

# 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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## PURITANICAL WITCH

68th Squadron

*Puritanical Witch's* last name originally started with a 'B', but when WAAFs came onto the base, Col. **Snaveley** commanded that the name be changed to something more respectable.

She came to Shipdham on 26 June 1944, and flew 78 missions. On 22 March 1945, she crashed while attempting to take off, as the pilot could not get the plane airborne. In the crash, the nose section was completely twisted off. It was salvaged 22 March 45.

Many crews flew in *Puritanical Witch/Puritanical Bitch*, the **Roy Boggs, Vincent Almoina, Dennis Murphy, Reuben Ricketts, Thomas Waters, Walter Franks** and many more.



Can anybody identify the two men in the Jeep?

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**PURITANICAL WITCH A/K/A PURITANICAL BITCH  
HAD HER DEVOTED FOLLOWERS**



Unnamed Armorerers carrying bomb to plane. How heavy was this bomb?



Can anyone name the Crew Chief of *Puritanical Bitch*?  
This picture was taken before the WAAFs arrived at Shipd-  
ham.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As I write this here in Florida in March, I hope that many of you who have experienced a real tough winter are finally seeing signs of spring.

Our friends at Shipdham do not forget us. Peter Steele is starting a project that he has thought of for some time. He is having a memorial board built that will contain the names of all those 44thers who lost their lives in combat. The names will be etched onto strips of light colored wood and mounted on a large wood framed board which will be placed in the entrance to the flying club at Shipdham.

As you know, Peter has done a lot of work as curator of the museum there. He has labeled and mounted all the collection of pictures that are displayed in one of the rooms. Many others have also contributed to maintaining our presence there, such as Eric King who with his son installed the large B-24 cut out mounted on the hangar.

Our treasurer, Jackie Roberts, reports that 231 members have paid their 2011 dues and that there are 181 life members. Jackie does an outstanding job of keeping our membership lists up to date, which involves calling all the life members each year to check on their status.

I sure hope to see many of you at Savannah in October. This may well be our last chance to get together and tell our war stories!!!

*George Washburn*

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### **ROBERT VANCE (506TH SQ) AND ALEX TOTH (66TH SQ)**

#### **A Friendship of Two Gunners That Endured Through War and Peace**

A seventy year friendship between Alex Toth and Bob Vance began on a train when both Al and Bob discovered that they had both come from towns on the Ohio River. Bob had been in a weapons platoon of a rifle company, Company G, 309th Infantry, 78th Division. He transferred to the Air Force Aviation Cadet Training, and both were on enroute to Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi.

Circumstances took each of the two Ohioans to different technical programs, and the next time they met was in the Mess Hall at Shipdham. The two chatted on March 23 – the night before the low level Wesel drop, and when *Southern Comfort III* did not return, Alex continued to have faith that he would see his friend again. Years later, they reconnected with a phone call when a woman in a local bar along the Ohio River remembered Bob and gave Alex his California phone number. From then on, the 44th BG Reunions were opportunities to rehash old experiences..

"In my time in the infantry, my time in the AAF, and my time in the USAF during the Korean War, I have met a lot of nice fellows and made a lot of good friends," Bob reminisced. "One fellow stands out the most, and that fellow is Al Toth, a great guy and a dear friend."

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*Ed. Note: Very recently Vance received word that his longtime friend had passed away.*

## LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



Hello again from your old ETO base in England. Station 115, Shipdham, has been pretty inactive in the immediate post Christmas period due to overdosing on some pretty fierce East Anglian winter weather. We have had a foot or more of snow, and frequent 60-70 MPH winds. (Which is pretty mild compared to some parts of the UK that had well over 3 ft of snow and winds recorded at 113 MPH)...

We were saddened to hear that time had taken its toll on the men of the 44th . and that the veterans association was to wind down over the next few years...we somehow always had it in our minds that you guys were sort-of immortal and would go on forever. But you can rest assured the memory of who you were and what you did during that terrible time of WWII will be kept alive here in East Anglia and your story will be told and re-told for decades to come. To emphasise that, I am delighted tell you that I recently attended a Norfolk primary school at Bloefield , where one 11 year old student did a project on the 467th BG at Rackheath, so 2nd AD memories are safe in the hands of the future generations.

On an associated note I have to add that I had a chat with 'our' landlady, Mrs Paterson, only last week, and she was still looking remarkably bright and 'chipper' despite the day being many degrees below zero.

Following up on that, we have had a kind donation from a local firm to print out the 44th BG roll of honour, so it may take its rightful place in the entrance of the main club building. Steve Adams, Peter Steele, Mike Artherton and I will be working on this over the coming weeks. No doubt we can persuade Doug Mounter, the club's official photographer, to take a few photos, for me to send over later in the year to go in 'tails'.

Interestingly, I had a very old, brown, faded newspaper cutting passed to me for the museum, detailing the August holiday rank swap day organised by Leon Johnson, when he and his driver Mike Fusano 'swapped roles' for the duration. The article also mentions Colonel Gibson and Colonel Walker as entering into the full spirit of the day, with one doing guard duty and the other KP! (We Brits are a tad more 'stiff upper lip' than that, so we would have found that a pretty quaint sort of thing to do) The paper was I believe a Norwich based one, but as with a lot of old press cuttings, it is not possible to be sure.

The 44th Bomb Group Memorial Garden is looking a little wind blown after all the ravages of a rather long and harsh winter, so Mike Artherton and his stalwart gardening team will soon be out with fork and spade, breathing fresh life into it, ready for this year's crop of visitors.

Well the 'snowdrops' (the English flowering variety) are starting to show, so it must soon be spring...so look after yourselves...more next time.

Best wishes from all the Shipdham Team  
Peter

## **RICHARD H. SMART, ENGINEER, 506 SQUADRON REMEMBERS PREGNANT PEG/FLYING LOG AND THE MISSION TO KIEL**

On 6 July 1944, the **Conrad Menzel** crew joined the 28 other 44th BG Liberators on the mission on the Baltic Sea. T/Sgt. Smart described that event:

"After five hours of flying, we dropped our bombs amid heavy flak from 22,000 feet. Immediately following bombs away, we were attacked out of the sun, by a formation of elite German F 109s. From our window we could see the fighters growing larger. Their yellow nose insignias were as plain as day, with their wing guns blinking and puffs of cannon smoke coming from their propeller spinners as they fired directly at us. We heard and felt some of their shots hitting our ship. Our gunners fired back as the fighters dived through the formation.

"The turret gunner, Sgt. **James Branson** got two of the attackers. We all knew that we had sustained severe damage, as our plane began to lose altitude. Our pilot, Lt. **Conrad Menzel** did his best to maintain flying speed while we quickly assessed our damage. The maintenance engine was hit by cannon fire and feathered. All propeller controls were damaged, so we couldn't increase our rpm or power output. The hydraulics were shot out, which made all the gun turrets inoperable. Shrapnel had ripped through the navigator's table, wounding Lt. **Raymond Bennett** (Navigator) and severely cutting his face. Amazingly, his were the only visible injuries suffered during the attack. If the Luftwaffe had known of our damage, it could have returned to finish us off with little difficulty.

"Owing to our mechanical damage, we were unable to maintain our speed, altitude and position in the formation. Alone, we headed out over the Baltic Sea at approximately 5,000 feet. We opened the bomb-bay doors and balanced ourselves on the catwalk; in an effort to maintain a diminishing altitude, we jettisoned guns and ammunition. At one point, we threatened to toss our Sgt. **James Branson**; he was not only our heaviest crew member, but also, we were sure, the heaviest gunner in the entire Air Corps. With the steady loss of altitude and air-speed, we faced certain death if we landed in the frigid North Sea. We were left with few choices for survival. Should we head for Sweden and certain interment, or attempt to return to our home base in Shipdham, flying some 600 miles over enemy-controlled Denmark and the North Sea, where there was a possibility of ditching? We decided to take our chances and to press on to England.

"At last we reached England and our Shipdham base. Still ahead of us was getting safely on the ground with only one pass; there was no possibility of a go-around. With little or no fuel, 100 octane gas fumes permeated our ship. Our shot-out hydraulics left us without any brakes, flaps or nose gear and only the right main gear. During landing, our nose settled on the runway; all switches were off. The plane's underside disintegrated in a show of sparks and debris. All we could do was ride it out. We veared off the paved runway and came to rest on grass. Someone yelled, "Let's get out of here before she blows!" Fortunately, the gas fumes did not cause the ship to blow up, and all 10 crew members safely touched the ground.

"Our ship was eventually flown to a repair depot, where it was restructured by chaining a telephone pole in the bomb bay; it was returned to service and appropriately renamed *The Flying Log*.

"August 1944, another crew with a full load of bombs took off in the revamped plane and crashed on takeoff, which killed all 10 men aboard. Sadly for them, *The Flying Log* was their flying coffin."

## **SOME MEMORIES OF NORFOLK CAN'T BE ERASED SAYS ELIZABETH WHITON NOW RESIDING IN ONTARIO, CANADA**

Elizabeth contacted **George Washburn** about her recollection of a crash of a plane at Shipdham in which the explosion was seen miles away. Her family farm was located at the west end of the village of Yaxham. A family member, Adam, assumed the responsibility of caring from the farm, in addition to his own farm. The Ministry of Agriculture established guidelines for gardening, and if the owners did not adhere to the rules, the land would have been taken from them.

Adam was not able to follow other family members who were in battles in France; he was considered medically unfit for service because of a severe hearing loss.

The family was constantly aware that night and day, bombers flew overhead, headed east; and hours later returned, many times in a bedraggled state.

Adam and his horse were about fifty yards from the top of the field on 8 August 1944, when suddenly the earth shook. A great column of smoke straddled the bank of the field. A brilliant fire flared up and then was smothered as black smoke erupted skywards. The reins around Adam's neck pulled taut as the horse reared and then bolted away in a paroxysm of terror. An earth shaking, ear splitting detonation shook the man as he plunged forward, dragged by the horse and tethered to the hoe by the reins around his neck. He hung on to the hoe handles desperately as his flying feet kicked and flailed across the orderly rows of beets. The acrid smell of burning surrounded them, and Adam chilled with horror as he saw a jagged piece of metal the size of a milk pail go flying past them and bury itself in a spray of leaves and soil. Fragments of metal were now whirling all around them. He felt them at his back, flicking across his cap, tugging at his sleeves and striking the field in every direction. The horse ran off, and still tethered to the reins and hoe, Adam stumbled along in pursuit..

Later, an American GI helped Adam's wife find her husband, safe but with multiple wounds from flying metal.

Sixty four years later, Ms Whiton contacted **George Washburn**, telling him of this childhood memory. She was nine years old at the time.

Quite coincidentally, George remembers the day **Pregnant Peg/Flying Log** went down. He did not fly that day, and was walking back from breakfast, when a plane with one engine feathered was flying overhead.

