

# 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 13 Issue #4

Journal of the  
44th Bomb Group  
Veterans Association

Spring 2013

Non Profit Veterans Association

EIN # 68-0351397

## OLD CROW



The plane arrived in Shipdham on 4 May 1943, and was assigned to the 506 Squadron. It flew a total of 16 missions, including many out of Africa, to Italy, Sicily, Foggia and Ploesti. It's disastrous mission was on Friday, October 1, 1943 to Wiener Neustadt. As reported by Steve Adams, the left wing spar was cracked, having been hit with a 20 mm shell. Piloted by Captain **James McAtee**, he made it to Tunis, where it was scrapped.

In addition to the McAtee crew, six other crews flew in *Old Crow* before it was finally scrapped: **George Rebick, Nathaniel Graham, Walter Bunker, Gordon Stevens, Frank Slough and Harold Laudig.**

It has been suggested that the Nose Art on this plane reminded some of the crew of a label from a liquor bottle – Old Crow.

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The 8-Ball Tails<sup>©</sup>

Official Journal of The  
44th Bomb Group  
Veterans Association,  
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## NATHANIEL GRAHAM CREW



Top Row L-R: Joseph Young, Bombardier; David McCash, Navigator; Harold Laudig, Co-Pilot; Unidentified man.

Front Row: Nathaniel Graham, Pilot; Mason Davis, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; Norman Kiefer, Right Wing Gunner; Albert Kern, Left Wing Gunner; — Edwards, Tail Gunner; -?- Modd, Belly Gunner.

**Nathaniel Graham** flew four missions in *Old Crow*; his Co-pilot, **Harold Laudig** flew with him, then moved into the **James McAtee** crew. He flew sixteen missions with the McAtee crew, then became a First Pilot.

James McAtee flew several missions in *Old Crow* into Sicily and many into Italy. He made it safely through Ploesti, but on the second raid on the Messerschmidt plant at Wiener Neustadt, the left main wing spar Old Crow was cracked, having been hit by a 20 mm shell. McAtee landed in Palermo, Sicily. According to Steve Adams, it was ultimately left in Tunis and scrapped.

*(Will Lundy's book does not record this loss, but apparently Steve Adams' research discovered this to be true.)*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



In late January, The Colling's Foundation B-24 "Witchcraft" stopped in Zephyr Hills on the start of its annual tour of the country.. The 44th is well represented in the names of contributors that are listed on the fuselage sides. Wally Balla, John McClane, Dick Hruby and Tom Parsons are there along with several others. The public can tour the ship except for the flight deck, but a lady opened it up for us. A fascinating person. Turned out that she flies the B-24 between some of their stops. We had a nice visit comparing notes. She is a former 767 Captain and has some 16000 hours flying time. She said the hardest part of flying the Liberator was taxiing it! She and her husband, who flies the B-17, own a Stearman and invited me for a ride which I did a few weeks later. It was almost 70 years since I learned in a Stearman, so it was quite a thrill.

The Collings Foundation gives Vets a free ride in their planes when they move between stops .Walter Fitzmaurice, 68<sup>th</sup> radio operator did that last October from Norwood, Mass. to Concord, New Hampshire and had forgotten how noisy it was!

Their tour takes them from Florida in January across Texas to California up the West Coast-across the Northern States to New England in the fall -then back down the East Coast to Florida in November. They spend two or three days in each stop. Check their Web site for their schedule which is only for the next few months, so you will have to check it from time to time to see when it will be in your area. Even if you cannot arrange a ride, stop by and see it, as they love to visit with B-24 veterans.

*George Washburn*

## GENERAL CARL A. SPAATZ MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

General Spaatz, a native of Boyertown Pennsylvania, was recently honored for his contributions to aerial flight. Spaatz was the commander of the Army Air Force during WWII. A graduate of West Point, he shot down three German planes in WWI. In an effort to prove the capabilities of midair refueling, he helped keep a plane flying for more than 150 continuous hours in 1929. As commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, he prepared for the American bombing in Europe. In 1944 he commanded the U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe

through the pre-invasion period and the campaign after D-Day. In 1945 he took command of U.S. Strategic Air Forces in the Pacific, supervising the assault on Japan, including the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Spaatz was the only person with the rank of general or its equivalent to be at all of the WWII surrenders in 1945: Rheims when Germans surrendered to the Americans May 7; at Berlin when they surrendered to the Russians, May 9; and aboard the USS Missouri when the Japanese surrendered September 2.

## LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



Well, winter is really upon us here in the UK as I type this and virtually all of the country is looking pretty white and belatedly Christmassy. Unsurprisingly your old station at Shipdham is currently buried under several inches of deep crisp snow, with a promise of quite a bit more to come. As contaminated runways and light aircraft don't play too well together, there is a shortage of cheery aviation news from the Aero Club, as all the pilots patiently (or impatiently in some cases) wait for the better days to arrive. I guess I'll have to write something else, rather than 'what we are doing over here' will have to fill this section of our editor's programme.

How about something along the lines of 'What you are doing over there?' I'm currently acting as one of several historic advisors on an upcoming documentary called Crew 713, [www.crew713.com](http://www.crew713.com) which is the story of the O'Sullivan Crew who operated under Leon Johnson's command of the 14<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing, out of Station 143 at North Pickenham, just a few miles down the road from Shipdham. Shanty Films out of Dallas, Texas are putting it together, and the provisional timing for its release is sometime towards the end of this year, (2013) all being well. Much of the footage is 'in the can' as they say, with hours of material shot from and in the Collings Foundation B-24, interspersed with footage from the '40 and some rather clever animation that also uses the Collings plane to create as authentic image as possible.

Via other contacts in the US, I recently heard rumblings of a group of folks who would like to see a film put together of the Ploesti raid. This is very embryonic at the moment, and really have no idea how it will pan out, but to me, it's a helluva a great idea. There is certainly some original footage available from air to ground, ground to air and variations thereof that already have been aired on Discovery Channel and / or National Geographic Channel. It would be a fitting tribute to those guys who flew that mission and another piece of 44<sup>th</sup> history permanently recorded for future generations to see and learn from.

I noticed that after this edition there will be just two more 8 Ball Tails, and subsequently just two more Letters From Shipdham. However sad that may seem I want you all to know I am honoured to have had the chance to keep in touch with you all over the past years and delighted to have been able to keep you up updated about your old East Anglian home.

Until next time, keep well and look after yourselves.

All the best from Shipdham.

Peter

## MEMORIES OF S/SGT. EDWARD BARTON GUNNER, RAYMOND MONDLEB CREW, 68<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON

In August '44, flying low left of entire formation, we crossed the Rhine River into Germany, caught intense and accurate flak; #2 fuel tank was hit, and we were losing gas fast. We turned back toward France and asked for fighter support, which resulted in a beautiful P-51 Mustang coming up and tucking himself under our right wing. He had swastikas under his canopy. His name was "Bean City Charlie."

He vectored us in a P-47 base outside Paris, a city named Coulomoniers. We landed and parked the plane off to one side. One week prior, this had been a German airfield, now a P-47 base. We then transferred fuel from a damaged tank to the others, then went into town and bought some food, some wine and French perfume, using the 4000 French francs from our escape kit.

The next day we flew our plane back to Shipdham. We had been MIA for a day. About two weeks later, we were told to report to the Finance Office. It seems we had spent about \$10.00 worth of francs, and the Finance Dept. wanted their money back! No matter that we had brought back a \$250,000 plane, and had slept under the plane's wings. **We were docked \$10.00 each. Is that how wars are won?**

*Ed. Note: Barton did not indicate the mission's destination, but it is reasonable to think it was Hamburg, Germany. The plane in which they were flying had no name.*

### **Next Unforgettable Mission:**

In October 1944, over Hamm, Germany, I was in the waist of the plane, throwing out chaff; which to me, always seemed to attract the German's radar. Flak was heavy. To my surprise and shock, a piece of flak came through

the other side of the fuselage, cutting the tail-gunner's oxygen line and hitting me in the right buttocks. Wow! What a blow, like being hit with a baseball bat – one big bruise. The crew cut my electrically heated flight suit; my pants and underwear were cut open, and I was put into an electric blanket to prevent shock. I stayed that way until we landed, about 3 hours longer. I downplayed the incident at the interrogation, and did not encourage my pilot to put me for the Purple Heart.

*Ed. Note: The date was 2 October 1944. The plane was unnamed. According to Webb Todd, on that mission Major Robert Lehnhausen, Captains Charles Peretti and John Warga; Lts. John Baxter, Hal Farmer, John McClain, Jr., Burr Palmer, Thomas Ryan, Jr., and Frank-Kunnath; Sgts. Otto H. Freeman, Jr, Matthew Ogozalek, Richard Stamper and John Schneider all completed their tour of operations.*

## IRWIN STOVROFF AND SEAN HANNITY

The Bombardier that parachuted out of *Passion Pit* 70 years ago is still at work, grateful to be alive despite the fact that he almost got killed by the Germans, just because he was Jewish.

Irwin's latest endeavor is raising money to train guide dogs to lead blinded veterans, and service dogs to aid disabled veterans. His organization is called [vetshelpingheroes.org](http://vetshelpingheroes.org). The show on Fox News showed him visiting some of the grateful benefactors of his efforts, showing how their life is enhanced by these beautiful animals.

