

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



8 BALL TAILS



Vol. 3 - Issue #4

Non Profit Veterans Organization

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Spring, 2000

EIN #68-0351397

B-24 Liberators



This picture of the last two Liberators in flight comes by the courtesy of the photographer, Paul Bunce of Hilton Head Island, SC, and through the influence of his friend, **Wiley Noble**. It first appeared on the cover of the newsletter of the Strategic 3rd Air Depot Association. Bunce captured this formation flight in Florida several years ago, and granted permission for onetime use by the two publications.

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD

President Emeritus: B-Gen. John H. Gibson (Retired)
7008 Gateridge
Dallas, TX 75240-7936
Phone: (972) 239-0559

Immediate Past President: Roy W. Owen (506)
6304 Meadowridge Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95409-5839
Phone: (707) 538-4726 Fax: (707) 538-1212
e-mail: Rowen44bg@aol.com

President: Edw. K. "Mike" Mikoloski (66/67)
626 Smithfield Road #702
N. Providence, RI 02904
Phone/Fax: (401) 353-0144
e-mail: EKMLIB44@msn.com

First Vice President: Richard D. Butler (506/67)
44th Group VP to 2nd ADA
16494 Wagon Wheel Drive
Riverside, CA 92506
Phone (909) 780-7421 Fax: (909) 780-1459
e-mail: rdbutler@excelonline.com

Treasurer: Gerald (Jerry) Folsom (506)
3582 East Dover Hill Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84121-5527
Phone (801) 733-7371 Fax: (801) 942-9988
e-mail: 44thbgva@xmission.com

Secretary: Nancy L. Van Epps (Hq. Sqdn.)
13922 River Road
Pensacola, FL 32507
Phone/Fax: (850) 492-2041

Director (67) Archivist
Anthony "Tony" Mastradone
9111 Tuckerman Street
Lanham, MD 20706-2709
Phone/Fax: (301) 577-1487
e-mail: mast@clres.com

Director: Robert J. Lehnhausen (68)
2540 Benton Court
Peoria, IL 61615-8838
Phone/Fax: (309) 243-1952

Director: Michael "Mike" Yuspeh (506)
7214 Sardonyx St.
New Orleans, LA 70124-3509
Phone/Fax: (504) 283-3424
e-mail: mikeyuspeh@worldnet.att.net

Director (44 SMW)
Charles G. Simpson
P.O. Box 281
Brechenridge, CO 80424
Phone/Fax: (970) 453-0500
e-mail: AFMISSILEERS@compuserve.com

Historian: C.W. "Will" Lundy (67)
3295 North "H" Street
San Bernardino, CA 92405-2809
Phone/Fax: (909) 882-2441
e-mail: willundy@aol.com
P.O. Box 315, Bridgeport, CA 93517 (Sum)
Phone/Fax: (760) 932-7349

Membership: Search
Art Hand (66)
517 Elm Street
Paris, IL 61944-1417
Phone/Fax: (217) 463-5905
e-mail: k9hwp@comwares.net

U.K. Representative: Steve Adams
28 Bassingham Rd.
Norwich, England NR3 2QT
Phone/Fax: 011-44-1603-400221
e-mail: s.p.adams@btinternet.com



ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS:
44th BGVA
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

The 8-Ball Tails ©

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

Compiled, written and published tri-yearly at 2041 Village Circle East, York, PA, by Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor. Printed and mailed Bulk Rate at Salt Lake City, UT under USPS Permit #6923. All original written material such as letters, stories, excerpts from personal diaries or memoirs, drawings and photos submitted to this journal will become the property of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and will be copyright protected except where noted. The text and photos are otherwise reproduced from official USAAF and USAF documents and photos which have been released for publication. Permission is granted for the contents of this journal to be reproduced specifically for personal archives.

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

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



COVER PICTURE (CONT.):



The front plane, formerly *Delectable Doris* has been renamed *Joe*, in honor of the late **Joseph P. Kennedy**. It's markings are of the 359 Bomb Group, Bethel. Behind it is the *All American*, bearing the markings of the 453nd Bomb Group, Old Buckingham. Both are from Second Combat Wing. Young Joe Kennedy died on a mission to knock out Germany's V-2 rocket launching sites.

Joe is being restored at the Fantasy in Flight Museum, Polk City, Florida. *All American*, the last fully restored, flying Liberator in the world has been renamed *Dragon and his Tail*. The Collins Foundation of Stowe, VT is the owner of the plane. Because it was used in the Pacific, they have renamed it to honor all aircraft and crews that flew in the Pacific Theater. The original *All American* was lost in combat, but holds the record for the most enemy aircraft shot down.

Wiley Noble is Secretary of the 3rd Strategic Air Depot Association National Headquarters.



GOOD NEWS FOR AF STATION 115

Our UK Representative, Steve Adams, sends word that Mrs. E. Paterson, owner of the Shipdham Airfield property occupied by the now defunct Arrow Air Services, has signed a lease with the newly formed Shipdham Aero Club. In her search for a new leasee, she had stipulated the leasee must maintain a museum in its facility with a theme that would perpetuate the history of the wartime 44th Bomb Group. The new Aero Club whose membership includes 60 former members of the Arrow Air Services club enthusiastically agreed to the stipulation. They have taken occupancy and the clubhouse is already being repaired and redecorated. Steve Adams has joined and has been appointed Historian and Museum Director/Curator. He is preparing to return all the 44th historical material which he removed from the Aero Air facility and had stored in his garage. They will be back on display at the restored club when the

decoration is completed. While the report was brief, a lot of enthusiasm from the Aero Club came shining through. The club owns two airplanes and will be storing other member owned airplanes. This is a good beginning from which the operation can grow.

This is great news for those of us who have always felt strongly that as long as AF 115 could remain open with some kind of flying activity we would always have our wartime home to revisit. The historic base has been our link to perpetuate the love and respect we share with the people of Shipdham and hope to carry on through our progeny.

We will have a more expanded report on AF Station 115 (hopefully with some pictures) from Steve in the next 8 Ball Tails.

Roy Owen



The Evolution of the 44th BG To Missileer

Charlie Simpson's Story

Fourteen years after WWII was over, and the Cold War was 'heating up,' new weapons and new airmen were taking center stage. Among those who were part of this transition was Charlie Simpson. In his own words, he describes the evolutionary process:

I'm a lifetime member of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association--but my time in the 44th was a long time after the unit was called a Bomb Group-- I served in the 68th Strategic Missile Squadron and the 44th Strategic Missile Wing. Those of us who served in the later version of the 44th had

strong ties to our past--we all knew the history of the original unit, and felt we had close ties with those of you who flew B-24's during the war in Europe.

TITAN I

I started my Air Force career in late 1959, first as an aircraft maintenance officer at Hanscom Field, Massachusetts. In early 1961, the Air Force began asking officers and enlisted people to volunteer for duty in the coming intercontinental ballistic missiles - an opportunity for those of us who could not fly to become part of a combat organization. I made a quick trip to the personnel office as soon as I saw a notice. I was told that in a few weeks I would be going into the missile career field in the brand new Titan I missile at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho. I spent the next four years as



Col. CHARLES SIMPSON, COMMANDER of the 44th
COMBAT SUPPORT GROUP, ELLSWORTH AFB, S.D. 1981

a maintenance officer throughout the short life of the Titan I. I was involved in the acceptance procedure for new sites and new missiles, and was involved in the removal of those same missiles and the dismantling of the same sites three years later. The Titan I was probably like the B-24 in some ways - it was a large, complex weapon system that took a lot of people to make it work. We had as many as 100 folks on a Titan I site to operate, maintain, secure and support three nuclear tipped PA missiles - a big work force for a small part of the nuclear deterrence.

MINUTE MAN III

When the Titan I era ended, most of us who had served in the system went on to newer missiles--I headed north and east to Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota, to become a missile launch officer in the newest ICBM system, the Minuteman II. The "Deuce" was just becoming part of the inventory of the Strategic Air Command--I got to perform some of the same "acceptance" tasks at Grand Forks as I did with the early Titan I. As a member of the eleventh missile combat crew, out of 100, to become combat ready, I was involved in training those crew members behind me on an entirely new weapons system. I spent my share of missile alerts below the North Dakota prairie - we would stay on alert for 36 to 48 hours, five or six times a month in those days, in a concrete



CAPT. CHARLES SIMPSON (SEATED) AT DEPUTY MISSION CREW
COMMAND CONSOLE WITH EVALUATOR CAPT. DANIEL DOWNING, 1981

CO OF THE 68TH STRATEGIC MISSILE SQUADRON

In June 1978, I reported to the 44th and immediately took command of the 68th Strategic Missile Squadron. The 68th consisted of 60 young missile launch officers who manned the five launch control centers in western South Dakota, around Sturgis, Spearfish, Belle Fourche, Newell and other small towns. These five

underground centers controlled fifty Minuteman II missiles spread over more than 5,000 square miles of prairie.

On my first day as commander, the outgoing commander gave me a package that included some important documents - a list of every commander of the 68th from its initial activation in 1942 and a history of the bomb group and bomb wing before it became a missile unit. In those days, we had a deep respect for the history of our units--and that respect continues today in the remaining ICBM units. I served as the 68th commander for almost two years, then moved to the position of Assistant Deputy Commander for Operations in the wing. During that period, we opened the museum at Ellsworth, with a 44th Bomb Group display one of the highlights. It shared center stage with a history of the high altitude balloon flights conducted in the mid-1930s from the Black Hills. The opening ceremonies featured a visit from two of the scientists from the National Geographic who were involved in those tests--in 1980, they were the President and Chairman of the National Geographic Society.

enclosure 60 feet below ground and between 60 and 120 miles from the air base. The big difference was that it took about the same number of people to operate and maintain 150 Minuteman II missiles as it did to keep nine Titan I missiles on alert. During my five years in the 321st Strategic Missile Wing (a B-25 medium bomber group in the war), I trained and evaluated missile crews, and represented the wing twice at the Strategic Air Command Missile Combat Competition. In 1969, our team of twelve officers and NCOs brought back the Blanchard trophy as the best missile wing in SAC.

Over the next seven years, I served in two SAC Headquarters jobs: First as an operations evaluator traveling to each of the nine missile wings to assess their combat readiness. Then as the chief of the office that developed the Single Integrated Operational Plan factors for missile performance - the specifics of accuracy and reliability that provided the war planners the basis for target assignments. In 1977, I attended Air War college. For my elective course, I spent three months reading the histories of the 44th and 321st Strategic Missile Wings and writing a paper about those units.

LEON JOHNSON ON THE SCENE

In May 1981, I took command of the 44th Combat Support Group and became the "mayor" of Ellsworth AFB, then the third largest community in South Dakota. In 1982, I had the honor of representing the wing at

the 44th Bomb Group 40th Anniversary reunion in Rapid City. One of my fondest memories is the scene of over 500 of you snapping to attention when General Leon Johnson entered the banquet hall at the Howard Johnson's. Over the next few months, I got to know General Johnson because he visited us again. We invited him to return to talk to our junior officers about the meaning of "officership." He not only talked to the young men and women of the wing and base, he made a series of

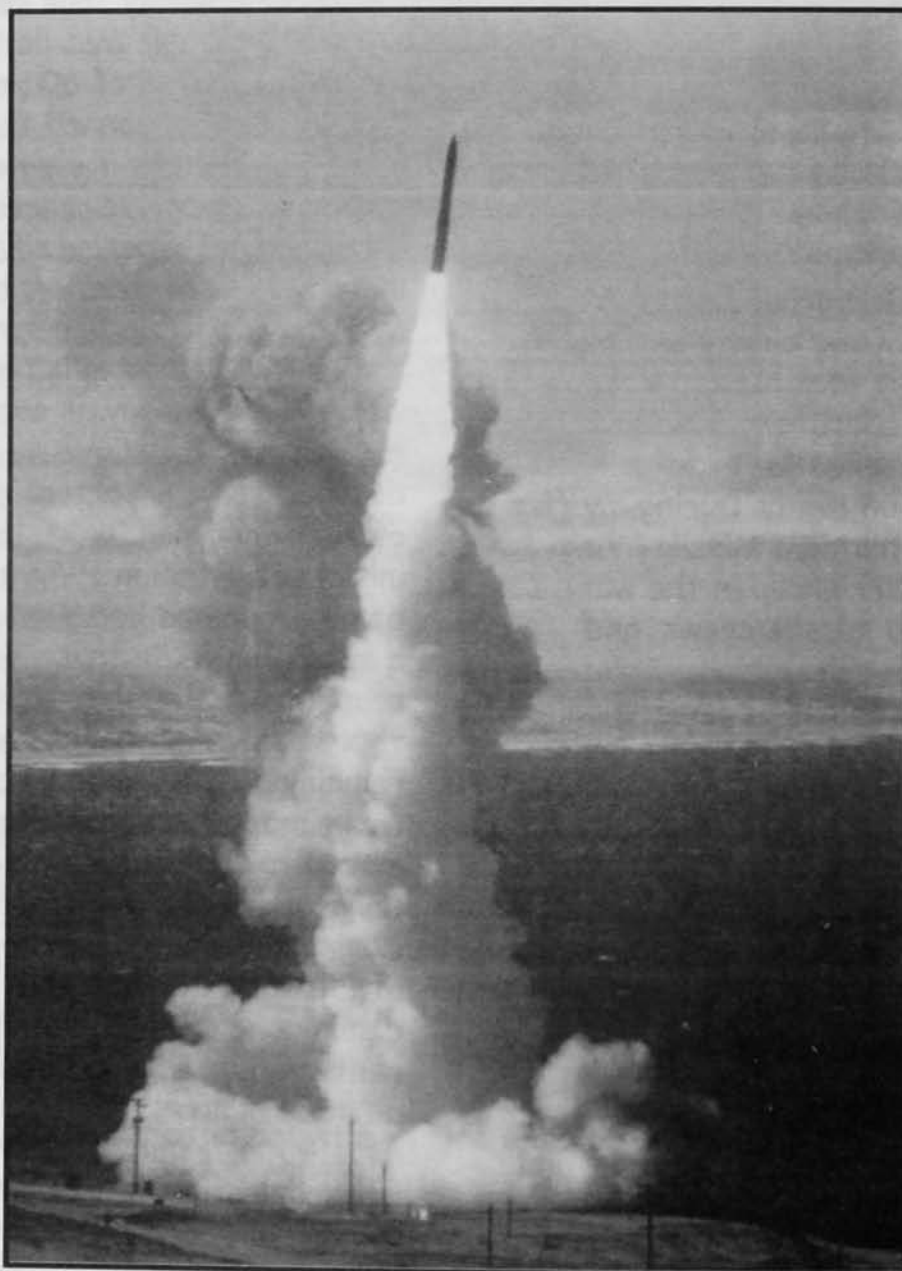
videos that summarized his concept of being an officer in our nation's military. I also had a great opportunity. I was able to sit and talk one-on-one with him on several occasions about leadership and command.

OPERATIONS BECAME WORLDWIDE

In 1983, I left the 44th for my first overseas assignment. I had been selected to command a new base in Sicily--a base that wasn't there yet. Over the next fourteen months, I oversaw the activation and

construction of a new ground launched cruise missile base--a task made difficult because we kept digging up US and British bombs that were dropped during the Sicily campaign. The base was the called Magliocco Air Base. It was captured so rapidly that German bombers that took off to bomb Patton's landing troops were met by American GIs when they returned for refueling and rearming. I was the first person to arrive at what we then called Comiso Air Base; but when I left

the following year, we had an operational missile wing and over 1200 troops on the base.



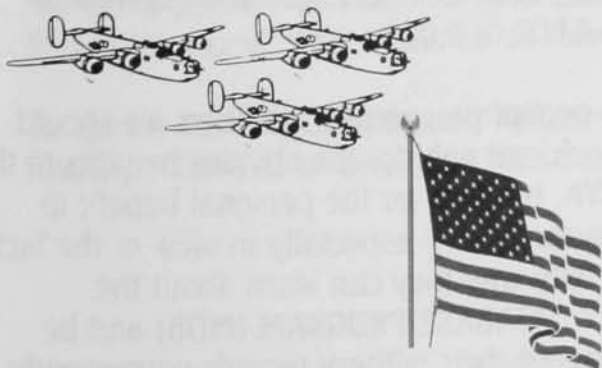
MINUTEMAN LAUNCH AT VANDENBERG AFB, CALIFORNIA.



I spent the next forty years on bases in Turkey and Spain as base commander--both bases were key training locations for our European fighter units. We normally had two or three squadrons of fighters from bases in Germany or England, using our bomb ranges and aerial combat areas. I ended my thirty years at Minot AFB, North Dakota, as Chief of Staff of the 57th Air Division, the host organization for the base, with a bomb wing and missile wing assigned to it. Interestingly, the 57th had been the 57th Bomb Wing in the war - and the 321st Bomb Group (the missile wing at Grand Forks I served in) was a part of that wing in Europe. I'm sure that some of the bombs I watched being dug up at Comiso were delivered by the B-25's of the 321st in 1943.

On July 4th, 1994, I made my last visit to an active 44th unit - the 44th Missile Wing, a victim of the Strategic Arms Reduction treaties, closed on that day. Veterans from throughout the history of the 44th Bomb Group, Bomb Wing, Strategic Missile Wing and Missile Wing (we lost the "strategic" designation in 1992), stood at silent attention as the flag of the 44th was folded for the last time. The memories of the 44th are well preserved, not only in the fine museum outside the gates at Ellsworth, but in the minds of all of those who were a part of a unit that played a key part in our nation's defense for over 52 years.

Editor's Note: Charles Simpson is Executive Director of the Association of Air Force Missileers.



44TH BOMB GROUP SAN DIEGO REUNION 2000

Thursday, August 31 - Sunday, September 3

This Year's Attractions:

Visit the beautiful Hotel del Coronado. This is a historic landmark, a building that is over 100 years old. It's unique architectural style can only be found on this building. Browse the 25 boutiques and shops.

The grounds will take your breath away. Since the buildings were not built at the same time, no one can understand how it all came together. The story of construction is worth visiting this structure. It is located on the Island of Coronado, across the bay from San Diego. The beautiful sight is worth the visit.

As other people visit the Carrier, you can visit this magnificent hotel.

The Aircraft Carrier visit will be limited by the number that the Navy will let board at one time. Please check on your registration if you wish to visit the carrier. This involves a lot of walking, but the experience is well worth your effort.

Balboa Park, The Zoo. Inside the park is the Air & Space Museum. I know the Panda is cute, but as some one told me the best kept secret in the Balboa, as well as the Zoo. Transportation will be furnished to the park and, stop at the entrance to the Zoo. There are trams to take you to the museums and other attractions inside the park. We left a whole day to visit San Diego's main attraction.

**Make your reservations
and arrangements now!!!**



*From the
Desk
of
Our
President:*



The new millennium arrived 'like a lamb' despite all the pessimistic predictions of temporal or cosmic problems by the 'gloom and doom' Y2K Apocalypsians. And so, we in the 44th BGVA arrived into the new millennium with pride, enthusiasm, energy and a spirit of hope, optimism, innovation and challenge - not unlike the style we demonstrated in the war and post-war years that earned us the reputation as *The Greatest Generation*. We made the commitments, the sacrifices and the efforts required of us to meet the challenges confronting us. Then, having overcome these threats and subduing our adversaries, we again demonstrated the finest of human qualities by providing our adversaries with aid and encouragement that enabled them to become productive members of the community of nations. Never have a people of any generation given more generously of its blood, sweat and tears, and shared -- no GAVE -- much of its wealth to heal the wounds of friend and foe alike.

The 44th BGVA is but a microcosm of *The Greatest Generation*, and our reincarnation, growth, stability and success are just causes for our pride. But, at the same time they present us with a challenge -- a challenge to insure that our sacrifices, efforts and accomplishments are recorded accurately and permanently in our electronic MASTER DATABASE PROGRAM (MDB) that can be used by historians, researchers and our children's children. A challenge also, to insure that all former members of the 44th BG and its support units are given every opportunity to join the 44th BGVA and be included in this major undertaking.

It is for the above reasons that your Board and I conceived and are sponsoring two (2) drives - one that is traditional and the other that is innovative. The former is the Fund Drive for the MDB and the latter is a Membership Contest.

The Fund Drive was kicked off with my letter of January 31, 2000 to each of you, appealing for contributions to support the MASTER DATABASE PROGRAM (MDB) in which we are both the innovators and the leaders.

As you may perhaps know, we have completed Phase I (Archival information and 8500 Sorties) and are in the process of implementing Phases II (Bios), III (340 Mission Summaries) and IV (**Will Lundy's** historical data, photos, diaries, etc.).

Financially speaking, Phase I is fully paid; Phase II is self funded; Phases III and IV, however, require separate funding that is not available from our current and/or future operating budgets. Hence the necessity for the **Fund Drive**, the first in the 44th BGVA, but a TRADITIONAL method in similar non-profit organizations.

The EVERY MEMBER GET A MEMBER ("E-M-G-A-M") CONTEST was kicked off in the winter issue of the 8-Ball Tails, although the contest rules are only being published in this Spring issue. The contest is crucial to our continued growth and vitality; because as you know, members are the critical element of all organizations. Our records indicate that there are some 2,000 members of the 44th BG who have not joined the 44th BGVA. When you add to this number the wives, children, grandchildren, relatives and friends, the pool of prospective new members can easily double or triple to 4,000 or 6,000.

It is this pool of prospective members we should try to reach, not only for the obvious benefits to the 44th BGVA, but also for the personal benefit to each non-member -- especially in view of the fact that the only way they can learn about the MILITARY DATABASE PROGRAM (MDB) and be able to record their military records permanently in the NMP is by joining the 44th BGVA. I strongly

believe it is our responsibility to our Comrades-in-Arms to make every effort to contact them or their families and apprise them of this opportunity. Time is of the essence, and we should not procrastinate any longer. I urge all of you to adopt my 'Zero Tolerance' attitude.

When you make a donation and enroll a new member you will be insuring the completion of MDP and the unprecedented increase in the growth and vitality of our cherished and beloved organization.

FINAL THOUGHT
I WOULD RATHER ATTEMPT TO DO SOMETHING
GREAT AND FAIL, THAN ATTEMPT
TO DO NOTHING AND SUCCEED.

**EVERY MEMBER GET A MEMBER!
EVERY MEMBER MAKES A DONATION.**

Edward K. Milsolaski



IT'S TIME TO BURN THE MIDNIGHT OIL! GET YOUR BIOGRAPHY DONE NOW!

Have you done your Database? If not, why not? Nobody is getting any younger. You might have to rattle around your attic to find some old pictures—but do it. You were in the greatest conflict in the history of the world. You helped save the world from horror beyond imagination. If you don't record it the way it happened to you personally, future generations will think it was a turkey shoot.

Larry Herpel is heading up the effort to load the biographies into the Database, a project that is proceeding smoothly but slowly. Working with him is Ruth Dobbs, wife of LTC Sterling Dobbs 68th BS and Jeffrey Deitering, who had a relative in the 66th. Larry could use another volunteer to enter data. To qualify, you must have basic knowledge of your computer, and have some experience in Word Processing. Call Larry at (512) 376-7780. You will work in wonderment as you read the reports, that this generation could have made such a sacrifice.

Filling out forms may seem like a lot of trouble; but you will be glad you did it. Even a hundred years from now, a grandchild, a historian or a casual researcher will be glad to find your story. You deserve to have the details of your sacrifice on record.

To quote Tommy Shepherd, "As certain as geese fly south in the winter, we can't outlive history. Time is of essence and essence is not to be wasted."

If you need forms for your bios, contact:

Jerry Folsom
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



WILL SEZ

In the past week or so most of you readers have received a letter from the Board and signed by our Prez requesting financial assistance - a donation - to assist in the data entry of more of our history into the new data base program. Preliminary words have indicated that many of you have generously opened your purse strings so this work can move ahead.

This "work" that we have been referring to, in general, resides here in my "war" room, but is not "my" material. No, the fact is that it is your material. You have been so helpful to me by providing data that can be found nowhere else. The archives have many records and material, but it does not have the personal, "i was there," data. It is this material or information about your experiences, your life, your records that must not be lost.

Most of us have been privileged to view Arlo Bartsch's data based program in action and have marveled at the amount of detailed data that can be placed in this program and made available immediately. The programming work is excellent. Naturally, while

viewing this program in action, I've been thinking and hoping that your material could be added into the program. So we invited Arlo to visit, to see what is stored here and to get his evaluation or his program to assimilate it.

Richard "Dick" Butler, a "neighbor," our Vice President and active Chairman of a 2nd ADA Committee studying Arlos' program, kindly agreed to attend to check out this material too. I am greatly relieved to learn that, after reviewing much of this type of material on hand, that the program, indeed, was designed to accommodate it all!

Once this was determined, the next step was to ascertain or prioritize the data entry of it, What to do first? That proved to be difficult for which is more important than the other? It was a subjective thing for me, being so closely involved in its accumulation. Dick and Arlo, having actual combat experiences, helped with their evaluation. We agreed that we needed to provide data about the target and an overall summary for every one of our 344 missions. So, this text is now being entered.



A very close second task will require more data entry expenses due to the volume on hand. These will be the personal diaries, some of which are in great detail, day by day accounts. While others might be only the recollections of events on one mission or an event that you have furnished in a letter.

Another subject that is important is photographs. A name is just a name that we see in a sortie report, or events in a diary, but a photo changes all of that as it now becomes a person. When one accesses a sortie report in the Program, each man is identified by his name, but if we have his photo, then his likeness appears in the upper right corner on the screen. We see him, he comes into view, becomes a person.

Yes, here and on hand are many good crew photos that can be utilized to access the photo of each crew member, but we will need more, especially in the period later in the war. We need to gather more of them, group or single, for posterity. The same is true for personal experiences in the form of diaries or individual stories that you have carried all these years and have not put in writing or voice tapes. I urge you to get them recorded by some means and sent to me.

Yes, data entry costs a great deal of money; most likely much more than we can donate. However, Arlo's program is **OPEN ENDED**, so data can always be corrected or added if and when further financing is obtained. Remember too, that we, the "44thers", are now the foremost pioneering bomber group in the **Second Air Division** utilizing this program, are number one. We must maintain the status of having the first and best available history.

My personal and sincere thanks to all of you for making all of this possible.

Will Lundy



Due to space limitations and to ensure the clarity and brevity of submitted material, the Publisher/Editor reserves the editorial license to add, cut or otherwise modify all submitted material so long as the original context of the material is maintained.



Have you changed your address, e-mail, telephone number?

Please notify us at:

**PO Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287**

SILVER WINGS

A cup of gold spills from on high
And sunlight paints my wings;
A cotton quilt, an azure sky,
These are an airman's things.

There is a peace, there is a joy
That moves all those who've flown
As earth unrolls, as lakes deploy,
And eye meets tone on tone.

And God comes, too, when spinning blade
Its winding movement stills,
When need portends 'Be not afraid,
But join as one our wills.'

So let me fly on silvery wing
Until my day runs thin,
A greater skill will surely bring
This airman gently in.

A cup of gold spills from on high
And brightly shows the way.
There is no night, no danger rude,
This is a wondrous day.

My course is set for altitude
Where pilots all convene,
For I am in the Hand of God
With flight plan He has seen.

Ray Ward

*Read at services for K.J. Kurtenbach,
Stalag 17-B Camp Leader*





ANNOUNCING THE EVERY-MEMBER-GET-A-MEMBER CONTEST CASH PRIZES

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the EVERY-MEMBER-GET-A-MEMBER-CONTEST, with cash prizes totaling \$700, and many other cash equivalent prizes that raise this total to over \$1,000. In addition to the cash prizes, the contest winners will receive other prizes that include:

*Breakfast for two at the The Westin Horton Plaza San Diego
44th BGVA Reunion SHIPDHAM TOWER lithograph
Gold Plated Pen and Pencil Set
Other prizes will be added and announced at the San Diego Reunion.*

The Contest began January 1, 2000 and terminates September 2, 2000 at the 44th BGVA Seventh Reunion in San Diego. Members may reproduce the entry forms and submit them, individually or collectively, along with their checks to the following address:

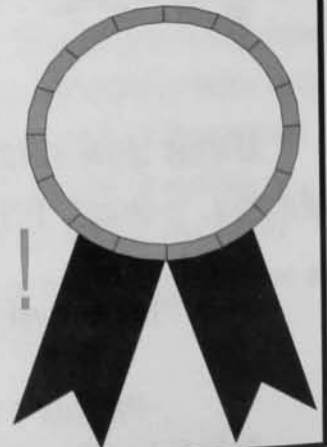
**44th BGVA
Attention: "E-M-G-A-M" CONTEST
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287**

Entries will be accepted at the Reunion to midday (1200 hours) Saturday, September 2, 2000.

All of us become winners whether we win one of the prizes or not, because the end result is an increase in our membership and the inclusion into our organization some of the 2,000 lost, mis-addressed, deceased and/or otherwise unaffiliated colleagues and their families. We owe it to our lost brothers to bring them back into the fold, so that they, too, may enjoy the benefits of membership in our organization. At minimum, they and their families should be given the opportunity to know about the 44th BGVA, and to have their records, their valorous deeds and their sacrifices entered into the 44th BGVA Military Database. Their contributions must be included for their children's and their grandchildren's sake. To deny them this last chance is unthinkable.

In this crucial undertaking, let us adopt a 'zero tolerance' attitude.
Every member gets a member. Contact and enroll your colleagues today.

Edward K. Mihalowski



BLUE RIBBON PERFORMANCE!

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit #6923
Salt Lake City, UT



"E-M-G-A-M"



44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

"EVERY MEMBER GET A MEMBER" APPLICATION

Name _____ Spouse _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Tele: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____

E-Mail Address: _____

In the 44th Bomb Group? Yes No If yes, what Squadron? _____

Not in 44th Bomb Group, sign me up as an Associate Member.

Relationship to 44th _____

Is this membership part of the "Every Member Get a Member Program?" Yes No

Found by Recruiter: _____ Relative: _____

2000

MEMBERSHIP

- \$20 - 1 Year
- \$25 (Outside US)-1 Yr
- Life Membership Dues 60 & over: \$125
- Life Membership Dues 40 to 59: \$150

EVERY-MEMBER-GET-A-MEMBER CONTEST RULES

Eligibility.

All members in good standing (Life, Regular, Associate, Honorary) of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association are eligible to participate and receive prizes. Officers and Board Members may participate, but are ineligible to receive prizes.

Method.

Points will be awarded for enrolling former members of the 44th Bomb Group, the 44th SMW, 14th Combat Wing, 44th Air Refueling Squadron, the 3rd Strategic Air Depot, and Support Elements like Finance, MP, 806th Ordnance, 50th Sta. Complement, 464th SD, (living or deceased), their families, friends and/or associates. Points will also be earned for re-enrolling former members (and their families and friends) of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association whose memberships have lapsed since the 1998/99 membership years.

Point Scoring.

Winners will be determined on the basis of points earned according to the following criteria:

Life Membership (40 to 59)	7 points
Life Membership (60 and over)	6 points
Regular, Associate & Abroad	1 point per year



Prizes:

<i>First Prize</i>	<i>\$300</i>
<i>Second Prize</i>	<i>\$200</i>
<i>Third Prize</i>	<i>\$100</i>
<i>Fourth Prize</i>	<i>\$ 50</i>
<i>Fifth Prize</i>	<i>Cross Gold, 10 ct., pen & pencil set engraved with winner's names.</i>
<i>Sixth Prize</i>	<i>SHIPDHAM TOWER Lithograph framed.</i>
<i>Seventh Prize</i>	<i>Breakfast for Two at Westin Hotel, San Diego.</i>

Entry Forms.

- Membership application as printed in 8 Ball Tails.
- Application forms may be reproduced.
- Appropriate dues must accompany forms.
- Forms sent by mail must be postmarked not later than 25 August 2000.
- Forms may be hand delivered at the 44th BGVA Reunion, San Diego, not later than 12:00 noon, 2 September 2000.

Mailing Address:

44th BGVA
Attention: "E-M-G-A-M" CONTEST
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287

Winners not in attendance at San Diego Reunion will have their prizes mailed to them.

Membership Contest Committee:

Chair: Ed "Mike" Mikoloski
Vice: Richard Butler
Treasurer: Jerry Folsom
Members: Robert Lehnhausen
Charles Simpson

All decisions of the Contest Committee will be final.





The 44th Bomb Group Band at the Officers Club. Seated, Paul Boensch is fourth from the left. Major Linck is standing at the far left.

Can anyone identify the other musicians?



PAUL BOENSCH AND THE 44TH BOMB GROUP BAND

Learning to be a bombardier at Childress Air Force Base in Texas was a different world for Paul Boensch, who had studied music, among other things, at the University of Memphis, and had played in many of the Big Bands in the area. He joined the Bieber crew at Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas, and on D-Day found himself up to his chin in snow in Greenland.

On July 7th the *Consolidated Mess* was carrying them to Bernberg, Munich, and other exciting Nazi hangouts. One day it occurred to First Lieutenant Boensch, that drinking warm beer at the clubs, playing cards or riding a bike to the movie house were short of ideal entertainment. He started a band.

When he first discussed it with Major Larry Linck, a member of the Permanent Party, in charge of the welfare and morale of the troops, he found a kindred soul. Linck was not only an enthusiast, he also had a great voice, and could be induced to sing on any occasion. They started talking to a few musicians about organizing a musical group, and the idea blossomed.

The Major had a very persuasive personality. Maintenance men who usually repaired airplanes found time to build music stands. Electricians set up lights. In a short time Paul was off to London to buy the popular music of the day, *Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree, I'll Be With You In Apple Blossom Time, String of Pearls, Tuxedo Junction, In The Mood, and many more.*

"Our best break came when soon after D-Day Major Linck had learned that an entire band of German musicians had been captured at St. Lo. Twenty four hours later we had their instruments, all in first class condition. Even their carrying cases were top of the line, so that when we carried them in our steam heated buses, they were well protected. Steam heated buses were a true luxury and rarity; but somehow, the Major managed it."

"We had a string base, piano, drums, trumpets, trombones, alto saxes and tenor saxes. There were fourteen or fifteen of us," Paul recalled, "ranging in rank from a Corporal who played the guitar (when he wasn't cooking for the Ground Officers Mess); to Major Linck, who was the highest ranking officer. Paul was the Music Director. Major Linck was the Front Man, serving also as Vocalist and Manager.

"We started playing in the Officers Club and the Aero Club where the enlisted men could dance with the women of the RAF. Soon we had many invitations. We played in lots of places, including Black Friars Castle, a beautiful edifice that was turned over to servicemen during the war. Of course, we were still flying, also; and at one time I climbed out of my flight suit, and immediately dressed for a performance."

When the thirty-five missions were up, Boensch and his fellow crewmen were happy to get back to the states, and the timing couldn't have been better. Within a few weeks his wife Helen presented him with a beautiful baby boy. Everybody who was sent to war found his/her own method of coping. For Boensch, music was his forte', and he shared it.



The 44th Bomb Group Band played at the Aero Club.



SAN DIEGO REUNION - 2000

Mike Yuspeh has put together a schedule of events that should delight everyone—the shoppers, the historical buffs and the animal lovers. The Westin Horton Plaza is within walking distance to great shopping areas.

You all have the choice of touring an aircraft carrier docked in San Diego Bay, or visit the beautiful historic Hotel Del Coronado. Among the planned events is a trip to the Balboa Park Zoo, one of the best in the world. They recently announced the birth of Hua Mei, daughter of Shi Shi and Bai Yun, three of the world's increasingly rare Pandas.

For those who wish to stay over, they can visit the harbor where the U. S. Navy, Marines and Coast Guard are all stationed. Seaport Village is a great place to shop, eat, and listen to local musicians. The Transit

Trolley is a time saving inexpensive mode of transportation.

The San Diego Aerospace Museum is a dramatic trip through aviation history. "Lucky Lindy's" *Spirit of St. Louis* was built there, and it gave rise to a major aviation industry. Quotes from aviation heroes, their portraits and their aircrafts deck the walls of this unique museum.

Located 12 miles north of the Mexican border, San Diego's population is a blend of Anglo, Chicano, Asian and African-American. It is the home of California's first mission built in 1769 by Father Serra while it was still under Mexican rule. A gold strike in 1870 and the arrival of the Santa Fe Railroad in 1885 set the stage for the rise of this interesting metropolis.

SAN DIEGO REUNION PROGRAM

Wednesday, August 30, 2000

Board Meeting: Afternoon (time to be announced).

Thursday, August 31, 2000

9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon: Registration.

1:00 PM to 5:00 PM: Registration.

6:00 PM to 7:00 PM: Reception-Snacks and cash bar.

Dinner on your own.

Friday, September 1, 2000

10:00 AM: Buses will leave hotel Westin Horton Plaza.

10:00 AM to 11:30 AM: North Island Naval Air Station (NAS) Tour.

11:30 AM to 1:00 PM: Buffet luncheon in Island Club NAS.

Your choice of Tours: Please check your preference on the Reunion Registration Form.

1:15 PM to 2:15 PM: Aircraft Carrier Tour or
Famous Hotel Del Coronado Tour.

Buses will pick up at Island Club for the above tours and will return to hotel by 3:00 PM.

Ladies: You are located at the Westin Horton Plaza. Lots of time for shopping at the Mall near the hotel.

Squadrons Dinner:

6:00 PM to 7:00 PM: Cash Bar.

7:00 PM to 10:00 PM: Check bulletin board for your Squadrons room assignment.
Theme to be announced.

Saturday, September 2, 2000

9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon: General Membership Meeting at Hotel.

1:00 PM Tour of the city of San Diego. This is one of only two tours offered at your expense. Please reserve early.

6:00 PM to 7:00 PM: Cash Bar.

7:00 PM to 10:00 PM: Banquet will be special. Candle lighting, live entertainment and dancing.

Sunday, September 3, 2000

Tour to Balboa Park Zoo - Travel to Park will be furnished by trolley starting at 10:00 AM and run until 4:00 PM. To enter the Zoo you must have a ticket. These are listed on the tour that the 44th are offering as a group. This ticket also offers you other perks in the Park. There are other attractions and museums in the Park.

6:00 PM to 7:00 PM: Cash Bar.

7:00 PM to 10:00 PM: Casual Buffet with exciting entertainment and plenty of dance music.

San Diego sells itself. It's climate is exemplary and we have you in a four diamond luxury hotel surrounded by your favorite shopping spots.





August 31 - September 3, 2000
 Westin Horton Plaza Hotel
 San Diego, California



2000 44th Bomb Group REUNION

Registration Form

Please Print or Type. All Information Must Be Complete.

Last Name _____ First Name (Tag) _____

Spouse _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Guests & Relation _____

Number to Attend: _____ \$195/each _____ Amount \$ _____

Tour #1:

Saturday, September 2: Tour Starts 1:00 PM From Hotel
 Tour of San Diego provided by Old Town Trolley Tours.
 This is a group tour for the 44th.

\$24 # Attending: _____ Amount: \$ _____

Tour #2:

Sunday, September 3: Ticket for Zoo at Balboa Park.
 Trolley all start running 10:00 AM to Balboa Park.
 They will make shuttles all day from park to hotel until 4:00 PM.
 You can plan your own stay until the last trolley leaves for hotel.

Please choose one: Tour of Aircraft Carrier _____ # Attending **OR** Tour of Del Coronado Hotel _____ # Attending

Total Amount Registration and Tours: \$ _____

Registration Includes: *Use of Hospitality Room; Reception; North Island Tour; Lunch at Island Club; Transportation to Aircraft Carrier or Tour Del Coronado Hotel; Squadron Dinner; Banquet with entertainment and dancing; Buffet Dinner with entertainment and dancing; T-Shirt (one to each person registered) one size fits all. The most important part of this reunion, you will get to be with friends who you spent the experience with during the trying times of World War II. San Diego is a great place to do this.*

Registration must be received by August 1, 2000. No registration will be taken after that date.

Space is limited, so act at once. Don't be left out!

We would like to firm up reservations as soon as possible. Please send this registration form with your check at once to:

Checks payable to: BGVA

Mail to: Mike Yuspeh • 7214 Sardonyx Street • New Orleans, LA 70124-3509

Phone: (504) 283-3424 • Fax: (504) 283-3425 (pick up at 6 rings).



THE WESTIN HORTON PLAZA SAN DIEGO
 910 Broadway Circle, San Diego, CA 92101
 (619) 239-2200

DATE OF FAX: _____ CONFIRMATION _____

HOTEL FAX RESERVATION FORM
FAX NUMBER (619) 239-1730

GROUP NAME: 44TH Bomb Group National Reunion
 MEETING PLACE 44th Bomb Group National Reunion

MEETING DATES: August 31, 2000 = September 4, 2000

Requests Must be Received by August 1, 2000

PLEASE PRINT:

NAME _____

ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEPARTURE DATE _____

COMPANY/ORGANIZATION _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER _____ FAX NUMBER _____

Additional Person in Room Yes _____ No _____

Name of Additional Person _____
 (One Form Per Room, PLEASE)

CHECK IN TIME: 4:00 p.m. CHECK OUT TIME: 12 Noon
 Accommodations may not be available if arrival time is prior to 4:00 PM.
 For revisions or cancellations please call (800) 6WESTIN

RATES

Single	1 person	\$95.00
Double	2 persons, 1 bed	\$95.00
Double	2 persons, 2 beds	\$95.00

_____ First night's deposit (RECD WITHIN 4 DAYS)

_____ Credit card (American Express, Diner's Club, En Route, JCB, Visa, Mastercard or Discover) - Circle One

_____ Request Non Smoking Room

Credit Card Number _____

_____ Request Accessible Room

Name on Card _____

_____ Request Rollaway _____ Crib _____

Expiration Date _____

_____ Request Written Confirmation Sent to Above Address

Checks should be sent to (along with a copy of this form)
 The Westin Horton Plaza San Diego
 910 Broadway Circle
 San Diego, CA 92101

Reservation forms received beyond the cutoff date listed above are Subject to space and rate availability. If the room type requested is Not available, the next available room thype will be assigned. If Your group has a range of rates and the rare category reported has Been filled, then the next available rate will apply. San Diego's Transient occupancy tax will apply to the above room rate. Currently the rate is 10.5%. Departure dates are confirmed at check-in. Departures prior to due date will result in a \$50 departure fee.

I will be charged one night's room and tax, which will be deducted from my deposit or billed through my credit card in the event I cancel within 48 hours of my Arrival. I may cancel my reservations without penalty prior to 48 hours of my arrival.

Reservations must be guaranteed by the first night's room deposit or an accepted credit card number and signature.
 Please guarantee my reservation with (circle one)

Signature _____



BEATING THE BUSHES

By Art Hand
February, 2000

ALBERADO, JOHN A. 58330 Bubba Road, Plaquemine, LA 70765; (504) 687-2509. John is deceased.

DAIGLE, DEWEY P. 809 Haring Road, Metairie, LA; (504) 733-0850. Dewey's health keeps him house bound.

HOWARD, WILLIAM H. (506th) 1353 West Hwy. 25 #70, Dandridge, TN 37725; (423) 397-2334.

KAMANIDES, MANUEL L. (506th) 249 Grove Street, Brockton, MA 02402; (508) 583-6031. Stevens crew and Dines.

KOKTA, FRANK (66th) 4314 Fiexn Drive, Prince George, VA (504) 733-3676. Deceased 1985. 66th Squardon cook(?).

KOLOBITZ, JOSEPH K. 313 Elm Street, Titusville, PA 16354; (814) 827-6343. Corporal deceased 1995.

MANZI, FRANCIS E. 88 Westborough Street, Worcester, MA 01604; (508) 754-4531. (This is his daughter's address.)

MARTIN, WARD E. 6625 SW 73rd Court, Miami, FL 33143; (305) 667-5265. Transferred to 98th BG early in 1942.

McDANIEL, VESTER L. (66th) 2107 Spirit Lake Road, Winter Haven, FL 33880; (941) 293-9022.

MEEK, NOEL W. (67th) 131 Barnes Drive, Paducah, KY 42003; (270) 898-7139. 67th Squadron at MacDill, FL.

MELNIK, ALEX 125 Homewood Avenue, Butler, PA 16001; (724) 283-4109. Deceased 3/13/98. 1st Lt. Adjutant with 50th Sta. Complement Squardon.

MEYERRIECKS, WILLIAM J. 987 Sonesta Avenue NE, Palm Bay, FL 32905-6321; (407) 952-6182 (winter) and 217 Kingston Drive, Ridge, NY 11691-2014; (516) 744-1458 (summer). 67th Squadron pilot, co-pilot.

MORGAN, LONZO (67th) 2152 Chambers Road, McDonough, GA 31253; (770) 957-7801 67th Squadron aircraft mechanic.

NEAL, LUCIOUS C. 1501 E. Brainerd St., Pensacola, FL 32503; (850) 432-6226. Deceased January 23, 1984.

NEWSOM, LEMUEL L. (68th) P.O. Box 363, Kitty Hawk, NC 27949; (252) 261-3413. 68th Squadron gunner for D. Davis (492nd) and Keeler crew. Completed tour.

NORTON, JAMES W. (67th) 226 Bluff Street, Kittanning, PA 16201; (724) 548-4872. 67th Squadron. Hansen's crew. Crew lost on first mission, 11/13/43. POW. Deceased.

OLSCHEKE, LOUIS E. (506th) 367 Mahogany Court, Labelle, FL 33935; (941) 675-3911. 506th Squadron co-pilot for Lt. Ed Jarvis crew.

PADGETT, ROBERT W. (68th) 3233 Harrison Road, Columbus, SC 29204; (803) 782-1687. 68th Squadron with the Gayman crew and A.V. Larson. 32 Missions.

POOLAS, GEORGE (93rd) 63 James Street, Dover, NJ; (973) 366-8543. From 93rd BG for a short period.

PORTER, GERALD E. (506th) 600 Franklin Heights, Shippensburg, PA 17257; (717) 532-4740. 506th Squadron A.V. Larson, Durett and Atkins.

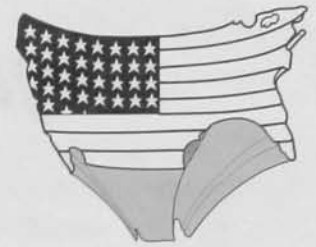
RENZI, VICTOR J. (67th Squadron) Baltimore, MD 21206. Deceased 1989.

SHOEMAKER, RUSSELL E. 1101 Kent Avenue, Decatur, IL 62526; (217) 872-7115. Russell has Alzheimers.



ART HAND

And His Unending Search



ART
AND
Lois
HAND

Nearly fifty years ago Art Hand set forth to find members of the 44th BG. He started out with a card file and a tank of gas, wandering through Illinois, Indiana and Missouri, and now has a computer disk of '44thers', with information that he can break down by zip code, state or city. His search never ends. If anyone knows of a person who flew in a '24, let him know. He might be one more piece of the big puzzle that Art is trying to put together.

Art was a Waist Gunner. He left the States in July of '43, went to Scotland on *Trouble*, then to Hardwick for two weeks, on by train to Glasgow and then off to Africa on a C54. His crew hopped across north Africa the best way they could, mostly from town to town on C47s. They stopped off at the 93rd BG on way to the 44th. At the last minute they needed waist gunners for the Ploesti Raid, so Art and his friend Clarence Hood volunteered. Clarence went to Turkey and was interned. Art did not know other members of that crew.

Back in England he was a Waist Gunner on the Charles Armstrong Crew of Pathfinders in the 389th Sq. In the beginning there were only five crews of Pathfinders. With unnamed planes, they flew ahead of the Missions, leading different bomb groups. When Col. Gibson asked them if they wanted to go back to the 44th they were ready. They joined the 66th Sq.

His most vivid memory was the Brunswick Mission. He knew it was a bad one, but was genuinely shocked, when years later Will Lundy sent him a formation sheet that showed the actual number that was lost. Eleven of the 44th planes went down over Germany in about 5-10 minutes. The Eighth Air Force lost 45 heavy bombers and 25 fighters; 88 German fighters went down also.

He recently learned that his plane was the first to drop on Omaha Beach on D-Day. Tony Mastradone unearthed that piece of information for him.

Because he was in the lead plane, it took 21 months for him to complete his missions. Going home meant meeting his 22 month old son, born a month after Art went overseas.

Anyone wishing information about other '44thers' in their locale, or can supply information to Art's search can contact him at 517 Elm Street, Paris, IL 61944-1417. Tel. (217) 463-5905. E-mail: k9hwp@comwares.net. His search could spark a local reunion in your hometown.



Folded Wings

February, 2000

Compiled by

Will Lundy



ALBERT, NEVIN F. Pfc. - 22 February 1999 ~ No other records located.

BELL, PHILLIP W. 0-742832 - 1991 ~ 68th Squadron pilot. He joined the 68th Squadron on 31 January 1944. His first mission was 20 February; followed by one the next day, and on the 24th of February, during "Big Week" his aircraft (famous Flak Alley) was shot down with only Phillip and three other crewmen surviving to become POWs.

CHAGNON, PAUL L. 11116914. Early 1991. S/Sgt. 67th Squadron. Paul was the radio operator on the H.A. Clarey crew. His first mission was on 20 April 1944, followed quickly by three more. His fourth and last was on 27 April when his plane was shot down. Only he and Raymond Shirley survived to become POWs.

CHASKIN, HERMAN - 13046320 - 1 January 1999 - 66th Squadron ~ Herman was a member of the Ground Echelon that went to England on the HMS Queen Mary in September, 1942. He was a member of the R.M. Pugh Aircraft Maintenance crew until M/Sgt. Pugh became a Flight Chief. No records available beyond that time.

FENTON (FEINSTEIN), MILTON S. 0-735298 66th Squadron - 1991 ~ He served as a Navigator on the G.R. Insley crew which was assigned on 4 September 1943. Their first mission of two tours was dated 9 October 1943. On April 21 his first tour of duty ended and the entire crew returned to the U.S. However, this dedicated crew signed up for a second tour, returned to the 44th BG, were assigned to the 506th Squadron. Flew the first mission of the second tour on 1 August 1944. For most of this second tour this crew was assigned as lead crew, leading the group on many missions, with Milton doing the navigating. Their last mission was dated 15 February 1945, completing a total of 46 for the two tours.

FLUGMAN, HERMAN O. 0-543494 - 506 Squadron - 1974 ~ Bombardier on M.D. Mendenhall crew. His first several missions were with Lt. Mendenhall with 26 March 1944. On May 19th he flew with the Hawkins crew and then with several other crews including Van Ess, Lincoln and Stone. He completed his tour on 27 July, 1944.

FRETWELL, LLOYD G. 0-662039 - 6 November 1999 ~ 506th Squadron. He was a Navigator on W.H. Strong's crew, an original combat crew. His first mission was 28 March 1943, a recall. Most of the first tough missions were with this crew, including Kiel, Ploesti and Weiner Neustadt. His last one with the Strong crew was on 3 November, while end of tour mission was on 30 December 1943 with the Capt. Middleton crew.

GALLAGHER, PATRICK W. - 0-748620 - 12 October 1999 ~ 506th Sq. Served as co-pilot for R.A. Parker crew on his first mission 13 November 1943, then several other pilots until 22 December 1943. At that time he became a regular on the Houghtby crew until into February, 1944. On 22 March 1944 he became a 1st pilot. He completed his tour of duty with 25 missions.

HENSLER, ROBERT L. - 66th Squadron - Date unknown ~ Robert was not a regular combat man but flew one mission, 19 March 1945 with Lt. Hornbreger as a nose gunner/togglier. He wrote that he thought he had two other missions but with another group. No other records are available.

KRAMER, HAROLD A. - 6 September 1999 ~ 460 Sub Depot personnel. No records available.



44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287

February 2002

Created by

Will Lewis

Flying Eight Balls



Gain As!

POWELL, CLIFFORD D. - 19176411 - 27 September 1999 ~ 506th Sq. He was an original member of the R.R. Lucas crew that arrived in the 506th Sq. early in 1944. His first few missions were with this crew, then served with several others as a spare until finishing the last of his 13 missions with the Beiber crew. Cliff suffered from ruptured eardrums, was grounded after his 13th mission. He later served with the ground gunnery section, trap range, etc.

PUTNAM, DAVID C. 15338965 - 1969 ~ 68th Squadron. David was the radio operator on the Meador crew that was transferred from the 392nd BG on 5 October 1943. He was assigned to several crews in his six missions, but was with the H.C. Palmer crew that was interned in Sweden on 9 April 1944. He returned to base on 16 October 1944.

PUTNAM, HARRY H. JR. 0-747139 - 6 February 2000 ~ 506th Squadron navigator. Harry flew his first combat mission as a member of the Saylor crew on 30 December 1943. His 19th and last mission was completed on 27 March 1944 with the Horne crew. In the middle missions he flew with several other crews including Larson and Purdy's. He was residing at the Air Force Village West at the time of his passing.

SCHROEDER, NORMAN N. 36586895 - 1 January 2000 - T/Sgt. Engineer Norman was assigned to the Steele crew for his first 9 missions. The date of their first mission was 26 August 1944 and his last one with them was 27 September. On November 1st he began flying as spare engineer for several pilots until 16 February when he became a "regular" with the Maynard crew until 18 March 1945. He completed his tour of duty with 34 missions flying with the Louik crew on 10 April, 1945. He was awarded a Certificate of Valor for completing his tour, but never received his D.F.C. medal. Norman also served with the Navy during WW #2 prior to his tour with the 44th BG, and again in the Korean Conflict. In later life, he was a dedicated volunteer worker for the Collins people on the All American B-24 and with the Yankee Air Force. A true Patriot!

STINE, RALPH I. - 19002662 - 68th Squadron - Date unknown ~ Ralph joined the Squadron on 8 March 1942, assigned to Armament section. He was with the Ground Echelon that arrived at Shipdham on 10 October 1942. Volunteered for combat on December 6, 1943 and flew his first mission on 16 December 1943. Two of the pilots with whom he flew were Slaughter and Cary. He was wounded on 9 April 1944 while a nose gunner for Lt. Palmer and was his last of 23 missions.

STEPKA, RAYMOND C. - 5 December 1999 ~ 66th Sq. co-pilot for the P.V. Dusossoit crew. They were assigned to the 66th Sq. in late February, flew their first mission on 10 March 1945. Except for two missions in mid April, Raymond flew his other 11 missions with the Dusossoit crew. Last mission for them was the last of the war, 25 April, 1945.

TERABERRY, PHILLIP F. - 19101247 - 21 October 1999 ~ 67th Squadron. Phillip was a tail gunner in the 67th Squadron, flew his first mission on 17 May 1943 as a replacement. He was assigned to the new C.S. Griffin crew for their Detached Service to North Africa in late June. He flew his first mission with this crew on 5 July 1943, and five more until 17 July when the crew was shot down on the attack on Naples, Italy 17 July. Phillip successfully evaded capture and returned to base, and eventually returned to the U.S.

UVANNI, WILLIAM A. - 33130253 - 19 October 1999 ~ 506th Squadron radio operator. "Bill" was assigned to the G.M. Beiber crew, flew to England on 6 June 1944. Arrived at Shipdham on 30 June and flew his first mission on 7 July 1944. This crew's 35th and last mission was on 2 November 1944, target Dortmund, aircraft Joplin Jalopy. Bill compiled a fine diary covering much of his military duty. Half of these missions were flown in "Consolidated Mess."

VRANUS, VINCENT V. - 27 February 1998 ~ 66th Squadron bombardier. He was a member of the Dusossoit crew that flew their first mission on 21 March 1945. His mission total was just six, having arrived so late in the war. Two of them were with the Dusossoit crew, and the remaining four were with Graham, Alderson and Derrick.



ERROR IN WINTER EDITION, 1999 - I am very happy to report that contrary to the published statement, Sterling L. Dobbs is alive and doing fine! My sincere apology for misleading everyone.



ABOUT THE SECOND AIR DIVISION ASSOCIATION

By: Dick Butler

2 ADA Vice President For The 44th Bomb Group

Our 44th Bomb Group was one of the fourteen B-24 groups assigned to the Second Air Division during World War II. In 1948, several people who had been assigned to the Division Headquarters gathered in Chicago and conceived the idea of the Second Air Division Association. As the war ended in Europe, General Kepner, Commanding General of the Second Air Division, was inspired to collect funds to establish a Memorial in England to our approximately 6800 comrades who lost their lives in B-24's while fighting to preserve our liberty.

In a few years after that initial gathering the idea was generated of establishing our Memorial in perpetuity in accordance with British law. It is the Second Air Division Memorial Library in the Central Library in Norwich, England. In addition to serving as a Memorial to our fallen comrades, it maintains our link with the people we saw on an almost daily basis during our combat tour and who have supported us over the years; the Board of Governors whose guidance, cooperation and financial support have been indispensable. The establishment of the 2 ADA/Fulbright Scholar to represent us in our library is one of the accomplishments that makes the Association unique. No other WWII veterans' organization sponsors such a living Memorial to those who fell in combat.

In 1994, the Central Library Building burned and most of the Second Air Division donated books and records were destroyed. The British Government, through its Millennium Commission, is building a new Central Library at a cost of about sixty million pounds. It will include the now, expanded, Second Air Division Memorial Library which will have the latest electronic data retrieval and Internet access capability. A Second Air Division Association convention is planned to be held in Norwich in November, 2001 for the dedication of the new Memorial room.

Over the years the Association grew in membership. Today there are about 6447 members, including Associate Members who are relatives of 2 AD people. There are also Subscribing Members who are individuals who are interested in the Association and its activities. We have about 452

"44thers", including Associates, who are members of the Association.

In the Association's early growing days attendees at the annual conventions were not identified by individual groups or their Headquarters. Then in 1971, "44ther" Bill Robertie, who became the longtime editor of the Journal, came up with the idea of having attendees participate as members of their respective bomb groups. Members of our 44th Bomb Group were the first to do so at the 1971 convention in Williamsburg, Virginia. For many years, 44th people at the conventions were the most numerous and led the way for the other groups. In about the mid-1980s, attendance by "44thers" began to decline, primarily due to the lack of interest and cooperation by the then leader of our separate 44th organization. At recent 2 ADA conventions, our 44th delegations were among those of the smaller groups' number of attendees. But at the 1999 convention in Austin, Texas, there was a noticeable increase in the number of our people. This can be attributed, in part, to the decision of our then 44th BGVA President, Roy Owen to hold the BGVA Board of Directors meeting in conjunction with the 2 ADA convention. Because of this increase in our number of attendees. Our current President, Ed Mikoloski has agreed that future mid-year Board meetings may be held at the time of the annual 2 ADA convention, whenever such is advantageous. This year that convention will be held 26 - 29 May at Tampa, Florida in the Hyatt Regency Westshore.

We encourage our 2 ADA members to join our Board of Director at this convention. It will be a great one. The location makes it very convenient for those who live in Florida, as well as in other parts of the southeast U.S. to attend. For the first time, B-24 people who are not members of the 2 ADA are welcome to attend. This is a significant first, so if you are not a 2 ADA member and would like to attend, contact me. My address, phone and fax numbers, and E-mail address are listed on the Association Board page of this publication. I will be glad to send you particulars of the event and a registration form. Our 2 ADA members have the foregoing in the Winter issue of the 2 ADA Journal.

ROBERT DUBOWSKY LT. CO. USAF (RET.) AND HIS DROP FROM THE SKY



If there is anything more scary than knowing you have to bail out of a B-24, it must be not knowing where you will end up. On January 16, 1945 Bob Dubowsky was co-pilot with Captain Joseph Tesla in the lead plane, with the Group Commander, Col. Eugene F. Snavelly riding along. This was Bob's 33rd Mission. The destination was Berlin, with Dresden as the alternate target. Fourteen miles from the IP, they turned south toward the Marshalling Yards at Dresden, meeting only moderate flak and no enemy fighters.

On the bomb run, things got worse. Flak was heavy and accurate, and before bombs away, they took a hit in number two engine. It caught fire immediately.

They left the formation, and the deputy lead took over. To put out the flames in number two engine, Tesla put the aircraft in a steep dive. At about 16,000 feet the prop froze. It couldn't be feathered because all the oil in the feathering system was gone due to the flak. But the fire went out.

Murphy's law prevailed, of course. *If something goes bad, it doesn't stop until the situation becomes a total debacle!*

Tesla was able to hold altitude on three engines until they passed near Nuremberg, when number four engine suffered an oil pressure drop and had to be feathered. Not able to hold altitude with only two engines, the plane dropped to 10,000 feet and proceeded on at 120 mph.

Out the window went 60 caliber ammunition, 50 calibre guns, bomb sight, radios, flak suits, escape kits--everything that could be detached. All alone over hostile territory and 150 miles to go, they continued on, crossing the Rhine River between Strasbourg and Haguenau.

Ill fortune continued. When crossing the Rhine, they ran into a gun emplacement, which peppered them with flak. There was a large hole in the right wing flap, which meant that a shell had pierced the flap and did not explode. The explanation for that bit of fortune was that the shells were time fused, preset to go off at a certain altitude, and they were flying too low for the timing device to work. If that wasn't enough, the number one engine was hit. Only number three was functional. It was bail out time. Capt. Tesla and Col. Snavelly were last out.

Editor's Note: Historians are learning that slave laborers deliberately sabotaged some weapons, in the hope that Germany would lose. Perhaps Bob's wing flap benefited from their efforts.

Bob hit a snow covered ground into a crowd of eager watchers. They were Alsatisans, carrying the FFI medallion (Free French Interior), and celebrating the departure of the Germans. He shared his parachute with the Alsatian women, keeping the packing history card. The Resistance workers offered him schnaaps, and before long an American Jeep provided him a safe trip through the mine field in which he had landed. Minor wounds were attended, and 70 hours after the mission started, he had the joy of returning to Shipdham.

Gratefully, Bob promptly looked up the parachute rigger whose initials indicated he had packed Bob's chute. With much delight the Englishman accepted his thanks and the stunning sum of sixteen dollars (almost double his weekly salary).

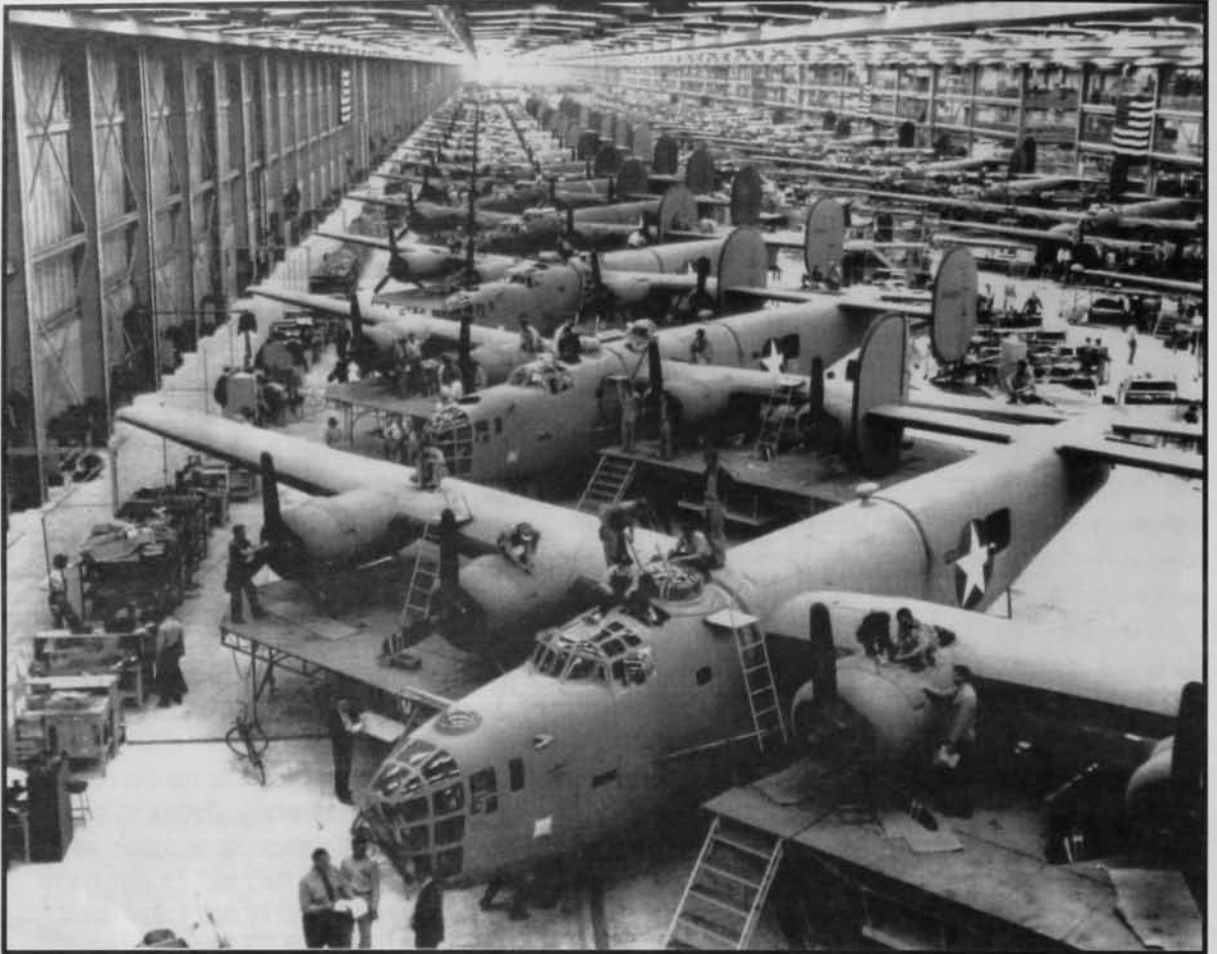
Bob flew two more missions to complete his 35, but none so dramatic as the day he dropped into the frozen land of Alsace-Lorraine.

Editors Note:

Incidentally, Bob is still looking for improvised words for WWII songs. He seriously intends to put them on an audio tape, so they will be preserved. If anyone remembers any, send them to 650 Grant Court, Satellite Beach, FL 32937. E-Mail: RDVB@aol.com.

Roy Owen writes: "At the last minute before bailing out, Col. Snavelly tossed his "50 mission hat" into the plane's interior. (This is ironic). We, the William M. Smith crew, along with many other crews on that Dresden mission, saw the lead aircraft go down over the target. We were certain we would be reporting our Commander's loss upon return to Homebase. However, due to the length of the mission and adverse winds we were forced to land at Orly Airport outside of Paris, short of fuel. There were so many such recoveries it took us three days to get fuel so we could fly on to Shipdham. On the second or third night, one of our two crew "sentries" left to guard the aircraft made a social excursion to a nearby bistro. While there he met an American GI fresh from the front who was telling our man about his observing the crew of a crippled bomber bail out and the airplane crash a couple of days ago. At the crash site he had found this "50 Mission Hat" which bore Snavelly's name. I'm not sure what kind of negotiation it took for our Gunner Fred Marzolph to get the cap after he identified the owner as our Group Commander, but he came back with the cap and upon our return to Shipdham, the next day he went to the Colonel's quarters and personally returned the cap. As I recall, there was no reward proffered. Imagine that! One day he goes down over the target, they recover with enough altitude and power to limp back to friendly territory before having to bail out. In the process he loses his precious cap and four days later he is back safe and sound and behold his cap is returned. How do you figure that?"

**CELEBRATING
IN
SAN DIEGO**



Everyone who gathered at the B-24's International Celebration had a special story to tell. Two members of the 44th were highlighted -- B/G Robert Cardenas, and Dick Butler. Louis DeBlasio, Ann Natilli, Julian and Paul Ertz; John Gately; Tom & Sarah Parsons; Frank Schaeffer, Perry Morse and your editor were in attendance. San Diego was the home

of **CONSOLIDATED AIRCRAFT CORPORATION**, where the first B-24 was built 60 years ago.

Speakers cite familiar statistics: the B-24 was the first mass-produced bomber; while, in combat, its nominal bombing altitude was two or three thousand feet below the B-17; it could carry two to four thousand pounds more bombload faster and further than the B-17 with an estimated 75% less publicity (ed.); was produced in higher numbers, was used in every theatre. It was the first U.S. airplane casualty at Pearl Harbor when one was destroyed on the ground burning the attack, and was the last downed in Europe just before VE Day. Ten states and a million people were involved in its production.

One of the designers pointed out that after Pearl Harbor, **CONSOLIDATED** braced itself for a Japanese attack. They disguised the plant and roads to it. They built a foxhole, had a gun emplacement and a runway. Fortunately, these precautions proved to be unnecessary.

Two assemblers at the plant--school teachers by occupation--described their experiences: the male workers were given instructions on how to deal with women. "No cursing--it's too upsetting; reprimand gently--as women are inclined to be emotional." Each worker worked on a single section on the

assembly line. When they went to lunch, the line moved with a strange groaning sound. A frequently stated policy was that they must never cover up a mistake. Some of the girls wrote their name and address on parts, which sometimes led to correspondence with maintenance men.

Maintaining uniformity with the many companies producing the Liberator was difficult. The Johnstown Flood slowed the flow of materials. **CONVAIR** made their own rivets; **LOCKHEED** bought the wrong size. At the **FORD MOTOR PLANT**, discrepancies arose. **CONSOLIDATE** engineers went to check their assembly line, and found that it took a right angle turn. Why? Because if they moved it straight it would go into the next county, and **FORD** would have to pay additional taxes.

Bob Cardenas reported on the glider program, going over the head of the military to get glider pilots from **DUPONT**. He got to England in January of '44; and by March was shot down. (*The dramatic story of Bob Cardenas' career will appear in a later issue.*) Bob Miller (44th BG, later Commander 389th) described arriving in England before the Shipham base was completed. Of all the crews that flew at that time, not one crew finished the tour. They flew with no fighter support, and a scarcity of

bombers. In the mission to St. Nazaire, they off loaded fuel to add bombs, using sight gauges, which were not accurate; and the inevitable happened: some planes ran out of fuel.

Dick Butler served on two panel discussions. He described the Kiel mission, May 14, 1943. This mission, which was against the fiercely defended submarine pens, was also the 8th Air Force first experiment with mixing B-17 and B-24 groups against the same target with non-compatible bomb loading. The combination of differing performance between the Liberator and the Fortress coupled with unique tactics associated with the incendiary bombs carried by the 44th requiring a two mile extension of the bomb run meant disaster for the 44th. The B-17's, after dropping their 500 lb. HE bombs, turned left for withdrawal which separated the formation and left the B-24's singularly exposed to the target area AA as they continued on the extended bomb run. The post target separation allowed the defending enemy fighters to down six 44th aircraft, heavily damage several others and wound or kill numerous crewmen. The 44th was awarded its first Presidential Unit Citation for the Kiel Raid and never again were these two aircraft joined together in a strike against the same target. On a later panel discussion, Dick read "*Ode To The Men of Ploesti,*" by Richard Allen Haft, a member of the 44th BG. The accuracy of that poem was good enough for Dick, a pilot on that awesome mission, to present it to the 500 participants at the San Diego Celebration.

Pat Ramm, an Englishman on the panel, was

eleven years old in 1944. He remembers the children who hung around the Shipdham airfield did not wish their names printed on the bombs being loaded, for fear Hitler would come to England to get them.

The experiences of the B-24 in WWII cover the planet. One airman claimed that he was standing of the island of Okinawa when he saw an amazing cloud rise to the west--Hiroshima. One week later he stated that his crew could pinpoint the next atomic drop site--Nagasaki. Pacific bomb crews described their assignments: fly one day, rest the next, maintenance the third day. Fly again. They loaded their own bombs, saved rain water for basic needs, tolerated typhoons and bad food. The Japanese took no prisoners, so they had no parachutes, no booze, no washing machine; but fortunately, no flak. If they happened to get some beer, they dangled it in the bomb bay, took the plane to 10,000 feet and let it rapidly cool.

An amazing report came from the Carpetbaggers, which were air commandos. They traveled as individual planes, not in squadrons, chose their own routes; dropped agents, ammo and supplies to the French and Belgium Underground; and answered directly to 'Wild Bill Donovan,' Director of the OSS. Information about this group was classified until very recently. A similar organization flew out of Africa, and its activities are still classified.

San Diego opened its arms to a group of veterans, hailed as heroes. 60 years later, reports of the B-24's dramatic escapades continue to unfold and unfold and unfold.



**44th BGVA
golf shirts and caps will
be available at our San
Diego Reunion.**

**The original lithograph (18 1/2" x 24") of the
Control Tower in Shipdham is still available for
\$32.50. Remember, half a century ago, how happy
you were to see it when you made it back safely
across the Channel?**

**To order contact:
PO Box 71223, Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287**



**The 44th BGVA Roster of Members' names are
available for \$7.50, including postage.**





A new wall of names is being erected in the Memorial Garden. Anyone wishing to be remembered on a wall can contact the Museum.



VOLUNTEERING AT THE MIGHTY EIGHTH MUSEUM

By Ruth W. Davis-Morse

The Mighty Eighth Museum has lots of volunteers, but Perry and I were the only two who traveled 800 miles to have the privilege. We spent the first day with “Bud” Porter, Director of Volunteers; but we didn’t do any work. We did a lot of wandering around in our blue coats, gawking at the displays we had seen on our first visit. It is still awesome. The plates with the Ploesti story were not yet finished. However, the Historian took six groups of school children through, and told the story very well. The Museum works with the local school system, and the goals of the program are truly admirable.

Among the projects is the restoration of a B-47 which was rapidly degenerating into a muddy heap. They moved it to the Museum, and school children are joining the 165th Airlift Wing of the Georgia National Guard in returning it to its formal glory. When the job is completed, the plane will be rolled to the front of the Museum, in clear view from I-95.

“Bud” schedules volunteers a month in advance; and he declares, ‘this place could not operate without us.’ Various ‘blue coats’ talk about their pay increases—nothing times nothing equals their increase. However, there are

advantages to being a volunteer—free coffee, discounts in the gift shop and cafeteria, and a free necktie for Perry. We appreciated all that, but we wanted to do some work.

One guide told of a group that came over from Germany, all with limited skills in English. The children could read the German writings, and were appalled at what they learned about Hitler. None of that information had ever been taught in Germany. The Museum is considering softening the display, to be less horrifying. Perry and I said “Don’t change it. The truth must be told.”



Most of the volunteers we met had flown in B-17's. We met a pilot of a Marauder, who went to great lengths to tell the unbelievable value of that fast plane over all others. Perry dropped a few arguments on the value of the '24, only to be shot down in each instance. The gentleman did disclose that all pilots of Marauders were crazy!!! (His words—not mine)

Raymond Reirson of the 92nd BG, 1st Air Division, drives about 40 miles to volunteer, three or four days each month. After people view the mission bomb run on the video, he describes his experiences—shot down over Germany, interned in Stalag 582 in Poland, and forced to march west in the dead of winter, as the Russians were advancing from the east. Even when everyone knew Germany was losing, Hitler held onto American airmen, hoping to use them as “bargaining chips.”

Phil Sellers, Public Relations Director, gave Perry the job of organizing his working materials. I ran off 5,000 pieces of stationery on their printer. Apparently there is an ongoing need for stationery, as the fund raising department is constantly doing mailings. Judy Walker, Director of Development, explained that entrance fees can never cover operating expenses.

On our last day we worked at organizing their archival materials. Perry clipped, and I

pasted. That task does not require much thought, but every good institution keeps its own historical records—and it's time consuming. We didn't get finished, so the next volunteer who shows up can pick up where we left off.

It was an interesting four days, and we would like to go back, but never again on a Superbowl Weekend. Getting back to York from ice-covered Atlanta was another interesting story.



The B-47
~ a work
in
progress.

LET'S GET SERIOUS

When the subject of another European tour arises, everybody nods their head that they are interested. Then it is forgotten until the next Reunion.

Larry Herpel will put a trip together, if the 44th wants to go. The Museum in Norwich is planning a grand opening in 2001. Why not go for that auspicious event, then plot a course across Europe, ending up in Germany? Let me, know if you are seriously interested, and the 44th BGVA will make it happen.



Larry Herpel
215 S. Medina
Lockhart, TX
(512) 376-7780
<lherpel@juno.com>



Mail & E-Mail



The 44th BGVA is one group you can join and be CERTAIN your name will not be sold to any commercial organization. **Jerry Folsom**, Treasurer, guarantees that all names, addresses and phone numbers are kept in total confidentiality.



From the diary of the late **Bill Uvanni**, Radioman on the George Bieber Crew on the *Consolidated Mess*:
July 7, 1944 - Bernberg, Germany. "On the wall-map of Europe a red line was stretched all the way from England to Bernberg deep in Germany. We were briefed to expect fighters, as this is in a fighter region; and also to expect heavy flak ... About 5 minutes before target time we were hit by fighters. We flew in the lead element and were right up front. Approximately 60 fighters lined 15 abreast came in at us from one o'clock and slightly high. They fired as they came in, and you could see orange millimeter shells as they came through the air. None of the planes from our squadron were hit, but an entire squadron (12 aircraft) were knocked out on the first pass. Some blew up and others went into dives and never came out. Some of the crew saw several chutes come out of these planes... the Germans were strafing the airmen hanging in their chutes.

