

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 2 - Issue #4

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Winter, 1997

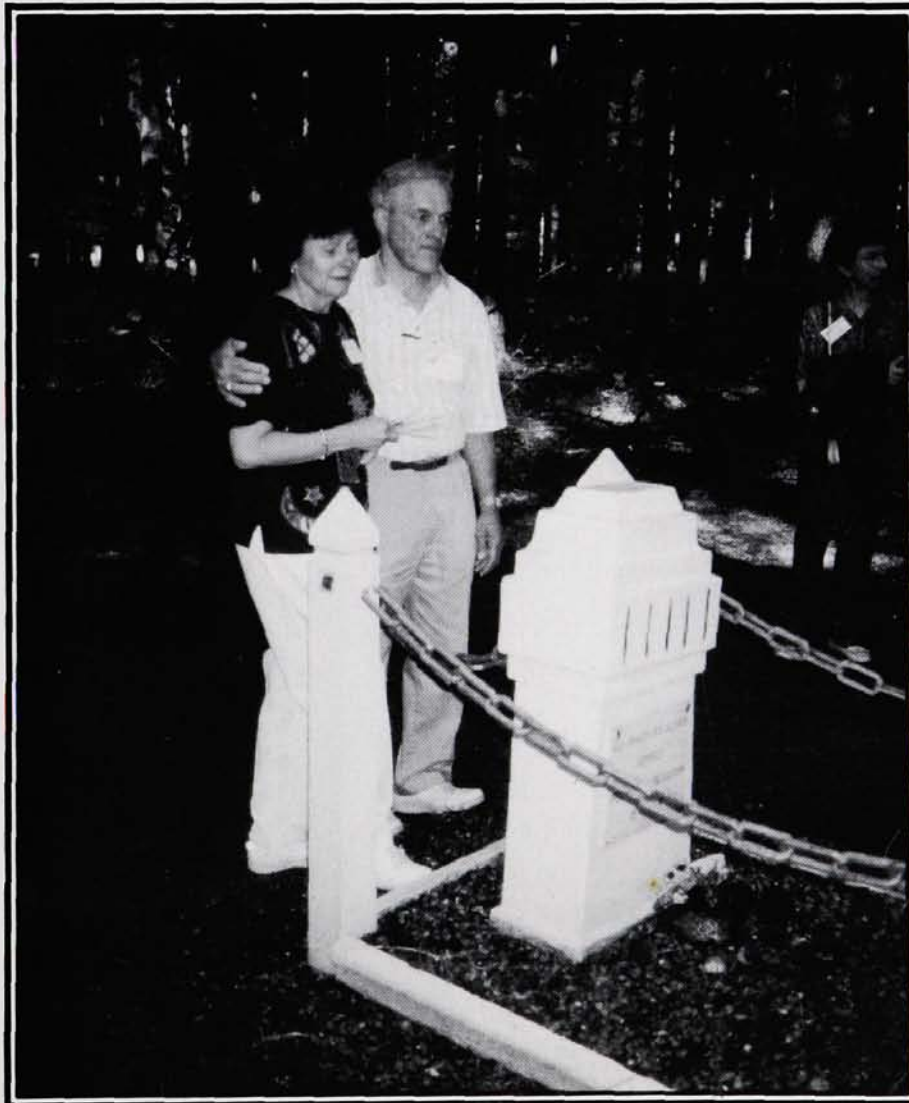
Non Profit Veterans Organization

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Instead of a featured airplane for this issue, we have a Cover Lady in the person of Lois Shaeffer Cianci and her husband Tony of Sinking Springs, PA. This is a preamble to installment two of

THE TRIP - THE TRIP

story last issue in which we covered the England part of our tour. We have made this our feature story and cover because the series of ironies, coincidences and completely unforeseen events that occurred during the European portion of our trip not only stretch one's imagination, they exemplify every principle and meaning for which our Association exists.



Lois Shaeffer Cianci and husband Tony at the crash site of the 67th Squadron B-24 which was shot down on January 21, 1944 with her father T/Sgt. Clair P. Shaeffer and his pilot Lt. Frank W. Sobotka, Jr. aboard near Gratenoix, France.

To start, I must refer you back to Vol. 1 - Issue #4, the Winter 1995 copy of The 8-Ball Tails page 12, where we did a rewrite of the beautiful article "Letters of Love" written by Dawn Drago, Staff Writer of the Reading, PA Eagle/Times. The story told of Lois, the little daughter of her single parent father, Technical Sergeant Clair P. Shaeffer, 68th Bomb Squadron and all of the letters he had written to her from the time of his entry into the Air Corps until he died in the shoot down of his plane over France on January 21, 1944.

In the conclusion of our story, we told how Lois, attending an Air Show, approached a man wearing an 8th AF Historical Society cap and inquired how she might find information on the death of her father. He in turn put her in touch with Pete Henry, who put her in touch with us and Will Lundy. Doing his usual great work, Will provided her with all the information he had and that she had sought since, as a five year old, she was informed that her dad was MIA.

In a closing letter to Lois, I told her about the 44th BGVA and informed her that she was a part of the 44th family and we welcomed her membership. I also noted in one of her letters that she hoped, someday, to travel to Nuepre, Belgium and visit the Ardennes American Cemetery where her father was named on the Wall of Honor. I told her I was in the final stages of planning a 44th BGVA tour to England, France and Belgium and I promised if she and her husband would join the tour, I would route the tour to visit the Ardennes Cemetery.

Now, the first coincidence; in November, not long after I received a tour reservation from Lois and her husband Tony, I received a letter from two officers of de L' Association Nationale Des Sous-Officiers de Réserve de French Armée de L' Air (ANSA) translated: National Association of Non-Commissioned Officers of the French Army Air Reserve. It was written by M. Jean-Pierre Marie, Historian and translated by M. Joël Huard, Public Relations Officer, respectively, of the Rouen branch of ANSA. The Association carries on research of the WWII air war over France, and the letter was an inquiry on the loss of two 44th BG aircraft on an 8 March 1943 raid on the railway marshalling yards at Rouen. I sent the letter on to Will for his research and in my answer to them said to expect the information they requested to be provided by our historian. I also noted it was ironic we should hear from them, for I was planning a 44th BGVA trip to England and France and we would be staying in Rouen as a base for a visit to the Normandy Invasion beaches on 6 June 1997.

From that point on the letters full of anticipation and excitement over our visit began to arrive. They offered assistance, English speaking guides; even a change in hotel for better accommodations. Most of all they simply wanted to arrange to visit with and thank us for our part in their liberation from the hated Nazi occupation. Little did we know the wonderful reception that awaited us wherever they had arranged our visit to a memorial or social reception. If there was any concern among us that we would be faced with a haughty and perhaps inhospitable attitude from the French, they were dashed from the moment our bus rolled off the ferry at Dieppe! It was almost comical; when on our last night in Eastbourne, I got a phone call from Joël Huard saying that the reception committee was so excited over our arrival, they could not stand to wait until we reached the hotel in Rouen, so were going to drive to Dieppe to meet us and lead the bus to our first scheduled ceremony! On with the itinerary.

Day 10 - June 5. Even with our early (0700) departure, we had a grand farewell with several of our Eastbourne hosts who had arrived at the hotel in time to have breakfast with us. We were also bidding farewell to Kevin and Diana Lundy and Richard and Betty Haft who were taking only the England portion of the tour and were returning to London for a nights rest before flying home. As partial replacements, we were being joined by Kevin Watson and his father-in-law, Tony Wood, both of Eastbourne. Kevin, a Senior Supervising Flight Attendant for British Airways, was the individual responsible for planning and organizing the "Ruthless" Memorial and all the ceremonies of our Eastbourne visit. Each would prove to be a great asset to our group in his own right.



A 44th BG "Italian Bobby" (Lou DeBlasio) escaping from London.
Ruth and Perry Morse in the next seat.

After a lovely morning tour in our bus to Newhaven, we boarded, bus and all, a SeaLink ferry for a smooth crossing in beautiful weather to Dieppe, France. As our bus came off the ferry and we quickly went through an immigration check, we saw a group of uniformed men holding a sign which welcomed the 44th Bomb Group to France.



Mr. Sylvain Dezelee, President of the ANSA, Normandie Association to greet us with a Welcome Poster at Dieppe.



Sylvain Dezelee and Jean Pierre Marie greeting us at Dieppe.

Those members of the ANSA there to greet us were: Jean Pierre Marie, Joél Huard, and Sylvain Dezelee, President of the ANSA, Normandie Association. After hurried greetings, with the French delegation leading in their car, we set off for Villers Ecalles, a small town outside Rouen, and the first memorial ceremony arranged by the ANSA. When we pulled into what appeared to be the parking lot for the town recreation park, we were amazed to see about 150 people led by The Honorable Mayor, Mr. Albert Coeligniet waiting to greet us.



Roy Owen, Will Lundy and Bob Vance meeting Mayor Albert Coeligniet of Villers Ecalles, France location of the "Miss Diane" crash site.

Another ranking dignitary was Mr. Christian Holle, Sub Prefect de Seine Maritime and approximately 20 fully uniformed ANSA members and a military band were also present. We were introduced to Mr. Maurice Quillen, holder of the United States Medal of Freedom awarded by President Eisenhower for his heroic service as leader of the French Resistance in the Rouen area during the German occupation. Also we met Mr. Guy Cressant, son of the Resistance leader in the Cauville Area during the war.

The next unbelievable coincidence; Guy was age 10 when he and his father found the wreckage of the 68th Sqdn. Frank Sobotka crew aircraft shot down on the 21 January, 1944 raid against the V-1 sites in the Palais de Calais area. T/Sgt. Clair Shaeffer, Flight Engineer on that crew was killed over the target and went down with the plane. He was Lois Cianci's father. This information surfaced during a period of welcoming and interchange of greetings between the French hosts and our group prior to the memorial ceremony we were to attend. After being introduced to Guy Cressant, Lois mentioned that her father had been shot down on January 21, 1944 somewhere in the area. Guy responded that yes, he knew of the crash and its location. When asked by Lois if he knew of her father when she spoke his name, Guy responded that he was not sure but it did sound familiar. He said he could not promise anything, but at his home he was still in possession of some items he and his father had collected from the crash sites of several U.S. aircraft and he would search through these things. Further, if the group desired, he would guide us to the crash site if time could be arranged during our stay.



