

331st Air Service Squadron



4th

Annual Reunion Pigeon Forge, TN

Best of luck June + Don

September 29th, Thru October 1st
1994

WELCOME - FOURTH ANNUAL 331st SERVICE SQUADRON REUNION
GRAND HOTEL , PIGEON FORGE, TENN.

WEDNESDAY , SEPT. 28th

Arrival of reunion committee. Set up Hospitality Room. I suggest we have dinner together in Hotel Dining Room.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 29th

Committee take turns to man Hospitality Room .
Meals separately or make your own plans for the group - Post time and place on board.
Entertainment, Thursday night, I suggest we all attend "Dixie Stampede, Dinner and Show". Get your tickets Thursday early afternoon. The show is on horseback. The dinner is unusual.
Trolley runs the Circuit from 8:30 A. M. to 12:30 Midnight. 25¢ per person.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 30th

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner your choice. If you want to get up a group, post time and place on board.

10:00 A. M. meeting of all members in Hospitality Room.

Entertainment - choose your own - if you want a group, post time and place on board.

SATURDAY, OCT. 1st

_____ breakfast together in Hotel Dining Room.

10:00 A. M. members final meeting.

Lunch, your choice

2:00 P.M. Casual pictures - outside.

5:30 P. M. - Dress for pictures in Lobby.

_____ P. M. Banquet

See Banquet Program next page

SUNDAY - Disband after breakfast or according to individual transportation times.

DINNER BANQUET

Dinner will be served _____

VIRGIL ASHWORTH, M. C.

While we wait for dinner

TOM PATTERSON - will read an article on the Flag.

John (Hank) Herth - Western Desert

AFTER DINNER

CARL COOPERRIDER - How and when the 331st was formed.
Get us overseas to Rayak, Syria to Landing Ground 174.

ROBERT CROSS - Your memories at Landing Ground 174 to
Bengazi.

RUDY O'BRADOVICH - - - Time at Bengazi including raid on
Polesti Oil Field

VIRGIL ASHWORTH - Time the Paratroopers were on the
ground at Bengazi.

CORDELL ARNOLD - His time as Line Chief and Bengazi.

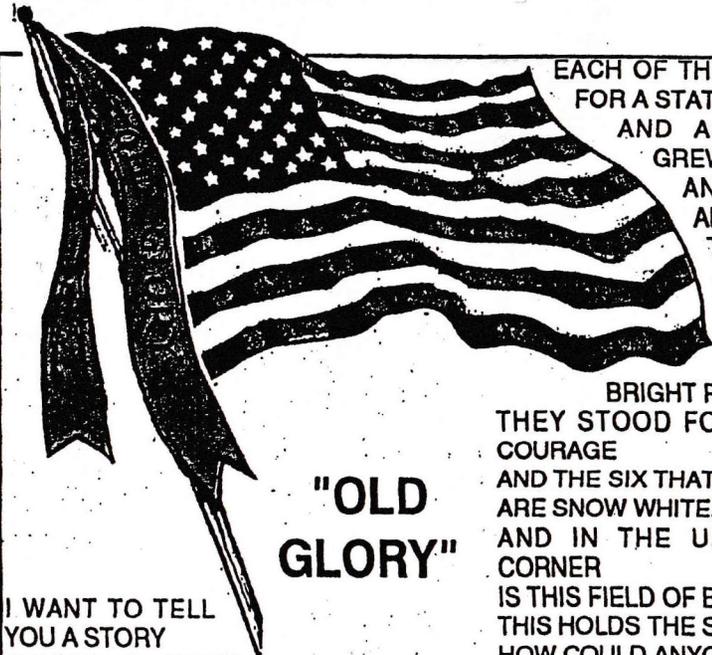
LEON MINER - Enfedeville, Tunisia to Italy and memories
there.

OSCAR LYNCH - Will tell of the raid on Bari Harbor.

I have been told by Jackson Mace, who is an operator for
the V. F. W. Reunion Information, that the 331st is still in
operation and was just last fall still on a station in
Alaska.

ADJOURN - After Bob Koehler leads us in singing a chorus
of "God Bless America".

TOM PATTERSON



"OLD GLORY"

I WANT TO TELL
YOU A STORY
ABOUT A VERY
PRECIOUS FLAG
SOME PEOPLE CALL IT "OLD GLORY"
AND OFTEN MANY PEOPLE BRAG.
SHE HAS CHANGED THROUGHOUT
THE YEARS
BUT STILL SHE FLIES JUST AS STRONG
I HAVE STOOD BESIDE HER THROUGH
BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS
I WILL BE TRUE TO HER, NO MATTER
HOW LONG.
AT FIRST SHE ONLY HAD
13 STARS AND 13 STRIPES
EACH HAD A SPECIAL MEANING
AND NONE OF THEM WERE BAD.

EACH OF THE 13 STARS STOOD
FOR A STATE
AND AS OUR COUNTRY
GREW

ANOTHER STAR WAS
ADDED

TO THE BEAUTIFUL
FIELD OF BLUE.

IT ALSO HAD 13
STRIPES

SEVEN OF A VERY
BRIGHT RED

THEY STOOD FOR SACRIFICE AND
COURAGE

AND THE SIX THAT STOOD FOR PURITY
ARE SNOW WHITE.

AND IN THE UPPER LEFT HAND
CORNER

IS THIS FIELD OF BLUE

THIS HOLDS THE STARS IN UNITY
HOW COULD ANYONE NOT BE TRUE?

NOW THE STARS NUMBER FIFTY

AND THE STRIPES REMAIN THE SAME

AND STILL THE STARS STAND FOR
OUR STATES

ONE WAS ADDED AS INTO THE U.S.
THEY CAME.

"OLD GLORY" IS OUR FLAG

BUT LIKE US VETERANS, TO OTHER
LANDS SHE WENT

WE FOUGHT FOR HER PROUDLY

AND MANY LIVES WERE SPENT.

THE COST OF EACH AND EVERY WAR
WAS LIVES, MONEY, AND TEARS.

I AM SO PROUD THAT I COULD FIGHT

FOR HER

EVEN THOUGH I WAS A MAN, I STILL
HAD MY FEARS.

