

# 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



## 8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 10 Issue #4

Journal of the  
44th Bomb Group  
Veterans Association

Winter 2011

Non Profit Veterans Association

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## OLE COCK



*Ole Cock* came to Shipdham between 18-24 March 1944, and was assigned to the 506 Squadron. She flew a total of 47 missions, the last on 12 August 1944 on a mission to Juvincourt, France.

The target was an Airdrome, and bombing was considered excellent. No enemy resistance was encountered, and fighter support was good. The official report states that *Ole Cock* dropped out of formation at 1037 hours, losing altitude. **Thomas McGuire**, pilot, reported that he was low on fuel. He was advised to call for fighter cover, then head for Allied lines. He called again to say that #3 engine had cut out, and

the fuel tank to #4 engine was empty. When last seen, he was headed for Allied lines and escorted by fighters. They crashed near Pont L'Eveque, France.

McGuire was KIA, as were **Dudley Titus**, Co-Pilot, and **Carl Daniels**, RW Gunner. **Turley Merle**, Bombardier; **Edward Kramer**, Engineer, **John Cullinane**, Radio Operator, **James Nokes**, LW Gunner and **Joseph Hansen**, Tail Gunner, all became POW.

**Peter Crawford**, Navigator, and **Robert J. Reiner**, Gunner, bailed out, evaded capture, and with the assistance of the French Underground, returned to Shipdham.

Although both evadees wanted to return to combat, they were not permitted. If an airman went down for a second time, there was a fear that he could be tortured into revealing the names of the French Resistance fighters who helped him on his previous crash.

The enlisted men were sent to Stalag Luft I in Barth, Germany. They were liberated by the Russians on 2 May 1945.



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## OLE COCK

**Merle G. Turley**, Bombardier, and **Joe Hansen**, Tail Gunner, on Ole Cock were captured together and taken to the front line POW camp where they were held for about a week. Then they were loaded on trucks and headed for the interior of France. After some days they arrived at Charlon, France. Here they met **James Nokes**, LW Gunner. The officers were separated from the enlisted men. The enlisted men were loaded in box cars and traveled for seven days. They arrived in Frankfort, Germany at an Interrogation Camp. After a week they were loaded in trains and sent to a permanent POW camp in Barth, Germany. On 2 May 1945 they were liberated by the Russians, then flew in a B-17 to Camp Lucky Strike and sailed home.

### OLE COCK WAS FONDLY REMEMBERED

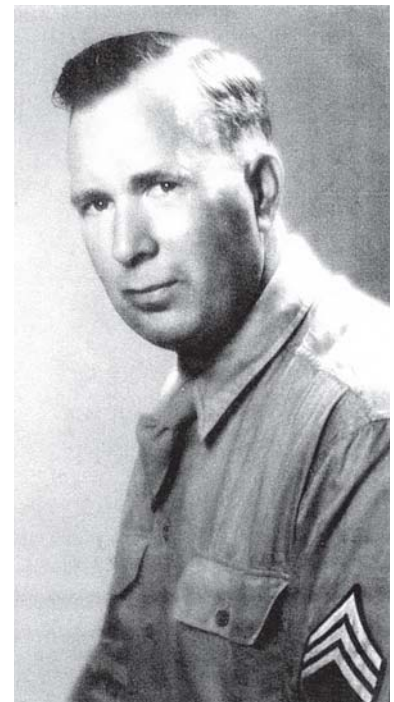
The **Walter J. Scott** crew flew fourteen missions, and **Thomas Muff**, Gunner, has great memories of this A/C.

**Frank Schaeffer**, Engineer & Top Turret Gunner on the **Bernard Komasinski** crew, flew four missions of his seven missions on *Ole Cock*. He sent pictures of the plane and this photo of **Harry Steele**, Crew Chief.



Top Row L-R: **Dermott P. Perdisatt**, Navigator; **William H. Claugens, Jr.**, Co-Pilot; **Walter J. Scott**, Pilot; **Herbert Walfish**, Bombardier.

Front Row L-R: **Henry Anuskiewicz**, Tail Gunner; **Lawrence A. Nevins**, Sperry Ball Gunner; **Robert Yost**, Engineer; **Thomas D. Muff**, Gunner; **John L. Horne**, Radio Operator; **Chester D. Gardner**, Nose Gunner.



Steele's work was so thorough, he received a special commendation from Col. **Leon Johnson**. He had a remarkable collection of photographs, which he shared with Schaeffer, many of which appear from time to time in the *8 Ball Tails*.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The 17th Annual Reunion and Meeting of our Association was a truly enjoyable and memorable event. Jackie and Lowell Roberts did their usual fine job of organizing. Some serious decisions had to be made regarding the future of The 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association. It was approved that the organization will continue for three more years, dissolving on Oct 1, 2013. The present officers and directors will remain in office.

We will continue to publish the *Eighth Ball Tails* as long as Ruth Davis- Morse is willing and able.

Annual dues will continue for 2 more years, and we will continue to support the Web Site.

It was agreed to have a reunion next year at Savannah. It will be a social gathering of old friends.

It has been a privilege to serve as President and I sure hate to see the end of a wonderful association. I have truly enjoyed all the friendships, old and new at the reunions.

Over the years, we have been blessed with people who were willing to dig in and keep the organization going. With the help of many, we have left our tracks and Heritage in many places. Historical libraries here and abroad hold our publications and CDs; plaques in many places on both sides of the 'pond' tell our story. But it is imperative that our decisions will result in an orderly and proper closing.

For all second generation members- Lee Aston proposed and will be working with the Eighth Air Force Historical Society to promote the formation a Sons and Daughters of the Eighth Air Force. Thus, our history can go on for generations.

Thanks for all your support over the years.

*George Washburn*

### **THE SECOND AIR DIVISION DECIDED TO GO OUT WITH A SPLASH!**

According to Maxine Mackey, Convention Chairman, the last reunion of the Second Air Division will be held September 17-22, 2011 on a ship, "Enchantment of the Seas". The 64th Convention will be held aboard a Royal Caribbean ship from Baltimore to Bermuda. Make your reservations early, as cabins are allocated on a first come first serve basis. Your passport must be up to date.

Travel Agent: Terri Lane, Catchawave Vacations  
Phone 972-824-0202 Email: [terri\\_catchawave@cox.net](mailto:terri_catchawave@cox.net)



## LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



Hello again from a really hot and sunny Norfolk, where the folk lore of the traditionally lousy British weather has been well and truly swept aside by several weeks of warm clear and totally flyable, summer weather.

This year so far, we have had a steady stream of visitors to the museum and look forward to even more as the 'museum season' of June to September really gets under way. However to start the season off we were delighted to host a visit by **Art (Arthur) Holt**, a bombardier with the 44th who arrived mid '44 and returned stateside at war's end. Art flew 29 missions out of Shipdham during his tour, on *Jail Bait*, *Big Time Operator*, *King Pin*, *Loco Moto* and *The Big Headed Kid*, as well as a handful of

un-named B24s. During the tour of the museum, looking at the photo wall, Art recognised the Shipdham mode of travel to the nearby pubs (English Bicycles) and was heard to comment that as well as recognising the roads and the bikes in the pictures, he felt sure he recognised some of the roadside ditches, where a good night out had occasionally ended up!

A few weeks later, Dr. Tom Baba, the son of **Jack Baba** (Ordnance), who served with the 44th for the whole duration of the war, came by and we were again delighted to be able to show him round. Jack was a good buddy of **Ivo Di Piero** in the Armament Section, and it is believed they hung about together a lot in their off duty time. Maybe they too knew the same Norfolk ditches as Art. For sure Jack's son Tom wanted to retrace his dad's footsteps walking from the airfield to the village, as his dad had told him about it many times. Obviously the lure of English beer was strong despite its different taste to American Light beers and the quaint British tradition of serving it un-chilled. ( i.e 'warm' )

The Monument at Carlisle looks totally stunning and everyone associated with it and its placement (especially you Lee) should be justifiably proud of it and all it stands for. The story of the valour of the men of the 44th will now be there to be read by subsequent generations for hundreds (if not thousands) of years to come....and that's just how it should be.

Our Open day is in the Shipdham Flying Club diary for late September, and we are starting to prepare for a similar influx of visitors to that of last year's highly successful event. However this year I must remember to grab some food, drink and a quick trip to the restroom before we open the doors. Last year there were so many folks wanting to both check out the museum and talk to someone about the 44th or ask questions, that taking a break of even 10 minutes needed planning of military proportions to achieve. Once outside the building, getting back in was nigh on impossible. We look forward to being put in the same position this year and tell more folks the story of the 44th.

Best wishes from all the Shipdham Team  
Peter

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*Ed. Note: This letter was written after the last 3 BTs, when weather was warm. By the time you read it, they will be putting on heavier coats.*

## MUSEE DE LA RESISTANCE



Picture of Museum Vuesmusee1

After 65 years, honors have arrived for the men and women in France who had the courage to stand up against the Nazis that had engulfed their land. Pierre Berenguer and a group of other history-minded Frenchmen are creating a museum, honoring the Resistance Fighters. They are looking for stories and photos of airmen who were helped by these dedicated individuals.

The courage of this group of underground patriots can never be overstated. They kept radio contact with their English allies, informing them of troop activities. In many cases with supplies that were brought to them by parachuting assistants, they were able to blow up bridges and dynamite troop trains, aiding the Allies at great risk for their own safety. They hid and housed escapees until they could safely transport them to boats that could carry them across the Channel. Many paid for these patriotic acts with their lives. But victory was their goal, and no price was too high.

The museum is located near the crash site of the Sobatka crew, near the village of Gratenoux. Some members of the 44th Bomb Group visited that site in 1997. Among those present

was Lois Cianci, daughter of Clair P. Shaeffer, Engineer on *Bing's Big Box*. Shaeffer was KIA from enemy fire; and a member of the Resistance removed his dog tags. He sent one to Washington; the other he kept in a box.

At a ceremony around the crash site, an amazing event took place. Guy Cressant, son of the Resistance Fighter, handed Clair Shaeffer's scorched dog tag to his daughter Lois. The gift was so unexpected, tears spouted forth from everyone present. Simultaneously, a gentle rain began to fall, as though heaven was weeping also. It was a moment which no 44th who was present can ever forget.

Pierre remembered that **Milton Rosenblatt**, Co-Pilot, and **Abraham Teitel**, Bombardier, survived that crash and were able to escape. Recently the people in the area gathered to honor the members of the Sobatka crew, who forfeited their lives to help free France from the Nazis. They laid flowers at the crash site, and American flags floated everywhere. Of those that flew on that fateful day, 4 were KIA; 4 became POW.



The crash site, festooned with flowers.

...continued on page 7



Among the guests was Lois's long lost friend, Guy Cressant, pictured with a French soldier. She has been trying to locate him since the day he handed her Clair Shaeffer's burnt dog tag.

Pierre is hoping to contact evadees, looking for their stories and photographs. The 44th BGVA sent him a copy of the book by the late **Archie Barlow, *Escape in the Pyrenees***; **Milton Rosenblatt** sent some photographs, and **Frank Schaeffer** sent a well documented account of his experience as an Evadee.

Any member of the 44th who was helped by the Resistance Fighters is urged to contact Pierre. His e-mail address is: [museedelaresistance@free.fr](mailto:museedelaresistance@free.fr).

The Resistance fighters are long overdue to be recognized and thanked.

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*If you have a picture or a story, you may send it to me, and I will forward it to the museum. Ruth Morse, 2041 Village Circle East, York, PA 17404.*

.....

