

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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Down De Hatch

Down De Hatch came to Shipdham May 5, 1944, shortly before D-Day, and many members of the 506 rode in this 'lucky' plane that managed to chalk up 90 missions before the War ended. It made it back to the ZOI to be on exhibit at Willow Run, for employees to view their returning handiwork.

Roy Owen will remember this plane that took him to Ruwer, Germany on Christmas Eve, 1944. He was co-pilot on the **Smith** crew, assigned to knock out bridges and tunnels to control the movements of Germans who were attacking at Bastogne. Hitler had planned that surprise attack very well. England was 'socked in' with dense fog, so the planes were grounded. The entire 44th knew B/Gen Anthony McAuliffe needed help. He was low on supplies, but somehow holding his own against a German Panzer Division.

Finally, December 23rd, the weather cleared, the planes flew and dropped supplies, General Patton moved his troops to the area, and the Americans prevailed. Gen. McAuliffe will always be remembered for his famous reply to the German call for his surrender, "NUTS".

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ROY OWEN
PILOT, PROFESSOR
and
THREE TIME PRESIDENT OF THE 44TH BOMB GROUP



Roy Owen at the Friends of the Eighth BG Museum, Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, UK

Roy Owen accepted the presidency of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association when the 44th Heritage Memorial Group folded. That was in 1995. He held the position until 1999, when a family crisis forced him to relinquish the position to **Edward Mikoloski**. The following year, 'Mike' underwent torturous moments, losing both his daughter and his loving wife. To help him through those desperate times, Roy accepted the gavel again. **Gerald Folsom** was the next President, and Roy became Vice President. Then in 2004, upon the request of his long time friend, President **Robert Lehnhausen**, he accepted the role one more time, completing Lehnhausen's two year term. Tragedy of the highest level struck Roy last January when he lost his beloved partner 'Lolly'. Nevertheless, his dedication to the

Association kept him at his post, still holding the gavel for the 44th Bomb Group.

Roy considers himself a middle class American man, born during the Great Depression to a U.S. Postal Service employee, his father; and ex-telephone operator housewife, his mother. Educated in the public schools, he was considered a gifted athlete, a bronze Body Surfer who basked in the warm Southern California sun and its beautiful beaches.

When he was in eighth grade, his father's cousin, an Army Air Corps Reserve 1st. Lt. Pilot came to live with the Owens. He had been furloughed from active duty due to the depression budgets allocated to the Air Service. The gentleman found employment at a local airport as an Airplane Mechanic and Instructor Pilot, a fortunate turn of

events for Roy. On a number of occasions the cousin would tell Roy to ride his bike to the Airport to accompany him on a test hop on an airplane on which he had finished some repairs. Nothing could have been more exhilarating for a teen age boy. From then on, Roy knew what he wanted to do.

The clouds of war covered Europe when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Roy had just graduated from high school at age 17 and entered college, while awaiting his 18th birthday to



Roy Owen at Shipdham

apply for Aviation Cadet training in December 1942. Graduating in Class 44-E, he was assigned to the crew of Lt. **William M. Smith** as his Co-Pilot. Upon completion of Combat Crew Training, the crew left for England and assignment to the 44th Bomb Group. Roy completed 26 Combat Missions, 12 of which were as Co-Pilot on a lead crew with either the Smith crew or the Captain **James Clements** crew.

When the war ended, Roy volunteered for a Reserve appointment. He returned to civilian life, to his wartime bride, to college on the G I Bill, augmented by summertime flying in agriculture aviation. As an Air Force Reservist, he flew with the 93rd Bomb Wing at Castle AFB, California. It was there he made his first post war contact with another 44th'er, **Dick Butler**, who was Operations Officer of the 33rd Bomb Squadron. Dick recommended that Roy be recalled to active duty, which occurred in April 1951. He remained assigned to the 93rd as an Aircraft Commander flying the B-50 until assigned for an overseas tour on Guam. During

that 1954-55 tour, Roy and Dick Butler's careers again connected. Also another 44th'er joined Roy and Dick, when Colonel **Bill Cameron** arrived to take command of the unit to which Roy was assigned.

After a short extension and transfer to Hawaii, Roy, accepted a Regular Air Force commission and returned to SAC as a B-47 Aircraft Commander with the 22nd Bomb Wing at March AFB, CA. After three years of crew duty, he began a four year assignment as an Operations Staff Officer at 15th Air Force Headquarters. Here, he again served with his friend, Dick Butler.

Following that tour, he was assigned to Beale AFB, in the initial cadre of the Operations Staff to plan for the operational mission of the new SR-71 Reconnaissance Aircraft assigned to SAC. Roy served with the 9th Recon wing for seven years, rising from Major to Colonel. During that period, his first marriage had failed.

Following that, after a three year courtship, the peak of his life and career occurred when, in October, 1970, he married his love, LaVoice; subsequently she pinned on his Eagle rank, and he was awarded the coveted Mach 3+ pin for SR-71 flight.

The next summer brought an assignment to Pacific Air Force Headquarters in Hawaii, where he became Director of Command and Control (the PACAF Command Center). By September, 1974, Roy, with 30 years of service, elected to retire. He returned to his beloved Beale AFB to have his retirement order read in the company of his SR-71 Blackbird colleagues.

Upon retirement he completed his Master's Degree in Political Science, and enjoyed a 12 year second career as Assistant Professor with California State University (his Alma Mater) in Chico, CA. Upon his academic retirement, he turned his attention to the 44th Heritage Memorial Group, which was on its death bed by edict of a president who, with his appointed Directors, was bent on disbanding the HMG. Roy rallied a committee of iconic members who approved a new Constitution and By-Laws which he authored; and at the invitation of the 67th Bomb Squadron, met with them at Amarillo, Texas. Together, the old comrades,

Dick Butler and Roy Owen, briefed the 67th members who, in addition to their approval of our Association revival, came up on the spot, with over a thousand dollars start-up money. This enabled the committee to send a newsletter to the HMG membership, encouraging them to join us in the new 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association.

None of this would have happened if it hadn't been for the firm determination of a handful 44th'ers, that the Bomb Group Association would live on, **Will Lundy, Bob Lehnhausen, Edward "Mike" Mikoloski, Charles Hughes, Bill Cameron, Art Hand, Reg Carpenter** and more.

The rest is history. Roy continues to be a leader, an innovator and a writer, all to the benefit of the 44th BGVA. He is adamant that this group (his family) will live on in the hearts and minds of generations who will follow.

Ed. Note: Roy Owen is the only 44th'er who moved on to span a flying career from our B-24 to the Mach 3+ SR-71, at that time the fastest plane on the planet.

I asked Roy what it felt like to take off in that craft. With great enthusiasm, he said it was an indescribable thrill, rolling down the runway. "The acceleration and your relationship to the earth speeding by so fast is bewildering. As you get positioned for take-off and advance the throttles to 100%, you first feel the astounding power; then with a quick glance to see that all is normal, you push the throttles further forward to light the Afterburners, adding fuel into the tail pipes, and feel the sudden added thrust; you then know you are really off on a helluva ride! The next transition is when reaching the cruise altitude of 80m, any sensation of speed has vanished. It is quiet, the sky is dark, you can see the curvature of the earth, and the only indication of speed is the number on the Machmeter to tell you are flying at 1800 Knots in level flight. It is truly beautiful, a feeling that you could literally reach out and touch the face of God."

Roy became downright nostalgic when he found the very Blackbird that he had flown was on display at the Hill Air Force Base Museum in Utah. And he was pretty close to tearful when, sitting in a motel in New Zealand, he happened to turn on the American news, and watch the SR-71 on its last flight—California to Washington D.C., where it can now be viewed in the Steven Hazi Museum, an extension to the Smithsonian.



60 years later, Roy Owen (center) received his DFC at the San Antonio Reunion, along with John Gately and John E. Butler.



Major James McAtee and Roy Owen
And the SR-71 at the Hill Air Force Base Museum
in Utah.



THE PRESIDENTS CORNER Roy Owen



It saddens me to open my article with mention of the January loss of our last living WWII Commander, Brigadier General **John H. "Jack" Gibson** (refer to separate article). Jack came to Shipdham as our fourth Combat commander. As for his qualifications for the job, he was truly, in the parlance of the early years of Army Aviation, a true **Aviator**. Trained in the early Thirties in the Army Air Corps, he was one of those who flew the newly born Air Mail Service routes in an open cockpit, single engine bi-planes with the Airmail bag placed behind his back in the pilot's seat. He came into the WWII AAF with nearly 10,000 hours of pilot flying time. Trained in B-17's, he completed a 25 mission combat tour with the 95th Bomb Group and stayed on to become its Group Operations Officer, where he served until offered command of our 44th BG in March 1944. Those who served under his command tell me Jack Gibson was a supremely confident, professional leader who commanded with the gentle hand of a true gentleman.

He led by example and with sincere respect and concern for his combat crews and support personnel. His allegiance to the 44th was embodied in his Lifetime membership in our 44th BGVA. We will surely miss this heroic gentleman and say to his beloved wife, Ruth: the men and women of our 44th family feel truly fortunate to have known him and have you share his love with us. Please remember, Ruth, you will always remain a treasured member of the 44th Family. Please join us when the family gathers for our reunions.

Now from a tribute to one of our best, I want to move on to one of our newest. He is not really that new, although we haven't seen him for a while, I'm sure you old timers will remember David Webster, the young man who used to voluntarily bring his collection of WWII uniforms and memorabilia, and put them on display at our reunions. He paid his own way and was his own docent for his display (every day of the reunion). After the second reunion he attended, he was hooked. Like so many of these great young guys who have come to us, either by being a nephew or grandson, whatever, like Chris Clark, Roger Fenton, and some without family connection like Tad Feinstein, David officially joined our 44th family as a paid member. I want to share his recent e-mail message to me and the members of your Board:

44th Bomb Group History

Dear Friends,

I hope the new year is finding you all well. It was a wonderful thing to see most of you last September at the Reunion. I will not miss one again.

I want to talk to you about something I have been thinking about since then. Actually, I've been thinking about it for a while, but after the reunion, I was spurred to bring it up. I would like to make an offer of being the official curator and assistant Historian to Roger Fenton. As many of you know, I already have a large collection of artifacts from WWII.

My collection focuses on the B-24, the efforts of the 8th Air Force, and specifically the 44th Bomb Group. Some vets of the 44th and family members have donated items to me already. I've started to assemble a small museum in my hangar that will be open by appointment for now. The display will show the history of the Army Air Corps, but will focus on the AAC of WWII and the efforts of the 44th. I will continue to do traveling displays like I have put

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on at the 44th reunions in the past, but I want to set up a place where people can go to see what the people of the 44th wore, wrote, took pictures of, played with and used in their daily lives. I talked to Roger Fenton a few days ago, and we agreed we would like to carry on the history part of the 44th, helping family members and friends find information and keep educating the public in the incredible efforts of the AAF and the 44th Bomb Group in WWII. Some of you have put a great effort in making sure the 44th history is documented through books, stories and the CD. Let Roger and I keep educating people in the great effort you have put out. I've been told too many stories about a vet's things going to the trash because they or the family were not aware there is someone interested in it. I want members of the 44 to know, not only am I interested in it, I will care for, display and protect their things for future generations to see and learn from this material. Please let me know what you think. I am honored to call you my friends. You are my heroes. (S) David Webster

I've passed David's message to you because I'm always so pleased when these younger generation folks come in contact with us for any of several reasons (usually personal information). Once they have met with us at a reunion or have been so willingly assisted in providing them with information they didn't know existed in their area of interest; the next thing we know, they become so impressed with our 44th Family, they want to belong. Next they want to take part in our work of sharing our history with the families, historians and just interested students wanting to know more about WWII and "The Greatest Generation", and do what they can, whatever it takes, to keep our Association alive. Examples are Chris Clark, Tad Feinstein, Roger Fenton, Blain Duxbury, and not to forget our U.K. Representative, Steve Adams, Lois Cianci, Jackie Roberts, Jackie Owen Strong and now David Webster.

Pleased, I certainly am, with these young folks; but additionally, I must tell you, the Senior 44th Family Veterans and Wives, how very, very proud I am of you for being the Proud Americans you are. I also want you to be proud that you have shown our nation and these young people who join us, that we are really a family, and sincerely intend to remain so for the generations to follow. It is you they want for their role models. Finally, I am gratified to serve this family I love as your president. On to Tacoma!

Roy Owen

Roy Owen,
Your President



THE NEWS FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle, President of the Shipdham Aero Club

Well, the English winter is just as you remember it, and at the moment is throwing everything it can at us. Your old base Station 115 just had a 78 MPH gust across its runway. We settled for that, as in the north of Scotland, the same night they recorded a gust of 128 MPH. That's about the cruise speed of the fastest planes in the Shipdham Hangar at present!!

Peter Steele, our 44th B.G. Museum curator has just had a 20 minute B/W film sequence shot at Shipdham in '43 committed to DVD for viewing in the museum later in the year. The processing of transferring to DVD has improved the quality of the sound and picture a fantastic amount and preserved your story for further generations to see.

Talking of preserving history, here in England one of the major national charities is 'Children in Need'. It is a major event, hosted by the BBC Television network. It raises Millions of Pounds for underprivileged children all over the world. This year the Shipdham Aero Club did its bit by hosting a class of 35 children and their families at the airfield. We provided aeroplane rides and rides in gliders for whoever wanted to try it. Needless to say, all the children and the majority of parents all joined in. For once the weather was superb, and all the children had a great day. The club and its members did it free of cost to the families, though

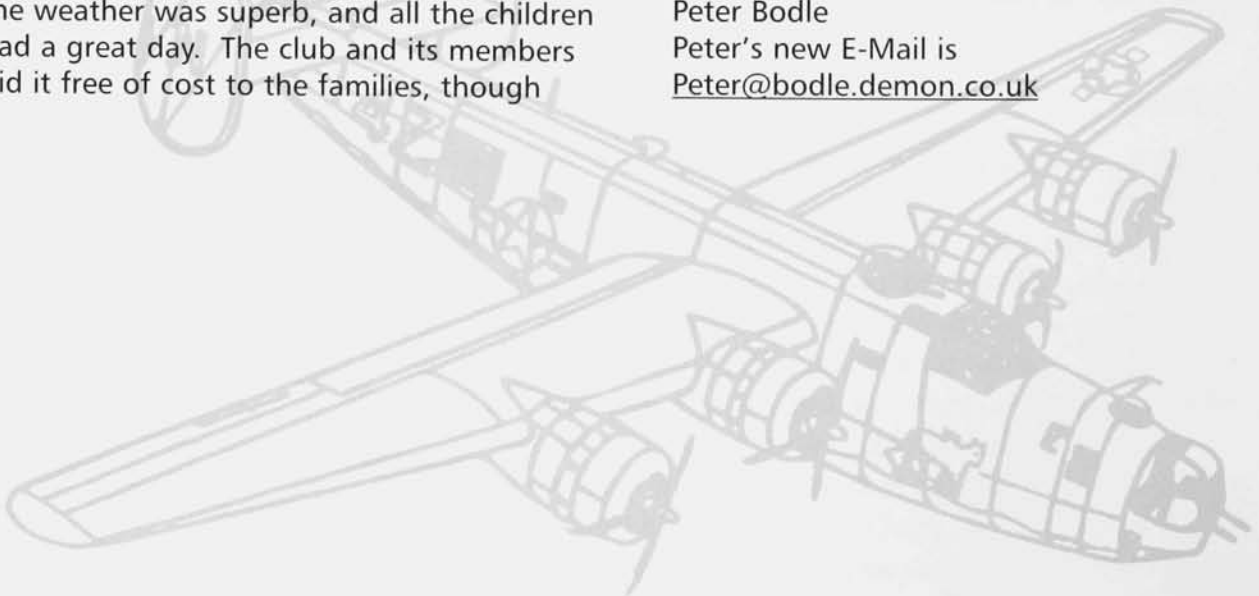
donations were sought for the Children in Need charity. Interestingly, for the majority of the children, it was their first ever trip in an aircraft of any sort.

Their headmaster who helped organize the event with Dick Jordan, our events secretary, is also teaching the children WWII as part of their history class. We enlisted the help of the 44th BG's UK Representative Steve Adams, who provided a group of photos for us to include in a 6 sheet information pack about Shipdham Airfield, its men and the B-24. Each child was given a pack to include in their WWII project folder.

What a day; we raised over 600 pounds for the charity, gave 35 kids (and some parents) their first flight in a plane, and hopefully by tying it all together with Shipdham's history, shared your story with another generation, who I am sure will remember it for the rest of their lives. It's kind of neat to think some of those kids will almost certainly still be talking to their kids about their first trip in a plane from Shipdham in forty years time. That's 100 years on from when you did it. That's making history live.

Best Wishes,

Peter Bodle
Peter's new E-Mail is
Peter@bodle.demon.co.uk



A SALUTE TO A GREAT GENERAL

THE LATE JOHN H. GIBSON



John H. Gibson

Beloved by members of both the 95th and 44th Bomb Groups, General Gibson's courage was proven over and over, as he flew the missions with his crews, sharing the dangers.

Gibson received his flight training at Randolph and Kelly Fields in 1932. His years of flying time and organizational training at American Airways prepared him to be Air Executive, to the benefit of both groups that he led.

As a Reservist, in '42 he was called to service in the Air Transport Command. Wishing for more excitement, he contacted an old friend, **Curtis LeMay**, who promptly reassigned him to the 95th. He was one of the first five officers assigned to this newly establish Bomb Group. He flew 25 missions in B-17s. When Col. **Frederick Dent** was wounded in combat, Gibson was assigned CO of the 44th BG. On D-Day, Col. Gibson joined the raids on Normandy, preparing the way for the battle that was to begin at 7:00 A.M. He was the Command Pilot on the *Lone Ranger*, with the **Charles F. Kuch** crew; his target, the city of Ferets-De-Ceristy in France.

Col. Gibson fondly remembered the day he was thrown into the pond, August 11, 1944. It was a day of celebration for the 44th's 200th Mission, in which rank was not to be displayed. With great enthusiasm, the celebrators dunked a uniformed captain, next Col. **Johnson**; then couldn't resist following it up with their commander, 'Jack' Gibson.

Robert Lehnhausen described his lifelong friend as 'a truly unique individual in military leadership. He was fiercely loyal to his responsibility, and his personal courage and gentlemanly ways never went unnoticed by his men. He demanded excellence, insisting on continuous training of both air and ground crews. He felt that practice assured better maintenance of planes and equipment, and a better survival rate for the airmen. His constant command was 'practice, practice, practice.'

Gibson's career took him to Mountain Home Desert Base where planes were being tested, leading to the development of the Strategic Air Command. As a Reservist, he was recalled to serve in the Korean War. 'Jack' Gibson rose to the rank of General in his post-war years of service.

The American Airlines placed him in charge of the company's training program. His recommendation to invest in two simulators for the training of their pilots led to an amazing record of accident-free air miles. Few men have contributed so much to the advance of aviation in wartime and beyond.

Ed. Note: If there really are angels up there in the sky, I imagine General Gibson is giving them regular practice in formation flying.



WHY ME

By Arthur W. Schueler

My most memorable experience during WWII occurred as we traveled from New York to England in a convoy. Many stories have been published about the Chantilly as the decrepid old rust bucket that dodged torpedos to bring us safely to England, where the next two years were spent helping to take the fight back to Germany.

Remembering Pearl Harbor

My story begins on a Sunday morning December, the 7th of December to be precise! As we stood on the wall looking at the Ohio River winding through the valley below Cincinnati's Eden Park overlook, the car radio suddenly caught our attention – "Pearl Harbor has been attacked by Japanese planes." I knew my life would be changed profoundly forever.

I was enrolled in the draft. Even though my job in an essential industry exempted me from the draft, I decided I belonged in the service. My friend Charles Lichtendahl and I went to Dayton's Wright Field to take the physical exams to enlist in the Army Air Corps for pilot training. The vertigo test kept me out, and Charley failed the eye test. I then tried the Navy, but enlistments were halted as the country rushed to build ships to replace ones lost at Pearl Harbor. We needed weapons before men to man them.

Finally, on my 21st birthday, I joined the Army. Several days later I was sent to Fort Thomas, Kentucky, to begin my army service. After getting my inoculations, uniforms and equipment, I was sent to basic training at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. After six weeks of breaking down my civilian attitudes, and the result of the G.C.T. testing, I was given the option of choosing either cryptology or bomb-sight and autopilot maintenance. I chose the latter and was then sent to Lowry Field at Denver, Colorado. What a beautiful place! At 5:00 a.m. the snow-capped Rockies looked like gold. Six weeks later, after graduation, we

were sent to Salt Lake City to await assignment to our groups.

A Christmas to Remember

When we arrived at Salt Lake, we were stationed at the airport. It was cold! – far from home! – and one week before Christmas! We were told that our stay would be so short, we could not receive mail or packages. The absence of mail was especially depressing. The Mormon Church invited us to attend a Christmas Eve program, featuring the choir singing in the tabernacle. The music was beautiful, and increased our homesickness. I saw grown men cry that night.

Christmas morning we were awakened early. A trainload of incoming troops needed accommodations. Since the barracks were filled, some old tents on the airfield were to be used to shelter the new arrivals. I was one of the lucky ones chosen to start fires in the coal stoves used to heat the tents. What a mess! The tents were set up in a flat area without drainage. The wood floor sank into water beneath our feet. The spark arrestors on the flu pipes were blocked by soot, and someone had to climb up to the top of the tent to clear the blockage. I was chosen! Merry Christmas!

More Traveling

We were sent to Pueblo, Colorado to join the 506 Bomb Squadron, which was in the process of packing up for a trip to ????? Rumors promised we were going to the Pacific, and we really should purchase a good hunting knife before we left. A trip to Pueblo was unsuccessful in obtaining a knife because they were sold out – for some reason.

An endless train ride to New Jersey was a real test of personal attitudes and resistance to hemorrhoids. Camp Kilmer was the assembly point for troops headed overseas. As air force troops, we were envied by the infantry troops, who comprised the bulk of the men

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awaiting transport. Insults and fights were inevitable, and our first sergeant paid the price with a beautiful shiner. We later learned these fellow travelers were jailbirds gathered from briggs for shipment to England.

Off To Sight-See

To prevent troops from going AWOL, pay-day was delayed, and we were all broke. In spite of our lack of funds, several of us got passes. I had enough money for round-trip train tickets to New York. We wound up at the Red Cross Club on Times Square where everything was free. When we returned to Penn Station, the last train to Camp Kilmer was gone. We could not cash in the tickets, and we were potentially AWOL at a port of embarkation – a court-martial offense! Someone suggested we could catch a bus at Eastside terminal in hope that we could trade our train tickets for bus tickets.

We soon found there was a bus, but they would not exchange our train tickets for bus tickets. While we were discussing our problem, the bus driver came over and told us to stand near the door of the bus, and he would let us on free! (Sometimes the uniform is respected.)

Finally, the embarkation date arrived, and we headed for – who knew what? As we marched onto the dock loaded with all our gear, we passed a fence along which were hundreds of commuters watching our passage. Many of the watchers had tears streaming down their faces. What a sad day!

The Chantilly

The British ship we were to board was a rusty passenger ship, the *Chantilly*. The Indian crew scurried about, bare-footed, protected from the winter weather by discarded business suit coats.

We were assigned to the rear of the vessel while the infantry occupied the center of the ship. The stench rising from the bilge was gut-wrenching. We slept in hammocks with our neighbor's feet about two feet from our

faces. The food consisted of mutton stew which was brought from the galley in large pans. I made my first trip to the galley, and what I saw turned my stomach. The floor was covered with two to three inches of black sawdust. Spilled food was covered with two to three inches of black sawdust. Spilled food had saturated the swill, and as the bare – footed cooks shuffled around, some of the sawdust was kicked into the meat pans. The bread was not bad, so for seventeen days I ate bread, apples and candy bars. I decided not to eat that night, reasoning that if I had no food, I couldn't get seasick. Wrong! When you get sick with an empty stomach, you get the dry heaves. This you don't want.

As we quietly drifted past the Statue of Liberty, I silently wondered when, or if, I would see her again. If I knew what lay ahead thirteen days later, I would have been really worried.

When we went on deck the next morning, we were surrounded by ships of all types, as far as the eye could see, silently steaming eastward, shepherded by a baby flat-top, a destroyer, and some corvettes. Our ship carried a stern-mounted anti-aircraft cannon and a number of twenty millimeter anti-aircraft guns and machine guns. I was assigned to the port side 20 –millimeter gun as an ammunition loader. We were on three hours, off twelve.

The gun was mounted in a round concrete tub about eight feet in diameter, sitting on top of a four-foot diameter cylinder ten feet above the deck. When the ship turned to the port on its zig-zag path, the roll of the ship meant there was nothing but water directly beneath us. We hung onto the gun to keep from falling into the sea. Engine trouble caused us to drop back out of the convoy while the crew worked to repair the problem. Our fleece-lined leather outfits were packed in the hold, and all we had were our fatigues and our wool coats and knit caps. While on gun duty, we tried to keep warm by wrapping blankets around us. I have never been that

cold before or since.

German subs lurked along the east coast, looking for undefended ships like ours. Our luck held. The engine was repaired, and we rejoined the convoy during the night.

The *Chantilly*, now owned by the British was originally a French ship which was captured by the Italians in North Africa. The Italians used the ships to carry captured allied troops across the Mediterranean to Italy. Later in the war, the British captured the ship in North Africa and used it to carry Americans to England at \$400 each.

The British sailors told us we could live about fifteen minutes in the water at the temperature which was near freezing. They worried that, in the event of attack, the crew might panic and swamp the life boats. We were told to use our knives to prevent this. I don't know if I could have.

As the days passed, we watched the corvettes bounding across the waves from one side of the convoy to the other. Duty on these small warships must have been hell, but thank God they were there.

The booming of the depth charges signaled the landing the British Fairey B planes on the baby flat top. The planes could not land while armed with the depth charges. To land a plane on those small carriers, pitching on fifteen to twenty-foot waves, required skill and guts we admired.

Hot water was not available for bathing, so we had to use a cold saltwater shower – one was enough. Boy, did we stink!! One day we were ordered to report for medical tests. Measles had broken out somewhere on the ship, so we passed shirtless before the ship's medical officer, as he searched for signs of the disease. If you got too close, he used a swagger stick to push you back. I guess we did smell, but since we were risking our necks at \$400 a head to protect his country, he could have been more polite!

At sunset of the twelfth day, the flattop and destroyer left our convoy. The crew told us the sea was so rough the Germans would not

attack. Wrong! I was below decks when a dull explosion signaled the attack of German subs. As I rushed to the deck through a dark passage, I bumped into a crew member. In a frightened voice he cried, "No stab! No stab!" I had no intention of stabbing him. We rushed onto the deck.

When I reached the deck, the freighter that had been on our starboard was gone; it had split in two and sank before I reached the lifeboat station. The freighter on the port side was silently drifting back with the red light on the mast, warning that it was disabled. No rescue was possible. God bless them.

Our ship was the largest ship in the convoy and, in addition, it was a troop ship, which meant it was the initial target. The captain reported that he saw the second torpedo pass in front of our bow to strike the ship on our port side. His sharp turn avoided the torpedo. During the evasive action, our lifeboat stern rope broke, and this boat was uselessly trailing alongside like a surf board. What a helpless feeling!

Later that night I was on gun duty when a tanker was hit. The burning fuel lighted up the huge convoy, making it easier for the subs. After a while a corvette passed between us and the tanker silhouetted in the red glow. A huge explosion ending the agony of the burning ship created a huge mushroom cloud. The corvette had sunk the tanker to save the convoy. The horror made us speechless.

During the sinking of the tanker, I looked toward the port horizon and saw flashes of gunfire! A sub had surfaced and was using its deck guns to do the job. Another ship and crew gone!

In the gun turret, between the cold and excitement, we could hardly talk. Our eyes ached from staring into the dark waves, seeking something to shoot at. Before I entered the service, I wondered if I could kill another person, but that night I got my answer! I prayed for a chance to strike back. Waiting for a torpedo attack is the most helpless feeling I have ever known.

Daylight brought an end to the attacks, but a new threat loomed ahead from Norway-based bombers. Dornier bombers were used to harass the convoys as they approached Britain. The twenty-millimeter guns and stern-mounted cannon were the only defense against these attacks.

At one point we spotted an incoming plane and anxiously watched as it came on. I finally recognized it as a Catalina sea plane of British Coastal Command. A welcome sight!! Maybe we would make it to England.

I'll never forget the welcome sight of Ireland on our starboard side, seventeen days after leaving New York. It was as green as the songs say.

Our ship anchored in the Firth of Clyde as lighters came alongside to transport us to the shore. When the lifeboats were raised to provide clearance for the approaching small boats, the ropes on several of the lifeboats broke and dropped into the sea. So much for our chances to survive if a torpedo had not missed!

I heard estimates of eight to thirteen ships were lost from our convoy. God bless those poor souls. I was now convinced God wanted me to live a little longer.

Shipdham

After an all-day train ride with no food, we arrived at Shipdham's Air Drome, my home for the next phase of my life. I remember the first meal we had in twenty-four hours. It was Australian roast beef – the best I ever tasted.

That night the Germans bombed Norwich, several miles to the east. A plane was caught in the cone formed by several search lights and shot down. We watched from the top of our air raid shelter mound and cheered like we were at a football game.

The air raid shelter was half under water and half above, with dirt mounded over the top. Water filled the lower portion which I never entered.

I witnessed the first bombing of our base

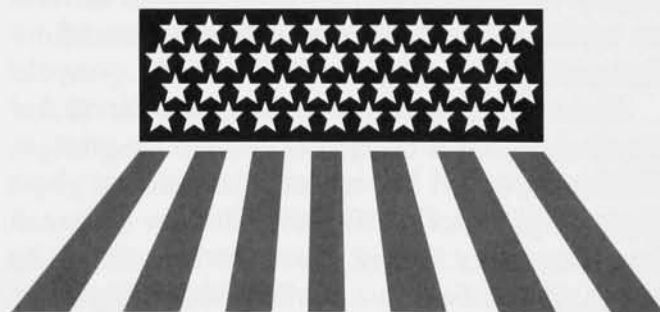
by a JU-88, which dropped a 250 KG bomb and a canister of anti-personnel 'butterfly' bombs, which covered a large area and closed the base for a day while demolition teams located and destroyed the vibration-sensitive 'bomblets'. Another attack occurred later, after I was transferred to the 36th Bomb Squadron.

In October of '44, Lt. **Walter Ludwick**, T/Sgt. **P.F. Scott**, S/Sgt. Lord and I were transferred to the newly formed (secret) 36th Sq. *(More will be written about those activities in a later edition of the 8 BTs.)*

I returned to the United States as a passenger on the Liberator #42-51307, which was R4/Q, nicknamed Just Jeanne. The 'quick trip home' took seven days due to a storm over Scotland, where we were ordered to put on parachutes 'in case'. We diverted to Wales, then to Iceland and Newfoundland before reaching Bradley Field in Connecticut. I wound up in Camp Atterbury, Indiana, and while home on leave, the atom bomb was dropped. While I was sorry for the civilian deaths, I realized the invasion would have cost more deaths, both military and civilian.

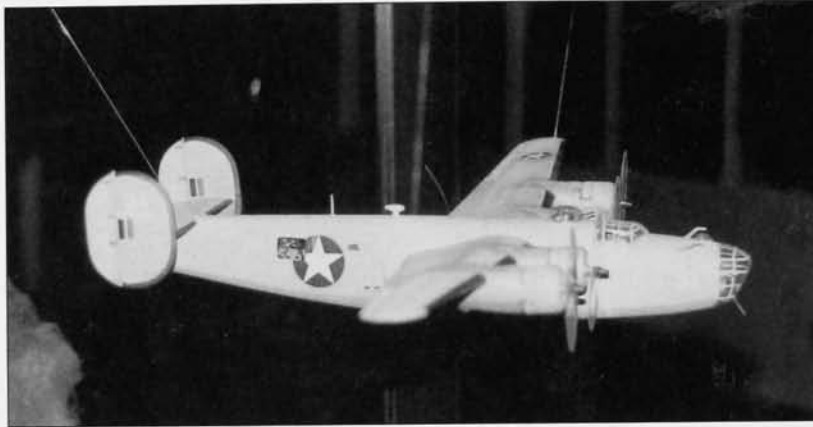
When the war ended, I returned to the University of Cincinnati on the G.I. Bill to earn a degree in Mechanical Engineering.

After all these years, I still remember the sacrifice made by those brave crews, especially in the early 'learning curve' days when needless loss of life occurred due to our unpreparedness and the 'fog of war'. I still ask myself "Why me? when I realize in a war, your future can be determined by a flip of a coin. GOD BLESS AMERICA!



THE PLOESTI EXHIBIT

The model B-24s are hanging low over the burning oil fields in the Ploesti exhibit in the Mighty Eighth Museum in Savannah, Georgia. Previously, the planes were on plastic poles high above the smoke and flames, an unrealistic depiction of the actual event. Roy Owen contacted the artist, who brought them down to tree-top level and suspended them with nylon threads from the roof of the exhibit. This brought accuracy to the unique piece of art that commemorates the awesome mission of the 44th on August 1, 1943.



FEARLESS FOSDICK'S CRASH A STORY THAT IS OVERDUE TO BE TOLD

By the late Bert Carlberg (67th Sq.)

In the April 1989 issue of the 44th Logbook, **Francis Peck** of Spokane, WA wrote that Fearless Fosdick was abandoned over or near the French town of San Quentin on 1 March 1945. There is a story to be told about this, because I am the sole survivor of the crew that bailed out of that aircraft on that date, but until I read the letter by Peck, I was not sure of the name of that aircraft.

The crew that flew *Fearless Fosdick* on 1 March 1945 was Lt. **Len Crandell**; co-pilot **Bill Croll**; myself Navigator/Bombardier; Flight Engineer, **Bob Ogilvie**; Radio Operator **Larry Feeny**; Nose Gunner Jim Roach; Waist Gunners **Walt Battenberg** & **Irv Germolus**; and Tail Gunner, **Jim Brown**. The mission was to bomb a target in the

vicinity of Munich – quite a long mission time-wise in those days. The flight was uneventful until we left the target area and headed home. After about an hour into the return trip the Flight Engineer and co-pilot reported that our fuel gauges (sight gauges) were showing that we had been using more fuel than anticipated. At the same time I reported that we were encountering much stronger headwinds than we had been briefed on that morning.

Another hour passed and we dropped behind the formation to conserve fuel, but by this time it was apparent that we did not have enough fuel to make it back to Shipdham, so Lt. Crandell asked me for a course heading to a friendly alternative in France.

...continued on page 15

Needed: A Place To Land

Paris was the best alternate, but we decided against it because, since liberation of that Capital, too many bomber crews had, on the slightest pretext, landed there in order to have a brief fling with the French beauties. This had resulted in a stern warning issued at briefings, that Paris was more or less off limits. I selected an airfield 90 miles north of Paris near a town named San Quentin, because it was located in an area, shown on our topographical map to be low countryside, free of any high hills where a crash landing would be more survivable.

We descended into a solid cloud cover that we soon found out extended right to within 100 to 200 feet of the ground. The only means of navigation I had during the descent was the G box (RADAR) and that only from one blip radiating from the master station giving me a course reading. We became quite concerned when we were still in the clouds at 500 feet on the altimeter; however, we broke out at about 300 feet, flying in and out of some low scud clouds. The course heading brought us over the portion of the airfield where there were parked B-26 aircraft, but the pilots could not line up for an approach to the runway due to the low clouds. Finally we lost sight of the airfield altogether, so I asked Lt. Leonard Crandell to take a reciprocal heading back toward the direction from which we had come. After a few minutes I picked up the course blip reading again on my G box, and we headed back to the airport a second time. Again we experienced the same problem – crossing over a portion of the airfield, but not being able to make a visual approach to the runway. By this time our fuel indicators were hovering just above the empty mark.

Suggestion of the Gunners

While all of this maneuvering is going on, the gunners were just sitting and listening to our conversation over the R/T, realizing that we are running out of fuel and not able to land. After we were not able to make our second approach, they pleaded with Lt.

Crandell to climb up to a safe altitude, so they could have the opportunity to bail out safely. At this point he also felt that we probably did not have enough fuel to continue to circle the field any longer, so he started an ascent north of this weather-bound alternate. We climbed to 11 or 12 thousand feet, where we finally broke out on top of all clouds. The aircraft was leveled off on a westerly heading and the evacuation began. The gunners and radio operator bailed out; then the flight engineer was crouching on the catwalk ready to jump, and I to follow. He looked up at me and shook his head. I took this to mean that he did not want to jump, so I just pushed him out. We were about 1000 feet over the cloud layer, and I watched him tumble down and disappear in the clouds without his chute opening. With this on my mind, I jumped and pulled my ripcord at the same time, barely clearing the aircraft. I floated down into the clouds, watching the aircraft flying serenely on as if on a routine flight. I

found out the next day that as soon as both pilots bailed out, the engines stopped and the aircraft crashed in an open field.

It was a thick cloud mass that we descended through. What fixed in my mind even after 44 years was the stillness and complete silence that I experienced as I floated to earth. When I was able to see the ground, I attempted to stop pedaling, but the base of the clouds and the ground itself were not far apart, so when I hit, I was apparently on the top of my swing coming down, and hit the ground with my entire body. I was knocked out for a short time, and on awakening, my parachute was lying limp because there was no ground wind blowing. It was early evening and still dark, but it must have been a rainy day, because my impact on the wet ground left an entire body imprint which was still there the next morning when I returned to look for a couple of lost items. With my flight clothing, I weighed about 230 pounds so the soft ground likely saved me from serious injury. Some days later the boys in the parachute

shop voiced some concern that I should have been issued a larger chute!

A Search for Help

This area of France had been taken from the Nazis some months earlier, and being an agricultural region, it was being prepared for the spring planting. In the waning light I spotted a farm house and out buildings about a half mile away, and I walked to them, carrying my silk parachute. I knocked on the door of the farm house, and it was opened by a farmer's wife, who registered some alarm upon seeing on her doorstep a large airman who she could not immediately identify as friend or foe. A couple of younger women – presumable daughters – crowded around her and spoke to me in French. Not speaking the language, I kept repeating "American", which finally registered. They indicated by sign language for me to come in and sit down in the kitchen while one of the daughters went to the nearby village by the name of Fresnoy-Tricourt, for assistance in communicating with me. While I waited they prepared for me a cup of coffee – at least it was hot and supposed to taste like coffee. The daughter soon returned from the village with a man who spoke English very well. We spoke briefly, and then he asked me to come with him to the village. Before we left the farmhouse, I told him that I appreciated the hospitality given to me by that particular family, and that I would like to leave the women my parachute as a token of appreciation. He told me not to do it, because that particular family had been quite friendly with the Germans during the occupation, so they were not very popular with the rest of the villagers.

Dinner with a Count

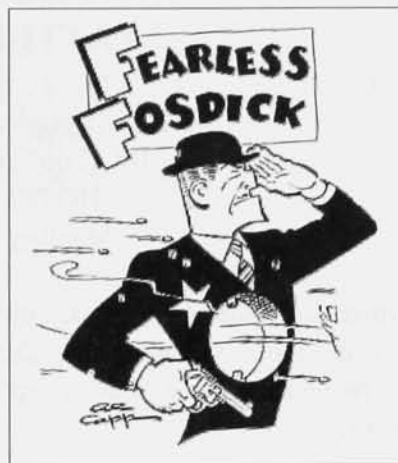
This French gentleman was truly a gentleman, and in addition, was a bonafide Count by the name of Comte de Tacher de la Pagerie with a most beautiful home dominating the countryside. In the center of the vil-

lage was a small café which we entered; and there I found the flight engineer Bob Ogilvie, who I had pushed off the bomb bay catwalk about an hour earlier, wolfing down a meal. He had been picked up earlier, but none of the other crew members showed up. We assumed they found their way to the airfield that we had tried to land at, but eventually had to abort our attempts. Inasmuch as it was now dark and getting late, our new friend invited us to stay in his home overnight. He did, however, call the airfield and tell the authorities that he had us under his wing, and that he would bring us there in the morning. The evening was a memorable one for Ogilvie and myself. Comte de la Pagerie brought out some of his food and drink that he was saving for the war's-end celebration. We spent a wonderful evening with this fantastic person, and finally went to bed in goose down pillow and comforter covered beds.

During our evening of relaxation, Comte de la Pagerie told about the condition that they lived under during the German occupation. He advised that his home - which we were enjoying at the moment – had been requisitioned by the Germans and used as Officers Quarters. We certainly agreed that they had good taste. In the morning we were taken to the airfield, rejoined with the rest of the crew, and a few days later, flew a spare B-24 back to Shipdham. This was quite an experience, and as I wrote in the beginning of this article, I am the sole survivor, because three weeks later, on March 24th, 1945, Lt. Crandell's crew flew on a low level supply dropping mission over the Rhine River in support of Field Marshall Montgomery's thrust across the Rhine. They received a fatal hit from ground fire that caused the aircraft to go out of control and crash, leaving no survivors. Two weeks prior I had been transferred to Captain **Ed Reynolds** crew as lead navigator, so my replacement on Len's crew suffered the fate that I escaped. After all this time, the details of my experiences on that March day remain in my mind, but time will

eventually wipe out that memory, so I bequeath this story to the records of the 67th Squadron, 44th Bomb Group.

(Carlberg sent this story to Leonard Crandell's brother Joe, who later gave it to Frank Schaeffer, who sent it to the 8 BTs. Fearless Fostick was named for an Al Capp cartoon character, which was a parody on Dick Tracy. Dick Tracy was a hard-hitting detective against crime. Fearless Fostick was a lovable bumbler.)

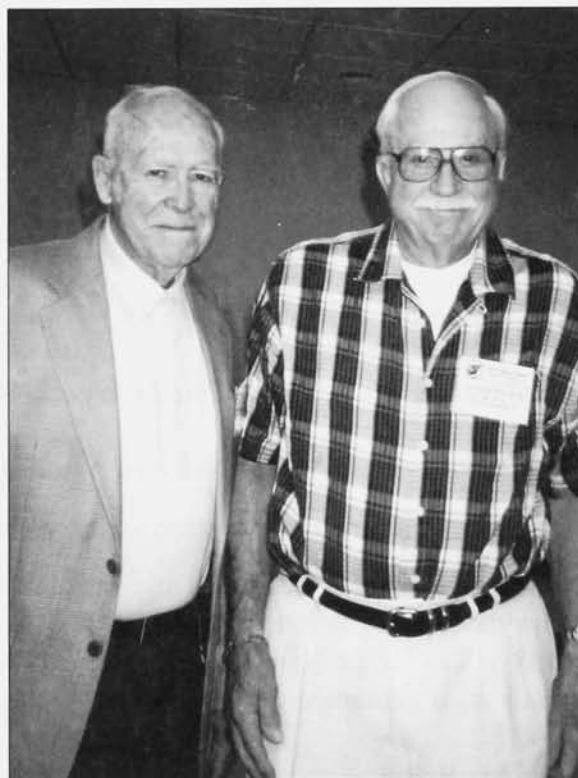


Cartoon of Fearless Fostick

**1st Lt. ORVILLE D. CURTIS
Receives his DFC
59 YEARS AFTER HIS
LAST MISSION**



Orville D. Curtis, former 506 Squadron Co-Pilot, was presented the DFC and two AM OLCs on September 2004 at his retirement home in Ithaca, NY. Lt. Col. Michael R. Mounts, USAFR, 914 Mission Support Commander, Niagara Falls, NY made the presentation. Lee Aston, 44th BG Board Member arranged for the acquisition of this award.



Unidentified men

From the Editor: Will these two members of the 506 Squadron please contact me? I want your story about photographic missions, but can't remember your names. Call me at 717 846-8948.



**DOUBLETREE HOTEL
SEATTLE-TACOMA AIRPORT**

18740 Pacific Highway South, Seattle, Washington 98188

Tel. (206) 246-8600 FAX (206) 431-8687

HOTEL REGISTRATION FORM

Meeting Dates September 4-7, 2005

***Reservations must be made by July 4, 2005.** Reservations for this event must be made by individual attendees directly with the Hotel's Reservation Department, on the telephone number listed above, FAX or by US Postal Service. The reservation will be accepted at the special group rate.

Please type or print:

Name _____

Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____ FAX Number _____

E-Mail Address _____

Additional person in room Yes _____ No _____

Additional rooms _____ One form per room, please.

Organization 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association

Check in Time – 3 pm Check Out Time - noon

For revisions or cancellations call number above

Rates \$88 + 12.4% tax (single or double) (These rates are applicable 3 days prior, 3 days after Reunion)

Individuals must guarantee first night.

Requests:

Non Smoking Room _____ Accessible Room _____ Rollaway _____ Crib _____

Credit Card -- Circle one

American Express, Diners Club, Visa, Mastercard, Discover

Credit Card Number _____ Name on Card _____

Expiration Date _____

Send check to above address. Reservations are guaranteed by first night's deposit or accepted credit number and signature. If arrival is after 6:00 PM, call to verify reservation. Departure dates are confirmed at check-in.

Departures prior to due date will result in a \$50 departure fee.

***We need early reservations, in order to guarantee buses & dinner reservations. Money will be refunded if an emergency causes you to cancel.**

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
REUNION 2005
DOUBLETREE HOTEL – SEATTLE-TACOMA AIRPORT
September 4-5-6-7, 2005
REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Please print or type. All information must be complete

Last Name _____ First Name (Tag) _____

Spouse _____ Squadron # _____ Life Member _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Guests & Relations _____

Number to attend _____ @ \$ 236.00/each Check # _____

Dinner Preference—Squadron Dinner-(Circle One)

Mesquite Smoke Breast of Chicken, Cilantro Glaze & Spicy Black Bean Sauce
Hazelnut Roasted Pacific Halibut, Lemon Basil Aioli

Banquet – (Circle One)

Spiced Rubbed Sirloin Steak, Flame Grilled with Rosemary Butter & Pan-Jus Lie
Hazelnut Roasted Pacific Halibut, Lemon Basil Aioli

Tours

#1 Bus Trip to Casino (Monday) \$15.00

#2 Mt. St. Helens (Tuesday) \$38.00

Description on page 31

#3 Seattle – (Tuesday) \$19.00

Bonsai Gardens, Gardens, Space Needle, Pike Place Mkt.

Description on page 31

#4 Bus to Downtown Tacoma – (Wednesday)

Reserved Luncheon

Description on page 31

We need reservations by July 4, to guarantee prices. If a health problem forces you to change your mind, your money will be returned. Mail Checks to: Richard Lynch, 109 Jason Road, Box 518, Conrad, IA 50621-0518.



Addicted to Action

By Archie Roland Barlow, Jr.

November 1995

About the time I was getting grown
there came this big distraction.
A war came along, I got pulled in
and I soon saw "-Combat Action."

As an Aerial Gunner and Engineer,
you can imagine my reaction.
When I was shot up, my plane shot down,
and I was "Wounded in Action."

As if that wasn't trouble enough,
for three long months and a fraction,
I hid from the enemy, then ran for my life.
My status was "Missing in Action."

Evading capture, I soon was sent home;
the war's end was great satisfaction.
But my hometown newspaper made a big mistake,
listing me as "Killed in Action."

I pointed this out to newspaper staff,
and expressed my views of the infraction.
They argued at first, then decided I could be right,
and printed a partial "retraction."

In my twilight years and a long time retired,
I've found a great new attraction.
It's just sitting, rocking, and nothing more,
but enjoying complete, wonderful "inaction."

*Archie Barlow was a member of the **Hartwell Howington** crew that was shot down January 21, 1944. He wrote his escape story, "Pursuit in the Pyrenees", a daring and frightening adventure in which he championed over all odds and reached freedom. Copies are available by writing L. B. Wright, 3911 Black Locust Drive, Houston, TX 77088-6904. The price is \$20.*

FROM THE ARCHIVES

1942

Re: Station Weather Office: The original cadre arrived 26 October, 1942. Liberators were arriving, which meant getting right to work with none of that all too familiar 'sweating out' the arrivals of flying personnel. The period of scrounging, cleaning, painting and building passed quickly, and a fair facsimile of a weather station emerged from what had been bare walls and debris when the group arrived.

The pioneer staff was augmented by the arrival of Sgt. **R. G. Johnson** in November and Lt. **A. M. Hutchinson** in December. The latter's career was destined to be brief but memorable. Exactly two months after his arrival, he volunteered for a mission. Though a rated navigator, he was not an air crew member; but on 16 February 1943, he volunteered to replace the regularly assigned navigator who was unable to participate, thus making it possible for that ship to take part in the mission. Soon after leaving the English coast, his ship was seen in a mid-air collision with another of the same formation. Both ships exploded and fell in flaming pieces. His complete disregard for personal safety on this occasion, in the face of hazardous duty, elicited a citation from Maj. **Gen. J. P. Hodges**, Commander of the Second Air Division.

Personnel turnover was exceptionally high in the early part of 1943. In June Capt. **Frank Hero** departed for temporary duty in North Africa, serving as a Staff Weather Officer in connection with the original Ploesti raid.

Lt. R. F. Long, who had come here in April 1943 went to Africa in September, to be attached to the weather advisory group for the Italian campaign. Concurrent with his departure, Lt. **C. L. Farris** arrived and subsequently became Station Weather Officer.

*(Ed. Note: The two plane crash on February 16, 1942 involved the **J. B. Long** crew, 67th Sq. and **Fred Billings** crew 66th Sq. Both crews are listed on the Wall of Missing at Normandy.)*



MAIL & E-MAIL

From Chris Clark, regarding the mission of Leon Vance, described in Fall, 2004 issue of 8 BTs. My uncle Frank was on that 5 June Mission, flying in the 489th. He flew three missions in the "Sharon D". Then he went to the 44th, where he received the DFC from **Leon Johnson**.

An interesting aside to that story: Chris's Uncle Frank had contact with two great heroes named Leon, both of whom received the Medal of Honor. Can anyone else make such a claim?

Here's a bit of trivia: Clark also learned that Leon Vance is the only B-24 airman to receive the Medal of Honor for actions flown from the UK. (Leon Johnson flew out of Africa.)

The deadline for information for the Database is May 1. Do you need an application? Call me at 717-846-8948. This is your last opportunity to have your history preserved on the disk that will be distributed to all members. Write your recollections, hilarious, tragic, scary or spiritual. Every man's job contributed to victory. Don't let those memories be lost.

From Susan Alexander, niece of **Thomas H. Cordes**, Nose Gunner on *Southern Comfort III*, that crashed in Wesel, Germany in Operation Varsity. Susan wrote a letter to 60 Minutes and to Tom Brokaw, wishing to publicize the story of her Uncle Tom. She reported the surprising turns in her life that uncovered the story of his death... a microfiche film, contact with **Bob Vance** and **Louis DeBlasio**, (sole survivors of the crash) and **Dick Lynch's** report from the adjacent plane that watched the *Southern Comfort* go down. Later, an interested Belgium airman, Peter Loncke, researched the crash and set up a meeting between the survivors, Peter Emmerich, the German youth who shot down the plane, and a group of representatives of the city of Wesel.

Recently, to her surprise, she was contacted by a Hollander, Stevin Oudshoorn, who visited her brother's graveside, and reported that the local papers were interested in the personal life of the soldiers buried in Margraten Cemetery.

Although the American Battlefield Monument Commission meticulously maintains the cemetery, the people of the city adopt gravestones and visit them from time to time.

Ed. Note: Susan's letter set off an interesting chain of events. We hope Mike Wallace at 60 Minutes returns her letter.



Sterling Dobbs has created a beautiful biography of his wife, the late Ruth Erma Garrett Dobbs. Previous to the valuable service that Ruth donated to the 44th BG, formatting the incoming histories of 44thers for the Database, Ruth had a colorful career of her own. She had attended West Texas State Teacher College, and said that some of her classmates flew on the Doolittle Raid on Japan in 1942. Her Bachelor of Arts in History became extremely valuable to her, when her first husband, a B-17 pilot, was killed. She was caring for her son when she met **Sterling Dobbs**. Their marriage lasted 57 years; they had one child.

Sterling's tribute of Ruth includes many stunningly beautiful pictures which she had painted. He did the book for their two children, but generously permits copies of the pictures to be made for her friends.

Ruth became an expert in every venture she entered—motherhood, art, bridge, computers. The 44th was lucky to have benefited from one of her many skills.



...continued on page 23

From **Bob Lehnhausen**, in response to my question: *"How did it happen that some of the Bombardiers were NCO's"*

"Yes, we did have some enlisted bombardiers. In fact, the original air echelon of the 68th had three men who were bombardiers but not officers. In fact the **Garret** crew with whom I flew as a co-pilot had **Oran Taylor** as our Bombardier. He was lost in the ditching (July 2, 1943). It was his family with whom Liz and I, Roy Owen and Jackie lunched while we were in Fredericksburg during the San Antonio reunion. Oran was a T/Sgt. Once the 8th AF adopted the policy of bombing by formations, as opposed to each individual a/c aiming and releasing its bombs, the need for bombardiers was lessened. Don't misunderstand, we still had the need for skilled bombardiers, but not every one needed to be expert. This change came about somewhere in the middle of Fall 1943. It was one of the tactics, successes, credited to Gen. **LeMay**.

"Once the B-24 was equipped with the nose turret, many of the bombardiers ended up being nose gunners. The task of the bombardier in other than the lead and deputy lead aircraft was changed to Toggler. He was to release his bomb load when he saw the bombs from the lead aircraft of his formation begin their descent. Even that was not easy..."

From **Edward L. Mirkin**: I was one of many to be picked up on a rainy muddy road at night, trudging back to my barracks after a tiring mission, to find the Good Samaritan driver was none other than General **Leon Johnson**, an event never forgotten.

The Yankee Air Force , Willow Run Airport in Belleville, Michigan, a group that has been

working dutifully at preserving WWII planes and memories. recently suffered a catastrophic blow. Their Willow Run Hangar burned down, possibly the result of a criminal act. Fortunately, their Museum is intact; but the need arises for replacement of that valuable Hangar which served so many purposes in its history. Anyone wishing to contribute to this special group of hard working historians, call (734) 483-4030. Jon Stevens is President.

Aviation thoughts from Roy Owen: The job of the Wing Commander is to worry incessantly that his career depends solely on the abilities of his aviators to fly their airplanes without mishap, and that their only miniscule contribution to the effort is to bet their lives on it!!

From Peter Loncke: In September 2004 the Crandell family, Joe, Barbara, Connie and Peter set out to visit Hamminkeln again, returning to the crash site of Kay Bar. **Leonard Crandell**, Joe's brother was pilot on the deadly Wesel Mission; there were no survivors to that crash.

When they arrived at the crash site, they discovered that someone had been digging at the site. Whoever did it left a pile of Plexiglas and a series of little digging holes. The Plexiglas was from the front windshield of the A/C. The family began digging for more, and found a 50 caliber bullet. They found a fragment of a glove, a .45 bullet head of one of the crew's Colt 45, an adjustment screw from an instrument, possibly the clock. Their finds attracted a great deal of interest in Germany, where they, too, have young people checking out crash sites.

Two weeks later, Peter and Connie went back with a metal detector. They found more bits

and pieces, all of which are treasured in Joe's home. He had the misfortune of losing a second brother on March 16, 1945 in Germany as a tank commander with the 778th Tank Battalion.

Peter is currently engaged in writing a book about the Wesel Mission and the three planes that crashed, killing eighteen members of the 44th, the crews of Leonard Crandell, Max E. Chandler in Southern Comfort III and John Delaney, the P47 pilot that strafed the anti-aircraft guns and ended up getting shot down also.



Did you know that the 8th Air Force is listed as the greatest armada of any country in any war? More than 350,000 Americans served in the 8th AF in three years. At its peak, the 8th could put up more than 2,000 four engine bombers and more than 1,000 fighters on a mission. They sustained 47,000 casualties; 26,000 deaths.



FOR SALE

Mary Aston is selling lapel pins of WWII Medals: 8th Air Force, DFC, Air Medal, Purple Heart, POW, European-African Mediterranean Theater and WWII Victory Medal. The price of each is \$9 + 37 cents postage. Also, a leaded glass depiction of the Flying 8 Ball. Proceeds go to the 44th BGVA. Contact Mary at 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635. Specify pin name and number of each type.

44TH BOMB GROUP PX

Flying 8 Ball Golf Shirts	\$25.00 + 3.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Caps (Indicate Squadron)	15.00 + 2.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Felt Patches (about 6 inches diameter)	15.00 + 1.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Squadron Pins (Indicate Squadron) .....	.5.00 + .50 Postage
Blue Liberator Shirts (Light Blue with B-24 designs) .....	.30.00 + 3.00 Postage
44th Bumper Stickers .....	.2.00 (Postage Incl.)

Order From:

Sam Miceli

(Make check payable to Sam Miceli)

6398 Dawson Blvd., Mentor, Ohio 44060-3648

From: **Jack Butler:** Setting Sail January 10, 1945 Liverpool, England, Well, this beat up looking ship does not remotely resemble the Queen Mary, but it does have my name on the passenger list headed for the good old USA. This ship was not designed to be a cruise ship. It was slapped together during the war for one purpose only, and that purpose was to get as much cargo on board as possible without sinking the ship. They let the German U-Boats take care of that.

The seating arrangement was very democratic. The officers were all up on the 3rd deck. Each stateroom? had 4 bunks, and we could pick which one we wanted. There was no rush. The ship was waiting until they had enough passengers to be fully loaded. For example, I was the only one from the 44th on that load. The rest of the guys were drifting in from other parts of England.

Back to the democracy. The enlisted men were all loaded on below deck, and were told they could pick any spot that suited them. It was strongly suggested that we find a bunk as close to the center and middle as possible. No explanation was offered. The area below deck was called the hold. This loading process took several days. This wasn't bad. We had free room and board, and could stay in town until the pubs closed. But soon we had seen all of Liverpool and its pubs that we wanted and were getting eager to head for home.

Finally we were told not to leave the ship and get ready to sail. And as usual, there was some sort of a delay. The second day of the delay, without explanation, we were told to take all of our belongings and move down into the hold and find another bunk. Now all the bunks that were left were no longer center and middle. They were all front or rear and near the edge of the wide open hold, instead of our previous four men to each cabin. Even though all the bunks were securely bolted down, when the North Atlantic Ocean started to storm, we found

out why front and center bunks were advisable. During really bad weather, our Liberty Ship would roll as much as 45 degrees, and on occasions when we were headed directly into the waves, our ship would almost disappear from sight. But as long as our Liberty Ship kept heading for the Port of New York, we didn't mind.

After we moved from our comparatively plush cabins on the upper deck, and got ourselves re-settled down in the hold, some of us were curious to see who the VIP's were who had taken over our cabins. So we went back up to the third deck to see who these VIP's were.

What a shock that was! These VIP's were all badly wounded stretcher cases, just being evacuated from THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE. Those who were able waved at us. We waved back at them, but we almost cried at what we saw. And we were going home, most of us without a scratch. I suppose one of the benefits of being in the Air Force is that we very seldom actually saw our casualties close up, like we saw those badly wounded men being loaded on our Liberty Ship.

Needless to say, there was no more complaining on our luxury cruise liner, the SS Liberty Ship.



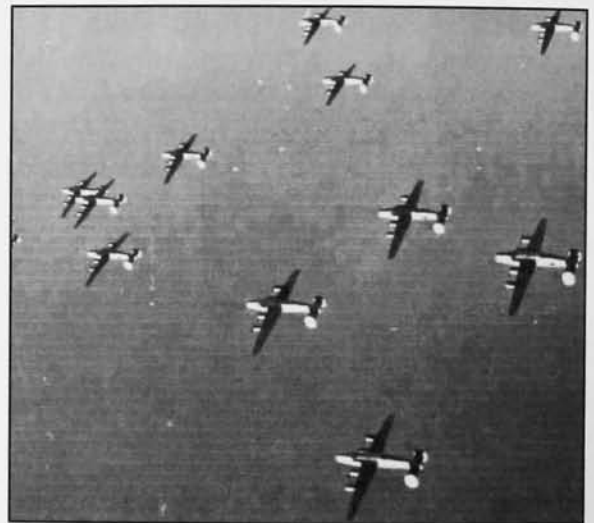
From Sherry J. Kisellyak to **Dick Lynch:** "I want to thank you folks from the bottom of my heart for providing David Hornsby with my E-mail address. His father, **Jimmy Hornsby**, was a member of my father's crew. Your organization was having trouble finding my father's fellow crew members. I received a call from Mr. Hornsby on Christmas Eve, and no present on earth could have compared with that phone conversation. Please relay my thanks to Mr. Will Lundy as well. You folks are awesome!!

Ed. Note: This letter shows the value of involving the younger generation in 44th Bomb Group activities.

INNOCENCE AND DEATH IN ENEMY SKIES

Forrest S. Clark, author of this book, lived through the harrowing experiences of being a Radio Operator/Gunner on the famous **Rockford C. Griffith** crew. Clark remembers bailing out over the Shipdham field, as Griffith brought his damaged plane down on one wheel, a miraculous accomplishment, that saved the life of one of his wounded crewmen. Clark's life was preserved when his friend, Abe Sofferman, accepted Clark's position with the ill-fated **Harold Pinder** crew. Sofferman survived the crash, but was killed by the German Secret Police.

After Fate spared him that disaster, they were returning from a mission to Lechfeld, Germany when the fuel readings indicated that Shipdham was not in the cards that night. They flew to Switzerland and were imprisoned by their hosts. Clark was among the lucky ones who managed to escape. Since the war, Clark has been a prolific writer. The details of his adventures and misadventures are on record in his newest creation. The price is \$10. Write Forrest S. Clark, 703 Duffer Lane, Kissimee, FL 34759.



CAN ANYONE IDENTIFY THESE PHOTOS?

From Robby England, Ennis Texas:

I believe these photos were officers in the 44th Bomb Group. The recon photos in the background look like the Ploesti refineries.

A veteran of the 44th named Phillips gave me these photos years ago, but I did not write names down, and have forgotten who he said they were, except that one was his CO. Time caught up with Mr. Phillips, so I can't ask him. The other, B24s in formation enroute to a raid. Can anyone tell me anything about this picture? Reply to Guy Adams, Webmaster of 44th BGVA's Web Page: gadams@chpc.utah.edu

A REQUEST FOR HELP

From Major Georgia Combs, #28 Henry Court, Elizabethton, TN 07856-1201. The niece of 1/Lt. Clay Myers, 466 BG, KIA on 1 September, 1944, is trying to locate anyone with knowledge of PFF operations, crew training, standard operating procedures, Gee Box, and H2X. Credit will be given to anyone who can provide information. Home phone 973-770-0744 , e-mail urgy391@earthlink.net

It has been said that a fool and his money may soon part, but they were lucky to get together in the first place.



REMEMBER THE VARGA GIRLS?



Steve Adams bought some WWII negative on e-bay, and this picture of early Shipdham was in the group. Can anybody identify any of the men who are portrayed here?



During the past few years it has been necessary for me to frequently work with Arlo Bartsch's Master Database, to obtain data necessary for my work with the Roll of Honor corrections and additions. Too, occasionally, I also refer to his great program with which to respond to requests about one or more of our combat men and their records. Quite often I select and print out many of those records as they are readily available and in great detail. While I am doing these researches, I recall listening to Arlo and his comments of what he can do with their data. At that time he was quoting a most reasonable cost to actually prepare an individual package for any airman.

In recent times, I have endeavored to compile such a package for relatives of our deceased airmen who dearly want some records of their 44th's combat missions, etc. Then, I've wondered why we have not made some kind of policy or provisions to our men to have such a program set up for them, or to offer to do the same for any of our airmen, directly for him.

To me, at least, it seems a waste of excellent records and of our organization's time and money not to do more with this great data. Yes, your Board has promised to furnish each of our members with a copy of the CD containing all of this material. But unless a household has a youth available, more than likely the CD will not be utilized as it could and should be.

At present the Board is withholding the distribution of your CDs until I can complete the revision and updating of my old Roll of

Honor book and the same data then entered in the Master Database. Once that is accomplished – and that time is drawing quite near – your CD will be available for you after that job is completed. Then you can review all of the records that you may wish. However, you will need a printer, in order to put your records into a booklet for easy access to your story.

Of course, to have your records set up in a booklet or pamphlet, it will entail some expenses to locate, print, package and mail. You may need a volunteer to find and extract your data or contract it. It should not be that expensive, either.

Arlo included in his Database several well designed and colorful forms on which to record your stories and your history. So, to me at least, it will be such a waste to have everything designed and ready as it is, and then to not make use of it all.

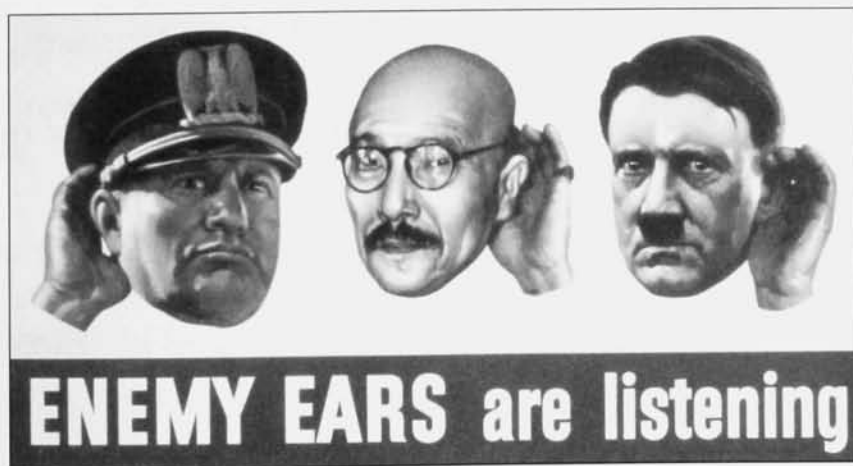
I am now volunteering to help any of you who are interested in having such a personal record prepared for you. Please e-mail or write to me with your intentions, and I will compile a list of the members who are interested. Then I will take it to the Board, if numbers are sufficient, to warrant the production of such records. If the Board approves that, we will move ahead for production of these records. Then you will be advised. Of course, no firm commitment can be made at this time, but you will be advised, whether this is feasible. Too, perhaps if Ruth has the space available in a future issue of Eight Ball Tails, a sample can be included in it.

The completed data for the Roll of Honor project has been reached, and now being proofed and shuffled into the proper slots. When finished, the additions will be placed on a CD for Arlo to move into his Master Database. Then we will make a serious consideration to provide a minimum of books. It surely will have over 400 pages, and these

are actual personal stories of survival and escapes from their aircraft, so they are excellent. They need to be printed so the public can read and learn what they did in order to survive, and to preserve the freedoms we now all enjoy.

Will Lundy

FRESH MEMORIES OF A DISTANT WAR



SEATTLE-TACOMA REUNION PROGRAM

Sunday, September 4

11:00 am - 5:00 pm	Registration Desk Open
12:00	Hospitality Room Opens. Schedule will be posted
3:00 - 7:00	Board Meeting
5:30 pm - 8:00 pm	Welcome Reception Cash Bar

Monday, September 5

8:30 am - 11:00 am	Registration
8:30 - 11:00	Board Meeting
11:30 am	Boeing Museum of Flight bus tour begins
	Lunch at Museum
	Museum Tour
4:30 pm	Bus returns to Doubletree
7:00 pm	Optional bus trip to Casino. Dinner on your own (Or Video presentation planned in Doubletree)

Tuesday, September 6

8:00 am	#1 Trip: Mt. St. Helens—3 stops
	#2 Trip: To Seattle
6:30 pm	Squadron Dinners Cash Bar

Wednesday, September 7

8:30 am	General Meeting—Roy Owen presiding
9:30	Database Presentation—Arlo Bartsch
11:30 am	Bus trip to downtown Tacoma
	Lunch at Downtown Restaurant
	Sites within a block of each other:
	Dale Chihuly Museum of Glass
	Washington State History Museum
	Tacoma Art Museum
4:30 pm	Bus pick-up at Sheraton Hotel for return to Doubletree
6:30	Cash Bar
7:00 pm	Candle Light Service, Banquet

Thursday, September 8

Departures

SEATTLE-TACOMA REUNION PROGRAM

Trip #1 This bus tour will take you to the Muckleshoot Casina, fifteen miles from the Doubletree. A variety of foods will be available in their restaurant, and an opportunity is available to give Lady Luck your best shot. Bus cost - \$15.

Alternative plan: A historic video in the Doubletree. Dinner on your own in hotel or at one of the nearby restaurants.

Trip #2 Tour to Mt. St. Helens is a three-stop expedition. On Stop 1, you will see a movie of the volcanic eruption in 1980. It blew 1,300 feet from the top of the mountain, causing many mud flows, knocking down about 100,000 acres of virgin timber. Twenty four to thirty inch thick trees were knocked down, broken off like twigs. A large pristine lake was completely wiped out and filled with debris, as pressure waves moved between ridges.

On Stop 2 you will see the actual ash and equipment that was destroyed, along with logs covered with ash. You can pick up samples of ash and rocks. A box lunch will be provided.

Stop 3 provides a splendid view of the mountain with a dome building in the crater, along with a lighted display of mud flow models. The price for this tour is \$38.00

Trip #3 is a three stop adventure: Stop 1 is the Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection. This is an outdoor museum of living art, featuring approximately 60 outstanding bonsai from Canada, China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and the United States. You can enjoy a guided tour or wander among these unusual pieces of floral artistry, reading the signs at your leisure. There is no charge for this museum.

Stop 2 is the Seattle Space Needle. This famed structure provides an awesome view of the city of Seattle. The cost of the trip to the top is \$13, but if you spend \$20 for lunch, the ride is free.

Stop 3 is at Pike Place Market. This is a unique Farmers Market which features all types of sea food that are found in the northwest waters. The fishmongers have developed amazing skill at throwing salmon over the heads of the crowd, and landing them at the proper destination.

Trip #4 is to downtown Tacoma, where you can visit the Dale Chihuly Museum of Glass. This man is the most famous glass artist in the world, as proven by his world-wide museum exhibits. In the hot shop, you can see his artistry in full production. There will be a catered lunch. Options: shopping, other museums listed elsewhere.

DOUBLETREE AMENITIES

Guest rooms are spacious, have direct-dial telephones, voice mail, coffee and coffee makers, irons, private balconies, heated swimming pool & spa, free; fitness facility, free; gift shop; beauty salon; 2 restaurants, 2 lounges; snack bar open at 5:00 A.M.; Wireless Web Access; high speed internet in rooms. Seven area Restaurants within walking distance.

THE BOEING MUSEUM OF FLIGHT

This museum is a must-see for any WWII airman. It features many planes on display from WWI and WWII. You can visit the Red Barn, which was the original home of the Boeing Company. The Lunar Roving Machine, Bowers Fly Baby, Baby Albatross, F-86 Saber Jet, Caproni (World's first fighter jet) Cessna Glider, P-40 and many more flying vehicles are housed in this museum. Displayed outside are Air Force 1, the Concorde and many more. Luncheon will be in the Skyline Room.

DOORWAY TO ALASKA

If you haven't visited our 50th state, this might be your best opportunity. The Norwegian Spirit leaves Seattle on August 13, for a weeklong trip, visiting Juneau, Ketchikan, Victoria, Glacier Bay, Sitka, Anchorage, Hubbard Glacier, Sawyer Glacier, Skagway & Prince Rupert. Balcony cabin from \$999; inside cabin \$499. (Rates subject to available space)
Or: Call Mindy, 1-800-571-4202. She works with all cruise lines.

DOWNTOWN TACOMA

After leaving the Glass Museum, cross the bridge, and you are close to the Washington State History Museum, the old Union Station, now a Federal Court Unit. Less than a block away is the Tacoma Art Museum. Walk four blocks uphill to the Sheraton Hotel where you will catch the bus back to the Doubletree at 4:30.

If you do not wish to walk, catch the Sounder Transit on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the museums for three or four blocks up the hill. You will be one block from the Sheraton at 1320 Broadway Plaza. Walk to the hotel.

NOT READY TO LEAVE ON THURSDAY?

Perhaps you will consider renting a car and driving around the Peninsula of Washington and along the Pacific Ocean to Port Angeles. From there you can take a ferry to Victoria, British Columbia. Hotels are within walking distance from the ferry. Buchart Gardens is absolutely splendid, as is the City of Victoria. Return the next day to Port Angeles and continue around the Peninsula or return to the airport. You won't regret the trip.



FOLDED WINGS

*“When you go home, tell them of us, and say,
for their tomorrow we gave our today.”*

Rudyard Kipling

BILLINGS, DONALD #19411 67th Sq. Date unknown T/Sgt. Billings was Radio Operator/Gunner on the **Veryl Duwe** Crew. He flew 32 missions, the first May 24, 1944. The crew flew in many unnamed planes, but also in *Black Sheep, Old Iron Corset, Fifinella* and *Mi Akin Ass*. On D-Day the Duwe crew flew to Caen with Capt. **Martin George** as Command Pilot, preparing the way for the invading troops. His last mission was July 29, 1944.

COX, MARVIN W. #19855 68 Sq. September 11, 2004 T/Sgt. Cox was Regular Army. He joined the 44th in October 1942; his first mission was November 11, 1942. He was the Aerial engineer on the crew of **James O'Brien**, one of the 68th's original crews; on one occasion he served as Right Waist Gunner. On one mission he flew with *James Hodges*. The O'Brien crew flew in *Rugged Buggy* to the ETO and into combat, and his last mission in *Miss Virginia*. He flew eight missions, the last on May 29, 1943. Cox suffered a ruptured eardrum or eardrums in the Spring of 1943, and was therefore grounded. Having been trained as an aviation mechanic, he joined the engineering section of the 68th, and served until the German surrender. He returned home on the Queen Mary with the ground echelon. Cox remained active in 68th and 44th activities. He and his wife, Grace, hosted a 68th reunion in Biloxi in the 80's.

DENNY, MICHAEL J. #19986 67th SQ, November 28, 2004 T/Sgt/Engineer Denny entered the armed services in February 1942. He flew 22 missions with Capt. **Chester L. “George” Philips** crew with Lt. **William**

Cameron as co-pilot on *Little Beaver*. He flew one mission on *Miss Dianne*. On his 22nd mission, the famous Kiel mission to the Krupp Submarine Works on May 14, 1943 he and his crew were shot down. He was one of four survivors from the crew. He served the remainder of the war as a POW in Germany. Denny is survived by several family members. His son, Michael Jr. remembers his father's teachings, patriotism, and a love of fishing and hunting. He was residing in Shortsville, NY at the time of his death. (*Notice of Denny's death comes from his longtime friend, Donald Hawkes, who served in the 44th BG at Shipdham in the 18th Weather Squadron on the first floor of the Control Tower*).

DYER, EUGENE N. #24031 68th Sq. Passed away many years ago. 2nd Lt. Dyer entered the service from New York. He flew 7 missions from Feb. 21, 1944 to March 18 1944. He was flying 42-109800 when he fell out of formation after his ship became damaged and headed for Switzerland. He landed at Dubendorf along with two other ships from the 44th BG. The entire crew was interned for the War. On that day the 44th lost 8 planes; two went down over Germany and six made it to Switzerland. In his 7 missions, *Dyer flew The Exterminator, Northern Lass* and *Paper Doll/Lady Dot*.

GIBSON, John H. #20365 Commander of 44th Bomb Group January 19, 2005 Col. Gibson followed Col. **Frederick Dent**, as Group Commander in May, 1944. Previous to that assignment, he had flown 25 missions with on B-17s, with the 95th BG based in Horham. In his five missions with the 44th,

...continued on page34



FOLDED WINGS

he flew in *I'll Be Back/Feather Merchant* with the **Robert McCormick** crew; *Any Gum Chum* with the **Ben Gillard** crew, *Lone Ranger* with the **Charles Kuch** crew, and unnamed planes with the **Elmer Hammer** and **Charles Armstrong** crews.

As with **Leon Johnson**, Gibson flew in support the invasion troops on D-Day. His leadership skills and bravery in the face of Luftwaffe aggression earned him respect in both B-17 and B-24 groups which he lead.

GOSHORN, HOWARD #25077 567 Sq. 1976 S/ Sgt. Goshorn flew 30 missions with the **Ernest Holmer** crew; on one occasion he flew with Capt. **Richard Wynes** as Command Pilot. His first mission was August 13, 1944. On several missions they flew as Lead or Deputy Lead. He was a Waist Gunner, but on his last mission he flew with **R. W. Bethel** as a Ball Turret Gunner. Goshorn's crew flew in many unnamed planes, but also in *Mi Akin Ass*, *Jose Carioca*, *Judy's Buggy* and *Lady Fifi Nella*. His last mission was February 14, 1945.

GRAEF, DALE W. #20428 506th Sq. August 20, 2004. T/Sgt. Graef flew most of his missions on the **Borkowski** crew; but also with **John Money**, **John McCaslin**, Col. **Chester Gibson**, Capt. **Edward Ayers** and Capt. **Edward Hughes**. He was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner, but also served as a Tail Gunner on some missions. He flew in *Greenwich*, *Gallavlantin Gal*, *I'll Be Back*, *Southern Comfort (Replacement)*, *Ole Cock and Shack Rat*, a total of 29 missions. He flew Kjeller, Kiel and Friedrickshafen missions, which were some of the 44th's most dangerous. After the war, Graef was employed by the Ford Motor Company at the Canton Forge Plant. He is survived by his wife, Mary, of 58 years; two daughters, Karen and Sandra; four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

HAMEL, Edgar O. #20522 506 Sq. January 4, 2004 T/Sgt. Hamel was an original member of the 506 Squadron. He flew the majority of his missions as a Gunner and Engineer with the **William Strong** crew. On some occasions he flew with **John Swanson**, **Lyle Davenport** and **James McAtee**, and also with Major **James Bean** and Col. **Frederick Dent** who were Command Pilots. His 29 missions took him to Germany, Austria, Italy, Holland, Belgium, France and Sicily. Hamel was a Gunner and Engineer, and was a Kiel and Low Level Ploesti Raid Veteran. He received the DFC for the Ploesti Raid. He also flew Foggia and Wiener-Neustadt when the 44th suffered terrible losses.

Most of his missions he flew in *Baldy And His Brood*, but also in *Trouble*, *Southern Comfort (Replacement)*, and *Prince/Princ-Ass/Princess*. His first mission was March 28, 1943; his last, November 13, 1943. This was the toughest time of the War for airmen to survive. Previous to his death, Hamel resided in Haverville, MA.

In the words of Bob Lehnhausen, "Hamel will be remembered by those who were regular attendees of the reunions as the one who was constantly at Bill Strong's side at the last few reunions that Bill attended. As his health failed, Ed made sure that 'his pilot' was safe and secure. Their friendship was an excellent example of the respect for each other that wartime duty developed among military people.

"Lynn Harding, Hamel's daughter wrote that her father had a military funeral. She was able to honor all his wishes attendant to the services, including having a 'real person blowing that horn.' I would like to believe that Gabriel really blew his horn as he welcomed this patriot and others to their eternal reward.

FOLDED WINGS

HUGHES, JAMES I. #20749 67TH Sq. Date of passing unknown. Grandson reported his death. His recollection of his grandfather was of his love of planes, and his willingness to share his war experiences. No information of his assignment with the 44th is on file.

Kirschner, Wallace E. #20941 506 Sq. March 20, 2003. Sgt. Kirschner was the last surviving member of the **John D. Money** crew. Kirschner, Waist Gunner, was one of three crewmen who survived the crash of *Southern Comfort (Replacement)* on the mission to Bernberg, April 11, 1944. When they reached the target, the Junkers Aircraft Assembly Plant, the Bomb Bay doors did not open. The plane took a direct hit into the Bomb Bay, so Kirschner and the other Waist Gunner were badly burned, but did manage to parachute out, and were immediately picked up by the Germans. Kirschner's first mission was to Kiel, January 5, 1944. In addition to flying with Money, in his 23 missions he also flew with **David Sayler, Norman Purdy, Robert Lucas** and **Waino W. Hannuksela**. Among the planes he flew in were *Peep Sight, Prince/Princess, Shoo Shoo Baby* and *Ole Cock*. His usual position was Right Wing Gunner, but on one occasion he was Engineer and Top Turret Gunner.

RUMBOLD, CHESTER passed away in 1978 S/Sgt. Rumbold was assigned to the 44th as a Bombsight Maintenance Technician. He was later transferred to the 389th BG in the same position.

SHIRLEY, RAYMOND #22026 67th Sq. October 12, 2004 T/Sgt. Shirley was Engr/Top Turret Gunner on the **Howard A. Clarey, Jr.** crew. Their first mission was April 20, 1944. On their fourth mission, April 27, 1944 on a mission to Moyenneville, France, the plane was hit with Flak. It crashed, with only

Shirley and one other crew member surviving. They spent the remainder of the war in German custody at different camps until liberated by the Russians in May 1945.

SINCLAIR, CHESTER L. #22047 67th Sq. Date unknown. S/Sgt. Sinclair flew 35 missions from August 18, 1944 with the **Oliver Hurst** crew. On most missions he was a Waist Gunner, but on one occasion was a Tail Gunner, once as a Nose Gunner/Toggler. He flew most of his missions in *Old Iron Corset*, but others in *Fifinella, Judy's Buggy, Phyllis, Lady Fifi Nella* and *Mi Akin Ass*. He flew to Hamburg, Kassel, Koblenz and participated in the Low Level Supply Mission to Best, Holland. His last mission was January 7, 1945. News of his death was from his son John Sinclair.

Weaver, William N. #22491 506 Sq. October 14, 2004 Sgt. Weaver flew 14 missions, thirteen into Germany, one into Austria., all with the **Erland J. Jacobson** crew. In his first five missions he served as Bombardier, later as Nose Gunner/Toggler. His first mission was on February 25, 1945. his last April 25, 1945. Weaver flew in *The Hit Parade, Jose Carioca, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Down De Hatch* and *Gypsy Queen*. Weaver and his wife Sharon lived in Grand Haven, Michigan. They had been married 43 years. He leaves his daughter, Cathy Bush, his son David and four grandchildren and three great grandchildren.





It is reported that Paul Kay has a team pouring ice cubes into the crater of Mt. St. Helen's, keeping it cool for the arrival of the 44th BGVA.

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

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44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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Journal of the
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Spring 2005

EIN #68-0351397



These rare images of A/C # 44-10553C and 42-110057Q came to the 8 Ball Tails editor through a circuitous route. This colored photograph was snapped by the late Capt. Bob Seever, who gave the glass-encased negatives to Will Lundy. The post office rattled the pictures around for seven months before delivering them. According to Steve Adams, the lower plane (68th Sq.) crashed in Merville, France 28 December 1944, after a mission to slow German troops moving toward Bastogne. The upper A/C crashlanded at Shipdham 8 September 1944, salvaged the following day.

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We have new information about our Website.
Read about under MAIL & E-MAIL.

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MISSION MEMORIES WITH A POST-WAR FINALE

GERALD GROSS

NAVIGATOR/BOMBARDIER

POST-WAR BOOK AND UNIVERSITY VP

In thinking about the missions of WWII, we tend to forget the long days of intense and skillful training which anticipated the risks to come. From the first moments of marching-drill on the boardwalk of Atlantic City, to classrooms at the University of Vermont, to Florida landing strips for pre-flight, to exhausting physical training in Nashville, lengthy navigation sessions in Quonset huts in Texas, to our first crew assembly in Mountain Home, Idaho, I had been honed to be part of a combat-ready team.

I and my crew members were an easy, efficient fit as we joined our pilot, **Tom McKenna** for final training and flights in B-24 rejects. We were a typical mix, drawn from Minnesota farmland, Pennsylvania coal mines, the plains of Texas and union halls of Brooklyn. Tom and I had broken away from our college years; he from Michigan and I from New York City.



Cadets leaving Burlington and the University of Vermont, off to their next base of training. Gross is second from left of first group of four at the turn.

In that final stage of training we flew seasoned crates that had known the heavy engagements we would soon encounter. Young brides, waiting for our return to base, would often enough look up to the skies to see our smoking B-24's coming in to land. Years later, I published the writer, Randall Jarrell, who had been with the Second Air Force, stationed in Tucson, and had trained briefly at Mountain Home. Poet, critic and teacher, he wrote what eventually became the most anthologized poem of WWII. *The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner* ends with "black flak" and "When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose."

Our crew had no such thoughts as we left Mountain Home for our last base in the States – Lincoln, Nebraska. There, for Division and Theatre assignments, one of our first briefing officers was Captain Eric Rhodes. He sure surprised his audience in coming on stage. Many of us had known him only as the foppish, feather-brained comic character, Beddini or Tonetti, of our favorite Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers movies. An Oklahoman and not a Franco-Italian via Hollywood, his presence on stage emphasized how many of us were in the war effort.

To the U.K.

I went to bed every night with a prayer that our crew would be sent to the U.K. and not the Pacific. It worked. Tightly packed into a small French liner, the *Louis Pasteur*, we dodged subs and swiftly arrived at Liverpool. Introduced to Britain by a first meal heavy on brussels sprouts, we were issued all of our basic gear for the months ahead. It was a strange sensation to feel a small arms revolver under my armpit and a bayonet knife strapped to my leg as we

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The McKenna Crew

Front L-R: Gerald Gross, Navigator/Bombardier; Russell Dowell, Co-pilot; Tom McKenna, Pilot. Rear L-R: Louis Spektor, Tail Gunner; Mike Allen, Radio Operator/Gunner; Jacques Jacobson, Left Waist Gunner; James Johnson, Armament Gunner; William Hornberger, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; Glen Allen, Right Waist Gunner.

entrained to East Anglia and our airbase at Shipdham.

It was Fall of 1944. In September of 1942, on approaching the age of 21, I had enlisted in the Army Air Corps Reserve. Not called up until February or March of 43, it had taken me more than a year a half to reach Shipdham and the full engagement of war, as a navigator/bombardier in the 506th Squadron of the 44th Bomb Group.

At Mountain Home we had been surrounded by rolling countryside with sheep tended by Basque shepherds who had been brought to Idaho years ago. Now we were walking along English hedgerow. Planes from our group were just returning from a mission as we ambled through the fields to our base. One plane had been seriously hit. Hobbling into the landing strip, it didn't quite make it. The ship exploded before our

eyes as it attempted to land. It was an unforgettable beginning for a green crew arriving at Shipdham that day.

Our Missions

Our crew did 23 missions 'til the end of the war. Our pilot, Tom McKenna, had made it clear from the very outset that we would perform as a disciplined group, and we did. No joking around in flight. No idle chit-chat on the intercom. On only one occasion I was called up to serve as navigator/bombardier for another crew. That group seemed awfully strange to me. Joking on the intercom and lots of casual talk made it somewhat unnerving for me as I went about my work. It was a relief not to ever go up with an unfamiliar crew again. In our twenty-three runs we had many close calls, turbulent rides, and damaged areas to

our ship as we encountered our share of fighters or flak. Often enough, I saw fellow planes go down on my left or right. We were lucky and were never forced down in combat. But weather could do it. On returning from one mission over Germany, Britain was so socked in by heavy fog that we had to be directed to a fighter base landing strip in France for an overnight. The Quonset hut that we stayed in was festooned with a galaxy of champagne corks. The fighter boys had hung them from the ceiling with strings or wire, happy evidence as how our buddies supported the local vintners. We were in Saint Quentin.

I had the time to walk into town. I then had a deep interest in music history, as I still do. Walking by the local bookstore, I noticed a book about a great fifteenth century composer. The title, *Was Josquin des Pres a Native of St. Quentin?* intrigued me. On inquiring about the author, I was told he was the local mayor. So I called on him, struggled through his English, and had a pleasant talk about Josquin.

Another music-related mission started when our early A.M. briefing officer told us we were going to Beirut. That's what I first heard when I wondered how in the world we were to reach Lebanon. It turned out to be Bayreuth. That, in turn, alarmed me because I had visions of accidentally hitting the famous Richard Wagner Festspielhaus. I kept careful notes as to where we dropped our bombs that day. Later in the evening, I went to the nearest phone booth and was able to obtain the phone number of the eminent Wagner scholar, Ernest Newman. Reaching him in London, I introduced myself and immediately told him that I was breaking regulations in talking with him because I was about to tell him just where we had dropped our bombs. I described the location of the ordnance area, whereupon Newman replied: "My dear young man, I am sorry to say that you may not have hit the Festspielhaus, but you may very well have hit that delightful rococo Bibiena theater at the Residenz." As

we did. Years later, I saw it completely restored.

It Wasn't All Bad

On occasion, the anomaly of a stunning visual moment in the drab course of a mission evoked emotion well apart from the tension of the hour. An unexpected rendezvous in Belgium around Louvain University, or circling about as early daybreak broke in East Anglia over the magnificent quads of Cambridge, or following the French coastline on return to base, to look down and see Mount St. Michel. These were special tokens of air warfare.

Meeting the Jets

We went to Berlin twice. It was a long jaunt, some 550 miles from Shipdham. Heavy flak on arrival, but our luck prevailed, as it did near the end of the War. On missions in southern Germany, we were among the first crews to be attacked by the newly developed jet fighters. Fortunately for the Eighth, as I later learned, almost two years earlier Hitler had bluntly vetoed production of the ME-262 twin-jet fighter. The fastest plane in the world, it was capable of more than 700 mph in level flight.

Although we had been given prior instruction as to how to fire at these new fighters, nothing could prepare us for the severe swiftness of their attack. Off one wing and then off another while we had barely time to aim our machine guns. Fortunately, the German fighters' jet propulsion was of short duration. If some of our long range escort fighters were nearby, they could deal with those jets. But there must have been a higher KIA rate for nearby 24's on those missions.

Harrison Salisbury may have written this in '42 or '43. It still applied when we flew in '44 and '45, although increased fighter escort had reduced casualties. The words from The New York Times correspondent were: "To fly in the Eighth Air Force in those days was to hold a ticket to a funeral. Your

own." Young men, and well trained, we were entirely unaware of such momentous sentiments. For example, I don't remember ever being downright scared during the conflagrations of a mission or during the heavy flak of a bomb run. Awfully pre-occupied, resigned, determined, angry, fatalistic; but not scared. However, I'm sure I would have been if we had ever gone down.

Wesel

Toward the end of the war, though, I experienced some moments of panic. B24's had been selected over 17's because they could fly more effectively at low levels, and we had to drop supplies on the German side of the lines, as our transports and gliders came in to land troops. That mission to Wesel was a well-coordinated effort, but in dropping supplies for our troops at a very low level of about 200 feet, Tom had to fly well into German lines, in order to circle properly for our way out and return. We seemed to fly lower than some of the tall smokestacks in the area. The German small arms fire was intense (rifles included!). Much of it ricocheted through my nose turret area. And that was the only mission for which I had forgotten to wear my flak vest! The debriefing session following that engagement was the only occasion where I drained more than one double Scotch.

Although our low level run in aiding glider troops during the Battle of the Bulge was unforgettable because of heavy arms fire and the number of gliders destroyed on landing, my absent flak jacket on the Wesel low level jaunt "takes the cake" in the close call category.

An Engine Problem

Another close episode, ironically enough, was not in action. We had just taken off for a mission when two of our four Pratt and Whitney engines, which normally carried 1200 horse power each for take-off, were not functioning properly. Tom, our pilot,

could not gain altitude, and it was immediately clear that we would have to abort our mission to Germany that day. In addition, it was also clear to us that we could not gain sufficient altitude to circle and land the plane, given our heavy bomb load. Tom, therefore, had to make the decision to salvo the bombs, knowing they would not explode with the pins still in them. Some of us were still assembled in the cockpit area while Tom sought to find his control to release the bombs, in order to keep us from heading into the ground. His control failed to function. The only thing left to do was for me to crawl up to the nose as quickly as possible. There, I was able to release the regular bomb control. And just in time.

On returning to base, Tom and I, along with our co-pilot, **Russ Dowell**, decided to see where our bombs had landed. We hopped into a jeep, drove into the countryside, and found the bombs which had ploughed up a narrow macadam road. A number of locals were nearby, puffing on their pipes as we approached. Looking up at us, not the least bit upset, one of them, standing next to their little building, merely said, 'Well, boys, you almost got our pub, ya' did, almost got our pub.' If I hadn't gotten up to the nose in time, we would not have been with those blokes for such a pleasant exchange.

The Trolley Missions

Our first mission had been to Altenahr, near Cologne. It was a source of relief to see the Cathedral still standing at the end of the war.



The Ruins of Cologne

While we waited reassignment to the Far East, the 44th, as with other Groups, conducted what we called 'Trolley Missions.' We took up all our ground personnel to fly low level over now-silent Germany, to closely inspect the results of our bombings. We were incredulous as to the damage we had done. The ruins of Hamburg were unbelievable.

After The War

After the end of the war, I decided to seek out a career in book publishing, while, via evening hours, I completed course credits for my truncated college degree.

The profession of book publishing can allow one to become involved with many individuals of consequence, as it did for me. From high table at Oxford's All Soul's, to a gathering of "old China hands" to celebrate Barbara Tuchman's Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45 with a festive dinner at the Hoover Institution, or overlooking Paris at midnight from her apartment building with Marlene Dietrich, there were many memorable occasions. For about five or six years after the war, I had a complete aversion to flying. It was only when I had to be in Washington on short notice for my company's publication of *The Economic Report of the President* that I could get myself back into a plane. After thirty years, I left book publishing to go on to academia,



where I served as vice president for a large university in New England for almost another twenty years. Both careers provided me with exceptional linkages to Germany.

I expect that it is correct for me to say I am the only member of the Eighth Air Force to have had an extended relationship, some twenty years after the war, with one of Hitler's closest associates. During the war, London's *The Observer* posited that one man in Germany was responsible for having extended the conflict by an additional six months: Albert Speer, Hitler's Minister of Armaments. I surely could not envision that I would meet with him some twenty-odd years later.



Albert Speer with Adolph Hitler at the Eiffel Tower



28 June 1940. France defeated, Hitler was at the height of his powers. On his one and only visit to Paris, which lasted about three hours in the early morning, he chose to have favored architect, Albert Speer, on his right and his favorite sculptor, Arno Breker on his left. Hitler saw the visit as cultural, not military. He appointed Speer Minister of Armaments in February 1942.

As a senior executive of the Macmillan Publishing Company, I would each year manage business negotiations at the Frankfurt Book Fair. The first year that I attended and saw the vast and meticulously ordered expanse of exhibitors from a balcony in the large hall, I immediately thought of the regimented troops of a Nuremberg rally.

The only defendant to declare himself guilty at the Nuremberg trials, Speer, sentenced to twenty years at Spandau, came out of prison in October, 1966. Then at the Frankfurt Book Fair, I and the London publisher, Andre' Deutsch, decided to call Frau Speer at their home in Heidelberg to express

our joint interest in the English language publication of her husband's memoirs. That phone call eventually produced the international best seller, *Inside the Third Reich* and it initiated a relationship that I maintained with Speer over the years, even after I left Macmillan to join Boston University.

On settling in Boston and meeting trustees of the university, I encountered someone who knew more about the 44th Bomb Group than I did. He was Arthur G. Metcalf, owner of the Electronics Corporation of America. He had been a test pilot and had served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the war. Involved in the development of the Norden bombsight, he and Ira Eaker were good friends. Out of that relationship and my affiliation with Speer, I, at Metcalf's behest, was able to arrange a significant post-war meeting, wherein General Eaker met with Speer at his home in Heidelberg to review the WWII bombing results. The talks were taped and published in *Air Force Magazine*.

Upon reading this text, Dr. John Silber, President Emeritus of Boston University, wrote to me as follows: "You will recall that you arranged for me to meet with Albert Speer at his home in Heidelberg, and subsequently arranged a meeting for Arthur Metcalf, General Eaker and me with Speer. On that occasion, Eaker returned to Speer all the medals that had been confiscated from him after the war. Speer seemed pleased to receive them."

Translated chapters came to me from Richard, one at a time. I would then send them on to Speer. In discussing a chapter on the bombing of Berlin, Speer said to me: "I must have been looking up when you were looking down."

For the sake of my own conscience in working with Speer, I had him agree to direct his share of his American royalty income to a refugee aid association in the States. This

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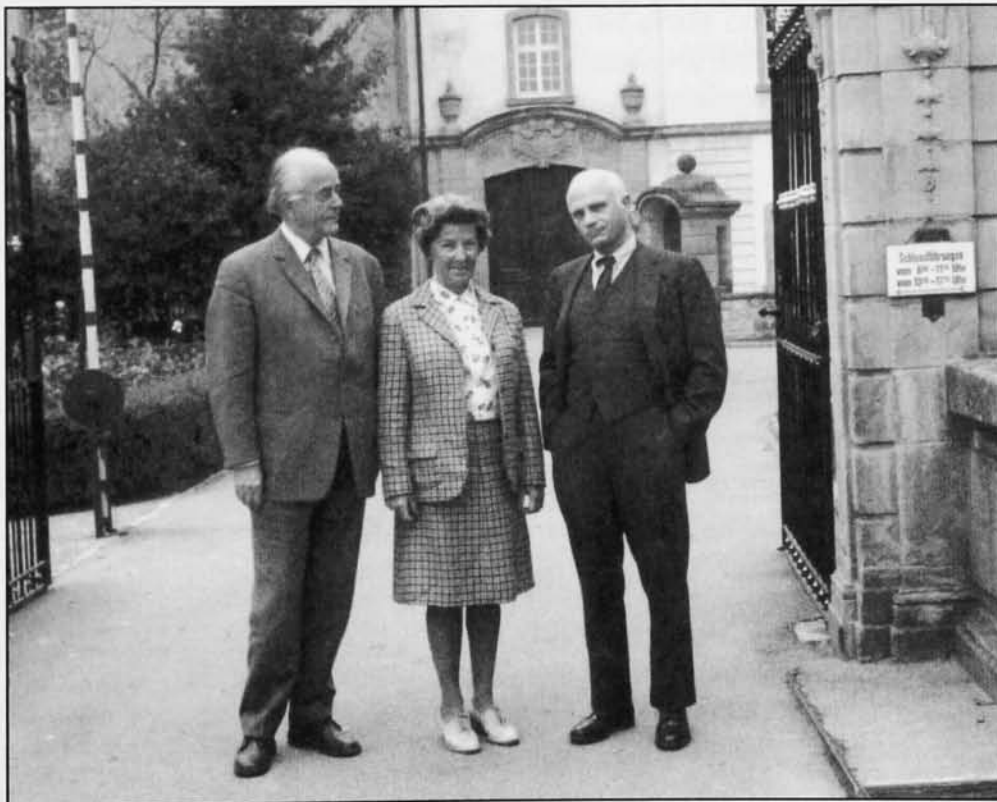
never became public knowledge. Til now. I still have a page that Speer wrote out for me, to indicate the relatively small amount of income that he realized from the world-wide success of *Inside the Third Reich*. Much of the income went to the original German publisher, Ullstein. The supervising editor there, Wolf Jobst Seidler, had been a tremendous help to Speer in polishing off the final text. Wolf had brought in Joachim Fest, then a member of the editorial board of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung for close assistance. On occasion, I would meet with the three of them in Heidelberg.

Speer and I had much to discuss in the translation of his memoirs, which were being translated by my close friends, Richard and Clara Winston. Clara and my wife, Flora, had been college classmates. Flora could recall the day when Clara decided to quit college to go off to live on a farm with Richard, who was a conscientious objector. There, deep in

Vermont, as language experts immersed in German translation work, they were, on occasion, thought to be German spies.

We did not discuss the war much over the years. However there was a memorable exchange when I happened to mention end-of-war missions when my squadron was attacked by jet fighters. Speer then recalled how he, Milch, Jodl, Galland had urged the rapid development and production of the Messerschmitt ME-262. It was 1943. Hitler, obsessed with the need for bombers to strike Britain, ordered that all work on the ME-262 cease. He then reversed the order in early '44; but time had been lost, and it took months for the first jets to go into action.

When I told Speer how relieved we were, having engaged those planes, to come to the end of the war and the end of our missions, Speer looked at me, and in his somewhat droll, ironic manner, slowly said, "Well, I suppose we can say Hitler saved your life."



L-R Albert Speer, his wife Margarete and Gerald Gross In Heidelberg

THE PRESIDENTS CORNER Roy Owen



Now that I am (temporarily) on the other end of the Pecking Order from semi-retired to Head 8-Baller, I am again suffering. In my term of Vice President, I had become relaxed from the harassment of our Editor, "Please won't you sit down and write your President's Column?" So it's "Hello again, folks." In a personal note, this first six months of my serving in fulfillment of the last year of Bob Lehnhausen's term, has been hectic. First, which was to be a nice two week vacation in Hawaii was ruined by my contacting what has become known as "The Airline Virus" on the flight over. I was feeling so bad and coughing 'til my chest and stomach muscles were aching. I flew home after the first week. Although I was more comfortable being home, I was still so weak I was unable to attend the very important Mid-year Board meeting at Carlisle Barracks, PA. That will be covered elsewhere by our Secretary/Editor who, so ably, arranged and managed that most eventful meeting.

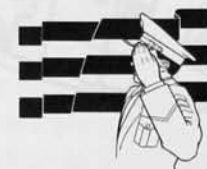
Two facets of the meeting I will comment on are: First, the object of the meeting was the survey of and meeting with the U.S. Army War College and Historical Center toward their becoming the repository for the treasured 44th Bomb Group archives collected by **Will Lundy**. His apprehensions over the capabilities of the Carlisle staff and facilities apparently vanished during the visit. It has been reported he is exhilarated over the choice and supports the Board decision to affiliate with the U.S. Army.

Next, I note in the Minutes of the Board meeting, the briefing by Archivist Chris Clark, dealing with high interest he has cultivated in the management of the Xerox Corporation. What Chris has provided them describes our Master Database program, and our intent to distribute a MDB Compact Disk to our living veterans or a living family member. In doing so, he has projected, not only inclusion of the combat histories of all the other Bomb Groups in the 2nd Air Division, but the salvation of those priceless combat archives which are preserved on common paper, transcribing their content into the digital recorded format developed in our MDB

Chris and I co-authored and signed a letter to Dr. James Cahalan, the Xerox Vice President, requesting a meeting with him (04-28-05) Dr. Calahan is responsible for administering their corporate grant program. We are talking about grant money in the range of \$7-800,000 per year for two years here! Fasten your seat belts folks. Big Chris has gotten their attention! That's all for this time. May I say, it was some fun getting back to again with the President's Letter. I'm looking forward to seeing you in Tacoma.

Roy Owen

Roy Owen, Your (Well-Worn) President



THE ESCAPADES OF THE LATE ARCHIE BARLOW



Archie Barlow

I stormed no hill, I took no ground, I brought no secrets back,

I captured not a Boche at all, I just don't have the knack.

I harmed not a hair on a German's head, I left no scars to see.

He hardly knew I'd been around, although he looked for me.

Sixty years have gone by, but the cost and the pain of wiping out the V-I Missile Sites at Escalles Sur Buchy continues to throb in the 44th Bomb Group. When T/Sgt. Archie Barlow jumped out the bomb bay of Ram It Dammit, and pulled the ripcord on his parachute, he had no way of knowing that six planes were going down, thirty-two airmen would be KIA, sixteen would become POW, three little girls would become orphans, and that he would be one of only nine who managed to evade the Germans. The date was January 21, 1944. His pilot was **Hartwell Howington**.

Barlow hit the ground in northern France, twisting his ankle on impact. Immediately he was surrounded by villagers who thought he was German. He shouted 'No Boche, no Boche'; then when he said 'American', he was surrounded by smiles, warm greetings and warm handshakes. He knew a good French word, 'Cache', which meant 'hide,' and immediately a middle aged lady took command. She directed young men to hide his parachute, then motioned for him to follow her.

Unfortunately, the sprained ankle made the walk an agonizing experience, but he made it to a wooded area and found to his delight, **Charles Blakley**, Waist Gunner on the Ram It Dammit. As they crunched in the bushes, German soldiers in trucks passed them, scanning the woods as they rode by. Other Germans walked by, supposedly on a search, but more interested in their own conversation. When they had the opportunity to size up their situation, Barlow realized that he had left his dog tags in Shipdham. If the Germans captured him without military ID, he would be shot as a spy.

The lady did return after dark, accompanied by an elderly man, who led them to a house where, to their delight, they met **Alvin Rosenblatt**, Radio Operator, and **Alfred Klein**, Waist Gunner. Their hostess fed them potato soup and coarse bread, and they slept—some in a bed; some on mattresses on the floor. Their hostess had a collection of dog tags, so Barlow's identity rose from Sergeant to 1st Lieutenant in one big jump. In a day they were outfitted in civilian clothes by Underground operators who would not divulge their own names. That was too risky. In the event that the Germans captured the group, they could be tortured to reveal the identities of the French helpers.

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Germans Were Everywhere

The train to Paris was filled with German soldiers, and by minimizing the limp on his aching ankle, Barlow and other crewmen walked past them and were met by another nameless member of the Underground.

For the next few weeks, Barlow was relocated from one household to another, as it was considered dangerous to stay in one place very long. His fellow crewmen were all smokers, so they asked their French friends to pick up butts that were thrown on the street. They took them apart, collected the loose tobacco and rolled it in any paper they could find.

Word of their existence was radioed to England. They were given forged French identification cards, complete with photographs of them looking clean shaven and spruced. Getting the photo involved a trip to a photo booth, waiting seven minutes for the picture, and having to look unconcerned when he happened to be elbow to elbow with German soldiers. One at a time, all four members of the Howington crew got their photo ID's, and were ready for the next step on their trek to freedom.

Bad Bedding, Worse Food

Time after time they were alerted that they would be departing by train to Toulouse, and time after time the trip was cancelled. Finally, they were enroute on an Express train, wondering whether the conductor was part of the Underground system. The next trip took them to the town of Foix; where, after a three hour walk, they slept on hay, freezing in an unoccupied cabin and were fed moldy cheese.

Their guides turned them over to friendly Basque guides, who were to lead them to the neutral country of Andorra, then on to Spain. French guides helped airmen for love of country; Basques were in business—they received \$500/each for every airman they turned over to Allied representatives in Spain. The food they had to offer was mutton broth. By this time they had accumulated eight more airmen, British and American, who were to join them on the next three hour trek.

Turning Back

After a ten day wait, they started out with their new guides, but bad food and freezing conditions took their toll on Barlow. He became violently ill. He passed out in the snow, and guides shook him to bring him back to consciousness, only to pass out again. Finally, the highest ranking officer in the group, a Major, decided the group had to push on without him. They gave him ration tickets, money and some frozen mutton, and the group pressed forward. Barlow returned to the freezing cabin.

His situation continued to be increasingly grave. At one point he tried to start a fire with his few matches, but they were damp and would not ignite. He tried to dry them in a sun-shiny window, but to no avail. Neither could he defrost his mutton.

Finally, in desperation, he walked several hours to a village, where a kindly couple fed him, fixed his shoes, gave him a comfortable bed and instructed him how to get to the town from which he had started, Toulouse. He had hoped to proceed forward toward Spain, but his new friend told him of German outposts along the way, and that his I.D. would fool no-one. Armed with a lunch which the wife had packed, he set forth again, hoping to find the railroad station where, with luck, he could get back to Paris and helpful Underground personnel.

After buying a ticket to Toulouse, he laid down on a bench and fell asleep, only to be awakened by two policemen, demanding his identity. Time after time, he gave his newly acquired French name, and with great severity and drawn pistols, they continued to question him.

Finally, he admitted he was a downed American airman, whereupon they greeted him with back pats, kisses, hand shakes and hugs. They asked a routine question, 'When will the invasion begin?' to which he gave his routine answer, "Soon."

Back to Paris

He could not find his 'safe house' in Toulouse, so he made the decision to go back to Paris. German soldiers were all about, and would surely notice his faulty French when he was trying to purchase a ticket. Taking a chance, he prevailed on a policeman, who fortunately was not a German sympathizer. He bought the ticket for him. Next there was a problem of food. He laid down a large bill, asking for 'Bread and Beer,' the only French words he could handle fluently. The waiter misunderstood his request, and handed him stacks of pretzels to the value of the large bill. Barlow stuffed and stuffed until he got the last one in his pocket. In time the train arrived and he was off to Paris to find his former rescuers.

Simone, a waitress, befriended him, and again he was back among friends who sympathized with his misfortune in becoming ill, but marveled that he had found his way back without being captured. For weeks he sat in a friend's house, watching German troop trains heading east. German crews were constantly scanning the skies, as though looking for a raid which never came. At times they pointed their ack ack gun directly toward his window, reason enough for him to move to another room.

By now Barlow was thirty pounds lighter, and his Underground advisors hesitated to send him back across the mountains toward Spain. The only alternative would be escape by submarine, which was considered more dangerous. He opted for another trip over the mountains, so they put new wooden soles on his shoes, and fed him to the best of their ability to build his strength.

At that time the "City of Light" was truly the City of Darkness; scarce food; fuel for cooking once a day; and for lack of gas for vehicles, horses were used for delivering merchandise. Potatoes were the mainstay of the Parisian diet, always accompanied with a bit of wine. Determined to get in good shape for the trip, Barlow religiously did push ups, sit ups and running in place. Good fortune smiled when he was joined by a young P-51 pilot with whom he could hold a conversation in English.

Together they set forth again where they were joined by five other airmen. A young lady led them the length of the train, off the back and onto another train, then separated them in groups of three. It was apparent the Underground had studied all aspects of train travel, and figured ways to get their charges safely to their destination. Hours later the train stopped at a desolate place that had no station. About sixty people debarked; and after the locals had left to go to the nearby houses, the men learned that they were all airmen.

Automobiles barreled them through hairpin curves with no let up in speed. Again they were placed in the care of the Basque guides, armed with submachine guns and pistols. Also armed were two Underground members who were leaving France, as their identities were known to the Germans. They hoped to get through Spain and eventually join DeGaulle's forces in England.

The Pyrenees

For days and days the group plodded on, dogged by German patrols that had a shoot-out with their Basque guides. Of course, the Germans won. Fortunately, one of the travelers had a map, so their trek continued. With the shooting, some of the group ran in different directions, so Barlow found himself with only three companions, Jim, Stan and Lynn. When avail-

able food hit bottom, Stan produced a pound cake which he was carrying for a 'real emergency.' They split it four ways, and it gave them the energy to climb the rest of the way up the snow covered peak, and over the border into Spain.

Jim, one of the four, began passing out; and finally, could not be rallied. They had to leave him, as German soldiers with dogs were within eyesight. The three slogged through foot high snow to the top of the crest, and somehow got separated. At that point Barlow thought of a fast way down the other side. He flattened out on top of the crusted snow; and using his overcoat for a sled, traveled long distances, using his arms and legs as rudders to avoid colliding with huge boulders. When he reached the valley road, he stopped at the first house he came to and asked, 'France or Spain?' The answer, 'Espana'. He had arrived!

In time he caught up with Lynn and Stan. They shared their time with an interesting conglomerate of many nationalities, including German soldiers who decided to desert, rather than return to the Eastern front.

Five weeks later they were transported to Gibraltar, and immediately flown to London.

As if fate had one last fright in store for Barlow, on his last night in London, V-1 rockets began to fall. He survived that also. Without his dog tags, he had to prove over and over, his true identity. Then, on June 19, 1944, he arrived in Washington, D.C. Within a week he married Aline Morgan.

*Archie Barlow passed away in 2000. Aline lives with their daughter Pat in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. She is a skilled seamstress, and she spends her time making quilts for needy people. Later events in the 44th led to discovery of three orphans whose fathers were lost at Escalles Sur Buchy—Lois Cianci, daughter of **Clair Schaeffer**; Jackie Roberts, daughter of **Jack Ostenson**; and Linda Guyton, daughter of **Hartwell Howington**.*

Pursuit in the Pyranees can be purchased by writing to Aline Barlow, 160 Jackson Drive SE, Calhoun, GA 30701. The price is \$20.



“I would rather have a German division in front of me than a French one behind me...”General George S. Patton

Bumper Sticker:

If you can read this, thank a teacher. Since it's in English, thank a soldier.

No Longer A Secret

Arthur W. Schueler sent his story, "Why Me?" for the last publication of the 8 BTs, up until he was transferred to the Secret Squadrons. He did not tell us what he did there. However the book by Pat Carty, *Secret Squadrons of the 8th Air Force*, records an amazing variety of operations that took place at Cheddington, all part of the plan that led to ultimate victory.

This quiet spot in the English countryside became first a home for the RAF. They conducted squadron exercises in Tomahawks in technical and artillery reconnaissance and message dropping sorties in support of British troops.

Next came the Mighty Eighth. The Ground Crew of the 44th BG came to Cheddington first, waiting the arrival of B-24s, who were still patrolling for subs in the Gulf of Mexico. When the first nine crews from the 66th Squadron arrived 1 October 1942, they found the airfield too small and the runways too short. Off they went to Shipdham.

Cheddington went through a wide variety of uses before it moved into its most serious work—confounding the Germans. For a while Army tactics, such as jungle warfare were taught there. When the Stars and Stripes took over, it became a training school for new combat men. An Intelligence Library was established with radio facilities, bombardment & navigational equipment; an old B-24D became available for hands-on study. Pilot training involved pre-op checks, air-sea rescue, interphone control, enemy tactics, ditching equipment, bail-out information, flying control, formation flying, aerodrome lighting, engine operations and much more. Navigators, bombardiers and radio operators all had their special classes.

There were frequent surprise visitors. Once a captured German JU-88 landed at Cheddington, escorted by P-47s. It became a valuable resource for learning the enemy plane's capabilities. A C-47 secreted Major General John Hodges and Commander

Butcher--Ike's Naval Aid onto the base. They were enroute to London to meet Ike. 'Blood & Guts' Patton came through, as did film star, James Cagney.

B-24s became available in Anglia, replacing the Fortresses for night surveillance of enemy operations. The Liberators were painted black to deflect German searchlights from the planes. The men used jamming devices to mask radio talk when groups were forming. They were frequently able to spoof the enemy into believing that more groups were enroute to attack than was the case.

One major contribution of the Secret Squadrons was called PSYWAR--Psychological Warfare. This involved dropping leaflets in Germany to tell the German citizens the actual progress of the Allied Troops, and the hopelessness of resistance. On the eve of D-Day, they dropped them to villagers of France, Belgium & Holland, informing the citizens of the imminent invasion. 45,000 pounds/day were dropped over occupied territory. They appealed to foreign workers to sabotage the German war effort. On two momentous occasions, D-Day and the day of the Rhine crossing, 1,000,000 copies were dumped upon enemy troops. When German soldiers surrendered, most had copies of the pamphlets in their hands or in their pockets.

As the war progressed, 'Carpetbagger Missions' dropped supplies and agents to resistant groups. "Gas Missions" flew with the bomb bay full of fuel, carrying them to Patton's Allied Troops that were moving eastward too quickly for normal supply lines to handle.

Although the number of losses did not nearly equate to that of combat airmen, the missions of these Secret Squadrons were anything but safe. Their list of KIAs, MIAs and POWs represents the many groups that served at Cheddington. It has been said, "The pen is mightier than the sword", but the men of the 44th know that "The value of the pen was mightily enhanced by the bomb."

YOU CAN CLEAN OUT YOUR ATTIC NOW



Paul Kay and Will Lundy at Ridgway Hall

"We're from the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association, and we are looking for a home for our wartime memorabilia," I told Major Michael Lynch, when Perry and I dropped in to look around.

Immediately the United States Army Heritage & Education Center at the United States Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania opened their hearts and their arms to us.

Major Lynch immediately reminded Perry, "You were in the Army Air Corps, and you have come to the right place."

Chris Clark from Monassas, Virginia, a researcher in the National Archives, was first to know that this one year old facility was operational. Perry's and my casual drop-in led to an eye-opening tour of a huge library, replete with many computers and tables for group meetings. Major Lynch promptly pulled up the names of General **James Hodges**, then General **Leon Johnson** on the computer. **Greg Statler**, Registrar, gave us a tour of their unique method of displaying heroes of many wars, particularly the memorabilia of General **Matthew B. Ridgway** of the XVIII Airborne Corps, for whom the building is named. Their photo repository is temperature controlled. They handle all memorabilia with rubber gloves. The build-

ing has been in use for only one year, so computers are busy tapping out collections of army stories. Major Lynch said, "We consider our job to tell the story of the Army, one soldier at a time."

In the coming year, an Education Building will be started, expressly so school children, researchers, historians or community organizations can come in and learn the details of army life, starting with the Spanish-American War and onward to Operation Freedom in Iraq.

You've heard this before, but I'll say it again----- No group has documented their history so thoroughly as the 44th BGVA.

The Board met at the Museum several weeks ago, eager to know **Will Lundy's** opinion of the facility, as a home for the treasures he has collected and guarded so valiantly. With his nod, the Board voted for Ridgeway Hall to be the repository for 44th materials.

Arlo Bartch's demonstration of the Database drew the attention of the highest officials in the museum. **Bob Lehnhausen's** recollections of high level decisions captivated them. He is going to put his memories on audio tape, to become part of the collection.

Do you have treasures that you have not decided where they belong? Contact the Heritage Center. A hundred years from now, your great-grandchildren can come and look at them. Let the museum know what you have, and if it is suitable, they will pay for shipping. If you have photos, label them with pencil. (Ink will eventually come through the front of the picture. Do not send your old uniform to the cleaners, before passing it on. They will take care of that. Years later, the chemicals of dry-cleaning will be destructive to the fabrics. Contact Major **Michael Lynch**, 950 Soldiers Drive, Carlisle, PA 17013. Tel. 717 245-4114; or Greg Statler at the same address.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

As I write this letter to you all, we are fast approaching the end of the 60th anniversary year marking the end of WWII. As Shipdham Aero Club celebrated at the beginning of this special year, so we will mark the end of this year in a manner befitting the occasion. On the Saturday we will have a Victory Fly – in at the club with memorabilia and V.E. support items provided by the Royal British Legion (One of the UK's top veteran associations.) On the Sunday we join with the villagers of Shipdham who are holding a victory Fete to be held on the village green in the center of Shipdham. No doubt some of you will remember the area well. From the photos I have seen, it appears to have changed little since your day, except the Flying Standard pub has since closed and is now a private dwelling.

The English historic aviation magazine *Fly Past* has confirmed that it will soon be publishing an article that covers stories about English children who met and befriended Shipdham air-crews and occasionally flew with them. I'll make sure a copy gets to Ruth as soon as it is published and the dear old snail-mail can make its way across the pond.

On a personal note, I have collected enough material and been provided with enough photos by the 44th's UK representative, Steve Adams, to put together a lecture about Shipdham and what you guys did while you were here. It is called Station 115 – The Story of an Airfield. It lasts for a couple of hours and is supported by overhead projector slides and a short black and white film. I have delivered it five times so far this year, and have two or three more bookings for it before the summer. It goes out to businessmen's dinner clubs, aviation enthusiasts groups, young farmers clubs and similar civic groups across Norfolk and the wider East Anglia. If any of you guys have any stories or photos that you feel you could share with me to add a personal touch to the lecture, I would be delighted to hear from you and include your material. You may be surprised how interested these folks are in hearing about what you guys did. At the last lecture, the Question and Answer session afterwards went on for over forty minutes, and only really stopped because it was time for the staff to clear up and close the hall.

Our flying season has just about got under way over here, and your old home is starting to reverberate once more with the sound of aero engines on a daily basis.....No great changes in that department then.

Look after yourselves,

Peter Bodle (President of the Shipdham Aero Club)

FOUND: THE TWO IDENTIFIED MEN



At the Omaha Reunion I met Walter Dunbar and Wayne Miller (506 Sq.), members of the John Doctor's crew. At later reunions, I tried to identify them by their photo; but

nobody knew them—until I ran their picture in the 'Tails. Sam Miceli had a better magnifying glass than I had; he read Miller's name tag, identifying Miller. Then Dunbar called, and here are his recollections:



Walter Dunbar & Wayne Miller

"We flew 33 missions in 78 Days," Dunbar recalled. "I will never forget the trip to Brunswick, May 19, 1944. Our engine got hit over the target, and we fell behind. Six fighters made passes at us, but Doctor kept going up, then down, so shells were passing over and under us. We made it back to safety. "Another wild adventure was over an airport near Nancy, France. We were going after an ammunition dump. There was a heavy cloud cover, so the Lead Crew took us around a second time. The anti-aircraft gunners got one engine; then the lever to salvo the bombs didn't work. We got out of formation, and got back an hour and a half late.

"Major James McAtee met us in a jeep. He was ready to send out the news—that we were MIA."

Dunbar was happy to see his Commander's picture in the last 8 BTs. Major James McAtee had pinned both the Air Medal and DFC on him.

When Dunbar wants to check out his list of missions, he reads a plaque on the wall. His son honored him by creating this unique wall hanging for his father.

Wayne Miller, Navigator on the **John Doctor** crew, was the only one who reported an error in the *Winter 8 Ball Tails*. Remember the picture of the planes in flight, and a request for information about the photos? (Page 26) The picture is upside down. Turn it around, and you will see that Wayne is absolutely correct.

Miller also remembers the Brunswick mission vividly—six fighters making passes at them, with shells going over and under the plane.

He remembers living in a Quonset Hut with 8 officers (two crews). Life was comfortable until they added more beds and more crew officers. He remembers that things got a bit testy at times; but he agrees, that was only one tiny inconvenience of being in combat in ETO. Wayne commemorates his experience on his license plate.



Wayne Miller's License Plate

From the Diary of the Late William Uvanni

From the Diary of the late **William Uvanni**, Radio Operator on the **George M. Beiber** crew: July 7, 1944. Bernberg, Germany. "They woke us up for our first mission at 1:00 A.M. We knew we were going last night, and I doubt any of our crew got any sleep. Trucks took us to the mess hall and then to briefing.

"On the wall-map of Europe a red line (tape) was stretched all the way from England to Bernberg, deep in Germany. We were briefed to expect fighters, as this is in a fighter region, and also, to expect heavy flak.

"We were pretty tense on the way to the target. About 5 minutes before target time, we were hit by fighters. We flew in the lead element and were right up front. Approximately 60 fighters lined 15 abreast came in at us from 2:00 and slightly high. They fired as they came in, and you could see orange 20 millimeter shells as they came through the air. None of the planes from our squadron were hit, but an entire squadron (12 aircraft) were knocked out on the first pass. Some blew up and others went into dives and never came out.

"Some of the crew saw several chutes come out of these planes, and a few minutes later the report came over VHF radio, that the Germans were strafing the airmen hanging in their chutes. We had been warned to delay our chute openings until a lower altitude to avoid this, but under tension, we don't always do the proper thing.

"We were in heavy flak all of this time, and I watched through the open bomb bays. We had P-38 fighter escorts, and they gathered where the German fighters were in a few minutes, and really paid them off. The ones that hit us were ME-410s (Germany's latest) and the inter-phone rang out with "There's a 38 on a 410 – he blew up!! "There's another 410 on fire!" "Hey, do you see that B-24 burning on our right?" "Another B-24 blew up behind us!" "Look at that P-38 after that German – there he goes – look at him – he's coming apart!!"

"I saw Bernberg below and it looked rather small. Our target was a bomber assembly plant right on the edge of town. It was easily identified because of the large runways in front of the plant. Our bombing was excellent. All the bomb explosions I saw were on the plant area and a few minutes after 'bombs away', the whole place was nothing but smoke and flames.

"We were about 7-10 minutes in the flak, and when we broke away from it, all the enemy fighters had disappeared. We had no further trouble on the way home.

"At interrogation the intelligence officer told us that missions didn't come any rougher than today's, and we were relieved to know that they would not all be like this one.

"Our group lost five aircraft; and **Paul Luthman**, Waist Gunner on **Walter Zerman's** crew was hit by a 20 MM shell, which broke his ankle and shattered the bone. (Five months later he returned to combat to complete his tour.)

"The mission lasted 7 hours, and we were on oxygen for 4 hours. Our bombing altitude was 19,000 feet, and the temperature was a minus seven degrees."

*Perry Morse was Tail Gunner. Morse remembers saying to Waist Gunner, the late **Harold Maggard**, "If all the missions are like this one, we won't make five, let alone thirty-five." However the Beiber crew did fly thirty five, and not one member of the crew was injured or killed. That was a record. Four members off the Beiber crew are still with us: **Jerry Folsom**, Co-pilot, **Paul Boensch**, Bombardier, **Nathan Woodruff**, Engineer.*

YOUR HISTORY IS IN CYBERSPACE

The idea of creating a Database with the history of everybody in the 44th Bomb Group seemed like an unimaginable task; that was ten years ago. Today it has become a reality.

Arlo Bartsch, a B-17 pilot with the 379th Bomb Group, and an 'Adopted 44th Bomb Group member', wrote a computer program that encompasses the 44th's story during World War II. No other organization involved in the war has managed to preserve its history so totally as the 44th Bomb Group.

Technology and the dedication of Will Lundy, who has done an amazing job of documenting and preserving the record of the 44th Bomb Group for the past 60 years, has made it possible for a dream to come true – a permanent record of the events that brought us to victory.

Check it out. On your own computer (or your grandchildren's). Access the Internet by typing in the following. <http://www.8thairforce.com>.

When you have accessed the Web Site

- - - SELECT Search Database from the selection menu.

Next, from the Search Our Database screen

- - - SELECT If Not A Member – Click Here To Join

Identify yourself, invent a password, type in your address & phone number, submit the information. You will receive confirmation of your selected ID and PASSWORD at your e-mail address.

You will now be a registered member and be able to enter your selected ID and PASSWORD and search our database. From there, you can click on any of the following categories:

All Missions and Crews Flown By - - - type in your name or anyone you wish to research.

Group Mission Listing - - - you can check out any mission that you or the Group flew.

Aircraft Special Status - - - tells whatever happened to any plane.

Roll of Honor - - - is where Will Lundy's careful recording of lost buddies is available.

Personal Legacy - - - contains personal stories from letters and diaries.

Search Biographies - - - where your personal history is recorded.

All data retrieved and displayed from the Database is printable. Share it with your family and friends.

Don't be intimidated by this technology. **Jump into it.** This trip into Cyberspace is FREE.

You will soon be receiving your own computer disk, from the 44th BGVA, which contains more complete information about the Legacy of the men and women of the 44th Bomb Group, during WWII and later.

Why not get a head start by checking out this Website?

If you have any problems accessing 8thairforce.com, please contact Arlo Bartsch @ 510-922-5247.

T/SGT. ROBERT PADGETT REMEMBERS D-DAY

Padgett kept hour-by-hour account of the most important date in WWII—D-Day. He reported 'wake up time' was 12:30 a.m. He put on long handles and flying suit, went to the Mess Hall for a cup of coffee and some kind of food. Then he went to the Equipment Room for the flight gear, then to briefing for the status. That's when his crew learned that it was D-Day. (Actually they suspected that something big was going to happen, as all crews were on a stand down on June 5th.)

The flight route was laid out with the return to England. They picked up the guns for the turrets, Use Easy Text, entries to save a signature block, a special notice, etc. --all routine requirements preceding all flights. At the site of *Wendy W* they listened to ground crew comments and waited for the start up flare.



Robert & Juanita Padgett
September 1944

"02:20 am. It's semi-dark and we have a light ground fog, the planes are lined up, my take-off CAP is on and the blessings have been made as we pass the run-way Chaplain, and are starting the take-off run. The plane in front of us rolls, a crew member of that plane and ours is in the back of the plane to flash a colored light for us to follow. I, the flight engineer, standing between the pilot and co-pilot on the flight deck, will count off about 30 seconds before we start our take-off run, also to be sure that plane ahead of ours made it off the runway; then call out the air speed and operate what controls the pilots call for. We take off and start the climb out, later breaking out of the fog, but it's still hazy; and we are still following the light of that plane. All of a sudden there's a call over the intercom, and I see another B-24 coming under us. I shouted 'PULL UP'. The pilots, **Charles Gayman** and **Clair Hill** and I were pulling controls and pushing throttles, trying to avoid a midair collision. The other plane's right rudder struck the lower left front of our plane. We moved up and away from the other plane, and after recovery, we found that we had a hole in the left front side of the fuselage, and lost an air speed line. All other lines were OK. We did not see the results to the other plane; the crewman in the tail of that plane using a flashing light must have been just a few feet away from our left side engine props. A REAL SCARY ENCOUNTER."

Wendy W continued on the mission, to hit coastal guns, but due to weather conditions, no bombs were dropped; besides they were too close to the Invasion Forces. So the flight returned to England. He later learned that the plane which bumped them was *Battlin Baby*, #42-94892, piloted by **Ted Weaver**.

The next mission at 1620 hours was in support of the ground forces at Vire, France on *Patsy Ann II*. After reaching their target

...continued on page 22

and were returning to the English coast, their A/C was fired on by Anti-Aircraft guns from ENGLAND!!! Turning back from the coast, they checked their IFF electronic and fired flare identifier colors, but again they were fired on by anti-aircraft guns. They fired flares again, checked in identification information for the day and turned back to try again. As it happened, a flight of B-24s came in range. They tagged on and made it back to Shipdham. At debriefing Lt. **Joseph Woodlock** found out he had received the wrong identifier packet for that time of day.

The flight time on D-Day was 13 hours,

20 minutes. Padgett looks back on those events and wonders how the crews survived with so many planes in flight over such a small area. As he summed it up, "There were no flight ground controllers then, just good planning, practice and an alert CREW."

*(Padgett shared these frightening moments with **Charles Gayman**, Pilot; **Clair Hill**, Co-pilot; **Joseph Woodlock**, Navigator; **Frank Kuneth**, Bombardier; **Richard Breon**, Radio Operator, **Alonzo Collins** and **Joseph Wawerna**, Waist Gunners, and **Leo Remkes**, Tail Gunner.)*

The Angel and the Eagle by **Joseph E. Milliner**

The Angel and the Eagle by Joseph E. Milliner is a personal story, written in 3rd person, of his experiences as a pilot, a family man and a distraught father whose son, a helicopter pilot, tragically disappeared in Laos during the Vietnam War.

Milliner describes the fury of the Ploesti Raid, target White V in dramatic detail. Then there was Foggia, where Buzzin Bear crashed, and four of the crew were lost. According to Joe, his ever faithful Guardian Angel JOSEPH saved him from parachuting into the flaming plane.

Milliner's signed hardcover book is available for \$11.95, (postage incl.). Write 281 Fincastle Way, Shepherdsville, KY 40165. E-Mail Mackie0126@aol.com

For Sale

Mary Aston is selling lapel pins of WWII Medals: 8th Air Force, DFC, Air Medal, Purple Heart, POW, European-African Mediterranean Theater and WWII Victory Medal. The price of each is \$9 + 37 cents postage. Also, a leaded glass depiction of the Flying 8 Ball. Proceeds go to the 44th BGVA. Contact Mary at 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635. Specify pin name and number of each type.

LIBERATORS AND LITTLE FRIENDS

From a student at Scarning Primary School in Norwich:

LIBERATORS AND LITTLE FRIENDS

Dark, daring and noisy bombers
Dangerously growling as they rattle over Norfolk,
In formation 'Lead', 'High' and 'Low'.
Following the Assembly Ship
Loud, brightly coloured and patterned – like a fighting butterfly.

Leaving Norfolk at Lowestoft, Yarmouth or Cromer
Patterned fields, hedgerows and woods disappear.
Replaced by the blanket of the North Sea
Green and grey, capped with white galloping horses.

'Little Friends',

Zooming like wasps in a foul mood
Snakes weaving through the cotton wool clouds
Wild and free
Protecting the boisterous bombers
Together they head to the target.

Ed. Note: A grandparent had to have been the source of this information for such a young child.

44TH BOMB GROUP PX

Flying 8 Ball Golf Shirts	\$25.00 + 3.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Caps (Indicate Squadron)	15.00 + 2.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Felt Patches (about 6 inches diameter)	15.00 + 1.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Squadron Pins (Indicate Squadron)	5.00 + .50 Postage
Blue Liberator Shirts (Light Blue with B-24 designs)	30.00 + 3.00 Postage
44th Bumper Stickers	2.00 (Postage Incl.)

Order From:

Sam Miceli

(Make check payable to Sam Miceli)

6398 Dawson Blvd., Mentor, Ohio 44060-3648

MAIL & E-MAIL



From **Dick Butler**: **David Patterson**, a much admired member of the 2nd Air Division passed on April 13, 2005. David served as Secretary of the 2AD for many years. His death is a tragic loss to the organization he served so diligently.



A great historical recollection from **Bob Lehnhausen**: In an old issue of a 1991 issue of a 68th Newsletter, I was reminded of T/Sgt. **Norius Crisian**, who was not a member of one of the 68th's nine original flight crews. He came to the ETO on the Queen Mary with the ground echelon.

Crisian was assigned to the 44th on 15 January '41. He attended AM (aviation mechanics) school, bomb sight maintenance school and armament school before going to bombardier school. Later, at Barksdale, he trained bombardiers.

In the March 1991 issue of the publication, he is mentioned in **Jim O'Brien's** story about the tragic results of our mission of April 5, 1943 to Mortsel, Belgium, a suburb of Antwerp. (Coincidentally, this mission was my first.) Crisian responded in the May 1991 issue, his evaluation of the bombing.

I don't recall much about him, for I joined the 68th March 16, 1943. He was **Jim O'Brien's** bombardier. They were shot down over Kiel on May 14, 1943; both were POWs for the balance of the war. To assure that I have not confused anyone, the pilot of their A/C on the Kiel mission was **Malcolm Howell**. Howell had been O'Brien's co-pilot. When Jim became the squadron CO, Howell got the crew. On the Kiel mission, Jim opted to fly as Howell's co-pilot. The point I would like to make here is that Crisian, a M/Sgt. must have been a very good bomb aimer to have flown with the squadron's CO.

It is also to be noted that squadron com-

manders did not often fly as the co-pilot of a crew, if they were not serving as the Command Pilot for that mission, and O'Brien was not. Colonel **Leon Johnson** was the command pilot of the 44th on the Kiel mission.

Forgive my lengthening this story, but as I pointed out, it was unusual for the CO to fly as a co-pilot, if not flying as a Command Pilot. O'Brien, our CO, was lost on the Kiel mission. He was succeeded by **Tom Cramer**. On our first mission out of Benghazi, Cramer chose to fly as co-pilot for **Robert Peterson**, but later lost his life on the mission to Lecce, Italy on 2 July 1943. Strange as it may seem, after these two great losses, I have no knowledge that squadron commanders were ever told that they could not choose to fly in this manner.

In reviewing this paper, a fact sticks out that has always impressed me, but has seldom been mentioned. I believe I am right. Our beloved leader, Leon Johnson was the command pilot on Kiel. The 44th was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for its action in that air battle – the first such award given in the 8th AF up to that time. He was also our leader when we earned the second at Ploesti on the low level mission of 1 August 1943. Perhaps one of you blokes that have more historical resources than I would be so kind as to check that. In my mind, I have always believed that he led both. If not, it will not diminish the tremendous respect I have always held for him. If true, it adds to his valorous lore.



These observations from an unidentified airman: "You know you've landed with your wheels up when it takes full power to taxi." "If God meant man to fly, He'd have given him more money."



...continued on page 25

From an unknown source: The controller was working a busy pattern told the 727 on downwind to make a three-sixty (do a complete circle, usually to provide spacing between aircraft.) The pilot of the 727 complained, "Do you know it costs us two thousand dollars to make a three-sixty in this airplane?"

Without missing a beat the controller replied, "Roger, give me four thousand dollars worth!"



From **Forrest S. Clark**: I met a man in Florida who, as a 15 year old teenager in Germany during WWII, was in an anti-aircraft battery shooting at our American bombers. Helmut Kern of Mannheim, Germany was assigned in a flak battery to shoot down our planes.

Kern said he remembers the bombers coming over his city of Mannheim and dropping bombs. He told how he narrowly escaped the bombs and survived. He said he was lucky and remembered all those men who were in the war.

We parted friends and gave tribute to the men who were serving with us. I was a bomber crew gunner on the missions that his anti aircraft battery must have fired at. Kern was recently a tourist in the Kissimmee area vacationing at Cypress Cove.

He got one of my wartime memoirs. It was quite a meeting and we parted friends.