Editor's Note: The Consolidated Mess had 200 holes, but nobody was hurt. This was the crew's first mission.



Forwarded from the Internet **Walter Lawrence** to **Tommy Shepherd**:

... I was in the barbershop and noticed a video that had pictures of B-24's on it. On further inspection I discovered the first part of the film entitled the mission, featuring the 44th with Gen. Johnson narrating. The amazing thing was that it included a good shot of *My Everlasting Gal* the ship we flew most all of our missions in, and even the last one where (due to no fault of hers) she let us down with a big bang right after bombs away; June 29 over

Magdeburg. I was on Lt. Westcott's crew, and the ship flying off our left wing was Lt. Landall's crew, and both got it at the same time when due to a flak hit, Landall lost control and altitude, dropping right on top of Westcott's. Three of us from Westcott's and six from Landahl's survived. It made me realize once again, that it was divine intervention that any of us survived.



The family of Penny Porter Cool of Glasco, KS, waited three generations to find out what happened to her uncle, **James M. Porter**. She had been told that his crew had made a pact, never to become POWs; but rather, go down with the plane. **Will Lundy** was able to connect her with **John Dayberry**, a life member of the 44th BGVA, and let her know of others that survived the crash.



Peter Loncke, First Sergeant in the Belgium Air Force, has spent the past twenty years locating crash sites, making videos and contacting relatives of those who were lost, both American & British. He has been in touch with **Will Lundy**, who told him how to contact **Bob Vance**. Loncke found two crash sites in the area of Wesel, Germany, and was delighted to learn that Bob and Louis DeBlasio had survived the crash of the *Southern Comfort*.

Editor's Note: Because of Bob's & Louis's colorful description of the Fighter Pilot that went down on the same day, I have made a constant effort to find him. They did not know his name. Peter Loncke thinks he will soon have him identified.



From **Bob Norsen** (68th Sq.): "My first ride in a B-24 was with eight other pilots as passengers. Major Curtis LeMay was pilot. He fought that airplane like he was wrestling alligators. I think we helped by walking in unison from front to back in the waist section while he was in the pattern. I wondered at the time - This B-24 will take MUSCLE! It turned out that it was easy and fun to fly...

The instructors were about a week ahead of the pilots being assigned. On my initial check out the instructor kept showing me how to steer with brakes- engines and

rudder as we used up runway. Ahead they were extending the runway with a paving machine covered with workmen. When he said "follow me on the throttles," I firewalled them. At the last minute we both pulled us off the runway, and we mushed over the paver, men jumping off and running for life."

"My check out lasted 15 minutes. Nothing was said, but I think we both learned that runway behind is in the wrong place!"



From **Kevin Watson**, England: Dignitaries honored the lost crew of the American Bomber RuthLess at Butts Brow, a hill above the town of Eastbourne. On Remembrance Sunday, Deputy Mayor Olive Woodall laid a poppy at the foot of the memorial in the place of Mayor Beryl Healy. The plane was named for the wife of the pilot, Ruth. Flying without her, he was RuthLess.

Three years ago an entourage from the 44th BG visited the crash site of the RuthLess, and were in awe of the ceremony which the community of Eastbourne held on that momentous occasion. It is nice to know that over there, they recognize the sacrifice of Americans to help free the world of evil that was of unimaginable proportions.



From **Mel Trager**, gunner, 506 Sq.: "... I and many Jewish veterans would be grateful if, in addition to the Christian Cross in FOLDED WINGS, we could also have the Star of David. I am enclosing a picture of the War Memorial here in Joliet (Illinois) that I planned and built. The Cross and Star of David were made to specification of overseas cemeteries. The Poppies were sent to me from the Mayor of Dunkar, Flanders Field.

War Memorial
at Joliet, IL
1999



Forwarded from **Tommy Shepherd**, the sad news that Father Fabian Harshaw, 62, a Benedictine monk, died recently. Born 1906, Harshaw was ordained a priest on May 21, 1932. From 1942-46 he served as Chaplain in the Army Air Corps, the first monk from St. Benedicts to become a chaplain in WWII. He achieved the rank of captain before leaving the service.

He is fondly remembered by many. Mike Yuspeh said it succinctly: "We wouldn't fly until Father Harshaw blessed us Father Harshaw furnished the wine we men of Jewish faith used in our weekly religious services..."

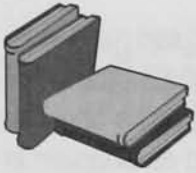
Shepherd stated, "To me, Father Harshaw is one of the quiet, meek and genuine men (of the cloth), the best of the best— kind of a living Beatitudes. The 44th was definitely 'blessed'... its Commanding officers, Staff, Support Unit Personnel, Air Crews, Ground Crews and Administrative Personnel. I can still 'see' that lil' man with the Cross Insignia on his blouse lapels. I can remember his blessings at Reconciliation - at - oh so many times when we would 'meet and pass.' As a Catholic by conversion, I feel blessed by knowing this Fine Man of God."



Mike Yuspeh invites one to check the New Orleans Web Site. Great information available there:

(Gnofn.org/~506bgp44).





Eastern Daily Press, England The Millennium Library in Norwich is taking shape, and by the turn of the year it will be rising above ground. According to Robin Hall, chief executive of the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Company, the shell is due to be completed in June. "We aim to have construction complete by December, 2000, and then we start the major job of stocking the library with books and installing information technology."

From **Jan J. Van der Veer** in Friesland, a province in Holland: Jan was a fifteen year old in 1943; and to avoid being sent to Germany for slave labor, he went underground. He has been very helpful to **Will Lundy** in supplying information about planes that went down in his area.

One of Jan's reports was about the late Thijs Westra, a Resistance Leader who 'dealt' in Allied Airmen. One B-24 Waist Gunner hiding in Friesland learned to speak Frisian without any foreign accent. He was provided with a faked passport; and even the local Frisians did not know that he was an American airman.

Editor's Note: Would that airman like to identify himself, and describe his life at that time?

Describing the German Occupation, Jan wrote "All of us knew that our lives depended on the whim of the first German police chap that came along. All of us were waiting for the night at last there would be that screeching of car brakes and the thudding of rifle butts on the front door and the shouting of 'Open up, German Police' They might shoot you right away. They might arrest you and torture you and try to make you talk about Resistance secrets."

Will and Irene visited Jan and his wife Rink ten years ago, and it was an impressive visit. Jan has since passed away, but his legacy of stories is in the files of **Will Lundy**.



From **Tony Mastradone**, a piece of *history*—*Washington Post*, **October 10, 1911**: "For the first time in the history of aviation, actual bomb dropping from an aeroplane took place at College Park yesterday afternoon." Lt. Thomas De Witte Milling, operating an army biplane, took up former Lt. Scott, inventor of the bomb-carrying device and on two successive trips released a 25 pound steel shell from the chassis of the aeroplane while the machine was flying at 41 miles an hour....Lt. Milling said, "With the device Lt. Scott has invented, I am sure it will not be long before the army will be able to destroy any large fortress ... in the world. A fleet of rapidly moving aeroplanes at the height of 2,000 feet, could drop each a 250 pound bomb of nitroglycerin ... and escape unharmed, while the shells would wreak death and destruction."

Editor's Note: Obviously, in 1917 nobody could have even imagined the Ploesti Raid.



E-Mail—DSC to Jack:

I was a Pan Am 727 FE waiting for start clearance in Munich, Germany. I was listening to the radio, since I was the junior crew member. This was the conversation I overheard: Lufthansa: (in German) "Ground, what is our start clearance time?" Ground: (in English) "If you want an answer you must speak English. (In English) "I am a German, flying a German airplane in Germany. Why must I speak English? Beautiful English Accent: (before ground could answer) "Because you lost the bloody war!" I was laughing all the way back to Berlin!!!



Everyone has a story worth telling and worth publishing. PLEASE Send it!

Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor
2041 Village Circle East
York, PA 17404

Telephone: (717) 846-8948

Fax: (717) 846-6688

e-Mail: REWDM@BLAZENET.NET



Chris Clark of Manassas, VA is trying to find information about his Uncle Charles Franklin Clark, 506 BS. He was a nose gunner on the Confer crew. He also flew with the George W. Smith and Robert McMahon crew in the 489th. He flew eight missions with the 44th, and received the DFC and 3 OLCs from General Johnson.

Chris, a Liberator buff, questions where this picture of his uncle was taken. Also, does anybody remember Charles Clark? Can you tell him any interesting experience you may have had with his uncle?

Call (703) 392-9437 or write 8427 Willow Glen Ct.,
Manassas, VA 20110-4639.



Charles F. Clark 33205104 506BS 44BG



**JOIN US IN SAN DIEGO
AT THE
BALBOA PARK ZOO!**

**HUA MEI,
DAUGHTER OF
SHI SHI AND BAI YUN
IS BEING PATIENT
AWAITING YOUR
ARRIVAL!**

Among the planned events is a trip to the Balboa Park Zoo, one of the best in the world. They recently announced the birth of Hua Mei, daughter of Shi Shi and Bai Yun, three of the world's increasingly rare Pandas.



Good luck in the
Every Member Get A
Member Contest!



44th Bomb Group
VETERANS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



Non Profit
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit #6923
Salt Lake City, UT

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



8 BALL TAILS



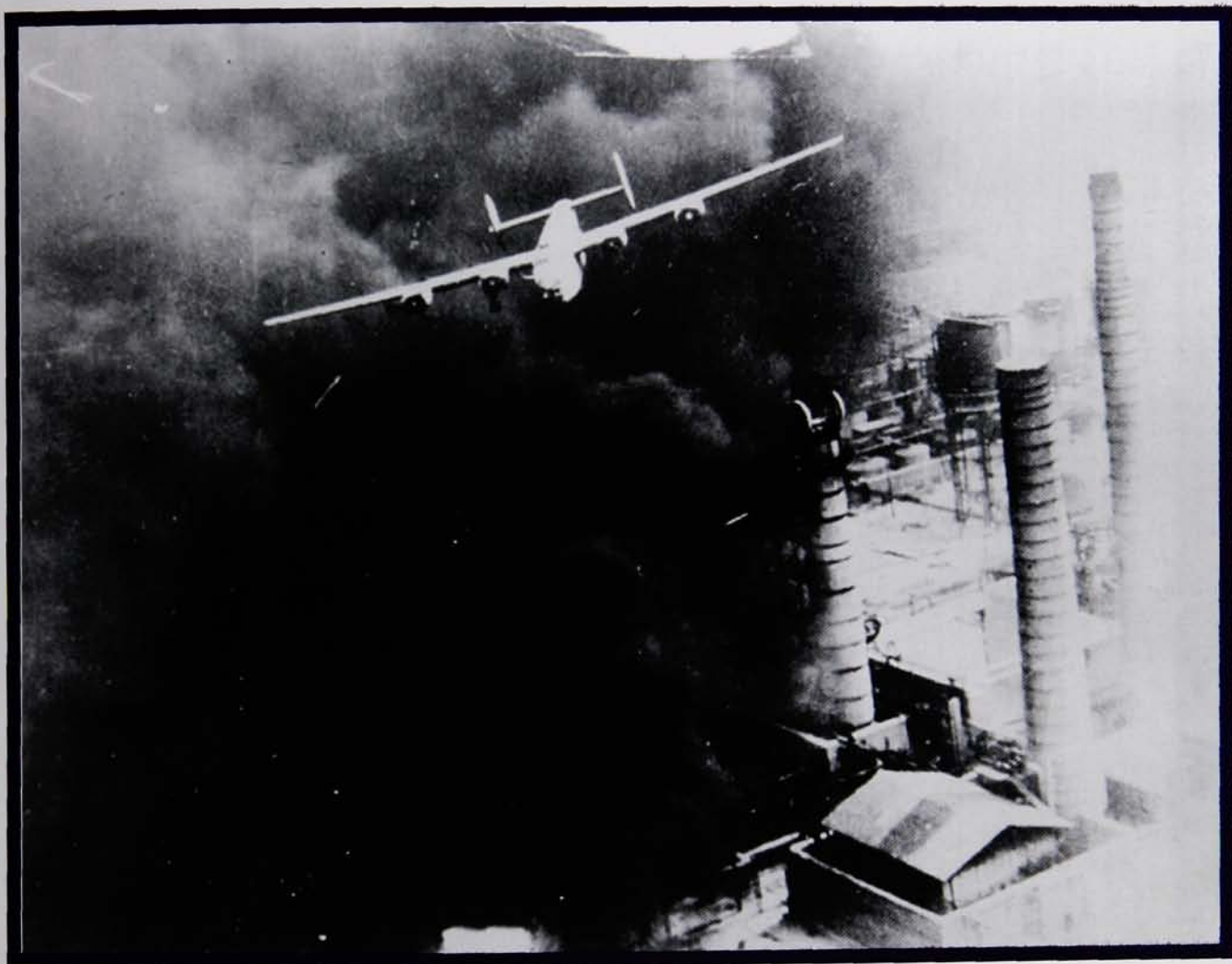
Vol. 3 - Issue #5

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Summer, 2000

Non Profit Veterans Organization

EIN #68-0351397



THE ATTACK ON PLOESTI HAS GONE DOWN IN HISTORY AS THE MOST DARING AND DANGEROUS MISSION IN AIRCRAFT HISTORY. SOME WRITERS CONSIDER IT TO BE THE TURNING POINT OF THE WAR.

S/SGT. ROBERT REASONER REMEMBERS PLOESTI CLEARLY,
EVEN THOUGH HIS CREW CAME THROUGH UNSCATHED.

His 21st mission on the *Black Jack* to Wiener-Neustadt changed his life and earned him Purple Heart #3.

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD

President Emeritus: B-Gen. John H. Gibson (Retired)
7008 Gateridge
Dallas, TX 75240-7936
Phone: (972) 239-0559

Immediate Past President: Roy W. Owen (506)
6304 Meadowridge Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95409-5839
Phone: (707) 538-4726 Fax: (707) 538-1212
e-mail: Rowen44bg@aol.com

President: Edw. K. "Mike" Mikoloski (66/67)
626 Smithfield Road #702
N. Providence, RI 02904
Phone/Fax: (401) 353-0144
e-mail: EKMLIB44@msn.com

First Vice President: Richard D. Butler (506/67)
44th Group VP to 2nd ADA
16828 Mitchell Circle
Riverside, CA 92518
Phone (909) 780-7421 Fax: (909) 780-1459
e-mail: rdbutler@excelonline.com

Treasurer: Gerald (Jerry) Folsom (506)
3582 East Dover Hill Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84121-5527
Phone (801) 733-7371 Fax: (801) 942-9988
e-mail: 44thbgva@xmission.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: REWDM@BLAZENET.NET

Director (67) Archivist
Anthony "Tony" Mastradone
9111 Tuckerman Street
Lanham, MD 20706-2709
Phone/Fax: (301) 577-1487
e-mail: mast@cres.com



Director: Robert J. Lehnhausen (68)
2540 Benton Court
Peoria, IL 61615-8838
Phone/Fax: (309) 243-1952

Director: Michael "Mike" Yuspeh (506)
7214 Sardonyx St.
New Orleans, LA 70124-3509
Phone/Fax: (504) 283-3424
e-mail: mikeyuspeh@worldnet.att.net

Director (44 SMW)
Charles G. Simpson
P.O. Box 281
Breckenridge, CO 80424
Phone/Fax: (970) 453-0500
e-mail: AFMISSILEERS@compuserve.com

Historian: C.W. "Will" Lundy (67)
3295 North "H" Street
San Bernardino, CA 92405-2809
Phone/Fax: (909) 882-2441
e-mail: willundy@aol.com
P.O. Box 315, Bridgeport, CA 93517 (Sum)
Phone/Fax: (760) 932-7349

Membership: Search
Art Hand (66)
517 Elm Street
Paris, IL 61944-1417
Phone/Fax: (217) 463-5905
e-mail: k9hwp@comwares.net

U.K. Representative: Steve Adams
28 Bassingham Rd.
Norwich, England NR3 2QT
Phone/Fax: 011-44-1603-400221
e-mail: s.p.adams@btinternet.com

ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS:
44th BGVA
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

The 8-Ball Tails ©
Official Journal of
The 44th Bomb
Group Veterans
Association, Inc. ©

Compiled, written and published tri-yearly at 2041 Village Circle East, York, PA, by Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor. Printed and mailed Bulk Rate at Salt Lake City, UT under USPS Permit #6923. All original written material such as letters, stories, excerpts from personal diaries or memoirs, drawings and photos submitted to this journal will become the property of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and will be copyright protected except where noted. The text and photos are otherwise reproduced from official USAAF and USAF documents and photos which have been released for publication. Permission is granted for the contents of this journal to be reproduced specifically for personal archives.

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

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



ROBERT REASONER'S ADVENTURES WHILE EARNING PURPLE HEARTS

Sgt. Robert Reasoner in 1942.



The German Luftwaffe was not the only problem the crew of *Bat Out of Hell* encountered when the 68th Squadron set off for the submarine pens at St. Nazaire, France on Sunday, January 3, 1943. B-24s followed the B-17 formations, dropped their bombs and continued following them out over the ocean and back toward England. Returning home, Reasoner's plane made it across the Channel to Wales, but Pilot Lt. Roy Erwin had no gas to continue. At 600 feet the plane dived straight down into a cabbage patch. Fortunately, without gas, it did not explode. Reasoner was one of the lucky ones that survived the crash. The impact was so powerful, his shoes flew off-still untied, and he sustained an injury to his heel. For that crash he earned Purple Heart #1.

Less fortunate was Clark Swanson, co-pilot, who died instantly. Roy Erwin died two days later in the hospital; and on January 8th, Thomas Davenport, Navigator, passed away. Reasoner lived to fly again.



Out of gas, *Bat Out of Hell* crashed in Wales.



Fifty-five years after *Bat Out of Hell* crashed near Haverfordwest, Wales, (1998) Reasoner returned to the crash site to lay a wreath on the monument to his fallen crewmen. The president of the Pembrokeshire Aviation Group, Malcolm Cullen, arranged a flight over the Denant area for Bob and Bernice Reasoner in a Cessna as part of the memorial celebration and expression of the gratitude of the Welsh people.

"After spending a week in the hospital, I was sent back to Shipdham. At first they didn't have anything for me to do. I just hung around, doing nothing. Finally they sent me to Lancashire to Turret Maintenance School." Reasoner enjoyed that for about a month, but the easy life was short-lived. In March they assigned him to the crew of Pilot George Jansen on *Margaret Ann*, and on May 14th, he was on his way to the Sub Pens at Kiel, Germany.

Fighters and anti-aircraft weapons protected the Krupp Submarine Plant, where 17 B-24s followed 109 Fortresses. The B-17s were dropping high explosives, some of which were falling through the Liberator's formation. To avoid this menace, the lead pilots maneuvered away from the B-17 bomber column, becoming easy targets for the German fighters. The 100 lb. incendiaries dropped by the Liberators broke open immediately, so the pilots in the rear planes had to fly in loose formation to avoid the masses of incendiary sticks from the lead planes. The 44th lost five planes, one was abandoned, 9 damaged, 12 men wounded and 51 MIA. Among the wounded was Reasoner, whose head met a .30 cal. bullet. This earned him Purple Heart #2.

"From my position in the tail turret, I was shooting at the fighter and watching the tracers. He was coming right at me," Reasoner recalled. "All of a sudden I found myself looking straight up at the top of the plane." He could feel the warm blood seeping out of his wound, matting his hair.

With four wounded men on board and a plane that had been badly damaged, Lt. George Jansen managed to get them safely back to Shipdham, succeeding in making a perfect landing. When the 44th was awarded a Unit Citation for the Kiel Mission, Reasoner was still recovering from his wound.

With the upcoming attack on Sicily, Reasoner joined the 44th's flight to Benghazi in late June, 1943. From this airfield they bombed Italian and Sicilian fortifications, in preparation for General Patton's and Montgomery's entry onto the island. This was the prelude to the attack on mainland Europe. They carried their bombs to Foggia, Naples and Rome; and when the decision was made to cut off the German oil supply at Ploesti, the *Margaret Ann*, Jansen's plane was among the attacking force. This was another Unit Citation mission.

"It turned out that our assignment to Benghazi was for the low level attack on the Ploesti oil fields. After some low level flying over England and over the desert of Libya, the day arrived for the low level mission. We took off at dawn for the target," Reasoner stated.

"It was a long mission. We were in the air a total of 13 hours and 5 minutes. We had to fight off fighters and fly through heavy flak before entering the fire, smoke, and explosions in the target area to deliver our bombs. We came through with only a few small holes in our aircraft, but I saw several planes go down. We had a lot of small arms fire over the target." August 1, 1943 is recognized as one of the most costly missions in the War, in terms of loss of men and aircraft, and also men captured.

"As a reward for this mission, we were given a three day pass and a plane to carry us to Jerusalem, which was at that time, a part of Palestine. Then we set out for England.

"Spain was a neutral country, so we couldn't fly over it. Instead we went over Gibraltar into the open Atlantic. I looked out the window and saw a stream of oil coming from under the plane. Another plane signaled to us that we had a problem, so we turned back to North Africa, this time landing in Marrakesh, French Morocco. It took ten days to get the plane repaired, so when we returned to England, we flew solo.

"Two weeks later we got word that the Army was holed up at Anzio and needed help to break through. By the time we got there, they had made the break, so they were ready to send us back to England. Then came the Mission to Wiener-Neustadt in Austria. It was a Messerschmidt plant.



CAN ANYBODY IDENTIFY THESE TWO STRATEGISTS WHO ARE POINTING OUT THE ROUTE IN AND OUT OF PLOESTI?

"The first time we went to Wiener-Neustadt on August 13, 1943, the Germans were unprepared, thinking our planes could not fly that far. We had very little resistance. Two months later, on my 21st mission, October 1, 1943, they were ready. This time I was with Lt. Coleman Whitaker's crew on the *Black Jack*. I thought it would be a milk run, and going across the mountains of Yugoslavia, I was wondering what I should do after I finished my last three missions-go back to the states, join a maintenance crew, or what? As it happened, my decision was made for me."

The ME 109's came straight toward the formation. These were experienced fighters -- 60 or 70 of them. Then came the heavy flak. It hit the bomb bay and set it afire. The plane fell back, peeled to the left, losing altitude. At that point there was no radio contact among the crew. *Black Jack* passed under another aircraft, and three crew members bailed out. Reasoner walked through fire with his eyes closed to find an exit. The bombardier's camera was occupying the camera hatch, so he leaped out the waist window, intending to open his parachute when he hit the clouds below. However, drifting out of consciousness, he woke up in the clouds with the chute opened. The plane drifted to the left, passing over the top of another plane in the formation. Two more crew members emerged. At that point the plane turned right and broke into two pieces, taking the lives of Coleman Whitaker, Pilot; Francis Badman, Radio Operator; Wilson Riche, Asst. Engineer; Robert Smith, Gunner and Anthony Domico, Assistant Radio Operator. Seven planes from the 44th went down that day. Reasoner earned his third Purple Heart.

"My parachute got caught in a tree, a few feet from the ground," Reasoner remembered. "By that time I was totally blind, and the Germans pulled me from the tree.

"Since I was sent to a hospital and not interrogated, I was not legally a POW," he continued. "I was in a room with five Germans with an Austrian doctor taking care of me. If the other patients were present, he did not talk. When they were out, he spoke very kindly in perfect English and was extremely gentle in the painful procedures he had to do in caring for my burns.

"He told me that I needed a great deal of work done on my face, and that he had a friend in Vienna who was a plastic surgeon. 'Would I like to see him?' Of course I wanted anything! that would make my life better, so he promised to make the arrangements. I had been in the hospital four months, most of them in total blackness. Now I could see a little."

During that period, kindness came from unexpected sources. Reasoner was 'adopted' by some southern Europeans—Serbians and Croations. They saluted him with great respect; and even though they had no common language, they talked.

They came in different numbers—two, three or four, and they each brought him the same treat, apples, sugar cubes or cigarettes.

"One evening an aide came and told me to come with him to get some clothes, that I was going to Vienna. I was outfitted with German infantry pants, ill fitting GI shoes and an old jacket, and at 5:00 A.M. I was off on a bus to a ski resort doubling as a medical facility.

"That doctor assured me that I needed a lot of plastic surgery. He told me to go back to my hospital and he would send for me when he had room. I never saw him again.

"Back at the hospital we had a new doctor who was very stern. I could hear him coming down the hall, 'Heil Hitler' to everyone he met.

"Several days later they repeated the call to get clothes to go to Vienna. This time, instead of the hospital, I ended up in a large warehouse filled with a collection of laboring POWs. We were transported to 17-A, which was mostly an English camp. I was treated great. Some of the POWs had been captured at Dunkirk, and I was the first American they had seen.

"After about a month I was sent to Frankfurt-on-Main to be interrogated and was assigned to Stalag Luft VI prison camp. I expected a lengthy questioning, but it was very brief. When the German folded up the paper he was writing on, I said, 'Is that all?' He assured me he already knew all about me and my crew, and did not need to question me further."

There was a rumor in Luft VI prison camp that in accordance with the Geneva Convention, wounded prisoners could apply for repatriation. A prisoner, an English doctor, acted as advisor as to who might qualify. He advised Reasoner to apply.

"I had to pass a long table with doctors from many nationalities who were supposed to be neutral in their evaluation—German, Swiss and Swedish. Each of them just passed me along, and the last one said, 'Sergeant Reasoner, you may go home.'

'Go home! Go home! It was almost too good to be true.'

This was the beginning of a long period of hospitalization for Reasoner. He had more skin grafts than he could remember at the Newton D. Baker Hospital in Martinsburg, West Virginia. When that closed, he went to Valley Forge Hospital in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. The surgeons created new eyelids for him, and rebuilt ears which were almost totally burned away.

Returning to civilian life was difficult, as he was self-conscious about his appearance. However he went on to get a degree in Botany at the University of Miami, becoming a landscape architect. In time he landed a job with the Department of Agriculture in Miami, Florida, and has been retired for 20 years. He and his wife Bernice reside in Mountville, South Carolina.



BERNICE AND BOB REASONER

DECORATIONS

Distinguished Flying Cross
Bronze Star
Air Medal w/3 OLC
Distinguished Unit Citation w/1 OLC
POW Medal
European Theater of Operations Medal w/4 Battle Stars
Three Purple Hearts

CREW OF THE MARGARET ANN



KNEELING L-R:
FRANCIS BAUMAN,
LOUIS GIRARD,
PILOT 1st LT.
GEORGE JANSEN,
BOB REASONER
STANDING L-R:
CLARENCE STRANDBERG,
CORWIN HUFF,
EUGENE VICKERY,
GEORGE KELSEY,
GEORGE GUILFORD,
ROBERT SMITH.

44th BGVA Board Meeting

At the 44th BGVA Board Meeting, Mike Yuspeh reported that the site for the 2001 Reunion will probably be in Barksdale, as that group is working very hard to complete the B-24, now under reconstruction. The plane will be renamed *Louisiana Belle*, and will have the serial number and stripes of the 44th.

Roy Owen is organizing a team of members to make personal calls to inactive members of the 44th in an effort to increase membership.

Following the meeting, Owen is going to Savannah to inspect the diorama of the Ploesti Mission at the Mighty Eighth Museum. He is also invited to Shipdham to speak to a group about 44th activities during WWII.

By-law change: The Nominating Committee is required to submit only one nominee for each office. Each Squadron will have a representative, but a Unit vote is not required. The number of representatives is unchanged.

Board membership: Tony Mastradone has agreed to continue as Archivist. Mike Yuspeh wishes to go off the Board after this year, but will work with his replacement.

Farewell

to the 506th Bomb Squadron

"Mum"

On July 10, 2000 the 506th Bomb Squadron lost its wartime "Mum," when Mrs. Linda Weston, age 89, quietly passed away at her home in Portsmouth, England. Linda, her husband Bill (Davies), and daughter



Beryl 1944

lived in the farmhouse just over the fence of AAF 115, Site 2, home of the 506th. We featured the Davies family in our Winter 1995 issue of the 8-Ball Tails.

Linda was the surrogate mother to all the 506th guys. She laundered our underwear,

baked us bread, welcomed us into her home and laughed her way into our hearts. We last saw her at our Shipdham barbeque party on the England trip in '97. She was a faithful member of 44th BGVA and is



1997

survived by her daughter Beryl, son-in-law, Ron and their children Rebecca, 20, and son, Christopher 17. We will miss her smiling face and the care she so willingly gave to the lads across the fence who were so far from home.

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association Reunion August 31 - September 3, 2000 San Diego, California

If you haven't registered for the 44th BGVA Reunion, you'll be missing a lot of fun. Mike Yuspeh has taken great pains to see that it will be another unforgettable event. The Naval Air Stations, Aircraft Carrier, Balboa Zoo, the shops around Westin Plaza and the historic Hotel Del Coronado are all on parade in this multi-culture metropolis. Located a short distance from the Mexican border, San Diego is one of the most exciting cities in the country.

There are no bonds like the bonds of war buddies. Don't pass up this opportunity to be together in a unique, sometimes quaint location.



2nd AIR DIVISION REUNION

The 53rd Convention of the 2nd Air Division Association met at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Tampa, Florida. Along with the flurry of old friends greeting each other in a hotel, which is famous for its splendor, there were boat trips, shopping opportunities and a trip to the Fantasy of Flight Museum.

The big event after the Buffet Dinner was a film presentation "Music at Theater Royal Norwich," a foot stomping, rip roaring, tear jerking presentation of an American show which many of the 44th had enjoyed on one of their English tours. The Stars and Stripes never looked better than they did on that English stage.

At the Banquet on Sunday evening, David Hastings, Vice Chairman of the Memorial Trust Board of Governors of the Norwich Museum/Library, reported on progress in the building program. He stated that this library will be unique in the world, and it honors the 6,700 American airmen from the 2 AD who died in WWII.

"This is the finest building in Norwich," he declared. "It is because of your vision that we have this living memorial. It promotes a unique bond of friendship between our two countries."

In addition to the library, there will be a restaurant, a heritage attraction center in which the history of Norwich is told and the 2 AD honored. There will be a model of a B-24 on



PERRY MORSE AND JERRY FOLSOM ADMIRE THE ICE SCULPTURE OF A LIBERATOR OUTSIDE THE BANQUET HALL AT 2 AD REUNION.

display and murals on the wall that tell the story of the war.

As a special consideration to the 2 AD members and expression of their gratitude, Norwich has extended an ancient but valuable designation: Status of Freedom of Norwich Award. This gives 2 AD members the right to have riotous parades through the city, complete with banners and loud music. Also the right to raise sheep within the city limits.

Long range plans include a Memorial Garden, six study areas for historians and researchers, a B-24 simulator and a 'Mission Room.' He announced that a banner will be displayed for every group that flew from there.

The 2 AD presented Hastings with a check for \$10,000. At present there are 499 reservations for the tour to the Grand Opening in November, with a waiting list of 25-30.

The candle lighting service honored those lost on particular missions, the ground crews who maintained the planes and those who have passed away in later years. Two members of the 44th participated in the lighting ceremony—Bob Lehnhausen and Will Lundy.



Will Lundy and Dick Butler.



Lighting the candles for lost buddies.



This story is dedicated to two young men, William F. Coll of Park Hall, Maryland, and Robert Zoller of Longmont, Colorado. Their uncles flew on B-24 #41-23778 F of the 44th Bomb Group. Both are new members of the 44th BGVA.



ENGINEER ON SCRAPPY II,
T/Sgt. William L. Coll, KIA AT Ploesti.

THE FIGHTING LADY: B-24 #41-23778 F

By: M/Sgt. Walter M. Patrick, USAF (Ret.)

GUNNER ABOARD Lady Luck THAT
WENT DOWN ON THE AUGUST 16,
1943 FOGGIA MISSION WAS
S/Sgt. HARPER F. ZOLLER.



This is the story of a fighting lady. Her official name was #41-23778 F, but she also had several other stand-ins, namely *Jenny* and *Lady Luck*. As a member of the 66th Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, she carried approximately 30 young men into battle over the skies of Europe, namely France, Germany and Italy, from December 6, 1942 until August 16, 1943.

Jenny appeared over the skies of Abbeyville, France with Lt. Jimmy Kahl at the controls on December 6, 1942; and on August 16, 1943, that same B-24, *Lady Luck*, made her final exit at Foggia, Italy with Lt. Rocco A. Curelli in the left-side seat. This account is about the trials and tribulations of #41-23778, the men who flew her, their exploits in the air, their leisure time, and a few of the men's post-war adventures.

The initial crew of *Jenny* was put together at Barksdale Field, Louisiana during July and August, 1942. They were: Pilot: Lt. Jimmy Kahl; Co-Pilot: Lt. Thomas S. Scrivner; Navigator: Lt. Edward Mikoloski; Bombardier: Lt. Edward Brennan; Engineer: T/Sgt. William L. Coll; Radio Operator: T/Sgt. Channing Satterfield; Right Waist Gunner; S/Sgt. Hank Balsley; Left Waist Gunner: S/Sgt. Walter Hazelton; and Tail Gunner: T/Sgt. George DeLacy.

The two well gunners joined the *Jenny* crew during the fall of 1942. Sgt. Harold Samuelian, who had some early contact with the *Jenny* crew at Barksdale, was assigned in September, 1942. I was assigned in October, 1942. I had arrived earlier in England, in May 1942, with the 15th Bombardment Squadron. The 15th was an A-20 outfit that made the first attack on Europe by Americans when we hit airdromes in Holland. It was a low-level attack in conjunction with the Royal Air Force. I was one of a few 44th gunners to have attended gunnery school with the RAF. Because of losses to combat and other attrition, I quickly moved up the ranks, so to speak, from well gunner to waist gunner to tail gunner.

The *Jenny's* first mission took place on December 12, 1942. Like most 44th crews, we flew our first mission to the FW-190 Yellow Nose base at Abbeyville on the French coast. The first crew loss was suffered on a mission to Romilly Sur Seine, eight days later on December 20, 1942, when tail gunner T/Sgt. George DeLacy's fingers froze while working on malfunctioning guns. This injury ended his combat career; and he would later be returned to the States.

PICTURED

CREW OF JENNY (Lady Luck) #41-23778 THAT WENT TO WILHELM-SHAVEN, GERMANY ON JANUARY 26, 1943.



THEY ARE FROM LEFT, STANDING S/Sgt. Hank Balsley, Tail Gunner; Lt. Jimmy Kahl, Pilot; Lt. Edward Mikoloski, Navigator; T/Sgt. Don Siebert, Engineer; Lt. Ed Brennan, Bombardier; Sgt. Walter Patrick, Right Waist Gunner; and T/Sgt. Channing Satterfield, Radio Operator.

FRONT ROW KNEELING FROM LEFT ARE Lt. THOMAS SCRIVNER, Co-pilot; Sgt. HAROLD SAMUELIAN, ASST. ENGINEER; S/Sgt. WALTER HAZELTON, LEFT WAIST GUNNER; AND REAR WELL GUNNER, S/Sgt. JAMES YOUNG.

The *Jenny's* fifth mission took place on January 26, 1943, and proved to be a real zinger. As all of the crews gathered in the briefing room to get the "poop" from the briefing officer, Captain William F. Strong, we immediately noticed that something was different. The route to the target was covered with a sheet. "Why?" we wondered. Captain Strong made his pitch. "Gentlemen," he said, "we have finally come to the point of why we are here, and" - his hand flipped the sheet off - "here it is." A lot of "ooohs" and "ahhhhs" answered our question. The *Jenny*, along with many others, was going big-time. The string of the flight path reached a long way, all the way from Shipdham, England to Wilhelmshaven, Germany. This was bound to be quite an experience. And for the crew of *Jenny*, it was.



We were hit with everything they had. The German fighters were so thick, it was like we had an FW-190 escort from the German border all the way to Wilhelmshaven and all the way back to the North Sea and beyond.

Anti-aircraft fire was intense, especially over the target area. Over the target itself, we had trouble with hung-up bombs in the bomb bay. It was at this point that Radio Operator T/Sgt. Channing Satterfield became a real hero. He went into the bomb bay and managed to get the stuck bombs to drop. Also over the target area there was real sweating by *Jenny* crew members when the B-24 off our right wing was decapitated. A German FW-190 fighter pilot flew his plane into the B-24 amidships. Both went down in flames.

After leaving the German coast, it was determined that our aircraft had undergone serious damage. The crew was told that there would probably be a crash landing upon reaching base. No "probably" about it. With no hydraulics and no brakes, the future looked bleak; and the crash landing took place. But Pilot Jimmy Kahl and his flight deck crew really came through in true heroic style. When that heavy landing gear finally fell safely into the down-and-lock position (there was no hydraulic fluid to operate it), I could not believe it. It was still "sweat-time" at landing. Most of the crew gathered back around the waist area to take their crash positions. But on landing *Jenny* held together; and we made it. That was just one of many miracles performed that day by the 44th. "Thanks" go to Pilot Jimmy Kahl and yes, to Don Siebert, also. Flight Engineer T/Sgt. Don Siebert told Waist Gunner Walter Hazelton a number of years later that he didn't think anybody aboard expected to see England again. He said Lt. Kahl, the pilot, did a masterful job taking the battered but still reliable Liberator back home.



Pilot of *Scrappy II*, Capt. Thomas E. Scrivner (left) and his co-pilot, Lt. Everett P. Anderson were KIA when their plane came out of the smoke and fire at their target, White Five at the Colombia Aquila Refinery.

The battle report of damage to *Jenny* from my Combat Crew Report said that the ship was badly shot up. Over two-

hundred holes were found in the fuselage, controls were cut, landing gear was damaged, there was no hydraulic system

KIA AT
PLOESTI WAS
T/Sgt.
CHANNING
N.
SATTERFIELD,
RADIO
OPERATOR ON "JENNY," "Lady
Luck," and "Scrappy II."



and no brakes. We would stand down for approximately a month. In the mean time, some drastic changes took place related to crew assignments. Lt. Kahl moved on to *Jenny II*, and Lt. Thomas Scrivner moved over from the right seat to become pilot of *Lady Luck*, the new name for #42-23778. The new co-pilot would be Lt. Everett P. Anderson, a transfer from the RAF Eagle Squadron. For quite a spell there would be new well gunners on every mission. The well gunners continued to change until we got to Benghazi.

Upon return from that January 26, 1943 mission to Wilhelmshaven, the flight crews found that the ever-loving ground crews had taken all of the regular buses to town and left the flight crew boys stranded at home base. Not to be left behind, some of the flight crew boys, myself included, decided that a weapons carrier would work as well as a bus, and off we went to town. In town we hid the weapons carrier in an alley so the MP's wouldn't see it. Some time afterwards, an elderly English gentleman pedaled his bicycle around the corner and into the alley, crashing headlong into the truck. Upon returning to the scene of the crash later that night, we flight crew boys, discovered that the Englishman had reported the presence of the truck to the MP's. The MP's had then confiscated the distributor cap of the truck, thus grounding us and making us easy prey for the lurking MP's. Within several days, at least six airmen were reduced to privates. It was General Johnson's policy that you had to be at least a buck sergeant to fly combat, so this was well and good with the bicycle casualties. We all volunteered to fly again.

In my case, I flew several more missions before *Lady Luck* was scheduled to fly again. The extra missions I flew may have been life-saving for me. By the time the mission to Ploesti came around, I had amassed 27 missions and was not required to make that fateful trip.

That first Wilhelmshaven raid was a turning point for a lot of things. It was at this time that the *Lady Luck* crew was selected to do some US War Bonds work. The crew was directed to report to the B-17 base for a radio broadcast back to the USA. This was about a five-day assignment. After many rehearsals with John Daly, we were ready for the presentation, we thought. Our parents and friends in the States were alerted to the big broadcast. Everybody I spoke with afterwards swore that we were reading from a script. Ha! Ha!

Following the January 6 mission to Wilhelmshaven, *Lady Luck* went to Kiel, the Friesian Islands, Dunkirk, Rowen, Brest, and back to Wilhelmshaven again. At this time, some of the crew



members volunteered for extra missions. So when the March 18, 1943 mission to Vegesack rolled around, both Balsley and I flew with other crews. This proved to be the undoing of Balsley. He took a hit through the stomach while flying with Major William H. Brandon on the *Suzy Q*. He was the first *Lady Luck* crew member killed -- until Ploesti. I flew that day with Capt. Robert E. Miller's crew. I volunteered for the mission to Vegesack in order to get my sergeant stripes back following the infamous attack of the Englishman's bicycle.

On May 17th, the illustrious mission to Bordeaux, France was pulled off with beautiful results. Enormous damage was done to the submarine pens there by Lt. James DeVinney, 67th Squadron Bombardier. Lt. Edward Mikoloski, the old *Jenny Navigator*, was the mission's lead Navigator aboard Maj. Howard W. Moore's plane "*Suzy Q*" co-piloted by Colonel Leon W. Johnson. Also aboard was Brig. General James P. Hodges, 2nd Air Division, Commanding General.

Life was not all flying, and we had some leisure time for crew leave to London. Needless to say we had some great stories to tell our barracks buddies when we returned. On one London trip Hazelton and I brought back a phonograph and a big stack of records. We had purchased all of the latest hits of the early 1940's: *Green Eyes*, *Blue Champagne*, *Chattanooga Choo-Choo* and *Amopolo*, just to name a few. These records were played and replayed in the barracks prior to our departure to Benghazi.

During this time in late 1942 and early 1943, we fought some terrific battles over Germany, missions to Rotterdam, Brest, Antwerp, Belgium, and Hamm, Germany. We also managed to drink lots of swell beer. And the English folks, especially the young ladies, treated the Yanks with respect. Low level training began around June 15th, 1943. We all knew that this foretold something special further down the line.

It was about this time that I had my perceptive dream. I'm not sure if I was partially awake when it occurred, but one thing is for sure, that dream was embedded deeply into my mind, and it is still there today. During this time I was *Lady Luck's* third tail gunner, and Walter Hazelton was the right waist gunner. The dream picture is as follows: Although I didn't see myself on the in-going flight, I did see that our plane had crashed in the target area. Walter Hazelton and I were outside the plane looking in. We saw that everyone else on board was dead. I could see a small stucco farmhouse a bit off to the left of where I was standing by the nose compartment of the crashed plane. Standing in the doorway of the farmhouse

was a man and a woman; two children were hanging on to the parents' legs. Between the plane and the farmhouse was a wheat field.

The target area itself was as pictured in many photos that I would later see. It was definitely an oil refinery area. In the dream I clearly saw all of the installations: cracking plants, storage areas, etc. It was a mess, bombs exploding all around us and fires raged. In the dream I didn't see any other planes nearby (although later facts revealed that Lt. Henry Lasco, flying in *Sad Sack*, had also crashed in the general area.) What I saw in the dream was as if a snapshot had been taken of the crashed plane, the dead crew, the target area in the midst of being bombed, and Hazelton and I standing there at the scene of the crash. As it turned out, Hazelton and I were the only survivors. We did not go on the Ploesti mission.

When we went out to *Lady Luck* in the early morning hours of August 1st, 1943 to board, Lt. Scrivner noticed profuse leakage of gasoline from the wing tanks. He decided on the spot that the plane was inoperable for the mission to Ploesti. So he and the crew were transferred to another bomber parked nearby, *Scrappy II*. Hazelton and I had already flown the required twenty-five missions (in both cases twenty-seven missions), and were not required to go on the Ploesti raid. As the crew was boarding the plane Lt. Scrivner asked me, "Pat, are you going with us on this mission?" I was undecided and for some reason did not even remember the dream. "Lt. Scrivner, this is what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna flip a coin. 'Heads' I go, 'tails' I stay." The coin turned up "tails" and I stayed. I don't know why Hazelton decided to stay. The crew was cut from eleven to nine, going without well gunners, and a new tail gunner took my place.

In 1854 at Balaclava, which is very near Ploesti, the famous *Charge of the Light Brigade* under Lord Caridigan took place. There the English light calvary ran headlong into Russian artillery. Loses were staggering.



PLAQUE HONORING CAPT. THOMAS E. SCRIVNER, PILOT ON *SCRAPPY II* THAT WENT DOWN AT PLOESTI ON AUGUST 1, 1943 IS DISPLAYED BY FORMER CREWMATES WALTER M. PATRICK (LEFT) AND COL. EDWARD MIKOLOSKI. THE PLAQUE WAS PRESENTED IN THE NAME OF COLONEL "MIKE" AT THE MIGHTY EIGHTH AIR FORCE MUSEUM DURING THE 44TH BOMB GROUP'S ANNUAL REUNION AT SAVANNAH, GA.



Similar to the Light Brigade's losses in 1854, were the losses suffered by American forces during the August 1 air raid on Ploesti in 1943. The percentage losses were the same. So the crew of *Lady Luck* now aboard *Scrappy II* with Tom Scrivner in the pilot's seat, dashed headlong into the 44th's target code-named White Five, the Colombia Aquila Refinery at Ploesti. It was there that they ran into the German command's most prized air defense secret: the deadly Q Train. It raked the attackers with vengeance, and possibly took out *Sad Sack II*, piloted by Henry A. Lasco, with the same blast of fire that brought down *Scrappy II*.



LEFT WAIST GUNNER ON SCRAPPY II AT PLOESTI WAS
 SGT. THOMAS F. SCHAPPERT,
 ALSO KIA.



RIGHT WAIST GUNNER ON SCRAPPY II WHO WAS KIA AT PLOESTI WAS
 SGT. MARVIN R. MICKEY.

In a letter to former *Jenny* gunner Sgt. Harold Samuelian, former Squadron Commander of the 66th Squadron, Major Dexter Hodge, wrote, "I was leading seven planes from the 66th. Thomas Scrivner was on my right wing and Lasco was on my left wing. Between the IP and the target area I saw flames coming over the right wing of Tom's plane. He was still flying when we went into the smoke and explosions at our target. I think I saw his plane crash but am not sure. All crew members were killed."

The Scrappy II crew was: Pilot: Lt. Thomas Scrivner, Co-Pilot: Lt. Everett P. Anderson, Navigator: Lt. Philip P. Phillips, Jr., Bombardier: 2nd Lt. Robert E. Young, engineer: T/Sgt. William F. Coll, Radio Operator: S/Sgt. Channing N. Satterfield, Left Waist Gunner: Sgt. Marvin R. Mickey, Right Waist Gunner: Sgt. Thomas F. Schappert, and Tail Gunner: S/Sgt. Hugh J. Malone. With the exception of Tommy Scrivner, the entire crew has been interned at the National Cemetery at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri.

Between the time I experienced the dream and the day of the fateful raid, I never told Hazelton or anyone else about it. But I certainly had thoughts about it when I sat in on the mission briefing the night before that last mission. Sitting there that night I again recalled the events of my dream from several months before. The next day I knew in my heart and without a doubt that as Hazelton and I sat around waiting for the planes to return, our crew wouldn't make it. They never did.

That night Major Jimmy Kahl drove up to our tent, and asked Walt and me to get into his jeep so he could take us for a ride. We rode out to the parking area and sat as Jim told us what actually happened to our comrades. Captain Robert E. Miller had led his flight into the White Five target, which was already on fire when he got there. When he emerged from the fire and smoke, both of his wingmen were gone. One of the wingmen, Captain Thomas E. Scrivner, did come out of the smoke, the plane in flames and the pilots were seen fighting gallantly for a crash landing. They managed to crash land into a farmer's wheat field, but before the plane had ground to a halt the aircraft exploded, killing all nine men aboard.

As he spoke about the last moment before the plane exploded, it seemed like that was the exact same time Hazelton and I showed up in the dream. I was so deeply touched by this mission that I mourned for my lost comrades. Even now they are remembered in my prayers. I am sure that most of the survivors of that particular era will say the same. I never told Hazelton about the dream until just recently when we got back in touch. I do not know what his feelings are about my story, but I will swear on a stack of Bibles that this is the whole truth so help me God. As a result of the great air battle at Ploesti, five Congressional Medal of Honor were awarded. Three were awarded posthumously. Another went to Colonel Johnson, commander of the 44th Bomb Group (he would eventually achieve the rank of General), and the fifth Congressional Medal of Honor went to Colonel John R. Kane, commander of the 98th Bomb Group.

Following the Ploesti debacle, all combat crews of the 44th were sent on one to two weeks of Rest and Recuperation in Telaviv. What a treat that was to enjoy fresh sheets and wonderful food. Following R&R, all who had completed twenty-five missions were started for the States via Cairo and then back to Shipdham for a few days. After Shipdham we left for Prestwick where we caught the jump-off flight to the good ol' USA.

Just before leaving for the States, the 66th Squadron Adjutant called Hazelton and me into his office and presented us with T/Sgt. Chevrons. "Well deserved," he said. We then hung out at the Red Cross center and presented the Red Cross girls with the phonograph machine and the records. While at the Red Cross club, I met T/Sgt. Tauno Metsa, Engineer on Lt. Walter Hughes' plane. When we got back stateside, Metsa and I were assigned to the Standardization Board at Westover Field, Massachusetts. We would be roommates, as well as fly together on Standardization Board missions, until Victory Day in Europe.



The final curtain for #41-23778 (viz. *Jenny and Lady Luck*) came August 16, 1943, two weeks and two days after the Ploesti debacle. Lt. Rocco A. Curelli from the 66th Squadron flew *Lady Luck* with the 67th Squadron on a bombing mission to the Italian port city of Foggia. This was an all-new crew flying on their second mission. The 44th Bomber Group had already visited Foggia prior to the Ploesti mission on July 15th, 1943, and had lost quite a few planes. This second visit proved however, a bigger disaster than the first. Seven B-24's were lost including old faithful, *Lady Luck*. All of the crew except Radio Operator T/Sgt. Wesley L. Zimmerman, was killed. Zimmerman was taken prisoner and was only a POW for five weeks when he escaped the Italian POW camp and made his way back to the 44th. After the war he returned to his hometown in Winston Salem, N.C. He married his hometown sweetheart, Gladys Hege, in June of 1943 prior to going overseas. After the war he worked for AT&T out of Winston Salem and was issued his "Folded Wings" in 1991. Of the 25 planes dispatched to Foggia, only 13 returned to Benghazi. As usual the 67th Squadron was the big loser followed by the 506th and the 68th. The 66th escaped without a loss.

The crew members of *Lady Luck* on her not so lucky day were: Pilot: Lt. Rocco A. Curelli; Co-Pilot: John G. Papadopoulos; Navigator: Lt. Walt Rossi; Bombardier: Lt. Victor T. Torrou; Engineer: Sgt. John H. Grinde; Radio Operator: Sgt. Wesley L. Zimmerman (POW and only survivor); Gunner: DeForest L. Ela; Gunner: Sgt. Raymond C. Shafer; Gunner: Sgt. John R. Hughes; Tail Gunner: Sgt. Harper F. Zoller.

Coincidentally, *Lady Luck* at Foggia and *Scrappy II* at Ploesti, were flying in similar positions: the right wing slot off the element leader. Another coincidence is that *Lady Luck's* radio operator at Foggia, Wesley Zimmerman (POW), and Walter Hazelton; who completed twenty-seven missions and was an original crew member of *Lady Luck*, passed away during the 90's and were the last two crew men of #41-23778 to "Fold their Wings."

Another casualty of the Foggia raid that made a number of important missions including Ploesti, prior to Foggia was Lt. Leighton Smith, pilot of *Buzzin' Bear*, a real warrior. Half of his crew lost their lives at Foggia; the other half became POW'S. *Suzy-Q* also went down at Foggia. She had carried General Johnson and Major William Brandon to glory at Ploesti. *Southern Comfort* of the 506th was lost; two of the crew died, but the remaining eight members of Lt. Horace A. Austin's *Southern Comfort* were taken captive. Another veteran of the Ploesti raid, Lt. Austin, escaped from the Italian POW camp. It seemed to be in vogue that American airmen

were able to escape from Italian POW camps. I met a number of POW's while stationed at Westover, MA, who had waltzed away after as little as a week in captivity.

The four survivors of the more than thirty crew members who flew in #42-23778 include Dr. Jimmy Kahl, pilot of *Jenny*. He resigned as Major to attend the University of Kansas, School of Veterinary, then opened up a flourishing business in his hometown of Winona, Minnesota. He still practices there today.

President of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association, Colonel Edward Mikoloski, is another. Colonel Mikoloski stayed in the service after the war and spent a great deal of time on the staff of General Johnson. He spent time in posts around the world, from England to the Pentagon, and retired in 1968.

The *Jenny's* first well gunner, Harold Samuelian, is still with us. When the war ended, he returned to his home in Fresno, California. Harold has been a prominent member of the merchant's community for years and years in Fresno. If you need a good bargain, he is the one to see!

I remained in the service after the war and served with then Captain Mikoloski at Westover Field for several years. We pioneered the concept of I&E presentations that prevailed for years. I went on to serve in Germany, Japan and Panama, and retired a Senior Master Sergeant with 28 years service in 1969. I then spent time working on a monthly magazine for the US Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. for 15 years before coming to my present home in Mt. Pleasant, SC.

The story of #41-23778 cannot end without the mentioning of her happy-go-Lucky shadow, Mr. Bob Hope and his USO troupe that among others, included the very talkative Martha Ray. Bob first showed up at Shipdham shortly before the 44th went to Libya. Then several days prior to Ploesti he appeared again at Benina-Main. We thought we had seen the last of the comedian at Benghazi, but when we boarded the C-54 at Prestwick headed for the States, who should show up but Mr. Bob Hope himself. We had a continuous poker game going from Prestwick to Iceland, and Bob kept wanting to join in; but we kept telling him that enlisted personnel were not allowed to gamble with officers, and in his case, civilians.

Near the end of hostilities in Europe, I was finally able to meet the real life and blood *Jenny*. I was stationed at Westover Field, MA, at the time and was surprised one day out in the parking lot in front of Base Operations to hear my name called. It was the now Major Jimmy Kahl, the first pilot of #41-23778. He had just been assigned to base operations.



He introduced me to his most gracious wife, Jenny. Of course it was a real honor to have met the lady that was the namesake of the plane in which I flew a number of exciting missions. To this day I stay in contact with Jimmy, the courageous pilot who carried us through the Wilhelmshaven mission.

One of my most momentous experiences related to the 44th Bomb Group came around Thanksgiving 1996. Colonel Mikoloski had asked me if I would drop in on General Johnson at his nursing home near my daughter's home in Springfield, Virginia, when he found out I was going up there for the holiday. I was taken aback at this request. Why would a retired Master Sergeant be visiting a four-star General - no matter what the circumstances? But I would give it my best try. My wife of over fifty years and I were warmly and graciously welcomed by both the staff and by the General. I wore my eight-ball hat.

The General was sitting in the den having a piece of pumpkin pie with whip cream. I knelt down in front of him and said, "General, I know you don't know me, but I flew with Colonel Mikoloski on *Jenny* and *Lady Luck*. I just wanted you to know that I represent all the enlisted men who served under you. We thought you were the best B-24 pilot on the face of the earth, and the bravest and most dedicated leader any of us has ever met." He smiled his heart warming smile and said, "Sergeant, you don't realize how your words bring back to me just how proud of the men of the 44th I am."

We went on to talk about the old days; and my wife told him how we used to baby sit Colonel Mike's children when we were stationed at Westover Field during the early 50's. "Yes", he said, "that was a long time ago." I may have been the last enlisted man to visit him before his death.

Lt. CURELLI AND CREW
(THE 2ND CREW OF "Lady
Luck" #41-23778)

FRONT ROW: GUNNER, S/Sgt.
HARPER F. ZOLLER;
GUNNER, S/Sgt. DEFOREST L. ELA;
ENGINEER, S/Sgt. JOHN H. GRINDE;
GUNNER, S/Sgt. JOHN R. HUGHES.



REAR ROW:
NAVIGATOR, Lt. WALTER ROSSI JR.;
PILOT, Lt. ROCCO A. CURELLI;
BOMBARDIER, Lt. VICTOR T. TORRINO;
CO-PILOT, Lt. JOHN G. PAPADOPULOS;
RADIO OPERATOR, WESLEY L. ZIMMERMAN.
GUNNER RAYMOND C. SHAFER
(NOT IN PICTURE).

In closing out this article about *Jenny* and *Lady Luck*, I'd like to tell about an unusual event that happened to me at Westover Field in early 1945. I was taking a shower one morning when a runner from an orderly room called my name to inform me that I was to report to the Base Commander's office at 1:00 PM sharp. The big sweat began - what had I done now? Upon arrival I was rushed into Colonel U.G. Jones' office. After the proper protocol he said, "Sgt. Patrick, you have been recommended for promotion to Master Sergeant, but by your record I see that you spent some time behind prison bars." "Yes, sir", I said, "I was a guard at a North Carolina State Prison and entered the service a day after Pearl Harbor."

He smiled about his humor and then asked, "What does your father do?" I told him that he was a retired Master Sergeant with 30 years service, mostly in the Corps of Engineers, and that I was an "Army Brat." "Where were some of the places you grew up?" the Colonel continued. I mentioned Fort Bragg in 1926 - 1927. "Oh, is that right? For your information I was a 2nd Lieutenant there and was probably your school teacher in the first grade." Wow! Was *Lady Luck* shining on me! He went on to tell me that his son, who had graduated from West Point, where else, I thought, was serving with General Patton in Europe.

Ten years after that promotion, as *Lady Luck* continued to shine on me, I would be privileged to photograph and document the retirement of Colonel Jones, Inspector General of the Atlantic Division of MATS there at Westover Field. Several days later I presented the Colonel a nice album of all the important events of his retirement ceremony. I doubt that he knew who I was, and I didn't say anything about my

"promotion interview" with him ten years earlier. I should have said, "Thanks. You were a very good teacher."

MEMORIES OF A WARTIME TEENAGER

Cynthia Ledger Harmonowski went back to Norfolk to visit a family member. While she was there, she and her 28 year old son set out to find the Control Tower at Shipdham. At that time, 1983, it was not easy to find. They climbed through nettles and other weeds, passed mechanical works, climbed the winding steps and looked out over the airfield.

"It really took me back in time," she stated. "I had stood up there in 1945 and watched the American planes take off for home, one by one. Reliving it, almost 40 years later, was absolutely tearful. I was so glad my son, Simon, could be with me. I always wanted him to know what it was like in England during the war, the lost lives, the shortages, the fear of the bombings, and the young American flyers who came to help us.



Among her clearest memories is that before departing for home, ground personnel were treated to Trolley Runs. It was an opportunity for them to fly over the areas where the air and ground battles had taken place. Working in administration, she had become friendly with many of the personnel, so an officer offered to slip her aboard a Trolley Run. With all the enthusiasm of a nineteen year old, she accepted, even though she did not qualify for the privilege. Fitted with gear and parachute, she was ready for the big moment when another officer stepped aboard and said, "Skip, you can't go." So she climbed off and walked back to her work station.

Realizing her disappointment, one of her American co-workers got her a pass to ride in a military vehicle and took her to London. On Charlotte Street, the officer knocked on a small manhole cover, and an Italian man emerged. He led them down a set of steps, and there, below the London street was a cache of black market liquor.

"The officer bought some and took me to a restaurant where we ate and drank champagne. To me, it was just amazing. It was the first time I had ever eaten in a restaurant," she recalled. "All of these memories came back to me when I was looking out of the Control Tower."

Cynthia met her husband, the late Lt. John L. Harmonowski in a railway station, and they rapidly became sweethearts. She felt the loss when he left twice for the missions in Africa. And when the war was over, she knew he was gone forever. Fate intervened, however, and years later they got together in America and were married.



CYNTHIA LEDGER
(HARMONOWSKI)
1944



LT. JOHN HARMONOWSKI
1944

John's health began failing several years ago, but when he knew the survivors of the Ploesti Raid were to be recognized in Savannah, he was determined to go. At the dedication of the diorama at the Mighty Eighth Museum, John rose from his wheelchair to be recognized as one who had flown on the awesome mission. Three weeks later he passed away.



The President's Corner

This column should be entitled The President Pro Tempore (for the time being) Corner for sadly our President is, once again, suffering the anguish of losing a beloved family member to cancer. You will recall on November 30, 1998 his daughter Peggy lost her fierce battle with the disease. Death came again to Mike's door on Sunday, May 14, to take his precious wife and love Yelena. She finally had to seek Heaven's rest from her struggle to survive the cancer that was taking her from him.

I hope that all of the 44th family will keep Mike in their personal prayers as he bears the enormous burden of grief he suffers from the loss of his loved ones. We hope you will find peace from your sorrow and return to us soon, Mike.

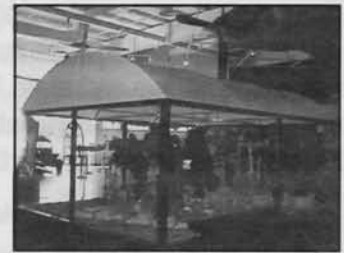
Meanwhile, to bring you up to date on who is minding the store, when Mike decided to move Yelena to a Houston cancer treatment center, he asked me to assume his duties as President Pro-Tem since Dick Butler, our Vice -President, was deeply involved with his responsibilities as our Group Vice President to the 2nd Air Division. So, here we are, back in the saddle again. I am able to do this because of Ruth Morse taking over publication of the 8-Ball Tails has made it possible. I wish to also point out that Ruth is doing a commendable job with the "Tails."



VIEWING THE 44th BOMB GROUP COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE AT MacDill AFB, May 26, 2000 DURING THE 2ND AIR DIVISION REUNION. L TO R: JERRY FOLSOM, BOB LEHNHAUSEN, MEL MURRACK, HARRY SNEAD, WILL LUNDY, AND ROY OWEN BEHIND THE CAMERA.

One of my recent actions also involved Ruth Morse when Nancy Van Epps notified President Mike that Hugh, her husband who has been long suffering with deterioration of the vertebrae in his neck, had reached the point that he was in too much pain for any significant amount of travel. Thus she submitted her resignation as our Board Secretary. Our solution was, since the Board had recently invited Ruth Morse to attend the Board meetings in order that she could properly report the board proceedings in the management of our association in the 8-Ball Tails, it was a short step to appointing her to replace Nancy Van Epps and also take the minutes of the meetings as our Secretary. This proposal was submitted to the board, unanimously approved and the appointment accepted by Ruth Morse.

Other significant activities by your PPT were a post Tampa Board meeting trip to Savannah to visit and see the progress on our Ploesti display in the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum. Also a visit to Shipdham which I tacked onto a personal trip to attend a memorial ceremony in Aston Clinton, England. Both of these activities, along with other agenda items from the Board meeting are covered elsewhere in this issue.



THE NEW TOP ON THE PLOESTI display IN SAVANNAH.

I want to close with telling you, Lolly and I will be attending the San Diego reunion, along with several new, first reunion, members and some former members we've recovered contact with, polished up and have all pumped up over getting active in the 44th family again. It will be a wonderful reunion and we would like your support in showing both the new and re-tread members what they have been missing when the family gets together. Your attendance will also give us the opportunity to thank you personally for the beautiful gifts you bestowed upon us in absentia at New Orleans marking our retirement as your President and First Lady.



Roy W. Owen

A Quick Visit to Shipdham

By Roy Owen

Taking advantage of an invitation to attend a June 4 memorial dedication honoring a 406th Bomb Squadron (Carpetbagger) crew piloted by an old friend that crashed on January 3, 1945 killing the entire crew at Aston Clinton, England, I tacked on a visit to Norwich and Shipdham. Phyllis Dubois was involved in assisting the Aston Clinton committee in locating family and friends of the deceased crew and traveled from Norwich to attend the ceremony. Thus she was able to transport me to Norwich and also graciously provide and drive her car to facilitate my visit to AF 115 to visit the new Aero Club and pay my respects for the 44th BGVA to Mrs. Eileen Paterson and Mr. Andrew Doubleday, owner of the old 14th Combat Wing Hq. Site.

Contrary to an unsubstantiated report by a former 44th HMG member (and emphatically denied by our representative, Steve Adams) that the airfield was closed and fenced off, the main runway was closed and the buildings and main hangar were a shambles. As I had previously reported that Mrs. Paterson had leased the airfield to the new Ship-

dham Aero Club and I found the old Aero Air complex completely cleaned up, freshly painted and the Museum Room being decorated by Steve Adams, the pub bar all refinished and the pub room being refurnished. The kitchen is newly painted and the installation of new kitchen equipment is forthcoming. Best of all, the main hangar has all been cleaned up and they are hangaring eight aircraft including a beautiful twin engine Beech. The club is open from Friday afternoon to Sunday sundown. The underground fuel tanks and refueling system have been repaired and certified and the main runway has been resurfaced and CAA certified. Steve Adams has joined the club, is in charge of decorating and takes his turn operating the club on occasional weekends.

So in spite of what the naysayers report, it is obvious that our desire to see our old "Home Base" is still alive and firmly in the flying business keeping the doors open and the Welcome mat out when we wish to revisit AAF 115. Mrs. Paterson says, as far as she is concerned, this is the way it will remain.



The 8-Ball Pub Room



Adams in the kitchen



HANGAR with the TWIN BEECH



Mike King of the Aero Club, Mrs. E. Paterson and Steve Adams standing by the Flying 8-Ball Marker in front of the Aero Club.



Andrew Doubleday and Steve Adams in front of 14th CBW Headquarters. Note the Stars and Stripes flying atop the tower in honor of my visit.



WILL SEZ

First, let me express my thanks to you, one and all, for your generous support of our appeal for more funds to keep the data entry work going, adding more data into our basic data needs for your history! I don't have the exact amount of funds contributed so far, as money continues to arrive; but I do know that we now have additional funds to continue on with this work.

Except for three days in early April, 1945, all individual sorties have been entered into our history base. Tony Mastradone continues to work with the personnel at the Archives to first locate these missing files, then copy so we can have the data entry team complete this work.

Arlo Bartsch's team has also continued work to enter summary reports of each of these 344 missions in support of all the individual sorties already in the data base. At last count they were well past the half way point with these brief summaries.

We still need to locate and add the many names of our members other than combat personnel who supported our operational activities as they all contributed to the results that brought us final victory in Europe. Basically, these are the men who supported the 44th BG itself - units like the M.P.s, Weather, 50th Station Complement, Quartermaster, etc. If any of you out there have rosters or data about these support units, could you please copy and send to me? We want to make sure that we give credit to each and all that served with us.

Surely many of you readers may wonder why we are trying so hard to collect the data to enter it all into the computer program and wonder what it will accomplish. Perhaps I can better illustrate the good that it is doing already by telling you of my experience this past month while making my annual relocation of residence from San Bernardino up to Twin Lakes, here in the High Sierras. To do so over the past ten years or so, it was necessary for me to box up as many of my paper records, books, photos, etc. in order to respond to the requests for data about our history. It required a fair sized two-

wheel trailer to haul all of these boxes of records, as well as the computer, copier, FAX, printer, etc.

My old computer that I leave up here now will no longer be adequate to utilize the CD-ROM on which all of our history is stored. So a new one is vital and is expected any day. Yesterday I drove to the "big" city of Bridgeport to use their library computer to access my e-mail. Would you believe I had 43 messages waiting!

Yes, some of it was personal, but the bulk of it covered appeals from relatives or friends of our combat personnel asking if I, we, have any data about this man who served with us. These requests come not only from the U.S., but from Europe as well. One from northern Ireland, one from Sweden, from England, etc.

People are using their computers to surf the Internet and are finding WEB sites with data about World War #2. They are learning that AFTER ALL OF THESE MANY YEARS, it now may be possible to get answers that were denied to them during that war. They are searching now to get those answers, and we now are in position to get those answers for them.

Before we found Arlo with his great data entry program, I found it difficult to come up with these answers. To do so took many hours of digging, checking, and frustration, as I did not have sortie reports for reference and particulars. But now with an adequate computer and a few key strokes, I (or anyone with this CD-ROM) can quickly find and copy all of the missions flown in summary or in great detail for every mission!

The volume of requests continue to rise. So much so that Larry Herpel has volunteered to assist with this work, and is taking quite a load off me. At times there are requests that go beyond our combat men, sorties, etc. We work together on them. Some are referred to me so I can possibly answer them from the other records compiled by our other historians Webb Todd with the 68th Sq. and Norm Kiefer with his 506th Sq. book. Also, Steve Adams, our representative in England, does his share of work with the 66th Sq. history, as well as fielding many requests over there.

E-mail is instant action, instant answers, whether in State or in Europe. Snail mail is almost obsolete, but is necessary to send the data we get from our CD-ROM back to those requesting. We find the data, then print it out on excellent forms developed by Arlo Bartsch so these people will finally have a hard copy to answer their questions, and keep for family records.

Even at present, it is possible to send much of this data back via e-mail or downloading it. But surely, as the public obtains more computers and becomes more proficient, answers will be sent to them computer to computer.

I cannot say this often enough or more sincerely. The program developed by Arlo Bartsch has provided the means for our great history to be made available to the public. It is alive, very vibrant and open ended. Now, it can be **AVAILABLE IMMEDIATELY**, as long as computers are utilized. It should be the answer to every Air Force historian of WW#2. We urge them to join with us in this endeavor.

Will Lundy

President Mike's request for donations is moving forward, but more funds are still needed. Any donation of any size will be helpful to complete the monumental goals which the 44th is undertaking to preserve the glorious history of this very special group of veterans. The goal is \$50,000. Don't delay. Your place in history is at stake.



Larry Herpel
215 S. Medina
Lockhart, TX
(512) 376-7780
<lherpel@juno.com>

A 44TH BG 2001 EUROPE-ENGLAND TRIP IS ON!

Be not discouraged that the 2nd AD Norwich trip for next year is full; Larry Herpel is fine tuning the itinerary for a 44th BGVA trip for September 2001 when the weather is pretty.

Generally, this tour will start in Amsterdam or Brussels followed by a visit to the Rhine seeing Cologne, Karlsruhe and Wesel, then on to the Battle of the Bulge area and on to Paris or through the Belgian coastal area on the way to Rouen and the Normandy Beaches. We will then cross the Channel and make our way to Norwich for a visit to the New Library. We will spend a day at Shipdham where we will have a picnic at the 14th CBW Headquarters followed by a tour of the Base and an evening cocktail party and Bar-B-Que with our friends in Shipdham before leaving for home.

For any who wish to stay over to visit more of Europe or England, Larry can arrange an extension as an "add on" to the group travel plan. A detailed itinerary will be ready for study in the next issue of the 8-Ball Tails and at the San Diego Reunion (meaning we've cut ourselves a little slack for reasonable adjustments before finalizing).

In the meantime, for information on making a reservation and deposit, call Larry at 1-888-317-7483 during business hours (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST), or at home in the evening at 512-376-7780. His e-mail address is: lherpel@juno.com.

THIS WILL BE A GREAT TRIP!

Better save the number of seats you'll need by making your reservations and a deposit with Larry early.



Déjà vu

By Roy Owen



CLAIR P. SHAEFFER holds his daughter, Lois, in a photo from 1943.

January 21, 1944, the 44th Bomb Group was targeted to strike the German V-1 missile sites at Escalles-Sur-Buchy in the Pas de Calais area of France. Being a part of Hitler's array of secret weapons intended to bring England to her knees, the area was strongly defended by fighters and AA. It was not only a heavily protected complex, the small dispersed sites were so difficult to hit from normal bombing altitude, the attack was made at 12 thousand feet.

Lower clouds in the target area further made it necessary for second passes over the missile sites to ensure any effective bombing results. All in all, what was expected to be a rather routine mission, turned into a terribly costly raid. Especially for the 68th Bomb Squadron which launched seven aircraft to have only three return.

One of those losses; the *1st Lt. Frank W. Sobotka* crew with *T/Sgt. Claire P. Shaeffer* aboard as Flight Engineer was documented in the Winter 1995 issue of the 8-Ball Tails. This poignant story came to our attention because T/Sgt. Shaeffer was, in that era, a rarity being a single parent. His death on that raid left an orphaned four year old daughter who, after 51 years of never having been informed of the details of her father's death, made contact with us. That story came to a dramatic and emotional climax when Lois Cianci (Claire's daughter) and her husband Tony accompanied us on the 1998 trip to England and France where she visited the crash site of her father's aircraft and was presented one of his fire blackened ID "Dog" Tags recovered by the French Resistance.

Back in February this year, I received a letter from Oklahoma City written by a Mrs. Jackie Ostenson Roberts which was an impassioned request for any information about her father *S/Sgt. Jack Ostenson*, 68th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, killed on January 21, 1944. Something was jogging my memory as I was turning the pages of the Will Lundy Roll of Honor to the Missing Aircrew Reports (MACR) of 21 January. Lo and behold, on the page facing the MACR of the Sobotka Crew was the MACR of the *1st Lt. Gary Mathisen* crew on which her father, S/Sgt. Jack N. Ostenson was Left Waist Gunner. Referring back to her letter I read that she was born January 30, 1944 to her Mother, Wilburta, in Boise, Idaho and her father Jack, killed only nine days earlier along with T/Sgt. Claire Shaeffer of the 68th, both leaving fatherless daughters.



Jackie Ostenson 6 months old.

So, as with Lois Shaeffer Cianci, we have filled the void left by the scanty information of the MIA notification and later KIA confirmation given to her Mother. Jackie since has excitedly joined our 44th BGVA family as a Life Member. She "can hardly wait" to join us at our reunion in San Diego. HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME, SHE AND LOIS CIANCI WILL MEET. WHAT AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR ALL THAT WILL SURELY BE!





BEATING THE BUSHES

By Art Hand
July, 2000

BAUC, ANTON R. 1016 Cora Street, Joliet, IL 60435; (815) 722-6047.
68th Squadron fire fighter. Deceased February, 2000 (See F.W.).

COLL, WILLIAM P.O. Box 269, Parl Hall, MD 20667; e-mail:
w.coll@erols.com. Association, William is nephew of William Coll who was
KIA on 1 August, 1943, Ploesti while an engineer on Lt. Scrivner's crew.

SENF, ELMER T. 2339 Redwood Road, York, PA 17404-3942; (717)
764-6678. Our only listing shows that Elmer was a Pfc. from York, PA.

Note: Art's doctor has instructed him to do no more work at the present time due to an irregular heart beat. Otherwise, this listing would be more extensive. Let us all wish Art a QUICK recovery.



Lost 44th members - Can you help??

MAIL HAS BEEN RETURNED, FORWARDING ORDER EXPIRED, NO SUCH ADDRESS OR MARKED UNKNOWN NAMES
WE HAVE LISTED THE LAST KNOWN ADDRESS OF SOME OF THESE INDIVIDUALS.

CAN YOU HELP US LOCATE THEM?

Lawrence H. Massey
No Street Number
Seth, West Virginia

William A. Croft
120 West Hillcrest Dr.
Carlisle, Pa 17013

Harold J. Brumm
406 21st Ave. SW
Rochester, Minnesota 55902

Earl A. Burns
10704 Decatur St.
Omaha, Nebraska 68164

Wallace Penny
3623 Taluga Dr.
Miami, Florida 32129

Stanley Reich
1111 Alvarado Ave.
Davis, Calif. 95616

Phillip Fanning
1534 SE 15th St.
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33316

William S. Strange
RFD # 3 Box 489
Marshall, Texas 75670

William R. Brady
3139 Sam Houston Forest Rd.
Moss Bluff, Louisiana 70611

Hal D. Farmer
1681 Greenbrier Dr.
Huntsville, Texas 77340

James E. Keith
14919 Redwood Cove
Houston, Texas 77062

Albert T. Wheaton
13209 Oak Park Blvd.
Garfield Heights, Ohio

Kenneth L. Buchner
669 E. Oakland Pk Blvd
Oakland Park, Florida 33334

William H. Martin
3781 Goldfinch St.
San Diego, CA 92103-3911

James E. Keith
Houston, Texas

IF SO, PLEASE CONTACT US AT P.O. BOX 712287 • SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84171-2287 • PHONE (801) 733-7371



Folded Wings

July, 2000

Compiled by

Will Lundy



BARLOW, ARCHIE D. T/Sgt. 14151313 68th Sqdn. FW on 23 April 2000. Archie served as an Engineer on the H. R. Howington crew which joined the 44th BG on 5 October 1943. He flew 9 missions from 5 November 1943 to 21 January 1944. On January 21st this crew was shot down, with Archie and four others from this crew managing to successfully evade capture and eventually returned to duty. Details of this evasion can be read in Webb Todd's book, *History of the 68th Squadron*. Four crew members were KIA while one was captured and became a POW.