CRASH
SITE.

With the welcoming over, the entire assembly was led up a street about a hundred yards to an intersection with a small park with a flag draped memorial which marked the (nearby) crash site of the 67th Sqdn. Lt. Clyde Price crew flying "Miss Diane." They were shot down on the Rouen Marshalling Yard raid March 8, 1943.

After eloquent speeches by Mayor Cloenigniet and Sub Prefect Holly and the playing of the National Anthems of France and the U.S., Roy Owen and Will Lundy placed a memorial wreath at the base of the memorial and were instructed to unveil the marker which revealed a newly struck bronze plaque listing the names of the eight crewmen lost in the crash.

Immediately after the ceremony our group was surrounded by the French expressing gratitude for our visit and for the sacrifices by our men to restore their liberty from the German occupation. Then when we boarded the bus and were escorted to the Hotel de Ville (City Hall) to find ourselves guests of the Mayor at a champagne and hors 'd oeuvres reception did the magnitude of sincere gratitude and joy being expressed by the French over our visit begin to sink in. After another welcome by Mayor Coeligniet, Mr. Sylvain Dezellee, President of the ANSA 39.45 Association Du Normande presented the Association Medal of Service to the 44th Bomb Group and a like medal to Leo O. Frazier, Navigator and lone survivor of the 67th Sqdn. Lt. Robert W. Blaine crew, also shot down on the 8 March 1943 Rouen raid. Leo Frazier was unable to accompany the tour for reasons of health; Roy Owen accepted the medals in behalf of the entire 44th Bomb Group and Leo Frazier (presentation of the Frazier medal in Oakley, Utah on July 4 is covered on page 14 of this issue). Lois Cianci

was presented a Souvenir Plate from The French Evereux Air Base in Villers Escalles by Mr. Le Capitaine Relmy, Commandant Le Armee De L'Air Information. All of our men were then asked to autograph litho prints of B-24s for the French.



SIGNING B-24 PICTURE PRINTS AT THE MAYOR'S RECEPTION AT THE VILLERS ESCALLES HOTEL DE VILLE.

We were then notified that we were due at another reception and must again board the bus. We were also told by our ANSA hosts that after conferring, they had agreed that if our group concurred, on the morning of June 7, before our departure to Paris, they would meet us at the hotel and escort us to the Sobotka crew crash site for a brief visit. It was unanimously voted to make that visit.

THE TOURING EIGHTBALLERS LINE UP FOR THE CAVIAR AT THE MARITIME DEPARTMENT RECEPTION IN ROUEN (CAILLIER, ADRIAN AND DOVEY ALWAYS WEAR THEIR CAPS AT COCKTAILS AND CAVIAR RECEPTIONS).



A short trip took us to the Hotel Du department De Seine Maritime, a beautiful multi-story building facing the Seine River, where we were met by our host the President Du Conseil General De Seine Maritime, Mr. Charles Revet in a lovely large reception room. The entourage was again treated to eloquent expressions of gratitude for the part the 44th took in the air war that helped to liberate the country. The elegance of the reception also rose with the addition of caviar to the hors d'oeuvres.

The irony of all this was what with our very early departure from Eastbourne to make the Ferry, we were expecting to go first to the hotel in Rouen, check-in, freshen up, change into some appropriate clothing and then proceed to meet the Mayor of Villers Escalle. The ANSA party meeting us realized with all the activity they had scheduled, we would never make it if we made the stop at our hotel. So there we were in Dockers, short sleeve shirts, sweaters and jackets; all of the women in slacks and everywhere we went our hosts were in suits and ties (or uniforms) and the ladies in dresses. In spite of us really looking like "tourists," our appearance was politely overlooked and we were treated as though we were formally attired.

When this, our last of the day, reception concluded, on the way back to our hotel, Jean Pierre Marie and Joél Huard led our bus to a beautiful vista overlooking most of Rouen at sunset. Easily in view were the River Seine and the Railway Marshalling Yard which was the 8 March 1943 target objective of the 44th Bomb Group.

Upon return to our hotel we were properly checked-in, had plenty of time for shower or, if the preference of Arnold Dovey, to bathe, dress and after cocktails enjoyed a great dinner in the hotel joined by Jean Pierre and Joél.

Day 11 - June 6. To appropriately spend the 53rd anniversary of D-Day on the Beaches of Normandy was our plan and we did it perfectly. On the nice morning trip from Rouen, we stopped at mid-morning in Bayeux so those desiring could visit the William the Conqueror Center which houses the 231 foot long Bayeux Tapestry which depicts the 1066 Norman invasion of England by William the Conqueror or stroll through this lovely small city.

Jean Pierre and Joél who accompanied us on the bus this day had arranged for a retired French Army Colonel who had landed with the Canadians on June 6 to act as our guide. He was a gentle and patient man who led us along in his car and stopped at each point of interest to tell us of the significance of the various beach positions in the height of the landings. We started at Omaha Beach which is overlooked by the everlasting beauty of the American Cemetery. It is often said that each American owes him or herself a visit to this beautifully serene piece of United States soil to view the monument to all of the Servicemen and Women of all branches who paid the ultimate price for the liberation of Europe and freedom from the tyranny of Fascism. We visited Pont du Hoc, where the Special Forces scaled the cliff and captured this observation point which commanded a 180 degree view of the invasion area; we saw Arromanches where some of the steel and concrete dock segments which were floated in and sunk to form a harbor are still visible; we saw the one gap in the sand cliffs where the U.S. invasion forces were able to ascend and advance off of Omaha Beach. We were all the way to Utah Beach and the Village of Montebourg which changed hands five times in the first few days of the assault and was left in a pile of rubble when the U.S. 4th Army overran the German defenses and advanced inland.

Aside from the ravages of the sustained bombing and naval shelling of the fortifications on Point du Hoc, there is little evidence of the massive battles which ensued on these quiet beaches where the visitors now stroll and the children play on the gently sloping sand. It is difficult to imagine the scenes that we have seen on film or possibly from the air on June 6, 1944 as actually happening until one returns up the hill and strolls among the row after row of white cross or Star of David marked graves of those we lost. Every Bomb Squadron of the 44th Bomb Group has men at rest there. This most memorable of days finished with a return to our hotel and a lovely dinner with some of our ANSA friends.



Dick and Betty Lynch dine with Mary and Lee Aston at the Hotel Mercure in Rouen.



D-Day, prior to departing for the Normandy beaches, Roy Owen and Doug McPhail joined Marilyn and Mel Murrack and Lois Cianci for breakfast at the Hotel Mercure in Rouen; Lolly Owen took the picture and Tony was wandering around with his camcorder.



Joel Huard and Jean Pierre Marie stayed with us and returned to the hotel for dinner after our D-Day tour of the invasion beaches.

Day 12 - Sunday, June 7. After an early breakfast and checkout, we met our ANSA escorts comprised of about six or seven cars and we set out for the Sobotka crash site in a forested hill area called Beaussault near the village of Gratenois. After driving a few miles, we left the paved road and proceeded up a lightly travelled dirt road until we reached a suitable area for the bus and the autos to park. It was a rather cool morning with some cloud cover and we departed the bus for a walk of about 200 yards along a barely discernible road in a lovely young forest of trees about six to eight inches in diameter and the ground blanketed with leaves and fir needles. When we came to a small sign with some French wording, we turned into the forest and had walked about 50 yards when we came upon a memorial marking the crash site. The small site was bordered by a shiny metal chain suspended from white painted cement boundary posts. Lying on the ground in the center of the chained area were several sizable fragments of bulletproof glass, some metal fragments and a small electric actuator motor from the downed B-24. Tearfully, Lois Cianci bent over the chain boundary to feel and stroke those pieces that had fallen from the sky with her father. After two or three very touching moments, the group was asked to gather around the marker with Guy Cressant and Lois standing at the head of the marker whereupon Guy reached into the inner pocket of his jacket and withdraw a small notebook and began to speak in French reading from his notes. In the course of his remarks one could hear mention of Sobotka and Clair Shaeffer and the date 21 January 1944.

Translator Jean Pierre Marie related that the 10 year old Guy and his father, head of the French Resistance, had reached the crash site before the Germans and were able to do little more at the time than gather the dog tags of those they could find, then leave the scene. It was the practice to send one of the usual pair of dog tags back via the underground so to reach the military unit of the deceased. What of the remaining dog tag? It was kept in the event the other was lost. Guy Cressant again reached into his jacket and withdraw a small box and presented it to Lois Cianci. Her hands shaking, she opened the box to find a dog tag identifying Clair P. Shaeffer, his next of kin Lois Shaeffer and the address where she resided with her Aunt. Every person at the scene was awash in tears.

AT THIS UNBELIEVABLE MOMENT 53 YEARS 4 MONTHS AND 17 DAYS AFTER THE CRASH, LOIS HOLDS HER FATHER'S DOG TAG TO HER LIPS.



GUY CRESSANT HANDING LOIS SHAEFFER CIANCI THE BOX CONTAINING THE CLAIR P. SHAEFFER DOG TAG.

Miraculously at that moment a very quiet, gentle rain began to fall. Lolly Owen was heard to say: "It's as though God is crying with us." After a few moments of joyful astonishment over this amazing coincidence, as we were preparing to leave, the rain ceased to fall, the sun came out and a small miracle had come to pass. Unforeseen, unplanned and unbelievable, yet there it was 53 years and 4 months later, a "Missing in Action" father was joined with his beloved daughter by a small fire-blackened steel pendant that had at last fulfilled its purpose.

We bade farewell to our new friends of the ANSA who had, in gratitude and respect for all the veterans of the 44th Bomb Group extended the hand of welcome to us with such sincerity we, on the departing bus, were somehow silently saddened for almost 20 minutes, each thinking over the joys of the past two days and nights. Happiness soon returned when we reached Giverny, the home and wondrous gardens of the renowned French impressionist Claude Monet. There we had lunch and a memorable two hour stroll through this colorful legacy to the French people by the artist.



