

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 11 Issue #2

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group

Spring 2012

Non Profit Veterans Association

Veterans Association

EIN # 68-0351397

CORKY

Corky arrived in Shipdham in early June 1944. She flew 66 missions with many crews, including **Charles Deurell, Reuben Ricketts, Arnold Lansosn, A. D. Bonnett, Benjamin Ford, Robert Knablein, Richard Donald, Thomas Kay, Elmer Kohler, Raymond Mondloh, Maurice Corwine, William Soloman, Thurston Van Dyke, Gerald G. Lindsay, Ned Anderson, Maurice Corwine and Robert Lough.** President George Washburn, flew as Co-Pilot in **Corky** with Elmer Kohler on several missions.

The plane underwent major repairs at Woodbridge, Suffolk from damage on the mission to Gelsenkirchen, Germany. She was lost 28 June 1945 in a mission to Dortmund.



44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD 2011 - 2012

President: George Washburn
11505 N. Armenia Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33612
Phone (813) 932-6425
E-Mail: liberatorpilot@msn.com

Vice President/Historian:
Roger D. Fenton
21539 East Alyssa Court
Queen Creek, AZ 85142
Phone (480) 893-3761
E-Mail: lomadanger@aol.com

Secretary/8 Ball Tails Editor:
Ruth W. Davis-Morse
2041 Village Circle East
York, PA 17404
Phone (717) 846-8948
Fax (717) 846-6688
E-Mail: rdavismorse@aol.com

Treasurer: Jackie Roberts
11910 SE 44th
Oklahoma City, OK 73150
Phone 405 732-5838
E-Mail: mywings@cox.net

Decorations & Awards Director:
Robert Lee Aston
830 Cardinal Drive
Elberton, GA 30635-2606
Phone (706) 283-1337
E-Mail: leeaston@elberton.net

Director: Richard Lynch
109 Jason Road, Box 518
Conrad, Iowa 50621-0518
Phone(641) 366-2414
E-Mail: r_blynch@heartofiowa.net
(first three letters r_b)

Director: Sterling Dobbs
P. O. Box 825
LaGrange, Texas 78945
Phone 979 249-3838
E-Mail: b24dobbs@cvctx.com

Director: Charles W. Tilton
812 Scenic Drive
Charleston, WV 25311-4165
Phone 304 346-4165
E-Mail: ctilton4165@suddenlink.net

UK Representative: Steve Adams
28 Bassingham Road
Norwich, England NR3 2 QT
Phone 011-44-1603-400221
E-Mail: steveadam2009@btinternet.com

Database Custodian and Webmaster:
Arlo Bartsch, Webmaster
42 Promesa Drive
Hot Springs Village, Arkansas 71909
Phone 501 922-5247
E-Mail: Afbas@aol.com

*(Web Page courtesy of
X-Mission, Salt Lake City, Utah)*

Visit our website @ www.44thbombgroup.com

The 8-Ball Tails[©]

Official Journal of The
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association,
Inc.[©]

Compiled, written and published tri-yearly at 2041 Village Circle East, York, PA, by Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor. Printed and mailed Bulk Rate at York, PA under USPS Permit #323. All original written material such as letters, stories, excerpts from personal diaries or memoirs, drawings and photos submitted to this journal will become the property of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and will be copyright protected except where noted. The text and photos are otherwise reproduced from official USAAF and USAF documents and photos which have been released for publication. Permission is granted for the contents of this journal to be reproduced specifically for personal archives. Otherwise,

copyright material herein may be reproduced by the journal of other incorporated non-profit veterans organizations so long as this publication is properly credited and prior permission is granted by the editor. (June 2003)

Those submitting letters, stories and photos to the editor or historian must do so with the understanding that this material will most likely be published in this journal as a matter of interest to the members/subscribers of the Association and this journal. While every attempt will be made to answer all of the material received, there is no explicit or implied guarantee that an answer will be provided or published. Except for specific requests for the return of original documents and photos, all material submitted will become the property of the 44th Veterans Association, Inc., or its successors.

THE GEORGE WASHBURN CREW AND CORKY



Back L-R **Herman Eckstein** (Co-Pilot), **George Washburn** (Pilot), **Thomas Keenan** (Bombardier), **Fred Crites** (Waist Gunner),
Front L-R **Vanig Abrahamian** (Engineer, Top Turret Gunner), **Donald McLean** (Waist Gunner), **Joseph Grothaus** (Nose Gunner), **Charles Staples** (Tail Gunner), **Walter Fitzmaurice** (Radio Operator).

President **George Washburn** flew twelve missions in **Corky**, flying with the crew of **Elmer Kohler**. His first flight as first pilot was in **Corky**, which is probably the reason he considered it his favorite plane. It is interesting to note that he was the youngest member of the crew when he moved over to the left seat.

George flew in many unnamed planes, but also in **Flak Magnet**, **T S Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys**, **Lady Geraldine** and **Lili Marlene**. D-Day had taken place six weeks prior to his arrival to Shipdham, so most of his early missions were into France, one into Holland, later bombing at the heart of the enemy... Germany.

Every mission is unforgettable to a flyer, but with George, his most memorable was to Gelsenkirchen,

Germany, the heart of the Ruhr Valley. In an unnamed plane, the Washburn crew was flying #3 position on left wing of lead. The aircraft was hit on the bomb run, and it went into a steep bank and headed down. Having lost aileron control, they engaged autopilot, bringing the plane under control several thousand feet below the formation. They salvaged the bombs and headed home alone landing in Woodbridge. One aileron jammed in an up position, and could not be controlled manually, so on autopilot, George flew to the end of the runway, plus or minus 10 feet and landed. The left tire was gone; they ran off the runway and were buried in the mud. On inspection of the A/C, **Herman Eckstein**, Co-Pilot, found a 3" piece of flak that had missed his foot by inches.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I know most of you have had quite a few rides in a B-24 many years ago. The Collings Foundation is offering free rides to WWII veterans this year on their country-wide tour. You could go in the B-17, but I think most of us would much rather go in the B-24. **Witchcraft** – a ship in far better condition than any we flew! You can either sign up for a trip between two of their stops, or if space is available, a 30 minute ride at one of their stops.

Their tour starts in Florida in January, goes west through Texas to the West Coast, then North up the coast, then East across the country, getting to New England in the fall, then down the East coast back to Florida in November.

To find out when they will be near your location, go to their web site "Collings Foundaion". Their flight schedule will show for the next few months, so no one will have to keep checking as the year goes on. To learn more, you can contact Hunter Chaney, Director of Marketing, at their stops. **Witchcraft** has the names of the many contributors to its restoration inscribed on the fuselage, which includes several 44thers.

As you may know, this is the last year that membership dues will be collected. So far over 150 have renewed. Many thanks to our Treasurer, Jackie Roberts, for her work in this regard. Jackie also calls all the life members to check on their status – no small task.

Note that our web site now contains all the issues of the *8 Ball Tails*. Thanks to Past President, **Gerry Folsom**, for his arranging with the University of Utah to do all the work of scanning the issues which has now been completed.

I talk quite often with **Arlo Bartsch**, our Database developer, custodian and webmaster. One of the most rewarding results of our positions is being able to provide to the many people who have seen our web site, and are looking for more information on their relatives. I do not know of any other Group that has the wealth of available information as the 44th has. This is all due to a B-17 pilot who developed that data base program, and is now considered one of us. **Many thanks, Arlo.**

George Washburn

• • • • •

REMEMBER ST. ANDREW'S HALL IN NORWICH?

An English Couple in Norwich are writing a history of St. Andrew's Hall, and hoping some of our veterans will remember some of the events that they attended there. They are also looking for couples who met at St. Andrew's and married. The names of **Will and Irene Lundy** has been suggested. Were there more? You can contact Barry and Geraldine Allen at bazallen41@yahoo.co.uk. Or if you don't want to send an e-mail, you can call me (Ruth Morse) at 717 846-8948.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



A windy few weeks across the whole of the UK has really put the dampers on a lot of amateur flying in the U.K., including any from your old WWII station, Shipdham. As you may know, my recent heart operation has totally curtailed my own flying activities and from now on, Jane and I will be leaving our future airborne transportation to the likes of Virgin Atlantic and American Airlines, though we may sneak the off flight from the local flying school near us.

However to make up for our own lack of 'hands on' flying we have recently got the TV series Ice Pilots, following the exploits of Buffalo Airways in Canada's North West Territories. If you don't know the series, it shows a lot of footage of C-46, DC3 and DC4 flying, as the Buffalo fleet is mainly made up of these for both freight and passenger flights for this airline who service a whole bunch of Canadian outpost communities, using old WWII planes and real 'seat of your pants' flying techniques. It is all totally brilliant stuff to watch. It also has a lot of 'hangar' footage, showing the repairs and maintenance of these tough old aircraft. But for Buffalo, they are actually the living proof of that old saying, 'the only thing you can replace a DC3 with, is another DC3'. I don't know who coined that phrase, but boy is it true in their situation.

