

# 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



## 8 BALL TAILS

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## JAIL BAIT

*Jail Bait* arrived in Shipdham, and from 23 June 1944 to 20 April 1945, she flew a total of 36 missions, three into Occupied France, and all others into Germany. Steve Adams, co-author of the book *'The 44th Bomb Group in World War II'* reported that on 16 January 1945 the fog over England was so intense, pilots were urged to stay overnight in Orly, France, upon their return from bombing of Dresden, Germany. The **Edward Hedricks** crew joined many other planes in finding the crowded airport, and enjoying the hospitality of the grateful French citizens.

A total of fifteen crews flew in *Jail Bait*: **Charles S. Herring, Elmer W. Smith, Arthur Ledford, Charles Norris, Maurice Steven, Ralph Hayden, Joseph Gillespie, Albert Leghorn, Charles Hess, C. R. Hinshaw, Robert Schrapper, Edward Hedricks, Robert Sanders, David Doughty and Leo D. Crooks.**

In May 1945, the plane returned to the Zone of the Interior.



# 44<sup>TH</sup> BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD 2011 - 2012

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

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

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

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

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

**Director:** Richard Lynch  
109 Jason Road, Box 518  
Conrad, Iowa 50621-0518  
Phone(641) 366-2414  
E-Mail: [r\\_blynch@heartofiowa.net](mailto:r_blynch@heartofiowa.net)  
(first three letters r\_b)

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

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

**UK Representative:** Steve Adams  
28 Bassingham Road  
Norwich, England NR3 2 QT  
Phone 011-44-1603-400221  
E-Mail: [stephenadams2009@btinternet.com](mailto:stephenadams2009@btinternet.com)

**Database Custodian and Webmaster:**  
Arlo Bartsch, Webmaster  
42 Promesa Drive  
Hot Springs Village, Arkansas 71909  
Phone 501 922-5247  
E-Mail: [SirArloB@aol.com](mailto:SirArloB@aol.com)

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## JAIL BAIT AND THE LEO D. CROOKS CREW

*As remembered by Ralph Becker, Navigator 66th Squadron*



The Leo Crooks crew, not individually identified: **Leo D. Crooks**, Pilot; **C. R. Crockett**, Co-Pilot, **Ralph Becker**, Navigator, **J. F. Defalco**, Nose Gunner/Toggler; **C. T. Kruse**, Radio Operator/Gunner; **Albert Chisman**, Engineer, Top Turret Gunner; **G. R. Glassner**, Right Wing Gunner; **R. O. Bergenhofer**, Left Wing Gunner; **Frank Stevens**, Tail Gunner.

*(This picture supplied by Ralph Becker, the tall officer in the back row.)*

Perhaps the first mission was the most scary. Part of my squadron made a shallow V split, and suddenly a large burst of flak hit the other group and knocked off the left wing of one plane. I saw the plane spiral down, down until I could not see it any more. No chutes came out. I was terrified. I remember later, I wrote in a diary about how the flak was really heavy. Many missions later, when the flak was really heavy, I wrote in the same diary, that it was moderate, just moderate. That first experience paled by comparison to the later ones, but as a first experience, it's impact was strong.

Perhaps in reality, the truly worst time was the mission giving logical

support to General Montgomery near the Rhine River and without direct fighter support. (*Wesel, Germany, March 24, 1945*) We took all guns and anything we could possibly remove—we literally stripped it. We also took a skeleton crew, and then filled to the brim with supplies. The job of all but the pilot and co-pilot was to kick, shove and push all the supplies out the open bomb bay door of a plane only a very few hundred feet above the ground—the supplies had no chutes. We came very close to the tops of trees, and you could see Germans firing with machine guns, while holding women as hostage

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shields. You could hear the tac-tac-tac of the bullets as they strafed the bottom of the plane—much too close.

*(Ed. Note: Two planes were lost on that mission: The 67th Squadron lost the entire Leonard Crandell crew. The 506 Squadron lost eight members of the Max Chandler crew: Two were injured but survived—Robert Vance and Louis DeBlasio. Anibal Diaz fell from Joplin Jalopy while unloading supplies. He was KIA.)*

In February, we were returning from a mission when we ran into a strong cold front and very heavy snow. It was so heavy that you could not see the outboard engine and barely, the inside one, and the wind switched direction dramatically, and radio contact was lost. It was a time of severe testing for a young navigator. Fortunately, by dead reckoning, some knowledge of meteorology and luck, we got back to England and the base safely. Finally some respect for us navigators!!

Perhaps the strangest thing that happened involved a skeleton crew of 4 of us going to a special base in southern England that had a 1 mile long

runway to accommodate planes where the hydraulic system had been knocked out. As we approached to land, a red flare went up. I was sitting between the pilot and co-pilot, and asked what that was all about. They did not seem to know. As we landed and the nose was coming down, we did not stop on the nose wheel, but kept on falling until suddenly, we were on the nose wheel itself. Fiery streams and flairs of sparks flew everywhere, and a horrible screeching noise overwhelmed us. We hit the crash bars and skittered down the runway for what seemed like an eternity until the plane finally stopped. I thought it was all over, all the way. The pilot and co-pilot were dressed down because they were supposed to know what a red flare meant. I got hell too, but not as bad, and the engineer got busted. He apparently really did not check the gear "down and locked". So we picked up one plane and left one behind—not as planned, and not the best of success.

*Ed. Note: Apparently a red flare means, you will have a problem if you land. That was before cell phones were invented.*

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### **RALPH BECKER REMEMBERS THIS ABOUT SHIPDHAM:**

The cherry red stove pipe in the Quonset hut—you either roasted like a chicken or froze like a fish.

A naïve 19 year old (me) being chased around in the snow by a young woman left over from a base dance. She was sicced on me by my 'good' flying buddies. I finally got smart and reversed the roles.

Having tea and crumpets with my English girl friend and her mother and father (naturally) beside a coal burning fireplace in the living room.

V2 rockets screaming over the skies of London.

A few sailings on the Great Yarmouth and the broads with an old wind-up record player on board "singing" away with big band music.

Being conned into believing that the Grant Scotch on the table during debriefings was rot gut stuff, and not good for a young man. Later I got even when the cognac was offered. At least I had heard of that, so I had that plus a little for later.



## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**



The Savannah reunion is sadly our last one. We did have quite a nice turnout—some 90 total with 19 veterans. We could have made up two crews, but would have been lacking 2 radio operators and one navigator. The only problem would have been that many of us would have trouble fitting into our old positions.!!!

The reunion was in the same hotel that we were at for the 1998 reunion when we dedicated the Ploesti diorama. We also did the same venues. Jackie and Lowell Roberts, who did a great job in organizing this reunion, did not know that the hotel in 1998 was a disaster. However it had been completely remodeled and was a very different place with a large hospitality room and nice banquet rooms. They sure would not have picked it in that year!!!

We did have a nice ceremony at the Mighty Eighth Museum. The Roberts organized a service in the memorial garden Chapel there, followed by a firing squad and playing of taps—all quite moving. Then we viewed the Ploesti diorama which has been added to with a video presentation of that mission. The only disappointment is the presence of the B-17 with only the nose section of our B-24 along side. Visitors, however, can see that the Lib was much more roomy than the Fort!!!

If some of the great second generation who have been faithfully attending our reunions in the past several years would like to arrange an informal get-together, I am sure that some of us who are still able would come!!!

As voted at last year's meeting, we are scheduled to dissolve this association on Oct 1 2013. Many of the next generation have expressed a desire to keep something going. I would recommend joining the Heritage League of the 2nd Air Division. They have a fairly active organization, reunions, and their own publication and have the base of all 14 Bomb Groups to draw on. Their Membership VP—Marybeth Dyer. 1020 Glacier Ave. Pacifica, CA 94044 Tel 650-355-8383 [smbyer@bcglobal.net](mailto:smbyer@bcglobal.net).

*George Washburn*

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### **Lessons learned from Noah's Ark**

1. Remember, we are all on the same boat.
2. Speed isn't always an advantage. Remember, snails were on board with cheetahs.
3. Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.

## LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



Greetings once more from your old ETO base in Norfolk England. Station 115, Shipdham.

My letter this time is a little more personal than many of my previous letters and is in reality more about the 14th Bomb Wing and 2nd Air Division than the 44th Bomb Group itself.

A year or so ago I was introduced to an American film director Alejandro Mena who was putting together a movie about the crew of his father's B24. The plane was Irishman's Shanty and Alejandro's father flew as Radio Operator on the O'Sullivan crew. They were part of the 392nd Bomb Group and flew with the 14th

Bomb Wing out of North Pickenham, some 20 miles South West of Shipdham. Irishman's Shanty was the first of the 392nd's planes and crew to complete their 30 missions. This film is to be their story. The working title of the film is Crew 713, that may or may not be how it finishes up.

A lot of work has already been done in the USA including many hours of footage with the Collings Foundation B24. Many hours of film were taken inside the Collings B24, and almost the same amount of it airborne. There has also been a computerised animation programme devised that can put the Collings plane into an animated sequence 'as itself', so that should produce some seriously authentic looking sequences in the film. Obviously there will be old footage and some modern pieces cut together to make it all work.

One of the film's production units will be working in the UK over the summer this year doing background footage and recording some interviews with the English people who knew the O'Sullivan crew during their stay in Norfolk. (and indeed they two are generally of the same age as the crews themselves.

There is a web site [www.crew713.com](http://www.crew713.com) that tells you more than I can write here, but I suggest it is well worth a look. In it you will see the Production Company have been kind enough to list me in the credits as one of then unit's historians, and recent e-mails and phone calls indicate that I may be needed to do a piece to camera, though quite what is needed I have not yet been told.

Again it is great to be able to assist with keeping the memory alive of those of you who flew out of England on those dark days all those years ago. It is projects like this that will help future generations understand a little more what all the guys in the Army Air Force did for us, and perhaps give them something to think about. Let's hope so.

Best wishes as always from Shipdham.  
Peter

## THE WORST MISSION I EVER FLEW

By Norman R. Chown, 506 Sq.

One mission I can never forget; it was just like it happened yesterday—The Tirstrip A/F in Denmark.

It started out with the briefing officer stressing that the target had to be visual. The target was in German occupied Denmark. "You are not to bomb through clouds or fog or smoke. You must be able to see that target. Under no circumstances do we want to harm or hurt any of the Danish people. The people of Denmark are our friends, and we must take great care to protect them. If you cannot drop the bombs at the target, there is a designated area in the North Sea. We do not want you to attempt a landing with bombs on board."

The mission seemed simple. Some would call it a milk run. To me, the worst part was the coming and going. It was over the North Sea, and I always felt uneasy, flying over water in a B-24. The plane was not known as a great plane for ditching.

There was also the "humor" that the North Sea was so cold, a downed flyer could not last longer than 20 minutes on the warmest day of summer.

As a Radio Operator, I had a special job on this mission. I was to monitor the SOS frequency #500, and do anything I could to assist a plane in trouble.

At the proper time, we took off, formed and headed for the target. Once we were over the North Sea, I switched to the 500 frequency to listen for SOS.

I had expected to hear Morse Code, and it surprised me when I heard a voice that had to be German calling "Actung Luffwaffe" over and over.

I thought, "Oh Hell! They know

we're coming and we're going to have fighters for the whole mission." I repeated my fears to the crew, and told them to keep an look out for enemy fighters. In my youth, I called them Bandits!

We flew at least 3 hours to get to the target in Denmark, and every 15 minutes or so, the German voice called for "Actung Luftwaffe". Each time, I imagined we were going to go down in that cold, cold, cold North Sea. I begged those gunners to keep their eyes open.

I activated the bombs by removing the cotter keys, long before reaching the target. I wanted to make sure we could get out of there as fast as possible if necessary.

When we got to the target, it was not visible—just 100% cloud coverage. I hoped we would get out of there as soon as possible. But no, the leader was hoping the clouds might go away, so we flew around for a while, waiting for the target to get visible. I figured this would be my last mission. If the Luftwaffe didn't get me, we would run out of gas, and the cold North Sea would do the job.

Eventually we headed back to the base, and we arrived at the place to drop our bombs. I was exhausted from fear—fear of nonexistent enemy planes, and fear of the North Sea. I did not replace the cotter keys in the bombs, and when they hit, they must have given a real thrill to a lot of fish.