"The pilot went into a left hand turn toward the dead engine side," he stated. "He then started to sink in a nose up attitude which we call mushing (losing altitude in a settling manner, rather than with the nose down as in a dive.) At about 1,000 feet he flipped over onto his back and went straight in. There was a huge explosion and fire, then the bombs started going off in the fire. **Will Lundy's** account says he had 6-1000 pounders aboard. It seems there were that many explosions over a short period of time. Later that day I went up in a British Oxford trainer with a friend of mine, and we circled the wreckage, which appeared as 4 lumps, which were the engines".

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*Ed. Note: The mission was to La Perth Airfield, Romilly, France. **Pregnant Peg/Flying Log** was piloted by **Myron Jacobs**, 506 Squadron. The entire crew was KIA.*



## **LT. JAMES TOMBLIN, NAVIGATOR ON THE LEDFORD CREW, REMEMBERS THE MISSION TO ARNHEM, NETHERLANDS**

The date was September 18 1944, the mission: a re-supply mission to paratroopers who had just been dropped near Arnhem, Netherlands.

"To practice this mission, we had flown in formation over the English countryside at an extremely low level. I lay on my stomach next to the bombsight and looked through the plexiglass nose. We were so low, I could see the ground between blades of grass. We had to pull up to get over small picket fences.

"On the actual mission, we flew in a tree-top level. A 4 engine bomber traveling at 200 mph that low is pretty exciting. German soldiers on the ground were firing at us with rifles. The bombardier in the nose turret would spot a rifleman and then try to tell the waist gunners and the tail turret gunner where the rifleman was (e.g., 10 o'clock, 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock, etc.) but we were traveling too fast for that tactic to be very effective. At that speed, we traveled the length of a football field in one second.

At the drop site, we cut throttle, pulled up to 500 feet and the jumpmaster (our special 11th crew member) kicked out the supplies. I was looking through the Plexiglas nose and saw a paratrooper crossing the field with his arm around a girl – and they had just dropped yesterday!

A rifle bullet hit the hydraulic reservoir tank, located in the top of the fuselage above the flight deck, and the red liquid spilled all over the engineer, Bill Wright. Eddie, (Sharp), the Radio Operator, thought Bill had been shot. Scared him to death.

When we got back to the base, we had to manually crank-down the landing gear and stopping the plane was a little difficult, but we managed OK.

(The story of this immense effort by the paratroopers is in the book "A Bridge Too Far" by Cornelius Ryan and in the movie of the same name.) A Plan by General Montgomery was to drop 35,000 paratroopers 64 miles behind enemy lines and capture the bridge across the Rhine River at Arnhem, Netherlands. To accomplish this, 3 bridges had to be captured intact by paratroopers, to enable a relief column to advance the 64 miles to Arnhem.

The Paratroopers captured all the bridges, including the one at Arnhem, but the relieving division of tanks stopped 5 miles from Arnhem. The paratroopers there were captured. They had held the Rhine Bridge 7 days, and Montgomery said 2 days were all that was required. In my view, this was the biggest boondoggle of the War, and certainly the most tragic.

The total 7 day casualties for all the forces involved – killed, wounded and missing – amounted to more than 17,000. The 24 hour period of D-Day had 10,000-12,000 casualties.

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***Ed. Note: Twelve days after returning from this mission, the Ledford crew went to Hamm, German in 'My Sad Ass'. They were hit with flak, Harry Star, Tail Gunner was KIA. All others became POW. That story was in an early issue of the 8 Ball Tails.***





## **MAJOR DONALD J. WILLIAMS THE WOULD-BE PILOT WHO BECAME AN EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Donald Williams was a student at the University of Idaho when WWII broke out. He was studying Economics and tutoring other students in Accounting, Commerce and Mathematics. He was due to get his Commission through Infantry ROTC in May 1942. The reward for being top of the class was the ability to transfer in grade to the Air Corps or the Marines. He already had a Private License through the Civilian Flight Training Program run by the University. Of course, he chose the Air Corps.

He was all set up to go directly to Flying School when he got a change of orders enroute, to report to the Commanding Officer at Barksdale Field, LA. He reported in, explained his mission, and was told firmly that it was easier to train a Pilot than an Administrator! He was made the Adjutant to the 67th Bombardment Squadron, and had orders to prepare to leave the next day. His assignment was to command the ground echelon, and take them overseas. He was twenty one years of age.

"The trip to England on the Queen was interesting", he recalled. "We were part of a large convoy, and had the misfortune of being intercepted by a German submarine Wolf Pack. It was decided the Queen should make a run for it because of her speed. We were put on a zig zag course – no stabilizers for sound control. I was about the only one on board who did not become ill."

Williams credits the Squadron CO, Captain **Howard Moore**; First Sergeant **Bob Ryan** and Sgt. Major **William Fitzgerald** for teaching him the hurdles of being an Executive Officer. "With their help, I grew up fast," he remembered. On April 8 he rose to the rank of Captain, and was transferred to Group as Adjutant.

"As Summary and General Court Martial Officer, my job was to see that all operations on the base were carried

out properly – the mess hall, transportation etc.

"Once an officer refused to get on a plane for his crew's assigned mission. The rule was that every plane was to have a crew of ten men; and since he would not get on board, the plane did not fly that mission.

"We imposed the death penalty on him, mainly to set an example for others to see that shirking one's duty was not tolerated. Of course I knew the review court would not impose that penalty. Even though I was sure it would not be carried out, I did succeed in making my point.

"Another time an airman had gone to town and did not get back in time to fly his mission, so he was AWOL. His explanation was that when he went to get on the bus at 11:00, the bus was not there. As it happened, I was also in town that night; and I did see that the bus pulled out five minutes to 11:00. So I gave him a free pass. This was when I was at Squadron level. Later when I went to Group, I saw my personnel file. There was a notation in it by Col. **Snavely**, saying 'Watch this man. He is dangerous.'"

Williams has the greatest admiration for the men who flew those bombing missions. He remembers that when the target was Cologne, Germany – sometimes to destroy the Doitch Bridge over the Rhine River or the Noll Marshalling Yards, they were ordered to preserve that ancient cathedral – The Church of Joseph and Mary. When the war was over, the city of Cologne was totally wiped out, but that famous cathedral was spared because of successful pinpoint bombing.

Col. **Eugene Snavely** was Commander when Williams first reported to Shipdham. When Col. **Leon Johnson** became Commander, he found him to be a truly admirable leader and friend. It was notable that after the 44th had

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Leon Johnson (right) at ringside. Donald Williams has his back to the camera. Phyllis Rear-dan (almost hidden from the camera) was from the American Red Cross.

flown their 200th mission, they celebrated 'Reverse Day'. Officers removed all decorations, and Johnson drove his driver, Mike Fusano to the festivities.

"As I recall, unfortunately some of the officers did some drinking that day. This was an insult to the enlisted men."

Williams was proud to join the group that stood at attention when his Commander was presented the Medal of Honor by General 'Jake' Devers.

Williams had gotten interested in boxing while in college. He set

up some matches in Shipdham, and learned that his Commander was also a boxing fan. One of his treasured photos is that of Leon Johnson sitting outside the ring, cheering the boxers.

When it was time to return home, now as a Major, once again he was in charge of delivering the men to their assigned destination. On April 18, 1945, they arrived to New York. Some of the returning parties were to report to Ft. Snelling, MN. As the ranking Officer, Williams was Train Commander. He had armed guards at every station. The train traveled through states and even home cities of the tired men who had won the war and were ready to see their own home. Everyone was sure they were going to be reassigned to B-29s, in preparation for the trip across the Pacific. Of course, the *Enola Gay* and *Bocks Car* solved that problem.

After the War, Williams became a Certified Public Accountant. He engaged in various business enterprises, including being a car dealer for Ford Motor Company. Still a businessman, he owns a large storage facility. He is living in Spokane, Washington; and with his daughter Sharon, is a regular attendee to the 44th BGVA reunions.



The 44th BG has a debt of gratitude to the men in this picture who are playing cards. This is the Photo Section at Shipdham, men who flew with the planes, photographed the action, and left a legacy of photos which are treasures today. Ursel Harvel (smoking a pipe) also wrote a book, *Liberators Over Europe*; which, if you can find it on E-Bay, comes at a very high price.

## SGT. TONY MASTRADONE, MEDICAL CORPSMAN'S MEMORIES OF WWII

As told to his friend Richard Halliday

"When I was looking for a job working in the coal mines of West Virginia, I decided to take a First Aid Course so I could help with injured miners," he remembered. "Later, when I was drafted, the government must have decided that I was qualified for the Medics in the Air Corps."

From Tony's hometown in Clarksburg, West Virginia, he traveled by train to Columbus, Ohio, and three days later was off to Barksdale, where he got his basic and medical training.

"They had a B-18 there, and it was really crude. If a person didn't watch, he could walk into the props." Tony remembers when the 44th BG was formed. "There were seven medics assigned to each Squadron, but at that time, we didn't even have an airplane.

"At that time I was doing sick call with the doctors. They were doing physicals on the top floor of those barracks. Then some of the medics got shipped to Fort Myers, Florida; three of us to Dayton, Ohio."

At that time the government was testing the body's response to high altitude flying. One of the medics in Dayton was put in a simulator, the temperature was dropped, he was not given extra oxygen, so he passed out, waking up later in the hospital. From those experiments, proper apparel and a supply of oxygen was designed for those who would be doing the bomb runs.

Tony was sent to Will Rogers Field, then to Ft. Dix, then to New York, and along with **Will Lundy** and thousands more, sailed to Europe aboard the Queen Mary. He was there until 1945.

The night before they shipped out, Tony and several others decided to take a look at the town...AWOL. They got to Trenton where a civil disturbance was taking place. A man had been stabbed in the neck. "So I jumped in

and tried to stop the blood," he remembered. "An ambulance came, and I was ready to back off. My buddies wouldn't let me. They shouted, "He needs you. He's bleeding," then threw me bodily into the ambulance.

"I helped get the man to the operating room, helped find blood donors, and at 6:00 A.M., I was free to go back to the base. I was covered with dried blood. Two men escorted me, and they advised me to get on the Greyhound Bus and speak to no-one. To make a long story short, I lost a stripe.

"Six months later Captain Young, our Medical Officer, looked me up. He told me the man I had helped in Trenton had died, but told me he wanted to get me a medal for my service. I told him "All I want is to get back my stripe. I became a Corporal Technician.

"In Shipdham I was assigned to the ambulance group. When our planes would come in with an injured man on board, they fired a red flare. If they could be helped at Shipdham, we took care of them; otherwise they went to an Evacuation Hospital." Although Tony flew with many patients to these centers, he cannot remember where they were. "I was too busy taking care of the injured man to even ask where we were going. Once we were tussling with a man in convulsions who was so strong, several of us together could hardly restrain him. Suddenly somebody yelled, "Don't let him breathe on you." Too late for us, we learned that the man had spinal meningitis. Fortunately, none of us caught it.