This story proves that even enemies can become friends in the passage of time. We agreed that each of us was doing our duty at the time; but today we see the war as a place where our friends died; and in a way, they bring us together to pledge our efforts for peace.

Mannheim in WWII was a major German industrial city making armament for the Nazi armies.

Clark's book, Innocence and Death in Enemy Skies, can be purchased by writing to Forrest at 703 Duffer Lane, Kissimmee, FL 34759-4114. The price is \$10.



From **Jerry Folsom**, two thoughts: "Eagles may soar, but weasels don't get sucked into the jets."

"What happens if you get scared half to death twice?"



From: Ivo DiPiero: Mr. & Mrs. Ivo DiPiero of Macomb, IL celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary January 7, 2005 by returning to Norwich to the same church where they had been married. They had been married in Norwich, England on January 7, 1945, where he was a Sergeant in the 44th Bomb Group, and she was a Lance Corporal in the Royal Air Force. They are the parents of two sons, Michael of Hillside, FL and Robert of Alaska. They also have five grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.



Ivy and Ivo DiPiero



The 44th BG Web Site has been folded into the 44th BG Military Heritage Database. The technology skills of two gurus brought this happy event about: Guy Adams (Son of Beverly Folsom) and Arlo Bartsch, a B-17 pilot who couldn't resist collecting B-24 tales. Click on 8thairforce.com. This Website was created by Arlo and his company, **Computer Generated Data**. The 44th BGVA Website was created by Guy with the help of **Jerry Folsom** and the courtesy of a Salt Lake City organization, XMission. Guy has a very commanding job at the University of Utah, but was willing to take the time to place our organization's history and activities into cyberspace. At this point in our lives, we have no idea who will use this information in the future. We can just be grateful that it is available.



From Luc Dewez: Luc's father, Lucien, chronicled the experience of living in Belgium when the Nazis took over his country. Luc preserved and translated his manuscript and shares it with his American friends via e-mail. May 10, 1940 "A lot of gun shots awoke me. I sat up straight in my bed. It was daylight. By my watch: 5:15 a.m. From the street I heard a number of voices speaking all together. Before I had time to go to the window, my father called me from downstairs. His voice had an unusual tone: 'Lucien, hurry up, it's war.'

"Every quarter of an hour there was a news bulletin. The first one I heard repeated: 'This night at 3:00 a.m., German forces, without declaration of war, have invaded the territories of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. Brussels, Malines, Wavre have already been bombed by the Luftwaffe.'

"Between the news reports, I thought of all that my parents and grandparents had told me about their life during World War 1. In my brain I turned over thoughts of oppression, food shortages, lack of essential products or means of life, the appearance of the black market, economic and political collaboration, denuncements, deportations, resistance and repression.

When Lucien came home from work that day, he saw handbills with a government message: 'All men ages 16 through 35 will go to Quievrain without delay with food for two days and equipment such as blankets, shoes and underwear. All reservists who have not yet received your call-up papers will conform to this command.'"

WWI had ended only 23 years previously. For the Dewez family, the nightmare of another war was upon them. It lasted five long years.





WILL'S ACCOUNT

Over the past quarter century I have managed to collect and keep a considerable amount of paperwork, photos, records, letters, and you name it. However, it appears now that Jim Hamilton and I, together, have the revised Roll of Honor book to near completion. I feel it is time for me to "retire". As a consequence, I should then find the best institution to store permanently so much of the material that I've collected from many of you and the records collected from almost everywhere.

When I first began my searches for 44th BG records, I learned that Maxwell Air Force Base had rolls of microfilm covering both the records of the 44th BG and the individual four Squadrons. I purchased them and found they contained much of our history. So I was sure that this would be one of the best places for my records now. Many people who had visited there spoke very highly of it, as they had greatly improved their facilities.

A second facility was brought to my attention, but I was not certain of the origin. Apparently, Chris Clark, who attends our reunions and who is increasingly involved with our history, learned about the new facilities recently built at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He got the word to Ruth and Perry Morse. They drove the 40 miles to learn more about it and were deeply impressed. Ruth, in turn, related their experiences to Roy Owen, and when he learned that Major Michael E. Lynch would like us to hold our meeting at those facilities, he requested that the mid-year Board meeting be relocated to Carlisle.

Paul Kay suggested to me that he would like to accompany me on my proposed visit

to Maxwell, and then we both could continue on to Carlisle for the Board Meeting. I hastily agreed, as I was eager to have someone accompany me, due to my limited hearing. I have always had a problem understanding speaker directions at airports. In the past, I had Irene to do the interpreting.

On Monday, March 28, Paul and I visited Maxwell AFB, met with Joseph Caver, Archivist, who gave us a grand tour of the Air Force Historical Research facilities. They did, indeed, have state of the art facilities for the many old documents placed in their care, many rooms full. However, there was absolutely no place available to display any papers, photos or items.

On Wednesday March 30, the Board of Directors meeting took place at the Army Heritage & Education Center in the new state of the art building near Carlisle. Here we were most graciously met by Major Lynch, who quickly made us feel "at home", pointing out that during WW #2 the 44th BG was officially identified as Army Air Corps, so we are a part of the Army history. We were given a complete and in-depth tour of their most modern facilities, shown their processing of material received from the public, and the fine care given to each and every object received, no matter how small. Best of all, to me, at least, was the space available for displays in this large building, and that they periodically take different items on display throughout the U.S.

One more very large plus, in my estimation, was the facilities available for the public's use while doing research work. There is a very large room, amply spread with work tables, computers, chairs, etc. Here historians, students, or interested persons have the

facilities to work with the staff, be provided with whatever data or item(s) that are available; and on request, can have items brought to the library for their research or study.

Needless to say, here is a facility of which I have been dreaming, but never really expected to find. Now, I wholeheartedly agree that this is by far, the best location for the 44th BG's historical records and items. Major Lynch assured us all that they are eager to obtain whatever we choose to release to them. He and his team offered to visit me, examine these items, catalog, package them and take them back to Carlisle. The problem is now solved. As of this writing, they expect to arrive within the next ten days.

The other very important happening that I mentioned above, I now want to cover in more detail. That subject is the completion of the revision of my old Roll of Honor book. Thanks to the diligent and expert assistance of Jim Hamilton, the revised text is completed. As soon as possible, this revised and expanded text will be provided to Arlo

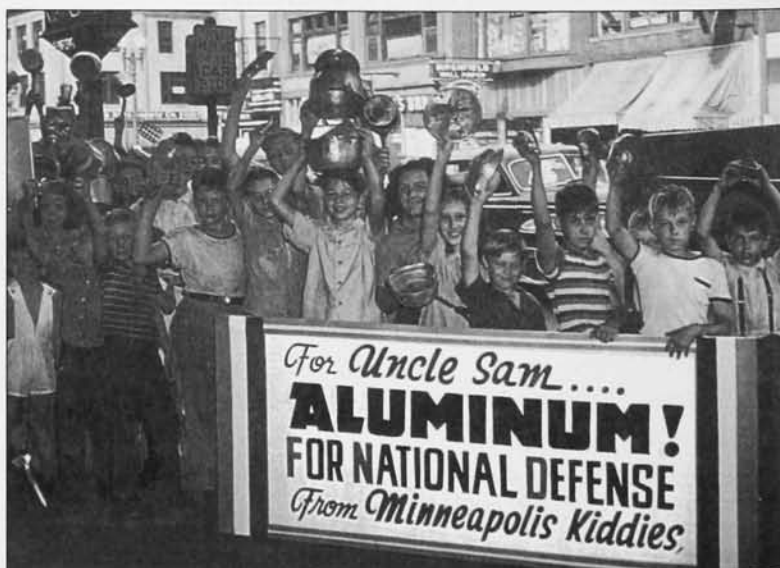
Bartch, for him to process into the Master Database.

Following that, there will be a minimum number of books printed. Cost figures are not yet available, of course, but will be investigated, and will depend upon the size of the new book and the number of copies ordered. It definitely will have more than 400 pages, and will have a good hard cover. Several of these books will be donated to various military libraries across this country. It would help us decide the number to print if those of you that believe you might want to purchase one would send a card or note. My addresses are shown in the inside opening page of every 8 Ball Tails. Either address is OK.

I send my very sincere thanks for your support over these many years. I could never have done all of the 44 BG historical work without your assistance over so many, many years. Thank you most sincerely.

WILL LUNDY

ON THE HOME FRONT





FOLDED WINGS

*"I shall not see the shadows, I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale sing on, as if in pain."*

Christina Georgina Rossetti

COX, MARVIN #19855 68th Sq. September 11, 2004 Sgt. Cox flew the first Group Mission of the 44th on November 7, 1943, as Engineer and Top Turret Gunner. It was a diversionary to Holland in *Rugged Buggy*, with **James Hodges** as Command Pilot. He flew a total of eight missions, the last as a Waist Gunner with **Wilmer Garrett** on *Miss Virginia* on May 29, 1943.

FITZSIMONS, WILLIAM #20222 506 Sq. December 7, 2004. 1st Lt. Fitzsimmons was a Bombardier. He flew with the following pilots: **J. W. Grow**, **Sidney Paul**, Major **Benton Greene** (Command Pilot) and **Ralph Golubock**. His first mission was February 24, 1944. He flew in *Oh my Sufferin' Head*, *Southern Comfort* (Replacement), *Greenwich*, *Prince/Princ-Ass/Princess*, *Pistol Packin' Mama*, *M'Darling* and *Ole Cock*. On his 27th flight the plane was hit by fighters. They lost too much fuel to make it back to Shipdham, so Golubock took the plane to Sweden where the crew was interned

GOLDSTONE, EDWARD G. #20407 66th Sq. 7 March 2005 T/Sgt. Goldstone was a member of the 1 Bomb Squad and Loading Bomb Group. His death was reported by his son-in-law.

HUBBARD, WILEY C. "Cliff" #20739 66th Sq. Date unknown. 1st Lt. Hubbard was a Navigator with the **Thompson Daley** crew. He flew 28 combat missions, the first on 30 September 1944. All missions except one were to Germany, knocking out oil refineries, marshalling yards, bridges and tunnels to prevent German tanks and troops from moving

west toward the advancing Allied Forces. One mission was to Metz, France, striking gun positions. The Daley crew flew on *Fifinella*, *Down De Hatch*, *Big Time Operator*, *Judy's Buggy* and *King Pin*. Hubbard's last mission was 24 February, 1945.

HULPIAU, GEORGE E. #20554 68th Sq. May 3, 2005. Capt. Hulpiah was a bombardier on many crews, most of which he flew with **W.D. Hughes**, but he also flew with such prestigious pilots as **Robert Norsen**, **Thomas Cramer**, **Roland Houston**, **Charles Hughes**, **Robert Lehnhausen**, **George P. Martin**, **David Alexander**, **William Cameron**, **Frederick Dent** and **Charles Benton**. He flew a total of 28 missions, his first, April 4, 1943. He flew in many different planes: *Victory Ship*, *Captain & His Kids Ride Again*, *Wing and a Prayer*, *Black Jack*, *Flak Alley*, *Avenger*, *Margaret Ann III*, *Satan's Hellcats*, *Pistol Packin' Mama* and *Full House*. His missions took him to Italy, Sicily, France, Austria, Romania and Norway.

Hulpiau was a part of **Bob Lehnhausen's** crew, formed at Geiger Field (Spokane) WA in October 1943. They trained in B-17s, joined the 44th on March 16, 1943, were assigned to the 68th Squadron, one of the five crews who were the 44th's first replacements. Lehnhausen remembers Hulpiau as a bombardier who practiced constantly to develop his skills, becoming the 68th Squadron bombardier. He led the St. Jean D'Angley and Meppen missions. Both of these attacks earned the praise of General Hodge. Of the St. Jean mission he wrote, "Your bombing today was the finest example of precision bombing yet accomplished by the Division."

...continued on page 30

FOLDED WINGS

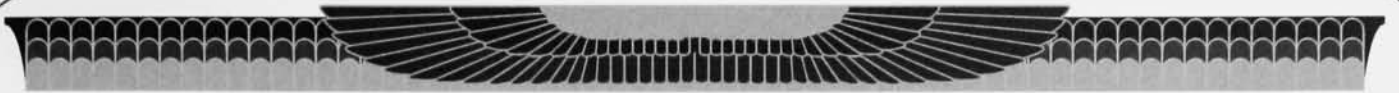
Hulpiau flew the two PUD missions, Kiel and Ploesti, and both of the Weiner-Neustadt raids. He was regarded as a hard-nosed combat veteran with a marvelous sense of humor. Lehnhausen stated, "He was a 44th BGVA loyalist. He and his lovely wife, Marian, seldom missed a reunion. He treasured his association with all you blokes and your ladies. They supported enthusiastically, whatever the leadership proposed."

KELLY, WILLIAM D. (Bill) #20903 68th Sq. 6 February 2005 1st Lt. Kelly piloted 32 missions, the first 4 August 1944. At that time the 44th was bombing Marshalling Yards and Bridges ahead of the eastward-moving troops, Kelly flew with such renowned Command Pilots as Capt. **J. E. Pennypacker**, Major **H. Sather**, Capt. **J.N. Keck**, Major **A. Hayduk** and Major **Charles Hughes**. He flew in *Gallivantin Gal*, *Lone Ranger*, *T.S. Tessie*, *Flak Magnet*, *Gipsy Queen*, *Corky*, *Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch*, *Lili Marlene*, *Louisiana Belle* and *Helza Droppin*. He flew a total of 32 missions, his last on 11 December 1944. **Lee Aston** was successful in acquiring Kelly's DFC and OLC #5 to his Air Medal. His DFC was earned by being a Lead Pilot. Unfortunately, Kelly died while arrangements were being made for an Air Force Presentation to be made at Springfield. However, the information of this upcoming event was FAXed to him while he was in the hospital, for which he expressed his gratitude. Kelly is fondly remembered by his traveling companions on the Larry Herpel European trip. Although he had serious physical problems at that time, he undertook the task of pushing the wheelchair of a handicapped member of the group through many areas in England and on the Continent. A graveside ceremony will be held at his burial in June at Camp Butler National Cemetery in Springfield, IL.

LEVEGREN, HAROLD #25716 67 Sq. 1998 S/Sgt. Levegren was a member of the **Ernest Kyle** crew, sometimes serving as Waist Gunner, once as a Tail Gunner. He flew 12 missions, the first on February 16, 1945. Most of the twelve missions the crew flew were to marshalling yards and railroad viaducts, slowing the advance of the German troops who were headed to battle the Allies who were moving toward the Fatherland. The crew flew in *Mi Akin Ass* and *Lady Fifi Nella*, and many unnamed planes. Levegren's last flight was March 17, 1945.

POTTS, JAMES A. #21708 68 Sq. January 28, 2005. Reported to Bob Lehnhausen by his co-pilot, **William Burlingame**. S/Sgt. Potts was a Waist Gunner on the **Walter O. Franks** crew, later serving as Nose Gunner/Toggler on some missions. On two missions he served on the **Fred Heichemer** crew. Potts flew 33 missions, the first September 9, 1944. He flew in *Flak Magnet*, *Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch*, *Gipsy Queen*, *Lili Marlene*, *Louisiana Belle*, *Gallivantin Gal*, *Lady Geraldine* and *T.S. Tessie*. Most of his missions were to marshalling yards within Germany, as allied forces were progressing toward the fatherland. His last mission was May 30, 1945.





FOLDED WINGS

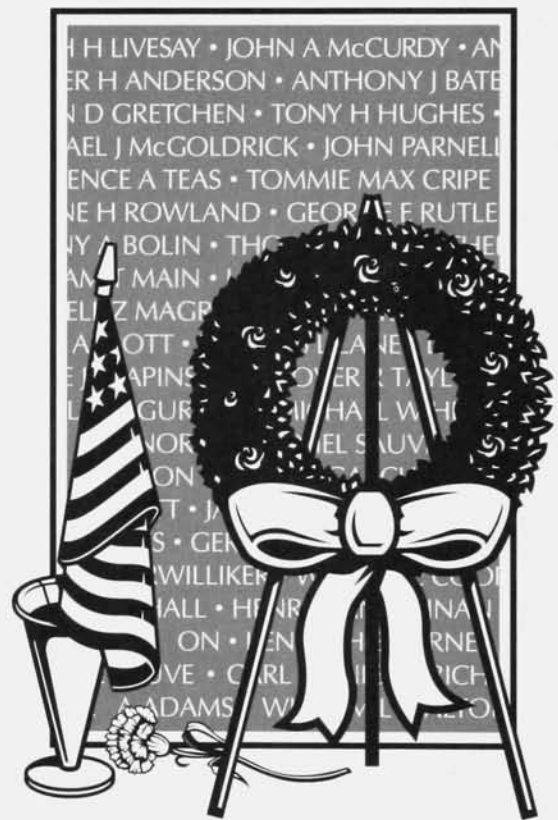
ROBERTS, JOHN # 25804 68th Sq. Date ??

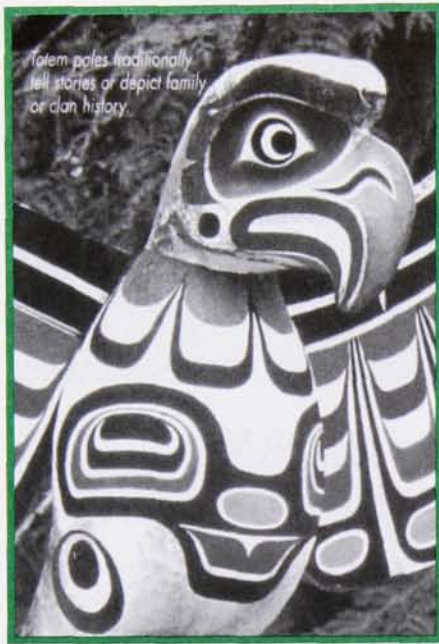
Roberts was a Tail Gunner and sometimes Nose Gunner/Toggler on the **Clayton R.**

Roberts crew. His first of twelve missions was March 10, 1945. The crew flew in *Black Sheep, Jose Carioca, Myrtle the Fertle Turtle, One Weakness* and *Lousiana Belle*. Their last mission was April 18, 1945, 24 days before VE Day.

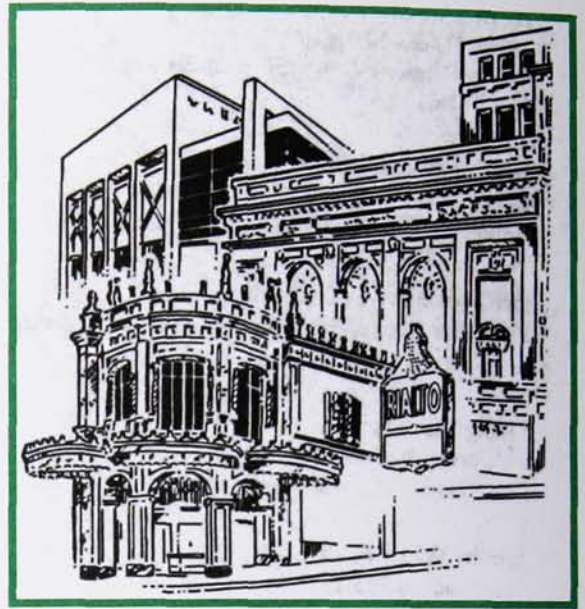
VILLELA, GEORGE B. #22414 30 January 2005 Corporal Villela was assigned to the 68th as an engineer clerk. He arrived at the ETO on the USS Mariposa on 1 May 1943 and received his assignment on May 10. He stayed in the war and returned home on the Queen Mary on 16 June 1943.

WARD, RICHARD C. #22460 4 December 2004. Sgt. Ward enlisted 10 January 1941. He was assigned as Line Chief, 67th Sq. His first arrival to ETO was 10 October, 1942. After three months, returned to USA 26 January 1943. He returned to the ETO on 28 August, 1943 and stayed until May 30, 1945. While flying the northern route the first time, he was one of the members of the B-24 that dropped food and survival material to the "Lost Squadron" the P-38's and B-17 that were forced down in Greenland on the Ice Cap. He was awarded the **Bronze Star**. When he returned home, he became a Jeweler and Watchmaker.





Eskimo Artwork



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Have you registered for the Seattle/Tacoma Reunion? Hurry. We need your registration to guarantee prices. The date are September 4-5-6-7, 2005. Registration forms are in the Winter issue of the 8 Ball Tails. If you lost the magazine call me, 717 846-8948.

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Summer 2005

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SAN ANTONIO ROSE/AKA LIMPIN' OLE SADIE

Before *San Antonio Rose* got her name, she was known as *Limpin' ole Sadie*. She arrived in Shipdham in May, 1944 and carried members of the 67th Sq. to Koblenz, where she was suffered heavy battle damage on 19 July 1944. Nevertheless, 1st. Lt. **John Honmyhr** piloted the plane safely back to Shipdham. She went to Woodbridge, Suffolk for repairs, returning to combat in August. She was transferred to the 68th Sq. on 20 February, 1944, and was hit by Flak on a mission to Magdeburg, 3 March '45. This time 2nd. Lt. **William L. Warner** was flying her under her new name, *San Antonio Rose*. A flak-attack was so damaging, Warner looked for the nearest safe landing field. Five of the crew bailed out at Volkel, Netherlands, but with

some repairs at B-80, was able to make it back to Shipdham. She survived the War and was returned to the Zone of the Interior in May '45.

Navigator on the Magdeburg mission, and one of those who stayed with the plane was none other the 44th's President-Elect, **Paul Kay**.

(Can anyone identify the airman standing in front of the plane?)

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HOWARD MOORE THE MAN THEY CALLED 'PAPPY'



Howard Moore in 1941

Howard Moore was a First Lieutenant when he was assigned to Barksdale, the first home of the 44th Bomb Group. He became Squadron Commander of the 67th. That was in 1942.

"We were a bomb squad, but there were no planes," he remembered. "After a few weeks they received one B-24. It was just sitting there two days, so finally I asked the Line Chief to 'keep me straight about the engine, and I'm going to fly it.' The Line Chief had just graduated from Maintenance School, but he helped me get it going. I took it up, circled a couple of times and brought it back down.

"Wow! Did I get in trouble! **Frank Robison**, my CO chewed me out because I hadn't been checked out on B-24s. Then, a

couple of days later, I was appointed Instructor Pilot."

Moore had joined the National Guard in 1940 and was already licensed as a commercial pilot. When the war broke out, he was assigned to active duty with the 153rd Observation Squadron in Meridian, Mississippi. America had very few pilots at that time, so Moore's commercial license was accepted by the Air Corps. Since he was a first Lieutenant in the Infantry, he retained the rank in the Corps.

From Barksdale the 67th went to Oklahoma City, got their equipment; and off they went across the pond, the first group to arrive in UK. "Preswick, Scotland was 'socked in', so we had to do an Instrument Landing. We missed the runway, and the Control yelled, 'Turn left, turn left. There's a mountain ahead.' We turned, and arrived safely. Then we waited for the rest of the planes...and waited...and waited. None came. The next morning we learned that planes were diverted all over England. Finally we got together and flew into Shipdham."

The RAF did all they could to help the new arrivals. Among other kindnesses, they fed them English food. That was one of many adjustments the airmen had to make—mutton & Brussels sprouts. By this time Moore was a Captain, having achieved that rank before he left the States. "Things moved pretty fast in those days," he laughed.

"When the missions began, the losses were horrible. We were losing planes and crews at an unbelievable rate. We were doing daylight bombing, and with no fighter support, Luftwaffe was slaughtering us. The RAF helped as much as they could. Finally, Frank Robison, our CO went to **Ira Eaker** to complain. They sent him back to the States

...continued on page 4

and put **Leon Johnson** in charge. Then when the P-47s came, it helped; and the P-51s were life-savers.

"On one mission our plane was battle damaged, and I couldn't keep up with the formation. I knew our best bet was to get to the Channel, and I was almost there when **Roy Klinger**, our Tail Gunner reported that there were fifteen fighters closing in. Just as the Gunner started aiming at the fighters, fifteen or sixteen RAF Spitfires came up. What I saw was the most dramatic dog fight I could ever imagine. There were so many contrails, it was like a great big ball of snow up there. We could see fighters going down, and hoped that they were German. We made it across the Channel and got back to Shipdham safely. Absolutely, the RAF saved our lives," he declared. "There was no way we could have survived that attack."

Moore was sad to remember that on a later mission to Kiel, Klinger was flying with another crew. Fighters shelled the tail turret which fell off, carrying the Tail Gunner to his death.

How did he get the lingering title, "Pappy Moore"? The answer, of course, is that he had attained the ripe old age of 28, which was amazingly ancient to his 18-21 year old crew members.

When the 44th went to Africa, Moore was part of the group that were bombing strategic areas in Sicily, in preparation for General Patton's assault on the island. When the Ploesti Raid was in the planning, he had already completed his missions. Having a wife and two babies at home, he opted to hitchhike to London on a transport plane, travelling via Marakesh. From there, he made it home to his family.

His next assignment was to be the personal pilot for General Mark Clark. This took him on flights in and out of Moscow, flying in a B-17; once into Vienna. At one point his skills became known to General Eisenhower, but Mark Clark was not ready to release his prize. When the situation changed, he was

assigned to fly a C-47 to the Presidio in San Francisco.

In 1947, when the Army Air Corps became the U.S. Air Force, Moore was transferred to Carswell in Washington, D.C. with the 7th Bomb Wing. By that time he had risen to the rank of Lt. Colonel.

Next he became Commander of the Base in Rapid City, South Dakota, later Base Commander on B-36s, later Wing Commander on B-36s. From there he returned to Carswell to become Commander of the 11th Bomb Wing. While he was there his Wing won two Fairchild Trophies in an International Bombing Competition. He later flew B-52s.



Brigadier General Howard Moore

His next assignment was at the National War College in Fort McNair in Washington, D.C. Then Wing Commander of Bergstrom AFB, Texas. He was there one year; then on to Altus, Oklahoma, where he was 816 Air Division Commander for two years. Then back to Carswell as 19th Air Division Commander.

Moore's next assignment was Guam, where B-58s were flying. An unexpected health problem arose, and he passed out on the job. They ushered him to the hospital, then informed him that he was grounded,

one of the most sobering moments of his life. From there he went to Ogden, Utah where he was Vice Commander of the Depot. However, with his flying days over, the allure of the Air Force was gone. He retired and moved back to his home in Ft. Worth, Texas. He was 52 years old at that time, and had risen to Brigadier General.

General Dynamics was working on the F-16; so he was a welcome addition to their operation. He was named Chief of Training, a job he held for the next six years.

His last occupation was to take up ranching. He joined a partner, and between them, they had 50 head of cattle. Being a rancher was not as much fun as flying, so he gave up that occupation, and currently enjoys retirement at his home in Ft. Worth with his wife of 72 years. Margaret Myers Moore had been his 7th grade sweetheart. The couple lost one child. Their son, Howard, Jr., followed in his father's footsteps and became a Captain on a major airline. He recently retired, and is now a private pilot for Ratheon.



Howard Moore & Lynden B. Johnson arriving at Carswell.

Howard Moore and Bill Cameron are the only two of the original 90 combat men to complete their tour of 25 Missions.

'The little farm boy from Indiana' has rubbed noses with many of the most powerful people of his era. He laughs that 'he was the only person who ever passed up dinner at the White House.' President Eisenhower invited him, but his friends from the War College were dining at the same time, so he joined them. Later, Ike requested his company at Bergstrom, and they reminisced about the War.



General Ira Eaker met B/General Howard Moore at Ogden, Utah, a great opportunity to exchange war stories, 1965.



Howard Moore and Margaret with John Kennedy at Carswell. 11/2 hours later, Kennedy was assassinated.

THE PRESIDENTS CORNER Roy Owen



After all of the times I have been through the 'passing of the gavel" process, one would think it would become rather routine. However, here it is once again, time to frame some words which will express both the gratitude I feel for again being afforded the opportunity to serve as your leader in this, the most beloved and proud organization, to which I belong. At the same time, I welcome the return to attending to the promises I have made, to continue as best I can, to ensure we hand over to our heirs, the most respected WWII Bomb Group Association in our nation.

The most significant event of this brief two year term we have witnessed is the affiliation of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association with The U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. With the recognition of the Army of the 44th BGVA as the archival parent of the USAAF WWII 44th Bomb Group (H), we have finally found a proper historical home for the 44th Colors and Battle Streamers to fly, and the archival body of our official history to safely reside. For this, we should all be thankful to our Secretary/8BT Editor, Ruth Morse and her Tailgunner husband, Perry, for their diligent management in seeing this project become a reality.

I am really looking forward to our reunion in Tacoma. It is such a beautiful part of the country, and the center of a large part of the air transport production of our nation. Paul Kay has the Welcome Mat laid out for us. See you there!

Your President

(This is the last time)

Roy Owen



THE KIEL RAID REVISITED

Roy Owen wrote a well-researched report on the Kiel Raid in the Spring 1997 issue of the 8 BTs, Vol. 2 – Issue #2. A member of a third generation of **Douglas Myers**, Andrew Turner, his grandson, wrote a documentary on the aftermath, telling the story of the POWs who survived the mission to suffer the hellish consequences of imprisonment.

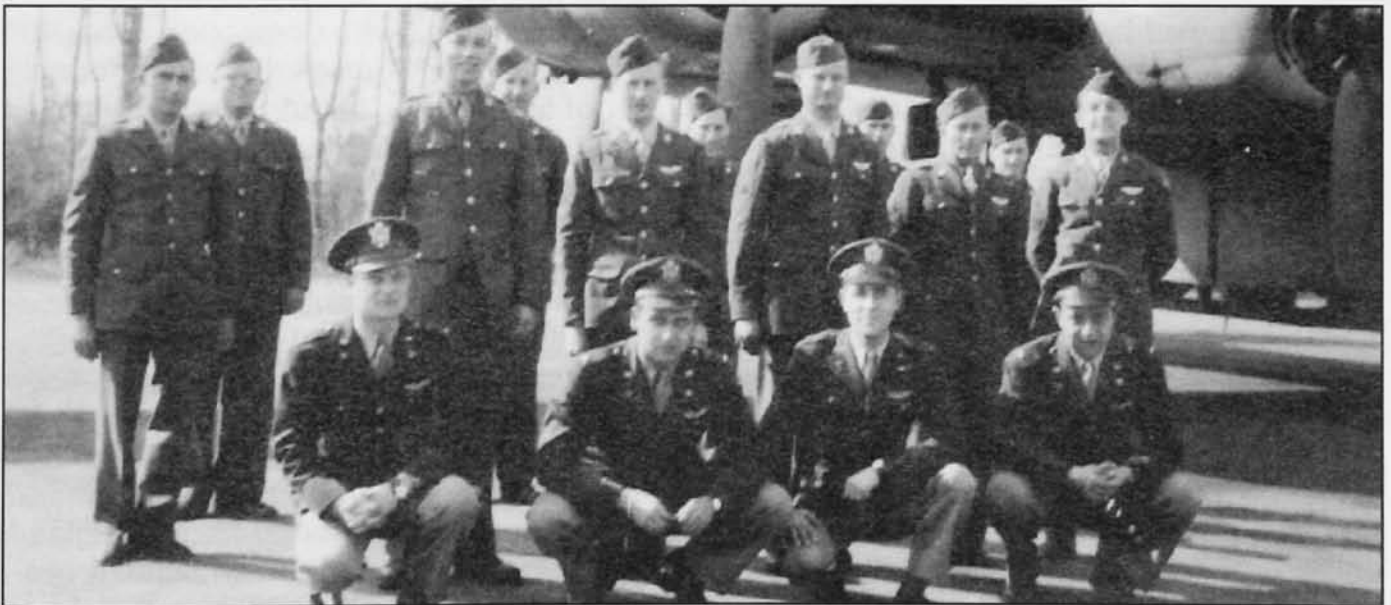
The mission, 14 May 1943, was to the Krupp Submarine Building Works at Kiel, one of the most heavily defended targets in Germany. Its value to the Reich was in production of U-Boats that were successfully attacking Allied shipping. The 44th, led by Col. Leon Johnson, had 21 aircraft following B-17 formations; their assignment, to drop high explosives. The Liberators were to bomb with 100 lb. & 500 lb. cluster incendiaries. The object was to set fire to the rubble created by the Fortresses. According to **Will Lundy's** report, it was the toughest test to date. Enemy Aircraft destroyed by the gunners: 21, 13 probable and 1 damaged.

The 66th Sq. lost *Scrappy*; 67th Sq, lost *Miss Delores*, *Annie Oakley* and *Little Beaver*; *Rugged Buggy* (68th) went down, *Margaret Ann* was not lost, but one gunner was KIA and three were seriously injured. 506th Sq. *Wicked Witch* went down. She had only a nine man crew.

The *Ruthless* was too battle-damaged to land at Shipdham; so she was directed to Ireland for repair. A total of six planes were lost, 25 men were KIA, 27 became POW. Many of the POWs who survived that mission were sent to Stalag Luft III.

Two years later, when the Russians were approaching, they were sent on the infamous Death March, described by Andrew Taylor. His grandfather, 2nd. Lt. **Douglas Myers**, Co-Pilot on the Captain **John W. Swanson** crew; Swanson, Myers, Schiefelbusch and Sidney Bank survived and became POWs. Wolf, Mears, Christensen, Duncan and Glemboski were all KIA. *Wicked Witch* was the second 506 aircraft and crew lost since joining the 44th in March.

For the success of this mission, the Group was awarded its first Unit Citation.



Crew of the *Wicked Witch*

Front Row L-R 1st. Lt. James C. (Curt) MacAtee, Pilot; 2nd Lt. Douglas B. Myers, Co-Pilot; 2nd. Lt. Richard L. Schiefelbusch, Navigator; 2nd. Lt. Sydney W. Bank, Bombardier.

Second Row L-R S/Sgt. Joseph B. Duncan, Left Waist Gunner; S/Sgt. George E. Christensen, Right Waist Gunner; S/Sgt. Stanley W. Gliemboski, Tail Gunner; T/Sgt. William J. Mears, Top Turret gunner; T/Sgt. Frederick T. Wolf, Radio Operator.

Back Row: Maintenance Crew. Names not known.

THE DEATH MARCH OF THE KRIEGIES

*As written by Andrew Turner,
Grandson of Douglas B. Myers*

On Saturday, January 28th, 1945, the prisoners of Stalag Luft III could hear artillery rumbling in the distance. The Russian army was advancing and was reported to be about 22 miles away from their camp in Sagan, Germany.

It was surmised one of three things would happen. The first was that the Russians would overtake the camp and the Goons (German guards) would surrender or flee. If this happened, the Kriegies (a short form of the German word for POW) expected their liberation would come without fear. The second option may be an order from a fervent Nazi official for the prisoners to be executed. If this were the case, the Goons were sure to have a fight on their hands. The last option would be a mass march across Germany. To this option, American Brigadier General Charles Vandermann said, "In that event we will suffer many casualties, and it will be a March of Death." This last option was soon to become a reality.

The men had been expecting something to happen for days, but on the evening of the 28th the announcement came. Orders were given to evacuate the camp post-haste, they would begin marching in one hour. In his 1960 book *Krieggie*, Kenneth W. Simmons describes the time directly after the order was given.

"The next forty minutes of accelerated activities surpassed all records for assembling and preparing for a mass-moving project. Closets were emptied, food divided, packs rolled, beds disassembled, kitchen stripped of food and dishes, tools and weapons were uncovered. Most of us dressed with two pairs of socks, two suits of underwear, two shirts, overcoat, hat and G.I. gloves. By ten-thirty most of us were ready and waiting to move out."

The situation was even more grim for the Goons who would be guarding them, than for the Kriegies themselves; there were about

8 guards for every 100 prisoners. The Goons were just as cold, just as hungry, and just as ready for the war to end as the prisoners. By 11:30, the Kriegies were beginning their march from Sagan toward Berlin. Simmons says:

"I had never expected to be marching from Sagan in the direction of Berlin...the mark made on us at Sagan would never be erased, and I knew it. We moved up the long hillside. The column slowed down as the climb grew steeper. Somewhere near the top I turned around and saw Stalag Luft III in flames. The fire covered several square miles, and the flames leaped high in the cold air. This was the end of Stalag Luft III and the beginning of the March of Death in Germany."

In *The Longest Mission*, a 1995 reunion publication by the Association of Former Prisoners of Stalag Luft III, the fire blazing below and the tremendous migrations is given greater definition:

"Over in the North Compound, Block 104 went up in flames, small retribution for murder of 50 Kriegies. It had been the origin point of the 'Great Escape' tunnel. The West Camp moved out at 12:30 a.m.; the North and Center at 3:45 a.m., and the East at 6:00 a.m. The great exodus was on, a line of men stretching for 20 miles."

The Kriegies were not the only reluctant travellers on the road. Lt. Richard Schiefflebusch had been a POW at Sagan for almost 2 years. In a World War II Odyssey, he describes the departure from Sagan:

"We had strange, mixed feelings – glad to be leaving the camp, but fearful about our future in the extremely cold, snowy night. After several hours of marching the German command arranged for us to stop for rest and to receive rations. Unfortunately, the stopping place was a windswept autobahn. The food supplied was black bread and white margarine. After about an hour we went on

with the march, much colder and less confident than before. One of the principal aspects of our march was the excessive number of civilians, especially old people and children, who were crowding the roads as we moved toward our still unknown destination. They were, of course, trying to escape the westward moving Russian armies that were over running their villages and their homes. The estimates were given in the historical account of this migration was 6,000,000 people. They were mainly Polish and German. It was the most abject, massive human tragedy that I have ever seen. The procession included people with small horse-drawn carts, wagons and people with sleds and people with backpacks, all trying to survive."

Vernon L. Burda writes about one incident during the first hours of the march in his composition *I Saw Ten Thousand Men Cry*;

"The column of men was terrifically long and we moved very slowly. Along the highway (Highway 99), we met the once mighty Wehrmach Ski Troopers, all in white – and these 'Supermen' were begging cigarettes from us as we passed. They were either about 40 or 50 years old or young kids – headed for the front."

Simmons' account of the beginning hours of the March of Death is very similar to Schiefelbusch's.

"Our travel along the highway was almost paralysed by the thousands of people moving in one direction. These civilians were bitter and demoralized, and many of them, I felt sure, would rather surrender to the Russians than continue. The civilians were, in fact, prisoners too, for the S.S. troops moved them by the force of rifles and bayonets. Every now and then some civilian would sit down and refuse to go on. A rifle shot allowed the civilian to sit there forever."

On the night of Sunday the 29th, The Germans allowed an overnight stop. Schiefelbusch was able to grab some sleep in a barn. Simmons and about two thousand

others spent the night packed into a small church. The Kriegies began to realize their situation was even worse than they had expected. Many of the men were becoming very ill. Simmons describes his night in the church:

"The church was packed so tightly that any man who found it necessary to move more than a few feet was almost certain to step on someone else. Toilets were set up outside, and there was a continuous line to and from them. With two thousand men in one small building, lines were moving all night long. Many men became desperately sick at their stomach and were never able to reach the door. Dozens of men rushed up aisles vomiting all the way. Others with dysentery stepped on hands, feet and stomachs, trying to get outside. Nerves were strained to the breaking point."

The next stop on the March of Death would be Muskau. After hours upon hours of marching in the freezing cold, sleet and snow, they arrived. The men were to be sheltered in an industrial area, in abandoned factories and plant buildings. This was somewhat alarming, since they would be targets for air raids, but as Simmons put it, "Most of us were too tired to care". Simmons and Burda were housed in brick buildings with heaters. Burda describes it as dry, warm and lit..."and best of all, we got German black bread and marge. We were too tired to do much but eat – and then we slept on the concrete floor."

Schiefelbusch's experience at Muskau shows the enormity of the March by the contrast in available shelter.

"On the last phase of marching, our group was on the tail end of the marching line. This meant that we would be the last group to be sheltered. After an hour we were herded into the only shelter left for us, an abandoned glass factory. A 30' x 20' massive iron slide door designed to close us off from the wind and snow wouldn't close. It was off the slide mechanism and couldn't

be moved. So we tried to make the best of it. We arranged those in the worst shape into a compact group on the cement floor of the huge enclosure and found blankets to put over them. We searched through their clothing and back packs to find something for them to eat. We reasoned that their bodies had simply run out of heat, and that we must help them to replenish it. Sleep for most of the helpers was out of the question until we got those in shock or those convulsing stabilized so that they could rest. We lit fires, but the smoke became so thick and dangerous that we had to put the fires out."

The next day, the Kriegies would make the march some 18 miles to Spremberg where the second phase of their nightmare would continue. Burda says:

"We saw plenty of signs that reminded us of home – Esso, Mobiloil, Kodak, Agfa and others. The Germans crowded us into the old French 40 and 8s', and I do mean crowded. There were 55 men and a guard in our car...I lay on the floor and several times I woke up with four men laying zig zag across me, so that I couldn't even move...we had gotten to the point where we didn't care where we were going, as long as we got there. The Germans gave us no water, and that was no fun. Most of the guys had loose bowels and were throwing up."

Somehow the Kriegies were able to find some sort of order in this chaotic environment. They would stand and lay down in shifts, organized areas of the cars for toilets, cared for the sick, and attempted to get along with each other. The major problem was the lack of water and the refusal of the Goons to provide it for them. Eventually it came to a breaking point, as Simmons explained:

"All of us started hollering 'Wasser, Wasser.' We had made up our minds we were either going to get some water or die. The station was crowded with civilians trying to board trains. There was a pond just

ahead of the engine, and there were water fountains in the station. We broke ranks en masse, and started for the pond and water fountains. Guards fired in the air, but all of us moved to the water. Men drank and filled their cans and jars with water. Until that moment I had never realized the value of plain water. It was the most valuable necessity of life. Without water, men became animals."

It would be four days before the men would arrive at Mooseberg and their new home StalagVII-A. The buildings at VII-A were meant to house 100 prisoners, but were now housing 300. The latrines were overflowing, and there was excrement all over camp. The fleas, lice, bedbugs and rats were rampant. Many of the Kriegies had not changed clothes or bathed in over a month. The Kriegies would spend the rest of the winter at Mooseberg in bad conditions. Schiefelbusch tells of the conditions:

"We came into a louse infested, crowded, hungry, under heated and confused environment. I honestly believe the Germans were doing their best, but their transportation system was breaking down. Red Cross supplies could not get in. The communication with our home folks was non-existent. The Germans literally did not have enough food and fuel for the camp, and worst of all, they did not have any clear-cut policy for running the camp."

On April 29th things were about to get better. Tanks were seen in the distance. A short battle ensued and ended quickly with a tank from Patton's Third Army crashing through the gates. The soldiers were throwing rations to the prisoners as if it were candy. Celebration ensued as the Kriegies knew that for them, the war was really over. Burda explain the moment very passionately.

"Then, suddenly, for no apparent reason, a hush fell over the compound, and all eyes turned toward the town in which stood two high church steeples...and then it occurred, a

scene, the happening of which brought tears streaming down the face of every American prisoner-of-war, and a sob from every throat – we saw the greatest sight, the most emotional moment we would ever witness – raised before our eyes and flying defiantly above one of the church steeples was the symbol of our beloved land – The American Flag. Yes, the tears flowed from over ten thousand faces that day – over ten thousand unashamed faces, as that flag shocked us back with memories of the place we all held most dear – our beloved land, our home.”

Many of the Kriegies in Stalag Luft III were airmen who had been shot down. They may not have fought the war on the front lines, but they fought a different type of war – a war in their mind. A war against discouragement, hopelessness and despair was their fight. They battled to keep their fellow Kriegies in high spirits, to make sure they all saw their homes again. A bond developed, a

bond allowing them to make the march from Sagan. A union enabling a man to carry a stranger on his back for days through the snow, and to never meet him again was not uncommon. There was an inner strength, empowering a sick man on the verge of death to march tough arctic conditions with only a vision of home to move his tired legs. Many of these men left Sagan and never completed the march to Mooseberg. However, many more did make it home to their families, careers and lives. They have a fascinating story to tell and one which needs to be remembered.

Ed. Note: This well-researched treatise was written by Andrew Turner, grandson of Douglas B. Myers, a co-pilot on the John Swanson Crew, 506 Sq. Their plane went down on May 14, 1943 on their 5th mission to the Krupp Submarine Works in Kiel, Germany.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED

The 2nd Air Division is planning a huge turnout of veterans for the upcoming unveiling of the Air Force Memorial in Arlington, October 14, 2006. They are asking all Bomb Groups to be participants. Until now the Air Force has been the only branch of the service that has not been memorialised.

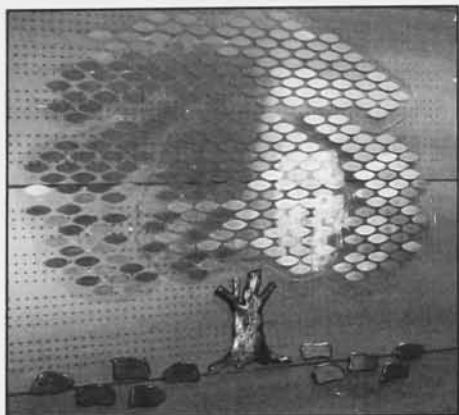
The Department of Defence recently released the final design for this monument which will be placed at the promontory of the Arlington Naval Annex Property, overlooking the Pentagon. The design is intended to evoke the soaring images of flight, while providing a spectacular visual gateway into the nation's capital.

Although the 44th held their Reunion in Washington two years ago, the Board is considering a return for this momentous event. The final decision will be made at the Tacoma Reunion, Labour Day Weekend.

Two members of the 44th, **Dick Butler** and **Roy Owen**, have been involved in the creation of this overdue edifice.

Any veteran is welcome. Membership in the 2 AD is not required.

THE SECOND AIR DIVISION AT SAN ANTONIO



The Donor Tree

More than 275 members of the 2 AD, eleven from England, gathered at the Hyatt Regency, front door to the Riverwalk, in the famous town where the Alamo was lost, but Texas was born. **Dick and Ardith Butler, Perry and Ruth Morse** carried the torch for the 44th. It was a gathering of happy remembrances and a strong determination to launch new initiatives.

The Heritage League brought photos of the Memorial Library in Norwich, among them, the Donor Tree which features the

names of those who have made contributions—bronze leaves, gold leaves and decorative rocks, each indicating the size of the gift. There are also dark leaves, awaiting donors.

Two generations of Anglicans enjoyed the Mexican treats along the Riverwalk and explored the shops at Market Square. Matthew Martin, Chairman of the Memorial Trust Board of Governors thanked the 2 AD for their generosity in establishing the Memorial Library, and reported on current activities. The current Fulbright Scholar has completed her commitment, and will be returning to the States. A new one has already been assigned.

David Hastings, a member of the Board of Governors, was effervescent in his gratitude for the fact that Americans came to England in their 'darkest hour', to bring defeat to the Nazis. A RAF Pilot, Hastings related his delight in once having the opportunity to pilot a B-24, Diamond Lil. This Liberator, owned by the Confederate Air Force, is one of only two that are still airborne, and probably the last that will ever cross 'the pond'.



Dick Butler stands by as Ardith shows her award, presented for her many years of dedicated service. Jean Hastings was also cited.



Howard Nesbitt (93rd), Earl Zimmerman (389th) and Perry Morse (506) light a candle for those lost in the Ploesti Mission.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

Well, the wind has dropped and the rain is now warm; it has to be Shipdham in the summer-time. There is a good deal of flying going on and the club's new motor glider is working hard, getting its pilots through their check rides, and in some cases, their first full licenses.

Our hard working Museum Curator, Peter Steele, revalidated his power pilot's license a week ago. Not bad, when you think he was flying Mosquitoes over Germany, just a couple of years after you guys had been there with the B-24s. So we are not only getting the youngsters airborne again, but also returning some 'retired' pilots back into the air for a second go.

In the last edition I told you that the Aero Club was taking part in the Shipdham village fete to celebrate the VENJ 60th anniversary. Well, we did, and it was superb. Even the Shipdham weather held out for us, and the club put on a large display featuring one of the gliders from the Shipdham fleet together with a stall showing and selling items of memorabilia, together with badges and stickers of the Flying Eight Balls. We also did a double fly past with one of the club planes immediately after the opening ceremony. The Aero Club stand soon became the centre of attraction for all the visiting veterans, Army, Navy and RAF, who all wanted to pass by and share their memories of their WWII experiences. Obviously we also had several local villagers who also held fond memories of the air crews and ground crews who flew out of Station 115 back in the 40s. There was a lot of reminiscing!!!!!!!!!!!!!! With a traditional British 'Town Crier' keeping the whole thing going, it was a memorable day that only came to a close well into the early hours of the following Sunday morning.

We are planning a concerted working party to push along the work of the 44th museum as progress has slowed somewhat after Peter Steele damaged his arm quite badly, and was put out of action for many months. He feels that a good concerted push over this winter should get us back on track.

Thanks to all of you who made contact with words of sympathy and encouragement after the bombs that recently shook London. As you guys that were here in WWII know, a few bombs wouldn't shake Londoners that much, and certainly would not stop Londoners going about their normal business. It's just so hard to understand why anyone would be so set against the freedoms that you guys fought so hard for here in Europe all those years ago. Particularly as you and I know, they just won't win. 9/11 has told them that already.

Look after yourselves,
Love and best wishes from your English friends,
Peter Bodle



44TH MEMBERS HONOR CAPTAIN ROBERT KEYES



A Memorial Service held May 13, 2005 for Robert Keyes, co-pilot on the Spagnola crew (67th Sq.) was attended by L-R (rear) Lee & Mary Aston, Bernadette & John Gately; (front) Mrs. Marie Keyes, daughter Louise Rutky. Aston was Navigator on Keyes' crew; Gately was an aerial gunner.



Aston arranged a Flyover from Gabreski AFB, Long Island, NY for Keyes' Memorial Service. Keyes' cremated ashes were scattered over Peconic Bay by an AF helicopter near the Keyes' summer home on the Bay.

INTRODUCING THE WEBMASTERS



Guy Adams (Beverly's son) and Jerry Folsom

When **Jerry Folsom** was Treasurer of the 44th BGVA, his enthusiasm for the 44th BG history inspired his wife's son to suggest setting up a Web Page. Guy Adams, our first Webmaster, presented the idea to the 44th Board at the Barksdale Reunion. He was so inspiring and enthusiastic; the Board authorized him to proceed. Jerry provided the information, introduction to the 44th, brief history of the group, the front picture and other pertinent information; **Mike Mikolowski** supplied most of the personal pictures.

Guy set up a meeting for Jerry with a Salt Lake City computer company, X-Mission. They were

kind enough to accommodate this veterans group. The Web Page came into existence without cost to the Bomb Group.

Guy set up the Website with the intention of making it very simple to navigate; and as he describes, 'there were lots of 'bells and whistles' left out that are on today's 'fancy' websites.' This was a deliberate decision, as he felt that in time, someone would take the website to the 'next level', and include the military database and other more interactive parts.

With a full time job and being a scoutmaster plus a member of a very active family, Guy's schedule was extremely busy. However, the work he had done proved to be truly beneficial. People who didn't even know there was a 44th BG contacted Jerry, many joined, increasing our membership, some came to the next reunion. In fact, Jerry's computer was filled with hundreds of E-Mails, asking for information about missions and lost friends. Guy's life got busier; so when the 44th Board voted to transfer the Website to Arlo Bartsch, he was very happy to release the password to someone who he considered more skilled. He stated, "I wanted the Website to become much more than I could make it – and now it can be."

The 44th is truly indebted to Jerry & Guy for their dedication to this noble project. (Guy's occupation is Assistant Director for High Performance Computing System, University of Utah.)

Next in line for the title of Webmaster was Arlo Bartsch. Arlo knew a great deal about WWII—he had been a pilot on, *of all things*, a B-17, 379th Bomb Group, 525th Squadron, based at Kimbolton, England. He flew 37 missions.

After developing combat proficiency, flying as a Co-pilot for 20 missions, 1st Lt. Bartsch was assigned to fly as the Aircraft Commander, teaching new pilots how to handle combat. He can proudly say that in the nineteen different planes that he flew as Command Pilot, with 114 different crew members, not one was wounded or killed, none bailed out, none became POW. He was there in the latter part of the war, 1944-45, and was lucky enough to be spared attacks by enemy fighters. Flak was in constant supply.



Arlo Bartsch

Having survived the war, like most veterans, he went home and filled his life with marriage and family. Tragedies struck, and after the death of his second wife, he searched for new direction in his life.

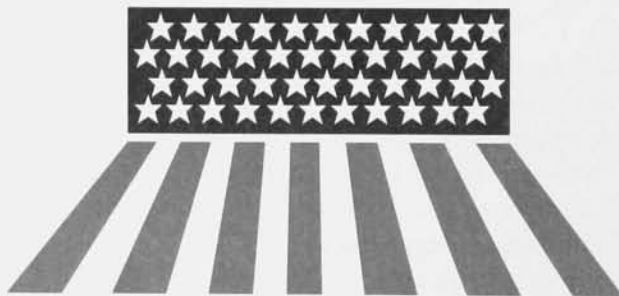
Forty five years had passed since he had climbed out of a Fortress. From an article in the local paper, he learned that Boeing was celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the B-17; so he attended, only to learn that he didn't know a single soul at the gathering. He went home and set up a simple spread sheet with all planes and all crews of his Bomb Group, and then decided the entire 8th Air Force should be on record. Unfortunately, it just didn't happen.

At that time veterans were interested in placing plaques and monuments to herald their activities, and creating a database was too new of an idea to attract their attention. Only his own group were supportive of the idea.

When Arlo ran into **Will Lundy** at a Second Air Division Reunion in Chicago, they found they had mutual goals. Will realized that there was a way to preserve and distribute all the information about the 44th Bomb Group which he was laboriously collecting. When the 44th BG met in Savannah, Arlo demonstrated his creation; and at last, Computer Generated Data Ltd. found a group of airmen who saw value in his work. Now, ten years later, almost all the data has been entered. Disks will soon be available for all members. Technology has made it possible for the details of three years of air war in the greatest conflict in human history, to be preserved in minute detail. Arlo hopes your children and grandchildren will put it into their computers, so the stories will never be lost.

In the Winter edition of 8 Ball Tails, you were given a lesson on accessing the 44th BG information from cyberspace. YOUR DISK WILL HAVE MUCH MORE INFORMATION. Do not put it in a drawer, to be dealt with at a later date. Share it with your children, grandchildren, local library, VFW, American Legion...any place that has a computer. This is your history. You helped win the War, so at this point in your life, there is nothing to gain by modesty. Here's an interesting bit of knowledge that you might enjoy—once you've installed it in your own computer, you can add anything to your own history that you wish. You can embellish your war experience to your own liking. How's that for a challenge? In your own office, you can even be a brigadier general! (Your disk will continue to hold the official record. Your computer can say anything you like.)

If you wish to contact Arlo, call (501) 922-5247; his e-mail address is afbass@aol.com. He will be demonstrating the use of the Database at the General Meeting of the 44th BGVA at the Tacoma Reunion over Labour Day. Come and get an education.



THE CONSOLIDATED LIBERATOR

(THE BOYS IN THE B-24)

By Christopher D. Clark

**The Consolidated Liberator w/the boys of the B-24,
From Ploesti to Berlin, they knocked on Hitler's door
In the days before 9/11, Al-queda, and Iraq
The boys of the B-24 dropped many an egg from
their bomb rack.**

**Off to fight on a distant shore, the roar that was heard,
was of the B-24
From the boys of 42 or 43, came the men
that set Europe FREE.**

**For all that they have done, we can't repay,
but thank God for the eggs they dropped
From their bomb bays,
for these men in the B-24,
all of their history is now folklore.**

Ed. Note: Chris Clark is a regular researcher of 44th history in the National Archives

From **George Washburn**, 44th Vice President to the 2nd Air Division:

The Second Air Division Association has opened a fund drive to support "Second to None: The Legendary Liberator Gallery" at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in Savannah, Georgia. Approximately \$87,000 is needed to complete this major centerpiece of the 2nd Air Division exhibit.

The exhibit centers around the nose section of "Fighting Sam" on loan from the Imperial War Museum in Duxford, England. It contains new exhibits and graphics and a B-24 Flight Simulator. A large screen will feature original B-24 combat footage.

I would encourage all 44thers to contribute to this exhibit. Donations may be sent to E. W. Nothstein, 2nd ADA Treasurer, who will pass the funds on to the Museum. Make your donation out to "2 ADA Second to None Legendary Liberator Campaign" and mail it to him at 40 Meadow Drive, Spencerport, NY 14559-1142.

THEY'RE ATTACKING OUR FRIENDS

July 7, 2005

From Kevin Watson (longtime friend of 44th BGVA): "I was at Heathrow Airport in a hotel when the bombs went off. I thought something was up, as all of a sudden my cell phone would not work.

"Something has got to be done about the religion that allows them to commit atrocities in the name of God."

The terrorist attack in London was shocking on both sides of the ocean. The close relationship between the two countries was evident at the 2 AD Reunion when **Perry Morse** and David Hastings met, each thanking the other for kindnesses extended in WWII and later.

Americans are cheering, everytime Scotland Yard catches another Terrorist.

Elizabeth Mills is conducting an ongoing search to locate Jack Holtzman, friend of Ackerman. He was the Bombardier on the Fineman Crew, 66 Sq. Any information about his whereabouts can be directed to the editor of the Eight Ball Tails.



David Hastings & Perry Morse



Elizabeth Mills of Eastbourne placed a cross for Edward Ackerman, her lost sweetheart; and James Bolin, her friend. The *Ruth-less* crashed February 2, 1944, carrying the entire crew to their death.



BUTTS BROW, CRASH SITE OF THE *RUTH-LESS* They said they would always remember, and they do. Butts Brow, 29 May, 2005

Warren F. McPherson Remembers When THE WILD BLUE YONDER TURNED BLACK

Flak! Ask any crew member to define flak, and you might get dozens of answers, because it meant many things to each of us. These meanings would include bitter memories, fear, anxiety, pain, frustration, despair and even determination. It usually meant terrifying nightmares which continued for years to come.

It was never hard to identify flak. The first time we saw it, we knew beyond question what it was. On our first bombing raid, the deeper our bomber got into Nazi territory, the closer we were to seeing our first burst of flak. We weren't disappointed!

Suddenly, just outside the window of the left waist position, it was like the burst of an artificial bouquet from a magician's sleeve. It announced its arrival with a roar like the violent clash of a mighty set of cymbals and an angry burst of flame which quickly clothed itself in a puffy cloud as black as an undertaker's shroud.

Each flak burst propelled scores of white-hot metal slivers scampering in every direction through the subzero atmosphere—searching for a bomber on which to hitch a ride. We never welcomed such hitchhikers, but many found their mark. Sometimes their mark was a vulnerable gas tank, an essential engine part, a control cable, or a fragile landing gear. Sometimes it was a pilot, navigator, bombardier or other crew member!

The first burst of flak meant we would see more, and how we hoped we would see it. On one raid we had dropped our bombs squarely on the target and were headed for home. Suddenly, the thing every airman dreaded happened. There was a violent blast like the shock of a hundred sonic booms all rolled into one. Our heavy bomber was pitched upward like an impatient pitcher flips the baseball, waiting for the batter to get ready for the pitch. We couldn't see the flak,

but we heard and felt it just under us.! We knew the next blast might not miss us—but it did! However, the plane flying just outside my window was not as fortunate. It caught a direct hit, and I watched it nose over, make a long dive to the earth below, and disappear in a ball of flame.

We feared flak much more than enemy fighter planes. Since we flew in tight formation with scores of other planes, and were in constant radio contact with them, hundreds of eyes analysed every inch of heaven and earth. When an enemy fighter was spotted, we all knew about it, and dozens of machine guns were prepared to welcome him. Most of the time our own P-38, P-47 or P-51 fighter escorts would swoop in and drive the enemy away. But the flak had no warning. Suddenly it was there, all around us. Sometimes the suspense was nearly too much to bear.

Flak meant a threat to survival, and this challenged us. The Air Corps provided flak suits made of overlapping metal plates sewn in canvas. Sections of these snapped together to form an armless and legless 20th century suit of armour. I always scouted around and gathered up any extra flak suits—or parts of them—and put them on the floor to stand on in the waist position.

We had another trick, too. On cloudy days the Nazi tracked us by radar, and we used chaff, which was shredded aluminium foil, just like the icicles we used for Christmas tree decoration. As we threw chaff out of the plane, it fluttered toward earth and reflected the Nazi radar beams back to them. This threw their calculations way off as to where our planes really were. We revelled in seeing their flak burst violently among the chaff, which floated far below us!

Warren F. McPherson (66th Sq.) was a gunner on the James N. Williams crew.

MAIL & E-MAIL



Ralph Becker (506 Sq.) wore his flight jacket to an air show in Dallas, Texas, 3 April 2005, and found some unexpected admirers. Brad Wallingford, nephew of **Thomas Lloyd Bartley** (506 Sq.) joined Glenn Bartley, son and nephew of the **Fount** and **Thomas Bartley**, (twins) on the **Hruby** crew. As members of the second-generation of 44thers they are delighted to see the Flying 8 Ball Patch and other memorabilia that reminds them of the colourful history of their family. Brian made this suggestion to the 44th: "Hit the PX; show those colors. You never know who you could run into." *Ed. Note: Becker was a Navigator on the Leo Crooks crew.*



Ralph Becker

Aviation Thoughts: If God meant man to fly, He'd have given him more money. Flying is the second greatest thrill known to man...Landing is the first!

Col. **Robert R. Gideon**, 15th Air Force, reports that during the air war there were more than 17,000 Americans and 1600 heavy bombers over Germany at one time.

Ed. Note: If Hitler had known those figures, he might have committed suicide sooner.

From the Fredericksburg Standard Radio Post Fredericksburg, Texas:

The first person to successfully pilot a fixed wing aircraft was not Orville and Wilbur Wright. It was Jacob Brodbeck, who, in his spare time, created an airship which he flew on September 20, 1865 in an area near San Antonio. A German immigrant, he was talented in many areas, his greatest in aerodynamics. Many of his basic designs are in use today. It is reported that his craft had wings, a propeller, a rudder and was powered by coiled springs. He gave up on the project when his plane crashed, even though he came through without major injury. *Can you believe this?*

From David & Carol Brubaker, Towanda, PA: The Pennsylvania State Police honoured a WWI, seven WWII soldiers and three civilians who had died in the service of our country, among them, **Frank Albert** (506 Sq.) a State Policeman. The Pennsylvania House of Representatives honoured the organization on the 100th Anniversary of their establishment as a law enforcement unit. Albert was pilot on the *A/C I'll Be Back*, which bombed an Aircraft Components & Assembly Plant in Friedrichshafen, 18 March 1944. Although the plane had already taken a hit in #4 engine, Albert continued to the target and dropped the bombs. Immediately after 'bombs away', the fire on #4 had spread to the wing, so he ordered the crew to bail out. By staying with the plane long enough for as many of his crew could escape, he lost his life, along with his co-pilot and three gunners. The State Police Hall in Wyoming, Pennsylvania was named in his honor. The Fraternal Order of Police Lodge plan to place a memorial on the Academy grounds, honouring all State Police who lost their lives after volunteering to serve our country in wartime.

Signs tell a story:

On a Plumber's Truck: "Don't sleep with a drip. Call your plumber."

In a Non-smoking area: "If we see smoke, we will assume you are on fire and take appropriate action."



From **Jack Francis** (68th Sq.): I recently checked the Database and realized that I have not been credited for two of my missions: April 5 & 7, 1945. I have the Flak Charts that we were issued for those missions.

On April 5 the crew was comprised of **R. C. Pitts**, Pilot; **William F. Cornelly**, CP; **Jack Francis**, Navigator; **Floyd McCracken**, Bombardier; **Thomas West**, Engineer; **Douglas Brown**, Radio Operator; and **Raymond Zgoda**, Tail Gunner. The Waist Gunners were either **Jack Waddle** or **Robert Miller**. I do not have the crew list for April 7. *Does anybody have any information about missions on those two days?*

Blessed are the flexible, for they will not get bent out of shape!

To everybody on the Internet: Do we have your current e-mail address? We have been fortunate that those who pay dues yearly keep us informed. The Lifetime Members do not fill out renewals, so we have no way of knowing their address changes.

Norman Nutt has undertaken the task of collecting those addresses that he is able to acquire. Please help him update his list. His e-mail address is norm7783@charter.net, and while you are at it, send it to Arlo Bartsch, also: abas@aol.com. He wants to keep everyone updated on the Web Page.

Are you thinking of moving? Give us your new address & phone number. **Got a new Zip Code?** Tell us. The post office has a lot of problems with bulk mail, but we have a better chance of getting your 8 Ball Tails to your mailbox if we have all the facts.



David Webster, an avid 44th historian, went to England, and was conducted on tours to Shipdham and Cambridge by Steve Adams. Steve gave David the honor of placing the 44th wreath at the Wall of Honor on Remembrance Day at Madingly.

David Webster honors the men of the 44th Bomb Group who gave all.



David Webster on Memorial Day



"Well, they make good razor blades." - Hermann Goring's opinion of American production capabilities.
Ed. Note: Obviously he still had a lot to learn.



Peter Bodle sent an E-Mail of the British commemoration of VJ Day: A Lancaster Bomber, escorted by a Spitfire and a Hurricane flew over Buckingham Palace. There were between 250,000 and 500,000 people in the Mall. The Queen and Royal Family were on the balcony of 'Buck House', just as she was with Winston Churchill in 1945. The bomb doors opened and a million poppies fell to earth to commemorate those who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and peace. The London Daily Mirror carried this powerful message: "65 years ago over the same summer skies, Spitfires and Hurricanes, and the young men who flew them, saved my little country, and in saving it, helped save the world from a terrible darkness.

So if those bloody cowards with their sodding beards, heads with tea-towels wrapped round them, and their 'jihads' against innocent women and children think they can do better than Hitler, or Napoleon or Phillip the Second of Spain or any of the rest of them, they'll be in for a surprise."

Ed. Note: *Hoorah for the Brits.*



FOR SALE

Mary Aston is selling lapel pins of WWII Medals: 8th Air Force, DFC, Air Medal, Purple Heart, POW, European-African Mediterranean Theater and WWII Victory Medal. The price of each is \$9 + 37 cents postage. Also, a leaded glass depiction of the Flying 8 Ball. Proceeds go to the 44th BGVA. Contact Mary at 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635. Specify pin name and number of each type.

I'm back to AOL.
Please send my
messages to:
rdavismorse@aol.com
Thanks,
Ruth W. Davis Morse

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- Flying 8 Ball Felt Patches (about 6 inches diameter) 15.00 + 1.00 Postage
- Flying 8 Ball Squadron Pins (Indicate Squadron) 5.00 + .50 Postage
- Blue Liberator Shirts (Light Blue with B-24 designs) 30.00 + 3.00 Postage
- 44th Bumper Stickers 2.00 (Postage Incl.)

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From the Bob SeEVERS collection: "Returning to Shipdham"



Cartoon by Bob Stevens, "From the Ground Up":
Can anyone name the plane that came back from Ploesti with corn stalks in the bomb bay?

**SEE YOU IN
TACOMA
September, 4th
DON'T
MISS IT!**



WILL SEZ

At long last, and after over 10 years of efforts, the revised Roll of Honor Casualties book is completed, printed, and will soon be available for sale. It seemed that this time would never arrive, but I am very happy to advise one and all that 200 copies are now available.

The book is hardbound, contains approximately 467 pages and includes data covering all of the 44th BG's men killed in action and also several of our men who died in service through accidents and illness.

In some instances, men from other military services are also appropriately included when they were killed in association with our men. Included in this category is a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient and that story.

For those of you who will be attending our annual reunion over Labour Day in Tacoma, WQ, there will be a supply on hand there. The price will be \$45, but if shipping is involved, shipping and handling cost must be added. This extra will be in the \$5 to \$6 range.

With the completion of the work to revise and publish this book, I announced that I had selected the final repository for most of the material that I had accumulated over the past thirty five years. This was after visiting the new Army facilities, the United States Army War College in Carlisle, PA. At that time I felt that I should release most of this material as quickly as possible and "retire". However, in the process of reviewing some of these items, I was reminded of several other facets of our 44th BG history, I have elected to temporarily put a hold on most of it. I felt that I would need much of it in order to write up a few of these stories or events that

I feel are important enough to warrant further coverage.

For instance, the D-Day story has never been adequately covered; we have not published any data about our 'fleet' of Grand Dames, as I call them. They include many Liberators that completed the war with 70 or more missions: Old Iron Corset completed 130 with no abort! Included in that category also is good old Lemon Drop, an original 'D' model, that had so many 'firsts' and records, including 31 months of flying by ending up as our 'Cowboy' lead formation aircraft.

Another subject near to my heart is the need to honor the many ground personnel who courageously volunteered for combat duty to fill the many vacancies in our combat crews due to injuries and deaths. At that early time in the war, absolutely no replacements were available.

These ground personnel bravely volunteered to fill those vacancies so that we could put all of our very few planes in the air. Many of them did not survive.

My plans remain the same. This collection will be placed at Carlisle. It will be delayed until I can compile a few of these untold stories.

Will



FOLDED WINGS

*There is no death! The stars go down
To rise upon some other shore,
And bright in heaven's jewelled crown
They shine forevermore.*

J. L. McCreery

Coleman, Underwood # 19796 506 Sq. 3 February 2005 S/Sgt. Coleman flew 29 missions on the **H.K.Landall** crew as Left Waist Gunner. His first flight was 8 April 1944. The Landall crew was among those assigned on 3 May 1944 to wipe out the V-1 sites at Wizernes, France, which had been striking Britain on a regular basis. On D-Day he flew to the Invasion Sites at Caen with Capt. **J. N. McFadden** as Command pilot. The crew flew in *The Banana Barge, Gipsy Queen, My Ever Lovin' Gal, Cape Cod Special, Passion Pit* and *My Peach*.

His last mission was 29 June 1944 to Magdeburg, the Krupp Aircraft Factory. They were hit with German fighters; four crew members were KIA; six became POWs at Stalag Luft IV.

News of this FW came from **Walter "Bud" Lawrence** who received this information from Landahl's nephew. Lawrence's plane had gone down on the same mission, and had shared the POW experience with Coleman.



Crawford, Peter # 19867 (506 Sq.) 24 May 2005 2nd Lt Crawford was the Navigator on the **Thomas McGuire** crew. Their first mission was 1 August, 1944. On their 8th mission to the Juvincourt Airdrome in France, 12 August 1944, they experienced engine failure from anti-aircraft fire. Three members of the crew were KIA; five became POWs; Crawford and one gunner bailed out, evaded successfully and with the help of the French Underground, returned to England nineteen days later.

Previous to the crash in *Ole Cock*, the McGuire crew had flown in *Flying Log/Pregnant Pig* and *My Gal Sal*. Crawford had been in the 44-4 Navigation Class in San Marcos. After the war, he became a chemist and a gentleman farmer, residing in Macon, Georgia. He was preceded in death by his wife of 53 years. News of his demise came to **Jack Francis** by his daughter, Ann Walton.

Daley, Wilbur Harry "Red" (68 Sq.) 11 May 2005 . Wilbur Daley was assigned to the armament section of the 68th. He was probably best known within the Squadron as one of the Squadron's two barbers. He flew home with the *Jack Comstock* crew after VE Day. He and his wife Lydia were active in the HMG and BGVA until his health failed. **Bob Lehnhausen** stated "We shall miss this fun loving redhead and his animated stories."



FOLDED WINGS

Gippert, Winfield Scott, Jr. #24699 (506 Sq.) 19 February 2005. 2nd Lt. Gippert was a co-pilot on the **Bernard J. Komasiński** crew. He was first in the Glider Program, then moved to Cadet Training, receiving his pilot's wings in 1943. On his 6th mission, 8 August 1944, his plane was disabled by enemy fire while bombing at the La Perthe Airfield in Romilly France. A runaway propeller in *My Peach* resulted in a fire which forced the crew to bail out. One member of the crew was wounded and evacuated; one became a POW. Gippert was one of eight who successfully evaded; and with the help of the French Underground, lived in wooded areas until 28 August when General Patton's 3rd Army came through the Marne area and liberated them. The Komasiński crew flew in *Ole Cock* and *My Gal Sal* in five of their six missions. Gippert was recalled to active duty in 1948 to fly the Berlin Airlift. He attended military school including Armament and Bombsight, Logistics and Supply, Jet Upgrading and Command and Staff College. He was an Instructor Pilot at Williams Air Force Base, Supply Officer at various bases, was on the Inspector General's team, Headquarters PACAF. He served tours in Italy and Viet Nam.

He and his wife of 60 years, Ann, resided in Tempe, Arizona with their son and two daughters. They had three grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

This information came from **Frank Schaeffer**, Flight Engineer of the Komasiński crew.

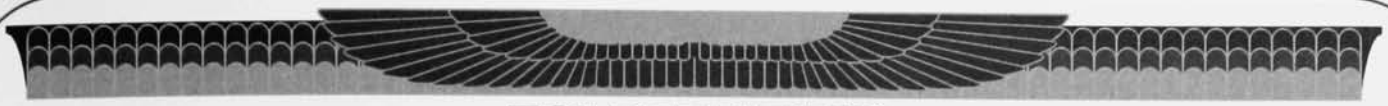
Graham, Alan Clark #20431 (66th Sq.) 15 June 2005. 1st. Lt. Graham was a pilot, arriving in Europe 21 February, 1945. In his nineteen missions before the War ended, he flew *Jail Bait*, *Jersy Jerk*, *Henry*, *King Pin*, *Loco Moto*. His last mission was 20 April 1945. Graham and his wife Dorothy resided in Newburgh New York.

McCracken, Floyd #21258 (68 Sq.) Date of death 1989 at age 66. 2nd Lt. McCracken was a Bombardier on the **Joseph Gillespie** crew, later with **R. C. Pitts**. On some missions he flew with Major **C. L. Lee** and Capt. **William Smythe**, Command Pilots. On some missions he was assigned Nose Gunner/Toggler. His first mission was 28 September 1944; his last was the last mission of the war, 25 April 1945. In his thirty one missions, McCracken flew in many different planes: *Phyllis*, *Flak Magnet*, *Gallavantin' Gal*, *Lili Marlene*, *Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch*, *Lady Geraldine*, *Hellza Droppin*, *Scotty Mac*, *Louisiana Belle* and *Jose Carioca*.

Moore, Francis C. #21396 (506 Sq) 17 July 2005. T/Sgt. Moore was a member of the Ground Crew. He received A & E Mechanic Training at Chanute Field, Illinois and Inline Engine Repairs in Liverpool. He was Crew Chief on the *Bar W*, a plane that distinguished itself by flying 106 missions.

Moore and his wife Mary Lou lived in Hiawatha, Kansas. The couple had three children, two sons, (one who passed away) and one daughter.

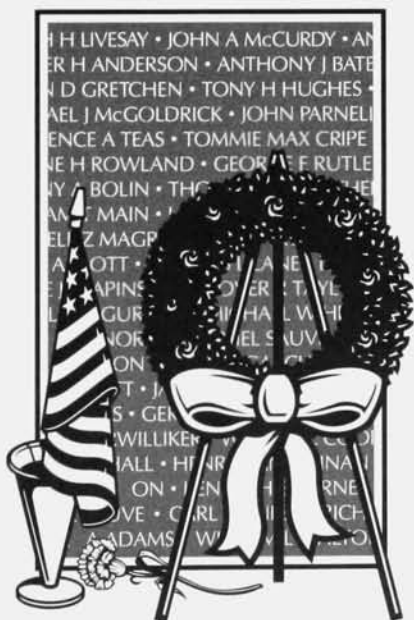
He returned to the states on 20 June 1945 aboard the *Queen Mary*.



FOLDED WINGS

Mueller, John J. #21440 (67th Sq.) 12 November 2004. 2nd Lt. Mueller (later a Major) was a pilot, flying many unnamed planes from 1 April 1944 to 25 July 1944. Mueller joined the AAC immediately after the beginning of WWII. His 35 missions took him into German Occupied Territories, including Berlin. On D-Day and later, he was involved in halting progress of German Troops to the combat areas. After the war he flew C-54s in the Berlin Air Lift, later B-29s, C-47s, B-37s before retiring in 1961 with 21 years of military service. He completed his work career with the FAA and Civil Service, retiring after 20 years of government service. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Ruth, one son, four daughters, 10 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. He was interred at Barancas National Cemetery in Pensacola, Florida.

Shockey, Harold L. #22027 (68 Sq.) S/Sgt. Shockey was a Waist Gunner on the **Robert Hoisington** crew. His first flight was 26 August 1944. In the six months he was on combat missions, he flew in *Sierra Blanca, Consolidated Mess, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Gypsy Queen, Sabrina III, Hairless Joe* and *Joplin Jalopy*. He flew most of his missions into Germany in support of the troops that were advancing eastward, bombing air-dromes and synthetic oil refineries. One mission was low level, dropping supplies to troops in Holland. His last mission (34th) was 6 February 1945. After the war, Shockey went into the plumbing and heating business. He joined the group that returned to Shipdham in 1979. He was a lifetime member of the Elks, American Legion and VFW. He leaves his wife of 58 years, Mary Margaret Minnick, 2 daughters and three grandchildren and one great grandchild.





The Queen Mary arrived in New York with 14,526 Veterans of WWII, 20 June 1945. The world was undergoing rapid change. Berlin had surrendered. Hitler was 'kaput'. President Roosevelt had died and Harry Truman was the new president. A few days later Mussolini was killed by his countrymen. Four months later the Atom Bombs hit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan surrendered and everybody celebrated. It all happened sixty years ago.

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

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8 BALL TAILS

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The name of *Black Jack* was used twice in the 44th Bomb Group. The first, #41-23816, was one of the original planes in the 68th Sq. It had a great, long record. It was lost on 1 October 1943 at Wiener-Neustadt.

The second *Black Jack*, #42-73506, "X" with a bar under it, was assigned to the 506th Sq. It flew 19 missions from 2 February 1944, piloted by Lt. **Albert** until it was lost on 8 April 1944 on a mission to Langenhagen, Germany. The pilot, Lt. **Guy Johnson** was KIA, but his entire crew survived to become POWs. Another photo of the same plane barely shows a nose turret, so that indicates that the one in this picture is 42-73506, a "J" Model.

This picture of *Black Jack* is part of the collection of **Henry Steele**, crew chief, 68th Sq. He shared his collection with **Frank Schaeffer**, who forwarded them to the *8 Ball Tails*. Can anyone identify the smiling gentleman standing in front of the plane?

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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.

AFTER PLOESTI--WIENER-NEUSTADT HOME OF THE MESSERSCHMIDT PLANT

The 44th was ordered to be part of an attack upon the Messerschmitt Air Frame Works at Wiener-Neustadt, Austria (approximately 30 miles southwest of Vienna) on August 13, 1943. Originally this was to have been part of a coordinated strategic bombing effort by the 8th and 9th Air Forces. The 8th was to send its 1st Division B-17s to the ball bearing plants at Schweinfurt and its 4th Bomb Wing B-17s to attack the Messerschmitt Air Frame Works at Regensburg. The 9th (including the 44th) was to attack Wiener-Neustadt. All of this was to take place on August 7, 1943.

The plan was to strike at the aircraft production facilities of the German, all at the same time of the day. This was to overwhelm the German defensive fighter forces. A grand plan. Not unlike so many other events in life, the planning was magnificent, the execution lacked greatness. For reasons unknown to us, the planned date was abandoned. Perhaps the date was too close to the August 1, 1943 Ploesti mission, and its resultant battle damage was a factor. We flew our part of the plan on August 13. The 8th did not fly its part of this plan until August 17, 1943. Even then, English weather fouled this well planned saturation of the German defenses. Instead of the two 8th AF elements of the mission penetrating German air space together, they were separated by three hours. This permitted the German fighters to attack both columns with ferocity, resulting in the loss of 60 B-17s that day.

Bob Lehnhausen has vivid memories of the drama of Wiener-Neustadt. "We still had our two additional fuel tanks in the front bays of the bomb bays. It was a target beyond our normal range, thus the extra tanks were essential. The planned landing in Tunis shortened up the total dis-

tance to be flown

"My recall of the briefing of the first mission to Wiener-Neustadt is that the intelligence people told us, as a part of the briefing, that we should not expect any great fighter opposition. There were no combat fighter units close by. However, there were German fighter training activities in the area, and that we might attract some pilot training officers to oppose our attack. As it turned out, the opposition on that mission was very light, both from fighters and from flak."

Twenty six B-24's left Benina for the 12 hour flight, but only 20 planes were able to reach it due to mechanical problems. They dropped 159 x 500 lb. bombs, and the target was well covered. Rear flight observers reported flame and smoke in the target area. Anti-aircraft fire was slight, and a few FW 190s attacked at the target, and on the way home 10-15 Me 109s attacked with little success. Gunners on the B-24s were able to bring down 2 enemy A/C. Twenty one planes from the formation landed in Tunis.

The mission report stated that Lt. **Robert Lehnhausen** from the 68th Sq. made a difficult landing in Sicily when his plane ran out of fuel. This forced landing took place on a small landing strip hedged in by rocky terrain. The strip was pocked with craters from previous bombing by Allied planes. Lehnhausen landed *Wing and a Prayer* dead stick with such skill that none of the crew was injured and the plane suffered only minor damages. When the tallying was complete, no planes or crew were lost.

"The force attacking Regensburg was led by General **Curtis LeMay**. They lost 24 of their 127 a/c and crews. Another first on this part of the mission was that they, the Regensburg raiders, flew on to land in

...continued on page 4

Tunisia. Once again this was to permit them a deeper penetration into Germany. This, rather than trying to return to their bases in England.

"I might add that the history of the 12th AF in Tunisia was poorly prepared to accept his force. This was the last time that this sort of effort was made by the 8th, to go to N. Africa with B-17s.

The 44th flew three more missions out of Benina in August before heading back to England—two to Foggia and one to Caricello. After that they were ready to return to England.

AND THEN

The 44th was called back to Africa with the assignment of clearing the way for General Patton to take Sicily from the Germans; but by the time they arrived, the takeover had been complete. The Germans had gone back into production at the Messerschmidt Plant, so the 44th set forth with 26 planes to complete the job of halting production, 1 October 1943.

Despite heavy clouds, Lt. Col. **James T. Posey**, Commander of the Raid, found a hole in the target area, and 50 tons of bombs were dropped. Fighters rose to greet the planes, as many as 75 Me 109s and 20-25 FW 190's were reported. Flak was also heavy. Eight planes from the 44th were lost, among them, *Black Jack*.

Black Jack (68th Sq.) had arrived in Shipdham 20 September '42. She flew 34 missions, among them, such notorious combat areas as Kiel, Wilhelmshaven, Rouen and Bordeaux, then joined the group that flew to Africa. On the second trip to Wiener-Neustadt, flak and enemy aircraft brought her down.

Black Jack was joined in the downward spiral by *Fascinatin' Witch*, #42-72877 (no name), and *Queen Ann* from the 66th; *Marcia Ann*, #42-41017, #41-23779 (no names), and *Count Bruga* from the 67th; #42-72857 (no name) from the 506th Squadron. Thirty three airmen were KIA, 38 were POW, of which two escaped, one was

repatriated and two were seriously wounded.

The enemy aircraft paid a high price: 50 fighters were destroyed, 3 probables and 6 were damaged. Of this total, the 68th gunners claimed 13 a/c destroyed.

Wiener-Neustadt was such an unforgettable event in Lehnhausen's career, he continues to study all aspects of that mission. "I have found that some of Hitler's detractors (German) complained that the defense of the homeland was based upon the prior day's or night's Allied air attacks. Apparently that is exactly what took place at W-N. On October 1 there were lots of 88's to greet our invasive attack. I have always believed that the planners of this mission were very unfair to the flight crews. My interrogation report shows that our briefed altitude was 18,000 feet. If my memory is correct, the area of W-N is about 5,000' above sea level. If my belief is correct, we were really only an average of 13,000' above those German rifles. That is an anti-aircraft gunner's delight.

"Somewhere, recently, I read that strangely, all of the losses on this mission were caused by flak, not by fighters. However, the personal narratives in the ROH dispel that statement. I heartily concur, there were lots of fighters, and they were firing lethal gunfire."

Coleman Whitaker was piloting *Black Jack* on this disastrous mission. He and four of his crew were KIA; five were POW; **Robert Reasoner** was repatriated. For his injuries, he was awarded his third Purple Heart.

Lehnhausen had warm recollections of *Black Jack*. "This was truly a beloved plane. The marvelous crew chief who babied and cared for this proud bird was M/Sgt. **Alfred Bagdonas**. 'Bag' and his dedicated crew really grieved the loss of this ship. At the time of its loss, Major **John H. Diehl, Jr.** was our 68th Squadron Commander. Diehl was the original pilot of *Black Jack*". It was part of the 44th original flight echelon. I have always wondered about the name. Was this the way the crew chose to honor their pilot, or was it some other association? As I recall,

the side of the nose had a painting that depicted the card game jack and ten beneath the name. At this point, there remains no one to check with."

Finding the unique details of every mission are never complete. An unexpected finding has given rise to another article which will be appearing soon in the 8 Ball Tails.

While the 44th was bombing Wiener-Neustadt on 13 August 1943, Roosevelt & Churchill were meeting in Quebec City at the Allied Quadrant Conference. On the same day of their second trip (1 October 1943), Allies captured Naples. Twelve days later, Italy declared war on Germany.

FOR SALE

THE LIBERATORS WHO NEVER RETURNED *By Peter Loncke*

This 365 page, plastic bound treatise deals with a single event, a low level mission to Wesel, Germany on 24 March 1945. The assignment was to drop supplies to the British paratroopers who had just crossed the Rhine River. The book is dedicated to 1st. Lt. **Leonard Crandell**, Pilot of K-Bar and the uncle of the author's wife Connie. Fifteen crews went down that day, two from the 44th BG. Seventeen men from the 506 were lost; two survived, **Robert Vance** and **Louis DeBlasio**.

Loncke's book has pictures of the airmen who flew, their crash sites, the sixteen year old German lad who aided with ground munitions; the P-47 fighter pilot, **John Delaney**, who crashed while defending the '24s; memorials that were erected at crash sites and much detail about those losses. 1st Sgt. Chief in the Belgium Air Force, Loncke researched many crash sites of many planes of other nations, and has been recognized for his dedication. Besides being a member of the 44th BG, he has Honorary membership in the Irish Guards Assoc., London Branch; 50-61 Sq. Assoc., RAF; 75 Sq. Royal New Zealand AF; and holds the British Ambassador's Meritorious Service Award.

The book is in it its second printing. The price is \$50 including postage. E-Mail Peter at b24kaybar@insightbb.com or contact him at 19343 Springfield Road, Groveland, IL 61535.



**SILENCE IS
OFTEN
MISINTERPRETED
BUT
NEVER MISQUOTED.**

PRESIDENTIAL BRIEFING

This is my first communication to our members as your inexperienced president. In the military, you have Staff Support. In business you have an organization to assist. This group, as you know, is all volunteers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those volunteers for their support and their time and efforts they give to the 44th Bomb Group.

Dick and Betty Lynch – Treasurers. They do our full time accounting, record keeping, collecting and dispersing our funds. Just handling the monies for annual meetings is a major effort, extremely demanding and time consuming. They do these things exceptionally well.

Ruth Davis-Morse – Secretary/8 Ball Tails Editor. The communication job she does is monumental, requiring more time and effort than most volunteers are willing to give. The *8 Ball Tails* is second to none in quality and value to the 44th BG.

Roger Fenton – Director and Historian continues to research and answer questions for many about individuals participating in our war. In addition, he holds a full time job. His time and contribution to our group is very much appreciated.

Robert Lee Aston – Decorations and Awards. For many who earned a decoration or award in our War, but never received it, are truly thankful for Lee's efforts. No one is more dedicated in allocating his time to this noble purpose than Lee.

Will Lundy – Archivist. I call Will the 'Oracle', which as you know, refers to a deity or anyone speaking with great wisdom, inspiration or authority. That's Will. He has been the keeper of the flame. The history of the 44th Bomb Group, the stories of our heroes would have been lost if not for Will's foresight. We cannot thank him enough for this dedication of more than forty years.

Perry Morse – 2nd Air Division Representative. This irreplaceable man is in charge of our Annual Meeting Hospitality Room. Without the help of Tony Cianci and others, you would not drink as much - or as well - or at the price you choose. Perry dedicates much time and effort to managing a happy gathering place. **Please, Perry, Keep it Up.**

IMMEDIATE GOALS FOR THE 44TH BGVA

1. Complete the Voice-over for the Ploesti Raid exhibit in Savannah, Georgia.
2. As you know, the Group has worked for many years to place Will's collection and our history into a Database. This effort was financed by members who saw value in computerizing our history. Many of you have contributed your personal biographical information to this bank. Very shortly we expect to complete the mailing of disks containing this historical information. Every member will receive a copy.
3. Transferring Will Lundy's records and his collection of our history to the United States Army Heritage & Education Center at the United States Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.
(On a personal note: Will keeps writing and using his material and delaying the shipment to Carlisle (and it is his right to do so); but I go to California in the winter, and I have told Will, if he doesn't get this material shipped, Carlisle will send a major to package and ship the material because they want it that badly. I am coming by his place and intend to crate him and the material for shipment.)
4. Organize the Annual Meeting for 2006.

I am leaning on Past Presidents Roy Owen and Bob Lehnhausen and their experiences. I will try and serve your needs and wishes in the coming year. I hope your holidays were happy, and the New Year brings you all the best.



Paul Kay

THE 44TH BOMB GROUP AT TACOMA



On duty to greet the arrivals were L-R Mary Aston, Jackie Roberts, Betty Lynch and Will Lundy. Mary made her military pins available, Jackie & Betty supplied guests with tickets and Will introduced his recently completed book, *The Roll of Honor*.

Nearly 100 44thers arrived at the north-western state of Washington for another fun opportunity to get together and remember solemn moments in the past. It was a time for family members, a generation later, to hear of experiences that are rarely discussed at home.

Paul Kay's careful reunion planning had interesting competition. A beauty contest was going on simultaneously at the Doubletree, and beautiful teenage girls in splendid costumes wandered the halls, along with the gray haired veterans who enjoyed the festivity.

The Boeing Museum of Flight was a winning trip, especially the walk through the old Red Barn, where the company followed the example of the Wright Brothers and built vehicles to soar through the air. The gallery is full of notable aircrafts, and one wing is devoted to pilots who demonstrated outstanding personal courage throughout the history of flight.

Many of their planes are on loan to government museums, particularly Air Force One, #707 121, "The Flying Oval Office." Notable for its contribution to WWII, Boeing built the B-17.

Some of the crowd opted to go to Seattle, to sit atop the space needle and view the scenery of a very sophisticated city. Considering the number of bags that were carried from the bus, the shopping had to have been a successful adventure.

Mt. St. Helens attracted half the crowd, and that tour provided a glimpse of all the splendor and devastation that Nature can impose. A box lunch in a picnic area started the trip, and at different levels, rangers described the volcano's unique performance. Whoever thought a volcano would explode sideways and throw stones 350 mph? Mt. St. Helens did. It was still steaming a bit in the crater that was left behind.



Frank Schaeffer enjoys a box lunch before the trip up to view Mt. St. Helen



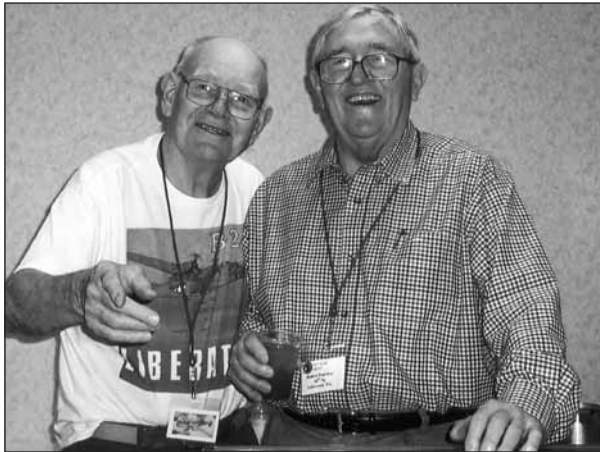
Sam Miceli ponders the power of a volcano

...continued on page 8

The Hospitality Room had space for groups to gather and chat, get an education on the Database and view videos of outstanding missions, particularly the Ploesti Raid featuring Dick Butler. On display was memorabilia from the David Webster collection.



Webster, a private collector, demonstrates a 60 year old chunk of barracks wall, decorated by an unknown artist at Shipham. This piece of 44th history was collected by Steve Adams and presented to Webster on a recent journey to U.K.



Perry Morse, procurer of beverages, and Paul Kay, Reunion Chairman, on duty in the Hospitality Room.



Dick Butler and Mary Aston (Roy Owen in Background)

It was a night for long overdue awards: The efforts of **R. Lee Aston** came to fruition when awards earned 60 years ago reached Tacoma. The moments were somber when Lois Cianci received two Air Medals for her lost father, T/Sgt. **Clair P. Shaeffer**, an aerial gunner in the 68th Sq.; and Jackie Roberts received an Air Medal for her lost father, S/Sgt. **Jack N. Ostenson** who was an Aircraft Engineer in the 68th Sq.

It was a joyous moment when 1st. Lt. **William W. Ward**, a Lead Bombardier in the 506 Sq. received the DFC + DFC/OLC#1 + AMOLC #5. Equally delighted was 1st. Lt. **Bernard W. Bail**, Lead Radar Navigator, 66th Sq., who received the **Distinguished Service Cross**, 3 DFCs and AM/OLC #4.

Presentations were by Col. **Richard Butler** (Ret.); after which, Mary Aston presented a 44th BG Suncatcher to him, a gift from her husband Lee.

The gavel passed from Roy Owen to Paul Kay, and the 44th's next chapter began.



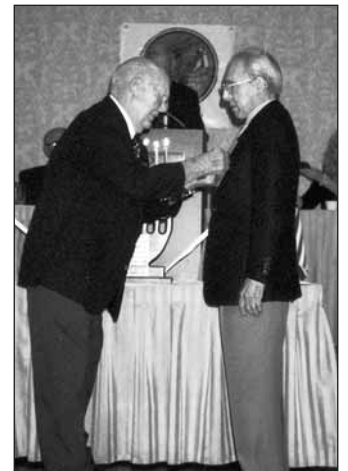
Lois Cianci



Jackie Roberts



William Ward



Dr. Bernard Bail



Leon Johnson



Robert Lehnhausen



Roy Owen

The Banquet was a night for long overdue recognitions. The 44th Board and Awards Chairman **Lee Aston** chose to honor two outstanding leaders of the organization, **Robert Lehnhausen** and **Roy Owen**, naming both to be recipients of the prestigious Leon Johnson Award. Both had been part of the group that founded the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association after the previous organization had folded. Both had served on the Board for many years and both had held the office of President (Owen, 5 times). Lehnhausen was also awarded a mahogany B-24. Owen received a model of the Blackbird, which he flew after the war. (This was a gift from Lowell & Jackie Roberts.)

SAN ANTONIO ROSE



The unidentified officer on the cover of the Summer Issue of the 8 Ball Tails was **William L. Warner**, pilot of Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose.

When Warner completed his missions, his wife, Coloma, who was nurse, told her co-workers the happy news that he had returned home. Her Head Nurse learned that a war-weary plane was on exhibit at Willow Run. She ordered a limousine to pick up Warner and transport him to the Ford Plant. To his surprise, it was his plane on exhibit. When he informed the workers he had flown that plane, out came the camera to snap this pic-

ture. 'Bill' never saw the picture until the Eight Ball Tails came out.

Paul Kay, Navigator, has a vivid memory of flying in Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose on 3 March 1945. Twenty one A/C were dispatched, five from the 68th. The target was the Rothensee Oil Refinery at Magdeburg, Germany. Flak hit, and the plane was living up to its first name—limping.

"We had no electrical power, no radio, no intercom for about 2 _ hours," he recalled. "One engine was hit and not operating. The bomb bay doors were hanging open and would not close. We were pulling a very high power setting since leaving the target , and still falling behind every formation that came along. With no communication to our formation, we came back out of Germany alone.

Bill Warner wanted to head straight for our lines, but I showed him we would be too low crossing some heavy flak areas in Ruhr Valley. So we flew almost due west and then turned south.

"We had crashed on the mission before, and the pilot was not sure how long we could keep flying. Many in the crew did not want to ride another one down.

"I had received a photo static copy showing where the lines were that day. We would be

...continued on page 10

crossing three rivers after turning south, the River Rhine, River Waal, River Mass. Fighting was along the Waal. We would be in friendly territory after crossing the middle river. Much of this communication was done by notes in my maps being passed up between the pilot's legs. Two crew members, the engineer and radioman went back to the waist to jump. This was Engineer Carns first mission with us, as our original engineer was injured on the prior mission crash.

"I could not let the nose gunner, Cliff Bengston out of his nose turret at that time because the wind would have blown my charts all over. He had been in the nose turret for about two hours with no communication except hand signals from me.

"He went up to the pilot and co-pilot, and came back and said the pilot was going to jump. I said, 'the @\#*%& he is.' So I climbed up to the pilot and said, 'I'm afraid to jump.' He said, 'I am too.' Then I told him there was an airfield straight ahead.

"We decided to send Bengston back to the waist to inform the crew we were going to land. I helped with his chest chute, but he got hung up between the uprights on the catwalk in the bomb bay...and the bomb bay doors were open! Our hands were cold and stiff from no heat since leaving the target.

"We could not free him, and we were concerned his chute might open in the bomb bay. I said, 'Cliff, you will just have to stand in the

bomb bay and hold on until we land.

"We had been told earlier at base, if you are going to be captured, try to surrender to the Luftwaffe; second choice - German Regular Army; third - SS; and last choice - civilians. The crew of five in the back all bailed out. Bob Swegell, Tail Gunner, didn't get the message about being in friendly territory when he bailed out. He landed in a thicket. Planning his escape, he ran one way, dropping his chute and May West, then turned the other way when he saw a farmer pitching hay. The farmer ran to him, but did not drop his pitchfork. Swegell retreated into the bushes and out the other side. A civilian ran to help, but he was smoking a pipe, didn't drop it, so Swegell thought he had a pistol. So back to the bushes he went. Finally some soldiers captured him—British Soldiers!

"We think we are the only crew that had a member surrender to the British Army!!!"

2nd Lt. **Dudley Drake** was Co-pilot on that mission; T. Sgt. **Clifford Bengston**, Nose Gunner & Toggler; S/Sgt. **Albert W. Leibner**, Radio Operator; Sgt. **Keith Springer**, RWG; Sgt. **Antonio Scorpio**, LWG; **Robert Swegell**, TG.

*Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose was flying High Element Left Wing; the Command Pilot in the lead plane was Major **Robert Lehnhausen**, flying with the **James E. Brownlowe** crew.*

THE 2006 REUNION

DOES THIS SOUND LIKE PLAN II?

WELL, IT IS

We're going to Washington! As you may recall, the Board announced that we would be off to Branson in 2006. By popular request, the decision was made to join the merriment at the unveiling of the U.S. Air Force Memorial. We were reminded by many—that this event will happen only once. If we miss it, we will always regret it.

It's a great opportunity for our veterans to see the WWII Memorial that was finished after our last trip to the Capital. Also, a chance to show that the airmen who flew to Munich, Bernberg, Berlin and other Nazi strongholds are still standing up to be counted.

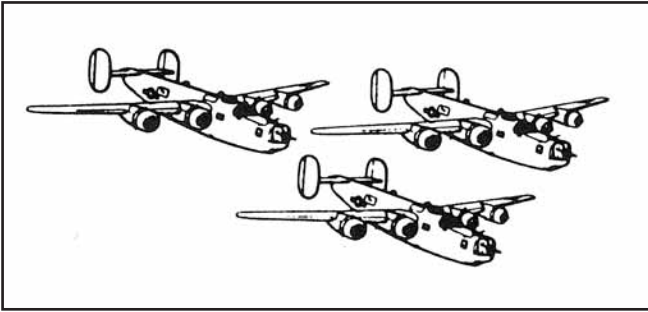
I wish we could give you exact dates for the entire celebration. The unveiling is October 14... that date is firm. Other great events are being planned around it, and it sounds like a celebration we will never forget. Stay tuned. The next 8 Ball Tails will give you the entire schedule.

B-24 SCULPTURE

VETERANS MEMORIAL GARDEN

BALBOA PARK, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

By Col. Richard D. Butler (Ret.)



A bronze B-24 model of the Liberator, was dedicated on Veterans Day, 11 November 2005. A splendid one-sixth scale model is mounted on a pedestal in the center of a reflecting pool. A number of men who flew combat mission in B-24s were present for the dedication ceremony. Also present were a significant number of men and women who helped build B-24s at the Consolidated Aircraft Factory, the birthplace of the B-24. The factory was located on Lindbergh Field; the B-24 model is pointed toward that location.

Retired Air Force Brigadier General, **Robert L. Cardenas**, is Chairman of the Veterans Memorial Garden and Center Committee. He was also Chairman of the B-24 Model Committee. Our B-24 is the centerpiece of the Veterans Memorial Garden. Army and Navy sections and monuments for those services will be forthcoming.

General Cardenas was in the 44th Bomb Group, 506 Squadron. Then a Captain, he was shot down on what he said was his 20th mission while flying as Command Pilot with the Ray LaCombe crew on a mission to Friedrichshafen, Germany on 18 March 1944. Along with the crew he was interned in Switzerland.

At the dedication ceremony General Cardenas described to the audience how the Veterans Memorial Garden and Center and the B-24 model had come into being. The City of San Diego, together with a grant from the State of California had provided the funds and the site on former Naval Hospital property for this most impressive location. The B-24 model

was made possibly by donation by many people and organizations. The leader for the entire B-24 model project was Mr. George Welsh, former B-24 Liberator Club administrator and currently publisher of the Bomber Legends magazine. He originated the idea for the model and pursued that idea to its fruition and the model as it exists today. We B-24 veterans and the citizens of San Diego are deeply indebted to George and his wife, Michelle, for all their efforts over several years to establish this wonderful memorial for a great airplane.

There were several speakers at the ceremony, one of whom was the former Mayor of San Diego, who during his term of office had worked tirelessly for the Veterans Memorial and the B-24 model installation; as that aircraft had been such a significant part of the city's World War II history. Another speaker was a gentleman that had been an engineer at Consolidated Aircraft during the design of the B-24, and had flown on the first test flight of the first B-24. He described that flight and his experiences on some other flights, as well as some aircraft manufacturing matters. As I am a native of San Diego and flew B-24s in combat, I was asked to describe some of my experiences, particularly those of the 1 August 1943 low level bombing attack on the oil refineries of Ploesti, Romania.

The 44th Bomb Group was well represented at the dedication ceremony. General Cardenas had his wife and daughter there. With me were my wife Ardith, our son Dan with his wife and two children, and our daughter Emmy Lou. **Will Lundy** was there with his two sons and his daughter. **John Gately** and his wife Bernadette also attended.

This beautiful B-24 model installation is a true memorial to all B-24 veterans-- those men that flew it, those who maintained and repaired it, and those men and women that helped to build all those planes. It is particularly a remembrance to all of those men that gave their lives, flying B-24s in the defense of freedom.

FLYING BLIND WITH NEEDLE BALL AND AIR SPEED INDICATOR

By Jerry Folsom

While attached to the 61st Troop Carrier Group near Grantham, England and Sherwood Forrest, the first part of December or last of November 1944, I was instructing the Command Officers in flying B-24s. The planes had a 500 gallon tank in each of the four bomb bays with the idea of ferrying gas over to Patton. The pilots were flying C-46s and C-47s, carrying troops and supplies to the continent.

One forenoon I went down to operations as I had often done, hoping I would get a chance to fly a C-46 or C-47. Only one person was there, a Major who was sick. He told me that there was a maximum effort on, and that all planes and pilots were on it. He told me there was a plane grounded over in France with a flat tire, right behind the unstable combat lines; and they needed to get a tire over there that afternoon before dark, as they did not want to leave the plane there overnight.

"You have been wanting to fly one of these planes," he reminded me. "Here is your chance." He asked whether I would fly a plane to France, delivering wheel and tire. He said he would go with me to help with take off and landing, and that he knew the landing strip where the plane was down. However, all that was available and flyable was one C-47 that had been redlined for flight instruments.

He assured me that we would be all right, as the weather would be good and clear. No weather front was expected until later that night, about midnight; and we would be back long before dark. We would be able to fly vfr. (visible flight rules); and since we will be able to see the ground and terrain, we would not need flight instruments.

He got a Radio Operator and Flight Engineer, and there were two or three others coming along to handle the wheel. We took off and had a nice flight to the temporary landing strip. We could hear artillery and guns in the distance. The tire was unloaded and the wheel replaced on the plane. I had a chance to stand on French soil for a few minutes before we took off to return.

A Change in the Weather

Things went well crossing the Channel on return flight until we approached the English shore. There was a big black cloud covering and obscuring the English Coast. It looked like a black curtain. Soon it was raining ... then raining harder and harder. The front was here now, and we were in it. Soon we could see spotlights flashing toward us, and there were colored flares being shot up – like several colored roman candles. It dawned on me that they were challenging this unidentified aircraft. Of course we had not filed any flight plan because we were going to be home long before dark.

I asked the radio man if he had picked up a radio packet containing the code words and colors of the day. Thank goodness he had. The men scoured the plane and found a couple of flares that were the colors of the day at that hour of time. They fired one, and that seemed to satisfy ground personnel. We did not see any more flares challenging us.

No Help From Instruments

It was raining hard – buckets full. One could see nothing through the windshield, it was raining so hard. We were on instruments, but actually no instruments – only the turn and bank indicator and magnetic compass. This was not much help in keeping direction, because it bounces around too much, especially in the turbulence of a storm. It is just a disc floating in a liquid, and not very stable. And as far as helping to keep a direction – it indicated only general direction. We could not go above a 1000 feet, as the RAF was coming out. We could see a plane exhaust occasionally, so we knew they were there.

It was raining so hard and it was so dark, we could not see the ground. We really did not know where we were – only that we were flying in the general direction of the Grantham base. Next we discovered that the radio did not work nor the radio compass.

Can you conceive the feeling of being in a plane and not knowing where you are or

...continued on page 13

where you are heading or where you are going to be able to land...if you can? It is a hopeless feeling.

The Major was so sick he could hardly hold his head up. Finally realizing it was time we should be in the area of our base, I suggested to him that if I see a landing strip (runway) that we should attempt to land. He agreed. I spotted a row of runway lights. They are like a slit - in - half ball. When lined up with them, you can see a row of lights.

The Major agreed we should land if we could. I flew a downwind leg over the lights to get set up, and started a landing pattern, called on the radio that we were an unidentified plane that was lost and had spotted their landing strip lights and asked permission to land. I advised them that the radio was not receiving and that I would turn on landing lights on the downwind leg, and asked them to give me a green light if it was OK. Well, I turned on landing lights so they could spot me better, and they gave me a green light. So

I proceeded with the landing pattern. The Major roused up enough to help land the plane.

Touching Down

Well – when we turned off the runway a couple of jeeps came out to meet us as we stopped. It was still raining by the bucketsful, as it can in England. When we opened the door, they wanted to know who we were and where we were headed. When we told them ‘Grantham’, they advised us that we were at Grantham, the base that we had left and to which we were hoping to return. If anyone thinks that we were not a group of happy fellows, he would be grossly mistaken. I said a few thank you’s and so did the others.

Out of hundreds of airfields in England at that period of time, Somebody guided us to the right field. Somebody was helping us.

This is just another example of Divine Intervention that I experienced while flying ‘over there.’

For Sale:

44th BOMB GROUP ROLL OF HONOR AND CASUALTIES

By Will Lundy

This book is probably one of the most researched documents of any Group in WWII. It is a hard cover book of 454 pages that represents more than 40 years of unrelenting effort to record the story of every airman in the 44th BG who gave his life for the noble cause of **Freedom**.

The 44th BG was the first Bomber Group to train in new B-24 Liberators in early 1942 and shared with the 93rd BG the honors for taking this new and untried Liberator into action against Germany.

Will remembered numerous close friends who were lost, and he did not want their stories to die. So he first had to find their stories that were buried in the rolls of microfilm available at Maxwell AFB and the National Archives at Suitland. But once the search was underway, it immediately expanded to ALL of the 44thers who died for liberty and freedom.

MACRs (Missing Air Crew Reports) divulged the home town addresses for all of these men, so many years were spent searching for the survivors of these downed airplanes, in order to obtain **FIRST PERSON STORIES** of what happened. He made thousands of telephone calls, sent letters, post cards, etc. over many years. Many official documents provided the personal stories for this huge undertaking of obtaining as many facts as possible. This new book provides the answers to most of the questions of: “What Happened to These Heroes”.

Cost: \$50, which includes shipping and handling.

Order from: Will Lundy

2519 Westville Trail

Cool, CA 95614

A SURVEY BY MARY ASTON
Regarding
A LAST HOORAH TRIP TO SHIPDHAM, ENGLAND
AND PERHAPS NORMANDY & BELGIUM

If you or your offspring would like to take another look at the areas where the youth of The Greatest Generation committed themselves to overcoming the Nazi Regime, 60 years ago, contact Mary Aston:

830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635-2606. Phone 706 283-1337.

E-Mail: leeaston@elberton.net

For Sale:

Mary Aston is selling lapel pins of WWII Medals: 8th Air Force, DFC, Air Medal, Purple Heart, POW, European-African Mediterranean Theater and WWII Victory Medal. The price of each is \$9 + 37 cents postage. Specify pin name and number of each type.

Also available, a leaded glass suncatcher featuring the Flying 8 Ball.

The price is \$115.00 (\$90 + \$25 S & H) Proceeds go to the 44th BGVA.

Contact Mary at 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635.



Flying Eight Balls Suncatcher

THE 44TH BOMB GROUP PX

Flying 8 Ball Golf Shirts	.....	\$25.00 + 3.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Caps (Indicate Squadron)	.....	15.00 + 2.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Felt Patches (about 6 inches diameter)	.....	15.00 + 1.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Squadron Pins (Indicate Squadron)	.....	5.00 + .50 Postage
Blue Liberator Shirts (Light Blue with B-24 designs)	.....	30.00 + 3.00 Postage
44th Bumper Stickers	.....	2.00 (Postage Incl.)

Order From:

Sam Miceli

(Make check payable to Sam Miceli)

6398 Dawson Blvd., Mentor, Ohio 44060-3648

Roy Owen found this document in his files, describing the situation in Shipdham after the 44th had flown 17 missions. It backs up Howard Moore's statement, "When the missions began, the losses were horrible. We were losing planes and crews at an unbelievable rate. The Luftwaffe was slaughtering us."

**HEADQUARTERS
44TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) AAF
Office of the Commanding Officer**

APO 634

March 9, 1943

SUBJECT: Depletion of strength of 44th Bomb Group (H).

TO: Commanding General, 2nd Bombardment Wing, APO 634

1. Attached hereto is an analysis of losses of this group by squadrons, since arrival in this theater. The group has become so depleted that its combat efficiency is seriously impaired.
2. Monday, 8 March 1943, there were three mental cases developed, which required hospitalization, one prior to the combat mission, one man became unconscious at 1500 feet due to hysteria and collapsed mentally upon completion of the mission. The post surgeon has expressed it as his official opinion that two more weeks of operations similar to those performed in the past month and those crews remaining will all collapse mentally. This opinion is based upon the observations of the surgeon and his assistants in the squadrons. The strongest and most stable individuals are showing evidence of flying fatigue.
3. The only replacements from the U.S. are the five crews for the 44th squadron of this group. These will be placed in combat as replacements in existing squadrons. As soon as they can be given training in high altitude flying and bombing. Unfortunately these pilots and bombardiers have had practically no training at altitude.
4. An analysis of the attached reports indicate that the following personnel have been lost for operations:

66th Bomb Sqdn. --- 67 of 120 or 55 per cent
67th Bomb Sqdn. --- 78 of 112 or 65.1 per cent
68th Bomb Sqdn. --- 62 of 118 or 52.5 per cent
The losses for the group has been 57.5 per cent. An examination of the attached lists shows that the losses are not always in the same categories with the result that it is impossible to form the total number of complete crews for B-24 type A/C which the figures of personnel available would seem to indicate.
5. Although replacement aircraft are being received, replacement crews for B24 type A/C have not arrived to date.
6. The group can stand its combat losses, without loss of morale or efficiency as soon as replacements arrive promptly.
7. This letter is submitted because of the seriousness of the situation as seen by the undersigned.

LEON W. JOHNSON,
Col., Air Corps,
Commanding.

BONNIE BROWN'S TRIBUTE TO HER FATHER

S/Sgt. Raymond Shirley

Raymond Shirley was young—only 20 years old—when he signed on with the Army Air Corps in September 1941; but then, many of the men who enlisted were very young. He was assigned to the Eight Air Force, 44th BG, 67th Sq. after being stationed at various air bases to receive training. He arrived at Shipdham Air Base to begin his duty.

His first mission was April 20, 1944. One week later, April 27th, on his fourth mission to Moyenneville, France, his plane Tuffy went down. Two members of the crew were able to get into their parachute before the plane exploded: **S/Sgt. Raymond Shirley**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner and **S/Sgt. Paul Chagnon**, Radio Operator.

All other members of the crew were KIA: 1st Lt. **Howard A. Clarey**, Pilot; 1st Lt. **Carl E. Rhodes**, Co-Pilot; 2nd Lt. **George W. Forrest**, Navigator; 2nd Lt. **Glenn E. Hinkle**, Bombardier; Sgt. **Leslie Lytle**, Ball Turret Gunner; **S/Sgt. Martin Rieger**, Right Waist Gunner; **Allen W. Phillips**, Left Wing Gunner; and Sgt. **Charles Youse**, Tail Gunner.

Bonnie remembers her father's recollections: "At briefing that morning (April 27, 1944) we had been told that there was one battery of four guns at the target

"We were on the bomb run. Paul Chagnon, Radio Operator, was on the catwalk holding the bomb bay doors open; I was in the top turret. Immediately after dropping our bombs we took a direct hit just outboard of #3 engine and lost the wing from there out. I saw it start spinning like a seed pod falling from a tree in the fall season. (#4 engine was also hit.)

"I was thrown forward in the turret as the aircraft started spinning to the right. I started coming out of the turret, at which time I saw Chagnon bailing out from the cat walk with my chest chute. Someone pulled the plane out briefly, and then we started spinning again to the left. I managed to get Chagnon's chute from his position, got it on and went to the catwalk to bail out. When I bailed out, Lt. Clarey was on the catwalk ready to bail out when I left the ship. I finally found the ripcord and started my descent slipping the chute on

the way down and ending up with a badly sprained right ankle upon landing.

"After getting to the ground, Chagnon came to help me and French civilians were trying to help us. They carried our chutes off; and of course, were speaking French. Chagnon had been born in Canada and had been brought up on French until they moved to the U.S. when he was six or seven years old. But that day he didn't remember one word of French, so the civilian efforts were of no avail. Anyway, Chagnon was helping me. Then the French abandoned us as the German military began to arrive at the scene.

"Chagnon and I approached a barn, hoping to get inside and hide. As we rounded one corner of the barn, the Germans came around the barn corner at the opposite end with their little 'burp guns' and that was it. They put us into a small truck; the bed portion had a cover on it, and inside the truck was Clarey's body. His chute failed to open. We saw no other bodies than that of Lt. Clarey.

"The Germans took us to a building with an underground bunker, where we stayed one or two nights; then through Paris to Dulag Luft, and from there to Stalag Luft VI on the 40-or-8 rail cars.

We were subsequently evacuated from Luft VI to Luft IV via that damned freighter down the Baltic. From IV, I was shipped to Luft I, again on a 40-or-8 rail car; Chagnon wound up on one of those forced marches as the Germans fled from the approaching Russians. Germans abandoned us at Luft I, just a few hours before the Russians arrived. We were eventually evacuated to Camp Lucky Strike in France."

Bonnie stated, "My dad rarely talked about his experiences, and it's obvious from his summary of his POW experience, that he was short on words when speaking about himself. One thing is for certain, with all of the men and women who served our country during WWII, they did it with tremendous pride and a sense of duty and patriotism."

Ed. Note: Raymond Shirley passed away October 12, 2004.



The Clarey Crew

Howard A. Clarey, Pilot; Carl Rhodes, Co-pilot; George Forrest, Navigator; Glenn Hinkle, Bombardier; Raymond Shirley, Engineer, Paul Chagnon, Radio Operator; Leslie Lytle, Nose Turret Gunner; Martin Rieger, RW Gunner; Allen Phillips, LW Gunner; Charles Youse, Tail Gunner.

Identities do not match the picture, except for Raymond Shirley, (top row, far right). Perhaps the reader can identify some of this crew. Only two members survived this crash—Shirley and Chagnon.

THE DAY AFTER THE PLOESTI RAID

From the Diary of Stanley F. Olson, Co-Pilot on the William Strong crew:

August 2, 1943: Yesterday we had it! We flew 2,400 miles round-trip to Ploesti, Romania and back. One of the most important targets of the war. We wound our way over the mountains through Albania, Yugoslavia, Romania and others.

When we neared the I.P. I believe I was scared. The target area was covered with smoke; flak was bursting, and it looked as if all hell was breaking loose.

As we turned on the I.P., Strong gave it power and we overshot Bunker. However, we moved into attack position in trail of Bunker; I took over. With Strong handling the throttles, I was busy trying to keep the plane level, out of prop wash, and hit the target. Once I swore we had been hit, but we went on. I had the wheel turned upside down once, trying to hold a wing up. Strong even gave right throttle, trying to pull it up. Had trouble keeping the ship straight because off Nos. 1 & 2 having more rpms, but adjusted them.

Just as we dropped our bombs (we barely had time before having to turn off), one ship went into a vertical climb, then quivering, reared back head first into the ground, bursting into flame. Two men bailed out, one jumped without a chute. It was Houston's ship; he incidentally had finished his missions. (All in Houston's ship were KIA, in spite of Stan having seen parachutes.)

Sixty airplanes are unaccounted for. So far we have 14 missing.

Olson was a Co-Pilot on the Strong crew, (506 Sq.) flying in Baldy and his Brood to Ploesti. Two months later, as pilot, he was KIA on the mission to Wiener-Neustadt, Austria, flying Star Spangled Hell. His bio and this report were submitted by his son, Dr. Terry Olson.

WARREN McPHERSON REMEMBERED THE WAITING GAME

From his book, *The Wild Blue Yonder*

We flew our first six missions in rapid succession. That was great, as far as we were concerned. When we got home from a raid we were so exhausted, sleep usually came quickly. The longer we waited between raids, the worse it was. We had too much time to think of the horrors of prior missions. Even sleep didn't help because nightmares began to come more frequently and more violently.

Many times one or both the other crews in our hut flew when we didn't. When that happened, one of the men from another crew, **Jack Frost** from Rifle, Colorado, would get dressed, then step to my bunk, shake my shoulders and say, "Mack, I gotta go fly, but I'm not going until you pray for me." So I would pray for him, and off he would go. I'm glad to say, he always came back, too.

On days we didn't fly, I went to the canteen to have tea and crumpets. The British servers identified me as the Yank who didn't take milk in his tea. At the canteen there was a big map that showed where the front lines were on the Continent. We liked to keep tab on how much more ground our troops had taken.

Back at the hut there was often a poker game going on around one of the single bunks. Those of us not in the game would read, sleep, work on hobbies, or write letters to family and friends. But we still had lots of time to think and dread the next mission.

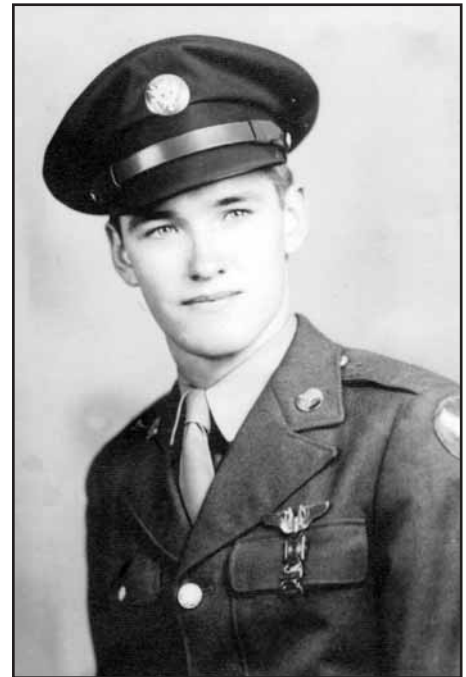
When we didn't fly a raid, we went to the flight line to 'sweat out' the planes as they returned. We counted them in as they landed, and the suspense would get intense. When a plane came in shot up and crippled, we became like a football crowd—rooting, cheering and pulling to help them make it. When a plane didn't come back, it deeply affected everyone.

After our sixth raid, for reasons we never knew, we were pulled off flying raids and assigned to fly a jet black B-24 at night all over the British Isles. Sometimes giant spotlights on the ground would lock onto us, so Willie and Everett would put the plane through all kinds of maneuvers to get out of the lights. That was hard to do.

When any of us asked what we were doing, we were told it was a secret. Not really knowing what we were doing in this strange assignment was bad enough, but doing it night after night for so long made the stress get worse and worse. As far as we were concerned, this could not end soon enough.

Our hut could be a noisy place, but we learned to shut out the noise and go to sleep. However, a couple of the quietest things in the dead of night would wake everyone in an instant. One was the low hum of the intercom speaker in the hut, which was used to announce an air raid. The moment that hum came on, we would be wide awake. The other was the way Pappy opened the door and entered to awaken us to fly a raid.

Sgt. McPherson was a gunner on the James N. Williams crew. After the War, he followed his calling and became a minister.



S/SGT. Warren McPherson

44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director



Shown at the presentation are: L=R Brig. Gen. Charles W. Collier, CO of the NC ANG; R. Lee Aston and William Overhultz. The 44th BGVA was represented by Lee and Mary Aston. Lee arranged the award event through the Air Force.

A Memorial service was held on June 14, 2005 for 1st Lt. **William D. Kelly** of Springfield, IL, a lead pilot, 68th Sq., 44th BG (1944) at Camp Butler National Military Cemetery, Springfield, IL. Representing the 44th BGVA were Director Robert Lee and Mary Aston.

1st. Lt. William R. Overhultz, Co-Pilot on Lead Pilot **Harry M. Garbade's** crew, 68th Bomb Squadron, received the DFC for 16 Lead missions, and AM/OLC #4 in a formal AF presentation at ANG Morris Field, Charlotte, NC on 2 October 2005. The 44th BGVA was represented by Lee & Mary Aston. The AF Award event was arranged by Lee Aston.



L-R: R. Lee Aston; grandson, Chris Kelly; son, Bill Kelly, Jr., and wife, Carol; daughter Susan and husband Gary Zoeller, nephew Bill McAllister; and Mary Aston.



Lee Aston, Jessie and Wade Elliott, Mary Aston

S/Sgt. **Wade T. Elliott**, DFC, and aerial gunner, 66 and 506 Squadrons, flew 30 missions from Feb. to June 1944, mainly on Pilot **J. W. Grow's** crew. S/Sgt. Elliott was belatedly awarded two Air Medal OLCs at an informal presentation at his home at Peterborough, N.H. on 18 October 2005 by 44 BGVA Director R. Lee Aston and Mary Aston, with Mary pinning the Air Medals on S/Sgt. Elliott after Aston read the AM/OLC citations.



Frank J. Colella

1st. Lt. **Frank J. Colella**, was the Co-Pilot on Pilot **Edgar J. Spencer's** crew, 67th Squadron. He flew 37 missions during his tour of combat from 4 August 1944 to 7 January 1945. This is the first time I've seen Frank, or photo of him, since I left him in 1944/45. He was a short little fellow back then. He was a close buddy of 1st Lt. **Robert (Bob) Keyes**, 67th BS, co-pilot on my crew. Frank is now largely unable to travel as he is pretty much wheel-chair-bound. He and his family were thrilled with the presentation; a lasting memory for his children and grandchildren.

...continued on page 20



Lt. Col. Sam Ramsey, Operations
Commander of the 151st Air Refueling
Wing, UTAH ANG and Gerald Folsom

Past President of 44th BGVA, 1st Lt. **Gerald W. Folsom**, Co-Pilot on the **George M. Beiber** crew, 506th Bomb Squadron, received three Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal in a formal AF presentation at the Utah Air National Guard Base, Salt Lake City on 2 October 2005. The ANG presentation was arranged by Lee Aston through the AF Review Board Chief William Anderson. The Air Medal presentation to Folsom was made by Lt. Col. Kurt R. Davis of the 151st Air Refueling Wing, UTAH ANG.

Capt. **Ernest W. Rommelfanger**, a Lead Crew Navigator and 67th Squadron Navigator in the latter part of 1944, received an OLC to his DFC and OLC#4 and #5 to his Air Medal at a presentation at his Omaha home. AF Col. Jonathan George, 55th Wing Commander, Offutt AFB, Nebraska, made the presentation in the presence of Mr. Rommelfanger's wife, Gerry, and children. The award arrangements were made through AF Review Guards Chief William Anderson by Lee Aston.



Captain Ernest F. Rommelfanger
receiving the DFC/Oak Leaf Cluster#1

SUMMARY OF SUCCESSFUL BELATED AWARDS SINCE 2004 REUNION

- 1ST. Lt. **William D. Kelly**, Lead Pilot, 68th Sq.; DFC/OLC #1 and AM/OLC #5
- 1st. Lt. **Gerald W. Folsom**, Co-Pilot, 506 Sq. 3 AIR MEDAL OAK LEAF CLUSTERS
- S/Sgt. **Wade T. Elliott**, Aerial gunner, 506 Sq. 2 Air Medal OLCs
- T/Sgt. **Clair P. Shaeffer**, aerial gunner, 68th Sq.; 2 AIR MEDALS
- S/Sgt. **Jack N. Ostenson**, aircraft engineer, 68th Sq. 1 AIR MEDAL
- 1ST LT. **William R. Overhultz**, Lead crew co-pilot, 68th Sq.; DFC + AM/OLC #4
- 1st. Lt. **William W. Ward**, Lead Bombardier, 506 Sq.; DFC + DFC/OLC #1+AM/OLC #5
- 1st. Lt. **Frank J. Colella**, Co-pilot, 67th Sq. DFC, AM/OLC #5 and #6
- Capt. **Ernest f. Rommelfanger**, Lead Navigator, 67th Sq., DFC/OLC #1 +AM/OLC # 4 & 5
- 1st. Lt. **George J. Gaudaen**, Navigator; 301 BG, 15th AF AM/OLC #1
- 1st. Lt. **Bernard W. Bail**, Lead Radar Navigator, 77th Sq., The Distinguished Service Cross,
3 DFCs and AM/OLC #4

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

We hope you all had a really great Thanksgiving Day; it's really great when you can get a day that families, friends and neighbors can spend time together and share a nice traditional meal and celebrations.

We did a similar thing here at Shipdham just a week or so earlier when we celebrated Guy Fawkes Night. So as you see it, here's how it works...you guys celebrate some of the main historic and significant features of the founding of your great country, while here in England we celebrate our most notorious home grown terrorist...who failed abysmally in his ill-planned attempt to murder our king and parliament!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Yup, that's us Brits for you. As you know, our sense of humour can be a bit quirky as well.

While our sense of history and sense of humour can sometimes be called into question, our sense of loyalty and regard for friends who have shared our joint heritage and still share our sense of values, can never be called into question. That is why your U.K. Representative Steve Adams and I have spent the last three months writing and producing a small (60 page) book entitled 'The 44th Bomb Group in Norfolk'. Unlike any of the excellent and very definitive books on the combat history of The Mighty Eighth, The Second Air Division or The 44th, which are aimed at the serious student of WWII and those times, this is a mainly pictorial book, aimed at a wider audience, local people, school children, tourists, general history students, etc., that hopefully shows what it was like to be at Shipdham during 1942-1944. The publication date is December 9th.

As you know, there are a great many tourist-oriented shops and stores in Norfolk aimed at our huge tourist industry. They all carry a wealth of books on The Norfolk Broads, The City of Norwich, The North Norfolk Coast etc, but there seems little to attract the casual historian or visitor describing the history of places like Station 115. So Steve and I thought we would change it. We hope you approve of our attempts to bring your history to a wider audience. Our friends at Hethel (Station 114) have seen the first proofs and have asked to have some copies to sell in their small museum shop. A really great idea, but needless to say, there was a catch. They wanted a book of their own on the 389th Bomb Group. Again, with Steve acting as go-between, Paul Wilson of the 389th history group and I have started one together for them.

Finally, I would like to share with you a notice that has been circulated a lot in recent months since the London bombings: "The general security level for the civilian population is to be raised from 'miffed' to 'peeved', though unofficial sources indicate that it could rise yet again to 'irritated', or even 'a bit cross'. Londoners have not been 'a bit cross' since the Blitz in 1940 when supplies of tea all but ran out. In keeping with this, the Terrorists have been re-classified from 'tiresome' to 'a bloody nuisance'. The last time this level was reached was during the Great Fire of London in 166. The Government advice from Prime Minister Blair to the population has been raised from 'pretend nothing's happened', to 'make another cup of tea'. There are only two higher levels of recommendation: "Remain steadfast and cheerfull' and the highest category, 'WIN' (used in 1939-45...but then you remember that...you guys were there with us.)

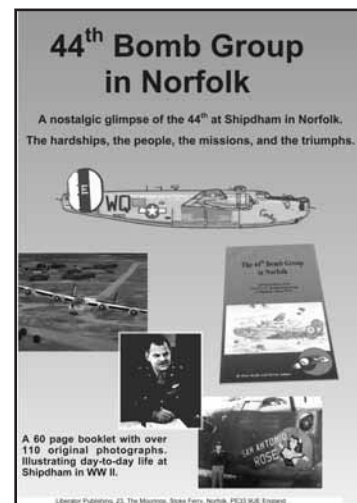
Have a great Christmas and New Year.

With our very best wishes from your old base Station 115.

Peter

Peter Bodle and Steve Adams have created a booklet, "The 44th Bomb Group in Norfolk." It is a pictorial history of the three years you served your country and help crush a vicious regime, making a safer world. On the cover is your beloved plane, the B-24, and inside are glimpses into the life you lived over there. The price is \$5. If you wish to purchase this piece of your own history, contact me and I will place the orders.

By the time you receive this magazine, you may have already received your Database Disk. Do not set it aside. Put in your computer, and as many others as you can. Your wartime history and that of your special buddies is contained on it. NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD IS THERE SUCH A VALUABLE PIECE OF HISTORY. If you do not receive this disk, or if you have a problem using it, feel free to call our Webmaster, Arlo Bartsch (501) 922-5247.



WEBSITE REPORT

If you have not visited your Website, you are missing something. In the past year 2,300,000 people checked it out. In the past three years, 6,400,000 people visited it. If you don't have a computer, somebody in your family does, so ask them to pull it up.

Access the Internet by typing in the following. <http://www.8thairforce.com> When you have accessed the Web Site - - - SELECT Search Database from the selection menu.

Next, from the Search Our Database screen - - - SELECT If Not A Member - Click Here To Join

Identify yourself, invent a password, type in your address & phone number, submit the information. You will receive confirmation of your selected ID and PASSWORD at your e-mail address.

You will now be a registered member and be able to enter your selected ID and PASSWORD and search our database. From there, you can click on any of the following categories:

All Missions and Crews Flown By - - - type in your name or anyone you wish to research.

Group Mission Listing - - - you can check out any mission that you or the Group flew.

Aircraft Special Status - - - tells whatever happened to any plane.

Roll of Honor - - - is where Will Lundy's

careful recording of lost buddies is available. (This is temporarily on hold, but will return soon.)

Personal Legacy - - - contains personal stories from letters and diaries. Search Biographies - - - where your personal history is recorded.

All data retrieved and displayed from the Database is printable. Share it with your family and friends.

Don't be intimidated by this technology. Jump into it. This trip into Cyberspace is FREE, and Arlo, our Webmaster, keeps adding to it. We do not have all the Fallen Wings in it, but we're working on it. You will soon be receiving your own computer disk, from the 44th BGVA. It contains more complete information about the Legacy of the men and women of the 44th Bomb Group, during WWII and later.

If you have any problems accessing 8thairforce.com, feel free to contact Arlo Bartsch @ 510-922-5247.

The 8th Airforce Website provides entry to many other Groups besides the 44th, all of which are interesting. The 44th did something no other Group accomplished: a complete history of every person who was a member, their planes, their missions and the ground crew that kept them flying. A long time from now, researchers and/or great grandchildren will look at this and say WOW!!!

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

"I was a kid in high school, living with my parents, a brother and sister, when the bells rang, whistles blew and the radio said that the Japanese had surrendered. It was VJ Day. People ran out in the streets shouting that the War was over."

Ann Natelli

"I was a nurse on duty in the Emergency Room in a hospital in New York. All nurses were frozen in their jobs at that time. When the radio reported that it was VJ Day, the ER filled up with people, especially servicemen. They had cuts and bruises from falling, bumping each other, breaking bottles and pouring drinks over each other's heads. All the time we were sewing them up, they were laughing."

Elsie Diaczun, RN

"I was stationed at Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi on VJ Day. I wanted to celebrate; but instead, I got sent on guard duty with a bunch of other guys. We had to drive around the field, making sure the celebrations didn't get too disorderly."

Perry Morse

Louis DeBlasio's strongest memory is May 8th, VE Day. He was in a hospital in Paris, and they wouldn't let him go out, as the authorities believed the riotous behavior was too dangerous. He had been rescued from a hospital in Ahlen, Germany on April 4th by Patton's army along with Bob Vance and John Delaney. With his arm in a sling and a bandage over his eye, he watched Paris celebrate from his hospital window.

"I remember the bombing of London in 1943-44, the blackout of that great city and the nightly raids and V2 rocket bombs. I remember standing on street corners with no lights, afraid to flick on a Zippo lighter, and afraid to turn on a flashlight. But dark as it was, behind the blackout curtains, gay and

boozy parties took place, where the scotch and the spirits flowed. One afternoon the air raid alarm sounded and I sought refuge in the Haymarket Theater. I stayed all through four performances of a play, and only emerged well after darkness had fallen, to be told that there had been a great air raid, and many had died."

Forrest S. Clark

Clark's book, Innocence and Death in Enemy Skies, can be purchased by writing to Forrest Clark, 703 Duffer Lane, Kissimmee, FL 34759-4114. The price is \$10.

"I was in Pratt, Kansas checking out in B-29s for deployment to the Pacific theater on VJ Day. The training was stopped and I ended up on recruiting duty in Maryland, which I hated.

Clay Roberts

"We were so busy, I hardly knew it was VE Day. Bill was stationed at Harlington, Texas, and we had a brand new baby. He was discharged from there, and we promptly set off for Paducah, Kentucky, where we spent the rest of our married lives.

Nell Uvanni, wife of the late William Uvanni



Sixty Years....August 15, 1945 to August 15, 5005



WILL SEZ

In my last article I mentioned my sincere interest in obtaining stories from our VOLUNTEERS during those early years of the war – late 1942 into late 1943. S/Sgt. (then) **Herbert J. Wilson**, 506th Sq. responded to this, and has sent me much information about himself both as a combat man and later. Also, I made a search of our records and was surprised at the large number of these ground personnel men who did volunteer successfully. It simply was impossible to identify all of them, especially in the 506 Sq., due to lack of necessary data in their early microfilm history.

My search started with a copy of Orders that Col. **Goodman Griffin** gave me that covered the 44th BG's Ground Echelon Listing of men on board the HMS Queen Mary on the 'cruise' to England 5-11 September 1942. At that time none of them were on 'Combat Status', so if they later appeared in combat, I assumed that they volunteered, as no one was forced to do so.

When the 44th BG arrived in England, the Germans had conquered most of Europe and were poised on the beaches of Europe, hesitating before attempting to cross the English Channel. Invasion could start at any time. Also, our new B-24's were fresh off the factory floor, untried, ill equipped for high altitude bombing and fighting. Our combat men did not have the time or opportunity to learn to fly at high altitude in close formations, in daylight, all of which were necessary to better protect against the enemy, and yet to bomb successfully.