At the de-briefing, I told the officer about the Luftwaffe calls, and the fears I had. He then put the knife in and turned it good.

"Sorry gentlemen," he said.

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"Because there was no enemy action, flak or planes, this cannot be counted as a combat mission, and you get no credit." Some days were like that!!

So I spent six hours experiencing fears of a nonexistent enemy action, which of course, brings to mind FDR's warning about Fear. (His words did not occur to me at any time during those six hours.)

*Ed. Note: Will Lundy recorded this trip to Denmark took place 2 April 1945. Norman Chown flew 20 missions, and returned safely to the ZOI. After the war he became an Attorney and Public Defender.*

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**EDWARD MAZER REMEMBERED FREDRICKSHAVEN  
AS DO MANY MORE MEMBERS OF THE 44TH BOMB GROUP  
18 MARCH 1944**

Col. John Gibson was in the Lead Ship. The target was cloud covered. We were at 18,000 feet. The Lead Ship decided to go to the Secondary Target. As we were preparing to leave, the clouds disappeared, and Col. Gibson decided to hit the Initial Target. But... we came in at 18,000 feet again. This proved disastrous. The Nazis had us zeroed in, and all hell broke loose. I cannot remember how many planes were lost, but one was too many. My memory is that planes were falling all around us. German fighters were taking their toll, but we managed to get back to Shipdham intact.

I have always wondered why the Colonel went right over the target at

the same altitude. I see in the Journal, that Col. Gibson also remembers this raid, but a little differently than I do!!

*Ed. Note: T/Sgt. Edward Mazer was a radio operator on the Gilbert Abell crew. They were flying in Judy's Buggy.*

*Will Lundy's report: The target was the Manzell Air Armaments, and it was hit with good results, but at a high cost. Eight planes failed to return to Shipdham; fortunately, six had made it safely across Lake Constance into Switzerland. They were interned, but many escaped and returned. The 506 Squadron lost 2 planes with 6 KIA and 13 POW with 1 injured; 1 gunner evaded & returned.*

**The only difference between a Tax Man and a Taxidermist  
is that the Taxidermist leaves the skin.**

Mark Twain

*The irony of life is that by the time you know your  
way around, you're not going anywhere.*



## **TAIL GUNNER FORREST S. CLARK REMEMBERS FLYING INTO GREENLAND, ENROUTE TO SHIPDHAM WITH THE ROCKFORD GRIFFITH CREW**

It had been bad weather much of the way from Goose Bay, and we had to pinpoint our approach and landing to the BW1 runway that was backed by a glacier. There was thick fog, and it had been snowing as we approached. For what seemed like a very long time, we searched for the correct opening to find the airfield.

We had been briefed about the extreme hazards of flying on approach to BW1, but no briefing could have prepared us for what we saw—or did not see— as we groped in the Greenland fog for the runway.

**Abe Sofferman** (Radio Operator) and I had reeled out the training wire antenna to tune in to the Greenland frequency, and Abe was taking it easy in the rear while I was up front in the small radio compartment, and had earphones on listening to the ground station at BW1. Suddenly there was a tap on my shoulder, and **William Weatherwax** (Co-Pilot) said, "We're coming in." Immediately I glanced through the small window and saw towering icy cliffs all around us.

I flicked the reel-in switch to retrieve the trailing wire, but it was too late, and the next thing I felt was the bump as we hit the runway. The trailing wire snapped off, sending the metal fish flying. All at once I had a shock, as the antenna wire hit the pavement of the runway. I pulled off my hand and reported, "We just lost the antenna."

When we taxied in to our assigned space, Griffith and Weatherwax said nothing, but someone on the ground must have reported it, because an officer came over and asked who was responsible for the accident—having the trailing wire out. I had to admit it was I. Then I caught hell from the ground crew

The next day **Harold Hammon** (LWG) gave me a firm lecture about teamwork. Then we all tried to climb the glacier, along with Jim McMahan of the crew following us. So much for BW1, a cold place in nowhere. The Eskimos were off limits, although there was a native village near the base. All I could think of 'what was I doing in this God-forsaken place in the middle of snow and winter coming?

### **CAPT. ROY BOGGS AND THE MISSION TO HARBURG**

Capt. **Roy Boggs**, 68th Sq.: On our mission to Harburg, 17 January 1945, we encountered intense flak; and on returning, counted 317 holes in our plane. The Elevator Control Cable was severed in the waist section, but the Auto Pilot was OK. We flew on it until our 19 year old Engineer (Joy F. Rehmel) spliced it together with some copper wire and a piece of trim tab cable. I recommended him for a Distinguished Flying Cross, which he received.

Since our trim cable was gone, I had everyone we could get into the rear of the plane for landing. I still have the cable splice which was given to me by the mechanic who repaired it.

*Ed. Note: The Database credits this mission to Cologne. Harburg must have been a nearby target.)*

## THE ARMY HERITAGE EDUCATION CENTER IN CARLISLE NOW OWNS A B-24 (IN CANVAS)



Perry, Lois & Mike

The presentation was made by Perry Morse and Lois Cianci to Mike Perry, Executive Director of the Center. It is hanging in Mike's office, and any B-24 admirer is welcome to come and view this piece of art.

**Avenger** was painted by a well known artist, Mike Nelson, in honor of **Alfonso Terwey**, Waist Gunner on the plane, and a tribute to all the brave men who made the ultimate sacrifice for us all.

Nelson did the research on the fate of the men on **Avenger's** last flight:

"On 16 December 1943 the Avenger was heavily damaged over Germany by a flak burst in the bomb bay of the aircraft, knocking out the #3 and #4 engines and all communication with the crew in the rear half of the A/C. After ordering the four crewmen in the front to bail out over Germany, the pilot attempted to fly the heavily damaged plane back to their base in England in an effort to save the crewmen in the rear of the plane. Once over England, he attempted to crash land on a beach south of Hull, England. Unfortunately, the pilot didn't know that the beach had been mined, and all aboard perished."

*Editor's note: Mike Nelson is a retired U.S. Marshal Chief. He is an accomplished painter, and his works, including this painting can be found at [Nelsonfineart.com](http://Nelsonfineart.com)*

The **Avenger** arrived in Shipdham in September 1943, and was assigned to the 66th Squadron; a year later, was transferred to the 68th Squadron. She flew 37 missions, including such awesome missions as Kjeller, Kiel, Ploesti, Wiener Neustadt and Foggia.

Nelson's painting was in honor of a family member, **Alphonse Terwey**, Right Wing Gunner, who was KIA, but also for all airmen who sacrificed in WWII. Five members of the crew bailed out and became POW: **John Griffin**, Co-Pilot; **Anthony Piccolo**, Navigator, **John Buckholts**, Bombardier; **Chester Martin**, Radio Operator and **Patrick Fries**, Engineer. The men in the rear of the plane did not get the 'bail out' signal. The Pilot, **Parke Jones**, was KIA, along with **Michael Zdonick**, Hatch Gunner, **Wilson Besse**, Left Wing Gunner and **Gordon Rhodes**. Tail Gunner.

## **ALGENE KEY (66TH SQUADRON) AND THE AVENGER**

One of the most famous names in early aviation was **Algene Key**. He and his brother Fred set an endurance record, flying 653 hours and 27 minutes on a noisy trip around their hometown of Meridian, Mississippi. (That record was never broken until the astronauts went into space.) Fred & Algene were early innovators of air-to air refueling. When WWII began, both brothers attempted to join the AAC, but were rejected, even though these two barnstormers had flown more miles than any other airman on the planet. Both were color blind! After further thought, they were accepted.

Algene flew four missions with the 66th Squadron, the third was on the *Avenger*. The target was on Romilly-Sur-Seine in France. The formation was attacked by German fighters, and his Right Waist Gunner, **Wilmer G. Lund** was mortally wounded.

Key saw maneuvering space, and did something only the most skilled and courageous pilot would and could do. He drove directly into the path of the fighters, forced them off their course of attack, and into position where Liberator guns were able to get direct hits.

After his 4th mission, he was considered too valuable to risk losing. He was called from combat and assigned to educating young pilots who would be entering the war.

**Bob Lehnhausen** remembers Major Key—"As a new pilot, when I found myself in the same Squadron and in the same room with my boyhood hero, Algene Key, it was unbelievable to me."

*Algene Key was the first airman to be awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He also received the Distinguished Service Cross, British Distinguished Service Cross and seven bronze stars.*

*Wilmer Lund was the first man in the 44th to lose his life to enemy action.*

**SUCCESS IS THE ABILITY TO GO FROM  
ONE FAILURE TO ANOTHER WITH NO LOSS OF ENTHUSIASM.**

Winston Churchill

**EXPERIENCE IS NOT WHAT HAPPENS TO A MAN, BUT WHAT A  
MAN DOES WITH WHAT HAPPENS TO HIM.**

Anonymous

**AMERICA'S VETERANS HAVE SERVED THEIR COUNTRY WITH  
THE BELIEF THAT DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM ARE IDEALS TO  
BE UPHELD AROUND THE WORLD.**

John Doolittle

## WIENER-NEUSTADT EVOKES A LOT OF MEMORIES

When **Richard E. Tuttle**, Radio Operator on A/C 42-72077, read that **Robert L. Disalvio** had folded wings, he was reminded of the two years he spent with Disalvio and **Donald Bridges** sharing a cramped space in a corner of Barracks 37-B in Stalag 17-B near Krems, Austria. (Bridges & Desalvio were on *Fascinatin' Witch*, piloted by **Richard Bridges**, who managed to escape and return to Shipdham.)

The pilot of Tuttle's plane was **Thomas Hopson**. The first fighter attack knocked out the plane's intercom, so they lost contact with the rear or nose section. Also, #4 engine was hit, and a fire started in the wing behind it. The tail section was also hit, so controls became difficult. A climb to the right began, which could not be controlled with the #4 engine feathered and #3 redlined (maximum power).

The next attack hit the nose and cockpit, knocking out autopilot controls. The plane went into a spin; the pilot lowered the flaps to control the spin, permitting six members of the crew to bail out at about 5,000 feet, Tuttle among them. Four were KIA.

When the Russians reached Vienna in the spring of '45, the Germans marched the prisoners west in the famous March of the Kriegies. Tuttle was able to escape the first day of the march, and met the American forces near Friasteut, Austria on VE Day.

Tuttle remembers other awesome experiences, including the Ploesti Raid. He was flying in *Mister 5 x 5*; tracers filled the air on the bomb run. Major **James Beam** piloted that plane, as the regular Pilot and Co-pilot were ill. They got through that mission unscathed.

Tuttle had also survived two plane crashes, previous to his mission to the Messerschmidt plant at Wiener

Neustadt. One was in Benghazi—caused by on-tail skid. Fortunately there were no injuries. The other was at Shipdham, caused by the collapse of the nose wheel. He was sent to the hospital, but rapidly recovered, except for the memory, of course.

*Ed. Note: After all of those awesome events, relived over and over, Tuttle became philosophical; he wrote a book: **Nevada City & Beyond, an Unscripted Life**. It begins it with memories of Benghazi:*

Benghazi, Libya, 1943. What a mess. In the beginning, there were the Arabs, destitute remnants of the imperious Ottoman Empire; then came the swaggering Italian conquerors dreaming of the glory that once was Rome; then came the Brits, bombing and shelling their way into town, and kicking the Italians out; next came Rommel, bombing and shelling his way into town and kicking the Brits out; then came Montgomery, bombing and shelling his way into town, and kicking Rommel all the way out of Africa; and finally came the Americans, quietly jeeping their way into the ruined city, seeking a base from which to bomb Romanian oil refineries.

Tuttle remembers dysentery, presumably caught by eating grapes contaminated by natives using human waste for fertilizer: A nasty disease, this dysentery is a lingering chronic illness which can resurface after years of latency. The treatment for it in the Libyan desert in 1943 varied greatly. The afflicted would report to sick call, unsure whether he would see Major X, who prescribed paregoric (an opium-derived euphoria-inducing drug welcomed by a sick soldier) to tighten him up; or, on the other hand, Captain

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Y, who firmly believed the thing to do was to flush out offending surfaces with castor oil...