"The area we called a hospital could not even be called a good First Aid Station. We had nothing to work with. Everything was in short supply. "During that early period, 1943, planes and crews were having heavy losses. We had seventeen to eighteen

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beds for enlisted men, eight to ten for officers. Officers were recruiting men from our ranks to go into combat with the promise that they could get home sooner. I did not volunteer. At one point my brother sent me a piece of parachute for a man who had crashed and died. He convinced me not to volunteer.

"We had to be innovative, using anything we could find to fill our needs. Ointments were stored in left-over food containers. We had one tongue depressor, which we dipped into a canister of 190 proof alcohol, and used the same one with every man who came in sick bay. We used alcohol to sterilize our cotton balls, (and occasionally we drank some). We started out with a Dodge ambulance, but that was taken elsewhere, and we ended up with an old English relic. It had room for four stretchers, two up and two down. Sometimes it was so cold, the battery wouldn't charge. I found an old crank like they used in Model T Fords, and we charged the battery with that.

"We got to Shipdham before the planes. When the first one landed, an Englishman wanted go greet the men. He walked straight up to the propeller and was killed."

Tony remembers a German attack on Shipdham. He climbed under the ambulance for safety. Later he found a piece of a bomb which was still very hot. It was marked with a Swastika and a notation that it was made in Czechoslovakia. It is among his prized memorabilia.

When the War was over in England, Tony came home on the Queen Mary. He went to Camp Shanks, then home for 30 days,; after that, to Fort Meade. From there he went by train to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and was expecting to be sent to the Pacific as a Surgical Technician. The *Enola Gay* and *Bock's Car* brought it all to a welcome close. With 117 points to his credit, he was discharged.

Tony found good employment with International Harvester and other trucking companies; and when a friend urged him to apply for a Civil Service job in Washington, DC, he was very skeptical. But he accepted, and it worked out very well for him. He retired in 1979, having directed the traffic and supplied transportation through many presidential inaugurations.

Tony and Kathy have been married fifteen years. He has two children from a former marriage. Tony served on the 44th BGVA Board for two years, and Kathy has been a willing and eager helper at many reunions. Tony's greatest contribution to the Bomb Group was in working with Will Lundy, doing research at the National Archives. It has been recognized that a great deal of the 44th history became available when Tony Mastradone learned to successfully research those archives.

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*Ed. Note: Tony's contribution to 44th BG history was recognized at a Reunion in Washington, DC when he was presented the **Leon Johnson** award by President 'Mike Mikoloski'.*

**Bob Vance** introduced a new word: paraprosookian, which is a figure of speech when the second part of the sentence denies the first part, such as:  
Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.  
.....  
I want to die in my sleep, like my grandfather. Not screaming and yelling like the passengers in his car!  
.....  
Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car!

## EUGENE VICKERY'S POW MEMORIES

*A Navigator on the **Coleman Whitaker** crew, Eugene Vickery was on his 22nd mission when the plane went down at Wiener Neustadt. Flying in **Black Jack**, half his crew including his pilot were KIA; one member (**Robert Reasoner**) became POW but was repatriated. Vickery and three others became POW.*

*Vickery kept an excellent diary of the course of events, starting with hitting the ground on that fateful day, 1 October 1943.*

*Finding myself on the ground with my nose an inch deep in the little garden plot at the edge of a little Austrian village, I picked myself up and with all the haste my nervous and clumsy fingers would allow, I unfastened my chute. As quickly as this was done, I started to run across the fields and gardens towards a likely place of concealment. Even as I started, I realized my position was quite a hopeless one. Two farmers were close behind me, followed by a young butcher boy in his white bloodstained apron. He was wielding an oversized cleaver. Ahead of me were two other farmers cutting across diagonally to my path to intercept me. Down the railroad, which lay just ahead of me, and which I must cross to reach the woods, there came a German soldier unlimbering the gun that was habitually swung from his shoulder. Burdened down as I was with my flying equipment, it seemed like in no time at all they converged upon me, and I was still far from the doubtful safety of the woods.*

*None of my captors, civilian or military, showed any animosity toward me. It seemed rather that they were inclined to be quite friendly, and when my eyes met theirs, many of them would wink or give some other such meaningful look. I felt quite sure that if it hadn't been for the Storm Troopers, that seemed to be everywhere, I can conceivably have received aid from many of them that may have made an escape possible. The young men especially seemed to show an interest in me that was more than ordinary curiosity would seem to warrant.*

I was turned over to a corpulent middle aged man in the Storm Troopers uniform; and he, quite self-conscious of his importance, marched me back to the little village where I had landed in the garden. Without delay he commandeered a truck of some sort that had large empty pans, with scraps of spaghetti and tomato sauce still clinging to them, and a number of milk cans scattered around in it. He indicated that I was to sit in the rear of the truck atop a milk can, and as soon as I was seated, he secured another similar seat for himself and sat facing me with his rifle cocked and loaded, waving around at me in a most uncomfortable fashion. Our ride was a short one, and the only point of interest was a large fire we passed on our way. I was unable to determine just what was burning, but there was considerable black smoke, which would indicate oil or gas.

When we reached our destination, the authorities, after much heel clicking and Heil Hitlering, refused to accept me, and so once again I rode among the spaghetti pans and milk cans to another part of the city. We were met here by a German Luftwaffe officer that was the personification of all we have come to expect in an officer of the Junkers class, complete with Luger, field boots, mustache and monocle. Neat, trim, efficient and with ill-concealed contempt for the party man, he went about his business questioning and searching me. He spoke in clipped precise English, and seemed not at all disturbed when I refused to answer his questions, but quite the contrary, he seemed to expect me to refuse, and acted as if it were the proper thing to do. Actually, it was my duty to reveal no information to the

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enemy, but the Party men and local police could not seem to appreciate this, and stormed and raved whenever any prisoner refused to answer their questions or follow instructions.

Said the German officer, "For you, the war is over."

Before the search and interrogation was completed, the second wave of bombers came over, and we were forced to spend the next half hour in a quite well built air raid cellar. There were about 25 people in the shelter besides my guard and myself. The shelter was built for about 50 people and had stools, benches and tables in it, but no food stocks. The people all seemed rather quiet, not very frightened and a bit awed. It was only the second raid Wiener Neustadt had experienced, and probably accounted for their attitude. One girl of about 18-19 seemed quite frightened and cried most of the time. Perhaps she had been through some previous unpleasant experiences. Their attitude toward me was simply one of curiosity, as I was the first captured airman most of them had seen.

When the raid was over, my questioning was completed, and I was sent with all my paraphernalia to a Flakwaffe post, accompanied by two officers, a guard and a driver. At the station I came across my first fellow prisoner, a Sergeant from the 44th. He was slightly wounded in the side by flak and very low in spirits. He had just finished answering a long page of questions, and had evidently given the Germans all the information they wanted, because they didn't press me for information after I once refused to talk. I was pretty disgusted with him at the time, and told him to keep his mouth shut in the future. However, it seems that there is always one or two in every group of POW's who will talk, and he happened to be the one in this case.

We spent the night at this post and were quite comfortably put up; and the food, although plain, was plentifully supplied and proved to be the best we ever received from the Germans. We had the standard black bread, a good

fresh salami, cheese and ersatz coffee. Twenty four more prisoners were brought in during the night, making a total of twenty-six. Most of them were enlisted men. Of the 11 planes lost that day, 8 were from my group. Some of the fellows were quite badly burned, and several suffered from broken bones, ankles, wrists, ribs and legs; and all but three of the rest were wounded by flak, 20 mm frags or Cal. 30. No one seemed to be in a critical condition, but some were suffering considerable pain."

*The next day Vickery discovered he had wounds!! There were two pieces of flak in his cheek, and then he realized what had cut his mike cord. He had more holes in his right leg. The cheek festered and the piece came out two weeks later, as did the three pieces in his leg.*

October 2, 1943. For breakfast we had black bread and sugar honey. I was quite hungry, and it tasted much better than it looked. Everyone was in pretty good spirits, and we had a talk with a German private that had lived 10 years before the war in Jersey. His biggest desire was to get back there. He had come to Germany in 1939 to visit his parents and was conscripted into the German Army before he could get out of the country when war broke out.

We were told we would leave at 12 on the train and arrive at Dulog Luft, the prisoner of war camp, at Frankfurt in from 1 to 3 days. This was the first indication we had had, of just how badly the country's transportation system had been disorganized by Allied Air Raids. Lt. Theodore Scarlett (*Co-Pilot*) and Sgt. Edwin Carlson (*Engineer/Top Turret Gunner*) who had been loose about 12 hours, and made their way to about 20 miles from the Yugoslav border, joined us in the station at Vienna. Their faces were badly burned, but were otherwise OK. They are the only members of the crew I ever heard of again. The wounded had not yet received any medical attention.

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On the way to the station, we saw a great deal of damage. One bomb had gone astray and landed on a house, killing the entire family of 7 who were seeking shelter in the cellar. However, except for the few stray bombs, all the bomb load had fallen in the target area, and our objective was a shambles. The Germans had told us before, that we had not done any damage to it. However the importance of the target was betrayed by two separate statements our guards had made. On one occasion they mentioned that they had been stationed in Italy before coming to Wiener Neustadt. Shortly after this, one of them said they had only been at their present post for two weeks. All of this at a time when they were so badly needed in Italy left little doubt that the Me 109 factory was of real importance; and that the factory was located there near the guns, and had not been moved 20 miles to the southwest into a woods, as some of the guards claimed.

*Vickery reported that while traveling by train from one camp to another a formation of Flying Fortresses came over; their target was a copper plant in Frankfurt. Two Me 109s were destroyed, for which the prisoners heartily cheered. A great number of flak fragments fell all around and sounded like rain in the leaves.*

*Food was in short supply; they tolerated four days of solitary confinement.*

"The first thing I did when I was left alone in my room was to pry open the frosted glass windows (5/8" iron bars on all windows) that the Germans had nailed shut. It afforded me an excellent view of the very peaceful looking countryside; and when I sat on my bed and looked out of the window at the dew covered fields sparkling in the sunshine, the old farmer plowing with his fine big horses and heard the children's voices mingled with the bark of a dog and the honk-honk of the big white geese, it was quite hard to realize that I was a prisoner of this country, and that we were at war with each other.

"On the third day of my stay at this camp, a German officer came in to interrogate me once again....I refused once again to answer his questions, so after a while he gave up asking about the Army, and we began to talk of more general things.

"He was quite interested in the value of real estate, rentals and taxes in the United States. He owned considerable property in Germany and worked in a bank.... He admitted that he didn't believe Germany could possibly win the war, not even hold out for more than another year. He implied that if the U.S. and England would guarantee to keep Russia out of Germany, that the Germans would surrender to the U.S. and G. B. He also wanted to know why we had gone to war against Germany. He said Germany had no argument with the United States, and neither one had anything that the other wanted. I mentioned the fact that Germany had declared war on us; it was not us who had declared war on Germany; but this didn't seem to cut any ice with him.

