

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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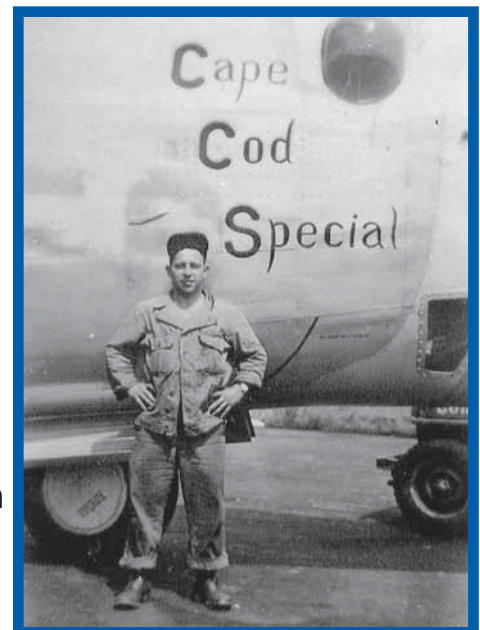


MY EVERLOVIN' GAL

My Everlovin' Gal was assigned to the 66th Squadron; then transferred to the 506th on 27 April 1944. The crew of **H. K. Landis** flew it to Hamm, Germany, then made many missions on *Cape Cod Special*. The **Gerald Wescott** crew flew 16 missions on *My Ever Lovin' Gal*. Tragically, on 29 June 1944, side by side, over the skies of Magdeburg, the two collided and went down.

Both were from the 506th Squadron.

The target was the Krupp Aircraft Factory in Magdeburg, Germany, a very heavily defended site. Thirty seconds after Bombs Away, *My Everlovin' Gal* was hit with flak, causing fluid from the hydraulic reservoir to pour out, leading to an explosion in the bomb bay. Flying alongside was *Cape Cod Special* which was hit at the same time. When trying to pull out of formation, the A/C slipped to the right, landing on top of Wescott's craft. Both planes went down; ten men died; nine became POW.



CAPE COD SPECIAL

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

MY EVERLOVIN' GAL & CAPE COD SPECIAL

Twelve different crews flew on *My Ever Lovin' Gal's* 29 missions, the first of which was 27 March 1944. *Cape Cod Special's* first was about two months later (3 June 1944); it survived only 9 missions and only three crews had flown in it. It is interesting that both pilots were on many of the same missions-Pas de Calais, Hamm, Gutersloh, Chalon-sur Mane, Moyenneville, Berlin and many more. Both pilots flew on D-Day, **Landahl** to Caen; **Wescott** to Ferets De-Cerisy.

S/Sgt. **Walter V. Lawrence**, Left Waist Gunner, on *Ever Lovin' Gal*, saw the flames in the Bomb Bay and reported the problem to his pilot. He returned to his gun position, just as the explosion occurred. He was thrown out of the plane; and fortunately was wearing his parachute, which did not catch fire nor was hit by flying debris. Only later did Lawrence learn that flying alongside *My Everlovin' Gal* was *Cape Cod Special*, and that both planes had been struck.

Howard Landahl, pilot on *Cape Cod Special* could not control his plane. When both planes tried to pull out of formation, Landahl's right wing struck **Wescott's** A/C, and disaster ensued for both.

Fred DuBose, Radio Operator on **Wescott's** plane, landed a short distance

from Lawrence. Nearby was **Landahl**, pilot of *Cape Cod Special*, in great pain from serious injuries in his thighs and legs. Apparently he had lost a great deal of blood. He was given morphine to relieve his agony. He died shortly thereafter.

Three men from *My Everlovin' Gal* survived and became POW: **Fred DuBose**, **Walter Lawrence** and **Joseph Morris**, Tail Gunner. KIA were **Gerald Wescott**, pilot, **Robert Reeves**, Co-Pilot, **Thomas Hine**, Navigator, **Arthur Toepel**, Bombardier, **Edward Thompson**, Engineer, and **Frank Artym**, RW Gunner.

Besides **Landahl**, other members of the crew KIA were: **Nels Pedersen**, Navigator, **Robert Staples**, Engineer, and **Charles Schiess**, Well Gunner. Six became POW: **Randolph Smith**, Co-Pilot; **Thomas Conzoner**, Bombardier; **Jack Davis**, RW Gunner, **Coleman Underwood**, LW Gunner; **Frank Rinaldo**, Tail Gunner.

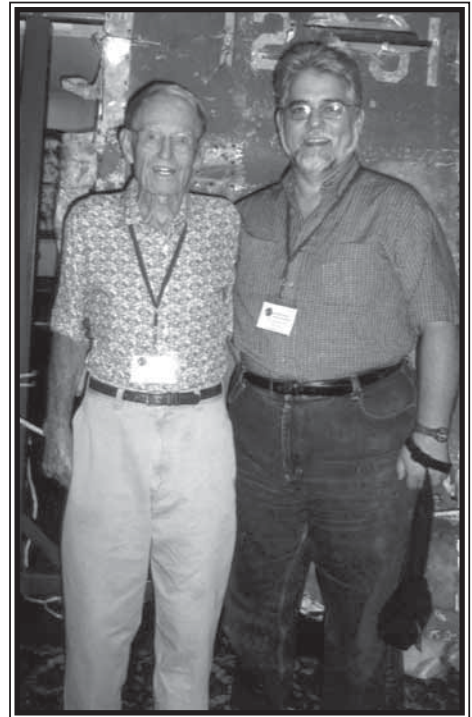
On this mission to Magdeburg, 26 of 36 aircraft were damaged; 2 were lost; one 66th Squadron A/C was forced to crash-land; one 67th Squadron A/C returned with one WIA, **Norman Tiller**, Waist Gunner on *Myrtle the Fertile Turtle*.

The photographs of *My Everlovin' Gal* and *Cape Cod Special* were part of the Steve Adams collection.



This Issue of the Eight Ball Tails is Dedicated to the 44th BGVA's Archivist, the Late C. Will Lundy

Editor's note: On 11 October 2006 Will Lundy passed away in Springfield, Missouri. He fell on a parking lot when he and his son Kevin were taking a casual walk during the Bomb Group Reunion in Branson. News of his death resounded around the world. The life and times of Will Lundy can best be told by the many people who knew him. As a member of the 44th BGVA, he worked until his last days to memorialize those who 'gave all'. His description of the men returning from early missions in planes that were ill equipped to provide safety and comfort for the crews cannot be matched in any other literature. No other aerial group can equal his detailed description of the 44th BG's activities on D-Day and other unforgettable times in the UK. Generations of families, scholars and tomorrow's airmen will benefit from Will's life work.



Will Lundy and Charles Runyon

From **Robert Lehnhausen**, Commander of the 68th Squadron: When WWII broke out, Will attempted to join the various military services; in each case he was rejected because of an eye problem. Determined as he was, he finally succeeded in getting an Army doctor to accept him. He was sent to Aviation Mechanics training. Upon completion of that training, he was assigned to the 44th shortly before they embarked for duty in the United Kingdom. Will became an assistant crew chief in the 67th Squadron of the 44th.

It was while serving as an aviation mechanic on the 44th's majestic B-24's, that he witnessed the sacrifices that were being made by the air crews of the 44th. So many of these losses were experienced with little or any knowledge of what had really happened to cause that loss, except to write it off as 'enemy action', or flak or fighters.

Several years after the war ended, he began to probe official records. He sought information from former air crew members. He began to assemble mounds of information. He became determined to write a history of the sacrifices of his squadron. It was a very sad tale. Of the eighteen pilots and co-pilots of the 67th's original nine crews, only two officers, **Howard Moore** and **Bill Cameron**, completed their required tour of 25 missions.

His plan to write the history of his squadron quickly was expanded into a history of the 44th. In 1987 Will and his lovely wife Irene compiled, edited, financed and published the first *"Roll of Honor and Casualties of the 44th Bomb Group (H)"*.

Upon publication and distribution of this massive effort, former crew members, researchers and members of families whose loved ones had been lost, added details to the record, or explained situations that had been referred to in the *"Roll"*. This splendid gentleman became a compassionate and caring expert, skilled in assistance to the families of men who had perished. He was always available. He developed a network of historical researchers throughout the world, who shared his concern that our men and their courageous deeds and achievements shall 'never be forgotten'.

In 2005 he financed and published the updated, expanded version of the *"Roll of Honor"*. Once again the members of the 44th Bomb Group family enthusiastically supported his plea, that this latest version be placed in as many libraries and repositories of historical military information as possible. He and his Irene achieved that on behalf of the 859 men who gave their lives as members of the 44th from October 1942 through May 1945.

Will was also the visionary who recognized the value of the Master Database computer program, conceived and perfected by his brilliant friend, Arlo Bartsch. This humongous store of information on the wartime sorties of the 44th is now available on our Web Site. This information is available by both cyberspace and in print.

We were blessed that this very humble but dynamic gentleman persisted in his desire to serve his country, and that he was assigned to the 44th. We mourn the loss of our dear friend.
WILL LUNDY WAS THE BEST OF MEN.

From Ray Ward, Author of *Those Brave Crews: Without the help of Will Lundy, my book could not have been written... (This highly acclaimed book is a well documented report on the Ploesti Mission. The book can be found on Google and Yahoo. The author can be reached at Weldon@cqservoces.com)*

From **Forrest S. Clark**: I first met Will 30 years ago during one of the 44th reunions in England in a huge Medieval Hall in Norwich. Jimmy Stewart was there, tall and elegant...there were many officers of the 8th Air Force and high officials of the English government. But Will was not so much interested in them as he was in the little guys. Will wanted our stories, and he was interested in the nitty gritty of the 44th.

From David Webster: Losing Will has saddened me deeply. He was a great friend. He gave me the greatest gift I could ask for. He introduced me to all of you. My first reunion with the 44th was in 1995. I was very nervous, but Will took me around to meet you all. I have made so many great and lifelong friends due to Will. He will live forever as a part of our friendship. *(Webster has a private museum containing many artifacts from WWII.)*

From Jackie Roberts, Treasurer of 44th BGVA: By the time I became a part of the 44th, I had looked for 50 years for information about my father. All I had of him was one picture. Will, in ONE week after hearing my story about being an orphan, sent me enough information to fill two suitcases. He filled the missing pieces of my life. I will never forget Will Lundy. He will always have a place in my heart. What a wonderful caring man. *(Jackie has accepted the position of Treasurer of the 44th BG Board)*

From David Hastings, a member of the Memorial Trust Board of Governors for the 2 AD Library in Norwich: We were shocked to hear the terrible news about Will Lundy...We have lost a true and great friend. His wonderful book on the 44th is always on show in the Memorial Library next to the Roll of Honor...

From Peter Bodle (Quoting Paul Wilson) '**A GREAT CHAP**' is typically the way we Brits will remember him. Upon the recommendation of Peter and Steve Adams, the museum of the Shipdham Aero Club will be named "The Will Lundy Museum". The Aero Club, itself, is dedicated to the great men who flew from there, the 44th Bomb Group.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



We were all saddened by Will Lundy's passing and our sympathy goes out to his son Kevin, who accompanied Will to Branson, and to the rest of Will's family. Bob Lehnhausen called him a "Mountain of a Man" and said that he stood, in the minds and hearts of the 44th veterans, as equal to that of General Johnson. Our feelings could not be put any better than that.

While trying to put this message together, I looked over several past issues of the 8 Ball Tails. All, of course, had Will's "Will Sez" articles. It is truly amazing, considering all the work that Will did, to record his recollections and our history. He was really a master in researching and recording all that information.

At this Thanksgiving time we give our thanks for having people like Will Lundy, Webb Todd, and Norm Keifer who wrote Squadron histories and for Will's "Roll of Honor".