**ACCORDING TO OUR REUNION PLANNERS,  
JACKIE & LOWELL ROBERTS:**

**THE 44TH BGVA MEETS AGAIN IN SAVANNAH**

The date is October 13-17, 2011. The Roberts Reunion Team promises a Dinner Cruise on the Savannah River, a Trolley Trip through Savannah, a visit to Ft. Jackson – followed by dinner in a restaurant that has alligators! (Jackie & Lowell promise you will be safe) The highlight, of course, is a trip to the Mighty Eighth Museum in Pooler, Georgia. (Here is where the Mighty Eighth was first organized.)

This museum holds our Ploesti exhibit, created when **Roy Owen** was president. Also, the nose of a B-24 is there, ready for you to climb in and simulate a bomb raid. This was presented by the 2nd Air Division.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**"FREEDOM HAS A TASTE FOR THOSE WHO FOUGHT  
AND ALMOST DIED FOR IT THAT THE PROTECTED  
WILL NEVER KNOW."**

**Words found on a wall in the Hanoi Hilton**



## THE 44TH BOMB GROUP REUNION



Jackie and Lowell Roberts

Jackie and Lowell Roberts set out to make the 17th Reunion of this proud group of airmen an unforgettable event. It was. The Wright-Paterson Museum opened its doors early, so the 44th BGVA could have undivided attention to the beautiful Liberator they housed.



Perry Morse and Nancy Schmehl (the bartender) climbed the ladder to look into the cockpit.

There was something very special about climbing into that B-24, and hearing veterans tell their families, "Here is where I sat" ... "Here is where the flak came through", and so forth. Some veterans just stood and looked, remembering buddies who couldn't share that moment with them.

Four guides who led groups through the museum were thoroughly knowledgeable about every plane in view. One guide was amazed to learn that **Tom Parsons** had a personal encounter with the Me-163 rocket plane. (His story appears elsewhere in this publication.) **Roy Owen's** plane, the SR-71 was on display, as was the 44th Fighter Group's dynamic A/C – the Raptor.

The Chocolate Factory had good candy and a documentary on how their chocolate was made. After looking at airplanes, everybody enjoyed the treats, but nobody took notes on how to produce it at home.



The assemblage of all our veterans at the Wright-Dunbar Museum

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Don Williams, Richard Hruby and Charles Tilton view the Wright Brothers working tools.

The spirit of Orville and Wilbur Wright hangs over the city of Dayton. Their business skills in creating bicycles, printing presses, motors and eventually flying machines is highlighted at the Wright-Dunbar Museum. The story of their crashes and bruises in the Huffman Prairie, (a cow pasture) is told with pride; but 100 years ago it was viewed with scorn.

The Packard Museum was full of Packards, of course, but the one line



The plaque honoring the 44th Bomb Group had been placed in the grounds of the Wright Patterson Museum in 1989. President Washburn led a re-dedication of the plaque. Knowing the 44th BGVA would be at Wright-Patterson, complete strangers came to the veterans, asking them to autograph Steve Adams book, *The 44th Bomb Group in WWII*.



L/Col. Kent Furman

that was a great sales pitch, 'Ask the Man Who Owns One' echoed from the past. (*Obviously, that ad was used before Women's Lib became a part of our history.*)

*Fritzi Selasky confided that she scattered some of her late husband Charles ashes around the plaque, and tucked his picture in the soil alongside of it. Charles Selasky was the Navigator on Suzy Q on the Ploesti Mission.*

L/Col. Kent Furman brought the news of the 44th Fighter Group to the Banquet. His presence was a reminder that the evolution of flight from Kitty Hawk to Holloman Air Force Base had advanced at a staggering rate of speed. His personal history in the Air Force was a reminder that flying for Uncle Sam provided a great future for an ambitious young man or woman.

It was a pleasure to send home with him, a model of the Liberator. Imagine that! A model of a B-24 for a pilot who is flying an aircraft that skims the sky at Mach 1.5 – the F-22!

Lee and Mary Aston were each presented plaques for their services to the 44th. Lee was honored for creating the beautiful monument at Carlisle, and for endless effort to get belated awards to our airmen. Mary has been a successful fundraiser, a valuable benefit to the 44th treasury.

...continued on page 14

# 44TH BG REUNION SEPT 2010

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



ASTON LEE



LEE AND MARY  
ASTON



CLARK JOHN AND FAMILY



DOBBS STERLING



HOBBS  
DOUGLAS



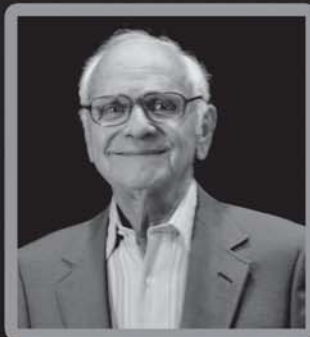
HOBBS DOUGLAS AND FAMILY



HOLT ATHUR



HOLT ATHUR AND AVERY



HUBY RICHARD

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





# 44TH BG REUNION SEPT 2010

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



**JOHNSON ROBERT**



**BOB AND ROBERTA  
JOHNSON**



**DICK LYNCH**



**DICK AND BETTY  
LYNCH**



**MORSE PERRY**



**PERRY AND RUTH  
MORSE**



**PERRY MORSE AND FAMILY**



**NEWBARD BILL**



**PADGET ROBERT**



**PARSONS TOM**

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





# 44TH BG REUNION SEPT 2010

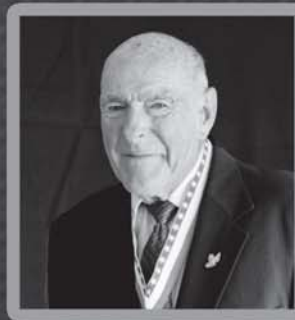
PORTRAITS OF OUR VETERANS WITH THEIR FAMILY  
AND FRIENDS IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR SERVICE ...



REED STANLEY



STANLEY REED  
AND AMANDA



SCHAEFFER  
FRANK



FRANK AND ELLEN



TILTON CHARLES



WASHBURN  
GEORGE



GEORGE AND CYNTHIA



WOLF TOM



WILLIAMS DON



DON AND SHARON



DON  
AND  
CAROLE  
BRIDGES

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



# 44TH BG REUNION SEPT 2010

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



**WOODRUFF  
NATHAN**



**WOODY AND FAMILY**



**LOWELL AND  
JACKIE ROBERTS**



**JOE AND CARIE WEST**



**FRITZIE**



**RICHARD HOLIDAY  
AND AMANDA**



**ERIC PETROSKI**



**TONY AND  
LOIS CIANCI**



**WAYNE AND  
MARTHA BENSON**



**DONNA FAMILY**

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





Jackie & Lowell Roberts plaques told their story – treasurers, keepers of the roster, planners of reunions, all efforts in honor of Jackie's lost father – **Jack Ostenson**.

The Board Meeting before the Reunion had begun in a somber note – the recognition that the number of attendees had dwindled and the number of Folded Wings had grown. The Banquet at the end of the Reunion came with the joyous knowledge that the 44th Fighter Group, our offspring, will carry the history and the traditions

of the Flying Eight Balls into the next century. October 1, 2013 will be the date of dissolution of the 44th BGVA. The Roberts agreed to plan the next reunion, which will be in Savannah, Georgia. That will be a fun gathering, as all the legal aspects of closing shop have been ironed out.

The *8 Ball Tails* will be published for the next three years, and all the heroic accounts of air war against Nazi Germany will be housed in the Libraries at Carlisle, Shipdham, Norwich, Holoman, Savannah and many more.

### PICTURES BY KEN



The Beiber crew brought the most guests to the reunion – fourteen in all. Nathan Woodruff (right) brought his three children, Martha Benson, Judy Wilson, and Johnnie, their spouses and grandson Taylor.



Lee and Mary Aston at the Wright-Paterson Museum



Perry Morse (center) brought JoAnn and son Richard Morse, and daughters Ellen Kelly and Nancy Schmehl. The family took over Perry's bartending chores.



Frank Schaeffer listens to the robot explain the wonder of this new invention – the cash register.

...continued on page 15



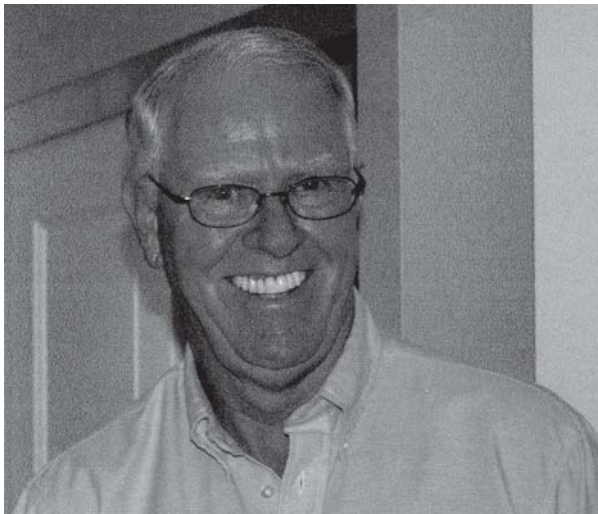
**PICTURES BY KEN**



Stanley Reed waits for the bus.



Tony Cianci looks at the many pieces of memorabilia on display, thanks to Richard Halliday.



Ken Kelly, son-in-law of Perry Morse managed the bar after lining everyone up for photographs before the banquet. If you received one through the mail, it was a gift from Ken.



Tom Wolf and George Washburn enjoy liquids and jokes.



Sterling Dobbs in the Hospitality Room after a long day walking through museums.



Richard Lynch (right) enjoys the Carillon History Park with the John Clark family.

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**PICTURES BY KEN**



Mary Aston, Lois Cianci and Cynthia Harmonoski share a scrapbook, brought to the Hospitality Room by Frank Schaeffer.



Lisa & Johnnie Woodruff



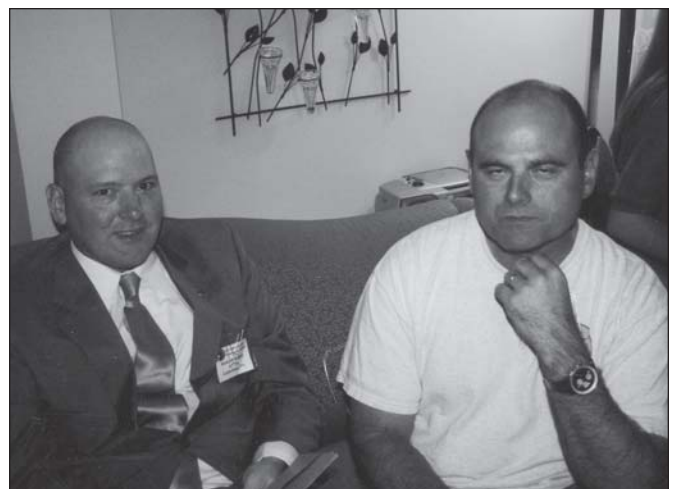
Carole Bridges and Jackie Roberts check the records.



Taylor & Lisa Woodruff share a visit with Jessie.



It's official! Jessie is declared the 44th BG mascot. Ellen Kelly and Mary Aston admire the fit of her new jacket – Mary's creation.



Richard Holliday and Kent Furman discuss 44th BG memorabilia.

...continued on page 17





Picture of children Among the guests that joined us was Troop 31, Rio Rancho, New Mexico. They came to thank the veterans, and brought a list of questions about aerial combat. Our veterans sat down and replied.

\*\*\*\*\*

### THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

By Eugene Vickory, Navigator, Coleman Whitaker Crew, 68th Squadron  
(Became a POW when *Black Jack* went down at Wiener-Neustadt)

Thanks for the memories  
 Of flights to Germany  
 Across the cold North Sea  
 With blazing guns  
 We fought the Huns  
 For air supremacy.  
 How lucky we were.

Thanks for the memories  
 Of ME 109s  
 Flak guns on the Rhine  
 We did our bit  
 And were hit  
 And ended our good times  
 We hate them so much.