We had flown down from England, past Gibraltar, to attack Nazi oil fields in Romania. Leaving Cornwall we flew over the Bay of Biscay, confident we were too far out to sea for Nazi fighters; all available space was so stuffed with spare parts and supplies, we did not even try to man the guns, leaving us utterly defenseless. This lax practice was corrected after June 1943 when a long-range German fighter—a Junkers 88 twin engine plane—shot down an unarmed transport, killing British actor Leslie Howard.

We rehearsed the low-level raid over realistic mock-ups of refinery targets, set up in the desert with the help of British engineers who had designed and built the original facilities not long before, when the world was at peace.

When not engaged in such practice runs, we helped with plane maintenance, since we had left our full deployment of mechanics and repairmen behind in England, taking only the few who could fly down in our planes. I remember one day that our pilot, Captain Rebich, said, he had been told that our chances of surviving gunfire on the low-level raid depended on how fast we could fly,

getting over the target in the least time possible, and that a clean plane flies faster. Figuring it was worth a try, our whole crew spent a day under the hot desert sun, scrubbing dust and dirt off the wings and fuselage, using aviation fuel as the cleansing agent... no small chore with a 110-foot wing span and the B-24's fat fuselage.

Tuttle's evaluation of the Ploesti Raid: As to Ploesti's spot in history, no one ever claimed that Doolittle's raid inflicted on Tokyo any greater damage than a gnat attacking an elephant's rump. But no other B-24 raid is accorded such prominence in history texts. (Just what is hell is this supposed to prove? I'm damned if I know, except that the Muse of History is neither fair nor reasonable.)

*Ed. Note: Tuttle's book is a history of his early life and the people who helped shape his attitudes. He spent five years writing this treatise. In many ways, it points out America's weaknesses and bad decisions, but ends in an optimistic note that America's ability to exist as a harmonious society, which may somehow be adopted by the whole world.*

*Nevada City & Beyond, An Unscripted Life can be purchased at the Comstock Bonanza Press, Grass Valley, California.*

From the U.S. Air Force Manual: It is generally inadvisable to eject directly over the area you just bombed.

The rescuer sees the bloodied pilot and asks, "What Happened?"

The pilot's reply: "I don't know. I just got here myself."

From a Basic Training Manual: Airspeed, altitude and brains. Two are always needed to successfully complete the flight.

## **ALEX ZIEL A/K/A ADOLPH ZIELENKIEWICZ BOMBARDIER/ GUNNER ON THE DONALD HESKETT CREW 66TH SQUADRON, REMEMBERS TWO REALLY BAD MISSIONS**

*(He changed his name because Adolph was an unpopular name for a Bombardier/Gunner in WWII; furthermore, his 13 letter last name was too long.)*

**18 November 1943**

The mission was to the Heavy Water Works in Norway, and the airmen were told that the enemy was busy developing a 'super bomb', and that this mission was of utmost importance. The enemy was busy developing a super-bomb, a bomb of unbelievable power, an atomic bomb!! We were warned of the possibility of encountering a new experimental type of Nazi long-range interceptor aircraft. It was to be a long, long trip over the North Sea under winter conditions. If you go down at sea, forget about hope.

We reached Norway just fine. Our group of 3 squadrons stayed in tight formation. No enemy fighters. Target straight ahead. Started the bomb run. Light flak. On the approach we were caught by a burst of flak off our right side. We continued the bomb run successfully. On the turnaround, #4 engine started sputtering and smoking. Then it died. Oh! Oh! We're in trouble. We were a long, long way from England! Many hours and hundreds of miles over the frigid North Sea!

What to do? Pilot's decision. 2 choices: #1 Reduce airspeed to conserve fuel for the long flight back to England. This, of course, meant dropping out of the group and losing the protection of the formation. #2 Stay with the formation and trust to luck. Our odds were very poor, one or the other. Pilot chose #2, Luck.

We departed Norway in formation of 3 squadrons. Things looked good after 3 hours or so. Pilot said, "lunch time. Smoking lamp is lit." I got out of my gun turret. What a relief! But I couldn't forget that we were on 3 engines, guzzling fuel fast. I went back to behind the pilot's seat, underneath the top gun turret. The engineer stayed in his top turret.

After lunch, I lit a cigarette. Rat tat tat!! Sounds of gunfire! Our engineer was firing his machine guns at Nazi interceptor aircraft. I put out my cigarette pronto and rushed to my battle station. We had been attacked by three German twin-engine fighters. Their craft had the capability of firing guns forward, and also had a set of guns to fire rearward. That way, they go into the bombers firing forward, pass forward; then the rear gunner flies rearward. There were three fighters, one pass each. No hits, them or us. A quick fight, but scary. That, plus the thought of running out of fuel over the frigid North Sea!

Finally, after long hours and hundreds of miles over the icy sea; finally, we saw land ahead. England! Then one of our three engines gasped and conked out—out of fuel. We found an airfield, but when approaching, another engine gasped, grunted and died. With one engine remaining, we were losing altitude fast. The runway was dead ahead. Chug! Chug! Fourth and last engine died. DEAD SILENCE! THUMP! THUMP! A B-24 bomber landing safely on 4 dead engines is almost unheard of. A crash is the usual thing.

Our pilot, **Dick Harleman**, made the right decisions that brought the

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*Devastatin' Diplomat* in safely from an exceedingly long and dangerous mission.

Zeilenkiewicz's evaluation of the experience: In war, your life might depend on the other guy's making the right decision.

*Ed. Note: Zeilenkiewicz's memory of the pilot and plane differ from the official records. Records indicate that Donald Heskett flew that mission, and the plane was Bull of the Woods. Devastatin' Diplomat is not listed among 44th BG A/C, and Dick Harleman is not credited with this flight. However, I chose to use the author's version of the Kjeller mission. Total truth is shrouded somewhere in history!!*

September, October, November, December 1943—this was the time the 8th Air Force started flexing its muscle in a big way against Nazi Germany, in the expectation that victory would soon follow. Out of 550 B-24 Liberators that raided the Ploesti Oil Refineries, 55 did not come back! We were losing 1500 aircrew members per week! German air defenses were much stronger than our generals thought.

Our bombers were missing their targets; Nazi fighter pilots and anti-aircraft batteries were shooting us down. They were the Ace, and we were the Bulls eye! B-17s were being lost at 4% per raid; that's one out of 25! B-24s were being annihilated at 5% per raid, or one out of 20! Our combat crew quota was 25 missions. You figure out what our aircrew member's odds were!

30 December 1943. Briefing. Target Ludwigshaven industrial complex, Rhineland. My regular combat crew was not called, but I was. I was a replacement for a bombardier-gunner who was sick. I was a stranger in this crew of '*Bull O' the Woods.*' Altitude 18,000 feet. Hey, Nazi anti-aircraft

gunfire is god-awfully accurate at 18,000 feet! I asked myself, do the generals and planning staffs know what they're doing? Our usual altitude was 28,000 feet.

Mid-morning takeoff, all 3 squadrons. We had Spitfire escort into France, F-47 Thunderbolt escort across most of France. F-38 Lightning twin-engine escort was supposed to take over. We were 100 miles from the German border, but we could not see any. I'm in my gun turret, alert, hands on controls, eyes wide open; guns are armed and ready. I'd swing my turret slowly, left, right, searching for aircraft, any aircraft. Blazing sun at 2:00 o'clock PM was a blind spot. Interphone was quiet.

Then...BOOM! BANG! EARSPLITTING THUNDER AND LIGHTNIGH!!!! Flying shrapnel ripped the oxygen mask off my face. FLAMES!!!

Three FW-190's, Hitler's best fighter aircraft attacked us from out of the sun. None of our 10 crew members saw the attack coming. That's how perfect these fighter pilots' positioning was.

Looking straight ahead, I couldn't see through the bullet-proof glass shield in front of my face. It was milky-white; a direct hit!! Something had tried to knock my head off!! Stinging icy wind was blowing in. Looking left, I could see we were in a steep downward spiral; both #1 and #2 engines were in flames. The pilot's voice came over the interphone, "Bail out! Bail out!"

I tried to point my turret straight ahead, so I could exit through the double hatch behind me. The turret wouldn't move—no electricity. In such a case, where the front gunner is trapped inside his turret, it is the Navigator's duty to use the manual crank in his compartment to enable the gunner to get out. No Navigator!

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It was do or die! It was almost impossible for me to turn around and squirm through the not fully-open escape hatch. I was weakening from the lack of oxygen. Fortunately, I was wearing a thin British parachute. (The American version was thick enough to have bottled me in for good!) I squeezed myself into the Navigator's compartment. Apparently the navigator had already bailed out. Thanks, buddy. The front wheel was down, wheel hatch open. I crawled into that hole. EXIT! Icy air. I had only enough strength to pull the ripcord. POP! Me? Unconscious, dangling in midair. MY LUCKY DAY!

I was awakened by the whoosh of a fighter plane that flew directly above me. Whoosh, another, only this one was below me, or was it in the same plane? I was hanging in my parachute somewhat crooked. Then I noticed that my right leg strap was open! Wow! I must have forgotten to relock it a couple of hours ago when I plugged my electrically-heated flying suit. I heard anti aircraft fire in the distance; shooting at our bombers. I looked down—straight down to a forest! What do I do now?

*Lt. Ziel landed in a tree. He was able to extricate himself, follow instructions about hiding his chute, and look for help. Since the bombing was planned at 18,000 feet, he wore walking shoes. His escape kit had a compass, maps, French and Spanish money, but no food. Luckily he passed some farms where fresh vegetables—tomatoes & turnips. After lunch he walked to an inhabited area—the village of Juvigny, where he used his best French to accost a man, saying, "Je suis Americain. Povez-vous m'aidez?" The man ignored him. He worked up the courage and knocked on the door of a house. A voice inside said, "Kto to jest, hohana?"*

This was Polish. I am Polish! I blurted, "Jestern Amerikanin." I was welcomed. The host farmer and his wife sat me down at the dinner table. The man in black was a Catholic priest invited over for dinner—roast duck, freshly baked dark bread, boiled potatoes and turnips.

*Ziel's newfound friends directed him to an apartment in Soissons, a long walk at night, but he evaded Germans and arrived at the assigned apartment house. His host was a fortyish Pole who immediately gave him a place to sleep. He slept until noon. This was December 31st, so he and his newfound friend spent New Year's Eve together with a bottle of vodka.*

*His next stop was in Paris where his Polish Underground hostess was Pani Zojsia. Her husband was a courier for the Polish Underground. He traveled between Paris and German-Occupied Poland. He usually returned to Paris in a month, but this time he was seven months late.*

*Word of Ziel's plight went to the French Resistance; but always, the word was 'wait'. During that period he encountered German soldiers, to whom he showed his fake ID.*

*From there he moved to another apartment where he encountered three other American flyers, also two British military agents, freshly arrived by parachute. During that time, there was information that the Germans were killing Jews, but nobody believed it.*

The Nazis were doing a very effective job of concealing their DIRTY LITTLE SECRET—genocide of six million Jews—man, women and children.

It took a couple of months for the Paris escape apparatus to work. I was housed and fed by the Polish Resistance, then transferred to the French Underground. 13 of us evadees

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traveled as a loosely spread-out group via passenger train to the city of Foix in southern France, at the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains. This was around March 1, 1944.

The train ride was uneventful... A German Army officer was passing through the car. He looked left and right, cheerfully saying, "Goot Morgan. Goot Morgan." One of our guys, a Flying Fortress tail gunner, unknowingly and cheerfully replied, "Oh, Good Morning, Sir." I cringed. Luckily Fritz didn't get it. He kept on going, saying "Good Morgan."

The end of the line was Foix. We had been warned not to get near the exits, to stay scattered inside the station... wait for a signal. I walked around at a slow pace, eyes and ears open. A German soldier walked up to me, cigarette in hand and asked me if I had a light. I did: a French lighter for which I had swapped my old American Zippo lighter. I lighted his cigarette. He said, "Donkoo Shane" and went off.

The signal came. We followed the guide, slowly, one by one, into the same tunnel our train came out of. Must have been a half mile of hard rock. Very uncomfortable. Very dark. Some of us had flashlights. Finally daylight.