As a quick result of these failings against a strong enemy, casualties came all too quickly and high in numbers. We did obtain a few American replacements from the Canadians and British, but very few in numbers. So,

when vacancies occurred in our combat personnel, we were forced to ask for volunteers from our ground personnel – and volunteer they did.

It was obvious to all, that the odds were stacked very high against anyone ever completing a 'tour' of 25 missions, the number required to get a return 'ticket' back to the US. About the only other inducement was additional 'flight pay', but nevertheless, these men stepped forward, helped fill the gaps in combat crews, and made it possible to put more planes in the air when we desperately needed them the most.

The 506th Squadron replaced our 404th BS that was sent to Alaska in July 1942. They arrived in late February and early March to give us eight more planes and crews. They did a great job of fighting and surviving for many months of combat, with the loss of only one airplane and crew. But several of their ground personnel stepped forward, also volunteered to help fill the gaps. S/Sgt. Herbert J. Wilson was one of them.

Sgt. Wilson was one of the later volunteers for combat in December 1943; he flew his first mission on 6 February 1944 with the Lt. **F. Albert** crew. Being a 'spare' crew member, he flew with many different 506th Sq. crews, mostly as a substitute for men who were sick or injured.

To quote him: "May I thank you for your specific words, as I was one of those who volunteered for combat duty, having served in the ground crew for but a few weeks after arriving at Shipdham in January 1944. Now all these years since then, I have been telling everyone that I had no permanent crew, but that the rule was that the planes could not go on the mission without a full crew. If anyone called in for sick call or had not come back from leave, or wounded, etc. the whole crew missed out.

"The 'training we substitutes had was minimal, since we were well acquainted with the power turrets and the .50 calibers and the bombs. I was given some flying experience around the British Isles, going up with other crews fresh from the States. I had been told that the most dangerous part of being an airman was during the training period, and an experience (more hair-raising than during my 31 flights over Europe) seemed to corroborate this hearsay.

"It occurred when the 'green' Navigator on a training flight mistook the English Channel for the Thames Estuary. At 10,000 feet we suddenly heard a 'vroom-vroom-vroom' and then saw little holes of light in the fuselage. We quickly realized that we were over the Pas de Calais area and managed to re-cross the Channel at Ramsgate. I recall that chaff had just come into use and there were many boxes stashed in the waist compartment. In our ignorance and haste, we threw about half the cartons out the waist window until we were out of danger. We did not know that the tinsel strips were practically ineffective when packed in the carton!

"Well, Will, you said that we COURAGEOUSLY VOLUNTEERED, and then later you used the adjective BRAVELY. I doubt if either word was the case with me, though today I cannot explain the feeling that made me want to go up. I never told my parents until I had completed my fifth mission – my Dad was a total disabled veteran of WW#1, and I was an only child. I am afraid that I did not think of my poor mother.

"I am glad for the recognition you gave of my particular quirk in the history of the 44th. As I recall, there were about 15 of us ground crew that volunteered for the 506th.

Incidentally, I met a WAAF from Bylough Hall and took her for my wife in 20 January 1945."

Sgt. Wilson completed his tour of 31 missions on 29 May 1944, and in May he was instrumental in helping set up the use of A. M. I., Bomb Trainer for use in helping the men who replaced the Bombardier with a "Togglier". When our procedures changed from individual bombing by each airplane to that of bombing on the lead airplane, the following planes in the formation started utilizing a nose gunner/togglier. This made it very important that the man in the nose turret released his bombs correctly and at the exact time.

As Sgt. Wilson had flown many of his missions as a 'Togglier', he was well qualified to become the lead Instructor for this new Bomb Trainer. This he continued to do to until the end of the war

To sum up the numbers of volunteers for combat, I have identified at least these numbers from each Squadron. No doubt there are more of them!

66th Squadron	25	5	completed their tours
67th Squadron	27	0	completed their tours
68th Squadron	33	6	completed their tours
506th Squadron	15	8	completed their tours

After determining that the 44th BG had at least these numbers, I had a discussion with Arlo Bartsch to determine with him the possibility of recognizing them and honoring them in a separate identity within the Master Database. Arlo thought that it was feasible, and would check it out, see if they can be given special recognition for their most valuable assistance when we needed it most.





MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Steve Adams** we received the tragic news that **Roger Freeman** has passed away. A true friend of the airmen who served in England, Freeman is renowned for his accurate recording of the air war in *"The Mighty Eighth," "8th Air Force War Diary," "Fortress at War,"* and more. In 1977 he spoke to the 8th Air Force Historical Society, and his memories of Americans at war were beautifully stated.

"...I remember you on your bicycles, the laughter, the singing and the shouting, how you would go to the local pubs, complain bitterly about the wet, warm English beer and then drink the pubs dry. I recall your generosity with the local children..."

"I remember getting terrified as a B-24 Liberator spiraled down with one wing aflame, and I was down there on the ground; and some equally terrified, or far more frightened young men were parachuting down from that blazing bomber....I recall seeing the humps on the stretchers being carried to the waiting ambulances..."

"Most of you wear the 8th Air Force symbol in some form or another, either in the badge of this society or sister societies. I say to you, gentlemen, you have every right to wear that with pride...wear it with pride and so keep the courage and endeavor of the 8th Air Force shining brightly for future generations."

Ed. Comment: Roger Freeman showed his never-ending gratitude to American airmen through his unique skill as a writer to tell the air war story. Even in his last years, he was researching and documenting the details of WWII.



Quite a few members set out to find our friend and former Reunion Chairman, **Mike Yuspeh**, a resident of New Orleans. We are not sure how his house made out from Hurricane Katrina, but we have learned that he is moving to Memphis. His E-Mail address is: Yuspeh@juno.com

From **Bob Dubowsky**: "On a trip to Israel

to visit our daughter and grandkids, we became friendly with a few Israeli pilots. They invited me to fly in an Israeli Air Force six place Cessna. We flew down to Eliat, then across the Sinai desert to an airfield 50 miles east of the canal named Birgafgafa. Irma and three friends were in the A/C as well. The Israeli pilot said, 'OK Bob, you land it.' I made the landing unassisted, which made me feel great, as I had never flown this type of plane before."

Ed. Note: Obviously, flying a B-24 is good preparation for flying a Cessna.



Aviation 101 from **Clay Roberts**: "The probability of survival is equal to the angle of arrival."

"Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make all of them yourself."



From **Jack Butler**: A B-24 from the 44th BG crashed and burned deep in Germany's Black Forest near Stuttgart on 19 March 1945. The roaring fire and smoke from the flames helped the Germans find the exact location of the crash site.

The Germans captured the four survivors and buried the other seven in a shallow grave in the forest near the crash site. Three years after the war an American burial team was able to locate the graves at the crash site and assure the grieving families of a first class Military Funeral at various locations.

The pilot and navigator were from my home town of Cleveland, Ohio, and I have been assisting the pilot's cousin, Roy Podojil, write about the incident. Just two years ago Podojil was able to obtain from government records enough information, that, with the use of metal detectors provided by German friends, we were able to track down the exact location and also find some remaining relics.

The exact location of the crash site in the Black Forest is about 8 miles east of Pforzheim and about 10 miles north of Simmozheim.

Strange things happen in the course of

...continued on page 27

any war. For over sixty years I had been wondering about what exactly did happen to my two buddies from Cleveland. Now I know. But I never dreamed that I would discover the crash site is less than 8 miles down the road from where two of my German great granddaughters were born and raised. My two German beauties speak perfect German and pretty good English.

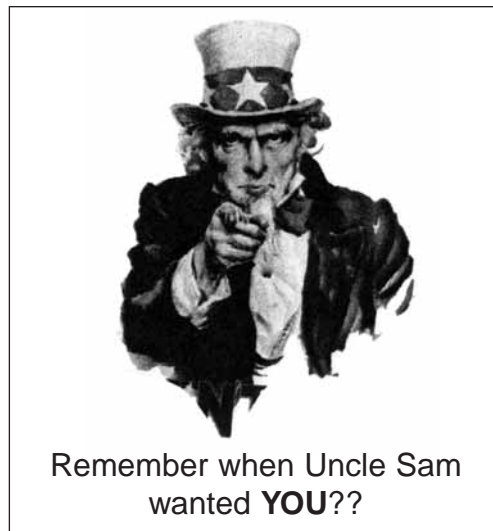
*Ed. Note: This was the 18th mission for the Podojil crew (66th Sq). The target was a Jet Plane Assembly Factory in Neuburg, Germany. A/C # 42-51907 was the only loss. The pilot and six members of his crew were lost. **Norbert Schmitz**, Tail Gunner, was wounded and died from the wounds; **Max Veitch**, Radio Operator and **Walter Mosevich**, Left Waist Gunner became POW; **Bernard Bail** was wounded and became POW. The group was freed 21 April 1945 by 44th Infantry. Bail was honored at the Tacoma reunion for long overdue medals.*



From Mark Osenki: "I work at the Errera Community Care Center in West Haven, Connecticut, a veteran center. I want you to know we will be dedicating one of our

Veteran Houses in the honor of **Frederick W. Clark**, a member of the 44th who was shot down on 28 January, 1943. I just wanted to let you know that we are still thinking about you guys."

*Ed. Note: S/Sgt. Frederick Clark was an Engineer on the **Maxwell W. Sullivan** crew. Flying in "Spirit of 76", they were bombing harbor facilities in Lemmer, Holland when they were attacked by 35 Me 109s and FW 190s. Two planes (68 Sq.) were lost, 1 badly damaged; 21 crewmen were KIA, 2 became POW; 2 returned to base, but badly wounded.*



From Wayne Brown, 506 Sq.: "Some time ago you had a picture which Steve Adams had gotten from negatives he purchased from E-Bay, showing soldiers in a jeep. It was labeled 'Early Shipdham'. The other half of the picture should show soldiers on a trailer. I found this in the 'History of the Fourteenth Combat Wing'. This is part of the **John Docktor** crew. The soldier on the right of the man holding the post is **Clarence Gable**, Flight Engineer. Next right (wearing the cap) is **Charles Heintz**, our Co-Pilot. The picture had to be taken in the summer of '44."

Can anyone identify others in the picture?



FOLDED WINGS

*Life's race well run, life's work well done,
Life's victory won, and now we sleep.*

BERRIER, DALTON # 19394 67 Sq. 2002 T/Sgt. Berrier was Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Robert Schmidt** crew. His first mission was January 11, 1944. He flew one mission with **Rockford C. Griffith**, others with Command pilots **Fred Sloan, David E. Saylor, Howard Holladay, Robert Felber** and **Robert J. Lehnhausen**. In his 32 missions he flew in *The Shark, F For Freddie, Chief & Sack Artists, Raggedy Ann II, D Barfly, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle* and *Phyllis*. Berrier's last mission was June 25, 1944.

CARDWELL, THOMAS J. M. # 19654 67Sq. 8 September 2005 T/Sgt. Cardwell flew his first mission 2 February 1944; on his 32 missions he served most of the time as Engineer/Top Turret Gunner, but frequently in the Waist or Tail Gunner positions. He flew with **Saul Fineman, Charles Hughes, Dale Benadom, Ivan Stepnich, John Winchester, Charles Arnold, Edward Yatkones** and **Lester Hundelt**. In addition, he flew with the following Command Pilots, **John H. Diehl, Jr.; Frank D. Slough; Robert Felber; Lewis Wright; Gordon Brandon** and **Sylvester Hunn**. He flew in *Big Fat Butterfly, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Patsy Ann II, Flak Alley II, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose* and *Phyllis*. His last mission July 25 1944 was to St. Lo, France. That mission was considered so successful, only the church remained standing when the 29th Army Division arrived.

Caldwell's last years were spent in Riverside, California. His death was reported by **Richard Butler**.

COMPTON, HARVEY #19812 66 Sq. April 2005 T/Sgt. Compton was an Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Robert Kolliner** crew. In his 28 missions, he flew with **Robert Abernathy**, Capt. **Chester Phillips** and Major **Howard Moore**. He flew in such prestigious planes as *4-Q-2, Princess Charlotte/Sure Shot, Jenny/Lady Luck* and the most famous plane in the 44th Bomb Group, *Suzy Q*. During that time his missions took him to Occupied France in preparation for the upcoming invasion. Next his crew was part of the group that went to Africa to assist with the Italian and Sicilian invasion. His 28th mission was July 15, 1943.

DUNLAP, ROBERT #25811 68th Sq. 18 October 2005 Sgt. Roberts was a Gunner on the **Clay Roberts** crew, serving in different gun positions in the ten flights that the crew made, the first on 11 March 1945. As the troops were progressing eastward, 44th missions were driving deep into Germany, knocking out airfields and armament plants, crippling German resistance. The Roberts crew flew in *Limpin' Old Sadie/San Antonio Rose; Jose Carioca; Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, One Weakness* and *Louisiana Belle*. Their last mission was April 18, 1945.

After the war, Dunlap attended the University of Texas, then became a broker in real estate and insurance. His latter years were spent in Austin, Texas. He is survived by two children.

Some of the information about Dunlap came from **Robert Hooper** of Fredericksburg, Texas, who found his obituary in his local paper.

Several years ago an erroneous report of Dunlap's demise was placed in several aviation magazines. The Eight Ball Tails was happy to publish his amused reply, that the reports of his recent death are totally exaggerated, (borrowing a quote from Mark Twain.)

GILBERTSON, STANLEY HOWE #20369 506 Sq. 10 March 2005 There is no record of Gilbertson's wartime activities. He and his wife Lois resided in Oregon City, Oregon.

GOEBEL, CLARENCE W. #20399 506 Sq. 1 December 2005 T/Sgt. Goebel was the Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **John Docktor** crew. He flew his first mission on 7 May 1944. The crew flew in *Flying Log/Pregnant Peg, Three Kisses for Luck, Passion Pit, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Southern Comfort II, My Gal Sal* and many unnamed aircraft. On D-Day, June 6, 1944 the crew flew to Colleville/St. Laurent, supporting the invasion. All missions after that were clearing the way for the Invasion Forces and destroying the factories that supported the Nazi war machine. Goebel flew 33 missions, completing his tour on 3 August 1944. He was regarded as a great husband, father, grandfather and 'all around good guy'.

FOLDED WINGS

GRAHAM, ALAN CLARK #20431 66th Sq. 1st. Lt. Graham flew his first mission as Co-pilot on the **Edwards Hedricks** crew, January 31, 1945. He piloted the plane on his second mission, February 21, 1945, and for the rest of his nineteen missions. He flew in *Jail Bait, Jersey Jack, Henry, King Pin* and *Loco Moto*. The Graham crew flew their 19th mission on April 20, 1945.

HOLSTON, CHARLES R. #20709 66th Sq. 15 July 2005 According to Holston's wife, Doreen, Holston was a cook for the 44th BG. There is no Bio on file of his activities.

MCKEE, JOHN H. #21284 506 Sq. Sept. 8, 2005. Sgt. McKee was a Radio Operator and Gunner on the **Bernard Komasinski** crew. They flew in *Ole Cock, My Gal Sal* and *My Peach*.

On his 7th mission to the Air Field at Romilly, at La Perthe, France, August 8, 1944, flak hit the #2 engine. The propeller could not be feathered, the engine caught fire, and the crew bailed out. McKee was captured by German troops and became POW in Stalag Luft 4. As the Russians advanced, he was among the Kriegies in the Death March described in the Summer 2004 issue of the 8 Ball Tails. This march covered a four month period from January 29 to April 26, 1945.

McKee and his wife, Anita, lived in Michigan City, IN. The couple had three daughters and three grandchildren.

This information comes from his crew mate, **Frank Schaeffer**, who was Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the Komasinski crew. Schaeffer survived the crash of *My Peach*, and successfully evaded, along with seven other members of the crew. The Ball Turret Gunner was wounded, and was taken prisoner.

MILLIKEN, JOHN #21368 506 Sq. August 2005 1st. Lt. Milliken's first two missions were on D-Day, June 6, 1944, piloted by **Richard Hruby**. Immediately after that, he received his own crew, flying in a number of different planes: *Passion Pit, Sabrina III, Shack Rat, M'Darling, Old Iron Corset, My Peach* and *I Walk Alone*. On August 13, 1944, the mission was to the road junctions between Le Havre and Rouen, France in an area known as the Falaise Pocket. *Passion Pit* was hit by flak and went down. The entire crew was taken POW. Milliken managed to cut

a hole in the canvas over the truck in which they were being transported and was able to evade. He met Canadian forces who helped him to return to Shipdham four days later. This was Milliken's 31st mission.

MONEY, WALLACE B. #22963 66th Sq. October 2005 2nd Lt. Money first flew with the RAF, then transferred to the 44th as a Co-pilot listed as a Flight Officer. He flew 30 missions with different pilots; on the 26th mission he was listed as a Lieutenant.

His first mission from Shipdham was 9 September 1943; his last, 12 April 1944. He flew with such renowned pilots as **Shelby L. Irby, Richard E. Harleman, Charles Armstrong, George R. Insley, Richard Comey** and **Sylvester Hunn**. His flights included such awesome missions as *Kjeller, Escalles sur Buchy* and *Friedrickshafen*. He flew in *Helen B Happy, Lil Cookie, Avenger, The Banshee, Big Banner, Lemon Drop, Scourge of the Skies, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Patsy Ann II* and *My Ass'am Dragon*. Money was located by **Roger Fenton**, leading to a visit from his pilot, **George Insley**.

After completing his missions with the 44th, he flew a second tour with a P-38 photo group. In civilian life he became a utility lineman; then was called up for the Korean War. He flew supplies and transported wounded from the front lines to base hospitals.

He leaves his wife Alice and a daughter Terry Money.

MOORE, FRANCIS C. #21396 506 Sq., 17 July 2005. Moore was an A & E Mechanic, receiving his training at Chanute Field, IL. He went to Liverpool, England on 17 April 1943 on the *Ile de France*, a ship that had no escort service. In Liverpool he studied Inline Engine Repair before moving to Shipdham. He became Crew Chief on the *Bar W*, a plane that flew 106 missions. After VE Day he returned to the States on the *Queen Mary* on 20 June 1945.

Moore became a farmer in Hiawatha, Kansas. He and his wife Mary Lou had three children, two sons (one deceased) and one daughter.



FOLDED WINGS

RICHARDSON, JAMES A. #21797 66th Sq. 13 June 2005 2nd Lt. Richardson was a Navigator on the **Amos Alley** crew. All of his 24 flights were into Germany, bombing ahead of the troops as Allied forces were approaching the Fatherland. Richardson was in the Air Cadet Training Program at Spearfish, South Dakota, but was redirected to navigation and bombardier training at Kingmen, Arizona. He completed Gunnery Training School and received his Navigator Wings July 1944. He flew one mission with **Albert Leghorn**; later with **Capt. Richard Wynes, Major David Hurley** and **Lt. Col. William Cameron**, Command Pilots.

The Alley crew flew in *Glory Bee, Jersey Jerk, Peace Offering* and many unnamed planes.

After discharge from the service, Richardson completed his college education and became a Park Ranger with the National Park Service from 1963-1986. He completed his career in Seattle as the Regional Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services 1970-86. He was responsible for evaluating and interpreting visitor service programs in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska.

After retirement Richardson and his wife Rowena moved to a ranch near Monroe, Washington and raised French Limousine beef cattle. He leaves his wife of 58 years, one son, one daughter and four granddaughters. He was interred at Tahoma National Cemetery.

ROOD, GEORGE E. #21845 67th Sq. 18 January 2005 S/Sgt. Rood was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **Roger E. Markle** crew. The crew's first mission was 12 March 1945; they flew a total of ten missions in six different A/C: *Mi Akin Ass, Old Iron Corset, Missouri Belle/Missouri Sue, Lady Fifi Nella, One Weakness* and *Three Kisses for Luck*. Rood's last mission was 18 April 1945.

Rood was an electrician for Blawnox Company and Glen Dale Hospital. He is survived by his wife Wanda, son Ronald and daughter Marlene.

SANDS, CHRISTOPHER #0-386917 68th Sq. August 13, 2005. In his 'History of the 68th Squadron,' **Webb Todd** reported that Engineering Officer Sands joined the Squadron on 3 August 1942 as the Assistant Engineering Officer. As a young officer and with a small group of enlisted men, he was the advance man sent to Ft. Dix, NJ to make the arrangements for the embarkation of the 44th ground echelon to England aboard the HMS Queen Mary. He arrived in the ETO on 5 September 1942. In June 1943 he became the Engineering Officer of the 68th when **Tom Landrum** was named the Group Engineering Officer of the 389th Bomb Group, which was newly arrived from the States.

The records show that he was sent on Detached Service to Bengahzi 16 June 1943; returned to the base two months later. Returned to Africa 16 September 1943, returning to Shipdham 12 October 1943, flying both trips to Africa with 44th planes & crews. He had detached service for another week to an unknown area, later was sent to St. Trond in March 1945, and returned to the base six weeks later. He was on leave to Dusseldorph 30 May 1945, returning to the ZOI on #44-42189.

Upon leaving active duty, Sand remained active in the Air Force Reserve. In civilian life he was a successful civil engineer. He retired from Rockwell International where he had worked on the first of the space shuttle projects. He had three sons, of whom he was extremely proud. Information of his FWs came to **Robert Lehnhausen** from Sand's daughter-in-law.

According to Lehnhausen, Chris Sands was an exceptional officer. He and his marvelous band of "grease monkeys" worked mechanical miracles in the maintenance and repair of the 68th's B-24s. Lehnhausen rated Chris Sand the most competent ground officer with whom he served in his military career.





FOLDED WINGS

STRUBLE, ROBERT S. #22914 506 Sq. 20 November 2005 S/Sgt. Struble was a Gunner, flying with many different pilots on many different aircraft. His first combat mission was 9 September 1943. In his 30 missions he flew with the following pilots: **Frank Blough, Wayne H. Middleton, Norman Purdy, Capt. Robert L. Cardenas, Patrick Gallagher, John McCaslin, H. K. Landahl, B. L. Scuddy and D. H. Dines.** His missions took him into France, Germany & Norway at a time when Allies were bombing industries to slow the Nazi war production. Among the planes Struble flew in were *Ruth-Less, Lucky Strike, Baldy & His Brood, Prince/Princ-Ass/Princess, M'Darling, Feudin' Wagon, Jail Bait* and *Subrina III.*

Struble earned his B.S. degree in Accounting from Rider University and a graduate degree at the University of Chicago. He had been Mid-Atlantic States Manager for U.S. Steel, later became VP of Guyon General Piping in New York City. He was active in many veteran, community and professional organizations. After retirement, Struble and his wife, Lamond Doig Struble lived in Newton, New Jersey. He leaves four daughters and four grandchildren.

TYREE, HAL C. JR. #22369 506 Sq. 2 January 2006 1st. Lt. Tyree flew his first combat mission on 2 August 1944 with **Thomas G. Waters.** After that, he and his crew flew a total of 37 missions into Belgium and France, but most into the heart of the German Reich. They flew in such prestigious aircraft as *Down De Hatch, Shack Rat, Glory Bee, Sierra Blanca, M'Darling, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Southern Comfort III, Sabrina III, Hairless Joe* and *Consolidated Mess.* Their last mission was 22 February 1945.

When he returned to the ZOI, he was stationed at Love Field in Dallas where Mary Hayes joined him, and they were wed. Tyree joined the National Guard and rose to the rank of Major General and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard. Tyree had been widowed with five children when he met Joan Fulton who had three children. They raised their families and retired to Ft. Myers, Florida. Tyree became ill the day after Christmas and passed away one week later; his wife Joan followed him in death thirty hours later. Mr. Tyree left 2 daughters and 3 sons; Mrs. Tyrees left 2 son and 2 daughters, 22 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

JOSEPH WACKER #22421 67th Sq. 31 July 2005 S/Sgt. Wacker was a gunner on the John Honmyhr crew, serving as both Tail and Waist Gunner at different times. In his 34 missions, beginning June 15, 1944, he flew with the following Command Pilots, **Howard Holladay, Perry Norris, Eugene Snavelly and Devon Davis.** Wacker flew *Phyllis, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Old Iron Corset, Mi Akin Ass, Peace Offering* and in many unnamed planes. By the time he finished his last mission, 4 November 1944, American troops were rapidly advancing across France. Wacker spent his last years in Meadowbrook, Pennsylvania.

The report of his death came from Jack Brand, a member of the 452 Bomb Group (B-17s), a hospice volunteer and neighbor.

WIMSATT, LOUIS JOHNSON #22599 1 January 14, 2006 506 Sq. 1st. Lt. Wimsatt was a pilot, flying his first mission 11 July 1944. As the Allies were bombing Germany's production facilities and transportation system, Wimsatt & his crew's first mission was to Munich; they flew a total of 37 missions, one with Major C. L. Lee as Command Pilot. Among the planes they flew were *Cape Cod Special, Southern Comfort II, Sabrina III, Shoo Shoo Baby, Down De Hatch, My Peach, I Walk Alone* and *Joplin Jalopy.* Their last mission was 27 November 1944.

Before the war Wimsatt attended Georgetown University before enlisting in the Air Corps. Among the adventurous stories he related to his family was of an emergency landing in Reims, France. When it came time to leave, he could barely get the a/c aloft, as his crew had loaded it with cases of champagne.

After the war, Wimsatt was a pilot on Capital Airlines for several years. Later he became part owner of the Johnson & Wimsatt Lumber Company.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Sarah Mildred Wimsatt, nine children, 19 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren.



B-24 Model at Balbor Park, San Deigo, California

photo by John Gately

**44th Bomb Group
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8 BALL TAILS



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The Beiber Crew, L-R Top: **William Uvanni**, Radio Operator; **George Beiber**, Pilot, **Gerald Folsom**, Co-Pilot; **Harold Maggard**, Waist Gunner; **William Rebhan**, Gunner.
Front: **Nathan Woodruff**, Engineer; **Carl Miller**, Armorer –Gunner; **Perry Morse**, Tail Gunner; **Alfred Wilson**, Navigator; **Paul Boensch**, Bombardier.

After the war, *Joplin Jalopy* sat in a field in Joplin, Missouri, unloved and unattended, cannibalized and eventually scrapped. It had been named for the town that had purchased \$300,000 worth of War Bonds. The city fathers purchased it in 1946 for a few hundred dollars, intending it to be a memorial; but found that they couldn't afford the project.

Sixty years later an English-born researcher resurrected her memory; and suddenly the town remembered. The local paper contacted members of the George Beiber crew, **Bob Vance** from the **Chandler** crew and others. Before long Robert Smith, a researcher and blogger, was sending the story around the world.

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JOPLIN JALOPY FLIES AGAIN IN SPIRIT ONLY

The crews that flew in *Joplin Jalopy* can testify that it was a 'lucky plane' – with one exception. Bob Vance, gunner on *Southern Comfort III*, remembers unloading supplies for the British paratroopers at Wesel, Germany, when a body flew down past him and bounced off the ground. It was Anibal C. Diaz. While standing between the well of the open ball turret and the bomb bay, Diaz's chest chute opened and pulled him from the plane. The low altitude and excessive speed of the plane provided no time for the chute to open. He was Joplin Jalopy's single loss in its 66 missions.

Jerry Folsom remembers returning home from a mission, and was close to the Channel when the plane suddenly lost power. Simultaneously, there were four blasts of flak in front of Joplin Jalopy. Immediately they dropped out of formation, and Jerry discovered that they had a blown fuse in the supercharger. Miraculously, another fuse was available; he inserted it, and the plane flew on.

If the plane had not suddenly stopped functioning, they would have been a direct hit.

On another mission, Perry Morse remembers a burst of flak, and he felt something hot hit his neck. "I'm hit," he declared. He put his hand to his neck, and what he found was not blood, but Spam. His can of Spam and an orange had been

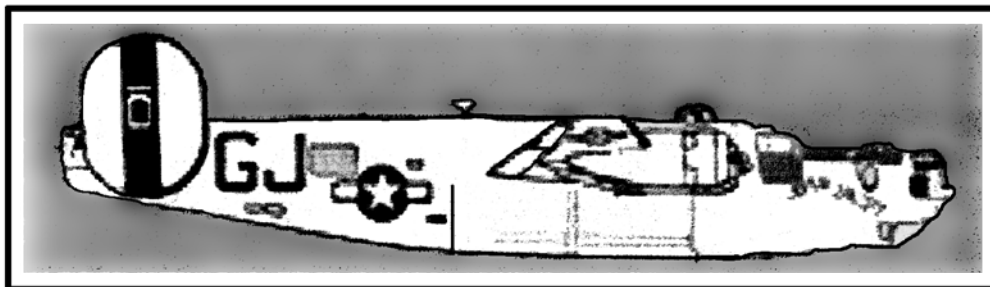
safely tucked in his cubbyhole. The flak ruptured both, so he returned to Shipdham hungry but alive.

In their seven flights on Joplin Jalopy, both Folsom and Morse believe that a Higher Power was watching over them.

The English-born researcher, Robert Smith found the story of Joplin Jalopy in the city's public library. He informed the local paper and the Joplin Globe reminded the town of that piece of its history. The son of an RAF Pilot, Smith had a life-long interest in the WWII air war. He searched the Internet and found Peter Bodle's article in 'Fly Past', in which it became known that the Jalopy and other planes in the 44th had transported British cadets on missions, along with Ursel Harvel, the photographer assigned to Station 115.

Roy Smith, Robert's father, was born in Attleborough, Norfolk. One of his happiest memories is meeting members of the 44th BG in the Abbey Hotel at Wymondham, Norfolk at the 50th Anniversary celebration. (If anyone remembers him, he sends greetings.) He flew in a Spitfire, and was poised for the attack on Japan, but was spared by the dropping of the A-Bombs.

Smith's grandfather, 'Bill' Smith, ran a barbershop in Attleborough. He had the unique experience of giving Jimmy Stewart a haircut, not aware that his customer was a celebrity.



PRESIDENTIAL BRIEFING

By now you have received our computer disk containing the historical record of the 44th Bomb Group, including many of the individual biographies which you submitted. This is a one-of-a-kind piece of history. No other group has their records preserved so well.

During a recent conversation with Arlo Bartsch, he informed me that he had received 36 calls about the disk from 44th BG members or their families, asking questions. They mention how proud they are of their husband's or father's service in WWII with the 44th.

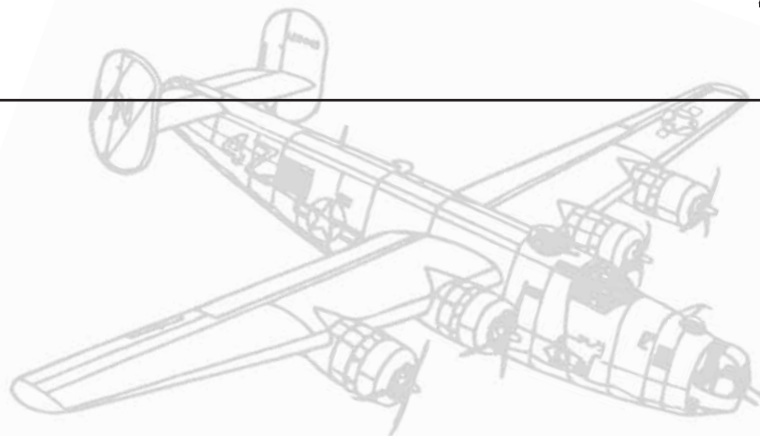
I recently met with a friend and I regaled him with stories about all of you and the group's many accomplishments. He reminded me, how fortunate we were to have maintained our camaraderie for 60 years, and still get together annually to visit, share stories and honor those members who have Folded Wings.

I do not know if we were the Greatest Generation, but I do know we were toughened by the Great Depression, and were proud to serve a country that before and since, has never been as patriotic and as supportive of its Armed Forces.

I am looking forward to seeing you at the Washington Reunion. It is not what we had originally planned, and it is rather pricy; but we will be joining the largest gathering of past and present Air Force personnel that have ever come together in one place. It is a blessing that the long-overdue Air Force Memorial is built in time for WWII veterans to enjoy the unveiling.



Paul Kay



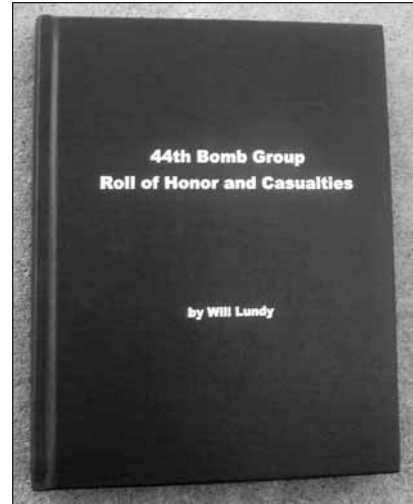
STILL AVAILABLE --THE ROLL OF HONOR

One of the stated goals of the 44th BGVA is to honor those who were lost. There is no greater way to honor the men who are buried at Normandy, England, France, Belgium, Holland and in many graveyards across America, than to make this book available, any place where families might visit.

Will Lundy's Roll of Honor is truly unique. It is a record of every combat death or injury that took place during the War years. In each case, there is a full description of the details of the mission, burial sites and what happened to other members of the crew.

The Roll of Honor is a treasure for researchers, historians or other 44thers who cannot forget their buddies. It can be a tax-deductible gift to a public or college library or historical society.

The price is \$50, which includes postage and handling.



Will Lundy's book

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A LAST HOORAH TRIP TO SHIPDHAM & EUROPE IN 2006

The 44th BGVA Board is wondering how many of our members would be interested in making a trip in 2006 to rekindle memories of our Shipdham Air Base during WWII. Also, to visit some of the outstanding sites in England and possibly another look at significant places on the Continent.

This is a survey to indicate whether enough members are sincerely interested in a last Hurrah Trip. The off-spring generation is urged to accompany their parents. We need a tentative head count. If interested, please contact Mary Aston, 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635 or e-mail to leeaston@elberton.net. Please check the sites that would interest you, or make some suggestions. Return to Mary Aston.

Shipdham Air Field/Norwich ___

American Air Museum (Duxford) ___

Site of Leon Vance MOH Mission ___

& ditching in Eng. Channel

Stonehenge ___

York, York Minster Cathedral ___

British Railway Museum ___

Aston-Martin auto factory @ Newport Pagnell (Hand made/custom autos; _____

priced @ \$100K+, the type James Bond, Agent 007 drove in Movie Series.)

Normandy (Invasion) Beach ___

Bastogne ___

Other Suggestions _____

Cambridge American Cemetery ___

Ruth-less Crash Site, Eastbourne ___

Roman Baths, Bath, England ___

Roman 4-walled city of Chester ___

Imperial Museum, London ___

American Cemetery in Belgium ___

Shaeffer grave & crash site ___

THE TREASURE THAT CAME IN YOUR MAIL

The 44th Bomb Group Has Taken The Lead...AGAIN

Your 44th Bomb Group Board of Directors has taken a step unparalleled by any other Veterans Group.... All Group Members have been provided with a piece of history that must never be forgotten—the War years. It is encapsulated within the 44th Bomb Group Database Program.

In the mail you have received a four inch disk that contains the Military and Personal records of the 44th Bomb Group during World War II. There is no other view of History to compare to this documentation.

World War II is an event that will be studied for centuries. Your personal Military Heritage has been preserved for Future Generations to "*Remember and Share... With Those Who Were There*". Everyone had a story. For those who chose to write their story, it can be found in the Legacy Pages of the 44th BG Database CD.

The following information is available in the Database: Names & Duties* Voices and Pictures* Missions & Targets * Crews & Aircraft* Biographies * Personal Stories & Diaries * Legacy Pages * Roll of Honor * Folded Wings* Prisoners of War * Missing or Killed in Action* Escaped or Evaded * Burial Sites* Unlimited Search & Retrieval Options.

****DO NOT DISCARD THIS DISK. ****

If you do not have a computer, pass this disk on to your son, daughter, grandchild, another family member or any friend who does have a computer. Let them pull up your name and print your history. Offer to share the disk with your local library, college, school system, VFW, American Legion, an appropriate Museum, or any place where the knowledge of history is important.

Your Board of Directors started the Database Project over five years ago. The intent was to preserve the History and the Legacy of the 44th Bomb Group. Many who contributed money and information to the project are gone...but their history lives on. Treasure it!

This Database was Conceived, Designed and Developed by Arlo F. Bartsch and his son, Peter Lincoln Bartsch. For technical support or help in the use of the Database, call:

Arlo Bartsch
44th Bomb Group Veterans Association
Database Custodian
Phone: (501) 922-5247
E-Mail: afbas@aol.com

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Should you want additional copies of the 44th Bomb Group Database, they are available for \$25 from the 44th BGVA (Taxes, Postage, Shipping & Handling Included)

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Our printer always has over-runs of past issues of the 8 Ball Tails, which I pass out to anyone who needs one. They are available to any member for only the cost of the postage.

Some members report that they give them to friends in Nursing Homes; others pass them on to children and grandchildren. Do you have a friend who is a historian? A researcher? An aviation buff?

Call me if you would like some back issues. (Ruth W. Davis-Morse, 717 846-8948)

BLACK JACK'S LEFT VERTICAL STABILIZER



It has been said that WWII will not be over until the last veteran is gone. Perhaps it won't be over then, as there are crash sites all over Europe, and eager researchers carry their shovels and metal detectors, ready to circulate

old bomber parts to collectors around the world.

Charles Runion, Sr., one of the newest members of the 44th BGVA, has spent nearly 30 years researching, collecting and preserving aviation history from 1935-45. He was able to acquire the left vertical stabilizer from *Black Jack* which had been unearthed from the crash site in Austria where it was shot down on that fateful mission of 1 October 1943. The vertical still retains the original color along with the serial number 123816 and the large letter X.

Runion attributes his success in identifying this piece of *Black Jack* through his contact with **Will Lundy**. After that he was delighted to talk to two crew members, **Bob Reasoner**, Tail Gunner and **George Guilford**, Bombardier. Bob posed an interesting question: How did *Black Jack* get its name? The answer, "add the numbers (serial) on the vertical together 123816 they equal 21, a Black Jack."

Runion continues to search for original photos of each of the crew members, along with any other 44th BG memorabilia. All will eventually be displayed with the vertical. He plans to have a museum in the middle Tennessee area, where this accumulated history can be viewed by many.

Every crash had its own unique stories.

The MACR reports that this aircraft was observed to be hit in the bomb bay by flak shortly after turning away from the target. It fell back and peeled off to the left, losing altitude, then passed directly under another aircraft. It was burning in the bomb bay section. Three chutes came out at this time. It drifted back to the left and passed over the top of another a/c in the formation; then swerved to the right and seven more parachutes were observed. Then the plane turned to the right and broke into two pieces.

T/Sgt. **Guilford** was among the survivors. He remembers the Navigator, **Eugene Vikery**, tapping him on the shoulder and saying, "I'm bailing out." A few seconds later, the plane got a direct hit from flak and went into a nose dive – and Vikery could not bail out. Next the plane exploded and blew him out. "I was knocked out for a few seconds; when I came to, I was falling - I opened my chute. I could see small pieces of the plane floating around."



Black Jack

Black Jack was one of 25 planes that made it to the Messerschmidt plant. This was Tail Gunner S/Sgt. **Robert Reasoner's** second trip to Wiener-Neustadt, and he was already planning what he would do when his next three missions were finished. Then ME 109s flew straight to his formation, and his life was forever changed.

Reasoner's recollection of that fateful moment are very vivid. He remembers before jumping, ducking down to look under the flames to see M/Sgt. **Robert M. Smith**, Waist

Gunner and Asst. Engineer **Wilson A. Richie** lying on the floor.

He had to walk through fire to the waist window to bail out. His chute got caught in a tree. In the hospital he learned that Gunner **Anthony Damico** had died from internal injuries. After German doctors attempted to get him help for his head and neck burns, and after many months in POW camps, he was repatriated.

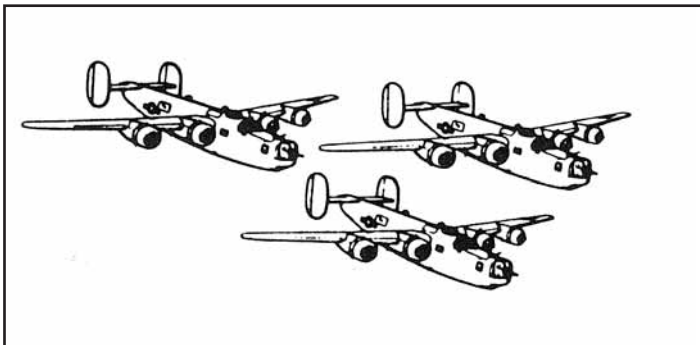
Later in the States, Engineer **Edwin Carlson** told Reasoner that he had tapped Pilot **Coleman Whitaker** on the shoulder and

motioned for him to get out. Sitting on the floor and leaning against the side of the A/C was Radio Operator **Francis A. Bauman** with a strange expression on his face. At that time Carlson was blown out of the plane.

Upon returning to the States, Reasoner received his third Purple Heart. After many months in the hospital, he returned to civilian life, a true survivor.

Crew friendships are eternal. Reasoner and Guilford continue to enjoy a warm relationship that, truly, was forged in fire.

A B-24 DISPLAY In the MIGHTY EIGHTH HERITAGE MUSEUM SAVANNAH, GEORGIA



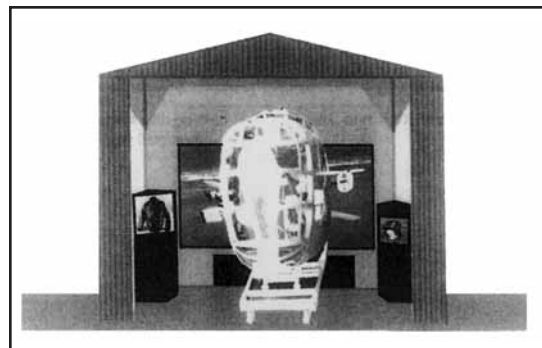
The 2nd Air Division has set a new goal, to establish an exhibit featuring the B-24. On display will be the nose of *Fighting Sam*, a plane from the 389th Group. This nose will be part of the 2 AD display which will feature all bomb groups; protruding will be this authentic nose piece. Visitors can enter this section of the 60 year old bomber, giving them a glimpse of the plane that flew in every theater of WWII.

THE SECOND AIR DIVISION NEEDS YOUR HELP

This venture will cost \$120,000. At this point they are \$19,000 short. Will you contribute to this cause? This is the last opportunity for the legacy of the 2 AD to reach across to future generations.

Perry Morse, the 44th BGVA representative to the 2AD, will collect the funds and present them to the 2 AD as a contribution from the Flying Eight Balls. Make out checks to 2nd Air Division.

Send them to:
Perry Morse
2041 Village Circle East
York, Pennsylvania 17404



LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

Last week I got talking with a British army veteran (84 years young) who still has a very keen and active interest in the USAAF involvement in WWII. During the course of the chat he produced some pictures of Diamond Lil doing a low level pass over Shipdham Aero Club on June 17th 1992 on the last visit of a B-24 to the country. It was truly a beautiful sight and brought back many vivid memories, but reminded me that we don't have a Flying B-24 here in England any more, and that is sad. We do have the B-17 Sally B and that is great, but not quite the same, if your interest is with the 44th BG and Shipdham. Never mind. The main theme of this wistful reminiscence is to remind you guys (as if it were really necessary - to really look after your flying heritage. Enjoy it while you can, it can disappear far too quickly.

At the Shipdham clubhouse we have refurbished the kitchen so we can produce some better snacks and drinks for our members and visitors, as well as keeping the British food-safety authorities happy. Since the Church Army coffee and do'nut vans stopped running when you guys left Shipdham, the catering on the airfield has become very much a self help operation. We may still be pretty good at making tea, we are much better now at making coffee than we were when you tried to drink our attempts at making it. For those whose taste buds remember those far off days, we still have a hulluva long way to go in the do'nut department. Sorry guys, you should have stayed a bit longer and given us a teach-in on do'nuts!

Our spring will be well under way when you get to read this, and our second runway, 13/31 will be active with a side by side grass or concrete surface. (That's the second of the cross runways in your day). Pilots will be able to choose which surface they need for their type of aircraft. We started looking at the project and talking it through with our landlady, Mrs. Paterson, about a year or so ago; and as soon as the grass section dries out a bit more from the winter snows and rain, Geoff, our hard working grounds-man will roll and prepare it some more, ready for use. By mid-summer we will have the choice of six runways, a situation unheard of at Shipdham since the days when the last of the 44th's B-24s lifted off in 1945.

Talking of the approach of spring, one of our gliding instructors reported he was able to complete a soaring flight in his sailplane for just over 45 minutes last week. That for us is the first indicator that winter is relaxing its grip on the Norfolk countryside. It may still snow again before it's fully springtime; but you remember, late spring snows are usually light and short lived, nothing like the monster amounts you guys had dumped on you in the Northeast in February.

Many thanks to those of you who have contacted Ruth and bought a copy of the booklet about the 44th that Steve and I put together. We hope you liked it. The next booklet in the series covering the 389th at Hethel is on the presses as I write this, and the final one in the series for this year, covering the 492nd and the 491st at North Pickenham is due out by early summer.

Warm wishes from Shipdham,
Look after yourselves
Peter Bodle

Peter can be reached at peter@bodle.demon.co.uk

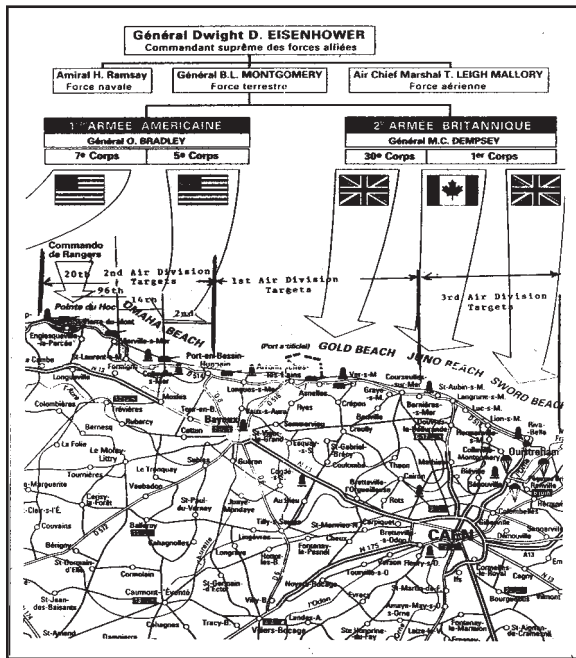
Peter Bodle and Steve Adams have created a booklet, "The 44th Bomb Group in Norwich." It is a pictorial history of the three years you served your country and help crush a vicious regime, making a safer world. On the cover is your beloved plane, the B-24, and inside are glimpses into the life you lived over there. If you wish to purchase this piece of your own history, contact me and I will place the orders.

Peter's and Steve Adams' booklet is available for \$5 plus postage. Peter is sending me copies. If you wish a copy, call Ruth W. Davis-Morse at 717 846-8948.

GEN. EISENHOWER'S MAP OF BEACHES

This is a detailed and scholarly study of D-DAY 6 JUNE 1944

By Will Lundy



wounded, very little flak damage. Even before these first crews returned to base, another formation was already in route to other targets inland from the beaches. Everyone was preparing for additional missions that day; and in fact, a total of four were to be flown.



D-DAY

For me, it is difficult to watch the TV re-runs of the valiant attempts of our troops to make the difficult landing on Omaha Beach in France. It is difficult to watch, to view our soldiers being under such intense and accurate fire. Seemingly, they did not have a chance to gain a foothold under such withering streams of projectiles that were cutting them down. There were no bomb craters or protection of any kind for these men to gain shelter, so they were forced to run through it all, headed for possible shelter of the cliffs. It appeared to be nearly hopeless for anyone to cross that wide expanse of beach and get out of the direct line of enemy fire.

At the same time my stomach always gets that weak feeling as I cannot forget that my 44th BG had been assigned to bomb this same general area at 0600 earlier that morning. Had we really failed so miserably to knock out any of those strong enemy defenses? It surely appeared so, as the slaughter continued. When our planes returned that morning, our airmen were elated that they had done a fine job of bombing, no one was

Looking for the Bomb Craters

I and both of the bomber group associates had strong recollections that the 2nd Air Division Bombers had been assigned to hit the strong German defenses, starting from the surf on up to include the heavy guns and fortifications on the higher ground. These beaches, as far as we could determine, showed no evidence of exploding bombs, no bomb craters, nothing. Surely there must be answers somewhere, some reasons why our assault troops were getting pounded so badly, although we had bombed the German fortifications there. What really happened to the very heavy air support that should have destroyed or badly damaged these defended fortifications? What really did happen earlier that morning? We had to find out.

Shipdham Prepared

The 44th BG's historical records and memories told us that our Shipdham Air Base was closed at noon on the 5th. No one could leave the base; and those off base already, were to return immediately, if located. Ground crews were at their respective aircraft

dispersal, having heard the rumors flying that D-Day was imminent. But what was not known ahead of time and even afterwards, was how much more unique and complicated it would be from all the other missions flown out of England. (It appears now that only the low-level Ploesti mission of 1 August 1943 was similar to the first D-Day missions, so far as the large number of individually assigned targets – and that one was flown out of North Africa.)

The Search for Records

It was learned that the special order for this mission, Operation No. 394 and Field Order 727 could provide us with the official plans for this opening attack on D-Day. It was necessary to obtain #394 from the Eisenhower Museum, which dealt with the long time planning for this mission. Field Order #727, which covered the actual detailed orders for the Heavy Bomber Activities, was furnished by Roger Freeman, bless him. He was kind enough to supply us with this Order several years ago when we first began this endeavor. For complexity and special details, as well as for specific, multiple targets, it resembled only Ploesti in our experiences. Field Order #727 included planning for all three Bomb Wings – both B-17s and B-24s – all having the same overall bombing strategy; but for simplification, only the Liberators of the 2nd Air Division are covered in this article; and at times, only the 44th BG.

The Pathfinders to Lead

The planners for this mission had determined that the relatively new Pathfinder, or PFF equipped aircraft must be utilized as lead aircraft in the event of bad weather. The best and most practical tactical unit was the formation of six aircraft – one PFF leading only five others. The word 'pod' is used here to identify them. There would be 225 each Squadron pods overall (1350 a/c) including the 75 Squadrons of B-24s for the 2nd Bomb Division (450 aircraft). The 44th BG would provide 6 Squadrons of 6 pods (36 a/c) to lead the 14th Combat Bomb Wing. Similar arrangements were planned for the other three Liberator Combat Wings in the 2nd Air Division.

Better accuracy and control would be maintained by having only five closely bunched aircraft bombing on one leading PFF aircraft. Studies also confirmed that by using the PFF equipped aircraft, approaches to the target would be directly from the sea, as the new equipment would give a clearer, more dependable indication when crossing from water to land, rather than flying parallel to the sea. Too, by having PFF aircraft, and in the event of cloud-covered targets, there should be far less possibility of bombing short and hitting our own troops. This possibility was uppermost in the minds of the planners, and was the common thread in all of our planning. However, the fault with this planning for PFF – leading pods of five regular Liberators was the CRITICAL shortage of this equipment. The plans called for the 44th BG to utilize six of their PFF equipped B-24s for their own formations, as well as to supply four additional PFF aircraft and crews to other Groups. However, the 44th did not have them! In fact, the 44th BG had lost one PFF plane and crew while on a mission flown on the 5th of June.

To get the most bombers over the many assigned targets in the least amount of time (20 to 25 minutes), the planners dictated that there must be four columns utilized, rather than the standard (much wider one) used in conventional bombing. So the Liberators within this 2nd Bomb Division were assigned a separate column for each of the four parallel columns! Each of the Combat Bomb Wings would establish the sequences of their respective Bomb Groups within their own column. In the 24th CBW, the 44th BG would lead that column, as they had the PFF aircraft and crews. The 392nd BG would follow the 44th, and the 492nd BG would follow behind them in that order.

Each PFF aircraft, both B-17s and B-24s, had two types of special Pathfinder equipment. One was the Gee box used for very accurate navigation from the English Coast to the target. The second one was the H2X Pathfinder scope instrument which could identify their specific target locations. Both

instruments required a separate operator. Each Pathfinder aircraft in each pod had a Command Pilot on board, a high ranking officer, who had combat mission experiences; and had the authority to alter plans if he deemed it necessary. Standard PFF bombing practices, prior to this one mission, would have had but two PFF aircraft per Group.

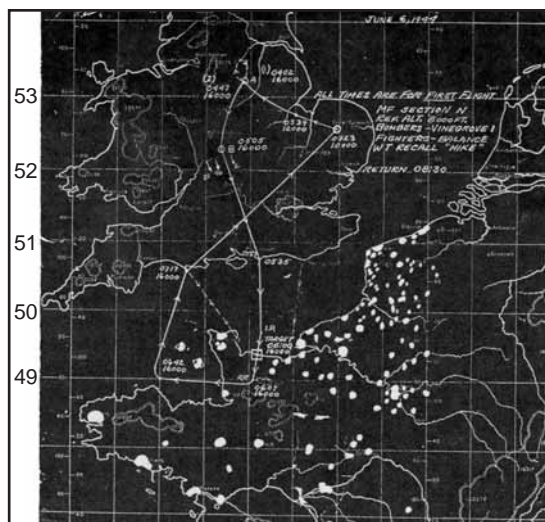
Timing and Airspace Were Critical

Normal assembly plans had to be altered considerably due to the lack of sufficient air space between London and Norwich. With most of the Liberator bases of the 2nd Bomb Division being located closer to the selected air assembly area, as well as to lessen the congestion in the assembly of so many bombers (1350 of them) the Liberators were to take off first, fly to the selected large assembly area in the 'midlands' of England, north and west of Peterborough. B-17s of the 1st Division would then follow 30 minutes behind the last of the Liberators. They, in turn, would be followed after another pause of 30 minutes by the 3rd Air Division with their B-17s and Liberators.

Due to this very early bombing schedule for the 1350 four-engine bombers involved in this very congested bombing plan, it was necessary for the 2nd Bomb Division Liberators to take off in the dark (roughly 0230 to 0300 hour), fly northwest to the assembly area north and west of Peterborough, and with some bombers traveling as far west as the Irish Sea. There they must find their assigned Group Pod, then the pods had to move into their assigned position in their Combat Wing. All of this assembling activity to make four column formations had to be accomplished in the dark. Some units reported that they were so far west that they were over the Irish Sea. This assembly, in itself, was a dangerous and difficult assignment.

First Mission Routes

However, when the 2nd Air Division assembly was accomplished, and at the assigned time and at the assigned altitude, the four columns began their assigned route to their targets. To understand this plan, visualize looking southeast from the English



Midlands area, hold up your right hand in front of you, palm down, and with thumb extended. Each of your four fingers would represent one of the four 2nd Combat Bomb Wing Groups. Each knuckle segment will represent an individual Bomber Group within that Combat Wing. Two of the columns had three Groups, two had four Groups – due to the 14 Groups involved.

Your little finger could represent the 20th CBW, being led by the 446th BG (with PFF aircraft not necessarily their own) and would be the western most column. Your fingernails would indicate that group was led by PFF aircraft in all four columns. Their four targets were in the Pointe du Hoc area, and were the westernmost specific targets on that portion of the French coast. The next finger would represent the 2nd CBW which was assigned four specific targets in the Pointe du Hoc area and St. Laurent areas, just east of the 20th CBW targets. Your third finger (longest one) would be the 14th CBW with their four specific targets being in the St. Laurent and Colleville areas. The fourth finger would represent the 96th CBW which was assigned specific targets in the areas of Colleville, Bessen and Caen – all four targets east of the other CBW's. It should be noted also, that at the target areas, one target area could be within the same close area as leading PFF pods from neighboring columns.

Every Minute Detail Was Carefully Planned

At the assigned time, the four columns of

Liberators flew south-eastward in separate formations as detailed above, but parallel to one another, still in semi-darkness. Various searchlights and beacons were stationed on the ground as visual aids for the four bomber streams to follow. These aids would help simplify the difficult jobs for the Navigators to follow along the established routes. All of these targets were specific 'Defended Locations', and NOT THE BEACHES THEMSELVES. Even the bomb loads and fusing were planned specifically for the various types of targets assigned.

Your thumb would represent the following two Bomb Wings, the 1st and 3rd, whose targets were those farther east from the Omaha Beach area. Their bombing was to commence less than one half hour from the last of the 2nd CBW bombed.

The 2nd Bomb Division Liberators were scheduled to bomb their targets within the time period of 0555 to 0614, bombing within the altitudes from 14,000 to 17,000 feet. (The formation sketch shows the altitude to be 16,000 feet). The 1st Bomb Division was to follow approximately 30 minutes behind the Liberators of the 2nd Air Division, and to bomb their assigned targets east from the Liberators at Gold Beach and the Western section of Juno, from 0658-0730, etc. The 3rd Division's targets followed in time of bombing, for a short interval, eastward from where the 1st Division's assigned targets ended.

When the 2nd Division's four columns reached the southeast coast of England, east of the Isle of Wight, they were to make synchronized turns to fly nearly due south. Their specific assigned targets on Omaha Beach would be spread out along the French coast directly in front of the four leading Groups with their PFF navigational equipment. Each of the leading Bomb Groups, those with the PFF aircraft, would be first to bomb their respective targets spread out from west to east along the French Coast. So it would be a simultaneous bombing all along the Omaha Beach Targets. The following Groups in each of the four columns were to utilize their navigators with conventional equipment, to

locate and then follow the leading PFF pods to their respective targets. They would be using the flares dropped by the leading PFFs to determine the specific location to release their bombs.

The IP

In essence then, the English coastline was the Initial Point to begin the individual bomb runs on their specific targets. From there on, all of the leading PFFs zeroed in on their assigned targets, fanning out as necessary, flying directly and individually to these beach targets. So, from the southern English coast to the coast of France, each PFF aircraft and his pod was on his assigned 'bomb run' of approximately 25 minutes. Then the following two Groups (or three) with their six 'pods' were to line up on these same targets of the leading Pod groups, utilizing their conventional navigating procedures. To be specific, the 14th CBW would be leading the third column with six pods. The 392nd BG was to follow the 44th BG with their six pods, and the 492nd BG was to follow the 392nd BG with their six pods. Both of these trailing Groups had been assigned the exact same targets as the 44th, so they would have to spread out and navigate from the English coast to get in line with the correct 44th BG's six PFF pods.

However, with all targets in the Omaha Beach area being obscured by cloud cover, their bombing could not be visual. All four columns then had to depend on their respective PFF aircraft for the initial bombing on their assigned targets. Due to favoring winds aloft, the leading PFF bombing took place approximately five minutes early in all four columns and the following aircraft continued to bomb for about 25 minutes. The orders were very specific that no bombing would be made after 0625 hour. If any aircraft arrived later than that, they **MUST NOT BOMB**.

But why was there no evidence of damages or destruction to these German 'Defended Localities'? Surely it had to be due to these critical items in the Orders. To quote: "In conjunction with Headquarters A.E.A.F., it was decided that if cloud covers should prevent visual synchronization, bombs would be

dropped on Pathfinder indications in the normal manner, EXCEPT THAT THE RELEASE WOULD BE DELAYED SO THAT THE MEAN POINT OF IMPACT WOULD BE NO LESS THAN 1000 YARDS FROM THE FORWARD WAVE OF THE WATER BORNE ASSAULT FORCES".

Cloud Cover Was a Determining Factor

This seems to guarantee that no target within a half mile of the sea would be hit! No wonder the beaches were clear of bomb craters! It appears that this delay was established in the official Orders, but also was given to each of the PFF navigators in their briefing for this mission. The PFF navigator on the crew with Command Pilot General Leon Johnson recently sent me a copy of his typed orders. This typewritten slip included these instructions, identical to the instructions in this Order:

"If the cloud cover prevents synchronization on target or shore, bombs will be released normally on PFF. Bomb release will be delayed as the landing craft approach the beach. No less than 1000 yards (over half a mile) from the forward wave of the assault forces. This will be accomplished by the following schedule:

Zero minus 75 to Zero minus 20 --

No delay, bomb on target

20 to	15	5 second delay
15 to	10	10 second delay
10 to	5	15 second delay
5 to zero		30 second delay
		-- Division

1st. Lt. **Harold Morrison** had retained vivid memories of what took place on this historic morning. He flew in the #2 position within Capt. **Charles Armstrong's** pod of six, with this pod being the lead pod for the entire 14th CBW. Lt. Morrison stated that there were no airplanes ahead of them as they approached the drop zone. Nor could he see any other pods ahead or beside them. Capt. Armstrong, the most experienced PFF pilot in the 44th BG, reminded his following five pilots of the very specific instructions as soon as the briefing ended. He stated that when they were approaching the drop zone, he wanted them to move in as close to him as

possible, two on each side of him and one to follow directly behind him, Lt. Morrison stated that when nearing the target, they closed in so tightly that their pod was almost five abreast, and one was nearly on Capt. Armstrong's tail turret. By packing so tightly on Capt. Armstrong's lead, their assigned small target surely should have been badly damaged by them as well as by all of those following in line behind him. Capt. Armstrong's PFF Navigator stated that they 'bombed over', missed, only because of this ordered delay.

Leading the Last Group—Leon Johnson

General **Leon Johnson's** PFF aircraft was leading the last two 'pods' of six 44th BG aircraft because the PFF equipment in the other pod had failed. Apparently General Johnson chose this trailing position and not the Group Lead specifically to assure compliance with these orders and to be absolutely certain that none of the assault forces were hit. (This was the reverse of his position when he led the entire 44th BG at ground level over Ploesti Oil Fields, for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor). Then, both the 392nd and 492nd BG pods of six Liberators which were following in trail, but had no PFFs (that we can identify), would also bomb 'over'. Their very specific instructions were to bomb on the drops by the PFF's 'markers' in front of them. So, every one of the following aircraft should have made their drops on the markers of the PFFs ahead of them. They all bombed 'over' on all assigned targets – if they bombed at all. Records show that well over 100 Liberators did not release their bombs.

Many thanks are owed to **Tom Brittan** for his detailed records for PFF aircraft activities on this first mission of D-Day. Here are parts of his records covering the assignments for the 2nd Air Division that early morning:

The 389th BG supplied the six PFFs to lead their own Group, as well as six more to lead the six 'Pods' of the 446th BG. They also provided more PFFs to lead pods for the 458th BG. (The 389th was the first Group in the 2nd Air Division to train in PFF aircraft).

According to Lt. Col. **John Woolnough**,

Robert Taylor was to have taken Col. Steadman in the PFF lead of the 446th BG, but they were scrubbed when one engine wouldn't start. Col. Steadman had to go with a standby crew.

Tom also lists the 93rd BG as probably having nine PFFs available, so six of them surely flew the leads for themselves, but we have no further data or confirmation from them.

This report does not cover the procedures utilized by the other three columns of the 2nd Air Division so far as their actual bombing is concerned, but the leading PFF for the 446th BG (per their records) bombed near 0555 hours. From all of these results, it appears that all four columns must have had similar records. The reports made after the Omaha Coast was secured, stated that there was little evidence of bombs hitting any of the assigned fortified targets on Omaha beaches. The videos and photographs taken of the assault forces conclusively proved the enemy had not been weakened to any degree. D-Day planning appears to shout: **it was better to miss completely than take any action that could possibly result in damages and injuries to those ground forces and their equipment.**

Field Order #727 results show that the 2nd Bomb Division had 446 B-24s airborne, 423 of them were credited with sorties, but only 329 actually executed their assignments. They dropped 895 tons of bombs with no loss of aircraft. However, the 44th BG had two of their aircraft involved in a collision during assembly. Both aircraft were damaged, but continued to complete their sortie. The top of the right vertical stabilizer on one aircraft was bent inward to near a right angle, while the other aircraft was damaged under the navigator's compartment (front end) where the vertical stabilizer struck it. The tail gunner on the lower aircraft must have had a terrible few seconds when the number 1 & 2 engine propellers of the other ship were within a few feet of him.

Before these first airplanes and crews returned to base, the second mission was

already underway. They, too, could not bomb, because their targets were not visible, and no PFF aircraft was available to lead them, as all PFF aircraft were utilized in the first mission. In fact, there were four missions planned and executed this day with additional bombs dropped via PFF.

Official secret reports indicated that: "The immediate beach areas showed only limited evidence of bombing damage, as was to be expected in view of the extra precautionary measures taken to avoid short bomb falls when the through-the-overcast bombing technique was used. (These precautions included the arbitrary time delays on bomb releases). Areas behind the beachhead, ranging from 300-400 yards to three miles, revealed extensive evidence of concentrated bombing patterns.

Unexpected Benefits

"The principal contributions made by this bombing effort included the demoralization of enemy troops and the disruption of signal and transport communications which could have hindered the deployment of immediate reserves."

There was negligible enemy opposition to the bomber attacks, consisting entirely of ground defenses. Only one bomber was lost to enemy action, and there were few instances of battle damage, although four aircraft sustained Category 'E' (salvage) damage in a collision and landing accidents.

Contributors to this study include: 1st Lt. Harold Morrison, Capt. Charles Armstrong, Tom Brittan, Tony Mastradone, Chris Clark, Stephen Adams and others.

64 years is a long time, memories weaken. So if there are readers that question why this Omaha Beach (and others) were not bombed prior to the early hours of D-Day, thereby destroying at least some of the weapons and weakening their defenders. The reason is that Eisenhower's strategy was to not tip his hand until the very last hours. It worked because Hitler was convinced that the Allies would land in the Calais area of France, and had his reserves in the area. He did not release them until it was too late.

A TRIBUTE TO HIS PILOT, ROCKFORD GRIFFITH

By Forrest S. Clark, 67TH Sq.

I wanted to do this a long time ago, but never got around to it. Too bad it was not done while he was still living.

It is a small tribute to him and some notes about the crew members. Some are still living, and others are in the wild blue yonder. But it speaks for all of them.

I took what I remember about the crew members and incorporated it into this memorial tribute. For me, personally, I have come to fully appreciate what he did for us in the tragic times of WWII. He saved our lives on more than one mission. He was among the best pilots the 44th ever had, a friend and combat colleague and a great American patriot who deserves the tributes of all his 44th friends and comrades in battle.

I think all of us recall a few figures in life who stand out, and he was one of them. Too bad we did not communicate more to him.

WAR WEARY FLIGHT JACKET FINDS A HOME

Lee Aston's flight jacket served him well through his 36 missions as Navigator in the 67th Squadron. However, 60 years of hanging in a closet loosened the threads, and one sleeve was loosely drooping. Nevertheless, the 67th Squadron symbol on the front and beautiful Liberator on the back were still intact. According to Aston, the 67th was the only Squadron that had its own symbol. He recently presented his cherish jacket to the U.S. Army Heritage Museum and Education Center in Carlisle, PA.

"Don't you repair it, let us do it" said Jay Graybeal, Curator of Uniforms.



L-R Jay Graybill & Lee Aston



Lee Aston's flight jacket

Please Note: Renewal Dues for the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association is \$25. It was raised two years ago to meet rising costs of mailings.



MAIL & E-MAIL

From William J. Meyerriecks:



Crew Picture

The picture on page 17 of the winter issue of the 8 BTs is mislabeled. It is not the **Raymond Clarey** crew.

"The crew shown in the photo is the **Carl Rhodes** crew. Carl Rhodes is the first man standing on the left, Pilot. Next, **William J. Meyerriecks**, Co-Pilot; **George Forrest**, Navigator; **Glenn Hinkle**, Bombardier; **Raymond Shirley**, Engineer. Bottom Row, far right, **Leslie Lytle**, Nose Gunner; **Paul Chagnon**, Radio Operator; according to Meyerriecks, other identities are correct—**Martin Rieger**, RW Gunner, **Allen Phillips**, LW Gunner; **Charles Youse**, Tail Gunner.

"The crew picture was taken in late 1943, just before we were sent, as a crew, to Topeka, Kansas. In Topeka we received a new B-24, which we ferried to Prestwick Scotland via the southern route, South America, Africa, north along the European coast, landing at Prestwick. The B-24 was taken to be readied for combat. We, the crew, were sent to Northern Ireland to a holding camp. We were there about a week, then we were sent as a crew, to Shipdham to join the 67th Sq., 44th BG.



William Meyerriecks

"As seemed to be the custom, the crew was assigned to fly five missions with an experienced combat pilot, **Howard A. Cleary**, with

Carl Rhodes as co-pilot. William J. Meyerriecks, the crew's co-pilot had to sit it out. On their 4th mission they were shot down. I understand that the Engineer and Radio Operator were the only crew members to get out of the A/C, but the Engineer was the only survivor. The original co-pilot, me, Merriecks, was assigned to Frank Ward's lead crew as Co-Pilot. I completed 30 missions, part as co-pilot and later as pilot.

It was both sad and pleasant to see the crew being recognized in the Journal. They gave their lives for the cause. All are heroes. Sincerely, William J. Meyerriecks, Jr.



This comes as a true story *Air Force Gunners Publication*: "A buddy of mine was flying from Seattle to San Francisco. Unexpectedly the plane stopped in Sacramento along the way. The flight attendant explained that there would be a delay, and if the passengers wanted to get off the aircraft, the plane would reboard in 30 minutes.

Everybody got off the plane except one gentleman who was blind. My buddy noticed him as he walked by and could tell the man was blind because his seeing eye dog lay quietly underneath the seats in front of him throughout the entire flight. He could also tell he had flown this very flight before because the pilot approached him, calling him by name, said "Keith, we're in Sacramento for almost an hour. Would you like to get off and stretch your legs?" The blind guy replied, "No thanks, but maybe the dog would like to stretch his legs."

Picture this: All the people in the gate area came to a complete quiet standstill when they looked up and saw the pilot walk off the plane with the seeing eye dog!

The pilot was even wearing sunglasses. People scattered. They not only tried to change planes, but they were trying to change airlines!

Have a great day and remember, things aren't always as they appear.
(Story supplied by Gary Heinz)

...continued on page 18

In his database, **Cyril Nierman** reported an interesting occupation-cryptographer. He graduated from a cryptography school at Pawling, NY in 1943, then attended the RAF code & cipher radio school #5 at Worchester, England. He was in the 44th, and his duties are listed as 'communications and cryptography'. He later joined the Reserves and attained the rank of Captain.

The cryptologists were the first to recognize Hitler's activities. When the British got the first Ultra machine, the Allies could predict all their attacks.



Letter from an English Father

"My son Chris has had a fascination with the history and bravery of so many of the personnel who were based on the site where we live now. As he is only 14 years of age, he shows that he has much respect and admiration for all the people who were involved with the 44th.

"He has started to gather bits and pieces of artifacts at the site and has placed them in the museum at the airfield. However it is extremely difficult to find any real original items from those days, and replica items are easily obtained, if you have the spare cash. My point of the letter is to ask you if you could help Chris in finding original items to go into the Museum at Shipdham. It would really make his day.

Regards, Rod Barrett, (Chris's father)
Chris has recently joined the 44th BGVA and has just received his first magazine.



From Bonnie Brown: The family of the late **Raymond Shirley** donated a huge collection of WWII model airplanes built by Shirley to an AF ROTC unit at a high school in Splendora, Texas.



From **Paul Boensch** (Bieber Crew): We had a lot of jokers around our quarters in Shipdham. One time I put on a pot of coffee and laid down for a little nap. Somebody sneaked in and put something into the pot. I woke up to a lot of loud noises. Whatever it was, it cracked the coffee pot. I still don't know who did that.



From **Jerry Folsom** (Bieber Crew) We were given coke for burning in the pot bellied stove, but it was in short supply. We got a box of it once a week, and it would generally be gone in a few days.

There was a telephone pole close to our barracks, and there had been some comments about the use of it. It wasn't connected to anything. If I were to guess, I would think **George Bieber** or **Willis Edgecomb** might have had something to do with chopping it down. I don't know where the axe came from. I came into the barracks and there it was, cut into about four foot lengths, lying on the floor.

I helped split it up so that it could be readily put under the bunks. Instead of tucking the blankets under the mattress as was normally done, it was left hanging over the edge so that it would reach the floor, concealing anything under the bunk. As I recall, soon after the floor was cleaned, there was a knock on the door and Captain McAfee stuck his head in and an English officer right behind him. He looked around briefly and said, "There is no wood in here," and closed the door.

It burned real well in the stove.



From an unknown source: Peter Emmerick, the 16 year old German boy who carried ammunition to the anti-aircraft guns at Wesel, passed away recently. In 2001 Peter met with Joe Crandell, brother of **Leonard J. Crandell**, pilot of K-Bar, who had been lost along with his entire crew on that low level mission. The following year he met **Louis DeBlasio**, waist

gunner on *Southern Comfort*, one of two survivors of that plane. Peter Loncke had arranged these two gatherings, acting as interpreter when Peter Emmerick tearfully apologized and explained the circumstances of his assignment, to be an ammo carrier.



From **Robert Dubowsky**: For about 21 years, Bob has been a volunteer at the Space and Missile Museum at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. In light conversation, a young man told him of his father, who flew in a B-24 out of a place called Shipdham. It was Chuck Hand, son of the late and unforgettable **Art Hand**. It was Art, who spent a lifetime, finding members of the 44th BG and urging them to become members. A short time before his death, he was presented the **Leon Johnson** award.



Jerome Wilner, (68th Sq), Bombardier on the **William Dolan** crew, remembers a crash landing in Paris on *Gipsy Queen* after a mission to Metz.

"At that time officers wore their dress uniforms under their flight suits. It was my bad luck that during the crash I was rolled around pretty badly, and my uniform pants tore from the waist to my ankle. The rest of the crew were able to go out on the town in Paris, which had already fallen to the Allies. I was left in a hotel bar with only a chambermaid for company. Wilner remembers fondly that like in all good movies, the gang had a rollicking good time in blacked-out Paris, but Wilner got the girl!!!



From **Bob Vance**:
Ships sail east and ships sail west
While the selfsame breezes blow;
It's the set of the sails and not the gales
that determine the way they go.
Like the winds of the sea are the ways of
fate as we journey along through life;
It's the set of the soul that determines the
goal, and not the calm nor the strife.
(Author Unknown)



From an Unknown Source: In preparation for D-Day the British stashed 4000 pound bombs among fields of grazing sheep to deceive German spy planes flying overhead.



In the Database, Captain **Harry Orthman** reported leading the 492nd BG on the first mission on D-Day, flying with Col. **Eugene Snavelly** as Command Pilot. Later he was transferred to the 44th BG, flying missions ahead of the advancing Allied troops.



From the Diary of **Tom S. Parsons**, LWG on the **Ted Weaver** crew: "After briefing we went to the planes (which were already lined up for us on the perimeter), and as soon as the time came, we took off. Of course a great amount of difficulty was encountered in making formation since it was very dark (about 2:00 a.m.) and there was a terrible overcast.

In trying to find the formation, we crossed a little too close under another plane and, due to a sharp updraft, we ran into it. However the only casualties were a mangled fin and right rudder and ten sets of jangled nerves...

(The plane that was bumped by *Battlin Baby* was *Wendy W*, piloted by Charles Gayman.)

To form up the bomber column for this first mission,, it stretched nearly all the way from the Scottish border to the midlands of England.

Parson's account continues: "Since we were the first formation to bomb the invasion coast, (Colleville & St. Laurent) I thought we might have been lucky enough to see the landing of the troops, but the overcast was so thick that all I saw was a few bursts of shell fire along the coast line before we dropped our bombs.

"Five hours after they returned to Shipdham, Battlin' Baby and the Weaver crew flew a second mission to a vital communications center at Vire, near Caen. By that time he could see that the soldiers had cleared the beaches and were several miles inland."

"All the men were eager to be a part of D-Day" **Robert Lehnhausen** remembered. "Their spirits were high; nobody wanted to miss that historical event." Major Lehnhausen, who commanded the 68th squadron, led the second mission, flying with the **Robert A. Edmonson** crew in Flak Magnet. "Our target was Ferets-De-Ceirsy, but we had to bring our bombs back to Shipdham. The sky was so overcast, we couldn't see a thing, even at 12,000 feet.

"At times we have heard complaints that we weren't any help on D-Day; but the truth is, we did our work before D-Day. In April 1944 we implemented the Transportation Plan of bombing, devised by Prof. Solly Zuckerman. The Plan targeted 79 German-held rail and transport centers. RAF Bomber Command was assigned 37 targets; the 8th AF was assigned 42. The Plan was overwhelmingly successful. It isolated the Normandy battlefield for the Invasion. The Germans had extreme difficulty in transporting replacement troops and supplies to the battlefield. We bombed 70 cities, hitting rail and transport systems. It was a costly enterprise: 2,000 heavy bombers were lost. That amounts to 20,000 men. "On one mission we bombed a Naval Luftwaffe Station. A large number of fighters rose in response, and they lost half of them. Because we had achieved air superiority, the Luftwaffe didn't

show up for D-Day.

According to Walter J. Boyne's book "Clash of Wings" subtitled "WWII in the Air", on April 14, 1944, the Combined Chiefs of Staff placed both Bomber Command and the Eighth Air Force directly under Eisenhower's control. He decided to proceed with the Transportation Plan, which critics called "Zuckerman's Folly".

In March 236 planes from Bomber Command devastated the major railway center south of Paris. This was the beginning of an offensive that would confound the enemy railway network with 22,000 British and American sorties and more than 66,000 tons of bombs dropped before D-Day. Credit for success in this huge undertaking was credited to the fact that by 1944, crews and leaders were more experienced, better trained and had developed improved techniques.

Roger Freeman's report on D-Day Missions: **First Mission:** 1,805 B-24s and B-17s dispatched. Three B-24s lost.

Second and Third Missions (apparently both of these missions were a part of the same Field Order): 782 B-24s and B-17s dispatched. One B-24 lost.

2587 sorties by our heavy bombers were airborne, only one of the four losses were due to enemy action. Two of the four lost were involved in a mid air collision. That is the achievement of air superiority.

Sadly, all four of the bombers lost that day were B-24s. Three belonged to the 493rd Group. The 493rd was the last Heavy Bomb Group to join the 8th AF; they were added to the 3rd Division. D-Day was their first operational mission. Their attaining operational status marked the completion of the commitment by the Air Corps to have 40 Heavy Bomb Groups within the 8th AF.

No-one can minimize the heavy loss of life to the invasion forces, but air superiority and destruction of the rail system were certainly factors in the success of D-Day.



Who was the smiling gentleman whose face appeared on the cover the winter issue of the 8 Ball Tails? Bob Lehnhausen thinks it is **Charles Pigg**. Unfortunately, Charlie's vision is limited, and he could not be sure. **Jim Craddock** suggested Wesley Mitchell, but that name could not be found in the Database. It remains an unanswered question.

Charlie Pigg was considered an outstanding Maintenance Man. He oversaw the work on four planes. His favorite was *Lemon Drop*. Battle weary, *Lemon Drop* was ultimately painted with 'tiger stripes', and used as a formation A/C.



From Roger Fenton: COMBAT FOR DUMMIES

1. Always aim towards the enemy.
2. Cluster bombing from B-52s is very very accurate. The bombs are guaranteed to always hit the ground.
3. If you see a bomb technician running, try to keep up with him.



From the Archives: One of the B-24 airmen killed in the spectacular low-level raid on Ploesti on 1 August 1943 was S/Sgt. **Albert H. Oser** of the 93rd group, a gunner credited with six enemy aircraft destroyed. This ranked the highest score for 8th Air force Liberator gunners and was only equaled by two 44th Group Men. T. Sgt. **John Pitcovich** and Lt. **William G. Morton**. In fact; only five gunners achieved the unofficial accolade of becoming an 'ace' through shooting down five or more enemy aircraft while flying in Liberators from England or on detachment in North Africa. In addition to the top scorers, T/Sgt. **Willard W. Scott** was credited with 5 1/2 and T/Sgt. **Ravelle A. Bennett** with five; both were top turret gunners, and also served with the 44th Group.



Invasion group enjoying the arrival of Sten Guns, dropped to them from the AC. Marquis de la hue des Meuliers near Oabois, Montmoat, France, Summer 1944

Is it possible that sixty years after the War, the very scarcity of B-24s has made these planes more lovable? In the TV program 'War Stories', Oliver North recently pointed out that the B-24 was harder to fly than that highly publicized B-17 and extremely more perilous to ditch. None of this was a secret to the men who flew those planes. It is notable that two 44th pilots ditched without a loss of a crew member.

Among those who appeared on the show was Richard Butler, a survivor of Ploesti. However, they made a serious error in identifying photos: on the left was Dick, our great 44th hero; on the right was not young Butler, but his pilot, Walter Bunker.

The number of '24s that are still flying can be counted on one finger; the number available for viewing can be counted on less than ten fingers. 60 years after the war, nearly all have been shredded, they are still revered and unforgettable.



Shipdham through the lens of Ursel Harvel



Poster at Air Force Museum in Dayton. Ohio

2006 REUNION SCHEDULE 44TH BOMB GROUP

Wednesday, October 11, 2006	Executive Committee arrives
Thursday, October 12, 8:00 A. M.	Meeting of Executive Committee
	Registration Desk opens
Friday, October 13, 8:00 A.M.	Registration
	Bus Tour of Washington, DC
	(includes Arlington Cemetery, WWII Memorial, Korean & Viet Nam Memorials
	Trip to White House (limited to 100 people)
7:00 P.M.	Cocktail Party - Cash Bar
	Squadron Dinners
Saturday, October 14, 8:00 A.M	Buffet Breakfast
	44th BG General Meeting
	Bus Trip to Air Force Memorial event
	Bus Trip to Memorial Concert
Sunday, October 15, 8:00 A.M	Buffet Breakfast
	Tour to National Aerospace Museum, Chantilly, VA
7:00 P.M.	Cocktail Party - Cash Bar
	Banquet
Monday, October 16	Buffet Breakfast & Farewells

REGISTRATION **44TH BOMB GROUP 2006 REUNION**

Please note: Because we are joining the Second Air Division for this Once-In-A-Lifetime event, the unveiling of the Air Force Memorial, we will be registering through the 2 AD Executive Secretary, Evelyn Cohen. Fourteen Groups of the 2nd Air Division, 8th Air Force and current members of the AF will be participating in this celebration-possibly the largest gathering of Air Force personnel - old and new, that Washington has ever seen.

We will be staying at the Fairview Park Marriott Hotel, 3222 Fairview Park Drive, Falls Church, VA 22042. very close to the Memorial. Seating for the celebration will be arranged; therefore it is important that you **REGISTER EARLY.**

44th BOMB GROUP REGISTRATION

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse _____ Squadron # _____ Life Member? _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Guests & Relations _____

Number to Attend _____ (Fill out a separate form for each room needed)

Costs: Single Room 3 nights \$692.00 _____

Double Room 3 nights per person \$542.00 _____

Tours:

White House Tour (Friday 10/13)

(100 persons only) No Charge

Bus Tour of Washington, DC (Friday 10/13) 37.00 per person _____

Buses to Natl. Aero Space Museum (Sunday, 10/15) 17.00 per person _____

Extra nights-\$92/night AMOUNT OF CHECK _____

Make out check to 2nd Air Division.

Mail to: **Evelyn Cohen**

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Philadelphia, PA 19114-4157

IF YOU WISH TO JOIN THE WHITE HOUSE TOUR

Buses are rapidly filling, so we cannot guarantee that a seat is available.

However, with your registration, include this information:

Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Social Security Numbers _____

Place of Residence _____

Country where born if not a U. S. Citizen _____



WILL SEZ

The 01 August 1943 low-level attack on the Ploesti Oil Fields was one of, or actually was our toughest mission of the war. However, except for the two books compiled by Webb Todd and Norman Kiefer, very few personal experiences have been printed. Even in my 67th Squadron Book, for several reasons, I chose not to research or ask for personal stories because many had previously been included in Dugan & Stewart's book, "Ploesti".

Recently I took the time to re-read William R. Cameron's JOURNAL after Bill and a friend spent several months to update and complete it. It was then that I learned that they had added several personal stories from our men who had participated, stories that, apparently never before appeared in print.

Several years ago Bill had asked me to help him finish his Journal, but I had to decline, as I had too many projects unfinished. However, at the present time I am not that busy, and I would like to finish it for him and for his memory. As he has these stories already, all that must be added, I believe is that I should ask our airmen who survived that terrible mission if they would like to have their personal stories included as well.

So.....could I ask you veterans who have not already done so, to look back to that mission and jot down what you remember, what happened in your plane and with you personally? Many of Bill's stories include much praying, as well as personal observations – bombs hitting targets, seeing our planes getting hit, breaking barrage balloon cables, etc. Include anything that still stands out in your memories – please.

I should have asked you long ago, but thought that most of you had already recorded your experiences. But after reading the stories that Bill had collected more recently, there surely must be more experiences that you could share with us all. Perhaps at this time of your life, it might not be so difficult to put your memories down on paper. I urge you to do so now. Send them to me via e-mail if you wish, or by letter, or whatever. But do it as soon as you can, so that I can wrap up Bill Cameron's own stories into his Journal.

One other item: To clarify what previously was reported, I could not get my papers in good enough order, so I had to defer their transfer to the Army Heritage Library and Museum in Carlisle. The files still have my 'war room' bulging, but I am slowly putting some of it in better order. Part of my problem is that requests for information continue to arrive in large numbers. I do enjoy being able to answer some question for which these people have searched, unsuccessfully. However there must be a stopping point shortly, as the Army is quite eager to get it and to have it in a safe place. Sometimes I think that Paul Kay is more eager than the Army is, for it all to be deposited in Carlisle. They will take excellent care of your, our history.

Will Lundy



FOLDED WINGS

*I know that I no more shall see the season's glorious show,
Nor would it's brightness shine for me, nor it's wild music flow;
But if around my place of sleep, the friends I love should come to weep,
They might not haste to go. Soft airs, and song, and light and bloom
Should keep them lingering by my tomb*

William Cullen Bryant

ARMOUR, SAMUEL #19234 68th Sq. 20 November 2005. 1st. Lt. Armour was a Navigator on the **Edward Kohler** crew; but also with pilots **Thomas Kay** and **William Ritter**. Armour's first combat flight was 18 July 1944 to Caen, as the Allies were beginning to break free from coastal areas after D-Day. He flew missions in *T. S. Tessie, Lili Marlene, Gipsy Queen* but his happiest memory was in having flown 25 in the beloved plane, *Corky*. His last mission was 30 November 1944. Armour's pride in his *Corky* missions was ongoing: *Corky's* name is etched on his tombstone. He completed 36 missions, 25 in *Corky*.

BARBONE, ANTHONY # 19302 66th Sq. 7 August 2005 Barbone was a member of the Ground Crew. Sgt. Barbone entered the service 6 January 1942. He received his Basic and A&E Training at Sheppard Field, Texas; B-24 training at San Diego, California; and was assigned to the 66th BG at Barksdale Field, LA. He moved with the Squadron to Oklahoma City and to England September 1942 via the *Queen Mary*. He returned to U.S. June 2, 1945.

BUMGARDNER, BERT #19585 25 September 2005 68th Sq. T/Sgt. Bumbardner was a Radio Operator/Gunner on the **William Dolan** crew. Their first mission was November 4, 1944. This crew flew thirty missions, one to Metz, France, all others into Germany at a time when the Allies were steadily progressing eastward into Germany. They flew in many planes: *Lili Marlene, Flak Magnet, Gipsy Queen, Corky,*

Gallavantin' Gal, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, T. S. Tessie, Lady Geraldine, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose and Three Kisses for Luck. Their last mission was April 18, 1945.

DAILY, THOMPSON E. #19914 2006 1st. Lt. Daily was a Co-pilot with **Thomas Harrocks** on his first combat flight 28 September 1944. Two days later he had his own crew, flying into the heartland of Nazi territory. Daily flew one mission to Metz, France; all 27 others were into Germany, hitting oil refineries, marshalling yards and air fields.

The Daily crew flew in *Fifinella, Down De Hatch, Big Time Operator, Judy's Buggy, King Pin* and many unnamed planes. Their last mission was February 24, 1945. He was rotated back to the States early, due to his father's critical health problem, but returned to finish his tour.

After the war Daily remained in the AAF, flying C-54's, C-124's and C-135-B's during the Berlin Airlift, the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam War. He and his wife Thel of 67 years retired in Fairfield, CA. The couple had a son, 2 grandsons and a great grandson.



FOLDED WINGS

GRIFFITH, ROCKFORD C. (Rocky) #22749 67th Sq. 2005 His death was reported by **Ralph Jackson**. 1st. Lt. Griffith flew his first of 22 missions on 10 October 1943. He and his crew flew in *Calaban*, *4-Q-2*, *Shack Rabbit/Star Spangled Hell* and *Judy's Buggy*. Griffith is fondly and admirably remembered for his skilled landing on 18 November 1943 when, returning from Kjeller, Norway, it was discovered that flak had damaged the right landing gear. Griffith had a wounded tail gunner aboard. He directed all crew members except his co-pilot Lt. **Lawrence Grono** to bail out; then the two brought #41-29161 to a perfect landing with only the left wheel down, arriving among a group of cheering ground men who held their breath until they knew that everyone was safe. For that performance he was awarded the Silver Star.

On 13 April 1944 the mission was to Lechford, Germany, a Twin Engine Fighter Plant. After completing the bomb run, it was discovered that they had engine malfunction and were too low on fuel to make it back to Shipdham. Griffith flew it safely to Switzerland where all were interned. Griffith and his Tail Gunner escaped and returned to England. All other members of the crew were kept in internment until the war ended.

HINSHAW, C. R. # 20676 66 Sq. 2006 1st. The crew of 1st. Lt. Hinshaw flew their first mission on 27 September 1944. Most missions were flown in unnamed planes, but also in *Scotty Mac*, *Jail Bait*, *Big Time Operator* and *Peace Offering*. On one mission to Magdeberg, they flew with Capt. **Sterling Dobbs**, Command Pilot. Their last mission was on 15 March 1945. At the time of his death, Hinshaw was residing in Liberty, North Carolina.

News of Hinshaw's death came from Robert Fisk, son of **Robert Fisk**, Navigator on the Hinshaw crew. Fisk, Jr. also reported on the death of one of Hinshaw's close friends, 1st. Lt. **Thompson Daily**.

MILLER, WAYNE A. #28353 2005 506 Sq. 1st. Lt. Miller was the Bombardier on the **John Docktor** crew. His first of 33 missions was 7 May 1944. The crew flew in *Passion Pit*, *Limpin' Ole Sadie*, *San Antonio Rose*, *Southern Comfort II*, *My Gal Sal*, *Flying Log/Pregnant Pig*, *Three Kisses for Luck* and in many unnamed planes. On D-Day the Docktor crew flew to Colleville/St. Laurent in France. All missions were supporting the advance of the Allies who were moving east. Their last mission was 3 August 1944. According to **Walter Dunbar**, Navigator on the Docktor crew, Miller left the service after the War as a Major. Later he rejoined as an enlisted man, spending 20 years altogether. He leaves his wife Mary. The couple had been married many years.

REINHART, ELMER #321778 23 December 2005 67th Squadron. Lt. Col. Reinhart, pilot of *G I Gal* arrived in Shipdham and was immediately assigned to the group that went to Africa. His first mission was 6 July 1943. In preparation for Patton's invasion of Sicily, his first two missions were to Gerebina and Catania. After that were four raids to Italy, and then he began the low level practice flights at Benina Main. On 1 August 1943 he was a participant in the famed mission to Ploesti. *G I Gal* was the last plane to leave Target Blue, and was beset by German fighters. One member of the crew was KIA; all others became POW.

Upon returning to the States, Reinhart transported military aircraft until the War ended. After that, he became a computer programmer. His last residence was at Air Force Village, Riverside, California.





FOLDED WINGS

RENDALL, WILLIAM A. (Scotty) # 21779 16 September 2005 66th Sq. 1st. Lt. Rendall was a Navigator, flying most of his missions with the **Donald Heskett** crew. He also flew with **John Y. Reed**, **Shelby Irby**, and once with **James W. Kahl** as Command Pilot. He flew in *Fascinatin' Witch*, *Helen B Happy* and *Bull of the Woods*.

On 11 October 1943, after the awesome mission to Wiener Neustadt, the Heskett crew was part of the group returning to England. The first leg of the journey was to Marrakech, Morocco. An engine malfunction in Libya forced a crash landing with Helen B Happy plowing a 150 foot furrow through a meadow. Rendall reported that when he put his feet down, it was into soil. The crew survived with only one serious injury, but missed the group flight to England.

On 30 December 1943, the Heskett crew was bombing in Ludwigshaven, Germany, bombing via PFF through heavy clouds. A group of German fighters brought Bull of the Woods down with 2 crewmen KIA; seven evaded successfully. Because of his French-speaking skills, Rendall was retained by the Resistance to help move American and English evadees. The Gestapo infiltrated the group, and he became a POW at Stalag Luft III. He was part of the group liberated on 30 April 1945 by the arrival of General Patton. Rendall and his wife Millie spent their last years in Grapevine, Texas. Report of his death came from his son, Richard Rendall, USMC (Ret)

STEWART, MARTIN V. #22163 25 December 2005 67th Sq. Lt. Stewart was a Co-Pilot on the **Robert Gunton** crew, later with **Wilbur D. Carter**. At times he flew with Command Pilots Captain **Frank Davido** and Capt. **Howard McCormick**. His first mission of twenty-seven was to Brussels on 31 May 1944. On D-Day he flew to Colleville/St. Laurent in defense of the troops that were landing in Normandy. From

there, his missions took him to chemical factories, fuel storage area, airdromes and marshalling yards, all efforts to keep the enemy from moving toward the Allied troops. He flew in *Old Iron Corset*, *My Gal Sal*, *Mi Akin Ass*, *Glory Bee*, *Judy's Buggy*, and many unnamed aircraft. His last mission was 27 August 1944.

WHITEHOUSE, JAMES M. #22540 26 February 2003 1st. Lt. Whitehouse was a Copilot, flying first with Oscar Leonard, then all other flights with the John Titter crew. His first of 36 missions was 24 May 1944, just when the Allies were preparing for the Normandy invasion. On D-Day the crew flew two missions, one to Caen, the other to Colleville/St. Laurent, both Invasion Targets. On 19 June they went to Autheux, bombing the V-1 sites in France. Whitehouse flew in the following a/c: *Passion Pit*, *Shack Rat*, *Feudin' Wagon*, *Southern Comfort II*, *Ole Cock*, *My Ever Lovin' Gal*, *Full House*, *My Peach* and *Joplin Jalopy*. Their last mission was 8 August 1944.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Lavonne E. Pierce; daughter Valerie and son Dr. James M. Whitehouse, Jr. He was preceded in death by daughter Carol. The couple had four grandchildren and two great great grandsons. Whitehouse was born in Canada; he spent his last years in San Bernardino, CA. After the war he became a supervisor of electrical maintenance at Kaiser Steel Company.

WICKHAM, WILLIAM G. #22553 68th Sq. 2 February 15, 2006 William Wickham was a member of the Ground Crew. He passed away in Erie, PA, and was buried with full military honors. His death was reported by his son Joel, Commander USNR (ret.)





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8 BALL TAILS

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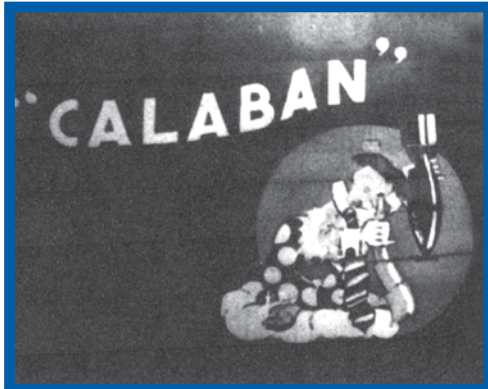
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Veterans Association

EIN # 68-0351397



Most of *Calaban's* missions were flown by the crew of **James Hill, Jr.**, and the memory of this beloved A/C still lingers with its Bombardier, **William Egan**. *Calaban* arrived in Shipdham on 3 March 1943, and was assigned to the 67th Squadron. The plane's first mission was the successful raid on the Submarine Pens at Bordeaux, flown by **Walter Bunker** with **Richard Butler** as Co-Pilot.

Named for a dim-witted serf in English literature, *Calaban's* last mission 11 December 1943 was to a boat and rail center in Emden, Germany. The

'24s were set upon by a large fleet of German fighters; however, it was a bomb from a '24 above *Calaban*, dropping on the wing that brought her down. **Richard O'Neill**, pilot, and nine members of his crew were KIA. One survived to become POW.



L-R 1st Row, Front: **Edward Dobson**, Co-Pilot; **Clint Shuler**, Navigator; **James Hill, Jr.**, Pilot; **John Pitcovich**, Flight Engineer & Top Turret Gunner; **Ray Reeves** Radio Operator.
Standing: **Mike Chayka**, Ground Crew Chief; **John Christensen**, Assistant Ground Crew Chief; **Lester Schwartz**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Herman Wagenfuhr**, Ground Crew Turret Specialist; **Hubert Womack**, Tail Gunner; **Clark Bailey**, Left Waist Gunner; Emerson "Mike" Michalik (Ground Crew Medic); **John Russell**, Right Waist Gunner; **Bill Egan**, Bombardier

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Visit our website @ www.44thbombgroup.com

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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.

CALABAN

“IT TOOK MORE THAN LUCK, BUT WE’LL TAKE THE LUCK”

The *Calaban* crew joined the group that flew to North Africa, and immediately joined in bombing missions to Sicily and Italy, preparing for the upcoming invasions by Generals Montgomery and Patton. On August 1st they were part of the low level mission to Ploesti, one of 37 A/C assigned to bomb Credito-Minier and Columbia Aquila. Following *Suzy Q*, flown by Colonel **Leon Johnson**, *Calaban* flew through the fiery inferno at treetop level with planes going down on all sides

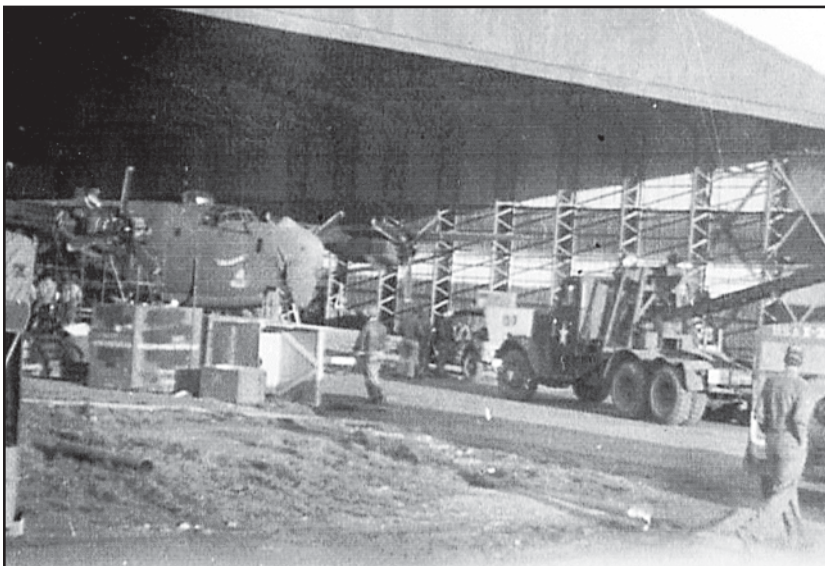
Those that emerged from that fiery cauldron were badly damaged. *Calaban's* right wing was severely cut between the fuselage and #3 engine all the way to the main spar where she had smashed through a balloon cable. All planes were blackened by the oil fires, blistering the paint.

Skimming low between and under telegraph wires, and rubbing their bellies against fields of corn in an effort to avoid the fighters and flak towers, the 24's

dashed bravely along, pursued by fighters. James Hill managed to evade the fighters and made it as far as Malta. With repairs, they were able to return to Benina Main in time to join the awesome raids at Wiener Neustadt and Foggia. When these missions were completed, *Calaban* was the only surviving plane in the 67th Squadron.

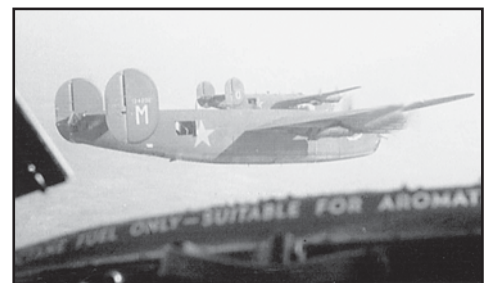
Squadron Commander Col. **Bill Cameron** remarked that *Calaban* was the most shot-up plane that kept coming back.

Of *Calaban's* original crew, only one member did not survive the war, **Ed Dobson**, Co-Pilot. He became pilot of his own plane and was lost with his crew on a mission to Norway. Bill Egan is the last living member of the crew. He and his wife Theresa have two grandsons who graduated from the Air Force Academy, both of whom are pilots. Bill had the honor of commissioning one of them as an officer in the USAF.



Calaban in the Hangar for Repair

According to Steve Adams, this is the first time this picture has been published. Does this sight look familiar to anyone in the Maintenance Crew?



Calaban



HITTING THE KJELLER AIRFIELD AT OSLO, NORWAY

Bombing the Motor Works at the airfield near Oslo was challenging. Returning to Shipdham was even tougher. Enemy fire and fuel shortage brought death to some, internment to others. Nevertheless, the raid was successful. The Norwegians built a monument to those who were lost on this difficult assignment.

It was **Edward Dobson's** second mission as pilot with his own crew. As Co-Pilot on the **James Hill** crew, flying in Calaban, he had survived the low level mission to the oil fields at Ploesti, and the awesome raid on the Messerschmidt plant at Wiener-Neustadt. On November 13, 1943 he flew his first mission as pilot on *Raggedy Ann*. Five days later on the raid at Kjeller, the plane was beset by a JU-88 and went down, losing all members of the crew.

Each loss is a personal story: it was the first mission for **Norman Charleston**, Co-Pilot; **Byron Latimer**, Navigator, had flown 11 missions, some on *Miss Emmy Lou* with **Richard Butler**; **Sydney Burroughs**, Bombardier, was killed on his 5th Mission; **David Faust**, Radio Operator, was lost on his 2nd; **Joseph Gallagher**, Engineer, was on his 8th; **Henry Voorhies**, Ball Turret Gunner, 4th; **Aaron Hulphrey**, Gunner, 16th; **Joseph Gilbert**, Gunner, 3rd; **Hershel Feichter**, Gunner—3rd Mission.

Kjeller Tally

Total loss of life-- 42; Internees-- 10
The 67th Squadron lost the **Edward Dobson**

Crew, **Joseph Houle** crew and **Earl Johnson** Crew. **Rockford Griffith** made it to Shipdham, ordered his crew to bail out then made his famous landing on only the left gear; the **Dellas Brown** crew lost one gunner, shot in an attack by an Me 210. The **Edward Mitchell** crew went down in the North Sea and all members were KIA.

The **Baxter Weant** crew of the 68th Squadron were forced to land in Sweden. The entire crew was interned, but later nine returned to duty. T/Sgt. **Frank Gavin**, (engineer) was retained to repair the plane, which later was used by the Swedish Air Force. The Avenger, piloted by Lt. **William D. Hughes**, made it back but lost one member of the crew to enemy fire.

Briefing advice about Norway: If you plane goes down, find a church and stay there. The Underground will find you.

Why was Norway important to the Nazis? Their thousand miles of coastline were ideal for ship building, and for stopping the flow of supplies from U.S. to Russia. When American bombers went to Kjeller, they had to precisely hit Nazi targets. Norway was a neutral country.

The war was moving in many directions when Kjeller was attacked. The city of Kiev was liberated; German defences on Dnieper were crumbling; Allies were crossing the Sangro River in Italy; and Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek were meeting in Cairo. Source: History of the Second World War, a Time-Life Book, Prentice Hall Press.



Broken Mulberries at Normandy, after the storm.

PRESIDENTIAL BRIEFING

Similar to Shipdham mission briefing, when weather was clear (not often) and the target was not heavily protected, the briefing was shorter.

So is this one - stay healthy, keep your spirits high (as always). I'll see you in Washington. We have registered sixty 44th BGVA members to date.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Kay".

Paul Kay

COMPLETED: A FORTY YEAR PROJECT AND IT'S ALREADY ARRIVED TO CARLISLE

Will Lundy climbed up on John Warsinske's pickup truck in a final farewell to his 40 year project of preserving the history of the 44th Bomb Group. With the help of Kevin, Will & Irene's son, they worked for more than five hours, moving and packing cartons of paper.

According to Will, John was an expert, filling the boxes and keeping the material in order of dates, which will make it easier for the experts at the Army Heritage Library in Carlisle to file and catalog the information.

The experience provided Will with an education in shipping. The Post Office had special containers about six feet tall, 24-30 inches deep and about three feet wide. They were open on the front to load the boxes. It had a flexible heavy screen to keep every-

thing inside and secure. Will's files filled two of those and they went directly to Carlisle with no further handling.

A tribute to Will's lifetime effort, Warsinske said that in his twenty years of historical work, he has never seen anything that even comes close to the details of our 44th BG's collection of data. Will modestly credits the members who provided pictures and stories, making it possible for this collection to come to completion and reach its final destination.

It came about because of Will's foresight, Irene's support, great perseverance, and the fact that members trusted that Will would take care of their precious memories.

“Sign on Wall of Army
Heritage Museum”
The Eye of the Army
The Army in your Attic

**HAVE YOU REGISTERED FOR THE 44TH BOMB GROUP REUNION
IN WASHINGTON? IF NOT, THERE IS STILL TIME!**

**THE BIG EVENT IS THE UNVEILING OF THE
ARMY AIR FORCE MEMORIAL**

October 13-16, 2006

Our Reunion coincides with the 2nd Air Division Association's 59th Annual Convention. We will be joining 17 other Groups. It will be the biggest showing of WWII airmen that Washington has ever seen. Of course, young airmen will also be in our midst-all those who dared to look up in the sky and choose to join other brave men who flew there in defense of liberty.

PROGRAM

Friday, October 13, 2006

Registration
Hospitality Room
Cocktail Party--Cash Bar
Squadron Dinners

Saturday, October 14, 2006

Buffet Breakfast
Business Meeting
Lunch on you own*
Dinner on your own*

*Food Court, Park Bistro, Club Lounge
Buses to Air Force Memorial
Buses to Air Force Memorial Concert

COST

Single Room \$692.00
Double Room \$542.00/per person
Triple Room \$492.00/per person
These costs include hotel room for 3 nights
And all events except Tour of Washington
Aerospace Museum and Sunday AM
Memorial Service at the AF Memorial.
Extra nights \$92 + 9% Tax
Deposit: \$50/person; Balance Due Aug. 1st
Refund Policy: (60 days prior to convention -
\$15 charge per person)
(30 days prior--\$25 charge)

Sunday, October 15, 2006

Buffet Breakfast
Special Options **
Bus Trip to Aerospace Museum \$17.50/person
Tour of Washington, DC--\$37.50/person
Memorial Service at Air Force Memorial
10:00 - 11:00 AM (No bus service for
this event)
Banquet

Monday, October 16, 2006

Buffet Breakfast
Farewells

DIRECTIONS

From **Washington National Airport** - Take 1-66 West to 1-495 South to Exit 50 B. Follow signs to Fairview Park South. Hotel is on the left.
From **Dulles Airport** - Take Dulles Access Road East to 1-495 South to Exit 50B East. Follow signs to Fairview Park South
Hotel is on your left.

TAXI SERVICE: RED TOP (703) 522-3333

RESERVATION FORM

44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Please print or type. All information must be complete

Name _____ Spouse _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (____) _____ E-Mail _____

Hotel Room: Single _____ D/D _____ King _____ Non-Smoking _____ Handicapped _____

Arrive: _____ Depart: _____

Sunday Tour 10/15:

AeroSpace Museum, Chantilly, VA \$17.50 per person Yes ___ No ___ # ___ \$ _____

Tour of Washington DC \$37.50 per person Yes ___ No ___ # ___ \$ _____

DEPOSIT - \$50/PERSON (Balance Due by August 1st): \$ _____ **PAID IN FULL:** _____

Registration includes: Everything on agenda except tours as listed above.

Registration must be received by August 25, 2004

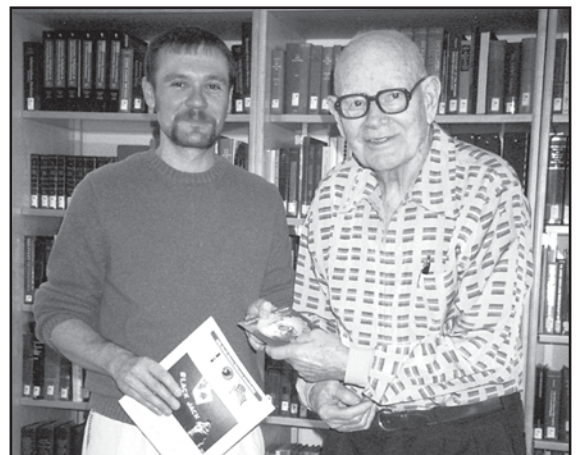
Send this form and all correspondence to:

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TEL. (215) 632-3992 • FAX (215) 632-8319

'THE ARMY IN YOUR ATTIC' AT THE HERITAGE MUSEUM & LIBRARY HAS OUR DATABASE

Greg Statler, Registrar at the General Stillwell Building, accepted the 44th BGVA's Database Disk from **Perry Morse**. At the Board Meeting held in Carlisle one year ago, Arlo Bartsch, did a presentation of the unbelievable amount of information that is held on the disk. Completion of the disk project is one of the 44th's great accomplishments. Placing it into the Library/Museum guarantees that it will be continuously available to researchers, family members and historians. When the Flying Eight Balls are only a memory, their deeds and sacrifices will not be forgotten.



Greg Statler and Perry Morse

44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS PRESENTED BY VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY AT WHITE HOUSE TO LT. BERNARD W. BAIL, 66th SQUADRON



Dr. Bernard W. Bail, former Lead Navigator, 66th Squadron, receiving the DSC medal from Vice President Richard B. Cheney in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, February 24, 2006.



Lee and Mary Aston represented the 44 BGVA at the White House DSC presentation with some of their children and grandchildren. Mary Aston is shown presenting a 44th BG glass logo suncatcher to the V.P. Gary Lee Aston, a 44th BGVA member, stands behind his father.

Sixty-two years late, on February 24, 2006, at the White House, former 2nd Lt. Bernard W. Bail, a Lead Radar Navigator, 66th Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, received the nation's second highest medal for his gallant and valorous actions above and beyond the call of duty on a bombing mission on June 5, 1944, the day before D-Day, the invasion of Europe. The target for the mission was a German V-1 / V-2 rocket launch site in the Boulogne-Sur-Mer area, France.

The June 5 mission turned out to be a Congressional Medal of Honor mission for the Command Pilot, Lt.Col. Leon Vance, leading the 44th Bomb Group bombing raid. On the second go-around to bomb the target, Col Vance's foot was shot off and he was in shock from loss of blood. Three of the Liberator bomber's engines were hit. The fuel line was severed to the fourth engine and high octane fuel was spewing about the flight deck necessitating cutting off the fourth engine. All flight power lost at the target at 23,000 feet altitude, and the first pilot, Captain Louis Mazure, was instantly killed. Lt. Bail placed his pants belt as a tourniquet around Vance's leg to stop the gushing flow of blood. The co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Earl Carper, put the bomber on automatic pilot to descend on a course to England which was only 18 minutes from the English Channel shores of England. The entire crew, except Lt. Bail and Col. Vance, bailed out over the Channel with England in sight. Only Lt. Bail remained to treat Col. Vance's leg but bailed out at the last moment over England leaving Col. Vance. The bomber was headed for an English village with a 500 lb. bomb still hung in the aircraft's bomb bay. Col Vance sufficiently recovered from shock to turn the bomber around and ditch in the English Channel thus avoiding killing English civilians. As the bomber landed in the Channel, it exploded. Miraculously, Col. Vance was blown clear of the bomber, survived, and was rescued by British Air Sea Rescue. Col. Vance was recommended for the CMOH. Recovering at the hospital, Col. Vance promised Lt. Bail that he would recommend him for a "very high medal" for saving his life. However, a

few weeks later as Col. Vance was being returned to the States aboard a hospital aircraft, the aircraft and all aboard were lost at sea between Greenland and New Foundland before he could recommend Lt. Bail for that "very high medal" he promised. Col. Vance was awarded the CMOH *post humusly*.

In 2005 Dr. Bail requested attorney Dr. R. Lee Aston of Elberton, Ga. and Director of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association to plead his case to the Air Force for that "very high medal" promised to him in 1944. Attorney Lee Aston prepared the Bail claim and successfully argued it to the Air Force winning the Distinguished Service Cross for Dr. Bail. Attorney Aston then made the arrangements for the DSC presentation by the Vice President at the White House on 24 February 2006.

Dr. Bail of Beverly Hills, CA, will be 86 years old in November and is still a practicing physician.



THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

March 15, 2006

Dear Dr. Aston and Colleagues:

It was my great pleasure to meet with the veterans of the 44th Bomb Group last month. Your distinguished service to the nation is greatly appreciated. I am also grateful to you for giving me the stained glass piece with the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association logo on it as a memento of a wonderful visit.

You have my thanks and warmest good wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dick Cheney".

Dr. Robert L. Aston and Colleagues
44th Bomb Group Veterans Association
830 Cardinal Drive
Elberton, Georgia 30635-2606

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

Well, we Brits are always said to be pre-occupied with the weather, but for the moment that is with good reason. Summer has arrived at Shipdham, and it really is one of the old fashioned summers you knew when you were here in Norfolk. We get sun, a little cloud and for the last month or so, a little rain, usually at night. As long as we don't have to pay with some of the winters that hit the Shipdham area during some of the winters of the late 1940s, we'll be OK. Needless to say, we are getting to use your old runways a lot, and getting in some decent flying time.

The work to date on the 44th BG Museum is really bearing fruit, and it is starting to look like a real museum, as the support equipment is being taken away; and we can see what Peter Steel, the curator, and his small team has created. The 6 ft. high 'Flying 8 Ball' sign is soon to be fixed on the north wall of the museum building, so it should be visible from a long way off. The 44th Bomb Group Museum Library is now a separate room in the same building. It has only two books in it at the time of writing this; but by next week the hundreds of books we have been bought, donated, loaned or otherwise acquired, will be rounded up from their various storage places, and will be installed on the shelves. The offer of a couple of scale model B-24s from a North Pickenham enthusiast has been accepted, and we now have them in the library room. They really are superb. The model of Lemon Drop, your assembly ship, has been given a prominent place in the main room. However, in these days of GPS navigation, modern on-board radar and transponder location systems, I suspect we will have to elaborate a little to our visitors on the role the assembly ships played in the bombing missions of the 44th BG and the rest of the 2nd Air Division.

In my last letter I commented on the flying display season, which is now well under way. Here in the UK we recently had the major RAF Fly Past of Buckingham Palace to mark the Queen's 80th Birthday. Because we were right on the assembly route for some of the formation, flying was restricted from Shipdham for a couple of hours each day of the week, running up to the Big Day. But boy, was it worth it! You just can't fail to be impressed by a big ship formation passing overhead. OK. OK. I know you guys did this sort of thing virtually all day, every day when you were here; but formation flying on that grand scale is not so high on the training agendas these days; and we mere mortals on the ground do not get to see it that often... It was worth waiting for.

Our new runway was recently christened by a variety of aircraft, big, little, gliders and older style tail-draggers... and is now readily available for use. I had been calling it 130/310, but compass measurements look like it will be 140/320. No doubt someone with a really expensive GPS will come back with a heading to ten significant figures, but as that is the only runway within 45 degrees of that heading, I guess everyone will understand which I meant!!

Steve Adams, our UK representative, has a good friend, Paul Wilson, who has just completed a book on the 389th at Hethel, and that is selling well. As you know, the smaller books that I have been involved with on the 44th, the 389th and the 492nd/492st are all being received very well here in England. Steve's book is being considered for reprint, so you can see the flame of your memory is still burning as bright as ever here in Europe. The interest in what you guys did all those years ago is now carrying down to another generation. Long may that continue.

Peter

Peter Bodle is President of the Shipdham Aero Club. He can be contacted at peter@bodle.demon.co.uk. The Bodle/Adams booklet, "The 44th Bomb Group in Norwich" will be on sale at the 44th BG Reunion in Washington DC. The cost is \$5.00. If you wish a copy, call Ruth W. Davis-Morse at 717 846-8948.

INTERESTED IN ANOTHER LOOK AT THE UK?

Mary Aston invites the 44th BGVA to one 'Last Hurrah' in the environs of England, including the Shipdham Airbase, the 2AD Memorial Library in Norwich, and other points of interest in that wonderful island from which you once flew. Mary and Lee are working out a schedule, along with tentative dates. They will present this information at the 44th's General Meeting at the October 2006 Reunion in Washington.

Correspondence from friends in England indicates that they will welcome us as always. At the Airbase, major changes are taking place, all directed toward preservation of your history.

Even now, Mary would be grateful to hear from people who have a definite interest. You can call her at (706) 283-1337 or E-Mail leeaston@elberton.net.



THE EFFECTS OF WIENER NEUSTADT — STILL RESOUND

Luella Phelps (wife of the late 2nd. Lt. **Delmar Phelps**) is a school teacher who is determined that her students will know about the sacrifices of WWII. She bought a stack of back issues of the 8 Ball Tails for her school library, then a second stack for her grandson, Kevin White and another for her nephew, Jay Richardson.

Kevin's grandfather, Delmar, (66th Sq.) was flying as Co-Pilot on Fascinating Witch. According to the report of the pilot, **Richard W. Bridges**, A/C # 41-23811 had previously been grounded because the two inboard engines were using too much oil. However, Bridges believed that he could manage that problem, as it was only a ten hour flight.

Unfortunately, when the Group started its second climb somewhere over northern Italy or Yugoslavia, the battle-weary plane lost power and was not able to keep up with the Group. Later, when the Group leveled off, 2nd Lt. Bridges was able to slip back into his assigned position.

Shortly after 'Bombs Away', four Me 109's attacked the plane and set a fire in the Bomb Bay. With extra fuel aboard, it was time to bail out. Three members of the crew were KIA by the fighter attack; Phelps was one of the six that survived the bail-out, only to become POWs. Several months later, the pilot was able to escape from his prison in Hungary with the help of Tito's partisans. Others stayed in the German prison camp until the war was over.

To add to the frenzy of bailing out, while the flyers were coming down in their chutes, fighters flew directly toward them, then turned and flew away. It is assumed they were just wanted to look at American airmen.

Kevin and Jay are lucky to have someone teach them the price of freedom.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE 44TH BGVA FAMILY
FROM
ROBERT J. LEHNHAUSEN
2540 BENTON COURT, PEORIA, IL 61615

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

What a marvelous group of dear friends you are. You permitted me to serve as your president a few years ago. During that time I asked you for the voluntary contribution of money to permit the completion of the Master Database program. Your response was magnificent. The work was completed at the end of 2005, and each member of the BGVA was sent a copy of this valuable CD which is chock full of 44th history.

More recently I asked that you further support the memorializing of the 44th Bomb Group (H) by buying a copy of **Will Lundy's** "Roll of Honor and Casualties of the 44th Bomb Group". My plea was that you buy the book, not only for your own library, but consider making sure that copy of this historical treasure be placed in the library of your favorite college or university, or other centers of historical research, to assure that the courageous young patriots, with whom we flew or supported, are never forgotten.

Did you know that in the twenty nine months that the 44th flew against the Axis powers in WWII, we lost 859 of our brave young comrades, killed in action (KIA)? 186 of our B-24s were lost to combat and aerial operations. These are overwhelming figures. Will Lundy, in the ROH, has carefully researched and documented each of the Casualties.

One of the principal reasons that the 44th BGVA exists is to insure that the deeds and achievements of the men and planes of the 44th are never forgotten. Especially the sacrifice of life that resulted from fulfilling our mission. Will Lundy's revised and expanded ROH pays tribute to each of the men we lost. The book is an unusual collection of stories of true bravery and heroism...and tragic endings. It is easily worth the \$50 break-even cost, which includes shipping.

My sincere thanks to those of you who have already purchased the ROH. In fact, the initial printing has been sold out. Your enthusiastic response exceeded my expectations. Will has ordered a second printing, half of which has already been sold. This assures that the record of the 44th in WWII is, without doubt, the most thoroughly researched and documented of any Heavy Bomb Group in WWII. This is all because of your fantastic support. For those of you who have not yet placed your order, please do not delay. Send your order and your check to:

Will Lundy, P.O. Box 315,
Bridgeport, CA 93517.

You will be pleased with this magnificent historical work. Read it, retain it for your library or consider donating it to you favorite library.

Bob Lehnhausen

Ed. Note: Bob Lehnhausen, one of the most beloved and respected members of the 44th BGVA, was recently honored in his hometown newspaper, Journal Star. The Memorial Day article noted his piloting skills and mentioned the day he ran out of fuel and had to tragically ditch in the Mediterranean Sea, resulting in the loss of five of his crew. He also lost his only brother, Edward, a pilot who was KIA in combat. Despite these painful times, Lt. Col. Lehnhausen rose to Commander of the 68th Sq. His leadership skills served him after the war when he became Mayor of Peoria, Illinois.



**FROM THE FILES OF THE LATE LT. CHARLES J. SELASKY
(Navigator on the *Suzy Q* on Ploesti Raid Flying with Col. Leon Johnson)**

**WAR DEPARTMENT
HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY AIR FORCES
WASHINGTON**

20 August 1943

TO OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE 201ST COMBAT WING OF THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE.

I have listened with greatest interest to the stirring accounts brought back to me of the details of the attack on the Roumanian oil refineries by heavy bombers of the Eighth and Ninth U. S. Air Forces. The destruction of these oil wells will be far reaching in its effect upon the German ability to carry on their operations. In fact, it might well be the "straw that broke the camel's back" and cause the dislocation of the German war effort. The dogged determination to reach and destroy each of those vital installations; and an utter disregard for personal safety, characterized the action of officers and men of your striking force and evokes my profound admiration.

The heroic accomplishments of the combat crews, and the splendid efforts of the members of the ground echelons who made the mission possible, are all deserving of the highest praise.

You were assigned the tremendous task of destroying in one day a target that could have been reached by surface forces only after many months of combat involving great losses both of men and materiel, and you carried your attack home in spite of the strongest kind of opposition built up by the Axis forces. Some of your comrades fell in the attack - others are now held as prisoners of war. Those of you who return to fight again must realize, as I do, that those men who gave their lives did so that others might live. The officers and men of the U. S. Army Air Forces all over the world take pride in your achievement.

H. H. ARNOLD
General, U. S. Army
Commanding General, Army Air Forces



Will Lundy's Roll of Honor is in Norwich, England, placed alongside the Roll of Honor in the 2nd Air Division's official listing of airmen lost in the War. Librarians can immediately look up the circumstances of any 44th's airman's death, when visitors come in to inquire. This new positioning of Will's book came about through the efforts of David Hastings.

**(Walter) Thomas Holmes, Jr. Lt. Col. USSAF Salutes
The Late Reginald H. (Bud) (Phil) Phillips, Lt. Col. USSAF**

Born 1/October/1919 - Folded Wings 3 April 2006

Phil and I were two of the original B-24 pilots of the 68th Squadron, 44th BG, trained at Barksdale Field, Shreveport, LA., early in 1942. He told me I was the first B-24 pilot with whom he flew. From Barksdale we were sent to Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma City, then on to Manchester, NH, where we checked out our new B-24s and prepared to fly the North Atlantic to report for duty in England. This was the first time I had seen the Northern Lights, and they were beautiful.

My bomber was named *Victory Ship*, but since Phil's plane developed a fuel leak and was sent back to Hershey, PA for repairs, his crew gave it the name of *Lemon Drop*! *Lemon Drop* was one of the few survivors at War's end. In these early days, so many of our planes were shot down, we doubted we would complete our requisite 25 missions.

Two of our most dangerous raids we will never forget: the Kiel Raid, May 14, 1943, and the well-documented low-level raid on Ploesti oil fields, August 1, 1943. One-third of the participating bombers were lost on that day.

At Kiel, which I consider my worst experience, we encountered some 125-150 German fighters for 5½ hours on a 7½ hour mission. Returning from this raid, Phil and I saw a plane from another group in dire straits with smoke pouring from two engines. Thinking as one, we escorted him, one on each wing, across the North Sea. When the crippled plane veered too close to Holland, we picked up two Folke-Wulf 190's and five Messerschmitt 210's. We survived a running battle to the coast of England, shooting down five of the seven enemy planes.

The *Victory Ship* suffered severe damage. Hit in the middle of the bomb bay, its

hydraulic system was knocked out; and with no flaps and no brakes, we had to crank the gear down manually, resulting in a very dangerous and difficult landing.

The Ploesti raid was even worse. Phil said it best when he commented: "I have been through and out of the mouth of hell!" Everybody agreed. Fittingly and thankfully, this was our last raid.

Both of these raids earned Presidential Citations for our Group. Phil was one of the most decorated pilots of WWII, many times cited for bravery and the recipient of the second to the highest medal award.

When Phil married Dorothy Jane (Dusty) Dustin in August, 1945, in Oklahoma City, I was privileged to serve him as best man. They were married for nearly 57 years and had three children, two of whom survive: Richard Phillips of Tulsa and Beth Warwick of Broken Bow, Oklahoma. Through all these years our families stayed in close contact frequently visiting and vacationing together. In the last few months, as Phil's health deteriorated, our communication was confined to the telephone. I talked with him the day before his death. The two of us were as close as any brothers, and for the course of our friendship, we never shared a cross word.

My magnificent friend, Phil, has now made his final flight and the best landing he could possibly make.

Tom

Victory Ship was hit on the crew's 4th mission to Abbeville. Holmes sustained a head injury and was knocked unconscious. He recovered and brought the plane back to Shipdham.



**FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
THESE FIGURES THAT TELL THE STORY
(CREWS SENT TO REPLACE LOSSES)**

Replacement crews, March 1943 .....	.5
Two months later, June 1943 .....	.20
Two months later, August 1943 .....	.16
Two months later, October 1943 .....	.20
November, transferred from 466th BG .....	.2
December .....	.17
February 1944 .....	.21
July 1944 .....	.40
August 1944, transferred from 492nd .....	.24

Most of these figures represent only the larger replacements. New crews were arriving every month because, as Major **Howard Moore** said, "The Luftwaffe was wiping us out." Where were the missions going? To Dunkirk, Holland, St. Nazaire, Wilhelmshaven, Rouen, Vegesack, Kiel and other strategic sites. Our men were flying unescorted daytime missions and the losses were huge.

When all that was going on, the War was raging on many fronts. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met at Casablanca to plan the Allied strategy. On the German side, Admiral Karl Donitz took command of the German Navy and General Paulus surrendered the German 6th Army at Stalingrad.

Imagine this: Der Fuhrer believed that the Hitler Youth would outdo the American Boy Scouts in battle!

44TH BOMB GROUP PX

Flying 8 Ball Golf Shirts	\$25.00 + \$3.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Caps (Indicate Squadron).....	\$15.00 + \$2.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Squadron Pins (Indicate Squadron)	\$5.00 + \$.50 Postage
Blue Liberator Shirts (Light Blue with B-24 designs).....	\$30.00 + \$3.00 Postage
44th Bumper Stickers.....	\$2.00 (Postage Incl.)

Order From: Sam Miceli

(Make check payable to Sam Miceli)

6398 Dawson Blvd., Mentor, Ohio 44060-3648

Please Note: The felt patches which were previously advertised are no longer available.

Sam Miceli and I talked about all the aches and pains that go with reaching this 'mature' time of life (the 80's). Sam said, "It's supposed to be the Golden Years. In truth, it is all FOOL'S GOLD!!!" How true!

Donald Higgins, nephew of S/Sgt. **Hartwell J. Higgins**, invites members of the 44th BGVA to a salute to veterans in Gibsonville, North Carolina. The event will coincide with the arrival of the Collings B-24, The Dragon and Its Tail, October 20-23. He is planning a Mission Briefing in a huge tent located in back of a Bread & Breakfast that dates back to the 1900s.

(Gibsonville is located 30 minutes from the Greensburg Airport and one hour from Raleigh.)

If you are interested in joining this patriotic, foot-tapping party, contact Donald at:

Donboy37@earthlink.net

S/Sgt. Hartwell Higgins was on Pappy's Chillun (68th Sq.) on 21 April 1944. The mission was recalled because of severe icy conditions. Apparently ice formed on the A/C; and at 14,000 feet it went into a severe spin and turned over on its back. Due to the violent maneuvering, the right wing and tail tore off. The pilot, Forrest Havens and Co-Pilot, Leon Del Grande were flung free. They survived, but all other members of the crew were KIA.

Pappy's Chillun was originally assigned to the 486th BG at Sudbury, and was named Turnip Termite. It was renamed when assigned to the 44th BG.

LOOKING UP WHEN THE PLANES CAME TO MUNICH

"We knew they were coming because the ground trembled under our feet," Norman Dauerer of Hopewell Junction, New York recalled. "I was seven years old, and I can still remember that it shook so hard, it made my stomach shake; and after a while, my stomach began to ache from all the shaking.

"The planes followed the Munchen/Nurnberg Railroad line. 1,800 B-24s flew over us, headed for Munich. First we felt the earth shake; then we heard the roar; after that we saw the planes."

Dauerer's father had come to America to live before Hitler rose to power. To help his relatives in Germany, he returned

for a visit and the officials took his passport, then drafted him. Norman and his mother joined family members on a farm outside of town, and were present when the 106th Cavalry Group took over the town.

The GI's were so considerate of the German family, a bond was established that continues to this day. When the War was over, the Dauerer family was able to return to America. Norman got a scholarship to pay for his education. He attends veteran gatherings and publishes a magazine about WWII. He goes to great lengths to extol the virtues of the 106 Cavalry, 60 years later, who are still his dear friends.

FOR SALE

13" Diam. Colored glass logo of Flying 8 Ball

\$85.00 + \$15 for UPS Shipping

Proceeds go to 44th BGVA

Place order with Mary Aston (706 283-1337)

Mail check to

830 Cardinal Dr., Elberton, GA 30635

**Please note: The 8 Ball Tails is running a
'LOST AND FOUND' Column.
What's lost? A LOT OF OUR MEMBERS**

The 8 Ball Tails is sent by Bulk Mail. If the member has moved or the zip code has changed, it is discarded, and we have no way of knowing that the member did not receive the magazine. This is especially troubling with Life Members, as they do not receive annual invoices. So.....please check this list, and if you know of the circumstances of a person on the list-change of address, folded wings or any other information, let us know. We are a family. We can't afford to lose anybody. Notify Ruth Morse of changes. See inside cover for address and phone number.

Marjorie T. Austin, Steamboat Springs, Colorado
Clarence Baker, Portland, Maine
Kathleen (Mikoloski) Cataldo, Holmdel, NJ
John B. Conrad, Lexington, KY
John J. Dayberry, Salisbury, NC
George H. Flynn, Pittsfield, MA
Stewart H. Grove, Hutchinson, Kansas
Earl J. Guy, Glendale, AZ
H. William Holmes, Norwich NR6 7RQ
Dean W. Johnson, Gary, Indiana
Eric A. King, Hingham-Norwich-Norfolk, England
Curtis Kinion, West Plains, MO
Harry Koester, Mechanicsburg, PA
Raymond J. Lacombe, Slidell, PA
Morriss W. Larkin, Delray Beach, FL
Robert C. Ledger, Farnham Surrey, England Gu98RB
James L. Livingston, Ruskin, Florida
William Maynor, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
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Stanley Mikolosky, Shrewsbury, MA
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Keith Nutter, Brooksville, Florida
Elvin D. Ours, Frederick, Maryland
John Page, Norwich, Norfolk, UK NR14 7LZ
Louis Parker, Jr., Lawrenceville, NJ
Archie M. Solatka, Tacoma, Washington
Charley Strange, Chicago, Illinois
Heath Strange, Lubbock, Texas
Erwin Stromhmaier, Oakland, California
Col. William Barrett Taylor, Arlington, Virginia
Charles W. Temple, Newpane, Vermont
Nancy Van Epps, Pensacola, Florida
Morton Zahler, Pompano Beach, Florida

GOING FOR THE TOGO

15 February 1943.

The target for this hurried afternoon mission was a German Raider thought to be the Togo, which was found on the morning reconnaissance flight. It was thought that the ship was ready to slip out at any time to raid Allied shipping. Crews were hurriedly called and briefed, with 17 planes of the 44th BG soon airborne. They rendezvoused with aircraft of the 329th Squadron, 93rd BG, and were led by the 67th Squadron's Captain **Arthur Cullen** and the C.O. of the 67th Squadron, Major **Donald W.**

MacDonald, as the formation's Command Pilot. Two aircraft were lost. A third crash-landed on the beach south of Ramsgate.

The bomb run was exceptionally long in order to make certain of scoring hits, as this target required bombing of the utmost precision and accuracy. At approximately 1540 hours, on final approach to target, the Germans placed very accurate flak bursts on the formation. Immediately after releasing bombs, leading A/C #783 was hit very hard by flak. #2 engine burst into flame and #3 was shot completely out of the wing. Captain Cullen reported, "We were on the bomb run. The target was in view. I flew P&I about 10 seconds, and he made a big correction to the right about 8 to 10 degrees. We flew that about 10 seconds and I saw the bomb release light go on - and then everything flew to bits. It must have been a direct hit with 88 mm under the flight deck at about the nose wheel section. It stunned me for a while, and when I could think reasonably, I looked around to see that we were in a dive, no ships were in sight, no roof on the cabin - just the windshield; numbers 2 & 3 were smoking and the cowling was blown off both engines and very little control on the wheel. I couldn't try the rudder because my leg was broken.

When I looked over at Major Mac (**Donald W. MacDonald**), he made motions to bail out. I then noticed he had a serious wound in his stomach. By this time we quit fooling with the airplane, as she was on her

right side and going down. Major Mac unstrapped his belt and with lots of effort on his part (it must have been agony for him) and a little pushing on my part, he went through the roof - or rather where the roof used to be. He got down all right, but died on the operating table of a German Luftwaffe hospital in France. After Mac left, I went, but hit the tail of the ship, broke my leg in another place, and also my arm. I heard from the Germans that **John Mackey** (Navigator) was killed in the airplane."

Sgt. **David H. Woo**, Radio Operator added: "On that day I had three relief men in the rear of the plane, so I was more or less in charge of making sure they had their chutes on properly. We had just made our bomb run and dropped our bombs when I felt a jolt and a sudden quietness. We were hit!! I called the Captain on the intercom for orders, but no reply. So I thought I had better get out. At least three times I tried to crawl out the waist window, but each time I was thrown back. The next thing I remember when I came to, I was in the open. I pulled my ripcord. I looked up in the sky and saw only pieces of our plane, but no chutes. So I must have been the last one to come down. I landed in the heart of downtown Dunkirk, and there must have been a whole German Army waiting for me."

Sgt. **Charles Arnold** normally flew with "Pappy" Hall, but was called in to substitute this day as a waist gunner. "It was a beautiful day for flying! Approaching the target, flak was not too heavy. Then I heard a muffled explosion and a dull thud - was it front or belly? Our plane shuddered but flew straight and level for a few seconds, then flipped over on its right wing and started spinning. The radio was out; everything loose was flying around. Jesse, David and I were all tangled up. (**Jesse Norwood**, Gunner; **David Woo**, Asst. Radio Operator) I knew that we had had it. I tried to get out of the waist window, but got hung up

...continued on page 19

between the gun mount and window frame, so Jesse went out the other window. As I was struggling to get free, I saw someone from the front fly past me. I just got a glimpse of yellow "Mae West" and black hair, so I could not identify. I just couldn't see that much in just a flash.

"Finally I worked myself free and got out to fall free of the plane. My chute opened and I landed in the village of Dunkirk, right on top of a high barn. I got free of my harness and then fell off the roof into a pile of fresh cow manure!! Quickly a German Field Artillery Sergeant picked me up. Woo, Norwood and I were taken to Stalag Luft 8B & 7A. I escaped three times, was caught quickly the first two; but my third was successful, and I came back through Russia.

"Just before the takeoff, Capt. Cullen's regular waist gunner (**Cecil D. Goddard**) got clearance for flying by Dr. Hymie and wanted to take my place, and for me to fly with Lt. **Rufus Oliphant**; but since I had already gotten my gear aboard, I asked to stay aboard; and he flew with Oliphant on our right wing.