Special thanks to Ruth and Perry Morse and Jackie and Lowell Roberts for getting our 2008 reunion arrangements started. Jackie and Lowell traveled all the way from Oklahoma City to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to scout out hotels and help Ruth and Perry in the planning.

I hope all of you have a great Christmas and New Year's holidays.

George

OUR FIGHTING MEN

By Sgt. Geoff E. Draycott
617 Squadron, RAF Scampton. 1971

Before you make a comment to perhaps judge and condemn,
Once they were the country's finest. Now they're very old men.

Once they were young and handsome, and donned their uniforms with pride.
Many went off to battle; sadly, many fought and died.

Of those who are with us today, many crippled and somewhat staid,
They make no claim on glory; it was a price courageously paid.

So when today you see them walking slowly down the street,
Remember, they fought for our freedom so that we might all peacefully sleep.

George Washburn brought this poem back from England. It echoes the status of the U.S. Airmen who reached into the unfriendly skies of Europe in WWII.

BRANSON, MISSOURI OPENED ITS ARMS FOR THE 2007 REUNION OF THE 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

The Tourist Bureau promised a gala event, and Jackie & Lowell Roberts made certain that it happened. The nearest airport was forty miles away; but Lowell rented a seventeen passenger van, and burned the highway time after time, day after day, getting everyone to the Grand Plaza Hotel, then back and forth all weekend. The Reunion could never have been successful without this fantastic service.



Black Jack's battered left verticle's stabilizer, a good back drop for the 44th Bomb Reunion.

Front Row L-R Don Williams, Nathan Woodruff, George Washburn, Ira DePiero, Jack Schiffler, George Insley, Robert Reasoner. Second Row: Lowell Roberts, Arlo Bartsch, Jerry Folsom, ??????????, John Gately, Frank Schaeffer, Will Lundy, Tony Mastradone, Ray Hamlyn. Back Row: ??????????, Bill Newbold, Robert Swegel, Dick Lynch, Jack Porter, Roy Owen, Edward Serbin, Perry Morse, Sterling Dobbs, Lee Aston, Robert Johnson
Will somebody please fill in the question marks?

THIS NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE

A tattered, battered, rusty old chunk of a B-24 came to Branson, courtesy of Charles Runyon, a history buff and private collector of tattered, battered, rusty old things. Runyon lives in Tennessee, but rented a vehicle to bring the aged vertical stabilizer to Branson.

Looking at the old piece of *Black Jack*, **Bob Reasoner** was happy to pose with Runyon, the man who brought this ancient relic from the Austrian barn where it had been stashed since 1943. Reasoner was the Tail Gunner on that A/C which went down at Wiener-Neustadt, flying with the **Coleman Whitaker** crew. Five men were KIA, five became POW. Because of the severity of his wounds, Reasoner was POW,

then repatriated.

Coleman Vickery, son of the Navigator, **Eugene Vickery**, and family attended the Reunion, bringing with them an amazing accumulation of memorabilia and a copy of the book which his father had written, describing much



Robert Reasoner and Charles Runyon

...continued on page 8

about his POW experience. Young Vickery was named for *Black Jack's* pilot, **Coleman Whitaker**, who, along with four other members of the crew, was KIA.



The Family of Eugene Vickery

A table in the Hospitality Room showcased the collections of Runyon's searches for memorabilia. He states that his European contacts are offering

him more old junked pieces from crash sites of a B-17 and P-47. He has learned that when planes crashed, many times locals would recover items that they might be able to use later. "I have seen B-24 wheels that were modified and used on tractors and wagons, wings used for fences, barn doors made from parts of planes, and so on."

As always, the Hospitality Room was a great place for friendly chats and serious remembrances. Sid Paul, Perry Morse and Tony Cianci kept the liquids flowing while Arlo Bartsch sat nearby, looking up histories on the Database.

THE TOURS

The Veterans Memorial Museum in Branson is truly remarkable. The walls are covered with over 500,000 names of soldiers killed in action. An awesome sculpture of fifty combat men lined up two by two is an amazing piece of art. Each soldier is modeled after a real combat man from each state.



Sid Paul, Perry Morse and Tony Cianci

Marching among them is Bob Dole, portrayed on what is reputed as the largest sculpture in the world.

Ivo & Ivy DiPiero were with the group that 'walked the plank' to luncheon on the

Showboat Branson Belle. A light hearted moment came when **Sid Paul** was called to the stage.

Whether by accident or acting as a jokester, Sid kept the performer constantly dismayed by ringing the wrong bell or inappropriately tapping the drum. The audience loved it. Fritzi Selasky danced with a show girl with the same effervescence we have seen at many of our past reunions (when some of our members were still dancing.)



Ivo & Ivy DiPiero

There was a tender moment at the Banquet when Jackie Roberts poured out her heart in gratitude for the help that she received in locating her lost father. **Jack Ostenson**, a gunner on the **Mathisen** crew was KIA on 21 January 1944. She presented beautifully engraved flame-shaped glass figures to **Will Lundy** (absent from the Banquet), **Roy Owen**, **Lee Aston**, **Tony Mastradone**, Ruth Morse, Jackie's husband Lowell, son John and grandson Justin, all of whom contributed to her journey to learn about a father she never knew.

IT'S A NEW ERA FOR THE 44th BGVA

Two members of the second generation from our veterans have been elected to the Board-Jackie Roberts and Roger Fenton. Jackie and her dedicated husband Lowell accepted the office of Treasurer, replacing **Dick & Betty Lynch** who had held the position for the past five years. Dick agreed to continue serving on the Board as Director.

Roger Fenton is the son of Captain **Milton Feinstein**, a Navigator in the 66th Squadron. Feinstein flew 47 missions, most of them with the George Insley crew. His last mission happened to be on April 25, 1945, the 44th's last mission of the war.

As Historian, Roger worked with Will Lundy, answering many questions of people hunting information about relatives or crew members.

His contacts for gaining information extended to researchers in the UK. Roger was able to add to 44th membership, gaining the interest of many by supplying a copy of the *8 Ball Tails* to inquirers. When he accepted the VP position, he graciously agreed to continue as Historian.



Lowell & Jackie Roberts,
Betty & Dick Lynch



Roger Fenton

New to the Board is **Charles Tilton**, a Navigator on the **Jack F. Comstock** crew. He was recommended by the Nominating Committee, **Bob Lehnhausen** and **Roy Owen**; but was elected in absentia, having another obligation when the

Branson reunion was scheduled.

The crew with the most members in attendance was the (late) **George Beiber** crew. When **Nathan Woodruff** (Engineer) met **Jerry Folsom** (Co-Pilot) and **Perry Morse**



Perry Morse, Jerry Folsom and
Nathan Woodruff Woodruff

(Tail Gunner), bystanders watched them tearfully embrace. It was 'Woodie's first 44th BG Reunion. He was accompanied by his son John and grandson Taylor.



Waiting to see the Red Skelton Tribute:
Betty Lynch, Jack Schiffer, Delores Shipley,
Beverly Folsom & John Gately

REUNION ATTENDEES

Beryl Apgar — Lee & Mary Aston — **Sterling Dobbs** — Dick & Betty Lynch — **Perry & Ruth Morse** — **Roy Owen** — **Lowell & Jackie Roberts** — Julius Carter — **George Washburn** & Cynthia Harmonowsky — **Jerry & Beverly Folsom** — **John, Jean & Bernadette Gateley** — **Will & Kevin Lundy** — **Sidney & Elizabeth Paul** — **Edward, Jean, Mark & Julie Serbin** — William Sanders — Tony & Lois Cianci — **Arlo & Blanche Bartsch** — Peter Burns — **Ivo & Ivy DiPiero** — **Richard Hruby** — Roger & Lori Fenton — Zane & Janey Hagins — **Ray & Tom Hamlyn** — Richard Holliday — Lee, Earl & Darla Howard — **George & Jeanne Insley** — Fritzi Selasky — **Dale Lee & Bea Commiti** — **Robert & Roberta Johnson** — **Frank Schaeffer** — **Tony & Kathie Mastradone** — **Ira & Ruth McKee** — Marilyn Murrack — Bill Newbold — Jim Snyder & Martha Pederson — Jack, Jack, Jane Porter — **Robert & Bernice Reasoner & Ann** — Charles Runion — Jack Schiffer & Delores Shipley — Vernon Wells — Delbert, Sara Tom & Regina Shaffer — Nathan, John & Taylor Woodruff — **Don Williams** & Sharyn Sanderson — Maple Cervo — Nina & Caitlyn Wallace — David Saylor — Coleman Vickery and other family members.

(IF YOUR NAME WAS OMITTED,
PLEASE FORGIVE ME)

The Editor

A gem of knowledge from the Memorial Museum in Branson: The Luftwaffe's 262A was the first operational turbo jet A/C ever created. It was first used 25 July 1944 for photo reconnaissance. 1,400 were produced, but less than 300 saw combat, as the AAC destroyed hundreds on the ground. Others did not make it into action because of lack of fuel, spare parts or trained pilots. (Can we say that the 44th BG contributed to their problem?)

THE LIBERATOR AT BALBOA PARK



Sculpture of B-24

Thanks to the determined efforts of an eight-man committee, Balboa Park in San Diego, California is graced with a sculpture of a B-24 Liberator. Two 44th BG members served on the Committee: B/Gen. **Robert L. Cardenas** (Ret) and Col. **Richard D. Butler** (Ret). Both Cardenas and Butler flew in the War and later were members of the USAF. Cardenas was shot down 18 March 1943 after hitting the target at Friedrichshafen, Germany. He parachuted into neutral Switzerland, then managed to escape. Cardenas is famous for flying the plane that carried Chuck Yeager to Mach 1.

Butler flew on two of the 44th's most awesome missions-Ploesti and Wiener-Neustadt, but was badly injured later on a test flight.

A Dedication Ceremony honoring the B-24 Memorial Donors was held on Veterans Day, with both Cardenas and Butler as speakers. Among the donors credited for contributions was the 44th BG, as recommended by the late **Paul Kay**.



L-R Robert Cardenas, Richard Butler, John Gately. Front is Lt. Col. Lester H. Ronsberg (Ret), USAF 376 BG. Ronsberg was the only other Ploesti veteran in attendance.

THE 44TH BOMB GROUP PX

When we lost Sam Miceli, the PX was boxed and dropped into the hands of Dick & Betty Lynch. An appeal in the 8 Ball Tails brought a wonderful phone call from Don Prater, volunteering to help. Here is what is available:

Blue Liberator Shirts	\$30 + \$4 postage	List size
Flying 8 Ball Shirts	\$25 + \$4 postage	List size
Flying 8 Ball Golf Caps	\$15 + \$3 postage	Indicate Squadron
Flying 8 Ball Pins	\$ 5 + \$1 postage	Indicate Squadron
44th Bumper Stickers	\$ 2 + \$0.50 postage	

Contact Don Prater, 1608 E. Candlestick Drive, Tempe, AZ 85283.

Phone 480 820-3838 E-Mail donprater@msn.com

Make checks payable to the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association

Don Prater will be introduced in a later issue of the 8 Ball Tails

PLOESTI—SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

By Robert Lehnhausen

On the reading of "Into The Fire" by Duane Schultz, the latest Ploesti book, I am about three fourths through it. According to the bibliography and the listing of origin of the many quotes used in this text, this gentleman has done a great deal of reading, but I find little **NEW** so far. I still maintain that the work of Dugan/Stewart is great work. The work of Roger Freeman has the greatest amount of research and military intelligence information and the best collection of pictures. The work of Robert Sternfels is superb in that he blew away the 'myth' that the leader of the 376th crashed into the sea. The officialdom of the Air Force permitted that story to exist, that a 1st lieutenant was the lead aircraft of such a large, well planned and bold mission, when the true lead of the 376th Group was Col. Keith Compton. Col. Compton flew as the co-pilot of the true lead ship. Lt. Flavelle may have led an element, but not the mission. Additionally, General Ent, the 9th AF Bomber Commander was on board Col. Compton's plane as the Command Pilot, the real mission Commander. Sadly, it was their aircraft that made the turn toward Bucharest at the wrong IP. General Brereton, the 9th AF Commander, in his wisdom, refused to assess blame, stating something like, 'these are the errors that are made in the heat of battle'.