I WILL ALWAYS DISPLAY HER PROUDLY
AND NEVER MISUSE HER IN ANY WAY

YOU SEE, I AM A VETERAN

A LOYAL AMERICAN, I AM PROUD TO
SAY.

"OLD GLORY" HAS BEEN MANY PLACES
THROUGH MANY WARS TOO

BUT AS WE WERE IN BATTLE

SHE STILL COULD BRING A SMILE TO
OUR FACES.

WHILE WE WERE FIGHTING FOR HER
IT WAS STILL THE BEST SIGHT TO SEE

SOME OF US GAVE OUR LIVES

TO SET OTHERS FREE.

WHETHER IN WAR TIME OR PEACE
TIME

IT IS SO HARD TO UNDERSTAND

HOW SOME PEOPLE CAN DESECRATE
HER

IT IS SUCH A DISGRACE TO OUR LAND

I AM NOT ONE OF THOSE

I CAN SAY WITHOUT REGRET

I WILL DISPLAY HER PROUDLY ONE
LAST TIME

AS YOU PLACE HER ON MY CASKET

THROUGHOUT MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN
TRUE

I AM PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN

I HAVE PROUDLY FLOWN THE
BEAUTIFUL COLORS

OF "OLD GLORY" THE RED, WHITE AND
BLUE.

I HAVE A FEW MORE THINGS TO SAY
IF EVERYONE WOULD FEEL LIKE I DO

"OLD GLORY" WOULD FLY FOREVER
AND A DAY

GOD BLESS THE RED, WHITE, AND THE
BLUE.

WE AS VETERANS FOUGHT TO GIVE
YOU THE RIGHT

FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH, SO SAY
WHAT YOU MAY

BUT DON'T MISUSE "OLD GLORY"
AS SHE FLIES HIGH OVER THE HOME

OF THE FREE AND THE BRAVE.
IF DEDICATION TO OUR FLAG, YOU

CANNOT FIND

JUST LISTEN AS YOU STAND CLOSE BY
AND MANY VETERANS WILL GIVE YOU

A PIECE OF THEIR MIND
AS THEY SALUTE HER WHEN SHE

MARCHES BY.

AND IF YOU STILL CAN'T UNDERSTAND
LURK IN THE SHADOWS, OR STAND

QUITE NEAR

WHILE THEY PROPERLY FOLD HER
AND PLACE HER IN MY WIDOW'S

HANDS.

AS SHE SHEDS YET ANOTHER TEAR.
YOU SEE SHE IS DEDICATED TOO

SHE WILL CARRY ON FOR ME AND
OTHERS TOO

SHE IS JUST AS PROUD OF "OLD
GLORY"

THE FAMOUS RED, WHITE AND BLUE.
K.E. ADAMS

John (Hank) Herth

WESTERN DESERT

Taken from "Stars and Stripes" while serving in Africa
by John (Hank) Herth

Bleak and barren and windy
A waste land as Ancients could tell
Blasted with cold in the winter
In summer, heat hotter than Hell

No place for a white mans dwelling
Where only the camels could roam
and the wandering tribes of the Arabs
Went further in search of a home.

But the Fates had decided before us
that the battle of life would be here
And this land should be hallowed and sacred
To the men who never knew fear.

Twas here that they won and lost battles
Though many forgotten by name
As a group they will live on forever
And others shall hear of their fame.

When peace comes once more to the weary
And the homeless and starving are free
Perhaps some will come as to Mecca
This desert and vastness to see.

As they stand on this ridge and see outward
The azure and purple hue
Will answer the question you wondered
Why was it they called it the blue

Let's hope they can see as a vision
The tanks as they gave what they had
And the guns as they pounded the trenches
With a sound like the heavens gone mad.

May they think of the soldiers there charging
And the planes droning high overhead
And when they come to the group of white crosses
Just ponder a time by the dead.

And here feel the thoughts of the dying
Wondering why all it should be
And remember their valor and glory
Are what gave all a chance to be free.

The Wanderer

A CANDYMAKER'S WITNESS

A candymaker in Indiana wanted to make a candy that would be a witness, so he made the Christmas Candy Cane. He incorporated several symbols for the birth, ministry and death of Jesus Christ.

He began with a stick of pure white, hard candy. White to symbolize the Virgin Birth and the sinless nature of Jesus; and hard to symbolize the Solid Rock, the foundation of the Church, and the firmness of the promises of God.

The candymaker made the candy in the form of a "J" to represent the precious name of Jesus, who came to earth as our Savior. It could also represent the staff of the "Good Shepherd" with which He reaches down into the ditches of the world to lift out the fallen lambs who, like all sheep have gone astray.

Thinking that the candy was somewhat plain, the candymaker stained it with red stripes. He used three small stripes to show the stripes of the scourging Jesus received and by which we are healed. The large red strip was for the blood shed by Christ on the cross so that we could have the promise of eternal life.

Unfortunately, the candy became known as a candy cane - a meaningless decoration seen at Christmas time. But the meaning is still there for those who "have eyes to see and ears to hear" I pray that this symbol will again be used to witness TO THE WONDER OF JESUS AND HIS GREAT LOVE that came down at Christmas and remains the ultimate and dominate force in the universe today.

My Closing Address

Men and your Ladies of the 331st Service Squadron, as the 1994 Reunion comes to a close, I want to express my heart felt gratitude to all who attended.

We came of age in a perilous period in the history of our Country. It changed our lives drastically. There were some things the times could not change, that is, the moral values we had learned in our homes and churches in our separate communities. I have a feeling of belonging to an elite group of people. For all of these, I developed a great respect and a friendship with many, all of which have given me a sense of security and the ability to handle whatever comes ahead. Our generation believed in those values and they were instilled to such a degree that we had a standard by which to guide our lives.

All of us gathered in this room tonight were, for a span of time, thrust together for an incredible intense time, before the real world returned and gave us the chance to start rebuilding our lives.

We were Catholic, Protestant, Jewish - rich and poor. None of that mattered. We came together really only briefly, had a relationship with one another, which we will never experience again as long as we live and that, I think, is something truly special. Gentlemen, I salute you.