Thanks for the memories  
 Of days we had to stay  
 In Sagan far away.  
 The cabbage stew  
 Which had to do  
 Till Red Cross parcel day  
 How thankful we are.

Chorus: We drifted far out of formation  
 We jumped and what a sensation!  
 And now we sweat out the duration.  
 Our job is done - we've had our fun.



# 44<sup>TH</sup> BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

## AIR MEDAL PRESENTATION TO LT. R.L. GILES KIRTLAND AFB, N. M., APR. 6, 2010

A WWII belated Air Medal presentation was arranged by Director Aston for 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Robert L. Giles, a resident of Albuquerque, N.M., formerly a B-17 Navigator from the 94<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 8<sup>th</sup> AAF, stationed at Bury St. Edmunds near Shipdham, to be presented at the activation ceremony at Holloman AFB, Alamogordo, New Mexico, along with a belated DFC/OLC#1 award to Capt. Arthur Kleiderer, 44<sup>th</sup> BG on April 9, 2010. However, Mr. Giles and wife were unable to travel the distance to Holloman AFB and requested a ceremony at Kirtland AFB near their home in Albuquerque. Aston arranged for Col. Frederik Hartwig, Commander of the 150<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Kirtland AFB Albuquerque, New Mexico, to make the presentation.

### MEDAL CEREMONY

*honoring*

*Lt. Robert Giles*



6 April 2010

150<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing

Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico



Robert Giles with the Air Medal and Citation presented by Col. Hartwig, C.O. 150<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, Kirtland AFB



2Lt Robert L. Giles



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Robert Giles served in the Reserve Army Air Corps from 26 May 1942 to 15 Oct 1943, as a private and from 16 Oct 1943 to 9 Dec 1945 as a combat navigator. He was assigned to the 333rd BOMB SQUADRON, 94th BOMB GROUP (H), 3rd Air Division, 8th AF, stationed at Bury St. Edmunds Airfield, Suffolk in East Anglia, England.

During his fifth (5th) mission on April 18, 1944 to Berlin, Germany his aircraft was shot down. Lt. Giles bailed out and became a Prisoner Of War until liberated from Stalag Luft III and returned to the Zone of the Interior in May/June 1945.

He sustained injury in one arm prior to bail out. Perhaps his greatest act was saving the life of his Bombardier, Lt. Quentin Brown. Lt. Brown was severely wounded in both knees and one arm from a close explosive blast of German 88mm anti-aircraft shells at the nose of his B-17. Lt. Brown was physically unable to attach his parachute to his harness and bailout. Their enemy-destroyed B-17 bomber was in flames and diving out of control for a crash.

Lt. Giles, though wounded in one arm, helped his bombardier to the nose escape hatch and fastened a parachute on the bombardier. Lt. Giles proceeded to aid him to safety by fastening his own parachute with one arm and bailing out of the crashing aircraft. Lt. Giles' life-saving actions ensured the severely wounded Lt. Brown escaped certain death. Lieutenants Giles and Brown remained POWs until the end of the War.

He is credited with five combat missions. He was awarded the Purple Heart on 2 Oct 1945. His other awards and decoration include the Prisoner of War Medal, the American Campaign Medal, European-African Middle-Eastern Campaign Medal with one Bronze Star and the World War II Victory Medal.

**44<sup>th</sup> BGVA, Awards, Decorations and Memorials, cont'd**

**CAPT. ARTHUR C. KLEIDERER, 67<sup>th</sup> SQDN. , RECEIVES SECOND DFC**

On April 9, 2010 at the Holloman AFB. 44<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Activation event, Alomogordo, New Mexico, arrangements were made by Director Aston for Capt. Kleiderer of Houston, TX, a 44<sup>th</sup> Group Lead Pilot to receive his WWII belated award of a DFC/OLC#1. Capt. Kleiderer's DFC/OLC#1 was presented to him by Col. Donald R. Lindberg, Commander of the newly activated 44<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group.



**Capt. Kleiderer- 1944  
44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group  
Lead Pilot-1945**

During WWII Kleiderer joined the Aviation Cadet program earning his pilot wings and attended B-24 transition school in 1945. He flew 30 combat missions with the 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group from Nov. 1944 to April 1945, 16 of which were flown as the Group Lead pilot. After separation from active duty in 1945, he was recalled to active duty in 1951 to serve in Korea until 1953. In Korea he served for one year as the Base Operations Officer with the 18<sup>th</sup> Fighter Bomb Wing.



**Capt. Arthur Kleiderer receiving his belated WWII DFC/OLC#1 from Col. Lindberg, C.O. of the 44<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico**

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**1<sup>st</sup> LT. GERALD W. FOLSOM RECEIVES THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR**

At a ceremony in Salt Lake City, Utah, on April 30, 2010, the San Francisco French Consul General Philip Lestienne dispatched his Deputy Consul Patrice Servantie to present the French Legion of Honor to Gerald Folsom, a co-pilot from the 506<sup>th</sup> Squadron. The ceremony took place at the State Capitol of Utah. Mr. Folsom waited over two years to receive his French award from the time that Director Aston nominated him in Feb. 2008. Several Folsom family members were present for the presentation event



**Deputy Consul Servantie pins the French Legion of Honor medal on Folsom**



**French Deputy Consul Servantie with Chevalier (Knight) Gerald Folsom**



**Wife, Beverly Folsom and her shining Knight Gerald**



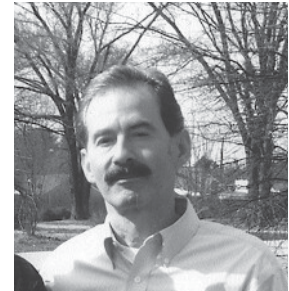
44<sup>th</sup> BGVA –Awards, Decorations and Memorials, cont'd.



(1943 Photo of  
Lt. Harold E. Etheridge)

A belated claim for a *post humus* Air Medal, a POW medal, and Presidential Unit Citation (PUC) with two Oak Leaf clusters for 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Harold E. Etheridge, Pilot, 66<sup>th</sup> Squadron, was won by the Awards Director, R. Lee Aston, in June 2010 for Lt. Etheridge's Son, Chris Etheridge, of Salisbury, N. C.

Aircraft Commander 2d Lt. Etheridge flew six missions before his aircraft was shot down on a mission to an aircraft assembly target at Gotha, Germany, on 24 February 1944. All crew members parachuted to safety and became POWs. Lt. Etheridge was wounded while parachuting and received a Purple Heart. Lt. Etheridge was interned at Stalag Luft I for 14 months until liberated by Russian troops in April 1945. After WW II, Lt. Etheridge served for 18 more years in the Air Force. During the Korean conflict he received the Bronze Star medal, and later served with the Army of Occupation in Japan. He retired with the rank of Lt. Colonel and retired to Albany, Georgia, until his death in November 1998. His grave is in the National Cemetery, Salisbury, North Carolina.



(2010 Photo  
of Chris Etheridge)

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DOUGH IS THE WRONG TERM FOR MONEY. DOUGH STICKS TO YOUR HANDS.

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*Life's greatest satisfactions include getting the last laugh,  
having the last word and paying the last installment.*

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The most humiliating thing about science is that keeps filling our homes with gadgets that are smarter than we are.



**ROBERT SCHAPER, FIRST A CO-PILOT  
(66TH & 68TH SQUADRONS)  
THEN A WEATHER SCOUT**

I was the Co-Pilot on **Quinton Torell's** crew. I would like to say that he was the nicest, friendliest, most cooperative pilot to fly with. Our working relationship left me feeling that I was as much the first pilot as he. I remember the 17th mission, the worst we ever had. (*Bauer Oil Refineries, Gelsenkirchen, Germany.*) We began the mission assigned right wing on the high element. After forming over the North Sea, the deputy lead indicated mechanical problems and aborted the mission. We were considered to be first fill-in for aborted aircraft, so we moved into the deputy lead position. Everything was routine until just before the IP. When the lead ship called us and asked if we would take the lead because their autopilot was malfunctioning, my throat mike wasn't working properly. I said we weren't prepared. Lead ship responded, "Fine, we'll form on you." I called the bombardier and he told me we had to bomb. He responded, "I can't bomb, I slept through the briefing. I don't know where the target is.

Feeling the pressure of the emergency with flak going crazy around us, I told the bombardier, either he drops or I will come back and do for him. His response, "I'll drop your (expletive deleted) bombs. He then picked the biggest warehouse on the river and blew it to you know what. The problem was, it was three miles past the target. In that extra minute, the 88's were able to zero in, and a number of planes in the formation were hit, including ours. We had a burst directly below us that blew a hole in our No. 4 oil tank; attempts at feathering were unsuccessful, causing the engine to freeze with the blades flat.

The burst also cut the main electrical cable to the one and two engines with the props set at 2100. We had lost control of the propellers and all instrumentation on the left side of the airplane. When we stabilized the airplane and found ourselves still flying, we proceeded on the return track toward England. There was the usual crew discussion on what the best plan was. The crew didn't feel we could make England and wanted to try to get to Sweden. When I was consulted, I asked the crew if they were prepared to fight off the German Luftwaffe by ourselves. I said our best plan is to follow the path of the bomber stream where our escort fighters would be looking for strays.

Part way along the return route, a lone P-51 came over to look us over, inspected our damaged aircraft and flew on our wing for about a half hour. Then he signaled low fuel and left. Over the Zeider Zee, four aircraft approached us head on at about 2,000 yards. They flipped into a vertical band, and we could see the twin booms of P-38's. A most welcome sight. I could have kissed them. We still had the North Sea to cross, which we did, giving up altitude to reduce fuel consumption. We then crossed over the English coast at about 10,000 feet, where the British shot at us!

*Ed. Note: The British must have missed, as his story continues.*

After having flown 17 missions with the 68th Squadron and 13 missions with the 66th Squadron, making a total of 30 combat missions with the 44th BG, I was then assigned to the 2nd Air Division Weather and Relay Flight. In this assignment, I flew 35 additional operational missions. My duties, as a weather scout, were to visually check the weather in the area that was anticipated to be in the target area when the bombers arrived. I also was required to fly a specially-equipped B-24 to provide Airborne Radio Relay to the 2nd Air Division fighters when these fighters

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were on a deep penetration escort beyond reliable radio range of the 8th Air Force Control. (Colgate) When radar in England detected enemy fighters rising to attack the approaching bombers, they would vector the 2nd Air Division fighter escort to intercept. Dec. 19, 1944 when the German attack began in the Battle of the Bulge, I flew a Weather Recon Mission, which required a take-off when visibility was less than 10 ft. (no typo). A jeep was needed to lead my plane to the end of the runway. At 500 feet we broke out on top. We reported clear weather for as far as we could see. After about an hour, we requested landing instructions and were told to stand by, which we did for over 8 hours. I made plans for the crew to bail out while there was enough fuel to set the autopilot to carry the plane out over the Atlantic. At the last moment, we were informed that an RAF Fighter Base south of London was opening up. (Bigger Hill). We found the field to be 9/10ths overcast. We would find a hole, spiral down through it and take a heading toward the base. When the clouds came down to meet the ground, we frantically climbed as steeply as possible to back on top and looked for another hole. This process was repeated several times until one of the crew spotted the field. We entered the pattern very tightly and started our final approach and found the sun there was directly in our eyes. Everything was white. We did manage to pick out some small building just before the end of the runway. After going around and again on the final, we dropped our gear and flaps and went through very low until we spotted the aforementioned building. We cut the power. I was mighty glad to walk away from that one.