We go back to the truth, that the air forces, unlike other branches of the services, **ALWAYS** were led to battle with their commanders out front, in the lead aircraft of the formation. Another error in the Schultz book that I would like to point out is the statement that there

was a 'gathering of the Ploesti Veterans in Salt Lake City in 2004'. He missed the point and the date. It was the **60th Reunion of the Ploesti Raid**, and the date was 2003.

Now I dismount from my 'high horse' to further state that there are very few photos in this latest work. Please, I am not a book reviewer, but damn it, I was a participant. I had the duty, on this operation, of flying in a ship that was on the right wing of our very ill great friend from Jasper, TX. (**Tommy Holmes**). What a courageous and noble man, who was a 'hot rock' pilot.

*From the Editor: While we are pointing out Ploesti errors: let's look at this one: In the book **BOMBER MISSIONS** by Col. Patrick Murray, he states "Colonel Johnson's 44th Bomb Squadron did not follow the same mistaken path, thanks to Colonel James T. Posey, who found the checkpoint leading to Brazi, the high octane plant five miles (8km) north of Ploesti. Johnson personally led his squadron as formation commander, flying in the co-pilot's seat of Suzy-Q, while Major William Brandon piloted the plane. When Johnson found that his target had already been bombed, he directed the squadron to alternate targets."*

What? Bill Cameron, Henry Lasco and all who followed him attest to the fact that Col. Johnson dove straight into the cauldron with his formation behind, dodging planes that were crossing in front of them. The situation was so fearsome and dangerous, after the war, it was learned that the local citizens thought someone was putting on an air show.



Some Thoughts for the Day

**Living on earth is expensive, but it does include a free trip around the sun.
Birthdays are good for you. The more you have, the longer you live.
I have noticed that the people who are late are often much jollier than the people who have to wait for them!!**

44th BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

By Lee Aston, Director

At the 2007 Reunion in Branson, Missouri, Sept. 2, belated WWII medal presentations were made to four veterans: **George R. Insley**, 66th Squadron; **Edward J. Serbin**, 66th Squadron; **Arlo F. Bartsch**, 379th Bomb Group; and **Delbert E. Shaffer**, 458th Bomb Group. Two belated medals were won for a fifth recipient, Capt. **Ernest C. Holmer**, a Lead Pilot, 67th Squadron, 44th BG. Dr. Holmer of Reno, NV, is recuperating from a recent operation and was unable to attend the Reunion. A home presentation by the Nevada Air National Guard is being arranged for Dr. Holmer's award of the DFC/OLC#1 and AM/OLC#5.

44th BGVA President George Washburn presented and pinned the medals on the recipients with Mary Aston assisting, while Capt. Lee Aston read the Medal Citations.



L to R: R. Lee Aston, Director; T/Sgt. Delbert E. Shaffer, Engineer & Aerial Gunner, DFC & AM/OLC#5, 458th BG; 44th BGVA Pres. George Washburn; 1st Lt.(Lt. Col.) Edward J. Serbin, Lead Navigator, 66th Sqdn. DFC/OLC#1 & AM/OLC#5; 1st Lt. Arlo F. Bartsch, B-17 Pilot, 379th BG, DFC & AM/OLC#6; Capt. George R. Insley, flew two tours, first as a Pilot and second as a Lead Pilot for a total of 53 missions, DFC/OLCs #2 and #3, AM/OLCs 7, 8 and 9; Mary Aston.

* * * *



Lt. Col. James C. McAtee

Lt. Col. James C. McAtee, former CO of 506th Squadron, was presented the French Legion of Honor medal in late August 2007 because of his terminal illness and would be unable to attend the formal presentation by the French Ambassador on October 6, 2007. He received the medal at his Aledo, Il., hospital bedside with family members present. Col. McAtee was one of fourteen 44th BG successful WWII nominees recommended by LoH **Chevalier R. Lee Aston** to be awarded France's highest combat medal.



French Legion of Honor

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**George Washburn
Receives Appreciation
Award for 2007
Presentation of
AF Medals**

George Washburn, Pres., 44th BGVA, received a 44th BG Flying 8 Balls suncatcher from Mary and Lee Aston on behalf of the 44th BGVA for making the presentation of the 2007 AF Belated DFC Medal Awards to the recipients **George Insley, Edward Serbin, Arlo Bartsch, and Delbert Shaffer** at the Branson Reunion, September 2.



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**SEVEN 44TH BG VETERANS RECEIVE THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL AT THE
FRENCH AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Fourteen (14) 44th BG veterans nominated by former Captain Robert L. Aston, 67th Squadron and a Chevalier (Knight) of the French Legion of Honor Order, were approved in 2007 to receive the highest medal offered by the Republic of France to WWII veterans for their combat services in the liberation of France from the Nazi yoke. Only seven (7) were able to attend the invitation to a presentation ceremony to receive their medals at the French Ambassador's residence in D.C. on October 6, 2007. The formal ceremony was a gala event ending after the medal presentations with French champagne and exquisite hors d'oeuvres for the seven medal recipients and their 68 family guests. The remaining seven recipients of the Legion of Honor Medal that were unable to attend the Ambassador's ceremony have chosen to receive their medal either at a nearest French Consulate, or at a home presentation by a Consul General or his representative. Those recipients are: William H. Brandon; Walter Tom Holmes; Frank Stoltz; Charles E. Hughes; Ernest C. Holmer ; Edward J. Serbin; James C. McAtee.



Pictured receiving the Legion of Honor medal from the French Ambassador, His Excellency Pierre Vimont, L to R : Perry Morse; Dale V. Lee; George W. Temple; H.E. Pierre Vimont ; Arlo F. Bartsch; Raymond E. Hamlyn; Edwin M. Lavitt; Chris C. Spagnola.



A 44th Bomb Group, Flying 8 Balls logo suncatcher was presented by Mary and Lee Aston on behalf of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association to His Excellency Ambassador Pierre Vimont to exhibit in the French Embassy in appreciation of the recognition honoring 44th BG veterans for their part in the liberation of France.
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**A Copy of 44th BGVA Director R. L. Aston's Remarks
to His Excellency, Ambassador Pierre Vimont on the Occasion of
the Legion of Honor Presentation
to Members of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association,
October 6, 2007**

Your Excellency, on behalf of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and for the Legion of Honor recipients here this evening, I wish to thank you for the great honor that the Republic of France has bestowed on them.

We are all truly grateful, and as a token of our appreciation my wife and I wish to present on behalf of the 44th BGVA to the Embassy of France a stained glass suncatcher copy of the 44th Bomb Group's emblem, the Flying 8 Balls.

We hope that an appropriate place in the Embassy can be found for it and that it will serve as a Reminder of our friendship with France and the great part that the veterans of the 44th Bomb Group played in the liberation of France from the Nazi yoke.

Merci beaucoup.



Lt. Col. Edward J. Serbin Navigator, 66th Squadron, of Wheeling, IL., chose to receive his French Legion of Honor medal at the Chicago, IL., French Consulate nearest to his home. The presentation was made to Ed Serbin by the Chicago French Consul General Jean-Baptiste MAIN de Boissiere on November 20, 2007 as shown, in left photo. In right photo, Ed Serbin (far right) expresses words of gratitude for the honored award. The event took place at the Illinois Veterans Affairs offices in the Thompson Centre building.



Capt. Ernest C. Holmer, Lead Pilot 67th Squadron, Reno, NV, received an OLC#1 to his DFC and OLC#5 to his Air Medal on Dec. 2, 2007. The Governor of Nevada made the presentation at the Nevada Air National Guard Base, Reno, NV. Pictured are: daughter Marilyn, Ernest Holmer, Marilyn's husband, son Randy Holmer and Barbra

Did You Know...

The Air Force Song was written by Robert MacArthur Crawford, an Alaskan-born musician who studied music at Princeton, in France and at Julliard. He entered his song in a contest, judged by Air Force wives. It was introduced at the Cleveland Air Races in 1939.

During WWII Crawford became a pilot in the Air Transport Command. After the war he became a Lt. Col. in the AF Reserves.

The song was carried to the surface of the moon in 1971 aboard the Apollo 15 "Falcon" lunar module. When 'Falcon' blasted off, Worden played the song on a tape recorder aboard the 'Endeavor' command module. It played while 'Endeavor' was in orbit around the moon.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

The highlight of the Summer here at your old station had to be the many visits of Veterans, Veterans families and 44BG and 8th Air Force enthusiasts. The 44th's very own Lee Aston, Mary and their family were the first. I'm sure Lee himself will have a lot to tell you guys about it, and the other sections of the Aston family pilgrimage to the UK, but for the record I'll go over the main points of the time spent at the airfield.

The memorial garden in front of the clubhouse is started and the first main feature fully completed is the new flag pole (Resplendent on the day with the Stars and Stripes fluttering in the English breeze.) Lee and Eileen Paterson ceremonially dug the first sod of earth from the area where the pathway and garden will to the flagpole. Whilst beside the flagpole, Lee presented Mrs Paterson with the beautiful 44th BG / 67 Squadron sun-catcher that will now be hung in pride of place in the 44th Bomb Group Museum which overlooks the Memorial Garden.

Lee and his son then were taken on a flight, overhead his old station, so father and son could share visions and memories for years to come. There was a lot of photography going on at the time, including quite a number of shots by the Aero Club's own official photographer Doug Mounter. (A disc, in American format, of this wonderful event will be forwarded to Ruth, to use or copy as you all see fit.)

The visit then moved on to the museum, which is now almost 90% complete. There the Aston family was able to enjoy time looking at the exhibits with the museum team and Mrs Paterson, and her family.

A traditional English roast dinner was then served with all the trimmings. As the dinner wound to a close, I was able to say a few words of welcome to Lee, his family and Mrs Paterson and her family. (Which I had to admit seemed a bit strange as Lee was serving at the airfield before I was born, and Mrs Paterson owned the airfield anyway!) None-the-less Lee replied with his usual emotion and candour and rounded off a superb day and one that will remain in the history of your old station forever.

Then George Washburn came to visit a few weeks later and we were able to repeat the conducted tour of the Museum and Memorial Garden site. We had George and Cynthia with us over two days and were able to discuss in some detail, all our hopes and plans for the future remembrance of the guys of the 44th. Again Mrs Paterson was able to join us on one of the days, and share her enthusiasm with the projects planned, for that small section of your old East Anglian station.

No sooner had George and Cynthia left, than another club member phoned me requesting a visit to the Airfield by an ex Norfolk, GI Bride whose late husband had been part of the Intelligence section attached to the 44th and latterly the 14th Bomb Wing, with Leon Johnson.

Just to top it off last week we were asked to host a coach load (40-45) English 8th Air Force enthusiast, on a conducted tour run by a specialist tour operator. (Their tour was Wendling, Shipdham, Old Buckenham and Thorp Abbott) I suspect we will see a few more of these tours over the next few years as the Museum to the 44th gets better known.