Our French Underground guide had taken us through the very tunnel from which the train had exited. He led us to a cave on the outskirts of the city. We entered the cave, and he instructed us to stay there until another guide arrived. "Don't show yourselves; don't make sounds that could be heard outside".

What an uncomfortable place to be! Just a little bit of daylight...hardly any dry spots to sit on. If we sat on the ground for a few minutes, we got chilled. So we stood until we couldn't stand any longer. We waited and waited. Night arrived—no rescue. It was hell on earth.

*Ziel's remembers help arriving, warm food, warmth; his next memory was in*

*a barn with 12 other evaders. A French farmer was their host, and they received one mutton-potato stew per day. It was comfortable and congenial. They slept on hay, close together to conserve body heat- toe to toe, six on one side, 7 on the other. His companions were: a B-17 tail gunner, a full colonel, shot down on his first mission; an Ace Spitfire pilot—shot down for the second time; an American fighter pilot. The majority were 1st and 2nd lieutenants—2 English, 1 Dutch, 10 Americans, most B-17 & B-24 combat crew members.*

*This group knew they had to walk across the snow capped Pyrenees Mountains. There was no road, no path, mutton-stew with potatoes and dark bread every day, and melted snow for water. The Tail Gunner had a problem keeping up, so they left him, with instructions how to press forward. Neither understood the other's language, so Ziel served as interpreter.*

*...Optimism was as strong as other; we all treated each other with respect and decency...brotherly and helpful attitude toward each other...all friends.*

Toward the border, we stopped at an old farmhouse to pick up our new guide, a Spaniard. Our French guide's job was done. Back to Paris for him. The new Spanish guide and our French guide were trying to come to some agreements between them, and can you believe this? Neither understood the other's language!! I served as interpreter. By that time my French wasn't bad, and I remembered my two years of Spanish in high school.

On March 13, 1944, our group of Allied Air Force combat crew evaders crossed the border of Nazi-occupied France into Andorra, the independent little tourist country between France and Spain, high up in the Pyrenees.

FREEDOM AT LAST FROM THE NAZI THREAT!! MOST OF OUR PARTY WENT BANANAS, SHRIEKING, JUMPING, SCREAMING, YELLING, HOORAY. Then on to mucho grandioso—a hotel to stay in...beds to sleep in...world’s best food...cigarettes...wine. Our true hosts in absentia were the British Intelligence and the British Embassy. Oh how good was that wonderful Spanish chow! Never before had I tasted food so gloriously delicious!

Next destination was Seville, then Barcelona. We arrived at the right time to join the Barcelona citizenry at the Arena for BULLFIGHTS.

Next stop: Gibraltar, then Casablanca Air Force Base. Then England.

*Ed. Note: Alex Ziel’s picture will be placed in the Musee de Resistance. This museum in Gratenois, France, honors the French Underground. Did you escape captivity with their help? They would like to have your picture & story.*

**LT. NORMAN NUTT’S HISTORY IN THE CARLISLE RECORDS**



Perry Morse presented a folder of Norman Nutt’s WWII experience to Michael A. Mira, Registrar, on the Soldier’s Walk at the Army Heritage Education Center in Carlisle, PA.

Mira looked at the carbon copied messages, written on very thin paper

(wartime fare before computers were invented) and was reminded that things were very different, 65 years ago. The folder had details about Nutt’s history since entering the Air Corps until his discharge after the war was over.

Morse and Mira were standing near a line of red bricks, many festooned with the Flying Eight Ball over the names. The 44th Bomb Group is well represented on the Soldier’s Walk.

Norman Nutt was a pilot in the 66th Squadron. According to the Database, he flew 19 missions from January to April 1945. He flew one mission into

France, and eighteen into Germany, bombing marshalling yards, railroads, airfields and oil refineries. Many missions were in a very popular plane, *Glory Bee*.

**Old age is like a hot bath. The longer you stick with it, the more wrinkled you become.**

## RADIO OPERATOR MAX VEITCH AND HIS MEMORABLE JUMP

On our 18th mission, we were flying a PFF ship to bomb an air field at Neuberg, Germany. We lost 2 engines over the target. We called for fighter escort, but could not get any. We then proceeded to head for our own lines. We had to throw out all unnecessary equipment in order to stay airborne. We were somewhere near Stuttgart, Germany when there was an explosion. I was in the bomb bay throwing out equipment when I felt the explosion and realized the ship was in trouble, and felt like it was going down. It happened so quickly that I had time to only buckle one side of my chest chute to my harness and jump out of the plane. As I was floating down in my chute, I saw three German 109's following the ship down, and did not see it hit the ground. I saw only three other chutes.

I landed in a small wooded area at the top of a hill. It did not take the villagers long to get up the hill and find me. They had double barreled shotguns and pitchforks with them. I was captured alone, as the other three men landed across a large river near another village. I was put in a room in a house, and did not see who the other men were until that night when I was put into a car with them. We were put into a small jail cell in a village somewhere for a few days with only bread and water to eat.

After about a week or more, they

took us to a train station in Stuttgart and sent us to the German town of Goppingen, where there were four German Hospitals. We were put into a room with German soldiers until we were liberated. Our Tail Gunner died in the hospital and was buried in a cemetery not far from the hospital. We were liberated on 21 April 1945 by the 44th Infantry Division of the Army.

Report by **Will Lundy**: The crew of #42-51907, 66th Squadron, piloted by **Robert Podojil** was the single loss on this mission to the Jet Plant Assembly Factory in Neuberg, Germany. Losses were: **Robert Podojil**, (KIA); **Frederick Ritter**, Co-Pilot (KIA); **Dudley Chase**, Navigator (KIA); **Walter Crane**, Bombardier (KIA); **Bernard Bail**, Radar Navigator, (POW, wounded); **Theodore Reichenback**, Engineer (KIA); **Max Veitch**, Radio Operator (POW); **William Clark**, Nose Gunner (KIA); **John West**, Right Wing Gunner (KIA); **Walter Mosevich**, Left Wing Gunner (POW); **Norbert Schmitz**, Tail Gunner (POW, wounded, died later).

According to Lt. Bail, they were the Lead Ship on this mission, and were attacked by fighters. They called for fighter support, but it was not available. The pilot attempted to fly back to friendly territory, but was not able. It was the first time Bail had flown with this crew. It is believed that Dudley Chase had been killed by civilians.

### CAN YOU REMEMBER THESE LONG-GONE ITEMS?

Black Jack Chewing Gum, Wax Coke-shaped bottles with colored sugar water, candy cigarettes, home milk delivery in glass bottles with cardboard stoppers, Howdy Doody, S & H Green Stamps.

Here's a bit of Trivia: 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.

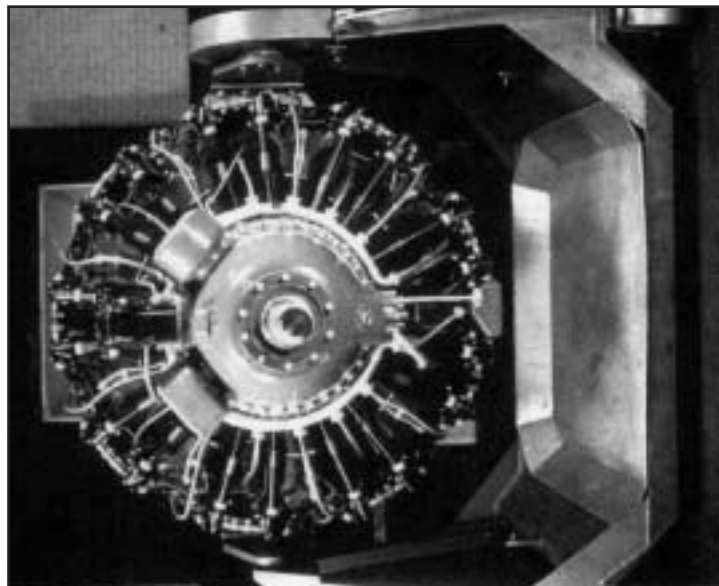
From the Infantry Journal: If you see a bomb technician running, try to keep up with *him*!



## SPEAKING OF THAT GREAT PRATT & WHITNEY ENGINE:

Chris Clark, grandson of a 44th BG veteran found a full page advertisement in the National Geographic Magazine, June 1944. Referring to the Ploesti raid: "The medals waiting for them are the least these men of our Air Forces have coming to them. They deserve more than our cheers—they deserve the very best we can give them to work with... We know that every shining Pratt & Whitney aircraft engine that rolls from our plant marches straight into a brand-new Liberator bomber... We aim to give that bunch the very best there is."

*Ed. Note: 65 years later, the Pratt & Whitney engine is a proud exhibit in many historic museums in the country.*



Pratt & Whitney Engine

## SOME OF THE CREWS THAT WON THE WAR



67th Squadron: The Lester Hundelt Crew, not individually named. **Adolph Hofferber**, Co-Pilot; **Darrel Hagenah**, Navigator; **J. J. Renzl**, Bombardier; **Harry Moss**, Radio Operator/Gunner; **Joseph Chabra**, Engineer; **Byron Nelson**, Right Wing Gunner; **Jack Porter**, Left Wing Gunner; **Benjamin Conroy**, Tail Gunner. (Third from the left is Jack Porter) *(The critter on the officer's shoulder is a live pet raccoon. Apparently they couldn't find a dog or cat.)*



From Dorothy Guerra, daughter of **Richard (Dick) Coward**, this picture of the **Robert (Bob) Seever** crew, 68th Squadron: Front Row L-R: **Albert Pschirer**, Engineer; **Charles "Leon" Daughtry**, Radio Operator; **Richard "Dick" Coward**, Nose Gunner; **Charles A. Olewine**, Waist Gunner; **Harold Whitten**, Waist Gunner; **Lee R. Denham**, Tail Gunner. Back Row: **Robert "Bob" Seever**, Pilot; **Hugh C. Maxwell**, Co-Pilot; **Donald "Don" Jenkins**, Navigator; **William "Bill" Zoellmer**, Bombardier.

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On 30 September 1943, the **Arthur Ledford** crew (66 Sq.) was on a mission to Marshalling Yards in Hamm, Germany. My Sad Ass was hit by flak, the Tail Gunner was KIA; all other members of the crew became POWs.

Not individually named: **Arthur Ledford**, pilot; **Harold Armstrong**, Co-pilot; **James Tomblin**, Navigator; **Richard Pascal**, Bombardier; **Edward Sharp**, Radio Operator/Gunner; **William Wrights**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; **Fred Wiener**, Right Wing Gunner; **Pervis Bertolio**, Left Wing Gunner; **Harry Starr**, Tail Gunner.



The **Edgar (Jay) Spencer** Crew (67th Sq) Front Row L-R: **Henry Fishbone**, Radio Operator; **Eddie Picardo**, Tail Gunner; **Thomas (Tommy) Stewart**, Armament Gunner; **Robert (Bob) Burdick**, Belly Turret Gunner; **Peter (Pete) Moskovitis**, Engineer; **George Schofield**, Waist Gunner. Back Row L-R: **John Beavers**, Navigator; **Frank (Mike) Colella**, Co-Pilot; **Edgar (Jay) Spencer**, Pilot; **William (Bill) Crean**, Bombardier.



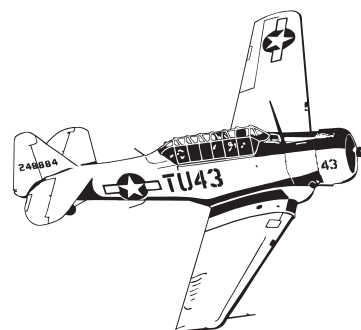
## TOM PARSONS' BULLET

By Martha Pedersen

In 1942 you could buy just about anything in London. **Tom Parsons** had heard all the theories about how to stay alive during the war. The one that captured his interest was, "The only bullet you have to worry about is the one with your name on it."

Knowing that most people had no control over that, Tom decided to do something about it. During his first pass to London, Tom bought an unexploded 20mm German aircraft cannon shell. It was perfect! He kept it safe until he could get back to Shipdham where he made it his own. A visit to the paint shop—and "Tom Parsons" was painted on that bullet. Carrying a potentially live shell

in his parachute bag seemed like a bad idea. A member of the ordnance crew removed the powder. Tom now had a safe shell, with his name on it, to carry with him on every flight. It must have worked. Tom finished his tour and returned home. The bullet with his name on it is still part of his memorabilia collection.