We have asked Bobby to lead us in a chorus of God Bless America, after which this Reunion is adjourned.

May our Lord be with us all while we are absent one from another.


Virgil L. Ashworth



said: "We are the children of your sacrifice."

OUTLOOK

Rediscovering his father's generation

It was an extraordinary tribute, capturing the moment and infusing it with the cadence of history. "They may walk with a little less spring in their step, and their ranks are growing thinner," President Clinton declared during last week's 50th anniversary of D-Day, "but let us never forget: When they were young, these men saved the world." Many of the old veterans assembled in Normandy wept unashamedly. But even more surprising than that uncommon sight was what happened among sons and daughters of the men and women who won World War II. They, too, were shedding tears.

ONE WEEK The baby boomers, notorious for their self-importance, have nothing in their experience to compare with the selflessness their fathers displayed at places like Omaha Beach and their mothers showed on the home front. The me generation has always dreamed of creating a new world. As the D-Day celebrations made clear, their parents had already accomplished that remarkable mission before the first baby boomer was born.

In some fundamental ways, the enormous focus on the Normandy invasion piqued the baby boomers' interest in their parents' generation. Even the president discovered new details about his father, William Blythe, who served on the Italian front after the Allied landing at Anzio. Much of Blythe's life has been a mystery to Clinton because he died in an automobile accident a few months before the future president was born. Now, family members have found letters Blythe sent during the war describing his experiences.

In fact, many baby boomers have never gotten a full picture of their parents' lives because the older generation has a natural reticence to talk about itself. Certainly the men and women of World War II have never been comfortable with the self-congratulation so often practiced by their children. But thousands of veterans made an exception during the D-Day commemorations. Many strolled with their children along the beaches and atop the cliffs of Normandy. Reliving their fears and sorrows, they retraced their attack routes and pointed out where a friend had fallen. More than a few asked themselves the classic but unanswerable soldier's question: Why him and not me?

In one compelling moment at Pointe-du-Hoc, Clinton walked awkwardly along the dizzying cliffs with Ken Bargmann, one of 224 Army rangers who stormed their way through barbed wire and machine-gun fire to capture a Nazi stronghold. The old soldier, his gentle face creased with a patient smile, explained to the young president exactly how he had scaled cliffs, pulling himself up hand over hand on ropes. He explained that it was no herculean feat, only a job that needed doing. Clinton's eyes welled up. He managed only a weak smile at Bargmann's son—a disabled Vietnam veteran—and placed his hand gently on the head of the old veteran's grandson. The president felt, aides said later, that he could add nothing to the moment. □ BY KENNETH T. WALSH IN NORMANDY

The enormous focus on Normandy piqued the baby boomers' interest in their parents' generation.



At Omaha Beach. *The president joins D-Day veterans on an invasion tour. Nearby, in a cemetery where 9,386 Americans are buried, he*

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Carl L. Cooperrider
THE 331st PRIOR TO LG 174

The 331st Service Squadron of the 323rd Air Service Group was assembled in January and February, 1942 from cadres drawn from the 42nd Material Squadron and from the 348th.

The cadres were expanded to full strength by transfers from other squadrons and by new recruits. The formation was made at Esler Field, Louisiana under the direction of Commanding Officer, Capt. (?) Paul Cunyas.

The primary purpose of an Air Service Squadron is to provide supplies and mechanical help for aircraft damaged from missions or in need of repairs not readily available from the ground crews of the bomb or fighter groups at their air base.

The officers of the 331st at organization were: Commanding Officer - Maj. Paul Cunyas, Adjutant - Lt. Oakley Morton III, Engineering - Lt. Sanders, Supply - Cptn. Harry Percy, and Medics - Lt. Edward Kapal.

Feb. and Mar. 1942 were spent learning our duties and responsibilities in the new organization and by June it was evident that our place in the war had been found. All the technical supplies and equipment were cataloged and packed in large plywood boxes and coded 6000-H for shipment. Meanwhile the squadron completed its roster of department heads and group leaders in accordance with the Table of Basic Allowances.

In early July, 1942 the Squadron sent the crated materials to the railroad depot. The personnel was alerted for an imminent move. On July 15 we boarded a troop train and headed for Fort Dix, New Jersey. The stay at Fort Dix was short. After receiving our overseas photos and completing most of our personal arrangements with families or friends, we were given berth tickets for our trip. Since the ship was docked at a New York City pier, it seemed obvious that we were headed for the European Theater.

Knowing little or nothing about naval terms or procedure, we did a lot of speculation as to just what we should do, anticipate, and guess our destination. But once on board, the rules and regulations were explained, we began to feel like sailors even though the largest boat most of us Mid-Westeners had ever boarded was a row boat.

The serious aspect of our cruise was difficult to recognize. We boarded the "Louis Pasteur" and were amazed at her size. We were unaware that we were to be passengers on one of the largest luxury cruise liners in the world at that time. This French liner had been impounded by the British Navy when, either by coincidence or plan, the ship was docked at a Canadian port at the time the French government was overcome by the Nazis. The Pasteur had been converted into a troop carrier under command of the Royal Navy and staffed by an experienced and skillful crew.

The liner could travel 8 days without refueling. Sailing on a zig-zag course for 24 hours each day is not conducive to fuel economy but the irregular weaving confused the German U Boats and sometimes the passengers. We were warned that the Atlantic was infested with submarines on the prowl for any American or British ships, regardless of the cargo.

MLA

The trip from New York to Freetown in Sierra Leone on the West coast of Africa 8 degrees north of the Equator was made on peaceful and gentle seas. The size of the cruise ship kept sea sickness at a minimum there being little sense of a rocking motion. The ship was refueled and we again headed out to sea.

On July 26 we crossed the Equator and were on our way for a trip around the Cape of Good Hope. The previous 10 or 15 days at sea had given us our sea legs and enabled us to round the Cape through a mid-winter weather system that caused 35 foot waves, a 30 degree list of the ship, and strong winds while causing a minimum amount of sickness.

On August 2, 1942 we were docked at Durban, South Africa for 3 days of refueling and servicing of the ship. On August 3 we were given shore leave until 1700 hour to visit the city. The season being winter, it was not a good time to see the better side of a city's activities.

