

# Flashback

## Radio Free Rabbit



*In the late summer of 1943, Fifteenth Air Force set up a number of bomber bases in southern Italy. One of these bases, located at Manduria, became the home of the 450th Bombardment Group, a B-24 outfit. The 450th Liberators were well-known because of their distinctive, white-painted rudders, a characteristic that brought the unit the nickname "Cottontails." When the Cottontails moved to Manduria, however, radio reception was poor, and the group didn't want to do without, so the airmen built their own transmitter and broadcast booth from spare and salvaged parts.*

*Coincidentally, the base was filled with rabbits, which bred like, well, rabbits. Some of them became station mascots. Here, SSgt. Emil P. Michowski, a station announcer, goes on the air with "Libby," short for Liberator.*