We have to say a big thank you to George and Cynthia, to Lee, Mary and their family and to the board of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association for their generous and timely donations to assist with the work of the museum. As you know we have been mainly self funding up to this time, and occasionally progress has been slowed by this. Now several of the bigger projects, The Garden and The Roll Of Honour, can start to make real progress. Thank you all.

On the 'looking forward' side of the airfield, we have a young (16 year old) pilot in our midst now. Lauren Bean has been learning to fly for several months and on her sixteenth birthday she soloed for the first time. Your lead of having young aircrew is still being followed at Shipdham, sixty or more years after you went home. Like you, we are proud of our pilots...some habits never die.

Warmest regards from your friends in England.

Peter

ASTON'S "LAST HOORAH" TRIP TO SHIPDHAM June - July 2007

For three weeks from mid-June to early July 2007, Lee and Mary Aston, accompanied by Lee's oldest son Gary and wife Linda, toured Central England and much of Ireland. A highlight of the trip, of course, was a two day weekend return to Lee's former WWII B-24 Liberator Airbase Station 115/Shipdham in East Anglia. On June 18 we flew from Atlanta to Manchester, England, rented a vehicle and drove to Stone where we had stayed on several previous trips to England. Back in 1944, Stone was a transient base Lee spent 5 days after the Spagnola-Aston crew had flown a shiny new Liberator across the Northern Route from Goose Bay Labrador, via Meeks Field, Iceland to Valley Airbase, Holyhead, Wales. The Astons headquartered a few days at Stone to see old friends who came to Stone to visit with Lee and Mary; his former advisor/ professor for his PhD from Aston University, at Birmingham, UK; and a distant cousin from Stone. *En route* from Stone to Norwich, the Astons did a bit of sightseeing and also toured the Aston-Martin auto factory in Newport-Pagnell where only 100 hand-made Aston-Martins per year are turned out at this plant. We reached Norwich on June 22 and went straight to the Norwich Library where the 2nd Air Division's Heritage Library is housed. There we met Derek Hills, Head Librarian for 2 AD Heritage Collection and presented a 44th Bomb Group "Flying 8 Balls" suncatcher to be displayed in the Library.



June 22, 2007: Astons present a 44BG logo suncatcher to Derek Hills, Trust Librarian, 2nd Air Division Heritage Library, Norwich, UK

On the evening of June 22, we invited Steve Adams, our UK Rep, and his wife Jan to dine with us.



L to R: Lee, Gary, Mary Aston, Steve and Jan Adams

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On Saturday morn, June 23, we did a bit of sight seeing and reminiscing in Norwich town. We noted that the old dance hall, Sampson and Hercules, a favorite spot of GIs in WWII to meet British girls, was no longer in existence and the statues had been removed. We had last seen it and photographed it in 1990.



1990 photo of the Sampson & Hercules,
Dance Hall, Norwich

At noon, June 23, on the way to Shipdham Airfield we stopped for lunch near the old railway station in Dereham (aka East Dereham) Many GIs had travelled through it in WWII. Only a short line tourist train now operates from Wymondham to Dereham.



Dereham Railway Station in 2007

On arrival at Shipdham Airfield's Aero Club, "Home of the 44th Bomb Group, the Astons were met and treated like visiting royalty by "King Pin" Peter Bodle, and Mike Artherton, his Aero Club staff, and invited British guests. We noted a large American flag on the wall of the Club Room and a long dinner table already set for a banquet at the dinner hour. Former Group Captain Brian Kidd, now of the Shipdham Anglican Church Board was waiting at the Aero Club to welcome and greet Lee and escort him to the church where members of the Church Board were awaiting arrival of the Astons to extend their thanks to the 44th BGVA for the generous donation for rebuilding the Church wall.



The entry to the Aero Club, Shipdham Airfield, Shipdham, Norfolk County, England

Preceding a Banquet at the dinner hour, were three planned priority events: (1) Peter had arranged for a flight over the Shipdham airbase with a local pilot, Richard Noble, who flew Gary and Lee around the area and over the field for about a half hour in a Cessna single engine Warrior 161 (4-place) aircraft. Only two of the field's former runways are still visible with only one being (runway 20/340) used by the Aero Club; (2) a visit to Shipdam's All Saints Church to receive thanks for the 44th BGVA's donation, and (3) Peter Bodle wanted to get photos of Lee and Mrs. Paterson, the owner of the airfield property, at a dedication ceremony breaking ground for a memorial flower garden for the 44th BG she is making to beautify the grounds at the Aero Club.



Mike Artherton welcomes Captain Robert L. Aston, 67th Squadron, back to Shipdham Airbase.



June 23, 2007: Flight over Shipdham Airbase- L to R: Lee Aston, Pilot Richard Noble, Gary Aston



June 23, 2007- Flight over Shipdham Airbase-L to R: Peter Bodle. Lee Aston, Gary Aston, Mike Artherton



June 23, 2007 Flight over Shipdham airfield shows No. 20 as only remaining runway used

The second priority event before the evening Banquet was a visit to the Shipdham Anglican Church to meet the Church Board wishing to thank the 44th BGVA for its generous donation to the rebuilding of its church wall. The Astons were escorted from the Shipdham Airfield to the All Saints Churchyard 44th Bomb Group memorial by Paul Hewitt and Brian Kidd, who are chairman and coordinator respectively of the Churchyard Enhancement Project (CEP), to meet parish council chairman David Hill. The Church Board members asked the Astons to extend their thanks to the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association for its generous donation to the rebuilding of the Church's wall. (Mary and Lee Aston also made an individual, additional donation to the wall repair.)



Wall repair at Shipdham's All Saints Church



All Saints Church daffodil memorial plots are being sold to raise money from donors



Part of Shipdham's Saints Church Board greet Aston, L to R Brian Kidd, David Hill, Lee Aston



Director Aston & David Hill by the Church's 44th BG Memorial



Lee Aston being interviewed by Robert Lomas, a reporter for the Dereham News



June 23, 2007: Mrs. Eileen Paterson digs first shovel full to dedicate a flower memorial garden plot to the 44th Bomb Group at the Shipdham Aero Club on the former Airbase.



The Aston Family presented a 67th Bomb Squadron suncatcher logo to Mrs. Paterson for the 44th BG Museum located at the Aero Club on the Shipdham Airfield



Mr. Andrew Doubleday, owner of the property that the 44th BG's Base Headquarters still standing buildings are located on, had been invited to the Banquet. He came by especially to welcome Lee and to extend his regrets that he could not attend the banquet as he had house guests.

After the various ceremonies of the day, Peter Bodle, his wife Jane, and Mike entertained the Astons royally with a sumptuous banquet with roast beef and turkey fit for a king at the Aero Club and some dozen guests. (Peter's added special touch for Lee at the banquet included a fifth of Lee's favorite "heart medicine", Southern Comfort.)

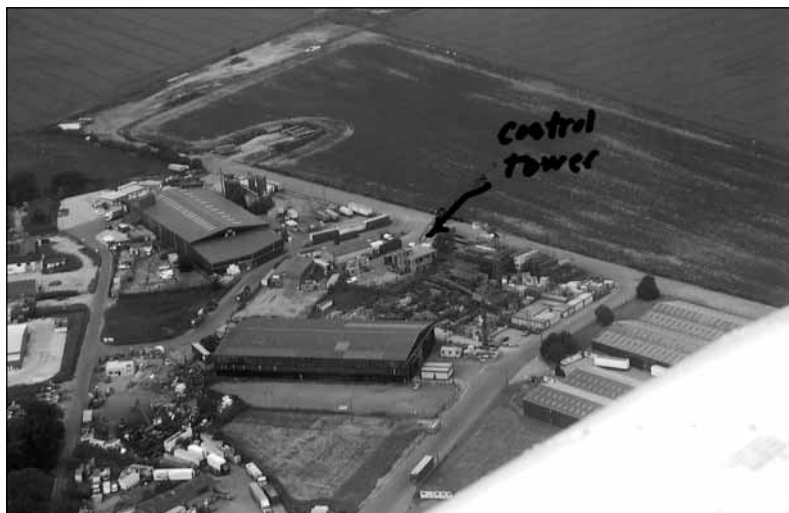


Peter and Jane Bodle, splendid hosts of a wonderful Banquet to welcome the Astons back to Shipdham Airbase



Welcoming Banquet for Captain Aston and his family under a large U.S. flag: L to R: Steve Adams (44th BGVA's UK Representative); Brian Peel (a supporter of the 44th BG); Mike Artherton, co-host; Host Peter Bodle; Jenny and photographer Doug Mark; Linda and Gary Aston; Mary and Lee Aston; Mrs. Eileen Paterson and daughter, Rebecca Proctor; Steve Adam's driver, Paul Wilson.

A final event after the banquet was to visit the Control tower while there was good light remaining, followed by a tour of the Aero Club's 44th BG Museum. We found the new Museum to have many improvements and material, and to be an ideal place for 44th BG researchers to be stimulated by "on the spot location" for their WW II research.



Aerial photo showing location of WWII Shipdham Control Tower



June 23, 2007: Mother Nature will gradually take over the Control Tower if restoration is never resumed.



Shipdham Control Tower in WWII, ca. 1943



1992 Dedication of Control Tower plaque for the Control Tower restoration project which was later abandoned. L to R: David Morgan, ? , Doug Genge, Steve Adams, Mary and Lee Aston. The new black granite historical plaque on the wall was made from stone contributed by Lee Aston from Aston Quarry, Culpeper County, Virginia



June 23, 2007: The Control Tower's historic plaque has lost its plastic cover shield and will be subject to gradual diminishing of the coloring of the gold lettering if a new plastic cover is not replaced. Perhaps the plaque should be removed and placed in the Aero Club museum, at least for the time being ?

THE CONTINUED SAGA OF SYDNEY BOLLICK RCAF, RAF, AAC, THEN POW IN SWITZERLAND 6 JUNE 1944

I was awakened that morning by the sound of heavy footsteps in the hall outside my room, voices yelling and someone knocking on all the doors saying, "Get up, it's here! The Invasion! The Allies have landed in France. We'll soon be going home. Get up, get up!

I jumped out of bed and turned on my radio, which was tuned to a French speaking Swiss station. The announcer was so excited and talking so fast that it was hard for me to understand him, but he kept repeating over and over, "Les Allies sont débarque sur l'embouchure de la Seine!" (The Allies have landed at the mouth of the Seine!) and I realized that the Invasion had actually started. Jumping into my clothes, I went down to the lobby where all the other officers had gathered. Nobody seemed to be interested in breakfast. Everyone was talking about the invasion and going home.

As soon as it opened the local stationery shop quickly sold out all of its copies of large scale maps of Western Europe. I managed to get one and thumb tacked to one wall of my room and faithfully plotted the Allied advances as they were reported on the Swiss radio and by the BBC from London. At first their progress seemed agonizingly slow, but after the breakthrough at St. Lo, and the subsequent cutoff of the Cherbourg Peninsula, things proceeded at a much faster pace. There was even talk of the impending liberation of Paris, but that proved to be a bit premature.

A byproduct of the Invasion was a subsequent increase in the internee population of the camp at Adelboden. The Eighth Air Force intensified its deep penetrations into southern Germany and Austria, and more and more damaged bombers found it necessary to seek sanctuary in Switzerland. It soon reached a point where Adelboden simply couldn't hold any more internees, so the Swiss had to open another camp.

We all knew that something was in the wind, and rumors spread through the camp like wildfire. Everything from our being repatriated to our being sent to a more prison-like Swiss military compound. None of these rumors proved to be true, and it was all settled one morning toward the end of June when the Swiss Commandant spoke to us at breakfast. All officers were being sent to a new Internment Camp at Davos. We were to pack our belongings and assemble at the front of the hotel at 8 a.m. the next morning.