Next day we left Durban and began the trip north in the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea. The trip was peaceful and uneventful and on August 16 we docked at Shmalia, Egypt, a port on the Red Sea, and disembarked.

The troops were directed to a British encampment set up as a transient station for replacements in the 8th Army. The large tropical tents provided enough space for at least 15 men and their possessions while arrangements were made for further movement.

We were greeted in Egypt with clear skies, 115 degree heat, desert sand, and those infernal desert flies. Of these, the flies were the worst torment. Oddly enough they didn't seem to bother the food in the mess kit while one tried to eat; rather they persisted in their attack on the neck and face. About the only relief was to wear a helmet liner with a mosquito net draped over it while eating.

During a week or so at the transient camp, we were issued our M-1 rifles and the job of removing the Cosmoline grease from them. We then loaded on an Egyptian train and headed northerly. The scenery through the Sinai Desert was mostly sand and seeming endless. Somewhere in Palestine, probably Haifa, the Egyptian railroad ended and the squadron and its possessions had to be transferred to a Syrian train because the tracks are a different gauge.

The trip was routine. The dry barren land was monotonous to watch. We arrived at Rayak, Syria and were taken to a former French airfield. We were assigned space in a large building which had once housed some personnel for this airfield. The structure which became our quarters was made of marble and was a good example of plush living by the French officials assigned to operate the airport in by-gone days.

We were allotted floor space in the several rooms required, issued at least 3 blankets and a comforter. No cots were available and we were to bunk on the marble floors which were cold and hard. Mosquitoes were bad but the rooms were equipped with canopy type nets suspended from the ceiling over each sleeping space. A day or so after our arrival men complained about bug bites. Inspection showed the nets were infested with bed-bugs (big fellows). A fumigation cleared the building of the bugs but the next infliction was a round of dysentery. At this point, it was found that the medical chest contained nothing but basic first aid and the only available cure for our problem was castor oil. Oddly enough the half glass of oil did its work and we were able to pursue our jobs or at least try with the material we had.

As I recall there were several hangers at the airfield. One of the hangers was nearly full of P-40 belly tanks stacked very high. There was also a vast supply of resealable fuel tanks for the bombers.

The appearance was that of an accumulation of tanks that would never be used. No where could we find the supplies that had been so carefully packed and shipped from Louisiana. Transport planes landed daily with spare parts for the Fighter and Bomb groups. These transport planes had been the property of Pan-Am Air Lines. They had been appropriated by the Army Air Corps, cleared of passenger seats and fitted to carry freight. The crews were drafted into military status by an option granted as a practical matter and on a voluntary basis. (Many of these crew members later transferred to the 98th Bomb Group as B-24 fliers and took part in the raids from Benghazi.)

Our arrival at Rayak coincided with the arrival of the American Air Support urgently needed by the 8th Army to begin and sustain a drive against Rommel's forces at El Alemein. The 57th Fighter Group with it's P-40s; the 12th Bomb Group with it's B-25s; The 98th and 376th Bomb Groups with their B-24s had flown their planes and crews to the area and began immediately to bolster the RAF in its assignment of allowing Rommel's forces no farther East than Alemein. We were stationed at Rayak from August 23 to October 26 (about 2 months). We had access to news releases of the Alemein situation by way of the Egyptian mail (a Cairo Newspaper). We were in the midst of a Nazi pincer strategy and not really aware of it. If the Russian hold on Stalingrad broke or Rommel could get enough supplies to renew his offensive east through Egypt, the path to the Arabian oil fields was open for the Nazis.

The addition of the 2 B-24 groups for harbor and supply line disruption; the B-25s for strategic bombing; and the 57th Fighter Group for front line defense, offense, and airfield protection changed the schedule for the 8th Army offensive and helped put Montgomery's forces in the role of aggressor. By October 23, 1942 the relentless attacks on Rommel's supplies into Tobruk and Benghazi by the Allied Air Forces together with the increased front line protection of the fighter planes, enabled Gen. Montgomery's 8th Army to begin an all-out effort at driving the Nazis westerly and then keep the offensive moving.

By October 26th Tobruk and its harbor were occupied and the 8th Army was moving west several miles each day. On this date the 331st moved from Rayak to LG 174 which was a level area 174 miles west from the Suez Canal and near a fresh water supply source in this vast Egyptian desert. This spot was to be our operational base for the rest of 1942 and until the move to Benina Main at Benghazi, Libya on February 21, 1943.

Nearly a year had passed from our Squadron formation until our outfit collected enough of its equipment to efficiently act as a Service Squadron.

Rudy O'Badovich - Memories at Bengazi including August 1st 1943
Raid over Rominain Oil Fields.

Just call me "Lucky". That is the one word I ponder as I reflect on those years. First of all, this farm boy enlisted in the Air Corp and I guess that was smart and lucky. I have no regrets being away from home for five years, three of them over seas. I guess it was luck that put me with the original cadre of the 331st, the greatest bunch of guys in the world.

After the rigors of forming a service squadron we were issued heavy boots and winter clothes and sent to Hamilton Field, N.Y. I was with twenty other guys leaving on an advanced detail by convoy of ten freighters. Soon after departure we lost one ship off the coast of South Carolina. We were lucky that our ship wasn't hit for we carried the ammunition, 97 box car loads in all. We stopped in Parnambuco, Brazil for fuel but couldn't stay because a German "pocket battleship" was prowling the area, sinking everything in its sights. After we departed they sank five ships in that harbor. Call me "Lucky".

It took us 51 days to lumber around South Africa to our destination in Suez. Most of you were seasoned troops by the time we got there. Anyway, just like the U.S. Postal Service, we eventually caught up (in Rayak, Syria). We joined up at Landing Ground 174 to a new bunch of P-40 fighters.

****Our stay will probably be covered by one of the other guys.****

From 174 we went to Bengazi, a part of the world that was then just a brown spot on the map. With B-24 bombers as our charge, we had plenty of excitement, including some enemy paratrooper raids. Our own raid was a low level attack by 176 bombers on Ploesti. I got a lump of shrapnel from one of the big bombs layin around the area. Another time, luck and God were with Virgil Ashworth and I. We found ourselves in a mine field. When we realized our plight, we stopped, looked down, and saw the wire of a "Bouncing Betty". One more step and When we stopped shaking we picked and prayed our way out. So many memories, good and bad, but my luck held out. If anyone is still awake, I turn it over to...