A replay of the presentation is available on his web site. Go to [vetshelpingheroes.org](http://vetshelpingheroes.org); go to the bottom of the screen and the video will be played.

## MEMORIES OF S/SGT. EDWARD BARTON

CONTINUED

### GUNNER, RAYMOND MONDLEB CREW, 68<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON

Many great things were made possible by 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group members in the post-war era. Many members of the 44<sup>th</sup> BG were high achievers, who made major post-war contributions to our country. Irving Stovroff was certainly one who made his contribution.

### CHRIS CLARK AND THE HERITAGE LEAGUE

Chris Clark has agreed to recruit second and third generations of veterans to join this ambitious group of young people, and continue to preserve the stories of their fathers and grandfathers.

The League's original goal was to support the Heritage Library in Norwich, England. It has the story of America, its history, geography and customs, along with its activities in WWII. The 44<sup>th</sup> BG database, created by Arlo Bartsch, is constantly updated, so the history of our veterans is well known to the young people of England, high school and college students. Occasionally the members of the League take

trans-Atlantic tours, maintaining an ongoing friendship with our British friends.

When possible, members of the League also assist in the care of plaques and monuments sprinkled through England.

The League produces a publication about the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division's history, and hold annual reunions. Their 2013 reunion will be in Savannah, Georgia, alongside the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society. (Details available at [www.heritageleague.org](http://www.heritageleague.org))

Their 2014 reunion will be in England.

Chris feels that the League is one group that carries on the tradition of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division (including the 44<sup>th</sup> BG); that is preserving the history of those noble airmen, who risked their lives for our freedom.

President George Washburn and other leaders urge young members of the 44<sup>th</sup> BG, to consider joining this enthusiastic group. Chris's e-mail address is: [Clarkhistory@aol.com](mailto:Clarkhistory@aol.com).

## ITALIANS RESEARCHING CRASHED A/C

Bob Zoller, nephew of S/Sgt. **Harper F. Zoller**, received a book from an Italian, who found his uncle's plane that had gone down on the mission to Foggia, Italy. They sent Bob a copy of the book, written in Italian. Fortunately, he was able to get most of it interpreted, and will give the book plus the English version to the Army Heritage Education Center in Carlisle.

S/Sgt Zoller was a gunner on the **Rocco Cureli** crew, 66<sup>th</sup> Squadron. The plane was attacked by fighters, and seemed to explode in midair. Luckily,

the Radio Operator, **Wesley Zimmerman**, was blown out by the explosion, was captured, escaped and returned to Shipdham. All others were KIA. This was the crew's second mission.

According to **Will Lundy**, the following A/C were lost that day: **LADY LUCK, SUZY Q, BLACK SHEEP, BUZZIN' BEAR, NATCHEZ-BELLE, SOUTHERN COMFORT** and **TIMBA-A-AH**.

**BALDY AND HIS BROOD** were able to fly to Malta and get care for two wounded crewmen.

## FROM THE DIARY OF JOHN J. GREISHAMMER, GUNNER ON THE NORMAN NUTT CREW, 66<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON



**Nutt Crew, not individually identified. The crew never had a formal picture made.**

**Norman Nutt, Pilot; Fleet Van Riper, Co-Pilot; Haven Kesling, Navigator; Carl Sharf, Bombardier; Elmer Kohn, Radio Operator/ Gunner; James Marsh, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; John Greishammer, Waist Gunner; Jangl Wenclas, Waist Gunner; Andrew Hartung, Tail Gunner.**

17 March 1945 – Mission 11. Target: Munster marshaling yards. A/c #616 R+ **Glory Bee**; – 30 to -40 degrees temperature at 23,000 feet. Bomb load: 44 100-lb GPs plus two clusters of incendiary.

I got up about 0600 hours, ate fried eggs for breakfast, briefed at 0720 hours. We took off around 1000 hours to enjoy a pretty day in the air until we neared the target. There, we found

10/10s cloud cover. Our flight plan again took us out over the Channel and into Holland, where we encountered some scarecrow flak, and several flak batteries opened up on us as we entered Germany. Then, after the IP and on our ten-minute bomb run, the Germans threw up plenty of flak. However, most of it burst between 21,000-22,000 feet below us, as our bombing altitude was 23,500 feet. Some burst eventually were pretty close, but we received no battle damage, even though the flak was heavy. Flying time was six hours and fifteen minutes.

23 March 1945 – Mission 13 Target: Rhine Germany; A/C #314 G+. No Name. Bomb Load: 44 100-lb GPs plus two cluster incendiaries.

Bombing altitude was 20,000 feet. Our target was the Rhine marshaling yards in an attempt to keep the Jerries from supplying the Western Front. I got up at - 3:15 this morning. Ate fried eggs for breakfast, and had briefing at 0420 hours. Our formation assembled at 12,000 feet, and we were over the Channel by the time I had pulled the safety pins from all the bombs. By that time we were at 15,000 feet, but before we took off, I found that one did not have an arming wire! Again, we flew over Holland and into Germany, but only penetrated about 18 miles into the Ruhr Valley, where we bombed the Rhine marshaling yards visually. Flak was moderate and pretty accurate. Bombing results were excellent, according to the lead ship commander at Lt. Alley's plane. We came back to base, landed at 1230 hours with our flying time shown as five hours and 25 minutes, so it was our shortest mission so far. NOTE: our plane, G+ 314 was lost on March 24<sup>th</sup>, flown by Lt. **Grandell**.



**FROM THE DIARY OF JOHN J. GREISHAMMER,  
GUNNER ON THE NORMAN NUTT CREW, 66<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON**

*CONTINUED*

25 March 1945 – Mission 14 Target: Hitzacker, Germany. **A/C #594 P+** Temperature at 18m000 feet was -25 degrees, Bomb Load: 24 250-lb GPs. Target was the Hitzacker Oil Storage Dump where the Jerries keep their oil reserves. The dump was located out in a forest near a small town of Hitzacker. I was awakened at 0130. Ate five fried eggs for breakfast and was briefed at 0245 hours. We formed up at 12,000 feet, but couldn't get all the planes together due to bad cloud conditions, with a storm setting in over the base. However, we caught one formation near Holland and stayed in that formation. We flew on into Germany, and as we passed Hanover, the RAF was attacking it! I saw intensive flak thrown up against the Limies – there were RAF bombers all over the sky. It sure looked

like a rat race to see which one could unload his bombs first.

We dropped our bombs on signal from the lead ship, visual bombing, as the weather was good. A few bursts of flak and some scarecrow flak were thrown up at us, but it could be considered nearly nil.

Shortly after we hit our target, we passed over the small town of Minburg, where we were greeted with about 50 bursts of accurate flak –apparently a six-gun battery. But from there on, it was okay, and we landed about 1230 to 1300 hours. Flying time was seven hours 15 minutes. Don't know what the results were, but they should be good, for we bombed visual. (Official records show results were excellent.)

From the **Air Force Gunners Association Magazine**, these statistics from **Richard Smart**, Engineer/Gunner, 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 506 Squadron.

350,000 Americans served in the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force.  
47,000 suffered combat induced casualties.  
28,000 became POW  
26,000 were KIA

Each bomber could carry up to 8,000 pounds of bombs.

ME-109s and flak were the relentless enemies.

Returning to England over the North Sea, some bombers were out of fuel, battle damaged with dead and wounded impaired, forced to ditch, not knowing how they would fare. 450 bombers ditched, 4500 crewmen went down, and less than 1,500 survived.

**LIFE**

**LIFE NOT ONLY BEGINS AT FORTY - THAT'S WHEN IT BEGINS TO SHOW.  
IF LIFE IS EVER FOUND ON THE PLANET MARS, THEY'RE SURE TO ASK US FOR A LOAN.  
THE TROUBLE WITH LIFE IS THAT BY THE TIME YOU LEARN HOW TO PLAY THE GAME,  
YOU'RE TOO OLD TO MAKE THE TEAM.**

## CHARLES RUNION AND HIS SEARCH FOR CRASH SITES, FOR BUILDING AN INCOMPARABLE MUSEUM

*Wings Remembered, Inc* is a non-profit museum in Lebanon, Tennessee that is dedicated to preserving pieces of wreckage from aircraft lost in combat during WWII. It is a repository of wreckage that he dug up from crash sites – bits and pieces of history that have been laying in the soil and under the grass for sixty plus years.

The 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group can recall the reunion in Branson, 2007, when our veterans had a group photo, standing under the vertical stabilizer from *Black Jack*.



B-24 Black Jack Vertical. The large display case to the right has items from each of the ten crew members.



B-24 waist window display.



Display case with flight jackets.

The stabilizer occupies a prominent space in *Wings Remembered*, along with battered pieces of planes and navigational equipment, all of which have been placed in Runion's keeping. Europeans who find items from lost planes mail them to the museum, adding to his collection. Much of the 44<sup>th</sup> BG's history is stored in this museum, and Runion is hoping that when families run out of space, and are looking for a

safe haven for veterans' treasures, they will consider entrusting him. His e-mail address is: [contactus@wingsremembered.com](mailto:contactus@wingsremembered.com)

A local television station reported on *Wings Remembered*, and a video of their report can be found by dialing <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v+PRuRi554hjk>. Watch it, if you can. It tells an amazing story.