After we got shot down, I thought, "Heck! I should have flown with Lt. Oliphant and I'd probably be back at the base or in some English Pub now. Later I heard Oliphant's ship was shot down with no survivors."

Cullen's craft was *Betty Anne/Gallopin Ghost*. Seven members of the crew were KIA: **Donald MacDonald** (CP); **John Mackey**, Navigator; **Paul Caldwell**, Bombardier; **Albert Emery**, Engineer and **Samuel Weiser**, Radio Operator

Arthur Cullen became POW, was wounded and repatriated; **David Woo** and **Jesse Norwood** were POW; **Charles Arnold** was POW, escaped and returned.

The *Rufus Oliphant* crew on *Boardwalk Flyer* were all KIA.

From the 68th Squadron, the **Thomas Cramer** crew on *The Captain and His Kids* crash landed; three bailed out and were KIA; eight survived the crash; three of the survivors were later KIA.

On the left side of this picture by Jerry Folsom is a flak explosion. Flying as Co-Pilot on the **George Beiber** crew, Folsom snapped this picture at the moment the explosion occurred, intending only to capture the bomb release.



He believes that the purpose of this explosion was to ascertain the altitude of the planes for the anti-aircraft guns. (A flak explosion was referred to as a German Scarecrow. Many pieces of black metal would be discharged, endangering any plane in its vicinity.)

**MISS DIANNE (67th Sq.)
ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE OF THE FORTS
(As reported by Stars & Stripes, February 18, 1943)**

These were the stories that came out of the homecoming of Eighth Air Force bombers that returned to their bases in Britain today after dumping hundreds of tons of explosives on St. Nazaire, one of the biggest Nazi U-Boat bases in a daylight raid. For the Liberators it was their second raid in 19 hours, following Monday's visit to Dunkirk.

Good-naturedly ribbing the Forts, the Navigator of *Miss Dianne*", a Liberator piloted by Captain **Clyde Price**, of San Antonio, challenged the B-17s to match their record of five enemy planes shot down.

The Navigator, 2nd Lt. **Jacob A. Augenstene, Jr.**, of Pittsburgh, recounted the engagements:

"As we were flying in the tail-end formations, the Germans would attack the Fortresses flying ahead and below us from the front, circle around, and then come to us from behind.

"The first plane that we got," Lt. Augenstene continued, "was blasted from 200 yards away, exploded and went all to pieces in the air. The second stalled when it was hit, plummeted straight into the clouds below, leaving a trail of smoke behind."

Dalton L. Snell, of Marked Tree, Arkansas, Top Turret Gunner; and Sgt. **Iris C. Wyer, Jr.** Waist Gunner from Clarksburg, Virginia, each got two of *Miss Dianne's* victims. Sgt. **Lewis J. Fleshman**, of Virginia, Tail Turret Gunner, got the fifth.

Fleshman's bullseye was scored on a plane that made the fatal mistake of exposing a vulnerable underside as it turned.

The rest of Captain Price's crew were 2nd Lt. **Robert E. Forrest** of Columbus, Ohio, Co-Pilot; 2nd Lt. **Morton P. Gross**, of Denver, Colorado, Bombardier; Sgts. **Kenneth Laughton** of Pine Grove, California, Radio Operator; **Kenneth L. Erhard**, Clearfield, Pennsylvania, Waist Gunner; and **Earl W. Holton**, Mulliken, Michigan, Rear Hatch Gunner.

Crew Chief of *Miss Dianne* was M/Sgt. George Baccash.

On 8 March 1943 Miss Dianne went down at Rouen, four missions after answering the challenge of the Fortresses at St. Nazaire. Eight members of the crew were KIA; 3 became POW.



ON THE HOME FRONT
Aluminum Cans collected in Johnstown, Pennsylvania for the war effort.

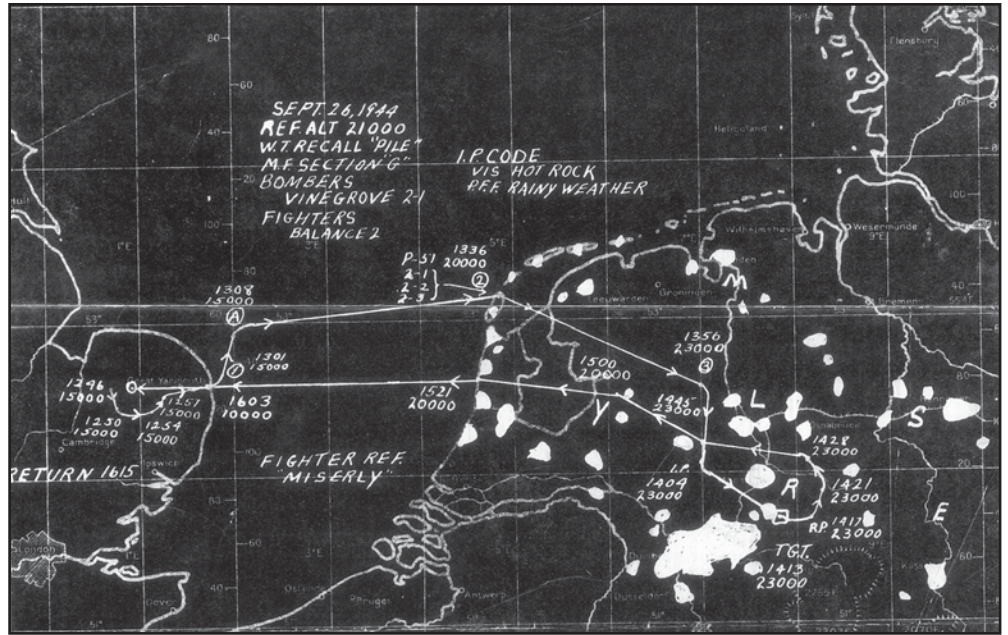


MAIL & E-MAIL



FLAK MAP

Jerry Folsom sent this Flak Map. It is labeled September 26, 1944. **Webb Todd** lists the mission to Hamm, Germany on that date. Can anybody interpret the meaning of the notations on this map?



Memories of 2nd Lt. **Charles Titkemeyer**, (Navigator, 66th Sq.) from the Database: "November 5, 1943, we bombed Munster, Germany. This was the first time we had fighter protection, and it greatly reduced losses.

"January 5, 1944, led raid on Kiel with Col. **Culbertson** as Command Pilot. We were out of position at target, so he ordered us to turn & bomb target directly into the wind. We dropped bombs directly on target, but at that slow speed, we all aged ten years." (After the War, Titkemeyer became a veterinarian.)

Steve Adams, our UK Representative, laid the flowers for the 44th BG at Madingley on Remembrance Sunday. He reported, "This is an Honor for me to do this for all the Heroes of the 44th BG who paid the highest price for the freedom I enjoy, and who some would try and deny me this God-given right." The service ended with the missing man formation, followed by a lone Spitfire, a Dakota, for the Airborne and finally a B-17.

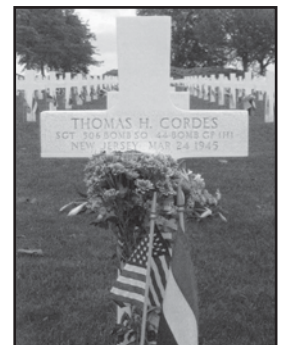
THE OLD CONTROL TOWER FALLING APART BUT STILL A TREASURE

Doug Genge, owner/operator of the Monster Cranes, whose business is next to the

Tower at Shipdham, could not save the old edifice; but nevertheless, he moved some of his heavy metal structure material close to the tower, protecting it, along with the excellent stone memorial that **Lee Aston** made and installed on the east wall.

Doug continues to monitor all activities around the Tower. He keeps the Roll of Honor in his office, making it available to anyone who visits and seeks information about the activities that went on there when the 44th BG was flying out, winning the War, 60 years ago.

Steven Oudshoorn of Holland sent this picture to Susan Alexander, niece of **Thomas Cordes**, a gunner on *Southern Comfort III*. This A/C was lost on the low level mission to Wesel, Germany on 24 March 1945. Two members of the crew survived, **Bob Vance & Louis DeBlasio**.



The Dutch people honor Americans who died, liberating their country. Cordes is buried at the American Cemetery at Margarten.

Lester Arms wrote this to **Will Lundy**, 13 September 1986: "I went overseas in April 1944 as Group Bombardier with the 492nd BG. Due to excessive losses, we ceased as a bomb group in August 1944. (530 KIA, 58 MIA) after 10 weeks of operation.

"I was on one of the ten crews reassigned to the 44th. We had flown 9 missions with the 492nd, and got 20 with the 44th. I was on (the late) **Joe Testa's** crew. Col. **Eugene Snively** was Command Pilot and we were the Lead Squadron on a memorable mission to Dresden, 16th January 1945.

"We were on the bomb run and target in the bomb sight when we got hit in #2 engine. Fire was past the waist gunner and the prop was vibrating badly. I salvoed the bombs as Captain Testa dove to 16,000 feet. The fire went out, but the terrific vibration continued. As we prepared to bail out, the engine froze and the prop was flat, causing a drag. Believe me, it is a lonesome feeling, seeing the bomber stream leaving us, along with the escort fighters. Here we were - 600 miles from our base and 400 miles from our lines. We soon lost #4 engine and had to lighten the plane. Out went our guns, ammo, bomb-sight, flak vests, helmets and anything we could throw out. The weather was unusually clear; we could see horizon to horizon. For some unknown reason, no fighters came up to do us in.

"Before reaching the Rhine, we lost another engine, but let it windmill for what good it might do.

"Knowing the French Army had taken Strasbourg and the Battle of Hagenau Forest was still going on, we crossed the Rhine at Strasbourg, trying to make Nancy. We were flying at about 10,000 feet; then an Ack Ack shell went through the wing between #3 engine and the fuselage. That emptied our gas tanks so we bailed out in the Alsace Lorraine area in the 44th Infantry Division territory. For some reason, a fighter pilot reported to our group that he saw us go all the way down when we dove to put out the fire. So, when we showed up about a week later in a C-47, it

came as a surprise to the group."

Captain Arms continued his report: "We got in the 29 of the 30 required missions. Our plane was taken by the SQ Staff for the flight home. We managed to change 3 engines in the war-weary plane they gave us. We would have changed all 4, but could only find 3. We were the last scheduled to leave for the States. The old plane had a coating of oil in the port side due to the bad engine, but we made it."

The Testa crew flew the last mission of the 44th, to Hallien, Austria 25 April 1945.

In the Spring 2000 Issue of the 8 Ball Tails, 1st. Lt. **Robert Dubowsky** (Co-Pilot) reported on this same mission. His recollections of the bomb run and bail-out paralleled Capt. Arms report. This 66th Sq. crew was flying in a 68th Sq. A/C. All members bailed out safely, but four sustained injuries: Capt. Testa, Lt. Dubowsky, T/Sgt. **Edward Sledghill**, Radio Operator/Gunner and **Robert Frady**, Left Waist Gunner.

When #42-50660 limped to unoccupied France and could go no farther, the crew bailed out. Before departing, Capt. Snively threw his '50 Mission Hat back into the plane. Miraculously, the plane went down but did not burn. A member of **Roy Owen's** crew retrieved the hat and returned it to its surprised owner.

"I lost my hat on that mission, also," Dubowsky recalled. "The folks in the 95th Evacuation Hospital in France (in the town of Saverne) where we stayed for two days were great. They gave me a hat and treated us all just fine. I gave my leather flying boots to one of the doctors."

*On that same day, Judy's Buggy, piloted by 2nd. Lt. **Howard Hinman** (67th Sq.) was hit by Flak and crashed near Metz. Two men were injured. The plane was salvaged.*

*On returning to Shipdham, Hellza Droppin', piloted by 2nd. Lt. **Gerald Lindsay** was abandoned due to fog. The crew bailed out; seven were injured. The plane was set on autopilot and presumably, crashed in the North Sea.*





Frank Scheaffer found the identities of the men on the picture on page 21 of the Spring 8 BTs. The site was at Marquis de la hue des Meuliers near Montmoat France. These were Allied Airmen who had been evading capture by German troops. The American was a B-17 Co-pilot from the 452nd Bomb Group. His crew went down on their first mission, 29 May 1944 on a mission to Leipzig. Also on the picture are a Canadian and an English airman. Others were members of the FFI (French Forces of the Interior).

The members of the FFI saved many of our men; and at great personal risk, kept the British & Americans apprised of the activities of the enemy. This information was a critical when the Invasion began on D-Day.



From Billy Finn to Will Lundy:

"Greetings from Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal, Ireland. Very interested in the site (at Ballyshannon). My main interest concerns **Arthur H. Dittmer** who was involved in TWO Liberator plane crashes, one in Ballyshannon (19th June 1944) and one over Langenhagen, Germany (24th August 1944). On both occasions he was pilot. Our local history group, *Historic Ballyshannon*, honoured the crew of the B-24 Liberator which crash landed due to lack of fuel near Ballyshannon. Arthur Dittmer survived, while two of the crew of 10 died. Amazingly, he was pilot of a plane which came down near Langenhagen 2 months later.

The crew parachuted out, but apparently Arthur was shot dead by civilians before the military arrived. Most of the rest survived, and another crew member, **Arthur Grueber**, lived to relate the tale. Four of the crew who came

down in Germany were also on the Ballyshannon Liberator. Our historic group placed a memorial stone on the site last year, and the Deputy American Ambassador to Ireland, Jon Benton attended. Little did we know that Arthur Dittmer died 1 month after the Ballyshannon crash. (Finn discovered this on the 44th BG Web Site)

We would appreciate any assistance that you might offer regarding contacting any of the relatives. We would like them to know that he has been honored on a memorial stone in Ireland. E-Mail; billfin@oceanfree.net



From the Legacy Pages, **William S. Aldridge's** Claim to Fame: "I was Operations Officer of the 67th Squadron. On 24 July 1944 it was the 2nd Air Division's turn to lead the 8th AAF; 14th Bomb Wing's turn to lead the 2nd AD ; 44th BG's turn to lead the 14th Bomb Wing & the 67th 's turn to lead the 44th BG. I was advised by my CO (**William R. Cameron**) that I would be leading the whole show. The Mission was saturation bombing of the German Army at Saint Lo.

Here is my claim to fame: I led the largest bomber formation that was ever assembled to bomb one target (approximately 1500 to 1600 B-24s and B-17s.) We flew the mission, but due to cloud cover over the target, we were unable to bomb. I flew the mission again the next day; and again, was Lead Aircraft Commander for the 8th AAF.

Aldridge can claim fame for another famous mission nine months earlier -to Wiener-Neustadt 1 October 1943. "My crew joined the 67th at Bengazi (a few days after Ploesti). We did not fly a single mission out of Bengazi. I cannot forget our second trip to Africa, that 'milk run' to Weiner-Neustadt. Well, the ol' 44th BG got the hell-shot-out-of it on that little ol' milk-run. My crew was flying '*Earthquake (McGoon)*' and I was lucky enough to make it back as far as Italy on 2 _ engines (no hydraulic system, etc.) I left *Earthquake* on the Salerno beachhead buried in the mud. That was my crew's roughest mission.



WILL SEZ

I want to take advantage of this column to get a message to those of you who have ordered our *Roll of Honor & Casualties* and have not yet received it.

Thanks to the great letter that **Bob Lehnhausen** wrote and mailed to many of you, the response was overwhelming. I not only could not keep up with your orders; my supply of books on hand quickly sold out! I immediately requested a reprint of 100 more books, but the printers had a backlog and have just finished printing the new order. Unfortunately, the printing company is in Massachusetts, so delivery to California will be taking a week or so.

In the meantime, I have made my annual 'migration' to my summer cabin here in the High Sierras, so will be mailing them out from here; and unfortunately, mail service is slow, at best. But rest assured that I will be packaging and mailing them as quickly as I can. If you wish to contact me for any reason, my phone number and address is at the bottom of this column. The other important business regarding the 44th BG is the arrival of a representative from the Army Educational Center at Carlisle, PA, to my home in Cool. He quickly packaged most of my 44th BG collection of data, books and photos. After several hours, we loaded about 15 large boxes onto his pickup and delivered them to the local Post Office in Cool.

Yesterday, thanks to Ruth Morse, I learned that all of those boxes arrived safely at the Army Educational facilities near Carlisle, PA where they are being cataloged and will be placed in an area specifically

assigned for it all. Although my 'war room' looks rather depleted, I kept several items -- loose photos (boxes of them), many newsletters from several sources, microfilm, etc.-- until it can be determined whether they can be utilized at Carlisle.

I also retained most of **William (Bill) Cameron's** letters, writings, photos and his 'Journal', so that later I can try to compile the individual personal accounts of our airmen who flew the famous Ploesti mission. **Webb Todd** and **Norman Kiefer**, our historians for the 68th and 56th Squadrons respectfully, have included much data about that mission in their Squadron books. However, that mission is so important to our history, it seems fitting to combine it all in one story. Bill Cameron had attempted to do the same thing in his revised 'Journal', so it is important in my view at least) to place it all into our Master Database and/or in a booklet. I hope to make a dedicated effort on this project this summer.

So, if any of you have recollections, stories or whatever concerning the Ploesti project, and would like to have it included, please send it to me at my Bridgeport address, written above. PLEASE DO THIS. We must make every effort to save YOUR stories **NOW**.

Will Lundy
P.O. Box 315,
Bridgeport, CA 93517





FOLDED WINGS

*And so the day drops by; the horizon grows
The fading sun, and we stand struck in grief,
Failing to find our haven of relief-*

Frederick Goddard Tuckerman

LT. GUY, EARL #20496 66th Sq. 1st Guy was a pilot, and was credited with two missions, flying with the **Thomas Harrocks** crew as an observer. His first mission, 26 November 1944, on Jersey Jerk was to Bielefeld, Germany, bombing a Railroad Viaduct. His second mission, 30 November 1944, was to the Marshalling Yards at Neunkirchen. He was flying in *Southern Comfort III*.

HAULMAN, CLEMENT # 20582 506 Sq. 7 May 2006 For reasons unknown, Haulman's record is not in the Database. However, his obituary from the Gainesville, Florida newspaper states that he attended the USAF Institute of Technology, later, post graduate work at the University of Maryland, Tulane University and the University of New Orleans. He was certified as a Testing Engineer by the USAF. He served over thirty years of active and reserve duty in the Air Force. According to the newspaper account, during WWII, he flew both B-17 and B-24s. He spent 14 years in Research & Development as a Testing Engineer at Wright Patterson AF Base in Dayton, Ohio.

Members of the 44th BG might remember him at the Reunion in Barksdale, where he was highly visible in his still-fitting WWII uniform with all his medals. The reason his history is not in the Database is troubling. It can be assumed that he reached the rank of 2nd or 1st Lieutenant.

HULBERT, KENNETH #20751 67th Sq. 2 June 2004 T/Sgt. Hulbert was a Radio Operator/Gunner on the crew of **Leslie Lee, Jr.** On one occasion he flew with the **Raymond Maynard** crew. He flew 32 missions on *Fearless Fosdick, Three Kisses for Luck, Limpin' Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Mi Akin Ass, Old Iron Corset, Miss Marion, Missouri Belle/Missouri Sue* and *Lady Fifi Nella*. His first mission was 31 December 1944; his last was 25 April 1945, which was the last mission flown by the 44th. On this day the American and Soviet troops met at the Elbe River.

LOWE, NELSON #21143 67th Sq. 26 January 2006 S/Sgt. Lowe was a Waist Gunner on the **Jack M. Hyland** crew. He flew 38 missions, the first on 7 July 1944 at a time when the 44th was wiping out railroads, air craft factories and communication centers in Occupied France, Holland and the German heartland. The Hyland crew flew in many unnamed planes, also in *Old Iron Corset, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Ffifinella, Three Kisses for Luck, Mi Akin Ass, Limpin' Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Fearless Fosdick* and *Heaven Can Wait II*. Lowe's last mission was 17 October 1944.



FOLDED WINGS

MORRISON, HAROLD C. #21418 66 Sq. Information of his death came to the 44th with a returned envelope labeled 'Expired.' 1st Lt. Morrison served first as a Co-Pilot with **Walter T. Milliner**. His first mission was to Berlin 8 March 1944. After two missions he was given his own crew, and his first mission as Pilot was to Bernberg. On one mission he flew with Frank Davido as Command Pilot. The Morrison crew flew in such notable A/C as *Myrtle the Fertile Turtle; The Banana Barge, Patsy Ann II, Gipsy Queen, Northern Lass* and *Any Gum Chum*. Their last mission, # 36, was on 4 July 1944.

MULL, FRANK S. #21446 68th Sq. 3 March 2006. Mull succumbed to cancer, as stated in a note from his wife sent to his buddy **Wendell Drennan** and relayed to **Ivo DiPiero**. According to **Bob Lehnhausen**, Mull, Drennan and DiPiero were all members of the 68th Armament section. He remembered that 'all three were exceptional in their skills, exemplifying the old fable about birds of a feather.' As CO of the 68th, Lehnhausen expressed pride in these three men who were so proficient in their assigned duties.

NABORS, WILLIAM H. 21475 67th Sq. Date unknown. S/Sgt. Nabors was a Tail Gunner on the **James Perry** crew. He flew four of his five missions in *Raggedy Ann II*, his first on 20 December 1943. His second mission was to Escalles sur Buche, an effort to wipe out the V1 Missiles that were targeting London. Nabor's last mission was to Berlin on 6 March 1944.



PECK, FRANCIS J. # 34612 2 June 2006 T/Sgt. Peck was a Radio Operator on the **Newton Condray** crew. His first mission was 16 August 1944. At that time the Allied troops had broken out of the Normandy Beaches and were on a steady eastward movement. Staying ahead of the troops, the Condray crew were bombing strategic sites in Germany, limiting troop movements and slowing the production of war materials. Except for one low level supply drop in Holland, all other missions were flown into the heart of Germany.

The crew flew their thirty-four missions in *Fearless Fosdick, Mi Akin Ass, Lady Fifi Nella* and several unnamed planes. Their last mission was March 12, 1945.

Peck and his wife Donna resided in Spokane Washington. He became a detective in the Spokane police department, later spending ten years working in the Public Defender's Office. The couple had two children, Karen & Michael.

PECKA, WILBUR J. #21630 2nd. Lt. Wilbur Pecka was a navigator, first on the **Richard O'Neill** crew; later he flew with **Leroy Hansen**. Pecka flew three missions, first on *Poop Deck Pappy, The Shark* and *Bad Penny*. His first mission was 3 November 1943; his last, ten days later on a mission to a Port & Storage Facility in Bremen, Germany.

Tragically, it was the first combat flight for the Hansen crew. The weather was severe and the fighters were fierce. First the #4 engine was damaged, needing it to be feathered. Nevertheless, the plane made it through the target. On the homeward journey, a flak burst destroyed #4 engine and damaged #2. Unable to make it across the Channel, Hansen turned back to Holland and was able to safely belly-land in a canal. Immediately the crew became German prisoners.



FOLDED WINGS

PHILLIPS, REGINALD (PHIL) #23274 68th Sq. 3 April 2006 Lt. Col. Phillips flew seven submarine patrols before receiving his overseas assignment. In 1942 he flew *Lemon Drop* to Shipdham, arriving at a time when planes were being shot down at an alarming rate. His first mission was on 14 November 1942. Most of his 32 missions were in *Lemon Drop*, but he also flew in *Natchez Belle*, *The Avenger* and *Eager Eve/Hag Mag/TheMoth Ball Queen*. Phillips was among the group that flew to North Africa, and became part of the force that cleared the way for the invasion of Sicily. He was among the raiders on the Ploesti mission. Phillips left the 44th for the start of the 14th Combat Wing as Assistant Operation Officer; later Operation Officer. He returned to the states September 1944. Phillips became CO of the 206 Base Unit, at Almagordo, NM. He finished in AAF Board at Orlando, FL.

Bob Lehnhausen remembers Phillips as a very handsome, quiet, very laid back, intense pilot who demonstrated all the desirable qualities of a no nonsense bomber pilot. He was the original pilot of *Lemon Drop #699*, with the original call letter of "P". **Charlie Pigg** was the dedicated Master Sergeant who crewed the *Lemon Drop*. Lehnhausen remembers the warmth between the pilot and his maintenance man, Charlie Pigg.

After the war Phillips graduated from Purdue University. At various times he was a cattle buyer for Wilson & Co., was active in farming, insurance and real estate. He and his wife Dorothy (Dustin) lived in Oklahoma. They had two sons, one daughter and five grandchildren.



SIMONS, DAVID #22043 4 March 2005 506 Sq. Captain David Simons was a Co-Pilot on the **Richard Parker** crew. Their first mission was on 10 October 1943. Most of their flights were in *Peep Sight*, but also in *Sad Sack II*, *Lucky Strike*, *Sky Queen* and *Gallavantin' Gal*. Simons flew with Capt. **Jay Smith** and Capt. **George Insley** at different times.

On 5 November 1943, on a mission to Munster, Germany, targeting a railroad junction, the bomber group was attacked by a large number of FW 190s. *Peep Sight* was hit and all but one member of the crew were wounded. Fortunately, the pilot's wounds were slight; and although he could not stay in the formation, he was able to bring the A/C back and crash land at Shipdham.

After fifteen missions with the 44th BG, the crew was transferred to the 93rd BG where they served as Lead Crew on Pathfinder missions, flying a total of 31 missions.

After the War he entered the field of education, serving as principal of a local school. Later he entered the ministry, an occupation which he followed for the rest of his life. Rev. Simons lived in Huntington, PA. He had six children, one was lost in infancy. His oldest son Richard was killed in Viet Nam.

THORNOCK, NEWELL BRUCE #22308 2006 67th Sq. T/Sgt. Thornock was a Radio Operator on the **Pinder** Crew. He flew three missions, both on *Lib-erty Belle/Lass*. His third mission was to Escalles Sur Buchy, hoping to wipe out the V1 Missiles that were attacking London. Several days later another crew took *Liberty Belle/Lass* to the same area and the plane was lost. Thornock and his wife Florence lived in Bloomington, Idaho at the time of his death.

TRAGER, MEL #22339 506th Sq. No record is on file about this veteran.

Join us in Washington. We'll sing it together.

Oh.....Off we go into the Wild Blue Yonder, climbing high into the sun;
Here they come zooming to meet our thunder. At 'em boys, giv'er the gun!
Down we dive spouting our flames from under; off with one terrible roar!
We live in fame or go down in flame. Nothing'll stop the U.S. Air Force

Here's a toast to the host of those who love the vastness of the sky.

To a friend we send a message of his brother men who fly.

We drink to those who gave their all of old, then down we roar

To score the rainbow's pot of gold.

A toast to the host of those we love, the U.S. Air Force.

Off we go into the wild sky yonder, keep the wings level and true;

If you'd live to be a grey-haired wonder, keep the nose out of the blue.

Flying men, guarding the nation's border, we'll be there, followed by more!

In echelon we carry on. Hey! NOTHING'LL STOP THE U.S. AIR FORCE

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

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8 BALL TAILS

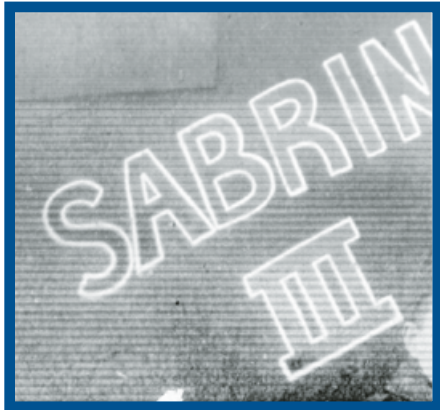
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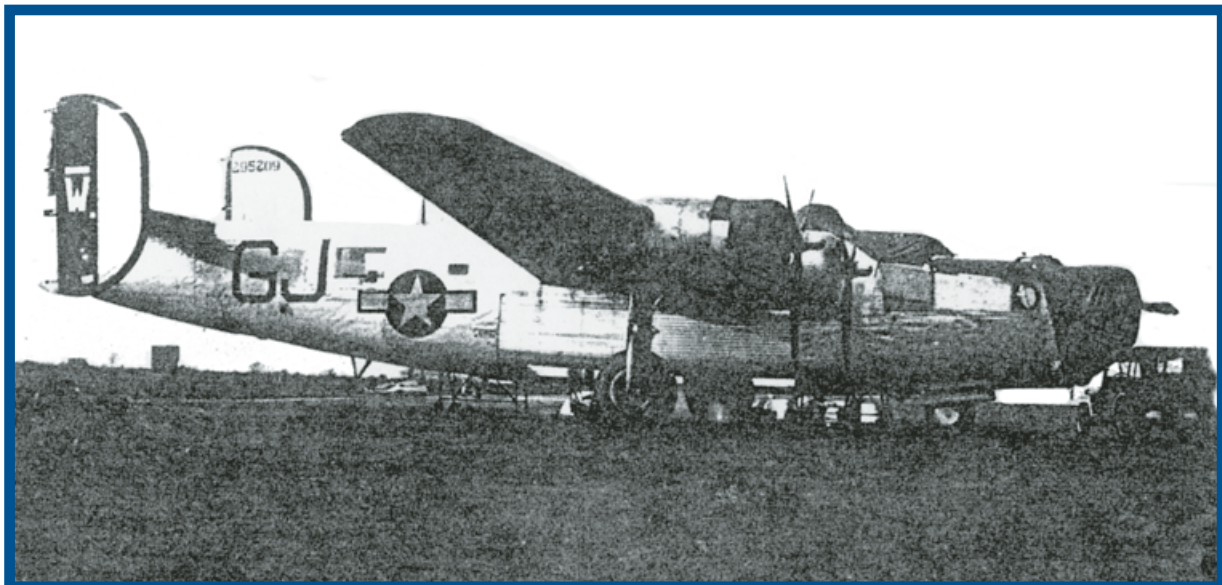


Reporting on this beloved plane is a study of the hair-raising stories of 41 crews who flew it in the period from 3 June 1944 to 20 April 1945. Assigned to the 506 Squadron, many notable members of the 44th, pilots and co-pilots, sat in the cockpit of this plane that managed to chalk up 106 missions.

The **Richard Hruby** crew flew the most missions in *Sabrina III* (13); the **Louis Confer** crew flew nine; the **Ogden Hill** crew flew seven; thirty eight other crews climbed aboard for their awesome rides in this lucky airship.

On D-Day the *Sabrina III* flew two missions, first to Colleville/St. Laurent in support of the invasion troops; later to a railroad yard in Angers, France, holding back the Wehrmacht from reinforcing their comrades at Normandy.

The Hruby crew had something that no other crew at Shipdham could claim: a pair of identical twins, **Fount** and **Thomas Bartley** of Keystone, Oklahoma, serving as Waist Gunners.



Sabrina III

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The 8-Ball Tails[©]

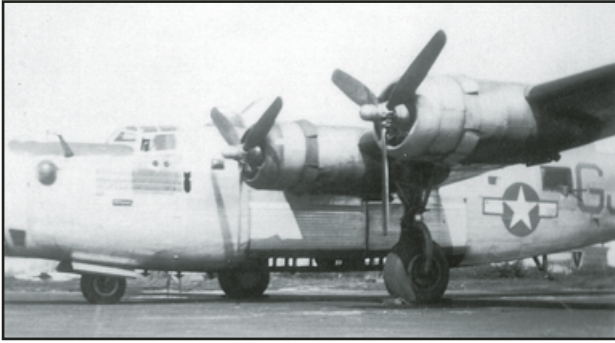
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SABRINA III



Plane showing bomb markings

Sabrina III, #42-95209, 506 Sq. was built at the Ford Willow Run plant and first flown in combat by the **Richard Hruby** crew. Her 106 missions were an amazing record for any B-24 at a time when 15 missions were about average.

Brad Wallingford, nephew of the Bartley twins, has done considerable research on his uncles' craft. Quoting from the diary of '**Doc** **Blanchard**, Radio Operator, Wallingford wrote that on a mission to an airfield at Laon, France, (23 June 1945) the hydraulic system was shot out by flak, and had no brakes for landing. The two waist gunners tied their chutes to the waist guns, to aid in stopping the plane.

Four days later the **Fred Stones** crew flew the plane to the marshalling yards at Creil, France. Flak hit the #3 booster pump connection to #3 gas tank, causing fuel to pour out into the slip stream. Believing the spray to be smoke, Sgt. **William Strange**, RW Gunner, jumped out, parachuted safely to the ground, then was captured and was a POW until May 1st.

On July 6 on the mission to Kiel, **Fount Bartley** got hit on his right leg by flak. It was his 30th mission, so his twin brother finished his missions with another gunner. T/Sgt. **David H. Appenzellar** flew with the Hruby crew as an observer on 15 June 1944. The target was a bridge in Tours, France. His dramatic description of the events appeared in the Spring 2002 issue of the 8 Ball Tails.

"FW 190s swept into Liberator formations and cascaded 20 mm shells into flights of the heavy bombers as they attacked military targets in eastern France. I flew in a plane piloted by 2nd. Lt. **Richard J. Hruby**, and, while the youthful pilot put his Liberator through violent evasive action, I watched the bullets from the top-turret guns of T/Sgt. **Cletus C. Clark** turn one FW 190 into a smoke-trailing, uncontrollable loss to the Luftwaffe. In other sections of the French skies I saw furious dogfights between P-51 Mustangs, P-47 Thunderbolts and German fighters. I saw at least one of the enemy ships hurling down to destruction.

"The mirror-clear June day made the skies an arena of incredible beauty as the planes continually clashed in violent battles. The opposition failed to interrupt the bomb run, and I watched the heavy explosives speed down toward their objectives in patterns that were the acme of symmetry and accuracy."

"Flying in the waist of the Liberator were the twin brothers **Fount "Boyd"** and **Thomas L. "Lloyd" Bartley**, manning the guns. Mustangs and Thunderbolts hovered about in defense of the formation. As they approached the coast, flak became their next enemy. Hruby brought *Sabrina III* safely through ; and to everyone's relief, the coast of England came in sight."

That was the best part of the mission, of course. As Appenzellar remembered: "The patchwork of the English fields never appeared so lovely and serene as when they passed smoothly beneath us on the return to base. As we neared our airfield, we looked down, and silhouetted upon the light, half-transparent clouds was the shadow of our Liberator, completely circled by a perfect rainbow of most brilliant reds, blues and yellows. The entire crew watched it with awe, forgetting now the earlier encounters, the deadly guns and the load

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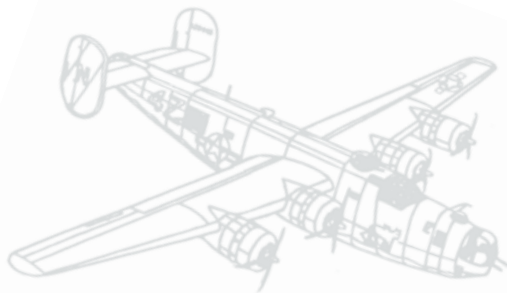
our cargo carried as we left the base some hours earlier. The shadow and rainbow glided along beside us, disappearing finally as the airfield pushed into view. Lt. Hruby slowly let the bomber down as we headed in to land."



PHOTO TAKEN AFTER MISSION

15 June 1944

L-R Top: David Appenzellar, Observer; Eddie Rosenberg, Navigator; Tom Smith, Co-Pilot; Richard R Hruby, Pilot; Herman Flugman, Bombardier; Doc Blanchard, Radio Operator/Gunner
L-R Bottom Robert Petkoff, Tail Gunner; Fount Bartley, Right Waist Gunner; Lloyd Bartley, Left Waist Gunner; Cletus Clark, Top Turret Gunner; Dog "Malfunction."



Left: Fount Bartley; Right: Lloyd Bartley
Can anyone identify the Ground Crew man in the center of this picture?



THE OTHER SABRINAS

The first *Sabrina* #42-95209, returning from the German port of Bremen, crashed in a clump of trees at Shipdham in 11 November 1943, the victim of enemy fighters.

The story of #42-52611, *Sabrina II*, is a mystery. The Database has no record of missions.



The late Paul Kay

With great sorrow and regret, we must report the death of our beloved President, **Robert Paul Kay**. Paul had heart surgery, had survived his post-op experience, had been through cardiac rehabilitation, and was ready to go home for the Christmas holiday. He passed away on December 24, a victim of a blood clot.

When he was preparing for surgery, he spoke to **Bob Lehnhausen**, Past President and Adviser to all presidents. Bob made a very profound statement. He told Paul that 'going into heart surgery is like going on a mission. You start out with high hopes, but you never know what will happen when you get there.' How true.

Paul had laid out a good plan for the 2007 Reunion at Carlisle, a plan which has been placed on file for the 2008 Reunion.

Because the *8 Ball Tails* was near completion at the time of his passing, we are retaining his Presidential Briefing.

PRESIDENTIAL BRIEFING

We were so happy to see all of you at the Reunion in Washington. To our delight, more than a hundred people from the 44th arrived, including second and third generations. Those of you who couldn't make it, please believe that we missed you.

Fortunately, the weather was on our side for the unveiling-blue skies and hardly a cloud. Needless to say, there was no veil over the monument. The three spires reach 270 feet in the air, and resemble the take-off pattern of three jets. The celebration was a short walk from the Pentagon, and we passed vehicles and armament that were two generations past the equipment of WWII. The President's speech was appropriate-that the Air Force was the only service without a memorial. He said, "Looking from this promontory to a place once filled with smoke and flames, we remember why we need them."

We were happy to see the P-51 Mustang fly over, the F-86 Sabrejet from the Korean era, the Viet Nam F-4 Phantom; and we were dazzled by amazing performance of the Thunderbirds. To me, none were more impressive than that beautiful B-24 that modestly passed over our heads. It was flown by General Bodycombe, a Liberator pilot in the 15th AF.

We are looking forward to seeing all of you at our 2007 Reunion. We expect it will be in Carlisle, where our memorabilia will be on exhibit. More information will be available to you soon.

A MESSAGE FROM THE TREASURER

To simplify the bookkeeping, the 44th BGVA, members will receive their registration notices in January; and they will be considered late in March. Do not send dues at odd months, as was done in the past; you will be getting a bill the following January.

Our newly catapulted member to the Presidency is George Washburn. George was out of the country when he received the message of Paul's death. For those who don't know George, you will meet him in the Spring issue of the 8 BTS.

2nd LT. RICHARD J. HRUBY'S RENOWNED FEAT He ditched in the Channel, and everybody survived.

Returning home from bombing the Friedrichstrause Railroad Station in Berlin, 29 April 1944, 2nd. Lt. **Richard J. Hruby**, flying # 41-29513, had come through heavy and intense anti-aircraft fire and damaging attacks by many enemy aircraft. It is believed that flak damage caused a leak in either the main gas tank or gas lines. The prop-governor stuck at 2500 rpm, and #2 engine was surging as much as 600 rpm. In addition, the formation was nearly 45 minutes late on the flight plan, prior to reaching the enemy coast on the way out.

On the return, as they were leaving the Dutch Coast, Sgt. **Cletus Clark**, Engineer & Top Turret Gunner, reported that all gas gauges registered nearly empty. Determined to bring his A/C back to Shipdham, Hruby cut back his RPM on all four engines. He instructed his crew to throw out all possible equipment, and told Clark to switch all engines to cross-feed fuel, to keep all engines running as long as possible.

The men assumed ditching positions. The VHF radio equipment malfunctioned, so they were not able to transmit their dilemma.

Flying at 5500 feet and with the English coast barely in view, all four engines quit!!

Hruby and his Co-pilot, **Thomas Smith**, lowered one-half flaps and put their plane into a dive to maintain airspeed. As they neared the water's surface, Lt. Hruby leveled off; and after skimming off one swell, settled down into the next one in a slightly nose-high position. The nose of the A/C buried itself for approximately 30 seconds; then the plane came to rest on the surface - floating and intact.

The pilots hit the water so skillfully, not only was the plane not visibly damaged, but the plexiglass in the nose turret remained unbroken. No member of the crew was injured!

The crew exited the upper hatch and released the two life rafts. One of them was unserviceable; the other would only partially inflate. The plane slowly sank and was gone in approximately fifteen minutes. One man got into the raft, the others clung to the ropes and remained in the water. In about one half hour, luckily, a British minesweeper arrived and picked them up.

Ed. Note: One other pilot in the 44th BG was able to ditch without casualties. Who was that?

THE 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION JOINED THE SECOND AIR DIVISION IN A GREAT BIG CELEBRATION IN WASHINGTON

The 44th BG showed up in flying colors to see the soaring spires of the U.S. Air Force Memorial, a monument long overdue; and well worth the long, long wait. It honors the Air Force and its proud predecessor, The Army Air Corps.

The three silver spires, mirroring the bomb burst maneuver of the dashing Thunderbirds, are representative of the core values of the Air Force—integrity first, service before self, excellence in all that is done.

The Thunderbird's smoke designs on the blue sky were amazing, but the breathtaking moment came when a beautiful Liberator streamed from the west and proceeded over the heads of a dazzled audience. President Bush and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld spoke with genuine respect and gratitude to those who have flown in honor and defense of our country.

At the Marriott



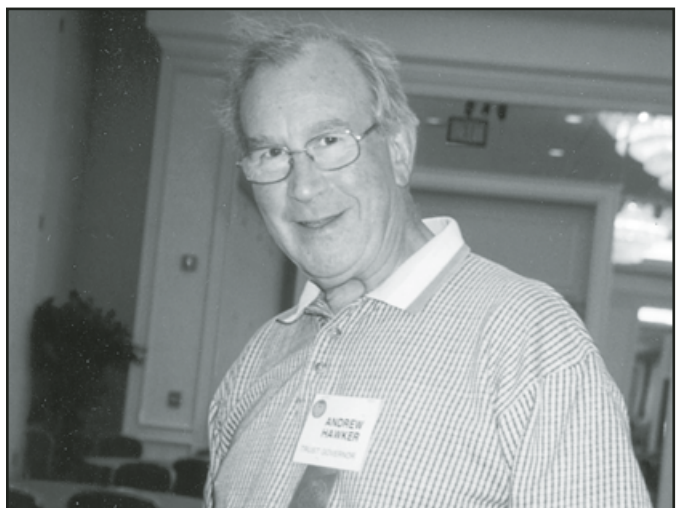
Dick Lynch, Treasurer and George Washburn, Vice President of the 44th BG chat after the General Meeting.



Pilot Christopher Spagnola (Center) met with two crew members, Lee Aston, Navigator, and John Gately, Gunner.



Will Lundy, Sterling Dobbs and Kevin Lundy emerge from the meeting. Dobbs was elected Director of the Board.



Andrew Hawker from Norwich, England, a member of the Heritage Trust of the Memorial Library.

...continued on page 8

The Aerospace Museum was a backward look at planes from WWII, Thunderbolt and Mustang and more, with a forward look at progress since.



Cynthia Harmonowski, **George Washburn** and Beryl Apgar viewed a German fighter plane. This brought bad memories for both girls, natives of Norwich. During a raid in Norwich, Cynthia flattened out on wet ground to escape a German dive bomber.



Syd Paul stopped by a fighter on the balcony of the Aerospace Museum

Perry Morse's side trip to the White House hit unexpected snags; but nevertheless, a hundred people from the U.S., Canada and UK gained entrance. At the last minute, by e-mail we were able to collect passport numbers. It became a family assignment. Ken Kelly, his son-in-law, directed the flow, getting everyone qualified for entry. Daughters Nancy and Ellen pushed wheel chairs and extended a helping hand at every juncture. Only one person was nervous about the outcome - that was Perry.

THE SQUADRON DINNER WAS LIKE A 44TH REUNION all in one big room, with impressive award presentations.

The 2nd Air Division Banquet was an event for all 440 attendees, 147 of whom were from the 44th . Many of our English friends were present, representative of the great group who oversee the care of the Memorial Library in Norwich.

Scenes at the Banquet



Perry Morse, John Lee and Richard Butler lit the candle, honoring the heroes of the Ploesti mission. **Bud Koorndyk** was at the podium.



With great enthusiasm, Granddaughter **Julia Folsom** embraced **Beverly & Jerry Folsom**. Julia is a Banquet Cook at the Marriott, working with the renowned Sr. Sous Chef **David Nvodjo**.



Lowell & Jackie Roberts, Lois & Tony Cianci.



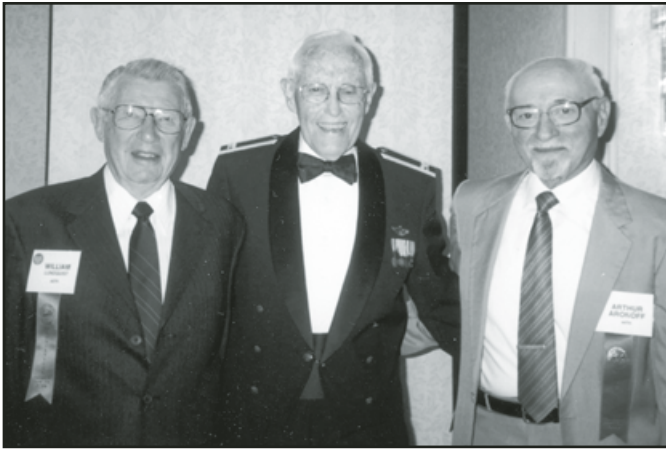
Irma & Bob Dubosky



Frank Schaeffer dined with **Robert and Roberta Johnson**.



...continued on page 10



L-R Pilot **Clay Roberts** (center) was joined with **William Lundquist** (Co-Pilot) and **Arthur Aronoff** (Navigator) at the Banquet. Robert's special interest at the Aerospace Museum was the renowned B-29, Enola Gay. Roberts flew a B-29 in the Cold War. Since his 'Blues' still fit, he decided to wear them.



Matthew Martin thanked the Americans for library support; but more, for joining the battle against the Nazis in WWII. Martin is Chairman of the Heritage Trust for the 2AD Memorial Library in Norwich, England.



The *Enola Gay*



Ardith Butler and Granddaughter Kayla presented roses to Evelyn Cohen, Reunion Chairman.



A PROFOUND THOUGHT

"Heroes are like mountains. You have to move a distance away from them before you can realize how big they are."

Col. Gerald E. Otterbein, U.S. Air Nat'l Guard

These words were spoken at a Veteran's Ceremony Nov. 11, 2006 in York, Pennsylvania. How true. It was at the 50th Anniversary of D-Day that Tom Brokaw named WWII Veterans the 'Greatest Generation'. Now, twelve years later, those words are resounding louder than ever.

44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

Three recipients of belated decoration for valor and bravery in combat received awards



2nd Lt. Delmer F. Phelps, Pilot, ASN 0-743272, 66 Sqdn, 44th Bomb Group, 8th A.A.F. ca. 1943

at the October 2006 Reunion in D.C. Two of the three recipients, 2nd Lt. **Delmer F. Phelps** and 1st Lt. **Edgar J. Spencer** have "folded their wings" and the medals were presented *post humus* to family members. The third recipient, Capt. **Edwin M. Lavitt** was present and very much alive to receive his decorations. Colonel

Charles Hughes presented the medals with Mary Aston assisting, as **R. Lee Aston** read the citations.



L to R: Sgt. Kevin White, Col. Charles Hughes, and Capt. Robert Lee Aston

Delmer Phelps died in 1976. His wife Luella is very much alive and actively employed in the Santa Clara, CA, school system, but could not be present. Their grandson, Sgt. Kevin White, a member of the New Mexico ANG was present to receive his grandfather's decorations. Lt. Phelps was the co-Pilot on the **Richard W. Bridges'** crew. Flying from their base at Benghazi, Libya, Phelps' aircraft was shot down on his 5th mission to an aircraft factory at Wiener-Neustadt, Oct. 1, 1943. Phelps and 5 of his crew became POWs for 20 months. Sgt. White received, for his grandfather, the Air Medal, POW, Mediterranean Theatre, and WWII Victory medals, the Presidential Unit citation with 2 stars. Phelps was a member of the 66th Bomb Squadron and was promoted to a 1st Lt. while a POW.

Lt. **Edgar J. Spencer** died July 4, 1998 at age 80. He was survived by his wife, Estelle Voelker, and a son Thomas Spencer, both of whom were present to receive th *post humus* decorations for Lt. "Jay" Spencer. Lt. Spencer completed a tour of 37 missions. His widow, Estelle, and son received for husband and father, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and two Oak Leaf Clusters to his Air Medal. His co-pilot was Lt. **Frank J. Colella**.



1st Lt. Edgar J. Spencer, Pilot, 67th Squadron; 8/03/1944 to 12/31/1944



L to R: Lt. Spencer's son Thomas, widow Estelle Voelker, receiving 1st Lt. Spencer's *post humus* DFC and AM from Mary Aston, Col. Hughes, R. Lee Aston at 44th BG's Reunion, October 2006

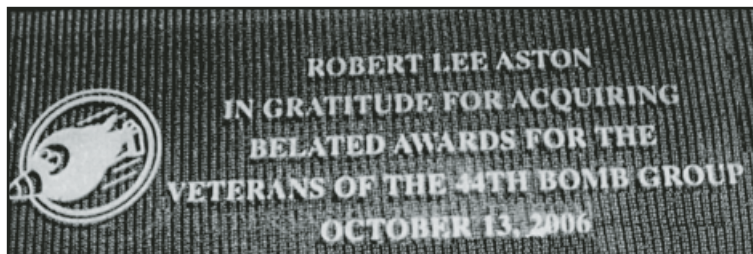
Distinguished Flying Cross (2+3) and Air Medal for Capt. Edwin M. Lavitt, 67th Squadron



L to R: Mary Aston, Capt. Lavitt receiving Distinguished Flying Cross OLC #2 and #3 and Air Medal OLC#4 from Col. Hughes, and R. Lee Aston with medal citations.

Capt. Edwin M. Lavitt, Ellington, Conn., was a Lead Pilot from the 67th Squadron. He flew a tour of 27 missions with 20 lead missions from 9/22/44 to 4/18/45. Capt. Lavitt flew lead missions for Group, Wing, 2nd Air Division, and one 8th AAF lead.

Lee Aston Receives an Appreciation Award



At the 2006 Reunion, Paul Kay, President of the 44th BGVA, presented Director of Awards and Decorations R. Lee Aston with an appreciation award. The award was a glass, two-pen desk set etched with the above shown word of appreciation for Aston's acquiring belated WWII combat medals for some 24 veterans of the 44th Bomb Group over the past three years. Lee Aston looks forward to continuing his work in being able to obtain more belated medals for more veterans that should have received them during their combat time.

Will Lundy Receives an Appreciation Award

At the 2006 D.C. annual Reunion, after the belated medal presentation, Mary and Lee Aston presented a 67th logo suncatcher to Will Lundy, on behalf of the 44BGVA in appreciation of Will's many "labors of love" as Historian for the 44th Bomb Group, and for his recent Roll of Honor book. (Will Lundy was a member of the 67th Squadron.)



L to R: Mary Aston, Will Lundy, Charles Hughes, Lee Aston

(2006 Reunion photo credit to John Gately, 67th Squadron)

AMERICAN EX-POWS IRWIN STOVROFF'S SPECIAL PROJECT

"It's the most fulfilling work I have ever done," states **Irwin Stovroff**, who dedicates his life to helping ex-POWs get the entitlements that the government provides.

Stovroff and his associate, Mitchell Cohen (also an ex-POW), provide the means for deserving veterans to get services for which they are qualified to receive.

Stovroff was a member of the Millikin crew whose plane went down on August 13, 1944 at the Falaise Pocket near Caen, France. As a POW who happened to be Jewish, Stovroff saw the worst of the German hatred. He can empathize with those who seek his help.

"EX-POWs suffer from alcoholism, depression and denial, and may not even relate their problems to their POW experience. In our office, the goal is to help those who cannot help themselves. Government services are available to them; and 95% of the time, we are able to get the help they need."

Historically, his clients have been POWs from WWII, Korea and Viet Nam. "We aren't getting any from Iraq. The Iraqi fanatics kill their captors," he noted.

His clients have amazing stories. In WWII, Stanley Willner, a young Merchant Marine officer, was blown off an exploding ship. He was picked up by a German destroyer in the Far East, and held on board the German ship for two months. When his captors were ordered to return to Germany, they dropped him off in Singapore where he became a prisoner of the Japanese. He spent 4 years in slave labor as part of the group who were building the bridge over the River Qui.

Another client, equally notable, was Lt. Col. Mel Pollack, who was flying an F-14 Phantom in the Korean War. He was shot down on his 78th mission, and became a guest in the Hanoi Hilton. His cage mate was none other than Senator John McCain.

Irwin Stovroff has a clear memory of the plight of the POW. On August 13, 1944 the

Passion Pit and 24 other B-24's were sent on a mission to bomb the road junction between Le Havre and Rouen, France. Germans were trying to escape from an area described as horse shoe shaped. General Bradley's plan was to entrap this large group of German soldiers, preventing them from coming to the aid of those who were still fighting at Normandy. The *Passion Pit* was hit by flak, and went down in a fiery burst. Fortunately, all ten of the crew parachuted safely, only to be captured by the waiting German Army. Stovroff's POW experience will live with him forever.

In a major interrogation center outside Frankford, Germany, he was questioned by a German officer who spoke excellent English. To his astonishment, he learned that the interrogator had lived one street away from Stovroff's family home in Buffalo, New York. In fact, Stovroff had been his paper boy!!!

The former neighbor did make a minimal effort to help his American captive by putting a question mark on the form designating religion. However, at Stalag #1, Stovroff was separated from his original group and placed with a number of Jewish prisoners who were slated for execution.

The lives of Stovroff and other Jewish prisoners were spared by the courage of two POW army officers, Col. Zehmke and Col. Spicer. They vowed to their German captors, that if they killed the Jewish prisoners, they would pay a heavy price after war.

Stalag Barth was situated near the Polish border. When the Russians came through, Stovroff and his fellow prisoners were freed. However, their liberators had a dubious plan for their liberation - take them to Russia and release them there. Fortunately, the 8th Air Force sent a special mission to deliver them safely to England and then back to the States.

Living in West Palm Beach, Florida,

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Stovroff volunteered to help Ray Knisley who had opened an office for the express purpose of aiding ex-POWs. When Knisley retired, Stovroff took charge of the office. He carries the title, National Service Officer. Among those he has helped are six ex-POWs who were held in the same camp where he was imprisoned. Stranger than fiction, his next door neighbor in Florida was in the same barracks as Stovroff when he was in Stalag Luft #1 'segregated'. The man's family owned a delicatessen in New York, whose slogan was, "Send a Salami to a Soldier in the Army."

"Our office has great success in getting the help that the veteran deserves," Stovroff explains. "We have helped several hundred. Some find us through our Web Site. Others read articles about entitlements, but don't know how to get them. If they can prove that they were a POW, we can help them."

Recently the Stovroff/Cohen team has taken on a new project. With so many wounded and blinded servicemen coming home from Iraq, they have started a program of procuring Guide Dogs and trainers. The cost of raising and training a VetDog from birth to placement is approximately \$30,000.

Since the Guide Dog Foundation delivers its dogs free of charge, sponsorship opportunities have been created to assist the Foundation in providing a new lease on life for the veterans.

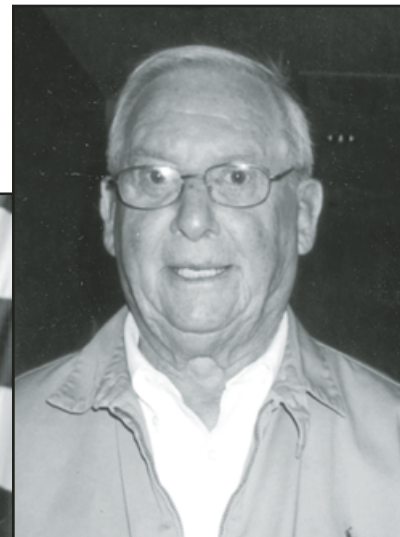
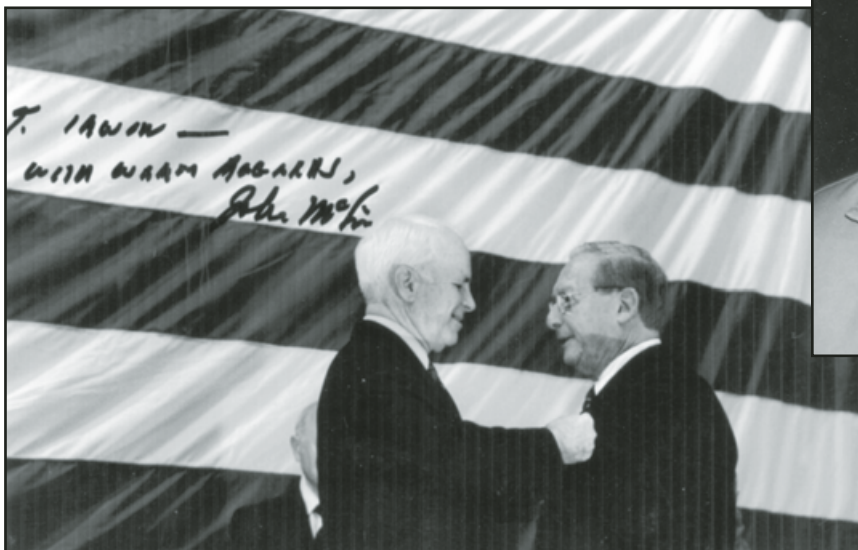
Veterans who receive a guide dog become a partner in a VetDogs team. Through this program, blind veterans can acquire a dog, but also get Guide Dog training and computer-assisted technology training.

Stovroff's work is all voluntary. However, three years ago he did receive one notable award--his DFC Medal, 6 decades late. It was pinned on by Senator John McCain.

The phone number of Ex-POW office at the VA Medical Center in West Palm Beach, Florida is (561) 422-7475. Stovroff's home number: (561) 488-6155; E-Mail IRWINTFI@AOL.COM

Irwin Stovroff's story was featured in Volume 3, Issue #7 of the 8 Ball Tails, Spring 2001. The grim circumstances of his POW experience are described in The Mighty Eighth by Gerald Astor.

Senator John McCain and Irwin Stovroff



Irwin Stovroff

IN DESPERATION, THE LUFTWAFFE TRIED THIS

Gerald Gross, Navigator on the **Thomas McKenna** crew, recently found a book with details about a little known, fearsome secret. ***THE LAST FLIGHT OF THE LUFTWAFFE, The Suicide Attack on the Eighth Air Force, 7 April 1945.*** The behavior of the pilots in the obsolete and war-weary planes of the enemy was so bizarre, High Command could not believe their tactics were deliberate.

This carefully researched treatise by Adrian Weir, credits Herr Hajo Herrman, the Luftwaffe officer, with the planning of this suicidal group which became known as the *Elbe* Force, named because its base was near the Elbe River. 1500 very young and inexperienced German pilots volunteered for this service, totally unaware of the plan. Herrman believed by ramming the bombers of the USAAF, it would slow their attacks long enough for the Jagdwaffe (jet fighters) time to re-equip.

Herrman planned for 1500 fighter A/C for the plan, but Hitler wanted fuel for troop support, so he allocated enough for only 1,000. On further thinking, he supplied enough for only 350.

The plan was that the BF-109 pilot was to dive at the wing or tail surface of a bomber and use the propeller as a circular saw. He could either throw the canopy aside for easy exit from the plane; or wait until the last second, then parachute to safety. An alternate plan would be to ram the bomber, bringing both planes down.

All armor was removed from the fighters to increase speed. Only 50 rounds of ammunition would be made available. The radios for these A/C could receive, not transmit; presumably to prevent conversations that could lead to loss of courage for the assignment. The young pilots had almost no training, as there was no extra fuel available for this purpose.

The day that the attack plan was to be implemented was April 4. As it happened, Herr Herrman was shot down and captured on that day. The weather was bad, so the scheme was delayed until April 7.

Luftwaffe Losses

German losses in 1945 were increasing at a rapid rate. From January to March 24th, 112 pilots were KIA or missing; 168 planes went down. Their worst day was January 14th when 54 pilots and 69 planes were lost.

As American pilots learned, the best laid plans do not always work. Jet pilots were ordered to ignore the bombers and attack the fighters. Formations of jets flew through the bomber formations without firing. The Elbe fighters were to follow the jets, then choose a bomber to cut with their propellers. Those youthful pilots that attempted that strategy chose to avoid the wings, in recognition that they cause a massive explosion from the stored fuel, bringing both planes down.

Some groups of the inexperienced German pilots were to climb above the USAAF formations and dive down. The temperature at 30,000 feet was minus 48 degrees. Many got lost in the clouds and turned the wrong way. Some had mechanical problems and returned to the air base; some bailed out; 60 were recalled because their fuel was dangerously low.

The famous English author, Roger Freeman, reported on the events of April 7th: 972 B-17s from the 1st and 3rd ADs and 340 B-24s from the 2nd AD took to the skies that morning. Despite the inclement weather, the 3 AD (B-17s) succeeded in bombing seven cities in the Fatherland; the 2 AD (Liberators) bombed Krummel, Doneburg and Neumunster; the 1 AD (17s) bombed six.

A total of 1314 bombers were airborne and 898 fighters. P-47s & P-51s claimed 64 German a/c destroyed. The bombers claimed 40 kills, but it was probably 10, as a number of gunners could be shooting at the same plane.

Freeman wrote that at least half of the bombers lost that day were known or suspected lost through ramming tactics. However, he did not conclude that these were deliberate suicide missions.

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The 2 AD Experience

One Elbe Fighter rammed a '24 which turned to avoid the crash and bumped another. Both Liberators went down, along with the Messerschmidt. Both crews parachuted and survived, as did the Elbe pilot.

Two other Liberators sustained damage from Messerschmidts, and they turned back

toward a French Airfield. Accompanied by a Thunderbolt, they limped across the North Sea and made it safely back to England.

As determined as the bombers had to be, continuing to their targets, the skies were full of the contrails of Mustangs and Thunderbolts circling and shooting.

THIS MISSION IS LOST FROM THE 44TH RECORDS

The History of the 67th Squadron indicates five A/C were on that mission; an unknown number from the 66th flew that day; the 68th put up twenty two. The Database credits only one plane which went to Neumunster that day, hitting a Railroad Center. *One Weakness* was flown by **William Warner**. The navigator on that crew was the 44th BGVA President, **Robert Paul Kay**, who fortunately could supply that information to Will Lundy.

In his History of the 68th Squadron, **Webb Todd** reported that the 44th dispatched twenty two A/C, five from the 68th. Their destination was to hit the dynamite installations at Krummel as priority target number one. He states that a rack malfunction in the lead A/C caused the lead squadron to go on to visually bomb target two, which was the Railway Center at Neumunster.

Todd's account stated that the high right squadron continued to attack Target One (Krummel), but because of the intense smoke at the target, the aiming point could not be picked up until just before bombs away, and the bombs landed short and to the right of the target.

However, Paul Kay's recollection was somewhat different. "I'm sure we hit the Dynamite Factory at Krummel," he recalled. "I remember the debris from that explosion rising up 12,000 feet. If our plane missed that target, the one that followed had to have hit it. Never before have I seen debris rise that high from a bombing." Kay remembered the fighter attacks. "We were attacked by FW 190s. Our gunners got 40 and the Fighters got 63."

He also recalls the interesting tactics of the fighters. "One Messerschmidt came straight through our formation, followed by another that was shooting at our A/C. Our gunners brought him down. We thought perhaps the first German pilot was showing the ropes to the second, who appeared to be quite inexperienced." According to Weir's book, Kay's evaluation of enemy activities was probably accurate.

The 66th Sq. reported their formation had been attacked for the first time in three months. They claimed three destroyed, one ME 262 and two ME 109s, with only minor damage to their own A/C.

Gerald Gross, Navigator on the **Thomas McKenna** crew (506 Sq.) recorded bombing Geesthacht on that date.

The German High Command determined that suicidal maneuvers were no deterrent to the onslaught of the bombers. It was the last mission of the Luftwaffe.

If any member of the 44th has a record of four missions in April 4-5-6-7, 1945, please let us know. It would be invaluable in helping us to complete the Database.



Gerald Gross and Paul Kay Two Navigators Who Flew This Mission Met at the Squadron Dinner

A GERMAN CAPTIVE'S POST WAR EVALUATION

During the post war interrogations, Ehrhard Milch was able to tell his English captors that it was the USAAF daylight raids which had defeated Germany, as these raids had concentrated upon transportation and oil targets.

He added, "The British inflicted grievous and bloody injuries on us, but the Americans shot us in the heart."

On the other side of the globe, another noteworthy event took place on April 7, 1945. U. S. Navy planes sank the Japanese battleship Yamato in the East China Sea.

Did you know: The first U.S. aircraft lost in combat was a B-24 destroyed on the ground during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The last bomber lost in combat over Europe was a B-24.

Source: LIBERATOR by Alwyn T. Lloyd

SORRY TO REPORT

Regretfully, the well-planned "Last Hurrah" trip to the UK has been cancelled. Sad to report, many who wished to go, had to cancel. Age is taking its toll. The eager young men who set forth to free the world from the Nazi scourge in 1942 have developed a lot of aches and pains since then. We'll have to depend on the Brits, to tell us how the Shipdham Museum is progressing.

THE 2007 REUNION

Despite everyone's best effort to follow the 44th Memorabilia to the Army Heritage Museum in Carlisle, it cannot happen. The word has come from Michael Lynch, Director of Operations, that the expansion which was planned, cannot be completed in time.

Before the invitation to the Washington ceremony came about, the decision had been made to go to Branson, Missouri for the 2006 Reunion. Plan #2 came about when the 2nd Air Division eagerly offered to be the host to this 'once in a lifetime event.' Now we are in Plan #2 for 2007; it looks like Branson, Missouri will be our destination. Look for the details in the next 8 BTs.

Blessed are the flexible, as they never get bent out of shape !!!

INDISPUTABLE SAYINGS

"The only time you have too much fuel is when you are on fire."

*"There are more planes in the ocean than submarines in the sky."
(From an old carrier sailor)*

"When one engine fails on a twin-engine airplane, you always have enough power left to get you to the scene of the crash."

Here's a good one to ponder: Without ammunition, the USAF would be just another expensive flying club."

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

Winter is knocking at the door as I look out my office window, and it will no doubt be well and truly established both in the US and the UK by the time you get to read this small note. Our new grass runway at Shipdham (140 / 320) is already a bit soggy from the heavy autumn rains we have had this year, but its grass surface is still very usable. (Remember the rain in Norfolk guys? It hasn't changed at all since you were here. (Come to think of it, it may even be the same water recycled... now there's a thought!)) Obviously our flying activities have slowed down and we are into the more indoor, winter activities that all rural flying clubs get into. Soon we will get a visit from the Safety Division of the Civil Aviation Authority (the UK version of the FAA) and they will deliver their current General Aviation Safety Lecture. We have hosted this lecture several times before and it is a really good 'heads-up' to keep us amateur pilots all to speed with the latest safety thinking. As their senior lecturer once said... 'it's good to learn from the mistakes of others, no human pilot can live long enough to make them all himself'. (Or herself with deference to Shipdham's 5 lady pilots.)

I have to advertise the 44th Bomb Group Museum yet again, as it is now almost fully complete. The main room and the library are completed and room three is well under way, complete with Audio Visual section showing the DVD 'The Mission'. Strange to think that Leon Johnson's deep, rich, southern voice would still be heard at Shipdham, on a regular basis, all these years on. A copy of Will Lundy's amazing book arrived earlier this month and will have pride of place in the library. The building itself had a good khaki paint job on the outside just before the Norfolk winter set in and should now hopefully be good for another few years, before we have to do it again. As I write this we are anticipating a visit from the family of a 44th Veteran, John A. Gray, who was a navigator. Both John's son and young grandson are expected at the weekend for a trip round the old base and a chance to wander through the museum.

We had our regular Shipdham Aero Club Bonfire and Firework Night on Nov 4th and got just over one hundred folks out on a clear autumn evening, to watch the fun, eat the burgers and hot dogs and drink some soup, and Real English Ale. (Yup...we still brew it in the old fashioned way, the same as it was brewed in 44, probably still in the same vats, and still without too many chemicals. It's still served un-chilled as you remember it and it still has a pretty darn good kick.) Our Landlady Mrs Paterson was one of the honored guests and having spent some of the evening with her, I think I can safely say she had a great time.

It is particularly poignant that it is Remembrance Day today as I write this. Like you we get TV programmes shown at this time of year that remind us of the vast numbers of people who never made it through WWII to 'May 45. Personally it is these vast numbers that I cannot really comprehend, and the mentality of the Nazi dictatorship to sacrifice millions of their fellow humans, including their own people, even after they knew that their cause was lost. Democracy in all its varied forms may well be slightly flawed, but it's the best we have to keep the world on an even keel, and defeat both dictators and terrorists alike.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you over the Christmas period.
Best wishes from your old base here in East Anglia.

Peter

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS SOCIETY

October 22-26, barely a week after the Air Force Celebration in Washington, members of the DFC Society convened at the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. **Perry Morse** and **Dale Lee** were two of the few WWII airmen present for the event. The younger holders of this distinguished group were captivated with Dale's dramatic account of his plane going down at Foggia, his escape from a prison in Italy, crossing mountains and perilous stretches of land while constantly hounded by Germans. When the group finally arrived to safety, they had to prove they truly were American airmen who had previously flown to Ploesti. Finally, they received the award they had earned – the DFC – pinned by the great **Jimmy Doolittle**.

The DFC Society is an interesting accumulation of heroes. Among them is a Komacazi pilot. He was an air cadet when captured by the Japanese in North Korea. He was assigned to the Imperial 'Suicide Squad', but managed to survive the war. When North Korea went to war against South Korea, he escaped to the south and flew for the South Koreans, later the Americans. The Komacazi pilot ultimately earned the American Distinguished Flying Cross.

Events in Las Vegas included a trip to Hoover Dam, but more impressive was the opportunity to tour Nellis Air Force Base. Their grounds have an amazing collection

of war machines. Among the least impressive was an Anti-Aircraft gun designed by the French. When fired at a 90 degree angle, it tumbled backward, and soldiers had to rush forward to put it back in operation!!!

The most impressive item on display was the Predator Drone. Boxed in a large metal container, this wide-winged A/C is transported to Baghdad in pieces. It has proven to be a valuable reconnaissance machine. On some models, Hellcat Missiles have been added; and can be fired with deadly accuracy. The remarkable part of the pilotless Predator story is that it is directed by a colonel, sitting at a computer in an unmarked building at Nellis Air Force Base.



Nellis AF Base is the home of the Thunderbirds, the planes that decorated the sky at the Washington AF Celebration. An instructor described the goals. "We find the best pilots in the nation, and make them even better." (*We had no trouble believing that.*)

The DFC Society strongly urges members to contact congressmen, urging support of 'The Stolen Valor Act.' This piece of legislation is to protect the integrity of this award; so anyone wearing the insignia has earned this honor, by heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight.

MISSION TO DRESDEN **(And back to Orly, a recollection of Roy Owen)**

"Our Primary Target on 16 January 1945 was the Marshalling Yards at Berlin, but we did not have good intelligence," **Roy Owen** (506 Sq.) remembered. "The weather was so bad, we couldn't see the target, so we headed to our secondary assignment, the railways at Dresden." Owen (Co-pilot on the **William Smith** crew) later learned that the railroad lines at Dresden were jammed, not only with army personnel, but also civilians who were trying to move west to escape the onslaught of the Russian troops.

"People were jammed into box cars, sitting on flat cars and hanging onto anything that was moving," he said. "Those of us who were on that bomb run could feel guilty about adding to the human misery below them; however, we can take satisfaction from the fact that we missed the target. We hit the western edge of the Marshalling Yards. It was not a good job."

The headwinds were fierce, snow was falling, and many planes didn't have enough fuel to get back to Shipdham. The Allies had already taken Paris, so Orly was the logical place to stop. William Smith brought # 00-829 down, only to find an airfield full of '17s and '24, all with the same problem.

"The first night they put us into a gymnasium." Owen continued. "The next two nights we spent in a Red Cross Hotel with all

its unusual amenities. It was the first time the men had ever seen a bedea, so that sparked some interesting questions and speculation about this luxurious equipment.

"Of course, we had to leave two men with the plane, so one immediately set forth to acquire some local beverages. Then, somehow they got into a scuffle with another B-24 crew, throwing snowballs at each other. As the beverages flowed, the battle advanced to firing flare guns. The next day the snow banks were full of black holes."

Three days later, fuel arrived from England, and it became necessary to leave the luxuries and the Mademoiselles of Gay Paris behind.

On that same mission, #42-50660, from the 68th Squadron, piloted by **John Testa** was abandoned in France, *Judy's Buggy* (67th) crashed near Metz, but did not burn. It was salvaged 4 February 1945; *Hellza Droppin'* (68th) got back to Shipdham but the airfield was fogged in solid. The crew bailed out, **Gerald Lindsay**, pilot, put the A/C on autopilot and it is believed to have crashed in the North Sea. **Bill Rosser**, pilot of *Big Time Operator* reported being delayed among others because someone ran off the taxi strip into deep mud and stranded several planes. The records indicate that fourteen men were injured on that mission.

YOU LOST WHAT?

By Col. Clay Roberts (Ret.)

Six months following our return from Furstenfeldbruk in January 1948, we found ourselves enroute to England for 90 days deployment under Strategic Air Command's new policy of rotating bomb groups to the UK. As luck would have it, the 307th was one of the first.

All of the aircraft were well over Boeing's maximum gross weight of 120,000 pounds. Because of the weight factor, non-

stop to the UK was not advisable. We refueled at Bermuda, and because the runway was much less than the 10,000 feet at MacDill, my scanners/gunners reported the landing gear had 'tickled' the barbwire strands on the fence at the end of the runway as we departed.

I was the fourth aircraft to depart Bermuda, but somehow ended up being the first to arrive at our UK destination, Royal Air

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Force Station, Marham. I guess being the Squadron Flight Engineer paid off. The Base Commander and welcoming party were there to greet us and cheered when my navigator's golf clubs hit the tarmac, the instant the bomb bay doors opened. It was good to be back in England and 'The Wash' area again.

Our daily routine was pretty much as it had been back at MacDill, but the Base Commander wanted his pilots to get some experience in attacking a bomber formation, so the routine was spiced up with some formation flying. At that time the Royal Air Force was flying the Meteor, a twin-engine jet that looked a lot like the WWII German ME 272. The fighter tactics used were pretty much the same as used in WWII and were carried off many times without incident until one day something went wrong.

We were a nine ships formation with a three ships lead, lower left and high right elements. The jets had been making head on passes; passes from the nine o'clock and tail positions and had now moved to the three o'clock position. I was on the right wing of the high right element leader and closest to the three o'clock attack. My co-pilot was "Bart" Barto, a WWII bombardier now a pilot

retread. He had been calling out the fighter attacks since my attention and focus were on the element leader, when he yelled, "he's going to hit us, he's going to hit us, he's going to hit us", and at that precise moment 160,000 pounds of airplane went up like an elevator about 20 to 30 feet. I had been flying level with the element leader, and now I was twenty to thirty feet above him.

Upon return to RAF Station Marham I was the last aircraft to land. When I climbed down out of 4072, my Squadron Commander was waiting for me. I was told to check the number 4 prop for any nicks - one of the jets had lost its pitot tube. Much to my surprise, one of the paddles had a nick in it. The Meteor's pitot tube, which all pilots know gives the airspeed reading, was at the very tip of the left wing and was over a foot long. The pilot that almost hit us had put his wing tip through my outboard prop, and the prop had cut off his pitot tube. No wonder my co-pilot was getting hysterical!! We came within inches of being wiped out by a jet traveling over 300 knots! Thank God he was the pilot in command that day or we'd all be sporting another kind of wings today.



THE CALABAN CREW

Family members of the crew of this esteemed plane found errors in the identity of crew members on the cover of the Summer issue of the 8 BTs. Although William Egan, Bombardier, is the last living member, the children and grandchildren of this crew have established and maintained a relationship that is amazingly strong. They have asked that the correct names be attached to this picture:



Front Row, L-R : **Clark G. Bailey**, Assistant Engineer/Left Waist Gunner; **Edward M. Dobson**, Co-Pilot; **James E. Hill, Jr.**, Pilot; **C. E. "Ted" Shuler**, Navigator; **Emeric "Mike" Michalik**, Ground Crew/Medic; **William J. Egan, Jr.**, Bombardier; **Herman Wagenfuhr, Jr.**, Ground Crew/Turret Specialist.
Back Row: **Lester L. Schwartz**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Ray Reeves**, Radio Operator; **John H. Christensen**, Ground Crew/Electrician; **John F. Russell**, Rt. Waist Gunner; **John Pitcovick**, Flight Engineer & Top Turret Gunner; **Hubert J. Womack**, Tail Gunner.

JOHN W. HICKS

This message from Steven Adams: "A family in the U.S. is hoping to get American citizenship for their half-brothers in England. They need to know John W. Hick's serial number and unit. He was a Sergeant at the Shipdham Air Base. Neither the Database nor the ROH properly identifies this man.

Does anybody remember John W. Hicks? It would be helpful to bring a family together. If so, notify me (Ruth Davis-Morse, address on the inside cover) or Steve Adams (s.p.adams@btinternet.com)



A REQUEST FROM ENGLAND

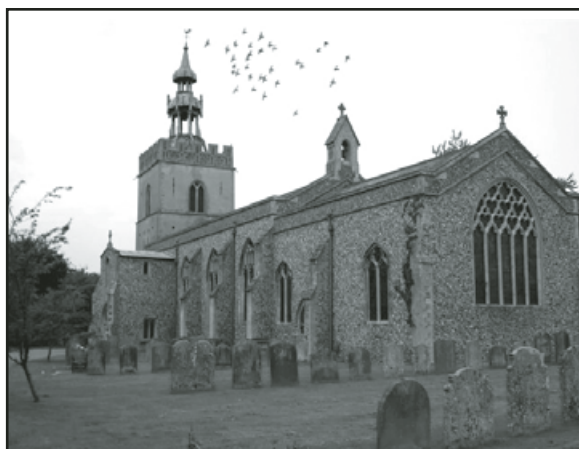
"I am trying to make contact with any ground-based veterans who were stationed in the UK during WWII with the 8th Air Force from any of the Bomb Groups based there. This would include anyone who was involved with running any of the camps in any way, Ground Crew, Cooks, Fire Fighters or Administration Staff.

"I'm trying to do research on the ground operations, to fill a gap that so far appears to have been overlooked, that of the sterling efforts required 'behind the scene' to keep the bomber offensive going.

"I am looking for any first hand accounts of life on or off duty, from surviving veterans or memories from more recent generations. I would like to hear about any tasks that were carried out, no matter how mundane. This is to get a clearer picture of how things were organized and done, especially as there were variations of operational procedure from base to base.

"I appreciate that I'm interested in events from over 60 years ago, but there may still be people with memories of this period of our history."

Malcolm Holland, Swindon, England, (MAHoll200@aol.com)



The wall of the Church in Shipdham is crumbling. When repaired, they intend to include a time capsule. The 44th's donation to this project, as voted at the recent meeting, is \$1,000. The space capsule will enclose Will Lundy's book, *44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor and Casualties*; and Arlo Bartch's Database of the 44th BGVA.

ITEMS FOR SALE

Having lost our superb salesman, Sam Miceli, the 44th BGVA is in dire need of a replacement for the PX. The job entails accepting orders for shirts, hats and other notable items and mailing them to customers. The reward is that you are helping a noble organization, and providing the means for veterans to show they are part of a proud and noble group. If you have the time to undertake this project, call me, Ruth Davis-Morse, Secretary. 717 846-8948

Mary Aston's Sales Project

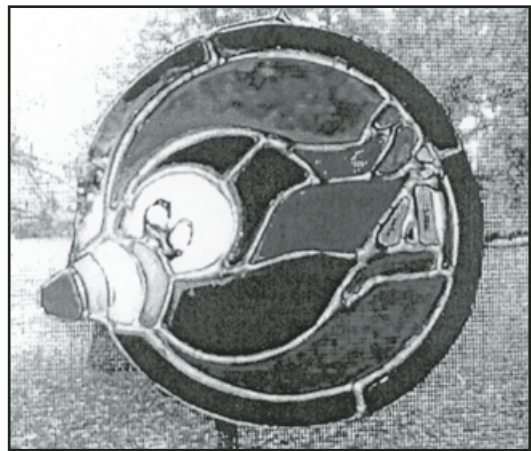
WWII Lapel & Hat Pin
 8th Air Force - DFC - Air Metal - Purple
 Heart - POW - ETO - WWII victory
 \$9.00 each + \$0.39 postage (each)
 (no photo available)

Proceeds go to 44th BGVA
 Place order with Mary Aston (706 283-1337)
 Mail check to
 830 Cardinal Dr., Elberton, GA 30635



Sun-Catcher

Diameter is 14" with attached chain to hang in a window
 \$100.00 + \$20 for UPS packing and shipping = \$120.00



Sun-Catcher

Diameter is 5.25" with attached loop hole to hang in a window; similar to 14" logo, but no lettering
 \$50.00 + \$10 for UPS packing and shipping = \$60.00



Sun-Catcher

Pelican-67th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group-8th AF (The only 44th squadron to have its own logo)
 Diameter is 14" with attached chain to hang in a window \$100.00 + \$20 for UPS packing and shipping = \$120.00



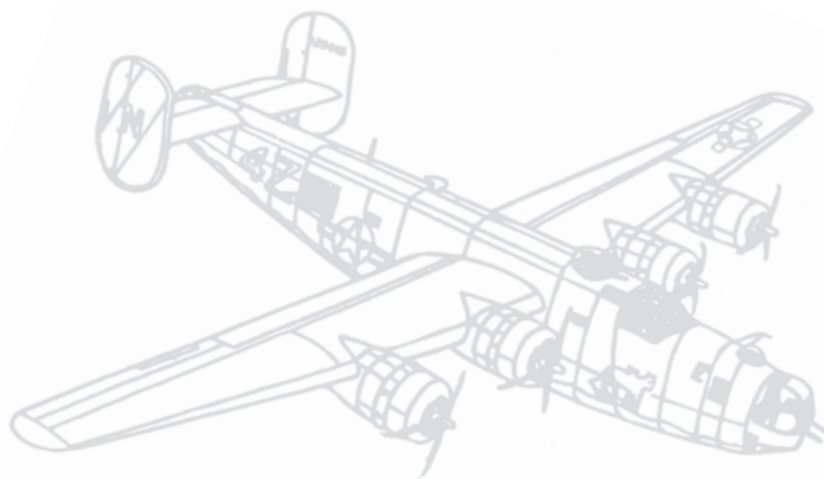
New Air Force Pin
 United States Air Force
 60th Anniversary
 1947-2007

\$12.00 each + \$0.39 postage (each)

ASTON DONATES AAF UNIFORM UNIFORMS TO CARLISLE BARRACKS



On a visit in October 2006 to the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 44th BGVA Director Robert Lee Aston, 67th Squadron, 44th Bomb Group donated his Army Air Corps footlocker packed full with his officer's uniforms, hats, pilot's coveralls, Army helmet, and other Army paraphernalia. Of particular interest to the museum personnel were the stencilled markings on his footlocker of Aston's shipment to the ETO with his name, rank, Army serial number, and FPO address. Another item of surprising interest was his Oxygen mask stowage bag which Aston said was used as a travel toilet kit by aircrew men. Shown in the photo accepting the gifts, L to R are: Robert S. Durham, Director, U.S. Army Heritage Museum, former Captain Robert Lee Aston, David J. Kennaly, Assistant to Registrar, and Jay A. Graybeal, Curator of Uniforms.



Do you know why cannibals don't eat clowns?

Answer: Because they taste funny.

HERBERT JACKSON RUSSELL'S MEMORY OF A TREE THAT GREW IN SHIPDHAM

In September, 1942, our 44th Bomb Group found a new home in the county of Norfolk near the town of Shipdham in Merry Ole England. A nice new airbase with three hangars! This story is about Hangar 1.

Hangar 1 was the most convenient for our 68th Squadron plane inspections. The hangars were wide enough for a B-24 to go straight in, but you couldn't zig or "there went them wing tips".

The first time we used Hangar 1, we pulled our ship in the west door and headed for the other side to pull straight out when our 100 hour inspection was completed. Our prime mover was the faithful "CLETRAC", and you remember how easy it was to steer them straight!

Everything went well, no wing tips bent, but someone looked at the far side to plan our exit; and lo and behold, a huge oak tree near the hangar door had our B-24 stymied for an easy exit.

Well, M/Sgt. **Campbell**, our line chief, soon decided how to get our plane past that tree. Pull one wing out of the hanger, swing the tail around in a cartwheel maneuver and back the plane out the hangar door. It worked! However, it took a lot of time and patience.

Well, our 68th Engineering section knew the answer. Requisition a 72" two man saw and we would solve the problem in a couple of hours. (What a job for a 20" chain saw,

which we didn't know had been invented.)

Tech supply and base supply soon found that asking for a 6' crosscut saw required a lot of explanation. How, why, where, when, and what were mild questions. Didn't we know that to cut a tree, we needed permission at the highest level? Yep, it had to go "through channels"!

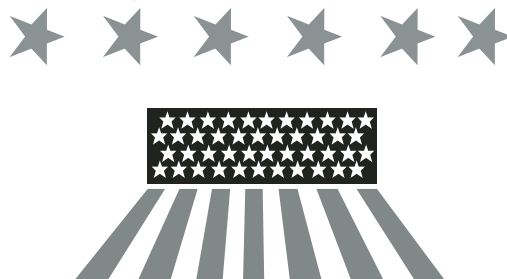
We explained our problem of using Hangar 1, and the wheels started turning. Slowly! My memory tells me it took over four months for permission to cut our tree, and then we didn't get the privilege of bringing the tree down ourselves. An official tree cutting crew was assigned to handle this job and carry away all the wood.

You know why we wanted to cut the tree ourselves? We found out how 'cold' the coke burned in our stoves, and that huge old tree would keep our Nissen huts nice and warm during that cold British winter.

Our story of the tree that stymied our B-24s had come to a happy ending. We became adjusted to the damp cold English weather, as if we had six blankets for our bunks, and didn't really miss the nice firewood for our huts.

If any of our British readers know the story of cutting a tree on government land, it would be nice to hear the explanation.

*Herbert Jackson Russell,
former M/Sgt. - 68th*





MAIL & E-MAIL

From Chris Barrett in England: I am looking for members of the crew who flew with **Kermit R. Faust**, a Waist Gunner on the **Donald L. Clark** crew. **G. B. Jones**, Co-Pilot; **Leonard Munter**, Navigator; **Thomas J. McGarry**, Bombardier; **John Keba**, Engineer & Top Turret Gunner; **H. P. Nagler**, Navigator GEE; **Glenn W. Howeth**, Radio Operator; **C. M. Kopperdud**, Waist Gunner; **R. N. Tharp**, Tail Gunner; **D. S. Ocker**, Tail Gunner on some missions.

Chris is a teenager in Shipdham who has developed a strong sense of history since moving close to the Aero Club. His E-Mail address is barrettvolv@aol.com. If you know anything about Faust's crew and do not have a computer, you may contact me (Ruth W. Davis-Morse). My address & phone number is inside the cover page.



Interesting recollection about the past.

From N. R. Cheek to Will Lundy, 1989: I was a member of the 464th Sub-Depot. I was the Assistant Supply Officer. ...I remember Captain Lee, who ran the Control Tower... When I enlisted in the Army at Ft. Bragg, N.C., M/G Jacob L. Devers was the Commanding General. He is the same General who pinned the Medal of Honor on Col. Johnson at Shipdham. I remember Mr. "Hardrock" Gaggety, the Minneapolis-Honeywell Norden Bomb Sight Tech Rep. He was the best poker player I ever saw. Col. Wall and Major Barnes were the best Bridge players. At the base, I was the 'Camouflage Officer'! Big Deal!! *N. R. Cheek remained in the Army and rose to the rank of LTC.*



From the *New York Times*, November 16, 2006: Gen. **Jacob E. Smart**, a four-star general who conceived the strategy for the daring WWII bombing raid on the oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania, and went on to help shape

the postwar Air Force, died in Ridgeland, S.C. He was 97 years old.

General Smart, then a colonel, came up with the idea of having planes fly exceedingly low to bomb the tightly defended refineries, which were believed to be producing one third of the fuel oil for the Nazi war machine.

In the face of protests by the five group commanders who would be leading the raid, his plan of flying at treetop level was accepted by Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme Allied Commander. Among the plan's advantages,

Col. Smart argued, was greater accuracy. Col. Smart was not allowed to fly on the Ploesti mission because his superiors thought his knowledge of Allied war plans and secrets was too great to risk his capture.

The Ploesti mission was deemed a success, even though 54 of the 177 bombers that took part were lost, and 53 more were heavily damaged. The refinery output was greatly curtailed, and five Medals of Honor were awarded, the most for any single American military action.

Later Col. Smart was allowed to fly 29 missions, the last of which resulted in his being shot down (at Wiener-Neustadt) and put in a POW camp. The German interrogated him repeatedly, having seen his picture with President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. Although he knew the details of the Normandy invasion, he divulged nothing.

After the war, Col. Smart became commander of the Fifth Air Force. In 1964 he became Deputy Commander in Chief of the U.S. European Command. After retirement, he worked with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, where he worked on the Hubbell Space Telescope Project.

Although few members of the 44th had the opportunity to meet Gen. Smart, he was a powerful influence in their lives during the war years.



...continued on page 27

To Will Lundy from Peter Bodle (at the Shipdham Aero Club.): The post delivered your remarkable book, safe and well, this morning. On behalf of the club, I would like to thank you and Lt. Morton for the kindness in providing it for our library. I will pass it on to Peter Steele, our curator, for placement in the small (but growing) museum library. I'm sure it will be appreciated by our pilots, and also the steady stream of visitors we are now starting to get to the museum. Kindest regards from your old (temporary) home.

Ed. Note: The Shipdham Museum & Library is growing, thanks to a dedicated group of Brits who promised to remember our men, and they do. This book was donated by Lt. Morton and Will Lundy paid for the postage.



To Jerry Folsom from Scarning Primary School in England:

The Airfield at Shipdham

The big destroyer and killing machine - Deadly
It's quiet and still waiting for the planes to land.

To destroy the enemy wherever they are.
It smells of oil; it sounds like a roar
As it takes off and is very speedy.

I can feel the rumble of the window at
five AM

In the morning when it takes off.

By Shana Cross

(Obviously, English children are being taught the story of the air war in WWII)



From Jill Mott Roberts, daughter of **Charles M. Mott** (68th Sq.) "One day I entered my father's name into Google. On the fourth or fifth page I found a man in England was trying to get in touch with an American veteran of WWII who had been stationed somewhere in England during the early 40's. The man in England wanted to get in touch with this man or his family, because he had something to return to him."

Jill knew her father had been a Bombsight/Auto Pilot Mechanic, and that he had been stationed at Shipdham. She also knew he had spent some time in North Africa.

The man in England has a friend named Howard, who had been a Boy Scout in Crewes, England. Crewes was a heavily traveled intersection on the rail lines at that time, and the troops frequently traveled that line. Howard, eight years old at the time, worked at a church canteen serving food to the soldiers who were on their way to their appointed destinations. Like all boys his age, he collected souvenirs: badges, buttons and anything they could regard as a prize. After all those years, he still had Charles Mott's dog tag.

Jill had to prove with birth certificates, that she was Charles Mott's daughter; then one day it arrived in her mail.

"Inside the envelope, wrapped in a folded sheet of paper, was a piece of metal that my father must have held in his hands a million times. I couldn't wait to send an e-mail to my new friends, to tell them that it had finally arrived home.

"Sometimes it's easy to get so tangled in the 'pros and cons' of war, we forget that men and women who serve in the military are real people. They have families who miss them while they are gone, loved ones who worry about them and who pray every night that they will make it back home alive and well.

"They are heroes. The ones that don't make it back are gigantic heroes..."

Ed. Note: Charles Mott folded wings in 2000.





WILL SEZ

It is hard to believe, but 2007 has arrived already, and now time for another **Will Sez**. How these years roll around so quickly.

Many of you now know about the loss of our Prez, Paul Kay, thanks to Arlo Bartsch's note that he posted on the Web. What a terrible loss it is, both personally as well as from our Association. His great good humor mixed in with his dedication to his work with our organization cannot be replaced. It was a joy to be near him, both with our organizational work as well as at our reunions. He was a great one!

In early December, about a month ago, Paul asked if I could provide him with a listing of memorial plaques that have been placed wherever, to honor our men that have been lost, as well as to provide some data about our 44th BG accomplishments. Paul did not advise me of the purpose of this listing, but I did compile one that I hope is fairly complete, I hope now that he might want it made available to all of you.

I could not find any records of any memorial being established while our 44th BG personnel were associated with the 2nd Air Division Association in the period between 1945 and 1980. But when the 44th Missile Wing was established and given our old number, they were instructed to form an organization to honor the military organization's roots from which their number (44th) had been re-assigned to them. This took place near the end of the 1970's with this entity becoming the 44th BG Heritage Memorial Group. At that time most of the 44th BG members within the 2nd ADA joined this new organization that was established, and with **Charles Joseph Warth** already established as our new leader. Both the 68th Squadron and the 506th Squadron had organized their own small units; but

they, also, were absorbed into the HMG.

During the period following 1980-1904, Joe Warth and our new organization designed and installed several plaques. They were:

1. Air Force Academy, Colorado. A bronze metal plaque dedicated 29 August 1986.
2. On our Shipdham Air Base, at the new Flying Club: A large granite stone mounted on a cement? base. 24 September 1988.



Shipdham Air Base

3. At Shipdham Village Church grounds near the street rock wall: A duplicate of the granite stone base placed on our base. Date: 24 September 1988.
4. At the Air Force Museum, Dayton, Ohio. 1 August 1993. A bronze medal plate.



The Air Force Museum

...continued on page 29



Shuttleworth Family. Ian is the young man on the right

OTHERS

1980's On a stone facing overlooking the Fairie Locks, near Gairloch, in northwest Scotland. The Shuttleworth family, while on their annual vacation near Gairloch in the 1970's discovered the remains of a B-24 that had crashed in that area in 1945, and were so impressed that they 'adopted' it. David, the father had served as a Navigator in "Lancaster" bombers during the war, so had strong feelings for other bomber airmen. Ian, his younger son, also became very interested, began his search to attempt to get answers for the many questions as to why and how this crash had occurred.

The David Shuttleworth family provided for and placed a metal plaque on the large rock facing overlooking the crash scene shortly after Ian had learned the identities of the airmen. He learned that this was the nine-man Ketchum crew from our 66th Bomb Squadron, plus six other veteran airmen from Air Transport Command. The B-24 was from the 93rd Bomb Group, was heavily loaded, had flown from a field in lower Scotland, and they were on their way home to the U.S. via Iceland. Date of accident was 13 June 1945.

Had it not been for Ian Shuttleworth contacting me, it is quite likely that I, we, never would have learned about this tragedy. All official records for our old 44th Bomb Group ceased at the end of May 1945. So there were no official records available with which to obtain this information in any of our

records. Ian spent years searching to locate all next of kin, the task doubly difficult as six of these men were from other military organizations. When Ian obtained the home addresses of all these airmen, he then notified these families about the data he had collected, and offered to any of these next of kin, to meet them at Glasgow and drive them to the Gairloch. Several of these family members did visit.

Ian also managed to convince the Scottish officials to declare this area as an official sacred site, due to the nature of the crash. This area is covered with the shattered remains of this B-24, some larger pieces being parts of engines, landing gear, propellers, etc. So, as a sacred site, the public is warned not to remove any of the material.

1992 Shipdham Airfield. A beautiful large stone memorial stone designed and donated by **Lee Aston**. Doug Genge, whose business is located next to the tower, arranged for the placement of this memorial on the east wall of the old tower, as well as for the ceremony itself. Prior to that time, Doug also paid for most of the expenses to restore the exterior walls of the tower and the replacement of the entire roof. So, in essence, he has made the control tower itself a memorial for us, as it had become dangerously deteriorated.



East Wall of Control Tower



Butts Brow, near Eastbourne

1995 Butts Brow, near city of Eastbourne, southeast corner of England. On 2 February 1944 the **James Bolin** crew, returning from mission, flying in Ruth-less, failed to clear the low mountain and crashed, killing all ten airmen. A young local resident, Kevin Watson, obtained the full support of the mayor, Ron Parsons, and placed a large memorial stone at the site. He also compiled and had printed a book about the crew (*Ruth-less, And Far From Home*), and the city has a small display near the beach to exhibit and tell more of the story about both the airplane and the crew.

In addition, on Remembrance Day (our Memorial Day) this fine city has a very full day of activities to honor the military. They start with a big, colorful parade, then follow that with a ceremony at the *Ruth-less* site, which includes a full memorial service. They end the day with more ceremonies and a Concert in their large auditorium, again honoring their military and any Americans who happen to be in the audience. It is awesome, to say the least.

1996 France, near Rouen, in a small village, the French had installed a stone monument with a memorial plate honoring the 67th Squadron crew of **Clyde E. Price**, flying in *Miss Dianne* that had crashed there on 8 March 1943. Nine men were killed, three became POW. The French retired military personnel arranged to conduct the installation ceremonies to coincide with our tour of 44th ers in 1997. I personally was quite impressed as *Miss Dianne* was the airplane I serviced; some of the crewmen were close friends.

2001 Pingland Hills, 5 miles northwest of Norwich, England - Private property on a small lake. Here the property owner designed, furnished and provided the memorial plaque to honor the eight airmen who were killed, aircraft and bombs falling into her lake. The accident occurred 21 April 1944. The pilot, **Forrest C. Havens** and co-pilot **Leon L. Del Grande** survived, with all eight of their crew not surviving.

Editor's Note: We are aware of more monuments than those listed here. We will try to get photos and locations of these edifices, so veterans, family members or friends who are traveling in those areas can find them. Because Paul Kay was so dedicated to preserving the 44th's history, he asked that this information be collected and later placed on the Web Page.

Other known monuments are at Hammelkiln, Belgium and Kjeller, Norway.

Will Lundy
P.O. Box 315,
Bridgeport, CA 93517

FOLDED WINGS

*The days decline: no more again, the hills so clearly rise,
And even joy's a shade of pain where still a sorrow lies.
Nor will my soul be soon aglow, nor soon my heart be gay
For here they lie - and I must go the miles another way.*

James Facos, 388th BG

Alba, Charles #19186 27 June 2006 66th Squadron. Borah was the Crew Chief on *Queen Anne*, a plane that made two trips to Africa, went through Ploesti, but crash landed near Foggia after it's second trip to Wiener-Neustadt. No personal information is available on the Database.

Borah, John J. #19460 4 September 2006 68th Squadron Lt. Borah, later Captain, joined the 44th BG on 23 May 1944. He flew 34 missions. According to **Robert Lehnhausen**, Lt. Borah was recognized to be an excellent pilot who adapted to combat operations quickly. He flew very good formation. His crew of officers were co-pilot **Otis Carmichael**; Navigator **Elmer Alderman**. His Bombardier eventually was **Myles Brewster**. In the course of time their combined combat skills were noted, and they became a lead crew. Their leads were often with PFF equipped planes. On those occasions they had the super skills of **Wayne Elberg** as their 'Mickey' Navigator. The close relationship of these officers continued through their lives, and they were regular attendees of the 44th BG Reunions.

Borah's first two missions were as Co-pilot with the crews of **Charles Gayman** and **Robert Knablein**. His first mission as pilot was on 21 July 1944. On other missions the Borah crew flew with Capt. Charles Hammer, Capt. Joy Smith and Major Harold Barnes as Command Pilots. The crew flew in *Jose Carioca*, *Gipsy Queen*, *Gallavantin' Gal*, *Lili Marlene*, *Lady Geraldine* and *Louisiana Belle*.

Borah's first flight as Captain was on 7 January 1944. His last mission was 29 January 1945.

After WWII, Borah remained on active duty with the Air Force, flying a total of 43 missions, including the Berlin Air Lift. Upon retirement, he entered the field of finance. He became an officer of a bank in Riverside, CA where he and his wife Maggie resided until his death.

Castro, Ladislao #19696 15 November 2006 S/Sgt. Castro was the Right Wing Gunner on the **Raymond Houghtby** crew. He also flew one mission with **William M. Maynor**. Most of his missions were flown in *Lucky Strike* and *Gallivantin' Gal*, one in *Peep Sight*. On his 16th mission to Friedrichshafen, Germany, flying in *Lucky Strike*, the plane was hit with flak, and was not able to cross the Channel. The crew bailed out in France. With the help of the French Underground, he was able to evade the Germans and made it to safety through Spain. All other members of his crew were captured and became POWs. Castro also served in the Korean War, achieving the rank of T/Sgt.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Sally; two sons, eight grandchildren.



FOLDED WINGS

Cootz, Edward P. #19833 9 October 2006
67th Squadron Cootz was a member of the Bombsight Maintenance Section of the 44th Bomb Group.

Eckstein, Herman J. "Joe" #20090 9 December 2006 68th Squadron. Captain Eckstein was a pilot. Information of his death comes to the *8 Ball Tails* from **Robert Lehnhausen**, who remembers Eckstein as a model combat bomber pilot. "He joined the 68th Squadron as the co-pilot of the **Jack Leibrich** crew in late July, 1944. He possessed a quiet confidence that made him very popular with crewmen and his peers. After 7 missions as Leibrich's co-pilot, he flew a few missions as co-pilot to **Ray Suddeth** and also my brother "**Doc**" **Lehnhausen**.

"He was then made co-pilot for the **George Washburn** crew. After 19 missions as a co-pilot, his skills were rewarded and he got his own crew.

"Joe was soon trained as a lead pilot, and flew his last several missions in that responsibility. He completed his 35 mission tour on 28 February 1945.

"He attended a few of our reunions. His son Tony has been active member of the 44th BGVA for several years.

"Jack Leibrich and George Washburn would both attest to the piloting skills of Joe. Both of these first pilots owed their survival to his airmanship during a flight in which a crisis arose. He calmly corrected the problem without fuss or feathers. His attitude was, 'isn't that what I was supposed to do?'

"Joe Eckstein was, to me, one of the finest examples of a very good combat bomber pilot. We are saddened by his departure."

Editor's Note: Eckstein flew with three Command Pilots: **Harold Stanhope**, **Dale Benadon** and **Wayne Stevens**. In his 35 missions, he flew in *Jose Carioca*, *Flak Magic*, *Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch*, *Corky*, *Gipsy Queen*, *Lady Geraldine*, and *Gallavantin' Gal*.

Haulman, Clement #20582 7 May 2006 506 Squadron (*Corrected Report*) Lt. Haulman was a pilot, who sustained an injury soon after being assigned to the 44th BG, and was returned to the states. After the War, he remained in the Air Force Reserve for approximately thirty years, rising to the rank of full Colonel. Many of his yearly two-week tours of active duty involved research and development assignments at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. During the same three decades he worked for the Pittsburgh Testing Laboratory branch in New Orleans, where he and his wife Cecil Lurline Breaux Haulman raised three sons. In 1979 he moved with his wife to Lafayette, Louisiana, where he belonged to the Reserve Officers Association, the Retired Officers Association, the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and Asbury United Methodist Church. Not long before he died, Col. Haulman and his wife moved to Gainesville, Florida. There is a display commemorating Col. Haulman's service in the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base. Among other items, it contains his WWII uniform, a wooden model of a B-24 he carved while recuperating from his wartime aircraft accident, and a book about the 44th Bombardment Group in WWII.

(*This information was supplied by Col. Haulman's son, Dr. Daniel L. Haulman, Chief of Organizational Histories Branch, Air Force Historical Research Agency.*)



FOLDED WINGS

Heyer, Edwin #20649 8 September 2006 68th Squadron. 1st. Lt. Heyer was a Navigator on the **George Martin** crew, but he flew also with **John Diehl, Jr., Baxter Weant, Joseph Brown, Samuel Williams, Frank Sobotka** and one mission with Major **George Jansen** as Command Pilot. This crew joined the 68th shortly before the 44th was sent to Benina Main, so they were part of the group that joined the low level mission to Ploesti.

Heyer's first mission was 5 July 1943. In his 24 missions, many times as lead crew, he flew to Italy, Norway, Germany, France, Austria (twice to Wiener-Neustadt) and the awesome mission to Ploesti, Romania. The crew flew in *Victory Ship, Eager Eve/Hag Mag/the Moth Ball Queen* and *Pistol Packin' Mama*.

Heyer and his wife Irma resided in South Holland, Illinois. He is remembered as being very upbeat and positive; and even though he was battling a serious lung disease, he intended to attend the Washington celebration, 'just to be with the guys.' Tragically, he missed it by about a month.

Kay, Robert Paul #20888 68th Squadron 24 December 2006 2nd Lt. Robert Paul Kay was a Navigator on the **William Warren** crew. He flew thirty one missions, according to official documents. However, his personal records indicate more, especially one on 7 April 1945 to Krummel. This mission that has recently attracted the attention of German researchers; but unfortunately, the U.S. records have been lost. The Warren crew flew in *Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, T.S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Phyllis, Limpin' Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose* and *One Weakness*.

After the war, Kay earned his B.S. degree in Agricultural Engineering at the University of Tennessee, and an MS from the University of Illinois. He was employed by the Weyerhaeuser Corporation, rising to become V.P. of Sales and Distribution. He was elected Director on the

44th BG Board of Directors in 2002, and in 2004 was named Vice President. He 2005 he served as Reunion Chairman, and he moved into the presidency after that meeting.

Kay was preceded in death by his wife Doris Hurst Kay, a marriage of 52 years. The couple had two children, one son, Paul Kay, Jr. and one daughter, Rebecca Kay Sprague, and four grandsons. His daughter Rebecca was the source of information about his death.

Laas, Robert F. #21018 12 November 2006 67th Squadron S/Sgt. Laas was a Gunner on the **Jack Thomas** crew. He flew 29 missions, the first on 2 February 1944. Laas usually flew in the Waist position, but on one mission, served as a Belly Gunner. On another mission he was with the **Rockford Griffith** crew. Twice the Thomas crew went to the heart of the conflict - 'The Big B' (Berlin). As the War advanced, he flew with different Command Pilots - **R. L. Cox, Frank D. Slough, Howard K. Halladay** and **Sylvester S. Hunn**. The Thomas crew flew in many different A/C: *F for Freddie, Shack Rabbit/Star Spangled Hell, Tuffy, Judy's Buggy, Raggedy Ann II, Mi Akin Ass, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle* and *Phyllis*. His last mission was 30 May 1944. Laas & his wife Gladys resided in Bellville, Texas.

Knowledge of Laas's passing came from his grandson, S/Sgt. Thomas M. Laas, and was forwarded by Roger Fenton, 44th BGVA Historian.





FOLDED WINGS

Miceli, Samuel #21332 29 August 2006. 506 Squadron 1st Lt. Miceli was a Bombardier on the **Ernest Grosset** crew; however, he also flew with Capt. **Carl Horne**, Major **William Cameron**, Col. **Eugene Snavelly** and Major **Wayne Middleton** as Command Pilots. He joined the 44th Bomb Group of 14 August 1944, having flown 21 missions with the 492nd Bomb Group. Because of their heavy losses, the 492nd was closed and airmen were assigned to other Groups. Most of Miceli's mission were flown in *Southern Comfort III*, but also in unnamed planes. Miceli's missions were directed to depriving the Germans of fuel and equipment, and destruction of railroads to prevent movement of troops.

Upon completion of his 30th mission, Miceli returned to the States and became a Bombardier Instructor at Midland, Texas. After the war he maintained Reserve Status, retiring with the rank of Major. He and his wife Edith resided in Mentor, Ohio. He was revered by members of the 44th Bomb Group for his dedication to fundraising by managing the PX, selling materials at Reunions and by mail.

Mitchell, Duane E. #21377 68th Squadron 19 August 2006 1st Lt. Mitchell was a Navigator on the **Donald H. Steinke** crew. He also flew with **Frank L. Foy**, **Ben H. Gildart, Jr.** and **A.D. Bennett**. He flew one mission with **Robert Lehnhausen** as Command Pilot. Mitchell's first of 29 missions was on 26 April 1944. He flew in a large number of planes: *Jose Carioca*, *Northern Lass*, *Full House*, *Wendy W*, *Channel Hopper*, *Flak Alley II*, *Fearless Fosdick* and *Mary Harriet*. On D-Day he was on the mission to Colleville and St. Laurent.

On 7 July 1944 on a mission to bomb an A/C factory in Bernburg, flying in *Any Gum Chum*, the plane was shot down by enemy fighters. Only two members of the crew survived- Mitchell and the Radio Operator, both

of whom were POW. He was hospitalized for three months, and was liberated on 9 April 1945. He was flown to Paris, then to the ZOI on a stretcher where he was hospitalized at Winter General Hospital.

After recovering, he became a member of the Missouri National Guard. He entered into the field of Medicine and was engaged in General Practice until 1996.

At the time of his death, Mitchell was residing at Mount Ayr, Iowa.

O'Brien, James #22096 Date Unknown 68th Squadron. Capt. O'Brien was a pilot. He flew 21 missions, flying in *Rugged Buggy*, *Victory Ship*, *Hitler's Nightmare*, *Lynn Bari* and *Lemon Drop*; on one mission, Col. **James Hodges** was Command Pilot; on another, Col. **Leon Johnson**.

On his 21st mission to the Krupp Submarine Works at Kiel, his plane was beset by enemy fighters and went down; O'Brien and seven of his crew were captured and remained POWs for two years; two crew members were lost. After the war, O'Brien remained in the Air Force Reserves. He retired at the rank of Colonel.

Orthman, Harry L. # 21567 67th Squadron 23 September 2006 Capt. Orthman was first assigned to the 492nd Bomb Group. When their losses became so overwhelming, the group was dissolved and Orthman was among those transferred to the 44th BG, with whom he piloted seventeen missions, most on unnamed planes. During the period from 18 August 1944 when he flew his first mission with the 44th, he flew with many Command Pilots: Col. **A. T. Reed**, Capt. **D. M. Lavis**, Capt. **Frank Davido**, Capt. **Merrill G. Berthrong** and Capt. **George Rebich**. His last mission was 3 January 1945. Orthman was a Life Member of the 44th BGVA. He and his wife Sally lived in Mission Viejo, California.



FOLDED WINGS

Rommelfanger, Ernest #21844 67th Squadron 3 December 2006. Captain Rommelfanger was a Navigator, flying with many different pilots. His first mission was 23 May 1944, two weeks before D-Day. Activities at that time were directed to preparation for the Invasion, then support of the troops as they advanced across Europe. His last mission, 24 May 1945 was to Wesel at the Rhine Crossing. Rommelfanger flew with many pilots, frequently as the Lead Crew: **Richard Thornton, Frank Davido, John Mueller, Charles Mercer, Dale Benadom, Robert Gunton, Robert Knowles, William Mayerriecks, Norman Bartlett, Russell Peller, Jr.** and four Command Pilots: **J. I. Turnbull, Wayne Middleton, George Rebich** and **William Cameron.**

In his 33 missions, Rommelfanger flew in many planes: *Old Iron Corset, Glory Bee, Mary Harriet, Fearless Fosdick, Mi Akin Ass, My Sad Ass* and *Lady Fifi Nella.*

Arrangements for a military funeral came about from the efforts of 44th BG Awards Chairman, Lee Aston, who had been able to acquire belated awards for Rommelfanger, which were presented on 12 October 2005. At that time he received DFC/OLC#1 and AM/OLC # 4 & 5. He spent his last years in Omaha, Nebraska. He is survived by a daughter Rosan Royal.

Thornock, Newell Bruce #22308 Date Unknown 67th Squadron. T/Sgt. Thornock was a Radio Operator on the **Harold Pinder** Crew. He flew three missions, the first, on 11th December 1943; the last 14th January 1944. He flew in the following planes: *4 Q-2, The Shark* and *Lib-erty Belle Lass.* Thornock and his wife Florence resided in Bloomington, Idaho.

Weaver, William H. #22491 July 2006. 67th Sq. Captain Weaver was the Intelligence Officer for his Squadron, but he flew on two missions as an observer: 21 May 1944 to

Siracourt, France to the V-1 sites, flying with the **Howard Metts** crew on an unnamed plane. On 30 November he flew as an observer with the **Ray Boggs** crew to Neunkirchen, Germany. Flying in *Lady Geraldine*, they bombed the Marshalling Yards. News of Weaver's death came from **William Smythe**, 68th Squadron Intelligence Officer and long-time friend of the deceased. **Bob Lehnhausen** remembers both officers with respect and admiration for their dedicated service. In Lehnhausen's last conversation with Weaver, he learned that his friend was approaching the golden age of ninety.

Yuspeh, Michael #22673 506 Squadron 16 December 2006 T/Sgt. Michael Yuspeh was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **Thomas G. Waters** crew. On one mission he flew as a Tail Gunner with **Hal C. Tyree.** His first of 35 missions was 1 August 1944. The Waters crew was part of the group that bombed ahead of the invading troops, all the way into the Fatherland. They flew in many different A/C: *Ole Cock, Sabrina III, Shack Rat, Flying Log/Pregnant Peg, I Walk Alone, Down De Hatch, Chef's Delight/Chief Wapello, Southern Comfort III* and *Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch.* His last mission was on 2 January 1945.

After the war, Yuspeh became a dealer in auto parts, selling them nationwide. Upon the request of **Roy Owen**, he became Reunion Chairman for the 44th BGVA. His most unforgettable Reunion was in New Orleans, where the Banquet became a masquerade ball. Among the great contributions that Yuspeh made to the 44th BGVA was his fundraising success, raising money to refurbish the Louisiana Belle, now on display at Barksdale.

Mike and his wife, Rose Faye, had two sons, both of whom became experts on U.S. government projects. The family lived in New Orleans for many years. Mike and Rose Faye moved to Germantown, Tennessee after a catastrophic flood in New Orleans.



**TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE 44TH BOMB
GROUP: THIS MEMORIAL IS FOR YOU.**

This graceful monument reaching high in the sky can easily be seen on the skyline of Washington, DC and Northern Virginia. Remember, before there was an Army Air Force, there was the Army Air Corps. Before there was a Thunderbird, a Saberjet or an SR71, there was a B-24.

Located on a promontory in Arlington, these graceful spires overlook the Pentagon and are adjacent to Arlington Cemetery. There is a Runway to Glory at the site entrance, a bronze Honor Guard statue, two granite inscription walls and a glass contemplation wall that honors fallen airmen.

**MANY WARS FOLLOWED WWII.
NONE WERE GREATER.**

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

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Available Jones 42-40780

Available Jones and its crew arrived in England, and was assigned to the 67th Squadron. Immediately they were dispatched to Benina Main, in preparation for the secret mission to be flown, August 1, 1943. They flew four missions to Sicily, in preparation for General Patton's assault, then to five to Italy. (The Jones crew had no way of knowing, but nine days after Rome was hit, Mussolini would be overthrown.) On August 1 *Available Jones* joined the stream of planes led by Col. **Leon Johnson**, following the railroad tracks to that smoke-filled fiery furnace that was Ploesti.

Available Jones was undoubtedly named by his pilot, **Fred Jones**, who apparently liked the cartoon, Sad Sack. As always, Sad Sack continued to suffer rejection on the plane that helped make history - **then was ditched!!!**.

Can anyone name the maintenance man on this picture, who blew the sand from the four engines and kept the plane operational for its ten missions from the Libyan Desert?

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AVAILABLE JONES DITCHED (AND EVERYBODY SURVIVED)

Enroute to the White Five target in Ploesti, **Fred Jones** approached the target down the railroad track at the altitude of approximately 100 feet. The target was already on fire, having been bombed by the 93rd Group. They dropped their bombs at their specifically identified target, then went down the deck as low as they could. Suddenly the haystacks opened up and revealed their hidden guns. They shot out the #4 engine, and a shell between the two waist gun positions, wounding both gunners in the legs. The plane broke one balloon cable; but continued on. Next they were beset by fighters.

T/Sgt. **Leo Spann**, engineer, described the attack, "We lost speed and dropped out of formation, and the fighters jumped us. With the two waist gunners badly injured, the enemy A/C came in so close to us, it seemed we could almost touch them. We figured that we had shot down four of them, and they finally left us, but the #4 engine had frozen up and with a flat propeller, it caused a hellava drag. The propeller would not feather!

"We started trying to gain altitude to clear the mountains ahead. We threw everything that wasn't tied down-all of the guns, ammunition, equipment, etc. When we finally arrived at the coast, our #3 engine was failing. The oil pressure was almost gone and the temperature was much too high. Lt. Jones asked me how long I thought it would last, and I estimated about 30 minutes at the most. We decided to feather #3 engine and see if we could fly with the other two, but they were

on the same side! If we couldn't fly, we were going to ditch it on the beach.

"I feathered the prop, Jones and the Co-Pilot got the plane levelled out, but we could not maintain our altitude. So we began making plans to ditch. We flew onward for approximately forty five minutes before we were forced to ditch. The time was about 1840 - at least that is the time that my watch stopped. We all managed to get out of the plane and into our life rafts, even though the tail gunner and the navigator were slightly injured in the ditching.

"The next morning a German submarine came by, started to help us, changed their minds and took off, leaving us. Then, at approximately 1500 hours, a small three - engine Italian seaplane sighted us, landed and picked us up and took us to Brindisi, Italy and to the hospital there."

All nine members of the Fred Jones crew became POW's-Jones, **Elbert Dukate**, Co-Pilot; **Adolphus Sweet**, Navigator; **Albert Bernard**, Navigator; **Leo Spann**, Engineer; **Michael Lillo**, Radio Operator; **Robert Becker**, Asst. Engineer; **Anthony Savettierre**, Waist Gunner, **Michael Sigle**, Tail Gunner. **Dukate** and **Sigle** escaped and returned to England. All POWs met at Camp Lucky Strike in May 1945.

Ed. Note: This ditching in the Mediterranean preceded the Hruby experience, which was in the English Channel. I have been informed that there is one more ditching with all crew surviving. Can anybody name it?



GEORGE WASHBURN'S PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Taking over the president's position in this manner was not a very pleasant experience. We were spending Christmas in Dubai and in my daily e-mail checking learned of Paul's passing. It was a real shock to us as a few days before we departed Florida, I talked with Paul. He told me of his upcoming operation in his usual up-beat manner. I got to know Paul quite well in the last 4 or 5 years and thoroughly enjoyed his company.. We both discovered that the world is really a small place. It turned out that one of his sales engineers at Weyerhaeuser regularly called on me at the power company in New England . We had purchased some of their laminated wood structures and I had once toured their facility in Salem Oregon , but had never met Paul.

I will have a difficult time in trying to match Paul's abilities such as chairing our meetings in such a relaxed manner. I will try to get some of his ideas completed, such as getting all the squadron histories into the web site.

For those of you who do not already know me, I was in the 68th Squadron from July,1944 to December, 1944. I completed 35 missions-19 as copilot for **Elmer Kohler** and 19 with my own crew. I inherited the crew of **Thurston E. VanDyke** ,who, flying as copilot with an experienced crew on his first mission , was one of four survivors of a ditching on July 11. Van was hospitalized and his crew flew as fill-ins until they all got together with me on my first mission as pilot-- the low level supply mission to Holland on Sept 18. Van returned to action in late November and flew 2 missions as copilot for Elmer Kohler, then flew as my copilot on my last 2 missions with his old crew! He then went on to complete his tour as pilot. I returned to the US in January-still only 20 years old.

Thanks to the devotion and work of our faithful secretary, Ruth and husband Perry, plans for our 2007 reunion in Branson, Missouri are going forward. Hope to see many of you there this fall.



BOB NORSEN REMEMBERS THE DAY THAT *LEMON DROP* FLEW TOO HIGH



Bob Norsen

"We were on a test flight, to see why the guns were misfiring when we were in combat. We were losing planes and lives because we couldn't return enemy fire. The oil in the guns was freezing, and they either wouldn't fire, or fired very slowly. We got new oil, and my

crew was assigned to test its viscosity at twenty to fifty degrees below zero. I was told to take the plane to 28,000 feet and see how the guns fired at that altitude with the new oil.

"I told the Co-pilot to take the plane to 33,000 feet, while I went back to oversee the gunners. He put the plane on Auto-pilot in a steep climb. I did not know that he had gotten his oxygen tube disconnected and had passed out.

"I was walking around the back of the plane, carrying my oxygen tank, checking on the gunners who were testing the new oil.

"Meanwhile, without his portable oxygen, T/Sgt. **Clarence Strandberg** left his post for a nature call, and before he got back, he passed out. When I saw Strandberg on the

floor, with **Adolph Brzozowy** giving him oxygen, I rushed to the front of the plane. Everyone was passed out -- **Charles Mott** and **Eddie Waite**, engineer and Top Turret Gunner. **Henry Krutsch**, Tail Gunner had sat down and leaned against the wall., and could not be revived. Brzozowy, Waist Gunner, and I were the only two who were conscious.

"We were at 39,500 feet and climbing. I quickly reduced power and put the plane in a high dive on Autopilot. We were coming down 10,000 feet a minute. When we were at 3,000 feet, I levelled off and found the first available emergency field.

"The interrogator could not believe what I told him about the A/C's performance. He said it was impossible. The plane could not go that high, and the wings would have fallen off with that rapid descent.

"However, my instruments showed that *Lemon Drop* really did fly to 40,000 feet and really did come down 3,000 feet a minute."

Editor's Note: There are no records of any other plane withstanding such stress, yet returning to fly again. The test did show the value of the new lubricating oil. Another discovery came from this trip: Tech instructions for the .50 calibre guns were to tighten, then back off two turns. Instead, Norsen and the gunners found that they worked better when they were backed off four turns.

One man was lost, others had some physical problems, but the test made it safer for the air war to continue.



THE LATE REGINALD CARPENTER'S EXPERIENCE IN HORSEFLY (THEN ON TO ONE MORE CRASH)

Every Ploesti experience is unique, and the events of the mission haunted this pilot until his death in 1996. *Horsefly* suffered considerable damage over the target, one engine was knocked out, and E.M. Rumsey, Co-Pilot and J. F. Manquen, Radio Operator were wounded. They were losing gas from a severed gas line, and a Me 109 managed to get a shot at the A/C, knocking out a second engine. They continued on over the sea, losing altitude due to the loss of two engines. When a third engine failed, they prepared to ditch.

The plane glanced off the water, then hit again. The ditching tore off the rear fuselage section, just aft of the wing. All nine crewmen were in the nose section per instructions. Seven men got out and released the rafts. Two were not able to get clear of the sinking ship, and they drowned when it went down.

The survivors floated all night and most of the next day until a Wellington Air-Sea Rescue spotted them. They dropped supplies and water, then circled them until relieved by a second Wellington. Finally, that night at 1930 hours, they were rescued by the Air-Sea-Rescue Service.

A TRIBUTE TO HIS ENGINEER

When Vincent Huenerberg passed away, Carpenter wrote the following message to his wife. "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 dinghy 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 dinghy hatch, and fortunately he was able to open it and deploy the dinghy. When I finally got free of the cockpit and came to the surface, the first thing I saw was Vincent standing in our one and only dinghy, pulling all the survivors into it. If it were not for his courage and determination to deploy that remaining dinghy, we would have all perished. All who survived owe their lives to Vincent E. Huenerberg, the best Engineer a pilot could have. Regrettably, S/Sgts Walter Brown and Edward Durand were crushed on the flight deck when the top turret tore loose from the fuselage, and they were unable to escape."

TWO MONTHS LATER ON L-BAR #42-41017

It was a second trip to the Messerschmitt plant at Wiener-Neustadt for 1st Lt. Carpenter, and the Luftwaffe was ready for this raid. About seventy fighters flew through the formation, flak was heavy, and ten planes went down.

L-Bar was struck and three engines caught fire. Five of the crew were KIA. Five survived and became POW.

Then VE Day came, prisoners were released, and everyone went back to the ZOI. However, the war hung heavily on Carpenter for the rest of his life. In a letter he wrote to his friend Bill Cameron, he said, "Having lost seven crew members -- two when I ditched in the Mediterranean on August 1, 1943 and five on October 1, 1943, it has left me with a severe 'Survivor' Guilt' emotional problem. It is difficult for me to discuss the experiences. For this reason I have been very fearful of attending any of the reunions. It is so painful for me to recall those missions that I have shied away from any contact with other 67th Squadron members."

Ed Note: I hesitated to include the personal story of Carpenter's unending sorrow over the loss of members of his crew. However, I feel a need to tell our readers that sixty two years later, veterans are still suffering from tragic memories of what happened when their youth was lost to the noble cause of freedom.

THE MATHEMATICS OF ORIGINAL CREWS 68TH SQUADRON, 44th Bomb Group (H)

(Number of missions flown by the 18 Original Pilots & Co-Pilots)

Eight of the original pilots and co-pilots were KIA:

Malcolm Howell (13), Roy Erwin (3), Thomas Cramer (16), James DuBard (5),
Maxwell Sullivan (7), Roland Houston (28), Duane Nelson (6), and Henry Kaitala (4)

Three became POWs:

James O'Brien, (20), Robert Ager (11) and Theodore B. Scarlett (15)

One was WIA and returned to ZOI:

Wilmer Garrett (22) (Wounded in Action)

Five completed their tours (25):

George Jansen, W. D. Hughes, Walter (Tommie) Holmes, John Diehl and
Reginald Phillips

Missions where losses occurred: Kiel, Germany-2; St. Nazaire, France-1; Leece, Italy-1;
Abbeville, France-3; Lemmer, Holland-2; Ploesti, Romania-1;

Ed. Note: The average number of missions of the original crews was 15. This was in 1943. As Howard Moore stated: "The Luftwaffe was slaughtering us."

MEMORIES OF SIDNEY R. BOLICK RCAF, RAF, AAC, USAAF, CARGOS, THEN--RESERVES

I spent nearly five years in military service WWII as a Pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force, the British Royal Air Force and the United States Army Air Corps.

On 1 June 1941, three days after graduating from high school in Lowell, North Carolina and two weeks before my 17th birthday, I boarded a Greyhound Bus at Lowell for Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, and enlisted for Pilot Training in the RCAF, using altered documents that showed me to be two years older than I actually was. I went through Reception Centre and Pre-Flight School in Toronto; Elementary Flying School at DeHaviland Tiger Moths at Oshawa, Ontario; Advanced Flying School on a twin engine Avro Ansons at Hagersville, Ontario, graduating 1 March 1942 as a Sergeant Pilot.

Joining the RAF

After ten days leave, I reported to the Overseas Debarkation Center at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and was put on a ship in a convoy that sailed to Liverpool, England. In England I was attached to the RAF, and sent to Flight Instructor's School. After completing a four week course, I was assigned to No. 1 Standard

Beam Approach School at Stradishall, near Cambridge, where I taught other pilots Instrument Flying and Instrument Landings. On one particularly bad night, with two students, I was forced to abandon an Airspeed Oxford training plane and bail out, as landing conditions were impossible. Fortunately, no one was injured.

Next assignment: USAAF

By late 1942, units of the newly formed U.S. Eighth Air Force were arriving in England and beginning daylight bombing missions against German targets on the Continent. In February 1943 I was transferred to the USAAF to the Bovingdon Replacement Depot with the rank of Flight Officer.

On March 16, 1943, I arrived in Shipdham, and was assigned Co-Pilot on the **David Alexander** Crew in the 68th Squadron. Then that crew was broken up. Next I was assigned as Co-Pilot to **Walter T. "Tommy" Holmes**. However, before I could fly my first mission, I came down with pneumonia and was in and out of the hospital for about a month. When I was finally returned to Flight Status, my seat

on the Holmes crew had been taken by another RAF Transferee.

During the next four months I had three more bouts with pneumonia, and when the Group left for North Africa on July 1, I was in the hospital again, and was left behind at Shipdham, missing the Ploesti Mission and the second trip to North Africa to support the Allied landings on Sicily.

When the Group returned to England, we started to get the new B-24 H's and J's as replacement aircraft. These ships had nose turrets with twin .50 calibre machine guns, and it was necessary to train the Bombardiers and Navigators on these turrets. I was made Squadron Gunnery Officer and given the responsibility for scheduling and overseeing this training.

Pilot in the Tail Turret

By November 1943, I had been in England for eighteen months and at Shipdham for eight, and still hadn't flown my first mission. I was getting desperate to get my missions in, so when a directive came down from Wing Headquarters that each Group was to have a Pilot in the tail turret of the lead ship on every mission, to keep the pilot advised of how the formation was doing, I promptly volunteered.

From December to March I flew ten combat missions as Tail Gunner/Observer and Co-Pilot. On one mission as Tail Gunner/Observer, I shot down a Me-109 and was awarded an extra Oak Leaf Cluster to my Air Medal. In December of that year I was given a battlefield commission to 2nd Lieutenant.

I flew my first mission as Tail Turret Gunner - Observer on 5 December 1942, and flew a total of nine missions in that capacity during December, January, February and the first two weeks in March.

Finally, a Co-Pilot, and then.....

The first week in March, I was finally assigned to a crew as Co-Pilot. 1st Lt. **Hollis R. Nichols** had just been checked out as first pilot and given a crew that had just arrived from the States, all but the Co-Pilot. I was assigned as his Co-Pilot.

We flew a few practice missions together with other new crews. Then on 18 March 1944

we flew our first actual combat mission. We were bombing the Dornier aircraft factory at Friedrichshafen, Germany. Just after we dropped our bombs over the target we were hit by flak in the number three engine and were unable to maintain our altitude. Rather than be taken prisoner by the Germans, we turned across Lake Konstanz to Switzerland and bailed out. We were picked up by the Swiss and interned in a camp at Adelboden, and later at Davos. In September, after the Allied landings in Normandy and in the south of France, I escaped into France and made my way back to England.

Ed. Note: Eight planes were lost on this mission: 66th lost one; 67th lost 2; 68th lost 2; 506 lost 4. 62 men were interned in Switzerland, of which 39 returned to England; five were KIA; 14 became POW; one evaded and returned to England.

After being interrogated in London, and going back to Shipdham to clear the base, I was sent to Prestwick, Scotland, and was flown back to the U.S.

After fourteen days leave and a few days at a Redistribution Center in Miami, I was assigned to the Aerial Gunnery School at Tyndall Field, Panama City, Florida. I flew gunnery trainees around in a B-24 as they fired at tow targets or at splashes in the water of Appalachicola Bay. It was very boring work, so in May of 1945, I jumped at the chance of transferring to Air Transport Command.

Next assignment: Cargos

I was promoted to 1st Lt. and sent to C-54 Operational Training School at Homestead, Florida. I graduated from that course in August 1945, just after Japan surrendered, and was assigned to Hamilton Air Force Base, San Raphael, California, where I flew C-54's on the Central Pacific Run from California to Hawaii and the other Central Pacific islands, hauling supplies out and bringing troops home.

I went on inactive duty in March 1946, but remained in the Reserve as a 'Weekend Warrior' for several more years until the pressure of making a living in civilian life made it necessary to give it up.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

Well guys, we have had our regulation 70 MPH plus winds across the airfield for this winter, and once again the old Station stood up to it well and we had no damage, either to structures or to aircraft. Unfortunately we cannot say the same for our friends and neighbours at nearby Old Buckenham (Station 144 in your day), they took a huge hit on one of their (new) hangars and lost the door and part of the roof. Sadly at least two planes were completely written off and several others damaged, some quite badly, though we are told they are repairable. The only good news was there were no human casualties on either airfield that day.

I am delighted to report that we did indeed have a visit from the family of a 44th Veteran, John A. Gray, who was a navigator. Both John's son and young grandson arrived a few weekends back and stayed with us most of the day. They spent quite a while going round and filming the Museum and were able to take a tour round the old base and had a chance to wander through the old control tower. Shipdham Aero Club was going to present them with a copy of the book 44th Bomb Group in Norfolk, that Steve Adams and I had written, but the taxi driver who ferried the Gray family to and from the airfield that day was so taken with their story, and their reason for coming to Shipdham Airfield, that he insisted in buying the book so that he could be the one who gave it to them. John's son James kindly presented the museum with a framed photo of his father and his crew taken in the US just before they headed to Europe. While at Shipdham he flew in Puritanical Witch, Flak Magnet and Galavantin' Gal. We were delighted to receive the crew photo and were able to get it in place and hung before the family left.

We read with sadness that the plans for a 'Last Hurrah' visit had fallen by the wayside, though we quite understand the reasons. As mentioned in 'Tails' we over here will keep your memory going and send you reports and photos. We will not forget.

Nor will the British schoolchildren either. You recently published a poem by a young English Schoolgirl Shana Cross, from the Scarning Primary School, not far from the airfield. A couple of years ago we hosted 30 or 40 children from that same school and told them a little about you guys and what you did, then took them all flying, (all for the first time in their lives.) My guess is that that flight and your stories will stay with those children for the rest of their lives. Let us hope so.

We had our CAA / Shipdham Aero Club Safety evening last month and hopefully we will all be better and safer pilots because of it. We invited folks from other nearby airfields, Little Snoring, Horsham St Faith (now Norwich International Airport) Old Buckenham, Seething and Andrewsfield; all airfields who can trace their ancestry back to WWII and most with a strong USAAF connection. The CAA pools safety information with your own FAA and a fair amount of the filmed material shown that evening was from Stateside. Funny how pilots both sides of the Atlantic tend to make the same sorts of mistakes!

England is still in the grip of winter at the moment, so our new grass runway is still very wet and un-usable, though we still try to fly as often as the Norfolk weather will allow. We have the first sign of early spring flowers, so there is hope for more flying activity soon at your old home. There are a lot of pilots sitting round in the clubroom drinking coffee, waiting to fly...some things don't change that much...

Best wishes from your friends here in East Anglia.

Peter



Mike Fusano, General Leon Johnson's driver, shows off his Commander's first automobile.

A CRASH LANDING THAT MADE HISTORY

The late ROCKWELL GRIFFITH in *H-BAR*

According to **Will Lundy**, the Ground Crew sat transfixed, watching *H-Bar* approach the runway with one wheel down, three uncertain engines and the gas tank nearly empty. **Ursel Harvel**, Photographic Officer of the 44th BG, was on hand to take this picture; and later, to record the event in his book, *Liberators Over Europe*.

"Lt. Griffith (67th Sq.) switched his Liberator over to AFCE to conserve gasoline for the long trip from Kjeller, Norway. As the southern tip of Norway slowly faded from view, Lt. Griffith's Liberator, which had fallen slightly behind the formation, was suddenly subjected to a surprise attack by a formation of approximately fifteen ME-109s and JU-88s.

The battle was brief but vicious with tail gunner, **Sgt. Forrest S. Clark**, shooting down one of the Nazi planes as Lt. Griffith went through violent evasive action which was only partially effective. The Liberator was seriously damaged. **Sgt. William T. Kuban**, Ball Turret Gunner, was seriously wounded. Griffith's plane had fallen to an altitude of 3,000 feet before he could get it completely under control, and with a seriously wounded crewman aboard, he was faced with a three hour trip over icy, white-capped waters of the North Sea...

"... For one hundred and eighty minutes, he alternately babied and bullied the huge ship along on one good and three uncertain engines."

Griffith's story is a legend in 44th history. Only one wheel in the landing gear went down. Rather than risk the well being of his entire crew, he ordered a bail out for all except Kuban and his Co-Pilot **Lawrence Grono**.

With an enrapt audience on the ground, with crash trucks, fire engines and ambulance

on standby, Griffith and Grono slowly brought *H-Bar* to the runway, balancing their craft until the left wing tip lowered steadily until finally touching the ground. *H-Bar* was a total loss, but the entire crew was safe.

No crew member has ever expressed more gratitude for his life than **Forrest Clark**, gunner, who has dedicated much of his life to placing his pilot's story in historical sites. Recently he wrote a very detailed description of the life and times of this hero to whom he owes his life.

"When I saw General **Leon Johnson** walking across that airfield with my pilot, I knew at that moment that he had saved our lives that November day in 1943. He had brought us

home...