BAUC, ANTON R. Pfc. 36658870 68th Squadron. FW in February, 2000. He served as a Fire Fighter, primarily involved with aircraft crashes on or near the Shipdham Base. On 4 June 1944, a B-24 from another base crashed several miles away, but Shipdham crews responded. Explosions killed two of these fire fighters, but Anton and four others continued to search for survivors. For this action Anton was awarded the Bronze Star.

CHAFFEE, THOMAS L. 1st Lt. 0-704147 67th Sqdn. FW in September, 1999. He served as a Navigator on the George B. Haag crew while assigned to the 492nd BG and then transferred to the 67th Sqdn. in August 1944. His first 44th BG mission was on 14 August 1944 and last one was dated 25 August, completing his tour of duty of 25 (?) missions. On 15 September 1944 he was transferred to the 12th RCD to return to the U.S.

CHANDLER, JAMES A. 17010687 68th Sqdn. FW on 10 February 2000. He joined the Squadron on 12/10/42, assigned to Ordnance. On 5/28/44 he was promoted to Munition Worker and on 2/5/45 was promoted to 905. He returned to the U.S. on the Queen Mary in June, 1945.

CRANE, JAMES J. 12074922 66th Sqdn. FW in February, 1992. He served as a gunner on the R. E. Harleman crew that flew their first mission on 21 February 1944 and last one on 27 March 1944. On this date they were shot down near the Spanish border after bombing their target. It was their eighth mission. James was one of the four crew men who survived the ditching to become a POW.

COX, HOWARD D. 35275530 67th Sqdn. FW on 4/10/2000 reported by Mrs. April C. Nicola. Howard was a Pvt. when he went over to England on the Queen Mary in Sept. 1942. Unable to identify his activities while he served with us while based at Shipdham.

DOMINO, JOSEPH S. FW on 17 September 1999. Last contact was made with him on 2/1/90. He was an early member of the 44th BG, but was transferred to the 98th BG in early 1942 at Barksdale Field, LA.

FITCH, ALLEN A. 13047486 67th Sqdn-FW on 13 February 2000. Allen was a member of the Ground Echelon that went to England on the Queen Mary, departing NYC on 5 Sept. 1942. He served first as an Aircraft Mechanic until promoted to Assistant Crew Chief from H. Grisham's crew. He was on S. Calloway's crew, Sgt. in January 1945 until returning to the U.S. in June, 1945. He returned in 1981 after 41 years of working at the Penn Tech Paper Mill.



GALLATIN, ELBERT H. 18060293 67th Sqdn. FW on 9 January 2000. As with Allen Fitch above, was a member of the Ground Echelon that went to England on the Queen Mary in September, 1942. He, too, was an aircraft mechanic, served on a line crew. By January, 1944, he had been promoted to an Assistant Crew Chief on the K.D. Gong crew, and continued to serve in that capacity with Sgt. Gong until the 44th BG returned to the U.S. in June, 1945. (See K.D. Gong below.)

GONG, KUN D. 34132986 67th Sqdn. FW on 24 December 1999. "KD" was an early member of the 67th Sq, was assigned as an engineer on "Blue Goose", piloted by G.W. Warne on 29 May 1942. He was part of a three plane unit selected to perform secret photographic work of NE Canada, Greenland and Iceland. In late September joined the 67th Sqdn. to fly to England. "KD" became a Crew Chief, assigned to Flight "C", promoted to M/Sgt. As with most ground personnel, he, too, returned to the U.S. after victory in Europe, flew home with his combat crew.

INDORF, FRANK E. 0-694877 66th Sqdn. Navigator-PFF-Radar. FW on 9 May 2000. Frank's first mission occurred on 28 June 1944, with H.D. Stanhope's crew and several more. His last of 29 was flown with the Elmer W. Smith crew, dated 06 February 1945.

MAHANEY, FRANCIS X. 33198065 506th Sqdn. Tail Turret Gunner. FW on 25 August, 1999 at age of 78. Francis flew his first mission (of two) on April 1, 1944 with the E.A Herzing crew. But his second one was the terrible 8 April one where they were shot down along with ten other 44th BG ships and crews. Happily, though, all ten men on board survived to become POWs. Aircraft flown was Rubber Check.

MORAN, JOHN V. ASN #? 506th Sqdn. FW on 4/1/2000.

MYERS, DOUGLAS B. 0-730575 Co-pilot 506th Sqdn. FW in 1999. Lt. Myers was one of the original members of the 506th Squadron. He served as co-pilot for Capt. Swanson, flew to England in early 1943 via the southern route, south America to Africa, etc. He flew five missions, his first being on 22 March 1943, and his last one was 14 May, 1943 (Kiel). The 44th was awarded a Unit Citation for this one. This crew was shot down by swarms of fighters, with only four men surviving to become POWs.

NESBITT, FLOYD M. ASN ?? 506th Sqdn. FW on 1 April 2000. Floyd served as Engineer on the P. J. Durett crew. They departed the U.S. on 6 June 1944. He flew his first 34 missions with Lt. Durett on 7 August and ending 31 December. He then flew his final mission of his tour with Lt. Confer's crew.

PICK, RICHARD S. 0-747102 66th Sqdn. FW on 29 December 1999. Richard flew many of his early missions with the R.E. McCormick crew as Navigator-GEE. But with that classification, he flew mostly in cloudy weather and with lead crews; he served with various crews. He completed his tour of duty on 7 October 1944 flying lead with the Lt. C.C. McDonnell crew.

SAFOS, VANGELO STEPHEN 0-795302 67th Sqdn. FW in July 1994. Vangelo flew his first of five missions while in north Africa on 25 Sept. 1943 serving as Navigator for the J.D. Kessler crew. His next was a very tough mission to Wiener-Neustadt on 1 Oct. 1943 with this same crew. His fifth mission was with the W.S. Aldridge crew on 4 Jan 1944 to Kiel, Germany. Later, on 12 April 1944, he transferred to the 50th Station Complement Squadron. Later still, he transferred to the 491st BG. He remained in service, retired as a Major.

SCHROEDER, JAMES A. 0-678513 68th Sqdn. FW on 16 May 1990. James served as a Navigator on the Philip W. Bell crew which was assigned to the 68th Sq. on 1/31/44. He flew his first mission on 20 Feb. 44. Crew had to abort on Feb. 21, but flew their second mission on 24 February. Just after bombing their plane was attacked and shot down. Six crewmen were KIA, with four men being captured and made POWs. Lt. Schroeder was seriously injured, apparently, as he later was repatriated.



THOMPSON, RALPH WILLIAM 0-706012 67th Sqdn. Pilot FW 1 March 2000. Lt. Thompson flew his 30 missions as co-pilot on the W.F. Gilbert crew. First mission completed on 30 May 1944, with his final one of his tour completed on 3 August 1944.

WILLIAMS, RICHARD 14044924 68th Sqdn. FW on 11 March 2000. Richard served as a Flight Chief, M/Sgt. He was with the Ground echelon that departed NY Harbor in Sept. 1942, was with the 68th Engineering until departing England again for the U.S. on 16 June 1945. He was with the men on Temporary assignment to North Africa, departed 6/26/43 for Benghazi. In late August, returned to Shipdham. But again, on 16 September, returned to Africa, to Tunis, until shortly after 1 October 1943.

WOLFSON, MURRAY R. ASN 506th Sqdn. FW in 1992. Murray flew his first mission as Radio Operator with the V.J. Scherzberg crew on 27 February 1945. His remaining missions were flown with the L.G. Pyle crew. His 8th and last mission was flown on 25 April 1945, the last mission of the war for the 44th BG.

My Escape

by T/S Forrest S. Clark

67th Squadron 44BG
Swiss internee on mission to Lechfeld, Ger.
3 April 1944—

I took many risks in my life but one of the greatest, if not the most dangerous, happened in the closing days and weeks of WWII when as a young airman I attempted to escape into liberated France. I attempted this as a risk with another airman because we wanted to get back to the U.S. by Christmas.

We eluded our Swiss armed guards at the Bern railway station and mixed with the crowds on the city streets. Dressed as civilians we got a taxi to the legation disguised as Swiss.

We hid in the American Legation in Bern, Switzerland, and were taken to the border with France and turned over to a French freedom fighter guide to get us across the border. It was risky because the border was patrolled

by armed guards and there were mines to cross. There was also a risk that we might be captured or shot by snipers in German holdout pockets or resistance or be mistaken for the enemy by the French maquis.

We walked at night over the Alps from Geneva to the border. It took three days. We hid by day in abandoned farm buildings. It was bitterly cold and snowing most of the way.

It was all a gamble to see if we could make it. We were walking into a confused wartime situation where nobody trusted the other and even the guides could not always be trusted. But we went on.

Finally we got to the border, crossed under some barbed wire, avoided the patrols and waded across an icy stream. We were told to go to an isolated farmhouse just inside France. We did as we were told and knocked

on the farmhouse's huge wooden door. A Frenchman answered and welcomed us. But we could not wait, so the next morning at first light we started walking again toward a small village. As we did so we were apprehended by a US army patrol. The colonel on the patrol told us we were walking in the direction of a mine field and there were snipers about.

Our risk taking had paid off this time and we did make it home a few days after Christmas 1944. It was then we learned that there had been a great battle to the north of us. That battle was the Battle of the Bulge, the last great German offensive of WWII.

After that my life was never the same. If I had failed that risk I likely would not be here to tell the story. I learned that there is nothing so strong as the desire to return home, to one's country, and it is worth taking risks for.



From the Editor:

Mail & E-Mail

Bob Vance and our new-found Belgium friend, **Peter Loncke** are keeping a stream of information flowing about Operation Varsity. In addition to Peter finding the *Southern Comfort*—Bob and **Louis DeBlasio's** plane— he has located the Fighter Pilot who went down the same day. His name is John Delaney, and he lives in Asbury, New Jersey. Now Louis, Bob and John have an information exchange communication going; and interestingly, their memories of events differ a great deal. Each refreshes the other's memory.

Joseph Crandell of Groveland, Illinois wrote that his brother, **1st Lt. Leonard Crandell** piloted the other plane that went down at Wesel, as shown on the Harvel film. That plane is about 75 yards from the *Southern Comfort*, and the depression is still there in the ground where it crashed and exploded. The entire crew was KIA. Joseph is contacting Peter to learn more details about his findings.

Peter is in contact with veteran groups from the RAF, New Zealand and Australia, helping them locate planes, lay memorial wreaths, and find burial plots.

Can anybody identify these three cheerful gentlemen? I assume the picture was taken in a pub in England.



ABOUT THE OTHER QUEEN

Sgt. Lyle Latimer returned from England on the Queen Elizabeth in October, 1944. To Latimer, the trip home was a wonderful experience. Four of his group shared the B-Deck of that luxurious liner enjoying every comfort.

To dodge a storm the Queen E took a southern route, so when they came to the East Coast of the U.S., they got an off-shore view from Florida to New York Harbor. When they swung into landing position, the Queen was in the middle of various sea-going vessels that blew whistles and horns at and for the returning veterans. The people on board waved and cheered them from all sides as they came into the last phase of landing.

"There was a WAC Dance Band ashore, waving and playing modern American style music," he recalled. "We had time to watch others leave the ship, and also, to observe the various items involved in unloading a ship of that size. For a farm-boy, it was especially informative.

"At Camp Shanks, NY we were delighted all over again. We found fresh American bread, T-bone steaks and fresh milk!" He and his buddies rode a Troop Train to Jefferson Barracks, MO, an unforgettable ride, because it was GOING HOME.

Editor's Note: Latimer's first bomb run was on D-Day to the invasion targets of Caen. He flew with the crew of 2nd Lt. Joseph Hermann, pilot. Latimer said that as the tail gunner, he did not care where they went, but did like to see where they had been!"

Paul Oberlin to **Will Lundy**: ... (describing a European vacation) "**Steve (Adams)** met us in Norwich, and we drove to Shipdham. For me, the biggest best highlight was to see and go in the Control Tower, as my Dad had spent a lot of time there...

Would you like an artist's rendering of our plane? John Bills, the son of a Liberator flyer, will do individual pictures, complete with insignia, nose art, serial numbers, battle damage, tail identification. The price is reasonable. The samples are impressive. Call 770-346-9517 or E-Mail john7linda@mindspring.com.

Dear American Friends,

I would like to wish you a great Independence Day 2000.

I hope that the Veterans will receive a lot of attention from the youngsters.

If you think they do not pay enough respect to your fight for the cause of freedom, be sure that in the other side of the Atlantic ocean, at least one Belgian guy does.

May they never have to pay the price for their easy-going way of life. The less you care about freedom, the more you risk to lose it.

Thank you for MY freedom.

Your dedicated friend from over here, waiting eagerly to be over there with you.

Luc Dewez



I always look forward to receiving my copy of the 8 Ball Tails. The picture on the front page of the Spring 2000 edition showing the "Delectable Doris" (now renamed "Joe"), and the "All American" (now renamed "The Dragon and his Tail") flying together, are a very pretty sight indeed. When reading your comments on page 3 regarding these two planes however, you state the "All American", the last fully restored, flying Liberator in the world....".

I would take issue a bit with this statement. The Confederate Air Force's "Diamond Lil" a completely restored B-24 has been in continuous service since it came off the assembly line in the Spring of 1940. It carries serial number 18. Almost certainly Diamond LIL is the longest continuously serving World War II era aircraft flying today.

Some people do not consider LIL a true B-24 because in appearance it does not have the cowling of turbocharged engines and the exhaust stacks are on top like a PBY. Additionally, the plane is about 9 feet shorter than a D Model. From a non cosmetic standpoint, LIL is significantly different from later model B-24s. However it is and was a B-24A. It also was designated an LB-30A Liberator I, under its original lend lease purchase order.

There have been times when the airplane underwent repairs and restoration, but it has never missed a scheduled tour season with the CAF. It did not go out on tour last summer because the aircraft it flies with, a B-29 "FIFI", did not go out on tour, and the two planes always travel together. Although the LIL was having new fuel tanks installed, and other maintenance performed, it could have been put together to go on tour last summer had FIFI been in a position to go. Today, LIL is coming together nicely and will probably be undergoing recurrency flights within the month of May.

Larry Herpel <lherpel@juno.com>



SIX SETS OF INITIALS
by Jack Butler (44th)

Let me tell you about 6 men to the 44th Bomb Group... All I know about them is that on six separate occasions, prior to May, 1944, each of them took off into the wild blue yonder. They were headed east into the rising sun over Germany. They never returned. I never met them and never knew them, yet I can never forget them. Let me tell you why I can never forget them.

All of us members of the 2nd Air Division had a lot in common. We are survivors. Would you be reading this otherwise? Most of us

have memories of friends, drinking buddies, guys in the next chair at briefings, etc. who did not make it. It is sad to say that my memory of some of my close friends who did not make it has faded.

Why then do I have such a vivid recollection of these six whom I did not know?

Well, in May, 1944, when I arrived at the 44th Bomb Group as a replacement navigator, I was assigned to an empty sack in a four man room. It was in a permanent building with inside plumbing. There were two double deck bunk beds. The vacant bed was a lower bunk. I thought this was great, but a little strange that the upstairs guys had not claimed it. They had not claimed it because they knew that there were six sets of initials burned into the rails below the upper bunk. Each set of initials had marks burned by cigarettes which counted completed missions. As I recall, the completed missions ranged from 3 to 14. I distinctly remember one set of markers showed the last completed mission as 12. Obviously he had not completed his number 13.

From May until December of 1944, the last thing I saw before I went to sleep were those initials burned into the bed rail above me. Not until recently did I realize those initials were also burned into my memory.

Is it possible that those six guys got together and put in a good word for #7? All I know is that I made it OK, but there were several occasions when I, and my various crews, needed and had incredibly good luck at the right time.

*Editor's Note: To locate which of the two Jack Butlers sent this message, I searched the Database AND COULDN'T FIND HIM! However, I learned by e-mail that he was **John E. Butler** and his new address is 12704 Transit Cove, Austin, TX 78727-5118. Phone (512) 833-7643. E-mail JackB839@aol.com.*

*Jack was in both the 66th and 67th Squadrons. He went over with **Bob Knowles** and **Howard Robb**, and sometimes flew with others. He was over there from May, 1944 to December, 1944.*

The news of his life is that he has two German great granddaughters, thanks to his grandson who took a German bride after serving in the Gulf War. Jack was visited by the German grandmother of his two great grandchildren. A resident of Hamburg, she is unable to discuss the war events which occurred when she was ten years old. Among the tidbits of information which Jack learned is that 600,000 women and children were evacuated from the city during the summer of '43. The 44th was bombing oil refineries, but before the War was over, most of the homes were destroyed.

Through cyberspace, Jack's grandson informed him that a 1 kilo ton bomb was found in the middle of Stuttgart. The authorities evacuated half the city to diffuse it. Apparently they find an unexploded bomb over there from time to time. The memory of WWII does not go away for either side.





A REQUEST FOR HELP!

John L. Milliken reported that four members of his crew **Darrel Larsen, Morris Larkin, Leon Allen and Irwin Stovroff** have not received the DFC; even though they all completed their combat tour together, and were shot down on the 31st, 13 August 1944. Milliken, **Martin Richard** and **Robert Bertoli** received their DFC on General Order 193, 2nd Bomb Division 17 August 44. **Kenneth Beckwith** received his GO 212, 31 August 44. Milliken received an additional DFC on GO 226, @ 2nd BD dated 14 September 44. Milliken is wondering if someone in the 44th might have the GO's, which could help the four in his crew to receive the decoration which they earned.

Editor's Note: Roy Owen advises those who have not received their DFC to write Air Force Personnel Headquarters, Decorations Department, Randolph Field, Texas.



From the *Stars and Stripes* comes the memory of General Patton's push through Germany, forwarded by **Bob Vance**:

'HELL ON WHEELS' ROLLS HELL-BENT THROUGH REICH Injured Foe, Medics, 30,000 Civilians Welcome End of War--for Them

AHLEN, GERMANY, March 31 (delayed), — German Army medics and civilians alike lined the streets of this hospital town—"the first open city" in Germany left thus far by the retreating Wehrmacht--and cheered and waved at the Second Army Div. tankers rolling through today on the road to Berlin. Col. Sidney Hinds of Nashville, Tenn., who has led his CCB across 36 miles of the Reich in less than two days, was in the first vehicle to reach the town, as forward elements by-passed it to slice through to the Autobahn, northeast of Hamm.

Surrender

At the entrance of Ahlen, his jeep was halted by a pot-bellied, bemedalled Nazi colonel, commandant of the town's dozen hospitals, which held more than 2,000 German wounded soldiers. The commandant offered him the surrender of the town, the soldiers and his own medics and 30,000 civilians who were still here.

As Col. Hinds followed the Nazi bigwig's car into the town, at first the civilians responded with a perfunctory "Heil Hitler!" They then spotted American vehicles and out went the bed sheets and tablecloths of surrender.

No Time for Prisoners

Dozens of Wehrmacht medics, in regular uniforms with Red Cross arm bands, were among the crowd and some of them joined in the waving. A couple of German Army doctors

saluted American officers. The tankers had no time to take prisoners, and so the meek-looking medics were still there when Brig. Gen. I.D. White bustled in for a staff conference in front of the town hall, still there when the tankers gassed up and still there when they rolled out again under cover of night.

*Editor's Note: Nobody was happier to see the armed vehicles enter Ahlen than **Louis DeBlasio, Bob Vance and John Delaney**, all POWs in a German hospital in Ahlen.*



Another Request for HELP!

As a school project, two teenagers in Holland are looking for stories about the liberation of their land in 1945, and any expressions of kindness, gratitude and courage which the Dutch people showed to their liberators. Their address is: Evelien aan de Wiel, Wittenstein 183, 3328 MV Dordrecht, the Netherlands.



Fritzi Selasky of Lubock, Texas has donated her husband's medals to the WWII Memorial in her town. Ground breaking will begin by Veterans Day in November. Lt. **James Selasky** was a navigator with the 67th Squadron, and was among the survivors of the raid to Ploesti, flying with Colonel Leon Johnson in the lead plane. In Lubock, Fritzi has dedicated her efforts to educating young people to the tragedies and triumphs of WWII.



OOPS!

For those of you who remember a **Captain Joseph Testa**, but never heard of a **Captain Tesla**, your memory is accurate. His name was Testa. In the article **ROBERT DUBOWSKY'S DROP FROM THE SKY**, Spring issue of the 8 BTs, the Editor got it wrong.

Dubowsky is still searching for parodies to WWII songs. Even if you only remember part of the song, send it to him. A long time from now, in a WWII Museum, some young people will feel the spirit of the young flyers who risked all to make a better world. His address is 650 Grant Court, Satellite Beach, FL 32937; e-mail irdud@aol.com.



*Everyone has a story worth telling and worth publishing.
PLEASE Send it!*

Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor
2041 Village Circle East
York, PA 17404

Telephone: (717) 846-8948 • Fax: (717) 846-6688
e-Mail: REWDM@BLAZENET.NET





Memories of **Bill Atkins**, 67/506: ...there are four missions that I remember well: the first, over Rhein Marshalling Yard was supposed to be at high level mission, then changed at the last moment to low level. They gave us a master briefing on a whole lot of flak we could expect. We did make it through without picking up any extra holes. Then there was the trip to Berlin, which seemed to me, went right into the center of town.

Another awesome experience was the mission with Napalm to Fort-de-Royan near Bordeaux, France. I was also on the flight to Wesel with Major Harvel. I transferred his movie to VCR, and it has been the mainstay of my annual report to U.S. history classes. However, the best mission I remember was after VE Day, and we took the political folks from Shipdham for a flight up the Rhine River, looking at the towns that were still standing but had no roofs or floors.



**E-Mail from Fritz-Peter Linden,
Stadtkyll, Germany to Will Lundy:**

We are putting together a magazine this year, celebrating four important dates in the history of our town, including the events of WWII. I am the editor of the "official celebration magazine" and with your information, I was able to translate the U.S. Air Force assessment of the bombings in late 44/early 45.

On behalf of everybody here, I thank you very much for your help. And if it weren't for you and all the other American soldiers back then, I probably wouldn't be able to write this little e-mail to you. This is the first time I can actually say thank you to one of the men who was actually there.

Editor's Note: Could anybody imagine that there would ever be a letter of gratitude from the enemy country? The recognized value of the sacrifices of WWII keep growing in every part of the globe.



George Wright, from Wylde Green, England, started a hobby of making models of WWII planes, and as a tribute to the 50,000 Americans who served in the 2 AD, he is placing them on permanent loan to the Memorial Library in Norwich. The aircrafts represented are older planes used as markers for the division's 14 bomb groups to move into formation over the North Sea, ready to start their missions into Germany. *Lemon Drop* and other colorful lead planes will be on display.



Have you lost your medals, and want them replaced? All honorably discharged veterans are entitled to a one time, free of charge replacement set of their authorized medals and ribbons from the U.S. Government. Submit request in writing to: National Personnel Records Ctr., Attn: NRPMF, 9700 Page Ave., St. Louis, MO 36132-5100.

Include your full name, service or social security number, branch of service and dates of service. Request must be signed by the veteran. If deceased, next of kin can sign the request. Be sure the request is legible. It is also helpful to attach a copy of the discharge certificate, but not required. Allow 90-120 days for processing.



**ABOUT THE DATABASE PROJECT,
ARE YOU LISTENING?**

Speaking as the Editor of the 8 Ball Tails, I can't help wondering whether 44thers do not submit their Database information because the project has not been clearly defined. Here is the plan: the entire history of the 44th Bomb Group - the missions, the sorties, the planes, the crews and the flyers - is being compiled and computerized. This information will be available to every library, high school and museum in the country and some places overseas, not just now but 100 years from now.

How will future generations know what happened in WWII if the people who lived it do not tell their story? Historians, researchers, archivists and family members will have access to YOUR history, but only if you put it on record. EVERY SINGLE JOB WAS IMPORTANT. IT TOOK FULL EFFORT TO WIN THE WAR. RECORD YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO VICTORY.

Is it so difficult to dig in your old boxes and pull out a handful of information and photographs about yourself? Is it so difficult to talk into a tape recorder or put it in writing, the harrowing moments you lived through, the ways you coped with tough times, the funny things you did with your buddies?

As Editor of the 8 Ball Tails, when I try to get details about a particular person for an article, and can't find his bio, I shake my head sadly. I want ALL of you to be remembered.

Write to us for your preprinted bio form:

44th BGVA Bios
PO Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287



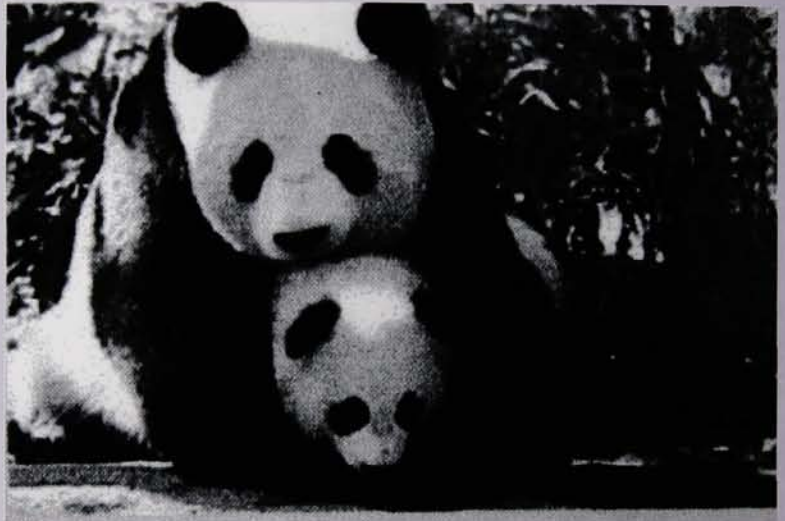
JOIN US FOR THE 44TH BGVA REUNION IN SAN DIEGO!



SEE HOW PATIENTLY THEY
ARE WAITING FOR YOU
TO ARRIVE AT THE
BALBOA PARK ZOO!!

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS

NOW!



44th Bomb Group
VETERANS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



Non Profit
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit #6923
Salt Lake City, UT



44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 3 - Issue #6

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Fall, 2000

Non Profit Veterans Organization

EIN #68-0351397

GRATEFUL EVADER

The first mission of the **Komasinski** crew was on OLE COCK #42-110024. The target was Bremen, Germany, bombing by PFF. According to **Frank Schaeffer**, flight engineer and top turret gunner, the crew had eleven men. They called the eleventh man a Carpetbagger. He was in charge of the radar jamming equipment, located in the left rear corner of the flight deck.



44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD

President Emeritus: B-Gen. John H. Gibson (Retired)
7008 Gateridge
Dallas, TX 75240-7936
Phone: (972) 239-0559

Immediate Past President: Roy W. Owen (506)
6304 Meadowridge Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95409-5839
Phone: (707) 538-4726 Fax: (707) 538-1212
e-mail: Rowen44bg@aol.com

President: Edw. K. "Mike" Mikoloski (66/67)
626 Smithfield Road #702
N. Providence, RI 02904
Phone/Fax: (401) 353-0144
e-mail: EKMLIB44@msn.com

First Vice President: Richard D. Butler (506/67)
44th Group VP to 2nd ADA
16828 Mitchell Circle
Riverside, CA 92518
Phone (909) 697-5875 Fax: (909) 697-2908
e-mail: rdb24@earthlink.net

Treasurer: Gerald (Jerry) Folsom (506)
3582 East Dover Hill Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84121-5527
Phone (801) 733-7371 Fax: (801) 942-9988
e-mail: 44thbgva@xmission.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: rewdm@blazenet.net

Director (67) Archivist
Anthony "Tony" Mastradone
9111 Tuckerman Street
Lanham, MD 20706-2709
Phone/Fax: (301) 577-1487
e-mail: mast@clres.com

Director: Robert J. Lehnhausen (68)
2540 Benton Court
Peoria, IL 61615-8838
Phone/Fax: (309) 243-1952

Director: Michael "Mike" Yuspeh (506)
7214 Sardonyx St.
New Orleans, LA 70124-3509
Phone/Fax: (504) 283-3424
e-mail: mikeyuspeh@worldnet.att.net

Director (44 SMW)
Charles G. Simpson
P.O. Box 281
Breckenridge, CO 80424
Phone/Fax: (970) 453-0500
e-mail: AFMISSILEERS@compuserve.com

Historian: C.W. "Will" Lundy (67)
3295 North "H" Street
San Bernardino, CA 92405-2809
Phone/Fax: (909) 882-2441
e-mail: willundy@aol.com
P.O. Box 315, Bridgeport, CA 93517 (Sum)
Phone/Fax: (760) 932-7349

Membership: Search
Art Hand (66)
517 Elm Street
Paris, IL 61944-1417
Phone/Fax: (217) 463-5905
e-mail: k9hwp@comwares.net

U.K. Representative: Steve Adams
28 Bassingham Rd.
Norwich, England NR3 2QT
Phone/Fax: 011-44-1603-400221
e-mail: s.p.adams@btinternet.com



ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS:
44th BGVA
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

The 8-Ball Tails ©

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

Compiled, written and published tri-yearly at 2041 Village Circle East, York, PA, by Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor. Printed and mailed Bulk Rate at Salt Lake City, UT under USPS Permit #6923. All original written material such as letters, stories, excerpts from personal diaries or memoirs, drawings and photos submitted to this journal will become the property of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and will be copyright protected except where noted. The text and photos are otherwise reproduced from official USAAF and USAF documents and photos which have been released for publication. Permission is granted for the contents of this journal to be reproduced specifically for personal archives.

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

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

FRANK N. SCHAEFFER, GRATEFUL EVADER

Frank Schaeffer avoided the Army draft by joining the Army Air Corps in 1942, but after his sixth mission from Shipdham, he found himself climbing into back rooms and hiding in pits to elude marauding Germans and wondering what was the difference. After enlisting, he had to wait six months before he was inducted. So he took the opportunity to



FRANK SCHAEFFER 1943

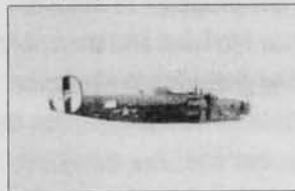
take night school courses at the local vocational school along with flying lessons. When the call came to report, he rode the Northeastern Railroad through a snowstorm, to arrive on time at the 8th Street Theater in Chicago.

Unfortunately, his dream to be a pilot faded, and he was sent to Shepard Field to study Airplane Mechanics, where the biggest irritant was the CQ who wakened them in the morning, "Drop your ---- and grab your socks." When he finished AM School, he went to Tyndall Field for Gunnery School; where he moved up to Buck Sergeant. To celebrate the completion of that program, and the rank that went with it, Schaeffer drank many beers and smoked a cigar. It didn't sit well. He barfed all over one of his roommate's foot locker!



FRONT LEFT TO RIGHT: BERNARD J. KOMASINSKI, pilot; W. SCOTT GIPPERT, co-pilot; EDGAR W. MICHAELS, NAVIGATOR; CHARLES H. LAIN, BOMBARDIER. STANDING: STANLEY J. HULEWICZ, TAIL GUNNER; FRANK LAFAZIA, BALL TURRET; JOHN H. MCKEE, RADIO OPERATOR; NELSON E. BROTT, LEFT WAIST GUN; WALTER E. JACOB, RIGHT WAIST GUN; FRANK N. SCHAEFFER, FLIGHT ENGINEER AND TOP TURRET.

Soon attacks of pneumonia and rheumatic fever separated Schaeffer from his buddies. When he got back on his feet, he was assigned Engineer on Lt. B. J. Komasiński's crew. His memory of working with his new crew in Pueblo, Colorado was harrowing, exciting and coupled with bouts of air sickness--problems that passed when the serious business of war came to them. When their training was over, they set out for the trip on the Queen Elizabeth to the Firth of Clyde in Scotland.



BAR P, Ole Cock, 42-110024
FROM HARRY STEELE'S COLLECTION.

From
Shipdham
Schaeffer

flew in a succession of planes: *Ole Cock*, *Bar-P*, *Bar-L*, and *My Gal Sal*, each time getting back safely, notwithstanding holes in the planes. (*My Gal Sal* crashed on take-off several weeks later, but Schaeffer was not on board.)



HARRY STEELE, CREW
chief of "Ole Cock,"
42-110024

August 8, 1944 was a foggy morning, delaying take-off on the mission to the German airdome near L'Perthe, France. Komasiński's plane, *My Peach*, had a substitute gunner, Coley Richardson, who was on his last mission. As it turned out, it was the last for all of them.

Trouble Beginning

Until the plane reached the IP, Schaeffer remembers little flak activity. When they reached the bomb run to the target, the #2 engine began to speed, and he could not bring it back to cruising speed with the synchronizing switch. The rpms increased, and he could not slow them.

"We had a runaway propeller!!" he recalled. "She really howled and went to 4,500 rpm. Our co-pilot, W. Scott Gippert operated the feathering button, and the throttle was closed, but the propeller refused to feather.



"Meanwhile I had gone into the forward end of the bomb bay to turn off the #2 fuel selector valve. The fuel booster pump switch was also turned off, as well as the generator for that engine; but with everything off, it continued to run wild. Lt. Gippert asked me to replace the feathering fuse, but I shouted 'No fuse. Circuit breakers here' and pointed to four little red buttons. He pressed on the button, but that was useless because the breaker had not popped. Oil pressure was at zero, which probably made any further feathering efforts useless."

By that time Schaeffer figured out that the freezing temperature had made the oil in the propeller spinner cold and thick, causing failure of the propeller to feather. Meanwhile the engine continued to howl and the cowling shook so violently, he expected the propeller to come flying off, possibly into the fuselage. In desperation he tried to replace the supercharger amplifier, but didn't depress the retainer catch, so it would not come out of its receptacle.

With all this excitement going on, they reached the target and Charles Lain, bombardier released the bombs; delaying a little, as the plane had fallen behind in their formation.

Jump?

At that point, Schaeffer released his flak suit, took off his oxygen mask, headset, throat mic, helmet and gloves, and unplugged the heated suit. He saw his co-pilot doing the same thing, so he signaled Nelson Brott, to come down from the top turret.

Standing on the catwalk, he suddenly realized that he had not been given the signal to jump, so he swung out and around the right side of the forward bomb rack, and back onto the catwalk behind it. Since he was wearing a chest pack parachute, he could not have gotten through the center of the bomb bay between the bomb racks. But in swinging around the rack, his parachute rip cord handle snagged on a bomb shackle and pulled out about 3/4 inch. Immediately he pushed it back in, but the damage was done. The chute suddenly began to spill while he was getting into position on the catwalk.

"Quickly I gathered the folds in my arms, but with so much air rushing through the open bays, more folds kept spilling, and I had my hands full gathering them together. It was all I could do to keep my arms around that bundle of silk. I recall seeing one of the fellows drop from the nose wheel door, and our pilot urging John McKee, radio operator, to get going.

Schaeffer took a minute to weigh his options...whether to change chutes or risk exiting in his disheveled pile of silk. Komasinski, seeing his indecision, bailed out, leaving Schaeffer alone on the plane. He worked himself forward to the front end of the rear bomb bay, crouched and rolled out.

The chute was pulled out of his arms with a jerk that jammed him painfully down in his harness, and he found himself swinging in 180 degree arcs, with the chute nearly collapsing with each swing. Watching *My Peach* from his billowing chute, he saw it follow the formation as though a pilot was still at the controls. (When the formation took a right turn, the plane continued forward until it was out of sight.)

Schaeffer could see other parachutes, but could not make voice contact. His hands were freezing cold, having jumped at 20,000 feet; his harness was cutting into his crotch; and the air was so thin, he just dangled weakly until the air got warmer. Then he could look down and see the French landscape, knowing he was coming into German Occupied Territory.

Meeting the Underground

One shot rang out and missed him, and soon he found himself surrounded by French people who seemed to want to help him. Some locals were so afraid of the Germans, they refused to permit him into their home. Others risked death to provide him with civilian clothing, food and transport into a wooded area where they hid him in a deep hole. He was accompanied by different members of the FFI (French Underground) from time to time, leading him to an unknown destination which hopefully would provide safety. His companions did not speak English, and he did not know French. With no idea



where they were headed, he followed them through woods, over hills, fields, swamps and dozens of barbed



BENIER FAMILY ~ LUCIENEE, COLETTE, GASTON, GRANDMOTHER, BLANCHE, JEAN-PIERRE, AND ANDRE

wire fences. Ultimately he ended up at the Benier home at

Orbais L'Abbaye, which is south of Reims. It was the residence of an elderly woman and her two adult children, who were kind enough to feed him and provide quarters where he could reside in relative safety. He could not leave the house, but sometimes sat in the back yard, which was surrounded by a high wall.



FRANK EVADING IN THE BENIER BACKYARD.

In time he learned that Richardson, gunner, was badly injured, and was under German control; and McKee, radio operator, became a POW. The rest of the crew hid in the woods and traveled at night, protected by the FFI.



HENRY MEYSONET, FFI FRIEND.

A French spy called Shorty, working for the English, befriended Schaeffer and shared the same bed. He proudly displayed his working materials-- batteries, weapons, and equipment for communicating across the Channel. Only a few trusted people knew that Shorty and Schaeffer were residing at the Beniers.

Sometimes Schaeffer would help Shorty with his radio transmissions. Other times he helped Andre pitch hay in the barn or help care for the honey bees, which frequently

stung him. Cigarettes were \$3.60/ pack, but Shorty solved the problem by buying a pound of black market tobacco in Paris; and in return for rolling them, Schaeffer had a regular supply for himself.

Looking out the family's front room, Schaeffer could see German convoys passing, trucks piled with straw, men riding the fenders, on motorcycles and afoot. German planes went over; and some days he could see American bombers in tight formations, too high to see what kind they were. From the radio, which the family played only once a day, they learned that the Americans were approaching Paris.



LOUIS GUYOMARD (SHORTY) ~ SCHAEFFER'S SPY FRIEND.

On August 28 the Patton's Third Army arrived at Orbais L'Abbaye. The town people brought out homemade flags, greeting the soldiers and throwing flowers at the tanks. Every time the convoy stopped, someone would run out with a glass and bottle of wine and pass it to a soldier, who swallowed it with a gulp and returned the glass for the next soldier. This continued until the convoy moved on.



The FFI came out, wearing the Cross of Lorraine inside a V on their arm bands. The people of the town were delirious with delight. Coincidentally, on an effort to find someone called Bill, another evader who the family had come to know, Schaeffer passed his own crew who were already on trucks headed toward the coast, enroute England. Schaeffer returned with Bill, joining the family in a champagne party. He dug out his old clothes



and shared them with Bill, so both had some semblance of a uniform. (Bill Weatherwax was a B-17 pilot who had lived with the Beniers, but later moved into the forest with the FFI.)

The next day was a day of revelry, traveling from home to home and celebrating with families that pulled out champagne that had been stashed away years before, awaiting their day of liberation.

Many Germans were hiding in the woods, more afraid of the FFI than of the Americans. American troops pressed forward at a rapid rate, taking no time to pick up lurking German soldiers, so the Underground sought them out, showing little consideration to the invaders who had been occupying their homeland.

On October 18, Schaeffer boarded a C-54 ATC in Scotland, and eighteen hours later, was joyfully back in the USA. He has taken the time to write a detailed account of his experiences, and to look up members of his crew.

His work experience after the war had been in a chemical laboratory; then with General Electric Company, making X-rays; with the Chrysler Corporation, making outboard motors; and he is still working two days a week in a machine shop.



FRANK SCHAEFFER AT
SAN DIEGO REUNION
2000.

HARVEL'S BOOK

Things become more precious as time goes on, but only in the right hands. Do you have *Harvel's Liberators Over Europe or The History of the 44th Bomb Group?* Do you know anybody who does, who would be willing to donate it to the Historical Library in Barksdale, Louisiana? Barksdale, the home of many 44thers at one time, is building a research library, and these items would be greatly appreciated.

A PLEA FOR LOST RECORDS

There are 8,085 Sorties entered into the Database, but Will Lundy has discovered that reports are missing from May 8, 1944 to April 7, 1945. Is there any chance that members might have them in their files, or in boxes in the attic? Please check; and if so, please get them to Will. Nobody is working harder to complete the 44th history for future generations than Will.

If you can, please give him a hand.

PAULA ERTZ, A TRAGIC LOSS TO THE 44TH BGVA

After enjoying the company of Paula and Julian Ertz over the run of our San Diego reunion, news reached us that on the following Friday they were involved in a serious automobile accident that took the life of Paula while Julian escaped with minor injuries. Besides Julian, Paula is survived by daughters Beth Ertz and Bera Dordoni, sons Gary and Scott Ertz and grandchildren Christopher, Jarron and Ashley Ertz.



Paula had just begun to devote some of her multi-faceted talents to the intra communication among long-lost members mission of the 44th BGVA. She and Julian, a semi-retired attorney, were also assisting in finding a producer for our own "Lois Cianci Story" as a movie. No doubt she would have contributed substantially. We will miss the amazing lady, and send our love and support to Julian.



From the Desk of our President

FIRST AND FOREMOST, I thank you for the beautifully fitting floral tribute, the many kind letters, faxes, e-mails, notes, telephone calls and other warm expressions of compassion, concern, and sympathy on the recent loss of my precious and beloved wife, Yelena.

I am especially grateful to Roy Owen who readily and willingly stepped in to carry on the duties and responsibilities of the office of your President --- this he did despite the personal problems he and Lolly were struggling with as an aftermath of the death of Lolly's father.

It is during difficult days like these that you find your true friends and sincere supporters very much like your own family...and family you are indeed to me, and one I am extremely proud of and love dearly.

Now to the business at hand. Our San Diego Reunion hit another new high with Five Star accommodations, elegant amenities (The Presidential Suite as our Hospitality Room), gourmet cuisine, terrific tours, nostalgic music for dancing and a floor show that captivated and energized all of us, especially, Charlie Hughes who impressed all present with his tepsichorean talents as he responded to the enticing calls of the alluring and energetic vocalist to join her on the dance floor. Great Reunions are becoming a habit with our Reunion "Impressario", Mike Yuspeh and I urge all members to make plans NOW for Mike's next Reunion in Shreveport/Barksdale, LA. In my congratulatory message to Mike, I paraphrased a quotation from the Greek Philosopher, Aristotle, who wrote, "We are what we repeatedly do. EXCELLENCE, therefore, is not an act but a habit." Thanks Mike and "thanks" to the fine and beautiful ladies mentioned in Mike's MY SENIOR MOMENTS (page 21) article for

their invaluable help. Also, our appreciation to Cathy Mastradone who was instrumental in obtaining the Cambridge Cemetery photograph that was presented to Jackie Roberts. No easy task under the best of circumstances but completed brilliantly through Cathy's, and Tony's resourcefulness, perseverance and invaluable contacts in Washington.



Congratulations to the "EVERY MEMBER GET A MEMBER CONTEST" (EMGAM) winners!

Pictured Above: Fritzie Selasky (\$300); Cynthia Harmonowski (\$200); Robert Dunlop (\$100); Alex Toth (\$50). Not Pictured: Col. Larry R. Huey (Cross gold pen & pencil set); William H. Sims and Don Wells (Cross gold pens). The success of this "first ever" contest may dictate its repetition.

The MASTER DATA BASE FUND DRIVE is off to an eventful start with our members generously "opening their wallets" and hearts to the tune of some \$16,000 as of this writing. Our goal of \$50,000 remains a valid objective to meet the long and short term requirements of entering the personal data on ALL members of the 44th Bomb Group (H) living and deceased. This, undoubtedly, is one of the most noble projects undertaken by this Association and I am totally committed to reaching our goal.



My thanks to those who have not yet made their contribution. Remember that ALL donations are tax deductible, so please GIVE and GET a tax deduction. As an incentive to your future donations, I am endeavoring to establish a CHALLENGE GRANT FUND which will MATCH dollar for dollar any donations made by the members.

Donations to the MASTER DATA BASE FUND can be mailed to:

Gerald Folsom, 44th BGVA
% MDB FUND
PO Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

The personal BIOGRAPHICAL forms are still arriving slowly and I urge all members to submit their data as soon as possible. We especially need biographies on our deceased and ground support personnel. Their data and contributions are critical to insure the thoroughness and the completion of the illustrious history of the 44th Bomb Group (H) in the World War that Ended All World Wars.

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Robert Lehnhausen as Chairman of the new AWARDS COMMITTEE. Bob has already proposed several innovative ideas that the Board will consider for implementation at their next meeting.

Your Board of Directors and I continue to maintain the financial stability and solvency of the Association under the astute and financial wizardry of our highly professional Treasurer, Gerald Folsom. His Semi-Annual Financial Report for Calendar Year 2000, as of 30 June 2000, showed TOTAL ASSETS at \$52,106.05; TOTAL LIABILITIES at \$33,014.34 and a NET WORTH at \$19,091.71. Copies of this report and one ending on December 31, 1999 were distributed to the members attending the General Meeting in San Diego. My Budget for Calendar Year 2001 lists INCOME at \$32,500 and EXPENSES at \$28,080 with an expected SURPLUS of \$4,420.

Your Board of Directors approved Shreveport/Barksdale AFB, Louisiana as the site of the next Reunion of the 44th BGVA during the month of October, 2001. The firm dates will be announced as soon as final arrangements are consummated by our Reunion Chairman, Michael Yuspeh. Make your plans NOW to attend this Reunion which promises to top them all. Shreveport/Barksdale AFB is the home of Eighth Air Force, 2nd Bomb Wing, the Eighth Air Force Museum and the B-24 J, and the Eighth Air Force Museum Curator are jointly restoring and repainting with the 44th Bomb Group Markings.

Members are advised the CDs of the Master Data Base are available at a cost of \$150 of which \$50 goes into the Master Data Base Fund. The CDs come with two (2) free upgrades from Computer Generated Data Co. (CGD). All purchases and payments are to be made through our Treasurer, Gerald Folsom by writing him at the following address:

Gerald Folsom, 44th BGVA
% MDB CD
PO Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

Lastly, on behalf of the members and personally I send our sincerest expressions of sympathy and compassion to Julian Ertz on the tragic loss of his dear and beloved wife, Paula, in an automobile accident shortly after their attendance at the San Diego Reunion. Our thoughts and prayers are with Julian and his family.

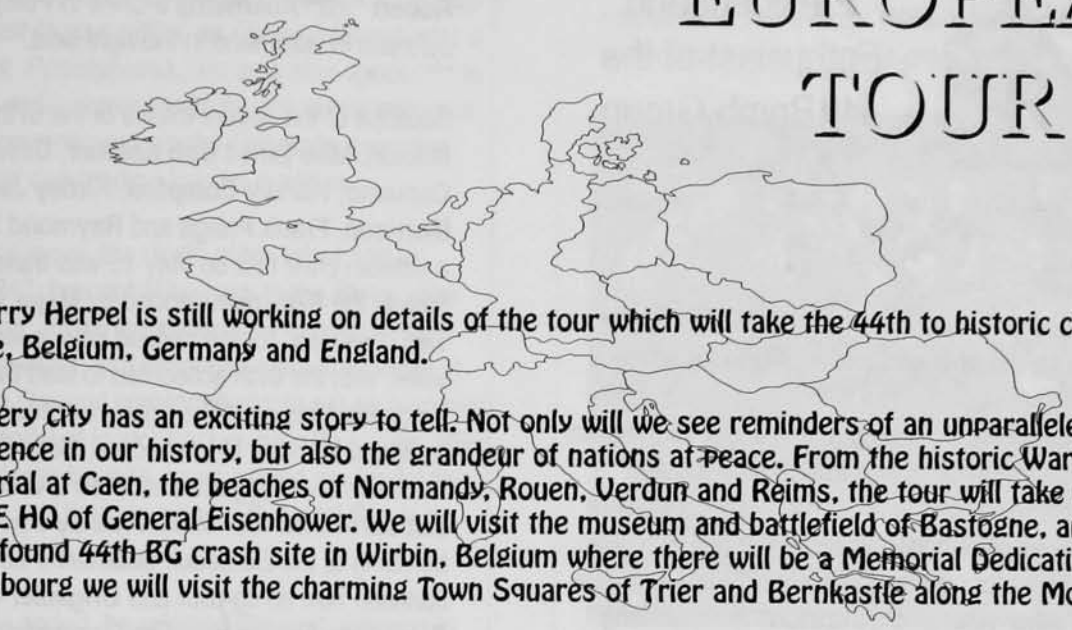
My closing thought is a tribute to our ladies.

"When you educate a man,
you educate an individual.
When you educate a woman,
you educate a whole family."

Edward K. Mihalovich



2001 EUROPEAN TOUR



Larry Herpel is still working on details of the tour which will take the 44th to historic cities in France, Belgium, Germany and England.

Every city has an exciting story to tell. Not only will we see reminders of an unparalleled experience in our history, but also the grandeur of nations at peace. From the historic War Memorial at Caen, the beaches of Normandy, Rouen, Verdun and Reims, the tour will take us to the SHAPE HQ of General Eisenhower. We will visit the museum and battlefield of Bastogne, and view a newly found 44th BG crash site in Wirbin, Belgium where there will be a Memorial Dedication. From Luxembourg we will visit the charming Town Squares of Trier and Bernkastle along the Mosel River.

From Koblenz we will cruise the Rhine to Cologne, enjoying the many sites along the way. From Cologne and its beautiful cathedrals, we will go on to Wesel, where Louis DeBlasio, Bob Vance and our new member, John Delaney (Fighter Pilot, 513 Sq., 401 Group), were housed as POWs until Patton's army came through and liberated them.

In Wesel we will inspect another crash site of one of our fallen aircraft from the 67th Sq. Here we will have the opportunity to meet Peter Loncke, a member of the Belgium Air Force, who has dedicated himself to locating crash sites and enlightening Americans, British and New Zealanders of his finds. Our Belgium friend and WWII researcher, Luc Dewez, will be joining us also.

Our trip to Liege will extend to Neuville-en-Condros home of the American War Memorial (Ardennes). 103 of our 44th BG are honored here, including Clair Shaeffer, father of Lois Cianci. We will tour the beautiful city of Brussels with its wonderful architecture, then the medieval towns of Ghent and Brugges for some great shopping and sight seeing. From Calais we cross the Channel to England and on to Norwich, home of the Memorial Library. Of course the trip will include Shipdham and surrounding areas, so clearly remembered as the 14th CBW Hq. A special day is scheduled around many activities while visiting that familiar site. The tour continues to Duxford and a visit to that fabulous Air Museum. The tour concludes in London. There are provisions for those who wish to stay over. Contact Larry for details: Phone (512) 376-7780; E-Mail ascotttravel@thrifty.net.

From the Editor: We have a limit of 48 people. Please send your deposit (\$150 per person) to Larry Herpel, 215 So. Medina, Lockhart, TX 78644. We have 42 paid applications, and others who have expressed an interest, but have not reserved a seat. Of course, we will accept names for a stand-by list, as this tour is still 12 months away. However, because of the negotiations involved in getting the best price, Larry needs to be certain we can fill the bus. More information will be forthcoming to those who have signed up, and will be announced in the next issue of the 8 Ball Tails.





Col. Mikoloski, 1960

Mike Mikoloski

President and Enthusiast of the 44th Bomb Group Association

General Leon Johnson once said of President Mike: "(he) has a remarkable ability to inspire in his fellow officers the same enthusiasm with which he habitually undertakes projects..." Mike proved himself to the great general while in England, and this complimentary statement came to him years later in the States. Mike hasn't changed since those years. With true optimistic drive, he strives for continued success for the 44th at a time when other veteran organizations are dwindling.

Mike was born, raised and educated in Worcester, Mass. where, after graduating from Clark University in June, 1941, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps with hopes of entering their flight program. He achieved his goal on July 4, 1942 when he received his Navigator Wings at Mather Field, California. He joined the 44th BG at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma as a crew member on *Jenny*, later renamed *Lucky Lady*, and flew to Shipdham with the 66th Sq., commanded by **Major Algene Key**, veteran pilot from the Pacific Theater and civilian pioneer of Air-to-Air Refueling.



Mike was 24 years old when he started flying combat missions in the fall of 1942 with his roommate and friend, **Tom Scrivner**, who replaced **James Kahl** as Aircraft Commander. By chance or choice, he was selected to lead the 44th on the May 14 Raid on Kiel in Captain **Robert "Ab" Abernethy's** Crew in *Forky II*, with Colonel Johnson in command in the right seat.

Because of the severe losses of the 67th on the Kiel Mission, Mike joined **Bob Kolliner**, **Dave Arnold**, **Frank Capuano**, **Harvey Compton**, **Kirtley Jarvis**, **Kelley Morrison**, **Frank Paliga** and **Raymond Shelton** to form a veteran crew that on May 15 was transferred from the 66th to the 67th, commanded by **Major Howard Moore**. Two days later, for the second time in less than one week, with the 67th scheduled to lead the group on the Bordeaux Mission, Mike again, by chance or choice, was assigned to Major Moore's crew, *Suzy Q*. They led the formation on a long nine-hour low level over-water flight that culminated with **Jim Devinney's** perfect pinpoint bombing of the Bordeaux Submarine Locks. Colonel Johnson flew as co-pilot and **Brigadier General James P. Hodges** flew on board as Commander of the Second Air Division.

At that time Mike's wife, Katherine, was awaiting the birth of their first child. This mission and the upcoming birth are recorded poignantly in the book *"SKYWAYS TO BERLIN"* (Chapter 6 "Sweating It Out").



Mike &
KATHERINE
with infant
daughter.

Left to Right:
Lt. James Kahl, pilot; Sgt. James Young, waist gunner; Lt. Edward Mikoloski, navigator; Sgt. Walter Summery, photographer; Lt. Edward Brennan, bombardier; Sgt. Harold Samuelian, gunner; Sgt. Channing Saterfield, radio operator; Sgt. Walter Hazelton, engineer (not visible, only legs); Lt. Thomas E. Scrivner, co-pilot - later became pilot and aircraft commander; Sgt. Walter M. Patrick (cap is only visible); Sgt. Harold Balsley, tail gunner. Our crew chief was Sgt. Walter Pitts.

When he finished his combat tour June 19, 1943 he joined General Johnson's staff as Group Navigator, later as First Wing Navigator at the 14th Combat Wing. Along with the Staff of the 55th Bomb Group and the 14th Combat Wing, he attended the presentation of the Medal of Honor to Col. Johnson by **General Devers**. (*This has a special interest to your editor, as General Devers was a native of York, Pennsylvania.*) He was also appointed to provide BBC radio correspondents with some personal and official commentaries on the General's executive, leadership and outstanding human qualities.

An emergency leave, the death of his infant son in December 1943, brought Mike back to the States. The War was raging. Air transportation was difficult if not impossible to obtain, and Mike was reticent to leave at that time. The General convinced him to act as a courier, to carry his Medal of Honor back to his wife Lucille. Mike accepted and with his wife, hand carried the Medal to Mrs. Johnson and their daughters, Sue and Sarah in Savannah, Georgia.

When the war ended, he rejoined General Johnson in 1947 as his Aide-de-Camp and I & E Staff Officer at the 15th Air Force, Colorado Springs. He continued serving under him as his Executive and Principal Staff Planner at 3rd Air Force, London and Continental Air Command, Mitchell Field, New York. After these Air Force assignments, he served with the General in joint and unified Dept. of Defense assignments at the NATO Standing Group and Military Committee in Washington, D.C. and later in SHAPE Hq. in Paris. After the General retired in Paris, Mike remained at SHAPE as Executive and Staff Plans Officer to **General Samuel Anderson**, who was Air Deputy to SACEUR, **General Lauris Norstad**.

Mike had the honor of serving as the Project Officer for the U.S. in the dedication ceremonies for the American Chapel in St. Paul's Cathedral. It was a ceremony that brought out the luminaries of both countries: Queen Mary, with Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret, represented the British government. General and Mrs. Dwight Eisenhower represented the U.S. government. Other dignitaries at the Joint UK-US ceremonies on July 5, 1951 included Prime Minister Clement Attlee; Winston Churchill; Anthony Eden, Lord Trenchard, Father of the RAF & Marshall of the Royal Air Force; Sir John Slessor; Lord Tedder, Former Marshal of the Royal Air Force; Sir Arthur Henderson, Air Minister; General Lauris Norstad, SACEUR **General**

Curtis E. Lemay; General Leon W. Johnson; Admiral Louis Mountbatten; **General Jack Wood**; the Lord Mayor of London and, of course, the Dean of St. Paul. Members of the British and American Armed Forces served together as the Joint Honor Guard and Marching Elements. *Editor's Note: Will anybody dispute that the British know how to hold a great ceremony?*



Distinguished Guests Departing St. Paul's Cathedral.

FROM BOTTOM TO TOP (NOT ALL GUESTS CAN BE IDENTIFIED):

GENERAL AND MRS. DWIGHT EISENHOWER WITH THE GENERAL'S BRITISH AID-DE-CAMP; COLONEL AND MRS. JOHN EISENHOWER; PRIME MINISTER AND LADY ATLEE; LORD AND LADY TRENCHARD; SIR WINSTON AND LADY CHURCHILL; FORMER PRIME MINISTER ANTHONY EDEN (IN CENTER WITHOUT HAT); REMAINDER OF GUESTS ARE CURRENT AND FORMER MEMBERS OF THE UK GOVERNMENT. MEMBERS OF THE US AND UK ARMY, NAVY AND AIR FORCE FORMED THE JOINT US-UK HONOR GUARD AT THE DEDICATION CEREMONIES.

From 1960 through 1964 Mike served in the Pentagon in the office of Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Policy; as Chief of the International Affairs Division, where he was responsible for the direction and supervision of the military missions in Latin and South America. The Air Force Global BASR rights negotiations and the Military Advisory and Assistance Groups (MAAGS). During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Mike was the principal planner and advisor to General Lemay, c/s USAF, on the Jupiter Missile Removal programs in Turkey and Italy.

His final assignment was as Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans & Programs at the 8th Air Force Headquarters (SAC), Westover AFB, MA, retiring on Feb. 1, 1968.

He was married to the former Katherine Mahoney, Worcester, MA with whom he raised six children. They



were blessed with eight grandchildren. Three of the Mikoloski surviving children and one grandson are life members of the 44th BGVA.



On Thanksgiving Day, 1986, Mike married the former Yelena Krasnochekova, a Russian actress, who he met in Moscow.

Tragically, Yelena passed away several months ago, after a lingering illness. Mike has expressed sincere gratitude to members of the 44th, whose messages of condolence continue to help him through this difficult time.

After his retirement Mike took post graduate courses at American International College, Springfield, NM and Nichols College, Dudley, MA in Business Law, Cost Accounting, Management and Computer Technology. He was owner and operator of a calculator and office equipment company in Webster, MA before joining TRIGON ELECTRONICS of California as their manufacturers representative for England, Ireland and the Eastern United States.

With all of the ceremonious occasions that Mike had attended in his military career, his rise to the Presidency of the 44th Bomb Group had no pomp and no ceremony. He simply took the gavel from outgoing President Roy Owen in Austin, Texas, and the job began. Then, being eager to credit his renowned predecessor for his outstanding accomplishments in a beautiful and well-orchestrated event in New Orleans, Mike ended up doing it in absentia. Roy and Lolly couldn't make it to the Reunion. *(Editor's Note: because of Mike's need to be with Yelena during her lengthy illness and ultimate death, Owen consented to serve as President pro tem.)*



PAST PRESIDENT ROY OWEN
&
PRESIDENT MIKE MIKOLOSKI
IN SAN DIEGO.

Mike's granddaughter recently interviewed him for a class project, and when she learned his history, she exclaimed, "Grandpa, you were a hero." This he stoutly denied,

saying "No, I am a survivor. The heroes didn't come back."

Mike's leadership commitment is firm: he wants to build on the 44th past glory, and continue the bomb group's winning tradition into the new Millennium.

Editor's Note: General Johnson's and Mike's moments of danger extended beyond wartime Europe. In 1952 they flew to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania in an Army transport plane to attend a Governor's Day Celebration. The plane crashed while attempting to land, bursting into flames. One crew member sustained minor injuries; all other occupants escaped unharmed.

Great Moments in President Mike's Career



MAJOR GENERAL LEON W. JOHNSON
AND
CAPTAIN "MIKE" MIKOLOSKI II



GENERAL CURTIS LEMAY
AND
MAJOR "MIKE" MIKOLOSKI II

AWARDS & DECORATIONS

- Legion of Merit, Hq. Dept. USAF Dec. 30, 1966
- DFC w/I OLC, 8th Air Force June 12, 1943
- AM w/3 OLC, 8th Air Force, April, 1943
- AF Commendation Medal, 8th Air Force, Feb. 1, 1968
- American Defense Service Medal
- American Campaign Medal
- Europe-Africa-Middle East Campaign Medal
- WWII Victory Medal
- Medal for Humane Action (Berlin Airlift)
- National Defense Service Medal
- Occupation Medal (Germany)
- AFLSA w/3 Silver OLC
- Distinguished Unit Citation w/2 OLC
- French Croix de Guerre w/2 Silver Palme





Roy OWEN, Lois CIANCI, Jackie ROBERTS

Lois Cianci presents the color lithograph of the National Cemetery at Omaha Beach, France to Jackie Ostenson Roberts as a welcome to the 44th Bomb Group Family.

WELCOME TO THE 44TH BOMB GROUP FAMILY

By Roy Owen

Another highly emotional event took place on Banquet Night at our National Reunion in San Diego when the two daughters who were orphaned by the loss of their respective 68th Bomb Squadron fathers on the January 21, 1944 raid against the German V-1 missile launch sites at Escalles-Sur-Buchy, France met personally for the first time.

We told the related events of leading up to this tragically beautiful meeting in the last (Summer 2000) issue of the 8-Ball Tails.

To mark the event with Lois Cianci, our first orphaned daughter of that raid, welcoming Jackie Roberts into the 44th BGVA Family, Tony and Cathy Mastradone acquired from the American Battle Monuments Commission a stunning 15"x 24" color lithograph of the central memorial statue in the Omaha Beach National Cemetery. They framed the litho beautifully and shipped it to the Westin Hotel for the ceremony. The point of this was the remains of S/Sgt. Jack Ostenson, Jackie's father, were never recovered. Thus his name is inscribed on the marble "Wall of Honor" and a white marble cross has been placed over the buried remains of one of those unidentified which states "Here rests in honored glory AN AMERICAN SOLDIER known but to God.

Jackie, in a tearful acceptance of the beautiful gift, gave the gathering of members her heartfelt thanks for providing all the information she had been seeking about her Dad in her lifetime. Looking at the members through tear filled eyes she said "You all are now my family, and I love you for all you have done to bring me to this moment!"



The Reunion ~ San Diego, 2000

There are few cities quite like San Diego; and Mike Yuspeh managed to show the best of it to the 44th BGVA. Lunch at the Island Club at the North Island Naval Air Station was bountiful and luxurious, and the bus driver's account of the way navy men looked at housing three major aircraft carriers was whimsical--the Constellation, a standard carrier, the John C. Stennis nuclear carrier, and soon will be hosting the Ronald Reagan, also nuclear. They call them the Connie, the Johnnie and the Ronnie!

The Westin Hotel is a block from Horton Plaza, a shopping mall that looks like it was designed by Walt Disney. Architecturally dramatic shops are connected top and bottom, side to side by escalators, bridges, and ramps. Prices weren't bad and food choices demonstrated the many cultures that inhabit that area.

Tony Cianci



JIM
AND
JEAN
CALLIER

Squadron Dinners at the Westin Hotel were a golden opportunity to catch up with old friends--and old accounts of war experiences. Will there be a time when buddies can get together and run out of memories of amazing events? Never.

Touring the USS John C. Stennis was an athletic adventure. The deck is three football fields long, with catapults for accelerating the speed of outgoing planes, and hooks for grabbing them when they return. It is very easy to see that the huge craft was designed to flourish in the global arena. Those who felt ambitious climbed the seven steep stairways to the Bridge, and were surprised to learn that the mammoth vessel housed another seven decks below. The 97,000 ton floating city is complete with galleys capable of feeding 5,000 members of the crew, a photo laboratory, aircraft repair shop, ship repair shop, fuel tanks for planes and escorts, and all the amenities to permit it to stay at sea for years, if necessary.

EMBLEM OF
JOHN C.
STENNIS



The Candle Lighting Ceremony and the Banquet were special, replete with dashing young men who made up the Honor Guard. It was here that the 44th met our newly-found orphan of the war--Jackie Roberts. The 50 year search that this young lady made to locate someone who could tell her about her father, S/Sgt. Jack Ostenson, is a dramatic saga which will be told in the next issue. Ostenson's plane went down on January 21, 1944, the same day, same mission in which Lois Cianci lost her father. Were there any dry eyes when Lois handed the lithograph of the Omaha Beach Memorial to Jackie? I don't think so. Welcoming Jackie and her husband Lowell into the Bomb Group was a solemn moment for all.



Should anybody go to San Diego and miss the Pandas? Perry and I waited in line 40 minutes to see the new baby that hung in the tree and ignored everyone. The guide explained that it's metabolism is so slow, it sleeps 20 hours every day. The rest of the time, it eats. Fortunately, the zoo has no shortage of bamboo for the three exotic critters, father, mother and baby, all on loan from the People's Republic of China.



Small tour group emerging from the superstructure onto the flight deck.



The carrier tour group ready to break-up into smaller groups and go aboard with the Navy Crewperson Guides.

Below: Roy Owen on the Bridge at the Helm.



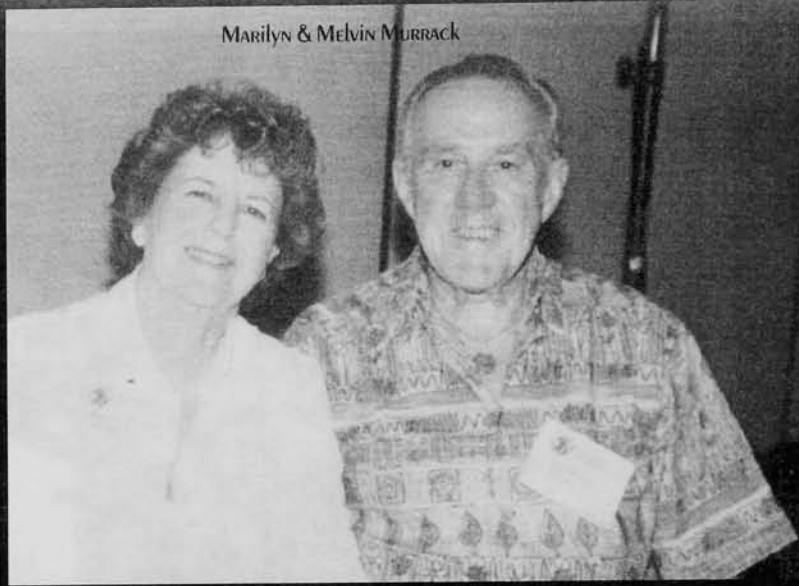
Part of the group in the San Diego Trolley during the North Island Naval Air Station Tour. Julian and Paul Ertz on the right. This could be the last photo of Paula and Julian before her tragic death the following Friday.



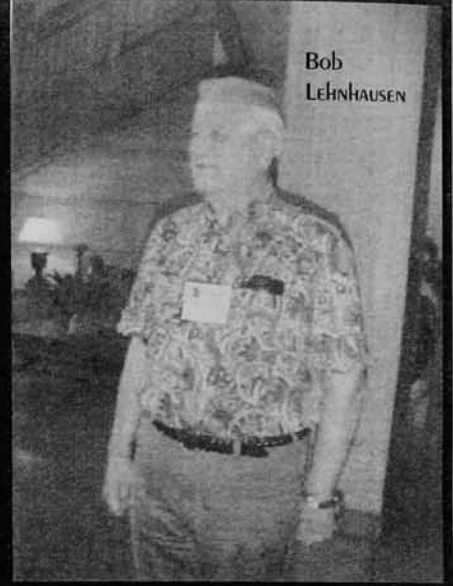
R
E
U
N
I
O
N

2
0
0
0

Marilyn & Melvin MURRACK



Bob
LEHNHAUSEN



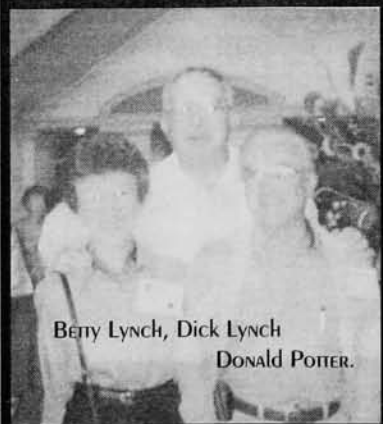
Tony MASTRADONE



"Liz"
LEHNHAUSEN



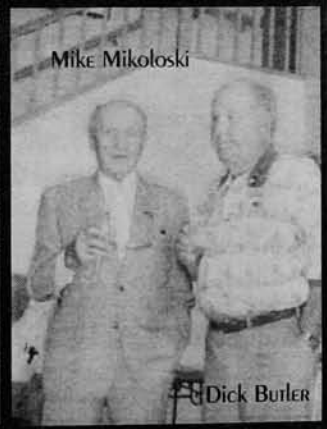
Betty Lynch, Dick Lynch
DONALD POTTER.



DON & GLORIA
Wells



Mike Mikoloski



Dick BUTLER

ANN NATILLI

LOUIS
DeBlasio



BEVERLY FOLSOM, CATHY MASTRADONE, LARRY HERDEL.



55 YEARS AND THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Clay Roberts saw a picture in the 2nd Air Division Magazine, asking identities of a crew--his crew. He immediately identified them, which led to a search for all members. Five met in San Diego at the 44th BG Reunion.

"We came together as a heavy bomber, B-24 Liberator crew in 1944. We delivered a B-24-J from Mitchell Field, NY via Bangor Field, Maine and Goose Bay Labrador to Valley, Wales. We were assigned to the 68th Bomb Squadron, 44th BG, and flew bombing sorties over Europe."

The crew suffered no casualties, but the radio operator saved his own life by breaking from procedure. He held the bomb bay doors lever in the open position from the IP to bombs away. His radio compartment was blown out by flak.

Their last flight as a crew was in May, 1945 when they departed for Bradley Field, CT via Bluie West One, Greenland. After flying up a fiord with wing tips brushing rock walls, they landed with a flat main gear tire.

only 22 years old. Needless to say, they were treated like royalty.

When they were broken up as a crew at Sioux Falls, SD in 1945, they went in ten different directions. Some made efforts to contact others, but were not able. Clay Roberts located Joe Stewart in Providence, RI, but he passed away before they could get together. Bob Dunlap had submitted the picture to the 2 AD Journal, which triggered a series of events that culminated in the five surviving members making contact and meeting in San Diego.



Shipdham, England 1944:

STANDING: KEN AMICK (flight engineer/gunner), JOHN CROSS (gunner), BOB DUNLAP (gunner), EDGAR FLOWERS (gunner) and JOHN BOILEAU (radio operator).
SITTING: JOE STEWART (bombardier), CLAY ROBERTS (pilot), JOHN "JUNIOR" ROBERTS (gunner), BILL LUNDQUIST (co-pilot) and ART ARONOFF (navigator).

Fuel shortage necessitated an instrument landing, 100 foot ceiling and 1 mile visibility at the Air Transport Command (ATC)

field, Mingan, Quebec. They were the first heavy bomber to land there throughout the war. Station personnel could not believe that they were so young, and that the pilot was

"This reuniting and meeting after over a half century surpassed all our expectations," Roberts reported. "The feelings of comradeship, the rush of emotions and bonding have been intense. We are in daily to monthly contact, and are committed to not losing contact again. We are scattered across the country. It almost seems that we were destined to reunite in the year 2000, because for the past 12 years I have passed within five miles of Stockbridge, MA (home of Art Aronoff); and we both travel the Massachusetts Turnpike at least twice monthly.





Sitting: Bob Dunlap (GUNNER).

STANDING: ART ARONOFF (NAVIGATOR), "JUNIOR" ROBERTS (GUNNER), BILL LUNDQUIST (CO-PILOT) AND CLAY ROBERTS (PILOT).

"We are the newest members of the Association and understand that we may be the crew with the most surviving members. (*Editor's Note: This statement will undoubtedly be disputed in future mailings!*) Our coming together this late in life has brought new meaning into all our lives at a time when we thought meaningful experiences were behind us. Our reuniting in San Diego was the 'Mother of Experience' and the feeling was unanimous that we 'wouldn't have missed it for the world!' What we felt and experienced is beyond description and regrettably cannot be shared with others--especially family. We are all 'chomping at the bit' to meet again at the 2001 Reunion in Shreveport.

"We regret and are sorrowed that five of our crew have passed on, but are grateful and overjoyed that our 55 years of waiting and wondering have finally come to an end."

(Editor's Note: Robert's description of his crew's gathering is the best evidence that every effort must be made to hold the 44th BGVA tightly together; and also, to record every detail of its history. WWII was a unique experience in human history, and must be recorded for future generations to know.)



An October 27 Update on John McClane

For those of you who were unable to be with us in San Diego, we announced that **John W. McClane** and wife, Doris had sent word they were unable to join us because John was facing surgery to remove a malignant tumor next to his right ear. That was done, but sadly, it was necessary to remove the entire ear. Further diagnosis has revealed presence of a malignancy in the lower back of his skull, which, due to the proximity to his spine, precludes radiation therapy. He was to have another polyp removed from his neck before Chemotherapy could be started.

In spite of all this John was in good spirits. He said he was still driving and, all things considered, feeling pretty good. He sent thanks for all the Best Wishes and Get Well cards, letters and faxes from the 44th Family. It was a wonderful feeling, he said, knowing he had so many friends, and said he really missed being there to videotape the reunion as he always does. John and Doris are two of our most steadfast members; a "Best Wishes" card from their 44th Family will surely make this ordeal easier for them to bear.

John & Doris McClane

120 N. Wolfe Road

Fernandina Beach, FL 32034



THE STORY THAT KEEPS UNFOLDING

Only a few years ago, Lois Cianci knew nothing about her father, Clair Shaeffer, Engineer on the Sobatka crew that hit the V-1 sites in the Pas Des Calais Area at Escalles-Sur-Buchy. Just before the San Diego Reunion, she visited with her father's Turret Gunner, August Smanietto and his wife, Elaine in Santa Barbara. Later, at the Westin Hotel, getting on the elevator, she and Milton Rosenblatt, Co-Pilot and his wife Lila met and exchanged hugs. Milt had a long-time



memory of Lois that he shared with her. When Sobatica's started its trip to the UK, it was discovered that there were problems with the fuel

pump, so they stopped in Boston, Massachusetts for repair. Given 3-4 days leave, Clair and Milt informed Lois's aunt of his whereabouts. She and another lady brought the five year old child to LaGuardia Airport, where they had a brief visit. Lois has no memory of the event, but Milt remembered it clearly. For years Lois has had a picture of Clair holding her. Now she knows when it was taken.

Milt shared another piece of interest to Lois: The first time the crew got together for practice, they were so excited, they all rushed to the cockpit to watch the take-off. Unbalanced, the plane never made it off the ground, and had to be sent out for repairs. He also told her about "Trim Tab", a floppy eared, furry mutt that rode with them. Such minute details become pieces of gold to a girl who has known nothing about the father she lost for more than fifty years.

Through Will Lundy she had been able to make her first contact with some surviving crew members, Smanietto and Rosenblatt. On the European trip in 1997, her search for knowledge of Clair's demise culminated at Gratenois, France, where the 44th tour group visited his crash site.

PHOTO ON LEFT:
Lois CIANCI AND MILTON ROSENBLATT.



From **Mark Morris**, Gunner on *OLD CROW*, 506 BS:

"The March cover of Aviation History has Keith Ferris' beautiful painting of *OLD CROW*, but the nose art is wrong. The aircraft is mis-identified as Prince-Ass, as it was years ago on an Air Force calendar, and still is mislabeled in the 8th Air Force Museum. Plainly visible is the Ser #124283 and the Prince-Ass wasn't delivered to the ETO until September, 1943. Also, on the museum plaque, **Reinhart's** name is misspelled. He was the pilot of the A/C on our left and was shot down. The artist's conception is really of **Lt. James McAtee** with *OLD CROW* leading *RUTH-LESS* and *G.I. GAL* onto target blue."



MEETING AGAIN IN SAN DIEGO



Sidney Paul and William Fitzsimmons, shook hands for the first time in 56 years at the Westin Hotel in San Diego. The fortunes of life had taken them in two different directions, and they lived to tell about it. Both had the experience of flying in a Liberator-- Paul as a pilot, Fitzsimmons, a bombardier (506)-- sharing some missions, not all, and on different time tables.