## EMIL UKENS WENT TO EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND DID ANYBODY TRAVEL WITH HIM?



Don Ukens, son of Emil, has looked at this picture for years, and now he wants to know more about it. His grandma had it hanging in her house for years, motivating Don to enter the U.S. Navy; and coincidentally, an opportunity to go to Scotland in 1970.

Now he is looking for somebody in the 44<sup>th</sup> who might have travelled along with his father. He is writing a story about his father, and would like some information about that trip.

The Ukens family has continued the heritage of government service: their daughter was a Midshipman in the NROTC. Her husband served as a Marine Artillery Officer. Next he is going to the University of St. Andrews, which will be a good reason for the family to visit Scotland. Don's wife is a native of Scotland.

So..... if any of you veterans accompanied Emil to Scotland, please contact Don. His home number is 580 652-3296; E-mail address: [uken@ptsi.net](mailto:uken@ptsi.net).



Emil's buddies when he was serving as a ground man in the 44<sup>th</sup> BG.



Shipdham Air Base, as it looked sixty years ago.

## RICHARD A. MAYHEW'S MEMOIRS TAIL GUNNER, 66<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON

On 21 January 1944 our target was the German rocket-launching ramp north of Rouen, France, which was a few kilometers south of the Channel. We were awakened at 4 a.m., had breakfast and then on to briefing. We were told they didn't expect us to encounter much enemy contact, so as I finished my duties, which was to check all guns and bombs, I went to my station, expecting just another "milk run."

On this particular mission, the navigator and bombardier were replacements. I did not know their names. Lt. **Spurgeon**, because of illness, was off flying status and assigned to ground administration. Our squadron was flying the low element of the flight. Our ship **Queen Marlene** was in the position known as "Purple Heart Corner". Upon approaching the target, we got a call from the lead ship saying, "We missed the target. Go around, go around". As we approached the target again, Lt. **Spelts** called the bombardier, telling him that we were on course, and he should open the bomb bay doors and take over the ship. The bombardier then said, "We are on target! Bombs away." At that moment I saw five or so Folke Wolf fighters, or as we called them "Georing's Yellow Bellies," chasing in. I yelled, "Fighters! Fighters! Six o'clock low."

The sound of their gunfire rang through the aircraft from the under side. The ball turret gunner, Sgt. **Reedy** screamed, "I'm hit. I'm hit." The fighters passed and made a curve to the right and returning from above, gave fire, which killed our top turret gunner, Staff Sgt. **Hail**, the radioman yelled, "Hydraulic fluid is spraying over my face." Then the navigator, Lt. **Goodnow**, said, "I'm hit. The bombardier is dead. My God, we're going down." Lt. **Spelts'** voice came through, "Abandon the..." That was all. The radio intercom

had gone out. At that time, I looked back into the waist position and saw the gunners, Sgt. **Gooden** and St. **F. P. Hall**, putting on their parachutes. I then rotated my turret to gain access to the waist position. I fell backward out of my turret, grabbed my chute with my right hand and opened the lower escape hatch with my left. While I was snapping my chute to the right harness ring, it happened! The ship did a rollover.

I presume there was an explosion because I blacked out. When I came to, I was falling free from my aircraft. My chest pack was hooked to the right ring. I frantically tried to hook the left ring, but the harness was too tight. I decided to pull the ripcord anyhow. The chute did not open. I clawed at the cover and managed to open it and reel the chute by hand. It opened with a loud, crackling sound. I felt like I was going right through the harness. I blacked out again momentarily. When I came to again, I saw pieces of the **Queen Marlene** falling around me.

Luckily, I landed in a newly plowed field. I didn't appear to be hurt, however, I had lost my partial dental plate, and my flying boots were gone. I was bleeding on the left side of my face. I had a few superficial cuts from shrapnel.

Before I could get to my feet, two Frenchmen ran up to me, felt my arms and legs for broken bones; and, being assured I was okay, they turned and ran up a small rise nearby to see what had happened. I followed them and saw the remainder of the aircraft burning. I did not see any chutes or anyone else from the plane. I then saw German military trucks racing up to the site. At that time, it was the policy of the German Army to go to the site of the crash and search an area of a mile in diameter.

When I saw the Germans, I ran back, buried my chute, and raced off in the opposite direction. I saw a wagon loaded with boughs and wood stopped at the edge of a wooden area. The driver of the cart was also watching the burning plane. I ran to him and said, "Comrade Americana. Comrade Americana." He motioned for me to get into his cart and hide under the boughs. I did, and we moved off down the road.

As we bumped on down the road, I wondered where he was taking me, and wondered if I had made a mistake in going with him. After a few miles and many anguished moments for me, we stopped. I crawled out from under the boughs, and saw I was in a farmyard. The farmer quickly hustled me into his barn and motioned me to go up into the haymow. I peeked out and saw him close the gate and go to the house.

I waited in the loft, scared and worried, wondering where I could go and where I was. Finally, I heard voices. I peeked out and saw the farmer, his wife and two young women coming toward the barn. They came in and climbed up the ladder. They had food and drink for me. I was too upset to be hungry, but I ate a little while we tried to communicate. The farmer sent the women back to the house, and they soon returned with clothes. He indicated I should get out of my uniform and put the clothes on. I did as he asked, emptied the pockets of my flying suit, and he took it to dispose of it. I imagine he buried or burned it.

He gave me a pair of pin stripe pants, oxford shoes and socks, a collarless shirt, and a dark jacket, also a beret. The clothes were ill fitting and odd-looking, but they changed my appearance. He tried to explain about the pants, and I

think I finally guessed right, and realized I was wearing pants the old man had been married in years before.

They left. After dark, the farmer came and took me into the house. I sat in a chair before the fireplace. I tried to tell him I wanted to go to Paris. Finally, I drew a picture of a train and said, "Paris, Paris." He nodded. He gave me a cup of coffee with some schnapps in it. I drank it and went back to the barn. I had given my candy to the children and divided my cigarettes with the father.

Later in the night, I imagine midnight or one a.m., he came and got me. He was wheeling a bicycle and repeating, "Antily, Parie. Antily, Parie". I figured we were going to Paris. By sign language, he tried to make me understand that he would ride the bike ahead, stop, park the bike and walk on. I was to walk to the bike, get on, and ride a similar distance past him, park, walk on, and we were to repeat this sequence until we got to the railroad station. I fouled up the first time, but after some more exasperated explanations, I finally caught on, and we arrived at the station. He kept repeating, "Antily, Parie, Antily, Parie".

When I was walking up to get my ticket, it finally hit me! That was what I was to say to the ticket agent. I was right. He gave me my ticket. I picked it up and walked away. The agent said something about "Amiens," but I didn't know what he meant. I had French currency which was issued to us in our escape kit, but I didn't know the value of the money, or the cost of the ticket. I just laid a bill down.

After I had walked a few steps, I heard the agent yell at me loudly and jabber some French words. What now? I walked back, and he handed me some change.

However, the little episode caught the attention of two German soldiers who were in the cage behind the ticket agent. From then on I could feel their eyes upon me. I casually sauntered out and sat on a bench to wait to board the train. I wanted a smoke, but I knew that if I took out a Camel cigarette, it would be a dead giveaway. I reached in my pocket and took one cigarette out of the pack, still in the pocket. I emptied some of the tobacco out of each end, rolled the ends, brought it to my lips and licked it like I had seen them do when they rolled their own.

When it was time to board the train, I watched where the Germans went. The train was old with compartments with no walkways between them. You boarded the train on the side and stayed in your own compartment until time to disembark. When we finally stopped, I knew what the ticket agent had meant when said, "Amiens," because we were at the end of the line. I would have to board another train to Paris. I had no idea which one.

I watched and saw the German soldiers walk by my window. I waited for my compartment to unload. When there was only one couple left, a man and a woman, I jumped up and stepped between them and said, "Americana, Antily Paree". The man was offended and shoved me and made a threatening gesture, but the woman said something to me and took me by the arm. I walked between them around to the platform, and they put me on the train. They both hugged and kissed me and bid me goodbye and left. I arrived in Paris the next morning.

I was finally in Paris, but what was I to do and where was I to go? I noticed the men all hurrying in a certain direction, and figured they were going to the toilet. I was right! I walked along, looking for

an empty stall, and suddenly noticed a pair of American combat boots. My heart flipped. I thought I had run across another escapee, something I had not thought or considered. I quickly stepped into the vacant stall beside him and said, "Comrade Americana. I don't know who he was or what, but he didn't want anything to do with me, because he finished his business in a hurry and disappeared.

While in the toilet, I reread my escape instructions and tried to decide what to do. We were told to go south. I had my compass. I got it out and headed south. I walked a few blocks, and rounding a corner, I bumped smack into a young woman. I repeated my time worn phrase in a desperate voice. She finally indicated I should follow her. We went to her apartment where I spent three days. We tried to communicate. I finally decided to go to some bars to see if I could connect with the underground. We had been told in briefing to do that – go to a bar and ask for beer, and the underground would contact you. However, nothing happened. I learned that, the underground didn't contact you unless you were alone.

The next day I decided to head south again. I walked through Paris and came out on the southern end along roads that lead to a village called Blanc Messnil.