"A Little Friend"

## SAVANNAH AND THE 44TH BOMB GROUP REUNION



Lowell & Jackie Roberts

As the time drew near for the Reunion, and only a handful had registered, Jackie Roberts burned up the phone lines, reminding people that the 44th BG Reunions are the best way to celebrate a noble organization.

Ft. Jackson changed its format: in 1998

an opportunity to revisit the Chapel, and attend a service, honoring those who served and did not return. Tom Parsons led a small service honoring his late wife Sarah. Her son and best



a very rebel-sounding man explained the purpose of it being built. It was to keep the British from going up the river to Charleston during the 1812 war. This time they showed us the mechanics of loading and firing a cannon. Among the dubious decisions that were made was placing the powder room high on a hill. Fortunately, it never got penetrated by enemy arms.

Lunch at the Crab Shack was different—a wonderful opportunity to view a whole bunch of small alligators, and a chance to dine on alligator meat. **IT TASTES LIKE CHICKEN!**

The Mighty Eighth Museum provided



friend remembered Sarah as a kindly woman and a fervent activist. (During the Civil Rights Movement, she was threatened by the KKK.) Tom placed Sarah's ashes into a vault behind the chapel.

All of us would have loved more time at the Mighty Eighth, but the time spent there was exhilarating. The Ploesti Diorama with low flying planes and high reaching flames



Sign of Mighty 8th Museum

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Back Row, L-R: **Stanley Reed**—68th Sq. Waist Gunner; **Arthur Holt**—66th Sq. Bombardier; **Don Williams**—67th Sq. Adjutant; **Charles Tilton**—68th Sq. Bombardier; **George Washburn**—68th Sq. Pilot; **Dick Hruby**—506 Sq. Pilot; **Sterling Dobbs**—68th Sq. Pilot; **Jack Schiffer**—44th Medium Bomb Wing, Barksdale 1950's; **John Clark**—67th Sq. Pilot; **Chris Spagnola**—67th Sq. Pilot; **Frank Schaeffer**—506 Sq. Flight Engineer (Evadee); **Joe Lentz**—67th Sq. Tail Gunner.

Front Row L-R: **Tom Parsons**—68th Sq. Waist Gunner; **Tony Mastradone**—67th Sq. Medic; **Doug Hobbs**—67th Sq. Waist Gunner (POW); **Jerry Folsom**—506 Sq. Co-pilot; **Nathan Woodruff**—506 Sq. Flight Engineer; **John Gately**—67th Sq. Waist Gunner; **Perry Morse**—506 Sq. Tail Gunner; **Lee Aston**—67th Sq. Navigator.

were clearly demonstrated. The video alongside told the entire story—starting with the decision of FDR and Winston Churchill to go for the oil fields as a means of slowing the Nazi war machine. The men who made the decision to tackle the assignment by low flight were highlighted, along with the problems that ensued en route. The number of losses, the valor of the airmen and the presentation of awards were all part of the video story. It was marvelously recounted. The late President **Roy Owen** would be delighted. He had found the artist and arranged for the diorama to be installed.

Here we lined up our veterans—all 20 of them for a picture in the photo gallery.

*Chris Spagnola, Lee Aston and John Gately were on the same crew.*

*Jerry Folsom, Nathan Woodruff and Perry Morse were on the same crew.*

Three shots and a bugler paying taps

were a somber ending to the visit at one of the world's truly great historical museums.

With a skilled Captain in charge, Savannah River Cruise provided a great opportunity for food and a view of this historic stream. We passed the famous statue of the girl who couldn't break the habit of waving to all who floated by!!

The Bus Tour through Savannah was a study in hundred year old trees, tales of famous people, statues of Confederate Generals, and homes shared by slaves and owners. They lived on different levels, and entered through separate doors. The driver did not hesitate to remind the BG passengers, that this country did not always provide 'justice to all.'

*If you would like a full pictorial review of the Reunion on a disk, contact Tom Wolf. He supplied many of the*

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*pictures in this report. 2400 South Meadowlark Drive, New Berlin, WI 53151-3166.*

L/Col. Scott Crogg, Commander of the 44th Fighter Group and L/Col. Kent Furman, Deputy Commander joined us at the Banquet. Col. Crogg was the spokesman, and he talked about the history of 44th BG, having obviously studied its glorious history. Both men helped with the citing and pinning of belated awards, also the honors bestowed on deserving members.

**Tom Parsons** was presented a plaque for his longtime efforts on behalf of 44th BG in supporting the Mighty Eighth Museum.

Both **Sterling Dobbs** and **Charles Tilton**, faithful Board Members, were honored for their steadfast aid in promoting the 44th in all projects.

**Arlo Bartsch** was honored for using his technical skills to expand the Web Page of the 44th, carrying its history around the world. Unfortunately, Arlo could not join us, so we missed an

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L/Col. Furman



L/Col. Scott Crogg

opportunity to remind him he flew the wrong plane—the Fortress!

Vice President and Historian **Roger Fenton** could not be present to accept our gratitude for his services. He was given a plaque and a desk-size B-24. Out of recognition for his great research capabilities, the BG purchased a brick for his father at the Army Heritage Education Center in Carlisle. **Milton Feinstein**, was a Navigator; he flew two tours with the **George Insley** crew.

President **George Washburn** declared he did not want a plaque and did not need a model B-24—typical gifts for deserving leaders. However, he did not say ‘no etched glass plate’, so he was presented one. George fell into the presidency after attending only one Board Meeting! When our beloved Paul

Kay unexpected folded wings, George stepped in, and demonstrated true leadership skills. A glass plate with a picture of his favorite plane, Corky, is a small repayment.

Jackie & Lowell Roberts got a fervent ovation for their service as Treasurers,



Ruth & George Washburn

but also for their success in orchestrating this magnificent reunion in Savannah, and others in the past. Jackie later confided, she could not speak, she was so overwhelmed

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with the applause. Later, they sent this message:

"Jackie & Lowell would like you to know what a Great Honor it has been, to put on reunions in the past six years for the Greatest Generation — WWII. We have belonged to the 44th Bomb Group for 11 years. NOT long enough. We have enjoyed knowing every one of you.

"We miss Roy Owen and Will Ludy. They got all the information possible on Jackie's father. She went from having one picture of him to two large

suitcases full of information on him. And thanks to Lee Aston - all of his medals.

"All of you will always be in our hearts. We will be there to help in any way we can until we write the last check in 2013."

Our Best to all, Lowell and Jackie  
The hotel provided plenty of opportunities for serious or light conversations, even music for those who couldn't keep their feet flat on the floor!



**This was supposed to be the last reunion!!** As it happens, a number of second generation members want to rethink that decision. Read the ***8 Ball Tails*** for an update!

## THE 2ND AIR DIVISION'S CRUISE TO BERMUDA 44TH BGVA

The Royal Caribbean's ship, *The Enchantment of the Seas*, managed the choppy ocean around Cape Hatteras, and only two people got seasick. Reportedly, the waves were higher that night, than when Hurricane Irene was hurling her winds at the restless sea!

Perry Morse, Vice President of the 2 AD, was the sole passenger from the 44th Bomb Group, but he was never lonesome. Among those thousands of passengers, it was easy to spot a fellow airman. The 2 AD presented jackets to all members. Their logo was boldly visible in the back.

A Disney-like train transported the island-curious veterans to the Mall and other noteworthy sites on land. After a quick look, however, most returned to enjoy the amenities on the boat. A few brave young folks enjoyed snorkeling and kayaking, but always got back in time for supper.

Five Brits joined the veterans: **Matthew Martin**, Chairman of the Memorial Trust Board of Governors; he was accompanied by his wife, Patricia: **Andrew Hawker**, Governor on the Trust Board was accompanied by his wife Andrea: and **Libby Morgan**, Librarian at the 2nd AD Memorial Library in Norwich.



Andrew Hawker



Matthew and Patricia



Libby Morgan

Libby presented a detailed description of the activities in the library, where many groups gather to learn of "The Friendly Invasion," which was the arrival of the Americans to their shores. English children learn of American legends, such as Johnny Apple Seed, and tales of the American west, including Cowboys & Indians. College students can browse through books that show American history, geography, customs and much more.

The Memorial Library is an integral part of the culture of Norwich. It was the reason for the 2nd Air Division to unite, and creation of this Library was their goal.

After the Banquet featuring Lobster and other delightful sides, the 2 AD reconvened for the Candle Lighting Ceremony. Charles Walker, President, presented a check for \$10,000 to Matthew Martin to be used for ongoing care of the Library. Certificates of attendance were presented to every veteran.

This reunion, purported to be the last, was so successful, members decided to hold one more. It will be in Chicago, the place where they first met and decided to build a Memorial Library. Members couldn't resist taking one more look at their roots. More information will be available as the plans unfold.

## AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

### LAST REUNION BANQUET AWARDS, SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, OCTOBER 16, 2011

Three belated medal awards were made to 44th BG veterans at the Sunday night Banquet ceremonies. Guest Speaker, Lt. Col. Scott Crogg, Commander, 44 Fighter Group, Holloman AFB, NM, and Lt. Col. Kent B. Furman, Deputy Commander 44th FG, made the medal award presentations to the recipients

**2nd Lt. Russell G. Erikson, 68th Squadron, of Quincy, Massachusetts, was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross *in absentia*** due to Russell's emergency hospitalization immediately prior to his scheduled flight to the Savannah Reunion with his four sons and one daughter. Lt. Col. Kent Furman, Deputy Commander of the 44th Fighter Group, Holloman AFB, New Mexico, read the belated DFC Citation in Lt. Erikson's absence. The DFC award was a correction for a 1945 AF clerical error originally intended to award Lt. Erikson the DFC for extraordinary achievement in flight on his #12 mission, January 14, 1945 to Hemmingstedt, Germany. 1st Lt. Erikson subsequently was awarded a belated DFC/OLC#1 on 10/06/08 for completing a tour of missions. Russell Erikson became airplane commander of the aircraft, Louisiana Belle, on exhibit, at Barksdale AFB.

Russell Erikson reported in late October that he had been released from the hospital and is recovering.



Lt. Col. Furman, left, reads the DFC Citation for 2nd Lt. Russell Erikson *in absentia*. At right, Lt. Col. Crogg, CO, 44th Fighter Group, Holloman AFB, NM (Photo by Mary Aston).



Ca Dec. 1944: 2d Lt. Erikson receiving Air Medal from 68th Squadron Crogg, CO, 44th Fighter Group, Holloman AFB, NM.

**#2nd Lt. John E. Clark, 67th Squadron co-Pilot of Belmont, N.Y., was awarded an Air Medal/OLC# 1** for his missions flown # 6 to #11, flown between 4/4/45 and 4/20/45. He was co-pilot on the Raymond Zamoni crew. Lt. Col. Kent Furman, Deputy Commander, 44th Fighter Group, read the Air Medal Oak Leaf Cluster Citation for Lt. Clark's distinguished service and Lt. Col. Scott Crogg, Commander of the 44th Fighter Group, Holloman AFB, New Mexico, pinned the Air Medal/OLC#1 on John E. Clark.

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Lt. Col. Furman, left, and Lt. Col. Crogg, CO, 44th Fighter Group, presented 2nd Lt. John E. Clark with the Air Medal/OLC#1. Clark's medal was Director Aston's (right) 101st successful belated medal claim. (Photo by Mary Aston).



2 Lt. John E. Clark, ca 1945, Co-Pilot, 67th Sqdn. 44 BG (1945 photos courtesy J. Clark & family friend Debbie Wight).

**S/Sgt. John Gately, 67th Squadron, of Huntington Beach, California, was appointed a Chevalier /Knight of the French Order of the Legion of Honor by order of President Zarkozy of France signed June 1, 2011.** 44th BGVA Director Lee Aston, a chevalier of the Legion of Honor, nominated Gately to receive the Legion of Honor medal in Feb. 2008 along with seven other 44th BG veterans. The seven others were inducted in 2009-2010, but Gately's nomination became "lost" in the French 'pipeline' until 2011 when it was finally recovered and approved. John Gately was a waist gunner on the Spagnola-Aston crew.