Fitzsimmons, Bombardier on Ralph Golubock's plane, the Princ-ess, was on a mission to Poland on May 29, 1944. The target was an oil refinery. Golubock reported that they were hit by a lone fighter who sprayed at the formation and happened to hit the #1 engine and the fuel cells in the left wing. They lost gas at a rapid rate, and could not feather the engine. With great effort Golubock kept the ship in flying position; Sgt. Walter Dunlop, engineer, transferred enough fuel for them to continue flying. Overboard went all the heavy materials--machine guns, ammunition, even the treasured Norden Bombsight, plus the Tail Gunner, who chose to bail out. He spent his time in a German prison camp.

About the time that all equipment was gone, a large formation of German fighters approached the plane, and with no means of protection, they waited for the blast that would take them out of the sky. It never came. So they limped along to Sweden where Swedish aircrafts--old P-35's picked them up and escorted them to the town of Malmo. Taking no chances, a Swedish fighter, seeing their open bomb bay doors, flew under to look for bombs. His radio antenna smashed against the Princ-ess's damaged wing; but nevertheless, they flew on to a safe landing.

In friendly hands, Fitzsimmons and his crew members were escorted to a King's Palace where they were interred in the same dwelling as German airmen.

What a place to be a POW! They ate well in the palace, had no guards and could go into the city any time they wished. According to some international agreement, English POWs were not permitted such freedom. In the restaurants of Stockholm, American and German airmen ate together, conversing freely in English. They sat out the war together and were repatriated at the same time.

By the time all of this happened, Sidney had finished his missions and was back in the States. He took an Instructor Flying Course at Bryan Field, Texas, then went to Langley Field, Virginia where he flew for Navigator Classes.

"After that I took a teaching position in a junior high school, and two years later I joined the National Guard. When the Korean War came about, our group was federalized, and I was in the service for the next 21 months."

At this point Paul decided to stay in the service. In 1952 he was assigned to Tufts College in Massachusetts as part of the ROTC Staff. From there he had the

opportunity to spend a year in Thule, Greenland, an experience that he remembers rather fondly.

Later, at Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts, Paul met and married an Air Force nurse, Catherine Elizabeth Fields, a lady who shares his life and enthusiasm for bomb group reunions. (*Editor's Note: Sid believes that he and Elizabeth may be the only 44th couple in the 44th BGVA.*) In the mid-1950's she was stationed at Lake Charles, LA in the 44th Hospital. He says that makes her a bonafide member. *Nobody will dispute her membership, but I'll bet there are other couples who are invited to come forward and proclaim their dual bonafide memberships.*)

In 1967 Paul retired from the service to resume his teaching career in Chicopee, Massachusetts. Thirteen years later he left teaching and began volunteering. Now he helps out at the Springfield Science Museum and Baystate Medical Center in Springfield.

For a short period in their WWII experiences, Paul and Fitzsimmons knew and felt the same fears and exhilaration of flying missions together and surviving. Fifty six years later, in San Diego they caught up with the rest of their stories.



GERALD FOLSOM AND MIKE YUSPEH CONVERSING.

MY SENIOR MOMENTS

by Mike Yuspeh

At the Reunion I had a Senior Moment. For those of you who don't know what a senior moment is: I forgot something. When I spoke at the General Meeting I did not acknowledge all the people who helped with the Reunion. I hope to correct that now.

First Roy and Lolly Owen who, with Rose Jay, helped pick the hotel. Roy and Lolly had researched the place before Rose Jay and I arrived. They could not have picked a better place. Roy arranged for the aircraft carrier. It took many telephone calls, but he got it done.

Dick Butler did a marvelous job getting the color guard. With schools closed for the holiday, he twisted arms and persuaded them to come. The young men were excellent, and they enjoyed visiting with us during dinner. I can't give enough thanks to "Mike" Mikoloski, who helped to get people to attend. He had a telephone glued to his ear. Roy Owen called all of the people on the west coast, and Tommy Shepherd woke up his E-Mail group. The letter Jerry Folsom got out was great. I thank all of them for the help, without which there would have been no reunion. Again Roy came through and bought all the refreshments we had in 1613 at discount prices from the military commissary. Dick Lynch and Perry Morse, to whom we have given the title of Bartenders of the 44th BGVA, have served you well through the years.

On registration day, without the help of the following, you would still be waiting in line at San Diego: Bob Schaper, Estelle Voelker, Rose Jay Yuspeh, Cathy Mastradone, Ruth Morse and Tony Mastradone. At the other table we had Bev Folsom and Lolly Owen working with Jerry Folsom and following up on membership. Perry Morse and Estelle Voelker also helped out with getting people on buses, and making sure everyone was aboard before leaving the hotel. Ruth Davis-Morse was all over the place, using her new camera, so that everyone could be seen in the 8 Ball Tails. Thanks to Sam Miceli and his wife Edith, who stored and brought both '8 Ball' golf shirts and caps to the reunion. They are our PX. Handling the reunion is not a one person job. The chairman coordinates and makes decisions; but without the help of a lot of people, this can not happen. Thanks to all of you for your support.

I hope to see you in Shreveport/Barksdale Field in October, 2001. We will do our utmost to make this another great reunion.

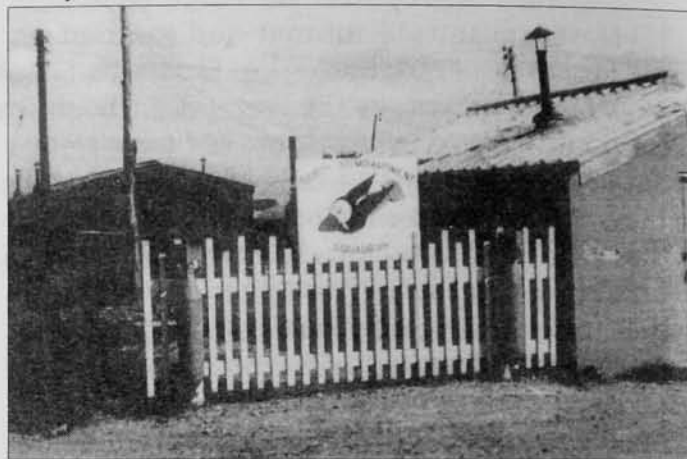
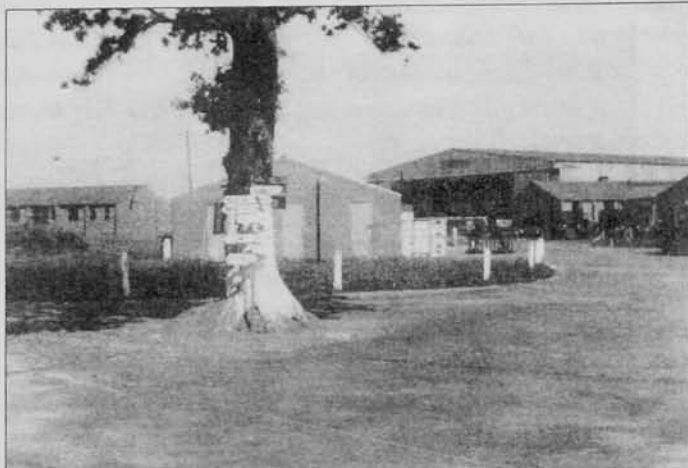


Miscellanea

Submitted by:

Familiar Sights

Jerry Folsom



When you submit your bio, write your story. Each one is different. Jerry gets applications from members who record their birthplace, and the place where they were inducted, but little else. Only family members will care about those details 100 years from now. However, your personal experiences, the moments of fear, the moments of joy, the exhilaration of victory--those are the stories of WWII that must be recorded.

WWII is a unique period in human history. That rattling old B-24 that carried you into Nazi Germany is a museum piece, (unless it was among those ground up, recycled and now sold as aluminum foil). The things

that happened when you were flying on those missions will never again be replicated. Write about those events. You have no idea who will be searching for that information, long after you have gone to the big hangar in the sky. Somebody will.

44th Items For Sale

Item	Price	Postage
Shirts	\$25	\$3
Caps	\$15	\$2
Pins	\$5	\$1

Send to:

Sam Miceli
6398 Dawson Blvd.
Mentor, OH 44060-3648

Patches	\$15	\$1
Roster	\$20	\$2
8th Air Force Military Heritage Database Disk	\$150	\$2

Send to:

44th BGVA
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

8th Airforce Military Heritage Database

The 44th Bomb Group Database is on-line. Search: 8th Air Force. Then 8th Air Force Military Heritage Database. Then click Personal Biography or All Missions. Then put in your name. If your biography was submitted, you will find your pictures, then and now and your crew's picture.

If you don't find it -- get busy and submit it. You are not going to live forever.

-Dick Butler-



NOW THE WHOLE STORY CAN BE TOLD

by Estelle Voelker



1st Lt. Edgar J. Spencer

During his lifetime, my husband, **E. Jay Spencer** told this story many times, sometimes with minor variations, depending upon who his listeners were. He did not want it to appear in print, however, because he feared being court-martialled. (Lt. Spencer passed away July 4, 1998.)

It was December 11, 1944, when Jay found himself flying "S-bar" to bomb a railroad bridge at Karlsruh, Germany. They were loaded with four 2000 pound bombs. At the target, three of the bombs dropped, but the fourth hung up in the bomb bay. When they got over the channel on their return trip, the crew tried kicking it out. Jay also tried to dislodge it by putting the plane in a nose dive and then pulling up quickly. Nothing worked. They also heard over the radio other planes in the same predicament being directed to the crash field. Well, Jay thought that field was aptly named -- you went there you were likely to crash. Besides, they had already been there and done that on another mission when their hydraulics had been shot out. So Jay inquired of his armament gunner, **Al Abercrombie** (**Schofield's** replacement) if the bomb could be disarmed. It could. To be sure, Jay asked him to verify it by showing him the manual. So the crew went about disarming the beast. They even stuffed their handmade mufflers from home in it. In the meantime, Jay also inquired of his radioman, **Henry Fishbone**, if he had his usual burned out fuses in his pocket. He did. So Jay instructed him to listen only, and not to send. And as soon as they touched down at Shipdham, he was to replace good fuses with burned out ones in the radio.

As soon as they landed and Jay put on the brakes, the bomb let loose and skidded down the runway ahead of them, sparks flying, until it rolled off into a ditch. All of the people standing along the runway to watch the returning planes dove for cover, thinking that it would explode at any moment.

Jay proceeded to his hard stand as if nothing happened. However, General Johnson was not amused, and arrived at the hard stand in short order. As Jay was filling out his forms required of every pilot, he could hear the General bawling out Abercrombie. Then Jay calmly descended from the plane through the bomb bay, stood up between the two, saluted General Johnson, and inquired, "is there any message you wish me to convey to my crew?" The general sputtered, "Your radio was out." It sounded more like an order than a question. "Yes sir!" Jay replied. General Johnson turned and left as quickly as he had arrived.

They had gotten away with being the only air crew to drop a bomb on the Shipdham runway!

The Spencer Crew

FRONT ROW L-R:

S/Sgt. Henry Fishbone, radio operator; **Sgt. Eddie Picardo**, tail gunner; **Sgt. Thomas (Tommy) Stewart**, armament gunner; **Sgt. Robert (Bob) Burdick**, belly turret gunner; (**Burdick did not fly with this crew, as the belly turrets were not used at that time.**) **S/Sgt. Peter (Pete) Moskovitis**, engineer; **Sgt. George Schofield**, waist gunner.

BACK ROW L-R:

F/O John Beavers, navigator; **2nd Lt. Frank (Mike) Colella**, co-pilot; **1st Lt. Edgar (Jay) Spencer**, pilot; **2nd Lt. William (Bill) Crean**, bombardier.



From the 2nd Air Division Journal

this report from R. D. (Dick Butler):

Kevin Watson of Eastbourne, England, a good friend of many 44th Bomb Group veterans, has recently completed and published a book entitled *"RUTH-LESS" and Far from Home*. "RUTH-LESS" was a B-24D, one of the original 506th Bomb Squadron aircraft. The original pilot and the man who named the plane after his wife was Frank Slough. "RUTH-LESS" was flown on many vital missions, including those of Kiel, 14 May 1943, the low level Ploesti mission of 1 August 1943, and the mission to Kjeller Airfield near Oslo, Norway on 18 November 1943. On February 2, 1944, "RUTH-LESS" crashed on Butts Brow, a hill above Eastbourne. The aircraft had received severe flak damage on a mission to Watten in the Pas de Calais area and was attempting an emergency landing at a small airfield at Firston. The pilot, 1st Lt. James "Aagle" Bolln, and the other nine crew members were all killed.

As a young boy in 1971, Kevin Watson played in the area where the plane crashed, and discovered many pieces of the wreckage. Then in 1994, Kevin read in the local newspaper, The Eastbourne Herald, that an elderly gentleman named Arthur King had, for the past fifty years in all kinds of weather, climbed the hill to Butts Brow on every Remembrance Sunday to lay flowers at the crash site. This inspired Kevin to seek out Mr. King and to subsequently start a fund drive to raise money to place a permanent memorial at the site. Kevin's effort was successful, and on 13 May 1995, an impressive ceremony was held at the crash site and the granite memorial was dedicated. Kevin's involvement in raising the funds and his research of "RUTH-LESS" and the men who flew it led him to write this book.

In his book, the author traces the history of the original crew from its training days at Pueblo Army Air Field, the acquiring of the new B-24D at Saline AAF, and the flight overseas to Shipdham. He relates "RUTH-LESS" crew experiences on the missions mentioned above as well as many others. This book is truly a historical masterpiece and no doubt will be used for story and research material for generations to come. With Kevin's permission, the following poem is quoted from his book:

THE "RUTH-LESS" FELLOWSHIP

We sit and view the Sussex Downs,
At grazing sheep, as seagulls cry,
Yet some of us hear other sounds,
For brave young men, destined to fly.

They came to fight beside the Few,
To ease the burden of our pain,
were our cousins, staunch and true,
And each day we saw them again.

We knew the trouble which they shared,
The engines coughed amid the cloud,
We hoped their lives would all be spared,
And ardent prayers were said aloud.

But "RUTH-LESS" could not make the height,
And through the mist she came to rest,
Upon a hill within our sight,
And God's hand rose on those he blessed.

They died upon a foreign field,
Defending freedom to the last,
For what the daylight then revealed,
Were friends together, hands held fast.

Their youthful spirits walk there still,
Past flowers blooming in the sun,
They smile down from Willingdon Hill,
Aware of duty proudly done.

--Doug Thomas, 1995

This soft-cover book is available from Kevin Watson at 29 Downs Valley Road, Lower Willingdon, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 9QG, England. The price, including postage, is \$20 U.S. It is also available through Amazon.com.UK. The "RUTH-LESS" Web site can be found at AOL. The address is: www.hometown.aol.com/kpwats7. There is also more information there about "RUTH-LESS" and the book.

OLD LIBERATORS NEVER DIE

By: H.L. Watkins, Jr.
44th Bomb Group, 67th Squadron

...ENGLAND....1944:

General Ike has asked 8th Air Force, to load up and bomb Berlin;
old Adolph Hitler has, no doubt, p____ed him off again.
They've awakened us at four A.M., but we're still half asleep;
that's our driver honking for us, just outside there, in his jeep.

He drives us to the mess hall, where the coffee ain't the best;
we chow-down and fill our bellies, piggin' out on S.O.S.
Then it's onward to the briefing, where I'll wager you a maybe,
we'll be told this trip's a milk-run; "like taking candy from a baby."

Our Chaplains always pray for us; asking God for a safe day,
and we take a precious moment; time to bow our heads and pray,
that we'll all come back this afternoon, without a loss of blood;
as a member of a bomber crew, you're in a close-knit brotherhood.

Next, we slip into our heated suits, and draw a parachute;
we'll load lots of ammunition, 'cause today we're sure to shoot.
The crew believes that this trip, like our last one to Berlin,
Will be a real bitch-mission - we'll draw fighters going in.

We've flown all of 8th's bitch-missions, dating back a year or so;
and if you think I'm braggin', we've ten Purple Hearts to show.
We have also been the lead-ship, guiding less experienced crews;
we are often held on standby, but our missions we can't choose.

A green flare from the tower, arcs the sky before it drops;
the pilot says it's time to fly, and winds up all four props.
We proceed onto the runway, where we're first in line to roll;
we have radar in our airplane, and our bombs will take their toll.

We call our radar MICKEY; it guides our bombs down through the clouds;
it sure p____es off the Germans, which in turn makes us feel proud.
Our bombardier is well equipped, and MICKEY works like magic;
in conjunction with his bombsight, the results are always tragic.

High above the English Channel, where there's no more blinkin' fog,
the air up here is silky smooth, and we'll note it in our log.
There'll be time to take a puff or two, while the bombers group together;
then it's onward to our target, hidden from us by foul weather.

Soon the Channel is behind us; o're the Netherlands we pass;
the navigator grabs his nose: "Who the hell is passin' gas?"
The bombardier defends himself: "You smell hydraulic fluid."
The pilot jokes that both of them, are in a childish mood.

Flying east into the rising sun, the pilot shades his eyes;
our first attack will come up-front; head-on in clear blue skies.
The Luftwaffe pilots orders are: "TAKE THE MICKEY LEADER OUT!"
To carry out their orders, will require a bunch of clout.

Our Skipper is from Texas, age nineteen and highly skilled;
his records say he's twenty one - that he trained at Randolph Field.
For more Texans on our team, are a group of teenage men,
who were trained as aerial gunners, way down south in Harlingen.

Our co-pilot is an Okie - a full-blooded Cherokee;
he was also trained at Randolph; born and raised in Muskogee.
The bombardier's a Yankee, who hails from Bangor, Maine,
and our radioman's from Omaha: Dit-Dot is his nickname.

Our navigator is a lady's man, who loves 'em, leaves 'em, makes 'em cry;
he's now playing with his sextant, mapping out the route we'll fly.
Our engineer, age twenty five, is called Pappy on this crew;
we all met in Arizona, in September 'Forty Two.

Our Liberator bomber wears the name: *THE TEXAS DUDE*;
she's a mean four engine war machine, who has an attitude.
Crouched inside of her ball turret, rides a man before his time;
at four foot eight and age sixteen, he weighs just ninety nine.

He's suspended down beneath the plane, and calls it outer-space;
it's his office during business trips, and the Luftwaffe calls him Ace.
Our twin window gunners, age eighteen, are John and Tommy Klyne;
they've each scored quadruple kills with us - all M.E. One-O-Nines.

Our tail gunner needs but one more kill, and he'll be a double Ace;
as he sits there riding backwards, he's in an advantageous place.
He sure boogered-up two Fokkers on our last trip, going in;
they have armor-plated bellies, Mates, and their pilots play to win.

He gets mean as hell in combat; men who've challenged him are dead;
when engaging him and Shorty, Luftwaffe pilots fear to tread.
They have served as our protectors, and today's their final bout;
we have never lost in combat, 'cause they've always whipped the Krauts.

As we cross the German border, every man is well aware,
the Messerschmitts and Focke Wulfs, soon will join us in the air.
We'll face Hitler's finest pilots; one will wear his Iron Cross;
when they see our bomber's name-plate, they'll salute and call her Boss.

Our gunners say they're ready, and quite anxious for a fight,
so they'll have a real good story, whilst we sip a few tonight.
Warm English beer works wonders, on an airman's weary body,
and Scotch whiskey mixed with coffee, blends a belly-warming toddy.

There'll be a bottle on our table, while the crew critiques the mission;
our gunners get the first drink - it's our pilot's own tradition.
He sure looks out for our shooters, which with us is quite OK;
there will be no crew objections, if they save our butts today.



As expected, comes the Luftwaffe; everybody on your toes;
there comes a pair of Messerschmitts, diving straight toward our nose.
Sitting tall in our positions, our adrenaline soars high;
they're engaging us both front and rear, and some of them will die.

Up front in the nose turret, a young sergeant fires a burst;
to eliminate the fighter's edge, he simply downs it first.
POOF! The Messerschmitt exploded; we saw tracers hit its tank;
our nose gunner just became an Ace, and he'll soon move up in rank.

The twin sergeants at the window guns, will have a chance to fight;
yonder comes a swarm of Messerschmitts, so get them in your sights.
Down goes another fighter; our old engineer got lucky...
he was feared back home by tax men; he brewed moonshine in Kentucky.

A lone Focke Wulf high above us, lingers just beyond our range;
we all know who's in her cockpit, and his tactics never change.
Wulfgang Schroeder fears our gunners; he's engaged them twice before;
our tail gunner sent him earthward, in his parachute, both scores.

His win record speaks quite well for him - a hundred ten, they say;
but the Texas Dude's still flyin', so he'll try again today.
Adolph Hitler loves his pilots; awards his best The Iron Cross;
Schroeder's sure to get his second, should his win be our first loss.

The Focke Wulf is now poised to strike; just watch her engine smoke;
our machine guns simply tickle her, as her belly mold they stroke.
'fore she dove toward her target, on her backside she did roll,
and her armor-plated belly, doesn't show a single hole.

Major Schroeder max'd her engine out, as she closed in from behind,
but her power plant got riddled; our tail gunner blew her mind.
Her propeller separated, and its hub was spinning bare;
she belched out a puff of black smoke, and exploded in thin air.

Her late pilot was unlucky; thrice he's lost to our tail gunner;
but this kill will surely haunt him; 'tis a real bitch-mission, bummer.
Ace will see his eyes in nightmares, as he did 'fore Schroeder died;
he saluted his assailant, and deep inside the victor cried.

Now the fighters have retreated, but the sky ahead is black;
as we turn onto the bomb run, all we see up-front is flak.
Our bombardier is set to drop, and the pilot says OK;
he will interrupt the silence, to announce "OUR BOMBS AWAY.."

Though our bombs have hit their target, our last mission's not complete;
it's a long flight back to England, and the Krauts despise defeat.
Their pilots have returned to base, to reload arms and gas;
they'll be back to hit the cripplés, and we'll kick more Nazi ass.

There are stragglers close behind us; some are shot up really bad;
parachutes are popping open, and there's several engines dead.
Junior pilots will come this time, and they'll get an education;
our Ace gunners are their teachers, and they ain't here on vacation.

We respect the German pilots, in this game of win or die;
It's a fighter/bomber-gunner duel, we've played out in Europe's skies.
Perhaps in God's near-hereafter, we will meet them face-to-face;
we have proven they are mortals, not Der Fuehrer's master race.

Our tour of duty is completed; we'll move to another base;
way out in the vast Pacific, the Isle of Tinian is the place.
We thank God for His protection, while we fought in Europe's skies,
and please bless the Luftwaffe pilots, who dared challenge us, and died.

Their senior pilots took a beating, and their ranks are growing thin,
we have grounded six more Aces, who will never fly again.
but the ack-ack gunners on the ground, surely showed a lot of guts;
them mean, kraut-eatin' bastards, really kicked our Yankee butts.

Our old airplane's shot to pieces, and resembles a huge sieve;
but we've earned no Purple Hearts today, and God's decreed we'll live.
This great lady will be grounded - she's served us proud, *THE TEXAS DUDE*;
but, *OLD LIBERATORS NEVER DIE*, my friend, they just become un-crewed.



Will Sez & Folded Wings

October, 2000



From the Editor:

With great regret I must tell the 44th BQVA that Will Lundy's column and Folded Wings will not appear in this issue. Will, whose dedication to the history of this illustrious organization, is moving to a more convenient location, taking with him the mountains of correspondence and historical documents which he has dutifully preserved for all these years after WWII. At the rate at which veterans are passing on, Will's work expands, and his dedication never wains. We can only wish him the best in his newest venture into a new home.

From the Editor:

Mail & E-Mail:

Bob Reasoner's picture of the two strategists tracking the mission to Ploesti brought some interesting replies.



CAPT. Alfred C. CARR ~ MAJOR HENRY G.V. HART

Joseph Milliner suggested **Captain Schmid** on the left, an older navigation expert that had finished his missions, but wanted to help. On the right, **General Ent**. For further consideration, he included pictures of Gen. Ent, **Gen. Brereton** (who was never without his 'swagger stick'), and **Col. Kane**, thinking it might be one of them.

The person I am betting on for accuracy is T/Sgt. **Jean Bressler** (S 2 Section of the 44th). He says he knows it was **Captain Alfred Carr** and **Major H.G.V. Hart**. Bressler was in Benghazi when the picture was taken. He worked with them, and remembers them both well.

Late report on the picture of the Ploesti strategists. **Col. G.C. Griffin** was Group Ground Executive Officer; and was present at the briefing. He, too, names Capt. Alfred C. Carr on the left; Major Henry G.V. Hart on the right. These were Operations Officers and Intelligence Officers who performed briefings for missions.

Editor's Note: Enjoy Millner's pictures. They are a page out of history.



LEFT TO RIGHT:
GEN. ENT
GEN. BRERETON
COL. KANE

It is no secret that the Flying 8 Ball looks like a pool ball turned into a personalized bomb. Of course, nobody in the pool game wants to be behind an "8" ball. Who originated the name, and had it assigned to the 44th Bomb Group? Does anybody know?

Everyone has a story worth telling and worth publishing.

PLEASE Send it!

Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor

2041 Village Circle East

York, PA 17404

Telephone: (717) 846-8948 • Fax: (717) 846-6688

e-mail: REWDM@BLAZENET.NET

From James Boyer, crew chief of *My Gal Sal*, comes this picture of his beloved plane. The Komasinski crew rode this plane on their 4th mission to Brunswick. **Jim Boyer's** recollection of his delight at receiving the new J series was dampened when, after the 14th mission, she crashed on take-off, with him onboard, for what was to be an errand to London. Although nobody was injured, he writes with regret, that the plane had to be scrapped.



"My Gal Sal."

Sam and Edith Miceli sold pins, hats and shirts at the Reunion. You can still buy them. Here are the bargains:

Shirts--\$25 + \$3 Postage

Caps--\$15 + \$2 Postage

Pins--\$5 + \$1 Postage

Send to: Sam Miceli • 6398 Dawson Blvd. •
Mentor, OH 44060-3648

The \$5 pin is the best buy you can find in quality memorabilia jewelry. One inch in diameter and in five colors--red, yellow, gold, black and green, it has a green nosed Flying Eight Ball, circled by the words '44th Bomb Group, The Flying 8-Balls'.



2001 EUROPEAN TOUR

Join the tour which will take the 44th to historic cities in
France, Belgium, Germany and England.

44th Bomb Group
VETERANS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



Non Profit

U.S. Postage

Paid

Permit #6923
Salt Lake City, UT

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



Season's
Greetings!

8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 4 - Issue #2

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Winter, 2001

Non Profit Veterans Organization

EIN #68-0351397

The crashes of 67th Squadron Aircrafts #41-23784 T and #41-23988 E are almost as vivid to the French living in Rouen as to Claude William Lundy, Aircraft Mechanic assigned to *Miss Dianne*. Fifty two years later, in 1997, he and Roy Owen unveiled a monument to the Clyde Price crew, whose plane crashed at Villers-Escalles on 8 March 1943, hit by F190s and flak. Seven of Lundy's friends were KIA, three became POW. In gratitude for Americans who gave all to liberate their country, the French hosts presented every airman on the tour an artist's rendering of *Miss Dianne* and her sister craft going down.



44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD

President Emeritus: B-Gen. John H. Gibson
(Retired)
7008 Gateridge
Dallas, TX 75240-7936
Phone: (972) 239-0559

Immediate Past President: Roy W. Owen (506)
6304 Meadowridge Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95409-5839
Phone: (707) 538-4726 Fax: (707) 538-1212
e-mail: Rowen44bg@aol.com

President: Edw. K. "Mike" Mikoloski (66/67)
626 Smithfield Road #702
N. Providence, RI 02904
Phone/Fax: (401) 353-0144
e-mail: EKMLIB44@msn.com

First Vice President: Richard D. Butler (506/67)
44th Group VP to 2nd ADA
16828 Mitchell Circle
Riverside, CA 92518
Phone (909) 697-2908 Fax: (909) 697-5875
e-mail: rdb24@earthlink.net

Treasurer: Gerald (Jerry) Folsom (506)
3582 East Dover Hill Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84121-5527
Phone (801) 733-7371 Fax: (801) 942-9988
e-mail: 44thbgva@xmission.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: rewdm@blazenet.net

Director (67) Archivist
Anthony "Tony" Mastradone
9111 Tuckerman Street
Lanham, MD 20706-2709
Phone/Fax: (301) 577-1487
e-mail: mast@clres.com



Director: Robert J. Lehnhausen (68)
2540 Benton Court
Peoria, IL 61615-8838
Phone/Fax: (309) 243-1952

Director: Michael "Mike" Yuspeh (506)
7214 Sardonyx St.
New Orleans, LA 70124-3509
Phone/Fax: (504) 283-3424
e-mail: mikeyuspeh@worldnet.att.net

Director (44 SMW): Charles G. Simpson
P.O. Box 281
Breckenridge, CO 80424
Phone/Fax: (970) 453-0500
e-mail: AFMISSILEERS@compuserve.com

Historian: C.W. "Will" Lundy (67)
2519 Westville Trl
Cool, CA 95614-2008
Phone/Fax: (530) 886-8636 (Winter)
e-mail: willundy@aol.com
P.O. Box 315, Bridgeport, CA 93517 (Summer)
Phone/Fax: (760) 932-7349

Membership, Search: Art Hand (66)
517 Elm Street
Paris, IL 61944-1417
Phone/Fax: (217) 463-5905
e-mail: k9hwp@comwares.net

U.K. Representative: Steve Adams
28 Bassingham Rd.
Norwich, England NR3 2QT
Phone/Fax: 011-44-1603-400221
e-mail: s.p.adams@btinternet.com

ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS:
44th BGVA
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

The 8-Ball Tails ©

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

Compiled, written and published tri-yearly at 2041 Village Circle East, York, PA, by Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor. Printed and mailed Bulk Rate at Salt Lake City, UT under USPS Permit #6923. All original written material such as letters, stories, excerpts from personal diaries or memoirs, drawings and photos submitted to this journal will become the property of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and will be copyright protected except where noted. The text and photos are otherwise reproduced from official USAAF and USAF documents and photos which have been released for publication. Permission is granted for the contents of this journal to be reproduced specifically for personal archives. Otherwise, copyright material

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

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



WILL LUNDY HISTORIAN

If you had to name a living member of the 44th BGVA, whose name has made it around the globe most frequently and consistently, Historian **Will Lundy** would be high on the list. From France, Germany, Belgium and England, and particularly here in the USA, the Assistant Crew Chief at Shipdham has left a mark on WWII air war history that will resound through the next millennium.

"When I realized that nobody was recording the events of my Squadron, the 67th, I started collecting information. "I put a book together, made 100 copies, and gave it to members of the 67th Squadron. Later I discovered there was no record of those who died in combat," he continued. "I thought their families should know what happened to them. If one or two men escaped a crash, I would look up their hometown and see if they still lived there. Or I would try to find somebody who knew them. Sometimes it was pure luck. I also got access to official documents, the briefings of those who made it back. I put it all together in a book, which I called *The Roll of Honor and Casualties*. Then I found a printer and made 160 copies of this book. (Ed. Note: Will did this at his own expense.)

Lundy's history of the 67th Squadron is long out of print and old copies are eagerly sought. One recently sold on e-Bay for \$150. His Roll of Honor augments most of the stories that appear in the 8 Ball Tails. His early recognition of the historical value of pictures led him to start what is possibly one of the biggest collections of WWII aviation memorabilia in the world. Even when he is looking for a safe repository for his collection, photographs, diaries and government records, he is using it almost daily to answer one more question from someone who is requesting information about a long lost cousin, father, uncle or brother. Most of the documentary information in the Database came directly from his files; and as much as he wants to take time to enjoy other facets of his life, he continues to research and respond to every e-mail that comes onto his computer.



C. Will Lundy - 1935

Will never started out to be a historian. He wanted to be a pilot. To his dismay, he learned that he couldn't enlist in any branch of the service because of visual limitations. A student at UCLA working on a degree in Psychology and Anthropology, he saw his classmates taking flying lessons. He was the only one who did not become a pilot.

When he was drafted in 1942, he wanted to be as close to a plane as possible, so he applied for Aircraft Mechanics School after Basic at Keesler Field, Mississippi.



Will at A.M. School, Keesler Field - 1942

Will crossed the Atlantic on the *Queen Mary*. With his buddies, he shared his awe at seeing *Lady Liberty* on Ellis Island; but before long, he realized that the *Queen* was all alone in that big ocean, with no escort service. That was a little bit sobering. Nevertheless, they made it safely to Ireland, then Scotland, then England.

He remembers sunken ships in the harbor at Firth, seeing Scottish children look at them in wonderment and riding in a 'toy train', (big enough for troops, but much smaller than American versions). "We got off the train around 2:00 A.M. and walked through total blackness to a GI truck. We all stayed in line by hanging onto the shoulder of the man ahead of him.



"We got to England before our combat crews who flew over later, so to keep us busy, they had us march up and down dirt lanes. We marched so long, we actually wore out our boots. Fortunately, my buddy and I had stashed a pair of civilian shoes in our bags, so at night we went to town and visited a pub. We enjoyed the company of Polish flyers who were in the RAF, even though neither spoke the other's language."

The realities of war came soon enough for Sgt. Lundy. Twelve times he watched his plane *Miss Dianne* take off and eagerly awaited its return. On 8 March 1943, the mission was to the marshalling yards on the west bank of the Seine River, south of Rouen. The bombers flew unprotected, and two were lost. Seventeen men from the Clyde Price and **Robert Blain** crew were KIA; four became POWs.

Will saw so many brave young men take off, never to return, he maintained his equilibrium by backing away from strong friendships with the combat crews. The pain of losing friends was too unbearable.

In 1944, he recalls waiting for his plane. "In the cul-de-sac there are the usual post-mission activities of gassing up, patching flak holes and/or bullet holes, engine checks, covering up, etc., fully underway. But here -- my plane is missing! I've sweated out each plane that landed hastily, identifying, then looking for the next. But the ships are now all in and unloaded. My pleas to the adjacent departing combat crews for any sign of its fate resulted in merely that it had been hit, feathered #2 engine, and fell behind. The many stories of stragglers being jumped by enemy aircraft continued to send chills up my spine. And hope was almost gone.



Will Lundy at Shipdham
WINTER, 1943

"Too upset to leave the line, I kept busy moving things around, making sure everything was in readiness for her return; kicking the weeds, watching the sky, and then the Jeeps and power wagons as they busily traveled the perimeter, returning the crews for debriefing. Then suddenly one of the Jeeps turned in and screeched to a halt. The line chief yelled, 'They're safe!! They landed on the coast with just an engine out.' I almost needed a parachute to bring me safely back to earth."

A traveling maintenance crew patched up the unnamed plane, and managed to get it safely across the Channel, past the White Cliffs of Dover to Friston Air Base, an RAF Fighter Base. Will joined his crew chief, **George Baccash**, in driving to southern England to ready the plane for its return to Shipdham, then back to combat.

With Lt. **Knapp** at the controls, the ship's return was an awesome experience for the eager aircraft mechanic who volunteered to serve as engineer on the flight. Adding to the problems of getting a bomber off a fighter air strip, the experience was heightened with "Doodle Bugs" (V-1 Rockets) passing overhead.

Pre-flighted, we taxied out across the iron mats that served as a short runway for the Spitfires, then on down to the far south corner of this rough, grassy plateau. It is a pretty view to see the ocean a couple hundred feet down the chalk-white cliffs through the co-pilot's window. But the view back diagonally across this "airfield," the long way, wasn't all that inviting because it really wasn't long. So it doesn't take much grey matter to understand why we got as far away from those buildings as possible. I took up a position between and just behind the pilot and co-pilot as they set the brakes, then fully advanced the four throttles, then the superchargers until the full power of those spinning propellers shook and bounced us, straining every nut, bolt and rivet. Suddenly, brakes off and I was hanging on for dear life as we jumped forward, gaining momentum with each turn of the wheels. We are soon rapidly accelerating, crossing the metal landing strip and off, but not up. Now a bump and we are airborne. No! back on the grass again. The rough terrain keeps bounding us up, but down we come.

"With rapidly widening eyeballs, I shifted my anxious gaze from those suddenly large buildings to the instrument panel - and almost swallowed my teeth. The fuel pressure - the FUEL pressure - it wasn't. But before I could say anything if, in fact, I could make a sound at all, we blasted up over those buildings - and back down again. No, not quite all the way back down, but into a shallow valley where we gained sufficient flying speed, retracted our gear, and tanked toward home, and I could breathe again.

"Why in the world do I always jump for any excuse to fly?" But now all is fine, those four Pratt & Whitney engines are music to my ears, even though the fuel pressure gauge tells me that one of them shouldn't be. Back in our cul-de-sac, I quickly took off the fairing around the engine accessory section of the "ailing" pressure to find that the indicator hose line had been improperly connected. No harm done, except of course for several missed heart beats. Now, ready for tomorrow, early, and back to war.

"In June of '43 we heard a rumor that a group was going to Africa. At that time, the 44th was undergoing severe losses, getting replacement of new crews and new planes. They started to practice low level flying, and we had to make alterations in the planes--50 calipers in the nose, twin 50's in the waist windows, etc. When I heard they were going to Africa, I wanted to go along. Africa was a warm climate, and England was cold and miserable. The Crew Chiefs could take one man; and as Assistant Crew Chief, I couldn't go. I couldn't even stow away, as the planes were too full.

"We got the word that the mission would be Ploesti, and some of the maintenance crew were recruited to go as combatants. Those who survived Ploesti returned to Africa on the second trip, but did not survive the Wiener-Newstadt Mission, only two weeks later."

Along with the agonies of losing friends, Will's memories are coupled with admiration of pilots whose skill bordered on miraculous. He saw Lt. **Rockford C. Griffith** bring in a battle-damaged plane from a long mission to Oslo, Norway. The right landing gear was damaged, and would not fully drop; the ball turret was down and could not be retracted; T/Sgt. **William T. Kuban** engineer was wounded. The pilot ordered all other crew

members to bail out; after which the pilot and co-pilot set that plane down so skillfully, so evenly, the turret did not scrape, and the wounded man was safely delivered. Lundy noted that for this skillful execution, Lt. Griffith was awarded a Silver Star.

Once he saw planes coming in from a long mission into a snow storm. With terrible vision and with one using the wrong runway, two planes were directly headed for a collision. At the last minute, one pilot took off, literally leaping over the other. Both planes were saved.

He watched everybody leap in all directions when 1st. Lt. **E. Jay Spencer's** plane skidded a bomb up the runway. (Fortunately, it had been disarmed.) He looked in as a P-47, returning to base, missed a formation of '24s coming in. A wing on the fighter clipped a bomber, and both planes went down.



Will leaves the Shipdham Barracks, heading to work.

When the 506 Bomb Squadron came over in March 1942, they brought new planes. With all of the changes that had been made for greater efficiency, maintenance grew increasingly complex. It was Will's job to see that every plane of his squadron that got off the ground had been checked, according to the Tech Orders for that particular series. Every time a defect was noted, all maintenance crews worldwide were informed of the repairs that must be made. The problems became so complex, Lundy became an Assistant Inspector in August '44, a specialist in checking plane numbers, and making certain the necessary repairs were made. He was moved up to Staff Sgt.



VE Day and the joy of the Trolley Mission made up for all problems, inconvenience and discomfort. Will finally was able to get on a plane. Then, before the 8th AF Command would accept any B-24 back at the states, every Technical Order had to be completed and documented. Seeing planes flying out daily, Lundy rushed to complete his assignments, so he, too, could fly in one of them. It was his joy to fly home in the *Iron Corset*, a B-24 that had set a record of 129 missions. It was the first time he was home since he had been inducted.

Will met his wife Irene, and they dated while he was at Shipdham, but had no plans for continuing their friendship. One week after he got home, he decided life could not go on without her, so he called her and asked her to marry him. Although she accepted immediately, it took 1 1/2 years before they could finally get together. All transportation out of England was booked solid. Finally, there was a cancellation, and she was able to come across. They were married in January 1947, one week after her arrival.

Irene is no less eager than Will to preserve the history of the 44th. She has been at his side through all of his research efforts. When the 44th gathers each year for the Reunion, she is right there at the Welcome Station. This is not a formal assignment. Everyone knows she will just show up and help out.

Irene's family connections to England have given the two insight into what was happening over there. They grieved when the Marshall Plan was rebuilding Germany and other enemy countries, while their allies in England were suffering through dreadful times, rebuilding their country. When the idea of a Memorial Library in Norwich was born, Irene was able to give Will new directions for his research materials. The Lundys' contribution to the 44th BG is best described by their many admirers.

From Col. **Bob Lehnhausen**: "More than any other person in WWII, General **Leon W. Johnson**, by his personal courage and leadership of the 44th Bomb Group (H) assured that unit and its brave air and ground echelons a prominent position in the history of military aviation. Likewise, no other person has done more to preserve the history of the gallant acts and deeds of the 44th air crews and their dedicated ground crews than Will Lundy.

He and his precious wife Irene possess an unusual sense and value of history. While the 44th spent the WWII years making history, the Lundys have spent over 50 years gathering, preserving, researching, cataloging, verifying and sharing the information. They have developed an international network of selfless persons who share their interest in history. The Lundys and their many, many enthusiastic and resourceful friends have assisted many, many families of missing or deceased airmen, in learning "what happened" to their loved ones during WWII. They have a special dedication for those young men who gave their lives in the cause of liberty...and of victory. The Lundy mission is to be sure that everyone who served with the 44th will be remembered and recognized.

I didn't know Will Lundy at Shipdham. However, from what I have gotten to know of him since then, his reverence for the flight crews of the 67th Squadron, he had to have been a superb AM (Aviation Mechanic).

Irene and Will have been very, very helpful -- more than any other, in finding out what happened to my brother and his crew. Bless them.

From Col. **Roy Owen**: C. "Will" Lundy, Historian, 44th Bomb Group; translated, speaks "Mr. Forty Fourth."

This wiry little Assistant Crew Chief on the 67th Squadron aircraft *Miss Dianne* was the first among the Eight Ballers at war's end to have the imagination, foresight and energy to realize the value of organization level combat records by compiling all of the group Missing Aircrew Reports into his *ROLL OF HONOR*. From that foundation, he brought birth and life to the history of the 44th and what later evolved into the 44th Bomb Group Veteran's Association as we know it today.

In 1992, the incumbent association leadership made a decision that the Memorial Group no longer had a future and would disband. Will was one of the first of a small group of stalwart members who rallied to preserve the association. They not only kept it alive, but also have steered its steady growth into the best organized B-24 Group Association in the Second Air Division.



C. Will Lundy and Dick Butler, TAMPA, 2nd AD, 2000

From Col. **Richard Butler**: "I did not know Will during WWII, but I know he started out as an Assistant Crew Chief and worked up to becoming a Line Chief in the 67th Squadron. Ardith and I first met Will and Irene in 1979 during a Second Air Division Association convention in Norwich. Our friendship with them and our respect for them, and appreciation for Will's work on behalf of the history of the 44th Bomb Group has continuously grown since that meeting. Few people would argue with my opinion that Will is the most dedicated veteran of the 44th in recording its history. For the past thirty or so years he has virtually dedicated his life to researching and writing about events and people of the 44th at Shipdham. The two books which he compiled and published at his own expense, "*History of the 67th Bomb Squadron*" and "*44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor and Casualties*" are recognized as the most accurate of any similar books of any B-24 bomb group. His historical work is recognized among the historians of the Second Air Division Association as the best. Almost all of his work on behalf of the 44th has been at his own expense. Irene, Will's wife, has always been at his side, assisting him in his work and encouraging him at his times of frustration. Over the years, Will has received thousands of requests from 44th veterans, spouses, children and other relatives, seeking information as to what a 44th person did during the war, or the circumstances of an individual's death. Will has answered each request to the best of his ability, often spending hours of research on a single case. To me, this has been his greatest contribution, helping people who are seeking information about a loved one. I am proud to be a friend of Will and Irene, and thank them for their dedication to the history of our bomb

group, and for the service they have provided to our members and their relatives who seek information about their loved ones.

From Sgt. Peter Loncke, Belgium Air Force: "I came in contact with Will Lundy back in 1999 as part of my research on both crashes of 24 March 1945, involving 2 B-24's (*The Crandell and Chandler crews*). He sent me a copy of the video tape which showed both crashes. With the help of this tape, I was able to find these crash sites in Wesel, Germany. Will helped with my investigation of the January 1944 crash of the Pinder crew in Winbrin, Belgium. He has been very helpful with my e-mail requests about 44th BG history."

From Col. **Bill Cameron**: "...Will is not only a gentleman, but is an admirable person. I didn't know Will during the 2 1/2 years we were at Shipdham. Sometime after the war I wrote to him, and we have continued to correspond for about thirty years. Four of the sergeants on my crew were his close friends. When they were lost, my bonds with Will became even stronger. I am very grateful to him for writing the history of our squadron, the 67th, and then later, the history of the 44th. They are both exceedingly well done...and required a great deal of time to research. During the war, he was a most dedicated mechanic, working in fair, as well as very cold weather; and in the early months, without shelter of any kind.

A SALUTE TO MECHANICS FROM AN UNKNOWN PILOT

Here's to the people with the greasy hands,
Who fuel the plane when the pilot lands.
Who fix the canopies and stop the leaks;
Change the tires and oil the squeaks.
Who smooth the scratches and rivet the panels;
Check "loud and clear" on the radio channels.
Who read the write-ups; and make repairs;
Check wires and cables for chafing and tears.
Who pull the chocks and walk the wings;
And do a million maintenance things.
Who watch as the bird takes off and flies.

So here's a salute to the gals and guys,
From a group of fliers who seldom ponder.
The ones who keep them in the wild blue yonder.

Reprinted from "TALL TALES", SAFHS, Georgia Chapter.



BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT L. CARDENAS



Test Pilot, Combat Leader and More

Left: B/GEN. ROBERT CARDENAS
HAS FLOWN MORE THAN 60 DIFFERENT AIRCRAFT
IN HIS CAREER.

Right: Climbing out of the
XB-45-JET Bomber.



Brigadier General **Robert L. "Bob" Cardenas**, Commander of the 44th Bomb Group, began his military career in the Coast Artillery, then became a pilot as a Cadet in the Army Air Corps. He was commissioned in July, 1941. In August, 1941, he was an instructor at Kelly Field. His section leader asked "has anyone here flown a glider?" According to Cardenas, "being a 2nd Lt., and not knowing better, I raised my hand before asking - why?" He wound up being sent to 29 Palms, California to establish an Army Air Corps Glider School.

29 Palms was a contractor-operated facility, and Lt. Cardenas was the only military person there. He had no gliders, but it was expected that the government would supply them. However, at Glider Meetings he had become acquainted with Mr. Richard Dupont, a gentleman who had been named 'Glider Czar' by President Roosevelt, so he decided to use this contact to change the situation.

Lt. Cardenas wrote to Mr. Dupont, telling him that if he had \$5,000, he would be able to get five gliders and begin teaching men to be glider pilots.

Two weeks later a C-47 arrived and out stalked a very tall Colonel. "Who's in command here?" he asked. "I guess I am. I'm the only military man here." "Step around here, son," he ordered, and we walked to the back of the plane. He introduced himself as Colonel **Fred Dent**, and said he was in charge of the Glider Program.

"Did you go to West Point?" "No." "Then I'll forgive you, but don't ever write to a civilian over the head of your Commanding Officer." After the lecture, the Col. wrote out a check for \$5,000, and the Glider Program began.

This opened the door for Cardenas's new assignment. He was sent to Wright Field where he tested P-38's, B-24's, B-17's, LB-30 Testing AB 24's. The testing was going fine, and then his mentor, Col. Dent, was ordered to England for combat duty.

I told him, "Fine thing. You raised me from a pup, and now you're leaving me." He replied, "If you ever get to England, I'll get you into a group."

To England

Later Cardenas went to England as 3rd pilot to deliver equipment. He jumped ship in London and called Colonel Dent, reminding him of his promise. Cardenas urged, saying, 'I believe a superior's word is his bond.'

"All right," Dent replied, "but you'll fly every mission." This suited Captain Cardenas just fine. He was assigned to the 506 Sq. After four missions as co-pilot, he moved to the left seat and **Sidney Paul** joined him in the right. He piloted *Prince/PrincAss/Princess, Baldy and His Brood, I'll Be Back and Consolidated Mess*, each tour taking him deeper into enemy territory. **L. A. Sefranek** co-piloted with him into Berlin, **Eustice Hawkins**, into Brandenburg and **Dean Miller**, to an Aircraft Components and Assembly Plant in Fredrichshaven, Germany. That was on March 16, 1944.

To Switzerland

Two days later, on a return to Fredrichshafen, his 17th mission, he flew as Command Pilot, with 1st Lt. **Raymond J. Lacombe** at the controls. *Chief & Sack Artists* sustained flak damage, causing one engine to catch fire. Damage to the left wing caused the aircraft to descend at a 45 degree angle. Skillfully manipulating the controls, Lt. Lacombe succeeded in righting his aircraft and regaining his position in the formation to complete a second bomb run. Additional flak damage set fire to a second engine, severed fuel and hydraulic lines, and rendered the electrical system inoperative.

With several of his crew badly wounded and the uncontrollable aircraft on fire, Lt. Lacombe flew close to the Switzerland border where the entire crew parachuted to safety, including Captain Cardenas. (For his outstanding skill, courage and judgement, 1st Lt. Raymond Lacombe was awarded the Oak Leaf Cluster to his Distinguished Flying Cross.

Cardenas's chute dropped him in Lake Constance, a border lake between Germany & Switzerland. A piece of flak clipped off part of his scalp, but he was able to swim into the neutral country.

At that time the Swiss government was concerned with the B-17s and B-24s which were in plain view to any overhead German flight crew. They contacted the U. S. government, requesting an instructor to teach their pilots how to fly them to the safety of a mountain airfield. "You already have an instructor—Captain Cardenas," they replied. Thus the internee became the instructor of his captors' pilots.

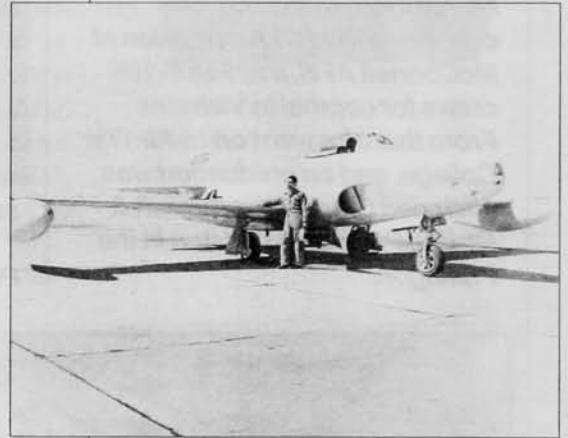
"I had to swear, practically in blood, that I would not use this opportunity to escape in one of these planes," Cardenas remembered. "However, the freedom to move around made it possible for me to make contact with the Underground. During his internment at Camp Maloney at Adelboden, he made friends with a Capt. Stolz, who joined him in an escape plan that led back to England.

"In Geneva the train station had one track that accompanied trains traveling IN-COUNTRY and another track for trains traveling OUT-OF-COUNTRY. My contacts arranged for me to hide in a Cafe' on the island between the two tracks. At the appointed time I donned a waiter's apron, walked out on the island and jumped into a freight train headed out of the country into France. I was accompanied by Capt. Stolz. When the train slowed down near Grenoble, we jumped and were contacted by personnel from the French Underground. After D-Day, we were flown out in a black C-47 back to England. Somewhere I have a photograph of Capt. Stolz and me with our contact in her Chalet near Geneva. I have never shown this photograph to make sure she was not placed in jeopardy."

Testing

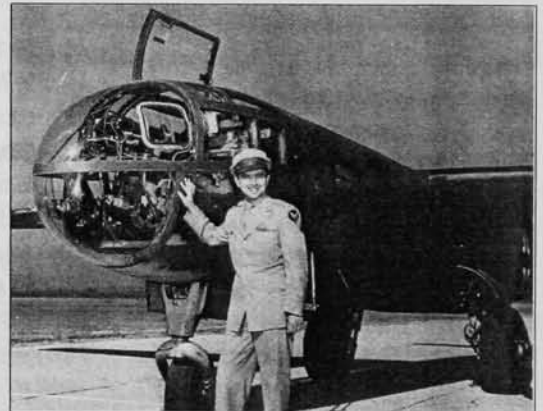
Returning to the States, Cardenas attended and graduated from the Flight Performance School. He participated in the flight test evaluation of the German ME-262 and the ARADO 234—Germany's first jet bomber. He was

the Operations Officer and the Command Pilot of the B-29 that launched Chuck Yeager in the X-1 into the realm of supersonic flight. In 1948 he was assigned Officer in Charge of Flight Test Division projects at Muroc AFB and Chief Air Force Test Pilot of the YB-49 Flying Wing program. After completion of the Performance Phase II, he checked out Captain Glen Edwards after the crash of the B-49 and loss of the crew, to complete the Stability and Control



The YB-49, in which Cardenas set a speed record in 1949.

program in the remaining B-49. By 1949, Cardenas flew the YB-49 from Muroc AFB to Andrews AFB to set a transcontinental record of 4 hours, 05 minutes, covering 2,258 miles at a speed of 511.2 mph. (Muroc has been renamed Edwards AFB.)



This was a German Jet Bomber which Cardenas evaluated.



Korea & Vietnam

During the Korean War, Col. Cardenas was working on the cutting edge with new jet fighters and bombers. He was then Commander of the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing in Okinawa, flying the F-86D. Later, he was Commander of the 18th Tactical Fighter Wing on Okinawa during the Gulf of Tonkin crisis. For the next two years, he flew the F-105 in combat operations over Vietnam.

He returned to the U.S. to command the 835 Air Division at McConnell AFB, training F-105 crews for combat in Vietnam. From there he went on to Air War College, and on graduation was assigned Chief of the Aircraft & Missile Programs Division in the Pentagon.



ABOVE: COMMANDER OF THE 18TH TACTICAL FIGHTER WING IN OKINAWA, KOREA AND THAILAND.

CARDENAS FLEW F-105'S OVER VIETNAM.

International Assignments

From the Pentagon, he was made Chief of the Special Operations Division at U.S. Strike Command HQ in Tampa, Florida. He rose to the rank of Brigadier General, and

became Commander of the Air Force Special Operations Force. Next he was assigned in Europe as Vice Commander of the 16th Air Force at the Torrejon Air Base, Spain. It was here that he had the dubious honor of negotiating the withdrawal of U.S. armed forces in Libya with Muhmar Quadafi.

"After that I became the U.S. Deputy to LIVE OAK at SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe) in Mons, Belgium." One of my jobs was to tell the Soviets 'NYET' when they would try to close the roads, trains and/or airways into Berlin. At SHAPE, which was the headquarters SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe), they called us 'the tripwire' to WWII."

Prior to his retirement in June of 1973, General Cardenas served as the Chief of the JL Division of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff (JSTPS) where he was responsible for the Joint Strategic Target List of the U.S. Nuclear War Plan.

In 1983, he was appointed to the White House as the California Coordinator for President Reagan's Southwest Border Economic Action Group. He resigned in 1985 and accepted an appointment by the Governor Dukemejian as Chairman of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Group, as well as a member of the California Council of Criminal Justice.

The Governor then appointed General Cardenas to the Board in 1987 where he was elected to a policymaking body for the California Department of Veterans Affairs, and to which he became Chairman in March, 1990. He left in 1993 to serve as Chairman of the San Diego County United Veterans Council and as a Director on the Board of the Veterans Memorial Center & Museum.

On April 15, 1993, the University of New Mexico honored him for his Outstanding Professional Contributions and Leadership. The USAF Test Pilot School at Edwards AFB honored the General on December 10, 1994 as a "Distinguished Alumnus" and in September, 1995, he was inducted into the "Aerospace Walk of Honor" at Lancaster, California. The Sigma Chi Fraternity awarded the General the Sigma Chi "Significant Sig" medal during their June 1995 national convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Currently, he serves as a member of the San Diego Advisory Board and a Director on the Board of the Veterans Memorial Center & Museum (VMC). He started a "Living History" library at the VMC so the little guys will not be forgotten. The group acquired 16 computers and established a computer school for veterans to prepare them better for a job and keep them from becoming homeless. They just started a committee that works with the City Public Administrator to provide dignified burial and honors for unclaimed homeless veterans. Toward that end, the VMC is in the process of acquiring cemetery acreage from civilian cemeteries to be operated as Satellites of Rosecrans National Cemetery, since Roscrans is full!

"This will provide approximately 90,000 coffin burial plots within a couple of years while we wait for a new National Cemetery," he reported. Last year there were 340,000 veterans in San Diego County. This year they are down to 280,000.

As a former Chairman of the Flight Test Historical Foundation at Edwards AFB, The Men of Mach 1, he now serves as a Trustee to the FTHF. The Foundation is the fund raising arm of the AFFTC Museum at Edwards AFB and the SR-71 "Black Bird Air Park" in Palmdale, California.

General Cardenas currently enjoys life at home with his wife Gladys, their children and grandchildren in San Diego, California.

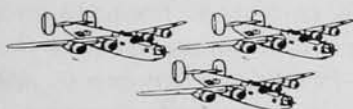


THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE - YB-49 Flying Wing.
Wing span - 172 FEET.

Decorations

Legion of Merit
with Oak Leaf Cluster
Distinguished Flying Cross
Purple Heart
Meritorious Service Medal
Air Medal with 4 OLCs
Joint Service Commendation Medal
Air Force Commendation Medal
with OLC
Distinguished Unit Citation
Foreign decorations include
the Spanish Grand Legion
of Aeronautical Merit.

44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



- Yes, Count me in!**
- Annual Membership Dues for year 2002 \$20.00**
- Life Membership Dues 60 and over \$125.00**
- Life Membership Dues 40 to 59 \$150.00**

Join us now so you don't miss the next 8-Ball Tails.

Name _____ Spouse _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Tele: () _____ Fax: () _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Group: _____ Squadron: _____ Crew of: _____

Friend _____ Relative of: _____

Donation: _____ Thank you for joining us!

Did you know that the 44th BGVA is not closed to veterans and wives? Any member or interested person may join as an Associate Member. Family members regularly request information about brothers, uncles, fathers or cousins. Any of these people are eligible to join and share the benefits of reunions, publications and camaraderie with WWII airmen whose awesome stories continue to unfold with each gathering.



The 44th BG's Tour Didn't Happen



September 11, 2001 Began a New Era

It was defined in the resounding words of President George W. Bush

“We will not tire. We will not falter. We will not fail.”

Larry Herpel made every effort to bring the trip about, but with every hour, the sobering truth became more clear. Newark airport was closed!!! Other hijackers were suspected to be in the area.

It will take some time for him to unwind the 16 day tour in which he had placed so much time and energy. He asks for forbearance from all of us who are waiting to be reimbursed.

FACING A NEW ENEMY

The world has seen rubble before. The attack on the World Trade Center in New York was, in a single strike, a ghost of the many nightly raids in London with the V-1s, and later the V-2s.

Our new enemy, the terrorists, had the advantage of total surprise. Early in the War, the British were able to take advantage of a new invention-radar. Located along the English Channel, they provided early warning of an upcoming bombardment.

*“I was in London, helping an English family clean their fireplace equipment,” Sgt. **Perry Morse** recalled. “I could barely hear the V-1 motors because the air raid sirens were so loud. It was scary to me, but the family had become so accustomed to the bombings, they hardly paid attention. One of the rockets dropped on the Railroad Station, and that caused quite a bit of damage, but it rapidly got cleared up and the trains continued to run.”*

The V-2 was more destructive. This rocket powered engine revealed itself as a red flash in the sky. The explosion was powerful, and the shock wave was truly violent. Wiping out those sites had to become a priority if England was to survive. No wonder the 44th was deployed to Pas Des Calais area at Escalles-Sur-Buchy and other areas on the French side of the Channel to knock out this ghastly threat. England survived; and along with the United States, determined that civilization and morality must prevail. It still must.

President Mikoloski sums up the American situation succinctly: “The World Trade Center, America’s most visible symbol of economic freedom and flourishing, was reduced to ashes with the greatest single day’s loss of lives in our history; the Pentagon, Bastion of the Free World’s most powerful military force, blasted by a hijacked commercial airliner with the loss of nearly 200 precious lives...”

On 7 December 1941, our generation did not know how we would win WWII, but we knew we had to win. Now the banner has been handed to another generation. Advanced technology has made great weapons available.

*With their strength and determination and our prayers,
America will again prevail.*



The German V-1 'buzz bomb'

Winbrin, Belgium 17 September 2001
Hamminkeln, Germany 19 September 2001

Events we were scheduled to attend on our tour.

PHOTOGRAPHS kindly submitted by KARL-HEINZ GANSEL



MEMORIAL PLAQUE
PINDER CRASH SITE

This message from Peter Loncke:

I just returned from my mission to Winbrin. What can I say, all went perfect!!! All +/-100 people attending were impressed by the ceremony and memorial!!! Mission accomplished!

I started the ceremony with one minute of silence to remember those killed at the terrorist attack from last Tuesday. I introduced the different guest speakers. The unveiling of the memorial was done by Colonel USAF Tunstall from the American Embassy, together with the Mayor of Houffalize and a Belgian War veteran who was too fragile to mount the steps, but stayed below. Five flower wreaths were laid. The last post was played and two minutes of silence. The school children had stood all this time around the memorial and at the end sang a song in French, very moving and nice. The 44th BG was represented by the Crandell family, brother of Lt. Crandell, KIA on 24 March 1945.



PETER LONCKE
2001

WINBRIN, BELGIUM September 17, 2001

The 44th BG's tour was to take us to the Memorial Site, where a monument to the Pinder crash was unveiled. Although we could not be present, a memorable event took place, captured photographically and relayed to us by E-Mail, courtesy of Sgt. Peter Loncke of the Belgian Air Force.



DEDICATION CEREMONY

Sgt. Forrest S. Clark had a special interest in that crash. He was personally aggrieved that his close friend, T/Sgt. Abe Sofferman, had been lost. In honor of this friendship, he had a plaque erected in his honor. In Clark's words, "It took 56 years and many months of research to put this story together ...Belgian aviation researchers recently unearthed parts of a B-24 bomber buried deep in an Ardennes pine forest..."

"The date (of the mission) was 29 January 1944 and the target, the city of Frankfurt, Germany. The pilot of that bomber was Lt. Harold Pinder, and in the crew was T/Sgt. Sofferman. I was to be on that bomber, but he chose to go to get his missions done."

Somewhere over southern Belgium an FW190A of JG26 shot down the bomber. It crashed in the pine forests near the tiny village of Winbrin in the Ardennes, about 100 miles south of Brussels. The FW190 guns set one wing afire.

It was one of 863 heavy bombers dispatched on that mission. Twenty-four B-17s and five B-24s failed to return. The FW190s of the 4th Staffel of JG26 took off at 1010 hours and intercepted the B-24 formation. On most of the mission, the bombers were flying without fighter support.



Some of the crew died in the crash and some parachuted, among them, Lt. Pinder and Sgt. Sofferman. They managed to get out of the badly damaged craft before it went into a steep downward spiral and crashed.

Fragments and some of the ammo have been dug up at the site. The forest hid much of the plane, but recently with the aid of metal detectors, pieces of fuselage, shell casings and other artifacts pointed to the plane's identity, B-24 #42-7547, *Sky Queen*, 67 Sq., 44BG.

Clark's research continued, "The rest of the story is one of hardship, courage and overwhelming odds. The surviving members of the crew were taken in by

the Belgian partisan army and hidden in various locations in the vicinity of Winbrin for about 30 days. Some of the local



PLAQUE UNVEILED.

resistance fighters and a couple of postmen saw the parachutes coming down. They took Sofferman and Pinder to the hideout of the partisan resistance army known as *Armee Blanche*. The area was heavily honeycombed with German occupation troops, all armed and ready to kill. They were under strict orders to seek out and destroy downed allied airmen. But the partisans kept one jump ahead of the Germans."

In one of the coldest winters in Europe's history, the partisan's struggled to get the airmen and some Russian

escaped prisoners to the *Comete Line*, an established escape route, but apparently their presence was made known to the German police.



THE CEREMONY PROGRESSES.

Unbelievable as it may seem, a Russian defector to the German army, Gen. Vlassov, led an attack on the partisans. Rather than risk capture and abuse from the Nazis because of being Jewish, T/Sgt. Sofferman chose to try evading. He was shot.



PETER EMMERICH

Clark expressed his deep devotion to his friend by paying for a plaque in his memory. It can be seen at Winbrin, along with the monument which the city has erected.

Sgt. Peter Loncke found the crash site. After much inquiry among the villagers, a burgomaster led him to the pine forest where the plane had gone down. According to Loncke, the impact hole was still visible. Some of the resistance fighters were still living, and could relate the events.



Thanks to the research of Will Lundy, Peter Loncke and many others, the crash site was discovered and the plane was identified. Loncke arranged the unveiling.



Hamminkeln, Germany

19 September 2001

A bridge was built between the USAF, the family and friends of nine B-24 groups and the city of this German town. The Mayor of Hamminkeln received a Memorial plate

commemorating the crews of "Operation Varsity," along with a painting of the planes which are now hanging in City Hall.

On 24 March 1945, the 67th and 506 Sqs. had been assigned to drop supplies to British paratroopers who had just crossed the Rhine. The planes were loaded, and the guns had been removed, to make more room for materials of war. They flew at treetop level over the little town of Hamminkeln.

Two planes from the 44th BG went down. Everyone on the crew of Leonard Crandell were KIA. Two survived the crash of Max Chandler's crew: Robert Vance and Louis DeBlasio. Sgt. Anibal Diaz on AC #42-50535, 506 Sq., was swept out of the plane when his parachute spilled open and out the ball turret well. The force of the air pulled him into the well and out of the plane. The Germans later reported him dead. John Delaney, flying a P-47 dived at anti aircraft guns and his plane crashed also.



MAYOR, CONNIE, BARBARA CRANDELL, PETER, JOE, PETER EMMERICH

The memorial event was orchestrated by Peter Loncke, who described the events of the day.

He picked up Joe, Barbara and Connie Crandell at their hotel in Lommel. Joe was the brother of Capt. Leonard Crandell. Along with a Belgian friend, they traveled to Hamminkeln.

Peter wrote, "We drove to the crash site which is situated next to the crash site of Lt. Chandler. It was



PETER STANDING during speech in the TOWN HALL

indeed an emotional moment for Joe and his family and ourselves when he put fresh flowers on the site, a wreath of artificial flowers with two American flags and a

plastic-covered display holding the photograph of the crew and the story of the crash. He had brought some sand with him from his hometown in Illinois to scatter around the crash site. The empty sand pot, he then filled with soil, together with some just fallen leaves from the oak tree which grows on the site. It was indeed a moving experience.

"We traveled on to the village of Hamminkeln. We set up our Memorial plate and covered it with an American flag. We went back downstairs where Joe met Peter Emmerich, the German FLAK operator who had shot down the Crandell plane. This was indeed an emotional moment for both men."

Both Germans and Americans contributed to the Memorial plate. Along with the contributors, two German fighter pilots attended the ceremony. Also present was a mixed party

from Holland and America. The group met with the Mayor in a big Council Room. The Memorial plate and painting

were presented. Contributors names and addresses were listed on the back of the painting.

Fifty-four years ago, nobody would ever have dreamed that such a gathering between friends and enemies could have taken place. We of the 44th are truly grateful to Peter for building this bridge.



L TO R: P. LONCKE, P. EMMERICH, JOE CRANDELL, GEORGE AND TERRY BOETCHER (15 AF), AND MAYOR OF HAMMINKELN.





From the Desk of our President

It is my fervent hope that with the summer vacation period a pleasant memory, we can now return with renewed vigor and energy to the serious matter of our unique, vibrant but seriously aging membership. It is reported in the media that most veteran organizations memberships are declining. Yet, in spite of these national trends, as you may recall, one of my announced goals as your new President was to increase our membership at a rate of 10% per annum. By virtue of our annual membership drives that included the EVERY-MEMBER-GET-A-MEMBER (EMGAM) CONTEST, the establishment of our new WEB Site, the mailing of some 800 letters to former and/or unaffiliated veterans of the 44th Bomb Group, and the continuing and constant day-by-day efforts of Art Hand and Jerry Folsom, the growing vitality of the 44th BGVA has shown steady annual growth. Where in 1998 our rolls stood at 850, today our membership stands at 1065.

Again, as in the 1999, 2000, and 2001 Budget preparations, I included in the 2002 Budget assumptions another 10% increase from 1065 to 1175.

But Jerry, Art, the Board, our Squadron Historians, "Will" Lundy, Larry Herpel and I need help from you. YOU are our greatest resource and reservoir. As our pool of potential members shrinks, more help is required from you to contact your crew mates, colleagues, comrades and/or associates. Once you establish communication with them or their families, refer them to our WEB site and/or apprise them of our association and the important programs (History and Individual Computerization, Annual Reunions, "8 BALL TAILS," Memorials, Ploesti Diorama, B-24 Dedication, etc.) we instituted. Do them a favor by "reaching out" and sending a membership form for them to submit.

I encourage you to do what many of us have already done, and enroll at least one of your children and/or grandchildren to insure that you will always have someone in the family who will stay informed about your wartime exploits by virtue of our WEB site, the "8 BALL TAILS," Reunions, and, of course, the Master Data Base. What better gift can you give? GIVE THEM A GIFT THAT WILL BE A WINDOW TO YOUR GLORIOUS WWII SERVICE.

Your Board held their semi-annual meeting in Omaha and it was agreed to hold our 2002 Reunion at that location. The firm dates in October will be announced soon.

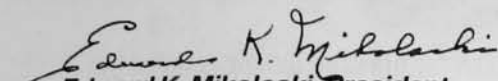
Pete Frizell sent me the July issue of the WORLD WAR II magazine (circulation 233,000) that contained a controversial article about the PLOESTI Air Battle of August 1, 1943. It contained erroneous, unfair and unwarranted accusations of this mission of mistakes allegedly by Col. "Killer" Kane (98th) and, indirectly by association, our Col. Leon W. Johnson. It appeared to be a futile attempt to sully the reputation of a leader and the brave men who flew on that daring mission by an apparently dissident airman from another group (389th). Whatever the writers motivation, our response rebutted the article's allegation by drawing on the personal reports of our Ploesti participants, and the fact as compiled in the official reports of Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Headquarters, Army Air Force, we dealt with the truth without resorting to acrimony, insult or blame. TRUTH will always win out. TRUTH is eternal.

Coordination with the Board and a representative group of Ploesti veterans: M/G Wm Brandon (44), Colonels Hodge (66), Cameron (67), Phillips (68), Holmes (68), Butler (506), Dabney (67), Reed (66), Hughes (66), resulted in a virtual tie as to whether the article should be even dignified with a response or challenged with an appropriate reply. It was my decision to write and challenge the article. I assume full responsibility should there be any criticism or adverse results from my letter. I hasten to add that my entire file was forwarded to Mr. and Mrs. John Kane Jr. (Col. Kane's son), Col. Wm Bacon and M/ Sgt. A. Plouff (98th), and M/G Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Jr., (Son-in-Law of Gen. Johnson and an avid student of the Ploesti raid).

I do not believe we have seen the last act to this "drama" but until the "final curtain" comes

down, my efforts will be devoted to insuring that the TRUTH prevails and that the reputation and gallant character of our esteemed leader and the brave men he led are duly honored, protected and preserved. Stay Tuned.

**My closing quotation –
"He who slings mud loses ground."**


Edward K. Mikoloski, President

(Ed. Note: The courage and skill of men in the Ploesti mission will forever stand as a measuring block for the glory and irrepressible spirit of airmen everywhere.)

.....
From the Editor:

Members, please do not keep your change of addresses a secret. If you change locations, phone number or E-Mail address, let us know. It will save Jerry Folsom, Art Hand, Roy Owen, Will Lundy and your crew members a lot of time trying to locate you. The 44th BG is a tight band of men, families and friends with a unique history. Let's stick together by staying in touch.

Have you visited the 44th Bomb Group's Web Site? If you are online, search <http://www.44thbombgroup.com>. You will love what you see—all the information about this great organization, the list of planes that flew, the upcoming events and much more. As time goes on, more information will be added.

Do you have any photos or information about your airplane, or one that you worked on? Do not let it yellow in your attic. If you are saving it for your children, copies can be made at any reliable office supply store—Kinkos, Staples, etc. (Not on a standard photocopy machine. It doesn't bring out details.) If you send originals, they will be copied and returned.

Have you done your Database? Do it. No effort is too small to record. Hitler's Thousand Year Reich ended in six years because of you. Write it, so the world will never forget the sacrifices that were made to bring him down.

The Eighth Memory

The English girls loved you
The German cities hated you
You littered Europe with bombs and fallen comrades
You learned to like the bitters and the weather
The cold was always there but so was the hope
I still see you there, children in leather and green
So much younger than you seem
Adapting, adjusting and bringing about death
Certain and doubtful all in one breath
Odds are against you, what do you have to lose?
But lose you will, if not your own life then someone you knew
Your livelihood riding cold on dedicated ground crew and never turning back

Life in a tin can, work in a freezer shot at day by day
Boredom and terror never far away
Fighters and flak stalking your every move
Pubs and English lovers never there long enough to soothe
Lives that ended too soon, terror that lasted too long
Your being there, now written on an airfield in marble stone
In November they bring you poppies, hoping somewhere you're well
Remembering the good times, remembering your hell
They see you in their memories
They visit your mates at Maddingley
Remembering your presence, remembering your fight
They remember you most, as those who fought in broad daylight
They call you "our lad's" in villages and in dales, from Norwich to Lavenham

From Framlingham to Deenthorpe the story is passed down
Of the day the Yanks brought new hope to town
From Fortresses, Liberators and Mustangs the stories live
In small churches, pubs and in village halls
To that most sacred of places behind the altar of St. Paul's
You who fought without hate
You those immortal young men of the American Mighty Eighth

Mark Brotherton

Write to:
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



A Tribute to



a Great Officer

Col. **Griffin Goodman** is best known by most members of the 44th BGVA for his droll humor, coupled by his delightful southern accent. He passed away March 22, 2001, at his home in Ft. Walton Beach. Col. **Edward K. "Mike" Mikoloski** attended the funeral service. President Mike remembers that, "More than anyone else, Colonel Griffin provided the continuity and 'sense of mission' of the 44th Bomb Group, since he served continuously as the EXECUTIVE OFFICER to all of the COMMANDING OFFICERS of the group, from Col. **Frank Robinson** at Barksdale AFB and Will Rogers AFB through Colonels **Robinson, Johnson, Posey, Dent, Gibson, Snavelly** and **Smith** at Shipdham."

In a tribute written in the 2 AD Journal, Lt. Col. **Richard Butler** referred to the Group Executive Officer as "Mr. 44." Butler reported, "He was the right hand man for all of the men who served as group commanders at Shipdham. Griff remained in the Air Force after WWII and served with distinction in numerous important assignments, retiring with the grade of Colonel. He attended virtually all of our 44th reunions and most 2nd Air Division Association conventions. He once served as President of the Association."

As C.O. of the 68th, Lt. Col. **Robert Lehnhausen** had little contact with 'Griff', but he was aware that as the ranking officer on the ground side, he was a skilled administrator. Lehnhausen stated, "Our troops were seldom shorted by the distribution channels of food, clothing, combat supplies and pay. It may not have satisfied their every want, but the group policies were not onerous or unbearable."

"Some of our folks didn't understand that our Base was a part of the 'Lend Lease' arrangement with the British. They were our landlords. Griffin's demeanor of grace and gentle persuasion, his tactful manner in dealing with the British "Clerk of the Works" and our Norfolk neighbors, made life for the seven commanding officers for whom he served much easier and pleasant. Our 44th personnel also shared in this rapport--without knowing why. It is unusual that one gentleman should serve so long in such a position of great responsibility. He maintained his leadership role because he was a valued aide to each of those seven commanders."

"I really got to know him through visits together at the Reunions. He possessed an amazing memory of the happenings of the 44th, both big and small. A great part of my admiration of this humorous, talented officer was his huge respect and the concern he displayed for our enlisted men and their welfare. Colonel Goodman G. Griffin was a splendid officer and a gentleman."

Editor's Remembrance: One of Col. Goodman's recollections was about the time he was riding on an eastbound train full of soldiers who were under his command. When he opened his orders to learn his destination, he discovered that fact had been omitted by his commanding officer. While riding along, pondering this omission, he questioned his First Sergeant, only to learn that he knew all the answers. He laughingly reported, "I had to ask my First Sergeant where I was going!!!" (He was going to England.)