After gulping down our breakfast, there was a mad rush for maps to find out where Davos was located. It looked to be some hundred and fifty miles or so from Adelboden, in another section of the Alps, quite close to the Austrian border. On the map it appeared to be a much larger town than Adelboden.

TRANSFER TO DAVOS

After breakfast the next morning we assembled in front of the hotel with our few personal effects. After roll call we picked up our belongings and walked through the village down to the railroad station. Most of the enlisted men were lined up along the side of the street to see us go, and I stopped to shake hands with each member of our crew, and to wish them luck.

The train ride to Davos took most of the day. We arrived about four o'clock in the afternoon and were trucked to our new home, the Grand Hotel in Davos-Platz. On the ride from the station we found that Davos was certainly much bigger than Adelboden. In fact, it was really two towns, Davos-Platz and Davos-Dorf. Most of the hotels, as well as the business district, were in Davos-Platz, and made up the heart of the ski resort. Although not quite as famous as its neighbor, San Moritz, it was well known to the worldwide skiing fraternity.

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Davos-Dorf, on the other hand, was a hospital town. Its virtual isolation from the rest of the town was due to its being home to three hospitals for tuberculosis patients, most of them German or Austrian. Needless to say, they weren't too thrilled at having American airmen as their neighbors.

Just as the Nevada Palace wasn't really palatial, neither was the Grand Hotel very grand, although it showed some signs of having been so at some time in the past. It had bigger rooms than the Nevada Palace, and a big lobby that was converted to a lounge for us, with plenty of tables for our card games or for reading and writing.

I wasn't lucky enough to get a room to myself this time, but I was able to pair up with a B-17 pilot named Cliff Beach, who I had gotten to know quite well at Adelboden. We divided the room into 'yours' and 'mine' and settled in. Our maps were the first things to go up on the walls, and we resumed our plotting of the Allied advances.

FOLLOWING THE ALLIED PROGRESS

By the first week in July they seemed to be nearing Paris, and about the same time General Patch's Seventh Army landed in the south of France and was pushing northward toward the Franco-Swiss border. We heard reports that the German Army was retreating from the southern part of France back toward Germany, and that the French Freedom Fighters, the *Maquis*, were coming down out of the Haute Savoie district of the French Alps and capturing towns and villages that bordered on Switzerland. This seemed to be borne out by the big increase in messages to 'Claude' and 'Pierre' and 'Jacques, and a host of others, from the BBC in London.

Once again the Camp was buzzing with talk of escape. Some of the officers seemed to be content to ride out the war in Switzerland and wait to be repatriated. But others like myself were anxious to get back to England and home as soon as possible. At that time I

had already been overseas for two and a half years, and the prospect of spending another year or more in Switzerland didn't appeal to me.

PLOTTING AN ESCAPE

My opportunity for escape dropped into the camp one day in the form of a French-Moroccan ex-soldier named Emile Bou-Hanich. Emile had been a Lieutenant in the French Army when France fell. To escape a German prisoner of war camp, he fled into Switzerland after he was demobilized and discharged. Since he was no longer a French soldier, his status was that of a civilian internee; and as such he was not confined to a camp, but was free to come and go pretty much as he pleased.

Emile and I seemed to hit it off together right from that first visit of his to our camp. He was about six feet tall, a little on the stocky side, but not overweight; with curly black hair and flashing black eyes. At the time that I met him he was living with a girl named Michelle in Lausanne, who just happened to be a secretary in the Lausanne office of the Swiss government bureau that was responsible for all the foreign civilian internees in the country.

He came up to our camp two or three times during July and August, and each time we talked about the progress of the war and our chances of escaping into France. By this time the *Maquis* had come down out of the mountains and captured several small towns along the Franco-Swiss border. Emile said that if we could get to one of those towns, the *Maquis* would see that I reached the American lines.

On his last trip to Davos, Emile told me that he had been able to make a contact in the Swiss border town of St. Gingolph that would help us get across the border into France. He said he would call me when the arrangements had been made - (we could receive incoming calls in the camp, but we couldn't call out) - and if I would meet him in

Lausanne, he would help me to escape. Now all I had to do was find a way to get to Lausanne.

FIRST TO ZURICH

To get to Lausanne, I first had to get to Zurich; and the best way to get to Zurich was to fake an illness serious enough to get sent to the Swiss military hospital there. Although there were hospitals in Davos, the military weren't allowed to use them except in cases of extreme emergency. So internees with non life-threatening illnesses were sent to Zurich. Our camp doctor was an old retired civilian general practitioner who seemed to have only two treatments for whatever ailed us, aspirin or bicarbonate of soda, and I set out to fool him into thinking I had stomach ulcers.

I chose ulcers because I was sure he didn't have the equipment to make an accurate diagnosis. I began my campaign to deceive him by reporting to sick call and complaining of a burning sensation in my stomach and extreme gas pains. Of course he gave me the usual bicarbonate of soda treatment and told him to avoid gaseous foods (as if I had a choice).

I was back on sick call the next morning with the same complaint, and he prescribed the same treatment. This went on for several days, with my pretended condition getting steadily worse and his uncertainty increasing accordingly. On Wednesday, September 15th, Emile called and told me to be in Lausanne on Saturday the 18th. He said he would meet all the trains from Zurich until I arrived.

The next morning I arrived at the Doctor's office all doubled over with my arms cradling my stomach, and told him that I had been vomiting up blood. This finally shook him up, and he said he would have to send me to the military hospital in Zurich for X-rays. He would make the necessary arrangements, and I should be ready to leave the next day.

I boarded the next daily train to Zurich the next day and the train arrived at the Zurich station about six in the evening. I walked the

half mile or so up the hill to the hospital, taking note as I did of the small hotel about three blocks from the station.

The male nurse on duty at the hospital's reception desk looked at my papers, then had an orderly take me to a ward that was occupied by two other patients, both Swiss soldiers. I put my few things in the small chest beside my bed and went back to the reception desk. I told the male nurse that I needed to go back into town to the train station, to pick up a parcel I had checked there because I couldn't carry everything on one trip. It was a flimsy story, but I guess he was tired and security at the hospital was lax, since all the other patients were Swiss soldiers. So he wrote me out a pass to go into town, telling me to be back by 'lights out' at ten p.m.

THE HOTEL

I had on my best civilian clothes, which I had worn on the train, including my ski sweater since the weather was already chilly at night, and my ski boots (with hiking hobnails removed). After walking down the hill I went into the lobby of the small hotel, the Hotel Bahnhoff, and asked for a room for the night. There was no use trying to pretend I was Swiss, my French wasn't good enough for that, so I told the desk clerk the truth, or at least part of it. I said that I was an American Military Internee, that I had been in the hospital, and that I was catching the train back to the camp at Davos the next morning. He asked for my travel papers, and I told him they were being processed, and that I would pick them up later that evening.

This seemed to satisfy him, and he gave me the key to a room on the second floor. After checking it out, I went out of the hotel to a Chemiste's shop down the street and bought a tooth brush, tooth paste and a safety razor.

Back in my hotel room I locked the door and began a long sleepless night. I knew that I would be missed at the hospital when I wasn't back by 'lights out', and could only hope that

they wouldn't start looking for me until morning. Then there was the matter of the travel papers. I had told the desk clerk I would turn them in. Since I hadn't, every time I heard footsteps in the hall outside my room, I imagined he was sending a house detective for them, and expected to hear a loud knock on my door.

I must have dozed off sometime during the night, and I woke up just as dawn was breaking. I took a quick shower, shaved and brushed my teeth, then walked down the stairs to the front desk to check out. Then my heart skipped a few beats! There was a different desk clerk on duty, and leaning over the counter talking to him was a big man who had 'police' written all over him. He had what appeared to be the previous night's registration cards in front of him, and was thumbing through them as he talked. He was obviously checking the ID cards, which all Swiss civilians were required to leave with the hotel clerk when they registered.

My first impulse was to run, to get out of there as fast as possible. But reason took over. I had nowhere to run to. So I walked up to the clerk, and using the best French that Frau Schumann had taught me, I asked for my bill. He looked at me with a slight smile, probably thinking that I was one of the foreign civilian internees, and reached behind the desk for it. As I paid him, the policeman glanced in my direction, then went back to checking registrations. Later, after my heart slowed down a little, I figured out that he had probably not reached my room number yet. If I had been on the first floor, my escape might have been short lived.

THE TRAIN

I forced myself to walk out of the hotel without hurrying or looking back behind me, but all the way down the street to the railroad station I expected a heavy hand to fall on my shoulder with every step. After what seemed like an eternity, but was really only three or four minutes, I walked through the door of

the station, let out my breath and started to breathe normally again.

But my anxious moments weren't over yet. When I went up to the ticket office and asked for a Second Class ticket to Lausanne in my carefully rehearsed French, the woman behind the window asked me a question that I didn't understand. Once again panic threatened to set in. So I just blurted out, "Do you speak English?" She gave me a look that was part disdain and part amusement, and repeated in English, "Do you want one way or return?" When I answered that I wanted one way, she issued the ticket, took my twenty francs and told me that the next train for Lausanne was leaving in ten minutes on Track Number Four.

Swiss trains, like good Swiss watches, keep perfect time. So I didn't have to wait long in the station. I bought a newspaper, and by the time I had translated the war news on the front page, the train was pulling in. I stepped aboard and found an empty seat; and for the first time since I had walked out of the hospital, I began to believe that I might really get away.

The seating on local Swiss trains is set up with two bench seats facing each other. I settled down in one of the seats that faced forward and looked out the window as the suburbs of Zurich flashed past. It seemed like hardly any time until the train made its first stop, and stayed in the station only about a minute. Just before it pulled out, two young girls who looked to be about fourteen or fifteen years old boarded and sat down on the seat across from me.

They were dressed in very pretty traditional Swiss costumes, and were obviously on their way to a festival of some kind. They seemed to be having a great time, and as they sat down, one of them smiled at me and said something in *Switzerdeutsch*. Since I couldn't answer, I buried my face in my newspaper and pretended I didn't hear her. My rudeness seemed to dampen their spirits somewhat, and they talked quietly to each other until they got off at the next station. Somewhat

shaken by this little episode, and reminded again of the precarious nature of my situation, I hid behind my paper to discourage friendly overtures from anyone else.

Luckily the train wasn't crowded, so no one else took the seat across from me, and I finally began to relax a little, when I got another scare. At one of the stops a man boarded the train and sat down across the aisle from me. With my nerves on edge, every man I saw looked like a policeman, and something happened that made me sure this one was. When the conductor came through the car checking tickets, this man opened his wallet, showed something to him, and the conductor nodded his head and walked away. The man had to be a policeman, there was no other explanation! All he was waiting for was for the train to come to the next station, then he would put the handcuffs on me, and I would be on my way to a Swiss jail!!

I sat there with my mind racing, trying to figure a way out. But there didn't seem to be one. If I jumped off the train when it reached the station, he would just follow me; and besides, I still had the same problem. I had nowhere to go. My only chance was to get to Lausanne and meet Emile. But, I told myself, anything was better than just giving up; and I had about decided to make a run for it. At that moment, however, the train began to slow down for its stop, and before I could get up from my seat, the man across the aisle got up and walked toward the exit on the front of the car. When the train stopped, he got off and walked away down the platform. Later, after I got my wits about me again, I decided that he probably was not a policeman, but an employee of the railroad with a pass to ride free.

THE ARRIVAL OF EMILE

Fortunately, the rest of the trip was uneventful; and after several more stops, we finally pulled into the station at Lausanne. I looked out the window for Emile, but didn't see him. When I stepped off the train and still

didn't see him, panic began to set in again. I walked the length of the platform, and just as I was becoming convinced that something had happened to him, he came rushing up the steps from the street, followed by an attractive blonde girl.

