



*Man's Flight  
Through Life Is  
Sustained By The  
Power Of His  
Knowledge*

# TO HONOR

## ALPHONSO P. RICCARDI

### MAJOR, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

### 1915-2003

*Major Alphonso P. Riccardi received his bombardier's wings and a commission in the US Army Air Forces in 1943. As a member of the 737<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, 454<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, Fifteenth Air Force at Cerignola, Italy, he flew 50 combat missions in B-24s over northern Italy, Austria, Germany, and Romania, including six missions against the heavily defended enemy oil refineries at Ploesti. While flying out of Cerignola, Major Riccardi, himself the son of Italian immigrants, befriended a young Italian boy named Mario Carpocefala. Fifty years later, after he had become mayor of Cerignola, Mario Carpocefala recalled the deprivation of his childhood in war-torn Italy and attributed his subsequent success in life to the encouragement and example of Major Riccardi.\* Major Riccardi remained in the Air Force after World War II and subsequently flew as a bombardier/navigator in the Korean War. He retired after 23 years of service and later became the principal founder and first president of the 454<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association. Major Riccardi died on 30 January 2003. He is survived by his wife, Mary, and their children.*

*\*The story of Major Riccardi's kindness and generosity to Mario Carpocefala is recounted in Stephen E. Ambrose's, The Wild Blue: The Men and Boys Who Flew the B-24s Over Germany (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), p. 142.*

By: Captain and Mrs. Robert J. Widmer, Sr.