The site of the American Bombing of 18 November 1943



RICHARD AND ARDITH BUTLER

From Col. Richard "Dick" Butler:

On 18 November 1943, B-24 aircraft of four groups, the 44th, the 93rd, the 389th, and the 392nd bombed the German motor works at Kjeller Airfield near Oslo, Norway. The bombing was excellent, but the 44th lost five aircraft and the crews of four of them. The 67th Squadron lost three planes and their crews. These were piloted by **Edward Dobson**, **Joseph Houle** and **Earl Johnson**. The 68th Squadron lost two aircraft, one being that piloted by **Edward Mitchell**. This crew was lost. The other 68th plane, piloted by **Baxter Weant** with Lt. Col. **William Brandon** as command pilot, had extensive damage and landed in Sweden. Two gunners on planes that returned to Shipdham were deceased due to fatal gun shot wounds.

In 1993, Forrest Clark, assisted by Ed Dobson, son of the lost pilot, led an effort to raise the funds for and to place a memorial at Kjeller Airfield to honor our fellow crew members who were lost on the mission.

On this past 30 June, my wife, Ardith, and I arrived in Oslo, Norway to start a cruise. Because I was on that mission of 18 November 1943 and lost some very good friends, I wanted to see the memorial to them. So on 1 July, Ardith and I journeyed out to the Royal Norwegian Air Force installation at Kjeller Airfield to view the monument. We were escorted to the site and I am pleased to report that the monument is in perfect condition. It and an adjacent RCAF monument are maintained by the RCAF. The brass plaque on the stone reads below the Eighth Air Force Insignia:

U.S. 8th Air Force

1943	1993
NORWAY	UNITED STATES

Here at the site of the American Bombing of 18 November 1943,
We, the Survivors of the 8th Air Force, 44th, 392nd, 93rd
And 389th Bomb Groups, Dedicate this memorial to the
Brave American Airmen who died on the Mission to
Norway in November 1943. In Remembrance of their
Sacrifice and Devotion to Freedom, we Salute them
And the Courageous Norwegian Allies who fought
Against Nazi tyranny a Half Century ago.
...dedicated 18 November 1993

In the photo, Ardith and I are standing behind the monument. The object to our left is a split five hundred pound bomb casing from the mission. It is well maintained also. It was an emotional experience for me. I am glad we went to Kjeller Airfield.

I might add that the Coastal Steamer cruise is wonderful. Norway is such a beautiful country and so clean. The ship is a working ship and stops at numerous towns and villages. We went all the way up into the Arctic Circle to Kirkenes at the very northeast tip of Norway where it adjoins Russia and Finland. I went to the Russian border. Ardith and I strongly recommend the cruise.



FOR SALE

Flying 8 Ball Patches -- \$14 + \$2 postage.

Back copies of *8 Ball Tails* -- \$5

Write 44th BGVA, P.O. Box 712287, Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

Flying 8 Ball Shirts -- \$25 + \$3 postage

Flying 8 Ball Caps--\$15 + \$2 postage

Pins -- \$ 5 + \$2 postage

Write **Sam Miscelli**, 6398 Dawson Blvd. Mentor, OH 44060-3648

Kevin Watson's book *Ruth-Less and Far From Home* is the story of the tragic crash of the A/C #41-24282, 506 Sq. It is available through Amazon.com; signed copies can be obtained through hometown.aol.com/kpwats7. The cost is \$20. His book is a tribute to the **James Bolin** crew of *Ruthless*.

The 44th Tour Group in 1997 will remember Kevin for graciously traveling with the group through France and Belgium and shopping for amenities to make the members more comfortable on the bus. Watson arranged for an awesome ceremony on Butts Brow, the hillside crash site of the Ruthless; and later, the meeting at the Eastbourne Courthouse with Mayoress Beryl Healy.

44th BOMB GROUP, The Flying Eightballs, a 115 page documentary of the 44th BG is available for \$55 from Turner Publishing Company, 412 Broadway, P.O. Box 3101, Paducah, KY 42002-3101. This hardbound 9 x 11 book has 128 pages of historical material, and biographies of many veterans. A good reference book for new members seeking information.

THE WILD BLUE YONDER is a chronology of the **James N. Williams** crew, (66th BS) as recorded by **Warren F. McPherson**. McPherson's detailed report tells the story from induction to his last mission, concluded by a kiss on solid soil. The Tail Gunner who later became a minister presents a lively and accurate account of the life of an NCO in the maelstrom of war. Cost \$10 for a soft cover, 32 page ringed book. Write 1016 E Rockwood Street, Springfield, MO 65807-5092.

PURSUIT IN THE PYRENEES, by **Archie Barlow, Jr.**, is an account of a three month effort of evading the enemy in German-occupied France, 1944. The price is \$20. Write L. B. Wright, 3911 Black Locust Drive, Houston, TX 77088-6904. Tel. 281-931-1932. E-mail Wright@juno.com.

The Angel and the Eagle, by **Joseph E Milliner** is a personal story, written in 3rd person, of his experiences as a pilot, a family man and a distraught father whose son, a helicopter pilot, tragically disappeared in Laos during the Vietnam War. Milliner describes the fury of the Ploesti Raid, target White V in dramatic detail. Then there was Foggia, where *Buzzin Bear* crashed, and four of the crew were lost. According to Joe, his ever faithful Guardian Angel JOSEPH saved him from parachuting into the flaming plane. Milliner's signed hardcover book is available for \$11.95, (postage incl.). Write 281 Fincastle Way, Shepherdsville, KY 40165. E-mail Mackie0126@aol.com.

S/Sgt. Robert Reasoner Remembers

Kiel Germany

May 14, 1943

It was a good day for a bombing mission, as the sky was clear except for a few scattered clouds below us. Soon after we crossed the coastline and were over the continent, we began to see German fighters rising in the distance. We began to have fighter attacks at irregular intervals before we reached the target city. As we reached the outskirts of Kiel, the fighter attacks intensified and became almost constant. At about that time, I saw Capt. O'Brien's ship drop out of formation and lag behind. He was under heavy attack and the fighters were just swarming around them. I was unable to observe any parachutes drop from the plane because of the large number of fighters in the area.

As we were nearing the target, we had become "tail end Charlie" because of the loss of Capt. O'Brien's ship. (I think we were flying #2 position and O'Brien was #3). Capt. Jansen had called me over the intercom and said "let me know when the bast--- are coming in!" When I called and said "here they come!", he then slipped up under the leadership of our formation and did such evasive action, that the gunners of the lead ship said they could almost touch us. At the home base, they were worried that Capt. Jansen would cut the bottom out of their ship with his props.

It seemed the fighters would never stop coming in on us. Most of the attacks were from 6 o'clock high and were mostly FW190's that lined up one behind the other and came in. Their tracer bullets coming at me appeared to be like little streaks of light that flashed on and off. On one attack, I suddenly found myself hanging on my back out of the tail turret. I didn't know what had happened until I got back in position in the turret. At that time I saw a bullet hole in the turret-plexiglass at eye level just above the bulletproof glass on the rear of the turret. The bullet would have hit me in the center of the forehead, but I was saved because I was

shooting at the fighter; and when sighting through the gunsight, I had to bend forward and stoop slightly. The bullet had just broken the skin on my head. It felt just like a hard blow with a hard club. The bullet had torn a slit in my helmet, clipped my headset and continued on into the aircraft structure. My imagination took over and I could feel the blood seeping on my head. I didn't dare check then, but it turned out to be my imagination, because the blood had remained in the area where the bullet struck me.

Even after the bombardier had dropped our bombs, the fighters continued to attack in large numbers. It seemed they would never stop their attacks. By this time, I had just about given up and wondered why Capt. Jansen had not rung the bail out bell. I looked in the waist section to see if the other gunners were still there. I could see they were still firing their guns and it looked like they were up to their ankles in spent 50 caliber cartridges.

As the fighters had begun their attacks rather slowly, they ended their attacks abruptly. I wondered why and looked around for a reason. The tail gunner is the last to know! There below was the coastline of the North Sea. The timing was perfect for us. My right gun was out of ammo and the left gun had a strip about eighteen inches long.

The safety from the fighters as we reached the North Sea gave us a chance to look around for the first time. When we saw all the holes in our plane, we thought of the new danger of the cold water below and how long we could survive if we had to bail out or crash-land in the water. Also how long before we could expect to be picked up and would it be in time?

Anyway, Capt. Jansen kept MARGARET ANN going with her #3 engine feathered. All of us in the waist kept a sharp lookout for any other signs of failure, but none appeared and we arrived back at our base at Shipdham. The engineer shot a red flare indicating "wounded aboard," and we were cleared to land immediately. Capt. Jansen made a perfect landing - he held the plane on the left main



A VIEW FROM AN EAST ANGLIAN

Roger Freeman

landing wheel, as the right tire had been flattened by a 20mm armor piercing shell. When the plane slowed till he could not hold it off the right wheel any longer, he let it touch down and made a curve off the runway onto the beautiful green grass and soft earth of England. The exit of the crew from MARGARET ANN must have set some kind of a record. MARGARET ANN was riddled. The ground crew told us later that we had 250 major holes (1/2 inch or bigger) in our aircraft. Most of the fuel tanks had been punctured, but luckily the hits were above the gas line. There were 3 holes in the tail turret. One hit me on the head, one came in at a slight angle and knocked the handle off the plexiglass door behind me (an early modification to keep the cold air off the tail gunner), and one came through the bottom of the turret and nearly cut the toes out of my G.I. shoes stored under the catwalk behind the turret. In the turret, I wore silk socks covered by wool socks and fleece lined flying boots. The ground crew traced the bullet that hit me and presented me with the steel point of a .30 calibre armor piercing bullet.

I'm sure those of us that still survive will always remember the first American raid on Kiel. All of us in the rear of the plane had been slightly wounded. Besides me, the two waist gunners had been hit by 20mm explosive shell fragments. The bottom gunner had received internal injuries and died on the way back to Shipdham.

S/Sgt. Leo V. McCready was hit by a .30 cal. machine gun bullet in his stomach and died the next day. M/Sgt. Robert M. Smith had 20mm shell fragments in his right leg, and S/Sgt. Richard J. Butler was wounded in his right hand, right arm and chest from .30 cal. bullets.

Ed. Note: S/Sgt. Robert Reasoner's story was featured in the Summer issue of the Eight Ball Tails. Reasoner has the singular distinction of acquiring three Purple Hearts.

"I have my own memories of you good people. I remember you on your bicycles, the laughter, the singing and the shouting, how you would go to the local pubs, complain bitterly about the wet, warm English beer and then drink the pubs dry. I recall your generosity with the local children, how you would give them sweets, make a fuss of them and arrange parties for them. I think most of us in England remember those cheerful young men that you were.

I have other memories and I make no excuses for changing the mood here. These are some of my memories that I have and they're true.

"I remember being terrified as a B-24 Liberator spiraled down with one wing aflame and I was down there on the ground, and some equally terrified, or far more frightened young men, were parachuting down from that blazing bomber. . . I recall watching the pilot of a P-38 Lightning being literally lifted out of his cockpit because he was so cold and numb after a long fighter escort mission to Berlin. "I remember seeing a B-17 Flying Fortress in a cloudless summer sky limping home from a raid with a shattered tail and with holes so large blown through both wings, you could see daylight through them. When this bomber finally came in to land at the local airfield, I recall seeing the humps on the stretchers being carried to the waiting ambulances.

"I also remember those bitter winter days in England, watching the ground crews working on the engines. Their hands must have been as numb as they could possibly be because you couldn't wear gloves for some of the intricate jobs they had to perform. . .

"And I remember a burning mass in an English field which, a few seconds previously, had been a P-51 Mustang fighter... and I knew that somewhere in that mass was a charring body that had once been a human being. . .

"I also recall the noise as I lay in my bed early in the morning. The constant noise which you couldn't escape from anywhere in East Anglia in those days as the bombers and fighters were warming up, taking off and going to war.

"I recall the contrails in the skies as hundreds upon hundreds of your bombers flew out . . . all heading eastwards. And one day, when you couldn't see the sky because of an overcast, I can recall seeing the colored assembly flares slowly dropping through.

"I also remember the fighters sweeping back in the late afternoons, the colors of their heraldry flashing in the sunlight... and the bombers coming home, some limping, but usually in good formation.

"These are my memories . . . I know there are memories which you have that I cannot share . . . although I know what they are... "Such things as the flak clouds over Berlin . . . over Merseburg . . . over Hamm . . . Such things as the smell of smoke and human sweat in the oxygen systems. Such things as the tired grip of an oxygen mask on your face for ten hours . . . the vibration and the noise of riding those bombers . . . Such terrible things as seeing your comrades, who you probably had breakfast with that morning, go down in the plane next to you

and being helpless to do anything about it. . . and perhaps worst of all, those empty beds which had been full the night before . . .

These are also your memories and they are just a small part of the story of the 8th Air Force. The 8th Air Force . . . I'll remind you again, the largest air striking force in history ever committed to battle . . . the supreme realization of the American dream of daylight strategic bombardment. Yes, a great force indeed.

"I know that the men of the 9th Air Force bled as freely . . . those of the 15th Air Force died as cruelly . . . and all the other air forces of that war have their pride, and rightly so. But no one can take away from you a record that is unsurpassed in courage and endeavor . . . And the evidence is there . . . 47,000 men killed or missing by the end of the Second World War . . . half the top awards for bravery earned by the American Air Forces were for the 8th Air Force . . . so that speaks for itself.

"Sadly, today there are people, some of them young, who would scoff at all this. They would say that you have come here to wallow in old glories . . . to gloat over a victory over another nation . . . that you achieved nothing . . . that your comrades who are not here with you died in vain, and in any case they are forgotten . . . Well, it goes without saying that there are men here tonight, with mental and physical scars obtained during those dark days, who could tell any 'Peace-Nik' far better than I could, that there is no glory in war.

"Of course you're not here to gloat over a victory over an old enemy . . . I have German friends and I'm sure some of you do. No, you're here because you take an honest pride, and I think, if you won't admit this, it is probably the basic element of your all being here. You have an honest pride of being part of the 8th Air Force . . . indeed you do.

And as for having achieved nothing . . . that is nonsense. You were part of the decisive victory over the worst tyranny that man has ever known . . . and you should be proud of it. Your courage and endeavor are not forgotten... neither are the people who died. Any young life is a wasted life, but nobody died in vain. All those boys whom you lost died in a damn good cause.

"I mentioned honest pride; if you want to keep faith with the sacrifice of your buddies of years gone by, there is no better way than to promote that pride. Pride in the 8th Air Force . . . the greatest Air Force your country has ever produced and one of the most famous fighting units in history . . . Cherish that pride.

"Most of you wear the 8th Air Force symbol in some form or another, either in the badge of this society or sister societies. I say to you, gentlemen, you have every right to wear that with pride . . . wear it with pride and so keep the courage and endeavor of the 8th Air Force shining brightly for future generations.

(Ed Note: Roger Freeman is the foremost authority of the history of the 8th Air Force in England during WWII. He is the author of "The Mighty Eighth" and other historical writings of the era.)

WILL SEZ

May, 2001

In this issue I would like to address a question to all of you combat men who could have flown the mission of 8 May 1944 and then the short period of 4 through 7 April 1945. We need your data if you participated in any of these missions, as these five mission folders are missing or misplaced in the National Archives! Tony Mastradone has made several trips there asking for searches to be made for these folders, but until this time they are still missing! Tony did find a 67th Squadron Engineering paper listing those 67th Sq. crews that flew the mission of 8 May 1944 (to Brunswick), so we can prepare sortie reports for them, but we must attempt to identify the crews from the other three Squadrons for that date AND all crews that flew any of the four days in April 1945 (4, 5, 6 and 7 in April 1945).

If any of you combat men remember or recall participating in any of these five missions, could you please drop a note to me with that information. If you can remember the names of your crew mates, great! If not, we may have to resort to your regular crew names to show on the sortie report. A/C name would be most valuable if known or found in your own records.

We are so close to completing our data entry files for all sorties flown by the 44th - well over 8000 - that we must do everything that we can find the answers to these last few. So, if you have kept any records of your missions covering these two periods, please take the time to check out any records you may have to determine if you were involved. We must be as accurate as possible in our historical records. THANK YOU!

Secondly, a personal request to each of you non-combat personnel. The story about the 44th's efforts during WW #2 will never be complete unless you people let me, us, know about what each of you did at Shipdham. Much of what the combat men did was recorded and saved in official records. But for the support personnel there is very little, indeed.



If you will do nothing else to help, would EACH of you drop me a note (my address is on the inside front page) to tell me what job YOU PERFORMED. If you don't write anything else, PLEASE give me your "job." Then, if you care to include more about yourself or particular events, names of men you worked with and who you worked for, I will be most grateful! Look at it this way, it took at least an average of 10 of us to keep one combat man flying. For the most part our work was routine, but very important to the war effort. We might not have had direct effect with the combat men or the B-24s, but the sum total resulted in victory in Europe. There still is a free world. And yes, I was ground crew, too.

Truly, I cannot emphasize this enough. For all practical purposes, all that now exists in our records is your name, and even these did not come from the official records. By writing to me you will confirm that we have your name and get it spelled correctly. I, we, do not have any monthly reports of personnel from any section, either. Nor are there any monthly reports of Squadron Operational personnel except the one I kept personally for the 67th Squadron for April 1945. Would any of you have kept such reports in your memorabilia? If you do, could you please copy and send to me? They are priceless now. Will you help me with these records?

Now on a personal note, I'd like to tell you about an incident that happened to Irene and me while shopping at a large grocery store a couple months ago. As we were pushing our large shopping cart, a man of about 60 years old walked up to us, pardoned himself for interrupting our shopping, and asked me if I was a World War veteran! It was a very unusual question, so I hesitated for a moment trying to guess what his motive was. When I finally told him that yes, I was, he then told me that he had been watching us for a couple minutes, noticed our erect posture and friendly ways, decided to stop us and ask. He said he was sure because of the look in my eyes, but I don't know for sure what that meant.

So we chatted for a few minutes about my time in service, about the 8th Air Force, the Liberator, etc. Then he told me that he often visited markets and public places, made a point of looking for men

who could have served in WW #2, and then telling them just how proud he was of us, and most of all, to thank us for our sacrifices. He said that the American public have not expressed their appreciation of their veterans as much as they should, so he was doing his best to seek out and to personally express his sincere thanks to as many veterans as he could.

He then firmly shook my hand, patted me on my back and walked away! It took me a bit to believe what had just transpired, but it left a warm spot in my heart. I am now relating this experience to you in case you have never experienced such a personal experience like this. It had happened to me, but in reality it was meant for all of you. So I wanted to tell you about it so that you will know that your efforts to save the free world is still much appreciated by our people who still remember your sacrifices.

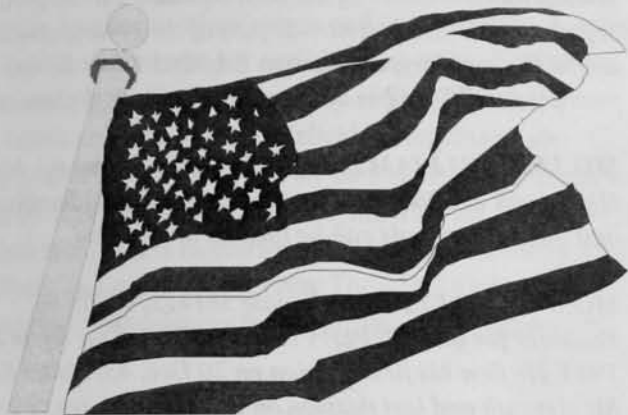
Will Lundy



FOLDED WINGS

September, 2001

Prepared by:
Will Lundy



ARRAJ, ROBERT 1/8/90 Not combat, no records located.

BRADFORD, KENNETH No date 66 and 67th Squadrons. Kenneth was a gunner, both waist and nose turret for the seven missions that he flew between 31 May 1944 to 15 October. He flew two with R.J. Gunton, three with H.C. Henry, and two with C.R. Hinshaw.

CAMPBELL, WALTER D. 1/92 68th Sq. 39331274 Walter joined this Sq. on 21 May 1944 as a member of the R.C. Ricketts crew. He served as a ball turret and waist gunner from 29 May 1944 to 30 December 1944 to complete 30 missions. He dropped from the Ricketts crew during that summer and then flew with other crews. Late in November, he joined the H.J. Eckstein crew and flew with them until 30 Dec. 1944.

CHANDLER, LAWRENCE W. 11/24/00 36427258 68th Sq. Engineer. He was a member of the A.A. Starring crew that arrived in this Sq. on 8 December 1943. Their first combat mission was 21 January 1944, when they were shot down over France. Four crewmen became POWs, but Lawrence managed to evade capture until he returned to the base four months later. Two days later he was on his way back to the U.S.



COLUCCI, PATRICK Date ? 506th Sq. Gunner Pat was a member of the T.G. Waters crew that arrived in the 506th Squadron on 28 June 1944. They flew their first mission on 1 August and he flew most of them with this crew. The T.G. Water crew completed their tour on 2 January 1945, but Pat had missed a few, so completed his 33rd on 14 January with the V.J. Scheerzberg crew. During most of his missions, he was a waist gunner. Both Pat and Ginny were frequent attendees at the annual reunions. They will be missed, indeed.

DAVISON, WILLIAM R. 1/29/97 13013634 68th Sq. 1st Sgt. He joined the 68th Sq. on 6/20/42 and was promoted to First Sergeant on 14 July 1942. He made both trips over and back on the Queen Mary, first in Sept. 1942 and return on 16 June 1945.

DIXON, WILLARD E. 3/1/87 Cannot identify.

FAHEY, DONALD F. 2/28/69 37506294 68th Sq. Radio Operator for the T.L. Weaver crew. Donald joined the Sq. on 5/5/44, flew their first mission on 5/21/44. This crew was shot down on 7 July 44 while on their 21st mission. Donald was one of the last crewman to bail out; was taken Prisoner of War. He was released at war's end, departed Europe on 3 June, arriving at the U.S. on 11 June 1945. On one of his missions, he was credited with saving the life of one of his crew, Sgt. Harrison.

FUNKS, ROBERT D. 3/01 506th Sq. He was Radio Operator for the T.G. Waters crew that arrived in the 506th Sq. on 28 June 1944. Robert and Patrick Colucci (above) were crew mates. He flew 28 missions, most of them with T.G. Waters, but he did not finish his tour until 25 March 1945. His last three missions were with the W.M. Smith crew.

GAURONSKAS, EDWARD C. No date 16042233 68th Squadron. Edward served as an Aircraft Mechanic. He was with the Ground Echelon that made the voyage to England on the Queen Mary in September 1942. His line crew is not identified, but he served in this capacity until 16 June 1945, when he returned to the U.S., once again aboard the famous Queen Mary.



GRIFFIN, GOODMAN G. Jr. 0-337352 3/22/01
Headquarters Group Executive Officer. Griff joined the 44th BG at MacDill AFB at the time it was organized, 15 January 1941. He was the only man to remain with the 44th from inception to 1946, when it was de-actified the first time. He was the Ground Group Commander, a Major, in charge of the ground echelon that departed the U.S. from New York City on the Queen Mary 5 September 1942. He served as Group Executive Officer throughout the time at Shipdham, serving as the right hand man for all five Group Commanders during that time. On 16 June 1945, he again was in charge of the ground echelon, brought them back to the US on the same Queen Mary. He remained in service, retired with the grade of Colonel. He was a great friend to us all. His memory will always bring a smile to many of us, and he will be sadly missed by all.

HOLLADAY, FRED R. 2/22/01 18163207 67th Sq. Waist gunner for the H.F. Hess crew that arrived at Shipdham in February 1944. He flew his first mission on 16 March, followed quickly by five more. But on 27 March 44, while attacking Mont de Marson at 10,000 feet, their aircraft was so badly damaged, the crew bailed out over northern Spain, were interned. Later he completed his tour of 50 missions with the 15th AF in Italy.

KAY, THOMAS C. 71/7/98 T-61780 & 0-885659 68th Sq. Pilot. Thomas and his crew arrived in the 68th Sq. on 8 July 44. He flew his first three missions as a co-pilot, first one dated 13 July. His first as a 1st pilot occurred on 19 July. Target Koblenz. He completed his tour of duty with 35 missions, the last one dated 21 November 44. He received his commission on 3 October 44. After completing his tour, he was placed on Detached Service to the Continent (Belgium) on 30 November. He departed England on 16 December for the U.S. and a well earned leave.

KISELYAK, WILLIAM L. Date? 0-2072476 67th Sq. Navigator for the R. Zanoni crew that was assigned from the 70th Replacement Depot on 1 March 1945. Their first of 10 missions was dated 17 March, with their tenth and last one on 20 April 1945. After participating in the "Trolley Missions", they returned home to the U.S. flying A/C #4449323.

LAUGHLIN, WILLIAM E. 3/24/01 0-718111 506th Sq. Flew as Bombardier on many crews, starting with R.L. Hoisington crew on 26 & 27 August 1944. Then R.H. Habedank and P.J. Durett. In January, he began flying with Lead crews, often with Habedank and E.J. Burns crews. He completed his tour on 20 April 45 with 38 missions.

LEWIS, WARD B. 9/25/95 0-806471 66th Sq. Co-pilot for the H.E. Etheridge crew. This crew flew just four missions, being shot down on that fourth mission dated 2/25/44. They made a valiant effort to evade attackers after being badly damaged over the target, but finally were forced to bail out at a low altitude. One crewman was KIA, with the others becoming POWs.

MEYERS, VERNON C. No date 66th Sq. From 2nd ADA. Vernon was a member of the 66th Squadron, a Corporal in September 1942, when he was part of the ground echelon on the Queen Mary, destination England. Later he was promoted to S/Sgt., but occupation cannot be determined.

MILLER, WILLIAM F. 2/08/01 William joined the 44th HMG back in 1986. However his unit was not identified and no other records can be located at this time.

MOSLEY, WALTER H. No date 38141279 67th Sq. Engineer for the J.R. Perry crew that joined the Sq. in late 1943. He flew his first mission on 20 Dec. 43. Walter flew his eleventh and last mission on 26 March 44, ten of which were with the Perry crew. In early April, he and the Perry crew were transferred to the 15th AF in Italy, assigned to the 415th BS of the 98th BG where they completed their tour.

PETERS, WADE D. 7/20/01 T-132351 66th Sq. Wade was the Navigator for the R. A. Perrault crew. This crew joined the 66th Sq. on 20 December 1944, flew their first mission on 28 January 45, had to make an emergency crash-landing near Brussels. Wade went on to complete 22 more missions, the last one being on 20 April 45. In May, they flew back to the U.S. In 1961, he returned to active Air Reserves service for 20 more years and retired as a Lt. Colonel.

RAY, CHARLES W. 8/5/01 14170302 67th Sq. He served first as a gunner and then later as engineer for the W.L. Wahler crew. His first mission was on 20 February 1943. On 8 April, he was seriously wounded, did not fly again until 25 May with the Wahler crew. Later, in July, he flew with other crews including Mueller and Benadom. He finished his tour of 29 missions with Holmer on 30 Dec. 1944. Charles and Helen nearly made it to their 60th anniversary.

SWATERS, WILLIARD E. 1990 Willard served with the 50th Station Complement. He was a member of the 44th BGVA for many years, but have no records covering his duties or time of service.



MAIL & E-MAIL



From Norfolk, England: Brian Peel, longtime friend and admirer of the 44th BG, is sad to report that his mother, Doris Peel passed away on April 11, 2001 at the age of 100 years, six months. As a civilian, Mrs. Peel was involved in the war effort, providing tea for English soldiers in the area, housing soldiers' wives and evacuees from London. Her efforts brought her acclaim from many dignitaries, including the British Secretary of State. When the Americans took over the airfield at Shipdham, she provided laundry services for men of all ranks. Brian was a teenager when B-24s were flying from his hometown. He has many warm memories of his associations with both flyers and maintenance crew. The 8 Ball Tails extends warmest condolences to him for the loss of his mother.



A School Boy's Memory: "I was about nine years old, living in Peterborough, England, attending All Soul's School. There was an American airfield nearby. At 11:00 A.M. we were out in the school yard and we heard a whole lot of planes roaring overhead, still climbing. They were two engine cargo planes with long steel cables pulling gliders. When school was out at 3:00 P.M., we heard the roar again. The planes were coming back, with the long cables twirling behind them. The gliders were gone. It was D-Day.

James Keane, York, Pennsylvania



A question from your editor:

Who named the B-24 Cadet Nurse, and for whom was it named? I have read that it was in honor of a Cadet in the nursing program at Memorial Hospital, Johnstown, PA. That was my school of nursing. I would surely know this lady, as it was a program that ran for only three years.



Mike Fusano's story about chauffeuring General **Leon Johnson** brought back a memory to **Joe Feeney**. Joe was one of those who was picked up by the General and transported to his destination. Among the General's questions was whether we were getting enough to eat. "We were," Joe affirmed.



Feeney supplied a bit of historical trivia: When were Serial Numbers discarded for Social Security Numbers? Joe made that suggestion at a Pay Conference in 1968. The idea was adopted. He believes he is holding the last card that has both his Serial & SS#. They were to turn them in, but he couldn't part with his.



Stephen E. Ambrose: "It would be an exaggeration to say that the B-24 won the war for the Allies. But don't ask how they could have won the war without it." (A quote from his new book, *The Wild Blue*.)

On May 2, 1945, 70 airmen and staff members were honored by the French Government. Gen. **Leon W. Johnson**, commander of the 14th Wing was decorated by Maj. Gen. Kepner. He was presented the Legion of Honor, Order of Chevalier and Croix de Guerre with Palm. The following members of the 44th were awarded the Croix de Guerre with Palm: Lt. Col. **William H. Brandon**, Lt. Col. **Walter I. Bunker**; Lt. Col. **William R. Cameron**; Lt. Col. **Robert J. Lehnhausen**; Lt. Col. **William H. Strong**. Now the French Government wants to express gratitude to **EVERYONE** who was in or over French soil from D-Day to VE Day. Monsieur **Perry A. Morse** recently received a lovely 'Diplome', worthy of framing, along with a letter of appreciation. Applications are available at Veteran Administration offices.



From Paul A. Trouve, son of **Louis V. Trouve**, comes a letter that solves a puzzle for Will Lundy. Louis expired 17 March 1977. His son found this letter from **R. J. Convey** to **Ralph Golubock**, explaining why the plane *Princess Charlotte* kept showing up in unexplained ways:

LETTER FROM R. J. Convey to Ralph Golubock
66th Squadron

My fiance was named Charlotte, so I named all of the B-24s I flew *Princess Charlotte*. Though I trained in B-24s, the first *Princess Charlotte* was a B-17 which I flew across the Atlantic with my crew.

The first few missions, including Ploesti, I flew with **Joe Flaherty**, 66th Squadron, 44th BG. He was a single-engine pilot who came to the 44th straight out of flight school, and was a permanent co-pilot on several missions until I got there. He sat on the left side and I sat on the



right. It was sort of a cooperative effort between the two of us to get the plane to the target and back. Our fourth mission (13 July) saw us lose two engines and land at Malta on a small field. We left the first B-24 there for repairs. *The Princess* that went to Ploesti kept her engines running all the way in and all the way back - for which we were duly thankful. While several people shot at us, including a "75," we were extremely lucky as *The Princess* only picked up one bullet hole, as I remember it.

We flew her back to England. But immediately after Ploesti, I moved to the left seat and my regular co-pilot, **Tom Drysdale**, moved back into the right. Back to Ploesti. We bombed White V, right behind General **Johnson**. However, so many planes were shot down, disabled or out of position, it was like we were all alone after hitting the target on the nose. So we rejoined another squadron of the 44th and came home.

The 44th made a second trip to Africa (in September) and we had a mission to Wiener-Neustadt. Besides losing an engine, we acquired an unbelievable number of holes in our plane. We landed near Naples at a British fighter base, and left the plane there. We rode back to England on a DC-4.

In a later raid (11 Dec. 43) to Emden, Germany out of England, we received a direct hit on the nose, right above the navigator, Louis Trouve. The force of the explosion knocked him backwards, over on the nose wheel doors, and out he went. Fortunately, though wounded, he opened his chute, landed in a bay, and was picked up by the Germans. (Lou and his wife, Charlotte, and I got together in New York after the war.)

After Lou was gone, we found flames were licking out of the hole in the nose, so I pressed the alarm button, "Prepare to Abandon Ship." The ball gunner (Neitzel?) saw Lou go by his turret and decided things were really serious. He tried to get out of his ball, but some empty shells or perhaps a belt or two had jammed the back exit door. With brute strength - and he was not a very heavily-built guy - he pushed the door right off its hinges and got out. The bombardier passed out in the nose turret and we thought he was a goner.

It turned out the flame was fed by a broken oxygen line, and when the oxygen was used up, it went out! By then I was half way out of my seat and preparing to signal "abandon ship" when I realized things were not so bad, and finally got things back on keel again. However, we were now alone and I headed for the Channel, losing altitude at a rapid pace. When we reached about 10,000 feet or so, the bombardier's voice comes on the intercom. He was alive and OK - just passed out from lack of oxygen.

We very luckily crossed the Channel and returned to

base without encountering any German fighters. The hydraulic system was now out, but there was enough pressure still in those spheres to work the brakes. I should have stopped at the end of the runway and received a hero's welcome, but I taxied back to our pad and coasted very slowly off the edge of it when the pressure finally ran out.

The "*Princess Charlotte*" (really *Nice & Naughty*) like all the others, got us home OK. We were blessed with good fortune as far as the crew was concerned.

I believe I saw her fuselage on the junk heap later. (Yes, she crashed at Shipdham on 4 Jan 44 while on takeoff). I still have the stencil that says "*Princess Charlotte*" used on some of these planes.

Completed 25 missions in *The Princess* - some bore the name in paint, others in mind only. Some bore two names, but as far as I was concerned, they were all Princesses, and all great. I flew missions for the 66th Squadron, although for Ploesti, we were assigned to another squadron (67th?) to fill out the formation.

Charlotte and I have been married 50 years and are living here in Stowe, Vermont.

Regards, *RJ*



A Search

This letter from Gerhard Walter from Erding, Germany, near Munchen, translated by Robert Chombard:

At the end of April, beginning of May, 1944, I was flying a single engine aircraft FW-190, located at Werneuchen, about 22 miles N.E. Berlin.

A little before noon this day, the sirens screamed. Some 45 minutes later, we heard the engines of a bomber formation N.E. of our base. When the formation was at about 1 1/2 miles from our base, we suddenly heard a terrible machine gun fire exchange, followed by the noise of over running engines. Little after, approximately 10 or 14 B-17s or B-24s fell in flames. None of them bombed, and thus was no bombs left in the wrecks, this meaning that the planes were on their return trip after having attacked their target. Suddenly a plane came down at low altitude, through the clouds. When the aircraft was at about 250 feet, the crew parachute jumps. Few minutes later, many came out of the clouds and ????? toward Werheuchen.

The same day I piloted my FW190 over the neighborhood, when suddenly I noticed a parachute in the branches of a tree. Immediately I thought, "I will go and get him for myself." After landing, I rode a bike toward this forest.

There I saw the tree, climbed it and cut the ropes. I just finished putting the parachute in my bag and was ready to ride my bike again, when I heard someone telling me "Hello." I was at first astonished, then I saw at about 30 feet, under a tree, a man in pilot's uniform. He waved his hand and showed me his leg, apparently wounded, but no open wound. He was probably wounded at landing. As I did not speak English, and himself obviously no German, we communicated by signs. Then he offered me a chewing-gum tablet. I then wondered, "How will I bring this lad to our base?" As good as had, I sat him on the seat of the bike and pushed it out the road to the base. When we arrived to a village, we stopped at a brewery and we both drank a beer from there. I phoned to the base and asked for a car. To start, I had some difficulties to convince them I was not joking. After an half hour wait, I went out to take a look. To my great astonishment, there were several people around with sticks who asked me to give them the pilot. Of course, my reply was showing them my pistol. "If you dare to come too near, I will shoot." I told them, "I am myself a pilot, and I would not like to be mistreated by a gang of civilians if I was shot down in enemy territory." Fortunately, no one moved. As no vehicle was in sight, I continued with my American on the bike. After another half mile, a Kubelwagen arrived with a driver and a meteorologist who spoke English. We had a brief conversation, and I heard that my man was a pilot of a B-24 unit. I asked him if I could have his insignia with wings, but he told me he would still need it to prove his identity. Then the car went. This history touched the life of two young men during WWII, but each one on opposite sides. *Ed. Note: If the American pilot reads this story, Gerhard Walter would like to be in touch. The 8 BTs would like to hear the rest of the story.*



From Mark Morris, Pueblo, CO: A new publication, Pueblo Army Air Base History, written by Dr. Ray Sisson, is now available at the Pueblo Historical Aircraft Society, located at the Pueblo Weisbrod Aircraft Museum, 31001 Magnuson Ave., Pueblo, CO 81001. Dr. Sisson is a retired professor from the University of Southern Colorado. Members of the 506 Sq. will find this book appealing, as their squadron was formed at the PAAB in 1942. They will also enjoy the museum, which houses interesting and well preserved memorabilia from 59 years ago. The book costs \$19.95 + \$3.00 S & H. Contact the Museum or write Mark: marksan@iex.net or PWAM@IEX.NET

The following photos are from the PAAB Book. Mark states, "I wish we had some photos of the 506 crews that trained at Pueblo, but we don't. Nor do we have any aircraft with crews - just A/C in the air. We have no information on others who may have trained at Pueblo as crews only. We have a lot of photos in the book, but all are later than when 44BG members would be in them. These people in these photos are unknown except for Jinx Falkenberg. The others at the party are unknown."



The Band at Pueblo took time to refuel. Can anyone identify this enthusiastic group of musicians?



From Ted Stamos: I am trying to track down information about my cousin, 1st Lt. **Robert G. Stamos**, who died as a co-pilot on a raid over Bernberg, Germany on April 11,



1944. The pilot was 1st Lt. **John D. Money**, who wrote an account of the incident... having to break out the window on the co-pilot side to escape. Robert was dead in his seat of flak wounds. The last contact from John Money in the 44th BGVA records was in 1992. The plane was, I believe, Southern Comfort II, 506 B. Sq. Only three survived, John Money, **Don Young**, **Wallace Kirchner**. I am trying to find somebody who might have known Robert, and could tell me anything... anything at all about him. (Lt. Col.)

Richard Butler sent me copies of his combat record. He suggested contacting the 8 BALL TAILS, to see if anybody remembers Robert. My home address is: Ted Stamos, 4423 Arden View Ct., St. Paul, MN. Phone 651 633-7067. E-Mail: ststamos@ties.kl2.mn.us.

Ed Note: The target for this mission was Junkers Aircraft Assembly Plant. The right bomb bay doors failed to open. When approaching the target, they received a direct hit in the bomb bay, setting the plane afire. It flew on a short distance, then winged over and split in two at the waist section.



From David E. Saylor, Birmingham, MI:
The identities in the photo showing the 14th CBW War Room are: Seated is Lt. **William Church**; Standing is Capt. **David Saylor**, Lt. **Harry Jacobs** and Capt. **Robert Morton**.



Bob Norsen (68th BS) to Will Lundy: "I had just finished B-17 school as a 'qualified' 1st pilot, B-17. There they tried to get us to land tail wheel first. Some did at great expense. The main gear came down so hard, the drag strut would part, laying the plane on one wheel, a wing tip and one engine.

"Early instructions on the B-24 were to land three point. Some did. The result collapsed the nose gear, left the tail pointing at the sky (at Ft. Myers). Of course, the right way to land both airplanes is on the main gear with the tail low but not dragging. The planes fly much alike. They can fly in formation easily. Same altitude. Same speed. "*Lemon Drop* was one of the originals, flown across by my close friend **Reginal Phillips**. Phil named it that because it had some defects originally that caused Phil and crew some delay to get the defects fixed. "I didn't get into the terrible trouble on missions that many did. Many times close, but I never came back with serious damage, and only once with an injury on board. I didn't fly a full 35 missions. Between an operations job and then engineering modifications for the B-24 after my crew was lost, flying with another pilot, I flew when needed as a substitute pilot. In that situation, I seldom got to go. I remember flying for **Johnny Diehl** on a Hamm Raid. Nearly frozen controls...working so hard with stiff controls, I had the window open, drenched in sweat. B-17s were flying back through our formation, engines out, etc. "I recall one mission while the main group did Ploesti. I stayed down to bring down another flight, when the 'promised new crews' showed up. We ran training missions of semi-real missions with long and complete briefing, then careful debriefing to review the 'mission'. The idea was to become so familiar with combat details, the new crews would be as safe as possible for themselves and for the rest of the team. On one of several such missions, a diversion, my plane was head-on attacked by a twin engine Messerschmitt that launched the first rockets I had seen. "Back in the States we had mentally practiced quick evasive action. Just as they 'stand still' out there, do a quick dive.' I did. The rockets smoked a few feet overhead. Slight rudder damage... " "Our (stateside) experience in Sub Patrol paid off in Europe. I was Operations duty one night, planning an ordered 44th mission to Danzig (*a Polish port on the Baltic Sea at the mouth of the Vistula River*), a flight well over twice as far as Berlin. We had not gotten back all planes on missions to Berlin because of fuel shortage. Using what I learned about stretching miles, flying like we did Sub Patrol, we got the entire 44th flight to Danzig and returned with fuel to spare.



From the Web Page, Aaron Williams, a relative of Capt. **Chester L. Phillips, Jr.**, 67th Sq., pilot of *Little Beaver* writes: It appears that a college prank was the impetus for Capt. Phillips to choose to become a combat airman: Williams describes an event in which the rivalry between Phillips's school, Texas State Agriculture College (now Univ. of Texas at Arlington, Texas) and Tarleton State U. in Stephenville, Texas. Phillips took his own plane to his rivals, intending to taunt their pre-game celebration. Unfortunately, Tarleton was pre-warned; a student threw a big board in the air, hitting the propeller and causing the plane to crash. Chester's punishment was that he could not complete his education. Williams believes this humiliation was the driving force for Phillips to request combat duty. His plane went down on the Kiel Raid, 14 May, 1943. Seven of the crew were KIA, four became POWs.

Williams wrote: "I want to thank all of you who sent me information about Capt. Phillips. Some of you remembered him as "George." I checked with the family to see what the origin of "George" might be. (It was the name of his dog)... I hope to see and meet many of you in Shreveport.



From the Archives

Does anybody remember this?

8th Air Force 3rd Anniversary
Office of the Station Commander
January 28, 1945

During the first part of the month, a couple of old faces reappeared on the station after an absence of nine months. They belonged to two enlisted members of the Chemical Company, who, in March 1944, were transferred to the Eastern Command and stationed in Russia to service bombers on shuttle missions. They reached their destination, the southeastern part of Russia, by a circuitous route, coming up through Persia. They found only makeshift quarters on a barren site and in a dry climate. Their food consisted of U.S. Army rations which were flown in from the Persian Gulf Command. All other supplies, including regular Post Exchange rations were also flown in from here. News was supplied by incoming crews and translated Russian communique, which were

posted on the bulletin board. Later, the men were able to salvage a liaison set and were thus supplied with ready news and entertainment. During the summer, a club was set up for the Americans and Russian officers. Here, liquid refreshments were available in the form of cognac, wines, a lager type of beer, and that "power-plus" vodka. (They say that the stuff can be used as lighter fluid.) The men worked in teams with the Russians supplying labor to be supervised by the Americans. The language was very difficult to learn and very few knew enough to converse to the natives, although some of the Russian officers could speak English well enough to make themselves understood. The Americans had very little opportunity to observe outside life since the Russians are hard-living, hard-working, and hard-fighting people and such things as transportation for pleasure purposes are absolutely unheard of. Theirs is an all out effort to terminate the war. However, the men did have an opportunity to observe the operation of a small nearby village. The village functions on a cooperative basis, with all the natives living in the village and going out to work the land each day. On certain days, they hold a bazaar at which they trade items they do not buy and sell. This entire cooperative system is worked more or less since there are no government authorities there to supervise. It was quite an experience to those men, but they did welcome the opportunity to return since the simply clean, hard life and that Russians lead is so very strange to us. The men left there in October and returned by the long circuitous route, as they had gone.

MEMORIES OF A DISTANT WAR



God Bless
the U.S.A



**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

P.O. Box 712287

Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



Non Profit

U.S. Postage

Paid

Permit #6923

Salt Lake City, UT

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



WQ

8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 3 - Issue #7

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Spring, 2001

Non Profit Veterans Organization

EIN #68-0351397

LOUISIANA BELLE

Sgt. Romie C. Vaughn, Assistant Crew Chief, *Louisiana Belle*.



The cover photo and feature story for this issue is one of good news to all of the 44th BGVA.

**The aircraft is the 68th Bomb Squadron
B-24J-42-50806 WQ E, Louisiana Belle.**

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD

President Emeritus: B-Gen. John H. Gibson
(Retired)
7008 Gateridge
Dallas, TX 75240-7936
Phone: (972) 239-0559

Immediate Past President: Roy W. Owen (506)
6304 Meadowridge Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95409-5839
Phone: (707) 538-4726 Fax: (707) 538-1212
e-mail: Rowen44bg@aol.com

President: Edw. K. "Mike" Mikoloski (66/67)
626 Smithfield Road #702
N. Providence, RI 02904
Phone/Fax: (401) 353-0144
e-mail: EKMLIB44@msn.com

First Vice President: Richard D. Butler (506/67)
44th Group VP to 2nd ADA
16828 Mitchell Circle
Riverside, CA 92518
Phone (909) 697-2908 Fax: (909) 697-5875
e-mail: rdb24@earthlink.net

Treasurer: Gerald (Jerry) Folsom (506)
3582 East Dover Hill Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84121-5527
Phone (801) 733-7371 Fax: (801) 942-9988
e-mail: 44thbgva@xmission.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: rewdm@blazenet.net

Director (67) Archivist
Anthony "Tony" Mastradone
9111 Tuckerman Street
Lanham, MD 20706-2709
Phone/Fax: (301) 577-1487
e-mail: mast@cires.com

Director: Robert J. Lehnhausen (68)
2540 Benton Court
Peoria, IL 61615-8838
Phone/Fax: (309) 243-1952

Director: Michael "Mike" Yuspeh (506)
7214 Sardonyx St.
New Orleans, LA 70124-3509
Phone/Fax: (504) 283-3424
e-mail: mikeyuspeh@worldnet.att.net

Director (44 SMW): Charles G. Simpson
P.O. Box 281
Breckenridge, CO 80424
Phone/Fax: (970) 453-0500
e-mail: AFMISSILEERS@compuserve.com

Historian: C.W. "Will" Lundy (67)
2519 Westville Trl
Cool, CA 95614-2008
Phone/Fax: (530) 886-8636 (Winter)
e-mail: willundy@aol.com
P.O. Box 315, Bridgeport, CA 93517 (Summer)
Phone/Fax: (760) 932-7349

Membership, Search: Art Hand (66)
517 Elm Street
Paris, IL 61944-1417
Phone/Fax: (217) 463-5905
e-mail: k9hwp@comwares.net

U.K. Representative: Steve Adams
28 Bassingham Rd.
Norwich, England NR3 2QT
Phone/Fax: 011-44-1603-400221
e-mail: s.p.adams@btinternet.com



ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS:
44th BGVA
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

The 8-Ball Tails ©

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

Compiled, written and published tri-yearly at 2041 Village Circle East, York, PA, by Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor. Printed and mailed Bulk Rate at Salt Lake City, UT under USPS Permit #6923. All original written material such as letters, stories, excerpts from personal diaries or memoirs, drawings and photos submitted to this journal will become the property of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and will be copyright protected except where noted. The text and photos are otherwise reproduced from official USAAF and USAF documents and photos which have been released for publication. Permission is granted for the contents of this journal to be reproduced specifically for personal archives. Otherwise, copyright material

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

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



LOUISIANA BELLE

By Roy Owen

In preceding issues we have described our negotiations with the 8th Air Force Museum to change the 466th Bomb Group B-24J *Laden Maiden* identifying markings to that of a 44th BG aircraft. The name of the aircraft, so appropriately chosen was our *Louisiana Belle*; the rationale being, the 466th was never stationed at Barksdale, while the 44th, after being activated at MacDill Field, Florida on 15 January 1941, was the first B-24 Bomb Group assigned to Barksdale on 7 February 1941. The 44th remained at Barksdale until 26 July 1942 during which time it trained the 90th, 93rd and 98th Bomb Groups before it 'graduated' to combat-ready and left for England to join the 8th Air Force.

The change of markings was totally supported by the 8th Air Force museum staff, the civic leaders of Shreveport and Bossier City and their Chambers of Commerce. It was approved by the Commander of the 8th AF and forwarded to HQ USAF for final approval, which it recently gave. Thus, the *Louisiana Belle* will bring to Barksdale and the 8th AF Museum all the glorious heritage of one of the most illustrious combat histories in the annals of air combat, 'The Flying 8 Balls.'

The answer to the question of who named the 44th BG "The Flying Eightballs," was found in Will Todd's book, *History of the 68th Bomb Squadron*. The story goes that the 44th picked up the name at Will Rogers Field. Col. Frank W. Robison, the CO was talking with Captain Goodman C. Griffin regarding the upcoming shipment to an overseas base. Robinson said he could not understand how this Air Force could even think that he could go into combat with this group of misfits, ninety day wonders and odd balls. He has never seen such a bunch of eightballs in his entire military career.

By the time the combat crews landed at Shipdham a few weeks



FRANCIS M Wood

later with twenty seven new B24-D Liberators, the paint was on hand and the artist was assigned his most important assignment to date, "Put the insignia on each of our planes."

The echoing cry from the 44th was, "The FLYING EIGHTBALLS of the 44th Bomb Group were ready to give the Jerries a go."

Now about the airplane: B-24J 42-50806-SH came off the Ford Willow Run plant assembly line in September, 1944 in the serial group 42-50760 to 42-51076. These were the first to be equipped with H2X AN/APS-15 which operated on X band for radar bombing. H2X was the American development of the British H2S, known as 'Mickey' APS-15A. Thus what was to be 42-50806 EA WQ when she reached Shipdham and the 68th Bomb Squadron of the 44th was, it could be said, born to lead!

WOOD AND DELLA ON THEIR wedding day, MARCH 18, 1944 in FINSBURY PARK, N. LONDON.

Still happily MARRIED, WOODY AND DEL RESIDE IN NATCHEZ, MS.



When she arrived at Shipdham, she was assigned to veteran Crew Chief M/Sgt.

Francis M. 'Woody' Wood and his assistant, '**Romie' Vaughn** on September 26, 1944. We rightfully associate the word veteran with M/Sgt. Wood, since in his total of 33 months overseas he crewed four different B-24s before getting 806 E, and had been awarded the Bronze Star by Col. Leon Johnson for his launch of 96 missions without a mechanical abort. He remained with 806 E until war's end, and flew home aboard her. His most precious acquisition during his tour in England was his lovely British-born wife Della.



When 806 arrived at AF 115, she was unnamed and with no regular combat crew assigned. Wood took advantage of this opportunity to name 'his' plane. He was proud to title her after his birthplace, a 2,000 acre pre-Civil War plantation named Belle, located on the banks of the Tensas Northeast River in Louisiana. The newly named *Louisiana Belle* flew 57 combat missions, sustaining only one abort after losing an engine well before target, forcing the crew to return. She flew 52 of her missions as lead aircraft. Among the targets she struck were tough, heavily defended sites, such as the Kiel Sub-Pens, Dortmund, Magdeburg, Berlin (twice) and Bottrop, where over the target she took an 88 mm burst directly under the plane. Her determined crew pressed on to the target, and she returned with over 200 flak holes to patch and two fuel cell changes in the left wing for Wood and his crew to repair. *Louisiana Belle* flew as lead aircraft for all three Bomb Groups in the 14th Combat Wing. Being a lead aircraft, Wood and his ground crew were required, if possible, to have her combat ready every day. Her record shows several stretches of three and four back-to-back missions.

ON THE RAMP AT Willow Run ARE THE displayed B-24s. SECOND IN LINE IS 806 E *LOUISIANA BELLE*

In late May, 1945 *Louisiana Belle* departed Shipdham for the U.S. Ironically she was flown by 1st Lt.

Russell G. Erickson and his crew of

nine, plus ten passengers; the same crew who had flown her over in September '44. After arrival back in the U.S., *Louisiana Belle* had




LOUISIANA BELLE
CALL LETTER "E"

one more duty to perform: the Ford Willow Run plant, in a gesture of thanks to their work force, had a family day and arranged to have several of the Ford built aircraft on display.

Four of these aircraft were from the 44th.

The refurbished and re-painted B-24 we will see and dedicate during the Reunion in October is the result of the hard work and determination of Mr. 'Buck' Rigg and his assistant, C/M Sgt. Grillo, working with the Air Force side; and our overall Project Officer, **Clem Haulman**. Clem orchestrated all the various efforts, working with **Dick Butler**, who, after acquiring the drawings of the B-24-J engine cowlings and other parts of the airplane which were in need of repair, herded through re-manufacture and shipment to Barksdale. On arrival, Mr. Rigg arranged for volunteer active duty Air Force personnel to make the repairs and do the re-painting. Certainly, not the least of the contributions necessary to the success of this project was done by **Mike Yuspeh**. By virtue of his own community service contributions in the region, Mike has been able to solicit funding through a number of sources: the city governments and Chambers of Commerce of Shreveport and Bossier City, the Louisiana state government, and our hotel, the Isle of Capri Hotel. Through Mike's efforts and contacts, the entire *Louisiana Belle* was made possible.

Every member of the 44th BGVA can stand proud of the placement of the *Louisiana Belle* at Barksdale AFB. She will not only serve as a commemorative of the glorious combat record established by the 44th Bomb Group as a WWII part of the Mighty 8th Air Force, but will also embody the history of our service to the mission of this historic base in its wartime role.



From the Desk of our President

Even though we celebrated it last year, the new millennium more accurately began THIS YEAR on January 1. It is my fondest wish that each and every one of you, and your loved ones, are blessed with a healthy, prosperous, and joyful year in this new millennium.

And, as is our custom, all new years are ushered in with toasts and resolutions. My toast therefore, though belated, is "May the hinges of friendship never rust and may the wings of love never lose a feather. May your right hand always be stretched out in friendship; but, never in want." My resolution is to increase my donations to our MASTER DATA BASE FUND (MDBF) throughout this year simply by adopting the age-old theorem of "CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME" We are all literally deluged weekly, if not daily, by mail, phone, TV, e-mail, etc. for donations to hundreds of charitable, medical, organizational, educational, political, international and myriad of other worthy causes that are too numerous to mention. We all have our favorite charities, and rightly have supported them over the many years of our lives because we are a caring generous and giving generation - truly the greatest. But, NOW, TO-DAY we have a need to support a noble and worthy cause in the MDBF, conceived and designed to preserve for posterity the illustrious history of the 44th BG and the heroic contributions and sacrifices of the men and women, many of whom made the SUPREME SACRIFICE for the causes of freedom and liberty.

To date, the archival information (344 Missions and the 8085 sorties including the names of the aircrews and the aircraft they flew) is already entered into the computer system. Currently, we are in the process of inserting the personal biographies of our air, ground and support personnel, as well as much of the information Will Lundy has assembled. But, the more difficult and costly phase of the MDB is to search, locate and contact the wives,

children, relatives, friends, neighbors and/or public record centers to solicit information on our deceased colleagues so that their gallant service and sacrifices may be included in the computerized data base. This phase of the MDB Project will require much time, hard work, many volunteers and the assistance of professional researchers and/or historians, public officials, governmental agencies, veterans organizations and other record-keeping institutions. And, it is this Phase that will require the expenditure of funds that are not available from our operating budget.

Last year your Board and I embarked on the MDB FUND DRIVE Through your kind and generous response to my letter of January 31, 2000, we raised \$16,000.00 with donations still coming in, but slowing. We must integrate our efforts. To those who contributed, you have my compliments and deepest gratitude and hope for your continued support with this campaign.


Now, it is my sincere hope that all members will be enjoined/inspired to build on this auspicious start by also making a new year's resolution to donate, to our own MDBF DRIVE, funds that you normally and regularly would contribute to other fund drives this year. This being consistent with the aforementioned principle of "CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME" I hasten to point out here that none of my remarks/suggestions are applicable to the support you provide your respective church, synagogue, mosque or any other place of worship. This support should continue under any and all circumstances.

You are reminded that all contributions to our MDBF DRIVE are tax deductible; hence, both you and the Fund benefit by your donation. All donations should be made out to "44th BGVA MDB FUND" and mailed to 44th BGVA, P.O. Box 712287, Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287.

CLOSING THOUGHT FOR THE DAY ON GIVING.

"Some give their might; Others give with their mite;
And, some don't give who might."

Let's all of us give a mite.



Edward K. Mikoloski
Edward K. Mikoloski, President



ALGENE KEY

COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE 66TH SQ.; AVIATION PIONEER

Early flights out of Shipdham did not enjoy the luxury of accompaniment by the 'Little Friends,' and the Luftwaffe took full advantage. Life always hung on the expertise of every crew member. The courage of those who flew, despite overwhelming odds, can never be overstated.

From **Will Lundy's** record of the 66th Sq. comes a memory of the late **Algene Key**, C.O. of the 66th Squadron, early pioneer in aviation, and valorous participant in WWII.



Long before the Japanese undertook to start the War at Pearl Harbor, Algene and his brother Fred set an endurance record, flying 653 hours and 27 minutes on a noisy trip around their hometown that took 27 days. *(That record was never beaten until the Astronauts took off.)* The people of Meridian, Mississippi were strongly supportive of their first attempt, but their enthusiasm waned with continued efforts. On the third attempt, the droning sounds of the overhead plane that continued through the nights became a real irritant; and their air-to-air refueling was a novelty at first, but less impressive as 'Ole Miss' rattled on.

Their friend, James Keeton, brought fuel and supplies to the brothers, early proof that air-to-air refueling was possible. Fred sometimes dazzled the spectators by walking on the wing, and straddling the engine to inspect gas lines—with no parachute.

When the record was broken and the plane came down, it was the biggest celebration Meridian ever held. 30,000 people gathered at the airport to watch the plane come in, and reporters from all over the country flocked to the tiny airport which had just been renamed Key Field.

Those barnstorming pioneers and others like them ignited the spirit of aviation in the youth of America. When WWII began, adventurous young men were eager to fling themselves into that colorful sphere. Among those whose goals were shaped by those early airmen was **Bob Lehnhausen**. "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," he recalled.

Even before the war began, both Key brothers engaged in training airmen in the National Guard. The move from barnstormers to military was not a difficult transition, and when the Guard was activated, Fred and Al went to Langley Field, Virginia for B-17 training. They distinguished themselves in the Pacific Theatre in bomb runs and Zero kills. When McArthur departed from Java, the Key brothers assisted in evacuating him, troops and many civilians to Australia. Fred's mission numbers were completed, and he assumed administrative and teaching positions in this country. Later, when Al was assigned to B-29's, it was his brother who checked him out.

If you haven't signed up for the European trip, DO IT NOW. You will see those places that ring so clearly in your memory. You will be traveling with that great bunch of guys who joined you in slapping Nazi Germany into submission. Larry Herpel has laid out a fantastic itinerary. You will see the peaceful side of France and Germany, peaceful because of your courage and sacrifice. Peter Loncke in Belgium and Steve Adams in England are helping arrange meaningful events; and our European friends are waiting for the opportunity to thank you—once again—for helping them through the worst happening of the century.

The dates are September 11-26, leaving from New Jersey. From Newark, we fly into beautiful Paris, get a half day tour, then off to your choice of sights. The City of Lights has sights and structures that are unique in the world: the Eiffel Tower, Arc D'Triumphe, Notre Dame, WWII Museum, the Louvre... your choice of wonders.

By bus we will travel to Caen (the 'milkrun' that brought down the *Passion Pit*), Normandy (where Jackie Roberts can read her father's name on the Wall of Honor) and Rouen. On the 5th day we will leave for Luxembourg, (the safest city in the world from invasion, until airplanes were invented.) We will stop by Reims and Verdun. In Reims we will visit Eisenhower's SHAPE Headquarters. From there to Bastogne, where General McAuliffe uttered that famous word, "Nuts." (He held out until the weather cleared, then help came from the sky.)

In Wibrin, Peter Loncke has orchestrated a memorial service for the Pinder crew, whose plane crashed there January 29, 1944. This enthusiastic Belgium airman has become a self-appointed investigator of crash sites, and has been helpful to many American, English and Australian families, informing them of the circumstances of the crash.

From Belgium, we cross the Rhine River, near the most challenging engineering feat in history—building a bridge into Germany while under constant enemy fire. Here we visit Cologne, Wesel, Maastricht and Liege. In Wesel we will visit the graves of the

Crandell and Chandler crews. Crash sites for these two planes were located by our Belgian friend, Peter. **Louis DeBlasio** and **Bob Vance** are the lone survivors of those two crashes. **John Delaney**, a fighter pilot on a P-47 dived down to strafe the anti-aircraft guns which brought down the two Liberators, and he crashed. He shared the POW experience with Bob and Louis.

We will visit the Ardennes Cemetery, where Lois Cianci's father is memorialized on the Tablet of the Missing, then to Brussels, through Dunkirk to Calais, then across the Channel past the White Cliffs of Dover. By bus, we'll go to Norwich, where we have a day to explore before heading to Shipdham. Friends will be waiting for us: Steve Adams, our British Board Member, Brian Peel, an admirer of the 44th since boyhood,

Phyllis Dubois and others who have never been shy to express their gratitude to the Americans. We will visit the Memorial Library, the Aero Club, Shipdham Airfield and the 14th Combat Wing Hq. Then Steve Adams and Roy Owen have a reception and barbecue set up where we will visit and picnic with Andrew Doubleday, our friends and civic leaders of Shipdham and the members of the Shipdham Aero Club.

We will visit the magnificent Duxford Imperial War Museum where the B-52 dwarfs all other planes on display, even the B-24, which is still under repair. At Cambridge we will visit the American Cemetery and Memorial with its Wall of Honor a sight that is not easily forgotten. We have a day in London to browse; then filled with joyous memories, we leave the following day.

To get the best prices, we need a full bus. Don't pass up this opportunity to have the trip of a lifetime. Every happening on the trip has been orchestrated to give you the most for your money. Larry Herpel will assist everybody in getting the best price to Newark, the gateway city.

Reservations can still be made by calling Ascot Travel, at this toll free number: 1-888-317-7483.

E-Mail: ascottravel@thrifty.net
Please note: The price for these 15 days is \$2,685. It includes 14 breakfasts, 10 dinners. Travel insurance is not included. If you wish to have that precaution, the price is an additional \$49.



**EUROPE
OR
BUST**

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS SOCIETY



Going to the DFC Society meeting is an experience in humility. There are airmen from all plane positions (mostly pilots) and from every type of aircraft that flew in WWII, Korea, Viet Nam, Gulf War and Kosovo. A gab session is an invitation to hear wild adventure stories, providing new insight into the way WWII was won. Many commercial pilots had some hilarious accounts to relate.

We met one pilot from the 9th Air Corps who had flown to Ploesti on that awesome mission 8/1/43. Also, fighter pilots from the 15th Air Corps, who accompanied bombers on later missions. Les Howard, Past President of the Hump Pilots Society reminisced about the flights over the Himalayas from India to China, supplying Generalissimo Chiang Kai Chek with needed materials.

A PMB Navy Pilot remembered listening to Tokyo Rose, who played American music. She spoke directly to the men on his ship, concluding her broadcast with a promise to 'get your ship tomorrow.' They did. The Japanese planes struck it, but could not take it down. It limped into Pearl Harbor for repair.

A tour to Lackland Air Force Base brought memories of Basic Training to many of the members, Perry included, particularly a notorious hill between the two fields that they had to climb. They have a B-17, Mosquito and Blackbird on display there, and are looking for old photos to go into their Air Command Museum. The newer Kelly Field is alongside Lackland.

Perry heard a statement that he finds hard to believe: One flyer said that his plane went down in friendly territory, and a group of women went after his parachute. He claims he held them off at gunpoint; as if he had lost his chute, he would have had to pay \$300 for the loss, since he had gone down in friendly territory. (*Is this true?*)

The government gave away thousands of DFC's during and in later wars, for completing missions or flying on especially dangerous assignments. There is no list of who received them. Anyone who deserves a DFC, but did not receive it, may contact the Society at 6920 Miramar Road, Suite 207-D, San Diego, CA 92121-2642.

MIKE YUSPEH HAS
8 BALL T-SHIRTS,
SIZE LARGE,
AS WERE PRESENTED IN SAN DIEGO.
THE COST IS \$7, INCLUDING POSTAGE.
SEND CHECK TO:
MIKE YUSPEH
7214 SARDONYX STREET
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70124-3509



44th Bomb Group Veterans Assn. Reunion Agenda

Bossier City - Barksdale AFB - Shreveport, Louisiana
October 15, 16, 17, 18, 2001 - Isle of Capri Hotel



Monday, Oct. 15

9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

Registration

Registration

Board meeting

6:00 PM

7:00 PM

DELI BUFFET. Cash Bar.

Buffet (Cold Cuts, etc.)

Tuesday, Oct. 16

7:30 AM to 9:00 AM

9:00 AM To 10:30 AM

11:15 AM

1:45 PM

3:30 PM

6:00 PM

7:00 PM

Breakfast Buffet

Registration

LUNCH Officers Club Barksdale Field - First bus leaves hotel. Speaker at lunch will be Colonel Steve DePyssler (Ret.) Two buses will shuttle from hotel to Barksdale Field. After lunch at approximately 1:45 we will walk over to museum where the dedication of the restored B-24 "Louisiana Belle," will take place. Military as well as local dignitaries will be introduced and make remarks. Approximately 3:30 first bus will leave for return to Hotel.

SQUADRON DINNERS (location to be posted). Cash Bar.

Sit down dinner.



Wednesday, Oct. 17

7:30 AM to 9:00 AM

9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

1:00 PM

6:00 PM

7:00 PM.

Breakfast Buffet.

Annual Membership Meeting - (location to be posted)

Tour of the City of Shreveport

Leave hotel for those members who purchased tickets for Tour #1.

BANQUET. Cash bar.

Dinner will be served.

Candlelight Ceremony

Combo will play for dancing.

Thursday, Oct. 18

7:30 AM to 9:00 AM

8:30 AM

6:00 PM

7:00 PM

Breakfast Buffet

Today is a free day

Tour of Natchitoches and Lunch.

Leave hotel for those members who purchased tickets for Tour #2.

BUFFET. Cash bar.

Dinner - barbecue with all the trimmings.

You can dance the night away with a big 17 piece band with the "Glenn Miller" sound.

Yes, you will have a room in which to meet and visit with your buddies every day from after breakfast until 5:00 PM.



TOUR #1

Wednesday, October 17:

1:30 PM Depart hotel

1:35 PM City Tour of Shreveport

The tour begins with a look at where it all began, the Shreveport Riverfront, 1830s site of bustling trade, drunken brawls and steamy brothels at the head of the Old Texas Trail. It was through here that many thousands emigrated to settle

much of Texas and surrounding states. Today, new casinos and high rise hotels, night clubs and restaurants thrive on the riverfront. We take a look at the past and present of downtown Shreveport, including a look at the Confederate Memorial, erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Shreveport, as the capital city of Confederate, Louisiana, was the last place to learn of the South's defeat in the War Between the States. As a result, the flag of the Confederate States of America flies on public property in front of the Caddo Parish Courthouse to this day.

Ledbetter Heights Historic District

The city tour continues as we motor through the oldest of Shreveport's three historic districts. View the old Texas Avenue corridor where Louis Armstrong performed at the Cotton Club, and Austin Place with its renovated 19th century Queen Anne Victorian cottages and mansions. Visit Oakland Cemetery, where 15 Shreveport mayors, the mother of Davy Crockett, and hundreds of victims of Shreveport's Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1873 were buried in an open mass grave. Oakland also contains a feature unique to Louisiana; above ground tombs, which present an interesting albeit macabre story. We continue to see the Municipal Auditorium, where Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Hank Williams and many others' careers began on stage here on the Louisiana Hayride radio show.

Tour continues through the Fairfield and Highland Historic Districts. Savor in the richness of days gone by, as you view block after block of old Southern mansions framed by verdant live oaks, dogwood and azalea.

2:45 PM Libbey Glass Factory Outlet Store



The store offers to the public Libbey tableware, glass creations and canisters, Louisiana souvenirs, L.E Smith decorative items and assorted accessories at outlet prices.

3:30 PM Depart Libbey Glass

3:45 PM Return to hotel



Thursday, October 18

TOUR #2

8:30 AM Depart hotel

9:45 AM Natchitoches, Louisiana

Founded in 1714, Natchitoches was settled before New Orleans and is the oldest settlement in the Louisiana Purchase. You may remember this intriguing little city from the movie *Steel Magnolias*, which was filmed here. Full of French, Spanish, Native American, African and Anglo influence, Natchitoches retains a colorful palette of ethnic traditions, gracious hospitality and tremendous pride in the past that residents eagerly share with visitors. Our eccentric step-on guide/actress clad in costume correct to the time of early Natchitoches entertains us with her assumption of the personalities of historical characters discussed in her unique presentation of fact and folklore



10:30 AM Cane River Country

Lined with the cotton fields and mansions of working antebellum plantations, oak alleys, churches and old cemeteries, scenic Cane River inspires a celebration of antebellum life like few areas in the South.

11:00 AM Beau Fort Plantation Tour and Luncheon

An avenue of Live Oaks guides us into the exquisite garden of this working cotton plantation on the site of historic Fort Charles, c.1760, where we will, weather permitting, revel in the splendor of an absolutely charming luncheon experience on the grounds. Before enjoying a fine meal served on china with crystal, we will tour the home. Our down to earth Creole cuisine lunch today will be two Natchitoches Meat Pies served with Dirty Rice Dressing, French Creole Beans, Apple-Raisin Slaw, Mini Buttered Biscuits, Tea and Coffee and Pecan Pie for dessert.

12:30 PM Depart Beau Fort

12:45 PM Melrose

A National Historic Landmark Plantation, Melrose is a unique complex of nine buildings dating back to c.1796. The plantation is rich in history and legends of courage and creativity that began with the legendary Marie Therese Coincoin. The South's foremost primitive artist, Clementine Hunter, created renowned paintings here of the life and times of Cane River Country. In African House on the plantation grounds, Hunter created with his brush what is called "the most colorful room in Louisiana." She died on New Year's Day, 1988, shortly before her 102nd birthday and is entombed in the mausoleum at St. Augustine. Guests will have the opportunity to purchase mementos of Natchitoches and Cane River Country here at the gift shop.

2:15 PM Depart Melrose

3:45 PM Return to hotel; tour ends.

44th Bomb Group Veterans Assn. Reunion - 2001

Register
by September 10, 2001

Isle of Capri Hotel - Bossier City, LA
Barksdale AFB
October 15, 16, 17, & 18, 001

Reunion Registration Form

Please print or type. All Information must be complete:

Last Name _____ First Name (Tag) _____

Spouse _____ Squadron # _____ Life Member _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Guests & Relation _____

Number to Attend _____ @ \$215.00 Each Amount \$ _____

Tour #1- City Tour of Shreveport
Number on Tour _____ @ \$25.00 Per Person Amount \$ _____

Tour # 2- Tour of Natchitoches & Lunch
Number on Tour _____ @ \$55.00 Per Person Amount \$ _____

Total Amount Remitted Amount \$ _____
Check # _____

Description of tours are in this issue of the 8 Ball Tails.

Registration Includes: Everything on agenda except tours as listed above.
Registration must be received by September 10, 2001.

Hotel registration must be made directly with Isle Of Capri Hotel & Casino by phone only
Toll free (800) 843-4753. See copy of hotel form in this issue.

Check Made Payable to: 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association (44th BGVA)
Mail to: Mike Yuspeh - 7214 Sardonyx Street - New Orleans, LA 70124-3509
Phone: (504)283-3424 Fax: (504) 283-3425 (Picks up on 6th ring)
E-Mail: Mikeyuspeh@juno.com

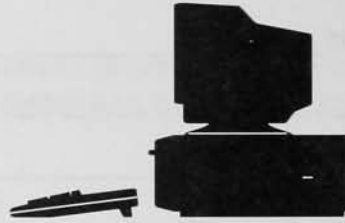




IT'S FINALLY HERE!

We now have our own Web Site

<http://www.44thbombgroup.com>



When checking it out, remember...it is under construction, and changes and additions will be happening regularly.

Check it often!

We need to ask each of you to take a look at the 44th aircraft listed on the Web Page. We are asking people to click on any airplane name there is a line under. The line indicates there is a picture of the aircraft, possibly with crew members and maybe even a short story about that airplane. And now for your job...check your closets, boxes of photos and photo albums to see if you have any of the data for the listed aircraft. Let's get those planes underlined.

Also, while you're looking for those photos and going down memory lane...if you haven't already done so, send us your military biography and become a permanent part of the documented 44th history.

BGVA 2001 Reunion Isle Of Capri Hotel

PHONE RESERVATIONS ONLY!

711 Isle Of Capri Blvd. (Exit 20 Off of I 20)
Bossier City, LA 71171-5637
Phone: (318) 678-7777 Fax: (318) 425-4617
You must call (800) 843-4753 for reservation.
Reservation can only be made by phone.



Reservation Method: Individual Call-In.

Reservations for this event will be made by individual attendees directly with the Hotel's Reservation Department by calling (800) 843-4753. To assure the Group Rate, attendees must identify the group name, 44th Bomb Group Veterans Assn, Inc., and their reservation will be accepted at the special group rate. Guests will be accommodated on a SPACE AND RATE AVAILABLE BASIS. The check in time is 4:00 PM and check out time is NOON. Hotel will accommodate any early arrivals on a space available basis.

Guaranteed Reservations: Guarantees are required for guest arriving after 4:00 PM. To guarantee a reservation, they require a deposit equal to one night's room and tax at the time reservation is made. The deposit is refundable only if reservation is canceled 48 hours prior to the day of arrival. Guarantee may be made with a check or credit card.

This is the information that you will need when making the call.

Date Of Call: _____ Confirmation #: _____

Name: _____ Arrival Date _____ Time Of Arrival _____

Departure Date: _____ Organization: 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association Inc.

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax#: _____ E Mail Address: _____

Additional Person in room: Yes No

Name Of Additional Person: _____

Rates: \$89.27 Including Tax (Single/Double Each Night)

Credit Card: American Express, Visa, MASTERCARD, Discover Card

Credit card Number - Expiration Date - Name On Card.

Reunion Dates: October 15, 16, 17, 18 Year 2001



PASSION PIT CREW

FRONT L-R: JACK BARTOLI, NAVIGATOR;

IRWIN STOVROFF, BOMBARDIER;

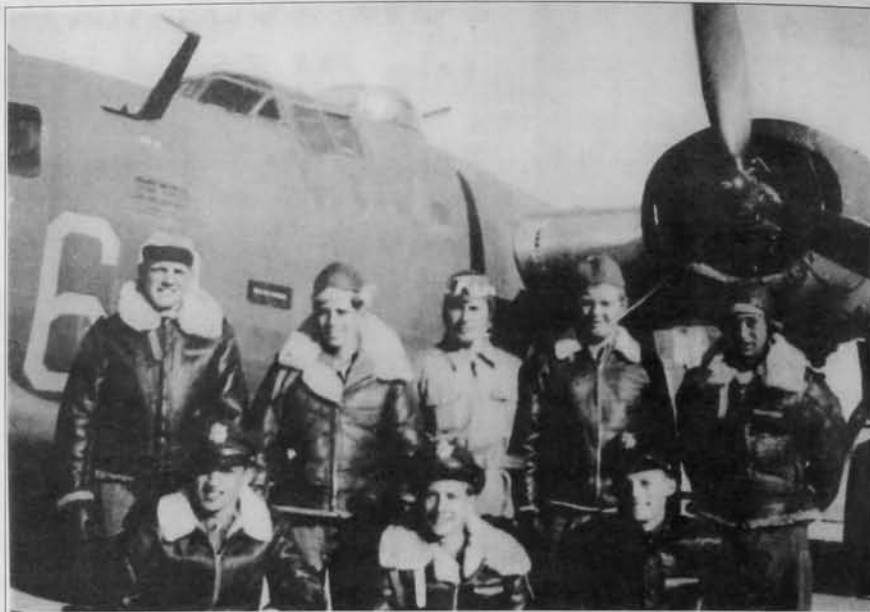
JOHN MILLIKEN, PILOT.

BACK: DARREL LARSEN, ENGINEER;

MARTIN RICHARD, RADIO OPERATOR;

WILLIAM MANIERRE, CO-PILOT; KENNETH BECKWITH, GUNNER; AND MORRIS LARKIN, TAIL GUNNER.

