



Love to
Mama
Dad

In Pursuit of Heroes

Heaven's Hellions, 42-H

by Lee Arbon

Five hundred and forty graduates of class 42-H joined the ranks of Sergeant Pilots in early September of 1942, bringing the total at that time to 1361.

When they reported for primary flying training in February 1942, America was still reeling from the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor and her forces in the Philippines were fighting a losing battle on the Bataan peninsula. Allied forces were locked in desperate battles for their own survival and few American forces were in position to help.

After graduation, the new Sergeant Pilots were promptly assigned to nearly every kind of operational outfit the Army Air Forces had. They took up positions in their new units and joined in the battles raging around the world where they gave a very good account of themselves in the process.

They wound up flying with the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Photo Recon Groups. Also the 67th, 68th and 71st Tactical Recon Groups. Others served with the: 7th, 12th, 17th, and 22nd Bomb Groups; 28th Composite Group in Alaska; and the 38th, 41st, 42nd, 47th, 90th, 307th, 310th, 319th, 320th, 326th, 340th, 344th, 345th, 381st, 388th, 397th, 398th, 451st, 492nd and 501st Bomb Groups. Still others flew with the 1st Fighter Group, the 27th Fighter Bomber Group, 31st, 33rd, 49th, 52nd, 79th, 80th, 81st,

82nd, 318th, 324th, 325th and 350th Fighter Groups. The 313th, 314th, 316th, 317th, and 374th Troop Carrier Groups also received their share of 42-H graduates. I am sure there were more, but these we know of. They served in every theater of war during WWII.

Forty-four of the class (probably more) went overseas as Staff Sergeant Pilots. At least 37 of them belonged to the infamous "67 Sad Sacks", a loose organization of Sergeant Pilots undergoing fighter training at Tallahassee, Florida, who were pulled out for immediate shipment to England to fly Spitfires. The "Sad Sacks" were whimsically organized by Jack Middaugh (Luke) at a time when the Sergeant Pilots felt particularly put upon and were commiserating with one another on their sad plight.

Most of the "Sad Sacks to be" were shipped to England on the *Queen Elizabeth* but eleven shipped out aboard the Danish ship *Buchanan*. Six hundred miles west of the Irish coast the *Buchanan* was torpedoed by a Nazi U-boat. George Myers (Luke) remembers:

"...After our cabin door blew in and we all rushed out to see what the damage was, I observed a melee around the life boats and heard the Captain on the bridge command 'Abandon Ship.' All lights were turned on in the night, so I went back to the cabin to get my flying jacket and lighter case. I found the

lighter, but my jacket was gone. When I got back to the rail the boats were pulling away so I climbed onto the rail and leaped for the knotted rope, planning to slide down it and swim to one of the boats. I missed that rope about as far as I miss some of my puts today. Jack McFarland (Luke) fished me out of the water.

"Fortunately, the day before the sinking, all of us had gone to the ship's locker and outfitted ourselves with swabbie clothing, hats and all. This is the way we were rigged when the (U-boat) commander finally convinced us to come along side. After discussing the matter of our rowing away with the occupants of our life boat, as well as the other issues, the Sub commander sent the *Buchanan* to the bottom with another fish. If that U-boat commander ever had the notion that fighter pilots were aboard that life boat, he could have saved Rommel a lot of misery in Africa."

James Patterson (Luke), also a victim of that sinking, remembers:

"The first life boat was picked up after five days at sea, the second on the morning of the ninth day and the third boat that afternoon. The fourth boat was not picked up until the thirteenth day."

The "Sad Sacks" were promoted to Flight Officer soon after arriving in England and sent on to Ber Shid, North Africa. It was there that Harold Lafferty (Luke) designed the insignia for them. After receiving limited local training they were reassigned to various fighter groups operating in North Africa. The exception being Bob Hoover (Columbus) and Tommy Watts (Ellington) who were assigned to the Depot at Oran as test pilots.

A few of the class came to an early and tragic end. I can remember when my Troop Carrier Group was being briefed for the Natal-Ascension leg of our south Atlantic flight. We were asked to keep an eye out for some A-20s which had disappeared and presumably ditched enroute to Ascension Island. Some of those A-20s were being flown by Sergeant Pilots. We never found them!