*Ed. Note: In a letter to Will Lundy, Schaper reported the name of this B-24 was Colgate Relay.*

### **BOOKS OF GREAT EVENTS IN 44TH BOMB GROUP HISTORY**

BURNING HITLER'S BLACK GOLD is a factual account of the greatest mission of WWII—Ploesti Oil Refineries, Romania. Major Robert W. Sternfels, pilot of the B-24 *Sandman*, 98th Bomb Group, compiled this book following 2 years of interviews with historians and participants in the mission. The book replicates many official documents, plus the report of an interview with the planner of the mission, the late General Jacob Smart.

Sternfels group flew alongside Leon Johnson's 44th BG, experiencing the same dangerous surprises—the railroad car full of German soldiers with anti-aircraft guns, small arms fire, steel cables, black smoke and fighters.

To purchase this factual, highly organized report on this valorous mission, contact Major Robert Sternfels, 395 Pine Crest Dr., Laguna Beach, CA 92651. The price is \$26.75 with shipping.

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If you are looking for a high adventure WWII story, read *Escape in the Pyrenees*, by the late **Archie Barlow**, Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the Hartwell Howington crew. The mission on 21 January 1944 was to Escales Sur Buchy, France, to wipe out the V-1s that were striking London. *Ram It Dam II* went down, and Barlow survived and evaded. He relates his moment by moment escapades of being hidden by the Underground, chased by Germans with dogs, sleeping in freezing haylofts, and finally sliding down a very high hill to safety into Spain.

Barlow's wife Aline has copies of the book. 160 Johnson Drive SE, Calhoun, GA 30701-3941 Tel. 706-629-2396. The cost is \$20.

## **S/SGT. RAY R. MARNER, JR. (506 SQUADRON) REMEMBERS CROSSING ON THE S. S. CHANTILLY TO ENGLAND**

The ground echelon of the 506th Bomb Squadron, consisting of 14 officers and 270 enlisted men, and under the command of Capt. **Green Benton, Jr.** boarded the S. S. Chantilly in New York on 27 February 1943.

The S. S. Chantilly was an old French ship that was taken over by the British in 1940. She was not in very good repair, and a lot of work was done on her in New York prior to our boarding, but she needed much more. The ship's crew was composed of some British and the rest were Hindu from Calcutta, India. There were approximately 1,000 troops on board, including American sailors, marines and infantry men. The Chantilly, carrying the only troops in the convoy, joined the approximately 74 ships of the convoy in New York harbor. It sailed on 28 February 1943 for the United Kingdom.

In **Ursell P. Harvel's** book *Jaws over Europe*, it was stated that the S. S. Chantilly was placed in the middle of the convoy to give the personnel carrier some protection in case of a U-Boat attack. This statement was not correct, as the Chantilly was located at the rear of the convoy, with only three ships behind us. Harvel also stated: "The shipment of skilled Air Force personnel, sorely needed in the 8th Air Force aboard the S. S. Chantilly, a condemned old English ship, the orders taking seventeen days to cross the Atlantic, was given by someone definitely irresponsible and came close to the disaster for the 8th Air Force." Any aboard the S. S. Chantilly would probably agree with this statement. It was truly a miracle that the ground troops of the 506 Bomb Squadron ever got to Shipdham.

### **An Explosion**

The first eleven days of our voyage were fairly uneventful, aside from very

poor sleeping arrangements, seasickness, and probably the worst food any of us had ever eaten. However, on Ash Wednesday, 10 March 1943, this changed dramatically. Around 6:30 PM we heard an explosion and the muster bell rang. We headed up the gangway to the deck in time to see an oil tanker sink and two other ships were damaged. Any ship that sustained damage indicated this by lighting a red light that would be visible to any support craft. We later learned that our Captain saw the first torpedo coming toward us, and he laid the Chantilly on her side, and the torpedo went along our starboard hull and hit the ship ahead of us on our port side.

The Captain then began to change course every few minutes by rocking the ship from one side to the other and continued this for the rest of the night. He was rocking the ship as much as 43 degrees, which made it very difficult to stay on deck.

### **Red Lights Went on**

Around midnight we were attacked again, and the red lights seem to come on all around the convoy. It was too dark to really see how much damage was being done, but we knew it was bad.

Around 3 AM we heard another explosion, and either a munitions ship or a tanker with high octane gas was hit, and the flames grew larger and larger, lighting the entire area. The light endangered the whole convoy, so a British Corvette shelled the ship, and a terrific explosion followed, with the flames shooting hundreds of feet in the air. The ship then quickly sank.

In our position at the rear of the convoy, there were three ships behind

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us and three ships to our front. At dawn on 11 March 1943, we found that we were alone well behind the rest of the ships. All six ships were either sunk or some may have changed position. We felt that we were like sitting ducks in this vulnerable position. We spent the next day trying to catch up with the rest of the convoy. Obviously, we were probably the slowest ship on the seas. Luckily, no more attacks were forthcoming.

### Official Report

In a letter to Major Ursel P. Harvel, in reply to his request, the Dept. of Navy gave the following information: "During the attack by U-Boats on March 10 & 11, 1943, the following ships were torpedoed and sunk: British Cargo *Tucurinca*; British Cargo *Jamaica Producer*, Norwegian *Brumm Count (or Brant County)*; U.S. Cargo *Lawton B. Evans*; U. S. Cargo *Andrea F. Luckenbach*. There were other ships in the convoy that were damaged by torpedoes, but did not sink. HMS Harvester was damaged when she rammed a U-Boat. She took on board prisoners from the U-Boat, and afterward she sank. It was reported by German prisoners that there were 12 U-Boats in the vicinity of the convoy. HMS Aconite sank U-Boats # 432 and

#442. There were many stragglers in this convoy, scattered because of the high seas and fog, and many left the convoy and proceeded to their destination."

The S. S. Chantilly remained at the rear of the main convoy and sailed up the Firth of Clyde, near Glasgow on 15 March 1943.

### Surprise at Shipdham

A few days after our arrival at the Air Base, I was walking from our living site to the flight line, when a staff car stopped and offered me a ride. Being a kid of almost 20 years, and not very military, I piled in the back seat to find the Colonel **Leon Johnson**. I guess the General wasn't very military either. He couldn't have been nicer to me. He wanted to know all about our trip over the Atlantic and all the details of the submarine attack. I will always remember how reassured I felt, with this man as my commanding officer.

*S/Sgt. Ray Marner, Jr. was assigned to Personnel Supply. When the war was over, he returned home 15 June 1945. It took only six days to get home on the Queen Mary. They arrived in New York harbor amid cheering crowds and bands playing on small boats.*

## THE 44TH BG HISTORY HAS GONE WORLDWIDE

As of December 11, 2010, the Web Page of the BG has been visited by 272,736 people, many of whom write to Arlo Bartsch and congratulate him on its volume of historical material.

Imagine this: a man from Belgium wrote to Arlo, requesting information about a mission on February 25, 1945, but he wrote it in French. Being computer-savvy, the gentleman had Google translate it into English! Arlo will reply; and if necessary, call on our Belgium airman, now an American – Peter Loncke to help with his English to French translation.

Our world gets smaller all the time. Could the father of the 44th history, **Will Lundy**, ever have imagined how far his brainchild would go?



## CHARLES ARNOLD'S LETTER TO WILL LUNDY

(Gunner, 67th Squadron)

"I was transferred into the 44th from the 15th, so I didn't get to know men of the 44th as well as my old outfit. On 15th February '43 – a beautiful day for flying, we took off for Dunkirk. It was early afternoon. Approaching the target; the flak was not too heavy. Then I heard a muffled explosion and a dull thud – front of belly? Plane shuddered but flew straight & level for a few seconds. Then it flipped over on the right wing and started spinning; the radio was out. Everything loose began flying all around. **Jesse (Norwood)**, (Gunner), **David (Woo)** (Asst. Radio Operator) and I got all tangled up. I knew we'd had it. I got hung up in the waist window between gun mount and window frame. Jesse went out the other window. Woo didn't remember how he got out. He thought the plane broke in two and threw him out.

When I was stuck in the waist window, I saw someone from the nose fly past me. I got just a glance of a yellow May West and black hair. I couldn't identify. I got several letters from the War Dept., later trying to identify who it was, but I just couldn't see that much in just a flash.

I finally got out of the window and fell free of the plane. I landed on top of a high barn, got free of my chute, fell off the barn and hit in a pile of fresh cow manure!

A German field artillery sergeant picked me up. Woo, Norwood & I were together in Dulag Luft. I left Jessie and Woo at 7 A in the prison. I escaped 3 times and was caught twice. Last attempt was successful. I came back through Russia.

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### WILL LUNDY'S REPORT IN *ROLL OF HONOR & CASUALTIES*:

The target was a German Raider, thought to be the Togo, located at Dunkirk. It was discovered on the morning reconnaissance flight. The assumption was that the ship was ready to slip out at any time to raid Allied shipping. Crews were hurriedly called and briefed, with 17 planes of the 44th BG soon airborne. They rendezvoused with the A/C of the 329th Squadron, 93rd BG, and were led by the 67th Squadron's Captain **Arthur Cullen** and the C.O. of the 67th Squadron, Major **Donald W. MacDonald** as the formation's Command Pilot. Two aircraft were lost. A third-crash landed on the beach south of Ramsgate.

When Cullen's plane, **Betty Anne/Gallopin Ghost** went down, the pilot was wounded, became POW and was repatriated; the Command Pilot was KIA; along with the Navigator, **John Mackey**, Bombardier, **Paul Caldwell**, Engineer, **Albert Emery**, Radio Operator, **Samuel Weisner** and Gunner, **Thomas McKinsey**. David Woo, **Charles Arnold** and **Jesse Norwood** became POWs; Arnold later escaped.

The entire **Rufus Oliphant** crew was KIA. They were flying in **Boardwalk Flyer**. **Thomas Cramer's A/C, The Captain and the Kids**, crashed on a British beach. Three members of the crew were KIA, one was slightly wounded.

That price for victory on 16 February 1943 - the Togo did not sail into the Atlantic, to battle the convoys carrying troops and supplies.

### INFORMATION THAT YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT:

1. SCRATCH A CAT AND YOU HAVE A PERMANENT JOB.
2. THERE ARE NO NEW SINS; JUST OLD ONES THAT GET MORE PUBLICITY.
3. BE CAREFUL ABOUT READING THE FINE PRINT. THERE IS NO WAY YOU'RE GOING TO LIKE IT.



## **TOM PARSONS AND THE ME-163**

(As reported in the Georgia Chapter of the 8th AF Historical Society)

The Me-163 "Comet" was no ordinary airplane. It was a rocket plane, using a self-igniting fuel and oxidizer mixture, which when combined in a combustion chamber, accelerated the aircraft up to an incredible 600 miles per hour. What is even more amazing is that the Me-163 had a rate of climb of more than 16,000 feet per minute! Compare this with the FW-190, which had a top speed of 472 miles per hour and a rate of climb less than 3,300 feet per minute, and you can appreciate how fast this plane really was.

As Tom explains, "I was the left waist gunner on a B-24 bomber on a May 28, 1944 mission to Zeitz, the site of a Focke-Wulf aircraft assembly plant. I saw a fighter approaching at a high speed – it was nothing like I had ever seen before. I fired a short burst at it as it flew past us, and put four holes into our own vertical stabilizer!" Tom's bomber completed its mission and returned to their base, at which time the crew received their normal post-mission interrogation.

A few of Tom's crewmates had also seen the strange, lightning-fast aircraft, but were hesitant to even talk to each other about it. It was such an unbelievable story that they were sure they would have been marked as being crazy, or just cooking up a story to get pulled off flight duty. "They weren't about to mention it during their debriefing and subject themselves to criticism and ridicule," say Tom, "but I did. After all, I saw what I saw. I shot at it."

The intelligence officer seemed very interested and wanted details. How big was it? How fast did it go? What did it look like?

"What were the flight characteristics?" asked the intelligence officer.