THE VIEW OF THE OMAHA BEACH CEMETERY FROM IN FRONT OF THE STATUE.

Leaving Giverny, we proceeded to Paris where we stayed at a hotel of good name, but of no similarity to the member of the chain on our stay in Rouen. Operated by Hindu Management, we had the worst check-in of any trip I can recall. I will never forget our members struggling with their bags when they were dumped in a hallway and we were left to either wait for the one bellman or wrestle your bags to your room on your own. From there it got worse, so I'll leave it alone except to vow never again will you hear the name Owen associated with the name Hotel Relais Mercure in Paris. We stayed two nights only with one full day free for everyone to do as they pleased. This means there are probably almost as many different adventure stories of who did what as there were on the trip. We did all get together to avoid another dinner at the hotel, and relying on the ingenuity of Keith Waterhouse our driver (and Waterhouse owner), had a great fun and reasonably priced dinner at a place he had utilized before. After dinner, Keith took the whole bus load to the Montparnasse district where we went to the top of one of Paris' taller buildings and had a beautiful Paris night lights view of the city.

Day 14 - June 9. Leaving Paris we travelled Northeast toward Liege, Belgium with a rest stop and visit in Reims. We then continued on to Bastogne for lunch and a walking tour of the (then small) village where the 101st Airborne were encircled during the Battle of the Bulge. When told to surrender or be killed, General McAuliffe, 101st commander, answered "nuts!" Traveling on we arrived at the U.S. Cemetery at Ardennes



Will Lundy and Roy Owen in front of the OMAHA BEACH CEMETERY STATUARY SYMBOL OF ALL THOSE AMERICANS AT REST HERE.

We had previously notified them of our arrival and that we would be accompanied by Lois Shaeffer Cianci, daughter of T/Sgt. Clair P. Shaeffer, KIA whose name is marked on the Cemetery Wall of Honor. She was met by the Cemetery Superintendent who escorted her to the point on the Wall of Honor where her father's name appears. It was marked with a beautiful wreath. Taking her then for a stroll through the grave markers of those unknown servicemen, the superintendent explained to Lois that after the war this cemetery had served as one of the few forensic cemeteries in Europe where last extensive efforts were made to identify each remains.



JEAN PIERRE MARIE AND JOËL HUARD ON THE NORMANDY BEACHES TOUR.



J.R. REVILLE AT THE BASTOÛNE MEMORIAL.



IRENE LUNDY AND OUR GUIDE AT ONE OF THE GERMAN ARTILLERY BUNKERS AT POINT DU HOC.

When this proved impossible, the remains were buried with the marker reading "Known Only to God." He went on to say that while her father's remains were not positively identified, she could rest assured that he was buried here among those also unknown.

As we were leaving the cemetery, Lois, although again with eyes reddened with tears, had a look of relief and quietly told me she felt, finally, the wondering and thinking and hoping that someday he would come back were over. Now she knows and can go home and tell her children the true story of the death of their gallant grandfather. She said she could never begin to tell the members of the 44th BGVA how profoundly thankful she is for making this all possible for her.

My only wish is that all the membership could have shared this joyful experience.



LOIS SHAEFFER CIANCI AT THE ARDENNES NATIONAL CEMETERY, BELGIUM, KNEELING OVER THE WALL OF HONOR MARKER BEARING HER FATHER'S NAME.

Day 15 - June 10. As you might expect, this will be an anti-climactic finish. We left Leige, after a splendid nights rest at the Holiday Inn, on our journey to Calais with a stopover in Brussels for lunch and some browsing.



The wreath and marker memorializing T/Sgt. Clair P. SHAEFFER, 68th Bomb Sqdn., 44th Bomb Group.



The Plaza in Brussels.



The Little Lost Boy in Brussels.

From Calais we had a much shorter ferry trip to Dover. After a drop off of Kevin and Terry, it was on to London and the Kensington Hilton for a last night of farewells. It was a great ride; one for which every member of the 44th can look upon with immense pride, for it magnificently fulfilled the basic mandate of our charter: to bring together, physically or spiritually, the family and comrades of both our deceased and living members.

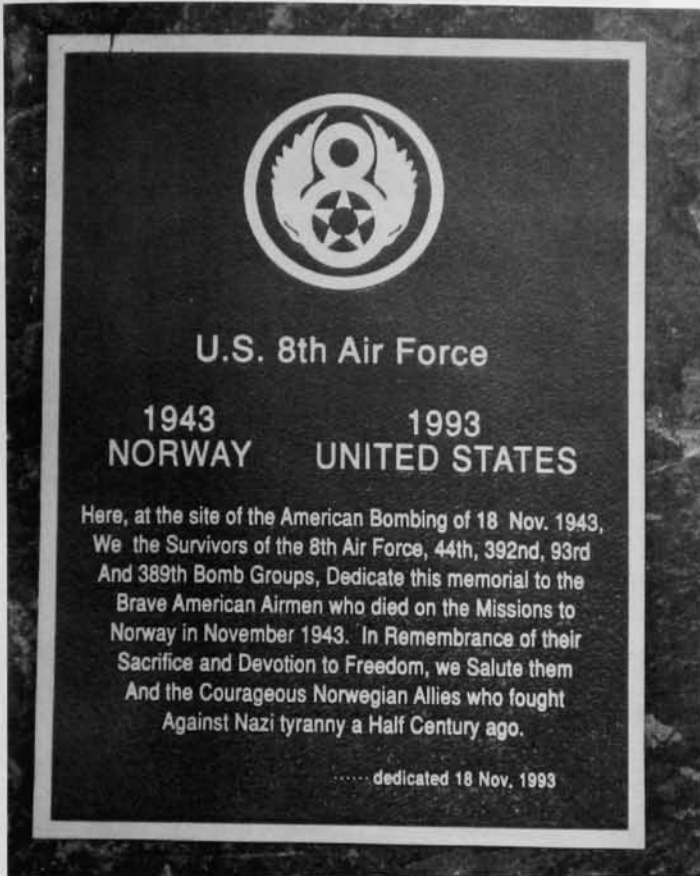


Col. Bill CAMERON and his lovely bride, HENRI.

MORE TRAVEL

Newlyweds Bill Cameron and his lovely wife Henri travelled to Norway in early September on what could be termed a delayed honeymoon.

In Oslo, Bill and Henri were escorted by USAF (Ret) Col. Knute Kinne to view the new stone and bronze memorial to the American Airmen who lost their lives on the 18 November 1943 raid on Kjellar Airfield. The new memorial dedicated on 18 November 1993, which replaced a wooden marker, was funded by donations raised by Ed Dobson, Jr. whose pilot father was lost, and Forrest Clark who flew on the mission. Bill and Henri were quartered in a very old farm house which is being restored by the Norwegian Air Force. The house is located on a hillside overlooking the airfield. Bill reports a number of bomb craters from the raid are still distinguishable on the hillside.



The Kjeller Airfield Memorial



Bill CAMERON with Col. (RET.) KNUTE KINNE of Oslo, at the Kjeller Airfield Memorial.

Some great poetry from the ranks.

Editor: Our hard working U.K. Representative, Steve Adams came up with this great piece of poetry from his 66th archives which Cpl. Asa W. Dye dedicated to (then) Lt. Col. Dexter Hodge. He says Col. Hodge wanted a poetical resume of the 44th Bomb Group and this was his inspiration:

The Forty Fourth Bomb Group

We've pulled our share of missions,
And we've really had a "go"
Among the first to fly "Old Glory"
Out across the E.T.O.

There's a cloud ripped trail behind us
From the "Dame of Liberty"
When we kissed good-bye in parting,
With a vow to keep her free.

We were glad to see old London,
And hear "Tommy's" Cheerio!
He admits he'd almost had it,
And was glad we'd have a "go."

So with mighty engines roaring,
And a sandwich made of Spam
We went out to meet the "Jerry"
With these "Libs" of Uncle Sam.

Then we found we had an airship
That really stood the test
And it's fifties blazed a verdict
Sending lots of "Jerries" west.

Our wings have thrown their shadow
Over France and Italy,
The 44th has blasted targets
Over all of Germany.

They've heard our engines roaring
from Gibraltar to Oran
And Rommel will long remember
The fighting "Libs" of Uncle Sam.

Yes, we've blazed a trail of glory
That will end in victory
Then only one more "mission"
For the 44th there will be.

Then we'll all attend a "briefing"
Just to hear the C.O. say,
Navigators please, attention,
Plot your course for the U.S.A.!



44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

6304 Meadowridge Drive • Santa Rosa, CA 95409 • 707-538-4726 • Fax 707-538-1212

July 25, 1997

Group Captain A. F. 'Bertie' Wallace CBE, DFC, RAF (Ret)
President
Eastbourne Combined Ex-Services Association
c/o Mr. Nigel Whitely MISM
24 Tavistock
Devonshire Place
Eastbourne BN21 4AG England

Dear Group Captain Wallace:

This letter is purposely overdue in order that I could write, organize and see to the publishing of our journal which, in the enclosed Summer issue, we have told the story of the wonderful visit by a contingent of our 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association to your beautiful city.

Our June 2-5 visit was prompted by reports from our small delegation which were able to attend the original "Ruthless" Memorial dedication two years ago. From the welcome extended to those members, we expected a most hospitable welcome by the caring people of Eastbourne; the ceremonial events and shower of heartfelt respect and love extended to us by your city was such an emotional series of events we were overjoyed and shall never forget our visit with you. Particularly the lovely buffet luncheon hosted by The Royal Air Force Association at your Club. This afforded us the opportunity to mix and socialize with some of the wonderful people of Eastbourne for which we are most grateful.