John Gately received his "diploma"/ certificate of appointment to the French Order of the Legion of Honor. He will be formally inducted with his medal presentation by the Los Angeles French Consul later this year. (Photo by Martha Pedersen).



Sgt. John Gately, a waist gunner flew 35 missions with the 67th Squadron. Several were on the venerable B-24, Limpin Ole Sadie. After combat and return to Stateside, John attended Officers Candidate School (OCS) and received a 2nd Lt's commission to be a gunnery instructor. (Photo ca 10/1944 by Lt. Aston).

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**MORE BELATED COMBAT MEDALS TO COME:** Because Savannah was our last reunion, Director Lee Aston announced the claims list of veterans' names and medal awards that are presently pending with the Air Force Board of Corrections for Military Records (AFBCMR). There will be no more opportunities for Reunion medal presentations. However, when and if the filed, claimed belated medal awards are finally approved, Director Lee Aston will make proper presentation arrangements at some Air Force Base near the recipient's home or at the recipient's home if he is home-bound. In the event of a *post humus* medal award to the veteran's family, presentation arrangements will be made at the nearest AF Base.

ALL THE FOLLOWING CLAIMS HAVE BEEN FILED FOR OVER A YEAR & WAITING  
Beginning in 2009 with the current, new, "change" occupant of the White House, review priority for WWII veterans belated medal claims ceased; denials of all claims became prevalent and very difficult to overcome.

<b>Claimant name / Squadron/ position/ deceased</b>	<b>medals claimed</b>	<b>original</b>	<b>filing date 1st refilling</b>	<b>2nd re-filing</b>
1st Lt. J. Wright, 68 Sq Bombardier	DFC, AM/ OLC#5	5/6/09	2/01/10	4/27/11
1st Lt. Clarence Thompson, 68 Sq Navigator, deceased	DFC	5/6/09	5/19/11	
2nd Lt Charles Taylor, 66th Sq Co-pilot,	AM, Purple Heart	3/29/10	2/05/11	
T/Sgt. Marvin Bolton, 506 Sq, Radio Operator, deceased	AM/OLCs #4 & 5	3/23/10	4/09/11	
S/Sgt. William Croft, 68th Sq, aerial gunner	AM/OLC #4	5/30/10	4/02/11	
S/Sgt. Harold Davis , 67 Sq , aerial gunner	AM/ OLC # 4	8/06/11		
2nd Lt. George Gaudaen, 15th AF, 301 BG, Navigator, deceased	BRONZE STAR	2005	7/14/09	3/19/11





## S/SGT JOHN BLEDSOE AT KIEL

**John Bledsoe**, Rear Hatch Gunner on **Malcolm C. Howell** crew. 68th Squadron remembers arriving and departing from Shipdham. I came over on the Queen Mary, traveling with ground support personnel. (I did not fly across with my crew because of an emergency leave -the death of my brother.

After receiving inoculations and preparing legal documents, we were transported to the docks for boarding, and get our first view of New York Harbor and that huge liner, the Queen Mary.

After about 6 days of 'zig zag' course changing across the ocean, we entered the Firth of Clyde on the Scottish shore. We finally docked and found several trains waiting to carry us to our operating base, Shipdham, near Norwich in the lowlands of Southeast England.

With freshly constructed runways, we found mud everywhere. After a familiarization flights around England, we initiated small bombing missions against French coastal (German occupied) airfields and submarine installations. We were escorted by British and Polish flown Spitfires. The RAF got tired of being shot at by our gunners and the Germans. (The Spitfire 5 and the Messerschmidt looked a lot alike, especially from a frontal view. The Germans quickly learned that this frontal attack was the most effective and safest (for them).

On some of the early missions, **James O'Brien's** crew lost both their Navigator and Bombardier. M/Sgt. **Norius Crislan** took the Bombardier's slot, and I took the Navigator post. After several missions to the sub pens at Brest, St. Nazaier, France, airfields on the coast and at Paris, we hit the sub facilities at Wilhelmshaven, Germany. Wilhelmshaven was a very important base, and was heavily defended. WE lost several planes, mainly due to fighters, as we had no escort for this mission.

My last mission, 14 May 1943 was Kiel, Germany, which was on the Baltic Sea. It was a very important sub base. About seventeen of we B-24s were backed onto the main B-17 force. In 'zig zagging to avoid overrunning the 17s, we overflew the Island of Helgoland, a German Flak School. Our plane took a hit in the bomb bay, and fighters knocked the Tail Gunner out of his position. We staggered over the target alone and dropped our bombs, turned off the target and bailed the crew out.

The survivors were taken prisoner by the German ground forces.

We were taken to a Prisoner of War Interrogation Center at Frankfort for two weeks, then to the main camp, Sagan, close to the Polish border. We remained there, except for four months at Stalag VII-A near Moosberg.

We were 'liberated' from POW camp on 29 April 1945 by elements of Gen. Patton's army. We departed Camp Lucky Strike, France in a convoy of small sea transports. During the voyage to New York, a lead vessel hit an iceberg. This threw the convoy into turmoil. We finally regrouped and continued the voyage into New York Harbor, where we received medical exams and a month's pay. After that, we went home.

*According to **Will Lundy's** records, **James O'Brien**, Command Pilot, became POW. **Malcolm Howell**, Pilot, and **Harold Van Oven**, Rear Hatch Gunner were KIA.*

*Seven of 21 planes were lost at Kiel. From the 44th, the 67th Squadron lost **Miss Delores**, **Annie Oakley** and **Little Beaver**. The 68th lost **Rugged Buggy**. The 506 lost **Wicked Witch**. **Scrappy**, (66th) had one member become POW, but later was repatriated. **Margaret Ann** (68th) had 3 slightly wounded, 1 KIA; **Victory Ship** (68th) had one wounded, but returned.*



## JOSEPH BEARDEN'S MISSION TO LAGENHAGEN

*Lt. Bearden was the Navigator on the Lt Eustice Hawkins crew. They flew across the pond in EZ-Duzit, delivered it to the Aircraft Pool, and never saw it again. From there they went to Shipdham and were assigned to the 506 Squadron. Since Lt. Hawkins suffered from chronic ear problems, after a few missions, along with the Bombardier (Lt. Albert McCloud, the crew was reassigned to Lt. M.D. Mendenhall's crew for the tour completion.*

"A mission I will never forget was Easter Sunday, 8 April 1944. I was asleep in the four man BOQ room with my crew members when my friend **Vernon Brockman** (Co-Pilot on Lt. **R. H. Marx's** crew. Crept into the dark room, loudly announcing his presence. Vernie told me he was scheduled to fly, and that he was going to be shot down, and that he wanted me to mail the cigar box he was holding to his wife. At that time we both had four missions, and when I suggested that he talk to the chaplain about his premonition, he stressed that it wouldn't make any difference, that he was going to be shot down anyway. I went to breakfast and to briefing with Vernie, all the time trying to convince him to talk to the chaplain. At the briefing I learned that the 44th was leading a maximum 8th AF strike against Brunswick with a feint toward Berlin. (The briefer emphasized to stay away from a concentration of flak at the Hanover railyards.)

"As I remember, the 44th lead pilot was a captain with Ploesti experience, and that the Navigator and Bombardier were deemed to be the group's best. I don't remember the name of the Command pilot. Scheduled in the #3 position off the lead (sometimes referred to as the purple heart corner) was a pilot (Lt. **B. L. Scuddy**) that I had never heard of. Later I learned that Scuddy's crew needed a

Navigator, so being anxious to complete my tour—I volunteered!

"I later learned that S/Sgt. **Wallace Robison**, a waist gunner on my regular crew had been 'drafted' as a replacement gunner for Lt. Scuddy's crew. We were flying in *M/Darling*.

"The mission seemed routine until we started the feint toward Berlin, and the Luftwaffe mounted a wolfpack fighter attack against the 44th, diving from 11:00 and 13:00 o'clock, spraying the formation with 20 mm cannon fire. (I have never heard an accurate count of the fighters the Luftwaffe used in the attack, but saying several hundred would seem safe.)

"The exploding 20 mm cannon shells were really a fireworks display. Some of the fighters passed within a few feet of the formation. During the attack, the 44th lead pilot did violent evasive action; and to this day, I don't know how Scuddy managed to stay on the lead's wing.

"During the excitement, I was thrown against an ammo can, tearing a hole in my flight suit and gashing a superficial wound in my butt. (Of course my wound healed, but all through the years, I have kept the torn flight suit as a souvenir.)

"The Nose Turret Gunner panicked, never firing a shot through the attack and bolting to the flight deck, announcing falsely on the intercom that he had been shot. At this point in time, I am not sure whether we lost an engine during the fighter attack or on the bomb run.

"Vernie Brockman's premonition was right. He was shot down in a flat spiral. I was able to count only seven chutes. (I learned later that all ten crew members got out and were captured.)

"Battle casualties in the nose of the lead aircraft during the fighter attack probably explains why we made the

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bomb run on Frankfort instead of our briefed target at Brunswick. The briefer was right—there was a concentration of flak around Frankfurt. The bomb run with the continuous flak barrage was nerve wracking—possibly more so than the stress during the massive air attack prior to the bomb run.

“Scuddy did an amazing job of keeping up with the group on three engines. About every two minutes, one of the good engines would backfire. I didn’t know Scuddy at the time, but I figured he had to be a Texas mule skinner, otherwise he couldn’t have known the language he expressed on the innercom following each engine backfire. The engine quit on the final approach when power was reduced for landing at our home base.

“Feeling thankful to be safe on the ground didn’t ease my agitation re the panicking nose turret gunner. I wanted to see him court-martialed, but I was further frustrated when the powers-to-be didn’t seem to be interested. I later learned a possible reason for their obvious lack of interest was the fact that Lt. Scuddy, contrary to 44th group policy, had been sent on a combat mission with his crew without first flying a combat mission as a Co-Pilot with an experienced crew.

“My second frustration dealt with our making bomb run on Frankfurt rather than Brunswick. Following my challenge, I was told that bomb release photos confirmed my allegation. (In my later years I have always wondered if official reports confirmed that we hit the wrong target—bombing Frankfurt rather than the briefed target.) As I recall, the 44th officially reported 11 aircraft shot down. However, the Squadron ‘scuttlebutt’ was that only about 10 of the 35 aircraft initially launched were flyable after battle damage was evaluated.

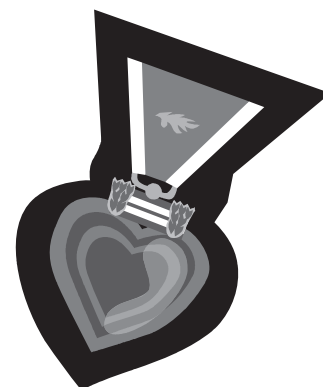
“During the dark days following the 8 April 1944 mission, the 44th was blessed

to have top-notch commanders when the chips were down. L/Col. **James McAtee**, 506 Sq. Commander, Colonel **John Gibson**, 44th Commander and General **Leon Johnson**, 44th Combat Wing Commander, were commanders who represented ultimate leadership qualities that helped us get through the adversity.

“I identify my Easter Sunday mission, 1944 as “The Day Blood Ran in the Bomb Bay”. Each year on 8 April, **Wallace Robison** and I make telephone contact, so that together we can express our thanks for another year of life.”

*Will Lundy’s report: More so than the disasters at Ploesti and Foggia, 8 April 1944 was the worst single day. The 44th was led by 389 BG aircraft equipped with Pathfinder equipment. With them as Command Pilots were Col. **John Gibson**, Group C.O. and Capt. **Robert Lehnhausen**, 68th Squadron C.O. The primary target, Brunswick, as well as the secondary were obscured by a successful smoke screen, so Langenhagen Airdrome, a target of opportunity was bombed instead. 44th gunners claimed 12 enemy A/C, 6 probables and 1 damaged. The 44th formation was severely attacked and lost 11 A/C. It was the worst loss of the war for one mission by the ‘Flying Eightballs’.*

*Losses: KIA—40; POW—72; WIA-9; 1POW escaped & returned to Shipdham.*



## **SQUADRON COMMANDER BOB LEHNHAUSEN REMEMBERS TOM PARSONS' COMPLAINT**

At one of our early reunions of the 44th, held in Rapid City, S.D. there was this very youthful, very handsome young man with an A-2 jacket that sparkled. Some gifted, artistic person had created an extremely impressive piece of jacket art.