One can get a pretty good idea of how hotly they were involved in action around the world during WWII when realizing that

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Left to Right: Staff Sergeant Pilots Sid E. Petty, Martin D. Frain, James H. Patterson and Horace Holik; 2d Lt Melvin G. Lindsay in rear; Staff Sergeant Pilots George Meyer, Fred C. Ogier and Robert E. S. Irvine in Northern Ireland following rescue from drifting lifeboat after the troopship *Buchanan* was torpedoed on the way to England. All Sgt Pilots were graduates of 42-H Luke.

US Army Photograph, Dec 18, 1942

Heroes Continued

eight two (15%) of the class are known to have been killed, became missing in action, or became prisoners of war as a result of enemy action. Among the casualties was Nathaniel Early (Luke) flying Spitfires with the 31st Fighter Group in North Africa. Early, by then a Flight Officer, disappeared near El Guettar, Tunisia on 23 March 1943. Another was Staff Sergeant Pilot James Butler (Luke) with four and one half victories. Butler, flying Spitfires with the 52nd Fighter Group in North Africa failed to return from an aerial battle near the city of Tunis on 20 April 1943. Another casualty of the same battle was Luftwaffe Sgt Pilot Otto Schmitt whose BF-109 was shot down, possibly by Butler!

A number of Sergeant Pilot graduates from Spence were assigned to the 325th Fighter Group and sailed to North Africa on the aircraft carrier USS Ranger and flew their P-40s off the deck to set down in Casa Blanca. Several of them were lost, missing in action or taken prisoner. Among them were Archie J. McKeithen, who had accumulated four victories in his P-40 before colliding with a German JU-88 over North Africa. John Smallsreed was killed after three victories; James Beck and James Dunlap failed to return from a mission. Beck returned to the living, but we do not know what happened to Dunlap. John Rauth was forced to bail out of his wounded P-40 off the Sicilian coast and became a prisoner of war for seven hours, probably a records.

After their stint as test pilots, Bob Hoover and Tommy Watts each volunteered for a combat tour with a Spitfire fighter group. Bob with the 52nd, was subsequently shot down in the Mediterranean and rescued by a German corvette looking for some of their own pilots. He became a prisoner of war for the duration. Tommy Watts, also flying Spitfires, was lost on a mission out of Corsica.

We know that at least seventy five enemy airplanes were credited to thirty one of the class which also produced two aces - Frank Hurlbut (Luke) and Sammy Pierce (Ellington). Frank Hurlbut, one of the "Sad Sacks" wound up flying P-38s with the 82nd Fighter Group in the Mediterranean (joining the members of class 42-C which went overseas with the group) where he scored 9 victories. Sammy Pierce flew his first tour in P-40s with the 49th Fighter Group in New Guinea and P-38s on his second tour with the same group. He got his first victory while still a Staff Sergeant Pilot. Sammy scored six more confirmed victories and five more unconfirmed as a flight officer and commis-



Typical of the make up of many combat squadrons is this photo of the 37 original pilots assigned to the 319th Fighter Sq of the 325th Ftr. Group. This photo was made sometime after January 19, 1943, since the Sergeant Pilots had already been promoted to Flight Officer and flown their P-40s to Casa Blanca from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Ranger. They entered combat a short time later. Included in this photo are thirteen Flight Officers, all former Sergeant Pilots of 42-H Spence. Left to right: Front row: Flight Officers Arthur Murray, John Rauth, & James Dunlap, Jr.; Lt Crowley; F/O Albert Moon (2 Victories); Lt Rusher; Lt Grove; Capt Hamilton; and Maj Howe. Second row: F/O James Poole; Lt Johnson; F/Os Harry Cooley, James Beck & Richard Catlin; Lt Collins; F/O Edmund Parent; Capt Burns; & Maj Myers. Third row: Lt Housel; F/O Wayne Darr; Lt Lacy; Capt Ritter; F/Os Ebert Smith (3 victories); John Smallsreed (KIA after 3 victories) & Lewis Brown (2 victories); Capt Crossley; and Lt Andridge. Back row: Capt Silver; Lt Mendelson; Lt Buckland; Capt Short; Lt Frye; Lt Gabaccia; Lt Pietraszek; Lt Cohen; and Capt Calhoun.

Photo from 319th Ftr Sq unit history courtesy of John Rauth

sioned officer, returning home at the end of the war as a Captain.