*Vickery described more moves to other camps, welcome Red Cross packages and epidemics of minor illnesses.*

*He described a change in his evaluation of his captors: "The first day I got in the cooler, I thought all the Kriegies were crazy, but they seem less crazy each day I'm here."*

He described amazing stories about his fellow prisoners. "One tail gunner landed safely in France, still sitting in his turret in the tail of the plane. The whole tail had been blown off the ship, but floated the tail gunner down safely.

"One waist gunner found himself trapped in the waist of the ship with no way out except through the bomb bay which was a mass of flame. He went through the bomb bay; and in doing this, became quite badly burned, and his clothing and parachute caught afire. He finally managed to clear the ship, but found himself at 20-22,000 feet, with his clothing and chute afire. Being a rather cool headed lad, he went to work beating out the fire with his

hands. He kept at this until the last minute possible, and then some 500 – 1,000 feet above the ground, he pulled his rip cord, swung twice and hit the ground – badly burned but safe. (They say chutes are made to save lives, not to keep you from getting hurt.)

"Sgt. Carlson, our Engineer, picked up his British type pack just before the ship exploded, and had one canvas handle in each hand. Thinking he was gripping the rip cord, he counted to 10 and pulled. When nothing gave, and chute didn't open, he looked to see the cause of the trouble, and discovered that he had not yet fastened the pack to the harness. He snapped on his chute in mid air and landed quite safely, except for his burns."

"A pilot in a B-17 climbed out of his side window because he could not get through the burning bomb bay. He caught his foot on the way out, but gave a jerk and got free of the plane. When he went to pull his rip cord, he discovered that he had forgotten to fasten his chute before he jumped. He would sure have been in an awkward position if he hadn't discovered that his foot had become entangled in the harness, and it was this that had caused his foot to stick as he left the plane. The chute was still fast to his foot, so he pulled it to him and tried to put it on, but couldn't get his foot loose. Becoming desperate, he pulled the cord and floated serenely down, hanging by one foot, and landed uninjured."

"Not all the strange experiences end so well. A bombardier flying his last mission decided to jump rather than stick to the plane when it appeared they would have to ditch in the sea when two engines had been put out. He jumped and was never seen again. The rest of the crew elected to stick to the plane, and they made it safely back to land and managed to land at an airport."

As Vickery described, "Life at the Kriegie Camp was full of stories told far into the night, card games, checkers, cooking, sleeping, unending planning of escape, rumors, baseball,

football volley ball, soccer, arguments, jokes, waiting for letters, talk of home and 'when the war is over', bartering and gambling cigarettes....."

*In November 1943 he had an ear infection which kept him in the hospital for several days, and continued to plague him for quite a while after his discharge. Christmas came and the prisoners used ingenious ways to decorate their surroundings. For New Year's Eve, the Germans provided them with some very weak beer - 3% beer, 97% water.*

*Vickery describes efforts by prisoners to dig tunnels to freedom, only to have them discovered and sabotaged. They were aware of air raids to Berlin, and occasionally got word that the Russians were advancing. Among his accomplishments at that time, he began creating cartoons and writing poetry:*

G. I. Coat

They say a little bit of Bull - - - -  
 Fell from out the sky one day.  
 It landed close to Old Berlin,  
 Just 90 miles away.  
 And when the Luftwaffe saw it,  
 Sure it looked so lovely there,  
 They said, "That's just what we are looking for,  
 We'll put our Kriegies there.  
 So they brought a bunch of goon guards in  
 And combat crews enough,  
 And put them in that lovely spot  
 And called it Stalag Luft  
 Oh! Mother Dear, it's worse out here  
 Than all the lands remote,  
 With every word I write, I say  
 Please send that G. I. Coat!

March 23, 1944 *The biggest dilemma in Stalag Luft was - who would win the bet: their pet cat was due to have kittens, and who would predict the date of the blessed event, and the number that she would produce.*

*The winner of this somber story will be announced in the next 8 Ball Tails.*



## **B/GENERAL ROBERT CARDENAS RELEASES THE PICTURE OF HIS HELPER IN THE SWISS ALPS**



Outside the restaurant where Robert Cardenas and Captain Stolz hid, they pose with the unnamed Swiss lady who helped them escape.

For years Bob Cardenas would not release the picture or name of the Swiss lady who helped him out of internment in Switzerland.

On 18 March 1944, while flying with the **Raymond Lacombe** crew as Command Pilot on a mission to Friedrichshafen, they were hit by flak. The engines were on fire and the decision was to head toward Switzerland. **Chief & Sack Artists** made it close to safe haven, but not quite. The crew bailed out and swam to the shore of Lake Constance and internment.

Upon the request of the Swiss government, the American government recommended him to teach the Swiss pilots how to fly the B-24s and B-17s, and get them away from the border where Germans could see how many American planes had landed there.

Before he began this new assignment, he signed a paper (practically in blood) that he would not use a B-24 to escape. And he didn't.

Instead, the pictured young lady approached him and asked if he wanted to leave. He checked her out with the American Counselor's office and she was considered a safe helper.

Every day there was a train running into Geneva and another going out. She hid him and Captain Stolz in a restaurant. When the train approached, she dressed them as waiters. They stood between the trains and climbed on the outgoing one, arriving in Grenoble. With help from the French Underground, he was ferried out of the country on a black C-47.

Cardenas's many achievements have been documented in different issues in the *8 Ball Tails*, but it was the young Swiss lady who opened the door for him to have an amazing career in the USAF.

**Reunion Schedule**  
**44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION**  
**OCTOBER 13-16, 2011**  
**INN AT ELLIS SQUARE**  
**SAVANNAH, GEORGIA**

**Thursday, October 13,**

Board Meeting	10:00 AM
Registration	1:00 to 5:00 PM
Hospitality Suite opens	7:00 PM

**Friday, October 14**

Breakfast	
Load Trolley for Ft. Jackson Tour And Lunch at the Crab Shack	9:00 AM
Return to Hotel, Afternoon Free	1:30 PM
Welcome Reception	7:00 PM

**Saturday, October 15**

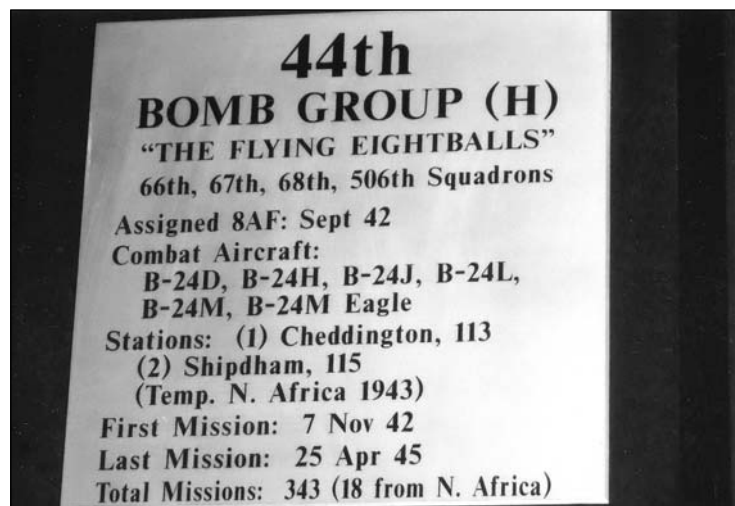
Breakfast	
General Membership Meeting	9:00 AM
Load Trolley for Mighty 8th Museum Tour & Lunch	10:15 AM
Return to Hotel	3:00 PM
Cash Bar	6:00 PM
Squadron Dinners	7:00 PM

**Sunday, October 16**

Breakfast	
Load Trolley for Savannah Tour, Riverboat Tour And Lunch,	
Afternoon on/off Trolley Tour of Savannah	9:45 AM
Cash Bar	6:00 PM
Banquet	7:00 PM

**Monday, October 17**

Breakfast & Farewells



**REGISTRATION**  
**44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION**  
201 WEST BAY STREET  
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31401  
OCTOBER 13-16, 2011

Please print or type. All information must be complete.

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse/Guest \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

**PRICING – 4 HOTEL NIGHTS**

Single \$700.00      Double \$957.00      Triple \$1214.00      Quad \$1471.00  
Please indicate bed preference: King \_\_\_\_\_ Queen \_\_\_\_\_ Single \_\_\_\_\_

**ALL ROOMS ARE NON-SMOKING**

Includes: Welcome Reception, Four Breakfasts, Hospitality Room,  
Transportation and Lunch on all tours, Squadron Dinners, Banquet.

**HOTEL PARKING AND AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION ON YOUR OWN.**

\$10 Per Day      \$25 Per Person each way. (Please include Arrival &  
Departure Times. I am  
Arrival Time \_\_\_\_\_ trying to work a deal  
with a Cab Co. for a  
Departure Time \_\_\_\_\_ combination rate.

**SQUADRON DINNERS ARE A BUFFET WITH TWO ENTREES**  
**BANQUET DINNER HAS TWO ENTREES, STEAK AND CHICKEN**  
**CHOOSE THE ONE YOU LIKE.**

**PAYMENT**

Number of Registrants (See Prices Above)

Single \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Double \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Triple \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Quad \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send checks to 44th Bomb Group Treasurer  
Jackie Roberts, 11910 S. E. 44th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73150

**MUST BE RECEIVED BY Sept. 7, 2011**



## WORLD WAR TWO FROM THE ENGLISH POINT OF VIEW

Peter Steele, "I must warn you that the account below is the war as seen through the eyes of a child, as I was only nine when it started!"



Peter Steele

In 1939 I was a nine year old living with my widowed mother in south-east London. Mother being the only bread-winner, we were, needless to say, rather poor, however, such things did not worry a nine year old, and they were happy times as I recall. In the early summer grown-ups always seemed to be talking about someone called Hitler, and said a war was coming soon. One day mother and I had to go to the local town hall along with lots of other people to be fitted with gas-masks. To me it was just a game, and I thought people looked silly with these rubber things pulled over their heads, with just their eyes peeping out through a celluloid window. They told us that we had to go home and stick tape in a criss-cross pattern over all our windows, so that when the Germans started to bomb us, the blast from the bombs wouldn't throw glass all over the room. Mother didn't do that; she was very house-proud! Later in the summer the government decided that all children living in the London area were to be evacuated out into the country where they would be safe. Mother packed a large case for my clothes, and we took it to school, the idea being that the whole school would all go together. There were three false starts, first we were go-

ing, and then it was cancelled at the last minute, but one day the headmaster came into the class and told us all to pack away our things as we were leaving that morning. We were loaded onto buses and taken to the local railway station where we found hundreds of other children from different schools around the neighborhood. Somehow mother, who was at work, heard that we were leaving; and she rushed down to the station where she was in time to give me a hug, and of course to tell me to be good! I did not see mother again for two and a half years. The train set off and even the teachers did not know where we were going. Eventually we arrived at a town called Tonbridge, and were taken in buses from there to a village about eight miles away. At the village school we were met by a fleet of cars which took us to houses all over the place. Many children finished up in homes where they were very unhappy; in fact, quite a number ran away, back to London. I was very lucky however, and was placed in a lovely home where the people were very kind. I called them Aunty and Uncle, and they were very rich. It seems that uncle came from South Africa originally, and his family owned a gold mine. Although they had two sons, one a major in the army, the other a Lt/Cmdr in the Royal Navy, they treated me as one of their own. Uncle went off to join the army, which left Aunty and I together. I had been living there for just over a week when war was declared on the 3rd September 1939. Within minutes of the announcement on the radio, the air-raid siren sounded and we all had to put on our gas-masks. You had to carry your gas-mask with you wherever you went. Mine was in a card-board box which came with it, and I carried it

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over my shoulder on a piece of string. The supposed air-raid on that occasion turned out to be a false alarm.