THE PASSION PIT



The *Times-Picayune* in New Orleans highlighted the **John Milliken** crew for having seven members present at the 44th BG Reunion, and their story has resounded through a number of veteran publications. The *Passion Pit* went down at the Falais Pocket near Caen on August 13, 1944. Every member of the crew had an experience that was unique, none more so than that of Bombardier, **Irwin J. Stovroff**.



Stovroff recalls it thus: "It was to be our last scheduled mission; we were to complete our tour. Together we had flown very dangerous missions, many of which were deep into Germany. This trip was just over the Channel, the Falais Pocket in France, a 'milk run.'

"We were on a straight run, and were to drop our bombs on three sites, one third each time. Then BOOM! We got a direct hit at the first target. Numbers one and two engines were on fire. We all bailed out, right into the German front lines. On the way down I threw away my dog tags, not wanting them to know I was Jewish.

"Within a week's time we were taken to a major interrogation center outside of Frankfurt, Germany. I think it was called Wetzler. We were separated and placed in solitaire, and individually

taken out for continued interrogations. The German officer, my interrogator, asked me questions I could not and would not answer. I gave him the usual name, rank and serial number, and told him that was all I had to give, and knew very little else. On my third trip with him, he said, "I know who you are and what you are (meaning Jewish). He told me he could save my life, then proceeded to name my father, mother, brother, sister, the grammar and high school I had attended, even the name of a former girl friend. He then said he lived on Ashland Avenue, next to the girl I was dating, pre-war. He had lived on the next street--Claremont Avenue in Buffalo, New York. He said he remembered being in class with my older sister, and had come to Germany to be with his grandmother, and stayed. He again said he would help me, and he put a question mark on my records next to religion.

Later in Stalag Luft #1, I was separated from the main compound of prisoners because I was Jewish. I know the reason we were not killed was because of the courageous speeches of Col. Zehmke and Col. Spicer, who warned the German commander that if any American officers were harmed, they would be held responsible. Col. Spicer was put in solitaire and sentenced to death for his speech. He survived until the end of the war.

When I finally got home after VE Day, I went to where this German traitor lived, but his parents had moved.

After this Dulag Luft (interrogation), I later found myself with my co-pilot **Bill Manierre** in a large room. Bill pointed out a beat up and dirty POW who was staring at us. Did I know who it was? I looked at the man and said 'no.' Bill said, 'he must know you,' and I replied, 'I can't figure out who he is.'

Suddenly Bill exclaimed, "My God! THAT'S MY BROTHER." His brother immediately recognized Bill, and they met and embraced.

The Germans were flabbergasted when they found out this was happening. Major Cy Manniere was a West Point graduate who had been dropped into France, and was working with the French Underground when captured and tortured. He told Bill and me to repeat his story, that he was a member of the Air Corps, had been shot down and picked up by the French Underground. If the Germans knew the truth, he could have been shot as a spy. They believed him, and he was sent to the same camp as Bill and I. Their mother received two telegrams on the same day, 1:00 AM, 1:00 PM on both sons—Missing in Action. "*Fact is greater than fiction.*"

Stovroff is now a volunteer National Service Officer at West Palm Beach VA Center, working only with ex-POWs to help get pensions and compensations. He has met six ex-POWs that were in his camp. And stranger than fiction, his next door neighbor in Florida was in the same barracks as Stovroff when he was in Stalag Luft #1 "segregated." This man's family owned KATZ DELICATESSEN in New York whose slogan was "Send a Salami to a Soldier in the Army."

Milliken's Evasion

John Milliken, pilot, intended to get this 'milk run' over, then sign up again. He was captured, but fortunately, was able to escape. "The German army was trapped, and we were trying to

keep them pinned until Patton could get there from Cherbourg. The *Passion Pit* was flying on the right wing of the command ship. We had one long bomb run to reach three road intersections. We were at about 15,000 feet when anti-aircraft fire hit us. The flak came through the bomb bay doors, cutting the hydraulic lines. Our bombs would not drop, and the plane was on fire.



PASSION PIT going down.

"I gave the order to 'Bail Out', and when I thought everyone was out, I let go of the controls and jumped. At first I didn't pull the ripcord. I just lay on my back, counting 'chutes. When I finally pulled the cord, I was so close that I hit the ground in thirty seconds. I followed procedure--rolled up the chute and hid it, and I knew which way was north, so I started hiding and walking. But the Germans got me. First they put me and a British airman in a farm house with a concrete cellar. In one place it had soft cement, so I started digging. But they came for us before we could get out. They took us to a courtyard where I met up with the rest of my crew. Next they ushered us onto a German personnel truck with a canvas top."

At that point Americans had total command of the air, so the truck moved at night with no lights to avoid being strafed. Milliken was at the front of the truck, and he noticed a loose flap. He pointed it out to his crew, suggesting that he



go first, and they should follow. He bailed out and rolled into a ditch, but nobody followed. He considers it pure luck that he wasn't caught, as there were two armed guards on the tail gate.

Milliken walked to a farm house, and explained his circumstance in his best French. The woman who answered quickly ushered him to another site, as Germans were sleeping in her house. She provided him with a worker's shirt, cap and a loaf of bread.

Then, using his Boy Scout knowledge, he headed north, using the North Star as his guide, sleeping in the bushes by day. The next night was foggy, so he just laid low. On the third day, hiding under bushes alongside a stream, he woke to find a Tiger Tank headed toward him, cutting bushes for German soldiers to use as camouflage. So he ran again.

"By this time I was really hungry, and I saw something great—a cow with an udder full of milk. So I enjoyed that. Then a bullet whizzed by. I thought, 'four days of running, and they got me again.' But to my relief, it was the Canadian First Army. I ripped off my shirt; and with delight, showed them my uniform."

He spent a couple of days in their camp, then hitched a ride back to London. He ran into a bombardier from his group, who turned white when he saw him.. "I thought you were dead," he exclaimed. (Small wonder. The *Passion Pit* turned into a fireball, minutes after the crew had exited.) All ten members of Milliken's crew had made it safely to the ground.

In two weeks after meeting the Canadians, Milliken was back in the United States. He never saw many of his crew again until the 44th BGVA Reunion in New Orleans, 1999. Seven of the ten joined him: **Martin Richard**, Engineer/Gunner; **Darrel Larsen**, Gunner; **Kenneth Beckwith**, Radio Operator; **Jack Bertoli**, Navigator; **Morris Larkin**, Tail Gunner and Irwin Stovroff, Bombardier. One member of the crew is dead. Two others could not attend because of health problems.

From Somewhere in England ...



*the Flying Eight-Ball
Brings You Best Wishes!*

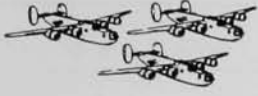


From the Editor:

Where is your Database? You write me letters (for which I am so grateful), but when I try to find you in the Database, you are not there! Why? Your Database is the last thing you can fling into the future. Your children and grandchildren are asking questions about WWII. You have magnificent stories of an event that cannot ever be replicated. What will happen when you are not there to answer the questions?

DO IT FOR YOUR EDITOR.
DO IT FOR YOUR CHILDREN.
DO IT FOR YOUR GRANDCHILDREN.
DO IT NOW!

44th Bomb Group Military Heritage Database



Personnel Information Form



Check Enclosed \$ _____

No. of Pictures _____ No. of Audio Cassettes _____

Last Name: _____ First: _____ Initial _____ Nickname: _____

Present Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Date of Birth: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Spouse: _____

Date enlisted/drafted: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Date Deceased: _____ Place of Interment/Burial _____ KIA

8th Air Force Group/s _____ Squadron/s or Unit/s _____

Special Military Training _____

Graduating Class: _____ Date: _____ Location: _____ State: _____

Group Rank _____ Group Duties _____ Ret. Rank _____

Your ASN (Serial Number/s) _____ / _____ / _____

Occupation prior to Military _____

Occupation after Military and/or continued Military service: _____

To complete your history it would be nice to list your descendants. Space is provided below.

Descendent	Relationship	Address	Phone
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Date Departed ETO: _____ How: _____ Destination: _____

Trip Details: _____

Military Honors & Decorations:

	<u>Stars or Clusters</u>		<u>Stars or Clusters</u>
Distinguished Service Cross	<input type="checkbox"/>	Air Medal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distinguished Service Medal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Purple Heart	<input type="checkbox"/>
Silver Star	<input type="checkbox"/>	Presidential Unit Citation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legion of Merit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prisoner of War	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distinguished Flying Cross	<input type="checkbox"/>	Victory Medal WWII	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bronze Star	<input type="checkbox"/>	European Theater Ribbon	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other Awards: (Including Foreign) _____

Please include additional pages for other thoughts, memories or stories you may wish to contribute:

Prepared by: _____ Relationship: _____

Address & Phone: _____

44th Bomb Group Military Heritage Database

Personal Information Data - Your "Living Monument"

It is our goal to assemble a complete record of all personnel who at one time served with the 8th Air Force during World War II in the 44th Bomb Group.

The records of those who were on flying status have been obtained from declassified group mission reports which have been stored in the National Archives. From this, a matrix has been developed which will allow for the search and retrieval of the following information: Who flew what mission, with whom, in what plane, to what target, on what date, enemy opposition, aircraft and personnel losses and hundreds of cross referenced bits of detailed information. We need information, biographies, and stories of Ground Crew and Personnel also.

To make the database come "Alive", your stories, memories, photographs and voice recordings are essential.

Cassette recordings of your memories are welcome and should be limited to two (2) minutes per incident.

Please provide a "then and now" photo of yourself and a crew photo if available.

A Master Copy of this multi-media database is now a part of the Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia. Other copies will be available to museums, libraries, universities, schools and on the World Wide Web Internet. You may also purchase your own copy of the full database on a CD to run on a home computer from the 44th BGVA (\$150.00 which includes 3 future updates).

Please fill out the form carefully so that the person entering your data into the database can interpret what you have written. It is important to include your special memories. These are an important part of the database, "your memories" saving them for posterity. Should enough space not be provided, please add additional pages.

Return completed form with \$10.00 donation* if you have no photographs. If you have included photos, please submit \$15.00 donation* with your form, and mail to:

44th BGVA, P.O. Box 712287, Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

Photos will be returned *on request*.

*Donations are encouraged to help cover costs of processing. However, please donate what you can up to the suggested amount. Thank You.



IT TOOK FIFTY SIX YEARS BUT SHE FOUND US



The story of Jackie Roberts's 56 year effort to trace her own heritage is a lesson in perseverance. This newly adopted daughter of the 44th BG, has finally unraveled the facts of her father's death. For years, the little she knew of S/Sgt. **Jack Ostenson**, she learned from her mother Wilberta: that he had red curly hair and had a true zest for life. Jackie was born nine days after his death.

Wilberta, Jackie's mother, tried to learn details of Jack's death, but government records were difficult to obtain. For a while she corresponded with Jack's sister, who was kind enough to send Jackie a birthday gift every year. When she died, there was no further connection to Jack's family until years later when Jackie resumed the search. She had assumed that there were no other family members.

Gary Mathisen's craft went down January 21, 1944 on a mission to Escalles sur Buchy, a low level bombing assignment against the V-1 missiles that were already leveling the buildings in London. From **Will Lundy's** *Roll of Honor*, Jackie learned that Jack flew with the 68th Squadron on this mission which had been considered relatively 'safe.' Bombing altitude was at 12,000 feet.

Seven B-24's left Shipdham, and only three returned. Enemy fighters were fierce in their attacks, and on their sixth onset, Mathisen's plane was reported to be burning at the waist.

Waist Gunner Ostenson and six other crewmen were killed; three became POW's.

The plane was flying alongside the one in which **Clair Sheaffer** (Lois Cianci's father) went down. (It has been speculated that the same burst of flak brought both planes to the ground.)

"Nobody can imagine what life is like when you don't know your own ancestry," Jackie explained. "I got tired of explaining to the medical professionals, that I knew nothing about my father. If one of my children became ill, the doctor would want to know the diseases that ran in our



JACKIE AND LOWELL ROBERTS AT THE
BGVA SAN DIEGO REUNION.



family. It was difficult for them to imagine that I really didn't know ANYTHING about my father.

"Every time I would hear somebody say the words 'World War II', I would go up and question them," she continued. "Then when they started to question me, I had to admit that I knew nothing, and didn't know how to find anything out."

Knowing that Jack had come from St. George, Utah, Jackie and her husband Lowell decided to search the Mormon records to see what they could learn about his family. To her surprise, there were several brothers and a sister that could be tapped for knowledge. She called the sister, only to learn that the lady passed away the previous month. However, her husband, Jackie's uncle, brought the couple to his house, and she learned that she had lots of cousins, all of whom remembered her father. Her uncle had a big picture of Jack; and when she looked at it, she realized that he had a living replica, her daughter Kim. She had inherited his features, especially his eyes.

Next she found the daughter of the aunt who had remembered her birthday throughout her childhood years. This cousin's opening statement was, "Where have you been for the past fifty years?" She presented Jackie her father's picture, his Purple Heart and other memorabilia, adding, "We always knew that some day we would find you."

From her new-found family she learned that the Navigator, **John Cleary**, had been a POW, and was still

alive. Her grandson ran a search for Clearys on the Internet, finding 50 in the USA. Jackie wrote 50 letters, trying to locate John. Then a Mrs. Cleary from Florida called to say that although she was not the one being sought, that she could help her. She gave the number of a government agency, which ultimately led her to **Roy Owen**.

"It was so wonderful to find people who wanted to help me." she exclaimed. "It was a new world that opened to me. Roy and Will Lundy were eager to supply information about the mission and the plane. Sharing experiences with Lois Cianci was wonderful. The entire Bomb Group has been so kind—it's like I found a new family."

Jackie and her husband Lowell have been married 42 years. They raised two children, both adults. Lowell is a retired government employee, now in business as a security specialist for upscale homes.

Jackie studied Reflexology, Zone Therapy and Herbalology, and will soon have her PhD. degree.

(Editor's Note: The value of 44th BGVA's mission to preserve history could not be better demonstrated than in the stories of Lois Cianci and Jackie Roberts.

It justifies all the of efforts of those who are working hard to see that the past is available to future generations.)





MEMORIES OF
T/SGT. JEAN BRESSLER
ARMY INTELLIGENCE, 14TH WING



Jean Bressler didn't fly to Ploesti, but the memory of it still haunts him. He helped with the debriefing of those that returned. It was the most painful and unforgettable assignment of his war career.

"I was the only enlisted man from Intelligence that got sent to Benghazi," he recalled. "Ordinarily I never went to the debriefings, but this was so emotion-packed, Major Hart called and said, 'Grab your forms and get down here,' so with typewriter in my arms, I went. Those reports were absolutely awesome. I can only imagine that those crews had to be haunted by that memory for years.

"The Intelligence Building at Benina Main was metal. All other building were tents, white for officers, brown for NCOS. We were hot in the daytime, cold at night. They warned us to shake our shoes in the morning before we put them on, as centipedes climbed in to get warm. Those nasty creatures had two pinchers that could inject poison into your skin. Then there were the scorpions with the tail that could flip up and stab you with poison. The kangaroo rats weren't so bad; except that at night, you could step into one of their holes and twist your ankle.

"The Arab natives would hold up delicious-looking grapes and try to sell them to you. If you ate them, you were certain to get dysentery. There was a locust plague while we were there. The damn things would hide in the drums, and when you lifted the lid, out they would fly.

"We had an interesting contraption for a shower. The frame of an Italian plane was erected vertically, and a gas tank was placed over top. A garden hose with a stop valve gave you a good flow of water. A Tarpaulin around it provided privacy; but also, protection from the cold air, if you were showering at night. At noon the water was over 100 degrees, at night it cooled off. If you got there at the right time, you could have a nice warm shower.

"One night Col. **Leon Johnson** came into the building where I was working and sat down. I asked him, 'Colonel, are we ever going to get out of this place?' He answered, 'The 9th Air Corps wants to keep us.'

"After that Captain **Howard Moore** went



to the States to talk about our future. General Arnold decided to send us back to England. Then **Captain Hero**, our Weatherman saw the monsoon season coming. He told us to leave now or we wouldn't get out at all.

"Those B-24's were dusty and full of sand, barely able to squeak over the Marrakech Mountains of French Morocco. If we had waited one more day, the ground would have been so wet, the planes could not have taken off. When we got to England, we kissed the ground we landed on.

Bressler believes the fortunes of war were kind to him. He enlisted before Pearl Harbor in 1941 so he could choose the Air Corps, rather than be 'stuck' in the Infantry. He was stationed at Keesler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi, studying the mechanics of the B-24. When word came for him to be transferred, he was out of reach. His friends in the barracks packed his bags, and on his return he started out through a blackout to the loading area. The bags were so heavy, he could hardly drag them along.

All of a sudden a very large man, a total stranger, grabbed his bags, rushed him to the loading area and threw the bags on the truck. Bressler climbed aboard, and off they went to South Bend, Indiana where he was trained to repair Bendix Turrets. Bressler smiled, remembering his unbelievable fortune: those who missed the truck were sent to repair planes in Alaska.

Except for serious study and long hours, life in South Bend was luxurious. Being the first GI's to arrive for training, the town opened its doors and its heart. Everything was free—movies, food, even beer.

Despite his turret training, Bressler ended up in Intelligence, which he considered an ideal position. He was given a Tech Sergeant rating; and in the three years he was there, he developed close friendships with many of his English counterparts. Having musical skills, he became the organist for a local church.

The airmen left soon after VE day, but Bressler's group was the last to leave England. Leaving his friends and co-workers was truly an emotional experience. These friendships have continued for the past 56 years, with visits to and from both sides of the ocean.

MEMORIES OF SHIPDHAM

From **Bob Lehnhausen** comes a picture and vivid memory of "Shipdham-in-the Mud." According to Lehnhausen, men and machines shared the misery of soft soil, lots of rain and the demands of military activity.



Pictured here are shoes, boots, galoshes outside barracks, evidence of the hellish aspects of early life on a newly occupied air base in England. Mud was everywhere.

"It was bad enough for the individual to navigate the ooze of the mud, but to get one of our big birds off the hard surface of a runway, taxi strip or a hardstand was truly trouble," he remembered.



(Editor's Note: Despite the obstacles, the B-24s got airborne from airstrips that would be unthinkable in 2001.)

Alex Toth's Memory of a Lucky Day

Every airman can remember anxious moments, and S/Sgt. Alex Toth's (66th Sq.) story will bring 44thers memories of similar events.

"I was the Right Waist Gunner on **Ted Hoffiz's** plane. I can't even remember the mission. It must have been a long flight into Germany, as we were getting low on fuel. I heard Hoffiz ask the Engineer for a fuel reading. It was low. As Assistant Engineer, they asked me to verify his reading. It was low. We were over France.

"Next the pilot asked the Navigator to find the nearest airfield, and we set out for San Quenton in France. When we broke through the clouds to 2,000 feet and buzzed the airport, we found it was full of bomb craters. It was so bombed out, we couldn't possibly land.

"The next closest was across the Channel at Manston. Out the hatches we tossed all flak suits, ammo, guns, everything that was expendable; and then sat there silently, each with his own thoughts and prayers.

"Hoffiz gave the day's code word to the air tower,

declaring the need for an emergency landing because of low fuel. A WAAF told him to stand by, but Hoffiz replied, "We're coming in. Clear the runway."

When the plane touched the ground, we all gave a rousing cheer. A jeep led us to a resting place, and an American Captain gave us a shot of American whiskey. Earth never felt so good. The tank reading when we landed indicated we had only five minutes of fuel."

Low fuel has been the source of many anxious moments; sometimes causing ditching; other times bringing a crew to the brink of death then sparing them. Toth's crew was among the lucky ones.

When he goes to a bomb group reunion and shares stories with others who did not fare so well, he knows how lucky he was.



Via Dick Butler: A message from England to the 2nd Air Division.

THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF NORWICH

I thought you would like to know that I have just returned home from the City Hall in Norwich, after having been invited by the Leader of The Council to attend the meeting at which the Freedom of the City was awarded to the 2nd Air Division USAAF Association. It was a very moving occasion that I will always remember.

The Lord Mayor was very gracious in his greeting, as were the many other Councillors with whom I had worked during my two years as Chairman of the neighbouring Authority in Broadland.

Your Award was the first item on the Agenda; and Nick Williams, the Leader of the Council made a deeply moving proposal. This was seconded by Councillor Ian Couzens, the Leader of the Liberal Democrats, who again made a very impressive speech. He was then followed by Councillor Martin Verran who spoke at length about your bravery and sacrifice and the great friendship that had been formed in the Forties and continued to the present day. The great debt that the City and County owe to the 2nd Air Division USAAF was stressed, as was the appreciation for your wonderful gift of the unique 2nd Air Division Memorial Library and the huge support given to the Library by the 2nd Air Division Association over many years. Also the joy of the Council that you will be returning to Norwich in November.

The proposal was then formally moved by The Lord Mayor and carried unanimously with acclamation. After the meeting ended, all the Councillors I spoke to expressed their delight at the award and how they look forward to meeting you later this year and their intention to make it a memorable visit. Brenda Ferris (The Lord Mayor at the VE Day Parade in 1995) in particular asked me to send you her best wishes and congratulations.

So the dream that we began in 1995, when we first discussed the possibility of obtaining the Freedom of the City for you at a VE Parade Committee Meeting at the City Hall, has now become a reality this evening and you will receive the Scroll in November at the Civic Reception on the Tuesday evening.

Well Done, you all deserve this rare award. Indeed you are the only members of the 8th Air Force to receive such a high honor. We are all so proud of you.

Best wishes for the New Year.

David J Hastings, Vice Chairman

THE PINDER CRASH:

Lt. **HAROLD PINDER** 67th Sq., piloted the B-24 that went down in Wibrin, Belgium, January 29, 1944. PINDER gave this statement to Will Lundy for the *Roll of Honor*: "We were met on the coast on and in by both ME 109s and FW 190s. At about 1102 hours, we dropped out of control after about three separate enemy passes. We took 20mm hits under the flight deck that cut the control cables...."

"The aircraft dove out of control. I remember the wing afire, and at least the #4 engine knocked out. The following is a listing of the crew and what happened to each of them:

Alvin Stubbs, Bombardier, **Robert Laucamp**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Jack Robison**, RW Gunner and **William Paxton**, Tail Gunner were all KIA. Harold Pinder, Pilot, **Lawrence Grono**, Co-pilot, **Donald Boomer**, Navigator, T/Sgt. **Earl Hall**, Engineer; and **Milas Green**, LW Gunner became POWs. **Abe Sofferman**, Radio Operator, managed to evade, but was later shot by the Secret Police.

Forest E. Clark wrote this memorial to Sofferman: "He was my best friend in the 44th BG. He and I were on the same crew all through training and into the missions. I knew him as an energetic, studious young man, full of the love of life, of his family, and devoted to the cause of his nation." Upon his return to the States, Clark visited Sofferman's family, sharing the sorrow of their mutual loss.

Quoting the Belgian partisan resistance fighters, Clark said of Sofferman, "He had the appearance of an intelligent man, a student." Books have been donated to the 2 AD Memorial Library in honor of Sofferman and others in his crew who were lost.

The town of Wibrin has recently decided to place a memorial plaque at the crash site, an area where the 44th will be visiting in the upcoming tour in September, 2001.

Jack Payton (right) found this picture in his collection.

CAN ANYONE IDENTIFY THE TWO GENTLEMEN ON LEFT AND MIDDLE?



CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

The Government of France is awarding a Certificate of Appreciation TO all U.S. military personnel who served in France during the Normandy landing on June 6, 1944 and the following conflict until the liberation of France.

To obtain the certificate, one must prove that he was in France during WWII and supply a record of service and honorable separation. Certificates will not be issued posthumously. Send your request, along with a copy of your discharge and service record showing your service in Normandy and the ETO, to the nearest French Consulate Office in the U.S.



WILL SEZ

February, 2001

Have any of you "visited" Arlo Bartsch's Web Site at <http://www.8thairforce.com> to view just how much 44th BG's history data can be found there? If you haven't tried it yet, set aside a little time to give it a try to learn more about it and see the possibilities there for a great deal of our history. However, do keep in mind that there are only samplings available at this time. In fact, that is all that is intended at this time. It is designed to offer only a taste of the great volume of data that actually could be placed there, not to show it all.

The reason for this type of sampling is to show the viewer what type of data is available and to what depth it can provide. Arlo has spent well over \$100,000 of his firm's money developing the program to make this type of information available. We, the 44th BGVA, have also spent an additional large sum for data entry of our history so far. For that reason, we cannot put all of our history out on the Internet as free. Like most Web Sites, they were set up to sell a product or service, not to give it away.

Having said that, Arlo has advised me that he intends to make all of our bio data available to the public, but only the first page. So anyone who wishes to view his bio or to see how many others have produced theirs, you can find them now at his Web Site. While you are on the Internet, you might also like to see what our Treasurer, Jerry Folsom, is developing on our own 44th BG Site at <http://www.44thbombgroup.com>. It is only in the developmental stage but should be quite interesting to everyone.

You may have noticed in the last issue of 8 Ball Tails that I not only did not write this column, but I also failed to produce the Folded Wings section. The cause for these omissions is that Irene and I have moved out of Southern California to the Northern portion of the state, east of Sacramento. This was our first move in 40 years, so it has been a labor intensive experience from which we are still suffering. There simply was no time to do the work and my equipment and records were not available.

As a consequence, the Folded Wings list has grown considerably, thanks to the efforts of our Treasurer Jerry and his aide, Lana Kopecky. They produced and mailed a large number of letters to the addresses of our members who had not renewed their membership for some time. As feared, many of these former members are deceased,

so many of these great people will not have an adequate story in the Folded Wings column this issue. Hopefully, I will be able to research more of them and have it ready for the next issue. I am not yet up to speed these days.

Also, I think you readers should know about the great efforts of one of our Associate Members, Pete Frizzell. Pete is one of the top researchers of the famous low level attack on Ploesti Oil Fields on 01 August 1943. He has helped us verify much data about the 44th BG's participation, both in text and photo; and has attended some of our reunions.

Pete found some 44th BG photos up for auction on the Internet from eBay and bid successfully on a few of them. He alerted Steve Adams, who also was a successful bidder on several. But when he learned from the seller that there were large quantities, more scheduled for bidding, he offered to purchase the lot. However, when the seller found that he was getting very high bids on some specific photos, he refused to honor a flat bid upon which he had agreed. When Pete learned that the photos were from the Harvell/Robertie collection, he contacted me to advise us of this great collection, wanted to help us save the great photos of our people and history.

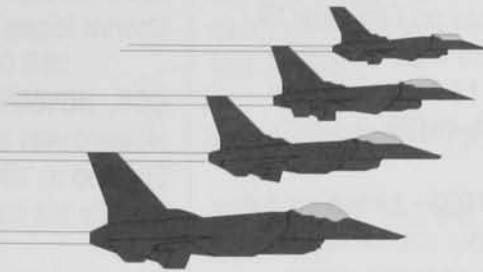
Our Prez, Ed Mikoloski, made arrangements to meet Pete at a nearby airport (Pete lives in Florida) and Ed drove them up to Maine. They contacted this dealer who permitted Pete to use his camera and film to make copies of those photos sold but not yet mailed, and successfully made a deal to purchase all remaining photos. Many of these photos are originals that Capt. Harvell used in his first book, "*44th BG Liberators Over Europe*" so the collection is priceless so far as our photo history is concerned.

When the copying and printing is completed by Pete, these photos will be added to the present collection of photos that I've gathered over the years. We will have a much more complete collection for our history and hopefully more crew photos to add to our data base. Had it not been for Pete and his strong desire to help, these photos would now be scattered all over the world. He most willingly spent his own money and many days of his time in this great effort. I can't say enough good things about him. We are greatly in debt to you, Pete. Our sincere thanks is not enough.

Will Lundy



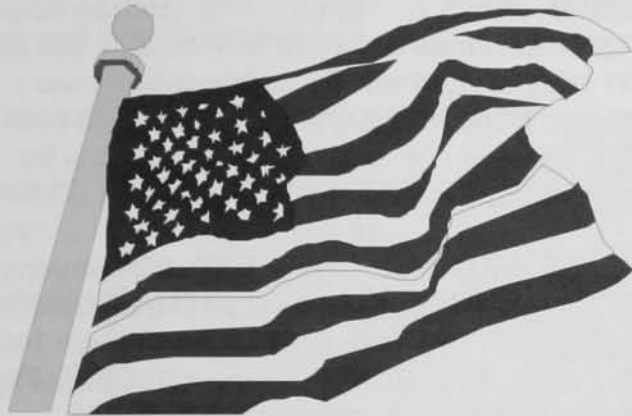
FOLDED WINGS



February, 2001

Prepared by:

Will Lundy



AMBLER, JAMES C. - 6 April 1989 - 39107032 T/Sgt. Engineer & Top Turret Gunner. 66th Squadron. James was a member of the H. E. Etheridge crew that flew their first mission on 30 January 1944. He was with this same crew and on his seventh mission when they were attacked and shot down on 24 February 1944, target Gotha, Germany. James was one of nine crewmen who successfully parachuted to become a POW.

AMICK, KENNETH C. - T/Sgt. Engineer Died 1950 or 1951. Stayed in Air Force. Was killed in crash in bad weather. Kenneth was the Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the C.R. Roberts crew. They were assigned to the 68th Squadron on 19 February 1945, flew their first mission on 10 March 1945. Their 12th and last mission was dated 18 April 1945. Kenneth and this crew returned to the US in late May, flying home on A/C #4449425

BALLA, WALLACE J. - May, 2000 - 0-819292 1st Lt. Wallace joined the 68th Squadron on 6 July 44, flew his first mission with the Clair Hill crew. Following that, he flew with many 68th Sq. crews, including Sterling Dobbs, Kay, Dimpfl, etc. He completed his tour of 30 mission on 24 December 1944 as co-pilot for the Jack Liebrick crew.



BARLOW, ARCHIE R. - 23 April 2000 - 14151313 68th Squadron T/Sgt. Engineer and top turret gunner for the H. R. Howington crew. Archie joined the 68th Squadron on 5 October 1943, flew his first combat mission on 5 November 1943. While on his ninth mission, 21 January 1944 he and his crew were shot down over France. Four of this crew were KIA, two became POWs, and Archie was one of the five crewmen to successfully evade capture. He was with the French Underground until 23 April 1944, began his attempt to gain freedom through the Pyrenees. He was interned in Spain until 31 May 1944, made his way to London, England arriving there on 1 June 1944, back to Shipdham on the 4th and later returned to the US.

BECTON, WENDELL R. SR. - 1 March 2000 - Cannot locate any data for him.

BENEDICT, ROBERT L. - 29 August 1997 - 67th Sq. Gunner on the E. C. Yatkones crew that arrived in the 67th Squadron on 8 June 1944. This crew flew their first mission on 12 June. Robert flew various positions as Gunner for most of his mission until 16 August 1944. He flew but three more with them, ending with the one dated 5 November. His last of 19 mission was completed on 18 March 1945 with the R. E. Markle crew.

BETZ, HENRY C. - Henry was a member of the 464th Sub Depot but we have no specifics about his contributions except he was a Sergeant.

BLACK, HARRY - December, 1991 - No data can be located for this man.



BOILEAU, JOHN 'JACK' - May, 1993 - 68th Squadron 32951768 Sgt. Radio Operator on the C. Roberts crew. This crew joined the 68th Squadron on February 19, 1945, flew their first mission on 10 March. They completed their 12th mission on 18 April, and flew home on 21 May 1945 in A/C #44-49425.

BOWE, DONOVAN K. - Approx . 1993 - Listed on our current roster as 68th Squadron but cannot locate anything about him in the 68th Squadron records.


BURRESS, WILLIE JOE - 10 November 2000 - 67th Squadron M/Sgt. Crew Chief. "Tex" was the first assistant crew chief on the George Baccash ground crew back at Barksdale Field in early 1942. He was a member of the ground echelon that went to England on the HMS Queen Mary in Sept. 1942. Later he was promoted to Crew Chief, and held that position to the end of the war. His last assigned aircraft was #44-48821 A-Bar, unnamed. Tex refused to allow it to be named, citing it as bad luck.

CAMPBELL, ROBERT P. - 1992 - M/Sgt. No records can be located.

CHAFFEE, THOMAS L. - September, 1999 - 0-70417 1st Lt. Navigator. Thomas first served with the 492nd BG in 1944, was a member of the George B. Haag, Jr. crew. They had completed 19 missions with them prior to being transferred to the 44th BG in early August, 1944. They flew their first mission with the 44th on 14 August, quickly completing their 6th and last of their tour on 25 August 1945. They were rotated back to the U.S.

CHAPMAN, WILLIAM A - 28 July 1997 - Apparently not combat. Cannot locate this man on any squadron roster.

CHRISTOPHER, ANTHONY J - 20 December 1997 - 31037024 67th Squadron Engineer and Top Turret gunner for the H. Hess crew. They flew their first mission on 16 March 1944 and then four more quickly until the 27th March when they were interned in Spain. Several months later they returned to England and finally transferred to the 15th AF in Italy to complete their tour.

**COOMES, THOMAS L.** - 15 November 1999 - 506 and 66th. Apparently not combat and cannot locate any data.

COSBY, EARL BELL - February, 1997 - He served in the service for four years and nine months. Cannot locate records.



COX, HOWARD D. - 10 April 2000 - 67th Squadron. Howard was one of the ground echelon who went to England in 1942 on the HMS Queen Mary. Cannot identify his classification while in the 67th Sq.

CRANE, JAMES J. - February, 1992 - 66th Squadron. 12074922. James flew a total of 8 missions, first dated 21 February, 1944 with R.J. Comey crew. He was a gunner, S/Sgt. His last one was 27 March 1944 with the R.E. Harleman crew, was shot down, injured in the ditching and became a POW.

CROSS, WILLIAM S. - 5 April 1988 - 68th Squadron - S/Sgt. Left Waist gunner on Robert Clayton crew. Completed 12 missions beginning on 10 March 1945 and ending on 18 April 1945. Crew not scheduled again before the last group mission of 25 April 1945.

DALTON, ROBERT J. - 24 May 2000 - 67th Squadron. 111115102. Robert was the Radio Operator who flew six combat missions, two with R. C. Griffith, two with Dines, and his last one with Lt. Scarborough on 12 March 1944. There are no further missions or data covering this Sgt.

DOMINO, JOSEPH S - 17 September 1999 - No data can be found at this time.

DEHANN, BEN F. - 8 December 1996.

DOEPKER, CHARLES L. - 22 October 2000 - 66th Squadron S/Sgt. Gunner on the W. E. Ogden crew. This crew was originally assigned to the 492nd BG, flew approximately 24 missions with that group. This crew was transferred to the 44th Group in July, 1944, assigned to the 66th Squadron. They flew their first and only one with the 44th BG on 31 July 1944, which apparently completed their tour of operations. Charles was a Canadian, born in Ottawa on January 22, 1922, was 78 years old.

DUNKERLEY, GAYLE - No data found.

DUNLAP, ROBERT L. - No date found 68th Squadron.

EDGEWORTH, WALTER - 28 September 1999.

EDMUNDS, EARL A. - 19 March 1999 HQ. & 506th Squadron.

ESPER, WILLIAM D. SR. - 8 October 2000 68th Squadron.

EYDENBERG, MONTE - 22 January 1999.

FAVIM, ROBERT A. - No date given.

FEINSTEIN (FENTON), MELTON S. - 1991.

FLESBER, ISSAC A. - August 1998 68th Squadron.

FLOWERS, EDGAR I. JR. - 1988 S/Sgt. Right Waist Gunner.

FOREHAND, CHARLES C. - 14 February 2000.

FRANK, ERNEST F. - No date given.

GENTILE, LEO T. - 10 July 1990.

GOODMAN, AUGUST T. - 7 January 1987.

GORHAK, JOHN D. Jr. - 27 November 2000 - 66th Squadron.

GOSSETT, ERNEST E. - 16 November 2000 - 0-442695 Pilot. Captain Ernest Gossett and his crew flew most of their missions while assigned to the 492nd BG. When that group was taken off combat status, this crew was transferred to the 506 Squadron on 13 August 1944. They flew their 1st mission with the 44th BG the very next day. They flew eight more missions as lead crew, and completed their tour on 6 December, 1944.

GRUEBER, ARNOLD H. - October, 1998.

HALL, FRED L. - 26 May 2000 - 68th Squadron.

HANDY, PAUL - 27 February 1989.

HANNUKSELA, WAINO W. - 9 January 2001 - 506th Squadron Pilot Waino was the co-pilot for the Charles Conner crew that arrived in the 506th Squadron on 30 August 1943. He flew his first mission with the McAtee crew on 7 September and many others later. He also was co-pilot to other crews including

Laudig, Clements, and Money. He completed his tour of duty on 23 March 1944, changing seats with Lt. Money to fly as 1st pilot on that last mission.



HESS, HOWARD - 12 January 1988 - 66th Squadron.

HICKERSON, GLEN C. - 1 June 2000 - 506th Squadron.

HIGGINS, WADE W. - 506th Squadron with James Clements.

HUFF, HERBERT A. - 4 June 1997.

INDORF, FRANK - 9 May 2000.

INDRI, VALERO - 1 April 2000.

IRISH, ARVIN L. - 17 April 2000.

JEDLOWSKI, HAROLD J. - 19 January 1998. 67th Squadron.

JEWELL, KENNETH - No date given. 66th Squadron Pilot.

JONES, JOHN T. - 9 February 1978 - Age of 57 cancer. 506th Squadron Ordnance.

JONES, PAUL A. - 25 August 1998.

KARAPIN, EDWARD F. - No date given.

MCCULLOUGH, HAL - 14 February 1999.

MCDONALD, ROBERT M. - 1985.

MCKENNA, THOMAS J. - 17 November 2000 - Pilot 506th and 66th Squadrons.

MARNELL, VERL - 12 April 1998.

MICKEY, COL. WILLIAM B. - 23 August 1998 - 66th Squadron and HQ.

MISER, VERNON - November, 1996 - 404th and 464th Sub-Depot.

MORAN, JOHN V. - 1 April 2000.



MORTON, SAM M. - 8 June 1990.

MULDOON, LEWIS J. - No date given.

NATHANSON, DAVID - 31 October 2000. Captain 67th Squadron and HQ. Ordnance.

NICHOLS, DERISE L. - 21 March 2000.

NEWBOLD, ELDRED - 1995.

PARSHALL, RAYMOND H. - 26 Jan. or June 2000 of pneumonia.

PETRIK, GEORGE A. - 25 March 2000.

PRICKETT, JOE W. - No date given.

REECE, CHARLES E. - No date given. 506th Squadron ground crew.

ROSCHIE, WILLIAM E. - No date given. 67th and 506th Squadrons ground crew. Musician.

RUMRILL, DEWLIN - No date. 464th Sub-Depot.

RUSSELL, GEORGE E. - 14 April 1996 - 66th Squadron Combat Engineer.

SAPORITO, SAM S. - 4 September 2000 - 66th Squadron.

SCHIMKE, ROBERT S. - 27 December 1996.

SIMMONS, HYLAN V. - 25 September 1999 - T/Sgt. 66th Squadron Crew Chief on Lemon Drop.

SLED, NOAH - No date given.

STERNBACK, LAWTON L. - 11 November 1997.

STEWART, JOSEPH - December, 1993 - 0-2063204 Bombardier.

STOKELUM, PAT P. - No date given.

STRANGE, WILLIAM S. - Mid-June, 2000.

STRUG, EMIL - 1997.

TAYLOR, LT. COL. JOHN B. - 27 August 2000 - Age 79. Co-pilot for John Mueller.

TERABERRY, PHILLIP F. - 21 October 1999.

TRUSLOW, WILLIAM B. - 17 June 1999.

TUTTLE, ROBERT M. - 31 July 1991.

WALSH, JAMES H. - 7 November 2000 - Evadee in Spain 506th Squadron.

WAWERNA, JOSEPH - 25 December 1999 - Age 84.

WEIHS, GORDON - January, 1999.

WHEATLEY, J. C. - 12 August 2000.

WILLIAMS, RICHARD - 11 March 2000.

WILKERSON, LESLIE A. - 29 June 2000 - Bio.



44th Items for Sale

Item	Cost	Shipping
Shirts	\$25	\$3
Caps	\$15	\$2
Pins	\$5	\$1
Send to:	Sam Miceli 6398 Dawson Blvd. Mentor, OH 44060-3648	
Patches	\$15	\$1
Roster	\$20	\$2
4,000 names, addresses and phone numbers.		
8th AF Military Heritage Database	\$150	\$2
Past Issues of 8 Ball Tails	\$5	\$0
Send to:	44th BGVA PO Box 712287 Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287	

From the Editor: Kevin Watson's book "Ruth-less" can be purchased through Amazon.co.uk. Signed copies are available through Kevin's website: KPWats7@aol.com (put in the key words hometown.aol.com/kpwats7).



MAIL & E-MAIL

A new and eager member, William Ennis, son of **Donald E. Ennis**, Tail Gunner in the 68th Sq, has joined and is planning to bring his father to the Barksdale Reunion. Ennis's last seven missions were on the *Louisiana Belle*, so it will be an especially meaningful event. (*Editor's Note: If there are any of his crew reading this—come and have a Crew Reunion*).



From Col. and Mrs. Clem Haulman we received news that their son David R. Haulman, Director of Public Works at the U.S. Army Engineers Research and Development Center, has been selected for promotion to full Colonel is assigned to the U.S. Air Force Reserves.

Haulman is the commander of the 917th Civil Engineer Squadron at Barksdale Air Force Base, La. He has more than six years of active duty with the Air Force, during which he piloted supersonic trainers and KC-135 jet tankers, performing air-to-air refueling missions in Europe, Southeast Asia and over the North Pole. He has also served 15 years in the Reserves as an engineer officer.

He received his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Southwestern Louisiana, a master's in systems management from the University of Southern California and a master's in civil engineering from Mississippi State University. He is a registered professional engineer in Mississippi and Louisiana.

David's identical twin, Daniel, has a Ph.D. in History from Auburn University, and is a Research Historian at the USAF Historical Research Center at Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, Alabama. Both sons are Members of the 44th BGVA.



From the Pueblo Historic Aircraft Society, their publication, *B-24 Airscoop*: The city & county of Pueblo, and a number of foundations have come up with the funds, and a ground-breaking ceremony has been held for a new hangar to shelter the Aircraft

Museum. Although Pueblo is the home of many B-24 pilots, they do not have a B-24. We can be all the more grateful for the efforts being made to preserve the *Louisiana Belle*.



From **Jerry Folsom**, Treasurer of 44th BGVA: Many thanks for the cards and kind messages. (*Jerry is so overwhelmed with the 44th's business—getting out statements, checking on lost members and answering requests for information, he can only give a blanket 'Thank You' to all who have sent him greetings.*)

CAN ANYONE IDENTIFY THIS SERGEANT SEWING STRIPES?



From **Tommy Shepherd**: Can't we do something to urge everyone to do their Database? The War was such an amazing experience, and everybody has a story that should be told. I have memories of going with the flight surgeon on short arm inspections. I saw and smelled the men's experiences. I remember some of these men riding their bicycles from site to site, 115 to Shipdham, to East Dereham, from pub to pub, to fish and chips, falling off their bikes drunk as a skunk, writing letters for the Ole Man to send to the next of kin and helping pack up their personal effects. It should all be on record.





From **Francis J. Peck**, 67th Sq.: one of the most memorable missions of the 34 that I pulled was a low level supply drop to our paratroopers in Holland, September, 1944. Our drop was just beyond a city of which I cannot recall the name. Our load was ammunition. There were several wooden boxes strapped on the catwalk. My job as Radio Operator/Gunner was to cut the straps and kick the boxes off the catwalk. While flying over the city, I heard the nose gunner yell, "Pull 'er up, Pull 'er up, you're going to hit the church steeple. Holding on for dear life, I swear I could have reached down and touched that church steeple.

As I cut the straps holding the boxes of ammo and kicked them out, I saw ever so much ground fire from the Germans hiding in the brush. As we pulled up and banked to get out of there, we were being peppered by ground fire rifles. When I got to my radio seat, I noticed a hole in it, and the bullet had exited just behind the pilot. The next day we learned that the Germans recovered most of the supplies our group had dropped.

(Editor's Note: But the bullet missed both Francis and his pilot, so it was a pretty good day.)



Joseph E. Milliner wrote an interesting book, *The Angel and the Eagle*, in which he describes his experiences as Joe, protected by his Guardian Angel, JOSEPH. His accounts are colorful and dynamic--particularly about the Ploesti mission. (Sections of this chapter will be reported in another issue.)

Having survived the war, Milliner is living through the tragedy of knowing his co-pilot son, William, flying in a Cobra Helicopter into Laos, crashed. He believes the boy survived, but has never been repatriated. The injustice of that atrocious happening has turned the life of him and his wife Mary, into an ongoing effort to influence the U.S. Government to intervene. All members of the 44th BGVA can offer prayers in William's behalf.



From **Elwyn A. Meyer** 68th Squadron to Will Lundy This is meant to be a tribute to all World War II Bomber Crews, Army Air Corps, Marines, Navy and especially to pilots of the Big Birds of the Army Corps.

Almost all bomber combat crews trained as a team before entering the combat theatre. Each member learned their duty stations through special training prior to their assignment to crew training. They also knew their duty lay in putting their combat loads on the target regardless of the enemy defenses.

Much "to do" is made of the macho image of the fighter pilots "one on one" battles. However they always had the choice to engage or disengage at will. They never really had to fly into the flak shrouded targets. I don't mean to say the bomber crews didn't welcome their "little friends" presence. They saved many bombers and contributed much to the success of the European Air War.

Bomber crews had no choice, regardless of the enemy defenses, they had to bore in, enduring enemy flak and fighter attacks. I know of no bomber forces that were ever turned back from a specified target due to enemy defenses.

As a navigator, I was able to observe and note the actions of our combat crews and see our losses and successes.

I would like to talk about a special person who was the pilot and commander of our crew. His name was Rueban C. Ricketts from Danville, Virginia.

Rueban, or "Rick" as we called him, had been an Army Air Corps A&E mechanic before going to pilot training. He graduated, transitioned into B-17's and was assigned as a co-pilot in a B-17 group. Just prior to his group leaving for overseas, he was pulled out and sent to B-24 transition school. Upon completion of his training, he was made a first pilot and given a crew without a navigator and sent to a replacement training center.

I was assigned to Rueban's crew as the navigator just after my graduation from navigation training. They were starting the second phase of their training.

Rueban and I had our differences at times as to who should be the navigator--pilots always liked to be in command. We worked out our differences after going over long water flights and coming home alone in the clouds where no "railroad tracks" were around. You had to learn to trust your crew members. He did.

I had faith and trust in Rick's ability as a pilot. One reason was his attention to and use of the aircraft check off sheet. Because of his previous mechanic's background, he knew his aircraft and it's problems. The crew chiefs liked Rick to fly their "birds" because he could usually tell them where to look for a problem and its possible solution. This saved them much time in getting the ship ready for the next mission. If we had mechanical trouble in flight, he and the crew engineer could confer and try to solve the problem.

He was Mr. Safety First on the B-24. I always felt he was a disappointed B-17 pilot and never trusted the B-24. He believed that the B-24 was unforgiving of any mistakes.

He never made a takeoff or landing that he didn't sweat through his flight clothes. He would always carry an extra jacket to change into against the altitude cold. He said flying the B-24 was real work, especially on takeoffs and landings. He was an excellent formation flyer regardless of which side of the flight element we were on. He flew good tight smooth formations.

Our worst flight catastrophe occurred on the 6th of August, 1944 on the Hamburg mission. Our target was an oil refinery. As we approached the target, the flak cloud over the target just got blacker; probably the box barrage type. You could see the cloud from 50 miles away. We had been briefed that over 300 heavy guns could be on you at all times. The cloud cover was from about 18,000 feet to over 30,000 feet in altitude. I looked through the astro dome at Rick and could see the sweat running from his forehead onto his oxygen mask. As we flew deeper into the cloud, you could smell the exploding gases from the flak; the shrapnel sounded like hail as it fell causing minor damage. We bombed the target with good results. You could see the burning gas generator plant and other facilities. We lost one ship there (J.P. McKenna's).

The group turned off the target area and then flew out over the Cuxhaven German naval base. That's where they nailed us. I believe they were sighting individual aircraft as there was no heavy barrage fire flak. Navy gunners were good. We lost two engines; the vertical fin was shot off above the horizontal stabilizer and the elevator, and elevator trim tabs were damaged. A huge hole was blasted out of the left side between the window and tail. The damage was reported by the top turret and waist gunners.

Rick hit the bail out bell because he only had two engines and possible control damage. He thought at the time it was best. As navigator I called him on the intercom and asked for the exact condition of the ship and said, "If this bird is still flying, I would rather chance ditching than spend time in a P.W. camp." Almost instantly six other voices came on saying "ditto" or words to that effect.

Rick said, "okay, let's try it." We had already lost the formation, they couldn't wait for us. He took the course I gave him out over the North Sea, jockeyed the B-24 on to the course, and put it in a shallow descent slow enough to maintain flight speed. He sent the flight engineer to assess any control cable damage, he reported none. Ted Sassano, the radio operator, gave position reports to the British Air-Sea rescue people every 10 minutes until we crossed the coast. The co-pilot, Wm. Sims, was busy helping Rick maintain flight control of the aircraft. Porter Branfort, the flight engineer and Rick were in constant contact addressing problems as they arose. The gunners remained at their stations throughout. Everyone was busy, busy. We started at about 22,000 ft. altitude and crossed the English coast at Great Yarmouth at less than 1,000 ft. Rick called the field and was cleared straight in. Luckily the wind direction was right and our course was in line with the main runway. Rick had been continuously trying to restart one of the engines. Just before crossing the coast, it restarted. We were over an hour late in returning. He greased it in with "nary a bump," used all the runway, turned on to the taxi strip and all engines quit.

The airplane crew chief came out, climbed on top of the wing, opened the fuel ports, put his fuel dip stick in and pulled it out dry. All tanks were empty. Later



we learned there were over 300 holes in the tanks and flaps. The crew chief was ready to cry. It was his second ship he had lost. This was this B-24's first mission. Rick comforted him by saying, "don't cry, it's a damn fine airplane, it got us home." I believe that it was later junked. After looking at the damage, I wondered if I was wrong to want to fly back. I do not know how Rick flew that plane, but he did--he knew his job. It must have been "hell" on him both physically and mentally. He did it on pure grit and stubbornness, I guess. He was a top man with courage and strength to do what had to be done. I do think that day he really developed a love for the B-24 (he wouldn't admit it).

You can listen to people talk about the courage of "fighter jocks," but the bomber pilots and their crews had the real raw courage it took to fly into hell and out, and they did. The pilots were the glue that made the difference. They deserve some of the cheers and respect they never seemed to get. Without them, we may have lost the war.

I salute each of them, they were true leaders. Especially one 1st Lt. Reuban G. Ricketts from Danville, Virginia. My kind of pilot!



This confession from **John E. "Jack" Butler**, Navigator. Jack flew with the 67th until shortly after D-Day, then finished his 30 missions with the 66th. He flew in many different planes, but his favorites were the *Glory Bee* and *Southern Comfort*.

Low Level Raid on the Collinwood Locomotive Yards. This highly successful low level B-24 bombing raid in April, 1944 was one of the best kept stories of WW2. As a result, none of us participants received any of the usual medals, but better yet, none of us was court martialled either.

During April, 1944 a few of us were still young, dumb and enthusiastic. I understand there were several others besides me who were planning on winning the war single handed if necessary. At any rate, a bunch of us eager beavers had finally arrived at Topeka, Kansas for the purpose of picking up a bright, shiny, brand new B-24. Now our only problem was to pick out which rumor we liked best. Were we going to

the South Pacific to work on our tans, or were we going to the Aleutians and freeze our butts, or were we going to England to assist the Piccadilly Commandos.

Remember, all this was highly confidential rumors. But finally it dawned on someone that as confidential as this information was, they ought to at least confide in the navigator, which they did. Confiding in me probably was not the worst mistake our esteemed authorities ever made. Anyway, they had to tell me where I was supposed to go and hopefully how to get there. So they told me the day before we left Topeka. They said, "Okay, take this nice, new and shiny B-24 and try not to screw it up. When you leave Topeka, head sort of northeast until you find this here Air base in New England." This sounded good to me and they were also nice enough to give me some maps (charts?). Just out of curiosity I decided to look at these charts. You never can tell when you might learn something useful.

Boy, did I learn something useful! I discovered that I would be flying along the shores of Lake Erie from Toledo to Buffalo and would be over the New York Central Railroad in Cleveland, Ohio at noon. I had worked for the Railroad for over three years before I went into the Air Force. My father had worked there for over 40 years before he retired. And there were at least 2,000 other railroad employees there also. I felt that I could trust my sainted mother not to alert the German Luftwaffe that I would be flying over the Collinwood Locomotive Yard in Cleveland, Ohio at noon April 15, 1944. I have felt terrible for almost 55 years that I was unable to resist making that phone call alerting my Mother that if a shiny new B-24 circled the New York Central Railroad Yard at noon April 15, 1944, it would be me. I suspect that my mother must have told my old man, which would explain why at least 1,000 people were cheering us on as we roared by at a very low altitude.

Now about the Low Level Bombing of the Collinwood Locomotive Yards. There are two gigantic smoke stacks ideally located for a practice bomb run. We had made one run over the railroad shop at about 1,000 foot altitude. Since every one on the ground knew what was going on, we naturally had a terrific reception. Every one in the Air Force was by now familiar with the genuinely historic Low Level Raid

over Ploesti so we didn't have too much trouble convincing the crew that we probably would never have a better opportunity for a realistic practice run. So we made the bomb run with excellent results. So after congratulating the bombardier on his great job, I reminded him that there were two smokestacks and why not make a great day out of it. So we did. So far we were having a great day. Now we were cruising smoothly down the shores of Lake Erie, headed more or less toward Buffalo. At this point Knowles, our pilot calls me on the intercom and asks me, "Hey Butler, don't we go some where near Niagra Falls?" I was embarrassed to have to inform him that I was already a little off course, and that if I didn't make a correction soon, we would be right over Niagra Falls in about 12 minutes. He said, "How long will it take you to figure the new course?" About 12 minutes I said. When we circled Niagra Falls we didn't drop below 1,000 feet and only circled twice.

(Editor's Note: Jack waited 54 years before he would release this tale.)



From **Bob Vance** - this reprint of a editorial by Gordon Sinclair of Toronto, Canada.

"This Canadian thinks it is time to speak up for the Americans as the most generous and possibly the least appreciated people on all the earth. Germany, Japan and, to a lesser extent Britain and Italy, were lifted out of the debris of war by the Americans who poured in billions of dollars and forgave other billions in debts. None of these countries is today paying even the interest on its remaining debts to the United States.

When France was in danger of collapsing in 1956, it was the Americans who propped it up, and their reward was to be insulted and swindled on the streets of Paris. I was there. I saw it when earthquakes hit distant cities, it is the United States that hurries in to help. This spring, 59 American communities were flattened by tornadoes. Nobody helped.

The Marshall Plan and the Truman Policy pumped billions of dollars into discouraged countries. Now newspapers in those countries are writing about the decadent, warmongering Americans. I'd like to see just one of those countries that is gloating over the erosion of the United States dollar build its own airplane. Does any other country in the world have a plane to equal the Boeing Jumbo Jet, the Lockheed Tri-Star, or the Douglas DC10? Is so, why don't they fly them? Why do all the International lines except Russia fly American Planes?

Why does no other land on earth even consider putting a man or woman on the moon? You talk about Japanese technocracy, and you get radios. You talk about German technocracy, and you get automobiles. You talk about American technocracy, and you find men on the moon - not once, but several times - and safely home again.

You talk about scandals, and the Americas put theirs right in the store window for everybody to look at. Even their draft-dodgers are not pursued and hounded. They are here on our streets, and most of them, unless they are breaking Canadian laws, are getting American dollars from ma and pa at home to spend here.

When the railways of France, Germany and India were breaking down through age, it was the Americans who rebuilt them. When the Pennsylvanian Railroad and the New York Central went broke, nobody loaned them an old caboose. Both are still broke.

I can name you 5000 times when the Americans raced to the help of other people in trouble. Can you name me even one time when someone else raced to the Americans in trouble? I don't think there was outside help even during the San Francisco earthquake.

Our neighbors have faced it alone, and I'm one Canadian who is tired of hearing them get kicked around. They will come out of this thing with their flag high. And when they do, they are entitled to thumb their nose at the lands that are gloating over their present troubles. I hope Canada is not one of those."

Stand proud, America! Wear it proudly!

Randy Howard - California Institute of Technology



Bossier City, Louisiana

**JOIN US FOR
THE
2001 BGVA
REUNION**

**October 15,
16,
17, & 18
2001**



Come see the Louisiana Belle, refurbished and re-painted B-24, at a dedication to be held during the Reunion.

Photo: M/Sgt. Francis "Woody" Wood, Crew Chief and Sgt. Romie C. Vaughn, Assistant Crew Chief and their new aircraft waiting for the artist to paint the name Louisiana Belle and the Flying 8 Ball logo on the nose.

**44th Bomb Group
VETERANS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 712287**

Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



Non Profit

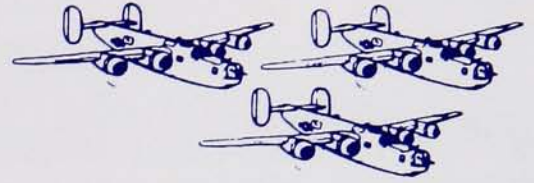
U.S. Postage

Paid

Permit #6923

Salt Lake City, UT

44th Bomb Group VETERANS ASSOCIATION



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 4 - Issue #1

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Summer, 2001

Non Profit Veterans Organization

EIN #68-0351397

The need for more planes became evident after the Ploesti Raid, and the government hurried to send replacements. The **Frank Sobatka** crew of **NICE'N NAUGHTY #42-7476** delivered this new plane to Shipdham, but the crew soon found themselves flying in other planes. On January 4, 1944, returning to Shipdham from Kiel, both main landing gears on **NICE'N NAUGHTY** collapsed and the plane crash landed. It was salvaged. Then on January 21, 1944, in an unnamed plane, the Sobatka crew was shot down at Escalles Sur Buchy. Two members of the crew survived and successfully evaded: **Milton L. Rosenblatt**, Co-Pilot and **Abraham Teitel**, Bombardier.



44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD

President Emeritus: B-Gen. John H. Gibson
(Retired)
7008 Gateridge
Dallas, TX 75240-7936
Phone: (972) 239-0559

Immediate Past President: Roy W. Owen (506)
6304 Meadowridge Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95409-5839
Phone: (707) 538-4726 Fax: (707) 538-1212
e-mail: Rowen44bg@aol.com

President: Edw. K. "Mike" Mikoloski (66/67)
626 Smithfield Road #702
N. Providence, RI 02904
Phone/Fax: (401) 353-0144
e-mail: EKMLIB44@msn.com

First Vice President: Richard D. Butler (506/67)
44th Group VP to 2nd ADA
16828 Mitchell Circle
Riverside, CA 92518
Phone (909) 697-2908 Fax: (909) 697-5875
e-mail: rdb24@earthlink.net

Treasurer: Gerald (Jerry) Folsom (506)
3582 East Dover Hill Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84121-5527
Phone (801) 733-7371 Fax: (801) 942-9988
e-mail: 44thbgva@xmission.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: rewdm@blazenet.net

Director (67) Archivist
Anthony "Tony" Mastradone
9111 Tuckerman Street
Lanham, MD 20706-2709
Phone/Fax: (301) 577-1487
e-mail: mast@cres.com



Director: Robert J. Lehnhausen (68)
2540 Benton Court
Peoria, IL 61615-8838
Phone/Fax: (309) 243-1952

Director: Michael "Mike" Yuspeh (506)
7214 Sardonyx St.
New Orleans, LA 70124-3509
Phone/Fax: (504) 283-3424
e-mail: mikeyuspeh@worldnet.att.net

Director (44 SMW): Charles G. Simpson
P.O. Box 281
Breckenridge, CO 80424
Phone/Fax: (970) 453-0500
e-mail: AFMISSILEERS@compuserve.com

Historian: C.W. "Will" Lundy (67)
2519 Westville Trl
Cool, CA 95614-2008
Phone/Fax: (530) 886-8636 (Winter)
e-mail: willundy@aol.com
P.O. Box 315, Bridgeport, CA 93517 (Summer)
Phone/Fax: (760) 932-7349

Membership, Search: Art Hand (66)
517 Elm Street
Paris, IL 61944-1417
Phone/Fax: (217) 463-5905
e-mail: k9hwp@comwares.net

U.K. Representative: Steve Adams
28 Bassingham Rd.
Norwich, England NR3 2QT
Phone/Fax: 011-44-1603-400221
e-mail: s.p.adams@btinternet.com

ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS:

44th BGVA
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

The 8-Ball Tails ©

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

Compiled, written and published tri-yearly at 2041 Village Circle East, York, PA, by Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor. Printed and mailed Bulk Rate at Salt Lake City, UT under USPS Permit #6923. All original written material such as letters, stories, excerpts from personal diaries or memoirs, drawings and photos submitted to this journal will become the property of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and will be copyright protected except where noted. The text and photos are otherwise reproduced from official USAAF and USAF documents and photos which have been released for publication. Permission is granted for the contents of this journal to be reproduced specifically for personal archives. Otherwise, copyright material

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

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



The "Milk Run" That Brought Down the Sobotka Crew

TOP L TO R: CLARENCE REEVES, CHARLES SHOCKLEY, ANDY ROSS, THOMAS CAPIZZI, AUGIE SMANIOTTO, G. CLAIR SHAEFFER.

BOTTOM L TO R: MILTON ROSENBLATT, FRED BUTLER, FRANK SOBOTKA, ABE TEITEL AND IRIM TAB OUR MASCOT.



PHOTO TAKEN IN CASPER, WYOMING BEFORE WE HAD TO DRESS HER.

D-Day was 6 months away. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin had met the month before in Tehran to plan the invasion of France. Eisenhower had been named to direct the invasion of Europe. Kiev had been liberated and German defenses at Dnieper had begun to crumble. Allies had crossed the Sangro River in Italy. Like a cobra in its death throes, Adolph Hitler ordered the most vile of his weapons to date--unmanned missiles into London, the V-1s.

Both the 66th and 68th Squadrons set out on January 21. The target was the V-1 launching sites, Pas Des Calais Area at Escalles-Sur-Buchy. It was January 21, 1944. There was heavy cloud cover, and bombing was at a very low 12,000 feet. The mission was considered a 'milk run,' since the target was very close to the English Channel. The 68th

Squadron sent out seven aircraft and only three returned. Hartwell Howington, pilot of *RAM IT-DAM IT*; Gary Mathisen, pilot on #42-7514, possibly called *VALIANT LADY*, Frank Sobotka, pilot on #42-7501, and Alfred Starring on *VICTORY SHIP* all went down with their planes. Of the four planes, eight crew members successfully evaded, thirteen became POWs and twenty were KIA, including the fathers of Lois Cianci and Jackie Roberts. Among the evadees were Milton Rosenblatt, co-pilot on the Sobotka crew. He tells his story very factually, so the tensions, the anxieties, the physical discomfort of his experience can only be surmised.



MILTON ROSENBLATT, LATE 1942, 20 YRS OLD.



"After graduation and a few days leave I was slated to go to Casper, Wyoming where I joined a B-24 crew as co-pilot. We did all our training from Casper, formation flying, navigation, bombing runs, mock air battles with a group of fighters using camera guns and getting a thorough familiarization of our aircraft. We got to know each other and our capabilities. We became friends.

"It was time to get our assignment to a theater of operations, and we drew England - the Eighth Air Force. We decided to name our plane and add a little nose art. About that time on Broadway a popular stage show was playing called Naughty but Nice. It had long legged chorus girls in it. We voted to change the name to Nice and Naughty and add a long legged nude on the nose. We found an artist on base that did a great job. It only lasted a couple of days until the Major of our provisional group saw it and made us give her panties and a bra. We started out for the east coast. Our route was Casper to Goose Bay, Labrador to Reykjavik, Iceland to Prestwick, Scotland.

"We finally arrived in Prestwick about the end of October '43. While our plane was being readied for combat, we were quartered in a castle and had time to explore the town.

"We flew to Norwich and landed at Shipdham about the 1st of November, and our first mission was five days later.

"We flew eleven missions, had some flak damage, made two emergency landings at various fields, suffered some damage from enemy aircraft, but lucked out and came home safely each time, except for our last mission, the twelfth.

Tail End Charlie at Escalles-Sur-Buchy

"We were scheduled to fly a 'Milk Run' just over the Channel to bomb the so called 'ski sites' - the ground equipment used to launch the buzz bombs

toward England. They were called ski sites because they looked like ski jumps.

"We drew 'Tail End Charlie' and because this was supposed to be a milk run at a comparatively low altitude (about twelve thousand feet), I didn't bother to dress with any heavy clothes. Just my light leather jacket and regular shoes. No boots.

"No problems with our take off. We got into position and headed for the coast. We arrived over our intended area but couldn't find the target. Not an enemy plane in the sky and the flak was light. We had great support from our P-47s. We circled the fields looking for our target. I don't recall how long we looked before we finally saw them (they were well camouflaged). By this time our air cover had returned to England to refuel.

"Almost immediately the sky was filled with enemy aircraft. Of course they started at Tail End Charlie. The tail gun was knocked out first. They circled and came at us from eleven o'clock high, knocking out the top turret and spraying the instrument panel with lead. The control cables were severed, and the two engines on the left were on fire. The plane started to roll to the left, went completely over and ended up in a flat spin. The bail out alarm had been sounded and looking out the window, I could make out three chutes, not knowing whether they were ours or not. I knew we didn't have much time to bail out due to our low altitude, but the flat spin gave us a few more minutes. I quickly put my chute on, grabbed my pilot's chute and put it in his lap as he continued to fight the controls while yelling at me to get going.

"As I went toward the bomb bay to bail out, I glanced up at the top turret and all I saw was a hole where it had been. The radio operator was putting his chute on and signaled me to go ahead, he was following. I learned later that he didn't make it. Neither did the pilot. I was the last to jump.

“Those that didn’t make it were **Frank Sobotka** the pilot, **Claire Shaeffer** the crew chief (top turret gunner), **Tommy Capizzi** the radio operator and **Clarence Reeves** the tail gunner.

“I later learned that the rest of my crew were all captured except for **Abe Teitel**, the bombardier and myself. We ended up in the Underground. Abe and I were in different parts so I never did get to see him, although I learned later that he got back okay.

Bailing Out

“When I jumped and pulled the rip cord, the chute opened and I was so low that it only swung once before I hit the ground. Luckily I landed in a clearing that was in a forested area. I immediately gathered my chute, ran for the woods and hid out under the low lying branches of a pine tree. I buried my chute and after thinking about it also hid my 45 pistol. After all, who was I going to shoot?

“Things had happened so fast, and I was so hyper, I decided to stay there, calm down and decide what my next move would be. I rested for about a half hour before I crawled out and looked for a way out of the woods. I thought I would head for Paris feeling that in a big city, it would be easier to get lost and possibly find a way to get into the Underground. The only problem was my uniform. How could I walk around with an American uniform on? As luck would have it, as I came out of the woods and started walking down a dirt road a woman came around a bend walking toward me. She seemed startled at first then seeing my uniform and realizing I was an American, started chattering in rapid French. I couldn’t understand a word, but I finally figured out that she had seen the dog fight and the chutes of the men that had bailed out and realized that was where I had come from.

“She was very excited and grabbed my hand, practically ran with me to her house which was

close by. I found out by sign language and using a few French words, that her husband had been taken by the Germans to a labor camp and she was working the farm by herself. I stayed there that night, but couldn’t stay longer because the Germans often came by. Before I left she gave me some of her husband’s clothes. I felt a little better about walking in the open, now that my uniform was hidden.

“That day I walked until I was exhausted, thinking that I would hide in a barn for the night; but every time I approached a barn, a dog would start barking. I ended up going into a field and finding a haystack that I could burrow into and get a little sleep. This happened for two more days, I hadn’t seen a German soldier in all this time.

The Kindness of the French

“Nothing to eat or drink I was getting a little light headed and decided to knock on the next door I came to. Toward evening of my third day I came across a small house and knocked on the door. A man opened the door and we just stood there looking at each other. I opened my shirt and showed him my uniform with the U.S. pin on it. He quickly pulled me in and closed and locked the door. He spoke no English and I spoke no French, but we made ourselves understood. He realized I was hungry and tired, so he fed me and took me into a back room where there was a mattress that I fell on and promptly fell asleep. When I awoke he called a school teacher who spoke fair English. I told him I was trying to get to the Underground. He said he could help. He left and when he came back, he had two bicycles with him. He told me to follow him, and he led me to a house that looked deserted. When I entered, I saw three men standing in the middle of the room. They immediately surrounded me and started asking me questions. What plane did I fly, where did I take my training, where did I live in the states, what school did I go to. When they were satisfied that I was an American they shook my hand, patted me on the back and told me that I was now in the



Underground. I later found out that if they had any suspicion that I wasn't who I said I was, they would have shot me at once.

"One of the men drove me to a farm house where I stayed for about a week. A man and his wife and their teen age daughter who was studying English lived there. I helped with the chores around the house and on the farm and helped the young girl with her English, while she tried to teach me French. I grew to really like the family, but all too soon, I was moved to another location. This time I was with one of the heads of the Underground. He took me with him to help him interview new evadees. He said that I could tell easier than he could if these new arrivals were either American, English, or Canadian, and not German, trying to infiltrate. Another one of my jobs was to help write phoney identification cards. We would have photos taken and attach them to the cards. We also made up travel permits. I still have the ones I made for myself.

"I stayed with these people for over a month. One of the men owned a flour mill, and he would hold meetings there with Underground personnel every so often. By this time I understood enough French to know what was going on. They knew an invasion was inevitable, and they were planning what action they would take. They had guns and ammunition hidden in various parts of the city that could be obtained easily and quickly.

"One day word had filtered through that the Germans were suspicious of one of the men and were looking to question him. The man whose house I was living in at that time said that he would probably have to get to England. He was afraid the Germans were getting too close. I told him that I would go with him and we started to plan our route. We could either go through Switzerland or across the Pyrenees to Spain. We decided on Spain. It was easier to get to England from there. Before we got started word came back that I was to be evacuated from a beach in

Brittany by an English Corvette. I was to be driven to the railroad station in Paris with my I.D. and travel permit.

Getting Past the Germans

"When the day came that I was to leave, I was driven to the depot and told to wait with one other evacuee at a certain place in the station. We were to keep our eyes on three men that were standing under a clock on the far side of the station, and when they started to walk toward the ticket taker we should calmly follow them. Not too closely. I wondered how we would get through. We had no tickets. While we were looking into a store window and smoking a cigarette, a German officer approached us. We were given orders not to say one word to anyone, not even oui (yes) as our accent could be detected. The officer approached and asked me, in French, if I would give him a light. He had a cigarette but no matches. Luckily I understood him and like most Frenchmen that I had observed, I offered him a light from my cigarette. He thanked me and left. No sooner was he out of sight than one of the men under the clock rushed over and asked me what had taken place. I told him and assured him that I had not spoken one word.

"People were starting to go toward the ticket taker's gate and it was time for us to go also. We followed the men under the clock and when they got to the gate they nodded to the ticket agent and gave him their ticket. They got back a stub and continued on to the train. I got to the gate and held my breath as I started through. Without hesitation the gate man nodded at me and gave me a ticket stub which I have to this day. Obviously he was part of the Underground also. I got on the train, and as it started, I noticed two German soldiers checking the passengers ticket stubs and I.D.'s. This made me a little nervous because I saw them asking some of the people something. When they came to me I had my ticket stub and I.D. in my hand ready for them. They asked me for my travel permit and I breathed a

Sneaking to the Channel and Freedom

sigh of relief. I didn't have to talk to them I just reached into my pocket and showed it to them. They looked it over, seemed satisfied and moved on.

"When we arrived at our destination which was a small town on the coast of Brittany, we were met by a truck (there were about eight of us on the train) that took us to a farmhouse about a mile inland. We went into a large barn next to the house. Straw on the floor was pushed aside to uncover a trap door built into the floor. We were led down a ladder into a large room in which there were about thirty escapees. We were all happy to see each other and shook hands all around, gave our names and told our stories. We were told that an English Corvette would come to take us across the Channel as soon as there was a new moon which would occur in two days. In the meantime we were given food and wine. In the evening we were given blankets and pads on which we slept.

"The night we were to leave finally arrived. We were given strict instructions on how we were to proceed to the coast. We were warned that the coast was heavily guarded and we should be perfectly quiet while we walked in single file toward the beach. It was dark as pitch when we started. Not a light was seen. We headed toward the coast single file as instructed. We went down a dirt path bordered by four foot hedgerows on each side. We had gone no further than fifty yards when one of our guides came running back whispering to us to jump over the hedgerow and hide quietly behind it. It seemed to me that we made one hell of a commotion jumping over the bushes and landing on one another before we settled down, but a few minutes later two men came strolling by chatting to each other and not even realizing that just a few feet from them about forty men were waiting for them to pass.

"We continued down the path until we were stopped near the beach. Two German soldiers were on sentry duty walking back and forth. They walked toward each other and when they met would exchange a few words, turn around and walk back. When they were far enough away, the guide in front of our column would tap three or four of us to sneak by and slide down the cliff to the beach before the sentries turned around to come back. When we were all down, we waited for the Corvette to come in and pick us up. (Twenty years later, my wife and I had a chance to go back there; and all I can say is that I was glad it was a dark night, because I don't see how we all made it down without casualties. I never would have tried it in the day light.) We were told to take off our shoes and put our socks in them, tie the laces together and put them around our neck and roll our pants up over our knees. The Corvette launched three row boats toward the beach and we walked out to meet them. Little did it help to roll our pants up. We were up to our waist before we knew it.

We boarded the "Corvette", were treated royally by the crew and cruised to England, interrogated thoroughly and eventually returned to our group.

"My wife and I did go back, and I followed the same route I had taken twenty years earlier. Every one I met remembered me; and at every place I stopped, friends and neighbors were invited in, and we had party after party. I still have many friends in France that I correspond with to this day and we go back to see them quite often."



L TO R: Tony and Lois Cianci, Lila and Milton Rosenblatt
Milt was co-pilot on the plane in which Lois's father, Clair Shaeffer was killed.



"ANOTHER ONE OF MY JOBS WAS TO HELP WRITE PHONEY IDENTIFICATION CARDS. WE WOULD HAVE PHOTOS TAKEN AND ATTACH THEM TO THE CARDS. WE ALSO MADE UP TRAVEL PERMITS. I STILL HAVE THE ONES I MADE FOR MYSELF."

Carte d'Identité N° 218

Nom **Bellec**
 Prénoms **Jean Marie Simon**
 Nationalité **Français**
 Profession **ouvrier**
 Né le **17 Janvier 1919**
 à **St Jean Des Vignes du Nord**
 Domicile **Buhulien Côte du Nord**



Signature: *Jean Marie Bellec*

Le Titulaire: *Jean Marie Bellec*

Témoins: *un précis justificatif*

Signature des Signatures: *Le Maire*

Le **5 Mars 1943**

de *Carte d'Identité*

Signature: *Le Maire*

Le **5 Mars 1943**

de *Carte d'Identité*

Carte d'Identité ne peut
 être délivrée qu'aux per-
 sonnes en résidence dans
 la Commune depuis au
 moins 6 mois.

Département des Côtes-du-Nord



de **Buhulien**

ATTESTATION

BESCHEINIGUNG

Le soussigné, Maire de **Buhulien**
 Der Unterzeichnete, Bürgermeister von **Buhulien**

certifie, afin de pouvoir se rendre en zone interdite de la région côtière,
 Scheinigt zum Zwecke der Einreise in die Küstensperzone

le Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle **Bellec Jean**
 Herr, Frau, Fraulein (nom et prénom) (Name u. Vorname)

né le **17 Janvier 1919** à **St Jean Des Vignes**
 (date) (lieu de naissance) (Geburtsort u. Ort)

profession (Beruf) **ouvrier**

domicilié à **Buhulien**, rue **...** numéro **...**
 anhaft in

son domicile légal — sa résidence habituelle
 ihren Wohnsitz / seinen / ihren gewöhnlichen Aufenthalt

puis le **24 Novembre 1942**, à **Buhulien** hat.
 dem in

Le Maire **...**

valable jusqu'au **7 Mai 1943**

A faire proroger tous les six mois.