Robert Cross - At Landing Ground 174 - front
line airfield during Battle of
Alemein in Egypt Sept. 23rd, 1942
to Bengazi.

August 22, 1994

331st SERVICE SQUADRON AT LANDING GROUND 174, EGYPT

The time was 10 p.m., Oct. 23, 1942. The final battle for North Africa began. The British 8th army began a relentless pounding of Rommel's German-Italian forces, known now as the battle of El Alamein.

It was not many hours prior to this that the 331st moved in from Syria to a flat spot in the Sahara desert, known as L.G. 174. This was about 25 miles mostly west of Alexandria and 18 miles east of the front lines at El Alamein. It could otherwise be described as being in the middle of nowhere.

Few could sleep that night after the bombardment started. Many were out digging slit trenches by the light of the explosions.

British and U. S. air support was essential to hammer the enemy supply lines which were stretched from Tubruq. The P40's at L.G. 174 were flying missions almost constantly. The result was that more and more planes were placed on our status for some kind of repair. It finally reached a point where we had more planes than mechanics to work on them.

I think it was about this time that we we were hit with a 3 day sand storm. The really bad news came when the storm subsided and we returned to work. There were only a few, if any, planes that had been protected with exhaust and intake dust covers. The result was that all those unprotected engines were filled with sand and had to be overhauled.

The sand blew so intensely that first night that when I stood outside, I could not see my feet with a flashlight shining down from my waist. Some lost their tents and ended up spending the night in the mess tent. One guard stayed on his post and became blinded by the sand. A group making their way to the mess tent found him and got him in. My own tent partially collapsed under the weight of the sand.

Weather during the winter was unusually warm and pleasant during the midday but nights were cold. Many went to work in sheepskin jackets in the morning but shed them by 10 am.

Finally, we were allowed a 24 hour leave every week or so. A truck was sent to Alexandria every day to take in those with a day off and bring those back from the day before. I looked forward to those days to get a couple of good meals at Athineos and nights stay at a pension (hotel).

The sad memory was the death of our Engineering officer Lt. Sanders who crashed while checking out a P-40 which had just been repaired. A few others and myself were one of the first ones at the scene. The memory of him still sitting in the cockpit engulfed in flames still haunts me. I still keep thinking was there something that I or we could have done but we didn't have any fire fighting equipment. There was the danger that the gas tanks would explode.

I also witnessed the death of a civilian from Douglas Aircraft who was crushed under the collapsed nose of a B-24. This also haunts me.

We knew people were being killed every day, but when you see it happen yourself to someone, you know it hits home.

(Bob) Robert K. Cross

VIRGIL ASHWORTH - Time the Paratroopers were on the ground at Bengazi.

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At Bengazi there was enough soil to get muddy. We were about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from our work area. One morning they found 21 Italian parachutes, after which there was a search made but found no one. We put on extra guards. I don't know what other units did but it was dark of the moon and you could hold your hand before your face and not see it. We had five B-24 s parked in a line behind the hanger, the British Unit was East of us, the 98th on the North side of the field. I don't know why no guards caught this but at 4:00 A M we were awakened by the 3000 pound bomber exploding. I rolled out of my bunk, put on my helmet and hunkered down, trying to make myself small as I could. Two men ran over me getting to the trench outside. I looked up and saw the most blue and red sky. Rudy said "I've been hit". Sam Larosa and I went to him. He had been sleeping with his knees up. There was a hole in the tent and if he had been sleeping with his knees down the shrapnal would have hit him in the face. He went to the Medic. We dressed and went to engineering. There were two British planes burning and one B-24. Tom Brethrick said to me it has to be fire bombs. We searched the other planes. The one burning was on the East end, the guard had been sitting under the next. It was clean. We found three fire bombs on the other three - 9 in all. Tom took them off and I carried them 50 feet from the planes and laid them in a row. Tom got a Soldier's medal for taking them off. I was not mentioned. We heard some of the 98th guards were knifed. No paratroopers were found.

Next day, back at Engineering things went well. Still no one was found. That night I drew guard duty 10 until 2. The guard tent was just across the road from the old hanger. A 12 foot fence, between the hanger and the road. The guards got on the truck, the Sargent of the Guards drove us to our post. The O D was Captain Percy. At my post the other guard had been under the middle plane. There were three. I had been working on the one on the south end. My tool box was setting against the outside wheel. I laid my jacket on the tool box and sat down to listen for unusual noises. I could hear the half track patrolling the runway. It did not disturb the sounds around me except a moment or two when it was at the nearest point. Outside the thump, thump of a desert rat and crickets and that was it.

Shortly after eleven I heard something scrape metal ever so lightly then nothing. Later I heard a weed break. The wind always blew sand and grit on the concrete apron between me and the bombed out hanger. You would hear it grit when you stepped on it, only this man was not walking. He was crawling flat on his belly. He could not help the sound, but what he did not know was that the sound spread through the concrete apron and I could discern a sure direction but could not tell his distance from me. He

would move once and wait. I remembered I was wearing an illuminating watch. I put it in my shirt pocket and heard him grunt his disapproval. It took him over an hour to cross the apron. When he reached the far ground I could tell the direction. Seemed he crawled to a point about 50 feet due east of me. He started a straight line toward me. Another half hour had passed. I knew if I fired and missed he would have my sure location. I had a clip in the rifle, a shell in the chamber and a clip in my right hand so when the first clip ejected, I could place another in my left a clip I could grab and do the same. I wanted to excite him from the first shot. He was getting too close. I held my breath trying to pin point him. He could hold his breath longer than I. He was too close now. I pulled the trigger, kept pulling it, heard the clip come out and injected the second one. He was running back the way he had come. I heard noises and cursing as he ran over things and heard my clip come out. I injected the third. I heard two shots from in front of the hanger and heard the wire fence fuss as he climbed it. I got to the edge of the hanger as the lights from the guard truck came on. He was standing in the lights with his hands up. They took him to the stockade. The O D said that is the first time I ever heard an eight shot rifle fire 16 times without reloading.