On a personal note, Jane and I are shortly moving from Norfolk to Cornwall in the far South-West of England, to be closer to the majority of the family and to the second wave of grandchildren. This is quite far away (300-400 miles) from the activities of the 2nd Air Division, but home to several of the jumping off points for the guys involved in the D-Day landings. Some appear to be for the Marines, and some for elements of the Engineer Corps of the U.S. Army. As you can see, I have a whole new set of learning curves to climb as I read up on the history of the ground based guys who were fighting hard some 20,000ft to 25,000 ft below you, as you pushed the air war into mainland Europe.

By the time you get to read this, we will have moved; but rest assured, I'll be keeping in touch with the Shipdham team on a very regular basis. Amongst other things, I will have to return to Norfolk every three months or so, on business.

In the meantime, and well, look after yourselves.

All the very best from Shipdham.

Peter

Ed. Note: The 44th Bomb Group wish for good health and best wishes as he and Jane into this next phase of their lives.

FRANCIS J. PECK'S LESSON LEARNED IN LONDON

I had finished my missions, and planned to meet a close buddy from my hometown. I went to the Red Cross Club for quarters. In the morning I was shockingly awakened, finding myself on the floor, having being knocked out of bed! After the cobwebs left my head, I dressed and went to the main desk.

I inquired of a volunteer, what happened, and she replied, "a V2 bomb landed in a park a block away. I walked to the park to investigate, and observed a very large crater. It scared the hell out of me, enough to take the first train back to Norwich. Needless to say, I didn't meet my buddy.

I wasn't about to hang around London and get killed by one of those bombs, after finishing my missions, unscathed.

Ed.Note: Peck was a Navigator in the 67th Squadron. He flew with the crews of Howard Holladay, Harold Hess, J. R. Jefferson and J.I. Scarborough.

CHARLES NORRIS AND THE MISSION TO LEVERKUSEN, GERMANY

Just after target #3 engine had no manifold pressure...actually, it was 30. It remained that way, and then #4 engine began fluctuating. We returned with the formation, but coming over Belgium, we checked the gasoline situation to find only 50 gallons in each tank. We called formation to advise, and left them, doing a 180 degree turn from 21,000 feet, and let down through the clouds, icing up.

It was an 'instrument' let-down, broke out of the clouds at near 2000 feet and over Brussels. We headed N.E., missed the airfield, and did a 180 degree turn to get back.

Then the engines started to spit and sputter for lack of gas. So we headed for an open field at about 400 feet altitude, salvoed our bombs, with the resulting explosions blowing all of the windows in the aircraft. It also damaged the elevators, so we had no elevator controls. #3 engine began burning, and then #2 began smoking. We used the throttles to maneuver nose up or down, had rudders, were forced to crash land on a grassy meadow N.E. of Brussels (25 to 30 miles), near Hentje/Westerlo. The nose wheel collapsed, but the main gears held up. This split the ship apart, shoved the dash board back into us. There were minor cuts and bruises to crew, caused mostly by flying Plexiglas. The Pilot's knees were banged, but the crew was OK. The Aircraft was completely wiped out.

Ed. Note: The crashed plane fascinated the local villagers. They wrote to Will Lundy, asking him to connect them to the crew members of 42-51234.

**DON'T WORRY ABOUT AVOIDING TEMPTATION.
AS YOU GROW OLDER, IT WILL AVOID YOU.**

WINSTON CHURCHILL

UNEXPECTED PIECE OF HISTORY ABOUT GENERAL LEON JOHNSON

From Langley Air Force Base, we learned that in Fort Hood, they are planning a celebration for the 44th BG's great leader, Leon Johnson. Before he came to the 44th BG, maybe even before the war, he was the first commander of the 3rd Weather Squadron (3WS), a unit that supports the U.S. Army. Under the leadership of the current commander, Lt. Col. Robert Coxwell, the organization have named a street on the Post in his honor. They are also building some displays in the Squadron Headquarters, including a replica of the General's uniform. The 3WS holds an annual 5 kilometer race, named in honor of the General.

Lt. Col. R. David Coxwell, Commander of the 3rd Weather Squadron, invites any member of the 44th to join the race. To register, call his cell phone, 254-289-8829. Stay tuned. More news may be coming; and hopefully some photos of their events.

WHEN YOUR COMPUTER IS A PAIN, CALL A BARTSCH

A new computer and printer were an overwhelming challenge to your editor, just when the next 8 Ball Tails were coming due. Arlo, our Web Master dealt with the problem, then called in the Big Guns – his son Peter.

In some mysterious way, from Wisconsin, Peter took command of my computer and solved the problem. That is the only reason you are reading the Tails today. A million thanks to Peter and Arlo, who make it possible for the 44th BG's history to travel around the world!

Arlo has placed the Reunion pictures on the Web Page. If you have pictures of reunions in the past, please scan them and send them to him: Afbas@aol.com.

PETER PASSAVANT'S' MEMORIES OF AMAZING ASSIGNMENTS

I was assigned to the 44th Bomb Group in November 1943. I was flying with a Night Intruder B-24 unit out of Peterboro before that. We were low level missions over France, Holland and other places, supplying the FFI and dropping OSS agents, food, ammo and medical supplies.

Then I was transferred to the 66th Squadron as a spare. I wound up flying with **Spencer Hunn**. I flew with him for about 15 missions, and then he went to Group. I asked for a transfer to the 67th Squadron. Then I flew with **Ivan Stepnich, Middleton, Bill Cameron** and others.

ONE OF PASSAVANTIS' GRIMMEST MEMORIES WAS A LOSS OF A CREW HE HAD FLOWN WITH: THE GLENN FOLSOM CREW.

Lt. Folsom, pilot, was leading an element of three ships and was approaching the field when he was involved in a collision with a P-47, and both planes crashed. All seven members of # 42-7582 were lost, as was the P-47 pilot.

Passavantis had just flown on a mission with the Glenn Folsom crew on the previous day.

*Ed. Note: Passavantis name is lost from the records, except for a few missions that he flew. This report is based on a letter he wrote to **Will Lundy** in 1986.*

MARCIA ANN AND THE WIENER-NEUSTADT MISSION

By Charles Runion

B-24 serial number 41-239918 Marcia Ann of the 67th Squadron was lost on the 1 October 1943 mission to bomb the Messerschmitt Factory, located at Wiener Neustadt, Austria. Her crew included **George Bronstein** Pilot, **Charles Erickson** Co-Pilot, **Jacob Cohen** Navigator, **William Archambault**, **George Berkstresser** Engineer, **George Click** Radio Operator, **Jack Shephard** Gunner, **Michael Prekopie** Gunner, **Harry Bolster** Gunner, and **Joe Mansfield** Tail Gunner. Of these ten brave men Jacob and Jack were the only survivors.



Last October almost 68 years to the day, I was at the crash site of **Marcia Ann** with my friend Max Reisner, a Historian and Author in Austria. He found an eye witness to **Marcia Ann's** fate who took us to the crash site. While we were all at the site, Mr. Schoell told us what he witnessed that day, translated by Max.

"At the age of 15 on the 1st of October 1943 I witnessed an American four engine bomber crashing after an attack on Wiener Neustadt at this spot not far away from our village. The Bomber was coming in from north flying already low and trailing smoke. Two Messerschmitt 109s were following the Bomber and conducting several attacks on it coming from the rear. They were using their canons, which we heard very loudly. Suddenly the tail of the bomber broke away from the fuselage and the plane

went into a near vertical dive crashing here. I was not able to observe any crew members who jumped out of the plane. When it impacted, there was a huge explosion followed by black smoke which formed a mushroom like cloud. We heard several more explosions which indicated that ammunition was

cooking off. We ran over to the site to try and get closer. Several farmers were already trying to block off the site. On the way to the bomber several farmers found crew member who had successfully jumped out of the plane at low level. They surrounded him and

started to talk to him. He had a white face and was obviously in shock. The crash site was covered in flames, to get closer was not possible. So we all went back to the village. When we arrived there some men started to shouting at the American. The situation was becoming violent. The American realizing this pulled out a photo and showed it around. It showed him with a female and some kids (Very likely his wife and kids). A German NCO who was on holiday in the area arrived at the scene telling the men that he is a POW and will be handed over to the Police. The situation calmed down. The American was asking for water when one of the women present gave him a cup to drink. He smiled and said in German words: "The first water from Europe!". Everyone was astonished. Police forces from Lackenbach police station arrived.

They took over the Prisoner. After a while Luftwaffe soldiers from Wiener Neustadt arrived too and blocked off the crash site. On the next day several farmers and the Luftwaffe soldiers went to the site. The fuel was still burning. They were able to gather the remains of the crewmen that were to be taken to Wiener Neustadt. In the next weeks the Luftwaffe returned to the site to collect the larger parts of B-24"

The site is in a wooded area today, near the village not far from Wiener Neustadt. There is something unique to this crash site. An evergreen tree that is more than 70 feet tall and over 3 feet in diameter towers far above all the other trees in the area as if to be a tribute to the brave men who lost their lives at that spot. We recovered a lot of artifacts at this site that will be preserved and displayed.