I was so happy and relieved to see him that I almost hugged him, but settled for a warm handshake. After introducing me to Michelle, he apologized for being late, and led the way to the bus stop. We rode the bus for about ten minutes, then got off and walked five or six blocks to Michelle's apartment. It was a light, cheerful second floor flat with one bedroom and a couch in the living room, which would be my bed for the night. When we had all relaxed a bit, and I had accepted Michelle's offer of a beer, even though it wasn't yet quite noon, Emile filled me in on our plans for the next day.

Lausanne sits on the north shore of Lake Lemon (Lake of Geneva) which runs roughly northeast to southwest, with the Swiss city of Geneva at the southwest end. Almost all of the lake is within Switzerland, with the exception of about a twenty mile stretch between the town of St. Gingolph, which is partly in Switzerland and partly in France, and Annemasse, a French town that is almost a suburb of Geneva. In peacetime a tourist sightseeing boat ran around the lake, stopping at several towns along the way, including the French towns. Now in wartime, however, it went from Lausanne around the lake to the northeast, making its last stop at the small port of Bouveret, about two miles from St. Gingolph, before skipping France and going directly to Geneva.

Emile's plan called for us to take the boat the next morning, Sunday, get off at Bouveret, walk the rest of the way to St. Gingolph, and cross the border into France that night. The border at that point was a small stream that flowed down from the mountains and divided the town. The Swiss had a guard post at their end of the bridge over the stream, and Emile had made a contact with one of the town

officials on the Swiss side, who promised to arrange to have the guard on duty that night let us cross.

The plan sounded good, but for it to work, we had to get off the boat at Bouveret; and that required papers that I didn't have. That's where Michelle came in. In her job as a secretary in the Swiss Bureau, she had access to blank forms for passes for civilian internees, and she had brought home a travel pass for me, all duly stamped and signed with a forged signature. The pass authorized me to travel by sightseeing boat from Lausanne to Geneva and return, stopping off at Bouveret on the way. But since I was supposed to be a French internee, I had to have a French name. And it should be one that I would not forget in a tight spot.

RENAMING MYSELF

I had received my flight training with the RCAF in Canada, and one of my classmates in flying school was a French Canadian named Harry Bouchard. I knew that I would have no trouble remembering his name, so I told Michelle to use it. She agreed, but said I would have to have more typically French first names, so we decided upon Jean Andre Paul. However, in working on the pass after I had fallen asleep that evening, she though I had said 'Bruage', instead of Bouchard, so I became Jean Andre Paul Bruage.

The next morning after a breakfast of fresh French bread and coffee, we took a bus to the Lausanne lakefront where the sightseeing boat was landing. There we said goodbye to Michelle and boarded *La Reine du Lac* (The Lake Queen). It was a good sized boat, about forty to fifty feet long, with a broad beam and a wide deck which had been fitted with rows of park benches across its width, so that the passengers could do their sightseeing in comfort.

The trip around the lake took about two hours and was very pleasant. The scenery was pretty, and by the time we reached Bouveret, shortly after noon, I had almost completely relaxed and was enjoying the ride.

The boat docked alongside a long pier that jutted out into the lake. As we stepped ashore, a Swiss soldier checked our travel permits. I followed closely behind Emile, and he whispered for me not to talk. The soldier passed him through with only a cursory glance at his papers. It was probably only my imagination, but he seemed to take a long time over mine before waving me through.

Bouveret was a small village with one main street that ran up from the lakefront to the center of the business district, where it intersected with the two lane road that ran along the coast a short distance from the lake. We followed the rest of the boat's passengers, looking in shop windows and trying to act like tourists, until we reached the intersection. Once there we wandered off from the others as casually as possible and set out on the road to St. Gingolph.

It was a sunny September afternoon, with a hint of Fall in the light breeze that blew from the direction of the distant French Alps. The only traffic on the road was a farmer in a truck, headed in the opposite direction toward Bouveret. We walked at a steady but unhurried pace and soon reached the outskirts of St. Gingolph. Just outside the town we stopped at a house set back a little from the road, where the town official who was going to help us lived.

I waited by the side of the road while Emile went up to the house and knocked on the door. It was opened by a woman, and judging by her gestures and the way she kept shaking her head, I felt sure that something was wrong. When Emile came back to where I was waiting, he told me that our plans had been changed. The woman was the official's wife, and she had told Emile that the Swiss Military had changed the guards at the Bridge just the day before, so it would no longer be possible for us to cross into France at that point. We were to go into town and wait in a small café until after dark. Then someone would come to guide us across the border at another point.

THE MAN WITH THE DOG

We found the café with no trouble; we went inside and sat down at a table in one corner. The place wasn't crowded, but I got a start when I saw that two of the occupants were Swiss soldiers, probably border guards off duty. Someone had left a newspaper on the table, and I resorted to my old trick of hiding behind it while Emile ordered a bottle of cheap local wine and some bread and cheese for us.

We sat in the café for the rest of the afternoon with people coming and going, including some soldiers. Perhaps the other people in the place had some idea who we were and what we were doing, for they left us alone and didn't bother us. Or maybe being this close to the war they had simply learned to mind their own business. Whatever their reasons, I was thankful for them.

About an hour after dark a man entered the café through the back door, leading a small dog on a leash. He stopped to chat briefly with some of the people in the place, then went out the front door. As he passed the table where we were sitting, he looked directly at Emile and gave an almost imperceptible nod of his head. We waited a minute or two, then got up and went out. Out on the street we saw him about half a block away, stopped as if in the act of lighting a cigarette. When he saw us in the light that spilled out from the café door, he turned and began walking up the street with his dog.

It was an almost moonless night, so we were able to follow our guide by the glow of his cigarette. After a couple of blocks he turned into a side street that ran up the hill away from the main street. This street wound around until it eventually ran parallel to the main street, but several hundred yards further up the hill. After leading us for a short distance in this direction, he stopped, swung his glowing cigarette in an arc, as if pointing

straight ahead, then turned and set off back down the hill on another street.

Our eyes had now grown accustomed to the darkness, so we walked along the street to the point where our guide had stopped, and looked out into total blackness. It took a few moments to realize that we had come to the street's dead end, and that just ahead of us was a steep bank that dropped off down to a stream where we could hear water running. The other side of the stream had to be France!

As we stood there trying to figure the height of the bank and the best way to get down it, we heard the clump, clump sound of boots on the pavement behind us. When we turned to look, we saw the beam of a flashlight swinging back and forth along the ground and the boots and green uniformed legs of a Swiss soldier who was obviously walking border patrol. Acting purely on instinct, we ducked into a doorway and flattened ourselves against a wall. We remained frozen to the wall and barely breathing as we heard the soldier pass the doorway, walk to the end of the street and shine his light down the bank into the stream. Then he turned and clumped past us again back down the street. Although he had scared the daylight out of me, he had done us one favor. By shining his light down into the stream, he had shown us the height and slope of the bank, as well as the width of the stream, and the fact that there seemed to be rocks across it that could be used for stepping stones.

As soon as his footsteps receded down the street, we left our doorway, ran to the dead end and half slid, half rolled down the bank into the stream. The water wasn't deep, but it was cold, and the stones were slippery and hard to find in the dark. But we just plunged in and waded across and climbed up the bank on the other side. And then**France.**
(To be continued)

MAJOR BOB NORSEN REMEMBERS THIS (68th Squadron)

My job in 1944 was getting B-24 modifications made to make the '24 a better airplane. Stuff like the special pilot/co-pilot windows, the twin '50s in the nose of the B-24D, ammo boxes and feeders that held more ammo, but forward enough to avoid tail draggin' weight distribution. Armour plate. Most of this was done at our home base. Later it was done in Ireland. I made the trip to Northern Ireland 'Mod' Center frequently.

Was the entertainment, coffee, doughnuts group the USO? Anyhow we got to see real women at times, friendly, nice! One - I wish I could remember her name, but it escapes me. Could have been Della. Della had a brother in the Army in Northern Ireland waiting for the invasion. Della wanted to visit her brother once before the invasion. Little did we know then, how urgent that was!

Della knew I went often, and asked if she could go along? 'Could she? Of course! delighted.' We had this tired P-47 just for administrative purposes and to let the pilot and ground crew have a thrill flying it—the ground crew riding duo behind the pilot. I had taken several ground crew men duo. It was approved at our base. I had used the P-47 for other work and for flights to N. Ireland. So of course, Della, USO, was allowed to fly!

So the first business needed in N. Ireland, I checked out an oversize parachute. In the cockpit we strapped it on the two of us. I signed out for Northern Ireland via radio. Fun trip. Get to Ireland. Pile out. Della goes to visit her brother. I get my work started. My name is called on the intercom, "Major Norsen, report to the flight line." At the flight line, "Report to General (ground pounder)" "Yes General?"

"You were seen leaving a single place airplane with a passenger?" "Yes sir." "THAT IS NOT ALLOWED, NOT FROM MY FIELD!!!! (Thunder & lightning) "Sir, it is approved at my field." "NOT HERE. IS THAT CLEAR?"

"Yes sir." I ended with no further argument. Didn't want to get more distinct orders. I finished my work. Late in the day Della shows up. We arrange for her to meet at the way dark end of the runway, after dark. She will climb in and we will be off. After all, I can't leave the gal to walk home.

I taxi past the control tower as they flash a light on the cockpit to see it with me alone. I taxi to the end of the runway. Della leaps in. We buckle the chute, I run up the engine and call for clearance. Red light. Jeep drives up. Sargent: "Are you alone there Major?" "Do I look alone, Sargeant?" Della is scrunched down. With the engine a bit above idle - "Do you want to check me out?" "No. Have a good flight Major." Green light. Lovely trip back to England. Star filled night. Flying is nicer with hostess. Land a bit long, run out to the dark end of the runway. Della hops out. I taxi back past the tower. Park out near the tower. My jeep is parked near by. I take the business papers, sign in, visit at the tower. Pick up Della at the dark end, take her to her destination.

All kinds of questions from the ground pounder. How did the passenger get back? No answer offered. "Why was this pilot allowed such terrible action?" No answer. --- Ground pounder general wants court marshal. So my CO assigns Jimmy Stewart to be my defense. Improper parachute for passenger. \$300 fine. End. Jimmy was one of the most loved guys in the ETO for all the right reasons. I wonder if Della's brother made it through the invasion? I never heard from her.

THE 64TH ANNIVERSARY OF PLOESTI CELEBRATED IN NEBRASKA



George Temple

One day **George Temple** and **Dale Lee** received a surprising letter, an invitation to attend a reception in Nebraska, honoring a survivor of Ploesti.

The man being honored was Japanese.

The event was being sponsored by NET Foundation for Television, and the host was Dave Heineman, Governor of Nebraska.

At a time when the country was suspicious of every person with Japanese blood, Ben Kuroki and his brother Fred, American-born Japanese men, pushed the odds and managed to enter the U.S. Army. Ben was assigned to the AAC as a gunner on a B-24. The Nisei from a potato farm in Nebraska, proved his mettle in the war against Hitler, serving in the 93rd Bomb Group in Africa and Europe. His group was called *Ted's Travelling Circus*.

As a member of the 93rd BG, Kuroki flew in many of the colorful missions of the 44th, including Bordeaux, Rome, Sicily and many more. Like the *Flying 8 Balls*, the

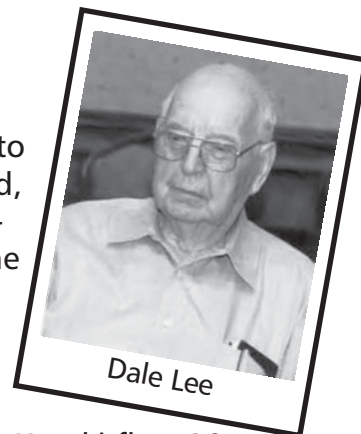
Travelling Circus flew the 13 hour mission to the heavily barricaded, fiercely defended target at the heart of the Nazi oil supply - Ploesti.