I walked along the country roads, watching and ready to hide, if necessary. I had nothing to eat, and at night I slept where I could... in culverts, fields and any place I could get out of the cold.

Walking was hard. The shoes were ill fitting, and I developed blisters as big as dollars that broke and made huge painful sores on my feet. The third or fourth day I saw a man working a field along the road. By this time I knew I needed help,

and I approached him. He was a simple man who had a soft manner and kind eyes, and looked like he could be trusted. He, in turn, could tell at a glance that I was a human being who desperately needed a helping hand. He motioned me to come with him. We walked together through the village of Blanc Mesnil to a secluded house.

Upon entering the house, I saw a young woman. Her name was Danice, and she was beautiful, but she was not to be taken advantage of. She pounced on me with questions. Where? When? Why? I tried to explain my plight. I had begun to learn a few French words by now, and could make myself understood a little. Finally, I could see compassion in her eyes. She sat me down, bathed my sore feet, put salve on the sores, and for first time in days, I had food and warmth. As we talked, I found out that Danice was a war widow with two small children. She had been living in Paris where it was unsafe, as the city was being constantly bombed. She met a man named George Engle who befriended her. He took her and the children to his home in Blanc Messnil, so they would be safe.

When George came home later that first night, and saw me, he said, "Not again. Oh well, take him to my room. We'll talk in the morning." I learned later that I wasn't the first scared, miserable young escapee that he and Danice had helped. A few months before, they had helped a young Canadian Air Force man.

I went into George's room and fell into his bed that had a huge feather tick on it. My feet were so bad, I couldn't walk or even stand. I stayed in bed for several days and slept. My meals were served to me by Danice. I would eat and flop back and sleep some more.

When I was able to be up and around, George introduced me to a friend of his named Joseph. He was also older, like George; and as they knew where to go in Paris for help, it was decided that I should have a false I.D., and that I should go by train to Toulouse, which was in the south, next to the Pyrenees Mountains. The evening before, George, Joseph and I were to leave for Paris, we had a huge dinner at Joseph's home. Twelve courses, a different wine with each course, the mashed potatoes were yellow with real butter. After desert, which was apples, cheese and sweet wine, we sat and talked. Joseph told me about his life. He had been a carnival man. He got out pictures of a carrousel he had owned, but it looked like what we call a giant swing in the U.S. He was at that time on a board that issued ration stamps, which probably accounted for the delicious meal.

During this time, Grandma, Joseph's mother or mother-in-law was busy knitting. When it came time to say goodbye, she had completed a brown woolen turtle-neck dickie, which she gave to me to keep me warm. I really treasured it and wore it until I reached Spain. Joseph gave me his address and asked me to keep in contact, as they wanted to know what happened to me. After returning home I did, in fact, communicate with Joseph, George and Danice for two or three years.

Early the following morning, George, Joseph and I went Paris. We went to a bar where they were both well known. Over cheese, bread and wine, we discussed what each of us would do. Joseph would get the necessary documents for an identification card. George would take me to get a photograph to put on the ID. After Joseph left, George and I started for

our destination. We stopped in bars along the way. As the first bar, George whispered to the bartender, "This is my American Comrade". We had free drinks for the rest of the evening. This happened a few more times in a few more bars. Finally, at the last one, George, feeling no pain, forgot to whisper and blurted loudly, "This is my American Comrade". Everybody looked up, and we had more drinks on the house.

While we were there, the air raid sounded. At that particular moment, George and I were in the can. When we came out, the bar was deserted and the door was locked. George explained that the bartender was an air raid warden and had to go to the shelter. Since there nothing else to do but wait, we had a few more drinks and ate hard-boiled eggs. When the owner returned, we left for the photo shop, which was next to Gestapo headquarters.

The lady photographer kept repeating a phrase to me, which I didn't understand. Finally, George handed me a comb. I combed my hair and she snapped the picture. We returned to the appointed place where we met Joseph and put together the identification card. They listed my profession as a journalist, stamped it with a French coin, and it looked quite official. He gave me the name Marcel Petit, born July 22, 1925. I carried this card with me the rest of my journey, and I still treasure it today. They took me to the railroad station. We bid goodbye with hugs, kisses and tears. I got on the train and was on my way to Toulouse, France.

I was seated in a compartment. A young French girl sat across from me. Two German officers came in and sat down beside her. I assumed they were

lieutenants. Three other people came in and seated themselves, and I heard the conductor coming down the aisle saying, "Bieat," which meant ticket. I glanced over my shoulder and saw that the conductor was accompanied by a German, and that they were checking tickets and identification. Again, I became frantic, fearing I would be caught. However, I had noticed the person next to me had placed his ticket on the back of his seat and went into the bathroom.

When he returned I put my ticket on the back of my seat and went into the bathroom. I waited. Suddenly the door handle rattled and a huge bang on the door. I thought, "My God. I'm really caught now." I tried to open the window so I could jump out, but it was bolted shut. I thought, "What the hell," and opened the door. There stood the conductor and the German. They said something I didn't understand, pushed by me and went in. I returned to my seat and waited. They left and went on to the next car, and I breathed a sigh of relief. A little further down the way, the two German officers got off the train, and I slept the rest of the way to Toulouse.

We got to Toulouse at five or six in the morning. It was bitter cold and still dark. Once again I had no place to go, but I checked my compass and headed south. About an hour after leaving town, I became cold and tired. I saw haystacks along the road. I picked a stack in the middle of the field, dug a hole in the side, crawled in and fell asleep. I awoke and again started walking.

After a few miles, I ran into two French Gendarnes. They came up to me, and since there was a light drizzle, they asked me to accompany them to a stone shelter nearby. They started asking me



for identification. I played dumb, acting like I couldn't hear or understand. Then one policeman held me, and the other one searched me. They found my false I.D., my escape map, etc. After seeing my map and realizing that I was an American trying to escape, they made me understand that I should get off the highway and stay in the fields.

I walked in the fields about one-half hour, and suddenly heard dogs barking furiously. This thought came into my mind, that they might have turned me into the Germans. I knew they used dogs to track. I began running frantically, thinking I'm surely caught now. I tore through brambles and bushes to the top of the hill, and I collapsed, exhausted. I looked back down and found, to my embarrassment, it was some hounds chasing a rabbit.

After resting a while I continued on along the crest of the hill. I could see the roadway and further down a village with a bridge crossing a river. Reason told me I should probably follow along the roadway. However, when I got closer to the bridge, I could see a guard post and German guards, and I knew I couldn't get by there, so I'd have to change my route. I turned to the east and came to a canyon with a dirt road, which I followed. After a while I came upon a Frenchman walking along the road in the same direction. Again, I indicated that I was an American escapee and he motioned to me to come with him.

He took me to his home, which was a three-story house. Upon entering the house, he took my arm and ushered me directly to the top floor and put me in a bedroom. A short time later he returned, took me down to the main floor and introduced me to his father, mother and

two brothers. Mother put dinner on the table, and we all sat down. Father served. We all ate with little or no conversation. After the meal, the father and the three sons had a conversation in low tones. I sat and waited. I knew they were deciding what to do with me. Later, the brother who brought me home, took me up to the bedroom and told me to stay there until morning.

Early the next morning, the same man came and got me. He and another brother and I walked for three to four hours, climbing into the mountains. About sun up, we reached a plateau and stopped and had a lunch of wine, bread and cheese. We continued on for another 45 minutes, and finally came to a log cabin built in the side of the hill. The cabin had no windows and three walls. The back wall next to the hill was dirt with a huge fireplace built into it. The door opened inward. On one side were two levels of bunks covered with straw, on the other was a table and two chairs and boxes, which contained apples, flour, beans and dried mule meat.

The man built a fire, and while we finished the cheese and bread, he told me I was to stay there, and he would return in three days. They left, and I watched them disappear down the hill. I went into the cabin, stoked the fire, lit a candle and settled down for the night, feeling secure and safe. The next morning I took stock of my surroundings. I found the ax, cut wood for the fireplace and hauled it in. I found the spring for water, carried a pail in and put on a pot of beans and mule meat. There was a set of books on the shelf, which were French instructions in English. I occupied my time trying to learn French by reversing the words. Looking around outside, I

noticed a tramway from the cabin that ran down the mountain.

The men were to return on the third day. That night I heard a lot of wind blowing, but didn't pay attention. I got up the next morning, pulled the door open. It opened inward, and the snow was up to my nose. I got the shovel and shoveled a path to the firewood, the spring and to my makeshift toilet. I still expected the men to show up. When they hadn't appeared by dusk, I knew I would be there another night, but each morning there was more snow. As a result, they didn't show up for 13 days. I got damn sick of beans and mule meat.

One night I dreamed of pancakes dripping in butter and syrup, so the next morning, I mixed some flour, salt and water and fried myself some pancakes. I cooked apples for syrup. I ate it; it was terrible, but when you are hungry, everything is eatable, I guess. The woodcutter returned on the 13th day. He brought me a razor and some more food. That night we had a nice meal with wine, cheese and bread. The next morning he told me that the pass over the Pyrenees was closed,, and he wouldn't be able to guide me over the pass until spring. However, he said I was welcome to stay there. He left. I was again alone to ponder my situation. I spent most of the night thinking: should I stay until spring or leave? By morning I decided to stay because of the deep snow.