Nothing happened in the first part of the war. Winter came and we had lots of snow, and I learned to ice-skate on the lake which was in the grounds of a neighbor. There did not seem to be any shortages that I was aware of, and life was good; at least from my point of view because there was no school. They hadn't gotten anywhere to teach us, as the local village school was full up with local children, and there just wasn't room for all the London children. Summer came and the grown-ups would gather round the radio each evening to listen to the six o'clock news. There was a lot of talk about a place called Dunkirk, and everyone seemed very worried. I found that very difficult to deal with; after all, it was in France somewhere, and that was ever such a long way away! The days went by and finally France fell, and what was left of our army was brought back in little boats. They consisted of all sorts, from tired old paddle steamers to tiny little cabin cruisers which belonged to ordinary civilians who happened to live near the coast, and just jumped in their boats and set off for France to bring the soldiers home. It was just something they did, off their own boat. A couple of them were stopped in the middle of the English Channel by a British destroyer who asked them, "Where in the hell do you think you're going?" The reply, "Dunkirk to pick up the lads" left the destroyer captain speechless, and when he looked ahead there were over fifty other little boats bobbing along behind the first lot.

When France fell, it finally came home to me, just how bad things were. The Germans were now only twenty miles from the Kent coast. Our army was in tatters and in no fit state to fight anyone. We were quite alone. The whole of Europe was under the Nazi jackboot. All we had was a small air force and the Royal Navy, whose

ships were scattered around the globe. The rest of the world said England was done for, but they were wrong.

Restrictions of all sorts were introduced. Invasion was imminent, and everybody had to carry identity cards which had to be produced on demand. A total blackout was brought in, which meant that all windows and doors had to be blacked out in such a way that not even a tiny chink of light was allowed to show after dark. The whole country was in total darkness. Cars had to be fitted with special headlight shields which only allowed a tiny beam to show, and in the event of an air raid at night, all vehicles had to stop and switch off their lights until the raid was over. People volunteered for all sorts of jobs, such as nursing, fire watching, which was keeping a lookout through the night for any incendiary bombs, and dealing with them when they fell. Also, some became Air Raid Wardens and Special Constables (Part-time Police). The Home Guard was formed, which consisted of old men too old to serve in the armed forces. They were issued a khaki uniform and a rifle, and their job was to keep a look-out for German para-troopers and invading Germans. (They became known as 'Dads Army') At about this time food rationing was introduced, quickly followed by clothes rationing. Everyone was issued a ration book; even the Royal family! You were entitled to a set amount of food and a set amount of clothing. As far as food was concerned, you had to register at a particular shop and a particular butcher. You were not allowed to buy your food anywhere else, with the exception of certain tinned foods, but more of that later.

A week's ration for one person was as follows: Bacon and Ham - 4 ozs (100g); Meat - one shilling and two pence worth (about 25 cents in your money today. Sausages were not rationed, but were hard to get. (People said they were 70% sawdust anyway.)

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Offal (liver, kidneys, tripe) was originally unrationed, but became part of the meat ration later in the war. Butter - 2 ozs (50 g) - Margarine - 4 ozs (100g) - Cheese - 2 ozs (50g) although some workers such as those in heavy industry and farm workers were allowed 4 ozs. Milk - three pints (1800 ml) occasionally dropping to two pints. Household milk in the form of skimmed or dried milk was available, one packet per month; Sugar 8 ozs (225g); Jam - 1 lb (450g) every two months; Tea - 2 ozs (50 g); Coffee unobtainable; Eggs - One fresh egg per week if available, but often only every two weeks. Dried egg - one packet every four weeks. Sweets - 12 ozs every four weeks, but children could seldom afford to buy them anyway.

All children had to have one spoonful of Virol every week; a sweet and sticky malt extract. This was supposed to ensure they got enough vitamins. All the above were allocated when you presented your ration book to your registered shop-keeper, who would then cut out the appropriate coupons from your ration book. Also in the ration book were food points. These were used to purchase certain tinned foods, such as meat, tinned salmon, fruit (pineapple, peaches or pears), condensed milk, rice and cereals. A tin of salmon cost 20 points, so you didn't buy that very often, as your total monthly allowance was only 16 points. The fact was that there just wasn't enough room on our ships to bring in many of the items we had always taken for granted. Things like oranges and bananas just disappeared completely, which meant that any children born during the war did not know what an orange or banana was. They never saw any until after the war!

Vegetables were not rationed, although some types were hard to come by - onions for instance. People were encouraged to dig up their lawns and flower gardens and grow their own.

Clothes rationing was also on a point system, and each adult was al-

lowed 60 points per year. This was equivalent to one complete outfit per year for the average adult. Growing children needed more clothes, so their points were of a lower value. There was shortage of fabric and a range of so-called utility fabric was brought into being.

This used a minimum amount of cloth, and was devoid of embroidery or any sort of decoration. Men and boys jackets were allowed two pockets and three buttons. Trousers (slacks) had no turnups, which had been fashionable up until then. Women and girls dresses had no pleats, elastic waist bands or decorated belts. Silk stockings were unobtainable, as all silk was required to make parachutes and barrage balloons. Girls would cover their legs with watered down gravy or weak tea, to make it look as though they were wearing stockings. The seam down the back of the leg was drawn with an eye-brow pencil. Women would make their own clothes out of any material they could find, even old curtains and blankets would be snapped up. Old wool jumpers and cardigans were carefully unpicked and re-knitted into a new garment. Knitting became very popular with the ladies, and Knitting for the Forces was almost a national occupation among the women.

Many other items were in short supply. A utility range of furniture was introduced: basic and hard wearing, it was all that was available for people who had lost their homes in the bombing, or were just starting out in married life.

Petrol was rationed severely, so much so the people put their cars away in a garage for the duration of the war. Other than the armed forces, the only people allowed a special ration of petrol were people like doctors, police, fire brigades and air-raid wardens. Many private lorries and buses resorted to converting their vehicles to gas, and carried huge black bags on

their cab roofs full of gas. They looked quite ridiculous, but they worked. Thus the pattern of everyday life for the ordinary man in the street was set for the rest of the war.

After Dunkirk everybody was on edge. People were talking about spies that had been seen or captured; none of it true of course, but all sorts of rumors were flying around. A ban was put on the ringing of church bells. They were only to be used to warn people of an air-borne invasion. At about that time, I saw an Air-warden pin a poster on the village notice-board. It was entitled "Know Your Enemy" and it depicted a German soldier, an airman, a sailor and a para-trooper. I looked at it and the para-trooper was the most evil looking man I had ever imagined, and I was terrified of anything German for a long time afterwards. Often was the night when I would wake up, convinced I could hear church bells ringing in the distance.

One day I was playing with a model airplane, and like most boys playing with such things, I was making all the aeroplane noises that you would expect to hear. Suddenly I realized that the noise I was hearing was not being made by me, but was in fact, real aircraft. I looked out across the garden towards Tonbridge, and the sky was full of airplanes. There seemed to be hundreds of them, and they were all German, flying in perfect formation. I called Auntie, and she came into the garden. We stood looking at them as they came towards us. They were very low, so much so that you could see the crosses on their wings, and in some cases, actually see the pilots in their cockpits. One actually looked down at me as he flew over. Suddenly we heard aero engines screaming, and turning around, we saw three Spitfires streaking down out of the sky with machine guns blazing. We ran for the house as empty machine gun bullets were falling out of the sky all over the place. The sky was full of twisting and

turning aircraft. The noise of machine gun and cannon fire, and the roaring aero engines was to me, quite frightening. Some of the Germans turned and fled, dropping their bombs as they went, but others stayed to fight. I saw a Dornier 17 bomber gently roll over onto its back, and with smoke streaming out behind it, dived in a gentle arc, to disappear behind some far off trees. There was a loud explosion and a column of smoke rose into the sky where he had crashed. Soon the battle drifted far to the south, but not before two other German aircraft were shot down. Some Hurricanes flew on their way to join the scrap. I ran into the garden to give them a cheer. Within a short while, it was all quiet except for the sound of exploding ammunition coming from the direction of the column of smoke. Far away towards Tonbridge, two parachutes were hanging in the sky, British or German, there was no way of telling, and the only other sound was a Skylark singing high up in the blue sky.

They came every day after that, but now they were much higher, so high that as they fought each other, they looked like little silver butterflies twinkling in the sunlight, high up amongst the contrails.

Aircraft crashing in flames became a common sight, and even today there are still over 350 aircraft unaccounted for in the south of England. It was as recently as 1975 that a young couple stopped their car in a lay-by on the Ashford to Canterbury road to go and pick blackberries in an adjacent wood. They found an ME 109 (German fighter), virtually intact, with the skeleton of the pilot still in the cockpit. His clothing had pretty well rotted away, but his wrist watch was still on the bone of his arm, and had stopped at twenty past three. It was subsequently proved that the aircraft had crashed in June 1940.

The Battle of Britain raged all through that long hot summer, and as

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youngsters, we spent our time rushing from one crash site to the next on our cycles, hoping to get there before the police or the army, so that we could grab some souvenirs.

By August, things were getting very serious, although the general public was unaware of just how bad things were. We now know that the RAF felt that they could last another week and no more. However, Lady Luck smiled upon us, because a German bomber crew bombed London, allegedly by mistake, and this was contrary to Hitler's orders. He had given specific orders that London was not to be bombed, and that the Luftwaffe were to bomb only airfields and aircraft factories. He apparently believed he would be in London in three weeks, and did not want it touched. Winston Churchill said, "They have bombed London, we will bomb Berlin", and that very night the RAF did just that. Hitler was beside himself with rage, and ordered the German air force to bomb London to extinction.

So began what was to become known as "The Blitz", but it gave the RAF the break they needed. They were able to repair their airfields and replenish their aircraft and pilots, and after a tremendous air battle over southern England, when the German lost 143 aircraft in one day to the RAF's 24, it was over. We did not realize at that time, but one day the Germans did not come, no air raid sirens sounded; it was uncanny, and everyone wondered what they had up their sleeve next. Slowly as the days passed, and all was peace and quiet, we knew that the Germans had given up the idea of invading England. We had won the first battle. With autumn came the dark nights, and German bombers started to come over at night. Nearly always singly, but one after another, all heading for London.