Until we went to Italy we had a man, I don't remember his name who was multi-lingual. Next morning he took two breakfasts and he went to eat with the new prisoner. The guard let him in. He wore prison denim and told him he was a trusty. He said we are breaking out of this place and if I know how to reach your friends, I can alert them. We will have a better chance together. The prisoner told of a room cut into the quarry on the mountain. The "Trusty" got up, walked to the door, took a key from his pocket, unlocked the door and left. The prisoner knew he had been had.

About nine in the morning about 20 British M. P.s came by on their way to get the paratroopers hid in the mountain. I quit work, climbed up on the plane to watch the paratroopers run them off the mountain. They stopped at a safe distance and watched. I went back to work. Three hours later there came about 40 soldiers, Indian Sikhs and Sudinese led by a South African Captain. They had guns of all kinds, bands of ammunition - more on each man than I could carry. The Italians came out without a fight.

Page 1

FOR 331ST MAINTENANCE SQUADRON

As I Remember Our Move from Bengausi to Enfideville

As usual, there were very few people in the squadron who knew that we would be moving to Enfideville. Several days before the move was scheduled to take place Col. Snyder came to the maintenance office and said he had located some trailers, that had been left by the Italians, and that I should get a crew together and get several trailers to put our shops and supplies in.

Preparation started that day to get equipment and vehicles ready to leave the next day to find the trailers. We had one welder, two or three mechanics, three for four trucks and a jeep. We planned for at least a three day trip. Following the colonel's directions, we finally located the trailers late on the second afternoon. While the mechanics and truck drivers set up our camp I took our welder, Sgt. Sullivan, with me to inspect all the trailers and select the ones we thought would be the best and easiest to repair. These were towed to where we had camped and as they were brought in, every available mechanic started working on them. We worked two full days and completed the repairs about mid-afternoon of the third day.

The small road we were camped on was perhaps a mile from the main road. When we started to move the repaired trailers, back to our squadron area, I stayed in the rear of the column in case something went wrong so I could keep the group together. When we reached the main road all we could see was a long line of two wheeled donkey carts. As we pulled onto the road the Arab cart drivers pulled their carts to the center of the road to impede our progress. I think Sgt. Boyles was driving the lead truck and since he was driving so slow, I pulled along side and motioned for him to stop. We traded vehicles and I started driving forward, one hand on the horn and the other on the wheel. When I caught up to the donkey carts I pulled to the left, but since none of them moved over I hit at least three of their carts, knocking them out of the road. I continued increasing speed to about 35-40 MPH as the carts moved off the road in front of me. From then on we had no trouble from them.

Shortly after we returned with the trailers, I asked the Colonel for a few days leave. The Colonel got up and we walked outside and he told me that we were moving way up North in a short time, and that when we arrived there I could take whatever time I needed. Within a very few days we were packing up and moving. I was to stay at the rear of the convoy with a truck carrying spare parts for the trucks and jeeps as well as a couple of mechanics and their tools.

The move went exceptionally well until we reached Tripoli, where our trouble began. I can't remember how long we were there, perhaps some of you can. The first sign of trouble was when a long line of yellow Ford trucks, built in Canada for the English army, pulled up. We were given orders to transfer our equipment and supplies to the English trucks, trading our good vehicles for their broken down ones. From this point on it was a nightmare trying to keep these trucks running. I can remember the C2 wrecker towing up to four yellow trucks, at one time, on more than one occasion. I think it was the second day out of Tripoli, we found a nice wide place where we could get off the road, repair the vehicles, and spend the night.

About an hour or so after we stopped, the 32nd Maint. Sqdn. parked across the road from us for the night. Except for our replacements in the 32nd, most of us knew quite a

few of them. Naturally, we wanted to know all that happened to them after we left Esler Field, and they had lots of questions for us as well. After a couple of hours Sgt. Rigor, an old friend of mine dating back to Barksdale, said "I have something to tell you that will give a real kick". Sgt. Rigor started by telling us that when they unloaded off the boat they were to stay at a British camp and were to march from the ship to the camp. Everyone except the CO, Col. Castleman, was dressed in coveralls. The Col. arrived in his dress uniform. At this point in the story Sgt. Rigor had to stop and laugh some. About halfway between the ship and their tents, the air raid alarm sounded. All the men scattered and the Colonel seeing a low place ran and dove in head first. After a few minutes the "all clear" sounded and the men all got up, and fell in ready to go. Shortly after the men had fallen in, the Colonels head showed up above the sand. He climbed out of the hole he had taken cover in and headed toward the men. The group soon realized that Col. Castleman had jumped into the British latrine and was covered from head to toe with sewage.

The remainder of our trip to Enfideville was about like our first day, driving some and towing some, always working on some trucks each time we stopped. We arrived at Enfideville in the afternoon just in time for us to set up camp.

Since Col. Snyder had said I could take a few days off when we reached Enfideville I had big hopes of leaving the next morning to see my brother, who was also stationed in North Africa. The next morning Capt. Morton came and said I would not be going by myself. All these yellow trucks had to be delivered to Bone, a city about 300 miles away. Two days later we started out and it wasn't long until we started towing and stopping for maintenance again. On our third day out, Capt. Morton told me to take the jeep and go see my brother. I arrived at his company area at twelve o'clock and met a couple of soldiers who I asked if they knew the company my brother was in. One informed me that he knew the company and it had been just across the road; however they had moved out about ten o'clock that morning to catch a ship.

Well, I continued on to Bone with our crew. When we checked in with the British at Bone, they told us we had to take the "Lories" (trucks) over the mountain, about 100 miles further up the road. Three days later we returned to the squadron and I have an idea that this group of drivers were happy to see Enfideville.

Cordell Arnold M/Sgt Retired.

Cordell Arnold

Cordel Arnold - Time as Line Chief and memories of Africa and
Italy

Leon Miner - To Enfiddiville, Tunisia to Italy and memories there.

You have all heard of Tunis, the Capital of Tunisia.