As many of you know, in those early days the 44th Missile Wing was based at Rapid City. We had several reunions there because we were encouraged by the Base Commanders to do so. They always assigned one of the squadron commanders to be our liaison, and the use of Base facilities were guaranteed. On each of those reunions, a visit to the Mt. Rushmore monument was always on the agenda.

On this particular reunion, the plan was to visit the Monument late in the morning. We were always given a few hours to permit us to observe this massive piece of gorgeous sculptural art work. The National Park Service does an excellent job of making visitors welcome. They also sponsored a fine restaurant at the Visitor Center. The arrangement was that we were responsible for our own noon meal. At lunchtime approached, Liz and I were in conversation with **Tom Parsons** and his lovely wife Sarah. We invited them to join us for lunch. They accepted.

Prior to this visit I had no memory of Parsons. I was aware that he had been a member of the 68th. He was a Gunner who spent several months with us in the summer-fall of 1944. It was a time when we probably had 35-40 crews at one time. We were flying most every day, especially since H2X radar permitted us to defy the weather and gave us the opportunity to bomb without requiring visual contact with our target. It was not unusual for a

crew member to finish his required tour in as little as 90 days.

Please understand that the pace at which the war was moving, getting to know each and every crew member in the Squadron was very difficult. Unless you did something unusually well, or something unusually bad or dumb, you escaped my attention.

Shortly after being seated, it is my recollection, Tom told me that while he was in the 68th Squadron, he really did not like me. I was not startled or upset by that, but I sought to know what it was that had I done or did not do that caused his dislike. He then went on to tell me that on a particular mission, in the time between arrival at the dispersal area and time for engine startup, when the crew members are standing around after accomplishing their pre-mission chores, I had roared up in my Jeep, alighted and was engaged in a very harsh, animated conversation with his pilot. I did not remember the nature of the conversation, but he thought it was unbecoming. Fair enough.

I then asked him to tell me who his pilot was for that day. He told me, and I smiled.

I have just told you that it is difficult to recall every crew man who served with us. However, I well remembered the young officer whom he named.

I had, as a C.O., developed a plan where I met every couple of weeks with all of my pilots and co-pilots. This meeting was often held every other Sunday afternoon in my quarters. I believed that the pilots were the most important members of each crew. My goal was to make sure that by good communications and intense training, we could make as certain as possible,

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that our crews survived. I conveyed to them the latest information available, and it was understood that they had the opportunity to ask questions. I felt the process worked very well, with exception.

After one of these meetings, in the portion devoted to questions, the young pilot whom Tom thought I had addressed too harshly, stated he had two questions. Fair enough, fire away. The first was, he wanted to know why on one of the Sunday evenings in which fried chicken was served, that at the time he got to the mess hall, all that was left were necks and backs! Of course, this caused a burst of laughter among the pilots assembled. It was unnecessary for me to respond. One of the pilots questioned him as to what time he got to the Mess Hall. As I recall, they served the evening meal from 4:30 to 6:00 pm. The obvious correction of that was that you don't spend so much time at the bar, and get to the mess hall earlier.

OK, now for the second question. He was concerned that there was a lack of military courtesy among the enlisted personnel on the base. They were not saluting him, and he thought something should be done about it. Not by him—but somebody with greater authority.

That one I chose to answer. I had noted that he was not very good at military courtesy himself. It was not very difficult, as an officer, to note when the enlisted man was saluting grudgingly. From personal observation of this individual, it was my belief that only grudgingly did he salute his military superiors...and I told him so.

This also caused most of the pilots to laugh. Having served as an enlisted man, I fully understood that this saluting business was a constant bother to the troops.

At this point **Sterling Dobbs**, who by that time was a more senior pilot in the Squadron, and was serving as an Assistant Operations Officer, called the officer by his name, and stated, "Ed, the next time you take off, I will get the ground crews to line up on each side of the main runway and salute you." Of course, a belly laugh was held by all.

Certainly, Tom Parsons was unaware of why his young pilot was not one of our brightest lights, nor a favorite of mine. But I did and still do remember him.

*Ed. Note: Bob Lehnhausen was too much of a gentleman to reveal this officer's name, so neither will I. If you are really curious, ask Sterling Dobbs. His e-mail is [b24dobbs@cvctx.com](mailto:b24dobbs@cvctx.com).*



## **MAIL & E-MAIL**

### **From George Washburn: An English Thanksgiving, 1942**

American soldiers followed in the footsteps of 17th-century Pilgrims and sat in the pew of Miles Standish. (By THOMAS FLEMING) With Americans in uniform serving all over the world today, the idea of them celebrating Thanksgiving abroad does not strike anyone as unusual. With Americans locked in a world war in 1942, it certainly was.

The hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops fighting the Axis powers in North Africa, the South Pacific and Europe celebrated the first global Thanksgiving as best they could, in the steel bulkheads of a warship's mess or the canvas of a jungle tent. England—teeming with American soldiers and sailors and airmen, ready to defend our ally against a possible German invasion and beginning preparations for an assault on Nazi-conquered Europe—was another matter.

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In those dark days, Americans took special pleasure in displaying their homegrown holiday to the Mother Country. The English were dubious at first but slowly realized they were being invited to share in something very special.

Helping to win them over was an extraordinary act of generosity very much in keeping with the spirit of the holiday. Merchant ships had carried tons of frozen turkey across the submarine-infested Atlantic for the big day. Then the Yanks announced they would donate all of it to the thousands of British war wounded in hospitals. Instead they would dine on roast pork and eat plum pudding for desert, alas without the standard rum sauce. "The quartermaster failed to deliver the rum," a newsman reported.

Americans also took advantage of their holiday abroad to walk in the footsteps of the Pilgrims who created the first Thanksgiving in the New England wilderness in 1621. One officer sat in the pew once occupied by the legendary Miles Standish, the Pilgrim's military leader, in the small parish church at Chorley, in the county of Lancashire. The Chorley town hall flew an American flag on Thanksgiving Day—the first time in their long history that the citizens had ever honored the flag of another nation.

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**U.S. Army Cpl. Heinz Arnold warms up the pipes in London's Westminster Abbey.**

The Lord Mayor of Boston, in Lincolnshire, invited 100 American servicemen to be his guests for a modest wartime dinner. Afterward, a senior officer laid a wreath on a memorial to five pre-Revolutionary War royal governors who had been born in the historic city. An American private laid another wreath in the cold dark cells where some Pilgrims were confined in 1607 while trying to escape to religious freedom in Holland.

Even more thrilling to those with a sense of history was a visit to Southhampton, where a U.S. Army detachment stood at attention before the pier where the old freighter, Mayflower, was fitted out for her trans-Atlantic voyage. At Plymouth they visited the quay from which the Pilgrims boarded. Not far away, the Archbishop of Canterbury conducted a service in the ruins of St. Andrew's Church, where some of the Mayflower's passengers prayed before they began their 3,000-mile voyage. Virginia-born Lady Astor was on hand for these ceremonies, calling Americans "my compatriots" and joking with a Southerner from Georgia, Private Billy Harrison, about their superiority to "damn Yankees" from New York.

The most dramatic ceremony was in London's Westminster Abbey, where English kings and queens have been crowned for centuries. No British government had ever permitted any ritual on its altar except the prescribed devotions of the Church of England. But on Nov. 26, 1942, they made an exception for their American cousins.

No orders were issued to guarantee a large audience. There was only a brief announcement in the newspapers. But when the Abbey's doors opened, 3,000 uniformed men and women poured down the aisles. In 10 minutes there was not a single empty

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seat and crowds were standing in the side aisles. One reporter said there was a veritable "hedge of khaki" around the tomb of Britain's unknown soldier of World War I.

Cpl. Heinz Arnold of Patchogue, N.Y., played "Onward Christian Soldiers" on the mighty coronation organ. With stately strides, Sgt. Francis Bohannan of Philadelphia advanced up the center aisle carrying a huge American flag. Behind him came three chaplains, the dean of the Abbey, and a Who's Who of top American admirals, generals and diplomats. On the high altar, other soldiers draped an even larger American flag.

Their faces "plainly reflected what lay in their heart," one reporter noted, as the visitors sang "America the Beautiful" and "Lead On O King Eternal." The U.S. ambassador to Britain, John G. Winant, read a brief message from President Franklin D. Roosevelt: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord. Across the uncertain ways of space and time our hearts echo those words." The Dean of Westminster and one of the Abbey's chaplains also spoke. "God has dealt mercifully and bountifully with us," the chaplain said. "True, we have had our difficulties . . . but all of these trials have made us stronger to do the great tasks which have fallen to us."

Throughout Britain, the first global Thanksgiving gave men and women from the New World and the Old World a much-needed feeling of spiritual solidarity. Let us hope that today's overseas service men and women can have a similar impact on a troubled and divided world. Happy Thanksgiving—and our nation's sincerest thanks—to them all, wherever they may be deployed.

*Mr. Fleming is a former president of the Society of American Historians. This article was adapted from his e-book, "An American Feast: Six Memorable Thanksgivings," just out from New Word City.*

### From Chris Clark, speaking for the Heritage League:

The Heritage League is an organization of second and third generation members of the 2nd Air Division. They are hoping that as veteran organizations—such as the 44th BGVA—close shop, that the young members will consider joining their ranks. Chris Clark, a descendant of a 44th BG flyer, has volunteered to help with recruitment. The web page for this group is: [www.heritageleague.org](http://www.heritageleague.org); scroll down to Membership, and fill out the form. If you have any questions, you can contact Chris at [Clarkhistory@aol.com](mailto:Clarkhistory@aol.com).

The Heritage League has a publication, *Heritage Herald*, that is full of WWII history. They have annual reunions, and have made a number of trips across the pond to view historic sites. They support the 2 AD Library in Norwich, but also are dedicated to preserving historic monuments of any of the bomb groups. Incidentally, veterans can join this group, but only as Associate Members, and they do not have a vote!

Rather than branching off into a separate group, our young members could consider joining this eager, well established organization.

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**William A. Rendell**, Navigator on the **Donald Heskett** crew (66th Sq.) has put his painful memories in a book, called *The Last Mission*. The crew was flying in *Bull O' The Woods* on a mission to Ludwigshaven, Germany. The target was the Chemical Works of I.G. Farben. The bombing was via PFF through clouds.

"Enemy fighters attacked from 3 o'clock, damaging controls. Heskett gave the 'bail out' order. Rendell remembers starting through the tunnel to go up on deck, but found that the bail-out dinghy in the passageway had snapped onto the pocket of my leather flying trousers. I finally got the other snap of the dingy free from its ring,

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and went out the nose wheel door with the dinghy still attached to me.

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

Seven members of the crew became Evadees and returned to Britain. Two were KIA. Because Rendell was proficient in French, the Underground detained him to help move American and British airmen. Unfortunately, the Gestapo found him and he became POW. His capture and later liberation are part of this suspenseful book.

Richard Rendell, son of **William A. Rendall**, has this book on a disk, and is ready for publication. Anyone interested in purchasing a disk can contact Richard at 44.sniper@live.com; or write 1449 Covered Bridge, Cincinnati, Ohio 95231.

.....  
 C. Mark Brown, son of S/Sgt. **Richard C. Brown**, Radio Operator/Mechanic/Gunner in the 705 Squadron of the 446 BG, asked Jackie Roberts how he could get a documentary by **Ursel Harvel**, about the Wesel Mission. To our delight, **Bob Vance**, had received a copy of that film when he returned to Shipdham after his ten day POW experience.

**Bob & Louis DeBlasio** were the only two survivors of the **Max Chandler** crew, flying in **Southern Comfort IV**.

The purpose of the mission was to drop off supplies to the British Paratroopers who had crossed the Rhine. The 44th losses were 2 planes,—including the loss of the crew in **K-BAR**, piloted by **Leonard Crandell**; and 1 KIA from **Joplin Jalopy**, when **Anibal Diaz** fell from the plane, while dropping supplies.