One of the rarer assignments given "We Few" fell to five Ellington Field graduates and one other Sergeant Pilot who had earned his wings in the RCAF. Russell G. Anderson, Rollin A. Barton, Ernest F. Davis, John P. McKinnon, John E. Snedegar, and Oliver Killian (RCAF trained) were assigned to Minter Field as Basic Flight School instructors. Rollin Barton recalls:

"...Upon graduation from advanced, I got my wings, changed my chevrons from three stripes of "Buck" Sergeant to those of Staff Sergeant, and promptly got orders along with an unknown number of others to report to Mather Field. ...After completion of the basic instructors course, six of us were sent to Minter Field, Bakersfield, California where we were assigned to various squadrons to teach cadets.

"We represented an unknown category of "Faculty" for the Training Command there. Initially we were assigned to a cadet detachment. We were quartered at one end of a cadet barracks under a paddle-foot Major who seemed to delight in having flight personnel to shepherd, command, and to slot into his "Table of Organization." We went to the flight line daily, along with the commissioned instructors, and assumed a student load apportioned without discrimination as to rank. Everyone flew and taught the program as you remember it - in the BT-13 or Vultee Vibrator. Our acceptance by the flying officers was a plus, because in almost every other aspect we were neither "Fish nor

foul" though the work load was significant. We logged over 100 hours of dual instruction a month, in some months over 130 hours.

"Life improved substantially for us after promotion to Flight Officer. At least we felt our rank was a tad above our cadets. We now bunked in the BOQ and ate at the Officers Club. It wasn't many months before we were commissioned as second lieutenants."

Barton later flew a tour with the 31st Fighter Group (P-51s) in the Mediterranean.

Each of the Sergeant Pilots of class 42-H distinguished themselves in one way or another, but among the most visible are: Bob Hoover who has just been enshrined in the Aviation Hall of Fame at Dayton; Carrol Shelby (Ellington) who just will not stop making red hot sport cars and chili; and Bob Bryant, who flew his combat in A-36s with the 27th Fighter-Bomber Group in the Mediterranean and during his last years in the service became the second military director of the USAF Museum (1958-62) as well as a founder of the Air Force Museum Foundation, Inc.

Sadly, in an article as short as this, one can account for only a few representatives of the class. But while researching this article the character of the class became clear to me and dictated the title, "Heavens Hellions." As defined by the dictionary, Hellions are a troublesome and mischievous lot. To the enemies of their day the Sergeant Pilots of 42-H were a lot more than that!

Class 42-G The Brassy Bunch

by Lee Arbon

Anyone trying to write about the Sergeant Pilots of class 42-G has to be impressed. There were an awful lot of them, and they were brassy.

While subsequent classes were larger still, 42-G was the FIRST really big one. 456 of them, nearly double the number then flying, pinned their wings on and raised the total to just over 1000. They were also the first class to have the pre-flight phase added to their curriculum.

Ellington, Kelly and Luke Fields produced 226 of their total. The remaining 230 graduated from Columbus, Dothan, Lubbock, Moody, Roswell, Spence, Turner, Victorville and Williams Fields, the first Sergeant Pilots to do so.

Where did they go after graduation? One hundred went to Peterson Field, Colorado Springs for Reconnaissance training, after which about half were allocated among the photo-reconnaissance and photo-mapping squadrons then forming. The other half were traded to bombers crew training organizations in return for increased aircraft allocations. Another hundred went to the 50th Troop Carrier Wing at Camp Williams, Wisconsin for DC-3/C-47 transition, and eighty went to the 52nd Troop Carrier Wing at Bowman Field, Kentucky for the same purpose.

One hundred and forty-seven were assigned to the Air Transport Command: Eighteen to the 2nd Ferry Group at Wilmington, Delaware; Fifteen to the 3rd Ferry at Romulus, Michigan; Eighteen to the 4th Ferry at Nashville, Tennessee; Thirty-four to the 5th Ferry at Grand Prairie (Dallas) Texas; Fifty-five to the 6th at Long Beach, California; and Seven to the 7th Ferry Group at Great Falls, Montana.