This photo taken from a mile away from the tree.



Village Close to Crash site. Marcia Ann went down between the two mountains.



This photo taken at crash site. Center is Mr. Schoell, witness to the crash; right is Historian, Max Reisner, interviewer and Interpreter; left is Schoell's grandson.

*Ed. Note: Marcia Ann was one of ten planes that went down on the return mission to the Messerschmidt Plant at Wiener Neustadt, Austria. Lost were: **Fascinatin' Witch; #42-72887; Queen Ann** from the 66th Squadron. (**Queen Ann** crash landed outside of Foggia, which was in Allied territory.)The 67th lost **Marcia Ann, #424017, Count Bruga, 4-Q-2, Margaret Ann and Miss Emmy Lou**. (**Miss Emmy Lou** crash landed in Catania, Sicily, which by then was Allied territory; **Margaret Ann** landed in Bari, Italy, at a Canadian Fighter Base.) The 68th lost **Black Jack and Star Spangled Hell**.*

Charles Runion is a Historian who has started a museum in Lebanon, TN. In addition to his interest in Wiener-Neustadt, he has searched many crash sites in the European theater, finding pieces of American and Allied aircraft. He brought the left verticle stabilizer from **Black Jack** to the Reunion at Branson, a treasure which was stored in an Austrian farmer's barn. It's presence at Branson was a delight to **Robert Reasoner**, Tail Gunner and the family of **Eugene Vickery**, Navigator on **Black Jack**.



Will Lundy and Charles Runion at Branson.

Anyone interested in the seeing the Runion Museum can contact Charles at contactus@wingsremembered.com or by phone: 615 444-7719.

.....

LT. FRED MARSHIK REPORTED ON THE LOSS OF LADY LUCK AT FOGGIA

In reply to an inquiry from the sister of **John G. Papadopulos**, Lt. Marshik wrote this: "The missing Air Crew Report and a subsequent report received in this headquarters indicated that Lt. **John Papadopulos** was a crew member of **Lady Luck**, which participated in a mission to Foggia, Italy on 16 August 1943. While over the target area this bomber sustained damage from enemy anti-aircraft fire, and while in a spin, was attacked by enemy fighter craft. Two men in the town of Ruoti, Italy, who spoke perfect English, stated that the plane seemed to partly explode in mid-air, and several crew members were seen to parachute from the plane. When these men arrived at the scene of the crash and landing parachutists, they saw several civilians taking many articles, such as watches, rings and even identification papers from the bodies; and also, they took parts of the plane. Later some German soldiers who were stationed in the town of Ruoti came to the scene of the crash and chased all the civilians away. When an investigation was made in this area by the Ruoti police and other officials, nine bodies were found. As many identifications had been removed from the bodies by the civilians, it was only possible to identify five of the crew members. The ones identified were **Walter Rossi**, Navigator; **Rocco Curelli**, Pilot; **John R. Hughes**, Gunner; **John J. Grinde**, Engineer; **Raymond Shaffer**, Asst. Engineer; and your brother, **John Papadopulos**, Co-Pilot. He was identified by a name band on his flying suit. Also he was carrying an identity card, two cards with personal pictures; a little notebook, a letter with instructions, a portfolio; and he was wearing two identification tags and a bracelet...

Sgt. Wesley L. Zimmerman, Radio Operator, the only survivor, was captured and taken to Potenza Italy and consigned to the Commander of the Carabinieri of Potelnza. Later he escaped from an enemy prison camp and has now returned the United States.

My deepest sympathy.

Signed Lt. Fred B. Marshik, A.C.

WILLIAM NEWBOLD GOT THROUGH PLOESTI BUT HIS LUCK DIDN'T HOLD AT WIENER-NEUSTADT

William Newbold, Navigator, on the **Walter Bunker** crew, in *Earthquake McGoon*, came through the Ploesti mission unscathed, but with strong memories of flak, fighters and watching four B-24s go down. Flying on the right was **MARGUERITE**, flown by **Roland Houston**. He saw the right wing snap by hitting a balloon cable, and later learned the entire crew was KIA. Seven hours later they returned to Benina, with #3 and #4 engines damaged, no hydraulics, tail control cables frayed, and holes through the gas tanks. He credits his safe return to two exceptional pilots, **Walter Bunker** and **Richard Butler**. *Earthquake McGoon*, following Lt/Col. James Posey to Target Blue. According to the late Dick Butler, Target Blue was so thoroughly demolished, it was never rebuilt until the Russians took over two years later.

Only two months later, Newbold found himself on a mission to the Messerschmidt plant at Wiener Neustadt. **COUNT BRUGA** was forced out of formation to accommodate a sharp bank by the leading squadron. As pilot, **Charles Henderson**, approached the IP, German fighters struck. It was a nose attack, with the fighters coming out of the sun in formation. Five or six attacked simultaneously, knocking out # 3 and #4 engines, and the aircraft went into a steep spiral.

Henderson gave the 'bail out' signal, and tried to hold the ship from spinning, to give the crew time to get out. Only three members of the crew got out safely, **Albert Greyhosky**, Co-Pilot, **John Dayberry**, Radio Operator and **Bill Newbold**, Navigator.

Upon hitting the ground, Newbold was immediately surrounded by hostile

civilians with dogs. German soldiers took command of the prisoners. Newbold endured solitary confinement at Hohemark, Germany for nineteen days of interrogation. After that, he spent 20 days in the hospital at Obermasteld, German for a leg injury.

(Newbold considered his injury minor compared to a Spitfire pilot from south Rhodesia in the bunk alongside his. He had lost one leg and one eye. They became good friends, and the gentleman invited Newbold to his home after the war to pan for gold!!!)

The next stop was at Stalug Luft III in Sagan where he spent fifteen months. On 27 January 1945 they were forced out of bed at 3:00 AM, and in the coldest winter that Europe had in 25 years, marched for four days through snow, sleet and freezing temperatures. The advance of the Russians on the eastern front prompted this sudden move.

No less than eighteen 44th BG officers were imprisoned at Sagan, but the only one with whom Newbold shared space was **Jim Selasky**. His plane had gone down with the **Reginald Carpenter** crew. They were aware of the Russian advance, as somebody in their area had a crystal set, and were able to receive information about the progress of the war. Needless to say, the crystal set had to be well hidden. Radios were absolutely verboten.

When they were doing their four-day trek, ahead of the advancing Russians, many civilians were trudging alongside the marching kriegies. They walked along under the threat that if any fell by the wayside, they would be shot. At one point Newbold and Selasky carried a fellow POW, rather than see him fall and witness him getting shot.

WILLIAM NEWBOLD GOT THROUGH PLOESTI BUT HIS LUCK DIDN'T HOLD AT WIENER-NEUSTADT

CONTINUED

Their diet consisted of black bread and not much else. They did receive hard, dried prunes, which they ate, chewed the seeds and ate the nut inside. Sometimes they slept in barns, which wasn't all bad – they could steal the milk from the cows sleeping alongside of them.

The march ended at Mooseburg; and one day, they looked out of their

compound and saw a beautiful sight – the American flag was being raised. Soon General Patton strode through the gate, and freedom had arrived.

General Patton kept his army moving rapidly forward, but as the GIs passed the compound, they threw bread to the starving men.

.....

FROM THE DIARY OF SAM CERVELLERA, 506 SQUADRON

May 11, 1944. Mission # 7. Crew: **Fred Stone**, Pilot; **Merrett Derr**, Co-Pilot; **Andrew Patrichuck**, Navigator; Glenn Hartzel, Nose Gunner/Togglier; **Charles Brown**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; **William Scott**, Ball Turret Gunner; **William Strange**, Right Wing Gunner; **Morrie Meunitz**, Left Wing Gunner, **I Robert Faust**, Tail Gunner. The Target was Mulllenhouse, Germany. We were to have excellent fighter coverage, as they expected the Luftwaffe. They expected right, as we were hit over France by FW 190s, and I mean hit. At the time our escort broke off at five. Morrie Meunitz opened up with a burst and got the first FW. The pilot bailed out and the plane went down in flames. They shot down Walshe's crew, and Lundy was in that bomb bay when it went down. We almost did not make it back to the Field because of Petrol. Our squadron did not hit the primary target or the secondary, but an jAirfield in france. They did a good job on this field, as the nangars and runways took a beating. The flak was moderate, except by the airfield, and they came pretty close. It was a pretty rough mission, and if those FWs would have come in again, they really would have done some damage. This makes four in a row and two practice missions. We are pretty tired and sweating...a day off now. Ryan was grounded because of sinus... 23 more to go.