Named *The Most Honorable Son* by members of his crew, Kuroki flew 30 European missions in the ETO, then 28 more in the Pacific in a B-29 labeled *Honorable Sad Saki*.

The story of the American-born Neisei came to the attention of various writers; television companies became interested; and in time T/Sgt. Kuroki received thanks and congratulations from President George W. Bush. His story appeared on PBS.

Blain Duxbury, a history buff and a member of the 44th BG, was present for this gala reception. He reported that when George Temple and Dale Lee were introduced, they received a standing ovation.

Editor's Note: 64 years after that awesome mission, what could be more appropriate?



Dale Lee

A TRIBUTE TO THE SUPPORT PERSONNEL (Posted by the 390th BG)

You achieved the impossible. You scoffed at pressure.

You improved, modified and ingeniously substituted whenever necessary.

You patched our wings, replaced our engines and healed our battle inflicted wounds.

You worked tirelessly to achieve operational readiness for our damaged planes.

You, as experts, unfailingly provided fuel, bombs, ammunition and all equipment necessary to sustain every bombing mission.

You truly excelled in maintaining the over-all efficiency of the greatest Air Force ever assembled.

You exemplified your deep concern as you housed and fed us, guarded and protected us with great care and professional skill.

You turned your special civilian skills into a mighty military asset. You were the part of the team which made the next combat mission possible.

Your dedication, commitment and intellect were major contributions to the total war effort.

Together we share the ultimate victory.

MEMORIES OF FRANCIS MOORE CREW CHIEF OF BAR W (1944)

We had a snow storm one night at Shipdham Air Base. The next afternoon two officers came out and wanted to fly *Bar W*, which they did. When they came in, they reported #3 engine was not running up. We pulled some cowling to check cylinders and found one cold, so we changed the spark plug. I got in the co-pilot's seat to check #3 and had to lean over to read RPM's when I heard a loud clatter and looked out; had chopped the work stand, which had been pulled out as normal. When revving #3 engine, the plane swung around. The snow had melted under the chocks to become ice. I had to call **Tony Yates**, the prop man. He brought out a new prop and installed it. Everything checked and the plane flew a mission the next morning.

Stripes earned...

506 Squadron in 1944, 4 Staff Sergeants became Crew Chiefs of B-24s. **John Omens, James Boyers, Francis Moore**, and I can't remember the other Sgt. Our names were sent in to Wing for Master Sergeants, but the war was over before it got signed! *Ed. Note: Maybe somebody in the 14th Wing can explain the year's delay!!!*

The War Was Over, but ...

Bar W was fitted in the bomb bay to carry luggage for moving barracks bags of persons from Belgium to a base in England. One afternoon two officers came out and asked if we wanted to go along as Engineer and Assistant to a Belgium fighter base, to move men and luggage. **Tony Cirami** and I readily agreed to go along.

The base was close to Mons, Belgium. After landing I noticed a tire was _ flat; the pilot asked if I thought we could get back that way, and I said 'no'. They called Shipdham and were told that they would send over a tire and wheel in the morning, so Tony and I went to town for a short time. But we just had our work clothes, so we had to borrow uniforms.

When we first got to Belgium and parked the plane, here came 2 fighter planes that buzzed us. The tower came out over speakers, commanding them to stop that, and to land, which they did. Soon after that, a red roadster, top down, went by, being driven by a fighter pilot of maybe 18. I thought he must have something going for him, if he had a personal car to drive besides a fighter plane! When we got back from town, to our great

surprise, they said a crew had come that evening and changed the wheel.

The next afternoon a different pilot came, loaded the plane, but could not get the nose down, so he had me get all the persons we could in the catwalk in the bomb bay and up front. I was kneeling between pilots and calling air speed when the pilot reached over and pushed the throttles

to the max. I looked and saw by the expression on the pilot's face, that he thought the runway ended, being a fighter base. Instead it just went uphill and down!!! After that scare we got off OK. After getting to England, the pilot could not find the airfield. As I remember, they called Shipdham and got directions. They had done a good job with camouflage, but was plain as day when we got over the field.

Not many planes got 100 missions, but we got 106 on *Bar W*. It didn't have a regular crew. It was a lead plane, and went on a mission every other day. The other lead plane was from the 93rd group, and sometimes both went on the same mission.

Francis Moore, A/K/A 'MO' was an A & E Mechanic - propeller training and In-line engine repair in Liverpool, England. He sailed to Liverpool on the Ile de France, arriving April 19, 1943 after a harrowing trip across with bad storm and no convoy. Prior to entering the military and after the war he was a farmer, in Hiawatha, Kansas.



Maintenance Crew: Elmer ??, Keith Hooper, Ralph Jorgensen and Francis Moore



MAIL & E-MAIL

Norman Chawn to Will Lundy: When I first went to Great Britain, I was in the 389th Bomb Group in Halesworth. I flew three missions with the crew I trained with, and when the 389th in October 1944 went back to the U.S. to train in B-29s, my Flight Engineer, **Charles Moffett**, and I, a Radio Operator, were sent to the 44th BG, 506 Squadron.

Our crew was made up of members who all had been in trouble, one time or another. Oh, nothing requiring a Court Marshal; but we didn't warm their hearts. Chas & I had 3 missions and **Lou Confer**, the pilot, had about 16. Each of the rest of the crew had different numbers.

The nose gunner was originally a Flight Engineer on his original crew, but when this pilot offered to beat up anyone in the crew he took the dare and beat the hell out of his pilot. That was his story. A waist gunner had been a ball gunner, but one day when landing, he couldn't get out of the 'ball', so he fired his guns to let the pilot know!!

The tail gunner had a drinking problem, mainly because when he broke his ankle and missed a mission, his crew did not return. His second crew did not return when he missed the mission with the flu.

The Navigator was a Staff Sgt. He had flunked out of Navigator School because he did not understand Celestial. When he came over as a gunner, they made him our navigator because no one used the 'stars' to navigate.

The pilot, **Lou Confer** was a regular Army M.P. When he got his wings, he was made a Flight Officer, not a 2nd Looney!!

I remember the Co-Pilot as being very afraid to fly. Also, I do believe he, at one time, got in a heated argument with a Major.

When Pilot Confer finished his missions, we got **Milt Parrish**. He was from Florida, and had quite a drawl. He visited a friend and flew in a B-17. He said, "Hell, all they did was put 3 more engines on a Piper Cub."

I noticed the only member of my crew that was listed in the (67th) History was Milt Parrish and **Grady I. Caren**, a gunner. Lou, Charles and I were omitted. Oh well, there goes my glory after 20 missions with the 506. I'm happy to be in one piece with all my marbles.

Maybe some day I will tell you what I did to get on that crazy crew.

P. S. On Page 70 of the 67th History, there is an account of the Bomb Bay Doors not opening. Hell, we went through that many times! It happened when someone would take a leak in the Bomb Bay. The pee would freeze the doors shut. It was always my job to catch the doors and wire them shut!!



Ginger Schwager, daughter of **Julius Carter**, Assistant Engineer & Gunner on the **William Earleywine** crew, 66th Squadron, drew attention to an error in the *8 Ball Tails*. I carried a picture of the crew in front of *Sweat 'Er Girl*, misnamed as Sweater Girl. Ginger is doing extensive research on the plane and its missions.

Her website is:
492ndBombGroup.com – Earleywine 901 crew.



FROM THE ARCHIVES –23 FEBRUARY 1945

On the 23rd of the month, the 44th flew its three hundredth operational mission, leading the 14th Combat Wing to the rail center at Weimar. Bombing was accomplished on H2X and the results were unobserved. On this memorable day, 1st Lt. James A. Struthers, 67th Bomb Squadron, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, completed his operational tour of duty by flying his thirty-fifth mission in our A/C J-Bar #518. This was the one hundred and fifth mission for this aircraft, which is crewed by Master Sergeant Otis S. Nelson. Lt. Struthers was greeted by Lt. Col. William Cameron, the Deputy Group Commander, and M/Sgt. Nelson, upon landing. He was later welcomed by B/General Leon Johnson and Colonel Eugene Snavely at the Interrogation Room.



FOLDED WINGS

*We will remember them. As long as we live
They too will live, for they are now a part of us
As we remember them.*

BENNETT, HENDERSON C. #24093 506 Sq. June 2007 1st Lt. Henderson was a Co-Pilot on his first 27 missions, and became a pilot for his last three. Most of his missions were flown with **Eustice Hawkins**, but he also flew with **Paul Blow, M. D. Mendenhal, Sidney Paul, D. H. Dines, Fred E. Stone** and **James Tucker**. He flew in *Shoo Shoo Baby, The Wasps Nest, Ole Cock, M'Darling, Shack Rat, Feudin' Wagon, Passion Pit, Prince/Princ-Ass/Princess, Cape Cod Special* and *My Peach*.

Information about Bennett's death came via the Rev. Gene Bouisseau, a volunteer at the Washington State Veterans Home, Port Orchard, Washington.

BENGSTON, CLIFFORD #19370 67th Squadron 7 August 2007 Sgt. Bengston was a Nose Gunner and Toggler on the **William Warner** crew. His first of sixteen missions was 22 February 1945. The crew flew in five different planes: *T.S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch; Phyllis, Limpin' Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose* and *One Weakness*. The Warner Crew flew on the last mission of the War, 25 April 1945.

The Navigator on the Warner Crew, the late **Robert Paul Kay**, recorded an interesting and frightening experience. On 3 March 1945 the mission was to the Rothensee Oil Refinery at Magdeburg, Germany. The plane was heavily damaged with flak, the Gunners were told to bail out. Unfortunately, Bengston was hung up in catwalk, and could not bail out. Everyone had frozen hands and were not able to release him, so he rode the plane down to a bumpy landing. However, everybody survived.

Navigator Robert Paul Kay was former President of the 44th BG until his untimely death 24 December 2006.

BOLZA, MICHAEL #19451 68th Squadron 30 October 2000 No information is available about this member of the 44th BG.

BRNILOVOCH, ALEXANDER G. #19528 68th Squadron 7 May 1997 1st Lt. Brnilovoch came to the 68th Squadron as a Flight Officer. He was a Bombardier, flying with different pilots, the first on 20 April 1944. Without explanation on the records, he did not fly any combat missions from May to August, but when he returned he was a 1st Lieutenant. Altogether he flew fifteen missions, the last on 29 November 1944. Brnilovoch flew with the following pilots: **Robert Lee, Joseph Parks, Jr. , J. L. Henderson, Addison Davis, James Collins, and Joy Smith**; and the following **Command Pilots: H. Sather, Charles Hughes, J. E. Pennypacker, W. E. Henderson, and Col. Johnson** from the **392nd Bomb Group**. He flew with different crews in *Wendy W, Patsy Ann II, Battlin' Baby, Hellza Droppin* and *Louisiana Belle*.

BROWNLEE, ARTHUR L. #19558 66th Squadron 8 June 1997 S/Sgt. Brownlee was a Nose Gunner and Toggler on the **Theodore Hoffiz** crew, Flying in *Jersey Jerk, Fifinella, Scotty Mac, Glory Bee, Henry, Big Time Operator, King Pin* and *Loco Moto*. Their first mission was 27 September 1944; their last, 15 March 1945. They flew one mission to 'The Big B' (Berlin). All missions were directed toward staying ahead of the troops and bombing German access routes and rails to the front.