A week later, loneliness and desolation overcame me, and I knew I had to leave. I knew I had to prepare myself the best I could. The snow is still four to five feet deep. I found a pair of high top logging boots in the cabin, and although they were a little large, they were a great improvement over the ill-fitting oxfords

that had caused so many blisters on my feet. I also took one of the woolen blankets and filled my pockets with dried apples. I shoveled a path to the tramway. It had a log cradle, which was a cable extending down the south side of the mountain. I knew it would be impossible for me to try to walk down the south side of the mountain. The snow was too deep and should I try walking, I would probably freeze to death before one night had passed, but I figured I could ride down in a log carrier.

I crawled into the log cradle, pulled the release and "We're off". Shooting down the side of the mountain, I picked up speed as I went. Soon I realized I was going too fast, the bottom of the tram was booming in on me. I grabbed the blanket I had taken and threw it over the cable and pulled down hard in an effort to slow down, but the blanket burned through. The cradle slammed against the bottom end, hurling me into the air. I landed in a bank of snow, which fortunately cushioned my fall.

Getting to my feet and gathering my senses, I looked on down the mountain. I thought I saw a road about 300 feet further on. After falling, sliding and rolling, I finally reached the road. I looked around and could see a village down in the valley, but remembering the German guards at the last village, I decided I better take off in the opposite direction. I trudged the rest of the day through waist-deep snow. I was tired, cold and miserable, and felt hopeless when I noticed a prayer shelter along the road. I went in and knelt down and prayed, "Dear God, please freeze the snow so I can walk on top".

I continued on about one or two miles, and as dusk settled in, I came to a

small farming village. I saw a lighted building, which I started toward when I met a man on the street. I approached him and said, "Comrade Americana". He looked at me, took me by the arm and took me into the building. There were seven or eight men sitting around a fireplace, and as we walked in, the conversation stopped, and they stared at us. My benefactor said, "This is an American. He just walked into town. They all howled with laughter, saying "He's crazy. There has been only one man in the village for the last week, and he came in on skis and went out on snowshoes." Then one of the men got up and motioned me to sit on his chair nearer the fireplace. Another handed me a glass of wine, and we talked. I had some sausage and cheese; and finally, the men departed for the night.

The man who I had met on the street took me by the arm, and we walked a couple of blocks. We came to a crude, three-sided shelter with a watering trough in it. He said, "You can stay here," and walked away. There was no hay or straw, only snowy manure on the floor. I huddled against the wall, shivering and trembling, tears rolling down my cheeks. I knew I couldn't have stayed there. I would have frozen stiff. I wandered around, and finally found a barn with animals in it and piles of hay. I dug in and went to sleep.

About five o'clock in the morning, I was awakened by a man pitching hay to feed his cattle. I recognized him as the man who had taken me by the arm the night before. He saw me and said, "Hungry?" Naturally, I said yes, and he motioned me to follow him into his house.

We went into the kitchen where he explained me to his wife. She gave me some breakfast and then took me to the top floor and put me in a room with a bed. I laid down, covered myself and went back to sleep.

I stayed in that room for three days, eating and sleeping. Early on the fourth day, the man and woman came to tell me I would have to leave right away. The mayor of the town was pro-Nazi, and he was inspecting houses. He would really cause trouble for me if he found me. The man pointed in the direction for me to, which was toward the Pyrenees. I walked all that day, constantly climbing. Toward evening I spotted a farmhouse in a remote area and decided to take a chance in contacting someone. I was cold and tired, and I had a bad sore on my foot from the boots I had taken from the mountain cabin. They were too large, and I had laced them tight. A sore formed where the laces were.

As I approached the house, I saw a farmer just outside the front door. I again explained that I was an American escapee, and he took me in the house. The living quarters were on top of the barn. We climbed the stairs and entered a room with a fireplace. There was an elderly woman sitting, holding a baby, and a young woman who was the farmer's wife. She was stirring a pot of food. The table had been set, and after the farmer spoke to his wife, she put another place on the table and motioned for us to sit up at the supper table for supper. The grandmother placed the baby in a cradle and stood up. Then I saw she had only one leg. However, she placed the stump on the seat of the chair, and hanging onto the back, she thumped, thumped, thumped her way to the table.

During the meal I found out she had lost her leg in the war, as she said, "The war to end all wars".

After we had eaten, the farmer took me downstairs again and up another ladder to the hay loft, which was another part of the upper story. I crawled into the hay for warmth and slept. Early the following morning, I was awakened with the thump, thump of Grannie' chair, as she went about preparing breakfast.

The farmer came up and beckoned me to follow him. I thought I was going to breakfast, but no. He handed me a shovel and told me to dig a path in the snow to the watering trough; which I did, and broke the ice so he could bring his oxen down to drink. He motioned me back to the barn, took a pitchfork and scooped manure into a wheelbarrow. Then he handed me the shovel and told me to finish the job.

After I finished, we washed our hands and went upstairs to the living quarters. The wife was shaking ground grain in a large strainer, separating the flour from the chaff, which she was putting in a huge pot cooking on the spit over the fireplace. It smelled great. I was hungry, and I thought, "Oh good. Nice, hot cereal for breakfast," but I was mistaken. We had coffee, bread and sausage.

After eating, I thought I would be able to rest and survey the territory. No way. The farmer took the pot off the spit and motioned me to follow him up the stairs. We went to a stall where the farmer tenderly took a quilt off a huge fat and old sow, and motioned me to pour the gruel into her trough, which I did. The wife then came out of the house and motioned me to follow her. We went to a large clay outdoor oven. I split boughs and wood, and we stoked up a roaring

fire in the oven. After it burned down, she showed me how to sweep out the ashes. I swept until I had the oven spotlessly clean. It was a hot and dirty job. The oven was still hot enough to bake bread, and you had to practically crawl in to sweep it out.

She went back in the house and came out with large loaves of bread to bake. The farmer then came and put an ax in my hand and led me to a woodpile where I split wood until they called me for dinner. Dinner was a treat. We had the delicious, newly baked white bread. I ate and then exhausted, I went back to my bed in the hay and slept until morning. I guess he had all the jobs done, because the next morning he said goodbye and pointed me down the road toward the mountain.

It took me the rest of that day and into the night to climb over the mountain ridge and descend into a valley. I came upon a hard-top road, and I walked down the road in the dark until I was completely exhausted. It was freezing cold, and I had to find a place to sleep and get out of the cold. I noticed a culvert under the road. It had leaves in it, which I gathered up around my head and body and fell asleep until morning.

I was so stiff and sore when I crawled out, I could hardly straighten up. It took me a while to get my bones moving to continue down the road.

About noon I entered the village of Pamiers. By this time, I was really hungry. I hadn't had anything to eat for two and one half days. I had ration stamps (which Joseph had given me) and money, but I had been afraid to use them. However, I was so hungry and knew I had to have some food in order to continue my walk over the mountains. So I took a

**RICHARD A. MAYHEW'S MEMOIRS**  
**TAIL GUNNER, 66<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON**

CONTINUED

chance, and finding an eating place, went in and sat down at a table. A lady came to the table and indicated she wanted to see my bread stamp before she would serve me. Since I didn't know which was which, I handed her the whole pack. This made her suspicious, and I knew she knew I was an escapee, but she gave me

my food; and even though I offered to pay her, she refused the money and waved me off with a gesture of good luck.

*Ed. Note: Mayhew did make it to Spain, but had continued trials along the way. His story will be continued in the next issue.*

**SAM CERVELLERA'S 8<sup>TH</sup> MISSION**  
**RADIO OPERATOR, FRED STONE CREW, 506 SQUADRON**

The target was one of the biggest supply and repair depot for FW 190s. We flew mostly north and then south into Germany and up to our target. We came out over water and over Denmark. We expected quite a big battle with the Luftwaffe, as this is right in their heart. We hit them alright. They were called out at eleven o'clock, and I started to count them. I got up as far as twenty, and they came in at the low element. They did not take long coming in, and we found out why. Four P47s were coming in to the FWs, and they had to break up. They were too low for us to get any shots to be effective. **(Glen) Hartzell, (Robert) Foust and (William) Strange** came close. We went over the target, and we were not bothered by fighters. There was a seven tenth cloud

cover, and we could not see the results. Coming out, we had P51s and P38s all the way out. Over the Denmark coast, we ran into flak, but not very accurate.

It's funny how those Jerries run when they see just one of our fighters. It is almost the biggest morale to a bomber crew, to see a friendly fighter. Over the Channel, you could hear the fighter pilots asking us, "Is everybody happy?" We answer, "Yeah Man." With them there, Jerrie won't dare come around. For my part, those fighters are winning the war. They saved us three times now. One bomber was fighting off a couple of FW190s, and asked for fighter help...The answer, "OK. Scruppy, here comes Pappy" After he drove them off, he sang, "If you're ever in a jam, here I am".