The honor, respect and love your citizens showered upon us demonstrated, most beautifully, the bond of friendship and love between the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and the people of Eastbourne. A bond forged in the flaming wreckage in which ten of our valorous comrades paid the ultimate price for the liberty we now enjoy. It is our hope this bond will be an enduring one. We thank you,

Sincerely,


Roy W. Owen, President
Colonel USAF (Ret)

p.s. Please pass on my personal greetings and thanks to all the members of the Royal British Legion Band and those members of the various branches who proudly bore their colors so impressively to make the "Ruthless" memorial ceremony complete.



44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

6304 Meadowridge Drive • Santa Rosa, CA 95409 • 707-538-4726 • Fax 707-538-1212

July 24, 1997

Cllr. Beryl Healy
Mayor of Eastbourne
Town Hall Chambers
Grove Road, Eastbourne BN21
East Sussex, England


Dear Mayor Healy:

This letter is purposely overdue in order that I could write, organize and see to the publishing of our journal which, in the enclosed Summer issue, we have told the story of the magnificent visit by a contingent of our 44th Bomb Group to your beautiful city.

I am not certain that I can properly describe the dimensions of emotion felt by all of the 44th visitors to have been a part of all the range of heartfelt ceremonial events which you and the caring people of Eastbourne arranged in honor of our visit. Beginning with your hosting of the joyous reception and tour of the City Hall; to the solemn and beautiful reverence of the Butts Brow ceremonies honoring our "Ruthless" crew, then on to the hosted luncheon by the Royal Air Force Club and the tour of the Redoubt Fortress. Finally, along with the leaders of Eastbourne, honoring us with your presence at the gala dinner marking the end of our visit to Eastbourne.

I must say, to all of we American visitors, the welcoming embrace with which your city took us into their arms was beyond our highest expectations. The honor, respect and love your citizens showered upon us demonstrated, most beautifully, the bond of friendship and love between the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and the people of Eastbourne. A bond forged in the flaming wreckage in which ten of our valorous comrades paid the ultimate price for the liberty we now enjoy. It is our hope this bond will be an enduring one. Please accept our sincere thanks and when it is opportune pass our gratitude on to all of those who participated and made our visit so memorable.

Sincerely,


Roy W. Owen, President
Colonel USAF (Ret)

Our 1998 Project

At our Salt Lake City Board of Directors, Col. Dick Butler, our Group Vice President to 2nd Air Division, briefed the Board on the project undertaken by 2nd AD to commission the sculpting of a 1/6th scale monumental bronze B-24 Liberator model to be placed in the USAF Academy Honor Court adjacent to the Academy Chapel at Colorado Springs.

The sculpture, to be done by Robert Henderson of Canon City, will join bronze models of the P-40, P-38, P-47, P-51 and, the most recent addition, a B-17. Henderson is recognized as the only sculptor to create monumental bronze airplanes. The gathering of models of the most famous of the AAF warbirds of WWII in the Honor Court is meant as "The Study Hall" of these aircraft and will be studied and seen by millions from all nations and future generations to visit USAF grounds each year. Most important of those to whom the Honor Court will truly be a classroom are our new leaders - our future - our Cadets. Failure to have a B-24 in that study hall would be unconscionable!

In answer to this challenge, your Board has unanimously approved joining with 2nd AD in the financing of this project as our major '98 effort. While 2nd AD will be the ultimate collection point for the various 2nd AD units, each unit is free to organize its own finding campaign. Our campaign is on "contribute as you feel you can" for individual members and the Board has approved an Association matching contribution of up to \$4,000. This means for every individual member contributed dollar, our treasury will donate a matching dollar until we reach the "as we feel we can" \$4,000. Point. We, of course, would like our total contribution to reach the \$8,000 mark. It is my understanding that our Treasurer left the General Membership meeting with around \$1,200, so we are off to a typical 44th "go for it" effort. (You guys make me so proud to be your leader, I can't tell you!). I think the most contributed by any 2nd AD unit is \$7,500 -- so what does that tell you? MAKE YOUR CHECK OUT TO: 44th BGVA and down in the Memo space write: Bronze Model Fund. Mail to: 44th BGVA, P.O. Box 2367, Salt Lake City, UT 84110-2367.

Farewell to General Leon William Johnson, USAF (Ret)

13 September 1904 - 10 November 1997



Our beloved combat commander and President Emeritus, General Leon W. Johnson passed away quietly in his residence at the Fairfax in Ft. Belvoir, VA on 10 November 1997.

Memorial services were held on Monday, 17 November 1997 at the Fort Myers Chapel at 1000 hours followed by interment in Arlington National Cemetery.

The General shared most of his military career with his wife, the former Lucille Taylor of San Antonio who predeceased him. He is survived by his two daughters; Sue, who is married to Major General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Jr. USAF (Ret), and Sarah Abbot Johnson.

Born in Columbia, Missouri he spent his boyhood there and Moline, Kansas. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy and commissioned a Second Lieutenant in June 1926. He later received his Masters Degree in Meteorology at the California Institute of Technology. After a number of flying assignments and progression in rank, the entry of our nation into World War II saw him selected as one of the first four flying officers assigned to the 8th Air Force when it was activated at Savannah, Georgia. He served as

Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations for that command in its formative period. He accompanied the 8th Air Force to England in June 1942. In January 1943, he assumed command of the 44th Bomb Group. In June of that year, he took the group to North Africa on loan to the 9th Air Force for the daring low level attack on the Ploesti oil fields in Rumania. For his heroic leadership of that raid, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. On his return to England in September 1943, he organized the 14th Combat Wing and remained its commander until the end of the war in Europe.

General Johnson went on to a number of command and important staff assignments such as Chief of Personnel Services, Hq. USAF; Commander 15th Air Force; First Commander of 3rd Air Force Mildenhall, England, Commander Continental Air Command; USAF Representative, Military Staff Committee, United Nations; U.S. Representative, NATO Military Staff Committee; Air Deputy to the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe at SHAPE Hq., Paris before his retirement.

During this illustrious career, General Johnson never forgot his combat group, the 44th. Over the years since the 44th had written its pages of valorous deeds indelibly in the history of the air war over Europe, this heroic leader remained humble, always disclaiming his role in the Ploesti Raid success as being any more a contribution to the mission as any other. It seemed his happiest act when at an assemblage of 44th Ploesti veterans, he would mingle among the men wearing the Medal of Honor around his neck and asking, "Would you care to hold your medal? Please take it in your hand, it belongs to you, I am merely wearing it in your honor."

We will miss you, Sir. It has been a privilege and an honor to have served our Nation with you under the colors of the 44th Bomb Group and 14th Combat Wing. May God give us more like you. The family requests that memorial remembrances be made to the Air Force Aid Society in his name. The 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association will make a donation on behalf of our members.

1st Lt. Leo Frazier, 66th Squadron is Decorated

In early 1943, 1st Lt. Leo O. Frazier, Lifetime resident of Oakley, Utah, was assigned to the 66th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group in England as Navigator on the 1st Lt. Robert W. Blaine crew. On 8 March 1943 their B-24 aircraft was shot down by German fighters while attacking the railway marshalling yards of Rouen, France. Lt. Frazier managed to bail out and survive, only to be captured and held in a POW camp until the war ended. He was the lone survivor of the shoot-down.

Leo returned to his Oakley home after the war where he operated a family store, and served his community as Mayor and Summit County Assessor.

When plans were being made for the 44th BGVA trip to England and France and we had began to communicate with the National Association of Non-Commissioned Officers of the French Army Air Reserve regarding our plans to visit the Normandy Beaches using Rouen as a base, they invited us to visit the crash sites of the two 44th aircraft lost on 8 March 1943. When we notified them that Leo Frazier, lone survivor of the Blaine crew was alive, the French extended a most excited invitation for him to accompany our trip so they could honor him. Unfortunately, he did not feel up to the foreign travel. During our visit, the French Air Reserve Association presented their Medal of Allied Service, commemorating participation in the liberation of France, to the 44th Bomb Group and individually to Lt. Leo O. Frazier. Both medals were accepted for the Group and for Leo by 44th BGVA President, Roy Owen.

Upon return home to Salt Lake City (60 miles from Oakley) our Treasurer, Jerry Folsom, unbeknown to Leo, made arrangements with Oakley Mayor Dick Woolstenhulme, Leo's son Blake and local veterans and Leo's family to attend a surprise presentation of the medal during the intermission of the annual 4th of July Rodeo in Oakley. The emotional presentation, made before an audience of 5,500 rodeo fans, included a congratulatory telegram from 44th BGVA member Robert I. Brown, who was Leo's roommate in the Stalag Luft III prison camp.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SPENCER YOUNG OF THE DESERT NEWS, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.





THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

WOW! What a show! It sounds like a lot of hype after each reunion to keep saying this one was greater than the last one, and so on, but those who came will know what I'm saying is our Reunion Co-Chairmen, Jim Clements and Jerry Folsom TALKED THE TALK AND WALKED THE WALK this time! Salt Lake City and our fourth was REUNION -- BIG TIME. In spite of unexpected construction on the hotel's third floor and getting our registration desk stuck in a remote corner of the Hilton Hotel, everything else was super well planned and executed. The weather intervened causing a change from the Snowbird Tour up in the 10k altitude and flying snow, to a city tour and trip to the Kennecott Copper Mine (biggest man made hole on the planet). But everyone seemed to enjoy Plan B. Other highlights were the great dance band of Bud Hutchings we had at the banquet (would you believe folks stayed and danced 'till 11 p.m. instead of jumping up and running for bed as soon as they finished dinner!)

Sunday morning we were honored guests at the nationwide TV broadcast of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The announcer gave a brief combat history of the 44th, then asked us to rise while we were honored with a huge ovation. Then after the broadcast, we were treated with the choir singing Battle Hymn of The Republic in our honor. Mighty touching! That afternoon we bussed out to Hill Air Force Base for a great lunch at the Officers Club followed by a welcome by the Air Force Heritage Foundation of Utah Chairman, Lt. Gen. Marc C. Reynolds (Ret) and Col. Nathan H. Mazer (Ret) in the beautifully restored WWII Chapel of the museum grounds. While still seated, we were given an address written and delivered by Captain (Chaplain) Phillip A. Baker, USAF. The thrust of his talk (not sermon) was a thanks to us and others like us (and his Dad, a WWII Navy veteran) for refreshing his, and the minds of his generation, of the sacrifices we made for the precious liberty they and their children now enjoy. The memorial service was beautifully closed by the retreat marched to the haunting strains of Amazing Grace played by a Bass Drum and Bagpipe trio of young women dressed in traditional kilts. They were Misses Jennie Jensen, Celeste Mahnke and Stephanie Winters, directed by Ms. Merilee Terry; all from Ben Lomond High School, Ogden, Utah.