FOLDED WINGS

BURTON, JESSE M. #19604 67th Squadron
26 July 2007 S/Sgt. Burton was a Waist Gunner on the **Charles H. Mercer** crew. He flew 26 missions, the first 23 March 1944, which was the first time that his pilot had moved up from two missions as a Co-Pilot. Burton flew in *Lil Cookie, Glory Bee, Limpin' Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Mary Harriet and Feudin' Wagon*. On D-Day the Mercer crew flew two missions: Colleville/St. Laurent and Caen (Vire)

Burton was living in North Carolina at the time of his demise. His death was reported by his Engineer and Top Turret Gunner, **William Rand**. It preceded that of his pilot by three months.

CARLO, BELLINDA 19658 9 August 1990 This name obtained from Social Security records.

CASEY, JAMES #19689 68th Squadron 6 August 2007 S/Sgt. Casey flew a total of thirty-four missions, the first on 19 July 1944. The invasion forces had already landed at Normandy, and air activities were directed to their support—knocking out bridges and destroying rail centers. War materials were a priority for bombing—oil refineries and air armament factories. Casey flew most of his missions with the **Thomas Kay** crew, but also with **Robert Peter** and **Russell Erikson**. He flew in no less than ten different A/C: *Corky, Gipsy Queen, T.S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Flak Magic, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Lili Marlene, Gallavantin' Gal, Three Kisses for Luck, Limpin' Old Sadie/San Antonio Rose and Louisiana Belle*. His last mission was on 14 March 1945.

His Commander, **Robert Lehnhausen**, remembers him as a young and enthusiastic member of the 68th Squadron. A warm relationship extended into the post-war years.

Casey's crew picture was on the cover of the Summer Issue of the *8 Ball Tails*. Unfortunately, he did not live to see it.

COLBY, EVERETT 1 March 1993 *This name was found in the Social Security Records, but does not appear in the Database.*

CONLEY, FRED M. # 19819 68th Squadron
There is no record of the activities of this member of the 44th BG

COOLEY, RUSSELL 10 November 1998 *This name found in Social Security Records; not on Database*

CRADDOCK, JAMES 18 August 2006
Although Craddock was a member of the 44th BG, his name does not appear on the Database. According to his wife of 58 years, Shirley, he was in Maintenance during the War, and was an Instrument Specialist. He was a friend of Will Lundy.

After the War Craddock attended Duquesne University, becoming an Industrial Engineer, after which he earned a Master's Degree at the University of Pittsburgh. The couple resided in Monroeville, Pennsylvania. They had five children, three daughters and two sons. They had five grandchildren.

FOLDED WINGS

LUNDY, CLAUDE WILL 67th Squadron 11 October 2007 S/Sgt. Will Lundy was A/C & Engine Mechanic and was an Assistant Crew Chief. His great contribution to the world was his careful documentation of the losses of the 44th BG, a lifetime effort that culminated in placing all materials in the Army Heritage Museum in Carlisle, PA. Lundy's column, 'Will Sez' was a regular contribution to the *8 Ball Tails*. Nearly all of the stories in the *8 Ball Tails* and on the Database were either written by him or preserved by him from members who trusted that their histories would not be forgotten.

Lundy was one of the Founding Members of the 44th Bomb Group, and served continuously on the Board from the beginning.

MCATEE, JAMES 21244 506 Squadron 12 September 2007 Lt. Col. McAtee was called Curt by friends in Viola, IL; called **Jim** or **Mac** by his bomb group friends) Major McAtee was a pilot of one of the original eight crews of the 506th Squadron that joined the 44th as the fourth squadron, in early March, 1943. **Bob Lehnhausen** remembers that they had accomplished their transitional training, prior to coming to the 44th at Pueblo, CO. Their original plane was the *Wicked Witch*. This plane was lost on the Kiel raid of 14 May 1943, with Capt. **John Swanson** and his 506th crew.

McAtee flew 34 missions, the first 22 March 1943. He flew Ploesti in *Old Crow*, and he and his crew flew the frightful mission to Weiner-Neustadt in the same ship on 1 October 1943. He was one of the combat men who chose to opt for a second tour if granted a 90 day home leave. All of the missions of his 'second' tour were as a command pilot. He was promoted to Lt. Col. In April 1945.

This very courageous man, small in stature, was a huge person in the history of the 506th Squadron which he rose to command. He

enjoyed a reputation among his men, of being a very fair and just leader who was well liked and respected by his men.

Norman Kiefer's history of the 506th "The Green Nosed Eight Balls" pays great tribute throughout its pages to this inspirational leader of the squadron. Kiefer was the Radio Operator/Gunner on the McAtee crew.

As pilot or command pilot, McAtee flew in a number of planes: *Old Crow, Ruth-Less, Prince/PrincAss/Princess; I'll be Back/Feather Merchant, Greenwich* and *Ole Cock*. As Command Pilot he flew with many pilots: **Gordon Stevens, Robert McCormick, David Saylor, Robert Johnson, Howard McCormick, Robert McCormick, J. W. Grow, Hal Kimball, James Brownlowe, Cleatis McDonnell, Elmer Smith, Roy Boggs and John Testa**. His last mission was 16 April 1945.

McAtee was a graduate of Monmouth College and the University of Iowa. He was both a farmer and a school teacher in three different school districts in Illinois. He and his late wife Mary had two children, eight grandchildren and eighteen great grand children.

MEANS, WALTER E., Jr. #21207 68th Squadron 14 July 2007 There is no record of his activities in WWII. According to his son, Thomas E. Means, Means stayed in the service, serving 20 years in the Air Force, later 20 years in Civil Service. The last address of Means and his wife Helyn was in Colorado Springs, Colorado.





FOLDED WINGS

MERCER, CHARLES H. #21320 67th Squadron 26 July 2007 1st. Lt. Mercer was a pilot who flew 30 missions from 2 March 1944 to 22 June 1944. On D-Day he flew two missions, the first to Colleville/St. Laurent; the second to Caen (Vire), supporting the ground forces that were arriving by Higgins Boats from England.

Mercer's first two missions were as Co-Pilot, first with **Lawrence W. Parks**, flying in *The Shark*; then with **George Thom** in *Lil Cookie*. He had his own crew on 23 March 1944, with which he flew the next 28 missions. The Mercer crew flew most missions in *Lil Cookie and Glory Bee, but also in Limpin' Ole Sadie, San Francisco Rose, Mary Harriet and Feudin' Wagon*.

Mercer was residing in Chicago at the time of his death. Information that he 'Folded Wings' came from his Engineer and Top Turret Gunner, **William Rand**. Rand, the last survivor of his crew reported the death of Waist Gunner **Jesse Burton**, who died three months before his pilot.

ROBERT E. "BOB" RUSCH #21894 66th Squadron 23 July 2007 S/Sgt Rusch was a Waist Gunner on the **James N. Williams** crew. In some of his later missions, he flew as Nose Gunner/Toggler. His first of twenty-five mission was on 1 August 1944. At that time the missions were directed at destroying bridges and rail centers, wiping out oil refineries and destroying enemy airfields. The goal was to immobilize the Germans, so the Allied push to the east could move more rapidly. No less than eight Command Pilots flew with the Williams crew, indicative of the importance of each mission. They included Col. **A. W. Reed** from the 491st Bomb Wing; Major **William Cameron**; Major **A. J. McGregor**, Major

William Strong; Lt. Col. **Joseph D. Gilbert**, Col. **A. L. Johnson**, Capt. **M. W. Miskewish** and **M. K. Martin** from the 392nd Bomb Group.

The Williams crew flew in *Fifinella* and *Big Time Operator*. His last mission was with the **Alan Graham** crew in *Henry* on 3 March 1945.

SCHWARM, EDWARD #21981 506 Squadron May 2005 **Edward Schwarm** passed away in May 2005, two months after the death of his wife Eria. His activities are not recorded in the Database, but in a letter to **Will Lundy** he reported that he was the Engineering officer in the 506; and stated that he flew as Co-pilot or Engineer on several combat flights.

Schwarm started with B-17s but moved to B-24s at Shipdham, later to B-29s until the war ended. After that, he became a member of the Research Staff at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Special Projects Director for Guidance and Navigation Systems for the Apollo Spacecraft and Lunar Lander. He helped design the flight test systems program for the final test flight for the first moon landing and return.

After completing these projects, he entered the Electrical Engineering Department of Arthur D. Little, a U.S. consulting firm, traveling to offices in both London and Paris.

George Washburn learned of Schwarm's death and that of his wife through the Social Security Records, after failing to make personal contacts.

Ed. Note: It would be interesting to know all of the contributions that 44thers made to aviation, once the war was won. Thank goodness some of them recorded their stories and sent them to Will.

FOLDED WINGS

SECRIST, HARRY E #21990 66th Squadron 14 February 2000 S/Sgt Secrist was a gunner, flying with a number of different crews, most frequently with the **John Anderson** crew. He served in the Waist and Ball Turret in his early flights, later as a Nose Gunner and Toggler. His first of sixteen missions was on 3 June 1944. On 5 June 1945, his second mission, flying back from a raid on the Boulogne Area of France in a badly damaged plane, he joined other crew members in bailing out, some into the Channel, others on English soil. The copilot was KIA; Leon Vance, pilot, ditched in the Channel, was rescued but died later enroute to the States.

Secrist flew first with **Louis Mazure**, who was killed two days later on the mission to Boulogne. He also flew with **Arthur Rasmussen, Charles Craven, John Muldoon, Charles Hess** and **John Anderson**.

The planes that Secrist served in were: *El Capitan, Chief's Delight/Chief Wapello, Fifinella, Three Kisses for Luck* and *Loco Moto*.

STAPLES, CHARLES W. "WOODIE" #24681 68th Squadron 27 October 2007. S/Sgt. Staples was a Tail Gunner on the **George Washburn** crew, flying 16 of his 37 missions with this crew. He also flew with **Clair Hill** and **Thurston Van Dike**. His first mission was 24 July 1944, his last 31 March 1945. He flew in the following A/C: *Flak Magic, Lili Marlene, Gipsy Queen, Corky, Lady Geraldine, Louisiana Belle, Down De Hatch, Puritanical Bitch/ Puritanical Witch, T. S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys* and *Scotty Mac*.

Washburn considered 'Woodie' to be an exceptional man. "He often remarked that he wondered what he was doing with all these 'young kids', being 32 years old and most of the rest of us in our early 20's. Woodie was a champion skeet shooter and quail hunter, and he continued to do so until his passing."

After the War, he became an exterminator, and his most prestigious client was President Harry Truman. When his work was completed at the Truman home, he sometimes sat on the porch and chatted with Mr. Truman. 'Woodie' and his wife Pauline resided in Kansas City. He died at the age of 95.

WEDDELL, EDWARD A. #22500 67th Squadron 31 May 2007 T/Sgt. Weddell was an Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **John W. Hommyhr** crew. His first of 30 missions was 15 June 1944. The crew flew with four Command Pilots. **Howard Holladay, Norris Perry, Eugene Snavely** and **Devon Davis**. They flew in the following A/C: *Phyllis, Limpin' Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Old Iron Corset* and *Mi Akin Ass*. His last mission was 4 November 1944.

WILLIAMS, MARVIN #22576 Information of the death of this member of the 44th came on a returned envelope, marked 'Deceased'. The Database has no record of his service.



The 44th Bomb Group's 2008 Reunion will be October 17-18-19 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The big event will be at the Army Heritage and Education Center at the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

The 44th BG Board members are working to find the best way to honor the greatest, most courageous, most considerate man in the 44th BG, General **Leon W. Johnson**. Put it on your calendars. You wouldn't want to miss this event.



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