According to a document found in the National Archives the 13th Tow Target Squadron at Langley Field, Virginia was supposed to receive fifteen of the new Sergeant Pilots. Four others were



Three of the Brassy Sergeant Pilots, of 42-G serving with the 316th Troop Carrier Group in North Africa in 1943. Left to Right: Francis A. Townsend (Luke), Robert T. Quinn (Luke), and William J. Albrecht (Kelly).

Heroes continued

to be assigned to the 4th Tow Target Squadron at Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia.

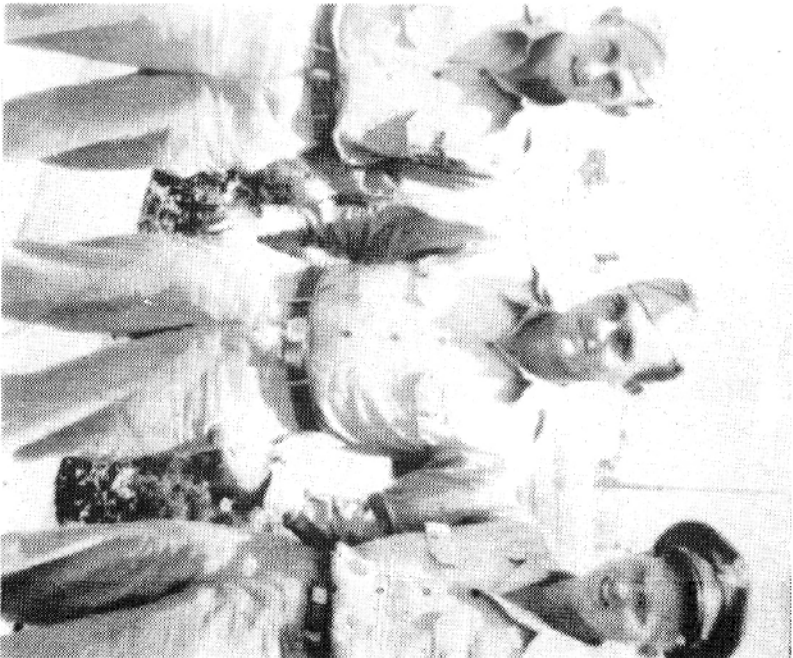
However, according to Stacy Natfel (Dothan), fifteen of his class of 27 were assigned to the B-25 crew training center at Greenville, SC, where the only officers were the Squadron Commander, Operations Officer, and Adjutant.

Sergeant Pilots comprised the main body of the new outfit. Natfel

believes that the remaining twelve wound-up in a B-25 group formed at Columbia, South Carolina, some later going to B-26s.

Those sum of all those figures add up to more than we know graduated. Besides the document found in the National Archives part of the assignment figures come from orders and some from memories of individuals. Orders were often amended and even in error, plus memories have also been known to play a trick or two on us. So instead of an exact total of 456 the figures are presented as an indication of how the members of class 42-G were distributed.

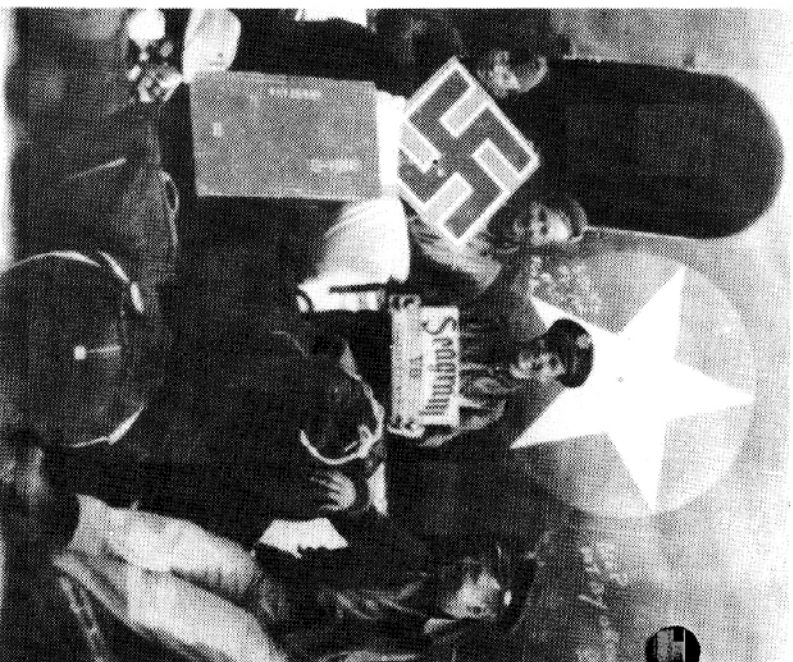
Not only was the class large in numbers, their impact on the units to which they were assigned was large as well. They reported to their new squadrons as if they were already