The air-raid warning would sound at about eight o'clock each evening, and they would be droning all night long, with the All Clear being sounded

about seven in the morning. This went on throughout the winter. One dark night, they were flying over as usual, and I lay in bed listening to the steady throbbing sound of their engines, and the anti-aircraft guns thundering away at them. In the distance I heard a bomb come whistling down, followed by a rumbling explosion. This was followed immediately by another and another, each one getting closer. The next two were close enough to make the house shake, and then a bomb came whistling down, and sounded very close. I sat up in bed just as there was a blinding flash which showed through the black-out curtains. The explosion that followed made my ears ring, and I heard glass breaking somewhere in the house. I leapt out of bed and ran to find Aunty. We met in the hall, just as there was another big flash and another loud explosion. The front door flew open and a strong wind flew through the house. Aunty was frightened as well as me, but we went outside. German planes were overhead, and there were flashes in the sky where anti-aircraft shells were exploding, while search-lights probed the night sky. We did not go back to bed that night, and when we looked out in the back door, there was a red glow in the sky that stretched right across the horizon. London was ablaze from end to end. I said to Aunty that Mother was over there, but she tried to assure me that she would be alright. In the morning we found a large crater in the garden, and another just over the fence in the next field.

At about this time I had joined the Boy Scouts, and as it was felt that the Germans would try to burn all our crops to help their 'U-Boats' starve us into surrender, the scouts were given the job of patrolling the fields of wheat, armed with fire-beaters to put out any incendiary bombs that fell. Although I would never have admitted it, I was still a little afraid of the dark, and when I was given two fields to

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look after on my own, I was not a very happy chap.

The old fear of German para-troopers came to the fore, and every sound I heard, I was convinced was a German creeping up behind me. I peered behind almost every tree, expecting to see a para-trooper crouching there. One night a bomber dropped three incendiary bombs in the fields I was watching, and while I was doing my best to beat one out, the other two were blazing away. Fortunately, another scout, older than me, who was looking after two fields not far away, came to help me and we stayed together for the rest of the night.

In London, a lot of people were killed in the raids, and many hundreds of houses were destroyed. Mother was bombed out twice, and the second time she lost everything, and had to start making a home all over again. In central London, many Londoners slept on the platform in underground railways, which of course was pretty bomb-proof. The so-called 'Blitz' fizzled out by early 1942, and all we got after that was what we referred to as 'nuisance raids'. The highlight of the year however, was that America had entered the war. It did not mean very much to the people of Kent because we never saw any of them. They were all based in East Anglia (Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge and Essex) However, as the war dragged on, we did see American bombers flying over on their way to bomb enemy occupied Europe, and would often watch them coming home, often with pieces hanging off of them, and/or streaming smoke behind them. We would cheer them on and hope they got back to their airfields safely. In Norfolk the Americans made a huge impact on the local population. The people consisted mainly of farming stock, what we called the yeomen of England. They had always led quiet unassuming lives in quiet peaceful villages, and now suddenly the American arrived. People were shocked. Suddenly airfields sprung up

all over East Anglia. Long convoys of lorries came rumbling through their country lanes full of Americans in strange uniforms, and soon they were followed by huge four engined bombers which dropped out of the sky to land where once cattle had grazed and sugar beets had grown. They roared around the countryside in things called jeeps and seemed to acquire just about every pedal cycle in the country!

People began to notice that these Americans were very friendly, and what's more, they seemed to love kids. It was not too long before friendships were formed, some of which endure even to this day. Americans were invited into homes to spend Christmas in an English home, and I firmly believe that the 'special relationship' often referred to by politicians actually started around the airfields of East Anglia. Even today, if you speak to the older folk, you will soon discover that the 'Yanks' are still fondly remembered and long will it be so. When you walk through a local church yard where there happens to be a memorial to those Americans who fell, do not be surprised to see a bunch of flowers lying at the foot; and on Remembrance Day, there is always a wreath of poppies.

The bombing of Germany continued night and day, and the Germans retaliated with the first of their 'V' weapons; the Flying Bomb, or Doodle-Bug, as we called them. Nasty things, you could hear them coming miles away, and you watched them carefully they flew over with a long flame shooting out behind, because if the engine stopped, then you dived for cover because they were coming down in a steep dive, and they carried a lot of explosives, certainly enough to knock down five or six houses. These were followed by the 'V 2', a rocket that carried a ton of high explosive. One could destroy a whole street, and frequently did. The big problem with them was that you only heard them

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coming after they exploded. The first you knew was a huge bang, followed by a noise like rolling thunder, and that was the sound of them traveling through the air, as they were faster than the speed of sound. Then the great day came when it was announced that D-Day had arrived. British and American forces had landed in France, and as the troops advanced through the Europe, the 'V 1's and 'V 2's finally stopped coming. When the great day came and we were told that General Montgomery had accepted

the surrender of all German forces at Luneburg, the country went mad. There was a party in every street in London, and in most towns and villages throughout the land. At last it was all over.

Rationing continued long after the war had finished, finally finishing in 1950, but there followed many years of austerity. In 1947 I joined the RAF and flew on the Berlin Airlift, and later flew Mosquitos, and tangled with the Russians, but that is another story...

*Ed. Note: Peter Steele has assumed the position of Curator of the Museum in Shipdham, honoring the 44th Bomb Group He joined the 44th BGVA at the 2009 Reunion in Tampa.*

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**Bob Lehnhausen** to Chris Clark: ..... You were so very kind to send me the material from the Archives related to the Wiener Neustadt mission of October 1, 1943.....

You should know that to me, this mission was the most harrowing of my combat tour, except for the July 2, 1943 mission to Lecce, Italy when our crew was forced to ditch in the Mediterranean. Yes, for me, (W-N was) more combat packed into less than thirty minutes, but what seemed to be an eternity...more than what our crew experienced on the low level mission to Ploesti. Ploesti presented a more gruesome and power packed scene of air/land battle and was certainly more costly, in men and aircraft, than Wiener Neustadt, but from a personal standpoint, was less terrifying. Throughout my tour of combat, there were other missions that were brutally scary; but Wiener-Neustadt has had a very savage and lasting memory.

Thank you again for all you have done for the 44th family.

.....  
The nicest thing about the future is that it always starts tomorrow.  
A good time to keep your mouth shut is when you're in deep water.  
How come it takes so little time for a child who is afraid of the dark to become a teenager who wants to stay out all night?  
.....

Roger Fenton wants to know if a word is misspelled in the dictionary,  
how would we ever know?  
Why are a 'wise man' and a 'wise guy' opposites?  
Why do we sing 'Take Me Out To The Ball Game' when we're already there?

## **FOUND AMONG THE WILL LUNDY RECORDS:**

**A group of letters from families in Holland, who had housed John Byers, Evadee, then POW**

Do you remember me? You came to Holland and conducted me in Waterschei by my friend with bicycle, who took the train to Hassekt, and you remained at home from 15 to 17 January 1944. You said it was very dangerous to leave...

You gave a light to me and a belt to my son. My daughter of 14 years was in love with Royce MacGillvary (not a 44th), who stayed with you and left with you, going to Brussels. Signed F. Bierman

Later – (no date) Remember me? I am Marcel. You called me "Sergeant Policeman". ... All of us have been captured by the Germans. Henri, the Dutchman was caught about 4th May 1944 in Antwerp. Two of your friends, Miss Black Hair and her mother and myself caught 1 August 1944. Only Mrs. White hair didn't go to prison.

We thank them all of the "White Brigade". We still have fond memories of you passing through Brussels. We all would have loved to have kept you here until liberation.

5 September 1944, Marcel Le Borene: We are free at last. We were imprisoned because the Gestapo learned through Henri, the Hollander, that we had helped you and others that parachuted in.

20 October 1945 We are very anxious to learn if you were successful in getting back to England.. I believe our place is the last place you were at while in the Netherlands.

Do you remember the 43-44 winter when the Allied Air Forces came every day and every night – and you sitting by the window, hoping to see them. ...Do you remember Little Gerdje who often sat on your shoulders and played cards with you the whole day. She is home again with her parents, sisters and brothers, and the Germans did not catch them.

You will remember the farm where you waited, in the evenings & getting dark, you'd look at the clock to see if 6 o'clock, and time to milk the cows. And several times you had to hide in the barn with Nic, the Jew, who is still doing fine. ...Every day I use your fountain pen (pencil). You left us on 14 January 1944. Signed Leentje Housmans

T/Sgt. **John Byers** was an Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Warren Oakley** crew. He was one of three that survived the crash of *Holiday Mess II* which went down on 22 December 1943. The mission was to bomb a railway & waterway system in Munster, Germany. The plane was hit with flak, then attacked by fighters. Their bombs were stuck in the bomb bay, and the part of the tail had been knocked off by the fighters.

In addition to Byers, the Navigator (**Frank Powers**) and Radio Operator (**Abel Fleischman**) were able to exit the plane before it crashed.

The Hollanders were very friendly and sympathetic to the airmen; but in due time, all were captured by the Germans.

P. C. Meijer, a Dutch Historian, related this story. "Last week I found the place where the Liberator came down, and met a farmer who lives near the place. The farmer, Mr. Bril, said he remembered all that happened. He was outdoors when the plane came in at low speed and was just above the roof of the barn. At first he thought it was a belly landing, but it hit very hard. Then immediately, he saw an American come running toward him (Powers, who had just parachuted) and was yelling, 'Bomb! Bomb!' and making gestures to lie down – and he did. The aircraft exploded immediately, and it was like a fireworks display with the ammunition exploding, fire, flames, etc. Pieces of the plane were strewn about. The explosions made a large crater seven meters deep and 20 meters in diameter, broke the windows in his house, and blew the doors open.

In 1985 during the anniversary celebration of the liberation of their country, the people of Den Ham honored this crew with speeches, flowers and photographs. They are remembered!

## YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO GET A DIPLOMA JUST ASK JAMES LIVINGSTON GUNNER 506 SQUADRON



Marvin Hirsch (right) places the mortar board on his uncle's head.

When James Livingston stepped forward to get his diploma – 68 years later than his high school classmates – he received it to a cheering crowd. Other graduates in the 2010 class at Screven County High School in Savannah, Georgia were happy to receive their diploma alongside a true WWII hero. In addition to the graduation ceremony, special honors for seniors were also held on the football field, 190 strong plus one Gunner.

"It was a proud day for me," Livingston stated, "al-

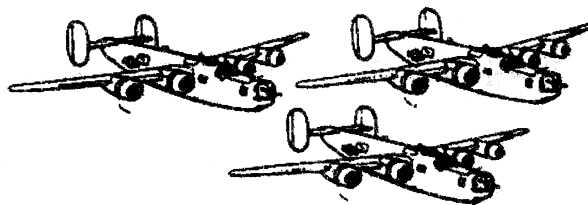
most as proud as the day I graduated from gunnery school."