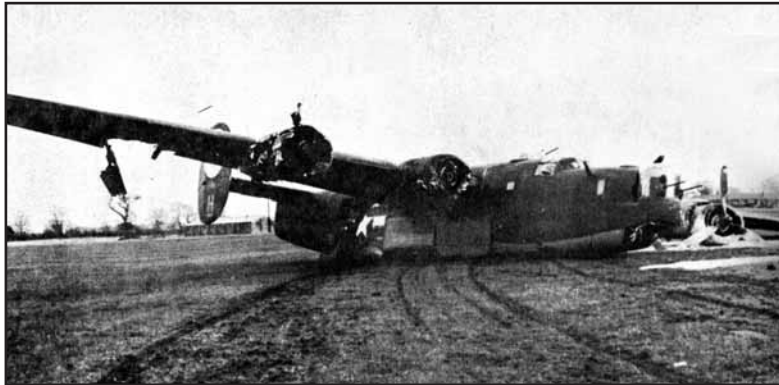
"...Griffith showed his piloting skills by getting us in the narrow fjord at BW-1 without crashing into the glacier as others had done..."

"...He in a very real sense was one of the under-rated pilots, and yet he never asked for any

hint of recognition. He was a true hero. Finally on the Lechfeld mission of 13 April 1944, badly losing fuel, we diverted to Swiss territory after the bomb run. We knew we could not make it back to the base..."

"... Now I shall tell things that perhaps nobody knows about Griffith. He and our navigator **Bob Weatherwax** had to put **Dave Edmonds**, our Bombardier, in the shower to sober him up before missions..."

Through Clark's efforts, Griffith is being memorialized at the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum in Savannah, Georgia; the WWII Memorial in Washington, later at the U.S. Air Force Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. This issue of *8 Ball Tails* will be sent to the WWII archives of the Folk Life Center at the Library of Congress.



Downed plane

FROM THE DIARY OF T/SGT SAM CERVELLERA Radio Operator on the Fred Stone Crew 22 April 1944

This was our first mission, and the target was the rail center of Hamm, Germany. It can be compared to Chicago as a nerve center. We confronted Flak as soon as we hit the German coast and all the way to the target. Some was very accurate, as (Robert) Ryan heard it hit the Ball Turret. Over target one third of our bombs went out. I pulled the salvo cable, and the rest went out. The waist gunners saw it flatten a two story building to the right of target. I stood on the cat-walk until flak got too accurate. My hands were almost frozen. We saw only three fighters, FW 190s, but they did not come in our formation. We had good top cover by P-47s and P-38s. They sure looked nice out there. There was a B-24 blown up to our right and low by the coast of France. Three chutes opened. We also saw a B-26 outfit plaster heck out of an airfield off the coast of France. The flak was low. It was almost sunset now, 9:40 PM, and Jerry took advantage of it and followed us in our formation to land. I wish I had a gun instead of a radio up there. The CO was pleased with our bombing. I was pleased with my salvo job. Stone was pleased with crew in general. A darn good crew. The crew said there were no atheists up there. Was I scared, no no, not yet anyway. I hope the rest are as easy. I was a little tired, but who wasn't? We won't have to go back there for a long while...29 more to go.....

Crew: **Merritt Derr**, Co-Pilot; **Andrew Patruchuk**, Navigator; **Glen Hartzell**, Nose Gunner/Toggier; **Charles Brown**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner/**William Strange**, RW Gunner; **Robert Faust**, LW Gunner; **Morrie Meunitz**, Tail Gunner.
(The 44th did not sustain any losses on this mission.)



ANYTHING TO HELP A FRIEND

Tony Mastradone, Medical Technician, (67th Sq.) got decked out in a new uniform to serve as Best Man in a recent wedding at a WWII show in Reading, Pennsylvania.

A POST-WAR EVALUATION

Albert Speer, Minister of Arms and War Production in Nazi Germany, to Ira Eaker, Commander of USAAF, "The real importance of the air war consisted in the fact that it opened a second front long before the invasion of Europe. That front was the skies over Germany...If you had repeated your bombing attacks and destroyed our ball-bearing industry, the war would have been over a year earlier."

This meeting was arranged by Gerald Gross, Navigator on the Thomas McKenna crew, later publisher and author.

Age is the best possible fire extinguisher for flaming youth!!

AVIATION THOUGHTS (from Roy Owen)

About rules:

- A. The rules are a good place to hide if you don't have a better idea and the talent to execute it.
- B. If you deviate from a rule, it must be a flawless performance; e.g. if you fly under a bridge, don't hit the bridge!

If you're going to fly low, do not fly slow.

You can't fly forever without getting killed.

Ed. Note: The average person can't get off this planet alive anyway.

SIGNIFICANT DATES

1 May 1942

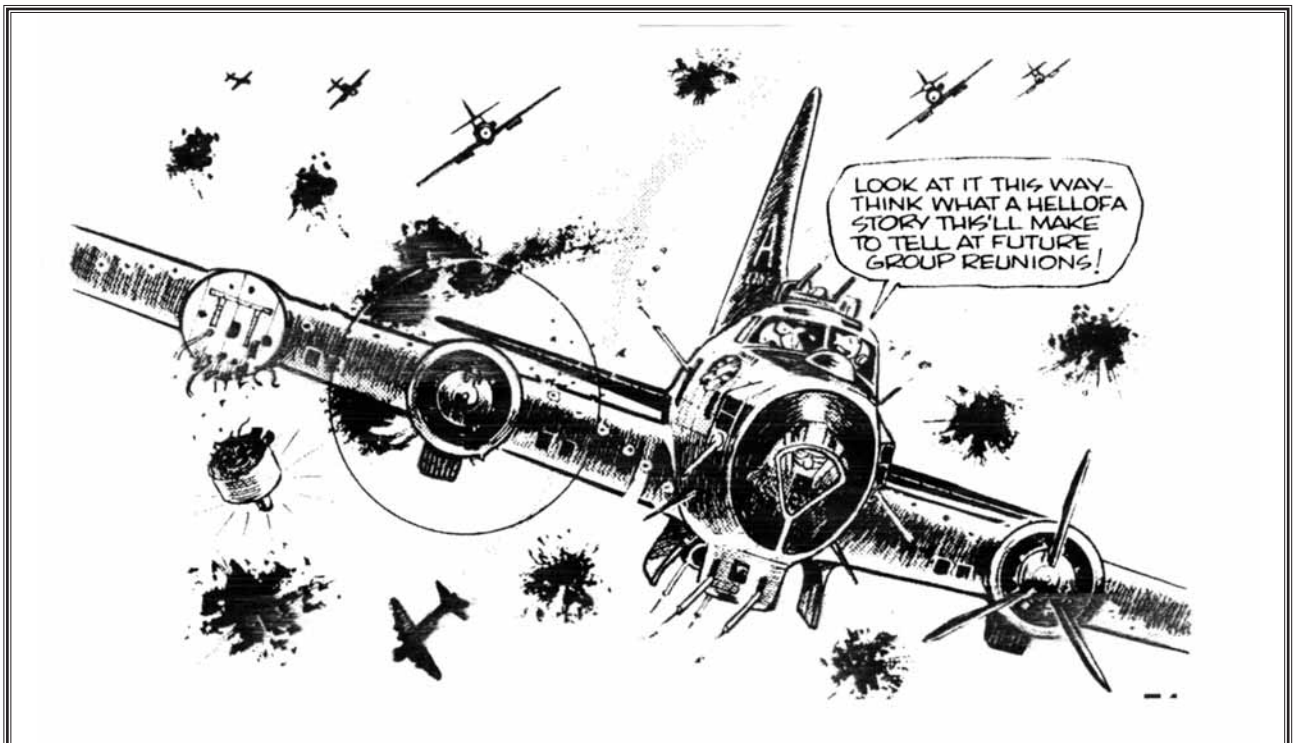
The USAAF accepted the first B-24D from the Ft. Worth Consolidated plant. By late 1942 40% of the Consolidated work force were women. By 1944 the Consolidated-Vultee payroll included more than 101,000 workers in ten states, operating 13 modification, research & operating divisions.

8 May 1945

VE Day

31 May 1945

All B-24 production terminated.



MONUMENTS

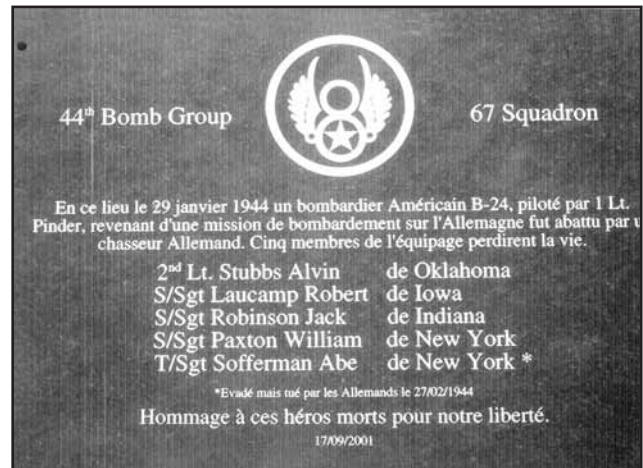


Bob & Bernice Reasoner with plaque

The late **Paul Kay** wanted monuments listed, so that anyone visiting that country could find them. **Robert Reasoner**, a survivor of the crash of *Bat Outa Hell* on 3 January 1943 provided this picture of the bronze plaque, honouring the men who were lost that day.

The **Roy B. Erwin** crew was on a mission to St. Nazaire. On the return, a navigational error brought several planes to Wales where they ran out of fuel and crashed. The pilot, Roy Erwin; Co-Pilot **Clark Swanson** and Navigator **Thomas Deavenport** were KIA. **John Gavin**, Bombardier; **Hylan Simmons**, Engineer; **Thomas Laskowski**, Radio Operator; **Delbert Perry**, Asst. Engineer; **Lanvilleo McCarty**, Asst. Radio Operator; **George Kelsey**, Gunner and **Robert Reasoner**, Tail Gunner were all seriously injured and hospitalized.

Bob and Bernice Reasoner were present to see the plaque raised for his lost crew members. It is located in Haverfordwest, Wales.



Plaque at Winbrin

PLAQUE AT WINBRIN, BELGIUM

Peter Loncke, Belgium Airman and 44th BG Member, sent this photograph of the plaque that commemorates the losses of the **Harold Pinder** crew on X-Bar. The mission was to Frankfurt, Germany, bombed via PFF on 29 February 1944. The Liberator was attacked by both Me 109s and FW 190s. Harold Pinder, pilot described the attack: "We took 20 mm hits under the flight deck that cut the control cables. The A/C dove out of control. I remember the wing afire and at least the #4 engine knocked out." Three gunners were KIA: The fourth gunner became POW, along with the pilot & co-pilot. He sustained wounds from the crash. The Bombardier was KIA; Pinder and **Abe Sofferman** evaded, then both were captured. Sofferman was KIA by his captors; the Co-Pilot was POW, evaded, repatriated, then died. Pinder became POW.



Gratenois, France

PLAQUE NEAR GRATENOIX, FRANCE

This monument near the town of Gratenois, France was erected in honour of the **Frank Sobotka** crew. Three members were KIA, the pilot, **Clair Shaeffer**, Engineer (father of Lois Cianci) and **Thomas Capizzi**, Radio Operator. Four of the crew became POWs: **Frederick Butler**, Navigator; **August Smanietto**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Andrew Ross**, RW Gunner and **Charles Shockley**, LW Gunner. Two evaded and returned to England: **Milton Rosenblatt** and **Abraham Teitel**.

...continued on page 14



The people of Hammilkiln, Belgium honored the crews that were lost on the Wesel mission, The *Southern Comfort IV* was lost on that mission. Two survivors of the Chandler Crew were **Louis DeBlasio** and **Robert Vance**. Also lost on that mission was *K-Bar*. All members of the **Leonard Crandell** crew were KIA. **Anibal Diaz**, flying in *Joplin Jalopy*, fell from the plane and was KIA. **John Delaney**, flying in a P-47 went down after dropping white phosphorus on the Anti-Aircraft crew that succeeded in knocking out four B-24s that were dropping supplies to the British paratroopers who had just crossed the Rhine River.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

GROUP PERSONNEL SECTION February 1945

On the second day of the month, Technical Sergeant **Hugh G. Bentley** of this Headquarters returned to the station after an absence of a little more than six months. Sgt. Bentley is an administrative clerk, who, in July 1944 was placed on Detached Service in Sweden. He was one of the trained AGD team, composed of a Major, a Captain, and four enlisted men, which arrived in Stockholm on August 1944 to handle all administrative matters pertaining to American personnel interned in that country. What a life -living in a hotel in Stockholm, wearing civilian clothes, and drawing per diem. Sounds like a soldier's dream, yet Sgt. Bentley tells us how anxious he was to return - guess that proves that we've got a really good outfit.

When this administrative team arrived in Sweden, they found more than one thousand (1,000) American airmen and more than one hundred (100) American aircraft, eighty-five (85) percent of which had been repaired and placed in commission. They stepped in and took over an outfit that was fairly well organized and running smoothly. This condition, of course, was quite surprising, as everything was set up and run by internee personnel. Internees were treated very well here, having been given superior quarters and rations and

recreational facilities were more than adequate. They even received occasional passes into Stockholm.

Perhaps we can attribute this high exemplary treatment to the efforts of the Swedish military officer in charge of all interned personnel, Major Count Felk Bernadette, the nephew of the King. It was through his keen and fair interest, his foresight and initiative, and his sympathetic understanding of the problems, that the entire program could be so successful. In return for this, the internees always conducted themselves in a manner becoming that of the best American soldier.

One by one the internees were all repatriated, until now there was no further need for a staff of trained administrative personnel to handle their affairs. So Sergeant Bentley has returned to the group with fond memories and stories galore. He is once more engaged with duties in the Group Personnel Section.

THE REST OF THE WAR STORY FEBRUARY 1945

The Battle of the Bulge had ended. Germany was in full retreat from the Eastern front. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met in Yalta. American and British troops were nearing the Rhine River. On the other side of the world, the Marines landed on Iwo Jima.



MAIL & E-MAIL

Larry Herpel, nephew of **Virgil Fouts**, is hoping someone will dig into his old photos from the war and find a very rare picture. *Cactus* (#41-24191), piloted by Fouts, was on its first mission on 22 March 1943. The target was the sub pens and docks at Wilhelmshaven. The plane was shot down by enemy A/C and probably crashed in the North Sea; there were no survivors. This was the first mission of the 506th Squadron, also the first plane and crew lost by the 506th. They had been in Shipdham for only a few weeks.

Is it possible that somebody photographed the plane on the way across the pond? They flew across in late February 1943. Could a picture have been taken stateside--Albuquerque or Wendover--when the crew was in training? If anybody happens to have the picture, it will be greatly treasured by his nephew, Larry.

Ed. Note: There are probably dozens of boxes of photos stored in many veterans' attics. This is a good time to dig them out and locate people who would treasure them.



From Steve Adams we received this picture of the Richard Hruby crew with the Royal Navy Crew that picked them up from the English Channel. The account of Hruby's successful ditching appeared in the Winter 2007 issue of the *8 Ball Tails*. The picture is part of the Mark Brotherton collection.



From **George Washburn**: Upon reading **Robert Lehnhausen's** tribute to **Herman "Joe" Eckstein** in the winter issue, I was reminded of an incident that occurred on one of our missions, which I have always meant to put in writing. Many years ago, at a 44th reunion in Dayton, Ohio, I telephoned Joe, who lived not too far away and urged him to come down to the reunion. He came that afternoon and we immediately recognized each other after parting ways in 1944. Joe went back home that evening and returned the next day with his wife, Millie. They stayed for the rest of the reunion. At the banquet, I was asked to relate some of my experiences and told this one. Last year at our reunion in Washington, Joe's son, Tony and granddaughter, Hannah, called on us one evening, so I also told them about this incident.

The mission of Oct. 18, 1944 was to Leverkusen, Germany. and was flown in very bad weather. The 44th lost 3 crews that day--all after leaving the target area. It is believed that **LT. Bakalo** of the 67th Squadron collided with **Lt. Dayball** of the 68th. Also lost was **Robert Lehnhausen's** brother, **Edward**. Lightening struck the tail of his plane, causing the deaths of the entire crew. There would have been one more crew lost if it were not for Joe Eckstein's presence of mind and piloting abilities.

We were flying in the #3 position on the left wing of the lead ship. Returning from the target, we were led into the top of heavy clouds at 24,000 feet. As we went into the soup, I had Joe take over as it would be easier for him to hold formation than me (flying cross cockpit). The visibility was very limited and we lost sight of the lead when he started a turn to the right. I took over and on instruments started a 180 degree turn to the left to get away from the formation. After rolling into a 15 degree bank on the artificial horizon, the airspeed started to climb. I applied back pressure, but the airspeed continued upwards. At about 220 Miles per hour, I became completely disoriented and even felt that we were upside down. Joe said "are you all right" to which I replied "no". He then said "Do you

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want me to take it". Thank God I was not too proud to say "Yes". As he took over I remember seeing (a little late) the turn and bank indicator (needle and ball). The needle was pegged to the left and the ball was all the way to the left. We were in the classic " Dead man's spiral". The artificial horizon still indicated a 15 degree level turn and had failed.

Joe, properly, had been scanning all the instruments and very quickly had analyzed the situation.. He proceeded to level the wings using only needle and ball and after a series of ups and downs got the airspeed stabilized in level flight. We then reset the artificial horizon and completed the turn back out of the clouds. It was clear over Brussels and I let down and landed at a field with steel landing mats and lots of mud. There we waited a few hours until the storm passed by- loaded up another crew whose ship was disabled and flew back to Shipdham in clear weather.

I will never forget that incident and am certain that I would not have recovered from that spiral. We all owed our lives to Herman " Joe " Eckstein. Not only was he an outstanding pilot, but an unassuming real gentleman. I am sure all his family are very proud of him as we all are.



MORE ABOUT RAMSTAFFEL (That's 'Ramming' in German)

"It was an old strategy with a new twist," wrote Donald L. Miller, author of *The Story of World War II*. In desperation to beat the USAF formations that were successfully reaching war production industries, the Germans introduced heavily armoured twin-engine fighters, Zerstorers. The Mustangs chewed them up. The next idea was called the Sturmbock, or Battering Ram, made up of a more strongly armed and armoured fighter, a modified Fw 190 with enhanced armour plating, a bullet resistant canopy, two auxiliary fuel tanks and five fearsome guns. Flying in waves of up to forty planes, this eight-ton 'flying tank' became for a short time, the most lethal bomber destroyer of the war.

The Zerstorers pilots declared great success at bringing down USAF bombers. If a Sturm Group pilot failed to score a direct hit on an enemy bomber, he was bound by a solemn oath to ram it. Although they had frightful numbers of casualties, these daring young Germans were driven by the belief that if their country fell, no mercy would be granted the German people.

On a mission to Kassel, the 445th Bomb Group was leading the 2nd Air Division. The bombs were released at Gottingen, 20 miles from Kassel. Then they were hit low and from the rear by three Sturm Groups. The Sturmbocks hung from the Liberators' propellers and savaged the exposed undersides of the bombers. One Liberator after another was turned to smoke.

One Sturm pilot said, "When I couldn't shoot the bomber down, I remembered the commitment to ram. "My left wing sawed through the bomber's rudder. My wing was so damaged, I couldn't control the plane. I was pulled out of the cockpit and my chute opened..."

To deal with this new strategy, the 8th Air Force sent fighter formations ahead of the bombers to break up the Sturmgruppen. The P-51s massacred the slow flying Sturm Group, along with the faster Me 109s that flew with them. Among the outstanding Mustang pilots was Chuck Yeager, who destroyed five Me 109s over Bremen, making him the 8th AF's first 'ace in a day'.

Since July, General Jimmy Doolittle had been receiving reports of small numbers of jet fighters and rocket-powered planes that were shadowing his bomber formations. They would fly at a safe distance from the bombers and taunt them with their performance capabilities, but rarely engage. The AF intelligence was most worried about the Me 262, the fastest A/C in existence. It flew 540 mph, about 100 mph faster than the Mustang, and it ran on diesel fuel.

Despite Germany's great production ability, Allied planes succeeded in destroying their delivery system. Of more than 1,200 Me 262's available, fewer than 200 made it into combat.

...continued on page 17

However, as reported in the previous 8 Ball Tails, Oberst Hermann picked up the ramming idea and organized the Elbe Fighters. His plan was to assemble 5,000-6,000 feet above the bomb formation; each pilot would pick a target and dive straight down on it, slamming into the weakest structural part of a heavy bomber-the section of the fuselage just in front of the tail assembly. A well placed hit was capable of breaking a bomber in two.



Liberator from 448th BG torn completely in half.

Hitler and Goring approved Hermann's plan, but only air cadets could be used, not veteran pilots. These inexperienced airmen were easily knocked out of the sky by the Mustangs and Thunderbolts that pursued them relentlessly.

At first these battle collisions were considered the outcome of enemy fighters pressing their attacks too closely and going out of control when disabled by defensive gunfire. Further information revealed that the oft rumoured 'Ramstaffell' was at last reality.

When the 9th Armored Division captured the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, air support kept the enemy from sending in reinforcements. A major blitz on the 25 Marshalling Yards kept the German Army at bay. Production of planes and weapons in the nation's industrial regions was slowed to a crawl. The Luftwaffe was also running out of pilots. On 25 April 1945 the 44th flew its last mission. VE Day was May 8th.

Ed. Note: Research information provided by Bob Lehnhausen.



Alfred Cataldo (Squadron Draftsman/ Aircraft Mechanic) in a letter to **Will Lundy**: "Pete" the Rooster was our mascot for the 464th Sub Depot. I remember how Pete got high on a half pint of 3.2, or maybe it was Mild & Bitter. Then somebody slipped that poor old rooster an energy pill from an escape kit on D-Day. That bird got up on the bike rack and crowed for about 24 hours. He stayed awake with the rest of us!



From Brad Wallingford, nephew of the **Bartley Twins**: If anyone has flown in *Sabrina III*, *Down De Hatch* or *Passion Pit*, I'd like to hear from you; also I'm looking for other crew photos with these aircraft. If anyone remembers the Bartley twins, I'd like to hear from you. 712 S. 91st S. 91st E. Avenue, Tulsa, OK 74412 Tel. (H) 918 260-1386; (W) 918 445-2445.



A HERO'S BURIAL FOR GENERAL WILLIAM BRANDON.

General Brandon (a Major at that time) was pilot on *Suzy Q*, flying with Col. **Leon Johnson** to Ploesti. A set of circumstances brought him to this assignment. Right after the briefing by General Ent, Col. Johnson announced that 'Pappy' Moore, **Bob Kollimer** and **Bill Brandon** would draw straws to determine who would be pilot on

this low level mission. Moore drew the short straw, so he was chosen; however, he completed his 25 missions and asked to return home. Kollimer drew the second shortest, so he was the back-up. He flew the low level practice missions. Brandon did not expect to fly, but in his own words, 'fate decreed otherwise'.

In a letter to Bob Lehnhausen he said, "At about 8 PM the night before the mission, Bob came to my tent to tell me he had the Crud, but intended to fly the mission anyway. I told him 'no way', that there was too much riding on that mission, and Col. Johnson was not a B-24 pilot. (I don't think he ever landed one.) I then went to Col. Johnson's tent. I informed him of Kolliner's problem and said, 'I had better go get some sleep'. He nodded his concurrence, and that's how I ended up in the cat-bird's seat.

Ed. Note: Brandon is noted for his modesty. He avoided the reporters, in order that Leon Johnson would be given all the credit for having led this group to White Five.



From Delores Moore, wife of the late **Robert Moore**: My husband wrote a documentary of his war experiences for our three sons. In his colourful description of return home, he said, "I received my discharge September 24, 1945. I could have waited for the train, but a bus was leaving at 6 PM that evening, so I took the bus. I stood in the well next to the door for six hours before I got a seat. I rode the bus for about a week, and swore I would never get on a bus again."



From Susan Alexander niece of **Thomas Cordes**: Tom's picture is on a web site of a Netherlander who is honouring the men interred in the Margarten Cemetery. The web site is: <http://www.basher82.nl>.



BUZZING AROUND THE INTERNET

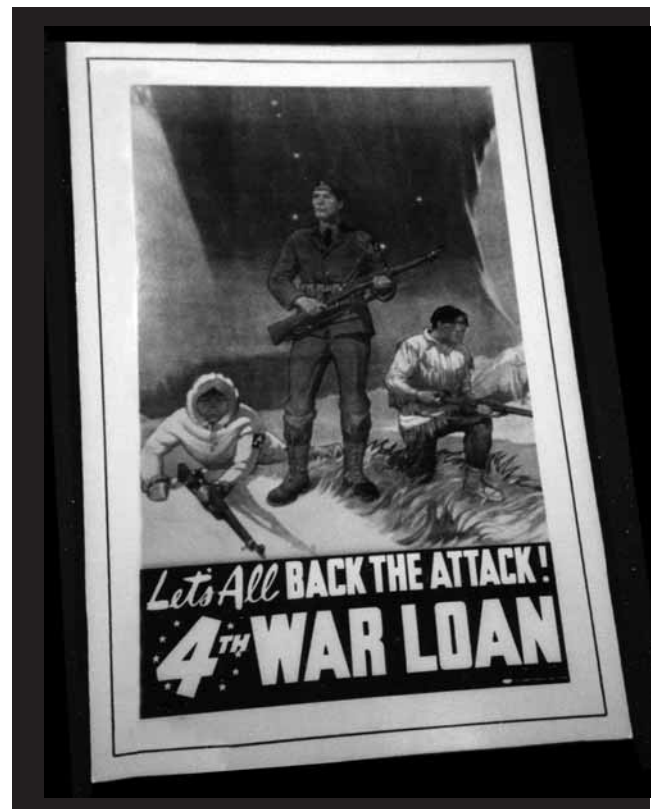
The aviation minded reader might enjoy the discourse between the pilots of Qantas airlines and their ground crew, as appears on their 'gripe sheet':

*Pilot: Something loose in the cockpit
Solution: Something tightened in cockpit*

*Pilot: Dead bugs on windshield
Solution: Live bugs on back order*

*Pilot: Evidence of leak on right main landing gear.
Solution: Evidence removed*

*Pilot: Mouse in cockpit.
Solution: Cat installed.*



Mary Aston's Sales Project

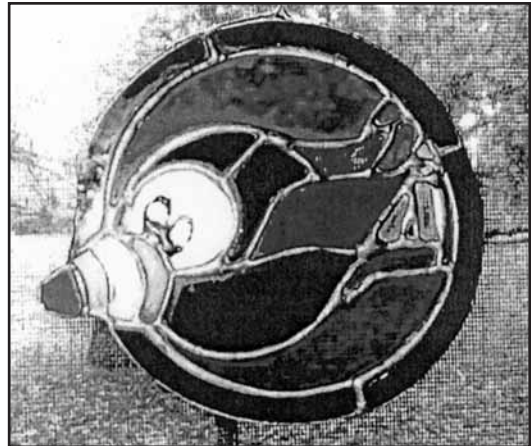
WWII Lapel & Hat Pin
 8th Air Force - DFC - Air Metal - Purple
 Heart - POW - ETO - WWII victory
 \$9.00 each + \$0.39 postage (each)
 (no photo available)

Proceeds go to 44th BGVA
 Place order with Mary Aston (706 283-1337)
 Mail check to
 830 Cardinal Dr., Elberton, GA 30635



Sun-Catcher

Diameter is 14" with attached chain to
 hang in a window
 \$100.00 + \$20 for UPS packing and
 shipping = \$120.00



Sun-Catcher

Diameter is 5.25" with attached loop
 hole to hang in a window; similar to
 14" logo, but no lettering
 \$50.00 + \$10 for UPS packing and
 shipping = \$60.00



Sun-Catcher

Pelican-67th Bomb Squadron, 44th
 Bomb Group-8th AF (The only 44th
 squaron to have its own logo)
 Diameter is 14" with attached chain to
 hang in a window \$100.00 + \$20 for
 UPS packing and shipping = \$120.00



New Air Force Pin
 United States Air Force
 60th Anniversary
 1947-2007

\$12.00 each + \$0.39 postage (each)

The 44th Bomb Group is still searching for a salesman to replace the late and beloved Sam Miceli. If you have a little time to run a mail order business, we need you, call me, Ruth Davis-Morse, Secretary. 717 846-8948



**Mr. STEPHEN ADAMS
OUR U.K. REPRESENTATIVE**

“Steve” unquestionably holds the record for our longest and busiest supporter in England! His interest in our Group and our records surely goes back to his early youth when the school children in East Anglia remembered our B-24s flying overhead or based so near them in their early days. When we made our quick departure in June-July 1945, headed for home and then onward to Japan, our vacant airfields must have offered them great opportunities to visit and to learn more about us.

It was in the mid 1970s when Irene and I first learned about the 2nd Air Division and their Memorial Library in Norwich, and their reunion was scheduled to take place in Norwich. There was no question, we must and did attend that one! At that time Irene and I were met by three of these youngsters - Steve Adams, Paul Wilson and David Morgan. They wanted to show us their collections of data about the 44th BG and Shipdham Airfield. Even way back then they had managed to accumulate a considerable number of photos and data.

Steve did not drive, but Paul did, he had a car, and the three of them spent most of their available weekends on our old base, learning as much about it as they could. Paul was on crutches, having been seriously and permanently injured in an accident, but managed to go everywhere that Steve and David wanted to investigate.

Time and the elements had caused considerable damage to our old, abandoned buildings. Wind and rain had damaged many roofs, with rust eating away at the reinforcement iron rods in both the walls and the roof of the control tower itself. The interior walls of some of these buildings

where our artists had painted various artwork and scenes, were seriously threatened. So Steve, who at that time worked at a roofing supply company, obtained the necessary materials and spent many weekends making repairs.

When Doug Genge, owner of the Monster Crane business that is now established next to our Control Tower, saw Steve busy repairing, and learning that (by then) I, we, were interested in an attempt to put a new roof on the tower to save it from further rusting and decay, he became involved as well. Doug spent several thousands of Pounds on both the new roof as well as two complete exterior walls. I sold his lithographs of the tower to many of our members, and this money went to those repairs and to our new organization of 44th BGVA.

Steve has always been a collector of photos of the base, our men and our planes, and continues to do so. He “surfs” the Web, looking for any photos of our planes, our airmen, our personnel. He bids on them all, and has managed to obtain many to add to his collection. Over the years, I have swapped many photos with him, with him doing most of the work and expense of copying. Also, he obtained our current personnel rosters, wrote many letters to people, hoping to get a copy of their crew photos, their airplanes, etc., as well as to share his collection with them.

In addition, he also has been very active in helping us with the difficult job relating to our aircraft names and aircraft identity numbers. The reason for that problem is that in most of our records, only the last three digits of an airplane's full number was utilized. All too often we had more than one aircraft with the same last three digits. So Steve has spent considerable time and effort

while working with Tom Brittan and our Group historians to positively establish the correct identity number.

When Phyllis DuBois was in charge of the American Room, she worked with Steve and Paul Wilson (and others) to assist her whenever American guests visited the Library, wanted to visit our old base as well. She would telephone these volunteers, who would then guide them to and around our base.

Steve also has been instrumental getting our Master Data Base CD installed in the three computers utilized in the Norwich Library within the new The Forum building in Norwich - the same building in which the 2nd ADA's American Room is located. So our entire computer Master Data Base is not only available within our American Room, but through out the entire Norwich Main Library.

Steve also works act as "postman" in Norwich with each issue of our 8 Ball Tails. Ruth Morse sends him several copies of our 8 Ball Tails bound for England in one bundle. Then Steve must go through his routine to get them all distributed to each individual person.

Steve also handles our Memorial Day wreath laying ceremonies at the American Cemetery near Cambridge each year. That includes the selecting and paying for the wreath itself. John Page had volunteered to perform this ceremony for many years but lately, Steve has done it himself.

Although we originally set up a bank account in Norwich with which to cover his

expenditures on our behalf, he has never once utilized that fund. Although we've tried to "twist" his arm to force him to utilize that fund, he still will not do so.

Back in the time period when our organization was identified as 44th BG HMG , early 1990s, we failed to locate a 66th Squadron member who would research and compile the history of the 66th Sq. One or two actually agreed to do so, but no "history text" was ever prepared. It was at that time that Steve volunteered to take on that task, as well. Todd, Kiefer and I supplied Steve with background history for that Squadron. When Steve submitted his work for printing, his printing company advised him that a Squadron book would not "sell". Or, in other words, they felt they would not make a profit - too limited an "audience".

So Steve enlisted the assistance of Ron Mackay, they replaced that Squadron text with an overall Group coverage, utilized his extensive supply of photos, and completed their fine book, "The 44th Bomb Group In World War II". It is still available for sale.

Quite obviously, Steve has contributed a great deal of work and substance toward our rich history. In doing so, he has surely become our FRIEND, INDEED! And for that, we owe him many thanks and our sincere gratitude well beyond what we can repay.

So, from all of us, we most sincerely thanks you, Steve & Janice

Will Lundy
P.O. Box 315,
Bridgeport, CA 93517



You can always tell luck from ability by its duration.

REGARDING THE 2007 REUNION

The Board of the 44th BGVA tried to arrange the finances of our Reunion in the way we have become accustomed -- each paying the hotel separately. First, Perry Morse's daughter Ellen Kelly worked out a good agenda with the Tourist Bureau Representative. Then Jackie & Lowell Roberts volunteered to visit the area, and fine-tune the arrangements. We think that the best possible schedule has been made at the best possible price.

Transportation from the nearest airport, Springfield, has been a challenge for the Roberts to arrange. If you are driving and can carpool with other members, that would be great. Shuttle service is being worked on. The next *8 Ball Tails* will provide further information on that service. Car rentals will be available through Enterprise at the rate of \$71 for the three days. A number of Board members will be driving, and expect to help with transport. **NOBODY WILL BE LEFT SITTING AT THE AIRPORT.**

Next: It is important that you register early, no later than July 2nd, 2007. We realize this is asking a lot for a Labor Day Weekend. If you register and have an unexpected problem arise, we will refund your money.

If you are flying, please let us know what time your plane will arrive in the Springfield/Branson Airport. We are working on transportation to the hotel.

Branson entertains many military organizations. The schedule of events, offered to us looks like a lot of fun. All the amenities are there for gatherings and recollections of heroic, sad, and sometimes funny happenings that carved your lives, sixty two years ago.

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION GRAND PLAZA HOTEL 245 N. WILDWOOD DRIVE, BRANSON, MISSOURI 2007 REUNION SCHEDULE

Lodging: Grand Plaza Hotel for 3 nights stay

Friday, August 31, 2007

Registration 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 PM
Welcome Reception 6:00 PM
(Dinner on your own)

Sunday, September 2, 2007

Breakfast
6:00 P.M. Banquet
Cash Bar

Saturday, September 1, 2007

Breakfast
9:00 A.M. Membership Meeting
5:00 P.M. Cash Bar
6:00 P.M. Squadron Dinners

Monday, September 3, 2007

Breakfast and Goodbyes

OPTIONAL SHOW PACKAGE

Saturday, September 1, 2007

12:00 pm Showboat Branson Belle
or 1:00 pm Titanic Museum

Sunday, September 2, 2007

10:00 am Red Skelton Tribute
2:00 pm Veterans Memorial Museum

44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

REUNION REGISTRATION

August 31-September 2, 2007
Grand Plaza Hotel, Branson, Missouri

Please fill out a form for each registrant

Please Print or Type. All Information Must Be Complete

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse/Guest _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Per Person Pricing: Single: \$456.00 Double: \$308.00 Triple: \$266.00 Quad: \$245.00
Please indicate bed preference: King _____ Double _____ Single _____

Includes: Welcome Reception, three free breakfasts, Hospitality Room, free parking,

Squadron Dinner. Please indicate choice of entrée:
_____ Chicken _____ Shrimp

Banquet: Please indicate choice of entrée:
_____ Prime Rib _____ Salmon _____ Chicken

OPTIONAL TOURS:

Saturday September 1, 2007

12:00 pm Showboat Branson Bell (with lunch) \$60.00 each
or 1:00 pm Titanic Museum \$30.00 each

Sunday, September 2, 2007

10:00 am Red Skelton Tribute \$36.00 each
2:00 pm Veterans Memorial Museum \$19.50 each

Payment

Number of Registrants (See Prices Above)

Single _____ \$ _____
Double _____ \$ _____
Triple _____ \$ _____
Quad _____ \$ _____

Tours: Show Boat \$ _____
Titanic Museum \$ _____
Red Skelton Tribute \$ _____
Veterans Memorial Museum \$ _____

Extra nights are \$99.00 per room per night, all taxes included. If you are planning on spending extra days before or after the Reunion, please inform us of your plans. It will help our treasurer get the correct information to the hotel.

Please send checks to 44th BG Treasurer:

Richard Lynch, 109 Jason Road, Box 518 Conrad, IA 50621, 0518



FOLDED WINGS

*What's hallowed ground? 'Tis what gives birth
To sacred thoughts in souls of worth!*

*Peace! Independence! Truth! Go forth earth's compass round;
And your great deeds shall make earth all hallowed ground.*

BAKER, LANNING #19279 68th Squadron 12 August 2006 T/Sgt. Baker was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **Joseph Kessler** crew. They were part of the group that went on the first North African tour of operations. Their first mission 13 August 1943 was to the Messerschmitt plant at Wiener Neustadt, Austria. After two raids to Italy, they returned to England and bombed strategic areas in Holland and France. Then, sent back to North Africa, they were part of the second raid to Wiener Neustadt. Seven planes were lost, one crash landed in Sicily; and the Kessler crew, flying in *Margaret Ann*, did an emergency landing on a grass runway near Bari, Italy. Three members of the crew were wounded.

Upon returning to England, on 8 April 1944 Baker flew with **William Altemus** in an unnamed plane to Langenhagen, Germany. Attacked by enemy A/C, the plane caught fire. Lanning and three others parachuted out, were promptly captured and became POW. The pilot and six members of the crew were KIA.

In his 22 missions, Lanning flew with a number of pilots - **Joseph Kessler, Baxter Weant, W.D. Hughes, Raymond Hamlyn** and **William Altemus**.

After the war, he became a Hospital Administrator. He and his wife Kathleen lived in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

Cardinal, Oliver J. #19652 68th Squadron December 2006 T/Sgt. Cardinal was Flight Engineer on the **Elmer K. Kohler's** crew, many times flying with 44th BGVA's President, **George Washburn**, who was Co-Pilot. His FW's report coincides with the death of a crewmate, **Lester 'Jim' Dietz**. Cardinal flew twenty five missions, the first on 11 July 1944. His mission assignments show the progress of the war after D-Day. On the request of General Patton, they bombed the Germans troops trying to escape the St. Lo area, as the Allies were steadily moving eastward. They bombed the railway stations, industries and fuel producing industries in Germany, most of the time flying in *Corky*. They also flew in *Flak Magic* and *Lili Marlene*. Cardinal's last mission was 30 November 1944.

DeBerry, Harmon #19966 67th Squadron 1 January 2004 T/Sgt. DeBerry was the Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **Russell Pellow** crew. On one occasion he flew with **A.J. Hardy**, Command Pilot. His first of 28 flights was 5 August 1944 at the time when knocking out A/C factories and rail transportation had high priorities. Most of his flights were into Germany; three were into France. The Pellow crew flew in *Glory Bee, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Judy's Buggy* and many unnamed A/C. His last mission was March 14, 1945.

FOLDED WINGS

Dietz, Lester J. "Jim" #20005 68th Squadron
November 2004 T/Sgt. Dietz was a Radio Operator on the **Elmer K. Kohler** crew. He was a member of the same crew as **Oliver Cardinal** whose FW report appears above. He, too, flew with Co-Pilot **George Washburn**, President of 44th BGVA. His flights took him to sites in France and Germany, flying in *Corky*, *Flak Magic* and *Lili Marlene*. He flew 34 missions from 16 July 1944 to 30 November 1944.

EGAN, WILLIAM #23193 67th Squadron 7
February 2007 1st Lt. Egan was a Bombardier on the **James Hill** crew. He flew 26 missions, the first on July 2, 1943, his last on March 12, 1944. Completing that number of missions during those early days was a miracle, as ten missions was considered a surprisingly lucky number.

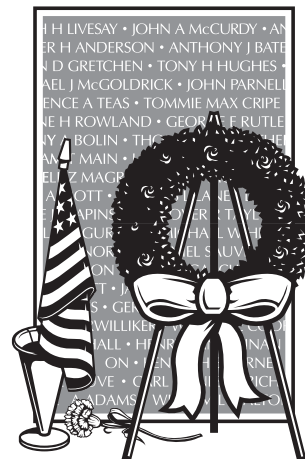
The Hill crew's introduction to combat was on arrival to Benina Main, where they were first dispatched to Italy and Sicily. They were part of the group that flew to Ploesti and succeeded in making it back, stopping first on the island of Malta. They were on both raids to the Messerschmidt plant at Wiener-Neustadt in Austria. Upon returning to England they flew to Germany and France. Calaban succeeded in coming out of these missions, battered and battle-worn. When these missions were completed, they were the only surviving plane in the 67th. Commander **William Cameron** stated that *Calaban* was the most shot-up plane that kept coming back. Most of the flights were in *Calaban*, but they also flew in *Princess Charlotte*, *Sure Shot*, *Earthquake McGoon*, *F For Freddie*, *Raggedy Ann II* and *D-Barfly*. In addition to flying with James Hill, Egan also flew with **Roland Gentry**, and with Command Pilots **Richard Butler**, **Dexter Hodge** and **William S. Aldridge**.

Bill and his wife Teresa have two grandsons who graduated from the Air Force Academy. Bill had the honour of commissioning one of them as an officer in the USAF.

Gavett, Franklin #20339 66th Squadron 4
August 2002 T/Sgt. Gavett was the Radio Operator on the **William Ogden** crew, but for unknown reasons that crew flew only one mission, 31 July 1944 to Ludwigshafen, Germany on *B U Baby*. Undoubtedly they were given other non-combat assignments which are not recorded in the Database.

Hawkins, Alfred G. #20587 506 Squadron 3
January 2007 S/Sgt. Hawkins began as a gunner on the **Thomas Waters** crew, but before his tour was completed, he served as Togglier, and on one occasion, as Bombardier. His first mission was August 9, 1944. On one mission of his 33 missions, he flew with the **Clyde Horsley** crew. He flew in many different planes: *I Walk Alone*, *Down De Hatch*, *Shack Rat*, *Chief's Delight/Chief Wapello*, *Southern Comfort III*, *Tuffy*, *Puritanical Biitch/Puritanical Witch*, *Sabrina III* and *Joplin Jalopy*. His last mission to Koblenz was 2 January 1945.

After the war, Hawkins was employed as an Electronic Technician. He and his wife Charlotte bought a home in the country where he could enjoy gardening. He was also a golfer. The couple had six children. They resided in Swanton, Ohio.





FOLDED WINGS

Heskett, Donald #20640 66th Squadron 30 June 2003 Lt. Heskett's first mission on 21 August 1943 was as a Flight Officer, flying as Co-Pilot with **Joseph Flaherty** on *Princess Charlotte/Sure Shot*. His second mission as a Flight Officer was with **Thomas Hobson**. On his third and all following missions, he had his own crew. On the raid to the Chemical Works at Ludwigshafen on 30 December 1943, the *Bull of The Woods* was attacked by FW 190s, knocking out the controls, whereupon Heskett gave the 'bail out' signal. The Co-Pilot and RW Gunner were KIA by the fighters; Heskett, the Bombardier, Radio Operator, Ball Turret Gunner, Left Wing Gunner and Tail Gunner all managed to evade and return to England. The Navigator evaded, was later captured, and was a POW until released by the Patton Army. Heskett escaped by walking across Portugal.

Hodge, Dexter #20681 66th Squadron 4 July 2006 Col. Hodge was among the first group to fly to England. He had already distinguished himself before entering the 44th BG. In 1940 he graduated from Texas A&M and was commissioned 2nd Lt. with the Army Reserves. He served with the 69th CAC at Ft. Crockett Texas. On July 9, 1941 he vacated his commission and enlisted in the Flying Cadets and became a pilot. He was re-commissioned 2nd Lt, and was assigned to the 66th Squadron at Barksdale Field, LA, serving as B-24 Instructor Pilot, Squadron Operations Officer and Squadron Commander. Next he was assigned to the 44th BG HQs as Group Operations Officer, later as Deputy Group Commander. From Barksdale he flew 18 night time antisubmarine missions, and during that time was promoted to Lt. Colonel.

The Database credits Hodge with 25 missions, the first 12 December 1942. At that time formation flying was very new to American airmen, so Hodge frequently accompanied planes in combat as Command Pilot, sometimes as Co-Pilot, expressly to study the success of formation flying. (*According to Bob Norsen, frequently as many as three men of high rank flew on these planes for the purpose of studying combat techniques in formation. The pilots were too busy flying the plane to study the formation.*)

Hodge flew in many planes: *Avenger, Sad Sack, Fascinatin' Witch, Queen Anne, Forky II, Scrappy II, Queen Marlene, F For Freddy, M'Darling, Mr 5 by 5, and Phyllis.*

He was part of the group that went to Benina Main in Libya, and flew as Co-Pilot with the **Robert E. Miller** crew to Ploesti. His last mission was 26 April 1944. After the war, Hodge and his wife Mertie moved to Bryan, Texas, where he became a rancher and also engaged in Real Estate sales. The couple raised two sons.

Kabak, Samuel #20872 66th Squadron 19 October 2000 The Database has no record of the activities of this member who served in the 44th BG.





FOLDED WINGS

Lasco, Henry #23239 66th Squadron 10 February 2007 1st Lt. Lasco was a pilot on *Sad Sack II*, and after one flight to France with **Joseph Flaherty** on *Queen Anne*, he and his crew were off to the Libyan desert. They bombed the marshalling yards at Messina to keep Germans from supplying troops to Sicily, in preparation for the upcoming invasion. Catania was next, knocking out the communications system; then on to strategic sites in Italy. After that, the Lasco crew practiced low level flying, in preparation for the historic flight to the white target at Ploesti.

At 'Bomb's Away' Lasco's Navigator was killed; ME 109's attacked; the Bombardier and Engineer were hit; then a bullet went through Lasco's jaw, rendering him helpless. The right rudder of *Sad Sack II* was gone, the left wing went down. The Co-pilot was not able to control the plane which was already on fire. It crashed in a cornfield.

Four members of the crew became POWs; five were KIA. Lasco's crew members have very warm memories of his upbeat attitude when all were in a hospital in Budapest. Despite his serious injuries, he was able to make them laugh.

After undergoing orthopedic and plastic surgery, Lasco became an accountant with the 3 M Company in the Aerospace Sales Engineering Department. He and his wife Nancy retired to Rio Verde, Arizona. The couple have a son and two daughters.

Lowenthal, Gerald #21145 506 Squadron September 2006 Lowenthal was a Life Member. He resided in Maywood, Illinois. No information is in the database about this member.

Moore, Robert A. #21394 67th Squadron 26 October 2006 T/Sgt. Moore was sometimes an Engineer/Top Gunner, sometimes Tail or Waist Gunner with a number of different crews. Most of his flights were with **R.W. Bethel**; but he also flew with **Richard Wynes** and **Herbert Bayless**. On one mission he flew with **Wayne H. Middleton** as Command Pilot; another with **Walter I. Bunker**, C.P. Moore's first mission with the 44th BG was 7 August 1944; his last, 8 March 1945.

Before being assigned to the 44th BG, he had flown fourteen missions with the 489th BG. This group was disbanded, as their losses had been so tragically high.

In his 35 missions, Moore flew on ten different A/C: *Shack Rat*, *Southern Comfort III*, *Consolidated Mess*, *Sabrina III*, *Down De Hatch*, *Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose*, *Phyllis*, *Mi Akin Ass*, *Fearless Fosdick* and *Miss Marion*.

Robert and Delores Moore, married for over sixty years, had three sons. They resided in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Selvey, Nicholas #21996 2 December 1999 There is no record of the activities of this member of the 44th BG.

Vahrenkamp, William #22382 66th Squadron No information about this member of the 44th BG. He resided in Ft. Worth, Texas

Vaughn, Alvin R. #22403 68th Squadron 28 March 2006 Sgt. Vaughn was a Maintenance Man, specializing in care of Electrical Equipment. After the war he first became a farmer; then entered the ministry, serving for fifty years.

Vaughn and his wife Mary had one son and one daughter, five grandchildren and one great grandchild. They resided in Forest, Mississippi.

Come to Branson and have fun. Join your old buddies, the members of the 44th Bomb Group.



44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association
P.O. Box 712287
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44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 8 Issue #4

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group

Summer 2007

Non Profit Veterans Association Veterans Association

EIN # 68-0351397



Top row L-R: **Thomas Kay**, Pilot; **Erwin Friday**, Co-Pilot; **Daniel Valenti**, Navigator, **Charles Blatchley**, Bombardier. Front Row L-R **Robert Swank**, Engineer-gunner; **Nelvin Olson**, Gunner, **Fred Blue**, Radio Operator, **James Casey**, Gunner, **Kenneth Smith**, Gunner; **Edwin Summers**, Gunner.

Flight Officer **Thomas C. Kay** and crew picked up *Little Audrey* in Kansas under Movement Order dated 29 May 1944. They developed engine trouble and were forced to land in Manchester, New Hampshire. Repairs were made and they proceeded to Labrador to gas and have further repairs. They flew the Atlantic, still dealing with problems of the gas flow to the engines. With the expertise of **Robert Swank**, engineer and gunner, they made it safely to Belfast, North Ireland, where *Little Audrey* was dropped for the problems to be resolved. The crew proceeded to England via boat, then on to Shipdham where the Kay crew was assigned to the 44th BG, 68th Squadron.

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X-Mission, Salt Lake City, Utah)*

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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.

Little Audrey had been named for a friend of Flight Officer **Kay**. When repairs in Ireland were completed, the plane was assigned to the 445th BG, 701st Squadron. It was shot down and crashed 2.5 km. east of Polch and 18 km. southwest of Koblenz on 27 September 1944 on a mission to Kassel, Germany.

James Casey, Gunner, was searching through old photos and found the cover photo, along with other prints of historical value. Roger Fenton, 44th BG Historian, researched the plane's history with the help of Tom Brittan, an expert on ETO planes.

Coincidentally, when *Little Audrey* went down on the mission to a tank factory in Kassel, Germany, flying with the 445th BG, her original crew was on that same mission in an unnamed plane.

Most of Casey's missions were into the heart of Germany, hitting industries and petroleum refining plants, all in preparation for D-Day.



Can this be the Engineer that
babied *Little Audrey* all the
way across the Atlantic?

A CORRECTION

In his tribute to **Herman "Joe" Eckstein** in the Spring Issue of the *Tails*, **George Washburn** described a mission on 18 October 1944 to Leverkusen, Germany in which he stated that **Robert Lehnhausen's** brother **Edward's** plane was lost, having been hit with flak. Sad to state, when it came out in print, it credited the loss to a lightning strike. Since the *8 Ball Tails* is expected to be totally accurate, I wish to state that Washburn's message had credited flak with the loss of the plane. I extend my sincere apologies to George and to the Lehnhausen family.

Ruth D-Morse



Anti-aircraft gun

**Sign in a muffler shop:
No appointment necessary.
We'll hear you coming.**

GEORGE WASHBURN'S PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Writing this in mid- June to make the Summer edition of *8 Ball Tails*, I can not say too much about the forthcoming reunion as you will be receiving this either just before or just after the reunion. I can say that we all owe many thanks to Ruth and Perry Morse and Perry's daughter, Ellen , for making the arrangements. Also thanks to Jackie and Lowell Roberts for driving over to Branson from Oklahoma City and fine tuning things.

A few other things have occurred in the past few months. Arlo Bartsch has entered the histories of the 68th and 506th squadrons into our 44th Bomb Group Web Site. The web site does generate inquiries from relatives or friends of deceased 44thers who are looking for information. I, as well as others, have had several such contacts over the past year or so and have been able to provide quite a bit of information, which is a very satisfying experience.

Ruth and Perry obtained four B-24 display models at the Reading, Pennsylvania WWII Celebration. Ruth packaged them up individually and sent one to each of Paul Kay's four Grandsons along with a very nice letter outlining their grandfather's accomplishments. We all had been trying to think of some memorial for his family and as usual Ruth came up with a fitting one. Another round of thanks to Ruth!!

Ruth has been in touch with the 8th Air Force Museum at Savannah regarding the status of the " Voice- over" for the Ploesti diorama. It seems that every thing has been done except installing it. They are in the process of rearranging all the exhibits, including the new B-24 " Fighting Sam" nose section exhibit, so hopefully the voice-over will be installed in the not too distant future.

Brenda Phillips, who keeps our roster up to date sends out lists of membership renewals to the officers as they come in to the treasurer.. The rate of renewals for this year has now slowed down . We presently have well over 600 up to date members and associates in our organization. Regular members also include family of 44th Veterans . We welcome Roger Fenton as our new Vice President.. His Dad was a 47 mission Veteran of the 66th Squadron. Among other next generation members who have been active are Jackie and Lowell Roberts and Lois and Tony Cianci. We certainly appreciate all their help.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

For once the main bulk of the words from your old station, here in East Anglia, are more to add comments to articles that were published in the spring edition of 'Tails', rather than adding anything new.

The article about the Griffith landing (arrival) in H-BAR was very interesting, not the least because we have the actual footage of both Forrest Clarke's parachute jump from H-BAR to Shipdham, followed shortly by the Griffith landing. Messy it was, successful it very much was. It was good to get some of the background on how the plane came to be in such a mess, and how long Griffith and Grano had fought the crippled plane to make it back that far. That footage is on a club produced DVD that shows what you guys got up to and had to go through on a daily basis to get the job done. (Another friend of the 44th, Brian Peel had the original {on VHS Tape} and made it available to us. Club member Julian Horne then transferred it to DVD). That DVD will soon be installed in Room Three in the museum and will be able to be played on demand by visitors.

The second story I simply have to comment on is Will Lundy's appraisal of Steve Adams. Guys, you only know the half of it. Without Steve, his generosity, help, knowledge and enthusiasm, our museum at Shipdham would only be a shadow of what it is today. Over the years, he has helped enormously by providing exhibits, photos and knowledge. Having done that, he then disappears for a while and lets the Shipdham Museum team just get on with it. Only on his next visit will he review the work we have done, and correct any errors that may have crept in. At that point he will usually produce another gem of an exhibit or photo to add to the collection. His knowledge and understanding of the 44th is beyond belief.

On a personal note, Steve contributed greatly to the paperback booklet that we produced together last year. (By the way, I have placed the order for the re-print; we are on the last box of the first edition. It's selling that well. Shipdham Airfield, as well as the 44th Bomb Group, has a real good friend in Steve.

Flying has been very high on everyone's mind over the last few weeks, as the English weather has been most odd...It's been good for at least 90% of the time! As you well know, that rarely happens here in Norfolk. We are all trying to make the most of it.

Ed. Note: Peter Bodle lectures regularly at Station 115 to local groups, Lions Clubs, Round Table, Women's Institute, Town & Village History Societies. The Rockwell Griffith single wheel landing and Forrest Clark's contribution to this memory is recorded on DVD. Bodle ends his lectures with this presentation. The Americans at Shipdham are not forgotten at the base that was once part of the Paterson farm.

THE CONTINUED SAGA OF SIDNEY BOLLICK INTERNMENT IN SWITZERLAND

I parachuted into Switzerland on 18 March 1944 from The *Paper Doll/Lady Dot*, #42-10012Q. We were bombing the Dornier aircraft factory at Friedrichshafen and I was flying Co-Pilot for **Hollis "Nick" Nichols**. It was our first mission together. Nick had recently been checked out as First Pilot, and I was the 68th Squadron's Gunnery Officer; I had flown nine missions as Tail Gunner/Observer whenever the 68th was leading the Group. The rest of the crew was recent replacements, with the exception of the Ball Turret gunner, **John Scott**. Scotty was on his twenty-fifth mission, and had volunteered to fly with us when the regular Ball Turret Gunner got sick.

The mission was uneventful until we approached the target, but then we ran into heavy anti-aircraft fire. We turned onto the bombing run, and just as we released our bombs, we took a hit in the number three engine. The prop governor was damaged, and the prop went into uncontrollable fully fine pitch, causing the whole plane to shake violently and forcing us to reduce our air-speed almost to the stalling point. Unable to stay in formation at that speed, we followed our briefing instructions and turned across Lake Konstanz toward neutral Switzerland.

By the time we had crossed the lake, our altitude was down from 20,000 feet to 8,000, and the violent shaking had increased. Knowing that the prop might come off at any time and perhaps come right through the aircraft, we decided to bail out.

Nick engaged the autopilot and put the plane into a shallow glide at 130 miles an hour. I pushed the bail-out button and got on the intercom to make sure all the crew understood we were bailing out. Then I unhitched myself from the cockpit, snapped on my chest pack parachute and climbed down into the bomb bay. After a quick look back through the waist to make sure that everyone back there was out, I dove headfirst through the open bomb bay door.

Just in time...

I had just rolled over onto my back and looked up at the *Paper Doll* for the last time when I saw Nick fall clear of the plane. At almost the same instant, I saw pieces of metal fly off the bottom of the fuselage. We learned later, from a Swiss civilian who took pictures of the crashed plane, that the prop had come off and spun through the fuselage, just about where Nick and I had been sitting just seconds before. With the runaway prop gone, the aircraft flew on in its gradual descent for about a hundred miles before it made a very good pilot-less belly landing in a field behind a little village in the foothills of the Alps. The nose broke off at the point where the prop came through, and it also broke in two at the ball turret, but otherwise, it was in pretty good shape.

I pulled the ripcord on my chute and watched it stream out above me until it snapped open with a solid jerk on the shroud lines. It was oscillating pretty badly, and I was swinging in a big arc like a pendulum on a clock; so I tried pulling on the shroud lines on one side to minimize the swinging. But about all I seemed to accomplish was to spill some air out of one side of the big canopy, which caused me to drop faster. So I thought "to hell with it" and let it swing.

As I neared the ground, I could see snow covered fields and a barn, and a wooden rail fence enclosing what was probably a pasture underneath the snow. For a second or two I thought I was going to land on top of the barn, but I gave a final swing and plopped down knee-deep in snow. Just before I hit the ground I had seen two soldiers in dark green uniforms and German-looking helmets climbing over the fence toward me. For a horrible moment I thought we had made a mistake and had landed in nearby Austria. But that fear was quickly dispelled when the first soldier shouldered his rifle and stuck out his hand and said, "Englander?"

I didn't know much German, but I knew

...continued on page 7

enough to say, "Nein, Amerikaner." When he smiled and shook hands instead of pointing his rifle at me, I knew that we had reached the sanctuary of Switzerland.

By this time the rest of the crew had been rounded up from where they had landed and were waiting in the back of a Swiss Army truck. I was happy to see that we had all made it without so much as a sprained ankle among us. We spent that night at an inn in the little village of Deutschwil, and the next morning, after what we came to know as a typical Swiss Army breakfast of hot chocolate, black bread and cheese, we were loaded onto the same truck and driven fifty miles or so to the Swiss Air Force Headquarters at Dubendorf Air Base just outside of Zurich. We spent that night there, after being interrogated by Swiss Air Force Intelligence and dutifully giving just our name, rank and serial number. The next morning we were put on board a train at the Zurich Bahnhof and transported to Neuchatel, a very pretty city on a large lake, also named Neuchatel.

Quarantined

The Swiss were deathly afraid of epidemic diseases, so we spent the next two weeks quarantined in an old hotel on a hill above Neuchatel. Our quarters were comfortable and the food good, if not overly plentiful. We were allowed to walk around the grounds of the hotel under the watchful eyes of a Swiss Army guard, and were separated from the curious Swiss civilians, who took the ride up the hill every day to see the American airmen, by a waist-high hedge that ran across the entire front of the hotel grounds.

At first these civilians were very friendly, speaking to us across the hedge in English, asking where we were from, what it was like there, and did we know their cousin Hans who also lived in Chicago (or New York or Peoria). However, on the fourteenth day of our quarantine an event occurred that changed their attitude toward us dramatically.

A Tragic Error

On April 1st American planes bombed the railway marshalling yards at Schaffhausen, Switzerland, mistaking them for similar railroad yards just across the border in Germany. As we were driven by truck to the Neuchatel railroad station the next day for the trip to our Internment Camp at Adelboden, the Swiss yelled insults and shook their fists at us, calling us 'murderers' and 'butchers' and other nasty names. After we had boarded the train and were pulling out of the station, one man ran alongside, yelling, 'Jew York, Jew York', as if that was the worst epithet he could hurl at us.

The train ride to Interlaken took only a couple of hours, and there we changed to a local for the short ride up the mountains to Adelboden. The view from the windows of the train went from being merely interesting, as we rolled across the broad valley that opened out to the lake at Interlaken, to breathtakingly beautiful as we climbed one side of the valley and it narrowed until all we could see ahead of us were majestic snow-capped mountains that seemed to rise right up to the sky! Having grown up in the Carolinas, I had seen mountains before, but nothing that I had ever seen in the Appalachians could compare to the sheer size and rugged grandeur of these Alps.

The train continued its climb up the mountainside, and after an hour or so it began to slow down as it approached the end of its line, the station at Adelboden. When it rolled to a stop, the Swiss Army guards lined us up on the platform for the walk up the hill to the village that was scheduled to be our home for the duration of the war.

Our New Quarters

Adelboden was a village of about three or four hundred people, almost all of whom derived their living from the tourist trade in normal times; from skiers in winter, hikers and climbers in summer. But these were not normal times. Even though Switzerland was a neutral country, it still depended on

imports from other countries which were now at war, for many of the necessities of life. And so the Swiss were on an austerity program almost as strict as if they were also at war. Food and other essentials were rationed, there was almost no gasoline available for civilian use, and travel for pleasure was severely restricted. Since this put a real crimp in the tourist trade, the people of Adelboden welcomed the American Internees as another kind of 'tourist' to help bolster the local economy until the skiers and hikers returned.

While our crew was in quarantine at Neuchatel, we had been joined by the crews of four more B-24s and two B-17s that had landed or crashed in Switzerland the same day that we did. Prior to our arrival there were only about fifty or sixty Internees in the camp at Adelboden, so our group more than doubled the camp's population. This presented some housing problems, but the Commandant of our Swiss Guards solved this by taking over another old hotel and separating our officers and enlisted men. Nick, **John McNamara** (Navigator), **Dolph Slovacek** (Bombardier) and I were moved into the Nevada Palace Hotel with the other officers. I was lucky enough to get a very small single room to myself. It looked out across the valley at a magnificent mountain called Lohrner.

Clean Clothes

We had parachuted into Switzerland in our flying gear, which consisted of heated long johns, one piece of coveralls and flying boots. Except for a change of underwear provided by our guards, we had lived in these clothes for two weeks. So upon arrival at the Nevada Palace, (which incidentally, although quite comfortable, was far from being a palace), we were overjoyed to learn that a Post Exchange and Supply Room had already been set up in the hotel. We were issued two changes of clothing; G. I. underwear, enlisted men's khaki shirts and pants, shoes, socks, and a toilet kit. The clothing was supplied by the American Legation in Berne, and we were even allowed a small

ration of cigarettes, chewing gum and candy. The PX was run by 1st Lt. Pete Zarafonetic, Bombardier on one of the first crews to be interned, and he was scrupulously fair in seeing that everyone got his fair allotment.

After changing into clean clothes and checking out the rest of our quarters in the Nevada Palace, we set out to explore Adelboden.

There wasn't much to explore. The village consisted on one main street with several shops, another hotel, the Hotel Baren, and a few other narrow streets winding around the mountainside. On these streets were two more hotels, a number of tourist homes or 'pensions', and the houses of the villagers. Most of these houses were two-story chalets with balconies, built against the hillsides and either painted sparkling white or left in their natural wood color. All of them had colorful painted designs on the front of the balconies and along the overhanging eaves of the roofs, very much like the 'distelfink' designs of the Pennsylvania Dutch in the United States.

Above the village the hillside steepened until it became the lower slope of the mountain that guarded the western side of the valley. A single one-lane dirt road wound upwards around this mountain slope to the few chalets that dotted its sides, ending at the pasturelands for cattle and goats, about a

thousand feet higher up.

Below the village the valley flattened out for perhaps half a mile, before starting the steep ascent up the sides of *Lohrner*,

and continued its gentle climb southward until it reached the impassable barrier at the foot of the *Enslingenalp*. From there a cable car lifted skiers and sight see-ers fifteen hundred feet



Distelfink

up to a natural bowl that provided some excellent skiing.

Since the only railroad ended at the Adelboden station, and the only roads dead-ended at the mountains surrounding us, there was no need for the Swiss to keep us under close guard to prevent escape. They stationed a guard at the railroad station and one at the road just below the village, and otherwise left us free to roam about as we pleased, just taking a roll call at breakfast each morning and one before 'lights out' at night.

We soon settled into the routine of the camp, breakfast at seven, clean up your quarters, take a walk up the hill to the main street of the village, window shop and talk to the storekeepers, sit on one of the benches in front of the little General Store and swap stories with the other Americans, walk up the hill a little further to the hotel where the enlisted men were billeted and visit with them. Then back to the Nevada Palace for lunch at noon, maybe take a nap, then repeat the procedure in the afternoon and be back to the hotel for supper at six. After supper there were usually a couple card games in the big room that had once been a night club, but had been turned into a sort of 'Officers Club.'

The club even had a bar, which was run by the owner of the hotel, an elderly gentleman named Monsieur Richard, who housed us and fed us under contract to the Swiss Government. We could get a beer if we had the money to pay for it, which we seldom had. We were paid our monthly salary by the American Legation in Berne, but to avoid conflicts with the Swiss military, they were only allowed to give us as much as a Swiss soldier or officer of our rank was paid. In the case of a 2nd Lieutenant, that came to forty dollars a month. The rest was held for us, to be paid when we were released and returned to our units at the end of the war. In some cases this could have amounted to a tidy sum, but as G.I.'s usually do, we found a way to get around these regulations.

Some of the pay that we received each

month was lost at the blackjack games or crap games that went on to relieve our boredom, and what was left was spent in a local café for coffee and any food that wasn't rationed. The Swiss Army fed us as well as they could, and the meals were well prepared, but the portions were not too plentiful. Breakfast was either coffee or chocolate, black bread and either butter or cheese, whichever they happened to have the most of. For lunch and supper we had some kind of pasta and a vegetable, sometimes with a green salad. Once a week we had meat for a main dish, usually veal. It was a lot better fare than we would have gotten in a German prison camp, and we didn't go hungry. But we didn't get fat either.

The Entrepreneurial Spirit Arose

Since there was very little seasonal tourist trade, the local shops were well stocked with merchandise, including some very good cameras. Seeing a potential gold mine in the American Internees, the merchants got together and petitioned the Swiss and American authorities to allow the Internees to charge merchandise in their shops, with payment to be made out of the Internee's account by the American Legation. Much to our surprise, their petition was successful, and we went on a colossal spending spree.

Although all of the shop owners benefited from this arrangement, the biggest and most immediate beneficiary was Willy Klopfenstein, a former Olympic Skier who ran the local photography shop. We just about cleaned him out of cameras and film in the first few days. Some of us had chipped in to buy an enlarger, which M. Richard allowed us to set up in a small storeroom in the hotel's basement, giving us our own darkroom. We spent many hours in that room, developing, printing and enlarging everything from mountains to chalets to St. Bernard dogs.

I bought a twin lens Rolliflex camera and several rolls of film, a pair of ski boots which I converted into hiking boots by putting hobnails in them, and a pair of tough civilian trousers. Armed with my new camera and

equipped for hiking, I set out to climb the hillside above the town and take pictures of everything in sight.

My usual companion on these hikes was **John Scott**, our ball turret gunner. There was very little rank consciousness at Adelboden, and although Scotty was a Staff Sergeant and I was a 2nd Lieutenant, we just seemed to hit it off. Maybe it was because we were both Southerners, he from Georgia and I from North Carolina, but whatever it was, we became good friends in the short time we spent together. I never saw him again after I left Adelboden, but I heard later that he had escaped through Yugoslavia and had spent some time with Tito and his Partisans.

Not all of my money (credit) was spent on photography. Quite a bit of it was spent at Frau Schumann's Pipe and Tobacco Shop. Although I had never been a cigarette smoker, I had started smoking a pipe when I got overseas, and it didn't take me long to discover Frau Schumann's shop.

Frau Schumann was a most interesting character. She was a widow, about seventy years old; and like most Swiss, she spoke English, French, German, Italian and Switzerduetsch, which was a combination of the last three. I had taken a couple years of French in high school, and when I told her this, she insisted on teaching me to speak French. She absolutely refused to speak English with me, and I can still hear her saying, "Pas parlez Anglais, parlez Francais." As a result of her persistence, I was soon able to speak passable French, and more importantly, to understand it when it was spoken to me or when I heard it on the radio. Of course, in the process of these French lessons, I also bought a lot of pipes and tobacco.

Listening in...

One of my other early purchases was a small radio for my room. I kept it tuned to a Swiss station during the day, listening to music and trying to understand the news broadcasts in

French and Switzerdeutsch. But every night I listened to BBC from London broadcasting messages to the French Partisans. The broadcasts always began with the first few bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the "V" for Victory bars. Dit dit dit dah, dit dit dit dah, over and over again several times, then, "Ici Londre, Ici les messages pour cette nuit." (This is London. Here are the messages for tonight.) This would be followed by several messages like, "Allo Claude, allo Claude, allo Claude. La neige is sur les mountains, la neige est sur les mountains. (Hello Claude, the snow is on the mountains) and "Allo Pierre, allo Pierre, la jeune fille est tres jolie" (Hello Pierre, the young girl is very pretty).

I listened to these messages by the hour and tried to imagine who they were intended for and what they meant. Some of the names, like Claude and Pierre, were repeated so often that they came to seem like old friends. And as I listened, my understanding of French continued to improve, until one night I realized that I was thinking in French, not translating it in my head from French to English!

Boredom was our biggest enemy at the camp, and we were all getting very restless. There was a lot of talk about escaping, and a few men tried it but were quickly caught and sent to a very unpleasant Swiss Army prison. **However, our boredom came to an end with the events of June 6.**

*Ed. Note: Sidney Bolick has written a very long treatise, which I am using in the Tails. His POW experience in Switzerland is another glimpse at the events which our men lived through in WWII. His story will continue in the next issue. In contrast I am writing of the experience of **John Joseph Brown**, who was a POW in Germany.*

President John Kennedy once said, "War is not fair. Some men get easy assignments; others go through horrible combat experiences. Life, itself, is not fair." How true.

JOHN JOSEPH BROWN'S THIRD MISSION ON *RUBBER CHECK* TO LANGENHAGEN

On 8 April 1944 we were hit by enemy fighters. I believe they were mostly Me-109s. The number of B-24's in our Group that was lost that day varies in reports from different sources. Some reported five planes on up to eleven. Well, as for the plane we were flying, it was hit on the first pass by the German fighters. By the time we knew they were there, we were being fired at. As Engineer, and being up on the flight deck in the top turret, I could observe everything. The damage was this: No 1 & 2 engines were out and smoking, No. 3 engine was on fire. The flames had engulfed the whole wing area. No. 4 engine was the only engine that was operating.

I reported this to Lt. **Herzing**, our Pilot, and it seemed that a long time elapsed, so I reported it the second time. But he and the Co-pilot, Lt. Filbach surely had their work cut out for themselves at that moment. Lt. Herzing then said to the Co-Pilot, "What do you think Phil?" The reply was "Let's get the hell out of here." The next order was to "Salvo the bombs and prepare to jump. Go ahead and jump."

Well, it was our first jump; all practice jumps prior to this were done on the ground, just to orient each person which exit to take. To complicate matters, after the bombs were salvoed, the bomb bay doors were swinging back and forth. After checking the swing of the doors, it was decided to jump as they were about to open, because they swung back almost immediately.

Well, we all bailed out and arrived back to the ground with a few bumps and bruises, banged up legs and backs, but other-

wise in good shape. I was told that shortly after we left the plane, it blew up.

We then were taken by German soldiers to a German Guardhouse, somewhere near Hanover. Within a few days we were shipped to Dulag Luft in Frankfurt.

We were held in solitary confinement for several days; and on occasions, brought out to be interrogated. Later we were shipped by boxcar on the railroad to Stalag 17-B in Krems, Austria. We were interned there until about April 7th or 8th, 1945.

At that time we were forced to march to Brauneau, Germany. During this forced march, which took a few weeks, we were fed only six meals - of slop. I think that a pig would have turned away from it. Once there, we lived in the forest until the U. S. Army came along, and we were liberated.

[The pilot (**Ernest Herzing**), Co-Pilot (**Virgil Filbach**), Bombardier (**William Ball**) and Navigator (**Gayle Dunkerly**) were sent to an Officer's Camp, Stalag 1 near Barth.

The non-coms were shipped to Stalag 17 -B in Krems, Austria - Engineer (**John Brown**), Radio Operator (**William Weiss**), Ball Turret Gunner (**Moren Hirsch**), Right Wing Gunner (**Alvin Thorson**), Left Wing Gunner (**Albert Leblanc**), Tail Gunner (**Francis Mahaney**)]

Ed. Note: According to Will Lundy's book, Roll of Honor and Casualties, the month of April 1944 cost the most plane and crew losses of the entire war. April 8th was the single worst day.

The mission to the Airdrome in Langenhagen, Germany cost the 44th eleven A/C; 35 KIA; 73 POW (with one escapee); 8 WIA; 1 seriously burned.

SWEATER GAL, RIGHT CREW, WRONG PLANE



SWEATER GAL # 41-100150
Standing L-R: Captain **William B. Earleywine**, pilot; 2nd Lt. **John H. Steid**, Co-Pilot; Lt. **Gerald Clinch**, Navigator; Lt. **Walter Tomaszak**, Bombardier; T/Sgt. **Willaim May**, Engineer. Kneeling L-R: T/Sgt. **Joseph Capossela**, Radio Operator; S/Sgt. **Michael Kellaher**, Waist Gunner; S/Sgt. **Ron Dieck**, Belly Gunner; S/Sgt. **Julius Carter**, Assistant Engineer/Turret Gunner; **Elder Williams**, Tail Gunner.

How did a 93rd Bomb Group plane get to be the background for a 44th BG Crew? Roger Fenton's explanation sounds logical: after the Earleywine crew completed their missions a member of the Ford Motor Company snapped their picture, then commandeered the plane for upgrades, then sent it to the next needy BG. This picture was discovered in the Ford Reporter on 1 August 1944.

Ginger Carter Schwager sent the picture, honoring her father **Julius Carter**, who was Assistant Engineer and Gunner in the 66th Squadron. Carter flew thirty-two missions during his nine-month tour of duty.

Ed. Note: Can anyone remember which movie star was labeled 'The Sweater Girl?' Answer: Lana Turner.



Lana Turner

ANNE LEHNHAUSEN SHAULES HONORS HER LOST FATHER ON MEMORIAL DAY

From the San Diego Union Tribune: *More than 60 years after her father **Edward Clark Lehnhausen**, died in World War II, San Diego resident Anne C. Lehnhausen Shaules says Memorial Day isn't for closure - her loss will always be painful - but about honoring our war dead. Here in her words are thoughts of the day she visited her father's grave several years ago in Luxembourg.*

As I looked over the sea of pristine white gravestones, I was struck by the magnitude of them. All these fine young Americans. When will we ever learn? Let us never forget the ultimate sacrifice these young people made for our freedom.

I finally got to visit my father's grave in Europe at the American Military Cemetery in Luxembourg. The experience was overwhelming. Not many family members were able to visit his grave site because of the distance. My father's plane went down over Holland on October 18, 1944. He was first declared "Missing in Action." It took a year before his plane was found in six feet of water...

Mom talked about how good he was and how movie-star handsome he became as a young man. But his actual death was never discussed. I know it was extremely difficult for her. She was nine months pregnant with me when he was killed. He was waiting every

...continued on page 13

day for a telegram from her telling him about the birth of his first child. He was a young man, only 23 years old, and mother was only 24. I arrived two weeks after he died.

I took flowers to my father. It was raining that day as we wandered around the lovely Luxembourg countryside. We saw an old barn, and my husband went inside to ask where the American cemetery was. I had such a sinking feeling that I had come so far and could still not find Daddy. Then I saw a sign pointing to the cemetery. We walked and walked, having no idea how far it was. The misty rain did not help, and our hearts were heavy. At last, I saw the sea of grave-stones, and I found daddy right away. It was a most moving experience. I got to talk to him at last. I felt that he was there.

The death of my father was a great tragedy from which my mother and all the family never recovered. I have always felt

that part of her stayed in a fantasy perfect world when she was young and he was with her. They were so young and so much in love. Their time together was so very short, only a few years. But up until the day she died 60 years later, she spoke of him fondly and her loss was as raw as if it had happened the day before...

I do not know if I ever will get back to visit my father again. But I am content that I was able to go at least once. I hope that my daughters and grandchildren can visit my father, as I do not want him to be forgotten.

All those brave Americans. How can we ever thank them? How can we ever forget? Four A/C were lost on 18 October 1944. The Edward Lehnhausen crew was flying in Flak Magnet. All members of his crew were KIA. Edward is the brother of Robert Lehnhausen, Commander of the 68th Squadron.

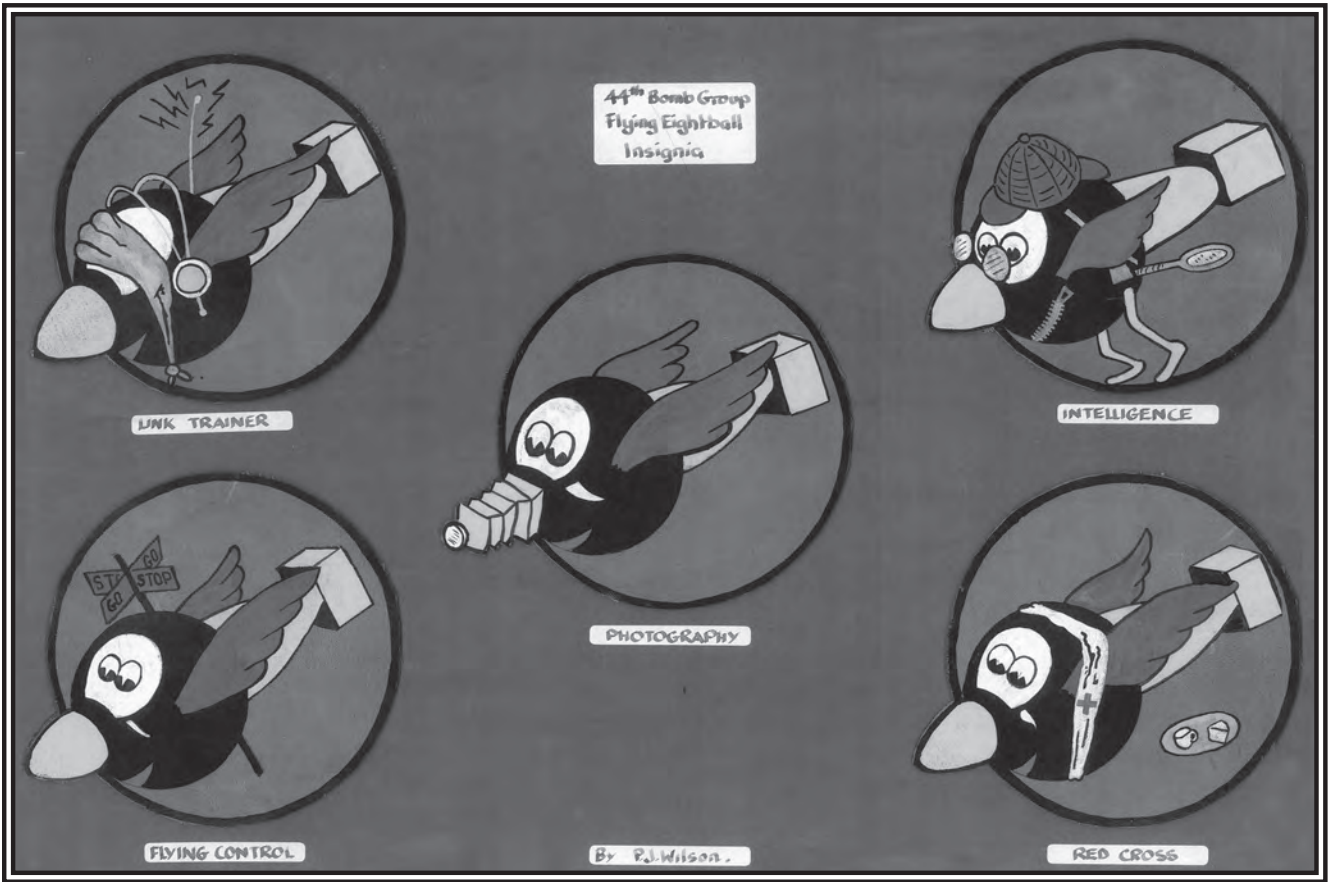
AN ODE TO ANOTHER FATHER

by Mary Esther Wheatley, (age 11)

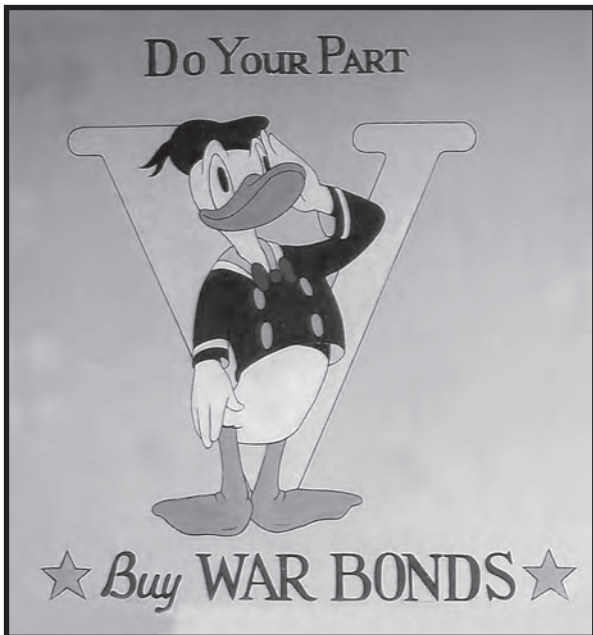
They say my daddy died. He did not die.
Why just tonight, I heard him fly
Above my roof.
Is that not proof
That he's alive and breathing where
The world is safe and free from care?

They say he 'folded wings' at sea
But daddy would have wanted me
To doubt those things.
You can't fold wings
That for a lifetime have been spread
To fly above a first child's head!

Tonight when all the world is still
I'll lean upon my windowsill
And listen for you, Daddy Bill,
And though the whole world fails to note
A fast approaching flying boat
With ghostly motors in its throat,
I'll hear it come, and I shall be
Proud - proud that you flew west to me
On wings that no one else could see.



This cartoon submitted by Will Lundy.



THE MIGHTY EIGHTH MUSEUM IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

The Museum is undergoing a major streamlining. As you will recall, the 44th BG placed a large diorama depicting the Ploesti Raid. It featured White Five, one of the refineries that Hitler depended on to fuel his tanks and trucks. About two years ago **Roy Owen** had the planes lowered to a more accurate level. (They advanced at tree-top level, and some were low enough to pick up pieces of corn stocks from the neighboring fields.)

According to Vivian Rogers-Price, Curator, the Ploesti exhibit will be part of a larger display depicting the activities of the Mighty 8th Air Force, which originated in Savannah. Included will be the nose Fightin' Sam, a contribution from the 2nd Air Division. A person will be able to enter the back of this B-24 nose, look down through the Norden Bomb Site and blast an imaginary target.

One piece of unfinished business is electronically placing a 'Voice-Over' on the exhibit. When Roy helped design the exhibit, he wrote a description of the Ploesti mission, which is printed on the base of the diorama. However, it is acknowledged that having a voice describe the event would be more powerful, as most people respond to sounds more strongly than printed material. **Tom Parsons** answered the call for help, and had a professional speaker

record the words on a DVD, which is now in the hands of the Curator. Hopefully, the project will soon reach fruition.

Currently the Mighty Eighth is featuring original art from artists who served in WWII. The exhibit is called "A Brush with Destiny," and features the work of men who were POWs, pilots, mechanics and other occupations during the War. An acrylic of a B-24 battling two Messerschmits over the English Channel was created by Charles Doyle. Some of the men who painted the unique nose art on planes are now preserving history through their art.

Anyone visiting the Savannah area would enjoy a glimpse back into the realities of WWII.

*Ed. Note: Equally impressive and worthy of its own exhibit was the raid on Target Blue, led by Col. Posey on August 1. This was the refinery that produced oil for Hitler's A/C. The Creditul Minier Refinery was totally destroyed, forcing the Luftwaffe to limit training and operations for the rest of the war. Among those flying at treetop level was **Richard Butler**, a former Board Member of the 44th BGVA, former President and currently a Board Member of the 2nd Air Division.*

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED:

Military Historical Tours is inviting members of the 44th BGVA to celebrate the 65th Anniversary of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in England. This organization works with FOX News, taking veterans & families to the site of airfields of the 8th AF. The first tour is 2-10 October. The stated goal is "To honor the men and women who helped defeat Nazi aggression by serving in or supporting the greatest air armada the world had ever seen-the 8th Air Force."

The second tour is 3-14 September, "Americans in Enemy Hands", the POW experience in Germany. The tour is working in conjunction with the OFLAG 64 Survivors Association. It will focus on the 350,000 members, 28,000 who became POWs during WWII. This tour is aimed at those airmen who experienced the German prison camps.

Contact can be made by e-mail: <http://www.miltours.com> or by contacting Major Bill McCullough, Military Historical Tours, 4600 Duke Street, Suite 420; Alexandria, VA 22304-2517; Tel. 703 212-0695.

FROM THE DIARY OF SAM CERVELLERA Radio Operator

3 May 1944 Mission #3

Fred Stone crew.

Target: St. Omer, France Visibility Poor...21,000 ft. *Shack Rat*

Temp minus 24

The target was a military installation at St. Omer, believed to be secret rocket installations... (V-1 site) It was 5 hrs. and 35 minutes long. We did not see much flak until we reached the IP. There we had a 25 min. straight flight to target with good visibility. Over the target there were clouds, neither the tail gunner nor I could see our bombs hit. I was still looking when we caught a burst of flak, not direct, but close enough to knock the boys around in the back. It was 2 ft. over my head, and I did not know about it till after we landed. Then we saw the flak holes in the fuselage. Those boys sure shoot straight over there on the French coast. No enemy fighters were around. P-51s swept the area. The flak was close enough... 27more to go...

8 May 1944 Mission #5

Fred Stone, Pilot; **Merritt Derr**, Co-Pilot; **Andrew Patrichuck**, Navigator; **Glen Hartzell**, Nose Gunner/Toggler; **Charles Brown**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; **William Strange**, Right Waist Gunner; **Robert Foust**, Left Waist Gunner; **Robert Ryan**, Ball Turret Gunner, **Morrie Meunitz**, Tail Gunner.

Target: Brunswick, Germany Visibility-- pretty good 22,000 ft. A/C #42-9997

Temp minus 32

Today we had the book thrown at us. Next to Berlin, this is the toughest target in Germany. Going in we encountered the usual flak, but it was inaccurate and not well concentrated. Just before the target we saw fighters forming at three o'clock and low. They were called out 'ME 109s and 190s'. After forming, they went out to one o'clock and started to press home. We were in the high formation and second element. That's just where they come in. **Hartzell** yelled out 'here they come' and let fly away, and so did **Brown** from the upper turret. They swept by, and **Strange** got a short burst at three o'clock as he kept going. He did not hit it, as it came by too fast. **Morrie** was going to get it at five o'clock, but his turret went out, and he couldn't get a shot. **Brown** came the closest to the 109s tail. In the meantime **Foust** was cussing the krauts because they would not come to his side. **Ryan** was screaming at **Stone**, to let him put the ball turret down, but it would have cost us the formation. The fighters made their sweep and did not knock out a single B-24, although they did some damage. They went around to form another sweep at 12 o'clock.

A formation of P-38s showed up; and Jerry seeing them, broke up and headed for cover with the P-38s in pursuit. We went on to make our bomb run and back to the Channel and home. Two B-24s collided over the target, but we saw no chutes. **Derr**, **Stone**, **Pat** and I had to sweat out the fighter attack, as we had no guns. I am going to get **Foust** to take over Radio Operator duties and shots too. I had to stomp on the bomb bays to get them to open, as the hydraulic fluid was frozen. It was tough... 25 more to go...

PS. We received the Air Medal for this mission...

Ed. Note: Will Lundy's book, Roll of Honor & Casualties, records the loss of one A/C from the 66th Squadron and 2 crewmen.

WWII NUMBERS

Americans who served in WWII - 16.1 million
61 % of U.S. troops were drafted - 671,000 were wounded
78,000 U.S. troops are still not accounted for.
464 Medals of Honor were awarded, 266 posthumously
90,000 men were POW
303,700 U.S. air craft were produced; 59,300 were lost.
Average pay for enlisted troops - \$71.33/month
Average pay for officers - \$203.50/month
6.5 million U.S. women entered the work force
55-60 million people from 311 nations died
50 countries were involved
12 million Europeans were left homeless
\$17 billion in US post war aid went to Western Europe
13.3 million pints of blood were donated to the Red Cross
420,000 performances were given by the USO

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

At one time the U.S. was looking for new ideas for winning the war, and serious consideration was being given to turn bats loose with incendiary bombs attached. A high ranking general in the weapons development department of the Army said he liked the bat idea better than that **'half baked idea of making atoms into bombs!'**

More Solutions of the Qantas Ground Crew To Pilots' Complaints

- P. Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.
- S. Almost replaced left inside main tire.

- P. Suspected crack in windshield
- Q. Suspect you're right.

- P. Number 3 Engine missing
- S. Engine found on right wing after brief search.

America is the land of the free because of the brave.

Graham Austin of Ipswich, England remembers the details of life in a country where bombs fell during many of the early years of his childhood.

"We had two kinds of shelters, the Morrison and the Anderson. The Morrison Shelter was used in homes. It was made of steel sheet metal and was like a big table placed down in the basement. When the sirens went off, the family could huddle under this structure; and hopefully, survive the raid.

"The Anderson Shelter was made of six inch corrugated steel. It had a rounded top, held together with bolts. The shape is similar to a cage that is used on airplanes for transporting an animal-but much bigger. It was big enough for a family to sit out an air raid. The soil was dug out, the shelter was placed in the hole, then covered with the soil."

From the Editor: Back copies of many of the 8 Ball Tails are available without charge. We ask to be reimbursed only for the cost of mailing. Call my phone number or e-mail me at the address on the inside cover of this magazine.

The *8 Ball Tails* is named for the identifying numbers on the tail of the featured A/C. Do you have a picture of your favorite plane, which could be used on the cover? Send it to me; I'll try to use it. (I am eager to learn what treasures are laying in our veterans' attics.)



Top left: American Red Cross Club Mobile, a traveling canteen, was borrowed from the London Passenger Transport Board.



Bottom right: Coffee and doughnuts were dispensed from the hatch on the side of the Club Mobile.

ONCE AN ENEMY...



Gottfried P. Dulias as a Cadet, Berlin Gatow, June 1944

Perry Morse met Gottfried Dulias at the WWII Celebration in Reading, Pennsylvania. Like other participants in the show, the pilot of a Me-109G was decked out in his German aviation attire, and celebrants were purchasing signed copies of his book, *Another Bowl of Kapusta*, (Cabbage Soup)

Morse and Dulias exchanged life stories. Morse was drafted into the army at age 19. On Miami Beach, Florida he volunteered for gunnery school, and in a few short months, he was flying in a B-24 with the **Beiber** crew.

Dulias was a member of the Hitler Youth. At age 18 he was summoned to Munich to be tested for military service. He was inducted into the Luftwaffe, became a trainee at the German Air Academy, and in six months was a fighter pilot in the 53rd Squadron, the Ace of Spades. He flew a Messerschmidt Me-109G, and was assigned to knock down the bombers flying out of England and the fighters that accompanied them.

Dulias claims shooting down two B-17s and a number of British Spitfires. The camaraderie of airmen was real, regardless of national identity. Within a few hours after shooting down a British plane, he met the pilot in a POW camp. The man walked up to him smiling, saying "Are

you the fellow that shot me down?" They shook hands like great friends.

At age 19 he was in combat; at age 20 he was a POW in Russia. Flying in *Gustav*, he shot a Russian 'Rata' and followed it down, wanting to photograph it and get credit for the victory. This took him into Russian territory; his plane was hit, but he managed to bring it safely to the ground. *Gustav* exploded seconds after he stepped out. From there he went on a starvation diet of Kabusta in a Russian Gulag.

Morse could report that when the war was over in 1945; he and his crew survived and returned to civilian life. Dulias spent three ghastly years in the Russian Gulag, returning to his family in January 1948. He could not return to his hometown of Konigsberg in East Prussia, as that was part of the territory which Russia claimed at the Peace Treaty. He and his wife Hedwig came to America in 1953. They rapidly sought citizenship and employment. They had three children.

Although Dulias shot down five planes, the Germans had no designation of Ace, as was the recognition in the AAF.

As the two WWII airmen agreed to stay in touch, Morse commented, "I'm glad you didn't shoot me down."

Ed.Note: At the Gathering of the Eagles and the graduation of the cadets at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, 16 Eagles were honored, among them, Gottfried P. Dulias.

He is a member of the Luftwaffe Aircrew Re-enactment Association, an organization of volunteers who participate in re-enactments for special WWII events. They come in uniform, but the swastika is never a part of their décor.

Why is it hard for giraffes to say they're sorry?"

Answer: Because it takes so long for them to swallow their pride!



MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Will Lundy**: Re the man on the front cover of the Spring edition of the 8 BTs:

"I was thumbing through Steve Adams book and page 52 found the same photo, but identified the man as: 1st LT. Fred H. Jones, the pilot who flew it. The man certainly is not dressed like an officer, but he does have a large object in his shirt pocket. It could have been taken Africa, where tans were worn, and most ground crewmen would have been dressed in coveralls, not khaki.



Can anyone identify this person?



From Arlo Bartsch, 44th Bomb Group Database Custodian: The 44th Bomb Group Web Site has been updated to include the latest issue of the *8 Ball Tails*. It also includes **Web Todd's History of the 68th Squadron** and **Norm Kieffer's History of the 506th Squadron**.



From Peter & Connie Loncke: The Air Force Escape and Evasion Society met in St. Louis, Missouri to reminisce the drama of Underground Belgium, French and Hollanders helping airmen who parachuted or crash-landed into their country. Three dozen airmen met with their 'helpers', remembering the dangers they faced from a determined enemy. Any member of an occupied country who was discovered helping an Allied airman would immediately be executed.

Members of the French Resistance, the Dutch and Belgian Underground, and partisans and soldiers from the former Yugoslavia led more than 2,000 U.S. airmen to safehouses and farms where they were kept and fed until it was safe to travel an escape route out.

Present at the Society' gathering were Peter and Connie Loncke. Peter has recently retired from the Belgium Air Force. He spent many years in his homeland, locating crash sites and informing families of his findings. He is married to Connie Crandell, niece of 1st **Leonard Crandell**, whose plane was lost in Belgium after dropping supplies to British paratroopers at Wesel, Germany.



From **Lee Aston**: Sixty four years later, the Ploesti mission continues to make news. The body of Lt. Archibald Kelly of Detroit, Michigan was found in Croatia. Apparently Kelly was a member of the 15th Air Force, flying out of Lecce, Italy.

The losses of the raid on 1 August 1943 by the 44th and 93rd Bomb Groups were so devastating, the plan was temporarily abandoned. However, as the War progressed and when bases in Italy became available, General Eisenhower made the decision to continue those raids (but not at treetop level.) Lt. Kelly was a participant in that plan. Eight members of that crew bailed out and survived. Two were lost.

The advantage of continued raids was that it tied up German forces, keeping them away from the Allied invasions planned for the coast of France. As German fuel supplies continued to drop, less training was available for new German aviators, making them an easy target for P-47s, P-51s and gunners on the bombers. *The 44th lost eleven A/C on the Ploesti raid, two of which were interned in Turkey.*



From: **Lawrence Cantwell** (66th Sq.) to **Will Lundy**: We arrived at the 44th in May '43. In retrospect, getting there was almost as 'hairy' as being there. Enroute to England via the southern route, we crash landed in Casablanca, with nearly a month delay in repairing the plane. From Casablanca to Norfolk, we carried a passenger, a captain, command pilot, ex-commercial airman. We

...continued on page 21

were lost over England in 18/10 cloud cover, low on gas, with no options. Fortunately, the Navigator located an RAF fighter airfield, the Captain took the left seat and took us through the cover, almost to the deck. He landed very nose high, hit the brakes, and ran off the end of the runway. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that without him, we would not have made it.

My first mission was on 29 May 1943 to the sub pens at La Pallice, France, replacing the Radio Operator on Lt. **John Reed's** crew. We lost an engine near the French coast, aborted, was attacked by 2 JU 88s, got away into cloud cover, lost instruments and wound up with an emergency landing at a Royal Navy Base in southern Wales. I was the bum on this mission who could not tune the radio to find out where we were. Thank God for the Navigator, who got us located with the radio compass. I resolved that day to learn my job when I got back to base-and I did, becoming a lead R.O., usually flying only when we led the 44th or the 2nd Air Division or the entire 8th AF.

I went with Lasco's crew to Benghazi for the Sicily/Italy invasion; but for the August 1 low level to Ploesti, I was hospitalized for over a week with amoebic dysentery. The Lasco crew went down over Ploesti. The survivors, **Henry Lasco**, Pilot; **Joseph Kill**, Co-Pilot; **Charles "Shorty" DeCrevel**, RWG and **Albert Shaffer** (LWG) were interned.

After returning to England, I continued flying with various crews, making my last mission on 8 September 1944. I turned down a commission, as it meant one more year overseas. I was sent home later that month.

Looking back now, I realize I've seen the days of maximum effort being 150 bombers with no fighter support (except Spitfires to the Dutch Coast) to 1500 bombers with a thousand 38s, 47s & 51s all around and over us. I have been on thirty five missions, including the first daylight over Berlin, a crash landing in an English meadow after coming back from Ludwigshafen, and never a Purple Heart.

That's true Irish Luck.



From Kevin Watson: The Remembrance Sunday ceremony in Eastbourne, England for the *Ruth-Less* crew is on the Internet:

[http:// youtube.com/watch?v=NqEvhkgxBAE](http://youtube.com/watch?v=NqEvhkgxBAE)

The story of the **Bolin** crew that was returning to Shipdham is told on the You Tube web site, as is the annual memorial service in their honor. Returning from a V-1 launching site in Watten, France in bad weather and badly damaged, *Ruth-Less* crashed on Butts Brow at Eastbourne. All members of the crew were lost.

An English gentleman, the late Arthur Smith, paid homage to those lost Americans every Remembrance Sunday for fifty years. Kevin Watson, a young man living in the area, convinced the Councillor Ron Parsons, Mayor of Eastbourne, to place a memorial on that site. Every year since then, a memorial service is held at the crash site. **It is a town that never forgets.**

Watson has written a book, '*Ruth-Less and Far From Home.*' Copies are available by contacting him at MonsieurKevin@aol.com.



From **Will Lundy**: If you think you are being snubbed by E-Mail messages bouncing back, please forgive. Blame my computer or blame AOL, but I am about to make some changes-a new computer. Try my other address: cwlundy@earthlink.net



From the Editor: A new museum is under construction at Normandy. The 44th Bomb Group is among the honorees at the new museum, by virtue of having been a participant on D-Day. The Flying Eight Ball will be proudly on display.



ABOUT BRANSON

According to Jackie and Lowell Roberts, the hills of Missouri are 'alive with the sound of music'. You will love being there. The deadline for registration is past, but register anyway. We will work overtime to get you into the hotel. It is important that you let us know when you are arriving. Our awesome Roberts couple have rented a van to transport you to the Grand Plaza Hotel.

Besides the planned events, you can opt to see Presley's Country Jubilee - Gospel, Classic Country, New Country and Comedy. The Welkresort Theatre offers a magic show. Jeff Gordon says his race car appears nightly. Does it also disappear? We're not sure.

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION GRAND PLAZA HOTEL 245 N. WILDWOOD DRIVE, BRANSON, MISSOURI 2007 REUNION SCHEDULE

LODGING: GRAND PLAZA HOTEL FOR 3 NIGHTS STAY

Friday, August 31, 2007

Registration 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 PM

Welcome Reception 6:00 PM

(Dinner on your own)

Sunday, September 2, 2007

Breakfast

6:00 P.M. Banquet

Cash Bar

Saturday, September 1, 2007

Breakfast

9:00 A.M. Membership Meeting

5:00 P.M. Cash Bar

6:00 P.M. Squadron Dinners

Monday, September 3, 2007

Breakfast and Goodbyes

OPTIONAL SHOW PACKAGE

Saturday, September 1, 2007

12:00 pm Showboat Branson Belle
or 1:00 pm Titanic Museum

Sunday, September 2, 2007

10:00 am Red Skelton Tribute
2:00 pm Veterans Memorial
Museum

44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

REUNION REGISTRATION

August 31-September 2, 2007

Grand Plaza Hotel, Branson, Missouri

Please fill out a form for each registrant

Please Print or Type. All Information Must Be Complete

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse/Guest _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Per Person Pricing: Single: \$456.00 Double: \$308.00 Triple: \$266.00 Quad: \$245.00

Please indicate bed preference: King _____ Double _____ Single _____

Includes: Welcome Reception, three free breakfasts, Hospitality Room, free parking,

Squadron Dinner. Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Chicken _____ Shrimp

Banquet: Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Prime Rib _____ Salmon _____ Chicken

OPTIONAL TOURS:

Saturday September 1, 2007

12:00 pm Showboat Branson Bell (with lunch) \$60.00 each
or 1:00 pm Titanic Museum \$30.00 each

Sunday, September 2, 2007

10:00 am Red Skelton Tribute \$36.00 each
2:00 pm Veterans Memorial Museum \$19.50 each

Payment

Number of Registrants (See Prices Above)

Single _____ \$ _____
Double _____ \$ _____
Triple _____ \$ _____
Quad _____ \$ _____

Tours: Show Boat \$ _____
Titanic Museum \$ _____
Red Skelton Tribute \$ _____
Veterans Memorial Museum \$ _____

Extra nights are \$99.00 per room per night, all taxes included. If you are planning on spending extra days before or after the Reunion, please inform us of your plans. It will help our treasurer get the correct information to the hotel.

Please send checks to 44th BG Treasurer:

Richard Lynch, 109 Jason Road, Box 518 Conrad, IA 50621, 0518



RECOLLECTIONS

For the past few months I have been collecting and combining as much data as possible about the 44th BG's participation in the low level bombing attack on the Oil Fields Refineries of Ploesti, in Rumania, 1 August 1943. The courage displayed by these airmen that Sunday morning was truly remarkable, where each combat airman earned all of the awards this nation could give to them. It was, after all, designed a "suicide" attack, but for most of these men, they were willing and often eager to be participating, come what may. They insisted on going, no matter whether they survived or not. No one can do more than that! So we must keep their deeds and their memory alive. Over all, five airmen were awarded this nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor, the most for any event in U.S. history.

When one traces back the origins of both the B-24 Liberator and the first Group to be trained in and on that new aircraft, one will find that it was our own 44th BG that fits that category. The 90th, 93rd and the 98th Bomb Groups were formed from the 44th BG in early 1942 at Barksdale Field, Shreveport, LA. Although the 389th BG did not have its origin from either the 44th or the 93rd, both of these groups supplied nearly all of the Ground Support personnel for the 389th BG during their first several months in operations. The Ground Support personnel for this new 389th Bomb Group were stuck on the U.S East Coast due to the shortage of ships, so the only answer was to utilize personnel from the 44th and 93rd Bomb Groups. Immediately, nearly 150 ground personnel from each of us were

rushed to the 389th BG, and then on to North Africa. So, of the five Groups that participated, only the 376th BG did not have roots from within the 44th BG!

The 93rd BG takes the honor of being the first Liberator Group to fly a mission in the ETO (European Theatre Of Operations), but they were only one week ahead of us, as we were delayed until after we had formed three additional Liberator Groups. The 44th was also short one Squadron, the 404th, as they were taken from us in July, 1942, quickly flown to Alaska to help stop the Japanese. Then, early in 1943, three 93rd Squadrons were rushed to Africa to help with the invasion of North Africa. So, in reality then, only four Squadrons of Liberators (approximately nine crews) were actually flying those early 1943 missions over Europe.

So at that time, there were only two depleted B-24 Bomber Groups in England to help the British prevent the imminent invasion by German forces. Our new aircraft, only recently designed, built and rushed into combat, had many problems from unsatisfactory equipment, was not designed for very high altitude attacks, which the accurate and very dangerous German anti-aircraft guns forced us to fly. Worse still, was the fact that even the clothing and equipment furnished to our airmen were not only unsatisfactory, but were downright dangerous, and caused several more deaths. Our machine guns would "freeze" at altitude (due to inadequate lubrication), so we could not keep our enemy aircraft at bay, no replacements of aircraft lost, nor killed or injured airmen except by volunteers by untrained ground personnel.

The arrival of the 506th Squadron in February, 1943, certainly brightened things a bit, but due to our heavy losses, we were still quite understaffed. Obviously, we certainly were losing the war against Germany, and the future looked very bleak. The mission to Kiel, Germany of 14 May almost put the 67th Squadron "out of business", with only Suzy Q remaining in service. Indeed, we were not only losing but there were very few replacements of men and airplanes. At that time I often was reminded of the fairy tale about the little Dutch boy who stuck his thumb into the small hole in a dyke until help could arrive. That scenario supposedly took place only about 100 miles from us, but seemed quite similar to our situation. Could we hold out until more help arrived? Surely our combat men had the same thoughts and feelings of futility, and worse still, how could anyone manage to survive a tour of 25 missions. There were so few of us, and so very many of the seasoned and well equipped enemy. Those were very, very bleak days!

For a short time in late May there was some speculation and several activities related to switching from daylight to night bombing; and then a period when we two Liberator groups started practicing very low level flying and even some formation flying at near tree top altitudes. Nearly all of us had his own opinion about this drastic change in flying procedures, but of course, most of us were quite wrong.

In late June 1943, when our Air Echelon got the orders to fly to North Africa and to bring along a maximum of four Ground personnel per aircraft, for an unspecified period of time, our airmen probably perceived that things surely would be better down there. There still remained a shortage of personnel and Liberators, but it surely had to be better than in England, the weather certainly would have permitted many more missions to be completed more quickly there.

When those several July missions in North Africa ended and the low level practice flights again resumed, nearly all of the airmen thought it great fun - especially the pilots. But when they finally learned the true reason for all of these unusual activities, it became very serious business. Shortly before 1 August 1943 it finally was announced that this would be a suicide mission, that it would be at a minimum altitude, and that if anyone did not want to participate, he would be excused, no questions asked. There were several men, and even a crew or two that had finished and exceeded their required 25 missions, so normally these men would have been returned to the U.S. However, all of those men elected to remain and fly this "suicide" mission, it being so important to our war effort. There are no records indicating that anyone having completed less than 25 missions requested to have his name removed from the listings of men assigned to fly that mission. They all insisted on going!!!.

Also, due to the fact that the bombing would be at near ground level, there was no need for a belly or "hatch" gunner. So, one of the gunners from each crew had to be selected to remain behind. Some crews drew "straws", others used different means to identify their extra crewman that must remain behind. It proved to be a sad situation for these men selected as they all had strong ties within each crew and NO ONE wanted to be left behind.

The briefing reports stated that this target was so important that, if they all hit their specifically assigned targets, it very well could shorten the war by six months, and probably save the lives of up to 200,000 soldiers needed to capture it by ground attack. Although there was a strong possibility that many of these airmen would be lost, EVERY airman wanted to participate! My personal assessment for this very strong response by our combat men is that it was a reflection of

the very, very critical situation and their accepted belief that very few of them would live to complete his tour of 25 missions anyway. The odds were so great against completing a tour of 25. If they probably were going to die anyway, then there could be no better opportunity to do something so very important, knock out those individually assigned targets, and thereby save the lives of so many ground soldiers.

Our combat men did not have low morale - quite the opposite. As a ground crewman, I had been present at my crew's airplane for every one of our missions in England, both for take off and return to base, for practices and for actual missions. These airmen had an almost impossible task to perform, but they always did the best that they could. I felt so sorry for them all when they arrived and struggled to load their gear and make preparations for take-off. It was heart-wrenching when they returned from many of those missions, even without any damages inflicted by enemy actions. Their equipment and their clothing were so unsatisfactory, to say the least. Even after over half a century has passed, I still cannot forget these memories of half frozen very young men as they tried to work their way out of their plane, ice hanging from their oxygen mask bladders and chin, many covered with frost, some needing help to walk, all due to fatigue, the cold, and their inadequate equipment - pitiful and heart wrenching memories. They never quit, but kept coming

back again and again, mission after mission. They were all well aware that the next mission could very likely be their last, but if it were, they were going to do the best to locate and hit their targets first.

It was only a few months later that the historic low-level attack was made on the Ploesti Oil facilities, with many of these airmen being our original combat men. So it should not have come as a surprise that they truly welcomed the opportunity to do serious and wide spread damage to their enemy's oil supplies. They did succeed in hitting their two assigned targets very well, with Blue Target put completely out of service until after the end of the war. White Five had been hit by others Groups in error, smoke and fire made it difficult to find, identify, and bomb their assigned targets, exploding bombs from other Groups downed and badly damage several of our planes. But this refinery also was severely damaged..

Bless those great airmen and thank them all for their "work" so very well done - from start to the finish. It is a shame that our American public have never truly learned how great these airmen performed against a very well trained and equipped enemy.

Will Lundy
P.O. Box 315,
Bridgeport, CA 93517





FOLDED WINGS

Having lost contact with many of the 44th BG's former members, George Washburn conducted a search in the Social Security Files. Many names which he found were of people who passed away before the 44th BGVA was formed. Some were never members of the organization. Nevertheless, they served in the 44th, so we are including their names in the Folded Wings, even when no information of their WWII activities is known.

*O memory! Thou midway world 'twixt earth and paradise,
Where things decayed and loved ones lost in dreamy shadows rise.*

By Abraham Lincoln (at age thirty seven)

ABRAHAMIAN, VANIG #19166 68th Squadron December 2006 T/Sgt. Abrahamian was an Engineer & Top Turret Gunner with four different pilots: **Walter Zerman, Clair Hill, Ray Suddeth** and **Elmer Kohler** (with **George Washburn** as Co-Pilot). His first of fifteen flights was on 11 July 1944. He flew in seven different A/C: *Lili Marlene, Flak Magic, Gipsy Queen, Gallavantin' Gal, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Corky* and *Lady Geraldine*. Abrahamian's last flight was 11 December 1944.

ACKERMAN, TRENT H. #19173 18 September 2003 68th Squadron 1st Lt. Ackerman flew his first of 34 missions on 6 December 1944 as Co-Pilot with **Joseph Gillespie**. Six days later he had his own crew, flying thirty three missions into Germany, one into France and his last, into Austria, 25 April 1945. This was the last day of the 44th BG's missions, thirteen days before VE Day.

The Allies were moving rapidly across Europe at that time, and bombing raids were directed to halt German production of war materials and slow the movement of troops by bombing railroad and bridges.

The Ackerman crew flew in nine different planes: *Lili Marlene, Gallavantin' Gal, T.S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Flak Magnet, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Puritaniical Bitch/Puritaniical Witch, Down de Hatch, Consolidated Mess* and *One Weakness*.

Information of Ackerman's death was located in the Social Security Death Index.

BAYER, ARTHUR #19377 20 August 1999 67th Squadron On his first mission, S/Sgt. Bayer was the Tail Gunner on the **Robert Stamos** crew, flying in *Amblin' Oki* on 13 November 1943. The second mission was to the Aero-casting works in Solengen, Germany, flying in *Seed of Satan*, with **Edward Taylor** as pilot. The target was covered with clouds, and they were bombing by PFF. On their return to the base, the plane was hit with flak and the crew bailed out into Belgium. The pilot was KIA; six members of the crew, Bayer included, were POW; two managed to evade, but were captured and became POW; one member evaded and returned safely to England.

Information of death derived from Social Security Death Index.

FOLDED WINGS

BEAUCHESNE, LIONEL W. #22824 66th Squadron 2 May 1997 S/Sgt. Beauchesne was a gunner on a number of crews, sometimes in the waist, other times in the ball turret. His first of sixteen missions was 5 November 1943. All of his missions were in France, Germany and Norway.

Most of Beauchesne's missions were with **Paulino Ugarte**, but he also flew with **Warren W. Oakley, Charles Armstrong, James Bolin, Donald Heskett, Robert Felber, William Strong** (Command Pilot) and **Walter Milliner**.

He flew in nine different aircraft: *Holiday Mess II, Bull of the Woods, Lemon Drop, Shoo Shoo Baby, Banshee IV/EZ Duz It; Scourge of the Skies, My Ass' Am Dragon, My Ever Lovin' Gal* and *The Banana Barge*.

Information about the death of Beauchesne was obtained from Social Security Files.

BECKER, MILTON #19350 19 January 2004 506 Squadron S/Sgt. Becker was a gunner on the **John C. Titter** crew. The Database credits him with 23 missions, flying into France, Germany and Belgium; and on D-Day he was part of the 14th Combat Wing that went to Colleville and St. Laurent. Becker flew in *Passion Pit, Shack Rat, Feudin' Wagon, Southern Comfort II, Ole Cock, My Ever Lovin' Gal, Full House, My Peach, and Joplin Jalopy*.

Becker's first mission was 25 May 1944, 12 days before D-Day; his last was 9 August 1944.

Information of Becker's death came from Social Security Files.

BURLINGHAM, WILLIAM A. "BILL" #19595 10 February 2007 68th Squadron 1st Lieutenant Burlingham was the Co-Pilot on the **Walter Franks** crew. He is fondly remembered by his Commander, **Robert Lehnhausen**, for his disciplined willingness to do what was asked of him in a pleasant and agreeable manner, even though he possessed a keen

desire to be his 'own guy'. Burlingham had fought the disease of Lymphoma for about thirteen years. With treatment, it had been in remission until last year.

Lehnhausen wrote, "Though small in stature, he was a huge figure of a man. He was always unafraid to express his opinion, but was never offensive in doing so. If it sounds to you that I found this gung ho young pilot a special friend, you are correct. He was not only a great friend, but he was a great patriot, worthy of praise and eternal remembrance."

Burlington's first of 33 missions was 9 September 1944. Although most of his missions were with **Walter Franks**, he also flew with **Jack Liebrich, William Ritter** and **John W. Vaughn**. He flew in such notable planes as *Louisiana Belle, Flak Magnet, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Gipsy Queen, Lili Marlene, Gallavantin' Gal, Lady Geraldine, T. S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys* and *Hellza Droppin*.

In the six months that Burlington was flying on combat missions, the 44th was bombing strategically to deprive the Germans of troop movements, fuel and equipment. During that time, Americans seized the Remagan Bridge over the Rhine River and had enter Nazi Germany. His last mission was 21 March 1945.

CLAUSEN, GEORGE A. #19772 66th Squadron 9 March 2007 T/Sgt. Clausen was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **David Talbott** crew. He flew five missions in two different A/C: *Hell's Kitchen* and *Scourge of the Skies*. His first mission was 20 January 1944; his last, 20 February 1944.





FOLDED WINGS

DEBERRY, HARMON #1966 1 January 2004 67th Squadron T/Sgt. DeBerry was Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Russell Pellow** crew. On one of his 28 missions he flew with **A. J. Hardy** as Command Pilot. Berry's first mission was 5 August 1944 at a time when the assigned duties of the Air Corps was to knock out air craft factories, oil refineries and other industries that contributed to the Nazi war effort, as well as bridges and rail centers to halt transportation of the German soldiers. Most of the missions of that crew were into the heart of Germany.

Pellow flew in *Glory Bee*, *Myrtle the Fertile Turtle*, *Judy's Buggy* and many unnamed planes. His last mission was 14 March 1945.

Information of his death was found by George Washburn, who searched Social Security Death Lists.

DERR, MERRITT #19988 1 April 2007 506 Squadron 1st. Lt. Derr was the Co-Pilot on the **Fred Stone** crew. His first of thirty missions was on 22 April 1944 at a time when the Allies were preparing for Operation Overlord, aka D-Day. On two missions, he flew with the **Thomas Smith** crew.

On D-Day the Stone crew flew to Colleville and St. Laurent. With the goal of keeping reinforcements from Normandy, their bombing raids included bridges, military installations, A/C factories, oil refineries and a V-1 site. They flew in *Shack Rat*, *Passion Pit*, *Feudin' Wagon*, *My Peach*, *Ole Cock* and *Sabrina III*. His last mission was 6 August 1944.

Derr was a life member of the 44th BG. At his request, his wife Francis asked that memorial donations be made to the 2nd Air Division Library in Norwich, England.

GAVETT, FRANKLIN #20339 66th Squadron 4 August 2002 T/Sgt. Gavett was a Radio Operator on the **William Ogden** crew. He is credited with one mission on 31 July 1944 in Bi U Baby to Ludwigshaven. Previous to his death, he resided in Bangor, Maine.

GUEBARD, VIRGIL R. 20486 506 Squadron S/Sgt. Guebard was a Gunner with three different pilots, filling all of the gunners' positions-Left and Right Waist, Ball Turret and Tail. Most of his flights were with **John Doctor**, later with **Thomas Smith** and the last with **John Milliken** on *Passion Pit*.

This Mission, 13 August 1944, was at the Road junctions between Le Havre and Rouen, France, an area known as the Falaise Pocket. Here a large number of German soldiers were entrapped by General George Patton in a pincer movement. The Allies were pushing forward across France, and the bombing at the Falaise Pocket was to prevent their escape and coming to the assistance of the German defenders.

The Passion Pit was hit by flak, #1 and 2 engines caught fire, and the crew bailed out. All became POWs, but the pilot, Milliken, was able to escape and return to Shipdham.

In Guebard's ten missions, he flew in *Flying Log/Pregnant Peg*, *Three Kisses for Luck*, *Passion Pit*, *Mi Gal Sal*, *Joplin Jalopy* and *Shack Rat*.

HARVEY, ARTHUR J., Jr. #20573 66th Squadron 4 December 2006 News of Arthur Harvey's death came from Evie Harvey. He resided in Honey Brook, Pennsylvania. The Database has no records of his activities during the war.



FOLDED WINGS

HESKETT, DONALD #20640 66th Squadron
30 June 2003 1st Lt. Heskett flew two missions as a Flight Officer; the first with **Joseph Flaherty** as Co-Pilot on *Princess Charlotte/Sure Shot*; the second with **Tom Hobson** as Navigator. He was commissioned and flew the mission to Wilhelmshaven as pilot. Eight missions later on 30 December 1943, *Bull of the Woods* was hit by fighters. Two of the Heskett crew were KIA. One evaded, was later captured and became POW; Heskett and six others evaded and returned to England.

Previous to his death, Heskett resided in Chandler, Arizona.

KABAK, SAMUEL #20872 66th Squadron 19 October 2000 The Database has no information about the activities of this member of the 44th BG.

KIEFER, NORMAN # 20916 29 April 2007 506 Squadron T/Sgt. Kiefer was a Radio Operator on a number of crews, most frequently with Capt. **James McAtee**, with whom he flew two historic missions-to Ploesti and Wiener Neustadt. His first mission was 22 March 1943. Before moving into the Radio Operator position, Kiefer served as Belly Gunner, Rear Hatch Gunner and Left Wing Gunner, flying with the crews of **William Anderson, William Strong, John Swanson, Nathaniel Graham, Harold Laudig** and **Norman Purdy**. At that time the air war was directed toward the slowing Germany's submarine production that was attacking convoys and troop ships. When the 44th Bomb Group went to North Africa, Kiefer was among the crews that bombed Italy and Sicily, then prepared undertake the most dangerous mission up to that time-Ploesti.

Kiefer flew in six different A/C in his thirty one missions-*Lynn Bari, Baldy & His Brew, Earthquake McGoon, Mr 5 by 5, Old Crow* and *Prince/Princ-Ass/Princess*. His last mission was 2 February 1944.

Norman Kiefer is best known and beloved for his historical account, *The History of the 506 Squadron*.

Report of his death came from his son, Scott Kiefer. He was residing in Dearborn, Michigan at the time of his death.

PETERSON, ROBERT CARL #21666 19 February 2007 68th Squadron Captain Peterson was a Navigator, flying with many pilots, most frequently with **W. D. Hughes**. His first mission was 31 March, 1943. Peterson was among the group that flew to Africa in 1943, engaging in missions to Sicily, Rome, Lecce, Austria and other strategic targets. He was on the low-level raid to Ploesti, returned to England, then returned to Africa and engaged in the second mission to the Messerschmidt plant at Wiener-Neustadt.

Peterson flew in *Lynn Bari, Captain and His Kids Ride Again, Little Beaver, Victory Ship, Calaban, Wing and a Prayer, Avenger, Scrappy II, Margaret Ann/Satan's Hell Cats, Flak Alley* and *Pistol Packin' Mama*.

In his 25 missions he flew with no less than thirteen pilots: **James O'Brien, Chester Phillips, Walter Holmes, Walter Bunker, Thomas Cramer, W. D. Hughes, Charles Hughes, John Reed, Robert Lehnhausen, William Cameron, Frederick Dent, Charles Benton** and **Homer Gentry**. His last mission was 13 February 1944.

After the war, Peterson returned to college; was recalled during the Korean War, and stayed in the Air Force, rising in rank to Lt. Colonel. He was married to Madge Elaine Burt, a marriage of sixty years duration.

Information of Peterson's death came from Lee Aston.

FOLDED WINGS

SELVEY, NICHOLAS #219996 506 Squadron 2 December 1999 No information is available about this 44th member. He resided in Blue Springs, Missouri.

An addition to the **William Vahrenkamp** obituary came from **Bob Lehnhausen**. Bob remembers him as the Mess Officer of the Combat Officers Mess, and his nickname was "Tex".

It is unfortunate that the occupations of most of the members of the 44th have not been recorded, particularly those in non-combat positions. It took the service of everyone to win the War.

WHITTLE, JAMES "JACK" JR. #22548 506 Squadron 29 June 2007 1st Lieutenant Whittle was the Co-Pilot on the **William 'Don' Edkins** crew. From 26 November 1944 to 20 April 1945 Whittle flew twenty four missions, the last with **Emmett J. Burns**. After VE Day, he survived a B-24 crash in England, an event which is not recorded in the Database.

Information of his death came from his Top Turret Gunner **LaVar Godfrey**. The crew flew in *The Hit Parade, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Joplin Jalopy, Consolidated Mess, Down De Hatch, Sabrina III, Phyllis* and *The Big Headed Kid*.

Almost all the Whittle crew assignments were into the heart of Germany—attacking Marshalling Yards, Railroad Viaducts, Oil Refineries, Jet Factories and Air Fields.

After the war, Whittle flew for a private firm, but was recalled to service during the Korean War. In 1946 he served as a bomber test pilot. He was sent to McClellan Air Force Base, and spent 18 months at a radar site at Mount Hebo in Oregon. He also served a four month tour in Vietnam and Taiwan. During his time in service, he rose to the rank of Lt. Colonel, retiring to Sacramento, California in 1966.

Whittle flew sail planes in Truckee and became qualified as a glider pilot, but his chief interest was buying and restoring vintage Ford Thunderbirds.

Whittle had an admirable academic background: a BS in Military Science from the University of Maryland; a BS in Administration from the California State University in Sacramento and a MS in Business administration from Golden Gate University. He and his late wife Vera Lowe had one daughter.

The following names of 44th BG members who had folded wings were derived by a search conducted by George Washburn. No bio exists of their activities, but in recognition that they were a part of the 44th BG, their deaths are being recorded in the 8 BTs.

ACREE, RICHARD M. #19176 68th Sq. 22 July 2004

ALEXANDER, WILLIAM #19196

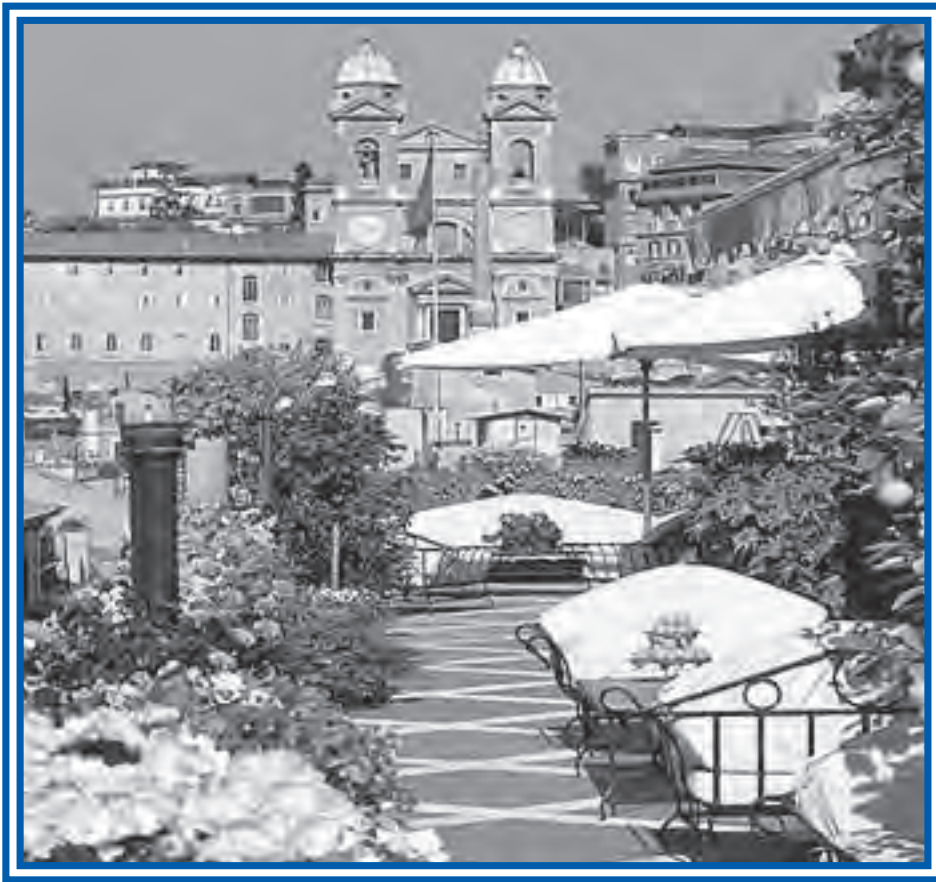
BALDWIN EDWARD J. #19287 28 September 1997

BALL, CLARENCE #19290 66th Squadron 14 October 2000

BALL, ORVILLE #19289 31 October 2006

BADGER, LEVI W. #19266 HQ 13 April 2004





*One of the great sights
in Rome is the Spanish
Steps. Its twin is the
Grand Plaza in
Branson-and you don't
have to walk the steps.*

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

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8 BALL TAILS

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Victory Ship arrived at Shipdham on 20 September 1942, and the **Walter 'Tommie' Holmes** crew climbed aboard for its Maiden Flight on 7 November 1942. Two months later, when the 68th Squadron was leading the 66th & 67th Squadrons on a raid to an Airdrome in Abbeville, France, the mission was recalled, whereupon the 66th & 67th turned back. The 68th did not receive the message, so they plunged onward and hit their target.

On the return flight, off the coast of France, an FW 190 attacked. A shell burst about a foot above the pilot's head, knocking out both pilot and co-pilot; a second burst knocked out the #3 engine and a third exploded into oxygen bottles just aft of the main cabin.

Victory Ship barrel rolled to the left and was diving steeply. Centrifugal force kept the crew from bailing out, and despite the roll, they kept firing. Minutes later when Holmes woke up, he looked through a hole on the top of the plane. He was staring at water...*Victory Ship* was upside down!!!



VICTORY SHIP NOSE ART



FIGHTER DAMAGE

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VICTORY SHIP

Lt. **Howard Klekar**, Bombardier, gave his pilot, '**Tommie**' **Holmes** a breath of oxygen, and he recovered sufficiently to bring the plane back to Shipdham., his head aching all the way. For this raid he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, British DEC and French Croix de Guerre.

On that same mission **James D. Du Bard** was flying on *Victory Ship's* right wing. The German fighters brought #41-23786 B down, and it entered the water with guns still blazing. Ten men were lost.

Twenty two different crews flew on *Victory Ship's* 50 missions. It was part of the formation that hit Kiel on the Baltic Sea. When the 44th BG went to Africa, this plane joined the bombings in Sicily and Italy; and when the 44th went to Ploesti, it was flown by Lt. Col. **James Posey**, leader of the group that hit Target Blue (later recognized as the source of Nazi air fuel.)

Disaster struck this trusty plane on its 50th mission to Escalles sur Buchy, 21 January 1944. Piloted by **Alfred A. Starring**, the plane was hit by enemy A/C, setting # 1 & 2 engines ablaze. The fighters persisted and the plane went down in flames. Five members of the crew were KIA; 1 evaded, 4 were POW.

This mission was very costly for the 44th BG: five planes were lost; twenty eight men were KIA, fourteen became POW, nine succeeded in evading.

Tommie attached that piece of flak onto his key ring, a reminder of the Abbeville mission. It's a reminder of what he survived.



Holmes was awarded the Purple Heart in a hangar in Shipdham.



'Tommie' was visited in the hospital by Kay Francis.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



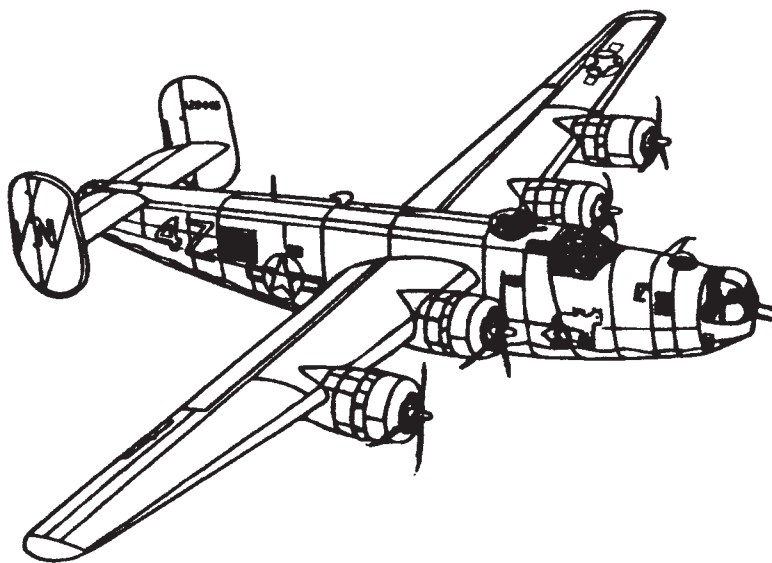
Organizations such as ours always have a few people who do most of the work required to keep the organization going. The two things that accomplish this are the 8 Ball Tails and our annual reunions. Neither of these would happen except for dedicated people like Perry and Ruth Morse and Jackie and Lowell Roberts. Ruth and Perry have spent countless hours dealing with the folks at the Army Heritage Center in Carlisle which we will be visiting during our reunion in October. As part of that visit there will be a ceremony honoring our esteemed commander, General Leon Johnson.

Jackie and Lowell, although living far away from Harrisburg in Oklahoma City, have travelled there to make arrangements. This should be an outstanding event and I urge all that can possibly make it to do so.

We still have about seven hundred members in our group. We have almost 300 life members and so far about 300 others have renewed their membership for 2008.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you in October.

George



WALTER 'TOMMIE' HOLMES' MEMORY OF PLOESTI

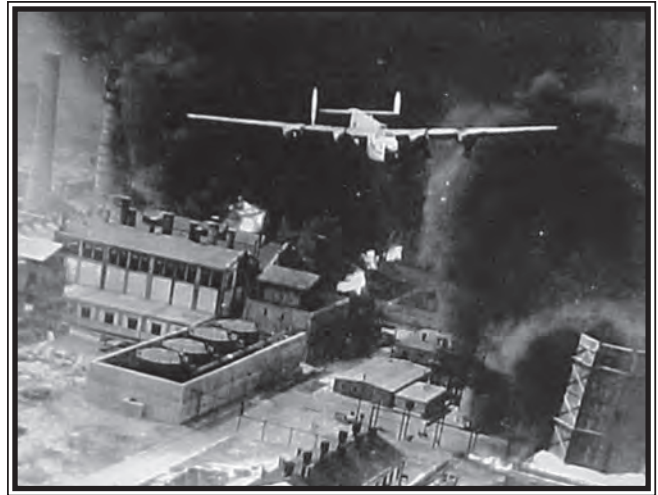
This raid – 187 B 24's – took place on Sunday, 1 August 1943. The target of this raid – one of the most important air raids of WWII – was the destruction of the Rumanian oil refineries, which furnished Germany's supplies for the Russian front.

Even before we left England in June 1943, we knew something big was going to happen that would involve low level flying. Since everything was top secret, we were told only that we were going to Libya, but we had no idea what a contrast in climate we would encounter, and how very hot and desolate this land would be. The temperature would rise to 130 degrees, and we would be assaulted by lots of hot wind, dirt, grasshoppers and scorpions.

While practicing in the desert we flew very low, which we enjoyed, but I am sure some of the crew were somewhat upset or nervous about flying into the ground. We did hit two hawks, one hitting the #2 engine prop governor, and a second hawk coming through the Plexiglas window in the nose, leaving blood, guts and feathers through the entire airplane, even to the tail. Luckily, no one in the nose was injured.

Benina – name of our airfield – was a large base about 15 miles east of Benghazi, where the remains of previous battles fought there were scattered all about – abandoned German planes, trucks and armoured vehicles along with thousands of oil drums everywhere from Cairo west across the desert. We lived in tents and were introduced to rations that we had not previously experienced – dehydrated foods – which were not particularly tasty.

We continued to practice low level fly-



PLOESTI

ing; and in between, flew about 14 missions over Sicily and Italy. We had no ice in the desert, so we took great pleasure in returning from these missions, drinking ice water frozen at altitude, eating K or C rations and listening to Axis Sally on the radio. To keep from perspiring so much, and to keep our clothes dry, we would remove them for takeoff and dress as we ascended. This may not have been Standard Operating Procedure, but it kept us dry.

To keep the sand from being drawn into the air scoops, we always had to be careful before takeoff to keep our engines at low RPM or turned sideways to the wind.

We lost our third squadron CO – **Tommy Cramer** – on 2 July 1943 – over Lecce Airdrome, Italy. **John Diehl** was promoted to CO and I became operations officer. I had finished my missions and hence did not fly many of the missions while at Benina. I did fly a mission to Rome where we bombed the railroad marshalling yards with strict orders to bomb only our target.

During the invasion of Sicily in mid-

...continued on page 6

July 1943 we were assigned to bomb the communication center in Catania. As we flew over Sicily we saw the largest armada of naval vessels assembled just off shore that we had ever seen.

When we were ordered to go to Ploesti, the mission was of such importance that we needed every available plane and crew, even though several crews had finished at least 25 missions. Capt. **Roland B. Houston** and crew would be doing #32.

Even though he was recuperating from a traumatic crash at sea a few weeks earlier, we needed pilots so badly that I had to ask **Robert J. "Bob" Lehnhausen** if he would fill out a crew. He graciously consented.

On the morning of the raid on Ploesti we were up very early for breakfast and briefing; and then to the planes for take-off at 7:00 A.M. We were eager to get started on this exciting low level raid after three months of practice and getting ready. All the planes got off okay and headed over the Mediterranean Sea toward the Adriatic Sea just east of Italy and west of Yugoslavia.

I observed a very strange event as we were flying at 8000 to 10,000 feet, just south of Italy over the Ionian Sea. A B-24 suddenly dived straight down into the sea. Later we learned it was our lead plane. I could not imagine what could have gone wrong. As usual, we were too busy to dwell very long on the unusual event and proceeded on with our mission. For various reasons we had 20 to 30 planes turn back. Most were attributed to mechanical failures caused by the desert sand.