"You know how a bird flies like this?" said Tom, his arms flapping slowly like a bird in flight.

"Yes," answered the officer.

"And you know how a hummingbird flies like this?" said Tom, his arms rapidly flapping near his body as he bobbed quickly from side to side.

"Yes"

"Well, a fighter flies like a bird, and this thing flew like a hummingbird, and it looked like a submarine.

The intelligence officer seemed duly impressed by Tom's report as he continued to whatever details Tom could recall from the brief encounter. His crewmates were another story.

"They didn't want this kind of attention," said Tom. The fact that I had put holes into our plane, along with my strange story – well, let's say they started keeping their distance from me."

Of course, Tom wasn't crazy or trying to get pulled off duty. He was among the first 8th Air Force men to see an Me-163 Comet, and he was simply doing his duty by reporting it. Things got a bit tense between Tom and his crewmates for a short while, but eventually other reports started coming in from other crews with similar sightings. "Once the other crews started seeing these new fighters and the word got out about them, things got back to normal. But they didn't let me forget I shot four holes in our plane.

The story picks back up more than 60 years later, when Tom was at the Eighth Air Force Historical Society annual reunion in Savannah in August 2008. One of the speakers was Joachim Hoene, a member of the German military during World War II. Joachim was a pilot, stationed at an experimental-aircraft unit located in Leipzig, and his father was the commandant of that unit.

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On the same day that Tom fired at the mysterious fighter that zoomed past his bomber, Joachim – without his father’s approval – took one of the Me-163s on an unauthorized flight. When Joachim descended, he unintentionally flew the unarmed plane through a formation of American bombers. When he landed the plane, it splashed through a large puddle and was covered in mud. His father was furious about the unauthorized flight, and made him cancel a date he had that evening and clean the plane. As Joachim washed mud from the vertical stabilizer, he discovered four bullet holes in it!

Is it possible that those four holes in the Me-163’s vertical stabilizer were made by the same bullets that Tom put through his plane’s own vertical stabilizer. There is no way to prove it, but if they were, Tom Parsons might have been the first man to successfully hit an Me-163 in flight.

*Armed with two 20mm or 30mm cannons, the Me-163 packed a formidable punch, but its weakness was its endurance. With only enough fuel for approximately seven minutes of flight, it could only engage bomber formations that passed near its airfield. The short flight time meant that it was normally limited to two passes at bomber formations: one on the flight up, and one on the flight back down. Because of its speed and maneuverability, Allied fighters could not match its capabilities. However the short flight time was the Me-163’s undoing. The allied fighters would wait until the Me-163 ran out of fuel and attack it as it glided back to land at its base, or after it landed.*

### **THE 44TH BOMB GROUP PX**

Flying 8 Ball Golf Shirts.....	\$25 + 3.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Caps (Indicate Squadron).....	15 + 2.00 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Squadron Pins (Indicate Squadron) .....	5.00 + .50 Postage
44th Bomb Group Stickers.....	2.00 (Postage Included)

Order From  
**Jackie Roberts**  
11910 S. E. 44th Street  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73150

### **FOR SALE—LAPEL PINS**

Mary Aston is selling lapel pins of WWII Medals: 8th Air Force, DFC, Air Medal, Purple Heart, POW, European-African Mediterranean Theater and WWII Victory Medal. The price of each is \$9 + 44 cents postage. (Specify pin name and number of each type.)

A large Suncatcher depicting the Flying 8 Ball; a 67th Squadron Pelican or 8th Air Force Logo are available at \$120 each + \$25 UPS (a total of \$145)

A small Flying 8 Ball sells for \$65 + \$18 UPS (a total of \$83) Proceeds go to the 44th BGVA. Contact Mary at 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635.



## MAIL & E-MAIL



Lee Aston wants to know the origin of the 44th Bomb Group Patch. According to his records, it was not approved by the Air Force Heraldry Office until 15 May 1951.

Roger Fenton (VP & Historian) reported that **Aggressor Beware** was the official motto of the Army Air Corps. The patch was designated as the official Crest, like a family crest of the group. Roger has briefing pictures, showing the original emblem on their jackets.

When the BG evolved into the Missileers, they adopted this new version. When **Jerry Folsom** was President of the 44th BG, he tried to interest members in purchasing the emblem for sale in the PX, but the idea did not strike a chord with Board Members.



**Bob Vance** reminded me of a poem that an Englishman on a bus quoted, during the 1997 trip to England:

When you go home  
Tell them of us, and say  
For your tomorrow  
We gave our today.

Rudyard Kipling



L-R (1) **Albert Liebner**, Radio Operator; (2) **Oscar Richardson**, who replaced **Billy Grau**, who suffered a broken shoulder after the crash-landing of **Phyllis** on the grounds of the Count of Monte Carlo, just north of Lyon, France. This was the crew's third mission. (They never heard from Billy Grau after that.) We had a couple of Flight Engineers after that; then Oscar Richardson became our regular until the end of the war. (3) **Keith Sprenger**, Right Waist gunner, formerly from East Tonawanda, N.Y. (4) **Dudley D. Drake**, Co Pilot formerly from San Antonio, TX. (5) **William L. Warner**, Pilot. We still keep in touch. (6) **Antonio Scorpio**, Left Waist Gunner & Armorer. He's from Providence, Rhode Island; (7) **Clifford Bengston**, formerly from Ishpeming, MI. (8) Our illustrious Navigator, **Paul Kay**, who left us too soon. Paul was originally from Tennessee, according to the stories he told me. He was the morale booster on the crew. (9) is the man behind the camera who naturally we can't see, namely **Bob Swegel**, Tail Gunner, from Forest City, PA. (*I wish I had asked someone else to take the picture, so I could have been on it.*)

**Bob Swegel** identified the crewmen in the picture which **Steve Adams** found, several months ago. The plane was **One Weakness**; it was the **Bill Warner** crew, as first recognized by **Bob Lehnhausen**.



The picture of the Gunner saying so long to **One Weakness** is unknown. The picture was probably taken at Valley, Wales on our way back to the states, or possibly at Bradley Field, Connecticut, where we left the plane.

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Does anyone remember this? An English gentleman, Wing Cmdr. Ken Wallis of Norfolk has worked for years on building autogyros. Many members of the 44th BG visited him and enjoyed viewing his contraptions. Brian Peel, an English teenager in WWII, sent this news clipping of Wallis's achievements. At age 94, he is still demonstrating it's capabilities.

From John Grantham, England: I am a volunteer with a Boy Scout Prascending Club. While our home base is in Lincolnshire, we spent a week flying Scouts from the Norfolk International Jamboree at the beginning of August.

Grantham's group was invited to use Shipdham, and he soon became interested in the history of the Flying Eight Balls. His father had flown with the RAF Path Finder Force in WWII.

This young man sends his greeting to our veterans, along with his gratitude for their sacrifice. He says, "The memory of their heroism and sacrifice is still very much alive over here"

*Ed. Note: They said they would never forget, and they don't. Many thanks to the Shipdham Aero Club, for being a repository for the 44th's history.*



From Col. **Charlie Simpson**, US AF (Ret.) (Executive Director of Air Force Missiles) In April 1983 I reported to Comiso Air Base, Sicily, the first permanently assigned person to what would become a new Air Force ground launched cruise missile base. I was the commander of a base that didn't quite exist yet. It was probably a lot like **Bill Cameron** found it, since it had remained almost untouched since July 1943, when we captured the base from the Germans during the invasion of Sicily. In April 1983 there were a few bombed out structures scattered around the old 5,000 foot runway – which was deteriorated asphalt with a tree growing in the midst of the pavement, a quarter from one end. The small Italian Air force contingent had refurbished one old brick barracks building, and had a few portable buildings. And we, the USAF, had a contractor putting together my new temporary home, a complex of about 100 "Portacabins". Italian contractors were busy demolishing the other old buildings, often delayed when they found an Italian, German, British or American unexploded bomb during the evacuation. Contractors were also just starting to build a complete new base with complete facilities, housing, schools, etc. When I left the base fourteen months later, the 487th Tactical Missile Wing was combat ready with nuclear armed ground launched cruise missiles (GLCM) on alert, with more than 1400 people assigned there. When the base closed in 1991, it had grown to a population of around 4,000. It closed because the Cold War was over and the mission had ended for GLCM.

I met an Italian Air Force warrant officer who had spent his whole career at Comiso. He told me the story of the capture of Comiso. Patton's troops landed about eight miles away on 10 July 1943, and took over the base about ten minutes later. A Stuka landed for refueling and rearming, and was met by an American 'ground crew'. Obviously, Cameron landed his B-24 a few days later – by that

time we must have established operations from the airfield. Incidentally, in July 1983, we had a 40th anniversary celebration for the liberation of Comiso. My public affairs officer found out that one of our young airmen had an uncle who had been part of the 1943 event. The headline in La Sicilia on 10 July 1983 chronicled the initial invasion, and talked about 'the second invasion of Comiso' by the American Air Force, by what they characterized as the 'brave, friendly young American airmen.'

*Charlie Simpson came into the AF in 1959 and was commander of the 68th Strategic Missile Squadron. Roy Owen tried to tie the Missileers to the 44th BG when the 44th closed at Ellsworth, but that did not work out.*

*The Air Force was formed in 1947. They had missiles as early as 1950.*



From **Sid Bolick** to B/Gen. **Robert L. Cardenas**, 27 January 1990. "You probably won't remember me, but we flew a mission together in late '43 or early '44. I know that it was during the time that Col. (**Frederick**) **Dent** was CO. My memory isn't as good as it used to be (whose is?), but I believe the target that day was Freidrickshaffen, and I'm pretty sure that we were flying with Capt. **George "Goosecreek" Martin**.

"You were a Captain then, flying Command Pilot that day, and I was a Flight Officer (transferee from the RAF), and a Co-pilot. That day, however, I was flying in the tail turret as Tail Gunner/Observer. I'm pretty sure you will remember that it was Standard Operating Procedure at that time for a Pilot or Co-Pilot to ride in the tail turret of the ship leading the Group, to keep the Lead Pilot informed of the condition and status of the formation. I don't remember how well that worked, but I do remember that I expended a lot of .50 caliber ammunition that day.

"The thing I remember best about that mission, however, is you lying on your belly in the bomb bay, looking out through the open doors to spot the bomb bursts.

"I was shot down shortly after that, on Mach 18, 1944, over Freidrichshaffen. I was flying Co-Pilot for Lt. **H. R. Nichols**, in a ship named **Paper Doll**. We were badly damaged by flak, but managed to make it across Lake Constance to Switzerland, where we bailed out. The whole crew landed safely and were interned by the Swiss. After D-Day, I escaped into France and made my way back to England. After debriefing in London, I went back to Shipdham for a couple of days to 'clear the base', then was flown back to the States.

"I arrived back home in October 1944, flew B-24's at a Gunnery School at Tyndall Field in Florida for a while, then transferred to the Air Transport Command. When the war ended, I was flying C-54's on the Pacific run, out of Hamilton Field, California. About 6 months later I went on inactive duty...."



Richard Holliday, longtime friend of Tony Mastradone, sent a report that Tony has been going through a series of serious medical problems. Tony served on the 44th Board for many years, and during Mike Mikoloski's presidency, he was presented the Leon Johnson Award. This was in recognition of his great contribution to the history of the Bomb Group by extracting information from the National Archives.

Tony and his wife Kathy have been regular attendees to the 44th BG Reunions. If you would like to send a get-well card, their current address is: 11621 New Hampshire Avenue, #313; Silver Springs, MD 20904.

## **FROM ROB WILLEMSSEN, (THE NETHERLANDS)**

Dear members of the 44Th BG VA.

First of all, I shall introduce myself: My name is Rob Willemsen and I live in the Netherlands (Europe). I was born and raised in Arnhem almost 45 years ago and still live in a small town near Arnhem.