**AVIATION DICTIONARY**

**Airspeed:** Speed of an airplane. Deduct 25% when talking to a Navy Guy.

**Bank:** The folks who hold the lien on most pilots' cars.

**Crab:** The squadron Ops Officer.

**Dead Reckoning:** You reckon correctly or you are.

**Glide Distance:** Half the distance from the airplane to the nearest emergency landing field.

## MEMORIES OF WILLIAM WARNER PILOT, 68<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON

My first combat mission was as Co-Pilot with a crew who was flying their last mission. We went to Nuremberg, Germany. Several planes directly ahead of us were shot down by German ME 109 fighters. The Americans' parachutes caught on fire as crew members bailed out of their disabled planes. I realize the men knew of their impending death, freefalling toward earth. I was very scared for the whole nine hour mission...

Warner described the next two missions were uneventful, but mission number four had new problems: bombing Aschaffenburg. We returned from Germany, just north of Switzerland. The plane was badly damaged by flak, and we were running low on fuel due to a leaking fuel tank. The weather had closed in, and we lost radio contact with our alternate field in France. We crash landed near Leon, France. The engineer's shoulder was broken, and the radio operator's face was badly lacerated from flak, but everyone else was all right. Military personnel from a nearby chateau came and helped us out of the plane and kept us overnight. The chateau's huge, deep bathtub impressed everyone! The next day we were taken in a 6 x 6 truck to 'Marysville' on the French coast and given another war-weary B-24 to fly back to Shipdham.

A week later we flew to Magdeburg and plastered the oil refineries visually. The flak was accurate and heavy. Over the target, the number 3 engine was hit by flak and caught fire. On the turn off the target, the complete electrical system went out, and we were unable to get the bomb bay doors closed. We limped back to northern Holland where the number 4 engine cut out. The crew bailed out at 1100 feet, twenty miles over the Holland border in 'no man's land'. I was told that

one of our crew's parachutes did not open, which devastated me when I thought of the loss of one of my men. I had encouraged them to bail out for their safety. That made the loss my responsibility. However, we heard later they were all picked up by a British armored car, with no crew member lost.

We were taken to a British medical facility to set up in an old monastery. Due to the loss of the electrical system in the plane, my electric boot warmers had not worked, and my feet were frozen. At the monastery medic worked on the first floor and the patients were placed on the second floor. The monks stayed in small cubicles on the third floor. An old Catholic church stood next door, miraculously undamaged.

All night long heavy military vehicles traveled along a blacktopped road alongside the hospital. It was raining. By morning the road was a mire of mud. The medics left the window open in my room to expose my feet to the air. They gave me a large glass of brandy to help me sleep. Doctors informed me that my black toes had to be amputated, but I argued against that decision. I was discharged, and my feet soon returned to a more normal state. The black toes improved, and are still with me today!

Ninth Air Force mechanics patched the plane, and we flew it back to our home base at Shipdham. On the way, we lost two of the four patched engines, but landed safely at our base. We spent the next week at a rest home for R and R to recuperate.

Occasionally, we were given different assignments. On one very dark night I was asked to go on a secret flight. With parachutes and dressed in black, two or three men rode in the back of the plane.

**MEMORIES OF WILLIAM WARNER  
PILOT, 68<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON**

*CONTINUED*

Their officer gave me the headings to fly into French territory. When completed, the officer said, "Alright, you can return now!" The men had jumped out, and we returned to the base without another word.

*(Ed. Note: Warner was dropping agents to work with the French Underground.)*

The longest mission I ever flew on a B-24 was ten hours, twenty minutes. At that point, we were running on gasoline vapors. The B-24 range was approximately 2000 miles, with a speed of 180 mph. We bombed at altitudes reaching 28,000 feet, as well as bombing right down on the deck. Often there more than a thousand bombers in the sky at one time, wave after wave of planes. The logistics of it all baffle me to this day!

I am often asked how the crews coped with the possibility that they might not survive. I had a navigator who shot himself, just as we were getting ready to load up on the bomber. That came as a surprise to us because he was the sharpest navigator with a happy-go lucky temperament. I also had a crewmember grounded because he could not take the stress anymore. Later in the States, he also committed suicide. Few pilots I knew had problems coping. All of the mental and physical screening that we received was used to determine an individual's capacity to endure stress and discomfort. It was the pilot's job to maintain command and composure, ensuring the safety of the crew and plane for the accomplishment of the mission.

It helped that after stressful periods of time during combat, we returned to relatively peaceful surroundings and adequate food. At Shipdham we were housed in a Quonset hut, sectioned off into three rooms, heated by a small peat-burning stove on which we sometimes warmed up K-rations we swiped from the airplane.

Before I arrived at Shipdham Air Base, a buzz bomb had landed 150 feet from our barracks. The resulting crater had filled with water and weeds. When we left for the United States, we threw our bicycles into that pond. You see, upon arrival at Shipdham, we bought the bikes from the British for 20 pounds. The Brits refused to give us anything for them when we left, so the crater became a bicycle graveyard. I have since heard that the crater/pond still exists on the abandoned air base. I wonder if the hulk of my bike is still under that water, covered with weeds.

Now a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, I departed England in May 1945, piloting the last plane I flew in combat. It was a B-24 named One Weakness with nose art of the girl from the Dick Tracy comic strip. Twenty military personnel were aboard.

After returning home, Warner became a Flight Instructor. He flew in B-29s, and after discharge remained in the Air Force Reserves. He attended Purdue University, earning a degree as an electrical engineer. He became a civilian test pilot for the Air Force. He was a pilot for 51 years, fulfilling a childhood dream.

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**THE TRUTH IS...**

**AN EXCUSE IS USUALLY A THIN SKIN OF FALSEHOOD STRETCHED TIGHT OVER A BALD FACE LIE.  
THE MORE YOU SPEAK OF YOURSELF, THE MORE YOU ARE LIKELY TO LIE!  
THE PERSON WHO SAYS THEY ENJOY A COLD SHOWER IN THE MORNING WILL LIE ABOUT OTHER THINGS TOO.**

## **REPORT ON THE AFRICAN ASSIGNMENT AUTHOR UNKNOWN**

It is necessary to give a picture of Benina Main, the desert airfield in Mussolini's fallen Empire. Located 15 miles from Bengazi, chief seaport with Tobruk in the heyday of Il Duce, Benina Man had become the chief bomber base, operating against the islands of Pantelleria and Lanpedusa, and now Sicily. Haphazardly tossed onto the red desert sands, it was but an incoherent jumble of runways and revetments, and to find one's way from point to point amid the sage and swirling sand became a science.

The days unbearably hot after the time in England, the various insects and desert rodents at every turn, the gritty sand in the food – and tearing into the aircraft engines, all combined to make the days too short. Hundreds of Italian and German planes, damaged beyond repair, littered the surrounding area for miles, and on the wall of the battered hangers, still raising its ugly head through the broken concrete, remained the shattered basis of Fascist philosophy, the words, "Believe, Obey, Fight!"

The nights, cool, comfortable and starry, time and again tended to bolster the sagging spirits of the terribly overworked men. Engine change, once considered complex and burdensome, became but an everyday drudgery, as the howling sand ate its way into the cylinders, and every remaining system of the B-24s.

And now the 67<sup>th</sup> Squadron had ten planes, but for the greater part, they were unknown and untried. Only Major Howard Moore and 1st Lt. William Cameron among the pilots, were veterans. Their planes, pilots and names were:

W. R. Cameron	<i>Buzzin' Bear</i>	J. D. Hill	<i>Calaban</i>
R. L. Carpenter	<i>Horse Fly</i>	E. H. Reinhart	<i>G.I. Gal</i>
C. S. Griffiin	<i>Lady Fifinella</i>	C. P. Henderson	<i>4-Q-2</i>
F. H. Jones	<i>Available Jones</i>	R. E. Kollinger	<i>Suzy Q</i>
E. R. Mitchell	<i>Bela</i>		

### **WILLIAM HUEY REMEMBERS THIS CRASH FLIGHT ENGINEER/GUNNER, WALTER FRANKS CREW, 68<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON, FLYING IN LADY GERALDINE**

After 20 missions, we were permitted to have two weeks of R & R. Our Co-Pilot, **William Burlingame**, tried to talk us out of going. He said, "Let's finish our missions and go home."

We voted for R & R. Burlington said, "Just wait and see. Something will happen when we get back."

Sure enough, on the 21st mission, we were shot over Germany and had to bail out over Nancy, France, just barely inside the American battle lines.

*Ed. Note: Needless to say, Huey completed his missions, then flew in the weather squadron until the end of the war. Lady Geraldine got repaired and returned to the ZOI after the war.*



## A BIT OF WWII TRIVIA

When Adolph Hitler was on the rise, the newsreels showed thousands of people yelling 'Heil Hitler', and it appeared that all of Germany was behind him. Not so. A growing number of thinking people found ways to defy his propaganda machine and leave messages where they would be found by the common folk.

A metal worker at the Siemens Cable Factory sat at his kitchen table and wrote short messages on post cards that he would later leave in stairwells of apartment buildings, in waiting rooms of doctors' offices and other public places where they would be found and read. "Hitler's war is the workers death," he wrote. Also, "Come

what may, no peace with the diabolical Hitler Regime!" Another, "Why fight and for Hitler's plutocrats? All reasonable Germans must help destroy Hitler's war machine."

Otto Hampel sought to jar his fellow citizens of how destructive Nazi rule would prove for them, their families and their families and their country. Unfortunately, the Gestapo eventually caught up with him. Both Hampel and his wife were beheaded.