Another brassy threesome (l to r): Bob Pace and Bill Shamel (Ellington) and Max Rummms (Luke) of the 316th TCCG relax while on combat rest leave in Alexandria Egypt, in the spring of 1943. (Photo - Bob Pace)

Captains of their own ships and of their own destinies. I will never forget how wary I became when some reported to the 316th Troop Carrier Group, my own group. They were so eager, so full of piss and vinegar, that I saw then as a threat to my own chances of becoming a first pilot. I needn't have worried because, as it turned out, the right and left seats were usually evenly shared. I now count some of them among the best of my friends.

We can follow the graduates through their initial assignments, but after that, they scatter like a handful of BBs spilled on a marble floor. No fewer than seventy two, probably more, went overseas as Sergeant Pilots, most with Troop Carrier but at least two with the 8th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron in New



After three months in the Sahara desert of Egypt and Libya, Pawlowski (holding case of Segrams) and crew have learned to call an airplane home. (Photo - Tommy Thorp)

Guinea.

According to Ray Kuhlman (Turner), he and his classmates at Wilmington delivered a number of B-26s to various destinations all enlisted crews, but in October 1942 were commissioned directly as Second Lieutenants, by-passing the grade of Flight Officer entirely.

42-G got into action soon after graduation. By the end of 1942 seven of them had perished in combat or operational flights: John Bence (Spence); Robby Beymer (Columbus); Carl Bosse (Lubbock); Charles Giddons and William Ineson (Moody); Gerald Nachreiner (Dothan), and Melvin Woodward (Lubbock).

The figure climbed to thirty-four during

1943: Wilbur Alley and Leo Herrold (Ellington); Gordon Anderson, Edward Martin, and Rex McIntyre (Williams); Clifford Briggs, George Spuhler and Royce Tuttle (Victorville); William Capps (Columbus); George Collins, Andrew Palmer, Rayford Roberts, William Sherry, Talmadge Simpson and Don Yancey (Dothan); Manfred Edkstrom, Hubert Hampton, Kenneth Lee, and Noland Pringle (Lubbock); Richard Engle, John Gerrity Jim Loffredo, Lucien Mobley and Harry Pawlowski, and Ernest Wilcox (Luke); Joseph Harris and Wesley Kane (Kelly).

By the end of 1944 at least fifty-two had give their lives including: Charles M. Adams and Frank Grayson (Moody); Hubert Bayless (Luke); Earl Bergeron, Henry Ellis, William Perrigo, George Risely Jr, and Marshal Rockett (Ellington); Wendell Blickensdorfer and Hubert Hempe (Columbus); Elmer Hartman and Thomas Paschal (Roswell); Calvin Heinlein, and Rudolph

We know others went down as well, but do not know the dates. Wesley Barbour (Dothan) was killed while towing a target with a B-26 which was hit by a P-47. According to classmate Russ Shaw, Joe Crucza (Lubbock) was killed while attempting a single engine go-around in a P-38 at Love Field when a WASP taxied into take-off position as Joe was crossing the fence. Emmett Herbst (Spence) was one of those unlucky "One a day in Tampa Bay" B-26 statistics. Dale C. Roberts (Lubbock) was killed in the crash of a C-47 near Mara, North Africa and Billy Wilmore (Dothan) was killed while flying a B-25 with the 12th Bomb Group in North Africa. By the wars end sixty-three members of class 42-G had made the supreme sacrifice. That is nearly fourteen percent of the graduating class.

They were brash. Despite the fact that no aces emerged from this class, one came close. After serving a tour with the 7th Photo Group in Europe, Wilbur "Wib" Eaton (Williams) served a second tour with the 4th Fighter Group and downed four enemy aircraft.