Will Lundy wrote the following report on this mission: The Marshalling Yards at Mullhouse was the briefed primay target, but it was obscured by clouds, so several targets of opportunity were hit, including Orleans Bricy Airdrome and Belfort Marshalling Yards. The 506 lost #42-94999 Bar H and the **James H. Walsh** crew. Walsh and **Joseph Peloquin**, Engineer evaded and returned, as did **Lawrence Richards**, LW Gunner (who was wounded but successfully evaded). **Warren Bauder**, Co-Pilot; **Peter O'Shanick**, Navigator; **Donald Martin**, Radio Operator, **Emery Lundy**, Bombardier; **Sydney Roper**, Ball Turret Gunner, **Edwin Puksta**, Right Wing Gunner (wounded) and **Thomas Fanara**, Tail Gunner all became POWs.



S/Sgt. Harold C. Davis receives French Legion of Honor Medal from Atlanta Consul General Pascal le Deunff.



Legion of Honor Award ceremony group. From left are Mary Aston, Justin Davis, Harold and Jean Davis, Dr. Lee Aston and French Consul General Pascal le Deunff.

Elberton

Davis receives the French Legion of Honor Medal

WWII veteran was nominated by Dr. Lee Aston

Former World War II veteran S/Sgt. Harold C. Davis, 90, of Oliver Springs, Tenn., received France's highest medal, the French Legion of Honor, on Jan. 12 from the French Consul General Pascal le Deunff at a formal presentation ceremony

at the French Consulate in Atlanta.

S/Sgt. Davis, a highly decorated airman based in England, flew 29 bombing missions in a B-24 Liberator in early 1944 with the 44th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force.

Elberton retired attorney Dr. R. Lee Aston was

also a member of the 44th Bomb Group in WWII and had received the Legion of Honor medal from France years ago. Aston nominated Davis in 2011 for the French medal. Twenty-three other WWII veterans have received the French Legion of Honor medal through As-

ton's recommended nominations.

Lee and Mary Aston, accompanied by their son Gary Aston, also a Georgia attorney, and daughter-in-law, Linda, attended the presentation ceremony at the Atlanta French Consulate.



France's highest combat medal, the Legion of Honor.

**JOHN GATELY AWARDED
THE ORDRE NATIONAL DE LA LEGION D'HONNEUR
(THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR)**



David Martinon of the Los Angeles Consulate on left, John Gately, and John Gately Jr.

S/Sgt. John Gately, 67th Squadron, received his French Legion of Honor medal on March 15, 2012 at a presentation ceremony by French Deputy Consulate General.



Fourteen members of the Gately family attended the ceremony.

ROBERT NORSEN'S REPLIES TO WILL LUNDY'S QUESTIONS

"I remember "**Lemon Drop**" was one of the originals, flown across by my close friend '**Phil**'— **Reginald Phillips**. Phil named it that because it had some defects originally that caused Phil and crew some delay to get the defects fixed.

I haven't written much about myself for the 44th. I guess I didn't get into the terrible trouble on missions that so many did. Many time, close, but I never came back with serious damage, and only once with an injury on board. I didn't fly a full 35 missions. Between an operations job and then engineering modifications for the B-24 after my crew was lost, flying with another pilot, I flew when needed as a substitute pilot. In that situation, I seldom got to go. I remember flying for **John Diehl** on a Hamm Raid. Nearly frozen controls. Working so hard with stiff controls, I had the window open, drenched in sweat. B-17s flying back through our formation, engines out etc.

Another mission I recall while the main group did Ploesti, I stayed to bring down another flight when the "promised new crews" showed up. We ran training missions of semi-real missions with long and complete briefing, then careful debriefing to review the 'mission'. Idea was to become so familiar with combat details, the new crews would be as safe as possible for themselves and for the rest of the team. On one of several such missions, a diversion, my plane was head – on attacked by a twin engine Messerschmitt that launched the first rockets I had seen.

Back in the States we had mentally practiced quick evasion action: "Just as they 'stand still' out there, do a quick dive." I did. The rockets smoked a few feet overhead. We had slight rudder damage. Problem: both wing men

dove out of sight. For the clouds? They showed up at de-brief. I never understood why they broke formation.

Would it be interesting to any of the new members to learn more of the early days of the group, when we first began to fly the B-24's?

My first ride in a B-24 was with some 8 other pilots as passengers. Major **Curtis Le May** was pilot. He fought that airplane like he was wrestling alligators! I think we helped by walking in unison from front to back in the waist section while he was in the pattern. I wondered at the time –'This B-24 will take MUSCLE!' It turned out that it was easy and fun to fly – maybe not as much fun as a P-47, but not a muscle builder either.

I had just finished B-17 school as a 'qualified' 1st pilot, B-17. There they tried to get us to land tail wheel first. Some did at great expense. The main gear came down so hard, the drag strut would part, laying the plane on one wheel, a wing tip and one engine.

Early instructions on the -24 were to land three point. Some did. The result collapsed the nose gear, left the tail pointing at the sky. (This was at Fort Myers). Of course, the right way to land both airplanes is on the main gear with the tail low, but not dragging. The planes fly much alike. They can fly in formation easily. Same altitude, same speed.

Ten or fifteen pilots were sent from B-17 school to Fort Myers for a couple of weeks, waiting for assignment. Several of us found a beach cottage and our wives joined us. Terrible mosquitoes, beautiful beach on the Gulf, wonderful fishing. Once, one of the pilots caught a 24 pound Snook, a choice local fish.

My wife Donna agreed to cook it. Right then we got orders to Barksdale. We gave half to the owners of the cabins, baked the other 12 pound, ate 12 lbs of fish among the group, packed for Barksdale while the fish was in the oven. We ate, then left for Barksdale that night. We drove all night. Then there was a rush was to find places to live. We found a group of new complexes. We all moved in, side by side. The next morning the pilots signed in, and started to learn the new airplane. The wives played musical chairs, matching the furniture and carpet colors among the furnished units. Some of my happiest days were living in that group of great people. Since much of the sub patrol was at night, we often slept days. The weather was hot and humid; there was no air conditioning. The attic fan made the curtains blow straight out into the room. Donna would lay a wet sheet over me. With the fan, going to sleep came easy.

The instructors were about a week ahead of the pilots being assigned. On my initial check out, the instructor kept showing me how to steer with brakes, engines and rudder as we used up runway. Ahead they were extending the runway with a paving machine covered with workmen. When he said "follow me on the throttles", I firewalled them. At the last minute we both pulled us off the runway and we mushed over the paver, men jumping off and running for life.

My check out lasted 15 minutes. Nothing was said, but I think we both learned that runway behind is in the wrong place! A month later, we were flying sub patrol day and night over the Gulf of Mexico. The group's first loss – a B-24 coming home in the dark to a

thunder storm over the base, after a long night on sub patrol.

As Squadron Operations Officer and pilot, I suspected that if we ever saw a sub, the chance of the Bombardier doing every detail of the procedure right in the few seconds we would have from sight to bombs away position was rather poor. So without any approval from anyone, the 68th started to carry 10 practice bombs in the rear bay; 8 live 500 and depth charges in the front bay. We intended to drop practice bombs on cloud shadows or other sudden targets to get the procedure in mind, practiced and tested.

The first 10 or so 'drops', nothing went out. Another several – nothing. I got on the intercom to Sgt. **George Guilford**: "OK, the next drop either a bomb or you is going out." The next ten went out – one on every target.

Late in the day we were way off course, south, when Sgt. **Clyde Carlton** the Photographer, spotted what he thought might be something further south. We flew to where he pointed, and the marker beacon came on. Lt. **Johnney Diehl** spotted the periscope leaving a wake as the sub headed west into the sunset. I made a tight 270 left to get some run distance. Sgt. Guilford laid a perfect pattern over the sub. The crew in back reported seeing the broken ends of the sub rise up, then sink out of sight. A little wreckage. Bubbles.

We stayed on site for maybe 20 minutes, trying to radio the Navy. Locating the position, thinking there might be survivors to rescue. By now we were low on fuel, so I put the engines on max range settings, max lean, low RPM. The very light B-24, in the cool of the evening, flew home

quietly. I think we all had mixed feelings about our 'victory'. Would victory always mean we will kill a bunch of young men, just like us, doing their job for their country?

The radio signals had reached Barksdale. There was a big celebration that night as we landed. The first and only sub the 44th sunk? Was there another one?

Sub patrol experience would pay off in Europe. I was Operations duty one night planning and ordered 44th mission to Danzig North around Denmark. It was a flight that was well over twice as far as Berlin. We had not gotten all planes back from Berlin on missions because of fuel shortage. Using what I learned about stretching miles flying like we did sub patrol, we got the entire 44th flight to Danzig and returned with fuel to spare.

Today, while working in my garden here in Seattle, a Spitfire flew over, low. What a lovely memory, beautiful plane, musical sound. So many memories. The best were the happy days as a group, getting ready for the 'glory' days.

Worst memory was the day we taxied to the end of the runway at Geiger Field, New Hampshire. All the guys were planning on being home again soon, victorious. We were riding high. The wives and girlfriends stood clutching the fence along the end of the runway where we turned for takeoff. All were bawling. They knew more than we did of what was about to happen.

That was a final parting for almost all of them. I can never talk about that scene. Even after 58 years, it breaks me up every time. I can understand why Col. **Frank Robinson** struggled to carry out the orders he was given in early '43. This was his family. He was sending too many on a one way flight.