I'm married, have two children and my profession is Chemical Engineering.

As long as I can remember, I have an interest in WW 2. Living in a city with such a lively history during WW 2 sure did help stimulate it.

OK, I hear you thinking, what does all this have to do with us.

Let me explain a little more.

As a person with an interest in WW 2, I read a bunch of books, newspaper articles and visited a couple of battle sites, such as the Normandy Beaches.

Two years ago, I was watching a TV-program which had a topic about the American War Cemetery in the Netherlands near Margraten.

The central lawn with flag post at the end and the graves on both sides.



Pond with chapel/tower and the walls of the missing adjoining

### **GREAT MOMENTS IN HISTORY**

*1 August 1943 is indelible in the memory of the 44th BG (Ploesti). Also notable on 1 August 1945, 784 B-29s of XXI Bomber Command bombed Japanese home islands.*

*On 14 May 1943 the 44th BG bombed Kiel, a submarine base on the Baltic Sea. Five weeks later the German U-Boats were withdrawn from the North Atlantic. The Battle of the Atlantic was won by the Allies*



## **WITH THIS SOLDIER IT ALL STARTED.**

**SEAMAN ROBERT H.  
2 Kt, 506 Bomb Sq., 44th Bomb Gp (H) Pennsylvania**

During this program I learned that there was a foundation that arranged the adoption of graves of killed American soldiers. I never knew about this and after the TV-program my wife and I talked about that possibility.

The thoughts about the program kept spinning in the back of my head for a couple of days and after a second conversation we decided to ask the foundation to grant us two graves or missing persons to adopt.

The cemetery has a large "wall of the missing". Actually there are two walls opposite of each other, on these walls the names of soldiers are inscribed that were killed at sea, in the air or on land and of which the body was never found.

After some 5 weeks we got a letter in which we were told that we were granted to adopt two soldiers, both inscribed on the walls.

Adoption of a grave or inscription means you will visit the cemetery regularly and take care of the grave or inscription by means of lay down some flowers in honour of the soldier and attend the memorial day activities if possible.

Because I wanted to know more of these two men I started to surf the internet in search of information. This search brought me to the 44th BG VA website because one of the soldiers was a member of the 506th BS and flew in a B-24 named "Cactus".

They were shot down on their first mission on 22 March 1943.

**NDAU, EDWARD W  
S SGT 506 BOMB SQ 44 BOMB GP (H) ILLINOIS**

**RUSSELL ELDO A  
T Sgt 506 Bomb Sq 44 Bomb Group Colorado**

**NAVAS FRANK  
2 LT 506 BOMB SQ 44 BOMB GRP (H) CALIFORNIA**

**WIESER JERRY H  
S SGT 506 BOMB SQ 44 BOMB GRP (H) CALIFORNIA**

**BRENNER JOSEPH L  
1 LT 506 BOMB SQ 44 BOMB GP (H) ILLINOIS**

**KLOSE KENNETH A  
S SGT 44 BOMB GP (H) NORTH DAKOTA**

**DOBBINS Maurice H  
S SGT 506 BOMB SQ 44 BOMB GP (H) ILLINOIS**

**SEAMAN ROBERT H.  
2 LT 506 BOMB SQ 44 BOMB GP (H) PENNSYLVANIA**

Missing in this enumeration are V.R.Fouts (Pilot) and R.K. Nordquist (radio operator). Through the 44th BG VA website I came in touch with Mr. Don Prater and Mr. Roger Fenton. They were very helpful to obtain more information on the "Cactus" and it's crew. Roger Fenton could even provide me with a (digital) photograph with most of it's crew showing in it..

After a discussion with my father-in-law, a new idea had set into my mind and I

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asked the foundation if it was possible to adopt more of the Cactus-crew. Luckily the foundation made an exception for me and it resulted in the adoption of 5 more members of this crew. For some obscure reason two crewmembers are inscribed on the wall in Great Britain and two crewmembers had already been adopted by others.

Why would somebody, born more than 20 years after WW 2, adopt these soldiers you probably ask yourself. I can't explain. I think it has to do with a sense of obligation to these men. They gave the most precious thing they possessed, namely their life, for us to live our lives like we do now.

This following text (from the wall of the cemetery entrance) says it all I believe.

**HERE WE AND ALL WHO SHALL HEREAFTER LIVE IN FREEDOM WILL BE REMINDED THAT TO THESE MEN AND THEIR COMRADES, WE OWE A DEBT TO BE PAID WITH GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THEIR SACRIFICE, AND WITH THE HIGH RESOLVE THAT THE CAUSE FOR WHICH THEY DIED SHALL LIVE.**

To honour these men, I am planning to make a commemorative frame and I have acquired some items to put in there, together with the crew photograph and pictures of the wall inscriptions.



The 44th BG patch and the "flying eight balls" patch shown are RKO Movie Studio replica's

The 44th BG patch and the "flying eight balls" patch shown are RKO Movie Studio replica's

A Purple Heart Medal and an Air Medal is the next thing on my list to acquire for this frame.

I'm also going to build a model (1/48) of the "Cactus" looking as close to the original as possible, for static display in my office at home.

During an email conversation, Don Prater asked me to write an article about this and the result you have just read.

#### More information:

The foundation that arranges the adoptions for the Margraten cemetery has it's own website (also in English) and you can read more

about their history at: <http://www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl/englich/index1.html>.

In case you are a relative of a buried soldier and wish to contact the person that has adopted the grave, I would suggest to contact this foundation. They are willing to make the contact between relative and adopter

If there are readers that know things about the "Cactus" or any of the crewmembers or know of living relatives of one of them, please contact me,

Don Prater or Roger Fenton.

With regards,

Rob Willemsen (The Netherlands)

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Larry Herpel, nephew of Virgil Fouts, wants to know whether anybody has a picture of **Cactus**. Fouts was pilot on **Cactus**. It was the first 506 plane to be lost. So it might have been photographed on the way across the pond.

## **MY MEMORIES OF CHARLES HUGHES**

(Commander of the 66th Squadron)

By ROBERT LEHNHAUSEN (Commander of 68th Squadron)

Charlie and I first met when we, with our respective newly formed combat crews, were assigned to the same Provisional Training Squadron at Casper (WY) Air Base in early November, 1942. We saw and interacted with each other every day as we learned all the elements of flying and commanding a B-17 crew. We flew our brand new B-17's to England, attended a Combat Crew Replacement Center session, then were cruelly told that our two crews and five others out of that batch of 35 crews were to be assigned to B-24s. Charlie did miss some of that meeting because he suffered a bout with measles, but he did catch up with us.

Looking back, I recall, fondly, some of our differences at staff meetings. In that period we were both squadron commanders. Sometimes he could be stubborn and fixed in his opinion or outlook, but he offset that with his great good humor and willingness to compromise in behalf of the general welfare...even with our superiors.

After the war we lost contact with each other, except for brief notes on Christmas cards. Years later, we both began to attend 44th Bomb Group Reunions, and could smile at our old memories.

I remember one incident which showed proof of his superior constitution. We were seated across the table from each other on a Sunday evening at the Shipdham Officers Mess. We had Boston Cream Pie for dessert. Charlie was famed for possessing a very good appetite and loving desserts. He had eaten his serving of pie. Someone else at the table chose not to eat their dessert and offered it to Charlie. After finishing off this second piece, a third was offered and he accepted with delight. A few hours later, chaos developed among the combat officers who had eaten at the mess hall that evening. The small Base Hospital was overwhelmed with men wrenching in stomach discomfort, including **Colonel Gibson**. So many of the combat officers were affected that we were 'stood down' (off of operations) for two days. It was later determined that the cause of the problem was botulism that had developed in the Boston Cream Pie. The punch line of this story is that one unaffected officer was Charlie Hughes. He ate three uninfected desserts!

Charlie Hughes was truly a courageous airman. He made a great contribution to victory in Europe, and helped make major strides in aeronautics in his years at the Pentagon.

### **DO YOU WANT TO BUY A BRICK?**

The Soldier's Walk at the Heritage Education Center in Carlisle has an amazing number of bricks with the Flying Eight Ball logo. Around the edges of the Walk are huge bricks called pavers that herald our leaders and our heroes. 8" x 8" bricks cost \$150. They have room for a logo, your name, rank, squadron number and name of the Group - the 44th. 100 years from now, your grandchildren will be able to find your name and see what you did on that splendid plane, the B-24. Contact me. I'll help you design it. (Ruth Morse, 717 846-8948)



*12 March 1945 the Allies were slowing the Germans by hitting U-Boat Yards and continuing their blitz on oil and rails.*

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

Bombing through clouds, more than 1,200 Fortresses and Liberators of the 8th Air Force attacked German submarine construction yards at Bremen, Hamburg and Kiel, and spiraled down loads on eight oil refineries in the first two cities.

The raids climaxed a big week end for both the 8th and the RAF. On Saturday more than 1,350 Forts and Libs continued the drive to cut Nazi communications to the Ruhr by aiming an assault at interlocking rail lines running from the area. Three marshalling yards in and near Dortmund and other targets north and east of the Ruhr were bombed, also through the clouds.

Captain Firman Mack (506 Sq.) led 33 ships from the Group to the Marshalling Yards at Wetzlar, Germany. Bombing was by H2X with unobserved results. Enemy opposition was nonexistent. Fighter support was good. There were 33 ships in the formation.

### CAPTAIN FIRMAN MACK'S REPORT

Our mission to Wetzlar got complicated almost at once. At some point on the way to the Group forming area, the airplane suddenly filled with acrid smoke. Everyone except me was coughing, hacking and gasping, trying to put on their oxygen masks. Fortunately, I had put on my mask before we left the ground because I was pretty busy during form-up. After the people got their masks on, someone in the waist told me that **Grover Logan** (*Tail Gunner*) had triggered a smoke bomb accidentally while walking through the bomb bay. After a certain amount of confusion, we got the bomb bay doors open and dropped the 100 pound smoke bomb into the 10/10 cloud cover below us. I never could find out where that bomb landed. Either the people didn't know or they didn't want to tell me.

After we got rid of that bomb, the smoke cleared out of our drafty old B-24 pretty rapidly. However, our troubles were not over. I received a call from the waist that the acid from the bomb had sprayed Logan in the face, and he was unable to wear an oxygen mask. If he continued the mission with us, he would surely die of anoxia. It shouldn't happen to a nice guy like Logan. We had a little powwow in the cockpit. The guy that was riding Command Pilot (**David Saylor**) that day said, "You can't go back!". I guess we already knew that because we knew that we were expendable. On the way to the target, you were working for the Government, but after you dropped your bombs, you had the luxury of working for yourself.

While I was still trying to figure out what to do about this situation, the waist called me and said, "Logan wants to bail out!" I had another short powwow with the navigator (**Murray Margolies**) who said, "If he's going to do it, he had better hurry because we are approaching the coast". I called the waist and told Logan to go ahead, but he shouldn't open his chute until he hit the clouds below us, which were at about 5,000 feet. (We were then about 13,000 feet.) The wind was behind us, and if he drifted too far, he might end up in the drink. Logan said OK; and shortly after that, he bailed out. The guys in the waist said he opened his chute almost before he got out of the plane. I think he came down somewhere around Ipswich.

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I don't remember much about the mission, but when we returned to Base, our revetment was swarming with staff cars. I seem to remember that General Johnson was among those present. In the uproar someone said, "We found one of the people who bailed out, but we can't find the other two."

It took a little while to figure that out, but it seems that someone in the formation had reported that we bailed out three people. The "two people" who were missing were Logan's pants and jacket which had been thrown out because they were smoldering from the acid.