Le Maire **...** **27 NOV 1943**

CERTIFICAT DE TRAVAIL Mod 1

délivré sous la responsabilité de :

Monsieur **le Maire de Buhulien**

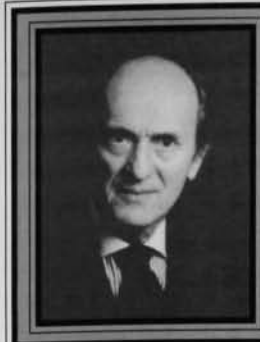
Qualité : **Côte du Nord**

A **Buhulien** le **17 AVR 1943**

Signature et cachet du **Maire**

J. 37280-43, (B)





From the Desk of our President

Last month (May 30) I completed my prescribed two (2) years as President of this thriving organization that my predecessor, Colonel Roy W. Owen, presided over for five years. You put me in charge of a remarkable organization and a strong Executive Board, broad and deep enough, to fulfill our mission of perpetuating our illustrious history, honoring the memories of our deceased comrades and providing the compassion, beneficence and friendship to the families of our fallen colleagues. I thank all of you for giving me this opportunity to represent and serve you in this capacity which I consider to be a profound privilege and unique pleasure.

I inherited from Colonel Owen a number of initiatives that he had tendered and that would come to fruition on my watch. One of the greatest of these is the Master Historical Data Base (MHDB) that will not only computerize the archival exploits of the 44th Bomb Group but also the personal histories of every man or woman who served with the 44th in WWII.

Much has been accomplished but much remains to be done and we cannot rest on past laurels.

As you know, the MHDB program requires funding that is clearly above our normal operating budget that averages in the area of \$30 - \$35,000 per annum. It is for this reason that I established the special MHDB Fund and appealed to you for donations to insure its success and perpetuity. To those who responded with your donations I thank you for your generosity and to those who have not yet made their contributions I appeal once again for whatever you can donate. Let's make this year the year "CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME" and, instead of responding to those appeals we are "deluged" with almost daily by mail, phone, fax, e-mail, etc., send your donation this year to the MHDB FUND, 44th BGVA, P.O. Box 712287, Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287.

Also, when I assumed the office as your President, I committed to insuring the financial stability of the association and the growth of our membership. I am pleased to let you know that according to our Treasurer's Annual Report for the period ending December 31, 2000, we are financially stable and have been showing an annual surplus for the past two years.

Our membership also continues to grow despite the ever growing attrition due to deaths that are occurring with ever increasing frequency. As of this writing our membership stands at 1,065 members and it is my goal that with the membership drives still in effect and/or planned, this number will continue to grow. Many of you are enrolling members of your family which I believe is one of the best "gifts" you can give your children and/or grandchildren. It is their key to the record of your service and contribution to that great victory over totalitarianism that made you one of those referred to by Tom Brokaw as "The Greatest Generation." Keep enrolling them and urge your fellow crewmen/colleagues to do the same.

Thanks to Jerry Folsom's efforts, our 44th BGVA Web Site is now up and running and the "hits" are growing daily. Keep in mind that it is new and we will be making improvements as needed. Also, our newly appointed AWARD COMMITTEE under the Chairmanship of Robert Lehnhausen received Board approval to inaugurate THE GENERAL LEON W. JOHNSON DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD this year. This award will become an annual event and the Year 2001 Honoree will be announced and receive this award at the Shreveport Reunion scheduled for October 15-18, 2001. Make your reservations NOW for another one of Mike Yuspeh's fantastic reunions. We will visit the 8th Air Force Headquarters, dedicate the B-24J with dignitaries from the state of Louisiana, city of Shreveport and 8th Air Force, tour Shreveport, dine and dance to the Big Band Music in the mode of the one and only GIENN MILLER. RESERVE EARLY!

Congratulations to Robert "Lee" Aston on his belated award of the DFC and two Oak Leaf Clusters to his Air Medal. He was notified on May 15, 2001 of these awards by the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records for "...extraordinary achievement while serving as Navigator on B-24 airplanes on many missions over enemy occupied Continental Europe" on January 11 and 12, 1945 (Air Medals) and March 15, 1945 (DFC). "Lee and Chris Spagnola are contacting their other crew members to meet and renew their friendships at the Shreveport Reunion in October. Other crews are also planning to attend, including Bob Dunlop's crew, and those few that are still remaining from my original crew in the 66th - Jimmy, Pat, Sam, George are you listening? I am counting on Bill Coll's uncle and some of "Buster" Hazelton's children to be there. See you in Shreveport.

I close with another one of my favorite quotations:

**"When the Love of Power exceeds the Power of Love
Take Heed."**

Edward K. Mikoloski, President



Back Row L to R:
LEON DEL GRANDE, Co-Pilot,
LT. Edward Cole,
LT CRAIG HAVENS, AND
LT. JAMES ZAICEK.



CAN ANYONE IDENTIFY THE
CREWMEN IN THE FRONT ROW?

ANOTHER RIDDLE RESOLVED

The mission to Zwickau, Germany on April 21, 1944 was recalled, but not in time to prevent the crash of A/C #41-29418 (68th Sq.) at Teverham Mill Lake, near Norwich, England. Five members of the crew perished: **James Zajicek**, Navigator; **Edward Cole**, Bombardier; **Leonard Lambert**, Engineer; **George Houchens**, Radio Operator; **Hal Wood**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Russell Taylor**, Tail Gunner. Pilot **Forrest Havens** and Co-Pilot **Leon Del Grande** survived, but were injured.

Very recently a police diving team found the wreckage with incomplete lettering on the *Pappy's Chillin*. The explanation of the crash was rime ice. The plane was flying into formation, travelling at 144-160 MPH through overcast, icy conditions. When it reached 14,000 feet, the aircraft lurched violently and started swerving to the right. The pilots could not control the ship, and it swerved back to the left, then



CLEMANS

started to spin tightly toward the ground. The plane then turned on its back and the right wing and tail were torn off by the violent maneuvers. The two pilots were thrown into the top of the cockpit, the cabin ripped apart, and they were thrown clear of the wreckage.

Just recently, fifty seven years later, a memorial stone was laid in honor of the crew, led by a US Air Force Guard of Honor. Cole's sister, Elizabeth Clemans, traveled to the site. Representing the 44th at the Memorial Ceremony was President Mike Mikoloski and U.K. Representative, Steve Adams.



This MEMORIAL was
dedicated in
TAVERHAM, outside of
Norwich, Saturday.

AIRMEN FROM THE BASE HONOR GUARD fold the AMERICAN flag SATURDAY during a CEREMONY at TAVERHAM honoring AN AMERICAN bomber crew THAT CRASHED NEAR THE TOWN 57 YEARS EARLIER. THE flag WAS presented TO BETTY CLEMANS, THE SISTER OF THE bombardier WHO PERISHED IN THE CRASH.



MIKE FUSANO AND THE GENERAL

"I was the first one to see the Medal of Honor after it was given to General Leon Johnson," said Mike Fusano. "I congratulated him on receiving it, and he immediately said, 'Don't congratulate me. I am only the custodian of the Medal. This is for the boys who did all the work.' That was so typical of the General's humility. He was the greatest man I have ever known."

Mike had the unique pleasure of being the driver for the great General. Drafted from his family's olive grove in California, he went to Wichita Falls, Texas for his Boot Camp experience, then to Shreveport, Louisiana, where he became a member of the 44th Bomb Group. In Barksdale he remembers being 'just another Dog Face.' From there he became a member of the motor pool in Ft. Myers, Florida, right in the Everglades. The advantage of that assignment was that they could sometimes go to San Carlos Bay and watch the porpoises leap about.

"When we went to England, our priest, Father Lamb went with us, and I was his driver. When he got transferred to the 1st Division, I became a full-time driver for General Johnson. He had a wonderful sense of humor. When we would leave the base, there was an Indian from Oklahoma on guard duty. It was his job to stop and challenge anyone



MIKE AND COL. JOHNSON

going in or out. When nothing was happening, the man sat in a little cubby hole and pulled a blanket over himself. The General jested that perhaps they should get him a teepee."

From his position as driver, Mike could enjoy some of the hospitality of great leaders. Once when General Johnson

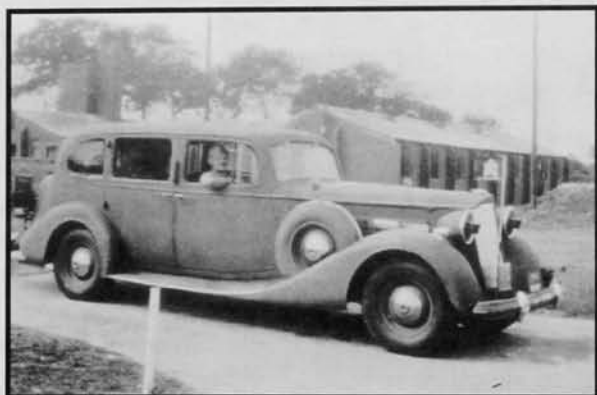
went to Hingham to visit Lord Ironside a British General, the maid came out to the car to serve Mike tea and crumpets. Lord Ironside had been relieved of his command after the disastrous battle of Dunkirk, so he returned to his special interest of growing a variety of apples. When Mike would meet him on the streets, he was always greeted warmly; and each time Lord Ironside wanted a report on how the General was doing.

"I was directed to pick up any walking soldier," Mike remembered. "The General would use that opportunity to find how things were going on the base. One night we picked up a Master Sergeant going off duty at midnight. He stated that there was rarely any food in the mess hall at that hour--just odds and ends. That was because the men on Liberty Runs got there first and ate it all.

"That didn't ever happen again," Mike declared. "The General changed that, immediately making provisions for those going off duty to eat.



"When the 44th was going on an especially hazardous assignment, the General would tell me to get his parachute, he was going along. He would say, 'This is going to be tough. I have to go along to take responsibility.' On base he drove himself, and I drove him when he went to other bases. Sometimes we would leave at 2:00 a.m., but he would always insist that I get back for some sleep, or catch up on a meal. When I wasn't driving, I had to take care of the car, a 1935 Custom Packard." On the celebration of the 44th 200th mission, the General took the wheel and drove Mike through the base.



Look who is driving Mike FUSANO

Mike had the great experience of being on the same plane with General Johnson for the Trolley Run, and heard him explain the details of everything that had been done. It was truly a moment of pride for everyone who had contributed to the war effort.

The friendship between the two men continued until the General's death. If Johnson was in Los Angeles, Mike and his wife Kaye would visit with him; and in the latter days of his life, they visited him in the nursing home in Fairfax, Virginia.

When the War was over, Mike returned to growing olives and making oil in Sylmar, California, where he resides with his wife, Catherine. He regards his time spent with General Johnson as some of the brightest moments of his life.



Mike FUSANO

William MENGES

WILLIAM MENGES ARMY COMBAT, 44TH BOMB GROUP & MISSILEER



1955

William Menges, AF Retiree, got 100 free hours from ATT, so he called to tell me his war experiences. He also called Jerry Folsom to chat. HE HAS NOT YET DONE HIS DATABASE, but promises to do it soon.

Menges started out with the CCC, an organization created during the Great Depression for young men who couldn't find jobs. In 1942 he was drafted, and found himself in the 3rd Army, manning the anti-aircraft search lights in the Ardennes for General Patton. Later, as a combat engineer, Menges built bridges for the advancing army in Luxemburg and Pruuen, Germany.

When the War was over, he took advantage of the G.I. Bill to study radio, then enlisted in the Air Corps and was assigned to the 44th BG at Rapid City, S.D. (He claims to be among the first to don the Air Force blue uniform.) At Ellsworth he became a Radar Mechanic. When the 44th had its transformation into the Missileers, Menges was there on Permanent Staff. His next assignment was Expediter on the ICBM and Minuteman Missiles.

Menges speaks with true enthusiasm of the high points of his service experiences. He says in England he danced with Col. Leon Johnson's wife, and at Geiger Field he worked with Captain Chuck Yeager. He says he has four Battle Stars and some Oak Leaf Clusters. Straddling three branches of the service in one short lifetime has been a heady experience for M/Sgt. William Menges.

SOME THINGS ONLY HAPPEN ONCE ... THE EUROPEAN TOUR

September, 2001 44th BGVA Europe/England Trip (A perfect trip to share with a child or grandchild.)

The trip will be a step back in time and a look into the progressive world that YOU made possible by your valiant sacrifice, fifty seven years ago. Not only will you see the cities where you helped wipe out Nazi strongholds, but also visit shrines and cathedrals that survived from medieval times to the present. From September 11-26, you will barely have time to see the wonders that lie ahead, and the history that YOU helped make. Did you know the Parisians cut the cables of the Eiffel Tower when the city fell, so the Germans could not use it as a radio tower? It re-opened after V-E Day, with free rides for any G.I. who happened along. Did you know a day at the Louvre is not nearly long enough to see the work of the Old Masters? You might get through one section.

At Caen the Wehrmacht was desperately holding onto the city, acting on Hitler's mistaken idea that the main invasion would be at Pas de Calais. Now Caen's biggest attraction is a Memorial Museum for Peace, honoring those who fought both wars--WWI and WWII. At Normandy, even those who have previously seen the exhibits and cemetery will again marvel at the awesome undertaking of that landing, assisted by B-24 bombers that cut off German support of the troops at the coast. Enemy cannons still protrude from cement bunkers, testimony of the deadly battle that ensued.

We will have lunch in Reims, a 2000 year old city and scene of Napoleon's last victorious battle. Reims is now famous for its champagne, and the home of General Eisenhower's SHAPE headquarters. From there, we will see Verdun and Luxembourg.

Day 6 takes us to Bastogne, Belgium, where an American tank is the centerpiece in the two square. Our Belgium friend, Peter Loncke will be joining us at the towns of Wibrin and Haufalize, where local people will dedicate a memorial at the crash site of the Pinder crew. From there we move to a medieval tour, Trier, Germany on the Mosel River for dinner and our evening stay. The next day's adventure will be a 4-1/2 hour cruise on the Rhine River.

The Gothic Cathedral in Cologne is still a majestic sight, even though the entire city

was devastated by the bombing. At Wesel we will visit the crash site of **Louis DeBlasio's** and **Bob Vance's** plane, then later to the cemetery where their crewmen are buried, then on across the Channel, past the White Cliffs of Dover and on to Norwich. We will see the Memorial Library, the Shipdham Airfield and the 14th Combat Wing Hq., and have an opportunity to meet our special guests from Shipdham Village and the British Legion. Too soon we will say good-bye to Steve Adams, Phyllis DuBois, Peter Loncke, Luc Dewez, Andrew Doubleday and all our other friends; then on to Duxford, Cambridge and London. Coming home, our heads may be swimming, but our hearts will be brimming at the memories of a holiday that can never be replicated.

*Take a young family member.
It's a great lesson in history.
Call Larry Herpel at
1-888-317-7483.*



WAR ROOM of the 14th Wing Hq. CAN ANYONE identify THESE STRATEGISTS?





THE REUNION IN BARKSDALE EARLY HOME OF THE 44TH BOMB GROUP

I recently heard the reason for veterans to go to a Reunion. They don't go because they want to talk about the good old days, and they don't go to talk about how great they once were. They go because they have been with other men whose courage has been tested to the utmost degree of human endurance, and yet stood tall. They want the company of such men one more time. To me, your editor, that says it all.

Barksdale will be a fantastic experience, as the dedication of the Louisiana Belle has great significance to so many 44thers. (In 2001, a B-24 is hard to find.) The efforts of **Clem Haulman** and Dick Butler in gathering parts for the reconstructed treasure has paid off, and the staff at Barksdale are eager to show off their work. A number of crews will be holding their own small gatherings; and there should be some pretty strong discussions, as memories of the same events unravel differently.

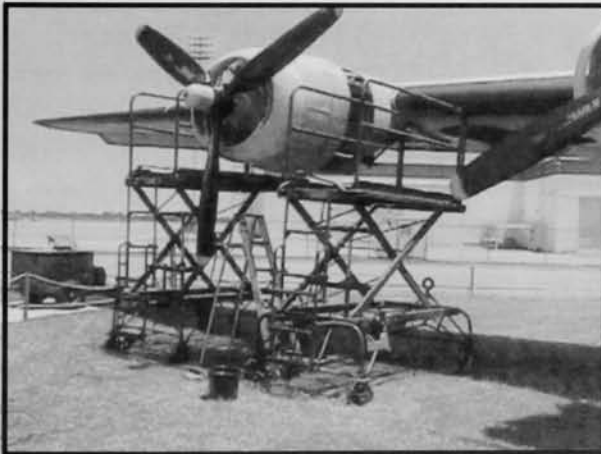
Mike Yuspeh's skills at arranging grandiose events is unparalleled in the upcoming program at the Isle of Capri Hotel at Bossier City. With the planned tours, he piques your interest in the history of Shreveport, once the capital of the Confederacy, and gives you a taste of the Southern culture and Creole cuisine, unique in the nation.

Most impressive, however, will again be the Squadron Dinners, Candlelight Ceremony and gala Banquet, where memories of the past can be 'rehashed' and revitalized. Could anything touch your heart more successfully than a 17 piece band with the 'Glenn Miller' sound? Don't miss this great opportunity. The Barksdale Reunion will happen only once.

PHASES OF THE RESTORATION



OF THE "LOUISIANA BELLE"



**JOIN US IN
BARKSDALE!**





**44th Bomb Group
Veterans
Assn. Reunion - 2001**



Isle of Capri Hotel - Bossier City, LA

Barksdale AFB

October 15, 16, 17, & 18, 2001

Reunion Registration Form

Please print or type. All Information must be complete:

Last Name _____ First Name (Tag) _____

Spouse _____ Squadron # _____ Life Member _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Guests & Relation _____

Number to Attend _____ @ \$215.00 Each Amount \$ _____

Tour #1- City Tour of Shreveport
Number on Tour _____ @ \$25.00 Per Person Amount \$ _____

Tour # 2- Tour of Natchitoches & Lunch
Number on Tour _____ @ \$55.00 Per Person Amount \$ _____

Total Amount Remitted Amount \$ _____
Check # _____

Description of tours are in last issue of the 8 Ball Tails.

Registration Includes: Everything on agenda except tours as listed above.

Registration must be received by September 10, 2001.

Hotel registration must be made directly with Isle Of Capri Hotel & Casino by phone only

Toll free (800) 843-4753.

Check Made Payable to: 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association (44th BGVA)

Mail to: Mike Yuspeh - 7214 Sardonyx Street - New Orleans, LA 70124-3509

Phone: (504)283-3424 Fax: (504) 283-3425 (Picks up on 6th ring)

E-Mail: Mikeyuspeh@juno.com



MAJOR URSEL HARVELL AND THE WOLF PACK.

MARCH 10, 1943



"This bit of history was made aboard an old French passenger vessel that had seen better days, the *Chantilly*. It could have been considered a luxury liner twenty years ago, that is, in the Indian Ocean trade. The British took her over and ordered her to

England via New York. We went aboard her there for the memorial crossing of the North Atlantic, a normal crossing in that ship was a feat without the menace of the jerry wolfpacks. Concrete gun turrets and gun emplacements had added considerably to the weight of the upper structure which may have interfered with the ship's balance on its usual run from Capetown, Durban to Suez on the East Coast of Africa, but one look at this tub and the calendar was enough to forecast the type of crossing we had ahead.

We ran into foul weather about the 8th of March, the a/c carrier turned back the 10th, about 4:40 p.m., the taffrail boom was dipping the water with every roll, chairs and tables were lashed down; then at 6:30, just two hours after the main escort had turned back, the most terrifying sub attack you've ever read about hit us. First to go was the deputy commodore starboard to forward, then a freighter directly opposite us, starboard, which saved us the first time, by taking the torpedo which was intended for us. Our silhouette was much higher on the surface than the smaller vessels around us and having the characteristics of a troopship was naturally the prize target for the Hun. I felt sorry for the little fellows who unknowingly were running interference for us and paying with their lives. Another tanker further to starboard was hit and sunk without burning. Then it became quiet. I clenched the railing at my station expecting the deck to heave up in my face any moment. I glanced out at the red light that always goes on at top mast when a ship was hit. There were three such distress signals and dozens of little red lights around each ship. I knew they were attached to men who could live only a few minutes in that Arctic water. Convoys never slow down or stop to pick up

survivors, and the escort was entirely too busy. As I contemplated these things, one by one the big red lights on the mast head would disappear leaving only the small red lights moving up and down on the heavy swells, gradually disappearing astern. I began to move about to get warm and ordered the men to move around, but stay in the vicinity of their assigned boat stations. I suddenly realized that I hadn't checked the top side boats to see if the native members of the crew (Lascars of India) had not already found refuge in them. I had been ordered to shoot them if necessary to keep them out. I moved forward a little uncertainly at first with legs that seemed tired on a deck that never seemed level. Glancing into the blackness of the life boats was a mere routine, knowing full well that the boats could never be launched anyway. I looked out to port, hoping that I couldn't see the nearest ship, but in vain, as its full outline was visible to me, black against lighter sky. I felt my heart quicken a little as the realization of periscopic sighting dawned on me.

My nerves had settled down a little bit and my hopes had risen some as we had made a turn since the last attack. I had just ducked into a gangway to light a cigarette, and was coming back on deck when a terrific explosion off our port bow nearly lifted our ship out of the water. At first I thought it was our ship and I listened for the alarm bell, but the red light on the ship nearest to us told me it was not yet our time. This little freighter started to settle very fast and seemed to settle to its watery grave even before we had fully passed it. There were more little red lights in the water, more gripping of the railing, yes, yes, and more prayers. In quick succession two more ships were torpedoed beyond the point where the freighter had just been hit. I could also hear depth charges going off in that direction and thought that it was about time somebody started to fight back and could feel a little warmth stealing through my veins from anger. Anger at the Navy at so little defense, anger at the enemy for operating on such a night not giving a man a chance, anger at the Army for putting skilled troops in an eight knot convoy, and anger at yourself for standing there unable to do anything but watch the slaughter. Then again, farther to starboard, this time two more ships put up red lights. All was quiet once more. An hour went by and nothing more happened. It was then midnight.

I went below to the main lounge to see what was going on below. There were twelve Dutch fliers from Java, an American



submarine officer, with several underseas cruises to his credit, with a jaw like a bulldog and a face white with fear. Perhaps he knew better than any of us what our chances were. An American paratroop officer was there, full of chatter and bragadoccio, until the next attack began, sitting nearest the passageway to the deck, with fear written all over him, looking from one to the other as if searching for consolation in the countenances of his fellow passengers. There were also some Red Cross men, infantry officers, one or two Marine officers, British Naval officers and a British padre. All were quiet and reminded you of men waiting to be sentenced. None wanted to go to their stateroom because of the possibility of passageways bulking closed and doors jamming in case of a hit trapping them. The ship was rolling and pitching, more violently than usual due to the constant change of course, and the movement only added to the taunt nerves of the passengers. One of the exit doors became unhooked and slammed shut with a resounding noise. Everyone was frightened, the paratrooper and submarine officer were on their feet in a flash; then settled back to their seat on the floor, a little sheepishly for the lack of control.



URSEL HARVELL, CAPT.

I returned to my station again and had hardly become accustomed to the darkness when the third attack of the night began at 0230. Several ships were hit in quick succession, none too near this time, thank goodness. Most of them were on the outside line of the convoy, several lanes to our starboard. The most spectacular of them all and a fitting finish to a devil show was a hit on the tanker loaded with 4,000,000 gallons of 100 octane gas. The engine room was apparently hit and the fuel oil began to burn amidship. The flames grew higher and higher and cast a reddish glow over the entire convoy. Every ship could plainly be seen and everyone was waiting for the inevitable explosion to the gas tanks and an end to the menace of illuminating the targets for the Jerry. How could he miss us now? I could not understand. We were like sitting ducks and to me it seemed only a matter of lining us up in his sights.

The outline of a Destroyer was seen circling the burning tanker, apparently waiting for the crew to get clear. A few seconds later she put a torpedo into the gas reservoirs. The resulting explosion is indescribable. There was a cloud level with a ceiling 4,000 ft., the exploding gas went up through the overcast and continued to burst beyond, creating a translucent illumination which was almost blinding. Each row of white caps on the top of the heavy swells looked like torpedoes heading for our ship in this weird light. To me, with nerves on edge it seemed only a

matter of where we were going to be hit, and I had practically resigned myself to that fate. However, the exploding tanker lasted only a few seconds actually, and the resulting flames soon died out and all was black again over the convoy.

Astern of us, gunfire was going on, mixed with the vibrating muffled sounds of depth charges. I thought for a moment a sub had been under fire of our escort vessels but a red light going on a top mast of one of our convoy soon faded any hope I had of seeing one of the enemy subs sunk. Later I learned from the wireless men that the cocky enemy had surfaced and shelled the straggling freighter to the bottom as a parting gesture of respect to our escort which was too little and too late.

Aside from sleeping equipped to abandon ship on a moment's notice and a few radio scares of enemy aircraft, nothing of consequence happened after the memorial night of March 10-11 to report on. I can truthfully say that the land of the British Isles never looked so good as it did to the passengers on the ship which should have stayed on its run up and down the East Coast of Africa.

Editor's Note: Harvell was a photographer. Fifty six years later, many pictures of crews, maintenance personnel and combat events can be credited to this dedicated airman. An original copy of his book "Liberators Over Europe" will be presented to the library at Barksdale during the 44th BGVA Reunion. Thanks to Jerry Wilner. (68th Sq.) a reprinted copy will be available for historians and researchers to peruse.

Wilner took stock of his memorabilia, and recognized its historical value. By his foresight, he preserved a valuable treasure, and passed it on for the next generation to know and appreciate the meaning of war.

In his 46 year old collection was the pamphlet, "The Destruction of Germany as seen on The Trolley Mission. The pages unfold the work of the 8th Air Force in bringing Germany to its knees, featuring the photographs of Capt. Ursel P. Harvell. The booklet ends with this powerful statement: "The Infantry, Field Artillery and Engineers--in fact, every man who ever participated--could lay claim to final victory. And deservedly so. But for sheer destruction of enemy installations the heavy bombers had no peer. Precision bombing, as exemplified by the 44th Bombardment Group, paid off."

From Dick Butler, this letter from the Memorial Trust of the 2nd Air Division USAAF:

DJH/2ADA/12/1/01

Brigadier General Patrick Adams, USAF (Retired)
President of Operations
Air Force Memorial Foundation
1501 Lee Highway
ARLINGTON
Virginia. 22209-1198. U.S.A.

Dear Brigadier General Adams,

Here in the United Kingdom we have been watching with the great interest and hope the progress towards your much needed Air Force Memorial. As we are finding here in the UK time is not on our side with our own Battle of Britain Memorial in London and it is the question of "time" that I am writing to you with a plea for help.

As you know during World War Two East Anglia was the base for the USAAF Eighth Air Force and in Norfolk and North Suffolk we were proud indeed to host the 2nd Air Division USAAF flying the B-24 Liberator with their 14 bomber airfields plus 4 fighter fields. A great friendship developed which has increased each year since then and we will never forget their bravery and sacrifice including the loss of over 6700 young US airmen who died fighting for their freedom we all enjoy today while flying from our Norfolk bases. As a Norwich schoolboy in those dark days I was privileged to meet many of the Crews and hence my pride now as an old Ex-RAF retired pilot to serve their Memorial Trust.

When the 2nd Air Division left us in 1945, they were unique in all the 8th Air Force by deciding that they did not want to leave us just a statue or a plaque, but they had the vision of leaving a living Memorial that could be enjoyed by future generations and so their wonderful 2nd Air Division Memorial Library was borne. This library is the only one of its kind in the world and covers all facets of American life as well as aviation and the air war in Europe. We also hold one of the finest archive collections in the world of the daylight bombing during the war, much used by writers and historians from all over the globe. Since the Library opened as part of our Norwich main Central Library, the 2nd Air Division USAAF Association have generously funded their memorial and only just over 7 years ago they raised over \$800,000 to give Norwich and Norfolk the priceless gift of an American Fulbright Scholar Librarian each year in perpetuity.

Sadly in 1994 our Central Library, including the Memorial was devastated by fire but within 3 months a temporary library was up and running. Now six years later, after having won millennium funding, we are watching a superb building arise from the ashes of the old library, a £60 million project which will be one of the finest structures in our ancient city. Included in this magnificent building will be the new 2nd Air Division USAAF Memorial Library, twice the size of the old and fully equipped with all the latest technology. The new building will also include a 200 seat lecture theatre, Norfolk Heritage Attraction Centre, restaurant, tourist and business centre and archive facilities. On November 7th of this year the US Ambassador in London will



formally open this new facility, which will be the finest American Memorial Library of its kind in the world and a fitting tribute to the debt that we owe to the United States Air Force. At the moment we have over 690 US Veterans and their families flying over for this historical occasion. This week the Norwich City Council formally approved the rare award of the Freedom of the City to the 2nd Air Division USAAF Association, the only unit of the US Air Force to ever receive this honour.

Keeping the records of the 8th Air Force has been one of our essential tasks and we were all so delighted when we first saw the Military Heritage Database project and realized the massive benefits. Last year at the 2nd ADA Convention at Tampa, we and our archivist looked at it in more detail and came away convinced that this is the most unique record we have ever seen. Indeed the Memorial Trust has agreed to help the project financially because of the importance. Here is a chance for future generations to see, learn and understand what happened in those days and a vital part of our records.

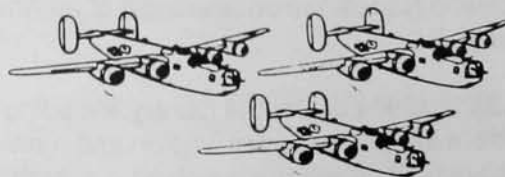
However, as I began my letter, time is against us, for unless we can get these records, histories, stories and people on the database now, many items will be lost forever in the next year or so. Here in the UK that database will be a vital part of the Memorial Library as I am sure it must be in your American Air Force Memorial. Therefore may I end with this heartfelt plea that you can support this database project as a most urgent item, for this understanding and detailed record of history needs to be available both in the USA and the UK as well as elsewhere, so that future generations will never forget the debt that they owe to the United States Air Force.

In Norfolk we have a saying about the 2nd Air Division USAAF, "They came as friends, they stayed as friends, they have remained friends and we and future generations will always remember them with pride and affection." This unique database will play a great part in that appreciation.

Finally, I hope you will not object to me writing to you, but we realize that your support is vital to the success of this outstanding project. We do hope you will be able to make the dream become a reality.

Yours sincerely,

David J. Hastings
Vice Chairman



Editor's Note: The information on the Database will be used on both sides of the Atlantic. Do you biography now. Your story is important.

VIVID MEMORIES OF T. J. FEENEY, LTC USA (Ret)

66th Squadron 44th BG (Staff Sgt. Tail Gunner)



THE KLEINSCHMIDT CREW

BACK ROW: KLEINSCHMIDT--PILOT,
SPOVER--CO-PILOT, ROSSEVELT--NAVIGATOR.
FRONT ROW: DIGGINS--ENGINEER,
THOMAS--WAIST GUNNER,
GOTTSALL--WAIST & BALL TURRET GUNNER,
FEENEY--TAIL TURRET GUNNER,
GROWDEN--NOSE GUNNER & TOGGLEER,
GORNETT--RADIO OPERATOR.

Thomas J. Feeney "Joe" volunteered for Aerial Gunnery School when he learned that with a problem of depth perception, he could not be a pilot. He became a Tail Gunner at Tyndall Field, Florida, then went to Lincoln, Nebraska to join his crew. From there it was OTU at Gowan Field, Boise, ID, then on to Shipdham to join the 66th Sq. of the 44th Bomb Group.

"Our first three missions were to Magdeburg, where we encountered the most flak of all the missions we went on," he recalled. Equally disconcerting was the ominous briefing on the morning their crew was assigned to fly over Cologne. It still rings in Feeney's memory: "If you hit the Cathedral, don't bother to come back." Pilot Lt. **Arnold P. Kleinschmidt**, on the *Glory Bee* was flying lead. They flew past the famous Cathedral and hit their target--the Deutch Bridge which was a primary artery for the German supply lines, and they did come back. Forty nine years later, Feeney was pleasantly surprised to see the photograph that had been shot at 22,000 feet by their bomb-sight camera appear in *National Geographic*.

The *Glory Bee* and the German Jet

"On April 25, 1945 we were on a mission to Swabische Halle. Our photo interpretation people had spotted an airfield there with elongated runways. They

figured it was a jet base, so we were sent to bomb it. However, in looking up, I saw one diving straight down at us from 12:00 o'clock. I turned my turret up and then watched as the jet went straight down through our formation. It was traveling so fast, my guns were always behind him as I tried to track him; and so close, I could see the German pilot's face as he passed by. I often thought (mistakenly) I could have hit him with a rock instead of trying to get that turret to move fast enough to get him. However, the mission was successful.

Bomb Stuck in Bomb Bay

Feeney and **William H. Diggins**, Engineer, are the last surviving members of the Kleinschmidt crew. Previously they had written recollections to each other, all treasures in Feeney's book of memories. Kleinschmidt wrote, "On one mission we had dropped our bombs and realized we had a bomb hung in the bomb bay. The bombs were attached to a shackle by a cable which activated the bomb as it left the bomb bay. This one didn't leave. The engineer crawled out with a pair of pliers and seven minutes of oxygen at 22,000 feet to cut the wire. He had to crawl out on the catwalk in the bottom of the ship over the open bomb doors. He did it. If he hadn't, the bomb could have detonated and blown us out of the sky."



Feeney's eyes followed the dropping missile. "As we moved away from the release point, the bomb left a trail of smoke until it hit the middle of a large; solitary farm house in the middle of a huge German field. We were unable to assess the damage we inflicted on this 'no choice target'."

Remembering Frankfurt

In Feeney's records he found this report by his pilot in correspondence with LTC **Maury Dyer**, another friend who served in the 66th Sq. (deceased).

"I guess the worst situation I was ever in was when I lost two engines in a snow storm over Germany.

"We were flying blind on a mission to the interior of Germany when I got hit by flak and lost an engine. The rest of the squadron flew off and left me. We could see the black shells exploding all around us and we were losing altitude. I got out of the main flight pattern and tried to restart the engine," he said. "When I tried the engine, I lost oil pressure in another engine and saw the prop of the second engine fly off past the window into space."

"Now we were down to two engines. We were out of the Frankfurt flak area, and I called in code for fighter help. We were losing 200 feet per minute and I had only a 17-mile corridor to fly through to try to make it to a safe landing place. We got our fighter escort and he took us across the bomb line where the ground fighting was taking place in France and then broke radio code by saying, 'Sweetheart, I'm home. You can make it now.' That was a big no-no.

"Sure enough, the Germans heard him. I told the crew to watch for them and here they came. We headed for the overcast 9,000 below. As the nose gunner turned his turret to fire, the door flew off the turret and struck the wing between the two engines and ripped a gash in the wing. I could see the latex liner swell out of the gas tank on the right wing. If it broke, that was it. We were in a high-speed stall and almost shaking apart. But I dropped the nose and we were okay again.

"I was trying to contact the British to get permission to land on the crash strip just across the Channel when we broke out of the overcast and I thought we

had enough altitude to make it home. When we got there we were at 250 feet and the tower told us to go around. We didn't go around and that liner held."

The crew remembers one more interesting facet of that adventure. "As we continued back across the Channel and losing altitude rapidly, Kleinschmidt ordered us to ditch everything including our machine guns, ammo and our A-3 bags. Our A-3 bags! They contained our escape kits, mainly stocked with cigarette and silk stockings." (*Editor's Note: While Kleinschmidt worried about getting them back to Shipdham safely, Feeney was thinking of the loss of bargaining power, tossing cigarettes and silk stockings.*)

Delivering the Gas

When the War was nearing the end, Patton's Third Army was swiftly and forcefully breaking through enemy defenses. They ran short of gasoline for their tanks, and the 44th was one of the groups that supplied them. This was a very low level drop. Feeney remembers dropping 50 gallon drums of gasoline at tree top level.

"I did not see any of them spill or shatter," he recalled. "The reason they didn't, was the wooden construction shaped like an hourglass with rounded wooden tops and bottoms that permitted the drums to roll when dropped." They did not encounter flak on this mission, but did contend with small arms fire.

One memory of that mission continues to haunt him. He saw a flyer from his own outfit hung up with his chute draped over the rudder of another B-24.

Encountering a 'Maverick'

On one of our missions we were forced to abort just short of our target and return to England. On the return flight we had no fighter cover. I spotted a single fighter above us directly approaching our tail. I fired above him so he could see my tracers. He continued and I fired below him. Since he continued in I zeroed in on him and forced him to turn off. The Martin Turret also fired on him. He radioed our craft and pulled parallel to us but out of range. He identified himself as a P-51 fighter and wanted to know why we

were firing on him. Needless to say we kept him well covered and he eventually pulled off and disappeared.

The matter was the subject of much discussion among our crew. When we were debriefed we were told it may well have been a P-51 but it was not one of ours. We were also told that we had no aircraft in the area and the marking were unknown to our intelligence people. We were told we did the right thing in firing on the craft.

In June, 1994 the USAF Historical Agency at Maxwell AFB, AL advised me that they had no record of downed P-51's being rebuilt by the Germans. Then in July, 1994 I learned from LTC Maury Dyer USAF (Ret) that when he flew with the 44th, he was informed that the Germans did use cannibalized parts from aircraft that crashed or were forced to land in Germany. He said that "what got our people's attention was that we could be shot down by one of them."

They were called 'Mavericks.'

Before the war, Feeney was attending Northeastern University in Boston, MA. Following discharge, he returned to the University, earning a BS in Business Administration. Shortly thereafter he reenlisted in the army in CIC. After training at Ft. Holabird, MD and serving as an agent in Washington DC, he received a direct commission in the Finance Corps. He served with the Army Audit Agency and held a number of General Staff assignments in Alaska, the U.S. and Korea.

The army decided to send him to the University of Colorado where he earned his MBA in 1962. His last foreign duty was a Comptroller Advisor to the Iranian Forces and their SCS (DOD equivalent). He was stationed with ARMISH MAAG Hqs. in Tehran, Iran. (The Shah was still ruling at that time, and the relations with American personnel were very good. After Feeney left, his replacement was murdered, and matters continued to go down hill after that.) His last assignment was a Chief Pay Systems, Office Chief of Finance, D.A. He also served as chairman of the DOD Military Pay Conference Committee. He retired in November, 1968. Following retirement he was

employed by Fairfax County, VA as Deputy Director of Assessments until 1976.

Feeney and his wife, Mildred, the former Mildred Caverly of Toronto, Canada, live in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. The couple celebrated their 51st anniversary in this past March. Mildred now a U.S. citizen, served in the R.C.A.F., the Women's Division at Air Force bases in Canada and England from 1942-46. Feeney joined the Keystone Capital Chapter of the Retired Officers' Association, and continues to serve as its Treasurer. He assists in fund drives to help the Hospice Unit of the Lebanon, PA Veterans Administration Medical Center.



JOE AND MILDRED FEENEY WITH COL. ROY DEVECCHIO

AWARDS and DECORATIONS

Legion of Merit, Hq. Dept. of Army, July 31, 1968
AM w/1 OLC, 8th Air Force, 1945
DOD Joint Service Commendation Army Medal,
11 March 1965
DA Army Commendation Medal, 11 March 1965
Army GC
American Campaign Medal
Europe-Africa-Middle East Campaign Medal
w/4 Battle Stars
World War II Victory Medal
National Defense Service Medal
Armed Forces Reserve Medal
Imperial Iranian Forces Commendation,
November 18, 1967



COLLECTING OUR HISTORY

by *Will Lundy*



In the last issue of 8 Ball Tails under Will Sez I complimented and congratulated our Prez, Ed Mikoloski and Pete Frizzell for working so hard and successfully to salvage many of our 44th BG's photos. Pete had made a long flight from Florida to Massachusetts to meet Ed Mikoloski and a quick drive to southern Maine. These two men managed to get great cooperation from Rick Becker, a dealer, to copy many photos already sold on the Internet and to purchase the remaining 44th BG photos on hand at a bargain basement price.

At that time we were sure that we had obtained all of the photos that Bill Robertie had accumulated after the war, having worked with Capt. Harvell, our official photographic officer, for years to get copies of all that Harvell had in his 44th collection. I had contacted Bill Robertie's widow, Hazel, verified that she would donate all those photos remaining in her possession. She said that she had placed them all in a medium sized box and would be mailing them to me shortly, as she was moving that next weekend.

Two weeks later the box arrived with numerous photos, but most of them were nose art of other groups, along with some fine photos used in Harvell's book. But there were no crew photos! Disappointed with the lack of those precious photos, I wondered if perhaps they did not take or at least keep copies of our later 1944 and 1945 crews? It was a mystery.

But shortly afterwards Deja Vu came into the picture. Yes, again, many beautiful 44th BG crew photos were up for bid on the Internet! Astounding and frustrating!

How can that be -- where had they come from? Had we not got all that Hazel had in her basement? No! It was soon learned that again, Rick Becker had many more of our crew photos up for sale! Source? Again, it was from Robertie's basement. And again it was Pete Frizzell rushing to his airport in Florida with all of his camera equipment, flying up to meet Prez Ed, and driving back to South Berwick, Maine to try again to make a deal with Rick.

But this time it was different because the man who had purchased all of the remaining things in Hazel's basement -- things she could not take with her -- had learned the value of old photographs after his first sale to Rick. This time it cost Rick \$3,000, so there was no way the 44thers could afford to purchase his remaining photos. Instead, Rick was good enough to permit Pete to take his own photos of his originals -- approximately 200 of them. We did not get the originals back but we did not lose those rare crew photos that had eluded our efforts over the past 10 years. I am sure that in the approximate 200 "new" crew photos, I have very few in my collection. Now, when those negatives are converted to pictures, we will have photos of so many of our combat men available to add into our data base.

Steve Adams was able to outbid others to obtain several of these photos, but for the most part, one bidder, Huckleberryduck has outbid almost all others. Per Steve's arithmetic, he has already spent over \$2,200 for those that he has acquired. And there will be many more on which to bid. Fortunately, too, two other men who were very interested in these photos, managed to successfully bid on several of them. When contacted by Steve Adams, both men volunteered to provide copies for us. One asked to join our organization. He is most welcome, of

course, and he even suggested that as a member he might donate all of his originals later in his life. Great! Some wonderful things have resulted even through the bad luck we've experienced.

This is a story up to date. Surely now there will not be a third "appearance" of new Harvell/Robertie photos. But I can't emphasize enough how extremely lucky we have been to have the interest and support of Pete Frizzell. Without his alert searches of the Internet, as well as his taking time off work and having the photographic equipment on hand, dropping all activities, we surely would have lost forever a large portion of our photographic history. Rick Becker was so impressed with his character that he fully trusted Pete with complete control of those precious photos. Rick even took Pete to dinner! Rick himself, deserves the thanks and appreciation of all of us. He, too, helped make it possible.

In retrospect, our problems resulted from assuming that Mrs. Robertie was fully aware of the records that Bill had accumulated over the years. Obviously, she did not because several years ago she told me that there were NO photos in her basement. Too, Hazel was deep into the confusion of moving. I can relate to that problem having just moved for the first time in 40 years. She was having to pack herself alone and time was running out. So she elected to call for help to dispose of what remained in her basement as she had no need for it.

Although it was a difficult situation, nevertheless, we all should give our sincere thanks to the Robertie family for the years that they served in the 2nd ADA and for their treasure trove of 44th BG historical material.



WILL SEZ

May, 2001

I suspect that most of you 44thers are aware that I have been working at the "job" of 44th BG Historian for many years. So I should have and did accumulate a goodly number of your personal diaries and your accounts of personal experiences. Many of these I used in my old book, Roll of Honor and Casualties, and some of these could have made their way into the data base for those connected with the loss of our planes and crews. For the most part, however, they had not been processed, but should have. The main reason that they are not yet data entered is their condition and cost to process. So many of them were handwritten, and are now scattered through out all of my inept file system.

Obviously, here in these personal stories and diaries there are considerably more elements of our history tied up, both large and short, that should be added to our data base. I have saved them for years in the hopes that we could get them into other books, or hopefully, into a computer program. But much to my amazement, I have learned that it truly is possible! I have mentioned these diaries to Arlo Bartsch on several occasions in the past two years but never in any detail. He would always assure me that it could be done and that he had foreseen the value of them and wrote programs to do that type of data entry.

A few days ago I got serious with that subject, wrote a letter to Arlo describing my hopes and including some forms and suggestions and sent them to him. Earlier I had given him two very good diaries for him to read so that he could appreciate how valuable they were for our history, and hoped that he might try to find a solution to get them entered. It had not happened and therefore I had incorrectly assumed that it could not be done. Perhaps my hopes that these diary stories could not be made readily available to the reader straight from the sortie reports that have already been entered. If they could, then our readers would be able to view the sortie reports and know immediately if any crew member had recorded his experiences of what

happened to him/them on THAT DAY. It then would seem to be more like a book, adding the many interesting and appropriate information to bring out the personal touch. If there were additional diaries written covering this same mission, how much greater the scope of the "picture" could be. This data could include the bomb load, time of takeoff, altitude, temperatures, types and number of aircraft attacks, type and severity of enemy actions, on to events that occurred in this or other planes that day. With so much of this type of information already collected, there surely must be some way to utilize it.

A few days after writing that letter I got a phone call from our great friend, Arlo, reminding me that he had foreseen this need when he developed the program and already had it available. He had me turn on my computer and then "walked" me through it! Yes, indeed, his program was up and running, needed only to be provided the stories! So, the program is already there, the stories and diaries are here, then the next step, of course, would be to get a move on, have them data entered.

Arlo had an answer to that eventually, as well. I must first "dig" them out, and that is almost literal, to make them available to a data entry team. Hopefully, there could be volunteers found out there among our members who would be willing to type the stories onto a computer disk in a uniform way. If sufficient volunteers cannot be found, then we should pay for this service. Then Arlo need only to get the disks to transfer the data to the proper places in the data base. IF we get enough volunteer cooperation on this project, we could save money on data entry costs and we could make our current funds go so much further, enriching our data base history. In other words, it could furnish the readers with so many more interesting and factual details about the way this war was fought and won in the air.

For those of you who haven't already obtained one of Arlo's CDs let me try to detail for you how these diaries and stories could be located in the data base. See the following instructions, but please bear with me as I have little knowledge of the proper computer terminology to use in such a procedure.

Will Lundy



HOW TO USE THE DISK FOR PERSONAL STORIES AND DIARIES IN ARLO'S 44TH BGVA
MILITARY HERITAGE DATA BASE PROGRAM

- 1 - Bring up the 44th BG Data Base Program from Start Up.
- 2 - CLICK on LOAD SEIected GROUP in the upper left section - 44th BG - it is the default Bomb Group already loaded and waiting.
- 3 - On this Main Menu Screen CLICK on PERSONAL MILITARY RECORDS (top left block).
- 4 - This will bring up the Personal Selection Form. In 'FIND WHO' type in the Block Space the last name of the person you are checking and CLICK on SELECT.
- 5 - This will bring up the 44th BG's complete listing of personnel, but specifically to the ALPHA area of the name that you selected. Find the specific full name of your search, move cursor to this person's line, then CLICK on it LEFT SIDE BLOCK to darken it, and CLICK on the top right hand box, SEIect.

This will bring up a summary listing of all missions flown by this person, in date sequence.

- 6 - Also available here are buttons to obtain Personal Biography and Crew Photos.

Move the cursor to the Mission Number desired or date or mission target and CLICK on the small box, left side. It will darken. Then move cursor to bottom of page.

CLICK on box SHOW CREW. A FULL SCREEN SORTIE REPORT will appear for that mission. Select the name of the crew member that has an incident or story to tell. Move the cursor to the small box to the left of his name and CLICK on it. This will highlight that box, then move cursor down to bottom of page to the box labeled VIEW PRINTOUT, and CLICK on that box.

This will bring up a new full screen, again with some mission data but set up only for this airman and his story or account of this mission. It will show his full name, Rank and Duty. Below this line and for the remainder of the page is space available for this crewman's complete story. If the story is extensive, it will continue on to another page. Or it might show only some basic facts, such as bomb load, time of takeoff, degree of flak, etc.

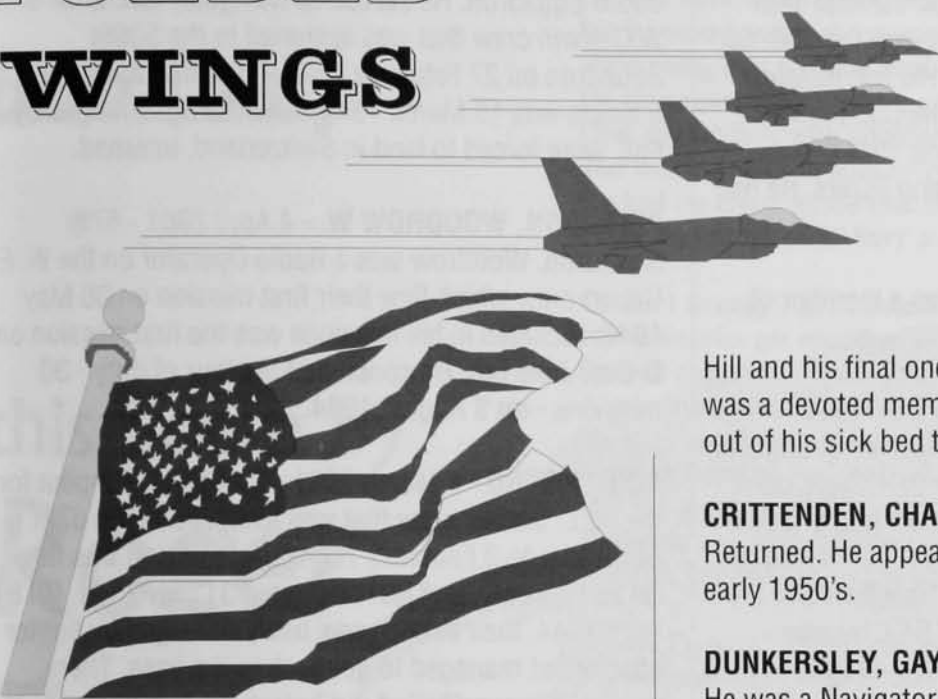
If other crew members also have personal accounts, they, too, can be accessed by the same procedure. To return to the Flight Crew Report for this mission, CLICK on the "X" box, top right corner.

DISKS ARE AVAILABLe FOR \$153. WRITE:

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association, P.O. Box 71228, Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

Visit our Website @ www.44thbombgroup.com

FOLDED WINGS



February, 2001

Prepared by:
Will Lundy

BEEBE, TRAVIS - 17 August 1997 - He was a member of the 806 Chemical Company that worked closely with the Ordnance sections of the four Squadrons.

CHANDLER, LAWRENCE W. - 24 November 2000 - 36427258. 68th Squadron. He served as Engineer of the A. A. Starring crew that arrived at Shipdham on 8 December 1943. This crew was involved with learning many of the RAF lessons about the German A.F. tactics and several practice flights. On 21 January 1944 they flew their first and last mission, were shot down by enemy aircraft. They were one of the four planes and crews lost by the 68th Sq. that day. Lawrence was the only crewman to evade capture, had many dangerous moments before he successfully made his way back to London on 20 May. He spent two days at Shipdham before returning to the US on 23 May 1944.

COLIC, PATRICK L. - Date Unknown - 506th Squadron. "Pat" was a gunner on the T. G. Water's crew that arrived in the 44th BG in June, 1944, and the last of his tour on 14 January 1945. His last mission with the Waters crew came on 2 January 1945, flown as Right Waist Gunner. Included in these last few missions were those with the crews of H. C. Tyree, Ogden



Hill and his final one with the V. J. Scherburg crew. Pat was a devoted member of the 44th BGVA, once getting out of his sick bed to attend another reunion.

CRITTENDEN, CHARLES A. - Date Unknown - Mail Returned. He appears to have been a member in the early 1950's.

DUNKERSLEY, GAYLE J. - Date Unknown - 0-688006. He was a Navigator on the E. A. Herzing crew that was assigned to the 506th Squadron in March, 1944. They flew their first mission on 1 April and their second and last one on 8 April 1944. All crew members became Prisoners of War for 13 months.

FEINSTEIN, (FENTON) MILTON S. - 1991 - 0-735298. Navigator. 66th Squadron. He flew his first mission with the G.R. Insley crew on 27 September 1943. This crew completed their tour on 20 April 1944, returned to the US for R&R. But these dedicated men returned to the 44th again, and were assigned to the 506th Squadron. Flew their first mission of the second tour on 1 August 1944, many times flying in A/C Southern Comfort. Capt. Feinstein completed his 47th mission on 25 April 1945, the last mission of the war.

FLESHER, ISAAC A. - August, 1998 (incorrectly shown as Flesber in Spring issue). 16053266. Joined the 68th Squadron on 3/31/42. Was with the ground echelon that departed NYC in September, 1942 on board the Queen Mary. Was a Radio Operator, transferred over to combat, flew his first mission 27 January 1943 with the W.T. Holmes crew. He was wounded on the Kiel mission 14 May 1943. He also flew the Ploesti mission on 1 August 1943 with the J. H. Diehl crew and completed his tour of 25 missions with the Hughes crew on 18 November 1943. He continued to serve on DS and finally returned to the US on 14 April 1944.



FOREHAND, CHARLES C. - 14 February 2001 - 67th Squadron. He flew his first mission on the first 44th BG mission of 7 November 1942, but with the 68th Sq. crew of J. D. Dubard, Waist Gunner. His last mission on Kiel raid, 14 May 1943 was with the C.L. Phillips crew, 67th Squadron. The airplane was shot down, with Charles and three others becoming POWs. He had a total of eleven missions.

JENNEY, THELO - 5 July 2000. He was a member of the 464th Sub-Depot.

LIGHT, HERBERT M. - 11 March 2001. 0-727354. He joined the 68th Squadron on 8/3/42, arrived in England on 10/2/42 as the Bombardier on the J. H. Diehl crew. He was a member of the R. Phillips crew that attacked the Ploesti Oil Fields on 1 August 1943. Completed his tour of duty on 22 August 1943 and transferred to the 2nd Air Division in mid-September, 1943. He was credited with shooting down one enemy aircraft, FW 190 on 3/18/43.

McCLANE, JOHN W - Date Unknown - 0-814368. 68th Squadron. John was a Navigator on the C. D. Peretti crew that arrived at Shipdham AAF Base on 14 April 1944. In a very short period he flew his first of 29 missions on 22 April. And again in less than a week attacked Berlin. John seemed to consider Lili Marlene as their aircraft. This crew was sent to a rest home for a week on 13 September 1944. John completed his tour on 2 October 1944 and was transferred to the 70th Replacement Depot on 9 October 1944 to be returned to the US. John was very active in his work with the 44th BG. He served on the Board in the early 44th HMG for many years. Too, he was their official video technician, recording all of their reunions, recording many interviews during these reunions even in England and every banquet in their entirety. He seldom was able to enjoy a hot meal at any of these affairs. John also absorbed all of the video expenses and donated the film records to the 44th BG archives. John also compiled three booklets of his experiences from training and all through each of his missions. John had the great courage to tell one and all about his personal fears during many of these missions and in detail. He had the courage to donate these booklets to our archives so that everyone will know just how difficult these missions were for our airmen. We salute you, John.



NORTHFELT, WALLACE D. - Date Unknown - 506th Squadron. He served as Navigator on the W.C. Irwin crew that was assigned to the 506th Squadron on 27 February 1944. Their first and only mission was 18 March 1944, when badly damaged by flak, were forced to land in Switzerland, interned.

PETERSON, WOODROW W. - 4 April 2001 - 67th Squadron. Woodrow was a Radio Operator on the W. F. Gilbert crew which flew their first mission on 30 May 1944. Included in his missions was the first mission on D-Day, June 6th. He concluded his tour of duty - 30 missions - on 3 August 1944.

PINO, PIETRO - 5 March 2001 - 0-807042. Co-pilot for the W. L. Wahler crew that was assigned to the 67th Squadron on 3 February 1944. First mission was flown on 25 February, and last one dated 31 July 1944. On 8 April 1944, their aircraft was badly damaged by fighter attacks but managed to get back to the base. There, most of the crew bailed out before the two pilots skillfully landed their B-24 without further damages or injuries. Pietro's last few missions were flown with different 1st pilots.

SUDDRETH, RAY - 16 November 2000 - 0-817861 Lt. Suddreth joined the 68th Squadron on 3/5/44 and completed his tour on 10/3/44. His early missions were flown as co-pilot for the J. W. Principe crew starting on 5/23/44, and flew two of the three missions of D-Day with that crew. On 9/10/44 he flew his first mission of many others as 1st Pilot.

WILSON, ALFRED R. - 5 February 2001 - 0-753096 - Bombardier. Alfred flew his first mission as a member of the D. H. Dines crew on 26 April 1944. He flew many of his early missions with the R. E. Van Ess crew, including one on D-Day. Then, was with several different 506th Squadron crew until he completed his tour of duty on 2 November 44 with the G. M. Beiber crew.



From **Bob Laas,**

this poem by **Roger Freeman**

September, 1996



Do you remember Little Joe, a guy just five feet one?
But he stood as tall as any man when up against the Hun.
He'd swing that ball and deal out lead, and most times make a kill;
He never seemed to have a care. He thought the war a thrill.
One day he flew with another crew, the ship got hit and blew;
The ball was seen to spin away, and what could poor Joe do?
He had no chute inside that thing; He never had a chance.
There wasn't much to bury at a cemetery in France.

Or am I wrong? I get confused. Was Joe some other guy?
My memories get muddled as the years go rolling by.
Do you remember Little Joe, a forty seven Ace?
A grin that went from ear to ear across his youthful face.
He knocked them down at quite a rate when up there in the blue.
It seemed like he had a winning streak that wasn't going to break.
But Joe got overconfident and made the big mistake.
He made a second strafing pass across a Jerry base.
The flak just blew his plane to bits and spread it round the place.

Or am I wrong? I get confused. Was Joe some other guy?
My memories get muddled as the years go rolling by.
Do you remember Little Joe? Was he the e.m.s. cook
With Brooklyn brogue and olive skin? His was that Latin look.
He always had a cheery word and fed us best he could,
Yet guys bitched about the chow, and never understood,
He had to work with what he had. The rations were so tight,
For oranges and eggs were saved for men who had to fight.
He didn't get a Purple Heart when knocked down by a truck,
And yet he served country well 'til running out of luck.

Or am I wrong? I get confused. Was Joe some other guy?
My memories get muddled as the years go rolling by.
Do you remember Little Joe, a six foot four inch guy?
A bombardier who was the tops when up there in the sky.
In sighting in his targets, he never seemed to fail.
He knew that Norden inside out, and hit them on the nail.
The flak would burst around his ship, and Messerschmidts attack,
But Joe would never leave his sight until he had a shack.
For twenty seven missions, he gave his very best;
And then a Jerry 20 mil exploded in his chest.

Or am I wrong? I get confused. Was Joe some other guy?
My memories get muddled as the years go rolling by.
Do you remember Little Joe? I'm not sure that I do.
If tall or short, or dark or blond, brown eyes, or were they blue?
A pilot or an engineer? A sergeant or major?
A novice in the task of war? A vet', a real old stager?
I only know that he was young, a kid become a man,
Exuberant and sure he'd win to live life's full span.
I guess he was ten thousand guys who didn't see it through,
For cause and county matter not, he did what he must do
To make this world a better place, the challenge of his day,
To give the whole darn human race more time to find its way.



MAIL & E-MAIL

The 8 Ball Tails notes the passing of a devoted friend of the 44th Bomb Group, Salli Johnson-Abbott, youngest daughter of General **Leon Johnson**. Services were held at Faith Chapel Funeral Home, Pensacola, Florida. President Mikoloski, longtime friend of the Johnson family, attended the funeral, February 28. Our condolences go out to her two sons, Leon Barnes and Nathan Abbott.



Jackie Robert's story of the search for her father, **Jack Ostenson**, 68th Sq. brought this unexpected response from Mrs. Mary C. Hoke, widow of **John L. Dickinson**, Engineer on the flight that brought down A/C #42-7514. She read the Jackie's story and called her, learning for the first time that John's name is on the Wall of the Missing at the Ardennes Cemetery.

Editor's Note: It is amazing to me. The number of 44th members with connections to the mission to Escalles-Sur-Buchy, all in one issue: Milton Rosenblatt; Lois Cianci, daughter of Clair Sheaffer; Jackie Roberts, daughter of Jack Ostenson; Archie Barlow; and now, our newest member, Mary Hoke. Like ripples in a pond, every deadly mission slashed into the lives of many people.



From Luc Dewez in Belgium: "My godfather, Luc Vansammilliette, died at the age of 65." The two had a very close relationship. Luc V told his godchild about the death of close friends and family when Belgium accepted defeat; of the four year German occupation; and in '44, the arrival of the Americans. In return, Luc D dazzled his godfather, telling him about the bomber stories which he had collected.

These conversations were undoubtedly the inspiration for young Luc, a member of the 44th BG, to write books about WWII.



The 44th has sustained another tragic loss. Col. **Goodman Griffin** passed away at his home in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida. Not only was he an invaluable administrative officer during the war, but was a uniquely funny speaker at 44th Reunions. The information about this beloved member is not available for this issue. A report of his life will appear in the next 8 Ball Tails.



From Michael O'Neil, Vice President of the Distinguished Flying Cross Society: The 8 Ball Tails carried misleading information regarding this organization, which he wishes to have corrected. First, the DFCS can only advise deserving veterans how to go about getting an earned DFC award. They do not issue them. If any airman feels he has earned the DFC but did not receive it, he should contact his Commanding Officer or ex-Awards and Decorations Officer. Only these officers can recommend the Award. O'Neil further states that the DFC was awarded only when a member of any and all U.S. Military Forces "distinguishes himself by heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight."



From Denis Davison: On page 35 of Volume 3 - Issue #7 - Spring, 2001 is a picture of a sergeant sewing stripes.

I am very proud to say that this man is my father, First Sergeant **William Robert Davison**.

It warmed my heart when my mother showed me his picture had been printed in this newsletter.

I have this original picture here at home along with others that I will soon send to all of you as soon as I can get them sorted and scanned.

I regret to inform the group that my father passed away on January 29, 1997. He was a wonderful man and I am very proud of him.





Roy Owen's step back in time:

I feel so fortunate that I was selected to commemorate this Memorial Day weekend with a flight in the Collings Foundation B-24J that, with a B-17G, was visiting an airport not far from my home. It was while aloft that I silently thanked our 44th Buddies whom we lost and did not make the flight that brought us home in 1945. I also whispered thanks to that tough old bird that, only when shot and torn so badly she could no longer fly, would she give up attempting to bring her precious crew safely back to base. It seemed to be the most fitting and fulfilling Memorial Day I have ever experienced. One I will take with me until I too go to where warriors rest. Let us never forget them.



The 67th Squadron's Insignia

According to the Archives of Walt Disney, an unknown artist designed the pelican that signified the 67th Sq. at the request of Pvt. Charles E. Rogers. The art was sent to Barksdale on April 8, 1942. Disney provided a copy of the original patch, and Eric C.



Wuest sent a picture of the official version. Wuest remembers that the unit's unofficial slogan was "Beware of Pelicans."



First Mission of the Beiber Crew, July 7, 1944: The late **Bill Uvanni**, Radio Operator, 506 Sq. recorded: "It was our first mission, and the target was a bomber assembly plant in Bernberg, Germany. We were pretty tense on the way to the target. About five minutes before target time we were hit by fighters. We flew in the lead element and were right up front. Approximately 60 fighters lined 15 abreast came in on us from one o'clock and slightly higher.

"They fired as they came in, and you could see orange 20mm shells as they came through the air. None of the planes from our squadron were hit, but an entire squadron (of 12 aircraft) was knocked out on the first pass. Some blew up and others went into dives and never came out."

Five of the group's aircraft were lost during the seven hour mission, but they succeeded in turning the German Assembly plant into 'nothing but smoke and flames.'

Paul Boensch, bombardier remembers that mission because the nose turret he was in got stuck, and he came so close to enemy aircraft, he could see the young German pilot who was flying. "He had yellow hair, a crew cut, and he had a white scarf and a black leather jacket," Boensch remembered. "He was very intent as he bent over his bomb site and shot down."

Referring to the 34 missions that lay ahead, **Perry Morse**, Tail Gunner, remarked to **Harold Maggart**, Waist Gunner, "If they are all like this one, we won't make it through five missions, much less thirty-five. The plane had over 200 holes, but they came through safely from Bernberg and the missions that lay ahead. Of the four crews that came together at Biggs Field, the Beiber crew alone returned home totally unscathed. Sharing the expertise in the cockpit was co-pilot **Jerry Folsom**, now Treasurer of the 44th BGVA.

The crew's navigator, **Willis Edgecomb** was killed after the war, taking off from Wright Patterson Air Force Base. They had lost track of **William Rebhan**, Waist Gunner. **George Beiber**, pilot and **Carl Miller**, Armorer, are deceased. **Nathan Woodruff**, Engineer, shares his time between Tennessee and Florida.





From **Art Harvey**, 66th Sq., comes a recollection of those days when the Army was splitting groups to accelerate combat readiness.

“So many of those who went to Ploesti were 44th/66th mates until the group was split in February, 1942 to form the 90th, 93rd and 98th groups. Halpro (**the Halvorson Project**) trained at Fort Myers, Florida while the 98th was also training there. They raided the 98th also for personnel, and some of the 98th people they took then had been 44th people previously.

“Of the 218 men listed on the roster, at least ten went directly into Halpro, probably more indirectly and later. At least one wasn't transferred to Halpro until the 98th was at St. Jean in Palestine in the Fall of 1942. Probably the same loss occurred in the other two squadrons of the 44th.

An Early Raid to Ploesti:

“They (Halpro) were scheduled to go to the Far East and bomb Tokyo from mainland China bases, but these had been overrun by the Japanese by the time the B-24s reached Cairo. With Rommel and his Panzer tanks on the attack, the British were badly in need of help. Consequently, Halpro was held in Egypt. Then on June 12, 1942 thirteen B-24s took off from Fayid for Ploesti. All of them reached the target. The raid was not given much attention, as it was high level bombing, and it was immediately recognized that only low level bombing would be successful.

“Nine landed at Ramadi, Iraq, as planned. Four landed in Turkey and were interned until April, 1943, when Turkey released all internees, Allied and Axis alike. Meanwhile on December 14, 1942, under the pretext of test-flying their now repaired plane, one crew ‘stole’ their airplane from the Turks and flew it to Cyprus, thereby setting up an ‘international incident’ which was appeased months later when our government delivered a brand new B-24D to the Turkish Air Force. The nine men on the ‘stolen’ plane were returned to Halpro at Abu Sueir, Egypt. An additional eight men escaped by land and sea before the total exchange was made April 30, 1943.”

Harvey sent a copy of the Thanksgiving Dinner, November 20, 1941 at MacDill Field in Tampa, Florida. Under the direction of **Earl E. Porter**, Mess Sergeant, the following cooks created a dinner for a

king: **Waldron, Hester, Hayes, Blakely, McLaughlin, Powers, Hopkins, Long, C.E. Miller** and **Douglass**. If you were there, you ate turkey with oyster dressing, giblet gravy, cranberry sauce, candied yams, baked ham, creamed corn and peas and snow flaked potatoes. There were salads, five desserts, healthy beverages and cigars and cigarettes. Not bad!

The Squadron Commander at that time was Major **E. J. Timberlake, Jr.**; The Adjutant was 1st Lt. **Charles L. Jeanette**; First Sergeant, **Ellis W. Hutton**.

On January 2, 1942 the order came for transfer to Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio to test the B-24C, signed by Col. **Young**. From then on, life grew increasingly exciting for this new batch of airmen.

Editor's Note: Wayne Harvey and Art Harvey are not related, but their paths crossed many times. Art's first flight was on a B-17; and he shared his excitement with Wayne, who was on the same flight. The two have continued to be friends throughout their lives.



SHIPDHAM AERO CLUB -- OUR “UK CONNECTION.” President Ed “Mike” Mikoloski reports after his November visit to Shipdham that the newly reconstituted and revitalized SHIPDHAM AERO CLUB (SAC) is in full operation with an active membership of 100 and an ultimate goal of 300. The hangar is completely occupied with 12 aircraft and three (3) additional planes are parked outdoors. Vice Chairman Michael Atherton informed President Mikoloski last month (January 29) that the Club has four (4) additional planes on their waiting list; and, that the Club has opened a GLIDER SCHOOL with two (2) certified instructors, one (1) “tug” plane and three (3) gliders on site. Under the astute, energetic and enthusiastic leadership and direction of its new Officers, the Aero Club is efficiently organized, well funded, and fully operational with continuous flying all year long. The Officers of the Shipdham Aero Club (all of whom are members of the 44th BGVA) include the following: Chairman: Adrian Hall-Carpenter; Vice Chairman: Michael Artherton; Secretary: Peter Bodle; Treasurer: Barry Cator. The Aero Club is on the WEB (www.shipdhamaeroclub.fsnet.co.uk) and their telephone number is 01362-820709. In addition to

flying and gliding, the Club has an active and well attended social program on weekends. Members of the 44th BGVA are cordially invited to visit the Aero Club and attend any of the scheduled social functions by calling the Club Manager, Steve Adams, our Representative in the UK who is also a member of the Shipdham Aero Club and is reestablishing the 44th BG Memorial Room in facilities that have been graciously made available to 44th BGVA by the Aero Club. The Club, also, has undertaken a project to construct and install outdoors a wooden replica of a B-24 with the 44th Bomb Group markings. Once again our new English friends come through and provide the 44th BGVA with an outstanding "UK CONNECTION."



Bob Norsen, (68th Sq.) remembers being sent from B-17 school to Ft. Myers, Florida, along with 10 or 15 other pilots. While waiting for assignment, they enjoyed the beach and the fishing, and tolerated the mosquitos. One pilot caught a 24 pound snook, fishing from the bridge. Just then they got orders to Barksdale.

"We gave half of the fish to the owners of our cabins, baked the other 12 lbs, ate 12 lbs of fish among the group, packed for Barksdale while the fish was in the oven. We ate and left for Barksdale that night, driving all night.

"We found a group of new complexes, and moved in, side by side. The next morning the pilots started to learn the new airplane. Some of my happiest days were living with that group of great people. Since much of the sub patrol was at night, we often slept days. Hot humid weather. No air conditioning. The attic fan made the curtains blow straight out into the room. (My wife) Donna would lay a wet sheet over me. With the fan, going to sleep came easy.

Patrolling for Subs

"...Late in the day we were way off course, south. Sgt. **Carlton**, the photographer, spotted what he thought might be something further south. We flew to where he pointed and the marker beacon came on. Lt.

Johnney Diehl spotted the periscope leaving a wake as the sub headed west into the sunset. I made a tight 270 left to get some run distance. Sgt. **Gillford** laid a

perfect pattern over the sub. The crew in back reported seeing the broken ends of the sub rise up, then sink out of sight. A little wreckage. Bubbles.

"We stayed on site for maybe 20 minutes, trying to radio the Navy. Locating the position, thinking there might be survivors to rescue. By now we were low on fuel, so I put the engines on max range settings, max lean, low RPM. The very light B-24 in the cool of the evening flew home quietly. I think we all had mixed feelings about our 'victory.' Would victory always mean we will kill a bunch of young men just like us doing their job for their country?

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

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



Administrative Changes at the Database

Arlo F. Bartsch at COMPUTER GENERATED DATA LTD. announces the appointment of Stephen J. Riordan IV, Commander USN (Ret) as President of the rapidly growing computer company.

According to Bartsch, the company's rapid growth, particularly through the participation of the 44th Bomb Group Association, necessitates restructuring of management to accommodate the changes.

At the last count, 320 biographies of the members of the 44th are on record, and they are slowly 'dribbling in.' Although other air force organizations have expressed interest in placing their histories into a database, the 44th stands as the leader in this monumental undertaking.

Ed. Note: Have you done your biography? Please do not leave your yellowing records for your children to sort through and try to piece your heroic history from a handful of papers in the attic. Write it now. Write your unique experiences. No two stories are alike. The application was in the last 8 Ball Tails.





Robert L. Dunlop, whose name appeared in the last issue of *Folded Wings*, wants everyone to know that like Mark Twain, 'the information about his demise has been greatly exaggerated.' Fortunately, this Waist Gunner on the **Clay Roberts** crew (68th Sq.) has a sense of humor, so the incorrect report did nothing to destabilize his sense of well being.

The Clay Roberts crew photo was featured in the Fall, 2000 issue of the 8 Ball Tails, celebrating their first reunion in 55 years. According to Dunlop, the picture was taken by a member of the maintenance crew with a camera he acquired by trading away two jars of Pickled Pigs Feet. Dunlop's father supplied the film.

Ed. Note: Imagine that! Two jars of pigs' feet, undoubtedly devoured fifty six years ago, provided a piece of history that has become a treasure.



From Fred Campbell, EXPOW VA Outreach Program Committee, 3312 Chatterton, TX 76904, (915) 944-4002 voice/fax to Richard Butler:

Former Prisoners of War: The VA Wants You!

Of all former prisoners of war, with approximately 46,000 still living, only about 35% connected with the Department of Veterans Affairs to accept the benefits for which they are eligible. Now is the time to step forward.

If you are an ex-POW or know of someone who is, please respond to this announcement. The American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc., has worked hard over the past 20 years to determine the effects of the POW experience on the health in later years of our POW veterans. The VA provides benefits related to over 20 health maladies that were presumed to be initiated because of severe prisoner of war conditions suffered in the hands of the enemy. These presumptives include frostbite, heart problems, post traumatic stress, malnutrition, osteoarthritis, and many others. For instance, we who were shot down and experienced the forced marches in the coldest winter, 1944-45, northern Germany had had in years can well remember the swollen, cold feet. Later heart problems and residuals of frostbite are presumed by the VA to have resulted. Tax-free disability compensation is provided for such.

Join American Ex-Prisoners of War, to be kept informed about the special benefits due former POWs and their spouses or widows. Our volunteer accredited National Service Officers will do their best to help you present your valid claim to the Department of Veterans Affairs, without charge. Learn more, call or write:

American Ex-Prisoners of War
c/o New Member Committee
National Headquarters
3201 East Pioneer Pkwy #40
Arlington, TX 76010
(817) 649-2979

or

American Ex-Prisoners of War
c/o National Service Office DVARO
3225 North Central Avenue, Ste 407
Phoenix, AZ 85012-2421
(602) 745-2201; (602) 745-2203 fax



Another Version of the naming of the Flying Eight Balls:

Wayne I. Harvey, one of the original members of the 44th assigned from Langley Field, VA, reports.

"Other members of the 44th that joined later have a different idea of the origination of the name, but here is the real story:

"While the 44th was at Barksdale Field, LA in 1942 we were flying submarine patrol over the Gulf of Mexico, and also receiving new personnel from Tech Schools. We were training and making new B-24 groups from trained and new personnel assigned. We were also preparing for our overseas assignment. The last group that we activated was the 93rd Group. Both groups were assigned only one hangar, and each section was responsible for crating their own equipment for shipment overseas. The 44th and 93rd used different areas in the hangar to store their completed crates of equipment. Each group had to identify their crates. The 44th used the number 8. The 93rd used a question mark.

"The squadron each had a painter assigned, and with much time on their hands, with nothing to do but to wait for more crates to be delivered to their area, someone suggested the 8 ball be used. Then, I'm not

sure who suggested the bomb be painted on also. Perhaps all of the design may have been the idea of the painter. I am not sure. The 93rd painter used the question mark, which was used for the tail of a squirrel. I do not recall ever seeing any of these crates after leaving Barksdale Field and arriving overseas.”

Harvey points out, also, that the 44th was the first UAAF to be equipped with B-24 Liberators.



PURSUIT IN THE PYRENEES is the saga of three months of evading the enemy in German-occupied France by **Archie R. Barlow, Jr.**, Engineer and Top Turret Gunner in the 68th Squadron. Their plane went down on Friday, January 21, 1944 on a mission targeting the Military Installations at Escalles Sur Buchy. With the help of the French Underground, five members of the **H. R. Howington's** crew managed to survive, twice hiding in the Pyrenees Mountains when the Germans were getting close, and eventually into Spain and a return to duty.

Barlow's plane, RAM IT--DAM IT, piloted by Lt. Hartwell Howington, was hit during the third attack of the enemy aircraft. It was observed to make a wide circle to the left, smoking, then went into a spin. One chute was observed, but the fighter attacks were so intense at that time, no further observations were made. Of the eleven crew members (one extra--a photographer) four were KIA, two became POWs; five successfully evaded.