Yes, and it was my family too. Treasured memories!

*Ed. Note: To put Norsen's history in perspective, he flew the second mission of the 44th BG in WWII. When he was assigned to teaching new crews and working on studying the capabilities of the B-24 and the materials used in combat, members of his crew were assigned to other pilots. **George Kelley** flew on the Kjeller mission with **Bill Brandon**. The entire crew was interned in Switzerland.*

***Steven Sevick, Milton Spears, Roland Houston and Joe Ward**, all on different A/C were KIA at Ploesti.*

***Will Lundy** once said, "The U.S. didn't know how to fight a war, least of all an air war. We had to learn as we went along."*

Robert Norsen flew on the second mission of WWII. Do you know who flew on the first mission?

66th Squadron — The crews of **Robert Miller** and (First Name Unknown) **Adams**

68th Squadron — The crews of, **James O'Brien; Walter (Tommyl) Holmes; James Hodge, Command Pilot; Maxwell Sullivan; Thomas Cramer and Reginald Phillips.**

.....
**WE COULD CERTAINLY SLOW THE AGING PROCESS DOWN
IF IT HAD TO WORK ITS WAY THROUGH CONGRESS.**

WILL ROGERS

44TH BG REUNION SEPT 2011

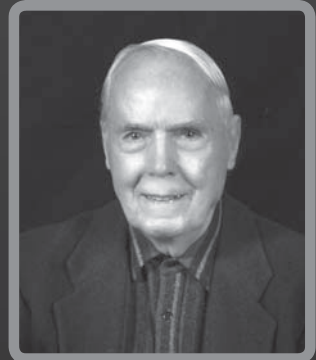
**PORTRAITS OF OUR VETERANS WITH THEIR FAMILY
AND FRIENDS IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR SERVICE...**



ALBERT AND ANITA



ALBERT, ANITA AND ART



ART



CHARLES



CHRIS AND ANN



CHRIS AND JOE



CHRIS AND LEE



CYNTHIA AND BERYL



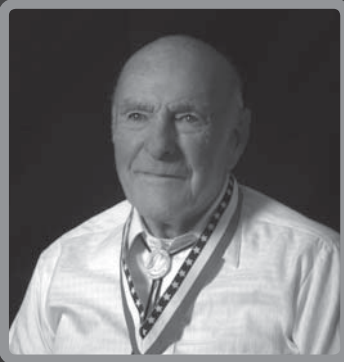
DON AND CAROL

**KEN KELLY (732)-778-9954
OKENKELLY@AOL.COM**



44TH BG REUNION SEPT 2011

**PORTRAITS OF OUR VETERANS WITH THEIR FAMILY
AND FRIENDS IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR SERVICE...**



FRANK



GEORGE AND CYNTHIA



GEORGE AND NANCY



GERALD AND BEV



GERALD WOODY AND PERRY



JACK AND DOLORES



**JOHN CLARK AND
FAMILY**



JOHN CLARK AND WIFE



JOHNNY AND LISA

**KEN KELLY (732)-778-9954
OKENKELLY@AOL.COM**



44TH BG REUNION SEPT 2011

**PORTRAITS OF OUR VETERANS WITH THEIR FAMILY
AND FRIENDS IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR SERVICE...**



JOHNNY, LISA, TAYLOR AND WOODY



KEVIN AND DON



LEE AND MARY



LOWELL AND JACKIE



PERRY AND FAMILY



PERRY AND RUTH



PHIL AND JUDY



RICH AND AMANDA

**KEN KELLY (732)-778-9954
OKENKELLY@AOL.COM**



44TH BG REUNION SEPT 2011

PORTRAITS OF OUR VETERANS WITH THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR SERVICE...



RICHARD



STAN, RAY, CHRIS AND ANN



TAYLOR



**TAYLOR, JOHNNY, AND
WOODY**



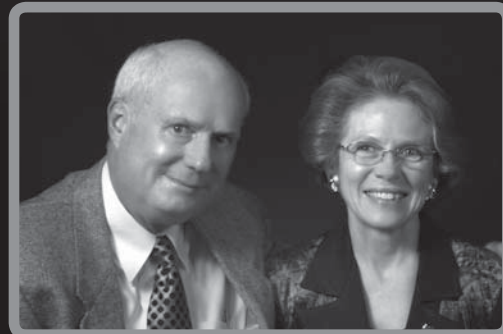
TOM



TONY AND LOIS



WASHBURN FAMILY



WAYNE AND MARTHA

**KEN KELLY (732)-778-9954
OKENKELLY@AOL.COM**



44TH BG REUNION SEPT 2011

PORTRAITS OF OUR VETERANS WITH THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR SERVICE...



WOODRUFF FAMILY



WOODY



WOODY AND HIS KIDS

KEN KELLY (732)-778-9954
OKENKELLY@AOL.COM

RECOGNITION FOR STEVE ADAMS

Our British Board Member living in Norwich has made an endless effort to preserve the 44th BG's history, and was overdue for our applause. He was appointed by Roy Owen, soon after the 44th BGVA was organized, and his ongoing efforts to place memorabilia and photos in the Shipdham Museum have been endless. On Remembrance day, he is always places a wreath on the Wall of Remembrance at Mattingly, in honor of his American friends. As each issue of the 8 Ball Tails arrives he delivers to all the proper destinations, including the 2nd Air Library in Norwich. Steve wrote an accurate history of the 44th, The 44th Bomb Group in WWII, which occupies many veterans' shelves and a number of historic libraries.

A small model B-24 is a small token of appreciation for his contributions to preservation of our airmen's history.



Photo of model plane.

RALPH BECKER'S FADED FLIGHT JACKET CAME TO CARLISLE

Ralph Becker, Navigator in the 66th Squadron, cleaned out a closet and found treasures he hadn't looked at in 67 years. Michael Mira, Registrar at the Army Heritage Education Center, was happy to add it to the collection of 44th Bomb Group memorabilia. In addition to the jacket, Becker also sent dress suits and other WWII items.

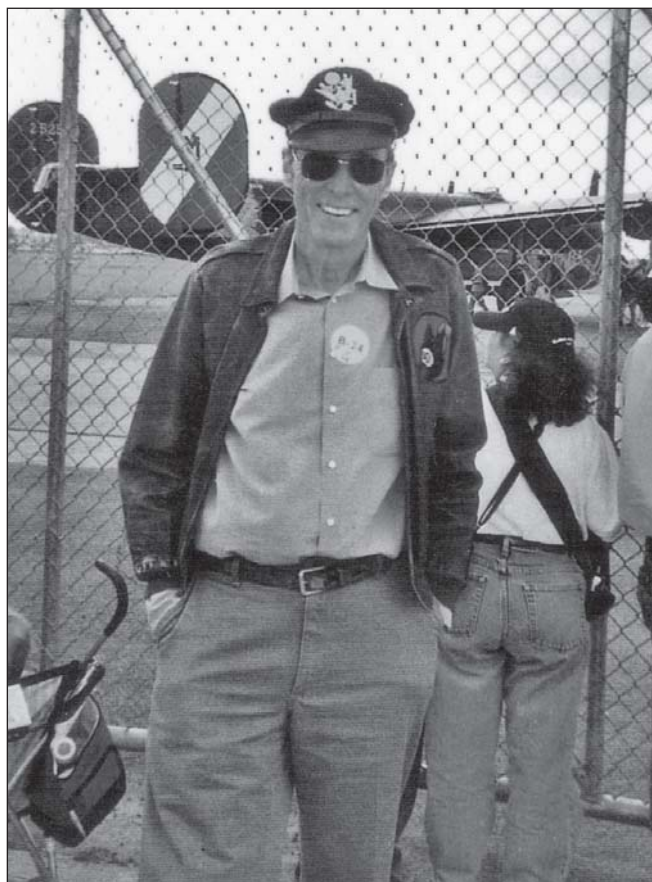
Also added to the 44th BG collection is Erwin Strohmaier's book, THE CHANTILLY, his well documented account of crossing the Atlantic through U-Boat infested waters.



Michael Mira and Perry Morse admire the newly arrived Flight Jacket.



Ralph Becker paraded his jacket at an Air Show, 20 years ago.



**DON'T WORRY ABOUT AVOIDING TEMPTATION.
AS YOU GROW OLDER, IT WILL AVOID YOU.
WINSTON CHURCHILL**

**CHARLES "SHEP" GORDON AWARDED
THE ORDRE NATIONAL DE LA LEGION D'HONNEUR
(THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR)**



Charles and his wife Dorothy at the French Consulate.



Charles Gordon

The award was presented at the French Consulate in Chicago, in recognition of his aerial service over Occupied France. A

French Consul read the citation, citing Gordon's contribution to the liberation of France and victory over the Nazi regime.

Lt. Gordon flew with the

S. H. Bowman crew, sometimes as a Navigator, other times as Bombardier. He flew 39 missions, 13 of which were over France.