The next excitement for the group (especially your Prez) was a walk through their aircraft museum,

where in the museum building sits the SR-71C which I was privileged to fly and join the ranks of those who have flown the Blackbird in excess of Mach 3 in level flight, and fewer still, those whose flying career spanned from the B-24 to the SR-71.

We finished our last day of this great reunion with a splendid Italian buffet dinner after which we were entertained by a 40 man strong Mens Barbershop choir called The Beehive State Men's Chorus. They sang for a full hour and really capped off our visit to Salt Lake City. A BIG THANK YOU JIM AND JERRY -- FROM ALL OF US THERE -- A JOB WELL DONE!

Speaking of jobs well done, we elected three new squadron representatives to the Board. P.H. "Phil" Phillips will replace Mel Trager in the Support Units seat; Tony Mastradone replaces Robert I. Brown representing the 67th Squadron; and Michel "Mike" Yuspeh is replacing Richard "Dick" Pedersen in the 506th seat. To those stepping down, you have done a tremendous job in representing your constituencies during this critical period of re-birth and getting the Association up and running. You are all loyal, strong and proven men and all know one does not have to occupy a seat on the Board to serve our Association. There will be need for your help in the future and I know you will answer the call. For those joining the Board, congratulations. The membership has given you their trust and confidence and I am looking forward to having you on the management team as we continue to lead our Association to new successes.

LOLLY AND I WISH YOU ALL A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR -- MELE KALIKIMAKA AND HAU'OLI MAKAHIKI HOU. I will see you in Savannah in October.



Roy Owen, President



1997
A REALLY
GREAT
BIG
REUNION



THE TREASURER AND HIS LOVE, BEV REALLY LOVE TO DANCE!



JIM AND JEAN CAILLER "SHOWING OFF."

A lot has already been said about the overall program, and the photos below capture the fun and enjoyment everyone seemed to have at the scheduled events, but I find myself short of pictures taken in that great unscheduled activity THE HOSPITALITY ROOM. Really, for the first time in our four reunion history, have we had so many of the wives come in, sit down, and stay to visit. It was really great. The atmosphere was friendly, lots of laughter, even a bridge game. The smokers were mindful and stepped outside when they needed to puff (which had a lot to do with it). There is no question, it was the happiest, most fun hospitality room we've ever had. It taught me a lesson, when we negotiate for future reunions, we're going to talk about a big, comfortable hospitality room as first priority!



Lolly EVEN GOT THE PREZ OUT ON THE FLOOR!



CHARLIE AND CAROL SIMPSON HEADING OUT TO DANCE.



BOB MYERS HAD BERYL APGAR SWINGIN' OUT!

TOM AND SARAH
PARSONS REALLY
UNDERSTAND THE
"BIG BAND" STUFF.



TONY AND CATHY MASTRADONE IN THE BACK GROUND.



"FRITZI" SELASKY TELLING IT LIKE IT WAS!

CHANGE IN '98 REUNION PLf PLEASE MAKE NOTE

NOTICE - NOTICE - NOTICE
 Just returned from Savannah;
NEW CONFIRMED REUNION DATES:
October 25 - 28, 1998

Days Inn/Suite on Riverfront.
 Reservation forms will be in Spring Issue of 8-Ball Tails.

We recently got word from our Savannah Museum Display Chairman, Tom Parsons, that the expected completion date for the 44th BG Ploesti Raid display in the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum is August, 1998. The Board agrees the 44th members should assemble to dedicate and view our display as soon as possible after completion. Accordingly we will slip the new Orleans reunion to 1999 and plan our '98 reunion for Savannah, GA and the Museum. This was unanimously approved. The dates available to us for the Museum are October 23, 24 and 25, so we will follow the usual four day schedule and start the reunion on October 22. Mark your calendars for October 22 through 25, 1998.

Mike Yuspah, our new Reunion Chairman, will be meeting with me in Savannah on December 2 to make arrangements for hotel or motel accommodations. Unfortunately we could not have that information in time for the 8-Ball Tails deadline which will be in the mail the first week in December. All of the details on the reunion program and our housing will be forthcoming in the Spring issue of the 8-Ball Tails. In the meantime, at the bottom of this page there is a Reunion Pre-Registration form. If you are planning to attend this most significant reunion, it would be a really big help to Mike in his planning for your maximum enjoyment of this historic area, to have you fill out the form to the best of your ability and send it to him.

The program and costs will be approximately what we had in Salt Lake City and we will have our usual schedule: Registration and Reception Thursday; Friday a tour of Savannah and free afternoon for exploring the River Walk, Squadron Dinners in the evening; Saturday morning, General Membership meeting, lunch and tour 8th Air Force Museum, evening cocktails and Banquet; Sunday, Buffet Breakfast and farewell.

SEE YOU IN SAVANNAH! Your Prez.

CUT HERE

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association 1998 Reunion Registration Form

Please Print:

Last Name _____ First Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____

Guests _____ Total to Attend: _____

Option #1: Full Reunion Number _____

Option #2: Thursday, Friday (Squadron Dinner) Saturday (Banquet) Number _____

Option #3: Saturday (Banquet), Sunday (Lunch & Buffet) Number _____

Option #4: Saturday Banquet and Dance Only Number _____



Mail to: MICHAEL YUSPEH • 7214 Sardonyx Avenue • New Orleans, LA 70124



A 1998 44th BGVA Tour



For all of those who were unable to attend the Salt Lake City Reunion, we were getting so many verbal questions from the membership asking were we going to have another trip like the one we had last Spring, that we decided to run a survey at the General Membership Meeting. Not surprising, I guess, after the first installment of the trip story telling all about our adventures, out of 80 responses (usually representing husband and wife) we had enough "YES" we would want to travel on the same itinerary as the '97 trip that we already have a bus full, (this doesn't mean that because someone filled out a survey that they have reserved places on the bus) so we are going to be off on another one next June.

There will be some small variations such as having an outlying hotel on our visit to Paris because of the World Soccer Tournament, but essentially we will visit Norwich, Shipdham, Duxford, Eastbourne, Rouen, Paris, Bastogne and Brussels. See the Outline Itinerary. We will be fine tuning the details and have them to you well before the trip dates.

IN THE MEANTIME, FILL OUT AND SEND IN YOUR RESERVATION/DEPOSIT FORM AS SOON AS YOU CAN. ENGLAND AND FRANCE WILL BE CROWDED THIS SUMMER BECAUSE OF THE WORLDS SOCCER TOURNAMENT. WE NEED TO BOOK OUR HOTEL REQUIREMENTS AS SOON AS WE CAN TO BEAT THE WORLD'S SOCCER CROWDS WHICH WILL JAM LONDON AND PARIS THIS SUMMER.

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association 1998 England and/or French Tour Outline Itinerary

- June 6 Day 1 Arrive London from New York.
- June 7 Day 2 Morning sightseeing tour of London-afternoon free.
- June 8 Day 3 Leave for Norwich-afternoon visit to Maddingly Cemetary.
- June 9 Day 4 Free day in Norwich.
- June 10 ... Day 5 Shipdham tour - picnic lunch and evening bar-b-que.
- June 11 ... Day 6 Leave for Eastbourne - Duxford lunchtime visit.
- June 12 ... Day 7 Ruthless Memorial Service - 1066 Country tour; p.m. tea. Evening, gala dinner hosted by the Mayor of Eastbourne and the local member of Parliament.
- June 13 ... Day 8 End of British Tour (depart for USA) or French tour - leave for Normandy - stay in Rouen.
- June 14 ... Day 9 Visit to Landing Beaches and Bayeaux.
- June 15 ... Day 10 Free day in Rouen.
- June 16 ... Day 11 Leave for destination near Paris.
- June 17 ... Day 12 Paris sightseeing tour; optional Bateau Mouche cruise on the River Seine, optional evening dinner in top city restaurant.
- June 18 ... Day 13 Day at leisure.
- June 19 ... Day 14 Leave for Brussels via Bastogne.
- June 20 ... Day 15 Leave Brussels for London overnight.
- June 21 ... Day 16 Leave for USA.



The above itinerary is subject to change, depending on local arrangements being made.

**44th Bomb Group Veterans Association
1998 England and/or French Tour Airline Reservation/Deposit Form**

Please reserve _____ flights for persons named below from JFK-New York to London on June 5, 1998 - Return date _____. If you wish to return at a later date Open Jaw ticket cost will be given on request. Group fare for tour dates: £359, tax included.

Please Print:

Title Number	Given Name	Surname	Frequent Flyer #
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Lead Name _____ Phone: (_____) _____ - _____

Address _____ Fax: (_____) _____ - _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I wish to pay the deposit of £75 Sterling per person by Credit Card (Visa or MasterCard only) Total amount £ _____ Sterling.
Card Number: _____ - _____ - _____ - _____ Expiration Date: _____
Deposit Non-refundable. Balance due 8 weeks prior to departure.



Signature: _____

Mail to: One Stop World, 163 Terminus Road, Eastbourne BN21 3NX, England; Attention: Alan Bacon

Inquiries: Roy Owen at (707) 538-4726

----- CUT & HERE -----

**WATERHOUSE TOURS
44th Bomb Group England/France, Belgium Tour**

Please reserve _____ spaces on ENGLISH TOUR ONLY *£869. OR _____ spaces on the entire ENGLISH/FRENCH TOUR *£1363. (* Approximate prices subject to adjustment). Group fare for tour dates: £359, tax included.