We flew a loose formation over the

water, gradually climbing to about 11,000 or 12,000 feet, and then turning on a heading of about 70 degrees across the mountains of Yugoslavia and clouds which gave us trouble, but didn't stop us. Later, we began a slow descent down the east slope to the Blue Danube River – which was a muddy brown, I suppose from rains. As we flew lower, we could see the countryside cities, animals, people dressed in bright colors, as if we were out for a pleasant Sunday afternoon drive.

Before we knew it, we arrived at the IP (initial point) where we changed course and flew southeast for approximately 25-30 miles to the target. At this time we were flying very low, passing a downed B-24 on my right. It appeared to have landed wheels up, but fairly well intact. The crew was standing beside the plane, waving as we flew by. How I did wish we could land and pick them up.

Next we came upon a power line, and I remember pulling up to get over it, thinking of the planes on my wings. By this time the anti aircraft guns were in full swing and many shells were exploding all around us. This was the first time we had ever been this close to 88 MM guns, and the impressive thing was the rapid rate of fire and the flames and bright flashes which seemed to be 30-40 feet long out of the muzzle.

We were now able to see many of the other targets burning – B-24s were coming back, over and through us. One plane – Bar D – flew directly over the top of our planes. I looked up about 100 feet and saw a hole about six feet across between #1 and #2 engines burning fiercely with the metal burning brilliantly around the outer edges. I'm sure he did not go far

before crashing. The sky was full of B-24s returning from the other targets. They flew over the top of our planes as we were approaching the target, flying extremely low. Our target was less than a mile straight ahead. There were numerous guns around the refinery and they were all firing. We had one or two fixed 50 calibre guns in the nose for the pilot to fire, but I do not recall firing them. I was too busy flying toward the target to concentrate on a target for the nose guns. I remember seeing a ground soldier literally explode when hit by some of our 50 calibre guns. He was less than 400 feet away.

We had the target in sight from about 10-15 miles away, and now we were rapidly approaching at a very low level – less than 50 feet high. I remember very clearly pulling up to get over the smokestacks on the power house, which was my assigned target, and I feel sure we put our bombs directly over target. The bombs were delayed action bombs, and they exploded at intervals of 30 seconds to 72 hours. This was to keep fire fighters away from the refineries.

After releasing our bombs we continued on a course which led us to the southwest and toward home. The fighters jumped on us on the retreat, and several of them flew into the ground, as we were still at a very low level. Our gunners were well trained and experienced at shooting enemy planes, and they did an excellent job.

I noticed one B-24 trailing heavy black smoke from the tanks in the bomb bay. He was flying very low and about 200-300 yards in front of me. The smoke got bigger, and I knew he could not last

much longer. I never did understand why he did not gain some altitude in order to bail the crew out. After about 20 miles he pulled into a steep climb to about 700-800 feet. I was so close behind, I had to observe the direction of his nose, in order to dodge his plane. I turned to the right as he veered off to the left. When he stalled, the nose fell abruptly and three chutes opened as the men in the tail were thrown 15-20 feet above the tail section. I felt sure they landed okay and probably made their way to the wreckage. The plane passed under our left wing and exploded, which I believe ended in the deaths of all the men at the front – six, probably. I never heard anymore about this plane or crew.

We lost #3 engine as our fuel ran out because of a faulty pump. We were not far from the target when this happened, so we transferred fuel and restarted the engine until we were off the coast. In the meantime I ordered the crew to throw everything overboard – guns, ammunition etc. I remember the long strings of 50 calibre ammo snaking through the air and into the mountains of Yugoslavia. We saved 100 rounds for the top and tail turrets, in case we ran into enemy planes. We dropped behind after crossing the coast, in order to save fuel. All engines were reduced – both RPMs and manifold pressure. Our flight across the Mediterranean was uneventful. We encountered a number of low cloud banks and felt that each one would be over landfall, but was not to be until about the fourth or fifth cloud bank. It was nearing dark as we finally crossed the coast and our field was now only about 20 miles ahead. We proceeded

directly to the field and landed promptly, as we knew we were extremely low on fuel.

I thought we flew about 14 hours, but later records showed 13 hours and 26 minutes. The next day I was told by the crew chief on our ship *Wing and a Prayer* that we had less than ten minutes of fuel. He drained the tanks to be sure.

We were very tired but elated at the excellent results of our mission – 'Blue Target' which was the Brazi refinery – the largest and latest American built refinery in Rumania – 100 percent destroyed.

We were all saddened by the loss of fifty or more planes in the five groups making the raid, but especially touched by the loss of one of our squadron piloted by **Roland B. 'Sam' Houston**. He and his entire crew were lost. This plane was shot down by German Fighter Pilot Willie Steinman in an ME-109, whose story has been recorded. This was his second B-24, but he paid a high price for his victory.

German's story: "The American machine guns were spitting all around," Steinman said, picking up Houston's ship at about 150 feet from the ground, attacking from the rear.

"I cut back on the throttle and gave the Liberator a good raking from wingtip

to wingtip. I could see tracers walking across the width of the plane and flames coming out everywhere. The top turret and tail turret were shooting me up. I closed to within 70 feet. My engine caught fire and there was a tremendous quivering. My speed carried me under the left wing as the Liberator went out of control. I was caught between the ground and Liberator with no control. I slid open the canopy and loosened the harness. I don't remember crashing. First thing I knew, I was seated on the ground, pants torn and cuts on my legs. Near me the two planes burned. I got up and walked away. No one walked away from Houston's ship."

Houston and his crew were on their 32nd mission.

All of us felt the importance of this raid and had practiced long and hard to make it. Patriotism was very much alive in America on August 1, 1943, and most certainly in our crews as well.

To this day I am thankful I do not have to rise and make another mission. The experience was something we endured with hope and gratitude, but never desired to repeat.



THE ESCAPE OF SIDNEY BOLICK

After crossing the narrow stream that flowed between Switzerland and France, Bolick lay face down at the top of the bank for a few minutes to catch his breath.

When I raised my head and looked at the scene in front of me, I knew that I was in France. Directly in front of me was a mound of rubble that had once been a building. Although there was very little light, from my position on the ground, the empty shells of burned out and half standing buildings were silhouetted against the night sky. At first it appeared that there wasn't a complete building standing anywhere, but as I stood up and looked around, I could see a house here and there that seemed to have escaped destruction. However, in the light of the next day I later saw that most of them were pockmarked and riddled with shell holes and bullet holes.

Emile told me to follow him, and we set off down the hill toward what we thought would be the center of town. We hadn't gone very far when the muted beam from a flashlight struck us, and a voice called out in French for us to halt. We stopped in our tracks with our hands slightly raised in front of us, and Emile replied that he was French and I, American, and that we had just crossed over from Switzerland.

The figure holding the light walked up to us, and we could see by its dim glow that he was dressed in a patched up uniform, and that he carried a British Sten gun in his hand. He and Emile engaged in a rapid fire conversation in French, and while I couldn't follow it all, I did catch enough to tell that his name was Andre, and that he was a member of the Maquis

band that had attacked and killed or captured the German garrison that had been occupying the town. It had been a bitter fight, as the devastation around us showed.

We followed him down the hill to the center of the town and into a three story building (one of the few left intact on the street) that was the Headquarters of the Maquis Unit. After we were interrogated by their Commanding Officer, a Captain with the Cross of Lorraine insignia of De Gaulle's Free French Forces on his shoulder, we were given a supper of watery soup and bread, and were taken to a room on the second floor, which was to be our billet for the night.

The next morning two U.S. Army sergeants arrived in a Jeep. They were couriers, running the loosely held German lines along the Franco-Swiss border, and carrying dispatches between the liberated French towns. They put Emile and me in the back seat of the Jeep, with a fifty calibre machine gun mounted on a post between us, and set off in the direction of Annemasse, a liberated town just across the border from Geneva, Switzerland.

These sergeants had obviously done this before. They kept close to the safety of Lake Lemman on our right, and on two occasions pulled the Jeep off the road into the woods and hid while a truckload of German soldiers passed by, heading eastward back toward Germany. With these delays and numerous detours along the back roads and country lanes, we reached Annemasse in the late afternoon.

Annemasse seemed to be a fairly large town, and was the headquarters of the French resistance forces for the entire

...continued on page 10

Haute Savoie sector. We were dropped off by the American sergeants at a building on one side of the central square that was the Command Center for these forces. Here Emile and I were separated and taken into different rooms. This time I was put through a very intense interrogation, which seemed to be more about Emile than about me. The only identification that I had was my dog tags, but this seemed to satisfy them, and they told me I would be sent to Annecy, where I would be put in touch with an American liaison officer. I asked about Emile, but they would only say that he was being sent to a Free French unit, and that he had already left.

I never saw Emile again. After the war I wrote to him at the address in Paris that he had given me, but the letter came back about a month later marked, "Inconnu" – (Unknown).

I spent that night in a barracks in the headquarters building, along with five other Americans who had either escaped from Switzerland, or had been evading capture by hiding out with the French Underground. The next morning we were put in the back of a truck and driven to an old villa outside the city of Annecy, that was the headquarters of an American OSS Captain. He had been dropped into France by parachute to coordinate the activities of the French Resistance forces with the American Seventh Army that was advancing from the South, and he had radio contact with General Patch's headquarters in Lyon.

Annecy was a beautiful city built along the edge of a clear blue lake, with a breathtaking view of Mont Blanc to the east. Although the town itself was in the hands of French, the Germans were still all around us, making a fighting retreat

out of France back into Germany. Three or four times during my ten day stay there, the Germans came within a few miles of the town. When that happened, the French trucks would roll out of town, loaded down with a motley looking group of fighters, and a little later we would hear gunfire in the distance, which might go on for several minutes or several hours. Soon after it stopped, the trucks would come roaring back with the French firing their rifles into the air and waving captured German flags or banners. Each time this happened, our waiting got a little more nerve wracking.

Within a few days our ranks had grown to more than twenty Americans, as escapees and evadees who had been hiding out in that part of France were funnelled into Annecy. The OSS Captain told us that he had contacted Lyons, and that a plane would be flown in to pick us up. For three days in a row we were taken to a farmer's field outside town to wait for the plane, since Annecy had no serviceable airport. And for three days we sat on the ground and listened to the sound of engines circling overhead, then fading into the distance because the weather was too bad for landing.

Finally, on the morning of the fourth day, there was a break in the clouds, and we saw one of the most beautiful sights in the world, an old twin engine C-47 Goony Bird dropping through an opening in the clouds and making a bumpy landing in the field. It had barely rolled to a stop and the cabin door opened, when twenty of the most unmilitary looking Americans that the crew had ever seen, charged across the field and boarded it. Within minutes it was airborne again, and we were on our way.

We stopped at Lyons for refuelling,

and about three hours later we landed at the U.S. Eighth Air Force Base at Bovingdon, England. It had taken me just ten days less than seven months to complete the Mission that I had started on March 18.

I was at Bovingdon four days, going through debriefing and being provided with new uniforms. On October 12th I reported back to the 44th Bomb Group at Shipdham. Since I had been behind German lines in civilian clothes, I could technically be considered a spy if I was ever caught by the Germans, so I was not allowed to fly combat in Europe again.

I received my orders for transfer to the Zone of the Interior, cleared the base and took a train to Preswick, Scotland. Twenty hours later, after a twelve hour Air

Transport Command flight that stopped at Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland before landing at Langley Field, Virginia, I was back in the USA!!

Bolick had the experience of serving in the RCAF, RAF, AAC in the 44th Bomb Group. His POW and Escapee escapade was one of many unique experiences of our men in WWII.

Every time I find a story about the help that our men received from the Marquis, I want to go over and thank them. They risked death daily, as did our men. They are now in their 80's or 90's now, and they can always be proud that they helped liberate their country. Thanking them is part of the unfinished business of WWII.

Among the members of the DFC Society is President George Herbert Walker Bush. It is believed that he will be our last President with combat service in WWII. He was shot down while flying an Avenger off the USS San Jacenta; the target was radar installations on Chichi Jima, part of the island chain that includes Iwo Jima .

When you think about it, old age is a very high price to pay for maturity!!!

According to an unnamed history researcher, the expression **'the whole nine yards'** came from the ammo belts of the air corps gunners. They were 27 feet long. Is that true?

At the time of Pearl Harbor the top US Navy command was called CINCUS (pronounced "sink us"), the shoulder patch of the US Army's 45th Infantry Division was the Swastika, and Hitler's private train was named "Amerika."

All three were changed for PR Purposes.

Source: Col. D. G. Swinford, USMC, Ret.—a history buff

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

For the first time in the years I have been updating you on what is happening at your old station, I have to start on a really serious note. Over the past two to three years the airfield and club at your old station have been under threat by an ex-director of the club who wanted to take over the club and flying activities at the airfield for his own ends.

Fortunately I can now advise that his efforts have failed following legal action by our landlady Mrs Paterson, and that the club, museum and all that it stands for, now have a bright long-term future; but it had seemed touch and go on several occasions. The club members, three of its directors and Mrs Paterson and her family have worked long and hard to achieve this outcome and we are indebted to each and every one of them and delighted that it has brought the three factions that make Shipdham work, even closer together than before. So much so that Mrs Paterson's son-in-law, Ken, will now be part of the senior management team of the club itself.

For legal reasons we will now be called Shipdham Flying Club.

On to brighter things, weather permitting, the ground works of the memorial garden get underway January or early February. Club director Mike Artherton and Museum Curator, Peter Steele have recently been seen in a huddle in front of the club buildings studying the Memorial garden layout plan in great detail, so ...Watch This Space!

We welcomed our first American visitor to the airfield in 2008, during the second week in January. The Children's author Derek Benz dropped by to see the place where his wife's grandfather served during WWII. Her grandfather was William C Doughton. (506 Squadron) He arrived at Shipdham in Oct '43 as ground crew and stayed through the duration of hostilities until after VE day '45. At some stage he became Adjutant of the 506 Squadron. He folded his wings in the late '70's.

His widow is still alive and well, and Derek was able to phone home and talk to her as he left Norwich station to get the plane home. As it happened it would have been William Doughton's birthday, the day Derek visited Shipdham. As always the Museum team were delighted to be of service.

Literally as I write this I have just received an e-mail from the daughter in law of Lt Richard Hruby, also of the 506th Squadron, who is planning a visit to Shipdham later this spring. We greatly look forward to their visit.

Obviously the British winter weather is not the greatest on the planet (you may well remember that...it hasn't improved any!) and we get some good flying days and some that are total rubbish. Today as I write this, we have a total rubbish day with low cloud, occasional light rain and winds with a mean speed of 18 knots and gusts up to 30 knots! As the old Shipdham saying goes...even the pigeons are walking today.

All our best wishes from the Shipdham team.

Peter

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CAPTAIN MILTON FEINSTEIN AS REMEMBERED BY HIS SON



Captain Milton Feinstein

Milton Feinstein was born in 1920, the only boy in the family. At age 6 he contracted polio, and for nearly six years he was bedfast, recovering

from this crippling disease. When his parents split, tragic circumstances arose, and at age 12, in the middle of the Great Depression, he was living on the street.

Milton found his way to New Jersey, looking for his father, but found him to be a tragic soul, barely able to care for himself. Again, Milton was forced to live on the streets. He was able to earn 25 cents/day selling papers; and despite his unfortunate circumstances, he faithfully attended school. He graduated from high school with honors, and also excelled as a basketball player, even though one leg was three inches shorter than the other. Aside from the fact that he walked with a distinct limp, he was in good physical shape.

Feinstein became a Machinist Apprentice and worked in a factory, wearing clothes wherever he could get them. **Pearl Harbor changed his life.** He joined and received new clothes and three square meals a day. His son believes he chose the Air Corps because he knew he could not march in Europe or the Pacific on a bum leg. He started pilot training, finished primary, but washed out in advanced training, probably because of the limitations of his short leg.

This gentleman was extremely bright. He was a member of Mensa, and could do the New York Times crosswords in minutes. He could have been sent home after wash-

ing out in pilot training, and being the only boy in the family, but he insisted on serving. He was sent to Navigator School and passed with flying colors. Next he went to Bombardier School, earning a double rating. From there he was assigned to the **George Insley** crew, and along with Insley, signed up for a second tour, flying a total of 50 tours. (The records of three are in the lost April files.) He flew in the Bomb Group's last tour, April 25, 1945.

After the War, Feinstein stayed in the reserves, married Juliet Scheanblum, and attended Boston University where he received a degree in accounting. Then came the Korean War. He was called back to the service, served through the Vietnam conflict, earned a Bronze Star and retired as a Lt. Colonel. At some point he changed his name to avoid Jewish prejudice in the area where the family lived.

His next venture was to become Vice President of First National Bank of Arizona, now Wells Fargo, where he worked for about 10 years. He passed away 7 January 1991, leaving four sons.

Who is the son who shared this story of a man who rose from a tragic start in life to make a major contribution for his country? It is Roger Fenton, 44th BG Vice President and Historian. Roger is in his 35th year in Law Enforcement. He spent 27 years with the city of Tempe Police Dept. (Home of Arizona State University). He and his wife Lori have two children, a son and a daughter.

Roger worked with Will Lundy to accumulate knowledge about the 44th BG which he makes available to family inquiries which come via the Internet. He mails out copies of the 8 Ball Tails to prospective members, and jumps into Board projects with enthusiasm and expertise – all this out of devotion and respect to a father who was truly an outstanding member of The Greatest Generation.

GEORGE TEMPLE MADE IT THROUGH PLOESTI, AND WIENER-NEUSTADT, BUT FOGGIA WAS A DIFFERENT STORY

Ploesti: When **George Temple** got to Shipdham, his crew immediately joined the group that headed to Africa. Three missions to Sicily, three to Italy, then flying with **Eunice Shannon** as pilot, **Robert Lehnhausen** as Co-Pilot, they made the 13 hour trip to Ploesti.

Both Temple and Lehnhausen saw Lt. **Flavelle's** B-24 inexplicably dive into the sea; but the formation continued onward to Target Blue. Following *Suzy Q*, and seeing planes exploding and tumbling downward, and with flak, ME 109s and ME 110s creating havoc all around them, *Natchez Belle* made it through unscathed. They landed at Benina at 1800.

Wiener-Neustadt: The defences at the Messerschmidt plant at Wiener-Neustadt could not prevent a successful bomb run. Temple was flying with **David W. Alexander** in Flak Alley. The twelve hour trip ended happily at Benina.

Foggia: While those missions were going on, General Eisenhower was working on the goal of capturing Rome, which would be the first capital city to be taken on Europe's mainland. Troops had already taken Salerno, but he needed an airfield close to the port of Naples. Foggia, a German-held airbase, was the best solution.

George Temple, Navigator on *Natchez Belle*, recalled the attacks of 24 yellow nose Me 109s. "The first 20 mm shell hit the flight deck near the radio, setting the upholstery and other flammable materials on fire. The next thing I knew, two engines were burning and we started down on a long glide. All the way down

we were under attack; the waist and belly gunners were killed by enemy fire.

"At 18,000 feet the pilot gave the signal to bail out. He did a good job of trimming the ship and giving everyone a chance to clear before abandoning his post. We all jumped except the two dead men and the Co-Pilot. (Temple learned later that **George Hersh**, Co-pilot, had forgotten his chute. He refused the offer to share a chute with his pilot.)

"I opened the nose wheel and bailed out. I figured I needed a minute before opening my chute, and I was afraid that I would get excited and open up too soon. As I fell, I followed the second hand on my watch with my finger. When it had been around once, I pulled the cord and she opened up nicely.

"I was coming down in a valley with mountains all around me, but the last fifty feet seemed to come up in a rush, and I miscalculated the slope on which I landed, so I broke my left ankle. It seemed only a moment until an Italian farmer with a shotgun appeared over the top of the hill. He got me on a mule and took me to a main road where a truck was waiting. The truck took me to the local police station in the town of Atella."

A doctor took care of the wounded, then all were moved to the Provincial Hospital in Saint Carlo, a mile north of Patenza. Then..... on September 10 American forces were targeting the road lines and rail junction in town, and one bomb hit the room and stairway next to Temple. The prisoners escaped the hospital, spent the night in the mountains, watching the bombings. When they

...continued on page 15

returned to town, they were promptly arrested and spent the night in jail.

Two days before that, with Mussolini out of power, the new Italian government signed a peace treaty with the Allies. Italian officers gave the prisoners the opportunity to leave, but cautioned them that Germans were everywhere, and escaping would entail great risks. So they waited, engaging in a cat and mouse game with suspicious Germans.

On September 18 British planes dive bombed the prison, whereupon Americans and Italians alike set forth. The Italians gave the Americans guns, food and clothing and a safe conduct letter. Temple travelled with another wounded American, (**Ralph Knox**, Well Gunner on *Timbah-A-Ah*), scrambling into the hills to avoid the bombings. A friendly farmer fed them, an Italian officer directed them toward the safety of British troops. Just when his travelling companion could go no further, five twenty-five pound shells went over, so they shoved off again. Traffic moved past them, but they were not certain whether it was British or

American. So they spent another night in the hills.

The next morning a farmer approached them, along with a tall blond fellow in an unrecognizable uniform. Just as Temple was ready to shoot, the man addressed them in English. He was a Canadian.

Nine days after parachuting from *Natchez Belle*, he found transportation to Tunis, and then was able to get back to the 68th.

The events of those who flew to Foggia and went down were directly related to the politics of the War. It was a costly mission for the 44th. The 66th lost *Lady Luck*; the 67th lost *Suzy Q*, *Black Sheep* and *Buzzin' Bear*; The 68th lost *Natchez Belle*; and the 506 lost *Southern Comfort* and *Timba-A-Ah*. Three members of *Baldy & His Brood* were wounded. The pilot brought that plane in to Malta so the wounded could rapidly get medical attention.

In all, 33 men were KIA; six became POW; 25 were POW but escaped; 1 managed to escape and return to Shipdham.



CAPE COD SPECIAL

George Washburn recognized **Lou Rabesa** in this picture. He was Crew Chief on *Cape Cod Special*, in the 506 Squadron, later transferred to the 68th. Rabesa came from Cape Cod and still lives there, but spends winters in Florida. Once, while visiting the Cape, Washburn went to play golf and found the flying 8-Ball in the clubhouse. He learned that Rabesa had built and owned the course for many years. The 68th Squadron once held a reunion there.

**44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
HARRISBURG/CARLISLE REUNION
SHERATON HOTEL, HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA**

Lodging at Sheraton for three or four nights

Thursday, October 16, 2008

Optional Arrival

Registration 1:00-5:00

Friday, October 17, 2008

9:00 AM-5:00 PM Registration

9:30 AM General Meeting

Lunch on your own

2:00 Bus Tour to Civil War Museum

7:00 PM Welcome Reception

Saturday: October 18, 2008

Breakfast

9:00 AM Bus Tour to Army Heritage Museum, Carlisle, PA

Box Lunch in Mess Hall

7:00 Squadron Dinners

Sunday, October 19, 2008

Breakfast

8:00 AM Bus Tour to Gettysburg

Lunch on your own

5:00 Return to Hotel

7:00 Banquet

Monday, October 20, 2008

Breakfast & Farewells

*If you wish to stay in the area for a few days, notify the hotel on arrival,
and you will receive the reduced price. If you decide to leave early,
notify the hotel of your departure date when you first arrive.
Otherwise, you will be charged for the extra day.*

**REGISTRATION FOR REUNION OF THE
44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
SHERATON HOTEL**

4650 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111

October 16-20, 2008

Please fill out a form for each registrant.
Please print or type. All information must be complete.

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse/guest _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

PRICING, 4 HOTEL NIGHTS:

Single \$682.00 Double \$933.00 Triple \$1,207.00 Quad \$1,482.00

Please indicate bed preference: King _____ Queen _____

Includes Welcome reception, Three Breakfasts, Hospitality Room, Free Parking,
Transportation to Civil War Museum, Carlisle Army Heritage Center, Gettysburg,
Squadron Dinners, Banquet.

SQUADRON DINNER: Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Chicken _____ Cod w/wine & spices

BANQUET: Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Delmonico Steak _____ Chicken Wellington

PAYMENT

Number of Registrants (See Prices Above)

Single _____ \$ _____ Double _____ \$ _____

Triple _____ \$ _____ Quad _____ \$ _____

Please send checks to 44th Bomb Group Treasurer:

Jackie Roberts, 11910 SE 44th, Oklahoma City, OK 73150

TO OUR MEMBERS:

Once again, it was to our financial advantage to pay the hotel bill through our Registration Fee. We are staying in a Harrisburg hotel because of its easy access to the Harrisburg airport. Also, the fact that Carlisle is a Truck Terminal presents a problem for drivers.

The employees of the Army Heritage Center are eager to show their delight, that we have chosen this facility to store our history. Their current displays represent the Army, starting with our nation's early wars. The 44th Board has taken on the task of placing the imprint of the Army Air Corps into the fabric of the Education Center.

Our late president, **Paul Kay**, planned the Gettysburg part of the Reunion. It is so unfortunate that neither he nor **Will Lundy** will be among us. In their memory, we are determined that this Reunion will be a great success.

AN APPEAL FOR HELP

Before the 44th BGVA arrives at the Army Heritage Museum in Carlisle in October, the Board is planning to create a highly visible symbol of our great leader, General Leon Johnson. Many of the additions to the Museum must be by private donation. (The Center is under the jurisdiction of the Undersecretary of the Army)

If you care to make a contribution to the Leon Johnson Memorial Fund, please send it c/o our Treasurer, Jackie Roberts, 11910 S. E. 44th, Oklahoma City, OK 73150.



THE MEMORIAL GARDEN

Among the plans that are unfolding at the Heritage Museum is a Memorial Garden, which will include a 'Soldier's Walk'. Identifying bricks can be purchased. Each has space for three lines, fourteen characters for a price of \$100. For an additional \$50, you may have the 44th BG logo above the name.

If you would like to have your name or that of a family member placed on the Walk, contact me and I will send you an application. My phone number and e-mail address are on the inside cover of the 8 BTs.

Ruth W. Davis-Morse



S/SGT. WARREN MCPHERSON'S THIRD MISSION
KIEL, GERMANY: 4 AUGUST 1944
GUNNER, 66TH SQ., JAMES M. WILLIAMS CREW

The briefing began earlier – at 6:15 AM today. We took off in Bar M again, just one heavy bomber among 1,200, and headed on course over the North Sea. As I did on every mission, I studied everything below us. Often I saw the shadow of our airplane on the clouds, and if weather conditions were right, there would be a halo around it. That was always encouraging.

On every mission I prayed all the way and asked God to be with us. I sang the Doxology over and over. Behind my oxygen mask and the noise of the engines, I could sing as loud or as much as I wanted, and no one could hear me. I revised it a little and sang, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures *there* below. Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost." The more dangerous things got, the louder and faster I sang and prayed!

We noticed many planes from groups ahead of us turning back before we got to enemy shores. We passed over Helogoland, a small island in the North Sea where the Nazis had a submarine base. Everything seemed to be going OK for us when we passed over the enemy coast. As we began shoving out chaff, we ran into lots of flak. We went right up the Kiel Canal, and just as we started the bomb run, Willie told Copilot **Everett (Wellman)** to handle her easy, as No. 1 engine was going out! Willie also alerted Flight Engineer **Len (Leonard Schiavonne)** about the ailing engine. My

heart skipped several beats before the engine regained itself.

At last **Mike (Salvatore)** called, "Bombs away!" **Hal (Woodson)** was to close the Bombay doors, but he got so fascinated watching the bombs fall and the flak, he forgot to close them. In fact, we were all watching the flak like a bunch of ninnies. It was ferocious! Finally someone yelled, "Let's get out of here and go home." Our twelve 500 pound bombs were delivered right on one of Hitler's submarine manufacturing plants. Woodson finally got the Bombay doors closed, and we were on our way out. In spite of the flak, we only found one flak hole in the nose turret. This was a 7 hour, 15 minute raid with minus 21 degrees and a terrifying blue yonder!

It was always a tense moment when we saw fighter planes in the distance coming toward us. *Were they our? Were they theirs?* We constantly studied silhouettes of the fighters, both ours and theirs, so we could recognize them as far off as possible. It was a thrill, the moment we could tell they were our P-38s, P-47s or P-51s. Man how we loved those guys! Today P-38s escorted us. At times a crippled fighter joined us and flew close up under our wing, so we could protect him.

Ed. Note: McPherson's Doxology and prayers reached the Highest Level. According to the Roll of Honor, no planes were lost on that mission. When the War was over, McPherson fulfilled a lifelong dream. He became a minister.

MARVIN W. COX HONORED IN PORT GIBSON, MS

The memory of **Marvin Cox** has become a part of the prestigious Chamberlain Hunt Military Academy in Port Gibson, MS, one of the few Christian military academies left in the U.S. Donna Cox Bozarth, daughter of Marvin Cox, and her husband helped a young man in need of structure in his life, so they sent him to this Academy. Their goal of helping this young man was so successful, he has been accepted at two Mississippi colleges, and is anticipating acceptance at the Citadel.

Next this benevolent couple provided the funds to build a new cafeteria on the campus, and the cafeteria will be named for Donna's father; it will be called the *Cox Cafeteria*.

Inside this beautiful facility will be a meeting area for small groups. The plan is for the room to resemble a man's study...with bookcases, leather chairs, desk, etc. The room will also be used to tell the story of Marvin Cox's service in WWII. On display will be his dress uniform and pictures of his experiences in England.

In addition, the building will house a mini-museum about WWII. Of course, The Flying Eight Balls will be highlighted.

Bob Lehnhausen had a warm relationship with Marvin Cox, remembering him as the flight engineer on the **Jim O'Brien** crew, one of the 68th original nine crews that constituted the Squadron as it began operations.

"Cox's combat career was ended when he had the misfortune of ruptured ear drums. He flew one more mission after that, then asked to be assigned to the Squadron Engineering Section where he became a valuable aircraft mechanic.

Like the rest of that wonderful group of 'grease monkeys', he spent the duration nursing those big ugly birds for those of us who depended upon their talent and skills for our survival."

"In my conversation with Mrs. Bozarth, I was in awe of what she and her husband have chosen to do to honor the memory and patriotism of her father. In our conversation she sounded just like Will Lundy in her desire to let succeeding generations know what sacrifices were made in those days, to insure the liberty that most of the rest of the world enjoys because of those frightful years of youthful dedication."

REMEMBERING THE O'BRIEN CREW

Every story has an addendum, and the Marvin Cox story aroused this memory with Lehnhausen.

"Looking at the record causes me to reflect, once again, upon the rigors of those early days at Shipdham. **Jim O'Brien** was a superb airman, he had a very fine crew. This crew had a terrible experience on the Wilhelmshaven mission of 27 January 1943. They survived a vicious fighter attack upon their plane, although two of the crew were KIA and two were WIA. The 68th also lost the crews and airplanes of Lt. **Nolan Cargile** and Lt. **Maxwell Sullivan** on that mission. One of the Sullivan crew managed to parachute to safety, but was so badly wounded that he was later repatriated by the Germans."

"Major **Francis MacDuff**, the 68th CO returned to the States on April 12, 1943 and Jim O'Brien became the new CO."

On 14 May 1943 the 44th flew the famous Kiel mission. **Malcolm Howell**, O'Brien's original co-pilot, had been checked out as a first pilot and had taken

over the O'Brien crew. This was to be his first mission as the pilot. Jim O'Brien opted to fly as Howell's co-pilot. In the course of battle, the Germans shot down this very fine crew. Howell was KIA, O'Brien became a POW. Because of his ear problem, Marvin Cox was not with his crew on these two fateful missions.

"Consider this though: Of these nine men on the O'Brien crew, who left the States with such high hopes in their combined airmanship and skills, only two completed a combat tour. Three were

killed in action, two were shot down and became prisoners of war. One was wounded in action, so severely that he never flew again, and Marvin suffered a disability that ended his combat career. It took a lot of pluck to enjoy high morale when one gave thought to such odds, but that was Shipdham in the Spring of 1943. Better yet, this was the situation in the whole of the 8th Air Force at that time."

FROM THE EDITOR TO THE SECOND GENERATION:

In this issue I have received two powerful stories from sons, told about their fathers, Roger Fenton; and in the *Folded Wings*, Leon Lowenthal. At Branson, Coleman Vickery brought a book, written and cartooned by his father, Eugene Vickery.

Ken Burns, the famous video producer of "The War", has expressed sincere regrets that he never talked to his father about his WWII experiences. As he expressed, "When a veteran dies without his story being told, it is like a library burning down." (How true)

Did your father keep a record of his war experiences? If he is still with you, talk him into recording it on a tape. If he is gone, write the things he told you. WWII was unique in our country's history. 44th Bomb Group members are a part of the path that led to victory. Put it in writing.

**FROM THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS NEWS:
BASIC FLYING RULES:**

"Try to stay in the middle of the air. Do not go near the edges of it. The edges of the air can be recognized by the appearance of ground, buildings, sea, trees and interstellar space. It is much more difficult to fly there."

MISSIONS IN POETRY

As remembered by Douglas D. McPhee In honor of his Navigator, Jim Richardson On his 50th Wedding Anniversary

*After a long and weaving voyage across the deep blue sea
We finally landed in England, our whole crew and me.*

*Then with our former lives to ponder,
Off we flew into the "Wild Blue Yonder
To give those Nazis their come-up-ance,
Once they shot flak, trying to stun us.*

As we cruised to 22,000 feet in the sky

*Jim Flaherty saw the Plexiglas fly,
As the flak shot all around in his turret
And at 53 below, a strong wind current,*

*But we kept flying high in the air,
The cold cold wind a hardship to bear
Luckily Dick, who was gunning the tail
Just as the flak from those Germans did sail.*

*Right over his head, just passed his ear,
Had just bent down to adjust some of this gear.
Surely God was with him where he had been sitting;*

We had to agree the situation was fitting.

*Whitey and Mac each losing his mask,
Each saving the other, as that was his task.*

Trying to fly back with the engines on fire,

We landed in Paris and had to inquire,

*Who will be stuck guarding the plane on the ground
While the rest of the crew made the rounds of the town?*

Well, Mac did, of course, while the others had fun,

Mac guarded the plane with his life and his gun.

After 25 missions and four Oak Leaf Clusters,

The Germans are finished, and now we find

We can go back to our homes that we left behind.

As in the Battle of the Bulge when the weather was bad,

We are now stuck in England. How sad!

*Again Iceland and Newfoundland
More delay- Will we get back to the USA?*

To all of our officers and all our crew

For getting us home safely, we all

Thank you!



S/SGT. DOUGLAS D.
MCPHEE

Ed. Note: The trip to Orly Air Field in France after a mission to Dresden. The Bombardier who saw Plexiglas fly was Jim Flaherty. The Tail Gunner was Diego Indelicatto.

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Two members of the 44th BGVA attended the 8th AFHS Reunion in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in July 2008. **Tom Parsons**, formerly a Board Member, and **Frank Schaeffer** have been diligent members of this organization. The AFHS are strong supporters of the Mighty Eighth Museum in Pooler, Georgia, the area in which the Eighth Air Force began in 1942. The renowned author, Roger Freeman, named it the "Mighty Eighth".

Membership in this organization includes those who flew in B-24s, B-17s, P-38s, P-47s and P-51s.

Half of the U.S. Army Air Force's casualties were suffered by the 8th AF—more than 47,000 casualties, more than 26,000

dead. 17 Medals of Honor were awarded to 8th AF flyers; plus 220 Distinguished Service Crosses and 442,000 Air Medals. Thanks to the diligence of **Lee Aston**, the number of awards are still growing.



Frank Schaeffer and Tom Parsons

THERE WAS A V-3 ROCKET



V-3 Rocket

The 9th Army found this awesome weapon near Danberg, Germany—a piloted 'Buzz Bomb'. In fact there were nearly 1,000 of them in a well camouflaged factory which workers unsuccessfully tried to destroy before evacuating. It is assumed that the pilot bails out when approaching his target.

For Sale: 8th Air Force Suncatcher, a fundraiser for the 44th BGVA. Here's a decorative item for your window or your local VFW, a great reminder of the most powerful aerial group in history—The Mighty Eighth Air Force. Diameter: 11.5 inches. Price: \$100 + \$20 shipping. Call **Lee Aston:** (706) 283-1337. E-Mail leeaston@elberton.net



THE 44TH BOMB GROUP PX

When we lost Sam Miceli, the PX was boxed and dropped into the hands of Dick & Betty Lynch. An appeal in the 8 Ball Tails brought a wonderful phone call from Don Prater, volunteering to help. Here is what is available:

Blue Liberator Shirts	\$30 + \$4 postage	List size
Flying 8 Ball Shirts	\$25 + \$4 postage	List size
Flying 8 Ball Golf Caps	\$15 + \$3 postage	Indicate Squadron
Flying 8 Ball Pins	\$ 5 + \$1 postage	Indicate Squadron
44th Bumper Stickers	\$ 2 + \$0.50 postage	

Contact Don Prater, 1608 E. Candlestick Drive, Tempe, AZ 85283.

Phone 480 820-3838 E-Mail donprater@msn.com

Make checks payable to the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association

DON PRATER, MANAGER OF THE PX

When we lost our devoted shopkeeper, **Sam Miceli**, we requested someone to step up and become our new salesman. Don Prater, a member of the 44th Bomb Wing, called and offered his services.

The 44th Bomb Wing evolved from the Bomb Group, and was active in the Korean War. Through the influence of **Will Lundy**, Prater joined the 44th BGVA and attended the Reunion in St. Louis. He has fond memories of dining with **Bob Lehnhausen, Bill Cameron and Roy Owen**.

Since then he has organized his own group, the Air Police Unit, and arranges reunions with them.

Prater sells 44th BG products from his own home; his wife Phyllis runs a home jewelry business. The couple have adopted a little boy, so they keep busy with their many chores.

His decision to volunteer for PX salesmanship is based on his true admiration and appreciation for those who flew the dangerous skies during WWII. ***The 44th is truly grateful for his service.***

TO ALL MEMBERS:

One of the biggest chores that the Board has undertaken is to place the 44th Bomb Group History in every historical museum and library that can be reached. As the Folded Wings list grows, more great heroes are lost. Their wartime experiences should never be forgotten. If you have a contact with any historical library, ask the librarian whether they will accept copies of the 8 Ball Tails. Let me know, and I will promptly send them a bundle. My phone number and address are on the inside cover.

Ruth Davis-Morse, Editor



FOLDED WINGS

*Remember all the best of our past moments...
And so to where I wait come gently on.*

Ellen Terry

BALLES, LLOYD R. Date of Death 28 September 2007. The family reported that Balles served as a Bombardier with the 44th BG. For unknown reasons, he is not in the Database.

BOENSCH, PAUL A. #19440 506 Squadron 25 January 2008 1st Lt. (later Major) Boensch was a Bombardier on the **George M. Beiber** crew. His first of 35 missions was 7th July 1944. The crew learned of D-Day when they were enroute to England, and had stopped in Greenland for refueling.

The Beiber crew flew in eight different A/C: *Consolidated Mess, My Peach, My Gal Sal, Down De Hatch, Lakanookie, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Joplin Jalopy* and *Sabrina III*.

While stationed in Shipdham, Boench joined Major **Larry Linck** in establishing the 44th Bomb Group Band, into which they enlisted any GI with musical skills to join in entertaining various groups—American and British. Among the areas where they performed was the prestigious Black Friars Castle. Boench fondly remembered taking off his flight outfit and immediately dressing for a musical performance.

After the War he became a teacher of Instrumental Music in the Memphis City Schools. He remained in the Air Force Reserves, and during the Korean Conflict he became Civilian Recreation Leader for the 516th/463rd TCW of the USAF in Memphis. He organized and directed a Voluntary Military Band and Orchestra; through his musical service he rose to the rank of Major.

Boensch and his late wife Helen had five boys and one girl; two boys are deceased. Their son Paul rose to Lt. Col in the Army, James became a Major in the Air Force,

William became a Master Chief Petty Officer in the Navy.

Boench passed away in the Tennessee State Veteran Home in Humboldt, Tennessee.

BOYKIN SR., RICHARD A. #19487 506 Squadron 3 December 2006 Captain Boykin was a Navigator on many crews, most frequently with **James Clement**. He also flew with **Earl Johnson, James Bunce, Jr., Lyle S. Davenport** and **Sylvester Hunn**, and with ten different Command Pilots: **David Saylor, Addison C. Davis, Eugene Snaveley, Marion Tiemenier, A. T. Reed, Charles Hughes, J. G. Merrell, Dale Benadom, James Stevens** and **Joy Smith**.

Boykin flew in many unnamed planes, also in *Sad Sack II, M'Darling* and *Prince/Princess/Princess*. His first mission 1 October 1943 was part of the 8th Air Force's preparation for D-Day. The importance of these missions is exemplified by the number of Command Pilots that led the formations. Frequently flying in the lead plane, Boykin's navigational skills were invaluable through 8 April 1945 when he flew his last mission, his thirty third.

Upon his return to the States he married to Margaret Lillian Rumble, then attended Washington Lee University, graduating with a degree in history. After graduation he worked for International Paper Company; later he established a custom furniture company in Matthews, Virginia. The couple had four children, many grandchildren and many great-grandchildren.

BROWNING, FREDRICH #19556 67th Squadron 26 August 2007 The Database has no information on this 44th BG member.



FOLDED WINGS

BURLINGAME, WILLIAM A. #19595 68th Squadron 19 February 2007 1st Lt. Burlingame was the Co-Pilot on the **Walter Franks** crew. He started as a Flight Officer, later rising to 1st Lt. His first of 32 missions was on 9 September 1944.

Burlingame flew with four different crews, including that of **Jack Liebrich, William Ritter** and **John Vaughn**. He flew in many unnamed planes, also in *Flak Magnet, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Gipsy Queen, Lili Marlene, Lady Geraldine, T. S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Hellza Droppin* and *Louisiana Belle*. His last mission was 21 March 1945.

Previous to his death, Burlingame and his wife Elna resided in Canon, Colorado.

COLLINS, ELWOOD #233251 68th Squadron Passed away Summer 2006 Lt. Collins was the Bombardier on the **Eustice Shannon** crew. He flew all missions with Shannon; the Navigator on that crew was **George Temple**. On the mission to Ploesti, Co-pilot was **Robert Lehnhausen**.

Upon arrival to Shipdham, the Shannon crew was immediately assigned to North Africa. Collins's first mission was 6 July 1943 to Sicily. The crew flew several missions to Sicily, then to Italy, Romania, Weiner-Neustadt and Foggia. His first flight to Foggia was uneventful; on a return trip on 16 August 1943, *Natchez Belle* was brought down by enemy fighters. He spent 18 months in Stalag 17A.

All of Collins's ten missions were flown on the *Natchez Belle*, except for one on *Eager Eve/Hag Mag/The Moth Ball Queen*.

Information about Collins demise came from his niece.

COX, MARVIN W. #19855 68th Squadron 11 September 2004. T/Sgt. Cox was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **James O'Brien** crew. His first mission was 7 November 1942, flying with **James Hodges** as Command Pilot. He flew a total of eight missions, but was grounded because of ruptured ear drums, whereupon he was transferred to the Squadron Engineering Section where he became a skilled A/C Mechanic. All of his missions were in *Rugged Buggy*, except the last which was on the *Miss Virginia*, piloted by **Wilmer Garrett** on 29 May 1943.

Cox and his wife Grace lived in Mississippi until his death. They are fondly remembered for hosting a reunion in Biloxi, MS. Grace is currently living in a retirement facility in Ridgeland, MS. Their daughter, Donna Bozarth lives in Orlando, Florida.

DELANEY, WILLIAM J. 13 June 2002 Name from Social Security Records. No information available.

DELLAFAVE, CARMEN R. 6 June 1999 No information available

DEUTSCH, ALAN S. #32968 66th Squadron Date Unknown. S/Sgt. Deutsch was a gunner on the **George R. Insley** crew. In his two tours, 48 missions, which began 27 September 1943, he served in all gun positions. The Database credits Deutsch with having flown in no less than thirteen A/C: *Nice & Naughty, Big Banner, The Banshee, Avenger, Lemon Drop, Scourge of the Skies, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Patsy Ann II, My Ass'Am Dragon, Shoo Shoo Baby, M'Darling, Southern Comfort III* and *Joplin Jalopy*. All missions were flown with Insley, but also with three different Command Pilots: **Sylvester Hunn, Devon Davis** and **Joy Smith**. Deutsch's last mission was 15 February 1945. When he became a member of the 44th BG, he listed his home state as New York.



FOLDED WINGS

DWELLE, LEONARD #22965 66th Squadron
Date of Death Unknown 2nd Lt. Dwell was a Bombardier, flying most of his missions on the **George Insley** crew. His first mission was 27 September 1943. He was Wounded in Action on 8 April 1943, separating him from his crew for a period of time. He flew with the following crews: **H. K. Landahl, Saul Fineman, J. I. Kearney, M. D. Mendenhall** and **Conrad Menzel**; also with two Command Pilots, **Sylvester Hunn** and **James Kahl**. When Insley was on his second tour, Dwelle returned to that crew.

In his twenty seven missions, he flew in no less than fourteen A/C: *Big Banner, The Banshee, Lil Cookie, Avenger, Lemon Drop, Scourge of the Skies, Patsy Ann II, My Ass'Am Dragon, The Banana Barge, My Peach, Southern Comfort II, My Gal Sal, M'Darling* and *Southern Comfort III*.

His last mission was 3 August 1944.

EDMONDS, THOMAS #22969 66th Squadron
Date of Death Unknown S/Sgt. Edmonds was a Gunner on **George Insley's** first tour. All of his 22 tours were with Insley, one with **Sylvester Hunn**, Command Pilot.

Edmonds flew in *Big Banner, The Banshee, Scourge of the Skies, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Patsy Ann II, My Ass 'Am Dragon, Shoo Shoo Baby* and *M'Darling*.

His last mission with the 44th BG was 20 April 1944. As the only married man in the crew, Edmonds opted to return home when he had completed his missions. He later decided to do a second tour, flying with the 15th AF for 38 additional missions. His explanation for choosing the 15th AF was that they had better weather, being based in Italy. He hoped to complete his assignment more quickly and return to his wife. During that period he had three missions to Ploesti. He did return home safely.

FARMER, HAL #20162 68th Squadron 1st Lt.
Farmer came to the 44th BG as a Flight Officer. His first mission was on D-Day, flying to Ferets De Cerisy as a Bombardier with **Robert Knaublein**. On some of his twenty one missions, he flew with **William Ritter**. In the post-D-Day missions, he flew on *Jose Carioca, T.S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Wendy W, Channel Hopper* and *Corky*. By the time he completed his last mission on October 3, 1944, he had been promoted to 1st Lieutenant.

GALVIN, GERALD M. #20317 18 April 2003
No available information on the Database

GAUDIN, PERCY J. #20336 66th Squadron 21 May 1997 S/Sgt. Gaudin was a Tail Gunner on the **James McKenna** crew. He flew twenty four missions with that crew, the first on 19 May 1944. His last mission, 6 August 1944, in *Stormy Weather*, was disastrous. **A.P. Byrne** was Command Pilot on a mission to the oil refinery in Hamburg, Germany. This unnamed plane was flying Deputy Lead for the 492nd BG. Both Byrne and McKenna were KIA, along with the co-Pilot, Navigator and Engineer. The GEE Navigator, PFF Navigator, Bombardier, Radio Operator, and all three gunners became POW.

Previous to this tragic event, Gaudin had flown on D-Day to Vire, France. On one mission to an A/C Factory in Brunswick, Germany, he flew with **Devon Davis** as Command Pilot.

The McKenna crew flew in *My Peach, Flying Log/Pregnant Pet, My Ever Lovin' Gal* and *Cape Cod Special*.

At the time of his death he was residing in Kiln, Mississippi.



FOLDED WINGS

GORDON, CLYDE F. # 20420 68th Squadron
30 September 2007 S/Sgt. Gordon was a gunner on a number of crews, most with **Parke Jones, Jr.**, but also with **Arthur Marcoullier, Raymond E. Hamlyn, Arthur R. Anderson, William Altemus** and **Robert Lee**. He flew in *The Jinx, Flak Alley, Victory Ship, Heaven Can Wait II, Pizz and Moan/Tootie Belle, Paper Doll/Lady Dot, The Exterminator*, and *V for Victory*. His first of 24 missions was 18 October 1943, his last was 9 April 1944.

JANDREAU, PAUL #22967 66th Squadron
Date of Death Unknown T/Sgt. Jandreau was an Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **George Insley** crew. His first mission was 20 December 1943; like his Pilot, he signed up for a second tour, which brought him to 15 February 1945. On one mission Jandreau flew with **Robert E. Felber**, another with **James Tucker**. Twice the crew with Command Pilots **Devon Davis** and **Joy Smith**.

Besides many unnamed planes, Jandreau flew in *Big Banner, Victory Ship, Lemon Drop, Scourge of the Skies, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Patsy Ann II, My Ass' Am Dragon, Southern Comfort III, My Gal Sal, Joplin Jalopy, Gallavantin' Gal* and *Nice & Naughty*.

Jandreau flew a total of 40 missions. On the second tour the crew was flying as Lead Plane.

KITTLE, PAUL #22966 66th Squadron Date of Death Unknown T/Sgt. Kittle was a Radio Operator and Gunner on the **George Insley** crew. Like other members of the crew, he followed the leader and signed up for a second tour. His first mission was 27 September 1943. At that time, long before the Normandy invasions, missions were directed to industrial sites, many in the Ruhr Valley where the Krupps factory were turning out war materials

at a rapid rate. While flying with Insley, Kittle also flew with three Command Pilots—**Sylvester Hunn, Devon Davis** and **Joy Smith**. In his 48 missions, Kittle flew in *Lil Cookie, Avenger, Scourge of the Skies, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Patsy Ann II, My Ass' Am Dragon, Shoo Shoo Baby, M'Darling, Southern Comfort III, My Gal Sal* and *Joplin Jalopy*.

His last mission was 15 February 1945.

LOWENTHAL, LEON #21144 7 May 2007
Leon Lowenthal was a Meteorologist and Photographer, assigned to the 44th Bomb Group. Because of his weather-forecasting duties, he had occasion to work closely with other meteorologists advising General Eisenhower, particularly about the decision to launch the D-Day attack.

According to his son Noah, Lowenthal frequently flew as an observer on different missions, particularly on D-Day. He accumulated a large collection of photographs which he placed in the 2nd Air Division Museum in Norwich, England.

As the Invasion progressed, Lowenthal was based in different areas; one of his most vivid memories was his assignment to Normandy after D-Day.

After the War, he entered the business world, producing pinball machines for local bars. Later he owned several bars and restaurants. He and his wife, Delores Lawlor, started a Day Care Center and Sports Camp, both of which are still operational.

The couple resided in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. They had four children, Noah, Rhea and Lisa. Their son Ira is deceased. Lisa and her husband Adam Silverstein have one child, named Ari.

Unfortunately, Lowenthal's bio is not on the Database.

FOLDED WINGS

MARKLE, ROGER SANFORD #21197 67th Squadron 26 September 2007 2nd Lt. Markle's first flight was with **Newton Condray** on 27 February 1945. After that he piloted eleven missions with his own crew, only three of which are still remaining. The crew flew in *Mi Akin Ass*, *Old Iron Curtain*, *Lady Fifi Nella*, *One Weakness*, and *Three Kisses for Luck*. His last mission was 18 April 1945.

MILLER, LOUIS F. #21350 506 Squadron. 30 April 2007 There is no Bio on this member. He belonged to the 44th BGVA, but did not submit any information to the Database. He and his wife Eileen resided in Towson, MD.

MURTAUGH, BERNARD #21467 66th Squadron 30 October 2007 Previous to coming to the 44th Bomb Group, S/Sgt. Murtaugh flew 20 missions with the 492nd from June 1944 to August. His first mission with the 44th BG was 9 August 1944, flying with **Arthur Rasmussen** as a Gunner. In his fourteen missions, he also flew with **Harold Koven** and once with **Gilbert Magaziner** as Command Pilot.

Murtaugh flew in *Big Time Operator*, *Jersey Jerk* and several unmarked planes. His last mission was 27 November 1944.

NEEPER, LOY L. "POTSY" #21491 67th Squadron 31 January 2008 T/Sgt. Neeper was a Flight Engineer, flying his early missions with the **Walter Bunker** crew. **Richard Butler** was Co-pilot on that crew until the 7 September 1943 mission to Holland, when he moved to the pilot's seat. On one mission they flew with **James McAtee** as Command Pilot. On later missions Neeper flew with **Robert E. McCormick**. He flew in some of the most challenging missions of that period—Ploesti, Wiener-Neustadt, Kjeller and more.

In his twenty-five missions, Neeper flew in *Earthquake McGoan*, *Ruth-Less*, *Mr 5 by 5*, *Calaban*, *Old Crow*, *Miss Emmy Lou*, *4-Q-2*,

Miss Emmy Lou II, *F for Freddie* and *Chief & Sack Artists*. His last mission was 8 March 1944.

The relationship between 'Dick' Butler and 'Potsy' Neeper has been ongoing. They first met at Davis Mânathan Army Air Field, both assigned to the 506 Squadron, Butler as pilot and Neeper as Engineer. On 21 December 1943 on a test hop in a recently repaired plane, *Emmy Lou II*, an explosion occurred in the #3 engine, whereupon all engines failed, and Butler brought the plane down to a crash landing. There were many injuries, Butler being the worst, but Neeper distinguished himself by carrying the unconscious **Robert Nicholson** to safety. With fire and explosions around the A/C, Neeper carried his Bombardier to safety.

Despite serious medical problems in later life, Neeper and his wife Irene attended 44th BG reunions. At the 1990 Reunion he handed his pilot the keys to *Earthquake McGoan*. Their last meeting was at the Ploesti Tidal Wave 60th Anniversary Reunion in Salt Lake City, 2003. In death, he wore a B-24 tie, a gift from his pilot, 'Dick' Butler.

ROBERTIE, WILLIAM #21823 There is no database information about the activities of this 44th member. He paid dues, and when he passed on, his wife Hazel continued her membership. It would be interesting to know what he did in Shipdham. Everybody's job was important.



FOLDED WINGS

SMYTHE, WILLIAM D. #22096 68th Squadron 26 January 2008 Major Smythe was an Intelligence Officer who debriefed the crews upon the completion of their missions. According to his Commander, **Bob Lehnhausen**, Smythe was so impressed with the sacrifices of the flight crews, he volunteered to fly on a number of missions. After his fifth mission, Commander Lehnhausen pinned his Air Medal, noting that Smythe was one of the few Air Force ground officers who earned a combat award for participating in aerial operations.

Before the war Smythe attended Duke University. When he returned home after the war he established an automobile dealership. His dedication to the automobile industry brought him numerous awards and recognitions; and his generosity to religious, educational and civic organizations brought him great respect and many accolades in the Santa Clara Valley. He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Carol Jean Smythe, six children, 16 grandchildren and one great grandchild. He was residing in Woodside, California at the time of his death.

YOUNG, JOHN S. #22664 66th Squadron Date of Death unknown T/Sgt. Young was a gunner on the **George Insley** crew, and along with his pilot, flew two tours, the first on 27 September 1943. In his 66 missions he filled all gunner positions. On one mission he flew with **Joy Smith**. On the second tour, the Insley crew flew as the Lead Plane. Twice they flew with Command Pilots: **Sylvester Hunn** and **Devon Davis**.

The Insley Crew flew in *Big Banner, Nice 'N Naughty, Lil Cookie, Avenger, Lemon Drop, Scourge of the Skies, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Patsy Ann II, My Ass 'Am Dragon, Shoo Shoo Baby, M'Darling, Southern Comfort III, My Gal Sal*, and *Joplin Jalopy*, plus many unnamed planes. Young's last mission was 15 February 1945.

After the War Young entered the practice of Medicine.

Ed. Note: This issue has many names from the George Insley crew. These were submitted by Roger Fenton, who wanted everyone in that crew to be honoured, even those who died before the 44th BGVA was organized.





THE ARMY HERITAGE AND EDUCATION CENTER

This Museum and Educational Center is a major component of the U.S. Army War College at the Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA. The Carlisle Barracks is the second oldest military base in the country. Many great officers attended classes in the Barracks, among them General John Pershing (1905), Dwight D. Eisenhower (1927) and General Omar Bradley (1934) The Army Air Corps was under the Army in WWII, and the Army Museum officials greeted us warmly. Will Lundy made the decision to place the 44th BG's memorabilia here—all seventeen file cabinets full.

Leon Johnson and those who flew in the formations behind him will be on parade at the Reunion in October.

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association

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8 BALL TAILS

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Tinker Belle's name but not her number got lost from the Database; Steve Adams and **Will Lundy** kept her in their records. She was first assigned to the 492nd Bomb Group, then transferred to Shipdham, 506 Squadron, 13 August 1944. Three days later she went to Kothen, Germany. Between the two Bomb Groups, she flew a total of 53 missions. On 14 January 1945 after a mission to Hemmingstedt, she landed in Merville, France with #1 engine out, choosing a safer landing than Shipdham where the weather was bad. By 2 March she was back home; but a month later, was shot down by flak and crashed near Wipperfurth on a mission to the Marshaling Yards at Plauen, Germany.



TINKER BELLE

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD 2007 - 2008

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TINKER BELLE

AC # 44-40158 was last seen at 1217 hours, 5 April 1945 at 14,000 feet, 22 miles northeast of Frankfort, accompanied by three P-51's. Radio Operator **Travis Nash** was in contact with formation which was flying at 18,000 feet and approximately three miles ahead of *Tinker Belle*. The pilot had feathered one engine, and was trying to reach an airdrome in friendly territory. They were flying at approximately 3,000 feet over the Ruhr pocket when anti-aircraft fire opened up. Both Nash and **George Brown**, pilot, sustained head injuries.

Howard Burkhart, Engineer, stated that the plane lost one engine before reaching the target due to mechanical failure. They lost altitude after reaching the target, then #2 engine caught fire. **George Brown**, pilot, was wounded; **Travis Nash** was KIA; and #3 & #4 engines were smoking. The decision was made to try to land at Brussels, Belgium, but they couldn't make it. Flak & small arms fire took its toll. Burkhart was busy transferring gasoline when the 'bail out' bell rang, so he was still shooting. He looked around and saw the plane empty except for Nash, who was dead. He jumped out, his chute was caught in a tree, and he hung there until a German soldier cut him down.

James Barry, Bombardier, had three bullet holes in his chute, shot by a German soldier; **Robert Sampley**, Waist Gunner, also was caught in a tree; he managed to break free, but immediately found himself surrounded by bayoneted rifles. **Ernest McAlpine**, Tail Gunner, landed among a group of Hitler's Youth. They saved his life, protecting him from a band of angry civilians.

Five airmen from the Brown crew ended up in a large prison camp that had French and Russians slave laborers in it. Lt. Barry reported that "The French and Russians were wonderful to us. They couldn't do enough for us. Some of the Frenchmen had been there five years, and when we arrived, they broke out food they had been saving all that time, and gave us a party. They even told the Germans they wouldn't work the next day."

On the morning of the ninth day, the first platoon of American soldiers, members of the 78th Division, arrived in camp and set them free. Two days later, the men were in Paris.

Ten days after the crash, Lt. **James Barry**, Bombardier, telephoned the 44th base, asking for a plane to come and pick up the returnees. **Hari Flowers**, Co-Pilot, and **Robert Thomas**, Navigator, followed soon after. By April 18 they were all back in England.

Nothing is known of the fate of **George Brown**, Pilot. There is speculation that perhaps his chute did not open, he was killed by civilians or possibly died from his head wound.

Tinker Bell is the last recorded combat casualty of the War. Other losses occurred, but not from combat. Twelve days after Tinker Belle went down, President Roosevelt died and Harry Truman became President. Thirteen days later (25 April 1945) the 44th BG flew its last mission of WWII. On that same day the U.S. & Soviet forces met at the Elbe River; and in California, the San Francisco Conference on the United Nations began.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



LAST CALL!!! SIGN UP FOR THE HARRISBURG-CARLISLE REUNION BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

This is, I believe, the farthest North and East that a 44th Reunion has ever been held. The 68th Squadron has had three in past years – Cape Cod –Connecticut and Erie, PA. All were well attended.

This is not a long journey for those of you from New England, New York and the rest of the Northeast, so we look forward to seeing many of you in October. Let's make this a big one. Time is marching on. Who knows how many more we will be able to have. By your attendance, you will also make all who worked so hard organizing this year's reunion very happy. So fill out and send those forms that appear elsewhere in this issue and in the Spring issue.

As I write this on Memorial Day weekend, many of you are not aware that our good friend Arlo Bartsch is having some health issues. Arlo, although a B-17 Pilot, in recent years is probably closer to we Libarator guys than to his own. Due to his tireless work in putting together the CD Data Base Program, we 44thers have a unique program. As Webmaster, he also does a fine job with our web site. We are all praying for his recovery and looking forward to the time when he is back to his usual activities.

Work on the Memorial Garden at the Shipdham Airfield has started this spring. The Shipdham Flying Club has a nice Web Site with a good description of the 44th Bomb Group Museum by Peter Steele, Curator and ex-RAF pilot. It was good to hear in Peter Bodle's last "Letter from Shipdham" that their future at the airfield is now quite secure. Thanks to all our good friends over there for keeping our memories alive.

George

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out."

Decca Recording Co., rejecting the Beatles, 1962

"Airplanes are interesting toys, but of no military value."

Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy
Ecole Superieure Guerre. (*School of Superior War, France*)

TO OUR MEMBERS:

The cut-off date for registering for the Reunion is September 10, 2008, 5:00 PM. **After that the price will be higher.** Please register early, as our transportation costs are based on the number of attendants. If a crisis in your life causes you to cancel, you will be reimbursed.

If you plan to stay longer in the area than the four days of the Reunion, add an additional \$100 for each additional day and each additional room that you will be needing.

The Heritage Museum was designed to feature all wars, from Revolutionary Days on. The Army Air Corps is a unique addition to the complex, and the 44th BG Board is challenged to draw attention to our contribution to WWII victory.

You will note one change in the registration: We will not be eating lunch in the Mess Hall. **Lee Aston** has contacted some prestigious guests to this event, and it was decided that a more formal setting will be needed. We will be eating in the Community Center, which is inside the secured Carlisle Barracks.

What else can you do in the area? The Capitol Building is the most beautiful in the nation. It was designed to emulate St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. The William Penn Museum located close to the Capitol features, nature, history and much more.

The Sheridan Hotel in Harrisburg is close to good shopping areas. If you have a car, you can tour the Hershey Park and Factory which is 35 miles east. Southeast is Lancaster, home of the Pennsylvania Dutch and Amish. Amish buggies compete for space on Route 30 and other highways. Lancaster has good Outlet Stores; and if you want to drive farther, the greatest outlets are in Reading, PA.

Register now. This Reunion will be unlike all others. You don't want to miss it.

The Shipdham Flying Club's Museum is dedicated to the 44th Bomb Group. Three rooms tell the 44th story.

Room One shows photos, mostly taken by the airmen, the chain of command of the 8th AF and the history of that great A/C, the B-24 Liberator.

Room Two is the Will Lundy Memorial Library. It is a study area where guests can sit at the desks and read any of the many books that tell the air war story.

Room 3 houses the audio/visual materials. DVD's are available, showing early footage shot at the airfield in the early 1940's.

Ed. Note: The 44th is so fortunate, that an ocean away and sixty five years later, the memory of their WWII heroism is still being heralded.

On behalf of every member of the 44th BGVA – Thank you, Thank you, Thank you Shipdham Flying Club. Thank you Mrs. Paterson.

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR THE
44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
HARRISBURG/CARLISLE REUNION
SHERATORN HOTEL, HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA**

Thursday, October 16, 2008

Registration 1:00-5:00

Dinner on your own

Friday, October 17, 2008

Registration 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

General Meeting 9:30 AM

Lunch on your own

1:00 Bus Tour to the Civil War Museum

7:00 PM Welcome Reception

Saturday, October 18, 2008

Breakfast

9:00 AM Bus Tour to Army Heritage Museum, Carlisle, PA

Lunch in Community Building inside Carlisle Barracks

7:00 Squadron Dinners

Sunday, October 19, 2008

Breakfast

8:00 AM Bus Tour to Gettysburg

Lunch on your own

5:00 Return to Hotel

7:00 Banquet

Monday, October 20, 2008

Breakfasts & Farewells

If you plan to stay additional days at the hotel, please note that when you register, in order to get the reduced price. If you decide to leave early, please indicate that to the hotel upon your arrival. Otherwise you will be charged for extra days.

**REGISTRATION FOR REUNION OF THE
44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
SHERATON HOTEL**

**4650 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111
October 16-20, 2008**

Please print or type. All information must be complete.

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse/guest _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

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Please indicate bed preference: King _____ Queen _____

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Squadron Dinners, Banquet.

SQUADRON DINNER: Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Chicken _____ Cod w/wine & spices

BANQUET: Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Delmonico Steak _____ Chicken Wellington

PAYMENT

Number of Registrants (See Prices Above)

Single _____ \$ _____ Double _____ \$ _____

Triple _____ \$ _____ Quad _____ \$ _____

Please send checks to 44th Bomb Group Treasurer:

Jackie Roberts, 11910 SE 44th, Oklahoma City, OK 73150

A VISIT TO THE MIGHTY EIGHTH MUSEUM POOLER, GEORGIA

Situated on the right side of Rt. 95 (S), not far from Savannah, is a museum that tells the WWII story, mostly through the eyes of B-17 lovers, but also in areas that feature the B-24. The Ploesti exhibit is highly visible; but unfortunately, the Voice-over has not yet been installed. Tragically, much about the Holocaust scene has been removed. *(I think the grim truth of WWII should always be remembered, but I have been told that the pictures upset certain tourists.)*

A new display of the nose of a B-24 (*Fightin' Sam*) has not yet been completed. Walter Mundy of the 2nd Air Division initiated this exhibit. When completed, a person will be able to sit in the cockpit and test the instruments. The Norden Bombsight will be available, and a visitor can simulate a bomb drop.

The Memorial Garden is very beautiful, as is the Chapel of the Fallen Eagles. The Chapel is dedicated to 'those who served in the Eighth AF for the cause of freedom.' One window features a B-24 flying among the clouds, accompanied by a 'Little Friend'.



Fightin' Sam



Memorial Garden

Visitors can experience a recently installed new and awesome version of a combat mission. The Museum Library is very complete. Historians, researchers and school children can learn the details of WWII in this unique facility, created by the 8th AF Historical Society. The 8th AF originated in Savannah; Roger Freeman, an English author, named it the 'Mighty Eighth.'



Chapel Window

MEMORIES OF A FINANCE OFFICER MORTON WEINSTEIN

Lt. Weinstein enlisted in the AC on 22 July 1941, attended Finance O.C.S., and in August 1943, found himself paying pounds and shillings to airmen at Shipdham. At that time there was only one Jewish Chaplain for the entire 8th AF. Weinstein visited him at 8th HQ in High Wyckam, near London, and was equipped with several Hebrew Prayer Books and two miniature Torahs, whereupon he started holding Friday night services each week. Attendance was fantastic.

Soon he became friendly with a Protestant Chaplain, **Wesley Cain**, and they played softball together, frequently on Shipdham's Squash Courts. Weinstein lost track of Wesley Cain after the War, but he is eternally grateful for the sermons he graciously delivered to the Jewish airmen, every Friday night.

One time General **Leon Johnson** came to the Finance Office for his pay. Weinstein had a note on the door, 'Closed for Lunch 12-1' Johnson said to his driver, "We'll come back later." Luckily Weinstein was nearby, and he said, "No way." He opened the door and paid the General. His memory of his General, "He was the greatest."

In June 1945, after everybody was paid, he climbed on the Queen Mary and earned a few bucks, playing poker all the way to New York.



Maurice Weinstein
At the Shipdham
Finance Office



AN ENGLISHMAN REMEMBERS THE CREW OF *BALDY AND HIS BROOD*

Brian Peel of Norfolk, UK remembers when his friends on *Baldy and his Brood* came back from Foggia. A teenager during WWII, he developed a kinship with several of the airmen at Shipdham, and has corresponded with them all these years. His mother did the laundry for a number of the crews.

After reading about Foggia in the last issue of the *8 Ball Tails*, Brian sent this picture of his friend, Sgt. **Oliver R. Germann**, who had received seven awards, the Silver Star, DFC and Bronze Cluster and Air Medal with Three Clusters. The picture appeared in *The Eastern Daily Press* in 1943. Germann had been wounded at Foggia.

LT. JAMES TOMBLIN REMEMBERS A VERY SAD MISSION INTO HOLLAND

A mission I remember very well was a re-supply mission to paratroopers who had just been dropped near Arnhem, Netherlands. To practice for this mission, we had flown in formation over the English countryside at an extremely low level. I lay on my stomach next to the bombsight and looked through the plexiglass nose. We were so low, I could see the ground between blades of grass. We had to pull up to get over small picket fences.

On the actual mission, we flew at tree-top level. A 4-engine bomber traveling at 200 mph that low is pretty exciting. German soldiers on the ground were firing at us with rifles. The bombardier in the nose turret would spot a rifleman and then tell the waist gunners and the tail turret gunner where the rifleman was (e.g. 10 o'clock, 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock, etc.) but we were traveling too fast for that tactic to be very effective. At that speed, we traveled the length of a football field in one second.

At the drop site, we cut throttle, pulled up 500 feet, and the jumpmaster (our special 11th crew member) kicked out the supplies. I was looking through the plexiglass nose and saw a paratrooper crossing the field with his arm around a girl – and they had just dropped yesterday!!!

A rifle bullet hit the hydraulic reservoir tank, located in the top of the fuselage above the flight deck, and the red liquid spilled all over the Engineer, **Bill Wright**. **Eddie Sharp**, the Radio Operator thought Bill had been shot. Scared him to death.

When we got back to the base, we had to manually crank-down the landing gear, and stopping the plane was a little difficult, but we managed OK.

(The story of this immense effort by the paratroopers is in the book "A Bridge Too Far" by Cornelius Ryan and in the movie of the same name.) A plan by General Montgomery was to drop 35,000 paratroopers 64 miles behind enemy lines and capture the bridge across the Rhine River at Arnhem, Netherlands. To accomplish this, 3 bridges had to be captured intact, by paratroopers, to enable a relief column to advance the 64 miles to Arnhem.

The paratroopers captured all the bridges, including the one at Arnhem, but the relieving division of tanks stopped 5 miles from Arnhem. The paratroopers there were captured. They had held the Rhine Bridge 7 days, and Montgomery said only 2 days was all that was required. In my view, this was the biggest boondoggle of the War, and certainly the most tragic.

The total 7 day casualties for all the forces involved – killed, wounded and missing amounted to more than 17,000. (In comparison, the 24 hour period of D-Day had 10,000-12,000 casualties.)

After the mission, our 6th, everyone got an Air Medal.

The date of this mission was 18 September 1944. Lt. Tomblin was the Navigator (66th Sq). Other members of the crew, unnamed in this narration were: Arthur S. Ledford, pilot; Harold Arnold, Co-Pilot; Richard Pascal, Bombardier; Fred Wiener, Right Waist Gunner; Pervis Bertolio, Left Waist Gunner; Harry Starr, Tail Gunner; R. J. Movin, Jumpmaster. Twelve days later the Ledford crew went to Hamm, Germany and was shot down. Check the next issue for that story.

The Roll of Honor reports two 44th BG members on other planes were WIA.



SAM CERVERELLA'S SIXTH MISSION

(506 Squadron)

9 May 1944 Target: St. Trobud, Belgium... Visibility Poor... 18,000 ft. Temp. minus 20...

We were to hit the night fighter base at St. Ohmar with 100 lbs. GPS...We encountered the usual flak coming in and it knocked us about quite a bit. We almost lost the target and had to hunt all over for it because of navigation, and we were late. We dropped our bombs and did a good job on the field and hangars. It was a visual bombing. Four of ours were frozen in the shackles, and we could not drop them until we got to the Channel and let down. Over the target a couple of B-24s blew up. In one, four chutes opened. Some bombs blew up as they left the racks and knocked the formation about. We are really giving it to them in earnest now, every day for three straight. We got up at 2 AM...24 more to go...

This mission to the St. Trond/Brrustrem Airfield in Belgium was to go after the night fighters that were attacking RAF formations. Cervella was the Radio Operator on the Fred Stone crew. They were flying in Shack Rat.

The 68th lost one plane on this mission, Northern Lass, when bombs exploded prematurely over of the target. Five members of the crew bailed out and became POW. Lt. Arnold Larson, pilot, was able to bring the plane to England, crash-landing at Attleboro.

Did you know that more U.S. Servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps? While completing the required 30 missions, your chance of being killed was 71%.

Col. D. G. Swinford, USMC

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LT. STANLEY GERASIMCZYK'S UNFORGETTABLE MISSION

As Bombardier on the **Maurice Steven** crew, 66th Squadron, Lt. Gerasimczyk remembers the mission to Schwabisch-Hall, Germany. "We formed to Group – Wing – Division, but kept losing the formation. Over Germany the pilot reported the problem to the Flight Commander. He got back and advised us to join a B-17 formation flying over to our left. We did. (Tail End Charlie). The group went through Frankfort, Manheim and Weimar. Heavy flak found our A/C. The Top Turret Gunner, **Albert Chisman**, was struck under the flak helmet in the right temple. (*He Survived.*)

"At the Base we counted over 420 holes. On this mission we had a replacement A/C. Pilot Stevens named it **King Pin**, and we flew 30 missions in it.

Lt. Gerasimczyk was on the mission to Best, Holland, as described by Lt. **James Tomblin**. He remembers seeing the Germans aiming guns at them as they were flying at ground level. He reported,



Picture L-R **Stanley Gerasimczyk, Maurice Steven, Gino Bisons** with **King Pin**.

"A slug found the O2 bottle in the May West, behind the ammo bin, which had only 75 rounds. The metal from the tank went through the Navigator's desk and Weems Plotter, on which he had his hand. Right between his forefinger and thumb, a hole 1" deep." *How's that for a close shave?*



Front L-R **Maurice Stevens**, Pilot; **Finis Cross**, Co-Pilot; **Gino Bisons**, Navigator; **Stanley Gerasimczyk**, Bombardier.

Top L-R **Jack Kendle**, LW Gunner; **Albert Chisman**, Engr/Top Turret Gunner; **Donald Braman**, RW Gunner; no identity here (transferred to 15th AF); **Robert C. Niles**, Tail Gunner.



Crew Chief for **King Pin**. Can anyone identify him?

MY BIRTHDAY GIFT FROM HEAVEN

From the diary of Earl P. Wikle (68th Squadron)

I was new in the ETO, just completed my ground school before coming into combat duty, flying the big ones...The B-24 Bomber.

One Tuesday night 15 March 1944 I looked at the schedule and saw where my crew was slated to make our first combat mission. I usually spent the evening in a poker game, then making the Red Cross before they closed for a bit to eat and a cup of tea. This night, after seeing the schedule, I decided to go to bed early to try and get all the rest I could, because I knew I would need it.

After getting undressed in my bunk and getting warm enough to stop shivering, they announced on the Loudspeaker System, 'an enemy Air Raid, planes within fifty miles.' Just a few minutes later came another announcement, saying the enemy planes were in the nearby neighborhood. Up I got, put my clothes on and went out on top of the Bomb Shelter, which was opposite my barracks door.

This being my first actual experience of warfare, naturally I was somewhat nervous and scared.

Looking Toward Norwich

My base was located west and within sight of Norwich, England. This seemed to be one of the German's targets for the night.

I never in my life witnessed such a sight. It seemed just like a movie with sound effects and all. You could hear the dull roar of the German's heavy bombers there, with a loud fast moaning roar. I could hear our fighters making attacks on the bombers. There were thousands of powerful searchlights lighting up the sky, all moving in different directions, searching for the enemy planes. In the direction of Norwich, you could see a reddish flare up; then in a few seconds you could hear a thud of the exploding bombs. In the sky, along with the search lights, you could see hundreds of bursts of flak shells being fired at the enemy bombers.

Over the base, luckily, the Germans only dropped flares, which lighted the whole sky and countryside, as if it were day! No doubt they were taking pictures of the base and bases around in this part of the country.

A Jokester

To give you an example of how scared I really was, one of the boys stood by the barracks and started to whistle – just like I thought a bomb would sound when falling. Some of the boys ran madly into the bomb shelter; but me, I stood there as if frozen stiff. I couldn't move a single muscle. I could feel cold chills running up and down my whole body. As that boy's wind became exhausted, we were standing on the bomb shelter.

Then we realized it wasn't a bomb, but this boy playing a joke on us newcomers. It was one hell of a joke; but after it was over; and those who weren't still under the spell of fear, had a good laugh over it. I did not laugh.

As far as I can remember, the raid lasted for about one and half hours. That was one of the experiences I will never forget. It was nearly one o'clock in the morning when I got back to bed and try to get some sleep and rest. What a send-off for my first combat mission!

Wake Up Call

Three-thirty came, the CQ calling the ones that were scheduled to fly that day. Being half asleep, cold, damp, hungry and very tired from the bombing, everyone was very disagreeable, and didn't care much whether school kept or not. We went up to the orderly room to check our names off the flight roster, and waited for the base bus to take us to the Mess Hall for breakfast.

Here I ate a heavy meal consisting of eggs, bacon, pancakes, orange juice and coffee. Finishing my meal, I went outside to get a bus to take me to the Briefing Room. The enlisted men went to one room and the officers to another.

...continued on page 14

Here they gave us plans of our mission, such as the name of our target, bomb load, time of take off, time over the target and the arrival back to the base, also, all codes of the day.

Being a radio operator, I had to go to still another Briefing Room to pick up the latest codes of the day and find out the Lead Ship and Deputy Lead. With all of this completed, I was ready to go to the drying rooms, where all my flying equipment was kept, such as leather flying clothes, Mae West, parachute. I stopped in the parachute room to pick up a bag of K-rations to eat on the trip.

Packing up my A-3 bag, which had all my flying equipment in, I went to the road to wait for the bus to take me to the plane.

Upon reaching the plane, I set my bag down and climbed into the plane, started my radio equipment inspection. When the check was completed, I helped the engineer put the guns in the upper turret, which sometimes was a very hard task.

Out of the plane, I gathered up my heavy flying clothes and began to put them on; then I was ready for the signal to start engines. This was quite an exciting time of the day, many large bombers with engines running, loaded to the gills with bombs and gasoline, waiting their turn to take off down the long runway. The weather was quite soupy, or in other words, a bit hazy.

Down the Runway and Up

Our turn came; we lined up with the runway, with super chargers and gas throttles full on, we started. Faster and faster we went until we reached the speed of about 120 mph, to pull the big plane off the runway into the air, circling the field until we reached a given altitude, then we started to form our element and get into flying formation. This took a long time because of such a great number of planes, plus other bombers from nearby bases. This caused very much difficulty in trying to get the group assigned to you. We used

flares to identify ourselves. Each squadron had a different flare signal.

When we were all in our proper position, right time, right altitude and everything working OK, we took our heading, which took us eastward over eastern England, Holland and into Germany.

By the time we reached the enemy's coast (at this time Holland), we were at our bombing altitude, wearing oxygen masks and our flak suits, and with every member at his proper position, wide awake.

Looking for Trouble

Being the radio operator, I had no given position. Since we were not flying Lead or Deputy Lead, I did not have very much radio work to do. So I stood between the Pilot and Co-pilot, keeping a sharp eye out for anything that might happen or go wrong with the plane.

Some of these tasks were calling out fighters (ours or enemy), calling flak, and keeping the pilot informed of the position of the bombers in our element, as to how close to the side or top of us.

This is a hell of a place to be in! As the Old Saying goes, 'Where you are looking for trouble, you usually find it', and we did, but nothing very serious.

Looking out through the pilots' windshields, I could see our fighter escorts scouting all around us, looking for enemy attackers. Looking down, I could see lower elements of our formation of many bombers, and a blanket of solid clouds. We were flying about seven thousand feet above those clouds.

While on watch, I could see quite a few bursts of flak coming up through the clouds, but they were too low to do us any harm.

Due to the solid overcast, we were flying by instruments, and were forced to bomb our target by instruments.

Bombs Away

We lined up for our bomb run, everything going well and peacefully, except for a few bursts of flak. Orders came for bomb bay doors to be opened. This was

one of my duties. I opened the door and reported 'Bomb Bay doors open'. We were carrying a load of 52 bombs. I nervously waited the call from the Bombardier, 'Bombs Away'. Finally I heard the call. I quickly checked the racks to see if all had cleared, then closed the doors. This, I will say, is quite a relief to know your bombs were all clear and on their way down, and that our plane had taken up that heading for our return trip to our base.

But just a few minutes after this great relief, ALL HELL POPPED LOOSE. Flak began to come up by the thousands, and they were very close and at our altitude. I, as well as every other member of our crew, seemed to hold his breath and pray to God to guide us safely through this hot bed of anti-aircraft gunfire. Our prayers were answered, thanks to God. Although this lasted only for about twenty minutes, it seemed like two hours.

Again, after getting out of that mess, we seemed to automatically relax and breathe more easily and regularly.

An Enemy Fighter

I was looking out the windows, glanced to my left and saw a fighter coming in for attack. Not having seen an enemy fighter all the way in, and this was out, I never gave it a thought it was a Jerry fighter after us.

Then I noticed blue puffs of smoke coming from the engine. My brain relapsed. I became stiff, cold, goose pimply and shocked, as if I were going to fly apart. I realized these blue puffs of smoke were not vapor, which usually comes out of a plane at high altitude, but was smoke from twenty mm. cannons; and this plainly was a German fighter attacking us. I couldn't move or talk, but just stood there as a blank. He went by like lightning and missed us with his guns. No one got a shot at him. I was very happy he missed us, and hated it that we didn't get a shot at him.

We saw a few more bursts of flak on the way to the coast of Holland, but nothing close. Than at the coast they let us have it again. They fired at us until we

were about fifteen miles out over the Channel. After getting out of the range of the enemy anti-aircraft fire, we could let down to where we could take off our oxygen masks. We were out of danger here of fighters and flak; what a relief this was.

We soon saw the coast of England and over our base again. It really was a good feeling to be back on good old earth again.

I never was so tired in all my life as I was when we got out of the plane. I could have laid down on the ground and slept until morning, but we had to report to the Intelligence Office and tell them of our trip.

Debriefing

Upon entering the Briefing Rooms, we were greeted with a cup of coffee. Me, not liking coffee, took it just the same. It was warming to me and did taste good. From here our crew went into the Intelligence Department where they asked us a lot of questions regarding our mission. Here they brought us a quart of Scotch and some sandwiches. We ate and drank and answered questions for about a half hour. After completing all this, it was time for an early supper, in which all of us took a part.

We ate like we were starved, and how good it seemed. We left the mess hall and went to our barracks, shaved, washed up and hit the sack. The first thing I knew was the CQ calling us again. I pulled one arm out from under the covers to look at my watch, which read three thirty. This was the morning of 16 March, 1944.

The same procedure we went through as the day before, only I was more nervous and jumpy. I think everyone else felt the same as I.

*This mission is not recorded on the Database for Wikle, but it appears it would have been to Brunswick, Germany. The one mission for which the Database credits this airman was to Friedrichshafen, Germany. He was on the same plane with **Sydney Bolick**, whose story has been written in segments in previous issues of the 8 Ball Tails.*

In his dissertation about his first mission, Wikle did not add that it was also his birthday.

AN AIRMAN'S SISTER REMEMBERS WWII AND HER BIG BROTHER

WORLD WAR II HERO

By Jeanette Howeth Crumpler

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My brother, Glenn W. Howeth, was only 19 years old when he enlisted in the USAAC. After training at Harlingen, Texas, Glenn was assigned to fly as a Radio Operator in a B-24 Liberator bomber from RAF Alconbury in England. He flew 30 missions in the B-24 Bombers, and was deeply concerned on how essential it was to win the war. My grandmother, mother and I thought he was winning the war almost single-handed. We were convinced he was the bravest hero of WWII. I was nine years old in 1942 when he left, and I faithfully wrote to him often. We were to remain close until he died in 1983.

Wichita Falls, Texas, like many other towns all over the United States, had young men and women in all of the services. I also had two half brothers serving as well. They were my dad's boys from his first marriage. That generation was faithful in signing up to stop the awful Axis of Germany, Italy and Japan from enslaving the world. Those of us who were too young to serve did our part by buying United States Savings Stamps and Bonds and collecting grease, rubber tires, tin cans and anything else that could help the war effort.

My dad and mother had divorced in 1942; and my dad was too old to serve, but had gone to Alaska to work on the AlCan Highway. My mother worked as the head of the legal department of Panhandle Refining Company, but also volunteered with the Red Cross. They were always serving coffee and doughnuts at Sheppard Air Force Base, and also welcoming troop trains, as well as helping at the USO. I felt I was 'helping' too, by tap dancing in the USO shows in Freer's Furniture Building in downtown Wichita Falls. Of course, our talent shows

sometimes were pretty corny, but we were enthusiastic, and thought we were boosting morale. More than one serviceman would comment that "Surely the front couldn't be any worse than Wichita Falls Kickapoo Lake Water and the local talent." They had a point.

I had learned to knit, so I felt obliged to knit my brothers wool scarves. Glenn's was bright pink and was four inches wide and two feet long! He later told me it almost glowed in the dark, and definitely didn't go with their flight suits. They used it to tie the door of their Quonset hut shut on windy nights. He said they used to shoot the rats in the Quonset hut too, which I thought was awful until he swore the rats were the size of Terriers.

Once Mother and I scrounged for weeks to find coupons to purchase cigarettes to send him, not realizing the Army Air Corps furnished better brands than we could find. We had a Victory Garden in our backyard as part of our war effort, and we also took in boarders during the War. These were married couples that needed lodging, since Sheppard had limited facilities for married couples at that time.

Glenn told me several stories after the war about funny things that had occurred on their base in England. One was about an accident flag that was flown so long, it became a pale remnant. The 'Accidents' were mainly because there was a long yew hedge separating two cement sidewalks, and the men used to race bicycles along each side of the hedge. Bets were placed on who could reach the end of the hedge first and knock the other cyclist off his bike.

Once on a bet, Glenn rode a bicycle backwards, resulting in a broken rib. He swore he was not tipsy at the time.

...continued on page 17

Another funny story was about the tail gunner on his bomber who had a 'snootful' one night and went ahead and got into the tail turret, deciding to sleep it off, since he knew they would have a mission the next day. Sadly, he woke up the next morning and didn't hear any engines. The fog was so heavy that the mission had been scrubbed. After trying to talk to each member, but receiving no answer, the gunner thought, "My God, they've all bailed out and left me up here all alone." He bailed out and broke his collarbone. He took a lot of ribbing on that occasion.

They flew at high altitudes and wore heavy suits and gloves that were heated. Glenn was the radio operator, but also served as the Medic. They had to wear oxygen masks of course, and the planes weren't pressurized. They talked to each other through microphones in the masks. Once Glenn was frantically summoned by one of the crew who thought his ear had been shot off. Glenn crawled to him in the midsection of the plane, took off his glove and reached up under the man's helmet. The guy's ear had been more or less folded over and had gone numb, but thankfully there was no wound.

My brother only told us these funny stories, but never talked about the horrors he and the others saw. He came home at age 23 much changed. He didn't laugh as much, and he seemed depressed and quick to become angry. We didn't realize the depth of his troubles. One lovely thing happened when he took me to the Minute Inn for cheeseburgers and cherry Cokes, then we went to the drugstore and he bought me a Sundae, and we took a long walk all through our neighborhood. He said that's what winning the war was about, being able to go to the drive-in and drugstore with his kid sister and the freedom to enjoy it. I never forgot that, and I told my own children about his time in the service.

After Glenn's honorable discharge, he stayed home about four weeks, getting

back in touch with friends and quietly enjoying the town. But he was anxious to return to the University of Texas to finish his education and get on with life. Marriage and two sons followed. He became an excellent geologist, but his deep troubles persisted.

He still laughed at times and was called 'Hap' once again, but there was a terrible sadness that never left him. The ties of friendships from high school and college he kept, but there were many friends who had died during the war, and he grieved for them and their families. In time his own tolls of tragedies and nightmares took even more joy from him. One of his sons died at age 7; and my oldest son, Bruce Crumpler, died in 1979. Bruce had been stationed at RAF Alconbury during his time in the Air Force, and he and Glenn had corresponded often about that.

Glenn and I remained close through those sad times, and a month before he took his life in 1983, we spent several days, just talking about the old days before WWII and some of the happier times we had had growing up.

After his death, when I cleaned out his storage place, I found boxes of letters he had kept for years, letters from me and Mother, letters from friends and others; and it made me realize once again, what a precious and caring person he was. I found his Air Medal and other decorations, his discharge and some photos from those war years.

I remembered the last time I saw him; and while he had laughed, his eyes were so sad. The World War II hero finally went home and was at peace.

*T/Sgt. Howeth flew five of his 30 missions with the 44th BG. Roger Fenton believes his other 30 missions were with the 392nd. In the short time he was with the 44th, he flew with **Donald L. Clark, M. H. Keilman, J. E. Pennypacker;** and with **John Delach** as Command Pilot.*

THE SICILIAN CAMPAIGN FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF A NAVY MAN

The 44th 'stood down' on the day that this event took place, but it involved a B-24, so here is his story: Bill Elder served with a USCG crew on LCI (L) 89 in the Mediterranean and Normandy, so he looked up and at different times and saw lots of B-24's. Here is what he wrote about an incident in the Sicily Campaign:

About D+1730 (D-Day), Flotilla 4 departed from the transport area with 20 of our vessels, returning to Bizerte to bring in more troops. We sailed unescorted by naval ships, leaving the Gala Gulf waters under the cover of darkness.

On our return trip the next morning, I was on watch again, sighting one of our bombers, a B-24 Liberator, at 0915, 11 July 1943, flying low over the water. I reported it to the O.D. on the fly bridge. They also had spotted the bomber limping home. As we watched the bomber, escorted by a fighter plane, a Spitfire with American markings, it finally ditched into the water several miles from us. The fighter plane came over to our convoy, circled around us, and flew back to the ditched bomber. It kept circling around us and the ditched bomber.

The Captain and Commander Unger came to the bridge and directed us to depart from the convoy to rescue the downed airmen. We changed course to our port on the bearing I logged. As we left the convoy the fighter plane swooped down over us with a burst of fire from his guns, dipping his wings, banking around and then flying off to the south. We were just off the coast of Tunisia's Cape Bon.

Approaching the area where the bomber ditched, we found the airmen with their yellow rubber raft. They were waving their hands. Boy, were they happy to see us! The water was very choppy, a fresh breeze with two- and-a-half to three foot waves. This condition made it hard to maneuver the flat bot-

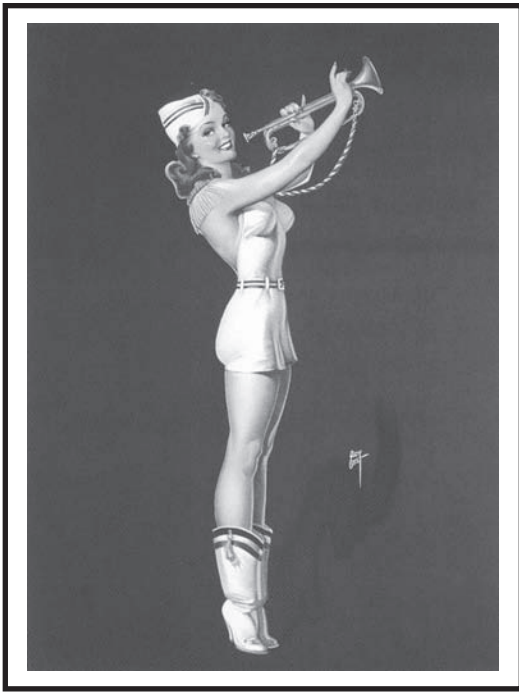
tommed ship near enough for us to get a line to the airmen. I said to the Captain, "Let me swim out to get them". He gave me the OK to do it.

Getting down on the main deck, kicking off my shoes and getting out of my coveralls, I directed Karner, as I tied a heaving line around my waist, to keep tying heaving lines to my line as I swam out to the rafts, and told him I'd signal him when to pull us in. As I got to the first raft, one of the airmen, injured, lay in the raft. His legs had the flesh torn up from the shrapnel, bleeding, with the flesh floating with the movement of the water in the raft. It made me sick; but I got control of myself, pulling that raft as I swam over to the other raft. There was another airman badly injured in this raft. I got hold of it, lying on my back, holding the two rafts, signaling Karner to pull us in.

When I got to the ship, the crew had the rope ladder over the side. Doc had the litter ready to pick up the injured men. The five airmen not injured scrambled up the ladder. Karner jumped into the water to help me get the injured airmen into the litter. Doc treated the injured men. The crew got the other airmen out of their wet and into dry clothing. They settled down with hot coffee and something to eat.

We finally caught up to the LCI's as they were entering Port Bizerte. At 1330 we tied up at the dock. The air force ambulance was waiting, and they took the airmen up to the base hospital. Our good deed for the day had been completed.

These men must have been with the 9th Air Force, which was also involved in the Sicilian Campaign. I hope one of that crew will read this, and learn who was their savior that day. Bill Elder is writing a book about his war experience. Perhaps more encounters with B-24's may surface.



Arlo Bartsch, Webmaster of the 44th Bomb Group's Web Page, and creator of the 44th BGVA's Database, wishes to thank all the members who sent kind messages to him through his recent illness.

Because of Arlo and the late Will Lundy, the history of the 44th BG has gone around the world, and will be available for historians centuries from now.

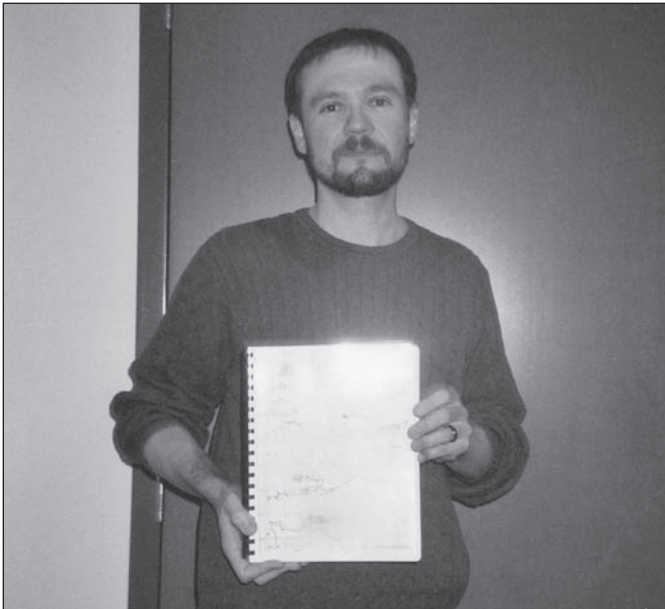
At this late date, other groups are trying to capture the memories of WWII veterans. Both Will and Arlo were both visionaries who could look into the future and see a need for their knowledge and skills. We all pray for Arlo's return to health.

Remember these signs?

She kissed the hairbrush
By mistake;
She thought it was her
Husband Jake.
BURMA SHAVE

Speed was high
Weather was not
Tires were thin
X marks the spot.
BURMA SHAVE

'THE LIBERATORS THAT NEVER RETURNED'



Gregory Statler, Registrar at the Heritage Library in Carlisle, accepted Peter Loncke's well-researched book about the casualties at Wesel on Easter Sunday, 24 March 1945. Loncke's book, 'The

Liberators That Never Returned', encompasses not only the losses of the two planes from the 44th, but the losses of every plane from every bomber group that participated, along with a personal account of every airman involved.

The 44th lost all members of the **Leonard Crandell** crew, flying in K-Bar. In **Max Chandler's** crew, flying in *Southern Comfort IV*, seven were KIA; **Bob Vance** and **Louis DeBlasio** were injured and became POW. *Joplin Jalopy* lost one crew member, but returned to Shipdham.

One P-47 pilot, John Delaney, lost his plane, was injured and became POW. He was diving at the anti-aircraft guns that were knocking out the B-24's.

Loncke is a Belgium airman who began studying crash sites and contacting the families of those who were lost. Later he married the niece of **Leonard Crandell**, and has become an American citizen.

Peter Bodle, correspondent to the *8 Ball Tails* for the Shipdham Flying Club, sent copies of two signs that have been erected at the 44th BG's old airfield.

This Garden was created with the kind permission and participation and participation of Mrs. Eileen May Paterson.

THIS MEMORIAL GARDEN IS DEDICATED TO THE MEN WHO SERVED AT SHIPDHAM (Station 115)

1942 – 1945

**From the History of the 68th Squadron by Webb Todd:
2 March 1944 Frankfurt/Main, Germany
It was not a good day...**

The site of a piston ring factory here was attacked by only a portion of the planes from the 44th. Bad weather caused the failure. A Target of Opportunity could not be located to be bombed, so many of the A/C came back with their bomb load; ten had bombed the briefed target with unobserved results. Some accurate flak was encountered near the target area, and several A/C landed away from the base due to the damage sustained. One aircraft piloted by Lt. **Robert E. Rose**, crash-landed with four dead engines, caused by a failure of the fuel transfer system. The crash was not marred by any injuries, and the A/C was in repairable condition.

Here is the report from the Co-Pilot on that mission, Lt. James Williams:

We were on our eleventh mission. Shortly after passing the French coast on the way home, the No. 4 engine suddenly quit, causing us to fall out of the group formation. After switching to cross feed, we finally got the engine operation over England, so it was too risky to dump the bomb load. We headed for Shipdham, maintaining 7,000 ft. just under the existing cloud layer. Approximately 30 minutes later, all four engines quit. Three airfields were in sight that an emergency landing could have been made. Just about a 1,000 feet from the end of the runway, a B-17 taxied onto the runway we were lined up on, so our only alternative was to land on the grassy infield. Just as we touched down on the grassy infield, the B-17 broke ground on its takeoff some 20 feet between wingtips. Even though the brakes were locked, there was little, if any, braking action. We hit a hedgerow on the airfield boundary, then a rock fence which folded the left landing gear and brought the aircraft to a stop. All crew members immediately

abandoned the aircraft safely. Since all of the fuel had been used or lost, the likelihood of a fire was diminished. To my knowledge, no other aircraft ever successfully made an emergency landing with 4 dead engines and a load of bombs. This occurred at Thorpes Abbott, England, the home of the *Bloody Hundredth* B-17 Bomb Group.

And speaking of 'close shaves', here's another colorful memory of James Williams:

Lt. General "Jimmy" Doolittle assumed command of the 8th Air Force near the 1st of January 1944. Considerable changes were made in the operating procedures immediately. Some which affected the combat crews were: 1. Bombing missions would be permitted to make predawn takeoff. 2. 30 second intervals between each aircraft taking off. 3. Maintain radio silence.

Each aircraft was permitted to have his HF radio tuned to the tower frequency. However, with radio silence, there was no method to verify that the HF radio was set on the control tower frequency. Always there was at least two aircraft lined up behind the take-off aircraft ready to go at their 30 second interval.

Such was the case of the aircraft in front of me. He had added full throttles; which indicated to me, it would mean a normal take-off was being made, but such was not the circumstance. He decided to abort his take-off, but no word was forthcoming on either our HF or VH radios.

Our crew procedures on blackout take-offs were to have the pilot keep an outside view of the runway and the dimmed runway lights. The engineer would be located immediately behind the pilot and co-pilot to continuously call our airspeed until the 'gear-up' command was given.

In this instance, the engineer had just called out one hundred when the cockpit was lit up by a red light from the control tower. I immediately looked down the runway, and sure enough, there was a B-24 right in the middle of the runway! The blue lights on the horizontal stabilizer were so close, there was not room to do anything other than to haul back on the control wheel.

Although there was no indication that we had made contact, there sure was some doubt in my mind. Our aircraft reacted immediately and was airborne instantly; so obviously we were above flying speed. We went on to complete the mission without further incidence. Upon our return, and immediately after the engines had stopped, our engineering officer was quickly examining each propeller blade for nicks or any other damage. I saw him, poked my head out the cockpit window and told him, "We saw

the aircraft on the runway, and was sure we missed it."

In the final analysis, the third aircraft behind us nicked the horizontal stabilizer of that aborting aircraft on the runway. The tower made no further effort to warn any other aircraft that was behind us.

There were other incidents during my 50 missions that, other than with the Grace of God, could we have survived.

*The crew that flew through these events were: **Robert E. Rose**, Pilot; **James Williams**, Co-Pilot; **Max Zuckerman**, Navigator; **Alfred Shella**, Bombardier; **Frank F. Fara**, Radio Operator; **William Kustinavage**, Engineer & Top Turret Gunner; **Frank Sammarco**, Waist Gunner; **George Belsky**, Waist Gunner, **Vincent Lopez**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Carlos Collins**, Tail Gunner. The Original Navigator **George Blumenthal** was killed in a bicycle accident on the first day of arrival to Shipdham.*

WAR IS GETTING MORE EXPENSIVE

According to the Wall Street Journal, the Pentagon is considering buying 2,458 of the F-35 Lightning II aircraft for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps from Lockheed. The cost will be \$300 billion plus \$650 billion to maintain and operate them well into this century. The average cost will average \$122 million each in current dollars.

Consider this: according to **Bob Lehnhausen**, the cost of one F-35 would nearly buy 35 B-24's @\$350,000 each. That is exactly the number of B-24's that made up the original 35 aircraft of the 44th. The 66th, 67th and 68th each had nine aircraft per squadron as part of the original air echelon. The 506th joined the group later in early march, 1943, with eight aircraft.

As Commander of the 68th Squadron, it was Lehnhausen's duty to 'sign off' on each B-24 that was lost. Small wonder, the cost of a Lightning II astounded him!

A BIT OF TRIVIA

When General Eisenhower was planning to invade Sicily, he felt the need to first take the small island of Pantelleria. Winston Churchill bet there would be only a few Italians on the island, and said he would pay five centimes each for any over 3,000. Actually, there were 11,000. Churchill figured out one twentieth of a cent for each of the over-age and paid Ike at their next meeting.



1.
They came over to England
From their land across the sea,
To help defeat an enemy
In the fight to make us free.

2.
Old England became an airfield
With twenty thousand planes or more,
To help ease the burden
And even up the score.

3.
Those who came to fly them
Young ones from city and every town,
Said, we may still be boys
But we wont let you down.



4.
Across the whole of Europe
Nazi evil spread its threat,
Engulfing many nations
Its will, they had to accept.

5.
The aim itself was simple
Destroy the Nazi scourge,
But achieving the objective
Required more than easy words.

6.
Each day began with breakfast
Before the breaking of the dawn,
Then came the tension of the briefings,
To determine the target they had drawn.



7.
They flew missions each and every day
Not knowing which would be their last,
They fought to ease the pain
Of a world in war's vice like grasp.

8.
For freedom they flew on bravely
Daily risking limb and life,
Hoping to bring about deliverence
From an agonising strife.

9.
Their effort was unswerving
They did not turn their backs,
They took off every morning
To press home their attacks.



10.
To Hell and back each and every day
Flying in mist fog or sun,
The young men of America
Fought till the battle was won.

11.
The price some paid for victory
Left families without father or son,
But each and every man
Knew the duty had to be done.

12.
When peace at long last came
And the sun began to set,
All the people of England said
The mighty Eighth, had given of its best.

Composed by Geoff E Draycott

44th BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

By Lee Aston, Director

NEW ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE IS 44TH BOMB GROUP'S FORMER (1944) C.O., COL. JOHN (JACK) H. GIBSON'S SON



Col. John (Jack) H. Gibson,
C.O. 44th BG (1944)

Although Brigadier General Gibson folded his wings on January 19, 2005, his wife, Ruth Gibson and the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association take great pride in announcing the appointment of Brig. Gen. Gibson's son, the Honorable John (Jay) H. Gibson, II, as the new Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, in January 2008.

AF Asst. Secretary Gibson has accepted the 44BGVA's invitation to make the belated WWII medal awards at the October Reunion at the Army War College.



Asst. Sec. AF John H. Gibson, II
and AF Sec. Michael W. Wynne



Brig. Gen. John H. Gibson
1918- 2005



Present at the Pentagon installation ceremony L to R, back row: Air Force Secretary, the Honorable Michael W. Wynne; AF Asst. Sec., the Honorable John H. Gibson II; front row: (mother) Mrs. Ruth Gibson, son Davis Gibson (12), wife, Laurie, son Holden (15).

CAPT. HOLMER RECEIVES DFC/OLC#1 AND AIR MEDAL FROM NEVADA GOV. GIBBONS

On December 2, 2007, at an annual awards event at the Nevada Air National Guard Base, Reno, Nevada, December 2, 2007, the Governor of Nevada Jim Gibbons presented Capt. Ernest C. Holmer, of Reno, Nevada, 67th Squadron and a Lead Pilot (1944-Feb.1945) with his second DFC and Air Medal/OLC#5.



* * * *

LT. COL. W. TOM HOLMES RECEIVES FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR FROM HOUSTON, TEXAS CONSULATE

On his 89th birthday, February 4, 2008, Col. Tom Holmes was presented with the highest French combat medal and was inducted into the French Legion of Honor as a Chevalier/ Knight. Col. Holmes flew 25 missions with the 68th Squadron, including Ploesti on which he was a target leader. Following Tom's accidental fall in 2007, the presentation was made at Tom's rehabilitation center in Austin, Texas, by the Vice Consul General Matthieu Clouvel from the Houston, Texas Consulate. On the day of the medal presentation, Tom's wife Nida gave a birthday party for her husband. A number of family members and friends were present to help make it a joyous occasion.



Major Tom Holmes
1943-44



French Vice Consul Matthieu Clouvel pins the Legion of Honor medal on Tom Holmes as Nida Holmes watches.



Capt. Tom Holmes
1943



Nida and Tom Holmes with French Vice Consul Matthieu Clouvel
at Tom's 89th birthday party, Austin, Texas, February 4, 2008.

* * * *

BABETTE BRANDON RECEIVES MAJOR GEN. WILLIAM H. BRANDON'S FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL *POST HUMOUSLY*

Maj. Gen. William (Bill) H. Brandon, was approved to receive France's highest combat medal, the Legion of Honor. Due to his demise, February 24, 2007, a *post humous* presentation to his wife, Babette Brandon, had to be arranged. The *post humous* presentation to Babette Brandon was made at the French Consulate in Houston, Texas, on February 26, 2008 by the Houston French Consul General Pierre Grandjouan. Former Captain Brandon flew 22 missions with the 68th Squadron starting in December 1942. Maj. Brandon was Pilot for Col. Johnson's lead ship on the Ploesti mission and received the Distinguished Service Cross for that mission.



Bill Brandon
ca. 2002

Capt. Brandon
ca 1942-43



Mrs. Babette Brandon receives Maj. Gen. Brandon's
Legion of Honor medal from French Consul Gen.
Pierre Grandjouan.



MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Peter Loncke:**

The story of B-24 K-Bar from Lt. **Leonard Crandell** and his crew is well known within the 44th family. The whole crew had lost their lives on Operation Varsity, the low level supply mission in support of our airborne troops at Wesel on 24 March 1945.

Last spring, however, a new chapter was added.

A young German boy called Mario Bollarth had been searching the crash site with his metal detector. He had found a silver bracelet with the name and service number of **S/Sgt. Ogilvie** engraved on it. **S/Sgt. R. B. Ogilvie** was the engineer of the crew.



As Joe and Barbara Crandell from Groveland, Illinois had left a memorial plate dedicated to the crew at that crash site, they also had left their home address on the back of the crew photograph that was placed next to the memorial plate.

Mario wrote a letter to Joe and Barbara and included photographs of the bracelet, and asked if they had an address of the Ogilvie family, so he could return the bracelet to them.

Unfortunately, the Crandells never had the pleasure of meeting the Ogilvie family, but that was soon to change...

Peter and Connie, Joe and Barbara's daughter and their son-in-law went back to Germany in March 2008 to visit Mario and bring the bracelet back to the USA.

Once home, they put all their efforts in tracing back any relative of S/Sgt. Ogilvie. With the help of the historical society of Auburn, NY they were able to locate his only sister Elizabeth, who still lived, well in her 80's now, at the same village for all those years.

The reactions of Elizabeth hearing that her brother's bracelet was found in

Germany left her dazed and confused at first. As she and her brother were only a few years apart in age, she still has a lot of memories of her brother. All these emotions were suddenly brought back to her, without any warning, when she got the news that his bracelet was found.

The bracelet, together with the full story of her brother's last mission, was sent to her by the Crandell family. Elizabeth got it in the mail, just before Memorial Day 2008.

Connie and Peter made a short stop in July at the Ogilvie's residence in Auburn New York. It was the first time that the Ogilvie family met a family member of one of her brother's crew. Peter donated Elizabeth and her husband Earle a copy of his book "The Liberators Who Never Returned.", including the detailed story of her brother's final mission. Photographs were brought to light which had been stored for years, letters were re-opened and read. The visit ended with a trip to the local cemetery where S/Sgt. Ogilvie was buried. It was an emotional and warm reunion with the satisfaction of returning the bracelet home.

Thank you Mario Bollarth...!!!



From **Forrest S. Clark:** A new book about WWII is sweeping the nation as a best seller, based on research by British author Martin W. Bowman. *Clash of Eagles* tells the story of the US 8th AF in the battles with the German Luftwaffe in WWII.

Bowman's research included interviews with German and American fliers in the Orlando and Kissimee area. He flew in a WWII A/C and attended air shows in the area. Clark's recollections are included in the book.

The book is available from Amazon.com for discount \$19.65





FOLDED WINGS

*Long I've been tossed like the driven foam;
But now, proud world! I'm going home.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Delaney, John 406 Fighter Group 513 Sq. 25 April 2008 Lt. Delaney became a member of the 44th BG after being introduced to the membership as a defender of B-24's on Operation Varsity. At that time bombers were dropping supplies to British Paratroopers who had just crossed the Rhine River on 24 March 1945. Delaney was a P-47 Fighter Pilot. His leader had been shot down and was murdered by German civilians. Although other members of his group had turned back, Delaney decided to make one more strafing pass at the anti-aircraft guns that were bringing down the B-24s. The flak gunners hit his A/C, he was flown from the plane, was caught in the slipstream, then thrown back into the cockpit head first. He struggled free from the rolling plane, but his leg was broken when struck by the tail. Immediately he was captured by the German infantry.

Delaney was joined by two gunners from *Southern Comfort III*, **Robert Vance** and **Louis DeBlasio**. They were POWs for ten days until Patton's Army came through Achmer and liberated them.

After being freed, Vance and DeBlasio had no knowledge of their fellow prisoner until a Belgium airman, Peter Loncke, began studying the crashes of Operation Varsity. He located the three participants, and they met for the first time at the 44th BG Reunion in Washington, D.C.

Delaney and his wife Margaret resided in Asbury, New Jersey. They have two daughters and one son who is in the Air National guard.

On the mission to Wesel, two 44th planes were lost, seventeen men were KIA; 3 became POW, counting Delaney.

Dregne, Bernard C. Lt. Dregne does not appear in the 44th Database. **Frank Schaeffer** found his obituary in the Wisconsin State Journal. The article says that he was a Flight Control Officer with the 44th BG, so he must have told his family of his wartime record. Does anybody remember him?

Dunkle, Ernest J. #20078 67th Squadron 23 June 2007 T/Sgt. Dunkle served as a Waist Gunner, Ball Turret Gunner and Nose Gunner/Toggler in his 28 missions beginning 27 April 1944. In most of his missions, he was reported as 'Other' in the Database.

Most of his missions he flew in *Old Iron Corset*; a few in *Sabrina III*. He flew with a total of fifteen different pilots: **Charles Arnold, Lewis Vance, James Struthers, Clarence Inman, Joseph Kuklewicz, R. W. Bethel, Louis Confer, Christopher Spagnola, O. Collins, Ernest Kyle, Robert Chaille, Leslie W. Lee, Jr., Raymond Zamoni, Leonard Louik and Milton Mauro.**

Dunkle flew on the last mission of the 44th BG to Hallein, Austria, 25 April 1945. His death was reported by his wife and son.

Figus, Fred #20488 68th Squadron 27 January 2008 Sgt. Figus was a Gunner. He flew a total of three missions, the first on 15 September 1943, the last on the awesome mission to Wiener-Neustadt, 1 October 1943. He flew in *Avenger* and *Margaret Ann* with the crews of **Ben H. Gildart and W. D. Hughes.**



FOLDED WINGS

Guilford, George W. #20488 68th Squadron 28 May 2008 **Robert Lehnhausen** remembers George as one who had an unusual term of distinguished service with the 68th Squadron. "He joined the 44th while they were stationed at Barksdale Field, LA. While in training mode there, they were also assigned submarine patrol over the Gulf of Mexico. On one of these patrols on 10 July 1942 the crew of **Robert Norsen**, with Guilford as the bombardier, spotted the wake of a sub periscope. They responded immediately and Sergeant Guilford delivered a stick of bombs that resulted in their claim of success. This attack is described on Page 10 of **Webb Todd's History of the 68th**.

"George was one of the five enlisted bombardiers that served in the early months of the war with the 68th. All of the nine original crews of the 68th had a commissioned officer as a bombardier. When I arrived in mid March 1943, only three of those nine were still on combat status. (*La Fleur, Klekar* and *Light*). Of the other six, three had been KIA, **Crawford, Grant** and **Keilman**. **Glass** was a POW, while **Flynn** and **Gavin** had been WIA and never returned to combat. **Bob LaFleur** was later KIA on 2 July 1943. You might ask, 'Does anyone want to be a bombardier?'

"I relate this sad tale to emphasize that the five enlisted bombardiers became very valuable to the effort. All served with distinction. None came with the air echelon. While I have not researched the others, Guilford came to the UK with the ground echelon on the Queen Mary.

"George flew his first four missions as a gunner. On the Diversionary Mission of 1 May 1943 he flew his first mission as a bombardier. He was assigned to the crew

of **George Jansen**. That must have been a very good relationship. George was a superb pilot and very demanding of his crew members. Guilford remained Jansen's bombardier until Jansen became the Squadron Operations Officer and no longer had a crew.

"Guilford, as a member of the Jansen crew, flew both of the brutal missions, Kiel and Ploesti, for which the 44th was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation. This significant honor was only awarded 27 times in the 8th's WWII European history.

"**Coleman Whitaker** had become Jansen's co-pilot. After Jansen ascended within the Squadron, a few more of the senior pilots flew as pilot of that crew. The real purpose was to 'check out' Coleman. After two such check rides, there was agreement that Whitaker should succeed Jansen as the pilot of that fine unit. They were on their third mission under Whitaker's leadership when they flew the 1 October 1943 to Weiner-Neustadt.

"Coleman Whitaker and the fine young crew took a direct burst of German flak over the target. The famed **Black Jack** which they were flying exploded. This tragic end resulted in five of the young Yanks being KIA. Guilford and four others survived and became POW's.

"I salute the uncommon courage of George Guilford. In my eagerness to relate the above, I almost overlooked that on 27 January 1943 mission to Wilhelmshaven, while flying as a gunner on the crew of **Jim O'Brien**, Guilford was wounded. Here I would like to stress that he continued to fly when scheduled in whatever role his superiors deemed necessary, never complaining.

"We bid farewell to an heroic patriot."
According to the Database, T/Sgt. Guilford flew in *Bat Outa Hell, Rugged*



FOLDED WINGS

Buggy, Victory Ship, Margaret Ann, Lemon Drop, Margaret Ann II/Satan's Hellcats, Calaban and Black Jack. The crews with him he flew on his 24 missions were: **Roy Erwin, James O'Brien, Robert Norsen, Walter Holmes, James Jansen, Baxter Weant and Coleman Whitaker.**

Guilford resided in Ocala, Florida.

Hansen, Joseph L. #20539 506 Squadron 15 February 2008 Sgt. Hansen was a gunner on the **Thomas McGuire** crew. His first of eight missions was 1 August 1944. The crew flew in **Flying Log/Pregnant Peg, My Gal Sal and Ole Cock.** On a mission to Juvencourt, France 12 August 1944 the plane was hit by flak, causing #3 engine to fail. Loss of fuel forced the plane to crash. Three members of the crew were KIA; five, including Hansen, were POW, two were able to successfully evade.

Holman, Frank Gormley #20703 68th Squadron 12 March 2008 T/Sgt Holman was the Radio Operator on a number of crews. He flew with **Joseph V. Principe, James R. Collins, Jack R. Liebrich, Wyman M. Bridges, Ray Suddreth and Herman J. Eckstein.** He flew in **Battlin' Baby, Patsy Ann II, Fearless Fosdick, Channel Hopper, V for Victory, T. S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Flak Magnet, Lone Ranger and Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch.** On D-Day Holman went on two missions; Colleville/St. Laurent and Caen/Vire. His last of 32 missions was 29 November 1944.

After WWII he attended the University of Texas at Austin. After completing his education, he and his brother opened the Holman Airport (now Kickapoo) and Holman Aviation in Wichita Falls, Texas.

He eventually went into the oil and gas business.

He and his wife, Jean Gathright, had three sons, eight grandchildren and ten great grandchildren. They resided in Dallas, Texas.

Hunn, Spencer Simmons #23237 66th Squadron 27 June 2008 Captain Hunn's first mission was January 5 1943, flying with the **Robert Abernathy** crew in **Forky II.** That crew, with **Leon Johnson** as Command Pilot, went to Kiel; later he flew with **Dexter Hodge** as CP, to the submarine base at Bordeaux. On his fifth mission he became Co-Pilot on the **Charles Hughes** crew. Among his many missions with Hughes was Ploesti. After leaving the target, enemy fighters and small ground fire damaged the left stabilizer of **Flossie Flirt**; fuel was low, and the pilot was forced to opt for Turkey and captivity. Six weeks later they were able to escape and return to flying status.

Upon returning to Shipdham, Hunn flew with **Kenneth Jewel** and **John H. Diehl** as CP, after which he became a Command Pilot. On D-Day he flew as CP to Colleville/St. Laurent with Captain **Paulino Urgarte.**

In all, Hunn flew in eight different A/C: **Forky II, Queen Anne, Flossie Flirt, Pistol Packin' Mama, Big Fat Butterfly, Chief & Sack Artists, M'Darling and Phyllis.**

He remained in the Air Force, retiring with the rank of Brigadier General. He graduated from the University of Utah, later earned a Master's degree at Purdue University. After retirement, he worked for the Federal Aviation System, and was in charge of Air Traffic Control Systems. Hunn and his wife Mary have two living children. They resided in Orem, Utah.



FOLDED WINGS

Kelly, Absolam Harrison #20901 68th Squadron 31 March 2008 T/Sgt. Kelly was a Radio Operator/Gunner on the **Arnold Larson** crew. His first of nine flights was 11 April 1944. The Larson crew flew on *Mary Harriet*, *Patsy Ann II* and *Northern Lass*.

On 9 May 1944, on a mission to St. Trond/Brustrem Airfield in Belgium, bombs exploded prematurely over the target, setting the bomb bay on fire. Five members of the crew bailed out, Kelly included. Along with four others, he became POW. (The Engineer was able to evade capture, and returned to duty.)

The remaining crew managed to put the flames out. 1st Lt. Larson was able to bring the plane back to England. Some of the crew bailed out over England. Larson crash-landed *Northern Lass* at Attelboro.

Taylor, William Barrett #22275 Group Adjutant 21 March 2008 Major (later Colonel) Taylor served first with the 93rd Bomb Group, later was transferred to the 44th BG and the 14th Combat Wing.

Taylor's history is not on the Database. **Bob Lehnhausen** remembers him as being extremely well groomed and with exceptional military bearing. He came to the 44th as a Captain, but when the group returned from Africa, he had moved up to Major.

Lehnhausen stated that when **Leon Johnson** was made commander of the 14th Wing, and he established that command headquarters on a living site at Shipdham, Barrett became the Adjutant for that unit, presumably until the end of the ETO conflict.

"In January 1944, I was sent to 44th Group Operations and a few months later was named to lead the 68th Squadron," he explained. "The transfer to headquarters changed my mess assignment for the balance of my stay in Shipdham, or through

May 1945. The norm was that the flying officers mess, at the Colonel's table. In the evening those same officers were expected to eat at the Colonel's table in the ground officers mess, in class A uniform.

"The exception there was if you had flying duty at that time of the evening meal, you were excused.

"It was only then that I got to know Barrett Taylor. I had occasion to visit with him. I found him to be dedicated to his task, and that he exhibited admirable loyalty to General Johnson. I had to assume that the General was pleased and impressed with his abilities.

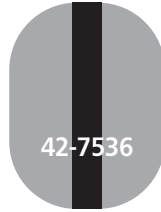
I was aware that Barrett had chosen to remain in the Air Force and assumed that he spent a great deal of that time with General Johnson. I believe this relationship was beneficial for both and also for the Air Force. We did have a chance to visit during the times that he attended the 44th reunions in recent years. His striking appearance and military carriage had not declined. Barrett Taylor was a very impressive person."

Colonel Taylor became Assistant Chief of Staff at the Air Force Academy, having been very involved in the legislation which led to the separation of the Air Force from the Army. Later assignments involved work in Washington DC, Spain and the Middle East. After retirement he was employed by Douglas Aircraft, retiring in 1975.

Taylor graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1941; later the University of Florida College of Law; he also attended Oxford University.

While in Europe he married Gwendoline Madge Abbott who expired 18 January 1991. The couple resided in Tampa, Florida. They had one daughter and three sons, one of whom is a Marine Corps Captain. He left ten grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He will be buried at Arlington.

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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THE BANSHEE

The Banshee was first assigned to the 392nd Bomb Group, but flew no missions with that group. In early October it was sent to the 44th Bomb Group, 66th Squadron, along with its pilot, **Kenneth Jewell**.

The Database has limited information about this aircraft. However, the record shows that 18 November 1943 *The Banshee* transported the **George Insley** crew to Kjeller, Norway. This was a very long mission with heavy losses.

The Kenneth Jewel crew flew 6 missions in *The Banshee*, the first on 13

December 1943. After the raid at Kiel, the A/C was sent to Rackheath for repair of the #3 engine and other battle damage.

The **George Insley** crew flew two missions in *The Banshee* first to the port & storage facilities at Bremen, Germany. Two days later they went to the airfield at Kjeller, Norway. On a later mission (unknown to this researcher) the landing gear was torn off and the nose crushed, but the crew survived. *The Banshee* was salvaged at Deopham Green in early January 1944.



The **Kenneth Jewel** Crew, (not individually identified)
Pilot, **Kenneth G. Jewell**; Co-Pilot, **Walter Milliner**;
Navigator, **Arthur Sakowski**; Bombardier, **Matthew J. Foley**;
Radio Operator/Gunner, **Stanley Lipczynski**;
Engineer/Top Turret Gunner, **William Wike**; Ball Turret Gunner
George Poirrier; Waist Gunners, **Sam Saporito & Edward
Guzik**; Tail Gunner. **John McCloskey**.

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THE BANSHEE

Apparently this plane was named by its pilot, **Kenneth Jewell**, but two of its most dramatic missions were flown by the **George Insley** crew. The mission to Bremen, 16 December 1943 was a return to the target, following an unsuccessful bombing attempt three days before.

This port was regarded as a prize target, being the second largest port in Germany. It had large manufacturing and storage facilities, and was also a busy rail center. The raid was successful, despite severely cold weather and fierce enemy attacks. There were two losses: **Battleaxe** (66th Sq.) and **J-Bar** (67th Sq.)

Two days later the target was the Airfield at Kjeller, Norway, located near Oslo. Thirty four A/C were assigned this mission. *The Banshee*, piloted by George Insley, was flying Deputy Lead. Both **Webb Todd** and **Will Lundy** reported that the Kjeller Airdrome, a supply, repair and maintenance depot, was hit with uncanny accuracy, but at a heavy price.

The 67th lost four crews, and had one crash landing—**Edward Dobson, Joseph Houle, and Earl Johnson**. **Rockwell Griffith** made a crash landing at Shipdham on only the left main gear. **#41-29139**, piloted by **Edward Mitchell** went down in the North Sea. The 68th lost two A/C piloted by **Baxter Weant** and **William D. Hughes**. The tally: KIA – 42; WIA – 1; POW – 10.

BANSHEE IV/E Z DUZIT

Apparently Kenneth Jewell liked the Banshee name; the next plane that came to him he titled ***Banshee IV/E Z Duzit***. The crew's first of eleven missions in this A/C went to Escalles Sur Buchy 21 January 1944.

The Brandenburg raid 9 March 1944 was damaging to both the plane and the pilot. ***Banshee IV/E Z Duzit*** was hit with flak, just as the bombs were released. Also, Jewell sustained a wound that tore his leg off. Co-Pilot **Harold Koontz** brought the damaged plane back to a crash landing at Shipdham. There was extensive damage to the nose of the A/C; it was salvaged two weeks later.

THE 44TH BOMB GROUP PX

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Plans for our 2009 reunion have been firmed up, as you can see by the applications elsewhere in this edition. The Sheraton Hotel is now being completely remodeled and will be ready for us in the Fall. We will be the 3rd group booking after the remodeling is complete. All rooms are 2 room suites with a bedroom and a lounge with sofas that make into beds, so 4 can be accommodated.

It is about 2 miles from the airport and shuttle service is available. They also provide complimentary shuttle service to shops within 3 miles, and there is a large mall close by.

There are still several details to be worked out with MacDill Air Base. As you know, that is where the 44th was organized in January 1941 before they moved to Barksdale, more than a year later. Among other things, we plan to have a memorial service at their Memorial Garden where the 44th has a plaque.

The Florida Aquarium is rated among the top 10 in the country.. The lunches available there in the Aquarium include a cafeteria service as well as a sit down service with a full bar. The menu of hot and cold sandwiches, salads, etc. is quite extensive and reasonably priced. Both MacDill and the Aquarium are a short 6 mile bus ride from the hotel.

The Fantasy of Flight museum, about an hour away, has an extensive collection of aircraft and other displays, including a B-24. After a lunch in an Officer's Club setting, there will be flight demonstrations by one or more classic planes.

As this could be our last opportunity to get together, Lets make the most of it. We look forward to seeing many old friends in Tampa .

The Mighty Eighth Museum in Savannah has received a B-17 which is being put into the exhibit hall. The entire place is being rearranged, and finally the voice-over for our Ploesti Diorama is close to being installed.

A reminder to all, in case the dues notice did not reach you, 2009 dues of \$25 can be sent to Jackie Roberts.

George Washburn

Did you know...

The 8th Air Force was activated in Savannah, Georgia. Half of USA Air Force casualties in WWII were suffered by the 8th Air Force. 17 Medals of Honor, 220 Distinguished Service Crosses, and 442,000 Air Medals were presented to members of the 8th AF. Number of DFC's - not known.

(These numbers have risen, as belated awards are still being presented.)

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



For once I really have to comment on the last issue of 'tails' rather than start off with something new from this side of the Atlantic. I was very saddened to learn that so many of 'our' 44th veterans have had to wait such a long time to get the recognition that they so deservedly earned all those years ago. Having thought it through for a day or two, since my copy of 'tails' arrived, it crosses my mind that there must be many other Bomb Groups out there with a similar situation to confront. I just hope they too have their own Lee Aston rooting for them.

I was also delighted to see that the Pavers are setting the names from the 44th B.G., in perpetuity on the Soldiers Walk at AHEC, Carlisle. That seems a most fitting tribute to those men and the 44th Bomb Group, as just recognition of an outstanding military unit.

Back at Shipdham, we have had a 'real winter's' winter. Snow, Ice, Fog, Wind, Rain, Floods...the lot. As you will know, that assortment of weather does not readily assist flying at all, and as the planes we use are real light-weight and tiny compared to your mighty B-24s, we have spent a fair amount of time these last few weeks, on the ground looking skywards. Hopefully the upcoming summer season will reward our patience. The power planes in the club fleet are, by and large, all fitted with pretty good heaters, so apart from the initial start-up period it is OK with minus figures on the outside air temperature. But spare a thought for our Glider Pilots...they have no heating at all (remember that from your B-24s)...and no fur lined jackets issued to them!!!

Mrs Paterson has graciously added to her donation for the memorial garden, and a brand new Garden Seat has arrived ready to be set in place by the maintenance team, in time for this year's crop of visitors. Since the Garden was dedicated we have been slightly surprised to occasionally see people turn up, look at the garden and photograph it, get back in their cars and drive away, without visiting the club or the museum. However, if that is what they want to see, then they are most welcome, but we would just love them to come in so that we can show them the Museum and the rest of the club. Nevertheless, the fact that people are coming to the airfield, just to see the Memorial Garden, is a very rewarding feeling, and in many ways, one of the reasons for creating it.

The 'Credit Crunch' that is affecting so many people across most areas of both the U.S and the U.K. seems to have been rather relaxed around the Shipdham Flying Club, and our club membership is holding up well. Most surprisingly, there has been more money put into the 44th B.G. Museum donation box in the past three months, than several previous three month periods. It could be that we are getting more visitors or it could be people are being more generous, either way it provides most useful addition to the museum funds and our curator Peter Steele will, I'm sure, find a good use for it over the coming months.

Best wishes from all at your old base in England.

Peter Bodle

From the Diary of Capt. Walter T. Holmes, May 14, 1943:

Kiel, Germany. Today the 44th dispatched 21 aircraft, but only three were from the 67th. One of the six planes that the 506th sent aborted. The target was the Krupp submarine building works. The planes of our Group were the only Liberators participating, following approximately 125 Fortresses.

This proved to be a memorable day, as later the Group was awarded its first Distinguished Unit Citation. The flak was terrific, along with swarms of enemy aircraft engaging in furious duels. To show the ferocity of the enemy attacks, this Group alone claimed thirty-two enemy aircraft as destroyed, five probables, and seven damaged out of one hundred and seventy-two enemy aircraft attacking.

The 67th's three aircraft were flying "Tail End Charlies" and were challenged early and often. In addition to our three planes, the 506th lost Lt. **John Swanson** in A/C # 41-24295; The 66th ship piloted by Lt. **Malcolm C. Howell** and crew in A/C #41-23819 **Rugged Buggy**. The 66th plane piloted by Lt. **John Reed** was so badly damaged that he ordered his crew to bail out over the base and then headed his ship to sea and then jumped.

Lt. **Hartley Westbrook** said that he was asked to fill the vacant co-pilot position on Lt. **Robert Brown's** plane in order to make a full crew for the third plane for the 67th, and they did not return. The 68th gunners leveled the following claims against the enemy: twelve destroyed, five probably destroyed and one damaged. This is believed to be one of the largest scores to be made by a total of five ships from a single squadron in this theater.

One 506 plane was badly damaged, and upon their return to the base, the control tower was only interested in whether the tires were flat. The control tower could see all the holes and feared that a flat might cause a crash and considerable damage to the runway. So they diverted the plane to Belfast, Ireland where the plane was landed without incident.

The Kiel Mission brought the first Distinguished Flying Citation to the 44th BG. Seventeen B-24s were to follow 109 B-17s. Part of the horror of this mission came when some of the Fortresses fell out of formation and were flying above the Liberators, dropping incendiaries. These were in sticks that burst into flame, immediately after being released, so the Liberators were flying through sticks of exploding fire.

The ferocity of Luftwaffe response can be measured by the losses. The 44th lost five A/C; one was abandoned, nine were damaged. Crew losses were huge: 20 POWs, 20 KIA plus one Evadee who was later KIA; WIA—four.

The purpose of this mission was to wipe out submarine production and protect the cargoes of men and supplies coming to Allied Bases.

A voice from another war:

"The experienced fighting pilot does not take unnecessary risks. His business is to shoot down enemy planes, not to get shot down. His trained head and eye and judgment are as much a part of his armament as his machine gun, and a 50-50 chance is the worst he will take or should take – except where the show is of the kind that ... justifies the sacrifice of plane or pilot."

Captain Edward V. "Eddie" Rickenbacker

Jackie Roberts wants to thank all the people who presented her with unexpected dollars. As Treasurer, she is dutifully preserving and investing the 44th's money, knowing there will be a need for funds now that we have the OK to place a 44th BG monument at Carlisle.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE MELVIN JOHN COLE

By Robert Lehnhausen

Melvin (during service he was known by his first name). In civilian life he chose to go by John. To his pals in the 68th, he was "Red". He joined the 44th on 4 November 1942. He, together with several other young radio operators, joined the squadron as casuals, meaning they were not a part of any crew. Early on he was grounded by what I recall was a sinus condition. Shortly after I joined he squadron, he asked for my help in getting back on combat status. That was achieved. Shortly before leaving for Africa, for Ploesti, he joined our crew (**Wilmer Garrett's**) as the radio operator. I was the co-pilot on that crew.

On our first mission, 2 July 1943 out of Libya, we were forced to ditch as the result of battle damage. When it became apparent that we were going to be forced to ditch in the Mediterranean, and the crew was ordered to prepare for ditching, "Red" Cole did exactly what he had been trained to do in such an emergency. He stayed at his position, he tapped out on his radio set a series of Morse Code SOS signals, and then screwed down his transmission key, to emit a constant signal. After being thrown from the crashed *Miss Virginia*, "Red" and I surfaced a few feet apart, next to the right side of the fuselage. Together we got the two dinghies free of their storage location on the top of the fuselage, lashed them together, and proceeded to recover all of our crew mates that had survived and were afloat in their Mae West's. Five of our fine crew never surfaced and lost their lives. Six of us were rescued.

May I impress upon each of you, that this young airman did exactly what he was trained to do **ON HIS FIRST COMBAT MISSION.**

There was NO established Air Sea Rescue service in the Mediterranean at that time. However, there was a British minelayer enroute from Alexandria, Egypt to Malta, carrying the British General Staff. This was eight days prior to the Invasion of Sicily. Someone on that vessel authorized being diverted to begin a search for us, for their radio room had picked up Cole's distress signal. About four and one half hours later, we were rescued by this British warship. Melvin John Cole was the key player, in my opinion.

After hospitalization and an R & R leave, we returned to the Squadron for duty on the Thursday before the Ploesti low level mission. This courageous young guy volunteered to fly the Ploesti mission, because Bill Hughes needed a radio operator. This was his second mission. How is that for a first and second mission? One, you survive a ditching, two you fly Ploesti with a 30% loss rate!

This was not the end of harrowing experiences for him. He flew his seventh of nine missions to Wiener-Neustadt on 1 October 1943. The 44th lost seven of its twenty five dispatched that day. On that mission he was flying as my crew's radio operator. I can assure you that this mission was a very, very violent experience.

Shortly after our return to Shipdham from the second trip to Africa, Cole's sinus problem grounded him for good. In January 1944 he was transferred to 2nd Air Division Headquarters. I was privileged to have flown seven of his nine combat missions with him, and can tell you that he was a superb crew member. He always carried his share of the crew "load", cheerfully and with excellence.

In civilian life he distinguished himself as a member of the advertising business, and spent most of his working life with the highly acclaimed McCann-Erickson Co.

We remained in contact throughout the years. He and his dear wife Adele, now deceased, were special friends.

So we bid farewell to a true patriot. Melvin John Cole was the best of men.

INNOVATION IN WWII

The truth of this story is verified by Lt. Col. John J. Wikle, Ret., son of Earl E. Wikle, Radio Operator on Paper Doll.

Starting in 1941, an increasing number of British airmen found themselves as the involuntary guests of the Third Reich, and the Crown was casting about for ways and means to facilitate their escape. Now obviously, one of the most helpful aids to that end is a useful and accurate map, one showing not only where-stuff-was, but also showing the locations of 'safe houses', where a POW on the lam could go for food and shelter.

Paper maps had some real drawbacks. They made a lot of noise when you open and fold them, they wear out rapidly, and if they get wet, they turn into mush. Someone in MI-5 (similar to America's CIA) got the idea of printing escape maps on silk. It's durable, can be scrunched-up into tiny wads, and unfolded as many times as needed, and makes no noise whatsoever.

At that time there was only one manufacturer in Great Britain that had perfected the technology of printing on silk, and that was John Waddington, Ltd. When approached by the government, the firm was only too happy to do its bit for the war effort.