One of his most vivid memories was a mission in *Heaven Can Wait II*, in the Spring 1944, when his formation was attacked by Messerschmitts. The gunners managed to get one, and the plane returned safely to Shipdham, but the memory of that event stands out above all other flight experiences. Gordon had previously received the Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters, The Distinguished Flying Cross and various Theatre Ribbons

After the war, Gordon became a Mechanical Engineer. They have two children, both living in Chicago. He and his wife Dorothy retired in Rochester, New York.

Before he passed away, the great air warrior, Jimmy Doolittle, wrote his autobiography, *I COULD NEVER BE SO LUCKY AGAIN*. His famous air raid against Japan was immortalized in the film, *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*. It can be obtained through Bantam Books.

GREAT OXYMORONS
GOOD GRIEF
FOUND MISSING
LEGALLY DRUNK
PRETTY UGLY
TEMPORARY TAX
INCREASE

CHARLES TILTON, NAVIGATOR, 68TH SQUADRON REMEMBERS THE AQUITANIA, AND WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

I remember steaming out of the New York harbor on board the Aquitania, a sister ship of the ill fated WWI Lusitania, and a bunch of us were below deck playing poker. We were alerted that we were passing the Statue of Liberty, and in our youthful naivete', we said "to heck with it. We'll see it on the way back". Little did I know it would be forty years before finally getting to see it while on vacation.

Arriving at Shipdham, I was picked up by the MP's for not wearing any insignia on my overcoat. I was ushered in to see the then Major Lehnhausen. I explained they were in my trunk, which hadn't yet arrived. He reached into his desk and handed me a pair. I still have them.

My first mission was the marshaling yards at Solfeld on 23 February 1945. Since only the lead crew required a bombardier, I was to get some experience as a gunner in the nose turret. Once up to altitude, I climbed in, plugged in the electric suit and prepared for combat. Once over the continent, we soon saw some little puffs of black smoke. If we seesawed a little out of formation, the puffs followed us. The next concern was to get some circulation in my rear end, since that was the unheated portion of the electric suit. I raised up to give it a rub, and hit my head on the plexiglass turret, causing it to split from the top, all the way down in front. Not knowing whether that one inch gap was going to get any bigger, I called our pilot, **Jack Comstock**, and was glad to hear him say, "Get the hell out of there."

After the first mission, our Navigator, **Frank Pechacek** was sent to Mickey

School. I then flew the next 12 missions as Navigator with the Comstock crew.

My most memorable mission was the supply drop at Wesel on 23 March 1945. We were briefed that Wesel had been neutralized, and it would be safe to fly low level. The German ground troops didn't know they had been neutralized, and they began shooting as we dropped our supplies and circled the town. Flying so low on our way out, back across the Rhine, I remember seeing frightened horses running across the pasture and jumping fences. One big bull couldn't jump, so he crashed right through a fence. We returned to base with a few holes in our ship and the proverbial tree leaves in the Bombay.

My last two missions were with the **T. R. Williams** crew as Deputy Lead Bombardier to De Royan, France – presumably to wipe out a pocket of Germans that were stealing the farmers' chickens – fragmentation bombs the first day and napalm the next. Finless fuel tanks. They tumbled out end over end, some hitting each other and exploding in midair.

That was my last mission until the Trolley Run over the Rhine Valley. It was so spectacular to see the Cologne Cathedral standing tall amid all the surrounding roofless structures.

*Ed. Note: The database credits Tilton with two missions that he did not mention: to Bingen, Germany with the **Walter Franks** crew on 10 December 1944; and to Altenok, Germany 30 December 1944 with the **Herman Eckstein** crew. On both missions, his assignment was listed as 'Other'.*

BOOKS OF GREAT EVENTS IN 44TH 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 \$20.

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*, 98th 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 44th 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.

JOHN LORD'S SON REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES OF HIS LATE FATHER

John Lord, PhD, sought to thank the British POW physician who had helped heal his burnt hand after leaping from a flaming Sierra Blanca in a mission to Kassel, Germany. He began writing to British Veterans Associations, in the hope that someone could assist him in his quest. Ultimately, a Dutch researcher through Pegasus Magazine, was able to identify the doctor, who fortunately was still alive. Lord contacted him, and

announced his wish to thank him and treat him to dinner. The BBC was there to interview Lord and Dr. Tony Barling, who had served in the 1st Airborne Division of the RAF, and had been captured while participating in General Montgomery's failed Market Garden campaign. In the end, he visited the doctor five times until Barling's death in 2001.

Another memory that was dear to the heart of John Lord was kindnesses

from the North Platte Canteen. While traveling in a 'troop train', they stopped at North Platte and enjoyed the bounty of the Nebraska and Colorado people, who loaded up tables with their prepared foodstuff. In 2001 he wrote a letter to the Mayor of North Platte, thanking the folks there through his office. The Mayor replied, stating that he would have his letter published in the local newspaper. He also told Lord that he was a child during the time these 'canteens' took place, and was often taken by his mother to participate. He mentioned that a program in honor of those occasions was planned, and asked Lord to come and speak, which he did.

Upon arriving in North Platte, Lord (age 79) rented a car; the transmission defaulted, and he was stranded on the interstate. A stranger stopped to help, took him to his home near the next exit

so he contact the rental car agency. During their ride to the gentleman's home, Lord explained his reason for being in North Platte: that he had been a radio operator in a B-24 during the war.

While he was on the phone, the stranger wrapped and handed him a package. He explained that he was an artist; and wanted him to have two pictures, one of a B-24; the other, P-51's flying with a bomb group. What could be a more endearing gift to a veteran who flew in a B-24 and felt the security of a formation of P-51s flying with the bomb group?

This story came from John Lord's son Keith, who reminded the reader of the Biblical verse, 'that which you measure out in the same full measure will be measured back to you'. How true.

ELMER RISCH, RADIO OPERATOR AT LUDWIGSHAVEN

**66TH SQUADRON, DONALD HESKETT, PILOT,
*FLYING IN BULL O'THE WOODS,***

30 DECEMBER 1943

(THIS REPORT LABELED SECRET-AMERICAN, MOST SECRET BRITISH)

I knew this crew very well, due to a shortage of engineers and top turret gunners. I made two missions with them, one was Kjeller and then the mission to Ludwigshaven. Our load was five bombs, and both bomb bays were loaded full with the 80 or 90 pound type.

I was working on the voltage regulators from take-off until after we had crossed the French coastline. Five minutes after reporting into my turret, I heard an explosion, and my leg went numb. Our ship peeled off to the right,

and then I heard the pilot give "Prepare to bail out." I went to the radio room. The operator was trying to open the bomb bays. I opened them for him. I put on my chute and went to the catwalk. Out of the corner of my eye I saw two chutes pass under the bomb bays. I waited until the pilot started to leave his seat, then I jumped at 22,000 feet.

I delayed my jump until I reached cloud cover. My harness was tight and there was no jerk. I landed easily in a plowed field, tumbled a few times and

spilled my chute. As I was coming down, I had noticed a man on horseback was following me. As I hobbled across the field, he spoke to me, but I could not understand him. Blood was now showing on my leg. I pointed to it and then quickly buried my chute. He kept giving the broken arm signal to run, but I did not know at the time what that meant.

I went over to the railroad tracks and lay down between the banks parallel to the line. The banks curved so that I could not be seen from the tracks. The horseman rode off and returned on foot with several friends. They took off my flying gear, and bandaged my leg and foot with aid of my parachute First Aid Kit. A scout plane had started sweeping low over the countryside five minutes after I reached the ditch. It scouted nearby the whole time I was being bandaged, and I was thankful I had delayed my jump. I broke open my escape kit to locate myself, but my friend had motioned to me to lie low and remain silent. Two hours later a man returned with cognac and a sandwich. As I ate it, I watched our formation return to England, and felt very lonely.

The farmer with the cart returned and gave me a sack full of excellent food and wines. He also brought me a hunting jacket and breeches. That night I was picked up in a car and driven away. The shell fragment was removed from my foot, leg and thigh. I was given good care, and the rest of my journey was arranged.

In 1982, Navigator **WILLIAM RENDELL** sent **Will Lundy** his memory of this mission: I remember that Elmer Risch was flying as a replacement that day for our Engineer, who was being Court Martialed that day for decking an MP in Norwich. As I recall, we were about 14 minutes across the coast in Abbeville

Country when **Heskett** moved from the box to fill in an open spot on Coffin Corner, due to an abortion at the coast. He swung a little too wide, and that was a signal for an attack from 3 o'clock by three FW 190s. **Aulis Blitz** (R W Gunner) was killed instantly on the first pass, and **George Miller** (Tail Gunner) took a fragment through his elbow. Controls were damaged on the right side, and we started losing altitude in a slow turn. **Bull O' The Woods** crashed north of Soisson, near Chivagny, with Sgt. **Aulitz Blitz** (Right Waist Gunner) killed on the first pass. Lt. **James Billings** (Co-Pilot) - reason unknown- still aboard. Most of the parachutes fell within a two-mile radius of the plane.