Please Print:

Last Name _____ First Name: _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone: (_____) _____ - _____ Fax: (_____) _____ - _____

Names of other persons travelling _____

I wish to pay the deposit of Sterling £200 per person by Credit Card (Visa or MasterCard only) Total amount £ _____ Sterling.
Card Number: _____ - _____ - _____ - _____ Expiration Date: _____
Balance due 8 weeks prior to departure.

Signature: _____



Mail to: Waterhouse Tours, Ltd., Dillons Road, Polegate, East Sussex BN26 6JG, England

Inquiries: Roy Owen at (707) 538-4726



Beating the Bushes

By Art Hand & Will Lundy

Winter, 1997

DONALD E. CARLSON: 1455 2nd Avenue, Apt. 1314, San Diego, CA 92101. Radio Operator for Lt. Gerald G. Lindsay. 68th Squadron.

THEODORE "TED" CLICK: 71 Fairway Terrace, Winchester, TN 37398. Tail Gunner for Bill A. Dolan crew. 68th Squadron.

HARRELL L. GARDNER: 481 East Lydia Highway, Hartsville, SC 29550. Tail Gunner for C.N. Atkin's crew. 506th Squadron.

ELWOOD "EDDIE" HAIRR: 1530 Rock Spring Street, Greensboro, NC 27405-3716. Turret Gunner on L. J. Winsatt/J.W. Wood crew. This man completed his tour on B-17 Memphis Belle.

WALTER LOCKETT: 103 Castleshoals Drive, Granite Shoals, TX 78654. H.S. Borkowski's crew as Bombardier. 506th Squadron.

THERESA MURPHY MCKINNEY: 308 Goodwin, Eliot, ME 03903. Daughter of William T. Murphy, KIA on 18 November 1943 when Lt. J.L. Houle's crew ditched, out of fuel. 67th Squadron.

MARVIN J. REDDICK: 3241 Harbor Beach Drive, Lake Wells, FL 33583. Co-pilot for A.H. Dittmer (68th Sq. POW after being shot down on 24 August 1944.)

CHARLES TORNO: 2224 Edwards Street, St. Louis, MO 63110. Engineer for J.W. Parks, Jr. on 10 May 1944. 68th Squadron.



ANGELS CORNER

Just a few days after returning from the Reunion, a short thank you letter arrived in the mail. It went like this:

Mr. President,

Enclosed you will find a check for two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) to be used as needed for the 44th. Thanks for a great reunion, hope to see you in Savannah for another great reunion.

Many Thanks,

Jim Branson, 3908 O'Briant Place, Greensboro, NC 27410

P.S. Roy, give to yourself, your family and the 44th Group the best you can and the best will come back to you,
Branson, 506th

When I read this to Lolly, she said you ought to make an "Angels Corner" for members like Jim who appreciate their Association and let you know it with a generous donation. Thank you very much Jim. You, along with **Bill Strong, Jr. (\$500)** are our first members of "Angels Corner."



Please note: Since our treasurer and our accounting system are unable to set up, manage and disburse funds from separate accounts required when donations are made by members for specific memorials, scholarships or projects, the Board has established a policy that all donations are placed in the general fund to be disbursed in payment of those memorial projects determined by the Board as most appropriate to perpetuate the heritage of the 44th and the memory of those valorous men who served our nation under the 44th colors.

Miscellanea



OUR NEWEST - NEW MEMBER



MEET AUSTIN JEFFREY STUTZ 7/23/96 GREAT GRANDSON OF JIM & NETTIE CLEMENTS, SON OF JEFF & LISA STUTZ (GRAND DAUGHTER) OF LINDON, UTAH ATTENDING HIS FIRST REUNION.

Like Everything Else,
Dues are going up...

Not much, but up nonetheless. We've been trying to hold the line as long as we were able, but most of the increase has been in the cost of the 8-Ball Tails. When I briefed the board on the cost increases in layout, pictures and printing, I pointed out that this left us with number of pages as the only variable available to reduce costs. In a complimentary burst, the Board members were kind in taking the position that they were opposed to any reduction in the quality level of our journal. From the many, many complimentary and supporting comments about the "Tails" from the membership attending the reunion, it would seem the members share the attitude of the Board.

With that, the Board turned to a raise in general membership dues as the next viable means of keeping up with costs. After some discussion, the Board settled with a \$5 raise to start March 1, 1998. This means the annual December 1, 1997 billing will go out invoicing 1998 dues as \$15 if paid and in the hands of the Treasurer by March 1, 1998. FROM THAT DATE ON, DUES WILL BE \$20 PER YEAR BILLED ANNUALLY ON DECEMBER 1.

Please remember, we run along pretty good by keeping a close watch on our costs versus income, but if you can stick an extra fin or sawbuck in the dues envelope, it's always welcome. In fact as

you read through this issue, you came across a new section we are calling "Angels Corner." Stop and read it and meet our first and second Angels.

Only McAtee is missing from our "Gathering of Leaders."



Left To Right
Charlie HUGHES, 66th;
Bill CAMERON, 67th;
Jack GIBSON, 44th CO;
Goodman GRIFFIN, 44th EXEC.;
Bob LEHNHAUSEN, 68th.



Other Reunions

The Florida Chapter of SECOND AIR DIVISION ASS'N will hold its annual reunion in Fort Myers, Florida March 26 - 29, 1998 at the Sheraton Harbor Place in downtown Ft. Myers. For information, contact: Frank K. McConnell, P.O. Box 482, Cape Coral, FL 33910; telephone: (941) 549-2747.

WILL SEZ

For this session at least one could probably call this "Bits & Pieces" as I have several items of interest to most 44thers.

First of all, Steve Adams, our 44th BG Representative in Norwich, England telephoned recently and gave me several items.

- 1) He has obtained a copy of the book, 14th Combat Bomb Wing written and prepared by Barrett Taylor originally back in 1946 which was reprinted by a firm in England. Barrett gave us the permission to have the reprint made, and for any profits to become the property of the 44th BGVA. Steve states that the reprint was made on better, glossy papers so that now the reprint appears better than the original. The cost to us has not yet been established at this moment, but probably will be in the 40s, and he will advise me the purchase data as soon as it is determined. So, keep tuned.
- 2) Steve has located some microfilm in the archives at Norwich covering some 44th BG reports of operations which are not available on 44th BG microfilm. Of particular interest to me are the reports of our 66th BS PFF planes which flew various leads for other Bomb Groups in the 2nd Division of "D" Day. We have reports on all planes and crews for our 44th BG missions, but not for those planes and crews that flew with other formations. Steve will copy and forward the data to me so that we can complete the story of that famous day for use in a future issue of 8 Ball Tails.
- 3) Steve has enrolled in a class at the college to learn how to operate and utilize all of the bells and whistles in his new computer setup. He is determined to make the best use of this new equipment as possible, and quickly as possible. I am sure that he will do just that!
- 4) At the 44th BG reunion at Salt Lake City this month, one of the tours organized by Jim Clements and assisted by Jerry Folsom was the visit to the famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir on Sunday morning to view their weekly TV broadcast. This was my first visit, as it probably was for many of us veterans, and I was impressed by the professional way it was organized, closely supervised, having us file into the building single file, across the front to the left main aisle and back towards our reserved section. Many guides directed us to our front, center section apparently in our honor. As Irene and I were shown to our seat, our guide said, "What a very large group. I never thought so many of you were still alive!" I've been reflecting on that comment ever since. We must be ancient, or else WWII is considered so by the younger generation.
- 5) At the Board meeting during the reunion, several subjects were discussed and probably will be covered

by our Prez elsewhere in this issue. One item in particular seemed especially important to me was the presentation by our Vice President to the 2nd ADA, Dick Butler. Dick told us about the discussions and decisions made at their Board meeting concerning the bronze B-24 replica to be placed at the U.S. Air Academy near Colorado Springs. As there will be a B-17 model placed there, surely we must support the costs of placing a B-24 model there too. Future class men and women, as well as the public in general, must not forget that BOTH bombers helped win that war for our freedom.

Our 44th BGVA Board agreed that we should support this endeavor and \$4,000 was appropriated. Too, they encouraged our membership to personally make any donations as each one cared to, and add it to the \$4,000 to show our support.

- 6) Closely related to the above item is the subject of a phone call which I received two days ago. Ray Ward, author of "Those Brave Crews," an epic poem in book form, as well as a WWII historian, advised me of an action which he recently made concerning his residual supply of that book.

But to refresh your minds or tell those of you not familiar with this masterful work, Ray wanted to write an epic poem about the world famous low level Ploesti mission of 1 Aug 1943. He contacted me in the late 1980s to obtain as much data about the part the 44th BG had in that mission. I furnished him a copy of my Roll of Honor. Ray was so impressed with the 44th BG's history up to that time that he decided to utilize much more of our records in his writings. As a consequence, our 44th BG's feats can be found all through that book.

Recently Ray realized that he still had a small supply of his books in his basement and decided to dispose of them. Recalling that he had received a very flattering letter from the Air Force Academy for a few books which he previously donated to them, he contacted them to inquire if they would be interested in more. Yes, indeed they were very interested, could he furnish 51 more of them! It seems that the Colonel in charge of their History Department will set up a class utilizing "Those Brave Crews" as their classroom prime reading book and will be made available to all students for as many years as the books hold together. They have also sent a certificate to Ray making him an honorary graduate member of one of their organizations.

So, if all goes well, there will be a class taught at the Air Academy honoring the feats of our B-24s, as well as the crews that flew them. Do we finally have one up on the Forts?