The Desert begins at the city limits and stretches south for hundreds of miles. Enfidelvil, a small Arab Village is about sixty miles south of Tunis. Our base was about two or three miles from this village. Water was brought into the base from this village. Big bags on trepods were filled with water and situated around the base for our drinking water. Empty oil drums were sunk into the sand and toilet seats made from packing crates were placed over the tops of the drums, served as our toilets. Our sand colored tents were our homes. We were in our own little world. Days were hot, nights were cold.- cold.

Arabs were frequent callers. They just seemed to spring right out of the sand and they would steal anything which was not nailed down. At one time four new non-coms arrived late at night and were put up in a transient quad tent, Putting their B-bage around the center pole. The next morning everything was gone but for what they had on. I'll bet the Arabs had a field day on the stuff we left behind.

On the eve of our departure for Italy I drew guard duty. As I sat hunched up against a B24s landing gear wheel to absorb a bit of warmth I noticed a dark figure trying to unstrap a tarp from a loaded vehicle. I got off about four rounds but missed him. Colonel Snyder wouldn't recommend me for a sharpshooter medal. A day or so after this incident we were on our way to Bisertti, the Port of Embarkation for Italy. We were all relieved to leave the Desert to the Wogs.

I've forgotten how many days we were in route to the Port, but I well remember the Thanksgiving Day while enroute to the Port. We were bivouacked in a valley and it rained all night - Thanksgiving Day Eve. Then all day Thanksgiving Day. If I remember right, we had been there for a couple of days. The rumor was that the weather was bad and we were waiting for the ships at the Port. So, that afternoon we started pulling out for Bissertti. Finally arriving at the Port, it was still raining and Tindell and I sat under a Low Boy Trailer to keep out of the weather until we were finally allowed to board. It was a miserable night. We were promised a turkey when we boarded, but the vessel, I believe, was an LST, manned by a British crew and they stole our turkey. If I remember right, Tindell and I were the only men from the 331st that were aboard. However there were many G Is from other units with us.

As we boarded the ship we were issued C-Rations, enough for the rest of the trip and across Italy. Prior to our group vacating Enfidelvil, an Advance Group of our squadron were sent ahead to Bari, Italy. I think the B-24s were flown into Brindisi. The LST that I was on landed at Naples. After unloading our equipment we headed southeast to Brindisi.

We could easily have been followed by the trail of empty C-ration cans. At that point of the country one could hear the big guns to the north of us, Going in and out of villages we had to drive around huge cone shaped cement blocks - tank barricades. It was pitiful seeing some of the natives returning to their homes. Some of which were still smouldering.

We eventually arrived in Brindisi meeting up with the squadron. But the next morning I left with Major Van Buskirk, our new Commanding Officer, to to Manduria Air Base. The morning after Arrival there the Major received word of the Bari raid.

Now Oscar Lynch, who was aboard one of the ships that was bombed will continue his story of the Raid on Bari

Thank you all for listening.

Oscar Lynch - Bombing of Harbor at Bari, Italy Dec. 2nd, 1943.

BARI, ITALY

Below is an entry from my diary in November 1943.

"Our small convoy left Hergla, Tunisia at 0200 Tuesday 9 November 1942. The night was cool, cloudy with a half moon. Rain had been falling making the road a quagmire. Twenty minutes out we left two bomb trucks stuck in the mud. Reached Enfidaville at 0300, eight miles. While we were waiting for the 376th Bomb Sq, at 0315, a big "BLACK CAT" strolled across the road right in front of our jeep."

The black cat was a prelude of the unknown things to come at the other end of the trip.

Our ship stopped at Taranto, Italy where we were to have disembarked. Our destination was only about fifty miles inland, Manduria. The harbor was so full of ships waiting to unload that we were ordered to proceed up the coast of Italy to Bari and unload there.

Our trip up the coast was everything you could imagine about a Mediterranean cruise. We were not very far out and could see the shore quite well. The sun was shining and the sea sparkled while we lounged on deck and enjoyed the breeze as the ship headed north to Bari.

The ship was a Liberty ship made especially for cargo and the purpose for which it was being used. We were loaded with bomb trucks, trailers, jeeps, ambulances and various other military vehicles parked fore and aft of the midships cabin area. Life rafts were stacked in the center of the deck in a row surrounded by these vehicles with their front bumpers touching the rafts.

The ship passed, among other towns, Brindisi, Monopoli and Mola di Bari as we traveled north. On the morning of 2 December 1943 there was nothing to indicate that today would be anything but just another casual outing since leaving Bizerte, Tunisia.

Just after dark we could see the harbor lights of Bari, which seemed unusual lit up so brightly, after all there was a war going on. A search light from shore pinpointed us for identification as we dropped anchor about a mile from shore. Most of us retired inside to finish a bridge game we had stopped to take a look outside.

Shortly after we were comfortably settled back into our bridge game, we were suddenly and emphatically interrupted by the loud piercing wailing sound of the ship's air raid siren. The book in which I had been keeping score went quickly into my shirt pocket. After all we would resume the game in a few minutes. We knew what to do and where to go on land in an air raid but just where do you go for cover on board a ship?

The ship's lights were suddenly out and the ship was darkened. I grabbed my camera to go out on deck and take some terrific night shots of the raid, and as I made my way along the companionway, I heard a shout "Make way for a gunner!" There was a bosun closet nearby, I remembered, and I quickly found its door which luckily was open. Not until this year, fifty-one years later, did I know that Lloyd E. Landers was near behind me, after him Steve Kaney, by the engine room door, and somewhere nearby was William E. Peterson.

Just as I swung into the bosun closet a dive bomber planted a bomb down the smokestack into the engine room. I don't remember a noise but a searing wave of flame accompanied by bits of shrapnel engulfed me and the force of the explosion banged me around and onto the floor in the little room. If I had not stepped into that closet just as I did, I would have shared the fate of Steve Kaney who was next to the engine room door. Lloyd E. Landers was hospitalized and suffered amnesia for several days while in the hospital and no one, including himself, knew who he was since his dog tags were lost in the blast. William E. Peterson tied Landers to a rope and lowered him over the side into a life raft. As I said I did not know about them until this year.