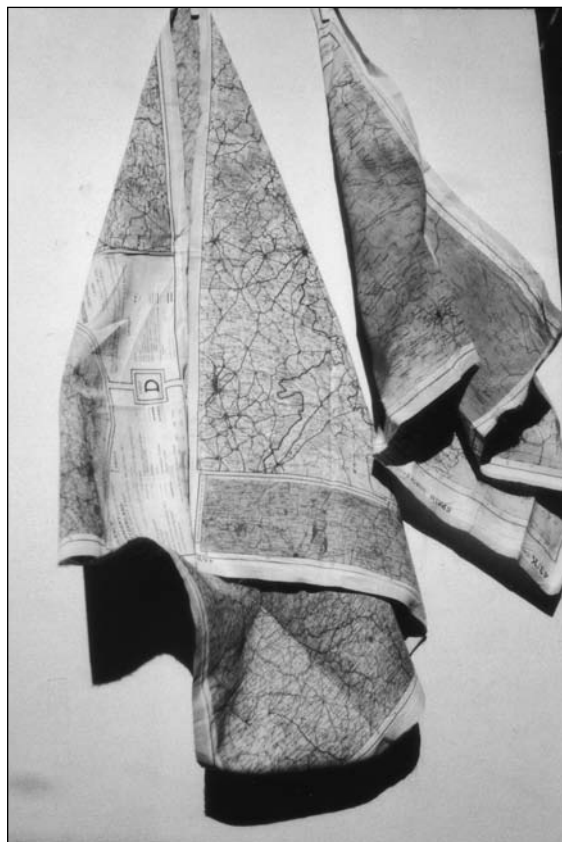
By pure coincidence, Waddington was also the licensee for the popular American board game, Monopoly. As it happened, 'games and pastimes' was a category of item qualified for insertion into 'CARE' packages, dispatched by the International Red Cross, to prisoners of war.

Under the strictest of secrecy, in a securely guarded and inaccessible old workshop on the grounds of Waddington's, a group of sworn-to-secrecy employees began mass-producing escape maps, keyed to each region of Germany or Italy where Allied POW camps were located.

(Red Cross packages were delivered to prisoners in accordance with that same regional system). When processed, these maps could be folded into such tiny dots that they would actually fit inside a Monopoly playing place.

As long as they were at it, the clever workmen at Waddington's also managed to add a playing token, containing a small magnetic compass, and a two-part metal file that could easily be screwed together. Useful amounts of genuine high denomination German, Italian and French currency were hidden within the piles of Monopoly money!

British and American air-crews were advised, before taking off on their first mission, how to identify a 'rigged' Monopoly set –by means of a tiny red dot, one cleverly rigged to look like an ordinary printing glitch, located in the corner of the Free Parking Square!! Of the estimated 35,000 Allied POWs who successfully escaped, an estimated one third were aided in their flight by the rigged Monopoly sets. Everyone who did so was sworn to secrecy indefinitely, since the British Government might want to use this highly successful ruse in still another future war.



...continued on page 8

The story wasn't de-classified until 2007, when the surviving craftsmen from Waddington's, as well as the firm itself, were finally honored in a public ceremony. At any rate, it's always nice when you can play that 'Get Out of Jail Free' card.

Lt. Col. John Wilke wrote that maps of Germany, France, Northern Spain, Austria and other countries were printed on both sides of very thin cloth. Apparently only one crewman carried them.

44th BG Veteran's Comments: Lee Aston: Interesting story, probably true. However, I don't recall ever being briefed before a mission about a Monopoly set with a red dot on it to mark it for escape maps.

MEMORIES OF CAPTAIN STERLING DOBBS PILOT 68TH SQUADRON

"This happened during and after D-Day, when U.S. Troops were starting to make their first big assault. The Air Force issued an order that Bomb Groups would provide air support by dropping supplies to the troops at low levels. To support his mission, the bomb bays of the B-24s had to be modified.

"Up to that time, I had flown 15 missions as a Co-Pilot. Operations called me and said that I was to fly an aircraft to a designated airport for modification. They assigned me an Engineer, Co-Pilot, an airplane, with instructions of where to deliver the airplane.

"This flight was to be at night. It was my first as Pilot in command. Everything went as planned.

"It was also my first night landing at a strange airport. As a result of the success of this operation, I was assigned a crew, and continued to complete my missions, the last several as Command Pilot.

"The mission was flown with the 44th in support of the ground troops. The aircrafts returned with little damage from ground fire. One crew member was hit in the buttocks. He received his Purple Heart on that mission.

Sterling Dobbs frequently e-mails bits of wisdom. Here is a recent one: At one time there was a tax on playing cards. The buyer paid extra for the Ace of Spades. Those who saved money by purchasing only 51 were said to be dumb or stupid because they weren't 'playing with a full deck.'

THE INSIGNIA OF THE 464TH SUB-DEPOT



In early 1944 Lt. Col. Hyman Shactman, 464 Sub-Depot Commander desired their organization to have a distinctive insignia. S/Sgt. Gine Repessi designed the one that was accepted, a Flying Wrench. Due to the fact that the primary duty of this organization was to keep planes in the air by repairing battle damage and doing second and third echelon maintenance on planes, plane parts, and accessories, a wrench - the tool most used by mechanics was chosen as the figurehead for the unit insignia. The sub-depot was an Army Air Corps Unit, so they gave it wings. The colors were blue and yellow, the colors of the AAC.

FROM THE DIARY OF THE LATE BERT CARLBERG NAVIGATOR – 67TH SQUADRON

In October Lt. **Leonard Crandell** and his crew (including me) departed New York on the Ile de France – an ocean liner converted into a troop ship. Strange though it may seem now, we were all afraid that the war in Europe would be over before we got there. Generals Patton and Bradley and Field Marshall Montgomery were moving rapidly across Western Europe, and the newspapers were predicting the war would be over by Christmas. The Ile de France was loaded with replacement troops, aircrews and glider pilots. We were packed in like sardines and could not do much except sleep, write letters, read, play cards or shoot dice. At times we would go out on deck for fresh air and exercise. Traveling with us was a USO group – led by comedian Jack Oakie – going over to entertain the troops. They may have put a couple of shows on as we crossed the ocean, but I was not aware of any. The glider pilots were a very unhappy group. They had all been instructor pilots in the Army Air Corps training command, and abruptly pulled out to fly gliders. They envied those of us who were going over to fly aircraft with engines. I've often wondered how many of them survived; because before the war was over, gliders were used frequently, supporting the advancing armies.

The trip over the ocean took only seven days. We were not part of a convoy, so the Ile de France changed its course heading every three minutes, which prevented an enemy submarine from being able to draw a bead on it. We docked at Glasgow, Scotland and went by train to Stoke-on-Trent, where we spent a couple of days awaiting assignment to the various air bases in East Anglia. Finally we were on our way – again by rail - to Shipdham, but delayed enroute when a buzz bomb narrowly missed the tracks that we were on. This

incident made us realize that we were in the war zone, and the enemy had not yet given up. Because of the delay, we did not arrive at the air base until late in the evening.

Our Assignment, the 67th Squadron

Our crew was assigned to the 67th Squadron, and Lts. **Crandell, (W. B.) Croll** and myself quartered in the rear most Quonset hut on the left side adjacent to a large sugar beet field. The hut was divided into four sections with two officers to each section. Crandell and Croll were put in one section, and I was put in the adjoining section with Lt. **Ed Reynolds**, who had arrived there three weeks earlier. He was the first pilot and his co-pilot, **Stan Fransted** and Navigator, **Hal Pendleton**, were housed in the section opposite us. (Several years later when I revisited the 67th Squadron area, our hut was gone with only the concrete slab on which it had rested, remaining.)

Lt. Reynolds and I hit it off right away, most likely because we were both from the same part of the country - he from Lowell, Massachusetts and I from Meriden, Connecticut. We both had spent our teen years during the very rough times of the depression, so we appreciated the basic needs of warmth, food and security more than our younger colleagues.

Both of our crews – Crandell's and Reynolds = became very friendly and often got together in one or the other's section to exchange skuttlebutt, experiences, and to have an occasional night time snack. Local farmers found they could make a bit of extra money by selling fresh eggs to the American airmen. We were steady customers, and some evenings we would bring bread from the mess hall, fry some of those delicious fresh eggs over our potbellied stoves and

...continued on page 11

make ourselves some great egg sandwiches.

My roommate was an animal lover, and soon after he arrived at the 6i7th, he took in a stray black cat. We had a window at the end of our hut, so we left it partially open so the cat could get in and out. This cat was quite a hunter, and often caught mice and small rats in the drainage ditch just outside the hut. On occasion – at night – the cat would bring in its catch and drop it by my cot or Ed's and loudly announced his hunting ability.

We had a radio in our room and enjoyed listening to the music from the Armed Forces Network, as well as the BBC news programs, which were identified and preceded with chimes. On occasion we tuned in a German propaganda station, which fed us a lot of garbage. One morning, however, we were surprised when, returning from a scrubbed mission, to hear the German station announcer inform us that they were disappointed that our mission was cancelled because they were going to be waiting for us near the target. Even late in the war, they still had some means of receiving intelligence information.

Reassigned to Ed's Crew

In early March 1945 Ed had some problem with the performance of his navigator, so without my knowledge, he had me transferred to his crew, which had been given lead crew status. I was a little upset, because I wanted to finish with Len Crandell, but the gods were with me through Eddie Reynolds. On March 24th 1045, while we were flying practice missions, Lt. Crandell and crew flew a low level supply dropping mission for Field Marshall Montgomery's troops crossing the Rhine River and sustained a direct hit that wiped out the aircraft and the entire crew. It took me a while to get over that.

My rating was that of aerial navigator. Following graduation from navigator

training, I was fearful of being assigned to the Pacific theater, in as much as many combat missions there required flying over long stretches of ocean with few navigational aids and frequent use of flying by the stars. I had been taught celestial navigation, but it was slow and cumbersome, so when our crew was assigned to the ETA, I breathed a big sigh of relief. There celestial navigation was rarely required. We had good maps with roads, railroads, towns, villages and cities clearly marked. Also, radio beacons were readily available.

The GEE Box

In the last few months of the war, we were given a new aid – called a GEE box. Special maps were made that contained curved lines which emanated from a master radar station and a slave station. These lines crossed to give perfect fixes over the central and southern England, and all the operator had to do was to place the setting or fix of his destination in the GEE box and steer the aircraft toward the fix which he would reach when the radar blips joined. The master station was powerful enough to reach into Western Germany, but the slave station did not go far enough east to enable a fix. However, the master station was a good indicator of course direction. I was able to use it to follow a course from southern Germany to an alternative field in France when we were flying in solid cloud, and had no other means of navigation. Also, when returning to base in early winter darkness and a snowstorm, I was able to find our Shipdham base without any problem.

Hallein Austria

Our last combat mission was on April 25th, 1945 when we flew to the outskirts of Salzburg, Austria to bomb a small refinery. It was a long mission – total fly-

ing time of 9 hours - but not one bit of enemy activity to challenge us. This was the last combat mission for the 8th Air Force in Europe.

The Trolley Missions

The war in Europe ended on May 8th 1945, but that day and the following one, we were kept busy flying what we called "Trolley" missions. On these flights we carried many of our ground support personnel at low level over Holland and the Ruhr Valley of Germany, to show them the devastation that had resulted from day/night bombings. I remember looking down at the bombed out cities, bridges, railroads, factories and highways, wondering whether they would be able to rebuild. Obviously they were able, because some of the most modern and beautiful cities have risen from those ashes – due to the Marshall Plan.

On one of those afternoons – right after May 8th – our squadron commander and a Capt. Fitzgibbons – who lived in the other corner of our hut – took a B-24 and flew to a part of the French coast famous for its wine production. They brought back quite a supply, and I'll never forget a wine drinking party that followed. I over-indulged, ending up throwing my guts out in the ditch next to our hut.

Going Home

My only use of celestial navigation came into play when we flew our B-24's home in early June 1945. On one leg of the trip – between Iceland and Greenland, we were told to fly a course 10 degrees left of the true heading in the field in Greenland and shoot celestial readings of the sun, which would give us speed readings. When we were within 10 minutes of the projected speed line, abeam the airfield, we made a 90 degree turn to the right and after coming over the southern tip of Greenland, soon reached the air-

port. Landing there was a bit difficult though, because the sole runway could only be reached by flying up a narrow fjord leading directly to that runway.

Prior to our departure from Shipdham, we flew a couple of nighttime training flights to brush up on navigation before leaving for the States. Ironically, we flew the entire trip in daylight, overnighing at Valley, Wales; Keflavik, Iceland and Blue West One in Greenland.

We landed our aircraft at Windsor Locks, Connecticut, and I never flew in a B-24 again.

Ed Reynolds and I Met Again

After the war Ed remained in the Air Force and spent time at various locations, including Alaska, where he flew to remote fields including the Aleutian chain, where he checked out navigation aids, often under horrendous weather conditions. He once checked out the GCA unit at Gander, Newfoundland when I was stationed there as chief dispatcher for Scandinavian Airlines.

After Ed retired from the Air Force he took a job with FAA as a pilot, and he performed the same functions that he had done with the Air Force – flight checking navigation aids. In the last years he rode as check pilot on airline pilots.

Lt. Carlberg flew sixteen missions with the Crandell crew, nine with the Reynolds crew. He is the only member of the Crandell crew to survive the war.



**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR THE
44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
2009 REUNION
SHERATON SUITES TAMPA AIRPORT**

Thursday, October 22

9:00 AM Meeting of Executive Board
1:30 PM Open Registration

Friday, October 23

Breakfast
11:00 AM Bus Tour to MacDill Air Field
Lunch at MacDill Dining Room
Return to Hotel 3:00 PM (approx)
7:00 PM Welcome Reception

Saturday, October 24

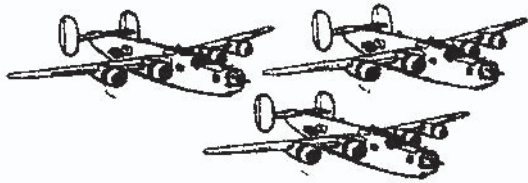
Breakfast
9:00 AM Annual Meeting
11:30 AM Bus Tour to Florida Aquarium
Lunch on you own at the Aquarium
3:00 PM Return to hotel
7:00 PM Squadron Dinners

Sunday October 25

Breakfast
10:00 AM Bus Tour to Fantasy of Flight
Lunch (incl)
3:00 PM Return to Hotel
7:00 PM Banquet

Monday October 26

Breakfast & Farewells



**THE SECOND AIR DIVISION
REUNION SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2009
THE WESTIN O'HARE, CHICAGO, IL**

In the past couple of years, the 44th BGVA's reunion occurred on the same exact weekend of the 2 AD's. **Dick Butler**, single-handedly represented our group. A Past President of the 2 AD, Dick would like some company this year. Registration begins on Thursday September 3rd. On Friday you can enjoy an Architectural Cruise and a Cocktail party that evening, (Cash bar).

Breakfast, and meetings are on Saturday, then off you go to the Museum of Science and Industry. Then more cocktails (Cash bar).

On Sunday there's a City Tour; later there is a Ceremony for Past Presidents and Banquet.

On Monday, it's Breakfast and Farewells.

This Reunion is coordinated by Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. Register online and pay by Credit Card: www.afr-reg.com/2ndAir

For more details contact Betty Lee, Chairman, Phone 321 259-6861

E-Mail betbrown331@aol.com

Or: Maxine Mackey, Phone 480 641-3033 E-Mail oakmackey@msn.com

To all of the 8 Ball Tail Readers: Because of the increased number of Folded Wings, and because our printer gives me over-runs, I have a lot of back copies of the Tails. They are already being distributed in many historical libraries, but we are looking for more. If you personally would like back copies, let me know and I will send them. Instead of reimbursing the postage, please make a contribution to the treasury, c/o Jackie Roberts.

If you have a college or museum in your town that collects historical literature, approach them and ask if they would accept sets of 8 Ball Tails. Along with the magazines, they will also receive an updated CD with the Bomb Group's history. If we do not push the 44th's history into every nook and cranny in this country, future generations will never know of the individual sacrifices of more than 8,000 young men, who helped to keep this country the bastion of freedom which all of us enjoy.

MORE THINGS TO PONDER FROM ROGER FENTON

1. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A CIVIL WAR?
2. WHY IS THERE AN EXPIRATION DATE ON SOUR CREAM?
3. CAN ATHEISTS GET INSURANCE AGAINST ACTS OF GOD?

THE LATE LT. COL DALE F. BENADOM'S HISTORY WAS PRESERVED BY HIS LOVING FAMILY

When a pilot has flown a PT-19, BT-13, AT-6, P-36, P-40, B-24, L-4, L-5, P-47, P-51, B-25, A-20, A-26, C-47, C-54, B-29, T-33, B-47, B-52, KC-97, B-17, RB-66, F-86, F-104 and British Oxford, he hardly had time to write his personal story. His wife Jean kept the list for him. He trained to be a fighter pilot, then came to England and found himself flying in B-24s.

Two trips to the heavily defended sites in Watten, France brought two crash landings for Benadom, flying as Co-Pilot with **Walter Milliner**. On 2 February 1944 they managed to get the heavily damaged plane #42-99996 across the Channel. Everyone but Milliner and Benadom bailed out, and the two pilots crashed the A/C at Shoreham, Sussex. That plane survived the crash and flew again with replacement of two engines and a section of the tail.

Six days later in *Shoo Shoo Baby*, all four engines were barely able to limp back across the Channel. The crew bailed out near Manston, Kent. Again, the pilots brought the plane down and were able to walk away. Four engines were replaced before it could fly again.

(It has been said any landing where you can walk away is a good landing. If the plane can fly again, it's a great landing.)

Apparently Benadom survived other crashes of lesser note, as his fellow airmen began to refer to him as 'Crash Benadom'. On 10 October 1944 he moved across to the pilot's seat, and he signed up for a second tour. By the war's end, he had risen to the rank of Major.

Benadom flew different planes during the Cold War and the Korean Conflict. When the Korean problems arose, he was based at MacDill Air Force Base. He was appointed Group Material Officer, and had the responsibility of moving all planes and other necessary materials to

Okinawa, in preparation for the air war that followed. He flew nine missions in that conflict.

From 1959 to 1962 he served as chief of Spadats Saint Division, working on the logistic support for space programs.

Apparently 'Crash' Benadom's luck with planes improved. Late in his career he received the Flying Safety Award for the longest record of consecutive accident-free months.

Among the pictures in the Benadom collection are four that will tweak the memory of our veterans.



P-47 Thunderbolt, one of the 44th's Little Friends.



Jeep Does that background look familiar to anyone

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Somewhere in Germany. Undoubtedly taken by Benadon on one of his post war assignments.



Bull of the Woods This plane flew 15 missions. It was first assigned to the 392nd BG, but they did not fly a mission in it. It came to the 44th in October 1943 and crashed the following December on a mission to Ludwigshaven, Germany. Does anyone recognize the crew kneeling before it?

Ed. Note: It is notable that many men like Benadom, who survived World War II, made major contributions to world peace and the progress of aviation.

WILEY NOBLE'S RESEARCH OF A GERMAN TOP SECRET BIRD



Crew Chief assists pilot with checks before takeoff of the Komet.

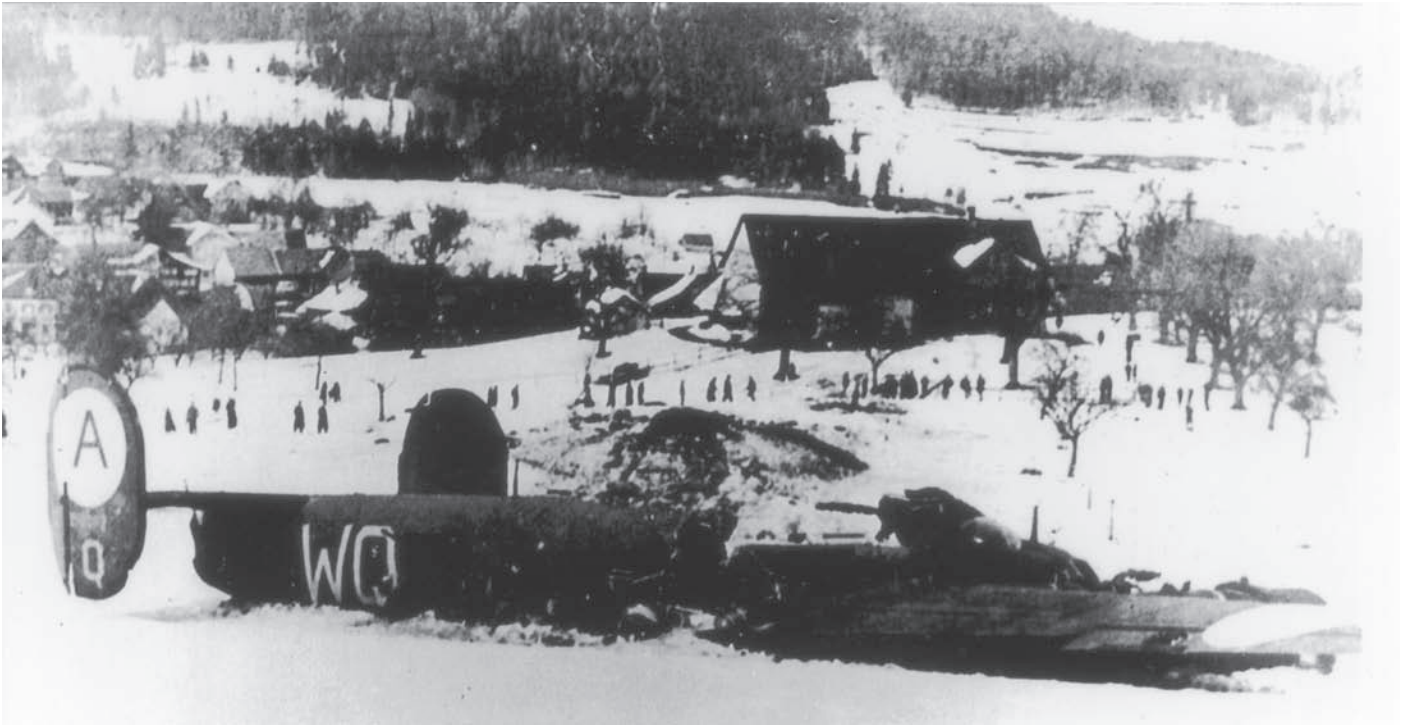
Construction of the rocket-powered ME-163 was kept a total secret from the rest of the military. It was constructed at the Messerschmitt factory in Augsburg, and was called the Komet. Production was slowed because the 8th Air Force was so successfully destroying German industrial plants, making spare parts unavailable.

The flights of the ME-163 were unsuccessful because it flew so fast, its pilots had only 2 seconds to select, aim and fire at a bomber before speeding past the formation. It was so fast, the ME-163 pilots said it appeared that the USAAF bombers were flying backwards!

The ME-163 required 3500 feet of runway for take-off. Fuel lasted only about 10 minutes, half of which was used in take-off. After the rocket engine fuel had been exhausted, the A/C became a fast, controllable glider, each armed with a cannon and 2 Cal. 30 machine guns. The 12" propeller on front of the flying wing powered the navigational and communication systems.

The Komet was considered a dismal failure. Their recorded 'kills' were 20 B-17s, one B-24 and one Mosquito bomber. At one point Herman Goering asked the Me-163 pilots to consider ramming the 8th AF bomber formations/ Twelve volunteered for this suicide mission, but no 'kill' was ever recorded.

ANOTHER LOOK AT *PAPER DOLL* AND HER ONE-WAY TRIP TO SWITZERLAND



Paper Doll at Dietschwil, Switzerland

Lt. Col. John J. Wikle, (Ret) flew to Zurich Switzerland, to follow the footsteps of his father, S/Sgt. **Earl P. Wilke**, Radio Operator on *Paper Doll*.

"It was March 18, 2001, my dad's birthday, and it was also 57 years to the day when he was shot down over Germany. The raid was a maximum effort put up by US forces, with over 700 planes targeting the city of Friedrichshafen on Lake Constance in southern Germany and its Zeppelin factory. The dirigibles had been dismantled, but the factory still made aircraft and liquid oxygen to fuel V-2 rockets, which the Germans would use to attack England. They were also making a new fuel, liquid hydrogen, for rockets with a range long enough to hit the United States, making the raid especially critical to U.S. strategy.

"We were still letting down, and I thought back to the day I learned my father was missing in action. I was in junior high school, and was called to see Mr. Mikesell. He was the superintendent,

and I was no stranger in his office. He told me to sit down as I entered. It was then I noticed Mr. Hildebolt, the principal, also in the room, and the one who administered corporal punishment. I could not think of anything that I had done to warrant this kind of meeting, but it wasn't about me, I soon learned. Mr. Mikesell asked if I knew my father, S/Sgt. **Earle P. Wikle**, was flying combat in the war. I told him I did and said he was on a B-24 as the radio operator/gunner. Mr. Mikesell explained that Western Union had been trying to reach someone at my house with no luck, so they called the school.

"Your father is missing in action over Germany," he said. Mr. Hildebolt added, "He may have bailed out. Do you wish to go home?"

"I didn't realize how serious the matter was. To me, going home to the dairy farm meant cleaning stables. Not being close to my father, I couldn't see how my

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Officers (not individually identified) **Hollis Nichols**, Pilot; **Sidney Bolick**, Co-Pilot; **John McNamara**, Navigator; **A. Slovacek**, Bombardier.

going home could help him, so I said 'no'. Eventually Western Union got the message through to my grandmother, and she came to school to get

me." 57 years later, Earl's son decided to follow the steps that his father had taken.

Glimpsing into a dark period:

"My trip to Zurich was uneventful, unlike my father's arrival in Switzerland. The number of planes lost in the U.S. raid on Friedrichshafen was 43, about six percent. His B-24, nicknamed *Paper Doll* was one of 16 that wound up in Switzerland."

L/Col. Wilke did a great deal of research about interment in Switzerland. He learned that the first Americans that arrived in that country walked across the border from France through the underground. Others got there after their planes were damaged by flak or caught in fighter plane action, or after they suffered a loss of fuel, mechanical failure or simply became lost. Some aircraft that strayed into Swiss territory were forced down or shot down by Messerschmitt Me 100s sold to the Swiss by Germany. The US crews were detained and their aircraft were impounded. In the early part of the war, a few Americans were exchanged for German prisoners. But by August 1943, just a few months before *Paper Doll's* crew bailed out into the rough Swiss Alps, the Swiss stopped this practice. In addition, the US government was paying the Swiss to house the interns, giving the Swiss government some incentive to hold onto the Americans.

Finding the right book:

John Wilke did a great deal of research on internees in Switzerland, and one book which told the grim story of an internee who escaped and was recaptured was *The Black Hole of Wauwilermoos* by M/Sgt. Dan Culler. His father had suffered the same black experience.

Soon after the crew of *Paper Doll* arrived in Adelboden, the United States sent an officer from the military attaché in Bern to brief the internees. His advice to the detainees was 'disregard what you have been trained to do, escape, because if you are apprehended, you will be treated as a criminal.' When they followed this advice, they were treated properly and permitted to travel about the country.

At one point Sgt. Wilke volunteered to be the radio operator at the US Embassy in Bern. Having worked for Western Union before the war, he would have been an ideal candidate for the position. Circumstances drove him in another direction.

Several months ago the *8 Ball Tails* carried a series of articles by

Sidney Bolick, an airman who has the unique experience of joining the RCAF, RAF, AAC, then became an Internee in Switzerland. Luckily, with the help of the French Underground, he succeeded in escaping. 947 of the 1,740 internees tried to escape. Of these, 184 were recaptured, among them Radio Operator **Earl P. Wilke**.

Earl's son John visited all the hotels



Enlisted men: **Earl P. Wilke**, Radio Operator/Gunner; **W. E. McGoldrick**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; **John P. Scott**, Ball Turret Gunner; **G. E. Counts**, Right Waist Gunner; **Carroll Waddell**, Left Waist Gunner, **Joseph Cumbia**, Tail Gunner.

where internees were housed, and viewed the splendor of the mountain peaks, beautiful cloud formations and well tended farms. Life was good for the internees, but apparently the desire to be free prevailed.

The Underground contacted Earl, urging him to bribe the guards, promising they would turn their heads on their escape. Unfortunately, other guards were in place, the escapees were captured and ended up in Wauwilermoos, a maximum security prison. They were housed alongside of sex offenders, murderers and other hardened criminals. Only when Earl was near death from malnutrition and ghastly living conditions, was he exchanged and permitted to return to England. John Wilke's research indicated that sixty one US airmen died in Switzerland. *It was the opinion among the detainees that the Swiss worked six days a week for Germany and prayed for an Allied victory on the seventh.*

Returning to England created new problems for this radio operator. Unfortunately, his flight records were lost, and at first he was considered AWOL. He had to seek help from a Senator to receive his flight pay, and his service-connected disabilities were never recognized. Along with thousands of other GIs, his records were destroyed in a fire in St. Louis.

Even returning home did not solve all of his problems. He could not get care in the VA Hospitals.

In going through his father's papers, John found a card from B/Gen B. R. Legge, saying that he had been accepted for the radio operator position in the U.S. Embassy, and that he was to return to the Embassy and work for "Mr. D." John believes that the reference was to Allen Dulles, who was in Switzerland at the time, working for the OSS, forerunner of the CIA, in an effort to recruit spies. John believes his father never saw this card until after the war. The tragedy of his

ghastly imprisonment at Wauwilermoos could have been prevented, if only he had received that card in time.

The father-son relationship:

John Wilke remembered his family as 'never being the huggy-kissy' type. A handshake was the typical greeting and farewell expression. Thus, when he was ready to board a plane as a US Marine enroute to Korea, he extended his hand to his father.

"He took my hand and pulled me to him and embraced me. I got on board and sat down, shaken by his sudden show of affection. It was then that I realized what he had done was soldier to soldier; and why a handshake on this occasion just wasn't enough."

During the Korean War, John J. Wilke enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps, later he enlisted in the Ohio National Guard. He served 30 years and retired as a Lt. Col.



THE GROUND CREWS PLAY WHEN THE PLANES ARE AWAY



Jim Boyer, Barton Cramer, Charlie Pigg, Willie Williams, — Wolfe and Snowgirl.
December 30, 1942



Jim Boyer, Crew Chief and assistants not identified.



Believed to be Jim Boyer in front of #42-95209 (*Sabrina III*). Picture is labeled "In service one year". Database credits 105 missions.

A challenge: Spike Jones kept us amused during WWII, and here is one of his noteworthy songs, *Der Fuhrer's Face*. I am omitting one line. See if you can fill it in.

Ven der Furher says, "Vee ist der Master Race,"
Vee 'Heil, Heil,' right in der Fuhrer's face.
Ven Herr Goebels says, _____
Vee 'Heil, Heil', right in Herr Goebel's face.
Ve bring the vorld new order, Heil Hitler's vorld, New Order
Everyone of human race will love der Fuhrer's face
Ven we bring to the vorld dis-order.

Answer: What is the missing line?

Ven Herr Goebels says "They'll never bomb dis place."
 (He really said it back in 1942.)

JACK BUTLER, NAVIGATOR, REMEMBERS MISSION #8

It was exactly 9:55 AM over Magdeburg, Germany on June 29, 1944. I had just seen two of our B-24s from the 44th Bomb Group in the flight immediately ahead of us get hit by flak, and then collide with each other and go down in flames. I did not see any chutes open, but I did hear much later that five of the twenty men aboard had managed to bail out and had become POWs.

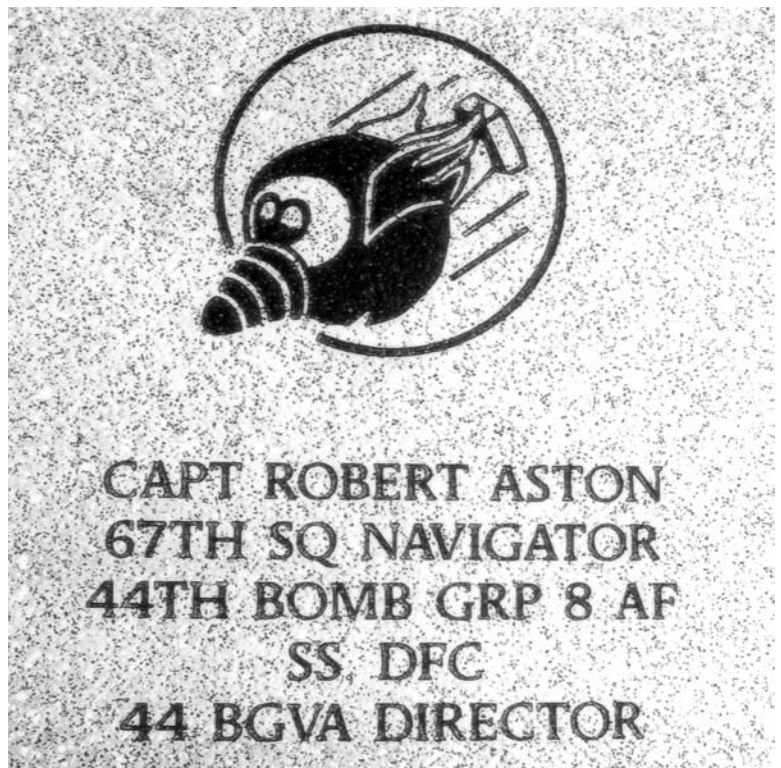
Two of our planes from the 44th were flying directly *behind* the 44th; but instead, were flying with the 392nd that day because of the special radar/bombsight equipment we had on board - (*GEE & PFF*). I was flying in *I'll Be Back* with Captain **Raymond Craig**, the Lead Pilot. Captain **Charles Handwright** was flying Deputy Lead until we were so badly damaged, we had to turn over the lead to Captain Handwright. A third B-24 in our box of three was part of the 392nd.

Of the three B-24s in our box, all were damaged so severely, we each had to limp home separately. All three of us were well aware that a disabled B-24 flying alone was duck soup for a ME-109, but fortunately for us, no Me-109 showed up as we struggled on our way home. Two of our three A/C crash landed in England. Our plane was so badly damaged, we were afraid we would crash in the North Sea, which would mean a long, cold swim to England, so we changed course until we got to near Calais and only 28 miles across the Channel. We finally made it safely all the way to our base, but were two and a half hours overdue. The next day our Crew Chief estimated over 300 holes in our fuselage. (I believe the Crew Chief counted one hole where the flak went in and another where the flak came out.)

Ed. Note: This mission was to the Krupp Aircraft Factory. 26 of the 36 A/C from the 44th were damaged. Two planes from the 506 Squadron were lost; ten men were KIA; 9 were POW. The 67th Squadron had 1 WIA.

The 44th Bomb Group expressed gratitude for great service.

Robert Lee Aston has done what nobody else had even undertaken—getting belated awards for men who earned them long ago. At every Reunion he manages to recruit a notable person to pin Air Medals, OLCs, Distinguished Flying Crosses, Silver Stars and Distinguished Service Crosses on our members. Lee has acquired 63 belated medals for 44th BG members. He also purchased the plaque on the Control Tower in East Anglia. Right now he is working on creating the 44th BG monument for the courtyard at Carlisle. The design is impressive. All that work earns him a Paver in the Soldier's Walk.



44th BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

Lt. Col. Walter Tom Holmes, 68th Squadron, received the Distinguished Service Cross for his target leadership on the 1943 Ploesti Low-Level Bombing Mission

At 8th AFHQ, Barksdale Air Force Base on Feb.2, 2009



8th AF Vice Commander Maj. Gen. Floyd Carpenter congratulates Tom Holmes after pinning DSC medal on Him two days before Tom's 90th Birthday



2 Feb. 2009: Maj. Gen. Floyd Carpenter, Vice Commander, 8th AF; 44th BG veterans: Landrum, Aston, Holmes (wife, Nida), Dale Lee, Geo. Temple.



Mary Aston presented a 44th BG Flying 8 Balls suncatcher logo to Maj. Gen. Carpenter for making the presentation of The DSC to Lt. Col. Holmes.



Tom Holmes, DSC with 44th Bomb Group veterans Dale Lee, Lee Aston and George Temple. Dale Lee and George Temple flee the 1943 Ploesti mission with Holmes. Lee Aston was the attorney for Tom Homes that successfully won his claim for an upgrade of the Silver Star to the DSC, and made the ceremonial arrangements of the second highest medal at Barksdale AFB to Holmes. About 100 family member, friends and base personnel attended. A luncheon was held after the ceremony.

FROM THE ARCHIVES, 68th SQUADRON:

26 February 1943 Wilhelmshaven, Germany

The 44th put up 9 planes that proceeded to the target: the city of Wilhelmshaven and its dock installation. #813 with 1st. Lt. **Walter T. Holmes** and **Howard R. Klekar**, Bombardier, dropped its bombs on the city of Wilhelmshaven. #699 **Lemon Drop** dropped its bombs on slips in the northwest corner of the harbor. 1st. Lt. Reginald h. Phillips, Pilot, and 2nd Lt. **Robert A. LaFleur**, Bombardier, participated.

The reason for the many attacks on #813 and #699 was that they were protecting Lt. **Miller's** ship, #811, which was crippled and fell out of the formation. The pilots of #813 and #699 dropped down to protect #811, although they knew they would suffer increased fighter attacks.

T/Sgt. **Frank W. Gavin** is credited with one FW 190 destroyed. Ship #699 was attacked by an FW 190 from 1 o'clock above in the vicinity of Wilhelmshaven. It was fired upon by Sgt. Gavin in the top turret at a distance of 400-500 yards. At 0630 position it was seen to burst into flames and go down. This is confirmed by the Right Waist Gunner, S/Sgt. **Jack O. Banta**. About forty minutes later, ship #699 was attacked again. It was attacked from 1 o'clock above by an ME 110. It was first hit by the right waist gunner, Sgt. **Jack O. Banta**, at approximately 100 yards, S/Sgt. **Henry G. Hayes**, Tail Turret Gunner, also fired at this EAC which came out at 5 o'clock. The EAC was seen by the Tail Turret Gunner to fall out of control and hit the water. This was also confirmed by the Left Waist Gunner, Sgt. **James M. Garrand**. The enemy aircraft is claimed as destroyed, and credited to the Tail Turret Gunner, S/Sgt. **Henry G. Hayes**. At that time Ship #813 was attacked by two ME 110s between 0630 and 0700 above. The Top Turret Gunner, T/Sgt. **Tauno I. Metsa**, started firing on the EAC at 650 yards and continued firing on it until about 150 yards. Toward the latter part of the attack, the enemy plane was so low that the top turret gunner called through the inner phone to the pilot to pull up the nose, which he did. The starboard engine of the ME 110 burst into flames and the plane fell into the sea. It was seen to hit the water by S/Sgt. **Patrick H. McAttee**, Tail Gunner. 2nd Lt. **Robert J. Stine**, Navigator, confirms the fact the ME 110 was diving straight down with the starboard engine on fire, but he lost sight of it before it hit the water. This EAC was claimed as destroyed and was credited to the Top Turret Gunner, T/Sgt. **Tauno I. Metsa**.

Ten minutes later ship #699 was attacked by an ME 110 from 6:00. This EAC attacked level with the plane at 500 yards. It was first fired on by the Tail Gunner, S/Sgt. **Henry G. Hayes**, and while firing at it, #699 was hit with two 20 mm shells. As this EAC came within 200 yards of the Tail Turret Gunner, it burst into flames and went down. This EAC was claimed as destroyed and credited to the Tail Gunner, S/Sgt. **Henry G. Hayes**.

*Ed. Note: All 68th Squadron planes made it back to Shipdham. The 66th Squadron lost two, **Maisie and Sad Sack**. **James Garrand** and **Robert LaFleur** were KIA on a mission to Lecce, Italy, 2 July 1943. **Frank Gavin** became an Internee in Sweden after a mission to Kjeller, Norway. He was later returned to Shipdham.*





MAIL & E-MAIL

From: Malcolm Holland in England:

I am trying to make contact with any ground-based veterans who were stationed in the UK during WWII with the 8th Air Force. It would include anybody who was involved with running the camps in any way, from Ground Crews, Cooks, Fire Fighters and Administrative Staff.

I am trying to do research on the ground operations, to fill a gap that so far appears to have been largely overlooked, that of the sterling efforts required 'behind the scenes' to keep the bomber offensive going.

I am looking for any first hand accounts of life on or off duty from surviving veterans or memories from more recent generations. I would like to hear about any tasks that were carried out, no matter how mundane, to get a clear picture of how things were organized and done, especially as there were variations of operational procedure from base to base.

(Anyone who wishes to respond to this researcher can contact him at MAHoll200@aol.com.

YOUR PERSONAL STORY ON TAPE

Many of you have expressed a concern that your stories will be forgotten. Martha Pedersen, niece of **Nels A. Pedersen**, wants your words preserved at the US Army Heritage & Education Center in Carlisle. She will work with Michael Lynch, Historian & Chief of Educational & Historical Programs.

At the Harrisburg-Carlisle Reunion, Martha spoke to a number of people who consented to be interviewed. When you have completed your oral history, she would be grateful if you would name other people to interview. Interviews will be conducted in person whenever possible, and she will come to you.

If you and a number of your buddies can get together, that would make a great history, as you can jog each others' memories.

If you were associated with the 44th through the USO or any other way, your stories are important as well.

Every person in the 44th Bomb Group had a unique experience, none of which was quite the same. Record your story. Never before or since in history has there been anything comparable to the events of the 8th Air Force. Don't let your memories of those amazing experience be lost. Martha wants to hear from you. Call her at (301) 987-5895 or contact her at martha_pedersen@hotmail.com

*Ed. Note: **Nels W. Pedersen**, Martha's uncle, was a Navigator on the **H. K. Landahl** crew. The crew was flying in **Cape Cod Special** on a mission to the Krupp Aircraft Factory in Magdeburg, Germany. Flak hit Landahl's plane, and also the one flying alongside – **My Everlovin' Gal**. Ten men died, Pedersen among them. Nine became POW. The date was 29 June 1944. It was Pedersen's 30th mission. This air disaster was reported in Vol. 8, Issue #5 of the 8 Ball Tails. This is the same mission described by Jack Butler, 66th Squadron.*



FOLDED WINGS

*Be still, sad heart! And cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining,
Thy fate is the common fault of all;
Into each life some rain must fall.*

Cole, Melvin John #23288 68th Squadron 28 January 2009 T/Sgt. Cole was a Radio Operator on three crews. His first of nine missions was with **Wilmer Garrett** to Lecce, Italy. On this mission, the plane ditched in the Mediterranean, and he sustained a chest injury. He flew with **W. D. Hughes** on the Ploesti mission. The last seven were with the **Robert Lehnhausen** crew. A health problem ended his combat assignments.

Cole flew in *Miss Virginia* (the A/C which ditched), *Avenger*, *Lemon Drop* and *Flak Alley*.

Cole was living in Minneapolis at the time of his death. He was preceded in death by his wife Adele. Information of his demise came from his son Dana to **Robert Lehnhausen**.

Dibb, Thomas F. #19999 66th Squadron 22 September 2008 S/Sgt. Dibbs was an Engineer & Top Turret Gunner on the **Albert Boudreaux** crew. The crew flew 8 missions, the first 21 March 1945. They flew in *Glory Bee*, *Jersey Jerk*, *Jose Carioca* and *I'll Get By*. Their last mission was 15 April 1945.

Thomas and his wife, Louise, lived in Greenfield, Wisconsin. They had been married 61 years.

Fusano, Mike #20308 Headquarters, 14th Combat Wing. Sgt. Fusano was drafted and went first to Wichita Falls, Texas for his Boot Camp experience. Next he was sent to Shreveport, Louisiana,

where he became a member of the 44th Bomb Group. From there he became a member of the motor pool in Ft. Myers, Florida.

When Mike went to England, he became the driver to Father Lamb, a priest who had shared the journey across the Atlantic. Before long, Father Lamb was transferred to the 1st Division, and Mike became the full time driver for **General Johnson**. Fusano's admiration for the General was boundless. Their relationship continued long after the war was over.

Jenkins, Donald R. #20819 68th Squadron 17 January 2009 1st Lt. Jenkins was the Navigator on the **Robert SeEVERS** crew. His first of 28 missions was 25 August 1944. In the post D-Day period, every mission except one was to Germany. The exception was the low level supply drop at Best, Holland, 18 September 1944.

The SeEVERS crew flew in *Jose Carioca*, *Flak Magnet*, *Gipsy Queen* and *Lili Marlene*, but most of their missions were in unnamed planes. Jenkins also flew with **H. R. Dimpfl**, **Ray Suddreth**, and once with **Victor C. Smith** as Command pilot.

The SeEVERS crew flew the Lead on several missions, including Jenkin's last mission which was the low level supply drop at Wesel, Germany, 24 March 1945.

After the war he became Professor of Engineering at Lafayette College in



FOLDED WINGS

Easton, PA, later at the General Motors Institute.

Jenkin's death occurred three months after the Harrisburg/Carlisle Reunion, where he and his wife Vinnie were accompanied by their daughter and son-in-law. Jenkins was a longtime friend of **George Washburn**; after the Reunion he and Cynthia visited the Jenkins' home in New Hampshire. Since both had flown many of the same missions, much can be said of their shared memories.

Morris, Mark #22730 506 Sq. 2008 S/Sgt. Morris first of twenty five missions was 29 May 1943 with **Nathaniel Graham**. He was a Gunner on the **James McAtee** crew, with whom he flew to Ploesti and both missions to Wiener-Neustadt, flying in **Old Crow** on it's last mission. He also flew with **Harold Laudeg, Norman Purdy** and **Robert Cardenas**.

He also flew in **Prince/Princess-Ass/Princess, Baldy & His Brood** and one unnamed plane. His last mission was 20 February 1944.

After the war. Morris worked as a civilian employee for the Army. He and his wife Rose were residing in Pueblo, CO at the time of his death.

Ed. Note: This Folded Wing was especially troubling, in that Morris's memory of the Wiener Neustadt mission was in the winter 2009 publication. He did not live to see his story in print.

Noble, Wiley S. was Secretary of the 3d Strategic Air Depot. He joined the 44th BGVA because the Strategic Air Depot did many repairs on 44th BG planes. He was Editor of the 3D SAD Association Newsletter, and frequently used stories from the *8 Ball Tails*. In

return, the *8 Ball Tails* carried some of his research on German aircraft.

Rebhan, William #25072 506 Sq. 2004 S/Sgt. Rebhan was a gunner, serving on a number of crews, mostly with the **George M. Beiber** crew, but also with **Hal S. Kimball, Billy Rosser, Ray Ciesielski, Charles Atkins, Hal Tyree**, and once with **Gordon Henderson** as Command Pilot.

His first of eighteen flights was 12 August 1944. He flew on **Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Southern Comfort III, Lakanookie, Joplin Jalopy, Sabrina III** and **Hit Parade**.

Rebhan's last mission was 10 November 1944.

Robinson, Ernest Conley, Sr. #21826 68th Squadron 18 April 2008 S/Sgt. Robinson was a gunner on the **Russell Erickson** crew. His first of 28 missions was 5 November 1944.

The Erickson crew flew **Lady Geraldine, Lili Marlene, Hellza Poppin, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Three Kisses for Luck, Louisiana Belle**, plus many unnamed A/C. His last mission was the last that the 44th BG flew, to Hallein, Austria on 25 April 1945. The German offense at Hallein put 87 holes in the A/C, destroyed two engines and caused one flat tire, but Erickson managed to land the **Louisiana Belle** safely at Shipdham.

After the war, Robinson entered the ministry, and for 50 years served 24 churches in the Hickory, North Carolina area.

He leaves his wife Myrtle, a marriage of 61 years duration. The couple had two sons, one daughter, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

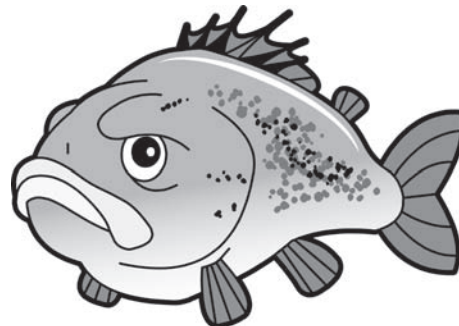
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According to **Ursel Harvel**, 44th BG Photographer, the sum of planes at MacDill AF Base in 1941 were one B-17, two B-18s, one A-17, two PT-17s and one BT-14. Right after War was declared, two 30 caliber machine guns arrived and were mounted on an A-17. This was the first 44th A/C that was combat-ready! The first Liberator that arrived was called the LB-30.

**DO YOU WANT TO MEET A SHARK
FACE TO FACE?**

You can do that at the internationally renowned Aquarium in Tampa, Florida. George Washburn has arranged for this viewing on Saturday, Day 3 of the Reunion. The Aquarium offers a chance to view king-sized Groupers, Parrot Fish and Penguins and many other peculiar and slithering critters. If you want to swim with the fish, here your opportunity. Hold your breath, stick your tongue in the snorkel and dive down. You will see one of the most beautiful reefs in the world.



The Fish are waiting for you.

Cartoon by Brad Fitzpatrick

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 9 Issue #3

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Summer 2009

Non Profit Veterans Association

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LITTLE BEAVER

Little Beaver was one of the early planes of the war. She arrived in Shipdham around 20 September 1942, and was assigned to the 67th Squadron. She flew a total of 19 missions, some of them into the earliest and most deadly missions of that period of the war. All but one of her missions was with 1st Lt. **Chester Phillips** as pilot and Lt. **William Cameron** as Co-Pilot. *Little Beaver* flew to Dunkirk, targeting the German Radar Ship, Tojo. The next day she went to St. Nazaire, France; then Wilhelmshafen, Vegesack in Germany, Rouen in France, Rotterdam in Holland and Antwerp in Belgium, plus a number of Diversionary Flights.



On April 16, with the same crew, Lt. Cameron moved over to the pilot's seat and took *Little Beaver* to Brest, the dock area in France. Major **Howard Moore** flew as Co-pilot.

May 14, 1943 brought *Little Beaver* to the Krupp Submarine Works at Kiel, Germany, located on the Baltic Sea. **Chester Phillips** was flying with a new Co-Pilot, **Wilborn Everett**. *Little Beaver* and four other 44th BG planes were lost; one was abandoned; 25 men were KIA; 4 were WIA, 24 became POW; 1 man evaded, then was KIA. (Will Lundy reported these figures from official documents. They differ a bit from Walter Holmes recollections, reported in Vol. 9, Issue 2 of the 8 Ball Tails.)

Enemy losses were notable: twenty-one fighters were destroyed, thirteen probables, one damaged.

Kiel was the 44th's toughest mission to date. For its success, the Group was awarded its first of two Distinguished Unit Citations.

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LITTLE BEAVER

Sgt. **Michael Denny**, Engineer on *Little Beaver*, wrote from his POW Camp, "We were hit after we left the target. Two bursts in the back, also knocked out one engine; then a burst in back of our Navigator (**Thomas E. Bartmess**). The entire inside of the flight deck was a mass of flames. It must have hit the hydraulic fluid in the accumulator positioned there. We went into a flat spin – had a Hell of a time standing on my feet and putting on my parachute. Tried to put out the fire, but was impossible. Could not get doors (Bomb bay Doors) open, so I had to fight my way back to the rear windows to get out. Bailed out at about 800 feet. Was the last one to leave the plane, and saw it crash and burn."



Members of Little Beaver's crew, not individually identified.

S/Sgt. **Charles C. Forehand** (Waist Gunner) states, "I remember Tommy Bartmess well – he was a very good officer and navigator. We were looking forward to making the 25th mission soon and coming home. The day we were shot down, the anti-aircraft flak was very heavy and accurate; fighters were everywhere we looked. I was flying as waist gunner that day, and we were hit by flak, were on fire. After that, things went so fast, I don't know what went on in the front of the plane. That night a German officer told me that three crew members survived, but I never saw any of them. I was captured as soon as I hit the ground and was a POW for two years."

Lt. **William E. Hill**, Bombardier, wrote, "I am the only officer from my crew alive, plus three enlisted men. A 20 mm cannon shell exploded right in the nose of the plane just behind me. I believe having a steel helmet on my head saved my life. My navigator (Bartmess) was first to bail out and I followed. He landed in the water, but was caught in shrouds of parachute and drowned. Fortunately, I stayed with the plane about 3 minutes longer and landed on the beach. Was almost knocked cold by a blow on my forehead as chute opened and again when I landed. However, came out of it all with only a scratch on forehead, sore spine for a few days and a little shock. Germans treat us fine and we have plenty to eat."

Captain **Chester Phillips** (pilot) was killed by a flak burst shortly after leaving the target. (This was his 21st mission) 1st Lt. **Everett Wilborn**, Co-Pilot, was last seen standing on the flight deck, and could have had time to bail out, but he did not survive for reasons unknown. (This was his first and only mission.)

T/Sgt **George Price**, Radio Operator; **Edward Phillips**, Asst. Radio Operator; **Dale Glaubitz**, Assistant Engineer, **Charles Forehand**, Waist Gunner; and **Barney Grabowski**, Tail Turret Gunner must have gone down with the plane, as there is no record of the circumstances of their deaths.

Besides the loss of *Little Beaver*, *Scrappy* (66th Sq.), *Miss Delores* (67th Sq.), *Annie Oakley* (67th Sq.); *Rugged Buggy* (68th Sq.); and *Wicked Witch* (506th Sq.) were also lost.

In his Roll of Honor, **Will Lundy** reported that with the loss of the three planes from the 67th, the Squadron was left with only one aircraft, and it was being overhauled in Northern Ireland – and one make-shift crew.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Time sure flies. Here it is early May and our esteemed editor is ready for my president's message for the summer edition, Seems that I just did one and here Ruth is already putting together the next issue. This is, I believe, the tenth year that Ruth has been doing this along with being Secretary. We sure owe her a huge vote of thanks. The 8 Ball Tails and our reunions are the two things that keep this organization going.

Jerry Folsom reminded me that some would like to come early or stay late, if they knew of other attractions in the Tampa area. We do have Busch Gardens Amusement Park which has many animal , bird and sea life exhibits— Great Lowry Park Zoo— Museum of Science and Industry. All are within 8 miles of our hotel. There are dolphin boat tours out of Tarpon Springs on the Gulf and of course, Disney World -about 60 miles east. The hotel will give us the same rate for 3 nights before and after if space is available.

The last 8 Ball Tails had a notice of the Second Air Division Reunion in Chicago Sept 3-7. Our present 44th organization had its roots in the 2nd AD. In the 70's the 44th usually had the biggest attendance at their reunions. In the early 80's Joe Warth who had been arranging the 44th hospitality room started the 44th Heritage Memorial Group- holding reunions and publishing The Fighting 44th Logbook. Here we are today after some 15 + years of the present 44th BGVA. Our own Dick Butler, now 2ADA VP for the 44th and Past President of the 2ADA, would welcome seeing some of us at their reunion this year. Many years our reunion dates have coincided, but this year is our chance to support him. We do plan to attend and hope to see some of you there.

Last chance to sign up for Tampa. Looking forward to seeing many of you in October.

George Washburn

The picture on page 16 in the **Dale Benadon** story was labeled P-47 Thunderbolt. **'Wrong'** says **Clay Roberts**. **'Wrong'** says **Arlo Bartsch**. Both agreed that it was some kind of a Navy plane, probably a Torpedo Bomber.

Gentlemen: Thanks for the correction.



LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



Hello again from your old East Anglian Base, Station 115.

Well, for once we Brits cannot complain about the weather over here. We have just had a pretty decent Public Holiday ...clear skies and warm sunshine for most of the time. But I guess that was not such a good weather scenario for you when you were here and a good bit of cloud cover was always useful until you got to your target, although I bet the ground crews never complained about a few days of decent conditions to work in.

The 44th Bomb Group Museum opened its doors for start of the regular summer season last weekend, and gave the museum support team the chance to start looking at making work lists for things we would like to see accomplished during the year. Steve Adams loaned us a

wide collection of items for display several years ago, and we have never had the opportunity to catalogue and label them. This year that will be done. We have a B-24 Prop blade on loan, and that needs a solid base made so that it can be displayed properly and not left lying in a corner. (Safe but unimaginative). There are quite a number of additional items that have been promised for the museum, and we will let you know about them as they arrive, and maybe include a photo or two. We were told by both Steve Adams and Paul Wilson (from Hethel Museum) when we started this phase of the Museum's life that this influx of artifacts would happen, and I am pleased to say they have been proved right.

The new surface to the runway 21-03 (it was 20-02 in your day) has proved a great success for local flyers and a steadily increasing flow of visitors are using it, bringing with them the appropriate comments on how much of an improvement it is.

The winter has taken its toll on some of the plants in the Memorial Garden, so Mike and the team will be replacing those that didn't make it through the frost and snow. (And the occasional attention of the local rabbits).

Our air-display season has started over here, and we are lucky enough to have a number of the old warbirds housed fairly locally. This means that we occasionally get to see DC3s, Spitfires and Hurricanes grace our skies. Not to mention Maurice Hammond's Mustangs from Hardwick (he now has two...that's greedy!) and the Mustangs and Thunderbolt from North Weald. The sound of a Rolls Royce Merlin, or a Wright Cyclone never fails to make folks stop dead in their tracks and stare skywards. Long may that continue! We are also on the route for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, between its base at Coningsby in Lincolnshire, and the East Coast area, where several of the annual Air Displays take place, so it is not unusual to see the Lancaster, Spitfire and Hurricane grace our portion of the Norfolk sky in loose formation.

Jets just don't cut it.

Best wishes from all at your old base in England.

Peter Bodle

BOB HOOPER REMEMBERS KIEL

The Spring issue of the *8 Ball Tails* reported that B-17s dropped incendiaries on B-24s which were flying lower!

"Wrong", says Hooper. "Our group was dropping the incendiaries. We were flying above another group of B-24's. We were dropping incendiaries, and they were flying through them. I could look through the open bomb bay doors, and see the '24s below us. I never saw a single B-17."

The best report of the Kiel Mission was written by Roy Owen in the Summer 1999 issue of the 'Tails'.

Quoting Roy, "Kiel was one of the greatest aerial battles of the War. Both B-17's from the First Air Division and B-24's from the 8th Air Force were assigned, the first time both types of aircraft were sent on the same mission. (The plan was:) The B-17' were first to drop 500 pound HD bombs, to be followed by 100 pound incendiary clusters which were transported by the Liberators.

"Compensating for differences in aircraft performance, Col. **Leon Johnson's** maneuver to avoid the dropping bombs of the higher altitude B-17's led the 44th to greater exposure to German fighters. **As it happened, the incendiaries of the B-24's came apart immediately, so pilots following were forced to spread their formation to avoid colliding with the incendiaries.** The Luftwaffe took full advantage of the altered pattern, and five B-24's in the rear echelons were lost in the target area, one on withdrawal."

So Hooper was right that Liberators dropped the incendiaries; the Tails was right that B-17s flew that mission also.

Bob Lehnhausen can testify that Liberators really did drop incendiaries on the Liberators below them. He was flying in *Miss Virginia* as Co-Pilot with **Wilmer Garrett**, and they were among the group trying to avoid the blazing fire sticks.

Will Lundy's ROH states that 109 Fortresses were to drop high explosives; the 44th were to drop 100-lb. and 500-lb. cluster incendiaries or 'matchsticks', as they were called. 17 B-24's followed the Fortresses. 21 enemy A/C were destroyed; 13 probables and 1 damaged. The 44th lost 5; 1 was abandoned, 9 damaged; 12 men wounded; 51 MIA.

For this successful mission, the Group was awarded it's first of two Unit Citations.

S/SGT. ROBERT HOOPER REMEMBERS GOING FROM FORTS TO LIBERATORS

Hooper was a Ball Turret Gunner on a B-17 with the **George Winger** crew. They came to England by the southern route, with a brief stop over in Trinidad for repairs. That took several days, so the crew slept under the wing, ate any food they could scrounge; and, unfortunately, drank the water. Upon arrival to Bovington, England, the plane was taken from them and they were sent to Shipdham, assigned to the 66th Squadron, and the crew was totally separated.

On 17 May 1943, Hooper's 8th mission was to Bordeaux. They flew first to Davidstown, England on the 16th to be closer to the target, as well as to have complete secrecy from German spies, as well as from their radar. On the morning of the 17th, the A/C took off

for the target, which was to be the longest mission in distance to this date, and it's execution demanded exacting work from all the crew members, especially the Navigators. It was necessary to fly west, out and around the Brest peninsula, and then back east to the target. The Germans were taken completely by surprise & the target was hit with excellent results.

Hooper, usually assigned as a gunner, this time was flying as the Photographer with 1st. Lt. **Ray L. Hilliard** in **Avenger II**. The engine began to malfunction, causing fuel problems before they reached the target. They knew they could not make it back to England, so they opted to go to a neutral country, and Spain was the obvious choice.

Lt. **William T. Auston**, Navigator, described the arrival. "We were flying at a high altitude, looking for a field; and finally saw a fighter base way below us. We were losing altitude as we were down to one engine running. We came in for a landing on their short runway. Lts. (**Ray**) **Hillard** and (**Alfred**) **Damron** had to set their brakes very hard, and we skidded along the runway because we saw a steam roller blocking our path at the end of the strip! No one was injured – a successful landing.

"After our crew was split up, I never flew with same crew twice," Hooper remembered. "On our mission to Bordeaux, after which we crashed in Spain, I did not know a single person on that plane."

Americans were not popular in Spain at that time. During the Spanish Civil War, a brigade of American volunteers had fought against Franco. That was the wrong side, as the Communist party was victorious after a four year struggle.

Avenger II crashed at a small landing strip on the northern Spanish coast, close to Santander. "There we were picked up by the Civil Guard and transported to Leone," Hooper remembered. "We were placed in a jail. Then a Catholic priest got permission to take us to a big cathedral, and down in the basement was the original equipment for torturing prisoners! The blood stains were still on the wall. This priest spoke excellent English – he was born in Chicago! Unfortunately, he had to turn us back to the police after our visit to the cathedral."

After the group was interned, they were allowed to visit a tiny town, where Hooper met a Spanish citizen who was eager to learn English. In return, he taught Hooper to speak Spanish. Having grown up in The Lone Star State, Hooper had conversed with many Mexicans, but the only words he picked up were the bad words! His vocabulary greatly improved with his new friend.

At that time unexpected problems arose for Hooper. Malaria and Amoebic Dysentery struck, undoubtedly from his visit to Trinidad with its limited sleep accommodations and bad water. In addition, all the food in Spain was cooked with olive oil, which aggravated his GI problem. Hooper's weight went from 168 pounds to 135. He got in touch with the American Ambassador in Madrid, who got him to a British hospital in Gibraltar. That was interesting...the famous Gibraltar monkeys roamed free in the hospital, stealing any bite of food they could lay their hands on. Hooper remembered that famous belief of the British: "If the monkeys ever go, Gibraltar will go." No wonder they had such freedom!!!

On August 3rd, the detainees were loaded on a C-47 and flown back to 8th Air Force Headquarters in London. Hooper was sent home with the agreement that he could enter pilot training. Unfortunately, his health problems continued, and he was later discharged.

Hooper was a photographer on his 8th mission - the trip to Bordeaux, having been separated from his original crew upon his arrival to Shipdham. When he returned to England from Spain, sadly, he learned that his crew on **Wing Dinger**, flown by his pilot, **George Winger**, was lost at Ploesti. Only one crewman survived to become POW: Assistant Engineer **Bernard Traudt**.

Bob Hooper recently arranged for copies of the 8 Ball Tails and 44th BG's disk to be accepted into the Nimitz Museum and Library in Fredricksburg, Texas. Originally the museum was devoted exclusively to the Pacific war. Recently they decided to include all of WWII.

THE PLOESTI DISPLAY AT THE MIGHTY EIGHTH

Tom Parsons puts his hand on the Collings Liberator, the last flying B-24 in the world. He earned his name on the plane by supporting the Collings project.

When the Mighty Eighth Museum in Pooler, Georgia, was planning meaningful exhibits, the 44th was eager to be involved. On hand was the President of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, **Tom Parsons**. Tom worked with the artist, and a dramatic diorama of the Ploesti mission emerged, complete with smoking oil wells and B-24s flying into the blaze. **Roy Owen**, who was President of the 44th BGVA, wrote a detailed description of the mission, led by Col. **Leon Johnson**. These words were printed under the diorama.

Roy wanted the words on a tape, so viewers could push a button and hear the description. Once again Tom Parsons came forth to assist. He found a professional radioman, who did it without charge; and when the Curator of the museum completes the current project of re-allocation of space, the Voice-over will be accomplished.

George Washburn is in frequent touch with the Museum, urging the completion of this project. *Time is running out for all of us. Getting the 44th history completed is a compelling task.*



UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS ABOUT SHIPDHAM:

By Fred J. Marzolph

In the first days of one's military life, you can expect many new and different things; but the most unusual, beastly and cruel things was the 'wake up' call by the sergeant, usually with his very loud metal whistle, and the words, 'Let's go, Let's go!' Lucky for him, we had not yet been issued any firearms or ammunition, so he continued Every morning!

Overseas, at Shipdham, at least in the 506 Squadron, we had a CQ that, on his building, would post a list of crews to fly the next day. In the morning his announcement would make me smile, or at least grin, when he woke us up.

His methods were to open the door and shout out, "Ho Ho, yo ho, you're up to fly the bloody kites today", and then name the crews. Other times it might be his call would say, "Out of the sack, up in the flak' and then name the crews. It was a greeting that made the morning much more bearable.

Marzolph's message came via his old Royal Typewriter, leftover from his years as a journalist in Moline, IL.

"The only difference between a tax man and a taxidermist is that the taxidermist leaves the skin."

Mark Twain

AFEES MEETS AT THE MIGHTY EIGHTH MUSEUM IN POOLER, GEORGIA



AFEES is an organization of WWII veterans, 600 strong, that honors those airmen whose planes went down, but were able to elude the Germans and return to base. It includes families of these evaders and escapees, as well as members of the underground who assisted the airmen.

On 8 August 1944 Scheaffer's plane, *My Peach*, went down approximately 60 miles south of

Paris. He was befriended by the underground who hid him with a family in Orbais L'Abbaye. On 28 August, Patton's army liberated him. Eight members of *My Peach* evaded and returned; 1 became POW, one was WIA.

Dale Lee was also in attendance at the AFEES Reunion. Lee, (also 506 Sq.) was flying in *Southern Comfort* on a mission to Foggia, Italy. The A/C was brought down by fighters, and Lee became POW in an Italian prison. Along with five other escapees, he broke out. They walked 600 miles over the mountains of Italy until they found help from the British, who flew them back to Africa. Jimmy Doolittle pinned DFC's on them for a previous mission — to Ploesti. Of the *Horace*

Austin crew, eight became POW, seven of whom escaped and returned; two were KIA.

Underground members of AFEES who assisted American and British airmen include patriots from Holland, Belgium and France. Most of them have already passed away. Their bravery in helping our veterans should never be forgotten.



Frank Scheaffer (506 Sq.) lights a candle for lost members at the Annual Reunion of the Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society.

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“TOMORROWS MISSION”

By: T/SGT Ernest D. Brown, JR.

WRITTEN SOMETIME IN APRIL 1945 The war in Europe was winding down and soon would be over. Brown was the Flight Engineer/Gunner on a B-24 Liberator Bomber, 44th BG, 67th Sqd, 8th Air Force, flying out of Shipdham, England

It was about 5 o'clock one afternoon when our tail gunner rose from his sack and headed for the door of the "Flack Shack", our humble and modest home. He walked past the Wash Room, Coal Compound, which we frequently visited nocturnally, to illegally replenish the supply for our homemade stove. Arriving at the C.Q. Hut, picked up the mail and a fist full of sulphur pills and returned to the Shack.

Some of us had mail, the rest hopefully looked forward to tomorrow.

But, we all received our sulphur pill to protect us from catching colds. As he entered the door, almost as one, a chorus went up "Are the crews up yet?" Shaking his head, he returned to his sack and started reading a newspaper from home. As the time slowly dragged on, some of the boys returned from the mess hall bearing the glad tidings that Spam was on the menu. One at a time, the boys dragged themselves free from their sacks and rode ¼ mile to "Ptomaine Tavern" on their English bicycles.

About an hour later as the Shack started filling up, the quiet conversation slowly turned from the chow to Piccadilly Circus in London. Some of the boys sat around, a now glowing red stove, writing letters. Others sat in small groups talking about the farm, their girls; but never once did the topic turn to tomorrow's mission.

The evening passed slowly this way, but always pleasant. On the radio drifted out music from the states that had been canned months ago in New York or San Francisco and sent to the Allied Radio Station.

About 10 o'clock, some eggs were frying on the stove and bread along side of it toasting on a conveniently bent coat

hanger. We never stood short when it came to our bedtime snacks. There was always about 5 dozen eggs bought from a near-by farmer for 90 cents a dozen. Along with bread, butter, jam, and peanut butter, stolen from the mess hall.

After we had our full, our radio operator picked up all the letters and carried them over to the pilot's room to have them censored. Stayed awhile to bat the breeze around and then dropped around to mail them. By the time he had returned, most of the fellows were in the sack and thinking. Thinking plenty of home mostly and occasionally their mind drifting off to tomorrow's mission. It's not much fun trying to go to sleep not knowing if it's your turn to fly tomorrow or not. Most of the fellows wanted to be awakened when the crews were posted, even if they were not flying. It seems as though you can sleep much sounder if you know you are not going up.

Usually somebody can't sleep at all, and he'll get up and patiently dress and walk down to once more check on the alerted crews. If any one of us in the Flack Shack were up, he would usually wake up one of us and tell us. It so happens that Kyle's crew was up tomorrow.

Early the next morning, around 2:30 A.M., the C.Q. came charging into the barracks with his little speech. "Brown, Kirby, Lovegren, Rubczak, Rankin, Dye. Briefing 3:30, 2,700 gallons topped off, fresh eggs for breakfast. Okay, let's go!"

It was not until after he had left that these words seemed to linger in the air and slowly penetrated our sleep to once again wake us up into reality. Reality of what? That once again we were to bomb Germany, and that it was going to be a

...continued on page 11

long mission, as foretold to us by the topped off fuel order, max capacity.

We swiftly dressed, quietly we wondered aloud where we were going. Then we stepped out into the fog-led night and quickly realized we were up against the weather as well as the enemy. We caught a truck to the mess hall where we stood in line because it was already beginning to fill up with gunners, radio operators and engineers. Some to eat their last meal and others their last one for about 15 hours.

Our breakfast was very good that morning, consisting of all the fresh fried eggs we could eat, breakfast food, fruit juice, toast and coffee. By this time it was 3 o'clock and we lingered over a second cup of coffee and a cigarette.

Again we walked out into the cold night and caught another truck to the gunner's briefing room where we went inside amongst the rising tempo of excited, but never-the-less, calm voices of crew members.

In the meantime, the officers of our crew had followed much the same routine and were at this time also waiting in the main briefing room.

After a few minutes of waiting and smoking another cigarette, an officer walked in with a piece of celluloid with long red lines drawn on it. This he thumb tacked to a huge map of Europe, thus showing our route to and from the target, which looked like, BERLIN! This caused a considerable amount of discussion, which was interrupted by a sharp command. "Attention! At ease men! Gentlemen, today you are hitting the German headquarters in Zossen just a few miles south of Berlin. This is to be a surprise attack and you should find it very enjoyable bombing the German Brass Hats. Looks like one way to get back at some officers." His joke received no response, so he continued.

"Stations will be at 05:25, you will taxi

at 05:35, take off at 05:45 to the West. Your bomb load is 44 x 100 G.P.'s and 2 x 500 M17's and fuel load is max-max. You engineers watch your fuel consumption closely and be sure all of your gas is out of your auxiliary tanks before you are in enemy territory. Remember this is a long haul. Your bombing altitude is 22,000 feet and the free air temperature is -35 degrees C. You will hit Bencher 21 at 9:20 and start your climb gradually out over the North Sea, crossing the Zider zee at 18,000 feet. Continue to climb out and into the target. Your bomb run is going to be extra long today, lasting 18 minutes. You waist gunners start throwing out chaff at the I.P. + 3 minutes. Chaff code will be "Applejack". Code word for bombs away is "Daisy Mae". Flack today will be moderate to intense and fighters are expected in the area. So, you gunners, pre-flight those guns good and don't forget to test fire over the channel. Your fighter support will be a group of Yellow Tailed P-51's. Don't forget the observer in the Blue Mosquito. Yesterday some trigger happy Joe took a few shots at it. If we can have the lights now, we can show you pictures of the target." After the photos of the target and the surrounding territory, along with the procedure for our let down back into England, the weather officer gave us a brief account of expected weather at the target and our return home.

Both Catholic and Protestant Chaplains were present now, just having returned from the main briefing, they lead us in a short prayer with a blessing. The briefing was now over.

Well, that's over with, I thought to myself as I walked the short distance to the drying room where we draw our flying equipment. Here I headed for the rear of the room where my locker was, walking past the rest of the fellows struggling into their heavy equipment. Getting dressed for altitude flying is quite a job. First came our electrical flying suit, an

extra pair of wool socks, heated shoes, summer flying suit, leather flying shoes, a 45 Pistol slung in gangster fashion around the chest, Mae West Life Jacket, parachute harness, silk gloves, electric gloves, flying helmet, goggles and lastly an oxygen mask strapped to the side of the helmet.

With this tiresome job completed, I slowly treaded out to another truck, which in turn transported us to our waiting plane "D-Dog". Up until this time, everything was done much as a machine would do it, but now we were facing the machine that would be our end or bring us safely back. The gunners went about their job of installing their guns and checking them, knowing that they had to work or else. I climbed up through the bomb bay opening, glancing at the bombs and patting one of them like you would a faithful dog. Eventually I made it to the flight deck where the crew chief met me and told me that the plane was A-Okay. I started the put put, which supplied electrical power to the ship while we were pre-fighting. After installing my two 50's in the top turret and checking them, I proceeded to check over the entire airplane from the nose to the tail.

Part Of Crew.....In Front Of The "Flack Shack"



Rankin(Tail Gunner).. **Lovegren***(Waist Gunner)..**Brown**(Flight Engineer,Top Turret)..**Kirby***(Radio Operator)..**Dye***(Waist Gunner) **Rubczak** (Ball Turret,not shown)
*Deceased.

For some reason, this is either as much as I wrote, or I lost what I wrote. I don't know. I did find one more paragraph in my hand as follows:.....
Brown's Post Mission Report:

I lit a cigarette and settled back, my head resting comfortably on a blanket roll, half asleep, trying to settle my nerves after today's mission. It wasn't too bad. None of them are bad once you're back and safe in your sack. Half in this world and half in the world of sleep, occasionally I would grasp the conversation of today's mission. The talk was always the same once you're back.

My Combat Crew Officers



Kyle*(Pilot) **Bratzel**(Copilot)
Penberthy*(Bombadier) **Atkins**(Navigator)
*Deceased.

More about The Mighty Eight Air Force:

The 8th Air force is listed as the greatest armada of any country in any war. More than 350,000 Americans served in the 8th AF in three years. At its peak, the 8th could put up more than 2,000 four engine bombers and more than 1,000 fighters on a mission. They sustained 47,000 casualties; 26,000 deaths.

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR THE
44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
2009 REUNION
SHERATON SUITES TAMPA AIRPORT**

Thursday, October 22

9:00 AM Meeting of Executive Board

1:30 PM Open Registration

Friday, October 23

Breakfast

11:00 AM Bus Tour to MacDill Air Field

Lunch at MacDill Dining Room

Return to Hotel 3:00 PM (approx)

7:00 PM Welcome Reception

Saturday, October 24

Breakfast

9:00 AM Annual Meeting

11:30 AM Bus Tour to Florida Aquarium

Lunch on you own at the Aquarium

3:00 PM Return to hotel

7:00 PM Squadron Dinners

Sunday October 25

Breakfast

10:00 AM Bus Tour to Fantasy of Flight

Lunch (incl)

3:00 PM Return to Hotel

7:00 PM Banquet

Monday October 26

Breakfast & Farewells

FRED J. MARZOLPH
NEVER HEARD THE LAST OF THIS:
(The day they dropped a bomb on England)

(He was flying with the William Smith/Roy Owen crew, and he says that was more like family than crew.)

The target has been long forgotten, but our flight this day was one to remember. The mission carried on like most of ours until we unloaded on the target. We were carrying 3-2000 pounders this day, and at "BOMBS AWAY" two went out of the bomb bay, but the third one hung up with the shackle partly open.

I informed the pilot of this, and he said to get rid of it. As the armorer on the plane, I hooked on an oxygen bottle, being we were still on high altitude, and headed out on the catwalk with the bomb bay doors still open. I was thinking this would only take a few minutes, being the shackle was partly open.

Armed with a heavy duty screw driver, I got from our engineer, **Carl Jacobson**, I placed it in the shackle opening and pushed, pulled, tugged, jiggled and all else until the oxygen bottle was empty and the bomb was still there!

My next step was to hook a long hose from the nearest oxygen station to my mask and repeat what I had done before, but with even more enthusiasm. I also kicked the bomb. It didn't move. I tried to shove it with my feet on it and my arms wrapped around the bomb rack; and still no movement on its behalf.

About this time I began to get visitors in the bomb bay. The bombardier came back and reaffirmed to the pilot, we had a bomb hang up, and then he left. Next the Navigator who I had never met before, came back and made some suggestions like, 'better dump it out' or something like that. I was getting pretty impatient and told him to leave the area, but not in those words. I later found out the substitute navigator was a Major, and not the enlisted man as we had on an earlier mission.

I then saw the pilot, **Bill Smith**, com-

ing out, and I was beginning to wonder if everyone was bailing out of the plane!

By now we were over the bomb dispersal area of the North Sea, where the bombers dumped those bombs that avoided falling on Germany. We circled the area for what was much longer than what we had spent over our target, and all I had accomplished was to drop the screw driver, set of pliers, the wrist watch (which my mother had given me before I went overseas), and the oxygen bottle into the sea and we still had the bomb.

With our fuel and the crew's patience getting low, the pilot told me to wire it up and we'll take it home. I grabbed each and every arming wire I could reach on the bomb rack, and twisted and wound those bomb fuses so much, I could have embarrassed a spider web class!!

Nearing Shipdham, the pilot informed the tower of our excess load, and they spread the alert and told us to come in. With that info, the pilots lowered the wheels and flaps, and we heard a loud "CRUNCH", **There went all 2000 pounds off — right through the bomb bay doors!**

Our nose gunner, **Eddie Tkacik**, later told me he saw a passenger train with a lot of people waving out the windows as the bomb was falling toward them. My last sight of it was when it hit the ground about 50 or more yards from the train, and there was no 'Boom'. I reached down with another arming wire and pulled the bomb bay door up, so it wouldn't drag on the ground when we landed.

I later heard that the farmer whose land it fell on, circled the bomb and its crater until a removal squad arrived. Our officers said they took some 'flack' about bombing our air base, but laughed it off.

COUNTDOWN TO PLOESTI

By an unidentified author

On May 29th (La Pallice, France), Lts. **Richard A. Larson** and **Wayne H. Middleton** chalked up their first mission. This 506th Sqd. Crew was flying in aircraft #42-40606-X, also known as *Timba-A-A-Ah*. When the crew got this airplane in the U.S., they had a discussion as to what kind of nose art to paint on the airplane. Nineteen years old Tail Gunner, S/Sgt. **Steven F. Bugyie**, had done a lot of tree cutting. *"I suggested that they paint a bomb in flight with the call that wood cutters use when a tree is felled. That is how 6-6 Bar-X got its name."*

"After La Pallice, we thought that these missions were going to be a piece of cake."

But the previous losses had been so severe that it was considered to have the B-24's do night bombing with the RAF. Shrouds were installed on the turbo superchargers of some aircraft to reduce the glow. First Lt. **Richard D. Butler** and a few others were sent to an RAF base to fly a night mission. *"I flew in the right seat of a Lancaster. The target was Dusseldorf. It was a very scary experience, as all firing was very visible in the dark. Tracers burned and flak explosions were like big balls of fire. It looked like the whole sky was lit up."*

Then the 44th BG shifted from high altitude bombing to low level formation. First as individual ships, then as elements of three, later in formations at low level, the crews learned the techniques of flying at low level for the purpose of bombing.

One of the new arrivals, 1st Lt. **Shelby L. Irby** experienced a huge rush of alarm: *"It was the sudden roar of a B-24 overhead at tree-top level, as I was walking to the O-Club. At the time, I chalked it off as some foolish pilot doing a dangerous 'buzz-job' on the O-Club,"* he reported.

It was a big thrill for the young airmen to fly just above the treetops. They flew so low over the fields that "Land Army" girls hit the dirt, and frightened cows ran frantically with their tails flying straight out behind them. S/Sgt. **Robert Reasoner** even waved to the people on a train on an elevated track

Some of the farmers were complaining that the 44th BG ships were scaring their cows and chickens so bad, they were not producing much milk or laying many eggs.

Lt. **William Cameron** wanted his ship to be called the *Golden Bear* after the symbol of the State of California, but only Assistant Engineer **Roy Winter** and he were from that state. *"As we were practicing low-level formation flying – referred to as "buzzing" – in true democratic manner, we compromised and agreed to call her the Buzzin Bear."*

Ed. Note: I found this story in my files. It was labeled "The Spirit of the 200 Club. Would the author like to come forward and claim it?"

"The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of the blessings. The inherent blessing of socialism is the equal sharing of misery"

...Winston Churchill

Lt. LOUIS TROUVE, BLOWN OUT THE NOSE WHEEL DOORS INTO GERMAN HANDS

Louis Trouve was the Navigator on the **Richard Comey** crew, 66th Squadron. When the Comey crew first came to Shipdham, they were immediately dispatched to Africa, from where they flew the missions to Italy and Sicily; then the awesome missions of Ploesti and the second trip to Weiner-Neustadt.

The target on 11 December 1943 was the boat and rail center in Emden, Germany. They were flying in *Nice 'N Naughty* aka *Princess Charlotte*. The plane received a direct hit on the nose, right above the navigator, Louis Trouve. The force of the explosion knocked him backwards, over the nose wheel doors and out from the plane. Even though wounded, he opened his chute, landed in a bay, and was picked up by the Germans.

This report of his interment was submitted by his daughter, Marianne Trouve. His son reported that he rarely talked about war experience; nevertheless, he wrote a very detailed account of his life as a 'Kreigie':

Written in 1963:

" It has been almost a decade since I became a 'Kriegsgefagen', but still strong in memory is that first view of the camp. We detrained at Barth, a small town on the Baltic, and set out on foot for Stalag Luft I in Frankfurt. Though prisoners, we had marched as soldiers, standing tall, our pride edged by the close scrutiny of German nationals. But there in bleak and windswept northern Pomerania there was no one but the German guards who escorted us.

Guards and Their Dogs

"These men were not of the Prussian militarist mold; they were old

campaigners apparently found unfit for hazardous duty. The watchdogs at their sides were German Shepherds of frightening mien, but fine specimens nevertheless, who obeyed with amazing alacrity the slightest whim of their masters. We were soon to learn that a guard and his dog were inseparable. The guards addressed the dogs by name, and in the inflection in their voices betrayed the closeness of relationship. One guard might lend another his gun, but never his dog.

"We fell silent and struck a slow cadence, each man engrossed in his own thoughts as he marched toward captivity. Presently there appeared in the flat distance, an enclosure ringed by two concentric barbed wire fences, with rolls of barbed wire in between. Even a sure-footed squirrel would have his work cut out for him to get across that barrier. Every few hundred feet, a watchtower of 'posten' box rose to dominate the wire, with searchlights and machine guns clearly in evidence as grim warnings that escape was something more than a matter of mere preferment.

"Some things are common to all prisoners. You live constantly with the yearning for freedom. Somewhere in your subconscious there is always the awareness of the deep concern you know your kin must feel for you. Your future is uncertain at best, and you are solicitous for you own safety. You may from time to time have to cope with dark thoughts that challenge your faith – your faith in your own military, your faith that someday you will return to your homeland, your faith in mankind.

"The area within our enclosure, which measured about a quarter mile square, was pockmarked with barracks, thin tinder-box affairs which afforded

...continued on page 18

reasonable protection from wind and weather. They were partitioned off into rooms about the size of an average living room. At this stage of the war, twelve men were in each room. As the war progressed, conditions became more cramped, and at war's end, it was not uncommon to find thirty men living in these rooms.

Twelve Men To A Room

"We slept on double decker bunks on excelsior mattresses. Each man had a mattress cover which was changed every few months, and a sheet which was changed about once a month. In exchanging the sheets, the old ones were laid flat on the floor and rolled into a column. One time a man was rolled up inside, and in Trojan Horse fashion, he got outside the confines of the camp, but was recaptured and kept without water until he 'talked'.

"Each room contained a coal stove, and weekly the Germans doled out a coal ration. This was used for warmth and cooking, which we did ourselves. The food ration was meager, consisting of bread which resembled roughhewn wood cut with a rip saw, potatoes, soup, jelly, butter, occasional meat. Our doctors estimated the caloric count at 600 daily.

"The bright spot on the food horizon was the Red Cross packages. Under 'normalcy' each man received one a week. When these were received, we knew no hunger pains. But as the ability of the Germans to wage war was neutralized, as their communications were more and more disrupted, their shipments ceased. Then we tightened our belts another notch each week. But our discomfort was counterbalanced by the realization that war's end was approaching.

Two Doctors On Hand

"Some strange things happened during the 'belting period'. Squeamishness or sentiment determined many from indulging, but all the cats in the camp that were kept for pets went on the butcher's block save one, and it survived only because its owner never relaxed his vigilance. Bird traps came into being, and were set up near the rubbish heap. More than one prisoner could say he ate crow and meant it literally.

"We had a community washroom. An improvised shower was in daily use during the warm weather; in the winter months we were taken in groups once a week to the German compound for a shower.

"Two prisoner MD's, one English, one South African, cared for our sick. Their medical supplies were adequate until they were taxed by an influx of evacuees from German camps further east that were abandoned in front of the Russian advance. A special pool of Red Cross parcels was built up to furnish an abundant ration for the sick.

"One case of spinal meningitis broke out. Fearing that the contagion of the dread disease might cause the entire camp to become infected, the doctors appealed to the Germans, and we were permitted to remain quarantined for several days.

"Repatriation was routine and took place every several months under the aegis of the 'protecting power', which in our case was a Swedish national. Loss of limb, tuberculosis, severe burns and other maladies in these categories would qualify a prisoner for repatriation. One, an Englishman, was repatriated for longevity. He had been taken prisoner before Dunkirk, and was imprisoned for over five years.

"We received mail and packages

from home sporadically, and were allowed to write three letters and four postcards a month. Captive chaplains conducted religious services regularly. There was no attempt at indoctrination by the Nazis. A public address system, controlled from German headquarters, was set up with a speaker in each compound, but there was no coercion to force us to listen. Lord Haw Haw broadcast regularly, but performed for a small and scoffing audience. There was a greater interest in the German communiqués.

"Thanks to the inventiveness of Roy Kilminster and Leslie Hurrell, two Limies, the BBC news broadcast was received daily in the camp. The clandestine radio that they constructed was a Rube Goldberg contraption. It contained among other things, pencil lead, shaving scrap containers, toothpaste tubes, silver paper and greaseproof paper.

"I took down the BBC newscast in the dead of each night in shorthand. Copyist made additional copies the following day, and the report was read in every barracks in the camp.

"In order to carry out this morale-boosting activity, for which I was later commended by the War Department, it was necessary to thwart the closest surveillance by the German "Abler" department, the trouble-shooting contingent in the camp. Somehow we survived their blitz raids and their fine comb searches, and the activity went on.

Sports In The Camp

"The sports equipment in the camp was made available by the YMCA. We had a softball league, a hardball league, and boxing. Other things were improvised, like weight lifts.

"Performers banded together, singers, mimics, comedians, and visited

each barracks in turn to put on their acts. The most popular entertainer was a little Italian who had a seemingly exhaustless repertoire of many funny songs, and who accompanied himself with castanets.

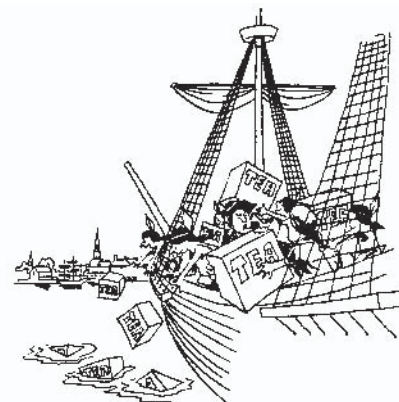
"Musical instruments were eventually procured and a band was formed. More than one full-length play was produced from an original manuscript and original music.

"We had a library and a room was set aside for classes. A prisoner who was proficient in a language or mathematics would teach others interested in learning. I taught shorthand.

"The only out-and-out instance of calculated brutality that I remember occurred near the war's end when all Jewish prisoners were segregated. This move the affected prisoners regarded as a step in preparation for more drastic measure, and their concern showed strongly. But the fears never materialized. They were segregated but otherwise unmolested.

Day of Liberation

"One night the searchlights stopped sweeping over the camp, and we could see the exodus of German personnel silhouetted against the moonlight of May 1, 1945. The gates were thrown over. We had been liberated by the enemy."



"Just between you and me, I'm not too crazy about taxation with representation either!"

44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

JAY STEELE RECEIVES FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL



On April 29, 2009, at a ceremony in the French Embassy, Washington, D.C., former S/Sgt. C .H. (Jay) Steele, 66th & 68th Bomb Squadrons, was inducted into the French Order of the Legion of Honor as a Chevalier (Knight) and presented the Legion of Honor medal by the French Consul General Michele Schaffhauer.

Dr. Jay Steele received a belated Silver Star for gallantry at the 44th BGVA's Reunion, October 2008, at the Army War College, Carlisle, Pa.. His Silver Star Citation read as follows:

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF

THE SILVER STAR

TO

CHAUNCEY H. STEELE JR.

Staff Sergeant Chauncey H. Steele Jr., distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations while assigned to the 66th Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, 8th Army Air Force, ETO, on 18 April 1944, during a bombing mission to Berlin, Germany. On "bombs away" at the target, the bomb bay doors malfunctioned and 52 hundred pound armed incendiary bombs released and piled up on the closed bomb bay door. Under intense enemy fire, without hesitation, Sergeant Steele proceeded to the bomb bay, working from the 8 inch catwalk in the bomb bay without flak vest, parachute and oxygen disconnected from a heated suit at 30 degree below zero, started to safety wire the bomb fuses and by himself unloaded 23 of the hundred pound bombs to be jettisoned from the aircraft's rear escaped hatch by another gunner. While on the catwalk, Sergeant Steele rescued the bombardier who had fallen into the bomb bay without a parachute and pulled him to safety on the catwalk. In spite of suffering frozen hands and feet, Sergeant Steele continued lifting the bombs from the bomb bay without any assistance until the reduced weight of the bomb load on the malfunctioned doors allowed the doors to open wide enough for the remainder of the incendiaries to fall through on enemy territory. Sergeant Steele's extraordinary gallant and heroic acts, without concern for his own life, thereby saved ten lives of the crew and his aircraft from certain destruction. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Steele has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Army Air Corps.





MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Bob Lehnhausen**: "I recently came across an article in the Wall Street Journal, and was captivated by the obituary of George W. Housener."

Housener had been cited as the Father of Earthquake Engineering, but among his many accomplishments was a reference to his activities in WWII. A PHD graduate of Caltech, he joined the Air Corps of Engineers and traveled to the European theater. He devised a bridge-bombing strategy for the invasion of Sicily and Italy. During the 1943 air raid at the Rumanian Ploesti oil refinery, he provided a crucial calculation that the barrage balloon tethers (cables) would snap when low-flying B-24 bombers hit them, rather than slicing the airplanes wings off, as had been learned in planning.

Lehnhausen's evaluation: "Those of us who participated in that mission differ with Dr. Housener's belief that the anti aircraft balloon tethers (cables) would be of no risk to the B-24's airframe.

"It is also to be noted that he devised a bridge bombing strategy for the invasions of Sicily and Italy. The same five Bomb Groups that flew the Ploesti mission also participated in those military events, either in advance of the landings or after the specific action...In all of the reading that I have done that relates to 'Tidal Wave', I have never encountered a reference to him by name."

The complexities of WWII are endless. Historians may spend a lifetime, studying it, and barely crack the surface of everything that took place.

FROM THE ARCHIVES THIS DOCUMENT MARKED 'SECRET'

The 8th of September was a glad day for nine officers and thirteen enlisted men of this group. Today they returned to England after an absence of more than 15 months – 15 months in a Rumanian prison camp. They were part of the men who went down on the first and historic low-level attack on the Ploesti Oil Refineries.

Those who were uninjured in crashing were taken to Bucharest for approximately 50 days, and then up to the central part of Rumania where a small village had been taken over by the authorities to serve as a prison camp. Those who were injured in crashing were taken to a hospital for treatment, and as they became well, they were sent to the prison camp where they were welcomed by their comrades who preceded them. This was their home for nearly a year. Officers were placed in a modern, stucco building which in peacetime years, was the summer villa of town officials. Enlisted men were quartered in small farmhouses nearby. After a first bit of rough handling by ignorant peasants who thought they were Russian airmen, they were treated quite well, and even kindly.

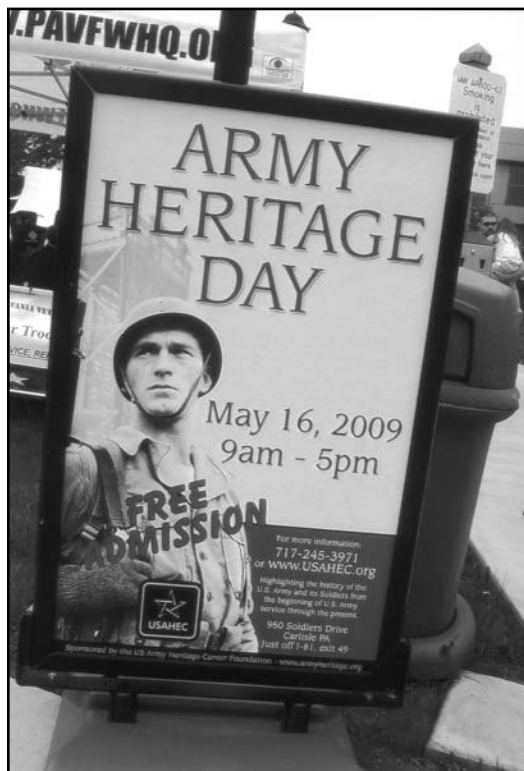
It was surprising to note that even a radio was provided for the officers. Thus they were able to keep up until two months before their liberation. It was via this radio that on 6 June 1944, the news of the Allied Invasion of Normandy was joyously received. When Bucharest was taken, and fighting broke out in central Rumania, trucks were sent to the prison to carry the men back to the Capital. From here, they were ferried back to England by 15th Air Force planes. These men are now assigned to Headquarters ETOUSA, and will be reassigned to this organization for a short time before returning to the Zone of the Interior...

HONORING OUR HEROES AT CARLISLE

The logoed pavers surrounding the Soldier's Walk grew as more of our heroes were given recognition: Squadron Commanders, **Charles Hughes, William Cameron, James McAtee and Robert Lehnhausen**. (Lehnhausen's brick had been placed earlier, along with those who had served as Board President.) Also named in the pavers are **John Gibson** (CO of the 44th after **Leon Johnson**) and **Griffin Goodman**, (Executive Administrative Officer at Headquarters.)

Two rows of red bricks with the 44th logo are lined up on the Soldier's Walk, and the Flying 8 Ball receives more than its share of attention, as no other group has taken full advantage of the opportunity to honor their veterans.

ARMY HERITAGE DAY AT CARLISLE

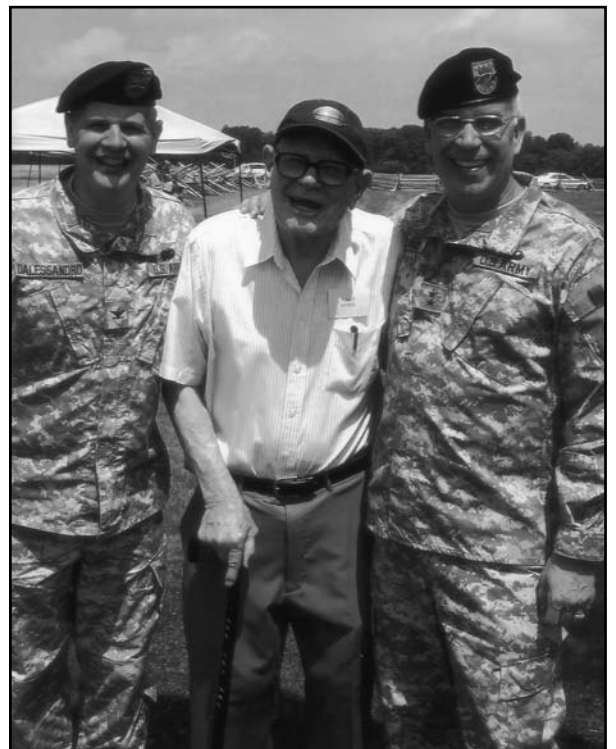


More than 4,000 people visited the Museum and Outdoor Exhibits at the Army Heritage Education Center at Carlisle, in honor of Armed Forces Day. The metal X-shaped bars which General Rommel had placed in the Channel at Normandy to halt incoming vessels were on display, along with a Sherman tank that arrived ashore, once the beach was opened.

A German anti-aircraft gun was nearby, a reminder that the enemy knew the dangers of the planes high above. Children were able to view weapons from every war, reaching

back to the Spanish American.

According to Mike Perry, Executive Director of the Army Heritage Center Foundation, ground-breaking of the Education Building will begin in the coming month. Completion of this project will fulfill the plan of AHEC, to educate the public, particularly school children, of the Army's (and Air Corps's) efforts to make America the great, free country that we all enjoy.



Col. Robert Dalessandro and Major General Robert Williams join Perry Morse in reviewing the exhibits.

When Hitler Phones for Help

By an unknown poet in 1941

Old Hitler called the devil on the telephone one day,
And the operator listened to all he had to say,
"Hello" she heard Old Hitler's voice, "Is old man Satan home?
Just tell him this is Hitler who wants him on the phone.

"What can I do?" the devil said, "My dear old Hitler pal.
If there's a thing that I can do, then help I surely shall."
Old Hitler said, "Now listen, and I will try to tell
The way that I am running on earth a modern hell.
My army went through Belgium, shooting women and children down,
We shot up all her country, and blew up all her towns.

"I started out for Moscow with the aid of my big tanks,
But the Russians, d— 'em, stopped us, and would not let us pass.
My submarines are devils, you ought to see them fight:
They go sneaking through the seas and sink a ship on sight.

"I was running things to suit me, until a couple months ago
When a man named Franklin Roosevelt wrote me to go slow.
He said to me, 'Dear Adolph, we don't want to make you sore,
So be sure to tell your U-boats to sink our ships no more.

I didn't listen to him, and he's coming after me
With a million Yankee soldiers from their homes across the sea.
That is why I called you, Satan, for I want advice from you;
I know that you will tell me just what I ought to do."

"My dear old Adolph Hitler, there's not much for me to tell
For the U.S. will make it hotter than I could for you in hell.
I have been a mean old devil, but not half as mean as you.
I'll be waiting for your coming, I'll keep the fire bright,
I'll have your room all ready when the U.S. begins to fight.
The U. S. A. will get you, I've nothing more to tell—
Hang up your phone and get your hat and meet me down in hell.

FOR SALE—LAPEL PINS

Mary Aston is selling lapel pins of WWII Medals: 8th Air Force, DFC, Air Medal, Purple Heart, POW, European-African Mediterranean Theater and WWII Victory Medal. The price of each is \$9 + 44 cents postage. (Specify pin name and number of each type.)

A large Suncatcher depicting the Flying 8 Ball; a 67th Squadron Pelican or 8th Air Force Logo are available at \$120 each + \$25 UPS (a total of \$145)

A small Flying 8 Ball sells for \$65 + \$18 UPS (a total of \$83) Proceeds go to the 44th BGVA. Contact Mary at 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635.

BOOKS OF GREAT EVENTS IN 44TH BOMB GROUP HISTORY

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 2 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, 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.

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. 190 Johnson Drive SE, Calhoun, GA 30701-3941 Tel. 706-629-2396. The cost is \$20.

POST WAR OBSERVATIONS OF THE LATE ARTHUR HARRIS, MARSHAL OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE:

"The major cause of our success in the Allied invasion was the absolute air supremacy of the air forces working with our invading forces. That supremacy was, in the first place, due to the enemy's absorption of airmen and air material in ever increasing numbers in a despairing attempt, which failed – to overcome the strategic bomber forces which were wreaking more and more vital injuries to his entire economic and military systems.

Harris quoted Albert Speer, Hitler's Armament Production Chief: "The effect of the strategic bomber offense has always been underestimated." He added that the bombers opened up a second front long before the invasion of France, because owing to the unpredictability of where attacks would strike next, defenses had to be spread out to cover every city or important factory in Germany and German occupied territory."

According to Speer, German rocket warfare was no more than a feeble and totally ineffective gesture. For example, the maximum production of the V-2 rocket was 5,000 a month. Five thousand V-2 rockets carried less explosive power than one raid by the Allied strategic bomber forces.

Hitler discounted the importance of bombers, putting more funds into fighter planes. That's not the only miscalculation by Der Fuehrer.



FOLDED WINGS

*Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And departing leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Clark, Forrest S. #22758 24 January 2009 67th Squadron S/Sgt. Griffith was a Gunner, later a Radio Operator on the **Rockford C. Griffith** crew. He also flew one mission with **Richard O'Neill**. His first of eleven missions was 10 October 1943.

Clark was with the Griffith crew on the mission to Kjeller 18 November 1943, in which the battle damaged plane's left landing wheel would not come down. Along with most of the crew, Clark bailed out over Shipdham, while Griffith and his co-pilot brought #41-29161 down safely on the right wheel. On board was a wounded member of that crew.

On a mission enroute to Lechfeld, Germany, Rockwell Griffith found the engine overheating. They managed to drop the bombs over the target, then discovered the #2 engine malfunctioned. Having insufficient fuel to return to England, he turned his plane toward Switzerland. He was greeted there with both Swiss Fighters and Swiss Flak. Despite that, Griffith did land safely in Dubendorf and the crew was interned. Two escaped, Clark and the others were detained. Months later, Clark was able to escape into France.

Clark spent most of his latter years in Kissimmee, Florida, then moved to Bristol, Tennessee. He had earned a degree in Journalism at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey; then a postgraduate degree in English Literature at the University of Minnesota. He was a

reporter and columnist for a number of newspapers in Florida and New Jersey, and his work appeared in various flight publications, including the 8 Ball Tails. His memorabilia will be donated to the 8th Air Force Museum in Savannah, Georgia. His Swiss Internee collection will go to the Swiss Internee Association.

Clark leaves his wife of 60 years, Ruth Lucille Buck. The couple had two children, a son and a daughter, two grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Graven, Thomas A. #20443 67th Squadron 23 April 2009 1st. Lt. Graven is listed as a Co-Pilot in the 44th BG, but the Database has no record of his combat missions. He lists his arrival date 01 April 1944. Previously he flew with the 492nd, later with the 392nd. His last mission (30th) was with the 392nd, but there is no record that he flew with the 44th. His departure to the ZOI was August 1944.

Graven was a member of the Air Reserve in Illinois, and he retired as a Lt. Colonel. After the war he attended Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, later joining Bristol Myers as a Medical Salesman.

Graven's death was reported by his grandson, TJ Graven.

Gray, John Allan #25354 68th Squadron 17 October 2007 Lt. Gray was a Navigator on the **Robert A. Peter** crew. His first mission was 30 October 1944.

Lt. Gray flew in *T. S. Tessie/Beck's Bad*



FOLDED WINGS

Boys, Flak Magnet, Gallavantin' Gal and Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch.

When GEE/PFF became available to the 44th, Gray qualified for this navigational tool, frequently flying in the lead plane. He flew with **Bob Seever, Roy M. Boggs, Harry Garbade, Frank Kiggins** and with **William Cameron** as Command Pilot. Gray flew on the 44th BG's last mission to Hallein, Austria 25 April 1945.

After the War, Gray earned a BS degree at Penn State University, later a law degree at George Washington University. He became a special agent with the FBI from 1951-1953. His next position was Deputy Regional Director of the FTC. He ended his career as an Administrative Law Judge for the Department of Labor, retiring in 1996.

Gray leaves his wife Donna, two children, three stepchildren and three grandchildren. The couple resided in Florence, SC at the time of his death. He was interred in Arlington National Cemetery on 25 April 2008.

Hamrick, Bazel #20509 2 October 1997 67th Squadron No records available. (Source: Security Death Index)

Hardman, Gene A. #20543 1 March 1996 506 Squadron No records available (Source: Security Death Index)

Harrison, Charles H. #20561 15 December, 1998 68th Squadron. Sgt. Harrison was a gunner flew with many pilots, most with **Ted L. Weaver**, but also with **Charles Gayman, Sterling Dobbs, Herman Eckstein** and **Myron Sesit** as Command Pilot. Harrison's first of 26 missions was 21 May 1944.

Flying with different pilots, Harrison flew in nine different planes: **Flak Alley II, Patsy Ann II, Full House, Battlin'**

Baby, V for Victory, Jose Carioca, T.S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Flak Magnet and My Sad Ass. His last mission was 29 November 1944. (Source: Security Death Index)

Holmes, Walter "Tommie" #23256 68th Squadron 25 May 2009 Captain Holmes was among the first pilots that came to Shipdham. His first mission, 7 November 1942, was on **Victory Ship**, a beloved plane that saw him through twenty of his 25 missions. On the plane's maiden flight to Abbeville, a shell from a German fighter plane burst above the pilot & co-pilot's head. Even with a head injury, Holmes was able to bring the plane safely back to Shipdham.

Holmes flew with **Wilmer Garrett**, and **Baxter Weant**, but also with **Leon Johnson** and **James Posey** as Command Pilots.

The Holmes crew flew in **Black Jack, Lemon Drop, Captain & His Kids Ride Again**; for the Ploesti Raid, they flew in **Wing & A Prayer**. That was his last mission.

Holmes carefully recorded the experiences of his most memorable missions, providing a considerable amount of literature for future generations to understand. He was also eager to relate his experiences to many young researchers and historians, a trait that endeared him forever to anyone who was seeking pertinent details of his missions.

After the war, Holmes and his father established feed businesses reaching from Louisiana to Texas, called TexLA. Later he entered real estate, and built a subdivision in Jasper, Texas. He lived in one of those homes until his death. With his first wife, Margarete, he had a son who passed away. Ten years ago he married Nida, who was with him until the time of his death.



FOLDED WINGS

Latimer, Lyle B. #21046 2009 67th Squadron S/Sgt. Latimer was a Tail Gunner on the **Joseph Hermann** crew. He arrived in Shipdham in time to join the mission to Caen (Vire). It was 6 June 1944 - D-Day.

The Hermann crew flew 27 missions in four different A/C: **Phyllis, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Fearless Fosdick** and **Three Kisses for Luck**.

Most of the missions were clearing the way for the invasion forces by preventing German troop movements from coming to aid of their comrades at Normandy. Two missions were to St. Lo, in cooperation with General Bradley's plan to keep German troops entrapped. An infantryman looking up, described one attack: "The bombers flew in majestically, and with a dreadful, unalterable dignity, unloaded and made for home".

Latimer's last mission was 15 August 1944.

Mirkin, Edward #21373 66th Sq. 27 April 2009 T/Sgt. Mirkin was a Radio Operator on the **John Winchester** crew; but he also flew with **Charles Armstrong, Saul Fineman, Charles Hughes, Robert Felber** as CP and **Lewis Wright** as CP. Mirkin flew 32 missions, the first on 30 December 1943. On D-Day the Winchester crew flew two missions: first to Colleville/St. Laurent; the second to Caen (Vire).

The Winchester crew flew in **Shoo Shoo Baby and Flak Alley II**, but most in **Limpin' Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose**.

His last mission was 1 August 1944, in which Robert Felber, as Command Pilot, led the 44th to the RR Junction at Amiens, France, as part of the ongoing effort to stop the movement of German troops.

After the war, Mirkin gained recognition as a men's fashion designer. He and his wife Mitzi were married 63 years. He leaves four children, two boys, two girls; and seven grandchildren. Edward and Mitzi resided in Westbury, New York.

Thompson, Frederick F. #22294 66th Squadron 15 May 2007 S/Sgt. Thompson was a Gunner on six different crews, mostly with **J. W. Grow** and **Eustice Hawkins**, but also with **Gail W. Larson, Albert Frank, Bob Cardenas, Henry Borkowski** and **Dean Miller**.

His first mission was 21 February 1944. Most early missions were into the industrial areas in Germany; but after D-Day most activities were in support of the troops. On D-Day he flew with Eustice Hawkins to Colleville and St. Laurent on **Passion Pit**.

Thompson also flew in **The Wasps Nest, Consolidated Mess, Greenwich, M'Darling, Prince/PrincAss/Princess, Ole Cock, Southern Comfort II** and **Cape Cod Special**.

His last mission was 22 June 1944. He was living in Greenwood, Maine at the time of his death.

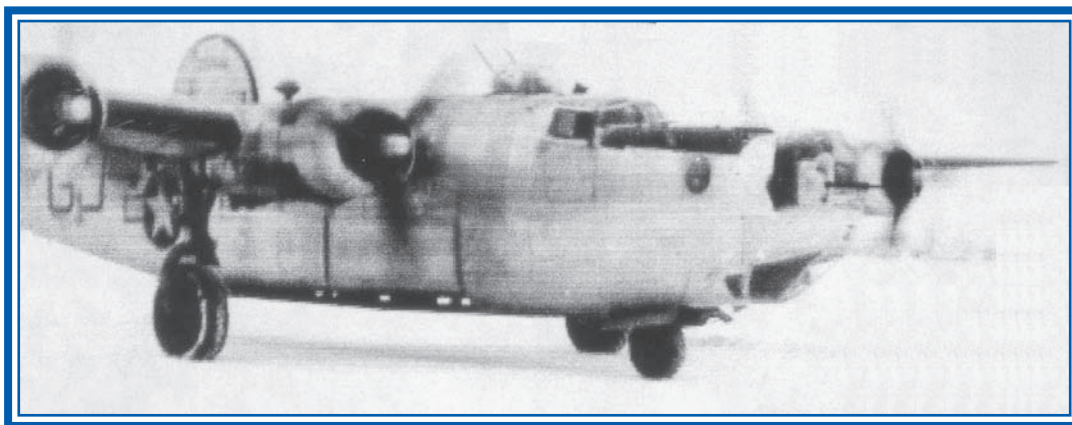


**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

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On the third day of the Reunion, we will visit the Fantasy of Flight Museum in Orlando; and yes, they have one of the few B-24s left in the world. There is entertainment for all ages: a ride on the plane that (unfairly) got more acclaim than the Liberator - the B-17!! - or fly in a WWII biplane. (You have to pay for those luxuries.) Those who are technically inclined can play an aerial video game or pilot a state-of-the-art hang glider simulation.



44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 9 Issue #1

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***FLAK ALLEY** flew a total of 47 missions from 4 April 1943 to 2 February 1944. No less than sixteen pilots sat at the controls with this plane which had rather audacious nose art. (Perhaps her long survival could be attributed to the fact that the German fighters couldn't take their eyes off the girl on the nose.)*

The **David Alexander** crew flew the most missions in *FLAK ALLEY*, a total of twelve including Mission #43 to Ploesti. The **Homer Gentry** crew flew seven; **Lehnhausen** crew flew 5; **Roland Houston**, 3. Other crews included **W.D. Hughes**, **Park H. Jones**, **Baxter Weant**, **Wilmer Garrett**, **Smith J. Meador**, **R. F. Stahler**, **Carl Bohnisch**, **William Cameron**, **Frederick Dent** as CP, **Harold Slaughter**, **Arthur Marcoullier** and **Joseph D. Kessler**.

FLAK ALLEY's last flight was to an A/C Assembly plant in Gotha, Germany, 24 February 1944. It was the third mission for the **Phillip Bell** crew. She crashed in a village close to the target. At about 1330 hours and 21,000 feet, five minutes flying time south of Gotha, the crew bailed out. Six parachutes were seen to come out of this aircraft before it exploded.



L-R Top Row: **George Hulpiau**, Bombardier, **Robert C. Peterson**, Navigator, **Hollis R. Nichols**, Co-Pilot, **Robert J. Lehnhausen**, Pilot

Kneeling L-R **Douglas H. Ratledge**, Asst. Engr.; **William G. Morton**, Engineer, **Michael J. Balazovich**, Asst. Radio Op.; **Thomas A. Laskowski**, Radio Operator; **Charles M. Ross**, Tail Turret Gunner
The Lehnhausen Crew (England, 1944)

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FLAK ALLEY

The 44th BG led the 14th Combat Wing on this mission to Gotha, Germany, 24 February 1944. Enemy A/C were on the attack all the way into and out of the target. By keeping a tight formation, losses were minimized. Unfortunately the 66th & 68th Squadrons each lost one plane.

This mission was to attack an Air Assembly plant. It was very heavily defended by both Me 109s and FW 190s. Although there were at least 40 fighters defending the target, with the tight formation, the losses were minimized to two: #41-29148 in the 66th Squadron and **Flak Alley** in the 68th.

Just after the target, **Flak Alley** was caught in the prop wash and fell out of formation, with two props on one side running away. Immediately they were attacked by fighters. The pilot, Lt. **Phillip Bell** knew of eight men bailing out, but only four of them survived. Lt. Bell said that he had been told that all of his men had jumped prior to his leaving the ship, but later was told that Sgts. **James Hammontree** (Ball Turret Gunner) and **Robert Gleason** (Tail Gunner), both from the rear of the plane, did not jump. However, the official record states that both Gleason and Hammontree did bail out, (or were blown out by the force of the explosion) but too soon, as both men were dead before getting down to the ground.

Sgt **Kenneth Sullivan**, (Left Waist Gunner), and Sgt **Wiley Haynes**, (Right Waist Gunner) were seriously wounded. Haynes was told to contact the others, then bail out, which he did. Unfortunately, he died soon after landing. Sullivan was seriously injured, captured as soon as he hit the ground, was taken to a schoolhouse near Gotha, but died soon afterwards in a hospital. This was his second mission.

S/Sgt **Anthony Millio**, Radio Operator, was only slightly injured when he bailed out; but his chute did not open or he failed to pull his ripcord soon enough. He died on the ground.

Lt. **George W. Hall**, (Bombardier), and Lt. **James Schroeder**, (Navigator), bailed out of the nose wheel door. Hall was last seen running to escape. He was wounded in both eyes, probably from shards of steel from exploding shells. He lost one eye, but the other was saved by a German doctor, who used magnets to removed slivers of steel from it. Hall died several years after the war ended.

Schroeder was not able to run, having been shot in the back. He was promptly captured, and by sign language he was able to convince the civilians not to beat him, as he had no weapons. Then a German citizen, Mr. Irbrukker, took him to his home for treatment of his injuries. Later he was befriended by a German soldier who spoke good English. The German said his brother was in Texas. He took him to the wreck of his plane which had both nose and tail sticking up from the ground. He was placed in a church for a while, then to a POW camp, but later repatriated.

Sgt. **Charles H. Freeburg**, Engineer, bailed out through the bomb bay doors and became POW. Lt. **James King**, Co-Pilot, bailed out but was wounded by a 20-mm shell and died a few minutes after hitting the ground. This was his fourth mission.

Lt. **Bell** parachuted to safety, but was promptly captured.

Reporting later, Hall stated that this crew had been up five times, but had only two missions credited. Just a couple of days earlier they had aborted in *Flak Alley* when the props ran away. On the Gotha mission they went over the target, but when swinging around to return, two engines on the same side had the props run away again. The pilots tried to counteract this strong torque with all their strength, but could not do so,

...continued on page 4

fell out of formation, and apparently were attacked by fighters, finishing them off.

Witnesses on the ground reported that the aircraft had been shot down by an Me 109. They stated, also, that a man from the village pulled one of the crewmembers from the burning bomber. This man was later abducted after the war by the Soviets and never heard from again.

The 66th lost one plane that day, #41-29148 B. Etheridge. Total losses from the two planes: POW — 8; POW & Injured – 5; KIA – 7.

BOB LEHNHAUSEN REMEMBERS HIS MISSIONS AND CREW ON FLAK ALLEY

I am especially proud of this group of men. We only flew five combat missions together, but gained significant recognition. **Robert Peterson, George Hulpiau** and **William Morton** were members of my original crew that joined the 68th in March 1943. Those missions were:

#77	30 December 1943	Ludwigshaven	Squadron Lead
#78	31 December 1943	St. Jean D'Angely	Wing Lead
#80	5 January 1944	Kiel	Deputy Wing Lead
#82	1 November 1944	Meppen	Division Lead
#87	5 February 1944	Watten	Wing Lead

Missions #78 and #80 were exceptional. In his *History of the 68th Squadron*, Webb Todd reported the following message from General **Dexter Hodges**, "...your bombing today was the finest example of precision bombing yet accomplished by the Division. We are proud of all of you..." That is something! It is the best of fifteen months of effort!

The mission to Meppen (#82) was a Target of Opportunity. Although we were briefed to attack Brunswick, we were recalled just as we crossed the German-Dutch border. Col. **Frederick Dent**, who was flying with us as Command Pilot that day, was determined to bomb Germany. **Robert Peterson** selected Meppen as the target, Hulpiau aimed for a concentration of barges on the Dortmund-Ems Canal. He didn't put his lead bomb into the pickle barrel, but he did put it into the middle of the barges. The photo reconnaissance verified the excellence of his work. A portion of the Groups bombs reaped a bonus result. They fell into an ammunition dump southeast of the town. Pure chance! The Germans were unaware, and we were just lucky. Once again the 2AD and General Hodge were very pleased and sent a message of congratulations. Colonel Dent was ecstatic.

All of these five missions were flown in *Flak Alley*. As I recall, I flew eleven of my missions in this wonderful "bird".

I also recall that **Sid Bolick** flew both of the Missions, St. Jean and Meppen, with us. Altogether Sid and I flew five of his missions together. In each of those missions he flew as the Tail Gunner with the responsibility of 'Formation Control' officer. This role was valuable to the Command Pilot in assuring that the formation was compact and defensible.

It should be noted that while it served as the 68's lead ship for some period of time, it eventually lost that special status once each of the squadrons became equipped with "Pathfinder" aircraft. Those PFF ships came to us equipped with radar gear as a part of the planes' original equipment. They were only used as lead aircraft. Plus, they were NEW. New crews had little affection for battle tested planes with a rich history of service and survival, ships like *Flak Alley* became 'war weary' and were assigned to the newest crews... and were lost in combat. Only our famed *Lemon Drop* survived. I flew that wonderful 'ole' beauty many, many times. An added bonus for the *Lemon Drop* was that I had a special regard for its crew chief, **Charlie Pigg**. He was a gifted mechanic with a personality to match.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



We had a very successful reunion at Harrisburg with 127 attending.. It was especially good to see all the family members there. All the events- visit to the Civil War Museum— Medal presentations and ceremonies at Carlisle- tour of Gettysburg went very smoothly thanks to the hard work and organizing abilities of Ruth and Perry Morse, Jackie and Lowell Roberts and Lee and Mary Aston. Thanks to them and all others who contributed.

As everyone seems to feel that we should have another reunion in 2009, I will be looking into setting it up for Tampa next fall. As many of you know, the 44th was organized at McDill Field in Tampa in January of 1941. There is a 44th Monument at the base, and we will try to arrange a visit there. Tampa airport is a very convenient one to navigate through and most hotels have shuttle service.

Cynthia and I made our annual trip to England in August and it was quite eventful.. We usually visit the Flying Club at Shipdham, and so we informed some of them that we would drop by on Saturday and visit. After arriving in England, I checked my e-mail and discovered that they decided it would be a good time to dedicate the Memorial Garden and Museum on Sunday. They had already arranged for a Color Guard and Chaplain from Lakenheath Air Base.

On the Saturday we stopped by, the place was a beehive of activity, preparing for the occasion. People were cleaning the clubhouse—Mike Atherton showed us the plaque that would be on the stone monument. and said it he would have it mounted that afternoon.. Chris Barrett's mother was sewing up a cover for the unveiling of the monument (Chris is a young man who has a great interest in the 44th, collects artifacts and serves as Assistant Curator of the Museum).

Sunday morning started off with heavy rains, but the sun came out shortly before the 11AM start. Mrs. Paterson and I cut the ribbon- the Color Guard raised the Stars and Stripes- the Chaplain - Col. Dowling did the blessing and we all sat down to a nice lunch in the Flying Club Lounge. Special thanks to Peter Steele, Peter Bodle , their wives, Mike Atherton and all the others who contributed. We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated group of friends there who put so much effort into keeping our history alive. Thanks to all.

The event was covered by the newspapers and I must say that one article made me a magician. It stated that I came over in June, 1944, and then stated that I flew the Ploesti Mission in 1943!! (At that time I was trying to learn to fly a BT – 13!!!)

Hope all had a good Christmas and New Years.

George Washburn

WILLIAM G. MORTON'S BIG SURPRISE

"I was finished with all my missions and ready to go home, when I got a call to report to 68th Squadron Headquarters," **William G. Morton** remembered. I went to Major **Robert Lehnhausen's** office. He just told me to get into his Jeep, then drove me to Group Headquarters. We both saluted General **Leon Johnson**. The General said nothing, but put a bar into Lehnhausen's hand; they each put a bar on my right and left shoulders and at that moment I became a lieutenant!!

"Why was I given this unexpected honor? My crew says I shot down 17 enemy aircraft." (The official record credits him with only six, but that was enough for the English author Roger Freeman, to name him an 'enlisted ace'.)

Morton was a member of Lehnhausen's original crew when they were first assembled at the Casper Army Air Base in Wyoming, where they were learning combat techniques in B-17s. Later, when they arrived in England and learned that they were re-assigned to B-24s, it was a sobering moment.

"I'm not going," Morton announced.

"If I go, will you go? Lehnhausen asked.

Of course, the answer was 'Yes, Sir.'

Lehnhausen remembers Morton as a brilliant and highly skilled engineer who distinguished himself on the second mission to Wiener-Neustadt, — 1 October 1943. Morton was flying with Captain **William D. "Doc" Hughes** in the **AVENGER**, 'Tail End Charlie' behind the Ninety Third and the Three-Eighty Ninth Bomb Groups. The enemy fighters permitted the first planes to pass, waiting for the tail-end group. They attacked with a vengeance.

Captain Hughes described the scene that ensued. "They were queuing up for a head-on attack, and in flights of three or four abreast, they started through the formation.

The first attack crippled some of our forces and broke up our formation. We managed to get our bombs away and started a running battle for home. The Luftwaffe was out 120 strong, attacking by twos from every position of the clock. It was every man for himself, as the pilots attempted to get back into some semblance of a formation. The **AVENGER's** gunners were fighting desperately, alone, and they drove off attack after attack, shooting down three ME 109s and damaging several others. However, before we were out of the battle area, our hydraulic system was shot out, and an elevator cable cut.

T/Sgt. **William Morton**, our engineer, cinched the hydraulic lines to save the fluid by bending the severed ends and affecting a splice in the elevator cable. This made it possible for us to return to base."

For his outstanding ability to act in extreme emergency, Sgt. Morton was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

When Morton was transformed into a Lieutenant, Major Lehnhausen loaned his late brother Edward's gear to Morton until he could acquire an officer's attire. He stayed in Shipdham and became a Gunnery Instructor. After the war, he attended flight school, became a fighter pilot and became a Squadron Commander in both Korea and Viet Nam.

Although Morton could not attend the Carlisle Reunion, he was very eager to learn how his great hero, General **Leon Johnson**, was being honored by the men who flew with him, the veterans of the 44th BG.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

For the first time since before the 44th Bomb Group moved in to Station 115 erosity of Mrs Paterson, the runway that The Shipdham Flying Club uses 20/02, (Now realigned as 21/03) has been replaced. Four inches of (very) old, and well used, concrete and tarmac have been removed and replaced with new aviation compatible tar-macadam. The runway surface is so unbelievably smooth several club members (myself included) rode up and down it on a pedal bicycle, just before it was re-opened for aviation use, just to try it out. The club's runway repair team will now be able to turn their full attentions to the maintenance of car park and other less important areas of the airfield's infrastructure.

The 44th Bomb Group Museum continues to attract visitors, even over the winter period, and we look forward to re-opening on a regular basis once the spring has really set in. Over the winter, the museum team has added a few more odds and ends to the collection and are delighted to have been loaned a blade from the ill fated McCoy B-24 for display. It will be mounted in room three, with the McCoy story on a placard next to it.

During 2008 we revelled in the formal opening of the Memorial Garden, The 44th Bomb Group Museum, The Open Day for the general public, and our first big corporate day, as well as the new runway...What a year!

Without doubt the Formal opening of the Memorial Garden and Museum by George Washburn, ably assisted by Mrs Paterson, was the real highlight of the year, and we are grateful for their attendance. I make no apology to attach in full Mike Artherton's report to the club members about that day.

"Blessed with fine weather, for once in the early part of August, George Washburn, the 44th Bomb Group Veteran's Association President, Mrs Paterson, one of the Padres from Lakenheath and the USAAF Lakenheath Base Honour Guard, performed the opening ceremony for the Memorial Garden and Museum.



"Press coverage was very strong (thanks Phil) and SFC can chalk it up as another major milestone in its brief history.

"The meal after the ceremony was suitably delightful and our thanks go to Margaret S, Karen, Helen and the rest of the catering team that day. One of our American guests noted that they never got food as good at many of the official functions they went to in the States. That's a great feather in the SFC catering team's hat!!!

"(And the weather stayed kind to us ...how good was that.)"

The young men from the Lakenheath Honour Guard did us proud, and George was quick to comment on this in his few words after dinner.

However the dignity and decorum of the group was slightly dented during the dinner, when one of the young men found it impossible to refuse the offer of a second helping of pudding, much to the amusement of his colleagues and the assembled dinner guests. (I guess some things never change...when did a G.I. ever refuse good tasty food?)

Best wishes from all at your old base in England.

Peter Bodle



THE SHIPDHAM FLYING CLUB MADE HEADLINES



Cynthia Harmonoski, **George Washburn** and Mrs. Eileen Paterson join the dedication of the Flying Club's Museum and Memorial Garden. **Does anyone know where a piece of an old B-24 might be available?** The Club would like to place it in the Memorial Garden.



The good cooks were on duty at the Flying Club, as Cynthia, George and Mrs. Paterson can attest. George was honored for his 35 missions with the 68th Squadron. As a teenager, Cynthia had been employed at the base, and Mrs. Paterson owns the land where the Club, Museum and Garden are located.



Dinner in the Liberator Bar and Dining Room. L-R Mrs. Paterson; Col. Dowling, Chaplain from Lakenheath; Brian Peel, Peter Steele, Chris Barrett, 2 members of the Honor Guard.

DO YOU WANT TO BUY A BRICK?

The Soldier's Walk at AHEC is a brick walkway where your name will be preserved, along with any information you wish to include. A three line brick is \$100. If you want the Flying Eight Ball logo added, the price is \$150. Pavers, which are 2' x 2' are \$1,000. They have space to honor your crew. Call me if you want an application. (717 846-8948)

WWII POETRY

Sing a song of defense and rock it to the sky,
Turn the Axis backwards with bonds that we buy
When the war is over, a victory song we'll sing
For what more could we wish than freedom bells to ring.

THE SECOND AIR DIVISION ASSOCIATION'S 62ND ANNUAL CONVENTION WILL RETURN TO ITS ROOTS IN CHICAGO.

The three day reunion will be at the Westin O'Hare Hotel, September 4-7, 2009. Armed Forces Reunion, Inc. will be making the arrangements. Reservations can be made by calling 1-888 627-8517.

THE HARRISBURG-CARLISLE-GETTYSBURG REUNION

Thanks to the great management and negotiating skills of Lowell Roberts, members of the 44th Bomb Group VA arrived by plane, shuttle or auto to the Sheraton in Pennsylvania's capital city, Harrisburg, PA. Tour #1 went to the Civil War Museum where the sale of a slave was depicted by life-like manikins, and resounding cannon shells desecrated Ft. Sumter.

Perry Morse wishes to thank the anonymous lady who paid for Museum souvenir pens which he wished to give as gifts to all participants. If you were there and didn't get a pen, catch up with him at the next reunion.

The big event was the gathering at the Army Heritage Education Center in Carlisle. When black veils were lifted on the Soldiers Walk, an impressive lineup of pavers & bricks were revealed, each bearing the logo of the 44th, and honoring its leaders and historical contributors: **Will Lundy, Paul Kay, Robert Lehnhausen, Edward (Mike) Mikoloski, Gerald Folsom, Roy Owen, Norm Kiefer, Webb Todd, Art Hand, Ursel Harvel, Arlo Bartsch, and of course, Leon Johnson.**

Michael Lynch, Chief of Educational Programs ushered the crowd into the library for the presentation of the Medal of Honor. 41 veterans lined up in the front row, facing the Medal. Col. James Pierce read the Citation, recounting General Johnson's heroism in leading the raid to Target White in the oil fields at Ploesti, Romania.

With great humility and genuine emotion, Leon Abbott, grandson of General Johnson, extolled the virtues of the great commander.

"I have to confess it's been quite a struggle to find the right words to mark this occasion. I have been blessed with the great fortune to pass on my grandfather's legacy to the nation he loved and defended, and I sincerely hope his character and



Col. James Pierce & Michael Lynch



Leon Abbott

courage will provide inspiration to future generations.

He was the embodiment of what is good and righteous about America. He had the "right stuff". There is no greater testament to that than the expressions of love and admiration, of

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devotion and genuine gratitude that I continue to hear to this day, and I certainly concur within my limited context as grandson and bearer of his name.

The quality of his leadership is a rare gift that comes along all too infrequently in the history of mankind. There are many examples: here are but a few that have been related to me:

When the crews assigned to the Ploesti raid were briefed shortly before departure, there was understandably much trepidation and dread throughout the room. Col. Leon Johnson reassured everyone that he would not ask them to go anywhere he himself would not go...they had a job to do. When he said, "I will lead you," the room became silent.

When Captain Dick Butler crashed his B-24 upon returning to Shipdam Airfield from a test flight, Leon Johnson arrived first on location in his staff car, ahead of the fire and medical personnel. Fire had broken out and ammunition and flares were beginning to go off. Capt. Butler had a broken arm and ankle. By his account, my grandfather and his driver ripped a gate off a nearby fence, improvised a stretcher and removed Capt. Butler from danger.

On a lighter note, Col. Johnson had quite a reputation for stopping his staff car and offering a lift to any airman walking along. He would take the opportunity to inquire as to their well-being, to listen to their concerns. He gained much respect within the ranks for this consideration. He even allowed himself to be thrown into the pond to mark the completion of the 200th mission...

We had many discussions around the dinner table, and I once had occasion to ask him what form of government he thought worked best.

With a twinkle in his eye, he

replied "A benevolent dictatorship". He had a wry sense of humor, yet there was much truth to his answer, presuming one devotes enough attention to the benevolent part of the equation. He most certainly did (devote attention) in his various responsibilities of leadership. In my opinion, this was the essence of America's post WW2 global leadership, and history will certainly prove that the world is a better place for it. There is no other nation that has exercised its power as generously and wisely, despite our human failings. I can only hope that such integrity will be the standard for the centuries to come, for all nations, for the sake of the human race.

Another important measure of a man is the quality of his friendships. My grandfather had numerous genuine and warm friends; I wish to mention three in particular that have had an impact on my life as well: first and foremost his great friend and mine Col. Edward K Mikoloski. With a heart as big as the sky, with wisdom and devotion, and unwavering loyalty, he also had "the right stuff". They are inseparable in my memory of them, and I owe much to both of them. I cannot imagine how impoverished my life would have been without their influence.

Secondly I would like to mention Mike Fusano who is a fine gentleman in his own right. He was my grandfather's driver during WW2 at Shipdam Airfield. Mike's health prevents him from being here today. We remain in touch, and he sends his best to everyone.

Thirdly I would like to mention Jaqueline Cochran, a truly remarkable woman whose contributions to the field of aviation among others is the stuff of legends. She was fond of me when I was a toddler, and I remember

her well. She was as dynamic a woman as this country has ever produced, far ahead of her time. So many more have contributed their hearts and minds as well; some are here today. They all made a difference in my grandfather's life, and he was richer for their love.

With all that said, there is no great leadership without the integrity of the organization behind it. A leader by definition has followers and it is their qualities that contribute equally to great achievements. The 44th Bomb Group serves as an inspiring example of what can be accomplished in the face of overwhelming odds, when the survival of all that is good is at stake; when doing the right thing is the most important of all. Leon W Johnson clearly recognized and deeply appreciated the loyalty of all that followed him into harm's way. The Medal of Honor was earned by all in the group. My grandfather made that clear at every opportunity.

And so the symbol of the nation's gratitude and respect now passes back to her, where it may best testify to all that is good about us, to the willingness to sacrifice for the greater good, the perpetuation of ideals, of leadership by example, and the true gallantry that time has proven undeniable.

I humbly pass my stewardship of this Medal of Honor to the United States Army Heritage and Education Center, in the secure knowledge that this is its rightful place, alongside the painstaking efforts of Will Lundy and many others, where the history

and character of the 44th Bomb Group may best provide inspiration for as long as our great nation endures... God bless all of you, and God bless America.

The second floor of the Museum houses a display depicting the war from Normandy to entering Germany. Walls of photographs tell the army story and pieces of memorabilia show Air Corps participation. Highly visible was Lee Aston's worn-out 67th Squadron flight jacket. Under the direction of Jay Graybeal, Curator of Uniforms, Lee's jacket looked as good as the day he first donned it. Although few had time to view it, the Courtyard holds materials from many wars—a tank, a helicopter, a WWI Trench, a pillbox, and much more.

But soon it was time to jump into the buses and enter the historic Carlisle Barracks. The first stop was to the Chapel, where the 44th heard a resounding message, based on Hebrews 12, Verse 1, presented by Chaplain Arthur Pace.

"The writer of Hebrews tells us an amazing thing: Death is not a disappearance; death is not the end. Instead, these heroes transitioned from the field of play into the stands, like at a football game. Having served with energy and vigor on earth, they now take their rightful place in the stands of glory, and



Leon Johnson's & Will Lundy's pavers



Treasurer Jackie Roberts views the paver honoring her father, Sgt. Jack Ostenson.

cheer on those of us who remain. They are the great cloud of witnesses. They did their part, and that right well. They then passed the torch of freedom onto us, asking only that we do not let it dim, and that we care for it as sacrificially as they did. If we listened carefully, we would hear

our departed brethren cheering to us from the stands. *"Live,"* they yell. *"Live free. Enjoy your life. Put aside anything that is holding you back, any*

excuses that you have made to limit yourself, and do what God has asked of you. Run your part of the race to the fullest. Do not tire. Do not falter. Do not fail." They tell us that one day each of us will take that same journey and join them in the stands. When we do, we want to do so with our heads held high, able to say to our friends and comrades that we took that torch of freedom that they gave to us and ran our best with it. Then, when our portion was done, we too passed that torch on to capable hands that will care for it just as we did. The world may never take notice or appreciate any of this. But our comrades in the stands will notice, and will cheer us all the louder...My friends, we will surely miss our departed brethren, and well we should. But we are comforted to know that they are not really gone. Rather, they have taken their place with the other heroes who have already gone before..."

Luncheon at the Letort View Community Center was a fast moving event, with the number of guests swelling as word of the event got around. The event was orchestrated by **Lee Aston**, Director on the 44th BGVA Board and Chairman of Awards & Decorations.

It was the late President **Paul Kay's** wish to bring the 44th BGVA to Gettysburg, and it finally happened. The season was right for viewing colorful trees and fields of Black Eyed Susans, but when we got to the Tourist Center **the power was out!!** Not to be dismayed, we jumped back on the bus with our Step On Guides and toured Seminary Hill, passed Jenny Wade's House, the Wheat Field and Devil's Den. The buses stopped at Little Round Top where General Armistead, leading his brigade, fell to a Yankee bullet. The last stop was at the Torch of Freedom, scene of Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address.