Paul Binsley (Kelly) and Joe Boyd (Luke), after flying with the 316th Troop Carrier Group in the Egyptian, Libyan and Tunisian campaigns, succeeded after months of trying in transferring to a P-38 outfit, the 71st Squadron of the 1st Fighter Group. Shortly thereafter Binsley disappeared on a test flight and Boyd was shot down. Boyd ditched his P-38 in the water off Solerno and discovered that his dingy was unusable as it was full of bullet holes. His Mae West kept him afloat however and he was rescued eighteen hours later by the crew of a British air-sea rescue boat looking for one of their own downed pilots.

Ted Ripley (Luke), who had served a tour with the 60th Troop Carrier Group then switched to fighters, had three fighters shot out from under him during action on the Anzio Beachhead, two of which he crash landed on shore and one he ditched.

Heroes, like beauty, exist in the eyes of the beholder. The beholders in one case was a glider crew. The hero? Who else but one of the brassy ones, David "Rosie" Rosenbrants (Ellington). While being towed across North Africa, a glider had torn loose from its C-47 tow-plane and had to land in the Sahara desert. Unable to

relocate its lost glider, and running low on fuel, the tow-plane abandoned the search. Day after day went by with no sign of rescue and the glider crew began to consider themselves doomed. Happily "Rosie" Rosenbrants, serving with the 314th Troop Carrier Group, was watching the desert slip by beneath his cockpit window when quite by accident he spotted the lone glider. He dropped down to take a look, saw the crew waving frantically, landed nearby and learned of their plight. A tow rope was attached and the glider with its happy crew was towed out of the wilderness.

The graduates of 42-G never lost their momentum. Consider this:

. Two of its graduates became personal pilots for famous generals: Eddie Russell (Ellington)



Dick Engle (Luke), so far as we know, was the only Sergeant Pilot to die with his stripes on while flying the HUMP, although others also perished there as officers. (Photo - Bobble Engle Shanks)

Withers (Kelly); Veral Higgins and Mervin Pease (Lubbock); and Richard Peek and Robert Peters (Spence).

Four more perished before the war ended: Nelson Bolton (Turner); Bruce Borth (Luke); Lawrence Masuga (Columbus), Joseph Tichenor (Spence) and Claude Tucker (Spence).



Ed Bosarge (Dothan) and Helen, his bride, attend the wedding of a squadron mate. (Photo - Lee Arbon)

for Field Marshal Montgomery and Charles Bennett (Lubbock) for Dwight Eisenhower.

. The class produced three of its own generals: Harry Bayne (Moody), Charles Bennett (Lubbock), and Ed Wengler (Luke). Wengler, while serving with the 316th Troop Carrier Group in Egypt, was "busted" from Staff Sergeant to Private for mischief in Ishmalia on the Suez Canal and claims the distinction of being

Heroes continued

The only general he knows of who started from the rank of private...twice! (Wengler was not the only Sergeant Pilot from 42-G to suffer such indignity. Charles Snyder (Luke) was also busted and continued flying as a private while spending a lot of time between flights on KP.)

. Had it not been for the initiative of "Mac" MacWilliam (Williams), of this class, the question of "Who were those Sergeant Pilots and where did they all go?" would have remained unasked and unanswered forever. Nor would eight years of the Sergeant Pilots' Newsletter have come to pass. Much of the data contained in this article was collected by Mac.

. Rex Medcalf (Ellington), the tough, methodical and meticulous creator and guardian of the associations by-laws, is another example of the energy of this class.

. Six of the first eight officers to serve the organization and three of the four presidents of the association have come from 42-G

Every pilot considers himself a great lover, those of 42-G were no exception. The class champ had to be Harry Pawlowski (Luke) who made a career of romancing the girls. He met his match in the fabled "Madam Shoo-Shoo", the talk of Cairo. Because Pawlowski spent so much off-duty time with her, he was never present for short-arm inspection, much to the dismay of the flight surgeon. But early one morning, shortly before he was scheduled to fly, the flight surgeon spotted Pawlowski in the chow line!

Months later, during the first night drop on Sicily, Pawlowski was the first to fall. Grim as granite he tried to hold his fiercely burning airplane in formation as the paratroopers leapt, then his ship fell into the dark Sicilian landscape and exploded.

Pawlowski is remembered by his classmates and others who knew him for many things, but none so brazen as the day he dropped his drawers in the chow line. In his own way, Pawlowski was true to the spirit of 42-G, the brassy bunch.