Hescott rang the Bail Out bell, and I was not able to get any answer on the interphone, so I started through the tunnel to go up on deck, but found that the bail-out dinghy in the passageway had snapped onto the pocket of my leather flying trousers. I finally got the other snap of the dinghy free from its ring, and went out the hose wheel door with the dinghy still attached to me.

"It was difficult to free fall with that darn dinghy slapping around, and I had to open up higher than comfortable. When the chute opened, the pocket with the escape kit left, along with the dinghy.

Stanley Langcaskey (Ball Turret Gunner), after getting Miller out of the plane, had an amazing escape. Heskett walked out through Portugal. I went back to France in 1972, and back to the crash site to recover some of the pieces of **Bull O' The Woods**, and learned that James Billing's body was recovered at the crash site, as was **Aulis Blitz's**, and they had been buried side by side by the French until they were moved to Epinal, at the American Cemetery.

FROM THE RECORDS OF THE SPIRIT OF THE 200 CLUB:

On the 19 July 1943 the 44th was on its way to bomb Rome's marshaling yards. While this raid took place, Lieutenant **Robert Lehnhausen** was still in a British general hospital in Malta. *"I was visited by a Lt. Col. From the United States Air Force, who was on duty at an advanced base on a small island off Malta. He asked us: 'Did you people come here to bomb the Rumanian oil fields?' I was startled. I had no knowledge of what our ultimate target would be. I told him I did not know."*

After the Rome raid, the 44th was back to low level practice flying and bombing. Even though Lt. **William Cameron** and Lt. **Robert Stine** had completed their 25 missions, started in October 1942, they flew the practice missions. *"On one practice flight, we were firing our guns at wrecked military vehicles in the battlefield east of our airfield, setting off some abandoned ammunition, which severely damaged the auxiliary power unit in one of the B-24 aircraft in the flight."*

*"Once we struck a large vulture. The impact sounded like a 20-mm canon shell. The vulture hit in the center of the nose compartment just about knee high. Lt. **Howard R. Klegar**, the bombardier, was at his position in*

the nose section with me. Both our legs had small bits of bone slightly embedded in the skin, but no serious injuries resulted. Bits of the bird went all the way past the nose landing gear into the bomb bay. The odor was extremely unpleasant, but didn't last long with the air rushing in through in the nose section at 200 plus MPH. At the same time another bird hit one of the engines."

Lt. **Joseph Milliner** was playing poker and drinking beer when he heard about Ploesti. *"The rumormongers were having a field day concerning the next target. Then the name Ploesti popped up. This had to be it."*

On Wednesday the 28th **Charles W. Titkemeh** wrote in his diary: *"The rumors concerning the very important raid are coming to a focus. One of the most important raids in history is to take place very soon. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin's Aide planned this raid at Casablanca. For the past seven months, military strategists have worked and planned on this mission. The target has been attacked twice before – once by Americans and once by the Russians, but everyone failed. This is a very, very important mission, and I hope to be on it."*

GOOD ADVICE FROM NORMAN NUTT:

ALWAYS KEEP YOUR WORDS SOFT, IN CASE YOU HAVE TO EAT THEM.

DRIVE CAREFULLY. IT'S NOT ONLY CARS THAT CAN BE RECALLED BY THEIR MAKER.

IF YOU LEND SOMEONE \$20 AND NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN, WAS PROBABLY WORTH IT.

SOME MISTAKES ARE TOO MUCH FUN TO MAKE ONLY ONCE!!

SAVE THE EARTH. IT'S THE ONLY PLANET WITH CHOCOLATE!

BIG PLANE 1

Keith La Port sent this picture of his father's crew.



L-R Bottom: Samuel Hopkinson, Waist Gunner; Robert Gustatson, Armorer/Ball Turret Gunner; Victor Casson, Tail Gunner; Earl Smith, Radio Operator; Michael Dono, Engineer/Waist Gunner; Clarence La Ports, Nose Gunner/Togglier.

Top Row: Robert Van Valer, Pilot; William Carmoney, Co-Pilot; --- Stephenson, Bombardier; Franklin O'Grady, Navigator.

Found on Facebook, this photo posted by Joseph Edwards, honoring his father's crew.





MAIL & E-MAIL

Kenneth Adrian (Navigator, 506 Squadron) to **Will Lundy**: Probably the reason why more bombers did not get to the target, (Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany) was because the top of the clouds were above 25,000 feet almost all the way! I'm sure some of the planes must have had runaway engines and others with mechanical problems, as we were trying to stay above the clouds. So the engines were under a terrific load, many aborting.

The planes ahead of us were making their own clouds in the form of vapor trails, so the followers had to go up higher to be able to see each other. Very few of the planes could have done it if we had not burned a lot of petrol on the way in.

From the IP I was buried under flak suits (one above and one below) and had my helmet on, too. The flak was intense from the IP on in. I stayed buried through two bomb runs and came out on the 3rd one. As the flak was less intense, I was getting curious – especially because they'd warned us about running out of gas due to the long flying time involved.

As I was observing this fiasco, there were some breaks in the clouds and the bombs went out, saw many of them explode in what appeared to be a pasture, with little black specks – cows?? I knew we hadn't hit anything (reported to be Schorndorf RR Junction), but hoped we had cut their availability to have a good supply of meat and milk.

I was probably the only one on the crew that could observe this. The pilots were having a hellava time staying in formation, and the gunners were looking for Bandits – and they were in the area.

Whoever was lead pilot made a diving turn to the right, into clouds right after the bomb run. This took care of the formation, and as far as I know, everybody started out for home alone. If the clouds had not been about 16,000 feet thick, the German Fighter pilots would have had a field day with our planes scattered as THEY WERE.

We decided to go under the clouds. I gave Lou (Pilot, **Louis Wimsatt**) a heading of 270 degrees. But after three bomb runs, no visual sightings and no radar, I didn't know here the hell we were in. I did see the bombs strike in a pasture, so I knew Munich was NOT our starting point.

We broke out of the clouds at 11,000 to 12,000 feet. I saw a Pathfinder and told Lou we ought to fly with him for more firepower against any possible German fighters. I also thought he might know where we were, and which way home. Rule # 1, Never tell a pilot you're lost!!

Shortly thereafter, he took us through a tremendous flak barrage (he was lost, too). I later calculated back from my first Gee fix, and found that he had taken us over Stuttgart, with its 1,000 shells bursting, at a time that would make your underwear turn brown in back.

We took off on our own. The B-17s were in trouble, too, as they had their little clusters of 5 or 6 planes.

I picked up my first GEE fix at Charlesville, France, which was close to the French-Belgian border, not too far from Luxemburg. We were supposed to pick up our fighter planes (escorts) at half-way between Charlesville and the IP (P-51s) and the target, P-38s near



Stuttgart, and then P-47s to take us home from there at Charlesville.

That was a lucky GEE fix, as normally the Germans had us jammed as we got closer to England.

I navigated us between the flak areas until we hit the coast at Ostend. One "88" was right on. He would have gotten us if Lou hadn't taken evasive action. But we got two wounded – our Nose Gunner and Bombardier (**Raymond Robertson** and **Eugene Bovktedt**). I had to pull the gunner out of his nose turret, and he was a mass of blood. He had been hit in the middle of his forehead, but it didn't penetrate his skull. He probably could have been fixed up with a bandaid.

Naturally, it scared him badly. I don't believe he'd been to church (Catholic) for ten years, but he led the pack for communion on the next mission.

Our route back was a lot shorter (thanks to the Navigator being lost) as we were very close to the main bomber stream coming in. But we were 15,000 feet plus lower than them. The planned route was way to the south; but after three bomb runs, we'd probably have ended up as POWs and a belly landing.

Luckily, this shorter route got us to Shipdham with, as I recall, four of our planes landing in France, the Channel, and all over England – out of gas.

The Bombardier got a piece of flak in his back that he really did fix with a bandaid. He didn't report it, as he wanted to fly every mission with Lou Wimsatt, who was a former Co-pilot on B-24s, and a hellava good pilot. I talked with the Bombardier's wife in 1986, and she knew about the flak.

I have two black and white prints of the plotted course that day. The original route was 2 hour, 15 minutes shorter, but apparently the course and targets were changed – possibly by the weather, too. As a result, we had two planes go into Switzerland, two shot down, and how many wounded and POWs.

*Will Lundy reported the following losses: the 68th Squadron lost 2 planes: **Mary Harriet** and **Channel Hopper**; the 506 lost **Southern Comfort III** and **Cape Cod Special #2**. Seven crewmen were Interned and returned; seven were interned and held in Switzerland; two were interned and repatriated; 2 were KIA and 19 became POW.*

Kenneth Adrian's name and history are missing from the Database. As Editor, I can testify that he was a Navigator in the 506 Squadron because I met him on a tour to Europe. The information in this article came from a letter he wrote to Will Lundy.