After collecting myself and remembering what was going on, I crawled down the passageway to a door leading out onto the deck and out I went. I was on my back and looking up I saw a beautiful fourth of July flare floating in the air above the ship. I said to myself that's a target flare/ Hearing an

airplane in a dive coming in, I rolled under a vehicle and heard him open fire with his machine guns as he made his run. The only thing good about him was that he was a lousy target bomber because his bomb fell alongside the ship sending up a big geyser of water as it hit and exploded. A fellow just can't seem to be able to dig a hole in a steel deck but I tried. Pretty quickly they left us to ourselves and went on to the harbor.

Soon the ship was burning with fire leaping high over the cabin area above the engine room. The order to abandon ship was given over the ship's intercom. Some one, I do not know who, and I climbed up on the life rafts and started pushing them down onto the vehicles below so that the fellows could take them to the ship's rail and toss them overboard. The first ones were not tied to the railing and the men were jumping over after them. We told them to tie the raft with the rope attached to the railing and slide down the rope into the raft. One man ran up to the rafts and yelled at us above "Stop! Stop! You are going to break my ambulance windshield!" I looked at my unknown friend and he looked at me. We looked behind us at the flames and heard small arms ammunition going off below decks. Our good old trusty ship was beginning to list slightly getting ready to settle to it's final resting place on the bottom of the Adriatic Sea. The next raft went squarely into the ambulance windshield shattering it into pieces. The man below disappeared without saying another word.

After all of the rafts were disbursed, my friend and I dragged one over to the side, tied it, and slid down the rope into the raft. I wanted to get away from that ship fast since I had heard stories of small life boats and rafts being sucked under with the sinking of a ship. We did get away. The last I remember of the ship was that it had developed quite a list and was burning badly. In the harbor the raiders had hit and sunk numerous ships including an ammunition ship which blew with a tremendous sound.

My luck was still holding out, I had ended up in a raft with the ship's radio operator, I think he was. By the way that water was cold in the month of December 1943. We paddled and sang songs and hoped we would get picked up soon. The man who I thought was a radio operator produced a flashlight and started blinking it around. After a while we saw an answering beam of light. A British Sub Chaser silently eased up out of the dark beside us. Wet, cold and shivering we climbed up on deck and were taken below

deck and I was put in a bunk wrapped in a blanket. I took my wet camera and a foiled sealed roll of film from my pocket and promptly fell asleep. My luck ran out, when I awoke my camera was gone but the film was still there. So what, I still was alive. Back down the coast to Brindisi went the Sub Chaser where we went to a hospital and were treated for our injuries. The same hospital where Kaney and Landers were taken. They may have been on the same Sub Chaser.

Next the British gave us a complete issue of a British army uniform and eating utensils. When dressed in this outfit I was mistaken several times for a British soldier.

April 29, 1994

David Cunyus:

I am Virgil L. Ashworth. I served with the 331st Service Squadron overseas 2½ years and am currently the President of the 331st Reunion Committee. Your father, Col. Paul A. Cunyus, was Commanding Officer of our Squadron. He was transferred from the 331st while we were still in Africa in 1943.

Oscar Lynch, Vice President of the Reunion Committee, visited with the Col. one morning last fall. We know the Col. is unable to attend our reunion.

Today I received a letter from Oscar suggesting we invite you to our next reunion in Pigeon Forge, Tenn. in your father's stead. Our Reunion will be held

Thursday Sept. 29th

Friday Sept. 30th

Saturday, Oct 1st 1994 at the Grand Hotel.

To make reservations you do not call the Hotel, you need to call National Reservations and ask for Sherry, 1-800-251-9752 or 1-800-251-4444. Wives are welcome.

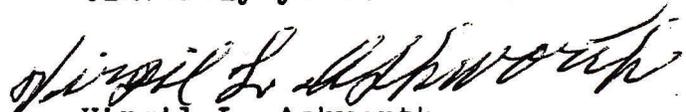
Enclosed is a copy of the Newsletter I sent out the first week of January 1994. I am preparing a letter to send to all the men we have found - 79 alive and about an equal number who, we have been told, have passed away. We are still searching.

If you are favorable to this invitation, please let me know soon.

For the after dinner program we plan to do "The Trail of the 331st Service Squadron." We will use at least five men for this.

Hope to see you in Pigeon Forge. Bye for now and God Bless.

Sincerely yours


Virgil L. Ashworth

May 1, 1994

Mr. Virgil Ashworth
RR 1, Box 67
LaMar, Indiana 47550

Dear Mr. Ashworth:

Thank you very much for your letter of April 29th, addressed to me rather than my father, Col. Paul Cunyus. Also, I appreciate your enclosing the 2-page newsletter with your letter.

After I read it, I passed it on to my dad to read.

He very much appreciates your remembering him, and thinking of him, as well as myself, to invite to the next 331st Service Squadron Reunion in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, Sept. 29th-Oct. 1st, this fall.

Regrettably, my father and I cannot promise at this time to come to the reunion. He is 89, wears hearing aids in both ears, and really can only understand what is written down clearly for him to read. The trip would be too demanding, too tiring, I am afraid, for him. I would, most likely, be unable to come myself. We both appreciate being invited.

Please continue sending the newsletter about the activities and news-worthy items concerning the members of the 331st Squadron. My dad enjoys reading the newsletter and trying to keep up-to-date on everything he can.

He sends his very best regards to all the members, their wives, and families.

As you might not know, he kept a diary, a journal, of his experiences in World War II, including his service in North Africa with the 331st Service Squadron, and later of his service in the invasion of Sicily and Italy, then his transfer to the China-Burma-India Theater, where he served under General Claire Chennault of "Flying Tigers" fame. I am currently trying to obtain the interest of a library so his multi-volume WW II journals can be available to researchers, historians, and anyone else who may have an interest in reading a first-person, "I-was-there-and-this-is-what-I-saw-and-experienced" account. If you know of a library that may be interested, please let me know.

Again, let me thank you for thinking of me, and my father, with your letter, and the invitation to the 331st reunion.

Sincere regards,

David W. Cunyus
Col. Paul A. Cunyus