Brown will be receiving a disk, another will be placed in the Army Heritage Education Center at Carlisle. How fortunate that little pieces of history are safely stashed in the hands and minds of our veterans, and burst forth when needed.

Flight Officer **Joseph G. Meyers** (Co-Pilot on the **James V. Derrick** crew, 66th Squadron) to **Will Lundy**: "I remember being greeted by Lord Haw Haw on the day we arrived in Norwich." (*Lord Haw Haw was an Englishman living in Germany who taunted the airmen during and after their flights. The Brits executed him after the War.*)

"I remember the mission to Hallendorf, Germany 31 January 1945. They scrubbed the mission when we took off, and the weatherman told us there was an open space between the clouds at 8,000 feet. We (the entire 8th Air Force) went to 20,000 looking for this opening, and were then told the missions were scrubbed, and how we had to make our way out of this mess. We descended by flying a heading back and forth, others made a slow spiral down, and some just lowered the nose and let her go. We never saw any planes, but we sure did hear several pass by.

"One time a B-24 joined on our wing. We 'experienced experts' thought it was someone who had lost its group. It turned out this plane was being flown by Germans! Somehow they left just before we were on the final bomb run.

"We, along with the enlisted men, stole coal from the pile, in order to keep somewhat warm."

.....  
**Attention Armorers:** Kathy Reed, daughter of a veteran, would like information about activities of the Armorers in WWII. She knows they loaded bombs on the plane, but is aware that was not a simple procedure. How did you handle those dangerous weapons? It's time to stop being modest. Many times members of the 44th who did not fly combat believe their work was not important, therefore they did not record their memories. Wrong!! Everybody was important; otherwise, we would not have won the war!! Call me or write me some of the details of your job,

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and if you had a narrow escape, tell me about that.



.....  
 From Paul Oberlin: the man pictured in front of *Puritanical Bitch* in the Summer issue of the Tails is not the Crew Chief. It is my father, **Alan F. Oberlin**. He was working in the Radio Maintenance

Shop. His job was to change the crystal in the radio before each mission.

.....  
 From **Vern Brenn** to **Will Lundy** (In response to request for information about a crash landing on 16 March 1944) Brenn was the Tail Gunner.

"I just want to say that the memory of that day has been a very painful one for me. I sort of think that I've intentionally tried to forget it and block it out. I've always carried a sense of guilt about being one of the three who lived through it. All of the other seven were far more deserving to live than me.

We were a new crew in the 67th Squadron. Lt. **John Scarborough** and I had flown our first mission as spares on another crew. Lt. Scarborough flew that first mission as a Co-pilot, and I flew on the same crew as a Ball Gunner. That mission was to Berlin.

"The plane we were flying the day we crashed, trying to make it home, was *The Shark*. I'll bet you will remember this plane with the Shark's face and teeth. It had a lot of missions to its credit.

"The day we went down was mission number three for Lt. Scarborough and me. We had gone to Fredrickshafen, Germany, near the Swiss border. If I

remember correctly, the target was a ball bearing factory. Flak was heavy; and on our way to the target, we had to feather one engine due to oil pressure. We were still able to stay in formation and did complete the bomb run.

"On our way back to our home base, we lost another engine. We could no longer keep up with our group, and the P-38 fighters took turns escorting us back to the English Channel.

"By this time our fuel supply was about gone. I remember the pilot asking all of us on the crew, if we wanted to ditch in the Channel or try to make it to the English shore. We all said 'Go for the English shore'.

"Somewhere over the Channel we lost another engine, and started losing altitude real fast. The crew in front of the plane spotted a farmer's field, and we headed for it. At this time we were only about five hundred feet above the ground. The pilot and co-pilot were struggling to keep the plane in a position to crash, when I heard the last engine cough and die.

"I seem to remember a large bump and very loud crashing noises, then it must have knocked me out. When I came to and realized I was still alive, I tried to get out and run. **Jerry (Silverman)** and **Charlie (Landells)** carried me to a grassy place away from the wreckage, and went back to check on the rest of the crew. All were dead except **Bob Stickel**, and he was hurt so badly that I do not think they moved him. Some English farmers were the first to arrive on the scene. They called an English hospital for an ambulance, and they took Bob, Jerry, Charlie and me to the hospital. We were several days until they transferred all of us except Bob to an American Hospital in Southampton.

"We were told that Bob was too badly hurt to try to move him. A short time later, we heard he had died. All of this seemed so tragic, because Bob was a

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crew member on one of the planes that survived the Ploesti raid.

*Ed. Note; Charles Landells flew 3 more missions after the crash; Vern Brenn flew three more—one of which was the low level mission to Wesel, Germany. Will Lundy had a special interest in THE SHARK, having once served as Crew Chief on the plane.)*

.....  
 From Michael P. Faley, 8th AF Historical Society to Roger Fenton: The General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay have established a fund to help airmen and widows who are in serious need of financial assistance. There are no strings attached—just a genuine wish to help widows of Air Force Veterans. Jane LeMay Lodge, Daughter of Helen & Curtis LeMay has requested publications to let this information to be known. Contact can be made at MPFaley@aol.com and www.8thafhs.org

Curtis LeMay made history in WWII as a leader of the B-17s that went to Regensburg, Germany. On that day, the AF lost half of the 1,000 planes that flew that mission. When Germany surrendered, he led missions into Japan. After WWII, he established the Strategic Command, the means by which the USSR ultimately crumbled. The late Roy Owen called him "Iron Ass", and considered him one of the toughest leader he had ever flown with.

*Now his family wants him to be remembered for helping needy veterans and/or their widows.*

.....  
 From Sgt. Fred Willman to Will Lundy: The 987 MP Co. (Military Police Company) left for England on 28 December 1942. We sailed on the Empress of Scotland, a converted Ocean Liner that was originally on the Pacific Ocean as the Empress of Japan. We arrived in Scotland and went by train to Norwich, England. We were stationed at Horsham Street Faith (near Norwich). This base later was used by Col.

Zempke and his P-47 Fighter Planes.

We were assigned to patrol Norwich until we could be taken to Shipdham. That base was being built, mostly by Irish laborers from Northern Ireland. We were assigned to Site Nine. This was a long way from the Mess Hall! It was a common occurrence to have a German lady talk to us and tell us when the German bombers would be over us at night. They tried to bomb the runways that were under construction. So a lot of times, we spent in a nearby bomb shelter at night, and up to our crotches in cold water. But eventually, our base was ready and we got those B-24 Liberator bombers. Wow! What a day that was! With them there, the air above us was being controlled better, and we didn't have so many air raids.

I do remember one time that they came over and dropped Anti-Personnel Butterfly bombs. Then the English came and herded cows through the field to detonate them. (August 1943)

My company was increased in numbers, so we had detachments all over Norfolk County—Norwich, Shipdham, Kings Lynn, Bungan and Attlaborough. We patrolled the whole county as part of an elaborate Early Warning System.

At the end of the war in Europe, my company was again reduced to 210 men, and all but us went home to be re-assigned to the Pacific conflict.

I remained in England, and we moved base to base and to Scotland. I came home on the Queen Mary in December 1945. There I was rejoined with my child bride. We lived in Illinois, and that is where we raised our three children.

Looking back, I remember those bicycles we had to ride to the Mess Hall, and often used them at night to go to a Pub. After about one week, no one was riding his own bike.

We did not fly combat, but we did our part to win the war.



## FOLDED WINGS

*When 'mid the blest with God you rest, the grateful land shall bow  
Above your clay in reverent love a hundred years from now.*

Mary A. Ford

**Ennis, Lewis S. #20128** 67th Squadron 17 August 2010 S/Sgt Ennis was a Tail Gunner on the **George Haag** crew. Before coming to the 44th BG, he flew 22 missions with 492nd Group, 857th Squadron. His first of six missions with the 44th BG was 14 August 1944, flying in Occupied France and Germany. The planes that he flew in were: *Phyllis, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Tinker Belle* and *My Akin Ass*. His last mission was 25 August 1944.

News of his passing came to **George Washburn** from Ennis's son-in-law, Larry Bonham.

**Gratta, James V. #20442** 506 Squadron 7 November 2011 S/Sgt. Gratta was a Radio Operator/Gunner on the **Erland Jacobson** crew. The crew flew 12 missions into Germany, the first on 25 February 1945. They flew one mission into Occupied France and the last into Hallein, Austria, which was the 44th BG's last mission, 25 August 1945.

Gratta flew in the following planes: *The Hit Parade, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Down De Hatch* and *Southern Comfort III*.

Gratta and his late wife Ruth (Jackson) Gratta had one son and three daughters. They had eight grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

After the War, Gratta became a carpenter. He became interested in baseball, both as a player and coach; and was also a golfer. At the time of his death he was residing in Marshfield, Massachusetts.

**Neri, Michael J. #21501** 68th Squadron 3 October 2011. Col. Neri was a Communications Officer during WWII. Later he served in the Office of Special Investigations until he retired a Colonel from the USAF in 1964. He subsequently worked at the National Security Agency and the Defense Investigative Service.

While based in Shipdham, in the rank of Captain, he flew as an Observer with the crew of **Bernard Kyes**. The target was an airfield in Essen, Germany.

Col. Neri is survived by his son Patrick and one granddaughter. Information of his passing came from Patrick

**Walsh, Edward E. # 22451** 506 Squadron 28 February 2011 Sgt. Walsh was a Tail Gunner on the **William Edkins** crew. He flew his first of 28 missions was 26 November 1944. His last was on 18 April 1945.

Walsh flew all missions but one with the Edkins crew; the other was with **James Whittle**. He flew in *The Hit Parade, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Joplin Jalopy, Consolidated Mess, Down De Hatch, Sabrina III, Phyllis* and *The Big Headed Kid*.

After the War, Walsh was employed for 42 years by the Cooper Industries. For the last 17 years of that employment, he traveled extensively throughout the United States as a Service Engineer. In his last years he was living in Washington, Pennsylvania with his wife Elenora.

Information of his passing came from the Bombardier of his crew, **Victor Czarnecki**.



## FOLDED WINGS

**Yoder, Harry D. #22657** 66th Squadron 8 May 2011 Col. Yoder was a pilot. He flew fourteen missions from 12 March 1944 to 20 June 1944. The planes he flew in were *Gipsy Queen*, *Myrtle the Fertile Turtle*, *Patsy Ann II*, *The Banana Barge* and *I'll Get By*. His early missions were in preparation for the Army's entrance onto the Continent. On D-Day he flew three missions.

With the war heating up at a rapid rate, he flew with five different Command Pilots—**J. I. Turnbull, Sylvester Hunn, Frank Davido, Robert Johnson** and **George Payton** (who was from the 392nd Bomb Group).

By the time he had flown he completed his 14th mission, he had been elevated to Captain. He stayed in the service and served in the Korean Conflict and Vietnam. Yoder flew during the Berlin Air Lift. He flew with the Secretary of War, and also the Peace Team to Japan for the official signing

of the Peace Treaty, after hostilities had subsided in the Pacific. He served in the Pentagon on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

He stayed in the military for 30 years, after which he worked at Lockheed Martin in Georgia. He went on to acquire the Presidency and later ownership of the Boyertown Auto Body Works. Yoder was also a Military and Government Contractor for Thomas Body of Reading, Pa, and also served as a Development Consultant for the National Penn Bank of Boyertown. He was a 1934 graduate of the University of Maryland.

When the family moved to Boyertown, he became active in many community organizations, including presidency of the General **Carl A. Spatz** Memorial Association.

Yoder is survived by his wife of 65 years, Ardath Davidheiser; a son and daughter and three grandchildren. News of his passing came from his wife to President **George Washburn**.



**44th Bomb Group  
Veterans Association**

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## **THE FORGOTTEN MAN**

Author unknown

When man first started his labor  
In his quest to conquer the sky,  
He was designer, mechanic and pilot  
And he built a machine that would fly.

The pilot was everyone's hero,  
He was brave, he was bold, he was grand,  
As he stood by his battered old bi-plane  
With his goggles and helmet in hand.

But for each of our flying heroes  
There were thousands of little renown,  
And these were the men who worked on the planes,  
But kept their feet on the ground.

So when you see the mighty aircraft  
As they mark their path through the air,  
The grease stained man with the wrench in his hand  
Is the man who put them there.