Chaplain Arthur Pace

44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

2008 FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR AWARDS



Frank Stoltz (R) of Miles City, Montana, on June 25, 2008, received the French Legion of Honor medal from the Consul General of France for San Francisco at a VFW ceremony, Miles City, MT for his heroic WWII military service to France. Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer, Miles City Mayor Joe Wheeler, and VFW Miles City Post Commander, former Lt. Col. Robert Johnson, AF Ret., were the principal speakers honoring Stoltz. Gov. Schweitzer presented Stoltz with a letter of commendation. Stoltz family members, wife Patricia of 60 years, and children were in attendance. Stoltz was nominated by Legion of Honor Chevalier R. Lee Aston for the French medal.



S/Sgt. Frank Stoltz-1944

S/Sgt. Frank Stoltz was a member of the 506th Squadron and an aerial gunner on the Norman Howe crew. Howe's aircraft was shot down on June 21, 1944 on a mission to Berlin. All crew members were made POWs except Co-Pilot Gordon W. Henderson, KIA. Stoltz was held POW until freed a few days after the War ended on May 8, 1945.



Col. Charles E. Hughes, 66th Squadron



Capt. Ernest C. Holmer, 67th Squadron






Col. Hughes of San Jose, Ca. and Capt. Holmer of Reno, Nevada, both decided to receive their Legion of Honor medals by mail rather than have a presentation ceremony at the French Consulate in San Francisco. Both finally received their diploma and medal in the Fall of 2008, over a year after nominated by R. Lee Aston, and are, at last, Chevaliers (Knights) of the French Order of the Legion of Honor for their services in liberating France from the Nazi yoke.

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44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS, continued

2008 REUNION MEDAL AWARDS AT THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE, PA.

The WWII Belated Combat Awards Ceremony and luncheon was held at Noon, October 18, 2008 in the Letort Community Center at the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks. 44th BGVA President George A. Washburn welcomed the 230 persons attending the luncheon and turned the awards ceremony over to R. Lee Aston. Nine WWII belated combat awards were planned for the occasion, but the highest medal, the DSC for Lt. Col. Holmes did not come through in time for the ceremony. Eight belated WWII combat medals were made to 44th Bomb Group veterans and presented by the Honorable John H. Gibson II, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, with Major General Robert M. Williams as the Base Host and R. Lee Aston as Master of Ceremonies. Appropriately for the medal presentation event, AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson is the son of our 1944 44th Bomb Group Commanding Officer, Col. John H. Gibson.

   <p>44th Bomb Group Veterans Association</p> <p>44th BOMB GROUP (H) Shipdham AFB, England</p> <p>WORLD WAR II BELATED COMBAT MEDAL AWARDS CEREMONY October 18, 2008</p> <p>Letort View Community Center Carlisle Barracks. U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE Carlisle, Pennsylvania</p>	<p>Programme</p> <p>11:45 a.m. – Luncheon Seating (before eating) Master of Ceremonies, Dr. R. Lee Aston Invocation Pledge of Allegiance Brief Introduction of Gen. Williams & John Gibson Lunch *** Introduction of Distinguished Guests</p> <p>WWII Combat Medal Presentations by The Honorable John H. Gibson, II Assistant Secretary of U.S. Air Forces Pentagon, Arlington, VA</p> <p>Distinguished Guests</p> <p>Maj. Gen. Robert M. Williams Commandant, U.S. Army War College</p> <p>The Hon. & Mrs. Walter E. Stadler, Pres. & CEO National Defense University Foundation, Fort McNair, D.C.</p> <p>Ms. Nancy Miller, Chief Development Officer National Defense University Foundation</p> <p>Ms. Pam Shilling, Outreach Program Manager National Defense University Foundation</p> <p>Ms. Alice Zimmerman (Representing the Executive Director, Mr. Mike Perry) Army Heritage Center Foundation, Carlisle, Pennsylvania</p>	<p>WWII, 8th Army Air Force, 44th Bomb Group Belated Combat Medal Recipients* October 18, 2008</p> <p>****</p> <p>Lt. Col. Walter T. Holmes – Distinguished Service Cross Jasper, Texas</p> <p>Capt. Robert L. Aston - Silver Star Elberton, Georgia</p> <p>S/Sgt. Chauncey H. Steele – Silver Star Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania</p> <p>1st Lt. George A. Washburn – Distinguished Flying Cross + AM/OLCs #5, #6 Tampa, Florida</p> <p>1st Lt. Russell G. Erikson – Distinguished Flying Cross + AM/OLC #5 Quincy, Massachusetts</p> <p>Capt. Sterling L. Dobbs – Air Medal/OLCs #4, #5, #6 LaGrange, Texas</p> <p>Capt. William D. Smythe (<i>post humus</i>) – Air Medal T/Sgt. Walter Fitzmaurice – Air Medal/OLC #5 North Reading, Massachusetts</p> <p>1st Lt. George W. Temple – Prisoner of War Medal Monroe, Louisiana</p> <p>*Note: The above medals were earned by the recipients in combat during WWII, but for some unknown, inadvertent, administrational error were lost or not awarded. The errors have been corrected.</p>
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The eight veterans from the 44th Bomb Group that received belated combat medals from WWII from Air Force Assistant Secretary, the Honorable John H. Gibson II, are, L to R: *post humus* for William Smythe to son James J. Smythe; C.H. (Jay) Steele, Robert Lee Aston; Russell G. Erikson; George A. Washburn; Walter Fitzmaurice; George W. Temple; Sterling L. Dobbs, by John H. Gibson II.

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The 44th BGVA's Host, Major General Robert M. Williams, Commandant of Carlisle Barrack's Army War College Base (R) talks with the Ceremony's principal guest, Air Force Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II from the Pentagon, who made the belated combat medal presentations



James J. Smythe, receives a *post humus* Air Medal for his father, Captain William D. Smythe, from AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II. Capt. Smythe was a 68th Squadron Intelligence Officer who flew five periodic combat missions to gather combat information about enemy tactics and flak installations.



Former S/Sgt. C.H. (Jay) Steele, an aerial gunner and amorer, 66th and 68th Squadron, was presented the Silver Star by AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II for gallantry and extraordinary heroism on a mission to the Eckner ball bearing plant, Berlin, Germany, on April 18, 1944. Jay Steele was originally recommended for the Silver Star on April 18, 1944 by his Pilot Morrison and Col. John H. Gibson, CO of the 44th BG. Jay Steele also received AM/OLC#6 for completing 35 combat missions. Steele flew 34 of his 35 missions with Pilot Harold C. Morrison. Unfortunately, on his last mission, his Pilot, James A. Wilson's aircraft was shot down on their mission to Bernburg, Germany, July 7, 1944. Nine of the crew, including Steele, were interned as POWs with radio operator D.P. Yocco KIA. Steele remained a POW until freed a few days after the end of the war.



Former Captain Robert Lee Aston, 67th Squadron Navigator, was presented the Silver Star by AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II for gallantry and extraordinary heroism on a mission to the oil refinery at Hamburg, Germany, on October 30, 1944. Aston led his late aircraft alone on the deep penetration mission to the target area. On arrival at the IP, he found scattered B-24s in total confusion, without leadership, all from other Bomb Groups, rallied and reassembled the Liberators leading them on the bomb run to successfully bomb the target. Aston's aircraft was the only 44th Bomb Group aircraft that day to bomb the primary target. (All other 44th BG aircraft went to the secondary target.) Lt. Aston was originally recommended for the Silver Star by Col. John H. Gibson in October 1944.



Former 1st Lt. Russell G. Erikson, Pilot, 68th Squadron, was presented the DFC/OLC #1 for extraordinary achievement by AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II. Mr. Erikson was Pilot of the Louisiana Belle and flew 33 combat missions.



Former 1st Lt. George A. Washburn, Pilot, 68th Squadron and President of the 44th BGVA was presented the DFC for extraordinary achievement by AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II. Mr. Washburn also was awarded OLCs#5 and #6 to his Air Medal for completing 35 combat missions.

The Banquet and Hospitality Room provided great opportunities for crew gatherings, serious ceremony and jolly conversation.



Roy Owen lit the first candle in the candelabra.
Lou Rabesa lit the Ploesti candle.



Belle War, daughter of **George Temple**, sang in his honor at both the Squadron Dinner and the Banquet.



Jim Strong, **Roy Owen** & Jackie Strong enjoyed Ursel Harvel's book in the Hospitality Room.



Two crews had three members present: **Clay Roberts** & **George Beiber**. Pictured here from the **George Beiber** crew are **Jerry Folsom**, Co-pilot; **Nathan Woodruff**, Engineer and **Perry Morse**, Tail Gunner.



After the Banquet, **Sterling Dobbs**, Roberta and **Robert Jackson** exchange memories in the Hospitality Room.



Former T/Sgt. Walter Fitzmaurice, 68th Squadron radio operator and aerial gunner was presented with OLC #5 to his Air Medal by AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II, Mr. Fitzmaurice completed 30 combat missions. He served on Pilot 1st Lt. George Washburn's crew



Former 1st Lt. George W. Temple, Navigator, 68th Squadron, was presented with a belated POW medal by AF Assistant Secretary Gibson as Citation Reader Col. James Pierce looks on. Lt. Temple was shot down at Foggia, Italy, 8/16/43 and broke an ankle upon parachuting. He was held 25 days under armed guard but escaped and reached Allied lines 9/22/43.



Former Capt. Sterling L. Dobbs, 68th Squadron Pilot, received OLCs#4,5,6 to his Air Medal from AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson for flying 35 combat missions.



Mary Pierce Aston presents a 44th Bomb Group Flying 8 Balls suncatcher to AF Assistant Secretary Gibson in appreciation of his medals presentation.



Master of Ceremonies Lee Aston receives 'thanks' for Flying 8 Ball suncatcher presented to Major General Robert Williams for hosting the 44th Bomb Group's 2008 Reunion at the Army War College, Carlisle, Pa.

POST-REUNION UPDATE ON DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS FOR TOM HOLMES



Capt. W. Tom Holmes ca 1943

On November 26, 2008, Counsel R. Lee Aston for Lt. Col. Walter Tom Holmes for his DSC claim was advised by the Air Force that the DSC for Mr. Holmes' claim had been approved. Mr. Holmes' former Silver Star for his target leadership on the 1943 Ploesti low level mission was upgraded to the Distinguished Service Cross.

Arrangements for a notable presentation of his high-ranking medal are being made.

* * * *



Ivy and Ivo DePiero. At the Banquet, Ivo introduced his wife of 64 years. She had been a member of the RAF. Unfortunately, Ivo passed away two weeks after the Reunion.



Taylor Woodruff, grandson of **Nathan Woodruff**, was the youngest member present. At the banquet, his father, Atty. John Woodruff spoke for the second generation of WWII veterans. He described an emotional moment when he had the first opportunity to meet his father's crew, and his ongoing gratitude and delight in meeting the men who flew those dangerous skies in WWII.



Two members of **Perry Morse's** family, Ken Kelly and Nancy Schmehl, took over his hospitality chores. Richard Schmehl took his turn pouring liquids and Ellen Kelly held the leash while Jessie, the dog, greeted the folks

The newly restored Cyclorama, depicting Pickett's Charge, was the highlight of the tour. The Museum had nooks where a person can sit and learn about the Civil War—battle by battle. It was difficult to tear everybody away to go back to the Sheraton for the Banquet.

What a happy gathering! The Harrisburg High School Color Guard per-

formed professionally. Jackie Roberts passed out Certificates for those who had been honored with pavers and bricks at the Soldier's Walk in Carlisle. It was an opportunity to declare the greatness of the 44th BGVA, all because of those who worked to make it great.

After Monday Breakfast, **Clayton Roberts** went to Carlisle to see his brick.



The children of the late **Paul Kay** received the certificate for his paver from Ruth Morse at the 68th Squadron Dinner. (*It was Paul's plan to bring the 44th BG to Carlisle and also to Gettysburg. I hope he was looking down on us and smiling.*)

L-R Rebecca Sprague, Ruth Morse & Paul Kay, Jr.





Berle Apgar, wife of the late **George Apgar**, brought the biggest family to the Reunion, some all the way from the Island of Cypress. President Washburn introduced the family and informed the Cyprus family that their island was sometimes a haven for 44th BG planes that were running low on fuel.

L-R Beryl Apgar; Denise Davies (Beryl's daughter), Georgia Case (Beryl's stepdaughter – George's daughter), Alan Davies Alan and Denise from Cyprus, Cynthia Harmonoski (Beryl's sister), George Washburn.



Col. Pierce listens to Lowell Roberts the 44th BG's ideas for enhancing the collection at AHEC.

PRESERVING YOUR MEMORABILIA

Since the men who flew in the Army Air Corps were under the direction of the Army, the Army Heritage Education Center in Carlisle, PA is inviting WWII Airmen to consider this location as a repository for their memorabilia. Of course, if your family wishes to keep these items, they should have first consideration. However, if this would be difficult for them to care for old uniforms, badges, diaries, flight records, letters or any other personal items, AHEC is more than delighted to preserve them and make them available to historians, researchers and families.

AHEC will soon be breaking ground on their new Education Center, and on a regular basis will be displaying materials from different wars. It will contain bleachers where school children, members of the community and veteran groups can attend educational programs about the Army's history and your history.

If you would like to discuss this with any of the administrators at AHEC, call Greg Statler, 717 245-3094 or John Warsinske 717 245-4114.

BOOKS OF GREAT EVENTS IN 44TH BOMB GROUP HISTORY

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 2 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, 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.

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. 190 Johnson Drive SE, Calhoun, GA 30701-3941 Tel. 706-629-2396. The cost is \$20.

MESSAGES FOR DEEP THOUGHT FROM ROGER FENTON

1. Would a fly without wings be considered a walk?
2. Why do they lock gas station bath rooms? Are they afraid someone would clean them?
3. I went to a bookstore and asked the saleswoman, 'Where is the self help section?' She said if she told me, it would defeat the purpose!

HUMOR INSIDE THE NISSON HUT

(as remembered by **Bob Lehnhausen**)

This story began in another of our evening bull sessions in our Nissen hut on our airbase at Shipdham, England. **David Alexander**, the pilot of the other B-17 crew who had joined the 68th Squadron at the same time that we had, and who was an occupant of our hut, had just returned from a short leave to London. He had made an acquaintance with an attractive young English woman who lived in a private home. Her husband was in the British Army, stationed abroad.

She had entertained Alex in her home. She was a person who enjoyed sun bathing in her privacy fenced back yard, in the nude. She had given Alex a copy of a photo of herself in the back yard, sans clothing. With a degree of pride, and an air of conquest, he passed the picture around for all to view.

Once again, **George Hulpiau's** sense of moral values was offended. To show his displeasure, he began to needle Alex about his transgression. He began his campaign with that famous chuckle. His needling went like this, "Alex, have you ever given thought that your forays with this gal are offensive to God? Have you ever given thought to the fact that the B-24 has this BIG piece of armor plate BEHIND each of the pilots' seats on the flight deck, but NOTHING UNDERNEATH?" With hand gestures he created a graphic visual that he meant as an upward rising piece of ragged anti aircraft shrapnel (flak). His gestures were accompanied by this verbal admonition, "Have you ever thought that God in his displeasure with your conduct, might direct some of that German flak up through the bottom of that thin metal pilot's seat and rip off the family jewels?" With that, Alex reacted with a very pained expression on his face, and at the same time, grabbing his crotch with both hands.

George was pleased that, at least, Alex had heard him. George had gotten his

attention. Noting the initial success that his questions had aroused, George continued his campaign. He jogged Alex with short jabbing questions, always clothed in that chuckle, reminding Alex of the inadequate protection which the airplane provided for his testicles; that his conduct was a test of God's tolerance of Alex's conduct.

The airplane that Alex flew, *Flak Alley*, became the 68th Squadron's lead ship. It had been fitted with a few special items, at the pleasure of the pilot. When our crew finally got back together in December, 1943 we became the Squadron's Lead Crew. **George Jansen**, our Squadron Commander, told me that since we would be using *Flak Alley* for our missions, that I was free to make whatever changes in the cockpit that I desired.

Shortly after our conversation I walked to the hardstand where *Flak Alley* was parked on the flight line. I was by myself. I crawled up into the cockpit and did a bit of minor rearranging. Time wise, this is months after George had begun his campaign on Alex about the relationship between his conduct and the lack of protective armor.

The Pilot and Co-Pilot seats in this model of B-24 were bucket shaped to accommodate the American style seat pack parachute. However, we were using British type, snap on, chest type parachutes. To fill up the seat, we used multiple Air Corps issued cushions to offset the space that the parachute would occupy. Alex had been the pilot of this plane, and he used a pile of cushions. I didn't use as many cushions, so I grabbed Alex's pile of cushions and lifted them out and erupted in laughter. At the bottom of this pilot seat...beneath his pile of cushions was a cast iron stove lid, about six or eight inches in diameter. It was David Alexander's personal armor plate. George Hulpiau was an effective campaigner! **Alex had gotten his message!**

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS SOCIETY



The DFC's bi-annual reunion was held October 27-30 at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida. It was a non-stop, event-filled gathering at a time when Pensacola was suffering a cold spell.

There were about a dozen WWII veterans present, more from the Korean Conflict, many from Viet Nam. Helicopter pilots were in abundance, and their stories were dramatic. Leighton Anderson, recent recipient of the Medal of Honor, addressed the group at Hurlburt Field.

Involved in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Anderson was part of a ten man team, dropping Special Ops into Pakistan. Using night vision equipment, they cross the border, looking for terrorists. The secret need for the operation was compounded by the fact that the tension between India and Pakistan had escalated, and Americans were being blamed for civilian deaths.

At the village where terrorists were in hiding, the team found only a few teenage armed goat herders. They took their weapons and sent them on their way. However, the operators did find a terrorist stronghold. When it was time to leave the area, Anderson had to park the gunship on top of a mountain 2,000 feet high. He was able to place only the rear section of the craft on the mountain and hold it steady until the team of thirty six Special Ops plus two detainees climbed aboard. For this outstanding flying skill, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross

Anderson described flying conditions: the dust is totally formidable, making day or night flying hazardous. The landscape is brown, similar to sights on the moon, so the maintenance crew is constantly challenged to keep the engines running. For many missions, refueling over enemy territory is threatening but necessary.

DFC members saw Eglin AFB's amazing collection of armaments. The Navy Museum on the base is filled with historic planes, including the one flown by John McCain.

The educational program for young inductees is amazing. Escape techniques for planes on fire, ditching in the ocean and parachuting into enemy territory are taught with great precision – all based on the experiences of those who survived other bad scenes and lived to advise the next group. An inductee can earn 95 college credits in that department.

The highlight of the tour was the magnificent performance of the Blue Angels. (Cold weather be darned), many members of the community joined the DFC Society in exclaiming over the Angels' aerial escapades. And wouldn't you know it — Pensacola warmed up the day we left.!

Editor's Note: Many stories are stuffed in my file cabinet, and I pick them out at random. Too much can never be written about Wiener Neustadt. Here's another memory that I could not return to the cabinet.

WIENER NEUSTADT THEN PALERMO, A TEMPORARY VISIT AS REMEMBERED BY MARK MORRIS

When I was about 15 years old, I lied about my age to see the then adult movie, *Ecstasy*. Somewhere through the years I had been informed that it was filmed in the area of Wiener Neustadt, Austria. True or not, I was again reminded of that bit of trivia when we were briefed on the bombing raid to be made there October 1, 1943. That is not all that is familiar about the name. Our 44th BG, 506 Sq. aircraft, *Old Crow* had been there before. On August 13, only two weeks after the Low Level Ploesti mission, we had flown out of Benina Main Air Field in Bengazi, Libya, to hit the Me-109 fighter works located near Wiener Neustadt. For our crew, it hadn't been too bad. Though our ship suffered enough damage to force us down at Palermo, Sicily, with one engine out, 2 smoking and low on fuel, we were all OK. After returning next day to Libya, we had changed bases twice. We flew back to England for a short time and then again to Africa. This time we were attached to the 12th Air Force.

Returning to the Messerschmidt Plant

October 1st 1943 flying out of Ounida, the field near Tunis, Tunisia, we were in for a heck of a Wiener Roast. The briefing information concerning expected defenses for Wiener Neustadt was that fighters weren't expected to present much of a problem. It was mentioned in passing, that there was an advanced fighter pilot training base there.

We had a new crew member. Previous Co-Pilot Lt. **Laudig**, now had a ship of his own. We were introduced to his replacement, Lt. **Waino Hannuksela**. Otherwise we boarded *Old Crow* with the same crew that she had carried to and from Ploesti (the **James McAtee** crew). Again this time the crew was reduced to nine, as it had been at Ploesti, but this time it was because our hatch gunner, S/Sgt. **Charley Loftus**, was hospitalized with Sand Fly Fever.

We faced an approximate 12 hour flight which was extending our fuel limit, but we still had bomb bay tanks installed. The over-land part was all at high altitude. We had loaded 1000 pound bombs.

A Strange Plane Riding With Us

Crossing the Mediterranean Sea, the flight was routine. We crossed the European coast, climbed over the mountains in clear weather and remained at high altitude. As we neared the target area, we began to receive flak. Our group seemed to be in excellent formation, but for one exception. I noted a lone B-24 about 1000 yards out at the 9:00 o'clock position. It wore the desert camouflage of the group we had been stationed near in Bengazi. I stopped scanning to examine it. Something else was peculiar about that ship. I could hardly believe it, but the waist window hatch covers were in place and closed. Mighty comfortable huh! About then the

flak which had been well below us increased in intensity as well as accuracy. Bursts were at our exact altitude. I had no doubt then, that its occupants were supplying a lot of good information to the flak gunners below. After getting the flak gunners zeroed in, the intruder peeled off and I lost sight of it. The flak was so accurate that it had simply blown the formation apart. In addition to the evasive action being taken by our pilot, Capt. James McAtee, we were literally being bounced by concussions. Fighters immediately appeared, well before the target, and they were all over us. **They were eager to the extent of flying right through their own flak.** Unbelievable!

By the time we hit the IP and Bombardier 1st Lt. **Joe Young** took over for the straight and level flight in, we were sitting ducks. I and all other gunners were firing a lot of rounds. There must have been 30 fighters interested in just our squadron. They would climb above the flak, stabilize to pick a target, then come diving down to us.

Sometime shortly after bomb release, I was suddenly pinned to the ceiling. At the time my thoughts were that we had been badly hit or that someone at the controls had. (Later I learned that a fighter had made an unwavering head-on attack, and **Mac** had evaded him by diving). I was pinned on my side against the ceiling.

We Waist Gunners had small 24 foot British chest type parachutes. We wore a chute harness, and if the chute was needed, one grabbed it by the cloth handle and attempted to slam it onto 2 large snaps on the chest portion of the harness. There was my chute lying alongside me, also pinned to the ceiling. I managed to reach it and just got a grasp on it when bang! I hit the floor. I was on my knees. I hit so hard that even with the heavy clothing, I dented the catwalk. I scrambled up and took a quick look around. Sgt. **A.G. Kearns**, Right Waist

Gunner, was also getting up. S/Sgt. **Jack Edwards**, in the Tail Turret, seemed OK and was pawing furiously at his guns.

Surprise! We were still in the air and in a more or less normal flying attitude. So back to work. Big problem. My gun was jammed. I got it cleared, but our ammunition was all over the floor. A.G. and I broke some of the ammo into short belts of approximately 20 rounds per belt. They didn't feed well and caught on the waist ledge during each short burst. I couldn't see any other B-24s even close. Not a nice feeling for a bomber crewman. We were all alone after that dive. Any ships still flying have apparently been spread all over the sky. More fighters appeared, but no guns seemed to be firing from our ship. Apparently all positions had the same problem of scrambled ammunition. I knew that must be corrected if we were to have any chance of survival.

Scattered Ammo

A.G. was rummaging around on the floor for ammo again. At least we had waist gunners who could get at our ammunition. The other positions had a greater problem. Our ammunition storage was thus arranged. Each waist position had a box fabricated from wood. It was about 30 inches long, 24 inches high, and just wide enough for the caliber 50 round to lie in. The ammunition was routed through a metal chute attached between this box and the side of the gun. The box was permanently mounted on the side of the ship, about a foot aft of the waist window and overhead. There was barely room to get one's head between the curved ceiling and the box to stock it. I pushed most of the hanging ammunition back into position. Then I placed my foot on the ledge of the waist window and heaved myself up. There I hung precariously balanced, one foot practically out the window of a

maneuvering B-24, hanging on for dear life, out of breath and half in panic, with oxygen hoses, communication cords and other stuff interfering. Chinning myself on the box, I reached in, feeling for the double-link end. We had been taught in gunnery school at Ft. Myers, Florida, that the ammunition would not feed unless the double-link end was fed first. I turned all that ammo completely over at least three times, while searching for a double-link end. After being tossed off the ledge more than once, and still not finding it, I was no longer only half in panic. With the last unsuccessful try, I decided 'enough of the technicalities'. Instead, I just grabbed a single-link end, fed it down the chute anyway and charged the gun. I had to open the cover and physically place a starting round in the gun to get it charged, and when I pulled the trigger it worked. Just in time! Three more Me-109s had queued up. They sat just above us at 9:00 o'clock high and 500 yards out. I called **Mike Davis**, top turret for help. Hearing no response and no other gunfire, I began berating, 'Mike, get those fighters', 'Mike, can't you see them?' 'Shoot Mike shoot!' As I took a quick glance around to A.G., I noticed one of my communication cords had hung upon the ammo box. I grabbed and re-connected it. As I did so, I heard Capt. Young saying, "Whoever that is screaming into the mike, knock it off". Now I knew which cord that was. I had had a mike, but no earphone. Sorry! The last three 109's that had queued up pulled slightly ahead of our left wing tip, turned in and began raking us. I resumed praying and firing, long bursts of both. They came diving in nose to tail, one right behind the other. They were so close that they drifted less than to our 7 o'clock position before they had to break off. At that, they were no more than 50 yards out when they went under and disappeared from my sight. They had fol-

lowed each other so closely that before the first one broke, all three were visible in my ring sight at the same time. I recall accepting the fact that we were going down, and it was just a matter of going down fighting. I promised that if God would just get us through, I would make no claims of taking a life. Well, maybe I am renegeing a little. Forgive me. Not those pilots lives, maybe, but I'm sure I knocked hell out of those 3 Me-109s.

Luckily, that was the last of the direct attacks on *Old Crow*. We had been under attack for a long time. The entire attack force (later estimated to be 100) must have been about out of ammunition if not fuel, having attacked before, during and long after the target.

Old Crow was in trouble

AS I again looked rearward, I became aware that a good portion of the left vertical stabilizer was completely gone. I had been so busy that I will never know just when that happened. Be that as it may, either flak or fighters had knocked it off. As things began to get quiet, we went about the task of assessing damage. Again, all of the crew was OK. *Old Crow*, however, showed signs of wear. In addition to the missing tail feathers, she had a lot of holes, and she had taken up smoking.

2nd Lt. **McCash** plotted us a route to Palermo, Sicily. As mentioned before, we had been there not too long after that field fell into U.S. hands in August. We knew the approach wasn't easy. Capt. **MacAtee** & Lt. **Laudig** had taken us in banking to the right through the pass around the mountain and into this short 3000 ft. fighter runway. It was a new approach for 2nd. Lt. **Hannuksela**, but for the rest of us, it was deja-vu. We were low on fuel, but made it without the engines coughing, as they had on the previous landing there.

Mac knew he was going to be very busy on the approach, and he called me

forward to stand behind him and call out the airspeed if it got down to 135.

Last time we had been there, Lt. McCash had lost his parachute. It had vibrated out the nose wheel door during the short field run-up and take off. (We speculated that he just wanted to retrieve it, so that explained his desire to return to Sicily.) We settled down safely and taxied to a stop. I don't remember exactly how many, but I think there were 4 other damaged B-24s either there already or coming in. We were given a short debriefing in the operations room there before we split. I mentioned my close in shots, but remembering my fervent promise, I didn't pursue a claim.

S/Sgt. **A. G. Kearns**, S/Sgt. Radio Operator, **Norm Kiefer** and I spent the night in the ship. The rest of the crew disappeared. I slept fitfully in the back of the dented catwalk, reliving the whole nightmare over and over.

When we were there before, we had been served at the outdoor mess arrangement that served the troops occupying the airfield. They had no spare mess kits. We ate out of the large gallon cans that their rations came in. They heated the food for us and did all they could to make us feel welcome. As a joke, I had packed a mess kit with other belongings in my B-4 bag in the aircraft, and bantered that only I would have one if needed. It served well now.

A New Problem

On our second day in Palermo, the three of us had just finished eating, and were meandering across the tarmac toward our aircraft. While swinging my mess kit in the air to dry it, I dropped my fork. Just then the wind suddenly came whistling across the field. As I stooped to retrieve my fork, a large sheet of corrugated metal came flying right over my back. As I straightened, the wind noise grew to a sound like an approaching locomotive. The three of us, Kief, A.G.

and I broke into a run for the remaining 200 yards or so and climbed into *Old Crow*. **We were in the midst of a tornado!** We clambered into the cockpit, I into the pilot seat and Kief into the Co-Pilot seat. A.G. busied himself closing hatches and securing loose stuff and starting the 'put put Auxiliary Power Supply. We held the foot brakes on and actually flew *Old Crow*, holding her on the ground. She never got lifted as did the other B-24s, and even a huge British Walrus were blown off the field. The worst part of the wind only lasted about five minutes. As it cleared, we looked around us. A lot of the fighters of the black 99th fighter group stationed there had been flipped over on their backs. A huge stucco wall separated the field from a road, and many of the aircraft that had performed a ballet past us now rested either against or half through that wall. One B-24 had gone into the wall backwards and rested nose down. The tail turret had ridden up the wall. There, about 20 feet above the ground was the vertical stabilizer intact, which later was to be installed on *Old Crow*.

That night the three of us slept on the cement floor of one of the empty buildings that the ground troops offered. I did not feel like spending another night inside the aircraft. Next day Lt. Hannuksela came out to the field. He talked to us a bit, then left. Repair of all the damaged aircraft was progressing, but I knew we would be there at least another day. I dragged Kief and A.G. along to downtown Palermo. There I went to the Red Cross and asked for a place to sleep. They had none, but suggested that I talk to a Colonel that had headquarters in the same building. I reported to him and made the same request. He asked if we were on one of the aircraft that they saw come into the airfield; then he called for a command car and had us taken to an infantry battalion

where clean beds of some hospitalized members were temporarily vacant. They welcomed us and someone gave us a bottle of vino. After supper we sat on the curb outside, swapped stories with the infantrymen and retired early. Next morning we made it to breakfast with our new found friends. Then we hitchhiked back to the airfield.

Sometime that morning all of our crew except Jack, the Tail Gunner, appeared. The repairs of *Old Crow's* tail was completed and she was refueled. Engine run-up went OK. The weather was checked, McCash plotted the course for Tunis and flight clearance was secured. As on the previous visit to that field we taxied into a church yard and turned around with our tail inside the yard to have as much runway as possible, since it was downhill and then up over a small mountain.

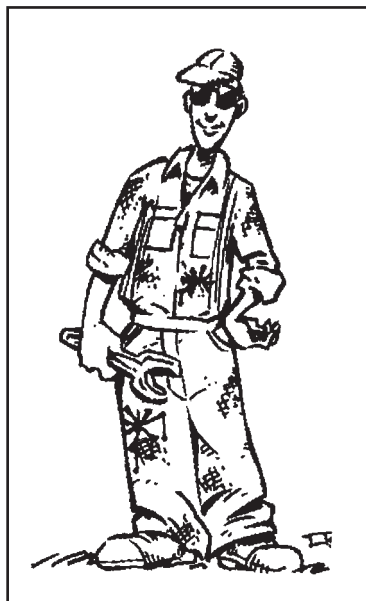
Down the short runway, up, up and away. *Old Crow* was a bird again for the last time over the Mediterranean Sea she labored along for few hours to Tunis. Upon landing we discovered that our group, the 44th, had left for England. We were to follow. First though there had to be some repairs.

Hatch gunner S/Sgt. **Charley Loftus**, now out of the hospital, sat alone in our tent in the middle of a large expanse of desert. As we approached he came rushing out, stopped short, looked perplexed, but could not quite voice his question. We hurriedly assured him that our Tail Gunner Jack was OK. Just off on a spree somewhere in Sicily.

The next day during inspection, the aircraft engineers inspected the aircraft at Tunis and discovered that *Old Crow* was damaged beyond repair. They found it difficult, in fact, to believe that she could even have brought us home, let alone the stress of landing and take off that she had borne us through. For one thing, the left main wing spar was partially severed by a 20 MM cannon shell that had gone in, remained and smoldered. That did, however, explain one of the large holes we had noticed there.

Ecstasy! I can tell you about Ecstasy. Climbing safely out of *Old Crow* in Palermo. **That was Ecstasy!**

*Jack Edwards, Tail Gunner, must have hitchhiked back to England. He later flew with the **George Insley, Raymond Houghthy** crews and others.*



A PLEASANT ENCOUNTER

By Dick Butler

During the Second Air Division Association Sixty First Convention this past October in Dallas, Texas, a local resident saw an item in the newspaper that said B-24 veterans that had served in England during WW II were having their annual convention in the Gaylord Resort in the community of Grapevine. This gentleman came to the hotel to see if anyone there had possibly known his father. The first person he met was Mr. Matthew Martin, the Chairman of The Board of Governors of the Memorial Trust of the 2nd Air Division USAAF. The visitor asked Matthew if he knew if there was anyone present that had served at Shipdham. Matthew knew that I had been in the 44th Bomb Group at Shipdham and was the only attendee at the convention that had done so. Matthew quickly found me and introduced me to Jamie MacCammond.

Jamie had done quite a bit of research about his father's WW II service, including some on the 44th's web site. His father was **James A. MacCammond**, a gunner in the 68th Squadron. He had departed Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma with the original 44th Bomb Group air echelon on or about 10 August 1942 for Grenier Field, New Hampshire. The B-24s were there for a few weeks getting some retrofitting and doing a very limited amount of flight training. The force then flew across the North Atlantic to England. By 10 October 1942 all twenty seven 44th B-24s were at Shipdham.

On 15 February 1943 seventeen 44th B-24s made an attack on the German Raider "Togo" in the port at Dunkirk, France. The force received very intense and accurate flak. Two B-24s were lost. James MacCammond was flying as a waist gunner on the plane "**Captain and the Kids**." It received extensive damage. Sgt MacCammond was slightly wounded by one of two 20 mm shells that hit the waist position. Three of the crew members bailed out and were killed. When it became apparent that the plane could not make it back to Shipdham, the pilot, **Thomas R. Cramer**, made a crash landing on the beach at Ramsgate. The landing was made without using flaps or landing gear and luckily all those still aboard were not seriously injured.

As a result of his aforementioned injuries, Sgt MacCammond was awarded the Purple Heart Medal on 11 May 1943. Then just three days later on 14 May 1943, S/Sgt James A. MacCammond was the right waist gunner on the B-24 "**Rugged Buggy**" in the attack on the Krupp Submarine Building Works at Kiel, Germany. This mission was the 44th's toughest to date and for the mission the 44th Bomb Group was awarded the first of its two Presidential Unit Citations. The 44th lost five aircraft, one was abandoned, nine were damaged, 12 men were wounded, and 51 went missing in action. **Rugged Buggy** was the target of numerous German fighters and their incendiary bullets started a roaring furnace in the bomb bay. The crew bailed out. S/Sgt MacCammond came down off shore in the Baltic Sea. He was rescued by fisherman and turned over to German authorities. He spent the rest of WW II in Stalag 17. Upon repatriation he was awarded his second Purple Heart Award.

Jamie MacCammond has gathered numerous papers and photos about his father's B-24 experience and it was a very pleasant experience to review some of them with him and offer some helpful comments about them. Jamie is very proud of his son that is currently serving in the Marine Corps and just recently returned from a tour in Iraq. While he was there he was wounded by enemy action and received a Purple Heart Award in May 2008. Jamie is very proud of the fact that both his father's and his son's injuries that occurred while they were serving our country were appropriately recognized, particularly that both were in the month of May.

Robert D. Vance's Chance Meeting And A Tribute to a Lifelong Friend

In reading the summer issue of *8 Ball Tails*, I came across an article about TINKER BELLE. In reading the article about that aircraft and its demise, it mentioned how five of the crew ended up in a large prison camp, and on the ninth day of captivity, a platoon from the 78th Infantry Division arrived in the camp and set the five fliers and others free. Two of us 44thers were at one time members of that great Division.

Alex Toth of Titonsville, Ohio and myself, a former Ohioan who lived up the river from Al, seemed to recycle into each other's life.

I spent 9 months in a weapons platoon of a rifle company, Company G, 309th Infantry. Al was in another regiment of the Division. Although both of us were from small towns along the Ohio River, we had never met. Unknowingly, each of us put in for transfer to the Air Force Aviation Cadet Training. After having several physicals and getting the paper work in order, I finally shipped out from Camp Butner near Durham, N.C. A number of us boarded a train for Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi.

On the ride to Keesler, Al was walking down the aisle and happened to spot the 78th Division patch on my shoulder, and so we got into a conversation. We had a long talk and realized our homes in Ohio were along the Ohio River, and not too far apart. We parted at Keesler and never saw each other again at that base.

Later I was released from the Cadet program (through no fault of my own) and went to Radio School and then to Gunnery School. From there I went to Westover Field near Springfield, Massachusetts for transition training. I trained in B-17s in Gunnery School and ended up in B-24s at Westover. I believe Al ended up about the same way, although I am not sure to which schools or bases he was sent.

The next time I saw Al was in the Mess Hall at Shipdham. Here are his words,

"It was a pleasant sunny day around 1:00 pm. Most everyone had eaten. I was walking down toward the serving area, and I saw this GI sitting there alone. He had on a GI sweater and a full red mustache, (auburn was the right color). This you never had when we first met. Anyway, we struck up a conversation and got reacquainted. There was never any doubt that I knew you from our first meeting on the train to Keesler. The last time I saw you at Shipdham was the 23rd of March, the night before the Wesel drop at low level. After learning about the mission on that day, I went down to the flight line to sweat out your return. Needless to say, your plane didn't return. I never gave up on you, always asked anyone from up the river if they knew Bob Vance. Finally this woman at the local bar told me you made it back. I was thrilled and happy to hear the good news. She got me your California address. You know the rest of the story."

Al and I met again a number of times, some at the 44th reunions, and we still keep in touch. In my time in the infantry, my time in the AAC and my time in the USAF during the Korean War, I have met a lot of nice fellows and made a lot of good friends, but one fellow stands out the most, and that fellow is Al Toth, a great guy and a dear friend.

Southern Comfort III (the fourth *Southern Comfort*) with **Max E. Chandler's** crew was shot down on 24 March 1945 on Operation Varsity. There were two survivors, **Robert Vance** and **Louis DeBlasio**.

Charles Burton Remembers His Father's Plane

Charles Burton, a second generation member of the 44th Bomb Group wrote an article for the 8th Air Force News about *Tinker Belle*, the plane that went down on the 44th's last mission, 25 April 1945. After seeing *Tinker Belle* on the cover of the Summer issue of the 8 Ball Tails, he forwarded an article he had written for the 8th AF News. In it he had included information about his father, **Robert Burton**, Crew Chief on *Tinker Belle*. With the permission of the 8th AF News, I am copying his story.

"My father served with the celebrated "Flying Eight Balls" during his entire military service during WWII. He had an intense respect for the aircrews.

Although all individuals in the command were subject to danger (crashes, accidents, bombings, etc.), the air crews of course were subjected to danger on an intense and daily basis. The main strain on the ground echelon was 3 years service versus a combat tour and the emotional strain of increasing combat losses, the loss of friends and buddies.

"I remember my dad saying that he learned quickly that war was not very glorious when you had to clean up the remains of your buddies after a crash. I was named for one of his close friends in the service, "Bucky", Richard Butler, who was killed on July 22th, 1944, when the B-24, dubbed *Flak Alleyll* ditched in the North Sea following a mission to Munich. He serviced 10 planes during the war, and none of them survived the war. I also remember him telling me that he flew on a few missions during the war. When he flew, he threw 'chaff' or 'window', from the Waist Gunner's compartment. That was tin foil, used to confuse the German anti aircraft.

"The last plane he serviced was *Tinker Belle*, which turned out to be the last combat casualty of the 44th. I believe my dad received his sergeant stripes when he became crew chief for *Tinker Belle*.

The fate of *Tinker Belle* demonstrates that the war could be just as deadly at its conclusion, even though planes were flying more missions and the allies controlled the skies. With *Tinker Belle's* demise, the war was almost over. My dad probably would have been able to fly home on *Tinker Belle*, had she survived. Instead he saw occupied Europe from another plane on one of the 'Trolley Missions', and returned home on the Queen Mary, the same ship on which he had arrived, approximately three years earlier."



Robert Burton, Crew Chief on Tinker Belle.

PASTOR'S COMPLAINT

The only time some people are willing to come to the front of the church is when accompanied by pallbearers!

Don't forget that people will judge you by your actions, not your intentions. You may have a heart of gold - but so does a hard-boiled egg!

ADVICE FOR GUNNERS

(From a poster at the Mighty Eighth Museum)

Every enemy fighter is DANGEROUS and needs watching
But he becomes really dangerous ONLY when he starts a direct attack
on you!

Luckily – THAT IS WHEN HE IS EASIEST TO HIT!!

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ing him completely – over, beyond, short or under him.

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MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Dick Butler**: I recently learned of the death of Mary Henry, wife of **Howard C. (Pete) Henry**. Pete was the 44th Group Vice President to the 2 ADA for eighteen years. He was a true leader of the 44th in those days. Under his leadership, the 44th always had the largest number of attendees at 2 ADA conventions. Pete also served as 2 ADA President in 1979-1980. Pete and Mary have been inactive in the 2 ADA since 1996, because of poor health. When Dick became President of the ADA, he led the group in financing a book endowment at the Norwich Library in Pete's name, in appreciation of his work with the 44th



MEMORIAL TRUST OF THE 2ND AIR DIVISION, USAAF

From Norwich: Libby Morgan, Trust Librarian informed **Dick Butler** that four books were purchased in his name through the Book Endowment Programme.

The dream of the 2 AD to leave a lasting memorial in England has fully blossomed. Children and young people can study American history, geography, culture, sports, art, biographies and politics as well as the contributions to victory in WWII by young Americans. Members of the Memorial Trust make a constant effort to let people in England know the availability of this unique Library and its many offerings. It came about because some very forward thinking visionaries chose to leave a piece of America behind when they returned home.



SALUTE INSTEAD OF HAND OVER HEART

According to '*Short Bursts*' the publication of the Air Force Gunners Association: There is a grass root movement for veterans to hand salute, rather than place their hands over their hearts when honoring the flag, fallen comrades and/or the country.

"It's referring to saluting when we pledge the flag, when the National Colors pass or are presented, when the National Anthem or honors are played, or when taps are played and firing squads or guns render honors. Those who object can continue the hand over the heart salute.

"There are no regulations that tell veterans what we can and can't do on this matter. What a positive and patriotic gesture if all veterans did salute on the proper occasion. It would reinforce the message of the many who served this country in the armed forces. You can help get the word out."



From Elizabeth Mills in Eastbourne, UK, we received news clippings of Remembrance Day in England, honoring Americans who died in the fight against the Nazi Regime. Every year they hold a ceremony on Butts Brow, honoring the men who lost their lives in the **Ruth-less**. The British said they will never forget, and they never do.





FOLDED WINGS

*Undaunted spirits held high, death a passenger in the sky
Through dark clouds of hellish fire,
Through beehives of stinging fighters
We tempted fate - some survived.*

William J. Fili

Caillier, James #19623 67th Squadron
23 September 2008 T/Sgt. Caillier was a Gunner, later Engineer on the **Frank Stough** crew. His first of 26 missions was 1 May 1943. On some missions he flew with **Horace Austin, Robert McCormick** and one mission with **James C. Bean** as Command Pilot.

With the Stough crew, Caillier flew the awesome missions to Kiel and Ploesti. The planes they flew were **Ruth-less, Old Crow, Raggedy Ann II, Baldy & His Brood, Miss Emmy Lou II, F for Freddie, Chief & Sack Artists, The Impatient Virgin and 4-Q-2**. The crew's original plane, **Ruth-less**, was lost at Butts Brow near Eastbourne, England. Caillier had the opportunity to visit the site in 1997, when the 44th BG toured the UK and France.

Although gunners usually hold the rank of Sgt., Caillier had an extra stripe. On a training mission in Pueblo, Colorado, when a Stough's plane crashed with another, Stough ordered the crew to bail out. Unfortunately, the Co-Pilot jumped also. Caillier stayed on board and assisted his pilot bring the plane to safety. For this act, he was awarded the DFC.

Calliere served in all gunner positions for his first 23 missions. On his last three, he was Engineer and Top Turret Gunner.

In a letter to **Will Lundy** in 1983, he stated that when he completed his tours,

General **Leon Johnson** gave him a choice of going to the states for retraining on B-29s or staying in England to instruct new crews. He chose the latter and was in UK until VE Day.

Caillier and his wife Jean resided in Sumner, Washington.

Dipiero, Ivo 30 October 2008 A member of the 44th BG Armament team, Dipiero served in Shipdham until the war's end. While serving in the UK, he met and married Ivy, an English girl serving in the RAF.

Ivo and Ivy were faithful attendees of the 44th BGVA Reunions; and his death occurred only two weeks after leaving the Harrisburg/Carlisle reunion.

Elliott, Wade #20133 66th Squadron
31 October 2008 Sgt. Elliott was trained as a ground crewman, but when he was offered the opportunity to fly, he took gunnery training and served on many crews on both the 66th & 506 Squadrons. In his 28 missions which began 8 February 1944, he filled all four of the gunner positions. Most of his missions were with **J. W. Grow**, but he also flew with the crews of **Wayne H. Middleton, Dean Miller, Guy Johnson** and **John McCaslin**. Elliott entered combat four months before D-Day and continued until two weeks after that big event. Because of the importance of the air war at that



FOLDED WINGS

time, no less than ten command pilots flew the missions on which he was assigned: **David Saylor, William H. Strong, Frank Stough, C. C. Parmele, Reginald Phillips, Robert Felber, W. A. Polking** (from the 392nd BG), **James Kahl, James McAtee and Frank Davido**. On D-Day Wade flew two missions to Caen (Vire) and Colleville/St. Laurent.

Elliott served as gunner on seven different A/C: ***M'Darling, Consolidated Mess, Lucky Strike, Greenwich, Prince'Princ Ass/Princess, Ole Cock and Hell's Kitten***.

After the war Elliott attended Dartmouth College. He found employment in sales for General Electric and Northern Industrial Chemical companies. He leaves his wife of 56 years, Jessie Barton Bontecou and one son. (Two other sons are deceased.) The family lived in several different cities, finally retiring with in Peterborough, New Hampshire, where he raised Arab horses.

Gavette, Franklin P. #20339 66th Squadron 4 August 2002 T/Sgt. Gavette was a Radio Operator on one flight with the 44th BG. He flew with Capt. William Ogden to the Chemical & Dye Works at Ludwigshafen on 31 July 1944 on *Bi U Baby*. This name was found from the Social Security Death Index.

Goodrich, George R. 30 July 2004 No information available.

Helfenbein, Dr. Abraham #20618 67th Squadron October 2008 1st. Lt. Helfenbein was a Co-Pilot on the **Lawrence Parks** crew for his first 25 missions. On 18 April 1944 he moved to the other seat and finished his last two mis-

sions as first pilot. On one mission he flew with **William Brandon** as Command Pilot.

Heffenbein flew in ten different aircrafts: ***Seed of Satan, The Shark, Avenger, Raggedy Ann II, Lil Cookie, 4-Q-2, D-Barfly, Chief & Sack Artists and Shack Rabbit/Starspangled Hell***.

In his letter to **Will Lundy**, he stated that after the war, he studied dentistry and was engaged in that profession for 30 years in Montrose, CA. Research indicates he joined a group of professionals called the Flying Samaritans. They provided oral surgery on needy Mexican children in Baja California. He and his wife Muriel resided in Camarillo, CA.

Pinder, Harold H. #21686 67th Squadron 21 October 2008 Lt. Pinder was the pilot on *X-Bar* which was lost on a mission to Frankfort, Germany. His first of twelve missions was 10 October 1943. The Pinder crew flew in six different planes, ***The Shark, F for Freddie, Avenger, 4 Q 2, Sky Queen and Liberty Bell/Lass***.

When the plane reached the coast on 29 January 1944 Me 109s and FW 190s began the attack, making three different passes that hit under the flight deck. They cut the control cables, knocking out the autopilot. One wing was on fire and the #4 engine was knocked out.

The Bombardier, RW Gunner, Ball Turret Gunner and Tail Gunner were KIA. Pinder, the Co-Pilot, Navigator, Radio Operator, Engineer and LW Gunner succeeded in evading but later became POW. The Co-Pilot was repatriated but died later of tuberculosis. The Radio Operator



FOLDED WINGS

evaded but was later killed; the LW Gunner was wounded, but along with the others, was housed at Stalag Luft 1.

After the war, Pinder moved to Florida to fly Cargo planes to Cuba. Shortly thereafter he returned his hometown of Pittsburgh and attended Washington & Jefferson College. He became a draftsman with Ruthraff Sauer Inc., and was involved in heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems for a variety of buildings, especially hospitals.

Both Pinder and his wife became active in scouting. They had four children and six grandchildren. He taught one daughter to fly, and she later became a helicopter pilot.

Rosenberg, Edwin H. #21856 506 Squadron 16 April 2008 Lt. Rosenberg was a Navigator on the **Richard Hruby** crew. His first of eighteen missions was 20 April 1944. At that time missions were dedicated to preventing movement of troops and knocking out the aircraft plants, disabling the Nazi war machine. On D-Day the mission to Caen (Vire), was to prevent the advance of the German Army in their effort to support the troops at Normandy.

The Hruby crew flew in **Down De Hatch, Ole Cock, Sabrina III, Glory Bee, Passion Pit** and many unnamed planes. Among the crew members were the famous Bartley twins, Waist Gunners, the only identical twins in the 44th BG. On one mission, Capt. **Ursel Harvel**, 44th BG Photographer, flew with this crew. On another mission, **Alfred L. Lincoln** piloted the Hruby crew. Rosenberg's last mission was 12 July, 1944.

Schuyler, Keith, Sr. #21979 66th Squadron 7 November 2008 Lt. Schuyler was a pilot. He flew 12 missions, the last into Berlin 29 April 1944. The Schuyler crew flew in **Gipsy Queen, Banana Barge, Patsy Ann II and Tuffy.**

The target was the Underground Railroad in the heart of Berlin. Three planes were lost, one from 66th, 67th and 506. The formation was attacked by flak over the target, and 30 to 50 enemy A/C fired on them all the way to the English Channel.

With flak damage, Schuyler's plane lagged behind the formation, losing fuel on the way. He dived in and out of clouds to avoid the fighters, but frequently had to emerge to de-ice the plane. In his book "Elusive Horizons" he described an attack by 10-12 FW 190s in which he dove straight into their formation and scattered them, but they regrouped and damaged **Tuffy's** fuel tanks. **Tuffy** had insufficient fuel to get to England, only one gun had any ammunition left and there were two fires in the tail section. He gave the 'bail out signal', turned the plane east so it would crash in Germany, and leaped out. All members of his crew survived and immediately became POWs.

Losses from that mission were: 13 POWs, 7 KIA, 10 ditched in North Sea and rescued.

Schuyler wrote a book, *Elusive Horizons*, describing his experiences as a pilot on a B-24. He and his wife Eloise resided in Berwick, Pennsylvania. Report of his death came from his son Brad. His death occurred three weeks after attending the Harrisburg/Carlisle Reunion.



FOLDED WINGS

Smith, Richard E. #22072 68th Squadron 2 January 2008 1st Lt. Smith was a Co-Pilot on the **Robert Peter** crew, with whom he flew 34 missions. On his 35th mission to Irlaching, Germany on 20 May 1945, he flew First Pilot. Five days later he flew to Hallein, Austria on the last 44th BG mission of the war.

Smith flew in *T S Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Flak Magnet, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Three Kisses*

For Luck, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Scotty Mac and Louisiana Belle.

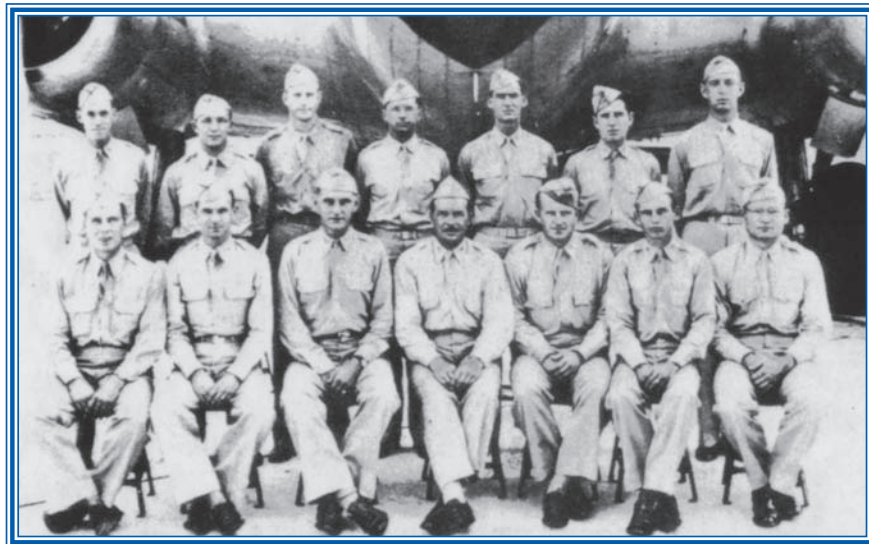
After the war Smith returned to Alfred University where he studied Ceramic Engineering. After college he worked for Pittsburgh Plate Glass and later, Sylvania Electric. His last occupation was in Commercial Real Estate. He and his wife Madge lived in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire.



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On 15 January 1941 the 44th Bombardment Group was activated at McDill Field, Florida. Below are the officers who were given the task of teaching young airmen how to win a war.



Top Row - L-R 2nd.Lt. **Marion Morgan**, Weather, Nav; 1st. Lt. **Jewell Ewing**; 1st Lt.**G. G. Griffin**; Lt. Col. **L. H. Ostjen**, Surg;1st.Lt. **D. W. MacDonald**, Asst. Engr.; 1st.Lt. **James Lee**, CWF; 2nd.Lt. **C.R. Heffner**, Morale, A & R;
Front Row – Capt. **Joe Moffitt**, Adjutant; Major **Curtis Sluman**, O.O. 68th Sq.; Major **Walter Bryte**, Instr. & Educ; Gp. Commander **Hugo P. Rush**; Major **Edward Timberlake**, O.O. 66th Sq.; Capt. **James Posey**; 1st. Lt. **C. M. W. Ruster**, Comm.

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PASSION PIT

Passion Pit #42-95150 arrived in Shipdham in March 1944, and was assigned to the 506th Squadron. She flew a total of 43 missions with 15 different crews. The crews of **Eustice Hawkins, John C. Titter, Fred E. Stone, John Milliken, John Doctor, Norman Howe, Conrad Menzel, Richard Hruby, H. K. Bennett, Norman Bartlett and Gilbert Abell. J. N. McFadden** flew as Command Pilot with **H. K. Landahl** on the first D-Day Mission. Eustice Hawkins piloted the second mission that day.

After D-Day, all efforts were to keep German troops from assisting fellow soldiers at Normandy. One of the bloodiest battles transpired at the Falaise Pocket, where Generals Bradley and Patton managed to entrap

thousands of German soldiers. To strengthen their position, they called on the Air Corps to bomb the areas where Germans were trying to break through.

The date was 13 August 1944. Twenty five planes were dispatched, *Passion Pit* among them. Flak was heavy and accurate; # 1 and 2 engines burst into flame. The Milliken crew escaped the plane just in time.



Passion Pit afire at the Falaise Pocket.
Flak explosion overhead.

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John McClane, Navigator on the **Charles D. Peretti** crew (68th Squadron), saw *Passion Pit* fall out of formation, followed by a monstrous explosion. He described the frightening scene, "The engines were torn from the wings and went tumbling through the sky with their props wind milling as they fell in a large linear arc. The wings, fuselage and tail were torn to shreds."The pieces of aluminum drifted and twisted while they were falling. With each turn the sun would reflect off their surfaces back into my eyes, as if they were mirrors. But the most spectacular sight was the fuel cells which had been torn from the wings. They did not explode their gasoline, but rather, they burned in huge orange tongues of flames streaming out behind the cells as they fell in a wavy fashion toward the earth."

At the road junctions between Le Havre and Rouen, France, the crew of *Passion Pit* fell into German-held territory and all became POWs

THE CREW OF PASSION PIT ONE EVADEE, ONE POW WHO EVADED, EIGHT POWS

Ironically, on August 13, the order came down that 31 missions would be sufficient for crews to return home. This was the 31st for the Milliken crew; but instead, they were on their way to their new dwelling—prison.

Together they were herded into a canvas-top truck for transportation from France to Germany. **John Milliken**, pilot, was able to hide a knife from his captors. At one point, he slashed a hole in the canvas and slipped off the truck, rolled into the bushes and eluded the German guards who would have shot him on the spot. He walked many miles and sometimes hung out in a cow pasture until a British force came through. They helped him make it back to Shipdham, unscathed.

The rest were questioned in Paris, then sent by box car to Frankfurt. While sitting with **Irwin Stovroff**, Bombardier, Co-Pilot **William Manierre**, noticed another prisoner who kept staring at the two of them. Neither could figure out why the man was looking so intently. Suddenly they connected – it was Manierre's



Front L-R **Jack Bertoli**, Navigator; **Irwin Stovroff**, Bombardier, **John Milliken**, Pilot.
Back: **Darrel Larsen**, LW Gunner; **Martin Richard**, Engineer/Gunner; **Gilbert Yarbrough**, Tail Gunner; **Kenneth Beckwith**, Radio operator; and **Morris Larkin**, Tail Gunner.

brother Cy. Cy had been dropped by a plane to the French Underground. He had been aiding the Marquis in blowing up trains; and along with others, was to be shot as a spy. Only a coincidence of fate kept him alive, to join his brother at Stalag Luft IV.

Darell Larsen, LWG, remembers the ride from Paris to Frankfurt in the box car. "They put 50 or 60 in the car with only one window for ventilation. We took turns standing or sitting, as there wasn't enough room for everyone to sit. "Our interrogators at Frankfurt were from the Gestapo. One was a graduate of Yale; the other graduated from Harvard. Their story was that they came to Germany for a visit and in their words, 'got trapped.' The enlisted men were separated from the officers, and we got sent to Stalag Luft IV. Several months later, the Russians were approaching, so the Germans started us marching back toward Germany.

Larsen's Escape

"At the Oder River near Stetein, with the help of some Polish slave laborers, I got across on a barge. Along with two RAF pilots, we managed to reach the British lines. American Intelligence Officers got us to London where we were placed in the 7th Hospital. They fed us and de-liced us, and brought us back to health.

"The Brits found us to be a problem. Sometimes we would sneak off and get drunk; and what was worse, took their bikes. They solved the problem by hiding our clothes."

Larsen went by boat from London to East Anglia, back to Shipdham, then home to California where he was discharged. He celebrated VJ Day in Hollywood.

Martin Richard (Engineer/Top Turret Gunner) remembers arriving in Paris as a POW. The Germans paraded the prisoners through town, proud to show off their captives.

The Gestapo agent who interrogated

Richard was a Yale graduate. Unimaginable but true, he sang "Yankee Doodle Dandy" to his prisoner.

"I felt they were playing mind games with us," Richard recalled. "They would ask the same question over and over, hoping we would say something more than name, rank and serial number. All of their mannerisms were very threatening."

From there the prisoners were moved to a convent which had ten foot walls. Here was the next threat, 'If one of you escapes, we will kill 15 or 20 of those who are left.'

Stalag Luft IV was in Poland, near the town of Grostychow. Richard remembers that someone in the camp secretly rigged up a radio. Progress of the war traveled quickly by softly spoken words. In January the Russians were nearing the outpost, so all the *kregies* were marched out. This was January. They walked for three months along the Baltic Sea, close to Kiel, sleeping in barns or in the open, filthy dirty and full of lice. At one point they marched along the east side of Berlin, almost to Leipzig. Finally they met the British troops, which was the beginning of their trip home.

Irwin Stovroff had a truly unique experience. Being Jewish, he threw away his dog tags; and when questioned, answered only with his name, rank and serial number. In Frankfurt, his interrogator said, "Since you won't tell me about yourself, I will tell you about you.

I know who you are, and I know what you are, (meaning Jewish). He proceeded to name my father, mother, sister and brother. He knew the school I attended in Buffalo, and the name of a girl I had dated."

"How can you know that?" I gasped.

"You were my paper boy when I lived in Buffalo," he replied. It seems that the Luftwaffe officer had come to Germany to visit his grandmother, and was drafted. The officer promised to help Stovroff. On his written report he placed a question



Irwin Stovroff
and his Vet Dog

mark under religion, but it was no help.

At one point, the German captors decided to separate the Jewish prisoners from the group. They ordered all Jews to step forward, whereupon the entire group stepped forward. However, it did not take long for the

Germans to find out who was Jewish. They separated them, in preparation for execution. Their lives were saved by an American army officer, Col. Zemke, who told the commandant, "If you execute the Jewish prisoners, you will be held accountable after the war." Apparently the possibility of losing the war was a strong enough deterrent to change the prison's policy.

Stovroff, William Manierre (Co-Pilot) and **Bert Bartoli** (Navigator) were all released at the same time.

What does one do after being face to face with almost certain death?

Irwin Stovroff became a Service Officer, helping ex-POWs who needed a helping hand. He continued this practice for years until the Iraq War. Then he found that POWs did not arrive from Iraq: the Iraqis did not take prisoners—they chopped off their heads!

Stovroff and his associates turned to another need—Seeing Eye Dogs for blinded soldiers. Later it became apparent that Service Dogs could be trained to care for men in wheelchairs. They walk alongside the chair, lead the way across streets and assume the

responsibility of keeping their charges safe. This requires money. At first he paid out of his own pocket, but seeing the great need, he began a fundraising project. So far he has raised over two million dollars. He needed much more help, so he started writing to Congressmen, describing the size of the problem and the need for help to solve it. Finally, Representative Rod Klein introduced a Bill in Congress, "Gift for Life". Every member of the House put the Defense Authorization Act 2010 to the top of the list, and help is now available. In October President Obama signed the bill into law.

In his report, Representative Klein applauded Stovroff's efforts, pointing out that a single man with absolute determination, has corrected a major problem in our society.

It is no secret that dogs are man's best friend. Stovroff took full advantage of that known fact, and a lot of disabled veterans are grateful for his foresight. His Web Site is www.Vetshelpingheroes.org

*In Frankfurt the crew of **Passion Pit** met **Bill Topping**, Bombardier on *Bad Penny*. He was a member of the *Leroy Hansen crew, 67th Squadron*. They got shot down on their first mission to *Bremen, 13 November 1943*.*

*While the crew of **Passion Pit** were going through a frightening experience, on the German side, things were worse. With the growing weakness of the German response to D-Day, Field Marshall Gunther Von Kluge was ordered back to Berlin. Knowing Hitler would certainly put him to death, he chose to commit suicide. The Allied victory at the Falaise pocket was so successful, the area became a killing field – one of the most intense and vicious battles of the war.*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Here we are in mid February in Tampa-- wondering if warm weather is ever going to arrive! We do not complain, however, seeing what those of you, north of here are experiencing!!

Jackie Roberts reports that 2010 dues are coming in. Some 370 dues notices were sent out and she has had some 260 returns. Just a reminder to those 100 or so who have not yet sent them in. Also a reminder to report any changes in addresses, etc. to Jackie.

We have some exciting news. **Roy Owen**, our late president, had a dream of getting an Air Force Unit with a 44th designation so that our heritage would be carried on in the active duty Air Force. In January, Roger Fenton received an e-mail from Col. Kent Furman, a Squadron Commander at Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo New Mexico. **A 44th Fighter Group was being activated!** They are looking for memorabilia of the 44th

Bomb Group and want to invite some 44th veterans to an Activation Ceremony. Details are not yet formalized. The 44th Fighter group has one squadron of F-22's and another squadron will be flying unmanned aircraft! We are all excited to see Roy's dream come true and sad that he is not with us to see it happen.

We spent New Year's in Norfolk, England., and had a short visit with Eric King and Dru Forsdick. Eric was a farm worker during the war and befriended several 44thers. He has many stories about the old days. We also got to see Peter and Margaret Steele, who came to our Tampa Reunion last year. Peter is the Curator of the 44th Museum at the airfield. A short visit to

Shipdham found quite a bit of activity on a cold, clear day. We met several old friends there- Geoff Draycott, who wrote that "Salute to the Eighth" poem that appeared in the Summer 2008 Ball Tails; Chris Barrett- young glider pilot and collector, who helps with the museum; and Mike Atherton, who did much on the Memorial Garden.

We managed to get home after only a one day delay due to the biggest snow storm in memory near London- 15 inches!!! Also the coldest in England for many years!! I am sure we will all welcome spring.

George Washburn

"For once you have tasted flight, you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward; for there you have been, and there you will long to return."

This quote from the 49th Fighter Squadron's Publication, The Hangman's News. The editor attributes this statement to Leonardo DaVinci – who only dreamed of flying.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



Like most parts of the Northern hemisphere, we at Shipdham had a very traditional white winter with more than our fair share of Ice and Snow. All of which meant that the flying activities over the winter have been slower than in previous years. On a personal note, I have edited my last Shipdham Flying Club monthly newsletter and handed it on to Lauren Bean our new editor. Lauren is one of the new crop of young pilots who are starting to take an active part in the running and administration of the club and its activities. Another teenage pilot who is 'getting involved' is Chris Barrett who I have mentioned before, as one of the Museum's Assistant Curators, helping Peter Steele and myself with upholding the memory of the 44th. With an active team of younger folk getting this involved, the future for the club and the museum looks very promising.

We are aware that the passing of time does not make return trips to your old station any easier, so we are delighted to note that a visit is being arranged for Arthur (Art) Holt (66 Sq.). Art was a 1st Lieutenant, and Bombardier who flew 29 missions with the 44th starting with the raid on the Juvincourt Aerodrome in Jail Bait on Sat August 12th 1944 and ending with The Brunswick Marshalling Yard raid on Sat March 31st 1945 in **44-49356**. He also flew in **Big Time Operator** (12 missions), **King Pin**, **The Big Headed Kid**, and **Loco Moto**, as well as numerous un-named aircraft. Art is expected to be with us in mid summer. If any other folks are thinking of making the trip, please let us know and we will ensure you a traditional Shipdham welcome. I will no doubt report back to you all on his visit in a later edition of 'Tails'.
peter@bodle.demon.co.uk is my e-mail and gliding.steele@btinternet.com is Peter Steele's. Please drop us a note, even if it is at the last minute, we will be delighted to meet up with you and show you round.

Despite the recent economic woes, the membership levels at Shipdham Flying Club have remained constant and we can still boast over 100 active members, which for a rural G.A. flying club in the UK., is pretty darned good. A recent major clearing -up and thinning out session in the hangar will allow us to house a couple of more aircraft and that way boost the club's income without adding too much of a strain on individual members wallets, although private flying has never exactly been a low cost hobby.

The Museum team have had a pretty successful year with a couple of hundred pounds being dropped into the donation box by the entrance.

Considering we only 'officially' open for 8 Sundays a year, that struck us as a pretty good sum to help run and expand the operation and continue to look after what we already have on display.

Like you we all look forward to the arrival of spring and for us, the start of both the Museum season and the prime flying time for the club.

Best wishes as always from Shipdham.
Peter Bodle

GOOD NEWS

More than a year ago, Lee Aston came up with a design for a 44th Bomb Group Monument which we hoped we could place in the Courtyard at the Army Heritage Education Center in Carlisle. As it happens, Lee has a piece of property that is full of granite, and he was willing to donate a chunk to this noble goal.

Lee has created other monuments for other causes—such as kinfolk from the Revolutionary War era, and a plaque for the Control Tower at Shipdham. Lee had the connections to have the stone picked up, transported, and carved to our specifications.

With the help of **Will Lundy's** book, Bob and Liz **Lehnhausen** figured out how many men served in the 44th ; how many air crews were shot down; and the number of KIAs, POWs, and WIAs. On the back of the monument are the names of the two men who received the Medal of Honor – **Leon Johnson** and **Leon Vance**; and the two missions that earned the Presidential Citation – Kiel and Ploesti.

Mike Perry, Executive Director of the Heritage Center Foundation, approved the design, but assured us that every monument must meet the approval of the Secretary of the Army, which means—

going through a lot of committees! However, he told us where to start, and gave us reports on its progress through the system.

Then, one day the Secretary of the Army wrote me a letter, approving the monument. It will be set in place and unveiled at the Army Heritage Celebration on Armed Forces Day. What could be more appropriate than that the history of the 44th Bomb Group should be locked in stone? We have a special location where it will be set, so if your children, grandchildren or great grandchildren ever walk the Trail in the Army Heritage Courtyard, they will see your rock-solid history along the way.

The unveiling will be held on May 16, 2010 at 2:00 PM, and **you are invited to join the ceremony.** Simultaneously, AHEC will be celebrating Army Heritage Day, and 5,000 people are expected to be walking the Trail and viewing the collection of army memorabilia from many wars.

If you decide to attend the unveiling, please let me know. It is important to know how many 44thers will be attending the ceremony. Call me at 717 846-8948 or send me an e-mail rdavismorse@aol.com.

Everyone is invited to attend the unveiling. If you plan to join the group, please let me know. They expect a lot of people there, and want to know how many will be with the 44th BG.. Call me at 717 846-8948.



FROM THE DIARY OF BOB BLAKENEY

Radio Operator/Gunner on Black Sheep
(On his first and only mission, Foggia 16 August 1943)

Flying with **Carl Hager**, Pilot; **Robert Pimentel**, Co-Pilot; **Wallace Blake**, Navigator, **John Mills**, Bombardier, **Howard Woods**, Radio Operator/Gunner; **Isabelino Dones**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; **Francis Curry**, Engineer/Gunner; **Henry Farley**, Waist Gunner and **J. A. Hess**, Tail Gunner

"About 125 to 150 B-24s took off in the early morning hours, with our plane the tail-end of a 4 plane diamond formation. Our pilot this day was **Robert F. Pimentel**, who had more experience than our regular pilot, **Carl Hager**, who for this mission, flew in the right seat.

We checked the plane, loaded the bombs and checked the ammo – then took off, Circle D and joined up with the group formation. We were flying a diamond formation, with our plane being the tail of that diamond.

Over the sea, after we had been flying for several hours, each plane dropped from the formation and we test-fired all our .50 calibers. **J. A. Hess (Tail Gunner)** was loading his gun when he accidentally pulled the ammo box off, and all his ammo went onto the floor. He reported this to the pilot, and **Francis Curry (Engineer)** came back to hand feed Hess's gun as we neared the target.

About 20 minutes or so before we reached the target at Foggia, we saw Ack-Ack, but don't believe it hit any of the planes.

Thereafter, we saw German fighter planes all over the place. They were mixed Me-109s and FW 190s, and my guess is that there were over a hundred of them. Almost before we knew it, our right inboard (#3) engine was on fire.

I told Hess and our pilot about it, that it was flaming and smoking, so Hager finally feathered it.

All of a sudden, the fighters seemed to pick on us. Hess hollered that B-24s were going down on his side. It was horrible to see a B-24 go straight down around and around, so we yelled for the guys to bail out. Six to eight of our 24's suffered the same fate. On my right, one of the planes in our formation dropped back to fly parallel with us. Next thing I saw was the crew in the back of this plane jumping out, their chutes opening.

Just before they bailed out, two German fighters came at us from the right and rear, so everyone was shooting back at them. They came in so close, I could see the pilots' faces for a second or two.

Anyhow, all the guns on the right side and tail of our '24 and the plane next to us were shooting at these two fighters, making one of them drop off.

I saw it smoking as it went down, and the pilot bailed out. But they had hit us, too, and our other inboard (#2) engine was on fire.

Then 3 or 4 fighters attacked two of our planes directly from the rear. I heard **Henry Farley (Waist Gunner)** yell over the intercom from his tail turret, because a fighter had hit his turret, peppering him with Plexiglas. Later, I saw him with Plexiglas in his face, and he was bleeding badly. His guns were not damaged, but the turret would not turn to follow the attackers.

All this time everyone was firing at these fighters, and one went down, smoking. And in the adjacent plane to ours, I saw the crew go out the waist windows. This plane was on fire, too.

Bombs out but fighters in waiting

By now we had dropped our bombs and were heading out from the target, when the fighters swarmed in on us

...continued on page 9

again. They shot down another '24 close to us while we were hollering over the intercom to have our pilots maneuver up or down to avoid the attacking fighters.

By this time we had a third engine on fire and the wing was smoking. I tried to get the tail turret going, but had no success. **Francis Curry** (*Engineer*) was called up to the front of the plane by Pimentel or Hager, to help with the feathering buttons. We could see holes in the plane from the hits they had been taking, but miraculously, no one had been wounded. We all felt ourselves to make sure we were okay.

It seemed that the fighters followed us for a long time. I cannot remember how long, but when they finally left, "**Rene**" **Dones** (*Right Waist Gunner*) came to the back of the plane, because the pilot had told us to put on our chutes – and to throw out everything we could to keep our altitude. But we kept dropping, even though we tossed everything loose overboard – guns, ammo, etc.

As we were doing this, Hess, who always was the nervous one, yelled that we should jump. We were going down gradually, but it was too late for that, as we were already too low over the water. Besides, I did not relish the idea of jumping into the water. Of course we all had been ready to jump if we got the pilot's signal, but now it was too late to bail out. We went into steeper dive, and Hess hollered that we were going to crash. I heard a bell sound, so we in the rear, Hess, Dones, Farley and myself—started to brace ourselves for the inevitable.

The Crash

We learned later that we had had no flaps, the wheels were up, and we hit the ground at about 150 to 160 mph. Hager and Pimentel made a tremendous landing on the beach in Reggio Calabria, but we did not know where we were at that time.

When we hit the beach, the sand broke through the bomb bay doors and flew all over the plane. The doors came off and slammed into us, but fortunately it only hit our legs. Hess got whacked on his head by a door, putting a hole in his head that bled for hours. Farley got knocked down and injured, but not seriously. Dones and I were not touched.

When the plane had almost stopped, we heard an explosion that blew out the bomb bay area. There was no immediate fire, however, just that explosion.

When the plane came to a halt, Hess was the first one out of the plane, yelling for us to follow him. We had no idea what had happened in the front of the plane until we all got out from the back. Then we saw that the whole front section of the plane was on fire.

Dones and I tried to go through the bomb bay to help our guys in the front, but by then the flames were everywhere and very hot. We were forced back, then removed our parachutes, but kept the packs as we exited the wreck.

We found that Hess and Farley had moved away because they thought the plane was going to explode. But as we were leaving to join them, we heard someone call from the front to the plane. We ran to the front to find Lt. Hager alone – he was the only one from the front to get out. He had taken off his flight jacket, Mae West and parachute in order to wriggle out the open side window. He told us that he heard the guys in the nose section screaming as the flames engulfed them. He had told **Pimentel** (*Co-Pilot*) to take off his gear and go out his side window, but there wasn't time enough. The flames were too severe. He didn't make it.

We helped Hager out and away because he was badly burned in the face and hands. His ears were really scorched, and he was in intense pain.

We had to abandon all efforts to free the others, as the flames were consuming

what was left of our plane. We heard nothing from inside.

So five of us had managed to escape – Hager badly burned, Hess still bleeding from his head wound, Farley bleeding from his many facial wounds, plexiglass still embedded in some, while Dones and myself were in pretty good shape. None of us knew just where we were, but we saw a farmer coming down a dirt road nearby with a cart pulled by an ox, I think. We yelled and he waited for us, so that we could load Hager and Hess, who thought he was dying. We tried to halt Hess's bleeding, finally slowing it down a bit. He was weak, though, from the loss of blood. Farley was very excited. But we could hardly touch Hager to help him, as his burns were so painful.

Captured

About this time we got on the back of the open wagon to ride for help. Then soldiers came down the road in a truck. We learned they were Italian soldiers, who took us into town; Cantanzaro, I think, in Reggio Calabria, which is the toe of Italy.

They put us in a room that was free of any furniture; and there we met a very angry, small round, and completely bald Italian Colonel. There were about eight to ten soldiers with him, too.

Instead of applying first aid, or trying to help Hager and Hess, the Colonel pointed out numerous bullet holes in the wall of the room where our fighters had strafed the place a night or two earlier. The Colonel was mad and started to ask questions in Italian.

Luckily, Dones spoke Spanish, and I understood most of what the Colonel said due to my knowledge of French. So Dones and I exchanged our interpretations with glances and gestures. Later, when we knew the Italians did not know English, we told the rest of the fellows what was said.

The Colonel kept insisting we tell him where we came from, the kind of plane we were on, how many planes, what was the target, and all of the usual military questions. But when he got no satisfaction from any of us, he began to gesture that he was going to slit our throats and have us shot. I told him to go to Hell—and Dones swore at him often. Of course, he did not know what we were saying, so when a question was asked, I'd tell him to jump in a lake, and Dones kept up his swearing at him. This went on for over two hours with the Colonel becoming more frustrated, mad as Hell. He again gestured that he was going to have us shot.

During all of this time, Lt. Hager got no medical attention. I kept asking for a doctor by pointing to Carl and gesturing for medicine and bandages. They apparently had neither. John Hess's head wound finally stopped bleeding, and I could see he had a hole as round as a dime in his head.

At some point, I'd guess about 5 or 6 pm, we were told to march into the street and led over and up stairs into another building and locked in. It had a slanted wooden partition on the floor, so I helped Hager while Dones helped Hess to lay down and to get them more comfortable. Hager had been in bad shock almost from the time he got out of the plane, so needed all the assistance we could give him.

We still had our parachute packs which had emergency rations in them. The irate Colonel was so emotional, he forgot to have us searched, or the packs. So we gave both Hager and Hess some chocolate. I cannot recall everything in the packs, but there large pieces of chocolate, sugar candy, etc. But Hager was in such pain that he could not sleep. I put my flight jacket under his head, but the poor guy was still in agony, no way to relieve him of his pain.

Dones, Farley and I talked about what we thought they were going to do with us. We must only give our name, rank and serial number. Farley was afraid they were going to shoot us, but Dones and I tried to assure him that they wouldn't.

Later, perhaps 8 to 9 pm, we heard the guards come up the stairs to get us. Fortunately, they only came to get us to feed us. I wanted one of us to stay with Lt. Hager, but they insisted that all of us go downstairs with them. I don't know what the food was, but it was okay, and we all were starved.

Our guards tried to talk with us again when one of them started talking in French. I knew what he was saying, so tried to whisper it to the others. Somebody came in, bringing some bandages and a sort of salve or lotion—at long last!

Burn Care

I experimented with the salve or lotion, first by applying it to Hager's hand, to see what his reaction might be. The soldier in charge began blabbing to me, and I gathered he thought I didn't trust them to give Carl the right medicine – he was right. Anyway, Carl stammered that the hand was okay after I had put the stuff on it, so we did his face as gently as possible. But to just touch his hand, face and ears caused him to moan in pain. I'll tell you, I never in my life saw a guy with the courage Carl through all the pain his burns caused him throughout this ordeal.

I think he was in shock for several days. Every time it was necessary to change his bandages and I had to remove the old, it almost killed him. Of course, this would open his wounds again. There was pus coming out of the blisters, especially with his ears – they were the worst.

After we finished our first meal, they took us back to the upstairs room and locked us in again. Carl got sick at his

stomach; then we used whatever clothing we had to serve as his bedding. The rest of us slept on the concrete floor, mostly sitting up against a wall. No one slept well, because either John or Carl kept moving or moaning. There were no facilities such as a bathroom, either, and the two windows had bars on them. In the very early morning I told Dones and Farley that I was going to try to get the 'Eyties' to take Carl and John to a hospital. I didn't know where they were going to take us next, but Lt. Hager, especially needed medical care immediately. We had some medication, sulfur or some other compound in our packs, but we used all of it the first night. Dones and Farley were sure that Eyties wouldn't know what we were asking for, but to hell with it. I was going to try. I said I'd talk in French to the Sergeant, and he'd understand. We agreed that both the Sergeant and the Colonel would be damned mad when they learned I understood the Sergeant's French the day before, but Hager simply had to have help. So we agreed with my plan.

Again the soldiers came to get us, took us down to breakfast. Hess was so weak, we had to help both him and Carl. Downstairs the same Sergeant was waiting, and I asked him in my best French, "Avez vous un hospital? And pointed to Carl and John.

The Sergeant was surprised, no doubt, but instead of running over to get the Colonel, he asked me if I spoke French, and said something about the Colonel being mad if he found out. Fortunately, the Sergeant had some compassion and did not send for the Colonel. He used French to inform me that there was a hospital, but in another town.

Carl didn't want to leave us, even though I told him that John Hess would go with him to the hospital. He still refused to go, so all we could do was try to get the dirty bandages off ourselves

and put clean ones on. It was slow and painful, to say the least.

'Breakfast' was a cup of coffee and some stale bread, then back to our cell. The guards returned again about noon and loaded us into one truck with an Italian driver and four guards. I don't remember now, the name of the town where we stopped for the night, but I know we were on the road all afternoon and most of the night. On the way, we went up and down and around mountains and hills. The driver was always talking to the guard with him, and he was a lousy driver. It was scary because there no rails on the side of those roads.

During the ride, we still had our parachute packs with us and, fortunately, there were chocolate bars and sweets in them. We were able to sneak them out of the packs without being seen. Half the time, one or two of our guards were asleep anyway. We talked of jumping off the truck – and I think we probably had some good opportunities, but with Hager and Hess, could not get far even if we did escape. But we talked of getting away if the chance came up later when Carl and John felt better.

Our Next Quarters

We finally arrived at this town, name unknown, and drove about one half mile out of it to a stone building. They made us get out, and frankly, we were relieved to get out. They put us in one room that looked and felt like a dungeon because it was down in the basement of the building. It could have had a dirt floor or cement with hay scattered over it. There was a hole in the ground at one end, and obviously, this was the toilet. It stunk!

Locked in, we got nothing to eat. I tried to make Carl as comfortable as possible, but he sure was in bad shape. Evidently, due to his extreme pain at all times, shock seemed to be worse. He was moaning, and we could not help

him. So we started yelling for the guards, got three of them to come to the outside of our cell. I told them that Carl must get some medical attention and medicine. By gesturing and some French, I tried to make them understand there could be some medicine in our packs that they finally had taken from us. Could I go look?

They would not let me out of the cell, but they motioned to Dones, who was small, that he could go. I told Dones to strip all the packs of food or anything else he could find to help us, and to bring it along if he could. Dones spoke Spanish to the guards and they understood him.

Dones finally came back with everything from the packs, which wasn't much—the usual chocolate, some sugar and sweets, as I remember it now, and some gauze. "By then "Carl was sinking lower, and we thought that he was going to die. I again tried to get the guards to get a doctor for him, but they only gave us a hard time. It seems that some planes had shot up the town a few days or nights before, and they certainly were not about to do anything for us. Dones and I got mad and were really spouting off—so much that they called the other guards down, plus an officer, I believe, and they started the same old business of gesturing they'd cut our throats, etc.

I remember inviting them into our cell, but of course the door was locked. It is peculiar, but as afraid as we might have been, the fear gets overwhelmed by anger, and then there no longer is fear. Had they opened the door that night to shut us up, I suspect that Dones and I would have gone after them. The anger came from our feeling of helplessness in seeing that Carl was dying and we could not do anything to help – nor would they.

For four nights and three days we were kept in this dungeon. The stink got worse. Carl got worse, but Hess improved a little. They gave us our meal of macaroni a day, usually about 4

to 5 p.m. We didn't eat the chocolate, deciding to give it and the sugar cubes to Carl. Both Dones and Farley were okay, but I was always a bit afraid that Farley might crack. He was quite young (about 19 or 20 and very immature, more afraid than the others. But we treated each other well and equally, which seemed to help him. As long as he could follow someone's lead, he'd be okay, and he was.

During our stay, we again talked about putting Carl to sleep, something to spare him his pain. But we couldn't hit him, nor do anything else. He did manage to sleep at times due to sheer exhaustion, but it was only in short spells. I remember trying to stay up with him as long as I could, but I'd still doze off and wake up in the morning.

Another Guest in the Dungeon

We complained about the stink in the place, but got nowhere. Rarely during the day did we see any guards; they stayed away from us. But, as I remember it, on the third or last night, the guards brought in a Lieutenant named Wilson, who was supposed to have been from the Midwest. We all remembered the warnings that the enemy planted people among prisoners, so we acted accordingly. This Wilson must have thought we were either the rudest or most stupid people he had ever met. I told our guys not to say anything in his presence. He, of course, overheard me say this, and insisted that he had been a P-38 pilot, and had been shot down a few days before. He said he was glad to see us, but we weren't too happy to see him.

He was about 5 foot 8 inches tall, wore a flyer's suit, had a mustache and, I guess, he was about 25 to 30 years old. We never trusted the poor guy, and as I learned years later from Hager, Lt. Wilson was truly a P-38 pilot, was sent to a German POW camp in Germany.

On the morning we left the dungeon, we got into a truck with the same four guards. Carl still showed few signs of improvement, though he could have been a bit better. I don't recall our route now—if I even knew then—but we finally got to one town with a railroad station where it looked like an army guarding it. I could not determine if they were Italian or German. The town was Taranto, but it took me many years to establish its name.

Bari

We stayed here for several hours, then finally put on another train, in a cattle car, and taken to the town of Bari. It was here that we had the toughest time. The guards took us off the train and walked us from the square on down the street. But before we left the square, there were people lined up on both sides of the street, yelling and raising their hands. Their ages varied from young to old and all were getting stirred up. Definitely we were in for it. They pointed to bullet holes in houses and just screamed at us. But the guards said and did nothing. When one elderly lady raised a stick as though to hit Hager, I raised my hand to take the blow. It was looking very bad for us, and we were thinking we surely would be mobbed. Still the guards did nothing.

Just at that time we heard machine gun fire from two motorcycles as they roared down the street, firing into the air. The mob dispersed rather quickly as they were afraid of these two Germans.

We were taken to a German headquarters for questioning, we guessed. So I reminded our guys to give only name, rank and serial number, to say nothing else. Both Hess and Dones said they weren't going to salute any German or Italian officer; and in fact, when Hess came out he told us he did not salute and did not stand at attention. I thought that this was wrong and told him so.

When I went in, there were three officers at a table, two Germans and one Italian. I clicked my heels and saluted. I heard one of the officers say, 'Bona soldten' and I was glad that I had saluted.

After we all had been interrogated, they took us to a temporary prison camp in Bari. We took care of Hess and Lt. Hager, both of whom were feeling better. Carl Hager's face was still swollen, hands still bandaged. So I helped him changed his clothes, helped dress him, washed and sometimes fed him.

It was here we met about 25 to 30 other American airmen, all shot down at Foggia on the same mission with us. We were there only three to five days, one meal a day eaten about 5 p.m. usually macaroni and hard tack, and no Red Cross packages. We spent our time doing nothing except a little boxing with each other. One Italian considered himself a professional boxer, had a pair of gloves and wanted to challenge us. However, he sparred with one of the officers and tried to knock his head off; but happily, took a beating instead.

While there, formations of some Allied planes flew over on bombing missions. The funny part is that they had an air raid shelter at this camp, and when the planes would come over, the siren would go off, and all the guards ran for that shelter. But all of us Americans ran outside and cheered the planes.

We left Bari the same way as we entered—walked through the streets to the train station. But with one exception, we had German guards. They put all of us in two cattle cars, and our train went through and over mountains in the central part of Italy. They had to stop at every steep hill, unloosen all but one car and then take it over, one at a time. I don't remember how long it took, but somewhere along the way they separated the enlisted men from the officers, sending them into Germany and prison camps there.

Prison at Sulmona

We enlisted men went to a prison camp in Sulmona, Italy, which was somewhere east and a bit north of Rome. It was in a valley surrounded by mountains and contained some 3 to 4,000 prisoners. There were over 3400 English, French, Turks or Greeks and whatever, but we were the only Americans—about 18 of us.

The first night an English Colonel came into our barracks and laid down the law to us. He was in charge! We were to do nothing, including trying to escape, without his knowing and permitting it. Immediately, we did NOT like him.

By now it was September, 1943. We had German and Italian guards around the prison at various stations. There was a high stone wall with, as I remember it, one gate. Could have had barbed wire on top of the wall, but I don't remember for sure. There was a dirt field where we played softball, a small church area and a priest. I got a prayer book from this priest, still have it at home. I always wore my rosary beads while flying and still had them around my neck there.

We all wondered and talked about the others that were killed in the crash. We talked about whether our families knew we survived and were all right. Again, we had one meal a day – macaroni and hard tack—but we got so hungry, it started to taste good. We received only one or two Red Cross packages while we were there. Don't remember all they contained, but it was just great, especially the chocolate malts and crackers.

We were in Sulmona prison camp for about four to six weeks—I lost track of dates. The weather always seemed to be good, we slept on straw over concrete. It was uncomfortable at first, but one can get used to it. I don't recall any interrogation of us while we were there. On one or two occasions, we saw our

bombers flying overhead and, of course, we hollered and waved to signal 'give them hell'.

But each passing day was just like the others. Except for softball, we did absolutely nothing. Oh, we did exercise a little, but not much of that either. All of us were still wearing our flight suits and jackets. I do not recall any of the Americans with us ever complaining, except about the food. We all lost much weight, I am sure.

During the time we were there, rumors kept spreading around camp that Italy had capitulated in September. After a while, we noticed that some Italian

guards seemed to be missing. We were told they left for home when they heard Italy was out of the war. Anyhow, as the days drug by, there were fewer and fewer Italian guards on the walls around our camp. We saw considerable numbers of German troop movements by truck. Sgt. Jett had talked with one of the German officers who, apparently, told him Italy was out of the war; but he warned Jett not to try to escape or he would be shot.

Blakney's adventures will be continued in the next publication.

*At the same time the crew of **Black Sheep** were suffering through the fear and agony as POWs, President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were meeting in Quebec for the Allied Quadrant Conference. At the same time, the Allies had completed the conquest of Sicily.*

You only live once, but if you work it right, once is enough.

Fred Allen



This performer came to Shipdham to entertain the airmen. Does anybody know his name?

Some thoughts on Colonel Richard “Dick” Butler Truly an Officer and a Gentleman

From: Robert Lehnhausen, 68th Squadron Commander

Dick came to the 44th as the Co-Pilot of the **Walter Bunker** crew in the 506th Squadron. The 506 was the fourth squadron of the 44th and arrived on Station 115 (Shipdham) in early March, 1943. The Bunker's crew was one of eight crews that made up the 506th.

Butler participated in both of the 44th missions that earned the Presidential Unit Citation, Kiel, Germany on May 14, 1943 and the epic low level mission against the Ploesti, Roumanian oil complex on August 1, 1943. He also flew on several more of the 44th's most dangerous and costly missions. Notable were the Foggia mission of August 16, 1943 and the hellish mission to Wiener-Neustadt on October 1, 1943.

Dick Butler gave thirty years of admirable duty to our nation. All of his duty was with elements of the Strategic Air Command. It should be noted that he was a veteran of WWII and the Cold War. At retirement in 1971 he was the Chief of Staff of 15th Air Force. In 1964 he became the Commander of March Field, CA. In 1966-69 he commanded the 320th Bomb Wing at SAC unit of B-52 and KC-135 aircraft.

Dick Butler was one of the organizers of the 44th BGVA. He and his devoted wife Ardith were regulars at all 44th functions. Dick also gave of his time, talent and treasury to the Second Air Division. For many years he was the 44th representative to that B-24 organization. He also served the 2AD as its Executive Vice President and then as President.

Dick Butler was one of the prime movers of the bronze scale model of the B-24 being sculpted and displayed at the Air Museum in San Diego, California's famous Balboa Park. He was also responsible for raising some of the money to finance this historical presentation and display.

Dick possessed a pleasant personality. He was easily met. Dick had a reputation for being a firm but fair commander. He also expressed a deep and genuine concern for welfare of his people, especially the enlisted personnel.

For those of us who had the privilege of serving with him in WWII, he was known to us as a man of sterling character and of uncommon courage. A truly great American.

The 44th Bomb Group Reunion in Dayton, Ohio

Please Note: You will be visiting one of the largest Air Force Bases in the world. Work that is done there determines the future of aerial flight and aerial combat; therefore secrecy is prime.

Thus, they must have a list of everybody who will be transported through their gates, so be sure to register by September 10, 2010. No registrations can be accepted after that date. If you register and then must cancel, you will receive your money back. You must carry your ID. A driver's license, Military ID, Student ID will be needed to get on the base.

If you plan to stay additional days at the hotel, please note that when you register, in order to get the reduced price. If you decide to leave early, please indicate that to the Hotel UPON YOUR ARRIVAL. Otherwise you will be charged for extra days.

As you will see, registration for the Reunion and the Hotel are together. We are able to get a better price by working with the Tourist Bureau in the planning.

Schedule of Events
2010 REUNION OF THE 44TH BGVA
SEPTEMBER 16-19, 2010
MARIOTT-DAYTON HOTEL
DAYTON, OHIO

Thursday, September 16

Board Meeting	10:00 A.M.
Registration	1:00 to 5:00 PM
Hospitality Suite opens	7:00 PM

Friday, September 17

Breakfast	
Load buses for Wright Paterson AF Base	7:00 AM
WPAF Museum - B-24 special 'Look In' (Guided Tour Air Power Gallery and more)	8:00 AM
Lunch at WPAFB Club & Banquet Ctr.	12:00
Load buses for Esther Price Chocolate Factory	2:00 PM
Welcome Reception	7:00 PM

Saturday, September 18

Breakfast	
General Meeting	9:00 AM
Load Buses for Wright-Dunbar Museum	10:15 AM
Lunch and Tour at Carillon History Park	12:00
Cash Bar	6:00 PM
Squadron Dinners	7:00 PM

Sunday, September 19

Breakfast	
Load Buses for American Packard Museum and Lunch	10:00 A.M
Load Buses for WPAF Museum Rededication of 44th Plaque	12:00
Load Buses for WPAFB Presidential & Experimental Hangars	2:00 PM
Return to Hotel	3:30 PM
Cash Bar	6:00 PM
Banquet	7:00 PM

Monday, September 2010

Breakfast & Farewells.

**REGISTRATION FOR REUNION OF THE
44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
1414 South Patterson Boulevard
Dayton, Ohio 45409
September 16-20, 2010**

Please print or type. All information must be complete (as shown on your ID.)

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse/Guest _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

PRICING, 4 HOTEL NIGHTS

Single \$630.00 Double \$860.00 Triple \$1090.00 Quad \$1330.00

Please indicate bed preference: King _____ Queen _____ Single _____

ALL ROOMS ARE NON-SMOKING

Includes: Welcome reception, Four Breakfasts, Hospitality Room, Free Parking, Free Airport Shuttle, Transportation and Lunch on all Tours, Squadron Dinners, Banquet.

SQUADRON DINNER: Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Chicken _____ Baked Salmon

BANQUET: Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Steak _____ Chicken

PAYMENT

Number of Registrants (See Prices Above)

Single \$ _____ Double \$ _____

Triple \$ _____ Quad \$ _____

Please send checks to 44th Bomb Group Treasurer
Jackie Roberts, 11910 S. E. 44th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73150

MUST BE RECEIVED BY SEPTEMBER 10, 2010

The September 2008 issue of the 8 Ball Tails carried the story about Lt. Louis Trouve, who was blown out the nose wheel door on the mission to Emden.

Lt.Col. Thomas T. Drysdale, Retired, Co-Pilot. Tells the Rest of the Story

Lt. Louis V. Trouve, known by friends as Lou or Louie, was a 44th BG 66th Squadron Navigator on the **Richard J. Comey** crew. I was the Co-Pilot, and the rest of the crew consisted of: Lt. **John J. Harmonoski**, Bombardier, Sgt. **Albert D. Franklin**, Engineer; Sgt. **Stanley J. Rosinski**, Asst. Engineer; Sgt. **Albert (NMI) Greenberg**, Radio Operator; Sgt. **Quentin J. Hall**, Asst. Radio Operator; Sgt. **Dale W. Neitzel**, Gunner; Sgt. **Richard H. Walker**, Gunner.

On December 11, 1943, the 44th BG was on a bomb run above Emden, Germany when it was attacked by ME 19s. Lou was blown out through the nose wheel doors. The 109s attacked from "out of the sun", firing, what we later learned were 30 mm tracer, armor piercing and explosive shells in that order. Our Bombardier, Lt. **Harmonowski** was ill on that day, and was replaced on this mission by Staff Sgt. **James E. Kipple**.

Two days later, December 13,
the European Edition of

THE STARS AND STRIPES Newspaper
Printed on the front page the
following headlines:

**8th hits Emden. Destroys 138 Fighters
Third Biggest Score Is Rolled Up in
Blow at Vital U-Boat Base
17 Bombers, Three Escorts Lost, N.J.
Pilot New Ace.**

The first shell, an explosive, hit our plane, **Nice 'N Naughty**, on the left side of the nose section, opening a hole more than two feet wide and with enough force to blow Lou out through the nose wheel doors. Fortunately, most of the explosion was absorbed by a large 50 caliber ammo can on the left side of the Navigator's compartment. Had the ammo can, full of ammo, not been there, the full force of the explosion would

probably have hit Lou and killed him.

The explosion also set the insulation covered walls in the nose section on fire, instantly filling the Navigator's compartment, the cockpit and flight deck with black smoke.

The second shell, armor piercing, came through the cockpit window to the left of Comey, barely in front of his head. It then pierced than armor plate a couple of inches behind my head at a steep angle and ricocheted through the radio equipment and into the bomb bay, destroying the release mechanism for two 500 pound armed bombs.

The third shell, another explosive, hit the top of the fuselage, next to and in front of the top turret. It did not injure the engineer/gunner, but left another two foot wide hole on the top of the fuselage.

When Comey and I rubbed the smoke off of some of the side and upper windows in the cockpit, we discovered we had dropped about 100 to 200 feet below the 44th BG that was dropping bombs at that time. Comey carefully and skillfully zigzagged, avoiding the falling bombs. Soon after that, we discovered the oxygen system had been knocked out, and Comey quickly alerted the crew to use walk-around oxygen bottles.

Following the bomb run, Comey and I became very concerned about Lou and the Bombardier, so I headed for the nose section as fast as I could. When I kneeled down on the catwalk, I could see the interior of the nose section was on fire, and the nose wheel doors were wide open. Not wanting to get my seat pack parachute on fire, I put it on the flight deck and crawled past the open nose wheel doors and into the front of the plane. Fortunately, the smoke had dissipated somewhat, and I was able to put out some of the fires with my gloved hands.

To my dismay, Lou was gone, but the

...continued on page 18

Bombardier was still in the nose turret. I opened the turret, yelled at him, shook him violently and tried to pull him out; and finally gave up, thinking he was dead due to smoke inhalation, lack of oxygen, the explosion, or a combination of the three. I then put out the rest of the fires, crawled back to the flight deck and cockpit and told Comey that Lou was gone, and the Bombardier was probably dead in the nose turret.

The ME 109's attack also knocked out an engine and the hydraulic system. So, not able to keep up with the 44th BG, we dropped several thousand feet and joined some B-17 stragglers heading for the English Channel. When we were at about 12,000 feet, to our amazement, surprise and glee, the Bombardier showed up on the flight deck! The explosion in the nose section, or the lack of oxygen had not killed him as I had assumed. It seemed he had only passed out, probably due to a lack of oxygen, and he agreed.

Crossing the Channel and arriving over Shipdham, we had more concerns: a landing gear that would not come down due to the battle damaged hydraulic system and two live and armed bombs that could come loose and explode on the runway while landing.

As to the landing gear, and having never cranked one down, I circled the plane over the Shipdham area while Comey went back somewhere into the bomb bay area and cranked the gear down by hand, greatly relieving all the crew.

Regarding the two 500 pound armed bombs that could be jolted loose and explode on the runway during landing, I think Comey gave the crew the option of bailing out or staying with the plane. I don't recall that any bailed out, but may be wrong. As it turned out, the bombs did not come loose on landing. Thank God!!!

Following the mission, all of the crew was concerned regarding what happened to Lou. At the mission debriefing, other 66th Squadron crew members said they saw Lou come out through the nose

wheel doors and open his chute. Of course, we did not know if he was okay, wounded, injured on landing, picked up by the underground, or was captured. Fortunately, about six months later I received a Red Cross Card from Lou in Stalag Luft III. The card was addressed to me, Tom Drysdale, 8th Air Force, England, following strict US Air Force policy for POW's to not reveal specific addresses of other combat crew members. He stated that he was well and enjoyed the Red Cross food packages. Receiving his card was a great relief to all of the crew.

Shortly after the war, Lou and I wrote and telephoned a few times, then later I met him in Brooklyn, NY. He had returned to his Long Island home, and was working as a newspaper reporter. We spent several hours updating each other, and he told me that as a POW, he was initially very concerned about what happened to the rest of the crew following the bomb run on Emden, but was happily informed by other later arrivals at the POW camp, that we all made it safely back to Shipdham.

My last contact with Lou was in 1955 when he sent a copy of the *Cincinnati Post All Week Magazine* to me, with a page 7 article he had written, *Behind the Barbed Wire... What happens to men condemned to the grim life of a war prisoner?* explaining his experiences as a prisoner of war for 17 months. The introduction was written by the Cincinnati Post **All Week Magazine** staff, stating how Lou became a POW, and that prior to the Emden raid, he had received the Air Medal, Purple Heart and Distinguished Flying Cross, the latter for participating in the low level bombing of the Ploesti oil fields.

The "*Behind the Barbed Wire*" article also included a photograph of six other POWs lying on the ground, surrounded by barbed wire. It is the same article sent by Marianne Trouve, Lou's daughter, for

the 8 Ball Tails 2009 Summer edition. The introduction to the article also explained it was originally written by Lou for the New York World-Telegram and Sun, and other Scripps-Howard newspapers.

Ed. Note: *The Database lists this target as 'Boat & Rail Traffic', but Stars &*

Stripes lists it as a vital U-Boat Center. Probably both are correct. Calaban from the 67th Squadron was lost with 8 KIA, 1 POW. Bombs from a B-24 overhead caused this loss. Nice 'N Naughty had one POW. 68th Squadron Bing's Big Box had two wounded, but returned.

Sobering Memories of Joseph Benoit

67th Squadron

Assistant Engineer/Right Waist Gunner Benoit flew to Shipdham as part of the **Roy Jorgensen** crew. In keeping with the group policy, Jorgensen flew as Co-Pilot with **Donald Decker** to Ochersleben, Germany, along with **James Liddell**, Navigator, and **Frederick Gatens**, Bombardier. **Big Fat Butterfly** was hit by flak, and everyone on board was KIA.

Four days later, **Sidney Hawkins**, Ball Turret Gunner from the Jorgensen crew flew to Gotha, Germany with the **Harold Etheridge** crew in an unnamed plane. Me 109s and FW 190s attacked. The Navigator was killed and all others became POW.

The rest of the Jorgensen crew, **Melvin J. Johnson**, Co-Pilot; **Frank Wood**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; **D. A. Lawyer**, Radio Operator/Gunner; **James Crane**, Left Waist Gunner; and J. J. Petricevich, Tail Gunner became part of the Richard E. Harleman crew. They made eight bombing missions together.

The final mission was Mont de Manson Airdrome, located in southern France. This mission was not expected to be a rough mission, but the 12 flak guns were very accurate. Right after #42-109836 dropped the bomb load over the target, they were hit by flak in the right wing, just behind the #4 engine. The fuel tank was also hit. The engine stopped, and they could not keep up with the formation. The decision was made to hit the deck and fly to Spain, a neutral country. As they flew over the French coast, they were hit by machine guns and small arms fire.

Quoting Benoit, "Our plane caught fire, and Lt. Harleman ditched the airplane. The plane broke in half at the waist windows. The four survivors were standing just behind the break, and were thrown into the water. Lt. Baum (*Bombardier*) got out from the front of the plane, but did not live. He had seven bullet holes, one which was in his neck.

"The front part of the airplane stayed afloat long enough for the rest of the crew to get out. I don't know why one else got out, whether they were knocked out or hit by the gun fire. They went down with the front section about a half mile from the shore in the Bay of Biscay, just out from the French town of Biarritz. The four survivors were pretty banged up and sent to a hospital in Bayonne France."

Melvin Johnson, Frank Wood, D. A. Lawyer and **William Cobane** (*Navigator*) were KIA. **Lee Fields**, (*Ball Turret Gunner*) was badly burned and repatriated. Benoit, Crane and Petricevich became POW, and were held for 13 months.

On that same mission, 67th Squadron lost Texas Roset. The entire crew was interned in Spain.

THE PROBLEMS OF GOING HOME

As remembered by **Fred Marzolph**, Gunner on the **William Smith/Roy Owen** crew—506 Squadron.

I don't remember where our mission had been to; but on the return home, we were in need of fuel. Our pilots, **Bill Smith** and **Roy Owen** found us an emergency field with a metal landing strip in a park in Gent, Belgium. On landing, we saw we weren't the only ones to have used it, as several fighters and I think a B-17 were also there on each side of the strip.

After landing, we all piled out of the plane and saw our pilot cruise by on a nearby street on the back of a motorcycle in search of fuel.

A short while after this, a civilian came walking up to our group and seemed to study each one of us, looking up and down as he walked by. Suddenly, as he approached me, he smiled and grabbed me by the front of my jacket and pulled and pointed down the street, out of the park. Not understanding the language and his intentions, I hesitated as he pulled harder, and he grew more excited as I refused to move; his action seemed to threaten me. Finally, at some of the crews' urging, I finally gave in. I collected a few more extra rounds for my pistol, and allowed myself to be pulled out of the park. We walked a block or two. We stopped in front of a tailor's shop, and in the window were two store dummies dressed – one in a civilian suit and one wearing a German Luftwaffe pilot's uniform. The gent pulling on my coat, let go, and with his arms going up and down the front of me, he pointed at the uniform. I began to see what he was trying to tell me, and we went inside the store. He removed the uniform coat and motioned for me to put it on. I removed my jacket and pulled part of my heated suit down and put the jacket on. It fit like it was made for me. Now the very excited 'giver' took the rest of the uniform, put it all on a hanger and handed it to me.

I had very little money with me, so I offered him a full pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes and a half-used pack as payment, and he seemed delighted to receive the American smokes. Probably he thought he was giving me the uniform completely for free.

I left the store after many thank you's and got back to the plane about the same time the pilot and fuel arrived, and we soon took off for home.

This station was just shortly before the war ended; and when it did, we were told we were to fly home the next day. The CO also said each squadron was to receive 100 gallons of beer as a farewell party gift. Numerous officers donated wines and other spirits obtained when they had landed on different shores. A good time was had by most, I among them.

Usually I was conservative on drinking, but this was a special occasion going home!

We were to leave the next morning, and when I didn't get up and get dressed, they first tried to talk me out of bed. That didn't work, so they took off my covers and pulled me out of bed. As they tried to stand me up, I resisted. We knocked over the barracks stove, soot and all, but they dressed me and packed my belongings. Simple, huh? Not really.

As I slowly recovered on our first home bound stopover, I looked to see if all my items were packed for me, and the first thing I missed was my German uniform. It was left hanging on the hanger. This shook me up a little, but believed that was all that was missing.

Then on our second landing in the Azores, while walking to the mess hall with our engineer, **Carl Jacobson**, I noticed I was sorta dragging one foot. "Jake" asked me if I got hurt in that bar-

...continued on page 24

racks scuffle, and I said I didn't think so; but later that day, when getting ready for bed, I noticed one shoe was much smaller than the other. A closer look showed me one shoe was my size 8 ½ and the other shoe was size 11! When the guys were dressing me, they grabbed one of my shoes and other size was found some place other than under my bed.

I tried to get a shoe or a pair in the Azores, but had no luck and equal luck in Newfoundland, Bradley Field in the U.S.,

and at Ft. Sheridan, from where I was to get a 30 day leave. I was going home walking like a wounded veteran! Once I got home, I put on a pair of low cut shoes, and with a very relieved and smiling look, I enjoyed my 30 day leave.

Fred sent me this story—typed out on his very antiquated Royal typewriter. It pre-dated electric typewriters, but it still peels out his memories—like the time he overdid the celebrating, just because the war was over!.

THE CAMERON SAGA, CONTINUED

Two days after the Naples mission, Bill Cameron described his next assignment: Rome.

At the briefing, I learned that the target for the next day was, indeed, an important one—Rome! This certainly was a day for surprises. The next word was that I would lead the Group in the **Suzy-Q**. Half of Howard Moore's crew had dysentery, while our ground crew, (including a few of our flight crew) had four engines to change on my plane, **Buzzin Bear**. **Suzy-Q**, however, was in good shape, despite the unusual and bumpy landing it had just undergone.

*(For some unknown reason, **Suzy-Q**, piloted by Howard Moore, had fallen short of the runway. All four engines had quit. The plane ran through rocks, sand and sagebrush, but landed safely onto the runway.)*

On the 19th of July, 1943, we were off for Rome in the **Suzy-Q**. It was a good mission, and I remember the white city below, while above we had a very blue sky. A few Italian fighters made half-hearted attacks from positions above our formation, but the sight of those beautiful tracer bullets streaming across the sky apparently discouraged any serious thought of attacks against us. I don't recall much flak, if there was enemy. It seems that the enemy was quite certain that we would not attack this holy and historical city, so had failed to provide any defenses in depth.

We had been briefed extensively on our target, the Marshalling Yards, where most of the Nazi's war material was being funneled to the front. Under no circumstances were we to bomb unless we were certain that we could hit this area without any possibility of errant bombs. The results were very good with little to no damage inflicted outside of the target area. There was considerable out crying by our enemy for this raid, and Christians all over the world were deeply concerned until it became known as a fact, that Rome itself was not attacked or damaged.

Jackson Hall was with us as the Group Command pilot that day, flying in the Co-Pilot sat on the flight deck. On the way home we lost an engine quite suddenly. But a few minutes later I finally figured out that Jackson had accidentally nudged the number four engine ignition switch with his right knee! That was about the only excitement on the entire mission.

Ed. Note: Three missions to Sicily and four to Italy completed Cameron's required number of tours. However, when it became known that the next mission was the longest ever undertaken by the 44th, he could not resist volunteering. Col. Johnson chose him to be Deputy Lead., to Ploesti.

BOOKS OF GREAT EVENTS IN 44TH BOMB GROUP HISTORY

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 2 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, 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.

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. 190 Johnson Drive SE, Calhoun, GA 30701-3941 Tel. 706-629-2396. The cost is \$20.

HERE I GO AGAIN

This is a song, written by the late Archie Barlow, author of the book described above.

I don't know if Archie intended for this to be published. Perhaps he was just bemoaning the problems of being on Lasix, which is a diuretic. I'm sure others can identify with this complaint, but the average person does not make poetry about it! It is to be sung to the tune of "Taking a Chance on Love."

HERE I GO AGAIN..... THE LASIX'S MAKING ME GO AGAIN,
I'D BETTER NOT BE SLOW AGAINDOING THE LASIX LOPE.

HERE I GO AGAINMY ENERGY'S RUNNING LOW AGAIN
THERE'S JUST NO STOPPING THAT FLOW AGAIN
DOING THE LASIX LOPE.

HERE I GO AGAINDON'T KNOW WHEN IT WILL PEAK
OH GOSH, I JUST SPRUNG A LEAK! TOO LATE FOR THE LASIX LOPE.

FOR SALE—LAPEL PINS

Mary Aston is selling lapel pins of WWII Medals: 8th Air Force, DFC, Air Medal, Purple Heart, POW, European-African Mediterranean Theater and WWII Victory Medal. The price of each is \$9 + 44 cents postage. (Specify pin name and number of each type.)

A large Suncatcher depicting the Flying 8 Ball; a 67th Squadron Pelican or 8th Air Force Logo are available at \$120 each + \$25 UPS (a total of \$145)

A small Flying 8 Ball sells for \$65 + \$18 UPS (a total of \$83) Proceeds go to the 44th BGVA. Contact Mary at 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635.

THE 44TH BOMB GROUP PX

Flying 8 Ball Golf Shirts	\$25.00 + 3.00 Postage
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The consensus about this picture is that it was staged. Bob Lehnhausen checked the records and realized *One Weakness* was flown to the states by the William Warner crew. Coloma Warner, Bill's wife, stated that the third man from the right was her husband, the pilot. In the driver's seat is our Past President, the late **Paul Kay**. According to Bill's memory, Paul always rushed to the Jeep so he could be the driver.

The man in the highly decorated jacket may not even be a member of the 44th BG. It is nice to know that the Life photographer was present at a happy time—when the war ended.



MAIL & E-MAIL

From Andrew Hawker: (a member of the Board of Governors of the Memorial Heritage Trust in Norwich, UK). Tom Eaton, the original Chairman of the Board of Governors recently passed away. Tom had worked closely with the 2nd Air Division, to bring the Memorial Library into existence, and to maintain its financial stability. This Library brings America to young English students, who are profoundly interested in learning of America's history and traditions. The men of the 2nd Air Defense, (of which the 44th was a part), are indebted to the dedicated work of this fine English gentlemen.

Apologies in order:

Imagine this... By telephone, **Tom Muff** (506 Sq.) called to say that the report of the folded wings of his friend **Walter Scott** was wrong!!!!!!!!!! He had just gotten done talking to him.

Here's how the error occurred. When the Board was trying to figure out whether Life Members were still living in the same place, Jackie Roberts made a number of phone calls. She had been given Scott's wrong area code number, and the lady of that house promptly announced that her husband had passed away. She was the wrong lady to be questioned about a 44th Bomb Group member, and she was too distraught to say more, so Jackie assumed she was talking to Scott's wife.

Fortunately, Scott was very forgiving of the error.

The question has arisen, should we continue to record Fallen Wings of men whose names are obtained from the Social Security list. I have voted 'yes'. If a man served in the 44th, I feel that we owe it to him to list his name in our publication. Someday his family may be looking for his history; the 8 Ball Tails and the Web Page may be their only source of information.

President Ronald Reagan asked this question: "Why does the Air Force need expensive new bombers? Have the people we've been bombing over the years been complaining?"

**HARDLY A DRIVER IS NOW ALIVE, WHO PASSED ON HILLS
AT SEVENTY-FIVE**

Burma Shave

AT INTERSECTIONS LOOK EACH WAY

A HARP IS NICE

BUT IT'S HARD TO PLAY.

Burma Shave

ROBERT LEHNHAUSEN REMEMBER JAMES GARVEY

A few weeks ago one of our still surviving 68th veterans called to tell me that Jim Garvey had "folded his wings". My immediate thought was to recall what this remarkable patriot had endured in combat. He was a marvelous example of one who converted the "lemons" of life to lemonade.

T/Sgt. James T. Garvey was an excellent radio operator. He joined the 68th squadron shortly before we left for Africa, the first time. He flew with several different crews, some of the squadron's finest.

On Jim's 20th mission on July 4, 1944 their B-24 developed a runaway engine that they were unable to shut down, shortly before leaving the English coast. The pilot, Lt. **Ben Schaefer**, ordered the crew to abandon the out of control airplane. All of the crew successfully parachuted safely over England. Not an every day experience.

On July 7, 1944 the 44th participated in a "maximum effort" mission. The 68th put up twelve aircraft that day to assault a target at Bernberg, Germany. Most of the airmen who had bailed out on the 4th were scheduled for this mission too, including Jim Garvey. For the 68th it was a terrible day. The German fighters really beat us up. We lost three very fine crews. Fortunately Jim's crew returned safely, but they knew they had been in a battle.

July 11, 1944 the target was Munich, and Jim Garvey was assigned to fly with the crew of Lt. **A. D. Bonnet**. Their aircraft, **Flak Alley II** picked up battle damage from flak in the target area, losing number 4 engine. Another engine failed about an hour from the French coast, and they were struggling to get to England. As you know, our big bird did not fly well on two engines. They did not succeed and were forced to ditch in the English Channel. Four of the nine man crew survived the ditching, including Jim Garvey. All were badly injured. Garvey had multiple broken bones. They were rescued by a British destroyer. Sadly, we lost five fine young men, two of whom were on their last mission.

Jim Garvey was sent to a British hospital

at Oxford, England. As he was recuperating from the trauma of eight days of extraordinary flight duty and survival, his agile mind reasoned that since he was in this famed city of learning, he should take advantage of the locale. He petitioned the Doctor who was the head of the hospital, to see if the University would permit his studying while he was recuperating. The Doctor was fascinated, telling him that this was the first time such a request had been made. The delighted Doctor was most willing to be the petitioner in Garvey's behalf, but he had to know what discipline Garvey desired. Jim's interest was in engineering. The Doctor made the call upon University officials, who were favorably taken in this unusual request, but unfortunately, the school did not offer a course in Engineering. The Doctor reported to Jim that while he could not get engineering, they had offered a course in Economics. Garvey accepted. He enrolled. After months of hospitalization and rehab, he continued his education in the States, in Economics. And it became his life work.

In civil life this gifted gentleman was very successful. He and his dear wife Vivian reared a large family and retired to Fargo, ND. We talked and we corresponded. It was always a joy to visit with him. He was always positive and upbeat. He never complained about the injuries that he had incurred, nor the rigors of his disability.

Like most of you, he continued to be a productive citizen after retirement. He was a national officer in the SCORE program, which is an organization of retired executives who voluntarily assist people with mentoring and advice. His eventual use of a wheelchair to navigate was of little concern. His approach was, "Hey, I am alive and available".

This is the brief story of another of the marvelous young patriots with whom we were privileged to serve. We salute his resourceful courage and exemplary service. As one of our British friends would say, "This lad had great pluck".

BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT CARDENAS AND HIS LATEST PROJECT



Bob Cardenas (506 Squadron) flew to Friedrichshafen as Command Pilot on the **Raymond Lacombe** crew on 18 March 1944. It was his 17th mission. With flak damage and the plane afire, **Chief and**

Sack Artists, was able to limp to the border of Switzerland; the entire crew bailed out into Lake Constance, swam to shore and became internees.

When the Swiss government learned from the American government, that they had a first class pilot internee, they asked him to teach Swiss pilots to fly B-24's. They wanted to get those big planes away from the border, to keep them from the eyes of German pilots.

In time the Swiss Underground reached Cardenas, helped him out of the country, and he became a test pilot.

Cardenas's contribution to progress in air supremacy is immeasurable. As a very young flyer, he was sent to 29 Palms, California, to establish the Army Air Corps Glider Score. His next assignment was at Wright Field, where he tested P-38s, B-24s, B-17s, LB-30s and AB-24s. Wanting to enter combat, he finagled his way to England and got assigned to the 506 Squadron. Escaping from Switzerland ended his combat experience.

Nevertheless, he stayed in the service, graduated from Flight Performance School, and at Wright AFB, did the flight test evaluation of the German ME-262 and the ARADO 234 – Germany's first jet bomber. Later, he had the unique experience of flying the B-29 that carried Chuck Yeager in the X-1 into the realm of supersonic flight.

The list of planes that Cardenas has flown includes: the fighter XP-26 "Peashooter" and B-29/X-1. He flew the YB-49 (the Flying Wing) over the Capitol Dome. (President Truman had asked him to fly it down Pennsylvania Avenue at 'rooftop level", so people could see what he was going to buy. It was the beginning of the stealth program. He flew in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

His last combat tour over North Vietnam was in F-105's as Commander of the 18th TFW Okinawa and Korat, Thailand.

After he retired from the service, Cardenas devoted his efforts to helping homeless veterans get a burial with military honors. His latest endeavor was to create a new National Cemetery at Miramar, California, so families that want an in-ground coffin burial will not have to go 100 miles north to Riverside.

He was recently honored for his ongoing efforts to see that veterans got the honors to which they are entitled, and for his leadership in establishing this new Cemetery.

Cardenas's early exit from WWII opened the door to many notable events and experiences for him. Nevertheless, the 44th BG can claim him as one of their own.



In this picture standing at the podium and surrounded by dignitaries, he led the flag salute.

*"Victory at all costs, victory in spite of terror,
victory however long and hard the road may be;
for without victory there is no survival."*

Winston Churchill

SIGN ON A T-SHIRT: THE OLDER I GET, THE
BETTER I WAS.



To err is human. To refrain from laughing is humane!

LANE OLINGHOUSE



FOLDED WINGS

...sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust.
*Approach thy grave like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him,
and lies down to pleasant dreams.*

William Cullen Bryant

Austin, Horace William #19256 506 Squadron 1966 Lt. Austin was a Pilot having flown in five different aircraft in the eleven missions with his crew. They flew in ***Heaven Can Wait/Pete the Pom Inspector; Southern Comfort, Ruth-Less, Timb-A-A-Ah and Jenny/Lady Luck.***

Austin arrived in Shipdham just when the group was sent to Africa, where he joined in the missions to Lecce, Rome and Sicily. On August 1st he followed **Leon Johnson** to Ploesti. He went to Wiener Neustadt on August, then three days later flew to Foggia, where fighters brought down **Jenny/Lady Luck.**

Enlisted men on his crew were imprisoned in Italian prisons, six of whom escaped and evaded. Two members were KIA. He and his Co-Pilot were placed on a train, enroute to Germany. At one point Austin saw the opportunity to put a stone in the door of the train; and just as they were approaching the Brenner Pass, he opened the door and rolled down an embankment. He kept rolling as far as he could, then laid down in bushes. The Germans searched and shot toward the bushes, but finally continued on their way. His Co-Pilot was POW until the end of the war.

Austin slept in hay stacks by day and walked at night. Along the line he met another very bedraggled airman, and the two continued on until they found British troops who got them back to England.

Austin and his wife Marjorie had two children, Robert and Jane. Robert served in the U.S. Navy during the Viet Nam War. Marjorie, a Life Member of 44th BGVA, has two grandchildren and four great grandchildren. She resides in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Butler, Richard D. (Dick) #19614 67th & 506 Squadrons 29 December 2009 Captain, later Colonel Butler flew 27 missions with the 44th Bomb Group, his first on 16 April 1943. He flew as Co-Pilot with **Walter Bunker**, who later became his Command Pilot. The Bunker crew flew such awesome missions as Kiel and Ploesti. At Ploesti, the Bunker crew followed Lt. Col. Posey to the Creditul Minier Refinery. Their bombing was so successful, it was never re-opened until the Russians took it over. This deprived the Nazi regime of aviation fuel, a major factor in the downfall of the Luftwaffe.

On 7 September 1943 Butler moved to the pilot seat and flew **Miss Emmy Lou**, named for his newborn daughter. At Wiener Neustadt the plane was hit by fighters, the # 3 engine was hit, and the gas level was low. The decision was made to land at an airfield near Catania, Sicily. He had no hydraulic brakes, the right wing was damaged and the flaps did not act in unison. They skidded to a stop, the nose wheel went down, and the plane had to be abandoned. The 44th had already left Africa, so the crew hitch hiked back to England.

Butler's next plane, **Miss Emmy Lou II**, took him on three missions. (She flew a total of nine.) On his last mission to Bremen, flying in **F For Freddie**, he had attained the rank of Captain, and flew as Command Pilot.

When **Miss Emmy Lou II** went in for maintenance and repair, the Butler crew ran the test flight. Tragically, there was an explosion on the battle damaged plane; it crashed on a farm near Shipdham, and Butler's fractures ended his career with the 44th BG.



FOLDED WINGS

In addition to the two planes named for his daughter, Butler flew in *Ruth-Less*, *Mr 5 By 5*, *Calaban*, *Old Crow*, *Earthquake McGoon* and *F For Freddie*.

After the war, he remained in the service, serving in the Strategic Air Command. He was Base Commander at March Air Force Base, then Chief of Staff of the 15th Air Force at March Field.

Butler was a founding member of the 44th BGVA, and served on the Board for many years. He served as a Board Member and later President of the 2nd Air Division Veterans Association, and was a major participant in the creation of the 2 AD Memorial Library in Norwich, England.

Dick leaves his wife and childhood sweetheart, Ardith, six children, 8 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren. The couple resided in Riverside, California.

Dusossoit, Paul V. #20080 66th Squadron 16 January 2009 Lt. Dusossoit was a pilot. He and his crew flew their first of twelve missions on 10 March 1945. They flew in *Fifinella*, *Big Time Operator*, *King Pin*, *Henry* and *Loco Moto*. On the mission to Rheine, Germany, they flew with **Veryl Bevelacqua** as Command Pilot. Dusossoit's last mission to Hallein, Austria, 25 April 1945 was the last mission of the 44th Bomb Group. Twelve days later, Germany surrendered.

Before the war, Dusossoit attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology. When he returned home to Massachusetts, he became a securities and commodities broker, later working for Merrill Lynch and rising to the vice presidency of this organization. He was frequently asked to lecture on commodity futures at both Harvard University and M.I.T.

Dusossoit was active in a number of sports. He and his wife, Elizabeth Jane King, built a house on the Inner Coastal Waterway

where he could enjoy the sport of sailing.

In addition to his wife of 66 years, he leaves three daughters, four granddaughters and two great granddaughters.

At the time of his death, Dusossoit and his wife were living in Charlotte, North Carolina. Information of his passing came from his daughter Janine Dusossoit.

Etheridge, Harold #20142 66th Squadron 1998 Lt. Etheridge was a pilot who flew one mission with **Kenneth Jewell** on 21 January 1944, flying in *Banshee IV/E.Z.Duzit*. Seven days later he moved to the left seat with his own crew. In the next two weeks, the Elderidge crew flew in *Myrtle the Fertile Turtle* and *Ice Cold Kady*.

On 24 February 1944, the 44th Bomb Group led the 14th Combat Wing to an aircraft assembly plant in Gotha, Germany. The bombing was successful, but the Me 109s & FW 190s attacked with a vengeance.

To elude the attackers, Etheridge took evasive action, diving, banking, skidding and slipping the A/C in a violent, erratic manner. He later reported that his waist gunners, who were not belted, were being thrown around like popcorn in a popper.

The two right engines on Etheridge's plane were knocked out and the vertical stabilizer was badly damaged. The plane went down; nine of the ten crewmen became POW. The Navigator was KIA. Etheridge had a broken leg. His waist gunner had a neck injury from tumbling around the plane during the evasive maneuvers. This was made worse by abusive civilians who did not understand that he could not raise his arms in surrender.

Despite their injuries, the prisoners had to walk to a village where they were separated and sent to different prison camps. Etheridge spent the rest of the war at Stalag Luft in Barth, Germany.



FOLDED WINGS

Etheridge stayed in the service, rising to the rank of Lt. Colonel. After retiring, he and his wife Rebecca, lived in Albany, Georgia. Rebecca pre-deceased him by seven years. He is survived by two sons, Chris Etheridge and Terry Etheridge; also one daughter, Debbie Powell.

Knowledge of Etheridge's death came from his son Chris. One of Chris's interesting recollections about his family is that his grandfather witnessed the Wright Brothers' first powered flight at Kitty Hawk, N.C. on December 17, 1903.

Two planes were lost on that mission: Etheridge's plane #42-29248 and Flak Alley from the 68th Squadron. Seven airmen were KIA; thirteen became POW.

Garvey, James T. #20327 68th Squadron 2009 T/Sgt. Garvey was a Radio Operator/Gunner who flew with no fewer than eleven pilots and three Command Pilots in the eighteen missions he flew from 24 September 1943 to 11 July 1944. He flew in *Avenger, Pistol Packin Mama, Ram It Dammit, Heaven Can Wait II, Northern Lass, V for Victory, Any Gum Chum, Lone Ranger, Corky (on D-Day) Lili Marlene and Flak Alley II*. He flew with the following crews: **W. D. Hughes, Harold Slaughter, S. H. Bowman, Raymond Townsend, Norman Peterson, George Martin, Ben H. Gildart, Charles Duerell, Benjamin Schaefer and A. D. Bennett**. He flew with three Command Pilots: **Myron Sesit, Robert Lehnhausen** (twice) and **John Gibson**. On 11 July 1944 on the Mission to Munich, they were hit with flak, but continued to limp westward, accompanied by P-38s. Finally, *Flak Alley II* could go no further. Lt. Bonnet ditched in the Channel, whereupon the plane broke in half. Garvey sustained a fractured shoulder and injury to his 5th &

6th vertebrae. When drowning was almost certain, the Navigator pulled him from the water and held him alongside the dingy until an English destroyer rescued four of the crew.

Garvey's last address was Fargo, North Dakota

On that same mission to Munich, the 66th Squadron lost one plane. Total losses: KIA – 13, Evadees – 3, POW – 1, Injured & Rescued – 4.

Hill, Richard G. (Dick) #20663 67th Squadron 15 January 2010 1st Lt. Hill was a Bombardier on the **Veryl Duwe** crew, flying 30 missions from 24 May 1944 to 29 July 1944. Most of the missions were in *Old Iron Corset*, but also in *Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Fifinella* and *Mi Akin Ass*.

On D-Day the Duwe crew flew to Caen (Vire).

After the war, Hill returned to his studies at the University of Cincinnati where he earned his degree in Mechanical Engineering. He became a Factory Representative for Macomb, Illinois, later a Sales Engineer for Lennox Industries in Missouri and Illinois. From there he became Sales Manager for Purdum Real Estate in Illinois. He moved to

Hawaii and accepted the position of Consulting Engineer at Darow & Sawyer in Honolulu.

Upon retiring, he and his wife of 58 years moved to Bella Vista, Arkansas. The Hills had two children, a son and a daughter; four grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Hobbs, Harold #20679 506 Squadron 23 February 2002 No information is available about this member of the 44th BG. Source: Social Security Records



FOLDED WINGS

Holden, Arlie R. #20694 66th Squadron 17 July 2002 T/Sgt. Holden was an Engineer & Top Turret Gunner on a many crews. His first of 28 missions was 3 November 1943; his last, 30 October 1944. He flew with the following crews: **Richard F. O'Neill, Sidney Paul, Richard Thornton, William Wahler, George H. Thom, Robert McCormick, Hal S. Kimball, Maurice Steven, Joseph Gillespie** and **Thomas Daily**. He flew with many Command Pilots, **Charles Benton, Robert Felber, Spencer Hunn, John Gibson, Lewis Adams, Douglas Thompson, John Losee, Lewis Adams, M. K. Martin, Eugene Snavely** and **E. T. Claggett**. On D-Day he flew to Caen Vire with **James McAtee** as Command Pilot; later that day he flew to Colleville, St. Laurent with **Leon Johnson**. On one mission to Gilslendirchen, Germany, he served as Ball Turret Gunner.

Holden flew in twelve different aircrafts: ***Poop Deck Pappy, The Shark, 4-Q-2, Lil Cookie, D-Barfly, Shack Rabbit/Star Spangled Hell, Phyllis, I'll Be Back/Feather Merchant, Consolidated Mess, Big Time Operator, King Pin*** and ***Flak Magnet***.

Information of Holden's death was found in the Social Security Records.

Hyland, Jack M. #20776 67th Squadron 24 April 2001 1st Lt. Hyland was a pilot. His first of 36 missions was 7 July 1944. Hyland flew in many unnamed planes, but also in **Old Iron Corset, Myrtle The Fertile Turtle, Fifinella, Three Kisses for Luck, Mi Akin Ass, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Fearless Fosdick, Heaven Can Wait II** and **Sultry Sue**.

His last mission was 17 October 1944. Information of his death came via the Social Security Files.

Humphries, Paul C. #20756 68th Squadron 14 August 2004 Sgt.

Humphries was a gunner on the **Myron Butler** crew, serving sometimes as a waist gunner, more frequently as a belly gunner. His first mission was 7 July 1944; his last, two weeks later to Oberpfaffenhofen.

The target was an armaments factory near Munich. A section of the wing was shot off by flak. Seeing they could not make it to England, Butler headed toward Switzerland. They encountered more flak, causing them to lose an engine and the right rear stabilizer on ***Cape Cod Special II***.

The crew bailed out. One member of the crew was injured when he hit the ground. Humphries and others were taken to Mulhouse, France, then Frankfurt, next to Dulag Luft, then to Stalag I, Barth, which is on the Baltic Sea. They were liberated by the Russian Army.

Information of his death came from the Social Security Records.

Hunyadi, Arnold G. #20766 66th Squadron 14 August 1944 T/Sgt. Hunyadi was an Engineer and Top Turret Gunner. He flew 28 missions with **Ralph Hayden**; one with **Robert Podojil**, one with **Paul Dusossoit**.

His first of thirty missions was 5 September 1944; his last, 21 March 1945. Hunyadi flew in many unnamed planes, but also in **Jail Bait, Jersey Jerk, King Pin, Henry, Fifinella, Down De Hatch** and **Big Time Operator**.

Information of his death came from Social Security Records.

Hurst, Oliver F. #20770 67th Squadron January 2010 Lt. Hurst was a pilot. He flew 29 missions. His first mission was 12 August 1944, flying with the crew of **Wilbur Carter**. On his second mission he moved over to the left seat and flew all other missions with his own crew. The Hurst crew flew in **Glory Bee**,



FOLDED WINGS

Fifinella, Old Iron Corset, Judy's Buggy, Phyllis, Lady Fifi Nella, Sultry Sue and Mi Akin Ass. Their last mission was 7 January 1945. Most of Hurst's missions were in France and Germany, bombing bridges, railroads and air fields, clearing the way for the advancing ground forces.

At the time of his death, Hurst was living in San Antonio, Texas. Information of his passing came from his daughter, Charlene (Hurst) de la Fuente.

McKee, Ira #21283 506 Squadron 28 February 2010 Col. McKee was an Armament Officer. He arrived in Shipdham 17 March 1943, having attended the Aircraft Armament School at Lowery Air Base. He was placed on inactive status December 1945 and returned to active duty March 1947. He was a Staff Weather Officer for SAC and TAC. He received meteorological training at UCLA and University of Chicago. He earned his Master's degree at St. Louis University. After retiring from military service he taught 9th grade mathematics.

McKee holds the Bronze Star and Distinguished Service Medal. He lost his first wife, marrying Ruth W. McKee several years later. He has two daughters and a son, two step-daughters and a step-son.

McKee was a regular attendee of the 44th BG Reunions. He and Ruth resided in Arlington, Texas at the time of his death.

Pyle, Larry #25853 506 Squadron 10 June 2009 Lt. Pyle was a pilot. His first of seven missions was 21 March 1945. The crew has one loss. On the low level Wesel mission, his Left Wing Gunner, **Anibal C. Diaz**, fell from the plane to his death, while dumping supplies to the British troops who had just crossed the Rhine River.

Pyle and his crew flew in **Sabrina III**,

Joplin Jalopy, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose and Jose Carioca. Their last mission April 25, 1945, which was the 44th BG's last mission of the war.

Pyle's last address was El Cerrito, California.

Ed. Note: Pyle's name in the Database is 'Leonard'. 'Larry' must be correct, as he has been a member of the 44th BG for many years. It is assumed he would have corrected the error of his name.

Kille, Wesley G. #20919 67th Squadron 15 February 1997 No information is available for this member of the 44th BG. Notice of his death came from the Social Security Records.

Wellman, Everett # 22509 66th Squadron 26 December 2009 Lt. Wellman was a Co-Pilot on the **James N. Williams** crew. In the post- D-Day effort, the 44th was bombing ahead of the troops, attacking refineries, bridges and railroad viaducts. On one mission he flew with **M. W. Miskewich** and two Navigators using GEE and PFF for accuracy in the bombing. Seven Command Pilots flew with the Williams crew: **A. W. Reed** (491st Bomb Group), **William Cameron, J. A. McGregor, William Strong, Joseph Gilbert, A. L. Johnson** and **M. K. Martin**. In their 23 missions, the Williams crew flew in many unnamed planes, also in **My Peach, Fifinella, Big Time Operator** and **Helen**. Their last mission was 30 December 1944.

Wellman's last address was in Oklahoma City.



**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

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