Will Lundy



FOLDED WINGS

October, 1997



- Charles N. Atkins '89 506th Captain, completed tour 9/11/44.
- Francis W. Beasley, Sgt. 4/26/95 67th Sgt., Aircraft Mechanic, Msgrt K.D. Gong's crew.
- William K. Bechtold, S/Sgt. 8/24/94 506th Left Waist Gunner, Capt. C.N. Atkins crew.
- Robert Bohaty '55 Unknown, all we have is an old address. We need some help on this one.
- Robert H. Boney, T/Sgt. 4/12/96 66th Came in with the Pathfinder crews. Later sent to the 392nd BG.
- Peter P. Budarf, T/Sgt. 7/97 68th Radio Operator on Lt. Roy M. Boggs crew, 29 missions, flew home 28 May '45.
- Robert J. Bulson, S/Sgt. '78 66th Top Turret Gunner on Lt. P.V. Dussoit crew, 17 missions.
- Davis L. Brookins, Cpl. 1/8/84 67th Came over with the original 67th on the Queen Mary.
- Carl G. Carlson, T/Sgt. 7/10/97 66th Flight Engineer on Lt. P.V. Dussoit's crew, 17 missions.
- Norfleet R. Cheek, 2nd Lt. '97 464th Sub-Depot Supply Officer.
- J. Davis Clark, S/Sgt. 8/24/95 66th Tail Gunner on Lt. P.V. Dussoit's crew, 17 missions.
- Mark Critchfield, Unk Unknown 66th One of the 44th originals at MacDill.
- John E. Devich, T/Sgt. '85 68th Flight Engineer on Lt. A.H. Dittmer's crew, shot down 8/24/44; POW until April '45.
- Beuford P. Fletcher, T/Sgt. 1/91 506th Radio Operator on Lt. D.E. Saylor's crew, completed tour early 1944.
- Howard N. Garrett, S/Sgt. 1/22/71 68th Waist Gunner on Capt. Gus Konstand's lead crew. Shot down 12/28/44.
- James C. Holcomb, 1st Lt. Unknown 67th POW Pilot; crew organized Dec. '43 at March Field, joined 67th June '44, completed combat tour.
- David J. Taylor, T/Sgt. 11/26/96 Unknown . Very little in the archives on this man, we need some help here.

FOLDED WINGS (Continued)

- Shelby O. Turner, M.D., 1st Lt. 2/16/97 68th Navigator on Lt. T. Ackerman's crew; 28 combat missions. Post-War became an MD, rancher.
- Preston E. Vaden, 1st Lt. '96 506th Bombardier on the Lt. George Rebich original 506th crews flying Mr. 5x5. Flew Ploesti with Major J.C. Beam. Completed combat tour.
- George Van Son, S/Sgt. '95 67th Tail Gunner for Lt. Elmer Reinhart. Shot down and wounded on Ploesti raid. Internee/POW in Romania.
- Romie C. Vaughn, Sgt. 5/21/97 68th Aircraft Mechanic. Had two cruises on the Queen Mary, over on 5 Sept. '42 and returned home on 6/16/45. His wife Martha has joined the 44th BGVA.
- Delbert Hunter, S/Sgt. 7/2/94 67th Waist Gunner on Lt. Charles H. Mercer's crew. Combat tour completed Feb. 1944. First 67th crew to start and finish with the same ten crew members.
- Warren E. Kline, S/Sgt. 4/25/75 Right Waist Gunner on 1st Lt. C.A. Bohnisch's crew shot down 5/4/44 over Central France. Kline was the only survivor. Captured & POW.
- Arnold P. Kleinschmidt, Capt. 6/26/97 66th Assigned to 66th Feb. 45. Trained and was Flight Cmdr. of new, Loran equipped B-24J's. Post-War cattle rancher and Lexington, TX School District Superintendent for 30 years.
- James F. Rowan, Unknown 5/28/97 464th Sub-Depot Instrument Technician.

FOR SALE

GATHERED AT Ojai, California for the signing, THE FOUR ARE PICTURED HOLDING ONE OF THE LIMITED EDITION PRINTS OF THE PAINTING. LEFT TO RIGHT: DICK BUTLER, CHARLIE HUGHES, BILL BRANDON AND BILL CAMERON.



NEW PLOESTI PAINTING

Nicholas Trudigan, an oil paint artist well known for his work in landscapes, has turned his interests to aviation art. His newest work is a rendition of the Ploesti raid entitled OPERATION TIDAL WAVE, The Ploesti Mission. Joining artist Nicholas Trudigan in signing his new limited edition of the painting are four distinguished 44th Bomb Group pilots who flew the historic raid; Major Gen. William H. Brandon (Ret), who was lead pilot in "Suzy Q" with Group Commander (then) Colonel Leon W. Johnson in the Co-Pilot seat. Colonel Richard D. "Dick" Butler (Ret) flew as co-pilot with Walter Burke in "Earthquake McGoon." Colonel William R. Cameron (Ret) in his "Buzzin' Bear" was designated deputy lead to Col. Johnson and flew in the slot position of the lead element directly behind "Suzy Q." Colonel Charles E. Hughes (Ret) flying "Flossie Flirt" which was badly damaged during the attack but managed to limp into Turkey where he was interned. He later managed to escape to Cyprus in a fishing boat thence back to England where he went on to command the 66th Bomb Squadron.

The 8-Ball Tails

Official Journal of The
44th Bomb Group

Veterans Association, Inc.

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MEMORY LANE

Spring of '45. Yankee ingenuity; build a little stand and bring the beer to the party. The rectangular barracks had a hallway down the center with two man rooms on each side and one large (width of the building) room on the end. This was the 506th Bill Smith crew officer's room with Lts. Roy Owen, Bill Rodrian, Pete Masonis and Smith in residence. This also seemed to become the 506th officer's club annex (the keg of Whitebreads Ale may have had something to do with this) with people coming and going most of the time. This picture was taken during one of our impromptu "gatherings." The picture is pretty dark, but if you look closely, hanging on the keg spigot you can make out a Flak Helmet to catch the drippings. Also, you can tell it's spring 'cause someone is sitting on the "Slow But Sure" stove top. I tell ya' war is a whole lotta doin' with what ya got!



THE 200 MISSION PARTY BASEBALL GAME.
NAME THE BATTER.



From the picture we included in the last issue of the visit to our Airbase by Norwich Lord Mayor Finch, we asked if anyone could identify the Red Cross Lady escorting Col. Dent and the Mayor's party through the Aero Club. Frank B. Bata, a two combat tour man from the 66th and 506th gives us the answer.

Sirs:

In the 8-Ball Tails, Vol. 2, Issue #3 is a photo of the RED CROSS LADY on page 35. She is pictured with the Lord Mayor and Col. Dent at the Red Cross Arrow Club. I believe this lady is Helen Hobak from Roanoke, VA.

I was in the 44th BG and had a younger brother in the 93rd BG stationed at Hardwick, who was very lax about getting in touch with me. Each week Helen would contact his base and then let me know that he was ok. My brother completed one tour of 27 missions and was then sent to Ireland as an Instructor. I completed two tours (a total of 54 missions) and then returned to the States. We all appreciated what Helen did for us.

Yours truly,

Editor: Dear Frank, I can see that our Memory Lane section is going to be fun! I'd bet your recognizing Helen Hobak was a surprise, and telling of her keeping in touch with your brother means she was a Red Cross lady that was working at her job. Art Hand has located two of our members and one of my best Air Force buddies was born, raised and retired in Roanoke, so we'll see if we can get some information on Helen and perhaps get some communication going. She certainly ought to be a 44th BGVA member!





The Night I Rode With Santa

By
Ivo F. DiPiero



The holiday was upon us, and throughout the house rooms were decorated for Christmas. A large box was brought up from the basement. I knew it was the right one, as it was boldly marked "XMAS DECORATIONS." Coming from the kitchen was a wonderful aroma of cooking flowing through every room. On the table was my favorite fruitcake with a large sign on it which said, "Do Not Touch Until Xmas." As I passed by, I slyly put a piece in my mouth. I then noticed my great granddaughter, slowly sliding her hand across the table toward a rack of cooling cookies.

"What are you doing, Erika?" I asked. Ignoring the question, she said, "I'm having a hard time knowing what to ask Santa to bring for Christmas. Besides, you don't have a fireplace or a chimney for Santa to come down," she replied.

"Erika," I said, "finish your letter to Santa, then give it to me. I will make sure that Santa will get it. I know how he can get into the house. It's a secret and I can't tell."

"I met Santa a long time ago during World War II." Erika replied, "Oh! Grandpa, not another one of your war stories!" Turning to Grandma, she asked if I was fibbing her again. Grandma replied, "I did not know him at the time, but usually he's a pretty honest fellow."

Looking at me, Erika said, "O.K Grandpa, when was that?" Sitting at the table next to her and helping myself to another piece of fruitcake and Erika reaching for another cookie, I began my story.

"It was Christmas Eve 1942 and the sky was filled with enemy planes and I was on my way to my plane, The Lemon Drop. The pilot, Lt. Reggie Phillips, and his crew chief, Charlie Pigg, were close behind. On the way Lt. Phillips told me, "Ivo, you are going with us on this mission tonight." "Where to?," I replied. He answered, "I won't know until we arrive at the plane."

As we arrived at the plane, I could not believe my eyes. Beside our plane, The Lemon Drop, a B24D, there stood a sleigh loaded with gift packages and sitting there was Saint Nick. His reindeer were tapping their hooves impatiently. Saint Nick had flown all the way from the North Pole to Great Britain to deliver gifts to the children. Santa was afraid that his reindeer might be hurt because the enemy was dropping bombs, and there was much noise from anti-aircraft guns on the ground. The U.S. Air Force gave him permission to fly on their plane, The Lemon Drop, so he could drop his gifts to the children; children that may never have gifts because of the war.

Everyone was eager to help and all the packages were transferred to the plane. When they were finished, Santa and the crew climbed into the plane and quickly took off. I noticed that the plane was flying at an exceedingly high speed and the propellers were not turning. I radioed the pilot and asked what was happening. The pilot responded, "I do not know. There must be magic in the air as I cannot explain the phenomenon."

We kept on with our task and dropped each package out of the plane as Santa handed them to us. Each one, believe it or not, dropped down the right chimney. As soon as the last package was dropped, our pilot, Lt. Phillips, gained control of the plane and we returned safely to base.

Every one said good-bye to Santa, and as he was leaving, we heard him say, "Merry Christmas, and for your good deeds on this night, I promise you that this plane, The Lemon Drop, and it's crews will always return to base safely."

The Lemon Drop was the last of the original aircraft to survive World War II.