Georgia law states that if a person left school to enlist in the military for WWII service, that person can be granted a high school diploma.

Livingston was a 'spare gunner', flying 32 missions with fifteen different pilots. He counted 293 crew members on 17 different planes. When the war was over, he served in the U.S. Army for a number of years. After working and raising a family, he decided it was time to fulfill a 68 years old promise that he made to his mother, that he would finish high school.



Wilbur Hiserote and James Livingston, both gunners, discuss missions in front of *Down De Hatch*. Livingston flew in this A/C to Mery-Sur-Oise, France; to Kiel, Germany and to Brunswick, Germany.



## CHARLES BLAKLEY'S MEMORY OF THE 'MILK RUN' TO ESCALLES SUR BUCHY IS NOW ON FILE AT THE RESISTANCE MUSEUM IN FRANCE

In response to a request from Pierre Berenguer, one of the founders of the Musee de la Resistance, Blakley provided his story to the French Museum. Blakley was flying on the **Hartwell Howington** Crew. The target was the V-1 sites in France. Unfortunately, cloud cover was very intense, necessitating five runs to the target to find an opening to drop bombs. At about 15:15 they were attacked by ME-109s and Ram-It-Dammit went down on the second frontal attack.

"I was flying left waist gunner that day. Numbers three and four engines were on fire, and flames were also coming over the radio deck (the area above the bomb bay). I left the ship through the camera hatch. The other four crewmen from the rear of the ship had already left. I had put on my chute and started toward the inside fire with an extinguisher, but then decided to also leave.

"I delayed for 5 to 6,000 feet before pulling the rip cord. First a vicious tumbling and then slower, and then I was falling on my back. As I neared the ground, a large tree was beneath me, so I pulled some chute cords to drift from it, and the next thing, the ground hit me very hard. I had nearly come down onto a wire fence! I saw someone coming toward me. I hid in a thicket near the trail, and as two people passed, I could see that one was **Archie Barlow**, our Engineer. When I called to Barlow, the French Woman that had rescued him almost had a heart attack. She then hid both of us, returning for us at about 20:20 hours, and took us to her home. While Barlow and I were hiding, it had started to rain, and we could hear a German patrol searching the area. **Alvin Rosenblatt** and **Alfred Klein**, both from our crew, were also brought to the French woman's house.

We were informed that Lt. Howington's parachute had burned, and he was killed on impact with the ground. The Co-pilot, Lt. **Herman Curtis**, Lt. **Kohn Kasten**, Navigator and Lt. **Wayne Crowl**, Bombardier, all went down with the plane.

S/Sgt. **Earl Boggs** (Tail Gunner), **Mark Heiter** (Ball Gunner) were both captured and taken prisoner. T/Sgt. **Ray Reeves**, a Radio Operator from the 67th Squadron, was flying as a Cameraman. He evaded capture and also returned to the 44th Bomb Group.

We were shot down on a Friday, and by Monday morning, the French had us outfitted in civilian clothes. One of my problems was finding shoes that were large enough, size 13. The only pair that they could locate was a pair of patent leather oxfords. I was still wearing those oxfords when I arrived in Andorra. When we got down into the damp snow of the Pyrenees Mountains, I cut up a heavy overcoat into strips and used them to make wrap leggings that came up to above the calf of my legs.

On Friday a man from Paris had been in the Amine area, and he returned to Paris and located some "French Underground" members. Early Monday morning, two Frenchmen took us to the train station and on to Paris. They briefed us that when we arrived at the Paris station, that we would see lots of German military, but for us to disregard them, and we would not have any problem.

By evening the four of us had been separated to stay at different homes in Paris. I was with an RAF pilot named Bill Waudby from Hull, England. Bill was a Spitfire pilot that had gone down after strafing a freight train. For the next two weeks, Bill and I were with a family that operated a bakery store. We stayed on the second floor,

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only going down to their quarters when the store was closed or at night. The lady would bring us up breakfast and coffee each morning. From our window we could hear lots of Germans walking on the sidewalks below with their metal capped boot heels.

Bill and I decided that if we were ever to get out of France, it was going to require lots of foot travel. We would spend the time doing 'push ups' and 'set ups' to stay in shape. (When I returned to the 44th Bomb Group, one of the officers could not believe that we had been doing calisthenics).

After two weeks at the bakery, we were told to prepare to move out. We were under the impression we were headed for the French border. It was a move to another family home in Paris. It was on Impasse Street. The man worked at the railroad shops, and some of the family worked at a nearby café. The family lived on the third floor of the building. Bill and I stayed on the fifth floor.

On Sundays the family would go out into the country to a farm where other family members were living. They would return with sacks of food items and vegetables. During the early morning, some of the family would take Bill and I separately for walks in the neighborhood.

We were told that the photographs taken for our escape packages were a dead give-away if used to make a false passport. The Germans could tell by the photos from what bomb group that we were flying. So now photographs had to be made. One afternoon the French friends took us to get new photographs. We were traveling on the METRO (electric train). We boarded the train at a right hand station. The car was very crowded, and we were barely able to get aboard before the sliding door closed. We were shoulder to shoulder with German soldiers. At the next stop the station was on the left, and the car nearly emptied. All of us except Archie Barlow moved across to a vacant seat, but he stayed with the German. When he went to move, somebody or something was holding him by the back of

his coat. He stayed cool and found out that it was not the German that had a hold on him, but that his coat tail was caught in the sliding door. He remembered from a previous trip that the next station was on the left, and then the next one was on the right. After the door opened, Barlow again joined us and sat down with the group.

On 1 March 1944 our false passports were in order, and we were ready to leave Paris. Then I became Gaston Louis Humbert. Some guides helped us travel from Paris to Toulouse on an overnight train. We were hidden during the daytime; part of the day was at the public library. We sure stuck out like a sore thumb in there... That evening we boarded a south bound train, and as it slowed for a station, we were told to jump from it on the opposite side from the station at a little village of Foix. Our French train rides had started at Foix and ended at Foix.

We stayed in the railroad right of way for some time, until there was no activity at the station. There were fourteen airmen and four of the five guides. We walked for the rest of the night toward the Pyrenees Mountains. The next morning we arrived at a house and barn. We stayed in the barn for five days, waiting out a snow storm. To keep warm at night, a long bed was made in the barn. One person would cover everyone with a tarp. Each one was lying barefoot to armpit of the next person. Then hay was used to cover everybody. The person who did the covering had a hole left for him. This had to be done with the last light of day, and stay there until daylight. Before morning came, you would get very stiff of lying in one position.

The guide bought a sheep or two from the farmer. At the end of the second day, we enjoyed a meal of boiled sheep. The only parts that were not put into the big iron boiling pot were the wool and the Baa.

The evening of the fifth day the guides thought that the snow had frozen enough for us to travel. We

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started out about sundown. During the night, Archie Barlow became sick and exhausted from traveling in the deep snow. He was slowing up the group, so the guides advised to leave him in another barn. He was to stay there for three days, to let us get out of the area. Rosenblatt and I left some of our rations and matches. Barlow told me later that he moved, right after we left him into another building. He was not able to start a fire, and the food (corned beef) was so frozen that he could not eat it. Barlow did make a contact again, and a policeman bought him a train ticket to return to Paris. He continued to evade, and was back to the 68th Squadron before 'D-Day'.

The rest of us traveled at night through snow as deep as our armpits. One day we stayed in an old castle. That was about the only place that we could build a fire and do any drying of our clothes. One night after we had walked across an ice fill stream and crossed a highway, a German patrol passed a few hundred feet below us.

Early in the morning of 13 March, the guides seemed to be lost and looking on the hillside for something. They were locating a door and opening to an aqueduct tunnel. For an hour we walked between the tunnel wall and the large water pipe. The left shoulder would hit the wall, and the right one against the pipe bands. When we came out of the tunnel, it was daylight. We had gone through a mountain instead of having to go over it.

We rested for a while, and the guides pointed to a summit and told us that the top was the Frontier. At 13:00 hours, after climbing the last 200 yards on a glacier on our hands and knees, we thirteen airmen had traveled for thirteen days since leaving Paris. We were out of occupied France and in the country of Andorra, high in the Pyrenees Mountains.

Late in the afternoon we were down in the valley, the snow was melting and we were in a small village. The fellows who had taken us across

the mountains had done their job, and we did not see them again. To me, the French Underground was any group of people that thought that their war effort was passing us onto somebody that they knew and trusted. That was how they were doing their part of the war.

The next two days we were in the village of Andorra. The village is the Capital of the Republic - a 175 square mile country that is in one of the valleys between France and Spain in the Pyrenees Mountains. We were in one big room that was like the United Nations in hiding. There were Americans, British, French, Spanish and Germans. Everyone was hiding or had deserted from some country.

We were told that we were waiting for the British Embassy to come for us. My patten leather oxfords were replaced with a pair of hemp sole sandals. Our night walking was not over, and I wished later that I had my oxfords back. I also gave up my 'Long-John' underwear that I had received in my Christmas package from home. A car had taken us south, but the Andorra-Spanish border guards had to be bypassed, so it was another night of walking. All night long the rocks worked up through the braided hemp sole of the sandals.

We spent the day in another barn, but this time we were in Spain. About sundown an employee of the British Embassy came for us in a 1934 Ford Sedan that burned coke for fuel. It was daylight when we came over the hills above Barcelona and the first time in many months we saw a city that was not under the affects of wartime blackout. For our British comrades, it had been years.

The British Embassy outfitted us with a complete new outfit, including a two piece suit. Then there were physical exams, interrogation and food. They were not able to move all the group to Madrid at one time, so Rosenblatt, Capt. Don Dilling and I stayed behind. One Sunday afternoon one of the Embassy employees took the three of us to a bull fight.

After going to Madrid, it was on to Gibraltar and we were flown in a French Moroccan C-47 to Casablanca.

At Gibraltar we reported to the American Military Liaison Office American Consulate. A full Colonel (Horace W. Forster) that smokes roll-your-own Bull Durham cigarettes and his staff was one S/Sgt. They issued us military uniforms and toilet articles. Before they sent us on our way, we signed a form that we were not to tell our escape story to 'NO ONE' unless that person was authorized.

There was a two day wait at Casablanca for a transport that was going to England. We were traveling with a very high priority number (one). The thirteen evadees were the first called out to board a C-87 (Liberator transport) that was bound for England. It was about a nine hour flight.

At London we were taken to the Canadian Hospital for MORE physical exams.

I had caught a head cold, so they treated my infected ears. We went through much more interrogation and were issued new uniforms. It was like the first days in the army, except this time they cared as to how we looked, and there were people to help alter the uniforms so that they would fit. We were told that our ETO war days of flying were over, and we would be headed for the United States.

