the newly found members were physically unable to participate. We were surprised too by the sheer number of members who had already passed on. Most of the reports regarding deceased personnel were sent in by members, and probably is not current, as agencies such as the Social Security Administration or Veterans Administration do not advise of the deaths of persons represented by their organizations unless queried .

The first aircraft to be used in combat were ferried over from Topeka, KS to the Torretta Airdrome in Italy by 484th BG flight crews before the onset of combat. Most of the B-24s assigned to the 484th for delivery overseas afterwards were built by the Ford Motor Co. at Willow Run, MI. Additional B-24s were flown in from the depot at Gioia Del Colle, Italy, as needed, by spare crews.

The three goals Bea and I set out for ourselves have been met. They are :

- 1) Bringing members together in reunion.
- 2) Perpetuating the history of the 484th Bomb Group.
- 3) Creating a Living Memorial and bringing it into fruition by the awarding of scholarship grants.

I want to take this opportunity to thank every member and spouse for their continued support of the organization throughout the years, I want to thank our members for their generosity in making the scholarship awards so successful. No one need tell you that the 484th is well respected and loved in Cerignola, Italy and surrounding country.

I want to thank those particular members who gave so willingly of their time and energy 1) Finding new members, 2) Sending out publicity releases, 3) Being local hosts at the out of town venues, and 4) Contributing stories to the Torretta Flyers.

We cling to one another to say goodbye for the last time, our eyes moist with full emotion, and our hearts and minds struggling to find words to say perfectly that final Goodbye and Thanks, it was a great experience. Yes! It was fun, we made new friends, we laughed and cried, and ate together. We saw great cities and wondrous sites together. The word of oneness was added to our vocabularies. It was the melding of all into a team as in the war years and that was a good team once more to be remembered by all of the living and the ones to come after. Indeed, it was good.

Bud Markel, Founder and President