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*(Sgt. Logan spent two weeks in the hospital, but returned to join the crew for their last two missions. The Mack crew's last was to Hallein, Austria, the last 44th mission of the war.)*

## MEMORIES OF FRANK OREHOWSKY

Tail Gunner, Jack Twitter Crew, 506 Squadron

I flew 18 missions, many decoy missions and diversion missions to confuse the Germans, their fighters and ack-ack. We lost our original plane and flew Tinker Belle when another crew used it on our stand down day, and they were shot down. That's how we started to use Down De Hatch on alternating missions with other crews.

I came home with the last cadre of 44th on the Queen Mary out of Scotland. We closed down Shipdham Airfield, disposing of the remaining equipment and planes before we left. Some came by flying planes back, and some planes were sold to the British.

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*(Tinker Belle was lost on 2 March 1945, shot down by flak on a mission to the Marshaling Yards at Plauen, Germany. It was the last recorded combat casualty of the war. The pilot was KIA; all others became POW, and nine days later, the first platoon of the 78th Division set them free.*





## FOLDED WINGS

*'Tis hard to part when friends are dear - Perhaps t'will cost a sigh, a tear.  
Say not good night - but in some brighter clime, bid me good morning.*

Anna Letitia Barbauld

**Armstrong, Charles** 66th Squadron  
Captain Armstrong was a pilot who flew 26 missions, the first 13 August 1943, the last on 24 August 1944. He arrived in Shipdham, and was immediately sent to Africa, joining the first group that flew to Wiener Neustadt.

Armstrong's early missions was as a Co-Pilot, flying with **Richard Comen** and **Robert Ferber**. He moved to the left seat on his third mission, and flew on such awesome missions as the second trip to Wiener Neustadt, Kjeller, Foggia and more. He flew with Command pilots **Frederick Dent** and **James Kahl**. On D-Day he flew 2 missions: Colleville/St. Laurent and Caen (Vire).

Armstrong flew in **Battle Axe, Princess Charlotte/Sure Shot, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, I'll Get By** and many unnamed planes.

On 8 May 1944 he rose to the level of Captain, and on his last two missions, he flew as Command Pilot.

Millie, his wife of 62 years states that she has little knowledge of his combat record in Shipdham. He did tell her that he was in the group that flew to Africa, and one of his funniest memories was that his tent caught fire on the day he was leaving. It happened on Friday the 13th!

After the War, he attended Indiana University, and was a member of their football team. Later he moved to Florida State University, and was involved in sports at that facility.

The Armstrongs had four children, twelve grandchildren and six great grandchildren. They were living in Talahassee at the time of his death.

**Blatchley, Charles** #19431 68th Squadron 6 October 2010 Lt. Blatchley was a Bombardier on the **Thomas Kay** crew. He flew 34 missions, the

first on 19 July 1944, The Kay crew flew in seven different aircrafts, **T S Tessie/ Beck's Bad Boys, Jose Carioca, Corky, Gipsy Queen, Flak Magnet, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch** and **Lili Marlene**. Blatchley's last two missions were with the **Walter Franks** crew.

After the war, Blatchley was employed by the Worthington Bio-Chemical Corporation, advancing to the level of Production Manager. He married Dorothy Wagner; the couple had two children, a son Brian and a daughter Leigh who died early in life. According to Brian, the couple lived in Freehold Township in New Jersey, a municipality for which Blatchley served several years as Mayor.

News of Blatchley's death came to **Robert Lehnhausen** from Blatchley's longtime friend, **Myron Brewster**. According to Lehnhausen, Blatchley and Brewster, both Bombardiers, had maintained their friendship throughout the years, attending both 44th BG and 68th Squadron Reunions.

He stated that there existed an admirable and unusual bond among the Thomas Kay crew.

**Butler, John E.** #19613 66th Squadron 2 July 2010 Lt. Butler was a Navigator on many crews. He arrived in Shipdham several weeks before D-Day; having been trained in using the GEE equipment, he flew with many crews: **Robert Knowles, Jack Wind, Raymond Craig, Usser Mustapa, Cleatis McDonell, William Earlywine, Albert Leghorn** and **James Williams**. Butler flew with many Command Pilots: **Frank Elliott, C. L. Lowell, S. L. Francine, George Player, Charles Hughes, Kenneth Comer, Spencer Hunn, L. L. Johnson, J. A. McGregor, Joseph Gilbert, Elmer Hammer** and **Eugene Snavelly**.





## FOLDED WINGS

On his 27 missions, he flew in the following planes: *Mary Harriet, Southern Comfort II, I'll be Back! Feather Merchant, El Capitan, Sabrina III, I'll Get By, Bi U Baby, Sand Box Special, Fifinella, Jail Bait, Glory Bee* and *Miss Marion*.

Butler did an excellent job, recording information about his missions. And wrote a number of stories which appeared in the 8 Ball Tails. He published a book of his WWII experiences, including letters he wrote home from Shipdham. Much of that information is available on the 44th Bomb Group Website.

He was living in Austin, Texas at the time of his passing. Information of his death came from both **Lee Aston** and **Sterling Dobbs**.

**Couch, Thomas H.** #19876 506 Squadron 28 May 2010 Sgt. Couch was a Tail Gunner on the **Eugene T. Cunningham** crew. His first of four missions was 19 March 1945. The crew flew in two unnamed planes, also in *Down De Hatch* and *Sabrina III*. All missions were into Germany, preparing the way for the advancing troops. His last mission was 18 April 1945.

After the war, Couch was called back into service; he served 3 months in the Korean conflict. He became employed in the paper industry. Misfortune struck when he was struck by an automobile, causing him to lose his leg. After that, ill health overcame him and he passed away in Marietta, Georgia. Couch and his wife Bonnie had been married fifty one years.

**Dubrock, John W.** #20063 66th Squadron 11 December 2009 S/Sgt. Dubrock was a gunner on many crews, but most on the **James N. Williams** crew. His first of 18 missions was 1 August 1944, his last, 14 April 1945. He flew with the following crews: **Dai-**

**ly Thompson, Jack Ketchum, Charles Hess, James Derrick, Roblee Perrault, John Muldoon, Ted Williams** and **Norman Nutt**.

Dubrock held all gunner positions, several times riding the nose turret and serving as togglier. He flew in many unnamed planes, including *My Peach, Henry, Jail Bait, Fifinella, Jersey Jerk* and *Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch*.

News of Dubrock's death came from his longtime friend, Warren McPherson, with whom he flew his earliest missions. Dubrock passed away in Iron River, MI, as reported by his niece.

**Ennis, Lewis S.** #20128 67th Squadron 17 August 2010 S/Sgt. Ennis was a Nose and Tail Gunner on the **George B. Haag** crew. Previous to coming to Shipdham, Ennis flew 22 missions with the 492nd Group, 857th Squadron.

The Database credits the crew with six missions. However his personal record indicates that he flew missions on *Tinker Belle*, a plane that was originally assigned to the 492nd Bomb Group.

His first of eight missions with the 44th Bomb Group was 14 August 1944. The Haag crew flew in *Phyllis, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle* and *Mi Akin Ass*. Their last mission was 25 August 1944.

After the war, Ennis was employed by the Dupont Corporation. He served as a volunteer fireman in Wilmington, Delaware. He and his late wife Minnie are survived by a daughter, two grandsons and four great grandchildren.

News of Ennis's passing came from his son-in-law, Larry Bonam.

**Glazer, William** #20389 66th Squadron Date unknown Sgt. Glazer was a Radio & Radar Repair Specialist. News of his death came from the 2 AD Journal.



## FOLDED WINGS

**Goldstein, Jack #20406** 68th Squadron Goldstein was an Assistant Operations Clerk, working with **Gene Holmes**. According to Robert Lehnhausen, Goldstein was recognized as a rather brusque-speaking man, a contrast to his superior officer, known for his gentle manner.

The Operations Department at Shipdham had the task of assigning men and crews to each mission. Lehnhausen believes decisions about which crews were given time off in Rest Homes, were also made by the Operations Office.

After the war, Goldstein was considered an outstanding entrepreneur. He was involved in Steel & Pipe Supply Company in Manhattan, Kansas, a company named the Kansas Business of the year in 2004. He was active in many community efforts and sports activities in Manhattan.

Goldstein is survived by his wife, Joann Stevenson, two step children, two grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Information about his death came from his wife Joann.

**Gray, John Allan #25354** 68th Squadron was interred in Arlington National Cemetery on 25 April 2008. 1st Lt. Gray was the Navigator on **Robert A. Peter** crew. His first mission was 30 October 1944 to Hamburg/Uetersen aboard TS Tessie.

During his time with the Peter crew, he flew in *Flak Magnet*, *Galavantin' Gal* and *Puritanical Witch*. During the latter part of his combat service, Gray was promoted to GEE/PFF Navigator and flew lead on several missions in a number of crews. On mission 309, Lt. Gray served as PFF navigator in the lead plane with command pilot Lt. Col. **William R. Cameron**, a decorated veteran of the Ploesti raid. His final mission to Hallein, Austria on 25 April, 1945 was also the group's final mission.

In 1949, Mr. Gray received a BS degree from Penn State University where he was a member of the track and cross country teams. After he received his law degree from George Washington University in 1951, he became a special agent with the FBI. Mr. Gray completed his long and distinguished federal service as an administrative judge with the Department of Labor.

John leaves his wife Donna, two children, three stepchildren and three grandchildren. John and Donna lived in Springfield, VA, Wilmington, NC and Florence, SC.

**Hess, Lester #20641** 68th Squadron 27 November 2009 Staff Sgt. Hess was a Tail gunner on the **William D. Kelly** crew. He flew 25 missions, the first on 6 August 1944. He flew all missions with the Kelly crew, but also with the following Command Pilots: **J. D. Pennypacker**, **H. Sather (NMI)**, **J. N. Keck**, **A. Haydak (NMI)**, and **Charles Hughes**. The crew flew in the following planes: *Lone Ranger*, *T S Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys*, *Flak Magnet*, *Gipsy Queen*, *Corky*, *Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch*, *Lili Marlene*, *Louisiana Belle* and *Hellza Droppin*.

Information about Hess's death came from his longtime friend, **Jean Bressler**, a Tech/Sgt. working in the 14th Combat Wing. Their friendship had preceded the war, and continued until Hess's death.

After the war Hess became a cabinet maker, later was engaged in sales. He and his wife Lucille had four children.

**Hughes, Charles #20750** 66th Squadron 18 October 2010 Col. Hughes, a pilot, was the Squadron Commander of the 66th Squadron. His first mission was to Kiel on 14 May 1943, flying as Co-Pilot with **Rowland Gentry**. After two missions with Gen-



## FOLDED WINGS

try, on 2 July 1943, he moved to the other seat and flew with his life long friend, **Spencer Hunn**, as Co-Pilot. The two flew together through all the missions to Italy, Sicily, Naples and Rome, then to the 'big one' to Ploesti. **Flossie Flirt** was badly shot up, so the two pilots made the decision to go to Turkey where they were interned.

An AAF Attache aided in their escape aboard an Italian vessel, and two months later he was back in England, flying again. When Col. **Frederick Dent**, commander of the 66th Squadron was seriously injured, Hughes became Squadron Commander.

In his 28 missions, he flew with **Shelby Irby, John Diehl, Frank Slough** and **George Martin**, sometimes as an Observer, other times as Command Pilot. He flew in **Flossie Flirt, Queen Marlene, Big Fat Butterfly, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Sabrina III** and **Hellza Droppin**.

His last mission was 18 April 1945.

Returning to the States in May, 1945, Hughes flew B-29s in Mexico. When the Pacific War was over, he took advantage of the GI Bill, going to Stanford to complete his education. While there, he returned to active duty in the regular Army as a Major on flying status. After graduation, he was assigned to the Research and Development Board in the Pentagon. This was followed by five years in California, involved in the development of Ballistic Missiles, followed by five years of R & D at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. His last tour of duty was Commander of the Air Force Satellite Test Center in Sunnyvale, California, the Control Center of all Air Force Satellites. He was part of the team that developed the technique for recovering the Space Capsule, all classified work at that time.