From **Tommy Shepherd**: The RAF report on Wartime Memories Project – Station 115: "The RAF Shipdham in Norfolk opened in September 1942. It became the base for the 44th BG. After the war, the airfield was used as a repatriation centre for German POWs returning to Germany from the U.S. The land was returned to Agricultural use with private flying taking place from 1970 onward. Most of the buildings remain in various states of decay, including the station headquarters, close to the entrance, the control tower, motor transport sheds, bomb store. The three original T.2 type Hangars are in use as warehouses. Part of the site is in use as an industrial estate. Several huts remain



in the dispersal site to the south east (506 B.S.), there are two buildings remaining on the communal site, and the 14th CBW is almost intact, along with the 464th sub depot site.

Ed. Note: The report did not mention the Shipdham Aero Club, which is the 44th's ongoing connection to their history.

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
Roger Fenton wants to know "If electricity comes from electrons, does morality come from morons? ... Why do they call it an asteroid when it's outside the hemisphere, but call it a hemorrhoid when it's in your butt? ... How important does a person have to be before they are considered assassinated instead of just murdered?"

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
From **Tommy Shephard**: A report from BBC News – Townsend Griffis, a forgotten hero from WWII:

Lt. Col. Townsend Griffis was the first known Air Corps officer killed in WWII. He is memorialized in a tablet in the earth at Bushy Park in west London. The tablet is half covered with grass, but the royal deer nibble at the grass around it.

Bushy Park was once a camp, and was named for Griffis, as was an airbase in upstate New York, evidence that his work

in Europe was highly regarded by the US military.

Griffis was sent first as an observer of the Spanish Civil War, sending home crucial information about the capability of German, Italian and Russian aircraft. In mid-1941 he was sent to London to establish the ground for a military alliance between the two countries, a fact that became public after Pearl Harbor. He was a fighter pilot; but unfortunately, he died in a Liberator.

Among his many assignments as an attaché, he was permitted to fly a Messerschmidt 109, and reported back to Air Corps commanders, a description of its capabilities.

Griffis was later sent to the Soviet Union to work out the route for delivering aircraft to Russia in a Lend Lease program. Talks ceased when the Germans reached the borders of the city, and he was forced to return to Britain by a round-about route through north Africa. He boarded a Liberator, and near the coast of northern France, the plane was shot down.

Griffis's observation and negotiating skills led the way to the hard-fought victory of the Allies in 1945. Only a few historians are even aware that such a man ever existed.

THE SEARCH FOR CRASH SITES

A number of our members have regularly found crash sites in France and Germany, but still many lost planes have not been discovered. A couple in Houston, Texas have started an organization to work with German historians and locate the scene of many crashes. Memorabilia of lost airmen

can frequently be retrieved. Anyone interested in contacting this organization can contact Dmi Enterprises – Elfie Majole, 1918 B=Night Star Lane, Houston Texas. Phone 1-800-533-5090. E-Mail: elfiemajoie@aol.com/dmitours@aol.com



FOLDED WINGS

*Farewell, dear voyageur - The river winds and turns; the cadence of your song wafts near to me.
And now we know the thing that all men learn; There is no death - there's immortality.*

Unknown author

Brubaker, Harold E. #19560 66th Squadron 14 August 2011. There is no report on this member of the 44th, which indicates that he did not fly combat. It is regretful that we cannot report on his position in the 44th, as it took everyone to win the war.

Dunkle, Ernest J. #20076 67th Squadron 23 June 2007 T/Sgt. Dunkle was a gunner on no less than sixteen crews in his twenty three missions. His first mission was 27 April 1944.

The Database shows a period from May 1944 to September when Dunkle flew no missions. On his early missions he flew as a Tail Gunner, Ball Turret Gunner, and once as a Toggler, and held the rank of S/Sgt. On later missions, he was listed as 'Other' in his position on the plane, and held the rank of T/Sgt. It is unfortunate that he did not record his story, to understand these unusual discrepancies.

The crews he flew with are: **Charles Arnold, Lewis Vance, James Struthers, Hal Kimball, Clarence Inman, Joseph Kuklewicz, R. W. Bethel, Louis Confer, Christopher Spagnola, O. Collins, Ernest Kyle, Robert Chaille, Leslie Lee, Raymond Zamoni, Leonard Louik and Milton Munroe.**

His last mission was nearly a year after arriving in Shipdham, the last 44th BG mission of the war, 25 April 1945,

Henry, Howard C. (Pete) #20627 67th Squadron 11 June 2011 Capt. Henry was a pilot, having flown 32 missions, the first on 11 June 1944.

Henry's first flights were with the **James Stephens** crew. On 12 June 1944 he moved into the pilot's seat.

Henry flew with the following Command Pilots: **Elmer Hammer, Wilford Nolen and Dale Benadon.** Henry flew in six different aircrafts: ***Phyllis, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Glory Bee, Henry, Big Time Operator and Jersey Jerk.*** He flew one mission into Holland, seven into France, and all others into Germany, all in support of the advancing Allied forces. His last mission was 25 February 1944.

The last years of his life, Henry and his wife Mary lived in Moline, Illinois. News of his passing came from his son Michael.

Larkin, Morris #21038 506 Squadron 28 September 2009 S/Sgt. Larkin was a Left Waist Gunner on the John Milliken crew. The crew flew 31 missions, the first on D-Day, 6 June 1945. He flew the first mission with the D. H. Dines crew; all others with John Milliken. This crew flew in many unnamed planes, but also in ***Sabrina II, Passion Pit, Shack Rat, M'Darling, My Peach, and I Walk Alone.***

On 13 August 1944, on a mission which was to be their last, ***Passion Pit*** was hit with flak; # 1 & 2 engines burst into flame. The crew parachuted safely, and were promptly captured by the Germans.

Lord, John B., #21136 506 Squadron 3 February 2012 T/Sgt. Lord was a on the Homer Still crew, their first on 22 September 1944. The crew flew five



FOLDED WINGS

missions, on two different planes: *Chief's Delight/Chief Wapello* and *Sierra Blanca*. On their fifth mission to Kassel, Germany, their A/C was hit with flak and set on fire. Three members of the crew, Engineer, Hatch Gunner and Tail Gunner were KIA. All other members parachuted and were promptly captured and were POW. Lord suffered severe burns on his left hand. Fortunately, some British Doctors who were POW were able to help him and save the hand from permanent damage.

After the war, Lord attended ITT, graduating as a Chemical Engineer.

He was employed by WH & LD Betz, an industrial water treatment firm, which later became a division of General Electric Corporation.

At the time of Lord's death, he was residing in Lincolnshire, Illinois. Information of his passing came from his son Kevin. Kevin wrote a touching story of his father's life, which appears in the current issue of the Tails.

Lutz, Warren #21158 (No Squadron record) 4 August 2011 There is no bio on Lutz. After the war, he went to Medical School, and became an MD.

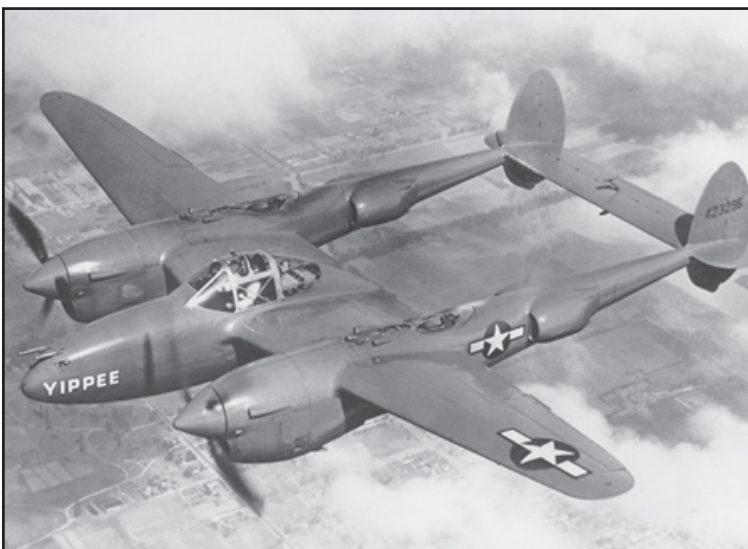


**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

2041 Village Circle E
York, PA 17404

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
YORK, PA
PERMIT NO. 323

LIGHTNINGS IN THE SKY BY A FIGHTER GUY



Oh, Hedy Lamarr is a beautiful gal,
and Madeleine Carroll is too.

But you'll find if you query a different
theory, amongst any bomber crew.

For the loveliest thing of which one
could sing this side of the heavenly
gates.

Is no blonde or brunette of the
Hollywood set, but an escort of P-38s.

The P-38 is the only American fighter
plane that was used by the Air Corps
from the start of the war – Pearl Harbor
– until victory over Japan. Called the
'Fork Tailed Devil' by the Luftwaffe, it

accompanied bombers in both Europe and Asia, and was the primary long range
fighter until the P-51 came on the scene. Jimmy Doolittle, Commander of the 8th AF,
flew this plane over Normandy on D-Day. He called it the 'sweetest flying plane in
the sky.

It was a "Little Friend" to the first crews that went over.