On 12 April, Alvin Rosenblatt and I returned to the 68th Squadron for a short visit. I also received my T/Sgt. Stripes. Then on 14 April 1944 we received our orders to return to New York on C-54 flight from Scotland. We received a twenty one day leave to a redistribution station. After that, home in Idaho. I went to Santa Monica, CA, and then the next five months at a Spokane, Washington hospital. I finished WWII at Chanute Field, IL as a Phase Chief (an instructor supervisor) in the Engine Change Phase of the Power Plant School.



## MAIL & E-MAIL



Roger Cressant  
Head of Resistance  
Fighters

Pierre Berenguer at the Musee de Resistance in France sent pictures of the family that helped many airmen escape capture by the Germans. Roger Cressant was head of the Underground in Gratenois, which is a village near the crash site of the **Sobatka** crew.

The late **Abraham Teitel** was housed in the Cressant household until his escape and that of **Milton Rosenblatt's** could be arranged.

The documents which Berenguer forwarded will be placed in the Mighty 8th Museum, as those fighters helped many 8th Air Force airmen escape.



Lt. Abraham Teitel and  
Guy Cressant  
(Age 9)

Ed. Note: The story of Charles Blakely, successful evadee who was helped by the French Underground. was recently added to the files of the Resistance Museum in France. They are looking for pictures and articles about the men they were able to guide out of the country when France was under the heel of German occupation.

If you were one of the lucky ones who escaped with the help of these brave Resistance Fighters, send me your story and/or pictures, and I will send them to Pierre. We are looking for every museum & library to place 44th history. Don't lose this opportunity for your story to be available for future generations.





## FOLDED WINGS

*How will we all be remembered when History takes us in hand?  
No doubt, we shall all be remembered with those who defended our land.*

**Aronoff, Arthur #25800** 68th Squadron. 17 January 2011 Lt. Aronoff was a Navigator on the **Clayton Roberts** crew. He flew 12 missions with Roberts, then one more with the **Thurston Van Dyke** crew.

Aronoff's first mission was 10 Mach 1945; his last 20 April 1945. He flew in *Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Jose Carioca, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, One Weakness, Louisiana Belle* and *T S Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys*.

The Clayton Roberts crew was reunited after many years at a 44th BG Reunion in San Diego in 2000. They became eager attendees to many Reunions after that, all wearing matching jackets to show the closeness of their crew.

Aronoff graduated from Syracuse University with a BS in Chemical Engineering, specializing in paper manufacturing. He worked for the Kimberly Clark paper company for many years. He retired in Stockbridge, MA and wintered in Longboat Key, Florida.

Aronoff is survived by his wife of 61 ½ years, Ellie. The couple had a daughter, twin sons and four step-grandsons. One son became a world famous drummer; the other, a psychologist. News of his passing came to Roberts from Aronoff's son, Jonathon. He was living in Stockbridge, Massachusetts at the time of his death.

**Dubowsky, Robert, #20062** 66th Squadron 5 February 2011 Lt. Dubowsky was a Co-Pilot on the **Thomas Harrocks** crew. He flew 36 missions, the first on 20 July 1944. He also flew with **Thomas Kay, John Testa** and **James Derrick**. The planes he flew in were: *Channel Hopper, Corky, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Flak Magnet, Fifinella, Scotty Mac,*

**Jersey Jerk, Henry, Glory Bee** and **Southern Comfort III**.

On a mission to Dresden on 16 January 1945, with **Eugene Snavelly** as Command Pilot, the plane was damaged by flak, and two engines were lost. Dropping out of formation, the pilot tried going as far west as he could, hoping to parachute into friendly territory. They made it to Saarburg where everybody bailed out; four members, including Dubowsky, had minor injuries. The Army had liberated that area a few days previous to their arrival.

An intriguing part of that story is that Col. Snavelly threw his 'Fifty Mission Hat' back into the plane, just before parachuting out. It was later found by some infantrymen; entrusted with the Testa crew, and 72 hours later, was delivered back to its owner.

Dubowsky flew two more missions after the Dresden mission, the last on 21 March 1945.

Following WWII, Dubowsky remained in the service. During his 22 years of service, he flew the C-47, AT-6, C-54 and many more. He served 3 years in the Pacific as Operation Officer and Communication Officer in many locations. Later he became Squadron Commander at Keesler AFB. After that, he studied Communications and Cryptography at Fort Devens in Massachusetts. At all his assigned stations he took night classes, finally earning a B.S. degree in Military Science. At Randolph AFB he learned to fly the T-33 and later the F-80. From there he was assigned to the Island of Crete as Chief of Electronics and Communications Division at the USAF Security Service Base. His last assignment was the 30th Air Division, Air Defense Command as Chief of the Systems Integration System.



## FOLDED WINGS

Bob and Irma were regular attendees of the 44th Bomb Group and 2nd Air Division Reunions.

Besides his wife Irma, Dubowsky leaves behind a daughter Jacqueline and two granddaughters. At the time of his death, the couple was living at Satellite Beach, Florida.

**Goldstein, Jack #20406** 68th Squadron Date Unknown Goldstein was the Assistant Operation Clerk, under the direction of **Gene Holmes**. **Robert Lehnhausen** remembers Goldstein as a rather brusque-speaking man, a direct contrast to the gentle manner in which his senior officer spoke.

The Operations Group was responsible for assigning crews and individuals for each mission.

Knowledge of Goldstein's passing came from the 2nd Air Division Journal.

**Moretti, Wilbur J. #21402** 67th Squadron 12 November 2006 S/Sgt. Moretti was a gunner with three different crews: **Wilbur D. Carter** and **James Bledsoe**. He flew in **Mary Harriet** and **Sultry Sue**. His first mission was 11 June 1944; his last on 20 April 1945. Information of his passing came from the Social Security files.

**Morris, William F. #21412** 67th Squadron 31 December 2003 S/Sgt. Morris was a Gunner on the **Robert Stamos** crew. He flew eight missions, the first on 26 September 1943; the last on 1 December 1943. His last mission was with the **Edward Taylor** crew. He flew in **F FOR FREDDIE, RAGGEDY ANN II, SEED OF SATAN, AMBLIN OKIE and 4-Q-2**.

On his last mission, which was to Solingen, Germany, it was assumed that flak damage caused loss of fuel, so the crew bailed out over Belgium. Two members of the crew evaded and

returned; two evaded but were later captured and became POWs, along with six that were captured immediately.

Information of Morris's passing came from the Social Security files.

**Mull, Frank S. #21446** 68th Squadron No information available. His death reported in Social Security Files.

**Nieman, Haskell #21518** A loan from the 392nd BG 20 September 2006, Lt. Nieman was a Navigator that operated GEE equipment. His first of 4 missions with the 44th BG was 29 July 1944, flying with **L.L. Johnson**, a Command Pilot from the 392nd BG, with the H. S. Cassell crew. He also flew with Command Pilots **George Player**, **H. Sather** and **J. E. Pennypacker**, all from the 392nd BG. His last mission was with the **Finman Mack** crew, (506 Squadron) in which he served as Nose Gunner & Togglier.

The report of his death was from the Social Security files.

**Thorson, Alvin #22310** 506 Squadron 10 March 2011 Sgt. Thorson was a Right Waist Gunner on the **E. A. Herding** crew. He flew on only two missions, the first on 1 April 1944; one week later on 8 April 1944, the Herzing crew flew on what has been recorded as the worst loss of the 44th in WWII.

On a mission to an Airdrome in Langenhagen, Germany, a Target of Opportunity, **Rubber Check** and ten other aircraft were lost. All members of the Herzing crew became POWs. Thorson was sent first to Stalag Luft for interrogation, then to Stalag 17B on the Danube in Austria. He was there for the duration. He returned home on the U.S.S. LeJeune. After the war he returned to his life of farming in Illinois. Later, he became an equipment Mechanic, then a building refin-



## FOLDED WINGS

isher and assembler of heavy equipment. He retired in 1986.

Thorson and his late wife, Doris Reppy, had a daughter, three sons; six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Thorson was residing in Sycamore, Illinois at the time of his death.

*Ed. Note: Lt. Col. Robert Lehnhausen recorded his memory of that mission: It was Easter Sunday, 1944. The 44th put up 44 planes that day. We lost eleven.*

The 44th was the lead group of the 2nd Air Division in what was a maximum effort. This mission was Col. **John Gibson's** first as CO of the 44th. The two lead aircraft were (PFF) Pathfinder Aircraft of the 389th Group. I flew as Command Pilot of the Deputy Lead Plane. The 506 Squadron was the day's Lead Squadron.

The attack by 50-75 German fighters penetrated our fighter escort in a head on attack (12:30 high) with devastating results – eleven losses. (We also lost eleven in Ploesti.)

**Toth, Alex #22335** 66th Squadron 5 July 2010 S/Sgt. Toth was a gunner on the **Theodore Hoffiz** crew. His first of 35 missions was 27 September 1944. The Hoffiz crew flew in eight different aircraft, **Jersey Jerk, Fifinella, Scotty Mac, Glory Bee, Henry, Big Time Operator, King Pin** and **Loco Moto**.

Toth's last mission was 14 March 1945. He attended the 44th BG Reunions until his health failed.

Knowledge of his passing came from his daughter, Susan Toth Dunfee to his longtime friend, **Bob Vance**.

### MARY ASTON'S BOUTIQUE

For Sale: 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 is 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.

### DO YOU WANT TO BUY A BRICK?

The Soldier's Walk at the Army Heritage Education Center at Carlisle displays the names of many of your leaders and friends. The slogan is: **Voices of the Past Speak to the Future**. You can't walk to the Museum without seeing the **Flying 8 Ball logo**, proudly displayed.

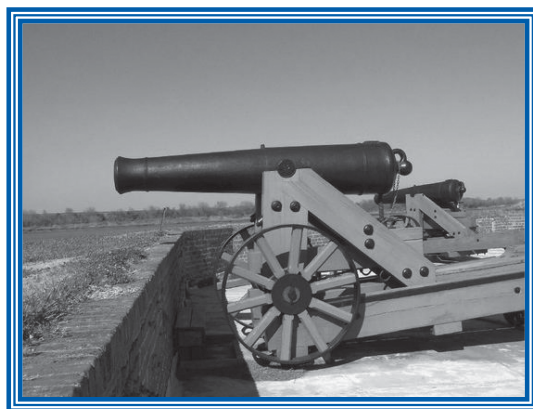
An Infantryman once said to **Robert Lehnhausen**, "Your group were no help to us on D-Day." Bob had the right answer: "We did it all ahead of time." And so you did—taking out airdromes, bridges and railway stations—to keep the enemy away from the action at Normandy. That must never be forgotten, when WWII history is studied.

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## **FORT JACKSON**

Fort Jackson is a national historic landmark at the entrance of the Savannah River, built to prevent enemy ships from threatening the city of Savannah. It was built between 1808-1812.

During the Civil War, it kept Union Forces from attacking the city, but General Sherman captured it by land. He called it a gift that he gave to President Lincoln.

Anyone can get lots of great shots here – by camera, of course.