Although the Nazi party had a near monopoly on communication, there were still many hearts and minds that its propaganda failed to win over.

*Source: Brad Bauer, WWII Magazine*

## BOOKS OF GREAT EVENTS IN 44<sup>TH</sup> BOMB GROUP HISTORY

If you are looking for a high adventure WWII story, read *Escape in the Pyrenees* by the late **Archie Barlow**, Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Hartwell Howington** crew. The mission on 21 January 1944 was to Escales Sur Buchy, France, to wipe out the V-1s that were striking London. **Ram It Dam II** went down and Barlow survived and evaded. He relates his moment by moment escapades of being hidden by the Underground, chased by Germans with dogs, sleeping in freezing haylofts, and finally sliding down a very high hill to safety into Spain.

Barlow's wife, Aline, has copies of the book. 160 Johnson Drive SE, Calhoun, GA 30701-3941. Tel. 706-629-2396. The cost is \$35.

*A copy of Escape in the Pyrenees has been sent to the Museum of Resistance in Gratenois, France. This facility was built to honor the brave Resistance Fighters - men and women - who defied the Nazi occupiers, and helped hundreds of American and British flyers return to safety in England. Pierre Berenguer, one of the leaders of this effort, is asking anyone who was helped by this determined band of Frenchmen, to*

*please send him their stories. Contact me if you received their help, and I will get your adventure delivered to the French Museum. (717 846-8948)*

**BURNING HITLER'S BLACK GOLD** is a factual account of the greatest mission of WWII – Ploesti Oil Refineries, Romania. Major Robert W. Sternfels, pilot of the B-24 **Sandman**, 98<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, compiled this book following two years of interviews with historians and participants in the mission. The book replicates many official documents, plus the report of an interview with the planner of the mission, the late General Jacob Smart.

Sternfels group flew alongside Leon Johnson's 44<sup>th</sup> BG, experiencing the same dangerous surprises – the railroad car full of German soldiers with anti-aircraft guns, small arms fire, steel cables, black smoke and fighters.

To purchase this factual, highly organized report on this valorous mission, contact Major Robert Sternfels, 395 Pine Crest Dr., Laguna Beach, CA 92651. The price is \$26.75 with shipping.

## COMBAT CREWS THAT HELPED BRING VICTORY



### THE CHARLES HINSHAW CREW

**L-R Back Row:** Lester Carreck, Left Waist Gunner; Donald Armstrong, CoPilot; Charles Hinshaw, Pilot; Robert B. Fisk, Navigator; James T. Booker, Right Waist Gunner.

**Back Row:** Charles Brenton, Radio Operator; Robert Ray, Nose Turret Gunner; Jimmie Wilson, Tail Gunner; Charles Holbrook



### THE CHARLES HUGHES CREW

**L-R Back Row:** Angelo Paluzzi, Engineer; Eugene Symons, Right Waist Gunner;

Thomas Chocklett, Engineer; Stanley Langcaskey Left Waist Gunner; Stanley Langcaskey, Belly Gunner; Aulus Blitz, Tail Gunner

**Back Row:** --- Miller, TG; Sternberger, Navigator; Charles Hughes, Pilot; Sylvester Hunn, Co-Pilot; Maurice Hause, Bombardier.



## MAIL & E-MAIL

Barbara Crandell, sister-in-law of **Leonard Crandell**, sent photos of great memorials to 44<sup>th</sup> BG members lost in Belgium and Germany. As it happened, the Crandell family, Joe (brother of Leonard), Barbara and Connie were in France on September 11 when they received news that terrorists had struck the World Trade Center. The dedication that was planned for the monument in Hamminkeln, Germany was postponed

until May, when the trip was rescheduled.

The Crandell family met Peter Loncke, a Belgium airman, and attended the dedication of a memorial for the **Harold Pinder** crew in Winbrin, Belgium. That memorial is located just a few feet from the large boulder in the Ardennes. Local people, including members of the Belgian Underground, came to meet the family.



## MAIL & E-MAIL



Daughter Connie took part in the ceremony.



Peter Loncke and George Vantilt at Pinder Monument

The cost of this memorial was paid by **Forrest Clark**, in honor of his friend **Abe Sofferman**, a gunner who flew this mission in Clark's place. Sofferman survived the crash, was attempting to evade when he was captured and murdered by the Germans – because he was Jewish. Peter Loncke arranged for the creation of the monument.

The ceremony for the Crandell monument took place when the 44<sup>th</sup> BG's tour was rescheduled in May. The **Max Chandler's** plane, **Southern Comfort**, was lost that same day, with two survivors, **Louis DeBlasio** and **Robert Vance**. DeBlasio was present when the group went to Wesel for a very nice lunch and presentation by German officials in the city of Wesel.



In Wesel, the monument is unveiled. Present are: Holger Schlieff, Mayor of Wesel, Connie, Barbara, Peter and Joe Crandell.

Of note: Connie & Peter met in 2001 at the Pinder ceremony. They were married two years later. Peter's death, in 2012 took place on the same day, 67 years prior, that Leonard Crandell's plane **Kay Bar** went down, with all crew members KIA.

*Ed. Note: In reporting the death of Peter Loncke in the Tails, I credited him with creating the Crandell and Chandler monument in Belgium, but that is an error. It was in Hamminkeln, Germany.*

### **William Peterson to Will Lundy:**

The mission that sticks in my mind better than the rest was 22 April 1944. The target was in Hamm, Germany. We had the usual morning briefing, went out to our bird, but had a stand down, then another. They even brought our mail to us. I had 4 letters from Bernice, who is now my wife. It was a beautiful day. Early in the afternoon we finally got the green light. On the way back, while crossing the channel, just as it was getting dark, I saw flashing lights behind us. I called Pete, and he told me to stay alert for them and keep him informed. Nothing unforeseen happened until we were ready to land.



The runway lights were extinguished; it was getting dark. Then it seemed hell broke loose. There was flak, except no smoke puffs, but firework; there were fires on the ground; tracer bullets seemed to come straight at me. I was in the tail, and had reloaded the 50s, but the tracers seemed to veer off at the last instant. I don't know if I fired back, as I can't remember seeing any fighters. We landed at a B-17 base near London, and returned to the 44<sup>th</sup> the next day. Then we heard a neighboring base had been strafed.

I have never read anything about this mission, but I know I didn't dream it.

*(Ed. Note: This story does not appear in the Database, nor on the Legacy Pages of the 44th Web Site. Nevertheless, the letter was sent to Will Lundy, and he made notes on the letter, verifying the story to be authentic.)*

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**Reginald Carpenter to Mrs. Pearl R. Huenerberg:** I was saddened to learn that Vincent Huenerberg passed away in March 1993. Your husband was a marvelous Engineer who always did his best to see that the aircraft was kept in tip top condition.

On the low level Ploesti mission, August 1 1943, when we were forced to ditch in the Mediterranean Sea, Vincent was the first crewman to go out the top hatch. The aircraft's tail was torn off, and it was sinking nose down very rapidly. Vincent swam to the left dingy hatch, which was now under water, and attempted to deploy it, but the door was jammed, and he could not open it. Rapidly, he swam over to the right dingy hatch, and fortunately, he was able to open it and deploy the dingy. When I finally got free off the cockpit and came to the surface, the first thing I saw was

Vincent standing in our one and only dingy, pulling all the survivors in it. If it were not for his strength and determination to deploy that remaining dingy, we would have all perished. All who survived owe their lives to Vincent E. Huenerbert, the best engineer a pilot could have. Regrettably S/Sgts **Walter Brown** and **Edward Durrand** were crushed on the flight deck when the top turret tore loose from the fuselage, and they were unable to escape.

I have very happy memories about my association with Vincent, and they shall go with me forever. Many of my friends have heard me tell stories about the Flight Engineer on the crew of **Horsefly**.

Sincerely, Reginald Carpenter, Pilot of **Horsefly**.

*(Ed. Note: Reginald Carpenter was a highly respected and much beloved pilot in the 67<sup>th</sup> Squadron. After surviving the Ploesti Raid, he was among those who flew to Wiener-Neustadt. Their unnamed plane was shot down by fighters. Five members of the crew was KIA. Carpenter and all others became POW.)*

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**Frank Schaeffer** to Ruth Morse regarding reunions: I'm sorry the 44<sup>th</sup> is holding no more reunions. The 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force is still going strong. Their next reunion is in Savannah. I am interested in the B-24 reunion at Tempe, Arizona. I hope to attend the Air Force Evasion & Escapees Reunion and 16th Armor in Rapid City, Iowa.

*Ed. Note: Frank is a very modest gentleman, but he has supplied many pictures to the Tails, and has written his story in a number of different publications. Frank has been a faithful attendee of the 44<sup>th</sup> over the years. Nevertheless, he is finding others to attend.*



## FOLDED WINGS

*The tide rises and the tide falls; the twilight darkens, the curfew calls,  
The day returns, but nevermore returns the traveler to the shore.  
And the tide rises and the tide falls.*

Unknown author

**Becker, Ralph S. #19351 66<sup>th</sup>**  
Squadron 11 February 2013 Flight Officer Becker was a Navigator on the **Leo D. Crooks** crew. Their first mission was 15 February 1945. The Allies seized the Remagan bridge over the Rhine on March 7, but the 44<sup>th</sup> BG was striking targets all over Germany, hitting Berlin with great thousands of pounds of bombs.