In 1992 Grandma and I returned again to England, and in the city of Norwich, I looked up into a clear moonlit sky, and I'm sure I saw a shadow of what looked like a B24D. I heard a voice saying, "I kept my promise, and The Lemon Drop is still flying."

If you should ever be in Norwich, England on Christmas Eve, look up to the sky. There will be a shadow of a sleigh with The Lemon Drop close behind.

Looking at my great granddaughter I said, "Erika, I promise you when your list is complete, Santa will receive it."



MAIL CALL



44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

6304 Meadowridge Drive • Santa Rosa, CA 95400 • 707 538 4726 • Fax 707-520-1217

September 27, 1997

To Our Dear Shipdham Friends,

On this day of national mourning for the tragic death of your beloved Princess Diana, it was the wish of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association membership that I convey to you all the profound shock and grief we share with you, our Shipdham family, on this day of world-wide sorrow.

In the eyes of America that beautiful young woman, with her love and feeling for the people of the world, brought the American people to a feeling of being more in touch with the British monarchy than has existed in generations. She was our "Peoples Princess" as she was to you.

Our prayers today are for her and with you on this day of farewell to Diana.

With love to you all,

Roy W. Owen
Roy W. Owen,
President

This comes from:

Nick Garza, San Antonio, one of the "Iron Men" of the 506th. He was the "cog" in the '95 San Antonio reunion machinery which kept everything running (meaning we never ran short of booze or bull!)

My Good Amigo Roy:

The Trip-The Trip!! I read it in total, with much enthusiasm, and Lots of Pride! You make me very proud Col. Owen, and I think I speak for many of us in the 506th, as well as the entire 44th Bomb Group. I only wish it could have been possible for us to have shared these most treasured moments.

We hope you and Lolly are well, and, checking your passports on a more regular basis. I'm still trying to "hang in there," although its somewhat difficult at times. We saw Loy and Arlene Neeper two weeks ago. He looks good, but his malady continues. We pray for him every day!

We think of you folks quite often and look forward to the next time. You are Special!!

Love,
Nick & Nan

Editor: Gracias for your most kind words Mi Amigo. I hope you enjoy the second installment of The Trip-The Trip in this issue. I'm very happy that reading the article brought the feeling of pride that we on the trip experienced. All of the 44th men and women should rightfully be proud of having served in this valorous outfit. When we were at Barksdale AFB for the dedication of our memorial marker, all of the 44th folks present were in tears of pride listening to the words of respect and admiration for the 44th spoken by the active duty Air Force leadership present. Then, once again, seeing and hearing the expression of gratitude and respect by our English and French Allies made us all swell with pride that the heroic performance of the 44th was so vividly known to our grateful allies. The 44th wasn't simply given the destiny to lead, our proud people earned it!



*This comes from:
Erwin Strohmaier
Piedmont Gardens
110-41 Street #1017
Oakland, CA 94611
September 3, 1997*



Gentlemen:

I am sorry that you had so much trouble that you did not have my new address. I had special change of address postcards printed and sent them to everyone I could think of. There is always a chance that some could get lost in the mail. Enclosed is a check for \$4 to cover your expense.

I am 86 years old and in a wheelchair recovering from Gullain-Barre syndrome, a paralysis of the motor nerve system. I now live in Piedmont Gardens at the above address.

I always enjoy reading your publication.

If it was not for my computer and my fingers coming to life, I could not write this letter.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Editor: Dear Erwin, I'm not familiar with Gullain-Barre syndrome, but it, for sure, doesn't sound like a bunch of fun! I do understand "recovering" and that, for sure,

sounds like you are a fighter who intends to get out of the wheelchair. Glad you enjoy reading the 8-Ball Tails. Those are the kind of words that make the effort worthwhile. I'll keep up the good work and you keep answering the bell for the next round. In fact, get on your computer and write some good "war story" stuff to put into the "Tails."



This comes from:
Wade Elliott - 66th/506th
Peterborough, NH

Editor: Wade Elliott, Peterborough, NH, 66th/506th, was (with his wife Jessie) in the intrepid group of 44th folks on the England/France Trip. Fishing around in some WWII personal files, he came up with an old yellowed copy of Stars & Stripes that carried this bit of poetry written by a Radio Operator/Gunner before leaving for a bomber mission over Italy. It's a "goldie oldie," Wade, Thanks!

Lightnings in the Sky

Oh Hedy Lamar is a beautiful gal and Madeline Carroll is too,
But you'll find if you query, a quite different theory amongst any bomber crew,
For the loveliest thing of which one could sing (this side of the heavenly gates),
Is no blonde or brunette of the Hollywood set -- But an escort of P-38's.

Yes, in the days that have past, when the tables were massed with glasses of scotch and champagne,
It's quite true that this sight was a thing to delight us, intent upon feeling no pain.
But no longer the same, nowadays, in this game, when we head North from Messina Straits, you take the sparkling wine--every time; just make mine an escort of P-38's.

Byron, Shelly and Keats ran a dozen dead heats,
Describing the view from the hills,
Of the valleys in May when the winds gently sway an army of bright daffodils.
Take the daffodils, Byron -- the wild flowers, Shelley; yours is the Myrtle, friend Keats, just reserve one of those beauties -- American Beauties -- an escort of P-38's.

Sure, we're braver than hell; on the ground all is swell;
in the air it's a far different story;
We sweat out our track through the fighters and flak,
We're willing to split up the glory!

Well, they wouldn't reject us, so Heaven protect us,
And, until all this shooting abates,
Give us the courage to fight 'em -- one other small item -- An escort of P-38's.



This comes from:
Sarah H. Reynolds
August 25, 1997

Hello Editor:

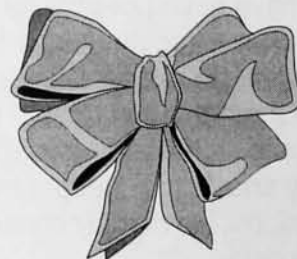
This is to request a notice to the membership concerning the huge omission of the B-24 from the special issuance of "American Classic Aircraft" stamps in July of this year by the U.S. Postal Service. I hope that the members will join me with a write-in protest to the Postmaster General and perhaps there will be a special issue for just the B-24 forthcoming. Those interested and willing should write a strong letter to:

The Postmaster General
Washington, DC 20268-6000

Thanks!

Editor: Dear Sarah, Boy oh Boy! How did I miss that? Enough is too much! We've been putting up with this looking at the bellies of B-17s for too long. Like elsewhere in this issue, we are playing catchup on getting a bronze model of a B-24 in the Honor Court at the Air Force Academy. Now, here we are left out of the "American Classic Aircraft" stamp issuance. How about it--are we going to take another "pie in the face" or do something about it? I'm with Sarah, let's make 'em put out a special issue stamp picturing the Liberator. I'd like to see someone who has been in the thick of this battle, like Don Chase, sit down and compose a letter of protest over the "American Classic Aircraft" issuance and a demand for a special issue featuring the B-24. Then send the letter to me and I will put it on the 44th letterhead and send it to the PMG. Then we can send individual letters to our Senators and House members. Thanks Sarah. We'll take it from here!

Note: Sarah is a 44th daughter; now is that a lot of spunk, OR WHAT?





This comes from:
Tony Mastradone
9111 Tuckerman St.
Lanham, MD 20706
October 2, 1997

Hello Roy:

In our 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association publication "8 Ball Tails" Summer edition, I think your story on the "Progress on the Savannah Museum Display" was very informative.

As the archivist for the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association, I would like to commend an archivist at the College Park Archives in Maryland, Mr. David Giordano. He spent extra time and effort in assisting me in getting information on the historic bombing mission of the oil fields in Ploesti, Romania on 1 August 1943.

I know with your leadership and assistance, the information will be used in an informative way and make a successful display that our Organization will be proud of and enjoyed by all.

Will be seeing you in Salt Lake City,

Editor: *Tony, I was unaware that you too were doing Ploesti research for our Mighty 8th Air Force Museum display. I should have known you would be in the thick of it! Please pass on my personal thanks to Mr. Giordano for his assistance in the research of the Ploesti archives. You know it is my aim to have our replication of the lead element over the target the instant prior to bombs away be the defining display in the museum. With you on the team, assisted by friends such as David Giordano, I can see my hopes becoming reality! We all thank you for all the great work you are always doing up there in College Park. Also, congratulations on your election to the Board -- and NO, I'm not going to release you from your archivist job, you've heard of wearing two hats?*

.....
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This comes from:
Phyllis Venieti
45 Hartsdale Road
Elmsford, NY 10523
October 5, 1997

Dear Mr. Clements,

I commend you and your staff for making the veteran reunions such memorable occasions! Because of your efforts, many enjoy visiting new places where they can reminisce with their buddies, swap post-war experiences, and share child rearing stories.

My father, Pat Colucci, has made the reunion a focal point of each year. Being reunited with his fellow flyers has added something special to his life. Hopefully, he will be able to take part in this year's reunion.

Two weeks ago he was rushed to the hospital with acute pneumonia. My father's condition was complicated by the several other physical problems he bravely survived but took a toll on his body. Delirious, he had only one thought on his mind. "One more reunion...one more reunion," he feverishly mumbled in the emergency room.

I believe it was my Dad's determination to get to Salt Lake City that helped him to heal more rapidly than expected. We will know this week if the doctor will allow him to make the trip.

As children, my siblings and I were aware of my father's pride in being part of the Air Force. He never spoke of the war, but instilled in us the love for our Country and the duty to defend her liberties. Recently, he turned into an ambitious writer. He writes about his Air Force adventures, delighting his grandchildren with stories of the heroism of his buddies. Penning the positive aspects of his life as a soldier has not only been an outlet for his creativity, but has also been a therapeutic tool.

The wives of the servicemen also appreciate the reunions. My mother has had the opportunity to meet wonderful men and women, to form many strong friendships.

The camaraderie which sustained the men through many desperate situations, which survived all these years and keeps them coming back to the reunions is unique. Thanks again for giving so many meaningful and delightful trips to look forward to!

Sincerely,

Holiday Greetings



Your Officers and Board wish you a Merry Christmas!

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VETERANS ASSOCIATION
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