A condensed version of this story appeared in Barlow Kinfolks book. The full story is available for \$20. Write L. B. Wright, 3911 Black Locust Drive, Houston, TX 77088-6904; telephone (281) 931-1932; e-mail Wrightb@juno.com.



Still "BEATING THE BUSHES" is ART HAND HERE with his wife Lois at the 1990 REUNION in Norfolk.



About our U.K. Representative: Can we ever say enough thanks to somebody who is always there when we need him? When the Times newspaper needed information about the memorial at Taverham, they called Steve Adams. When BBC radio needed someone to interview, they called Steve. When Radio Norfolk needed information, you can imagine who they called. If you ask Steve for a picture, he zips it across the Atlantic within hours. He protects our memorabilia, keeps us apprised of progress in the Memorial Library, and is always there to help promote the interests of the 44th BGVA. That's a friend!

Steve wasn't even born when WWII was going on. He learned about it in high school, and has been a serious student and devotee ever since.





Don't Forget!
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Assn. Reunion
2001

Bossier City, LA
Barksdale AFB
October 15, 16, 17, & 18, 2001

44th Bomb Group
VETERANS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



Non Profit
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit #6923
Salt Lake City, UT

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association

*Happy
Holidays!*



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 4 · Issue #5

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Winter, 2002

Non Profit Veterans Organization

EIN #68-0351397

Kay Bar

Kay Bar, A/C #42-100314 G+ was one of two lost at Wesel, Germany on March 24, 1945. In the original documents it had no name, but Steve Adams undertook to find its history, and learned this: The plane had journeyed through several Bomb Groups. It was originally assigned to the 389th BG, 564 Squadron and carried the call letter K. In March '44, it was transferred to the 44th BG. It was given to the 67th BS and had the call sign K bar. It remained as such until it was transferred to the 66th in September '44 and changed to V+; changed again to N+ in October '44; changed again to G+ in March '45. Then, on a low level mission to drop supplies to British paratroopers who had just crossed the Rhine, on its 57th mission, *Kay Bar*, along with *Southern Comfort*, was hit with anti-aircraft fire. It crashed and immediately exploded. All members of the Crandell crew were KIA. According to Steve, the nose art was "a goofy type" wearing a flying helmet and GI fatigues, holding a magnifying glass in his left hand and a bomb between the thumb and forefinger in his right hand.



**44TH BOMB GROUP
VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD
2002**

President Emeritus: B/Gen. John H. Gibson (Ret)
7008 Gateridge Drive
Dallas, TX 75254
Phone (972) 239-0559

President: Gerald (Jerry) Folsom (506)
3582 East Dover Hill Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84121-5527
Phone (801) 733-7371 Fax: (801) 942-9988
e-mail: 44thbgva@xmission.com

First Vice President: Roy W. Owen (506)
6304 Meadowridge Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95409-5839
Phone: (707) 538-4726 Fax: (707) 538-1212
e-mail: Rowen44bg@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: rewdm@blazenet.net

Treasurer: Richard Lynch (67)
Box 518
Conrad, IA 50621-0518
Phone: (641) 366-2414
e-mail: r_blynch@netins.net

Immediate Past President:
Edw. K. "Mike" Mikoloski (66/67)
626 Smithfield Road #702
N. Providence, RI 02904
Phone/Fax: (401) 353-0144
e-mail: EKMLIB44@msn.com

U.K. Representative: Steve Adams
28 Bassingham Rd.
Norwich, England NR3 2QT
Phone/Fax: 011-44-1603-400221
e-mail: s.p.adams@btinternet.com

Historian: Roger Fenton
4311 East Sunrise Drive
Phoenix, AZ 85044-1010
Phone: (480) 893-3761
e-mail: lomadanger@aol.com

Archivist: C.W. "Will" Lundy (67)
2519 Westville Trl
Cool, CA 95614-2008
Phone/Fax: (530) 886-8636 (Winter)
e-mail: willundy@aol.com
P.O. Box 315, Bridgeport, CA 93517 (Summer)
Phone/Fax: (760) 932-7349

Membership, Search: Art Hand (66)
517 Elm Street
Paris, IL 61944-1417
Phone/Fax: (217) 463-5905
e-mail: k9hwp@comwares.net

Director: Robert Lee Aston (67)
830 Cardinal Drive
Elberton, GA 30635-2606
Phone/Fax: (706) 283-1337
e-mail: leeaston@negia.net

Director: Robert Paul Kay (Paul) (68)
10411 Brook Lane SW
Tacoma, WA 98499
Phone: (253) 584-4420



ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS:

44th BGVA
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

Visit our website @ www.44thbombgroup.com

The 8-Ball Tails[©]

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

Compiled, written and published tri-yearly at 2041 Village Circle East, York, PA, by Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor. Printed and mailed Bulk Rate at Salt Lake City, UT under USPS Permit #6923. All original written material such as letters, stories, excerpts from personal diaries or memoirs, drawings and photos submitted to this journal will become the property of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and will be copyright protected except where noted. The text and photos are otherwise reproduced from official USAAF and USAF documents and photos which have been released for publication. Permission is granted for the contents of this journal to be reproduced specifically for personal archives. Otherwise,

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

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





Another Look At Europe



*There was time to laugh; a time to cry,
a time to be inspired; a time to remember.*



Kneeling: Larry Herpel. First Row (standing): Left to Right: Sidney Paul, Elizabeth Paul; Jack Schiffer, Delores Shipley, Jackie Roberts, Mary Aston, Marie Hughes, Ruth Morse, Ann Natilli, Louis DeBlasio, Carole Amato, Frank Amato. Back Row: Jerry Folsom, Bill Kelly, Norman Powell, Beverly Folsom, Charlotte Huntley, Lee Aston, Russell Huntley, Perry Morse, Lois Cianci, Tony Cianci, Charlie Hughes, Will Lundy, Irene Lundy, Rose Maglione, Larry Maglione, Lowell Roberts.

Larry Herpel is probably one of the great optimists of this century. Imagine trying to put another trip together after the cancellation on Nine-Eleven! Grounded in New Orleans for four days, he had to cancel the first trip by phone, begging those he could contact to notify others. He managed hotel and guide cancellations, sent refunds; and then worked on the next adventure. In late May the entourage reassembled and Paris was waiting.

The City of Lights was celebrating Liberation Day with a ceremony at the Arch of Triumph and a parade of well groomed horses and riders in stately uniforms. We couldn't get near the Arch, as dignitaries were everywhere.

Walking steps down the Eiffel Tower is a bit laborious, but there is lots of trivia to be learned along the way. The French flag was taken down in June, 1940, when France fell. Lucien Sarniquet carried it back up August 25, 1944, when Paris was liberated, but at his own peril. A lingering German shot at him. (Until then, the Germans were loving Paris. They hated to give it back to the French.)

The Castle at Versailles was breathtakingly beautiful, but its beauty was overshadowed by bad weather. To see the rail car where the Treaty of Versailles was signed, and where Hitler danced in triumph when France fell, required a longer journey. We'll see that on the next trip.



Jackie Roberts and the Administrator at Normandy.

At Normandy, Jackie Roberts found her father's name on the Wall of Honor; and when the Administrator learned that the daughter of a missing airman was present, he hurriedly grabbed wet sand and highlighted Jack Ostenson's name, so it photographed clearly. Although most of us have been to Normandy previously, and had seen the monument and endless rows of graves; it is no less awesome on a return trip. It truly is hallowed ground.

Our Belgium friend, Peter Loncke, led us to the monument at Winbrin, honoring the Pinder crew. On hand for a beautiful ceremony were Joseph Lafalize, the Burgomaster and his wife, Marleen, who donated the land for the monument. It is

located only about 100 yards from the crash site of AC #42-7547 *X-Bar*. This gentleman was mayor at the time of the crash. Many of the local people came to the event. Some remember January 29, 1944, when the plane went down; and many have a very clear memory of German occupation. A representative of the current mayor delivered a stirring speech of appreciation to Americans. Peter read his poem of gratitude (printed on Page 6), and called for a moment of silence, in memory of those who perished at that site.

Along with the plaque naming the crew, is a smaller plaque inspired by **Forrest S. Clark**, in honor of his friend **Abe Sofferman**. Wishing to complete his tour, Sofferman flew that mission in place of Clark, forfeiting his life for this decision.

Sidney Paul at Normandy.



Peter Loncke, Jerry Folsom, Joseph Hofalize and a dignitary from the local village honored the members of the Pinder Crew.



The next day, Peter led the bus to the Town Hall at Hamminkeln, Germany. Here a mayor's representative and a capable interpreter honored the members of the **Crandell** and **Chandler** crews; who crashed in nearby Wesel. While enjoying tea, coffee, soft drinks and snacks, 44th BG members listened to declarations of gratitude for peace between our countries. In the audience was Peter Emmerich, the anti-aircraft gunner whose careful aim brought down *K-Bar* from the 67th Squadron; and *Southern Comfort* from the 506 Squadron; and according to the records, two from another group.

Bastogne stands as one of the most ferocious battles in Europe, and it took place in the coldest winter that the Continent had ever known. Called 'Hitler's Last Gamble,' it was the Fuhrer's last ditch effort to turn back the tide of Allied soldiers that were painfully but steadily advancing toward the Fatherland. A well preserved Sherman Tank sits in the Town Square, and the Museum tells the story of the grit and determination of Americans to prevail. A look-out tower, shaped like a five point star, provides a view of the distant town.

The names of all the 48 states are listed, all credited for contributing to the victory which Americans call "The Battle of the Bulge." Europeans call it "The Ardennes Battle." General George Patton was assigned to bring relief to General McAuliffe's beleaguered troops. In his earthy way, General Patton sized up the situation. He said, "This time the Kraut has stuck his head in a meat grinder; and this time I've got the handle." When Patton arrived and when the skies cleared, the planes unleashed furor on the enemy and supplies to our soldiers. Hitler's last gamble was a loser.

When we crossed the Channel and saw that historically welcome sight, the White Cliffs of Dover, we remembered the song, and we sang it. In Norwich, Steve Adams joined us at the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library. For those who had not seen it before, it was absolutely captivating. No matter how long anybody stays there, it is never long enough.

Andrew Doubleday, his wife Debbie, neighbors and friends joined together in hosting a spacious setting of delightful treats in the complex where B/Gen. **Leon Johnson** commanded the 14th Air

Division. Doubleday's efforts to preserve and enhance the complex were very apparent. We wandered through the old buildings, trying to imagine their uses 57 years ago. It is a farm again, but the land shows traces of its glorious history.

Our British friend John Page accompanied us to the Control Tower, now tragically dilapidated. Its owner sells construction cranes all over the world.

From the tower, you can look across at the Aero Club. There are lines of light green amid the dark green plantings. Those are traces of the 44th runways. The asphalt was removed years ago, but still shows evidence of past glory. The members of Shipdham Aero Club prepared a reception and dinner for the group that was magnificent. Mike Artherton, Vice Chairman, had told me on the previous night, that they were planning a festive event. It was truly delightful, climaxed by inviting Jerry Folsom to cut the ribbon to a beautiful newly-constructed deck.

Mike gave Jerry and me a tour of the changes which have been made, and his aspirations for the future. The Club is eager for an on-going relationship between their members and the families of the 44th; and they have much to offer



Will Lundy climbed to the top of the tower he worked so valiantly to preserve. Unfortunately, time and circumstances have brought the tower to almost complete ruin.

for the arrangement. They plan to expand the Museum and strengthen the sixty year old structures which were hurriedly constructed to meet the immediate needs of the War. Mike is in charge of the grounds, and envisions a Memorial Garden. *(Editors Note: Do you have any ideas of how the Club should be preserved? What should go into the Memorial Garden? They would like to hear from the 44th. Do you have a child or grandchild who is interested in flying? The Aero Club would like an exchange program with American and British children. What a fantastic arrangement that could be.)*

Lois Cianci, **Charlie Hughes** and **Lee Aston** took advantage of the invitation to fly. Lois rode in a glider, and was given the opportunity to sit at the controls. What a joy for her, looking down on the same runways her father had looked upon long ago. The Aero Club has 75 members who fly, plus their families and 30 social members. Currently there are fourteen planes and five gliders based there. Are you interested in a contact? Mike Atherton can be reached at M.Atherton@Netcom.co.uk

The history of the 44th is tied to the Shipdham Aero Club. All of the members, plus Mrs. Paterson, owner, want to maintain an on-going contact with Americans. It is a relationship that we cannot allow to wither. The planes at Duxford, the graves at Cambridge, the monuments in London are all part of our history and our psyche. We know it, and so do the English people.

When we were ready to go home, Beverly Folsom summed up the trip very succinctly. She said, "We thought the 1997 trip could never be equaled, but we were wrong. This one was just as amazing."



To all Aircrew of the United States Army Air Force who flew in WWII.

By Peter Loncke
Sgt. Belgium Air Force

Boys of then,
who are men today,
turned in their civvies
to free my land.

Volunteers they were,
these aircrew chaps,
who gave the Hun
no place of fun.

Belgian people in those days
would listen carefully to their voice,
the voice of their engine
who night and day boasted their morale
in a magnificent way.

No one else
as those involved,
will ever understand
the meaning of it all.

A song of freedom high above,
who would bring relief
for the people
I so dearly love.

My father and mother,
and many more,
have prayed for you
to win the War.

We think of them,
these magnificent men
of the United States Air Force,
who served and died to free my land.



Photo Album

44th BGVA ~ Trip of Europe 2002



In Belgium: At the Wall of Honor, Jackie Roberts and Lois Cianci pay tribute to T/Sgt. Clair P. Schaeffer, Lois's father, whose plane piloted by Frank Sobotka, was lost January 21, 1944.



In Shipdham: John Page, longtime friend of the 44th BGVA, and Peter Bovell, Chairman of the Shipdham Aero Club, discuss the Club's future.



The bus driver was able to wind his way to the little village of Gratenois and to the wooded area we had visited in 1997. The scenery at Beauassault looked different. Trees had been cut and the dirt road was widened. Nevertheless, we found it, the monument to the crash site of the Sobotka Crew. It had been recently painted; and to Lois's delight, she saw that the townspeople had placed a fresh bouquet of flowers on the monument. It reminded us that the tragedy of the Sobotka Crew was not forgotten. Lois posted a tiny flag into the bouquet, honoring her father and letting the local people know we had been there.



Steve and Jan Adams. Steve has made major contributions to preservation of the history of the 44th, both at the Aero Club and in the Memorial Library of the 2nd Air Division in Norwich.





Jerry Folsom and Mike Atherton look over the area where a Memorial Garden is proposed. Mike's enthusiasm spills over when he discusses his plans for developing the Shipdham Aero Club into a functional, living monument to the 44th Bomb Group.



Andrew Doubleday points to old buildings which he is working to preserve on his historic farm, former headquarters of the 14th Combat Wing.



Larry Herpel stands at the entrance to the 506 Squadron Headquarters, honoring his uncle, 1st Lt. **Virgil R. Fouts**. Fouts was pilot of the A/C *Cactus*, which went down off the coast of Holland. There were no survivors. It was the crew's first mission and the 506 Squadron's first loss. Virgil Fouts is recognized on the Wall of Missing at Cambridge.

Brian Peel and Perry Morse renew an old friendship that started 57 years ago.



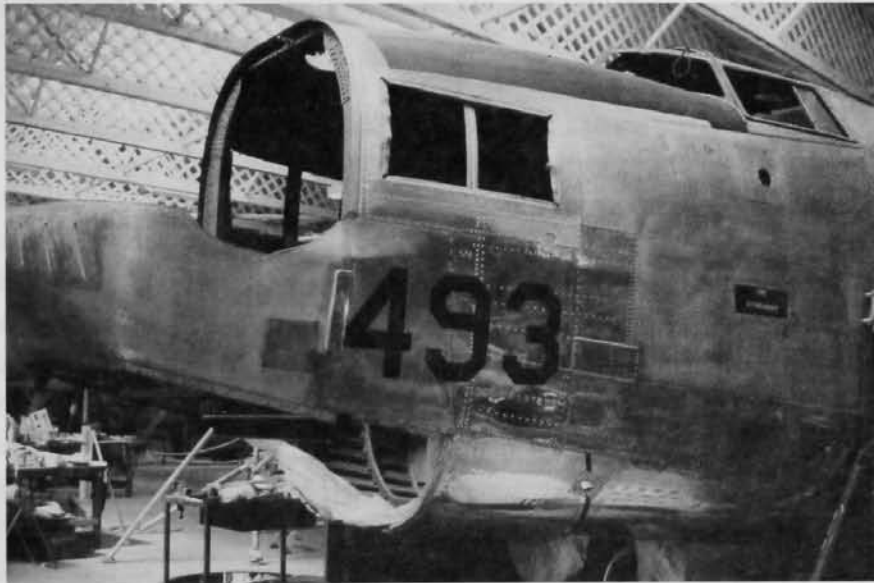
It is not possible to walk into the area, as noisy dogs provided a secure barricade. However, in the interest of protecting against the epidemic of animal infections, a posted sign requested that nobody enter without carefully de-contaminating their shoes.



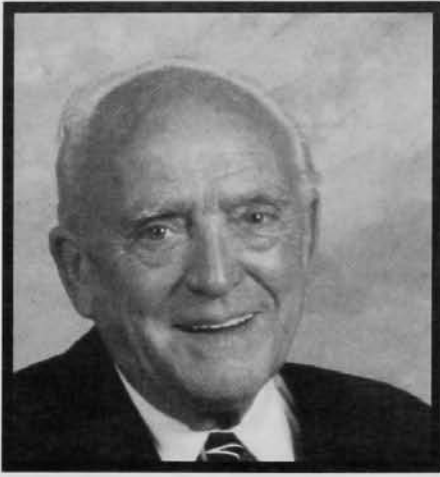


In Germany: Peter Loncke, Louis DeBlasio and Jerry Folsom listen attentively to the moving ceremony in the Mayor's office in Hamminkeln, Germany. The hospitality was truly gracious. Orchestrated by Peter, the Mayor's representative delivered a beautiful statement of gratitude for peace. A piece of art depicting B-24's at nearby Wesel, painted by a Belgium artist, hangs on the wall of the Mayor's office, a reminder of a time when the skies were less peaceful.

The restoration staff at the air museum at Duxford, England are optimistic that they will find the necessary parts to rebuild a very old, very dilapidated B-24.



Ready to debark from the Rhine cruise are Lois Cianci, Jerry Folsom, Tony Cianci, Larry Herpel and Beverly Folsom.



From the President's Note Pad

The 2,500 letters which were sent out several months ago brought in a sizable donations in the amount of \$13,400.00, which will be used to record volumes of information about our War experience onto our database. Thankfully, it also brought 40-45 new members who never before belonged to the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association.

Unfortunately, some letters came back stamped "Deceased." Those men were once with us, and now they are gone, along with their recollections of the War.

Many of the responses came from widows and children of members of the 44th. Their messages were so gratifying, I feel that I should share some with our readers:

"Thank God for Will Lundy!! He answered my plea for help in locating my first husband's military records and his time at

Shipdham. He is irreplaceable, a real treasure himself. Thank God his work is being saved."

"Thank you for calling on me for this most worthy cause, Will Lundy's valuable and dedicated work. It is very important that it be preserved. I would like to think that historians will look back 200 years from now and find our story of the Greatest Generation."

"Thank you for the decal and trying to preserve this collection of stories. Please accept my donation in memory of my Dad."

"Sending this donation in memory of my Uncle."

"Pleased to send this donation in memory of my beloved husband, who gave his all."

"Sending this donation; wish I could do more."

"Donating my first month's pay."

There are many letters written in this vein. I wish I had saved some of the first, but I never expected such a flow of memorial letters. It does tell me that WWII is still very much a part of the awareness of the families who still want to know about those who fought. The Military Heritage Database will have true value, long after all of us are gone.

I want to personally thank all who supported this project.

Gerald Folsom, President

Introducing...



Roger Fenton
*44th Bomb Group Veterans
Association Board Historian*

With the approval of the Board I have, with his assent, appointed Roger Fenton to fill the vacancy of our Historian left when our long serving, beloved **Will Lundy** stepped down in order to direct his attention to entering the remaining archives into the Military Heritage Database, and update and add to his Roll of Honor and Casualties book.

Roger began as a researcher for families seeking information about the 44th BGVA. He works with the Internet, database, and frequent discussions with Will Lundy, Archivist *par excellent*, researching for relatives seeking information of someone that was in the 44th. At last count, Roger has responded to over 200 requests.

Roger is a Member of the Association. His father, **Milton Feinstein** (Fenton) flew two complete tours with the 44th BG. Milton passed away in 1991.

(Editors Note: Getting help from the offspring of a veteran is a blessing to the 44th. Our history is so complex, and technology is so challenging, the value of Fenton's help cannot be overstated.)



Operation Varsity Revisited



Sgt.
Louis
DeBlasio

"They told us it was a 'milk run'," **Louis DeBlasio** stated, recalling March 24, 1945. It was a low level drop of supplies for the British Paratroopers who had established a bridgehead across the Rhine River, 2-1/2 miles WNW of the little town of Wesel. DeBlasio had been RW Gunner of the Chandler crew. The recollections of Sgts. DeBlasio and **Robert Vance**, Tail Gunner, were documented in Vol. 1, Issue 7 Winter, 1998 of the *8 Ball Tails*. Returning to Wesel on the recent trip to Europe sparked new interest in the details of that crash.

Fourteen of the nineteen bombers dispatched by the 2nd Air Division did not return. The 506 Squadron, 44th Bomb Group led the 14th Wing on the mission. On the previous night there was a leaflet-dropping operation by other B-24 Units and British Mosquitoes. On the 24th, sixty-nine tons of supplies were loaded onto the B-24's, with each plane carrying 2-1/2 tons of over 20 bundles. Twelve bundles were stashed in the

bomb bay, six around the Sperry ball turret aperture and three in the emergency hatch in the Tail, displacing Vance from his tail position. This made the plane tail heavy; so to compensate, the guns and ammunition were removed from the aft section of the plane.

In the recent trip to Wesel, DeBlasio was amazed to learn that when the plane stopped burning, a teenage boy entered the wreckage, and he was able to fire one of the guns stowed in the front of the plane. Crew members had been told they dared not to fire them, for fear of hitting their allies.

Most of the crew had not bothered taking their 'flak' suits; but Vance and DeBlasio decided to prepare for the worst. Their decision to take the suits saved their lives. This was the 8th mission for the Chandler Crew on the *Southern Comfort IV*.

Leading the formation, the 506 crossed the North Sea at 1,000 feet, and when they reached the coast of Holland, they descended to 500 feet. The progress of the war was apparent as the planes plowed eastward. Cologne and other cities, bridges and docks were almost completely destroyed. As they approached Wesel, they could see Allied gliders on the fields, some smashed into each other, and

scattered about were abandoned parachutes left by the advancing paratroopers. The planes dropped to 300 feet as they crossed the Rhine to assure pinpoint accuracy. The bell rang, and the two gunners shoved out the supply bundles.

Then, looking out the waist window, to their horror, they saw a man fall from the aircraft flying alongside, and watched as he hit the ground. He had become entangled in some parachute shrouds, and was pulled from the aircraft with the supply drop. (This was Sgt. **Anibal Diaz**, LW Gunner, on Lt. **Leonard Pyle's** crew.)

Sitting at an anti-aircraft gun was a Peter Emmerich, age 16. Peter was doing as he was told--shooting at American planes. He shot down four. Just as the *Southern Comfort* was pulling from the drop zone and banking to the left, Emmerich's ammunition struck the plane, causing it to stall momentarily and shudder. Sgt. **Thomas Clark**, LW Gunner, who was in the waist with DeBlasio and Vance, helped them open the bulkhead door to the bomb bay; but they had to close it immediately. Number three engine was afire.

DeBlasio and Vance assumed ditching positions; the plane went down, then bounced

upward. It flew another 100 feet, went down again, circled and split. DeBlasio and Vance rolled out. Clark stumbled to the split; but the plane exploded before he could exit, and he died with Chandler; **Hugh O'Donnell**, Co-pilot; **Robert Dantsler**, Navigator; **Thomas Cordes**, Bombardier; **Eugene Elliott**, Radio Operator; and **Sarkice Nedder**, Engineer and Top Turret Gunner.

A member of **Leslie Lee's** Crew, flying

as nose gunner, **Richard Lynch**, watched the destruction of both Crandell's and Chandler's planes. Nineteen men to the 44th died on that mission.



Thomas Cordes, Bombardier on Southern Comfort KIA at Wesel.

DeBlasio and Vance survived and were rescued ten days later by the advancing 2nd U.S. Armored Division, along with John Delaney, a P-47 pilot who crashed after diving at the AA guns and dropping white phosphorus.

Through Internet activities of Peter Loncke, Thomas Cordes's family has recently become interested in this crash. It was awesome for them to learn that this task force supply drop suffered all of the B-24 losses. A total of 22 A/C went down,



Sgt. Robert Vance returning to Shipdham after his crash and POW experience.

second only to Ploesti in losses for a low level mission.

Meeting the man who shot him down was an awesome experience for Louis DeBlasio and his family. Peter Emmerich explained that he was 16 years old when he was pulled from school and

taught to shoot the anti-aircraft gun. With Peter Loncke interpreting, Peter talked eagerly to Louis; and later, presented him with a gift of a hand-carved wooden cannon. The crash site did not look familiar to

Louis--the rows of corn were replaced with hay; the wagon he and Robert Vance hid under

was long gone. Contrary to the assumption that the plane's wing had been caught on a tree, he learned that an electric power pole had caused it to circle and split at the fuselage. That made it possible for the two gunners to roll to safety, just minutes before the plane burst into flames. With Peter Loncke interpreting, Peter Emmerich eagerly told his story; and even when there was no interpreter, he continued explaining his experiences in WWII.

Living in the area is an elderly gentleman who also watched the plane go down; but being in ill health, he could not be present. His wife and several of the townspeople came to meet us; and through their gestures, we felt their goodwill and friendship.

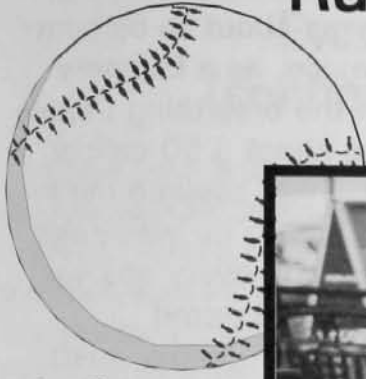


Peter Emmerich and Louis DeBlasio meet 57 years after their first encounter.

From a film made by Ursel Harvel, Loncke was able to locate the crash site and then find Emmerich and others who had been present in 1945. As it happened, the negative had been turned upside down; so by watching the screen in the mirror, he was able to locate the site.



Russell Huntley's Games With The Romanian Guards



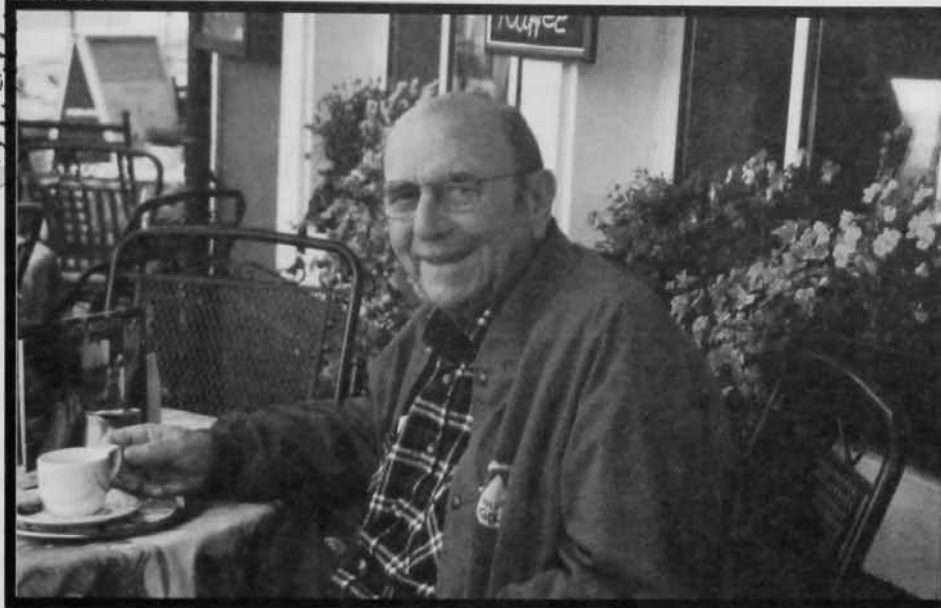
If the German and Romanian guards of the Ploesti POWs spend any time reminiscing about prisoners who were a 'pain in the neck', I'll bet they can't forget

Russell Huntley,

67th BS. He laughs when he describes his six escape antics, all of which brought him back to interrogations, solitary confinement and considerable discomfort.

"As prisoners, we were allowed to play baseball, and sometimes the ball would go over the fence. A guard with a gun would permit one of us to climb the fence and retrieve it, so the game could go on. Once I climbed the fence, and the group created great excitement so the guard wouldn't notice that I ran away. They soon caught me, and a very polite German officer said, 'We won't punish you if you tell me how you did it.' Of course, I was not able to tell the truth, so I told him I escaped through a drain pipe. They sent a man through the rusty pipe, and it broke. The officer accused me of lying, so I reminded him that they sent a heavier man. He must have believed me, as I didn't get punished that time."

"Another time, a group of us started digging. We dug and dug and dug. After a long time, we realized that effort was hopeless. We were just tunneling up and down under a big mountain. Another time, we had a pretty



Russell Huntley at Bern Castle.

good tunnel going, but then there was a big rainstorm. Our tunnel collapsed. The guards started checking out our tunnels; and each time they sent a man in, he came back saying that it ended in dirt. They just couldn't figure out why we did that."

"At one point, the Romanians asked us if any of us would like to work for them, in exchange for better food, more freedom, etc. We would be asked to sign a paper that we would not try to escape. I don't know whether any Americans would have accepted; but we would have threatened anyone who might have considered it. Why should we help our enemies win the war?"

Operation Tidal Wave, which targeted Ploesti, was Sgt. Russell Huntley's 7th mission. The crew of 1st Lt. **Elmer H. Reinhart**, A/C 42-40371 G named *G. I. Gal*, was following Lt. Col. **Posey** to Target Blue, the Nazi's source for aviation fuel. It was totally destroyed.

G.I. Gal was the last ship away from Blue Target. With part of a wing shot off, the plane emerged into criss-cross ships, and the pilot was unable to catch up with his formation, making him an easy target for the ME 109's. They shot away most of the tail turret, but, miraculously, **George Van Son** crawled away alive. Waist gunners **Alfred A. Mash** and **Robert Wolfe** were injured; radio operator Huntley gave them first aid.

Engineer **Frank Garrett** reported, "Gas was pouring out of a hole near #3 engine; the tunnel was a wreck; the tail turret hanging by a thread. The left vertical and horizontal stabilizers were almost shot off; the left aileron was practically gone, and there was a big hole under the #1 engine with oil streaming out."

Reinhart tried to gain altitude. The crew put on their parachutes as the plane heaved and quivered from nose to tail. At 3,600 feet, he turned on the automatic pilot and hit the bail out button. **Gerald Totten**, Navigator; **Richard Pendleton**, Bombardier; and **Charles Starr**, Co-pilot, joined the rest of the crew in the downward plunge. Apparently Starr's chute did not open properly; and it was later reported that in his misery, he asked to be shot. He was listed as KIA.

Huntley was interned for thirteen months at Timis de Just, 17 km south of Brasov, North Romania. Among his interesting recollections was on August 1, 1944, a group of soldiers came with wine and cheese, celebrating the happy event of 'defeating the American Air Force.' Circumstance rapidly refuted their dubious celebration. Only about a month later, the Germans were evicted from the area, and the Americans were set free. Flying in a B-17 decorated with American flags, they were transported to Bari, Italy.

Huntley's post-POW experience was no less dramatic. He was sent to Atlantic City for redistribution, and was hoping to become a cadet, and ultimately a pilot. A psychiatrist politely told him 'that he was proud of him; but after his combat and POW experience, he needed R & R, and was to be sent to Florida for 120 days. Immediately thereafter, Huntley had another physical, and twenty minutes later sat before the same psychiatrist. This time he was declared in fit condition, and was to be sent to the Pacific, flying in a B-29. Huntley called the man some unpleasant names, and did not go to the Pacific.

Next he was told that he would become a Master Sergeant, and was about to be sent to Almagordo, New Mexico, as a Gunnery Instructor. "I told them the only thing I knew about guns was how to shoot a 50 caliber out the nose of a B-24. They assured me I would do fine; and all I had to do was pass this test. I took the test; and every answer that I knew, I deliberately answered incorrectly. Those that I didn't know, I left blank. The next day I was congratulated for doing so well on my test!!!"

Huntley got out of that assignment by signing up for Radar School. He was assigned to a camp in Truax, Wisconsin, along with a group of combat crew returnees. The first morning a corporal came in and ordered them, all sergeants, to mop the floor and clean the barracks. An uproar ensued; the corporal ran off to report their disobedience, and a kindly major from WWI came in and alleviated the situation. The travails of being a returnee and ex-POW continued; and finally Huntley got discharged.

He gave himself time to think it over, and decided to re-enlist. He attended OCS, became a Second Lieutenant, and worked his way up to Major, specializing in electronics. His last position was head of Communications for the SAC Headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska. After his discharge in 1965, he started a business selling Blue Gold, a non-hazardous cleaning substance. His customers are Pratt Whitney, Rolls Royce and other notable corporations. Russell's wife Charlotte started a business, selling vitamins and herbal substances. They retired recently, and are traveling to all the reunions that they missed by keeping their noses to the grindstone.

(Editors Note: It would be interesting to know what the Romanian guards talk about, when they remember the War. I wonder if they still think Americans dug useless tunnels for recreation!)



Sgt. Dale Lee's Saga of Evasion (continued)...

Sgt. Dale Lee (506 Sq.) survived the Ploesti Raid, but his plane, *Southern Comfort*, went down after a successful mission to Foggia. Captured and harassed by civilians, along with six other detainees, Lee broke from the Italian stronghold and set forth on a harrowing trip back to Africa, then England, then home.

The day before they managed to break out, the Germans planned to move the prisoners into Germany. A commotion among the guards gave the prisoners the opportunity to use their crude tools, smash through a brick wall, and make their escape.

"We ran like hell, as far as we could that first night," he recorded. "When we could run no more, we slid off the slope of a steep mountain road." Straddling trees or any kind of brush, they leaned against the mountain and took a brief rest. Years later, with his wife Alice, Lee retraced his escape route, and learned that they had run 18 km that first day; and had climbed 4,000 feet up the mountain.

They headed for Italy's high mountains, resting and planning by day; walking at night, using the North Star as their guide. They headed for the boot of Italy, figuring the allied invasion would come from that direction.

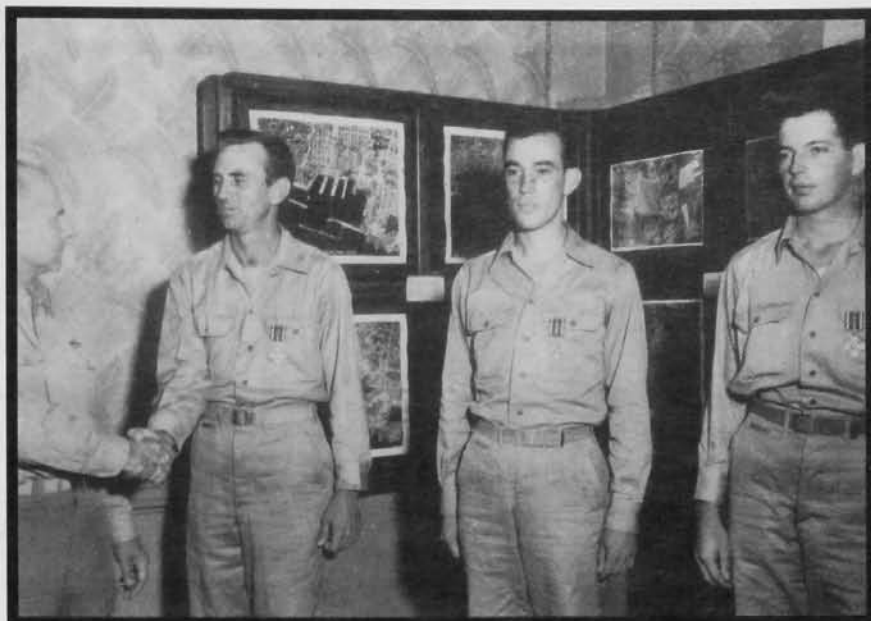
The Unending Quest For Food

For food, they stole figs, grapes and garden vegetables. One man traded his jacket for cheese that was absolutely delicious. Unfortunately, when morning came, they saw what was in the cheese--"big fat worms." "We ate it anyway," he recalled, "flicking the worms aside when they crawled out."

Having been told that garlic was a good blood purifier, Lee ate three big cloves, hoping it would clear up the infected shrapnel wounds in his legs. Its biggest effect was to give him bad breath. Their search for food was unending and generally unsuccessful. Every sound was threatening--even a falling leaf.

Finally, two Canadians from the British 8th Army arrived in a 4 wheel drive vehicle; and out-running Germans, who lobbed shells at them, they arrived with joy at a British camp, where food and hot coffee awaited them. Later the driver of the jeep drove them through a rainstorm to a Red Cross station where they enjoyed the luxury of sleeping on dry cots. From there they made their way to the 47th Fighter Group (P-40's), who helped them to the next camp, the 101st Airborne.

Lee's most vivid recollection of that brief encounter was a rollicking battle with an Italian POW over his right to have second portions of the dinner. The men of the 101st cheered



Left to Right: General Jimmy Doolittle, Joe Jett, Tom Pursell, Dale Lee.
(Editors Note: Years later Doolittle autographed this picture right under his nose, but the writing could not be picked up photographically.)

him on, as pots and pans clattered around from the skirmish. The men of the 101st are forever endeared in his memory, for supporting his right to more food.

Getting Back Into The System

After that, they got a flight to Africa, near Tunis. By then they looked so totally disreputable, nobody could believe they were American airmen. Only when the major at the base found their names on the list of those who were to receive the DFCs, by virtue of their mission to Ploesti, did he believe they were telling the truth. They were finally back in the system.

The DFC medals were pinned on them by none other than General **Jimmy Doolittle**, who was genuinely interested in their experiences at Ploesti, and also their experiences as escapees. He gave them secret orders for their return to England.

Frustrating moments continued, and tolerance was in short supply with these escapees. At the air base near Tunis, a mess sergeant refused to feed them because they didn't have a mess kit. They went to the Supply Sergeant, who upbraided them for losing their mess kits. Finally, **Joe Jett**, normally a quiet, gentlemanly sort, grabbed the Supply Sergeant by the throat and pounded his head against the wall, shouting, "When I bailed out of that G-- D--- plane on fire, the last thing I thought about was my mess kit." Immediately there was no further arguing about mess kits.

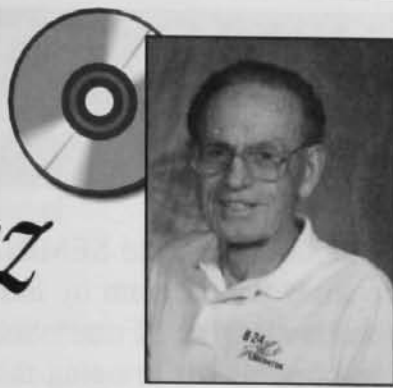
The 8th Air Force in London interrogated the group, then sent them to various camps to speak to the troops about their experiences behind enemy lines. In time for Christmas, 1943, they made it home.



This cartoon from the collection of Lt. James Tomblin (66th Squadron) from his account "There I was, Story #45,001."



Will Sez



It seems appropriate at this time to advise everyone that earlier this year I found it absolutely necessary to ask that I be dropped from the job of 44th BG Historian as it was taking nearly all of my available time. For years I have been attempting to correct, update and add to my Roll of Honor and Casualties book as the first edition was printed in 1987. Since that time I've learned of many errors in it that needed corrections. Many more events have been located that should be added to that text to better describe what took place in many of these incidents.

The Board acted on this request, dropped me from that position and put Roger Fenton into it. Roger accepted the offer and now is busy doing a great job of responding to the many people asking for data about our men who served during WWII. I am sure that he will perform with excellence. Perhaps this will start a trend to have more, younger people to step in, take over to lead our Group into the future.

Another younger man, Jim Hamilton, became acquainted with the 44th BG when he was researching for his book. The *Writing 69th*, (now in print). He kindly offered to re-design my book, and then to make the actual corrections and additions into that book. Photos will be added, as well, but due to all of this, it will be necessary to produce two books. The first is nearing completion and will cover the time period from mid 1942 through 31 December 1943. The second, of course, will span the period of 1 Jan 1944 to June, 1945. If possible, we will have a manuscript available at our reunion in Omaha for examination by you that attend.

My hope is that as soon as this change in Historian permits, I will be able to move along more quickly with the book revision. As soon as the text is completed, it can be transferred into the Master Data Base. Also it can help make progress in moving more of our archival material into the Master Data Base.

Arlo Bartsch is now well underway in his plans to place more emphasis on our Roll of Honor, make it more prominent in his program. Jerry Folsom is relaying much of this material to his secretary, Brenda, who processes it, makes it ready for data entry.

Of course we are limited in the extent of this work depending upon these costs. But my hopes are that somehow, someday, someone will locate donors who see that it is needed for the future generations to learn. It seems very important to me that we do our best to keep the deeds performed by our Combat Men forever readily available. These deeds against terrible odds managed to hold the advances of Hitler's might away from England until others arrived to help us take the war back to Germany.

The Military Heritage Database



To help your children and grandchildren when they ask questions about WWII, we have an opportunity to make sure you are always there to answer them, and they are learning YOUR version of the story.

Order your Military Heritage Database disk now. Make sure you and all of your comrades of WWII have included their contribution to the history of the 44th Bomb Group. You have magnificent stories of an event that can never be replicated. What will happen when you are not there to answer the questions?

For more information regarding biographies, please contact Jerry Folsom @ P.O. Box 712287, Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287. He has the necessary forms to be submitted for this database. He also has details for ordering your very own disk. E-mail: 44thbgva@xmission.com

Do It Now!

COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE SPONSORS SEMINAR ON "PLOESTI" WITH 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION PARTICIPATION.

The names of Colonel **William R. Cameron** and **Tom Holmes, Jr.**, will long be remembered in Midland, Texas, where these two distinguished members of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association captivated the 150-200 members and guests of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) attending the PLOESTI Seminar sponsored by that organization and the American Air Power Heritage Museum on Saturday, June 15, 2002. (*Editors Note: The Commemorative Air Force was formerly known as The Confederate Air Force of Midland, Texas.*)

These two veterans of the daring low-level raid on the oil fields in Ploesti, Romania, related their personal experiences and observations of this dangerous but vital mission in their typical low key, sensitive but thorough, accurate and non-judgmental manner. Both, Colonel Cameron and Tommy Holmes, had completed their combat experience and leadership on this hazardous mission. Colonel Cameron, as pilot of "*Buzzin Bear*," led the six plane element on General Johnson's wing serving as the Deputy Group Leader. Their target was the Colombia Aquila (White V) target that was already ablaze having been mistakenly bombed earlier by aircraft of the 93rd Bomb Group, who following the mission leading 376th Bomb Group, turned at the wrong IP (Initial Point), missing their assigned targets and selecting "targets of opportunity." "Tommy" Holmes, as pilot of "*A Wing and a Prayer*," flew in a separate 21 plane formation led by Colonel **James Posey** against the Creditul Minier at Brazi, (Blue Target) which they destroyed completely.

The focused, attentive and appreciative audience responded to the presentations with long and loud applause followed by an animated "Question and Answer" session that reflected their intense interest, respect and appreciation.

Also attending were Colonel **Edward K. Mikoloski**, Nida Holmes and Fritz Selasky.

Bill Coombes, the SEMINAR MODERATOR, opened the program by introducing and acknowledging "Fritzi" Selasky as the person most responsible for bringing this seminar to fruition. He stated that it was Mrs. Selasky who wrote him several months ago when she heard of the monthly seminar programs the CAF were conducting, and suggested that they consider sponsoring one of the "greatest air battles of all times," PLOESTI. After several exchanges of letters and numerous telephone calls, the program became a reality.

Among others invited, but unable to attend were the following veterans of PLOESTI: Lt. Gen. **K.K. Compton**, 376th BG and Mission Commander, M/Gen **William H. Brandon**, Group Ops 44th BG and Pilot of "*SUZY Q*", Colonel **Richard Butler**, **Reginald Philips**, **Robert Lehnhausen**, **Henry Lasco**, **Charles Hughes**, **William Dabney** and Colonel **Dexter Hodge**.

Bill Coombes, in his letters to us, referred to the affair as "...a GREAT seminar series program!" and also the following, "The many, many regular attendees of these programs came to me and said that it was an outstanding event." Mr. Coombes also expressed his thanks to the participants for the unique LONDON CLOCK presented to him and his wife, which they will place in a position of honor in Bill's office with an inscribed placard listing the 44th BGVA and names of the donors.

Members of the 44th BGVA have a standing invitation from the CAF to visit their Museum, Memorial Gardens, Annual Air Show and Seminar Programs.

(Editors Note: This report was written by the 44th's Immediate Past President, "Mike" Mikoloski. In his customary modesty, he failed to mention that he was also the principle speaker at this event. His topic was a glowing history of the 44th Bomb Group.)



LT. ROCKFORD C. GRIFFITH'S AMAZING FEAT

As preserved in a yellowed, updated newspaper from the collection of Dale Lee:

"While the parachutes of their crew dotted the horizon, the pilot and co-pilot landed a "junk heap" Liberator bomber at 150 miles an hour-saving the life of the wounded ball turret gunner who could not bail out.

"A crowd of 500 airmen and ground crews gathered to greet returning raiders, who watched in awed silence, and broke into thunderous cheers when the landing was completed.

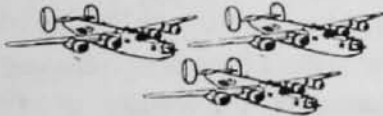
"The pilot was Second Lieutenant **Rockford C. Griffith**, a twenty-three year old farm boy from Oklahoma. Damaged controls forced Griffith, with the aid of his co-pilot, Second Lieutenant **Lawrence W. Grono**, to hit the runway with only one wheel. The bomber roared along on the wheel; then one wing touched the ground, and the Liberator swung around, skidded backwards 300 yards of the runway, and came to rest, right side up.

Floating all around the airfield were seven members of the crew ordered to jump because the plane was unmanageable. All landed safely.

Twice on the way home from Norway, Griffith's bomber fought off attacks by FW 190's and Ju 88's, which raked the bomber from nose to tail with cannon and machine-gun fire. This knocked out two engines, destroyed the hydraulic system and reduced the plane to a flying junk heap. "I knew I had to bring her in because of the ball turret gunner. He couldn't get out."

(Editors Note: The date was November 18, 1943. Can anybody name the turret gunner whose life was saved by Lt's. Griffith and Grono's courage and expertise?)

44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



- Yes, Count me in!**
- Annual Membership Dues for year 2003 \$25.00
 - Life Membership Dues 60 and over \$125.00
 - Life Membership Dues 40 to 59 \$150.00

Join us now so you don't miss the next 8-Ball Tails.

Name _____ Spouse _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Tele: () _____ Fax: () _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Group: _____ Squadron: _____ Crew of: _____

Associate: _____ Relative of: _____

Donation: _____ Thank you for joining us!

Due to increased costs, the Board of Directors at the annual meeting, authorized an increase of dues to \$25.00. The last increase was five years ago. Membership in the 44th Bomb Group Veterans's Association is still a bargain in today's world.

Searches and Findings

A Mission of the 44th Bomb Group Veteran's Association



Photo Identification Needed!

From Steve Adams, another Ursel Harvel's photograph: Can anyone identify any of these men, believed to be the cooks for the 68th Squadron?

Arthur V. Cullen Crew!

Tim Mackey, nephew of 2nd Lt. **John L. Mackey**, 67th Squadron, is hoping to find someone who remembers his uncle. Lt. Mackey, Navigator on the **Arthur V. Cullen**



John L. Mackey

crew. He was killed on his 5th mission to Dunkirk, France, February 15, 1943. A/C #41-23783 *Betty Anne/Gallopin Ghost* was brought down by enemy fighters. Seven airmen were killed, including **Donald MacDonald**, Command Pilot.

Tim Mackey can be reached at 80 Hollow Woods Drive, Pequea, PA 17565; telephone: (717) 284-4414.

Lt. David Saylor 44ther Discovered in British Columbia

This past July 28, Mary and **Lee Aston** had an amazing chance meeting with a lost 44th Bomb Group air crewman, **Warren Rohrer**, in the Butchart

Gardens, Victoria, B.C., while both were touring the Pacific Coast of Canada and Alaska. While walking the gardens, Lee stopped to rest on a bench and puff on his pipe as Mary went to the gift shop. Lee turned to see a man that was sitting on a bench behind. Lee could hardly believe his eyes. The man was wearing a blue, baseball-style cap with lettering that read "44" Bomb Group."



Warren Rohrer, 506 Squadron, and Lee Aston meet in Victoria, British Columbia.

Lee immediately moved over to sit by the man and introduce himself. Pointing to his own 44th BGVA cap with the 8 Ball logo, Lee gave his name and discovered Warren Rohrer, a B-24 gunner from the 506 Squadron

who served from October '43 to November '44. He completed his 35 missions with his crew piloted by Lt. **David Saylor**. AMAZING! to run into a fellow 44ther on holiday in Canada. Warren said he had had no contact with his former crew members and didn't know about our 44th BGVA.

He would like to know if any of them are still alive. CAN ANY OF YOU ALL HELP HIM FIND HIS CREW MEMBERS? If anyone can, write Warren Rohrer at 1321 Cherry St., Wellington, Kansas 67152; or telephone at (620) 325-3222.

Are you a Veteran who flew the low level mission to Ploesti?

From Luc Dewez, our Belgian friend: "For years I have been collecting memories of the veterans who flew the low level mission to Ploesti. Recently I have been working with an editor, a 100th BG Veteran; and we are now seeking a publisher. I would be so grateful to hear from 44th BG veterans who were on that mission, and who would share their experiences, anecdotes, official documents, photographs -- any information that would describe the awesome event."

Luc is making a serious effort to inform young people in his country, the awesome experience of WWII. He is the author of *Cruel Skies*, a studied account of the air war in Europe. Luc can be contacted at 8 Paul Pastur Street, 5190 Han-sur-San, Belgium. E-mail: luc.dewez@skynet.be



FOLDED WINGS

September,
2002

Prepared by:

*Will
Lundy*



AYERS, EDWARD 1 May 2002. Not in 44th BG. Was brother of man KIA only.

BILLMAN, ROBERT J. 23 March 2002 68th Sq. 37137220. Joined the Squadron on 5 March 1942, arrived in England on 2 October as an Engineer for the R.E. Erwin crew. He flew five missions, the first being 7 Nov. 1942 with M.V. Sullivan; and the fifth on 13 March 1943 flew with M. C. Howell. Possibly transferred to the 389th BG later.

BLAINE, HAROLD E. Date unknown. 31110213. Harold first served with the 806th Chemical, later transferred to the 67th Sq. where he worked in Tech Supply.

BOLGER, JAMES M. June, 2002. 506th Sq. Flight Engineer with the James Clement's crew for many of his missions. He arrived in England in January 1943. He flew his first mission on 18 October, 1943 with the Bunce crew and his third with J. Clements. He was on his second tour at end of war when he completed his 38th mission dated 18 April 1945. He was discharged in September, 1945. DFC medal.

BRUMM, HAROLD J. 29 June 2001 506th Sq. Harold was a Flight Engineer, flew his first mission on 25 May 1944 as a member of the J. C. Titter crew. He completed his tour of 35 missions on 9 August 1944, apparently all of them with the J. C. Titter crew.

BURKE, RICHARD

M. Date unknown.
31170058 68th Sq.

He joined the

Squadron on 19 June 1943 and flew his first mission on 13 August as a Waist Gunner on the R. J.

Lehnhausen crew. His next one was with B. H. Gildart on 1 October and most of his total of 31 with that crew. He completed his tour on 22 April 1944.

CANNETTI, DOMINICK Date Unknown

32626523 He joined the 68th Sq. on 14 April 1944 as a member of the C. D Peretti crew.

They flew their first mission on 22 April 1944, he as a Tail Gunner. Their last of 31 missions was completed on 2 October 1944.

The crew transferred to the 70 RCD on 9 October for assignment back to the U.S.

CARPENTER, WILLIAM W. 18 January 2000 T-129133 67th Sq. He flew his first mission on 6 November 1944 as Navigator on the J. M. Bledsoe crew. This crew flew their last mission of the war on 25 April 1945, with Lt. Carpenter finishing with 30 missions or more. They returned to the U.S. flying A/C #42-50741.

CLAESSEN, KENNETH 5 March 2001 67th Sq. Cannot identify any data.

CLARK, CLETUS C. 9 February 2002 17157054 506th Sq. He served as Aerial Engineer on the R. J. Hruby crew. Their first mission was dated 20 April 1944. On their sixth, 29 April, the crew made an amazing safe ditching in the North Sea with no injuries. They completed their 32nd and last mission on 12 July 1944.

CLIFT, REESE R. 4 Sept. 1999 14071610 68th Sq. Aircraft Mechanic. Like most of the ground personnel in the Engineering Sections, Reese made both trips, to England and return, on the Queen Mary. The "cruise" over in early September 1942 and the return in late June, 1945.

COINER, MAYO L. Date Unknown 0-678688 67th Sq. Lt. Coiner, Navigator, flew his first mission on 21 September 1943 with the W. S. Aldridge crew and most of his 33 missions. His last few were flown with different PFF crews serving as Navigator-GEE. His final mission of his tour was with the T. L. Harrocks crew.

COSTELLO, GEORGE B. Date Unknown
36216016 506th Sq. Aerial Engineer. George was a regular member of the J. S. Gurman crew, flew his first mission on 19 May 1944. But on their fifth mission, 28 May, their aircraft was shot down, and the entire crew became POWs.

CURRIE, THOMAS 10/17/01. 12175210 67th Sq. Thomas served as Aerial Engineer on the C. C. Spagnola crew which completed their first mission on 26 August 1944. He completed his 35th and last mission on 6 February 1945.

DAMBACHER, ALBERT N. July, 1995. 67th Sq. Al was a replacement Waist Gunner on the John J. Mueller crew. This crew started their tour on 1 April 1944, while Al completed his first mission on 24 February 1944 with the G. W. Johnson crew as a Gunner. His next few were with various pilots until his 9th when he joined the Mueller crew on 19 April. He completed his tour on 25 July 1944 serving as a Waist Gunner.

DELACY, GEORGE W. June, 2002. 66th Sq. George was one of the original and oldest of the 66th Sq. combat gunners at Barksdale Field. He was the Tail Gunner on the aircraft *Jenny/Lady Luck* on the first missions flown by the 44th BG. Unfortunately, he suffered severe frostbite on 12 December 1942 that ended his combat career. He was 97 years old at the time of his passing.

DOWD, JOHN F. 2/11/01 20113596 68th Sq. John was a Gunner on the D. F. Tofte crew that joined the 68th Sq. on 8 July 1944. Their first mission was flown on 18 July, second on 19th, and last on 21st July. Badly damaged by flak, they crashlanded in Switzerland, and all of crew were Interned. John escaped twice, was badly treated, and finally was repatriated back to the U.S.

FINK, ROBERT D. 31 July 2001. Served in 44th Headquarters.

FLISTER, HENRY ODELL Date Unknown
36232737 67th Sq. He flew his first mission as Tail Gunner for the newly arrived W. A. Roach crew on 1 May 43. In succession he then flew as Tail Gunner for R. I. Brown on 4 May, Left



Waist for H. W. Moore on 17 May, and Tail Gunner on E. R. Mitchell on 29 May 1943. His tour ended when he was Interned in Switzerland on 18 March 1943, Tail Gunner for R. J. Lacombe.

GARRISON, EDWIN 13 February 2002. Cannot identify at this time.

GILSENAN, HOWARD STEVE 3 May 2001 68th Sq. (Difference in spelling) Gunner for the E. K. Kohler crew that joined the Sq. in early July 1944. They flew their first mission on 16 July most of them with the aircraft "*Corky*." They spent a week in Scotland at a Rest Home, for R & R, (3 to 10 Sept.) and continued their missions through to 30 November 1944, completing 34 missions for Gilsenan. On 13 December they rotated to 70th RCD to return to the U.S.

GRALEY, BRUCE 16 April 2002 506th Squadron Ordnance. No further data located yet.

GRAY, ARNOLD 12 June 2001 506th Sq. Arnold was a Navigator, flew his first three missions with different crews. His first one was 9 September 1943 with the L. S. Davenport crew; second with H.J. Laudig on 21 September; and his third on 24 September with J. A. Bunce. Apparently, he was assigned to the W. M. Maynor crew, as his last four were with this crew. They were: 5 November, 18 November, 26 November and his 11th mission came on 20 December 1943 when they were shot down, became POWs.

HADDOCH, SAMMY W. 1993. 14181734 66th Sq. Sammy was a Ball Turret gunner on the D. R. Talbott crew that flew their first mission on 30 January 1944. On 20 February, this crew made a rough crashlanding. Then on 15 March, on their 10th mission, they were attacked and forced to bail out over Holland. Sammy became a POW.

HICKMAN, F. JACKSON October 1996 67th Sq. Ground Crew. "Jack" was an Aircraft Mechanic. He was a member of Ground Echelon that went to England on the Queen Mary in early September, 1942. He first served on the M. Bagley crew, but later, he became an Assistant Crew Chief on the R. D. Davis crew. He returned



to the States in May, 1945 with orders for a month furlough and then return to duty. However, orders were changed, most of the men had too many "points" for further overseas duty, so were assigned to bases near home.

HOBSON, THOMAS B. 11 July 2002. 506th Sq. 0-791426. Tom was one of the original 506th Sq. pilots that joined the 44th BG in England in late February, 1943. He served as Co-pilot for G. Rebich on their first mission on 31 March and on until after Ploesti. On 21 September 1943, he flew his first mission as 1st Pilot after he and his crew were transferred to the 66th Sq. His plane was damaged badly by fighters, most of crew bailed out, and he was captured to become a POW on 1 Oct 1943. That was his 21st mission. Tom was recalled into the Army during the Korean War. He then retired as an Army Colonel.

HUGHES, WILLIAM D. 1987 0-727993 68th Sq. Pilot. Joined the 68th Sq. on 8 March 1942. He arrived in England on 2 October 1942 with the 68th Sq. Air Echelon. He was co-pilot for Lt. Cramer; then became a 1st Pilot on DS to Africa, flew both tough missions to Ploesti and Weiner Neustadt. Completed his tour of 25 on 18 Nov. 1943.

HURLEY, DAVID G. Date Unknown 35330744 68th Sq. Aircraft Mechanic. Was a passenger on A/C #42-109805 on 25 May 1945 upon return to the U.S.

JACOBS, L. G. Date Unknown 67th Sq. 16146649. Radio Operator for the J. A. Struthers crew. He flew his first and all 37 of his missions with this crew. Mission #1 dated 18 August 1944 and mission #37 dated 23 February 1945. Crew returned to the U.S. on 19 April 1945.

JOHNSON, NORMAN B. Date unknown. 39454377 68th Sq. Gunner on the H. C. Palmer crew. Flew his first mission on 3 March 1944 and his 14th and last on 9 April 1944. Crew was force to land in Sweden on 3 March. He was released on 16 October 1944 and returned to base.



JONES, CLARENCE R. 9 February 2002 12096377 68th Sq. He joined the Squadron on 8 July 1944 as an Aerial Engineer on the D. F. Tofte crew.

They flew their 1st mission on 18 July and their 31st on 21 July 1944. On this last mission they were force to land in Sweden and Interned. Later, on 19 October, they returned to base.

KRYSZCZUK, CHESTER J. May, 1998. 506th Sq. Chester was the nose turret gunner on the A. R. Rockman crew that flew their 1st mission on 1 November 1944. They completed their tour of 30 missions plus on 11 April 1945.

KIRMSE, ROBERT 6 Sept. 2000 68th Sq. 0-699530. Bombardier on the A. V. Larson crew, when on their first mission dated 21 May 1944. Then he flew missions with several different crews. From 16 August, he was assigned to the S. L. Dobbs crew, a PFF crew. He completed his tour of 33 missions on 15 October 1944.

MILLER, ALLEN W. 18 May 2002 67th Sq. "Bill" served as a Gunner on the Roger S. Markle crew from February to May, 1945. He flew his first mission on 12 March and his last on 18 April 1945. He is credited with at least nine missions, but could have flown more during early April. He is survived by his wife, Marcella and two sons.

McFARLANE, ROBERTS 30 November 2001 0-885100 68th Sq. Served as Assistant Armament Officer in the 68th Squadron.

NELSON, ODIS E. (Curly) 23 January 2002 18085241 67th Sq. "Curly" was an Aerial Engineer for the Capt. Howard W. Moore crew, one of the first crews in the 67th Sq. On 5 October 1942 they departed from Gander Lake, destination England. He flew five combat missions with this crew from 6 Dec. 42 to 16 Feb. 43, but was "grounded" due to severe ear problems. Reassigned to Crew Chief, he soon established exceptional records of missions flown without an "abort" or early return due to mechanical problem. He and his assistant, Carl Hall, crewed *Old Iron Corset*, recorded at least 129 missions with no early returns. It completed the war, and I was proud to have flown back to the States with these two mechanics. On the last leg of the flights. *Old Iron Corset* took off 45th from Greenland and was first over the base in Connecticut. Old and war-worn, but still one of the fastest and best. Curly was exceptionally popular and one of the best!



NUTTER, KENT 30 May 2002. 13071509 68th Sq. Kent joined the 68th Sq. on 26 Oct. 44 as a Tail Gunner on the H. M. Garbade crew. Their first mission was dated 29 November 1944. Their last of 26 or more was dated 18 April 1945. (Possibly flew one or more in early April, reports missing) They returned to the U.S. flying A/C #44-40276 in late May, 1945.

O'BRIEN, JAMES E. 2002, 0-435700 68th Sq. Pilot. Jim flew his first mission and first for the 44th BG on 7 November 1942. His second was on 9 November. On 14 May 1943 he was flying as Major and 68th Sq. Commanding Officer. They were shot down and Jim became a POW. Jim was very active, attended reunions and wrote several very good recollections of his wartime experiences.

REED, JOHN Y. 16 May 2002 0-660004 66th Sq. Pilot Lt. Reed flew his first mission on 12 December 1942 as a co-pilot for R. J. Abernethy. Following that, he continued to serve as co-pilot for several pilots, including Bill McCoy, T. E. Scrivner, and R. E. Miller. On 4 April 1943 he flew his first mission as a 1st Pilot. He took part in the difficult 14 May raid on Kiel, and then on to North Africa. John completed his tour of 25 missions on 21 August 1943 in Africa.

PARTRIDGE, WILLIAM R. February, 2002 0-685953 66th and 68th Squadrons. Lt. Partridge was a Navigator on the W. O. Peterson crew that had transferred into the 44th from the 446 BG. They had already completed ten missions with that Group. He flew his first mission in the 44 BG as a Radar Navigator for the W. O. Peterson crew on 5 June 1944. On 10 October he was transferred to the 68th Sq. and completed his tour as a Radar Navigator on 22 February 1945 with the H.M. Garbade crew.

RAY, CHARLES W. May 2001. 14170302 67th Sq. He was a Gunner, flew his first mission with the D. H. Dines crew on 24 February 1944 as a Waist Gunner. His second one was with the W. E. Wahler crew, also as a Waist Gunner. Then he served with several other crews. He finished his 29th mission with the E. C. Holmer crew on 30 December 1944.



ROSENGREN, ROBERT E. 19 March 2002 506th Sq. Robert was a Gunner. He flew his first mission as Waist Gunner with the G. S. Stevens crew. His second was with the J. Clements crew, Belly Gunner on 30 November. His third and fourth were as a Hatch Gunner for the N. Purdy crew on 11 January and 14 January 44. He then joined the L. Waine crew, flew two missions with them. Then, the entire crew was transferred to the 15th A.F. in Italy where they completed their tour total of 50.

SMITH, FREDERICK J. 26 January 1991 3031080 68th Sq. Sheet Metal worker. He was a member of the Ground Echelon, Engineering Section, that went to England in early September 1942 and returned to the States with them in late June, 1945. He also was one of the men who was on D.S. to Africa in the middle of 1943 to attack Ploesti, Weiner Neustadt and many other targets.

SNYDER, BETHEL A. Date unknown. Service data also unknown.

STIEFEL, MAX A. 1 June 2002 0-801102 66th Sq. Max was a Navigator on the R. E. Felber crew when he flew his first mission on 13 August 1943. He then transferred to the R. W. Bridges crew, flew with them on 16 and 19 August; then 7 and 15 September. On his ninth mission, 1 October 1943, the Bridges crew was shot down and he became a POW.

TAYLOR, WILLIAM Date Unknown. Cannot locate him in our records.

THOMPSON, MOODY E. 29 June 2001 18085261 67th Sq. Moody was a member of the 67th Ground Echelon that went to England in early September 1942. He served there until June 1945, when he returned back to the States on the same Queen Mary. His job classification cannot be located at this time.

TITKEMEYER, CHARLES W. 17 July 2002 0-796626 66th Sq. Lt. Titkemeyer was the Navigator on the R. E. Felber crew that joined the 66th Squadron in June, 1943 and very soon assigned to D.S. in North Africa. His first mission was to the Oil Fields of Ploesti, 1 August 1943, by far the toughest. With but two exceptions, he continued to fly as Navigator with the Felber crew until late December, when



they became a Lead crew. As a Lead Navigator, he occasionally flew with other crews, until he finished his tour of 28 missions on 12 March 1944. Charles kept a fine, detailed log of his missions that he donated for our history.

TUREK, BENJAMIN J. 1988 67th Sq. Ground Personnel, Engineering Section. Ben served as Aircraft Inspector during 1943, later he was promoted to T/Sgt. in charge of Tech. Supply. He returned to the U.S. on board the Queen Mary in late June, 1945.

TODD, MARK or MACK 13 March 2002 68th Sq. Cannot identify.

VILLEMEZ, LAWRENCE R. May, 1999
18062086 68th Crew Chief. Lawrence was one of the Ground Echelon personnel who sailed to England in early September, 1942. He served in that capacity until he returned to the U.S. by flying home on A/C #44-49397, piloted by 1st Lt. T. R. Williams. He also served in N. Africa on D.S. in September and early October, 1943.

WAGNER, CHARLES H. Date Unknown
13029488 68th Sq. Aircraft Mechanic He, too, was a member of the Ground Echelon that went to England on board the Queen Mary in early September 1942. But he returned to the U.S. in late May 1945 as a passenger on A/C #42-95021.

WHITWORTH, JOHN L. 2 January 2002
34448789 68th Sq. John served as Left Waist Gunner on the W. H. Barry crew that was shot down on its very first mission, 8 April 1944. John kindly supplied his recollections of that mission and how the crew parachuted to become POWs.

WOOD, FRANCIS M. 18 May 2002 34133012
68th Sq. M/Sgt. Crew Chief. He was a member of the Ground Echelon that sailed to England in early September, 1943. He also served in Africa on the two Detached Service assignments in 1943. He flew back to the U. S. on 26 May, 1945 on his aircraft number 42-50806 E, Louisiana Belle, piloted by R. G. Erikson.



WILTERDINK, DONALD J. No date. No records can be located for this man.

ZEE, WALTER J. (Zubowicz) 7 August 2002
67th Sq. Sgt. Zee flew his first mission on 24 February 1944 as a crewmen on the R.C. Griffith crew. He also flew as Gunner on the G. J. Thorn crew. Later, he joined the Charles H. Mercer crew that flew their first mission on 21 March 1944. His last of 30 missions was flown on 6 June 1944, D-Day. Awarded the DFC medal.

DUBOIS, PHYLLIS 24 April 2002 Phyllis, our great friend and former supervisor of the American Room in the main library of Norwich, has folded her wings. She has been a faithful worker for that library and for our 44th BG as well. Even after being relieved of her duties in that American Room some years ago, she continued her efforts to assist us in every way possible. She was particularly concerned with the official Roll of Honour and attempted to help all of us to get it as accurate as possible. We miss her and owe her a great debt of gratitude. Bless you, Phyllis.

The 44th Bomb Group's PX

Making friends is as easy as pointing at your cap!

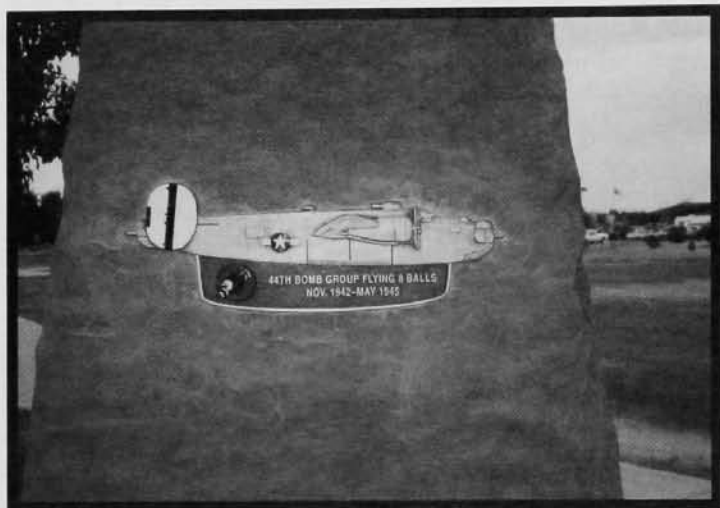
"The man was wearing a blue, baseball-style cap with lettering that read "44" Bomb Group."

Flying 8 Ball Patches \$15 + \$1 Postage
(Indicate Squadron: 66th, 67th, 68th, 506th w/
nose color of squadron. Also available
headquarters service squadron, all colors.)

Blue Liberator Shirts \$30 + \$3 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Shirts \$25 + \$3 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Caps \$15 + \$2 Postage
Pins (Specify Squadron) \$5 + \$1 Postage
Write: **Sam Miceli**
6398 Dawson Blvd.
Mentor, OH 44060-3648



MAIL & E-MAIL



B-24 Plaque at Hill Air Field
on 8th Air Force Memorial.



From Jerry Folsom:

A Plaque with 44th Bomb Group Markings has been installed on the 8th Air Force Memorial near the Hill Field Aero Space Museum at Hill Field, Roy, Utah. Two years ago, the 44th BGVA Board allocated the money for this distinction.

The Hill Field Aero Space Museum is unique in that it has a B-24 that was salvaged from an Aleutian Island, being restored. Completion is expected in the next couple months.

They have on display a 4000 pound piece of rock from the White Cliffs of Dover with a simulated emergency landing field that was on top of the cliff. This is nostalgic to many crews who flew from England.



Attn: Ploesti Participants and Buffs: Plans are underway for a 60th Anniversary Celebration of the Ploesti Mission in Salt Lake City, Utah. The date is

July 31-August 1, 2003. The Ploesti stories are so awesome, a new generation of B-24 buffs are eager to meet the men who flew that mission.



Setting the Record Straight:

From **Ed Mazer**, Radio Operator and Gunner on the Lt. **William Wahler** Crew, 67th Squadron: "The Bombardier who helped Tail Gunner **Joseph Meskinis** was Lt. **Tom Murray**. The mission was to the Langenhagen Airdrome in Germany. Wahler was able to bring *Judy's Buggy* safely across the Channel before crashing. Murray placed Meskinis in his parachute from his turret and placed him in his parachute harness, only to learn later that Meskinis's chute did not open. All other members of the crew bailed out and survived. Besides Wahler, Murray, and Mazer, the following crew members were on that fateful mission, April 8, 1944: **Pietro Pino**, Co-Pilot; **Grover C. Trumbo**, Navigator; **Clyde Bickel**, Engineer; **Carl Hager**, Radio Operator; **Charles Harmeyer**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Charles Ray**, Waist Gunner; and **James Warren**, Waist Gunner. (An error in Lt. Murray's name was in Vol. 4, Issue #3, Spring 2002 issue of the *8 Ball Tails*.)

In a telephone call, I learned why Ed Mazer did not fly with his crew on that mission. April 8, 1944, was Passover, a Jewish holiday. "A Catholic Chaplain came to our barracks that morning. Because I was Jewish, he gave me a pass to London." Carl Hager flew in his place.


Mazer read **Frank Stegbauer's** account in the *8 Ball Tails* about his friend, the late Charles Ray. According to Stegbauer, Ray was shot twice while overseas; then 'shot by a friend while quail hunting.' Mazer said, "I was a friend, but I didn't shoot him. I shot past him at a bird, and just missed his head. It almost scared me to death, that I came that close."

(Editors Note: It had to be rather sobering for Charles Ray, also.)





George Beiber



From Marge Beiber, widow of the late George Beiber.

I enjoyed the article about


George's co-pilot, 'Jerry' Folsom. Unfortunately, George's last name was not spelled correctly in the article. (Editor acknowledges error). Beiber was the beloved pilot on the *Consolidated Mess* and sometimes on *Joplin Jalopy*, and his crew can never praise him too highly.

Paul Boench, Bombardier, describes him as a man with great concern for his crew, a good listener, and a man with a great sense of responsibility. Boench's happiest memory with Beiber was returning home on the *SS Brazil*. "We played checkers the whole way home," he recalled, "using a pocket-size set we had gotten from the Red Cross."

Waist Gunner **Harold Maggard** considered Beiber the best pilot in the 8th Air Force; and his reputation must have resounded through the 506 Squadron. Many unassigned airmen, needing a few more missions to complete their tour, wanted to fly with him. Tail Gunner Perry Morse remembers him fondly for many reasons, including that Beiber loaned him his officer's jacket. Navigator **Willis Edgecomb** loaned his to Harold Maggard. They used it for entry into the Officer's Club to watch the performance of their Bombardier Paul Boensch, a member of the 44th Bomb Group Band. Lt. George Beiber passed away May 23, 1995.


From Dick Butler:

The name of the pilot who had to abandon a beloved plane, *Earthquake McGoon*, in Bari, Italy, after a harrowing scene at Wiener Neustadt, was **William S. Aldridge**.


July 14th is Bastille Day in France, ending centuries of rule by monarchy. July 21st is Independence Day in Belgium. Do you know the country from which they were liberated?

Answer: Holland.


From Forrest S. Clark:

"I was the radio operator on a B-24 of the 44th BG. We had dropped our bomb load and were heading as fast as we could for home base. As we did so, the formation loosened up considerably. It usually did. It was a scramble to "get the hell out of there." We were deep over Nazi Germany.

"I recall suddenly looking up from the top turret; and there, to my surprised eyes was another B-24, bomb bay doors open and bombs clearly visible. It looked like it was only 100 feet above us, but I know it must have been more.

"Someone on our crew blasted over the intercom, "Watch out, B-24 above us." Immediately the pilot dove down and out of the way, leaving in a hurry. A few minutes later the B-24 peeled away and dropped out of our sights. If those bombs had gone, we would have been blown to bits.

"Was it an intruder that had infiltrated our loose formation or was it an illusion? We had been briefed that the Germans were employing captured American bombers to infiltrate our formations, and in a suicide mission, try to collide with or drop bombs.

"When we got back at interrogation, the officers told us they had reports of captured B-24's intruding into our formations. Then the question follows: Were there any German pilots trained to fly B-24's? Answer: There were."

(Editors Note: Clark is trying to contact the members of the R.C. Griffith crew, (67th Squadron) including Lt. Bob Weatherwax; Co-Pilot Bill Tinsman and Bombardier, Lt. David Edonds. Any information about experiences with this crew would be appreciated. Write 703 Duffer Lane, Kissimmee, FL 34759-4114; telephone (863) 427-0371; e-mail B24vet@aol.com).



W A L L A R T



Gene Tierney's image, along with a curvaceous nude gal, still grace the walls of a dilapidated building at the Doubleday farm in Shipdham, England. **Jack Loman**, (50 Station Complement) painted many pictures that are still visible 60 years later. Their survival is remarkable. The building is an old kitchen that has stood roof-less for decades. Loman, now living in Solvang, California, is married to Monica, an English gal that he sometimes went AWOL to visit.

Much of the WWII wall art has been lost through time and neglect, but now efforts are being made to save it by the Eighth Wall Art Conservation Society, who have managed to move some murals to the museum in Duxford.

**44th Bomb Group
VETERANS ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 712287

Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



Non Profit

U.S. Postage

Paid

Permit #6923
Salt Lake City, UT