Becker flew in seven different A/C: **Glory Bee, Down De Hatch, Jersey Jerk, Loco Moto, King Pin, The Big Headed Kid** and **Jail Bait**.

Becker flew sixteen missions, the last on 20 April 1945. On May 20, Germany surrendered.

After the war, Becker attended the University of Vermont, then the University of New Hampshire, then the University of Florida where he earned a PHD degree. He was a specialist in Photochemistry. He taught at the University of Houston for 37 years, and was the first recipient of the Ester Farfel Award for faculty excellence in 1978. He also served as a visiting professor in a number of colleges in Europe.

Becker published books, papers and articles that influenced thinking in photophysics and photo chemistry, and joined in research with colleagues in Europe until 2011.

He is survived by his wife Phyllis, four children and four grandchildren. The couple was living in Fort. Worth, Texas at the time of his passing.

**Fisk, Robert B. #20216 66<sup>th</sup>**  
Squadron 16 November 2012 Lt. Fisk was a Navigator on the **C. R. Hinshaw** crew. Their first of 30 missions was 27 September 1944. Fisk flew all missions with the Hinshaw crew; on one mission, the Command Pilot was **Sterling Dobbs**. They flew in many unnamed planes, but also in **Scotty Mac, Jail Bait** and **Big Time Operator**. Their last mission was on 15 March 1945.

After the war, Fisk joined the Air Force Reserves, rising to the rank of Lt. Colonel.

He attended Syracuse University, earning a degree in Business Administration. After graduating, he was employed as photographer for the University, a position he held for 42 years.

In 1952 Fisk was sent to Iran to make health education movies and film strips under the Economic Development Program.

Fisk is survived by his wife Connie and four children. He was living in Syracuse, New York at the time of his death. News of his passing came to Roger Fenton by e-mail from his family.

**Fitzsimmons, Richard #20222 506**  
Squadron 15 December 2012 Lt. Fitzsimmons was a Bombardier on three crews: **J. W. Grow, Sidney Paul** and **Ralph Golubock**. At one time he flew with **Benton Greene** as Command Pilot.

Fitzsimmons flew in many different aircraft: **The Wasps Nest, Southern Comfort-Replacement, Greenwich, Prince/Princ-ass/Princess, Pistol Packin'**



## FOLDED WINGS

### ***Mama, Ole Cock and Gallavantin' Gal.***

On 29 May 1944 on the flight to Politz, Germany, flying in Princess, they were hit with a fighter, knocking out the #1 engine and the fuel cells in the left wing. The fuel was flowing out in huge amounts. The pilot could not feather the motor on the #1 engine, and for a short time, the plane was uncontrollable. He rang the bell once to bail out, but when he was able to stabilize the plane, he did not ring the second bell. However, the Tail Gunner bailed out, was picked up at sea by the Germans, and became POW. All others were interned in Sweden, and eventually returned to Shipdham.

**Gordon, Charles "Shep" #20419**  
68<sup>th</sup> Squadron 20 December 2012  
Lt. Gordon was first a Bombardier, later a Navigator on many crews. He flew with **S. H. Bowman, Raymond Hamlyn, Norman Peterson, Charles Durell, James Williams, A.D. Bonett and Charles Kuch.**

Gordon flew 33 missions, including the one on D-Day to Colleville/St. Laurent. The thirteen different planes he flew in were: ***The Exterminator, Heaven Can Wait II, Northern Lass, V for Victory, D-Barfly, Full House, Flak Alley II, Pappy's Chillun, T.S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Seed of Satan, Lone Ranger, Flak Magnet, and Lili Marlene.***

According to his son David, His most memorable mission was his 33<sup>rd</sup>, to an aircraft factory at Bernburg, Germany. Fighter attacks were vicious, but Gordon managed to shoot a ME 410.

His son reported that he received much local acclaim when he was awarded the French government award

"Knight of the Legion of Honor".

After the war he earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Buffalo. He worked many years at Pfaudler Company in Rochester, NY. He was a participant in Honor Flight in June 2009.

Gordon is survived by his wife of 61 years, Helen Horwitz Gordon, his children David and Ruth (Miller), both of Chicago; and two grandchildren.

**Harrison, Lyle A #25249 67<sup>th</sup>**  
Squadron 2 May 2012 T/Sgt. Harrison was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on two crews, **James Brownlowe, and James Clements.** He flew with many Command Pilots: **Robert Lehnhausen, Harold Stanhope, William Strong, Eugene Snavely, M. W. Miskewich, James McAtee, Donald Adams, George Insley, Wayne Middleton, J. L. Henderson, Donald Adams, Harold Stanhope, and Elmer Hammer.**

Harrison flew 31 missions, the first on 11 September 1944, the last on 24 March 1945. He flew in the following aircraft: ***Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Phyllis, Limpin' Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Fearless Fosdick, Sand Bomb Special, Miss Marion and Louisiana Belle.***

According to his cousin, Steve and wife Judy Harrison, he worked with Arcata Redwood in Northern California. Harrison was survived by his wife Jean, daughters Jean and Judy and son Rob, plus many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was living in Redding, California at the time of his death.

**Robison, Wallace # 21829 506**  
Squadron 2 March 2012 T/Sgt. Robison was a gunner on many crews, first as a Waist Gunner, later as a

## FOLDED WINGS

Togglier/Top Turret Gunner. He flew 36 missions, the first on 27 March 1944, flying with the following pilots: Paul Blow, B. L. Scuddy, Eustice Hawkins, D. H. Dines, Charles Connor, H. K. Bennett, J.L. Kearney, M.D., M. D. Mendenhall and Fred Stone.

He flew in the following planes: *Ole Cock, M'Darling, The Banana Barge, Feudin' Wagon, Shack Rat, Southern Comfort II, Passion Pit, Prince/Princess, Cape Cod Special, My Peach* and *Baldy & His Brood*.

On D-Day., Robison flew to Colleville/St. Laurent. His last mission was 3 August 1944.

Robison's wife Florence wrote of one of her husband's memorable missions: "Sgt. Robison flew 33 missions, the most memorable was on 8 April 1944, Easter Sunday. As a waist gunner on Beardon's regular crew, was drafted as a replacement gunner for Lt. Scuddy's crew. We were flying M/Darling.

During the dark days following the 8 April 1944 missions, the 44<sup>th</sup> was

blessed to have top notch Commanders when the chips were down. L/Col John Gibson, 44<sup>th</sup> Commander and Gen. Leon Johnson, 44<sup>th</sup> Combat Wing Commanders, were commanders who represented ultimate leadership qualities that helped get through the adversity.

Robison and Lt. Beardon remained in contact, and on each year on April 8, they made a telephone call contact, so that together they can express their thanks for another year of life. Lt Beardon identified that Easter Sunday mission "The day blood ran in the bomb bay."

*Ed. Note: The official records do not quite coincide with Robison's memory. However, the powerful evaluation of the 8 April 1944 mission is accurate. According to Will Lundy's evaluation, that month was the bloodiest of the war.*

*The April 8 1944 was the worst. The mission to Langenhagen Germany cost the loss of the most plane losses and casualties of the entire war for the 44<sup>th</sup>:*

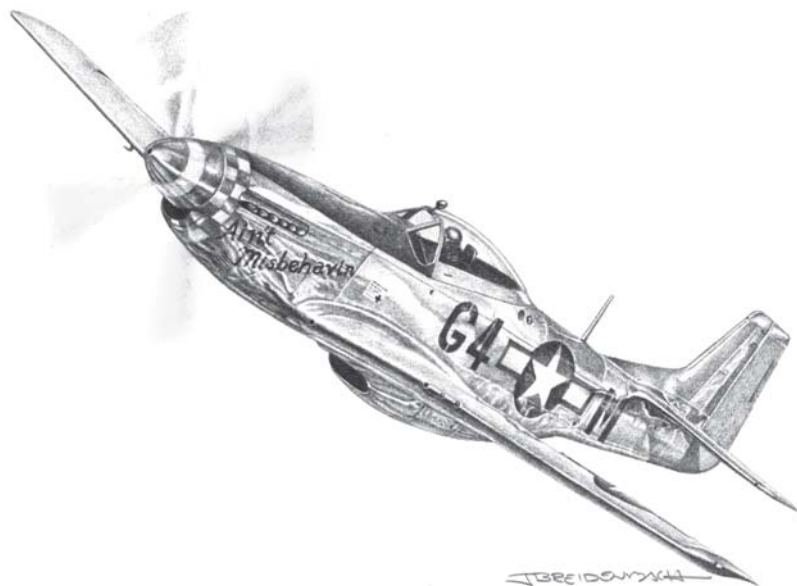
*A/C lost – 13; KIA – 46; POW – 72; WIA – 3.*



**44th Bomb Group  
Veterans Association**

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## **A GREAT LITTLE FRIEND**

The P-51 Mustang, built by North American Aviation, was a fighter/bomber that exceeded the performance of the Luftwaffe, and is considered a lifesaver by many airmen. It was powered by the Packard V-1650 with a two-speed supercharged engine, and armed with six .50 caliber M2 Browning machine guns. Mustang pilots claimed 4,950 enemy aircraft shot down.