Col. Hughes retired in 1971. He has one living daughter, (having lost one

daughter) and three grandsons. Preceded in death by his wife Maria, he was living in San Juan, California at the time of his death.

**Kesling, Haven S. (Jack) #20912**  
66th Squadron 3 September 2010 Lt  
Kesling was a Navigator on the **Norman Nutt** crew. His first of 22 missions was on 6 February 1945. All but one of the Nutt missions were into Germany. They flew in **Glory Bee, Henry, Fifinella, Mi Akin Ass** and **Jersey Jerk**. Their last mission was 20 April 1945.

After the war Kesling joined the Air Force Reserves, and was called back to active duty during the Korean War. Later he was active in the Perma Stone business. He became a manager for DX Oil in several cities. Later he moved to Des Moines where he became a manager for Sears.

He leaves his wife of 65 years, June Manthai. The couple had five sons, one of whom was lost in early life. They had 8 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.

News of his death came from his pilot, Norman Nutt.

**Litris, Harry (Aristides) #23012**  
506 Squadron 12 April 2010 S. Sgt.  
Latris was a gunner on seven different crews, filling in three gunner positions – Left & Right Waist and Belly. He flew with seven different crews and eight different Command Pilots. His first of 27 missions was 7 January 1944; his last on 6 December 1944.

Latris flew in eight different planes: **Lucky Strike, Peep Sight, M'Darling, Prince/Princ-Ass/Princess, Consolidated Mess, Ole Cock, Hell's Kitchen, Sabrina II** and **Passion Pit**.

The crews he flew with were: **Dean Miller, Paul Blow, J. W. Grow, Daily Thompson, Billy Rosser, Harold Koven, Billy Rosser** and **Richard Hru-**





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by. The Command Pilots with whom he flew were: **David Saylor, Frank Slough, C. C. Parmele, Reginald Phillips, Robert Felber, W. A. Polking (from 392nd Sq.), James Kahl, James McAtee and Frank Davido,**

On D-Day Litras flew two missions: Caen (Vire) and Colleville/St. Laurent.

After the War, Litras was in the restaurant business. News of his death came from his wife Anne. The couple had been married 61 years. They had 5 children. At the time of his death, the couple was living in East Farmingdale, New York.

**Lee, Dale V. #21076** 506 Squadron 18 May 2010 Lee was a gunner on the crew. His first mission was 2 July 1943. Upon arrival to Shipdham, the **Dale Lee** crew was immediately dispatched to Africa, where the crew flew the missions into Italy and Sicily, in preparation for the invasions that were under planning.

Lee flew in *Heaven Can Wait, Pete the Pom Inspector, Southern Comfort, Ruth-Less, Timb-A-A-AH* and *Jenny/Lady Luck*.

On 1 August 1943 the Lee crew followed Col. Leon Johnson to Ploesti, and arrived back safely. Fifteen days later they went to Foggia in *Southern Comfort* and the plane was brought down by fighters.

Lee was part of the group of escapees from an Italian prison. His dramatic story of crossing across the Italian mountains, constantly pursued by Germans, has been recorded in the *8 Ball Tails*. When he finally was able to get back to Benina Main, he received this Distinguished Flying Cross award from **Jimmy Doolittle**.

After the War, Lee became involved in dairy farming and cattle investing. He was preceded in death by his wife Alice, who had been WWII nurse, active in caring for the Jewish prisoners

who had survived the Holocaust. Dale & Lee had five children, 14 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. He was residing in Chandler, Arizona at the time of his death. News of his passing came from his daughter Kathy.

*Ed. Note: There is a discrepancy in the name of the pilot of Southern Comfort: The database lists Dale Lee; Will Lundy's book, Roll of Honor and Casualties lists Horace Austin.*

**Leedy, Donald W. #21077** 68th Squadron 12 January 2000 S/Sgt. Leedy was an Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Ted Williams** crew. Their first of sixteen missions was on 22 February 1945. In the two months that this crew was flying, they flew in eight different aircrafts: *Three Kisses for Luck, Scotty Mac, Mi Akin Ass, T.S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Jose Carioca, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Louisiana Belle*, and several unnamed aircrafts. Leedy's last mission was 14 April 1945. Information of his death came from the Social Security Records.

**Logsdon, Francis H. #24704** 66th Squadron 24 December 2002 Lt. Logsdon was a Navigator on the **Harry D. Yoder** crew. He flew all thirteen missions with this crew, and with six different Command Pilots: **J. I. Turnbull, Spencer Hunn, Frank Davido, Robert A. Johnson, George Player, and A. L. Johnson**. The Yoder crew flew in *Gipsy Queen, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Patsy Ann II* and *The Banana Barge*. On D-Day they flew 2 missions: Colleville/St. Laurent and Caen (Vire)

Logsdon's first mission was 12 March 1945; the last 28 June 1944. Information about his death came from the Social Security Records.

**Mansmith, Harold E. #21184** Squadron or auxiliary assignment un-



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known 16 December 2001 There is no record of his services. Information of his death came from the Social Security Records.

**Martin, William H.** #21212 Squadron or auxiliary assignment unknown 8 September 1987. There is no record of his services. Source of information of his death – Social Security Records.

**John E. McKay** #21282 506 Squadron 25 September 1998 Lt. McKay was a Navigator on the **Myron H. Butler** crew. They flew eight missions in *Cape Cod Special II*, the first on 7 July 1944; the last, seven days later on 14 July 1944.

The target on their last mission was an armaments center in Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany, near Munich. Before they reached the target, flak hit one wing, creating a large hole. Knowing they could not continue, they headed toward Switzerland. Another burst of flak knocked out one engine, and the rear stabilizer was shot off. The crew was forced to bail out of the disabled plane, and were immediately captured. They were imprisoned at Stalag I, Barth, on the Baltic Sea. They were liberated by the Russians.

Four planes were lost on that mission; 2 men were KIA; 20 were interned and returned; 18 became POW.

Information of McKay's death came from the Social Security Records.

**Melson, Howard J.** #19895 66th Squadron 2 October 1997 T/Sgt. Melson was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **George Tedford** crew, and once on the **John Winchester** crew. On one mission he served as a Nose Gunner and Toggler. His first mission was 11 January 1944. He flew in *Queen Marlene, Scourge of the Skies, Big Fat Butterfly, Chief's Delight/Chief Wapeli* and *Hell's Kitchen*.

On 18 March 1944, flying in *Scourge of the Skies* on a mission to wipe out an aircraft assembly plant in Friedrichshafen, Germany, the plane was hit by flak, and both engines on the left side became inoperable. The pilot took the plane to Switzerland and all members of the crew became internees.

At one point Melson decided to escape, but was captured at the Italian border, and was sent to the 'hell hole' at Wauwilermoos. Again he found a way to escape, but was apprehended again, for which he was placed in solitary confinement. While being transferred back to Wauwilermoos, he escaped again, was able to get to Lyons, France and was helped by the Resistance Fighters.

Melson and his wife Jeanette had two children. They were living in Datsboro, Delaware at the time of his death.

**Muff, Thomas D.** #21441 506 Squadron 27 October 2010 S/Sgt. Muff was a gunner on the **Walter Scott** crew, serving in all positions. On his 15th mission he became ill with appendicitis, underwent surgery, and after that flew with the following crews: **Charles Adkins, John J. Ryan, Jr., Thomas Waters, Robert Hoisington** and **Ray Criesielski**.

Muff's first of 30 missions was 14 May 1944. He flew in nine different aircrafts: *Ole Cock, My Everlovin' Gal, Gallavantin' Gal, M'Darling, Southern Comfort II, Down De Hatch, Southern Comfort III, Sabrina III* and *Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose*. His last mission was 30 October 1944.

After the war, Tom became a meat cutter. In time he and Dorothy started their own business, Tom Muff's Meat Market in Bradenton, Florida. The market operated for 25 years.

Tom took up woodworking, and the couple made and sold crafts as a hobby,



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traveling all over Florida. He also had a love of antique cars. He enjoyed exhibiting them, and won many trophies.

Dorothy passed away in October 2008. The couple had two boys and two girls, four grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

**Payton, John #23967** 67th Squadron 8 June 2010 T/Sgt. Payton served in many position in the planes in which he flew. According to the Database, he was first a Gunner, then a Nose Gunner and Togglier; and finally, an Engineer and Top Turret Gunner. He flew most of his missions with the **Jack Thomas** crew, but also with **Keith Cookus, D. H. Dines, Charles E. Hughes, Gilbert Abell, Charles Mercer** and **Rockford Griffith**. In his later missions, he flew with the following Command Pilots: **Frank D. Slough, Howard Holladay** and **Spencer Hunn**. Payton's first of 29 missions was 2 February 1944, his last was 18 March 1944. In preparation for D-Day, these missions were directed toward Military Installations, Aerdromes and Oil Refineries in both France and Germany.

Payton flew in the following planes: **F for Freddie, Shack Rabbit/Star Spangled Hell, The Impatient Virgin, D-Barfly, Tuffy, Judy's Buggy, Raggedy Ann II, Lil Cookie, Mi Akin Ass, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle** and **Phyllis**.

After the War, Payton became a professional photographer. He set up a business in Houston, Texas, where he met and married Nancy, who assisted him in his business. The couple had six children, twelve grandchildren and one great grandchild. They were residing in Bastrop, Texas at the time of his death.

News of his death came from his wife Nancy.

**Pursley, Charles E. #25185** 506 Squadron 3 March 2010 S/Sgt. Pursley held several positions on the **Rob-**

**ert Hoisington** crew. According to the Database, he flew 2 missions as a Ball Turret Gunner, many as Bombardier/ Nose Gunner & Togglier.

The crew flew 34 missions, the first on 26 August 1944, most into Germany, hitting bridges, tunnels and refineries. They flew in **Sierra Blanca, Consolidated Mess, Clean Sweep/ Dragon Nose, Southern Comfort III, Hairless Joe** and **Joplin Jalopy**. Their last mission was 6 February 1945.

At the time of his death, Pursley and his wife Jeanette were living in Glendale, Arizona. Jeanette reported his death to Jackie Roberts.

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*Ed. Note: Warren McPherson pointed out errors in other Folded Wings reports: S/Sgt. Robert Rusch was credited with 25 missions when he had flown 30; Everett Wellman was credited with 23 missions when he had also flown 30. The incorrect numbers are in the official records, which were the result of many records being lost when the war in Europe was over and the Air Corps was readying itself for the battle in the Pacific. The 8 Ball Tails tries to produce genuine truth, but frequently the airmen's own records are the only ones that are totally accurate.*

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*If any member knows of incomplete combat records, and can produce the information, Arlo Bartch will make the correction on the Web Page. Do you know how to get to the Web Page? Go to [44thbombgroup.com](http://44thbombgroup.com), click on database, click on flight crews, enter the flyer's name, and the computer will produce the flights that each man flew. If worse comes to worse, call the Webmaster, Arlo Bartsch: 501 922-5247.*



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## **THE MIGHTY EIGHTH MUSEUM**

The Mighty Eighth Museum is an educational edifice that exhibits all aspects of WWII in Europe. The 8th Air Force was activated in Savannah, Georgia on 28 January 1942, and is the largest air force that has ever been created.

Under its directions were the B-17s, B-24s, P-47s and P-51s. General Ira Eaker was its Commander. The Mighty Eighth flew 4,145 missions; 135,000 men flew combat in this powerful force. The two most disastrous were Schweinfurt for the B-17s; Ploesti for the B-24s. The Museum has dramatic exhibits to these two missions.