

Crew 7490, 748<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 459<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group,  
US Army Air Force

Information provided by Willis Cooper to Dee Fastenau, wife of Fred Fastenau, in a letter in 2010.

Crew Members listed in alphabetical order; see also Crew Group Photo.

**Lyle Boggess, Staff Sgt, Asst. Armorer and Nose Gunner** (died June 25, 2001 (in Billings Montana?))

He was known as “Curly.” Curly always said that “he was going to die with his boots on.” He died on June 25, 2001, at age 79, as a result of heart problems which had disabled him for several years before his death. When I think of Curly, I am always reminded of his cheerful nature. He had a ready smile that seemed never to leave his face. His enthusiasm, I believe, set the tone for us all.

**Ivey N. Brown, Staff Sgt., ArmorerGunner (2012—lives in Virginia Beach, Virginia; celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2012)**

He was known as “Brownie.” Brownie was a boat builder while in civilian life. Many times at bedtime, Brownie would go thru the boat building process, from starting with the keel toward finishing the boat. His position was Armorer- Gunner. On missions, Brownie operated the right waist gun standing at the right waist window.

Our B-24 had lots of fire power. We had the ability to protect our aircraft very well. As Armorer, Brownie was able to help anyone with gun problems. He was well versed in his job as Armorer-Gunner. He was also a perfect fit for our crew personality wise.

**Willis Cooper, Tech Sgt. and ROMGunner** (Radio Operator, Mechanic, Gunner) (2012—living in Monroe, North Carolina)

As ROM-Gunner, my station was at the left waist position. Each of the waist gunners positions, one on the left side window and one on the right side window, were equipped with a single barrel, 50 caliber, automatic machine gun. For takeoffs and landings, as well as when short-wave radio communications were required, my location was at the radio desk, located on the flight deck near Swede’s [Roy Erickson’s] top turret.

After we arrived in enemy territory, my position was at the left waist gunner’s 50 caliber machine gun, while Brownie’s [Ivey Brown] was on the other waist gun. One of my duties on the bomb run was to throw tinfoil out the tinfoil chute. The tinfoil was similar to that used as decorations on Christmas trees. The idea of throwing out tinfoil on the bomb run was to disable enemy radar. If not disabled, it allowed the enemy to get a bead on us by reading our direction of flight, our altitude, our speed, etc. Throwing out the tinfoil jammed the enemy’s radar and helped protect us against their flak.

On the way to and from the target, we also had protection by P-51s, USA fighter airplanes flown by the Tuskegee fliers. They flew interference for us.

**Roy Erickson, Tech Sgt., Flight EngineerGunner** (2011—living in Colerain, Minnesota)

He was known as “Swede.” He assisted the pilot and co-pilot with all flight engineering. As gunner, he operated the top turret, which was located near my [Willis Cooper’s] station at the radio desk. I remember some of his responses in pre-flight procedure to the pilot and co-pilot: “Rudders right, rudders left, right aileron up, left aileron down, left aileron up, right aileron down, safety gas caps wired,” etc., etc.—on and on it went before each flight, Swede called out to the pilot and co-pilot from his position—the top turret gunner. Each gunner’s turret was equipped with two 50 caliber, fully automatic machine guns. A fully automatic gun continued firing in rapid order as long as the operator continually squeezed the trigger.

**Fred Fastenau, Navigator** (Born January 15, 1921 in Valley Stream, New York; died June 3, 2010 in San Carlos, California)

His responsibility was to get us to the target and back to our home base, Giulia (Joy-ya) Air Force Base, Cerignola, Italy. His responsibility also was to supply all navigation info to the Pilot to keep us on course. I, and the others, always felt safe with Fred as the Navigator. He knew his job very well, and always seemed to be well versed in all the details. Great Memories! Fred came to our tent often to play pinochle and bridge. He knew both games very well. It didn’t take Fred very long to know who held which cards after each distribution of each shuffle. By the time we had played one or two rounds, Fred knew who held which cards. As long as we maintained our position in the group on missions, we followed the group leader to and from the target. But if we dropped out of the group, we were on our own, and that was where Fred’s knowledge of navigation helped us to find our way home.

[Dee (Dorothy) Fastenau (nee Edwards) added the following information: Fred had the opportunity to choose to become a pilot or a navigator. He selected Navigator because he thought it would be more interesting and challenging. He apparently discovered it was more often the latter—more so than he would want on occasion.

When Fred graduated from officer training and was in line to be shipped overseas, Dee received a letter from him indicating that he was soon to be sent overseas and hinting at where he was to be sent. Dee guessed, much to her parents’ amusement and bewilderment, that he would be sent to Italy. She figured this out after puzzling out his strange references to boots in his letter. Italy was often described as “the boot” because of its shape. He and the other members of his crew were sent to Cerignola, Italy.]

**Charlie Hall (Bombardier)**

As I remember, he was from Texas. We lost him as a crew member when we left Casper. It was explained as a “convenience of the government.” Charlie was designated as “Bombardier.” It was said that a bombardier on each crew was “History.” The only bombardiers remaining on each crew were those designated as a lead bombardier, who was to fly as a lead bombardier in the lead aircraft. Other aircraft were to drop their bombs coordinated with the lead bombardier. I remember Charlie as being a perfect fit for our crew, and I was sorry to see him be reassigned. Have often wondered where he landed. A computer check was unable to locate him.

**Joseph C. Hrastar, Staff Sgt., Ball Turret Gunner** (died April 1996 (in Cleveland, Ohio?))

The ball turret extended down out the floor of the aircraft. Joe was all alone in the ball turret, which in its downward extension had a 360-degree range. The ball turret was a tight fit for Joe who was an average-sized person. Joe died sometime in 1996. He attended our reunion at Harrisburg in the summer of 1995.

**Gail McIntosh, Staff Sgt., Tail Gunner** (died February 2009 (in Wellsville, Ohio?))

He was known as “Mac.” His position was “Tail Gunner.” He operated the tail turret, with his guns pointed out the rear of the aircraft. Mac always rode backwards while operating the tail gunner’s turret. But the fire power out the back of the B24’s tail gave us extra protection from the enemy’s fighter aircraft.

**Russ Newquist, Pilot and Crew Commander** (2011, living in Northumberland, Pennsylvania)

Having been a wrestler in college, Russ N. was very strong—a good choice for a B-24 pilot. He was level headed in calm flying as well as in emergencies. We were lucky to have him as our pilot and we thank him very much for his excellent service.

**Russ Wells, CoPilot** (died on June 14, 2010 in Belgrade, Montana)

His job was to assist the pilot in preflight procedures and in flying the airplane. He was to take over for the pilot in case the pilot became disabled. Like Fred [Fastenau], Russ Wells came often to our tent and played cards, bridge, and pinochle, with us. As you may recall, the officers had separate tents from ours, the enlisted men.

He was a good roller skater, having learned in his hometown in Indiana.