

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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FLAK ALLEY flew a total of 47 missions from 4 April 1943 to 2 February 1944. No less than sixteen pilots sat at the controls with this plane which had rather audacious nose art. (Perhaps her long survival could be attributed to the fact that the German fighters couldn't take their eyes off the girl on the nose.)

The **David Alexander** crew flew the most missions in *FLAK ALLEY*, a total of twelve including Mission #43 to Ploesti. The **Homer Gentry** crew flew seven; **Lehnhausen** crew flew 5; **Roland Houston**, 3. Other crews included **W.D. Hughes**, **Park H. Jones**, **Baxter Weant**, **Wilmer Garrett**, **Smith J. Meador**, **R. F. Stahler**, **Carl Bohnisch**, **William Cameron**, **Frederick Dent** as CP, **Harold Slaughter**, **Arthur Marcoullier** and **Joseph D. Kessler**.

FLAK ALLEY's last flight was to an A/C Assembly plant in Gotha, Germany, 24 February 1944. It was the third mission for the **Phillip Bell** crew. She crashed in a village close to the target. At about 1330 hours and 21,000 feet, five minutes flying time south of Gotha, the crew bailed out. Six parachutes were seen to come out of this aircraft before it exploded.



L-R Top Row: **George Hulpiau**, Bombardier, **Robert C. Peterson**, Navigator, **Hollis R. Nichols**, Co-Pilot, **Robert J. Lehnhausen**, Pilot

Kneeling L-R **Douglas H. Ratledge**, Asst. Engr.; **William G. Morton**, Engineer, **Michael J. Balazovich**, Asst. Radio Op.; **Thomas A. Laskowski**, Radio Operator; **Charles M. Ross**, Tail Turret Gunner
The Lehnhausen Crew (England, 1944)

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FLAK ALLEY

The 44th BG led the 14th Combat Wing on this mission to Gotha, Germany, 24 February 1944. Enemy A/C were on the attack all the way into and out of the target. By keeping a tight formation, losses were minimized. Unfortunately the 66th & 68th Squadrons each lost one plane.

This mission was to attack an Air Assembly plant. It was very heavily defended by both Me 109s and FW 190s. Although there were at least 40 fighters defending the target, with the tight formation, the losses were minimized to two: #41-29148 in the 66th Squadron and **Flak Alley** in the 68th.

Just after the target, **Flak Alley** was caught in the prop wash and fell out of formation, with two props on one side running away. Immediately they were attacked by fighters. The pilot, Lt. **Phillip Bell** knew of eight men bailing out, but only four of them survived. Lt. Bell said that he had been told that all of his men had jumped prior to his leaving the ship, but later was told that Sgts. **James Hammontree** (Ball Turret Gunner) and **Robert Gleason** (Tail Gunner), both from the rear of the plane, did not jump. However, the official record states that both Gleason and Hammontree did bail out, (or were blown out by the force of the explosion) but too soon, as both men were dead before getting down to the ground.

Sgt **Kenneth Sullivan**, (Left Waist Gunner), and Sgt **Wiley Haynes**, (Right Waist Gunner) were seriously wounded. Haynes was told to contact the others, then bail out, which he did. Unfortunately, he died soon after landing. Sullivan was seriously injured, captured as soon as he hit the ground, was taken to a schoolhouse near Gotha, but died soon afterwards in a hospital. This was his second mission.

S/Sgt **Anthony Millio**, Radio Operator, was only slightly injured when he bailed out; but his chute did not open or he failed to pull his ripcord soon enough. He died on the ground.

Lt. **George W. Hall**, (Bombardier), and Lt. **James Schroeder**, (Navigator), bailed out of the nose wheel door. Hall was last seen running to escape. He was wounded in both eyes, probably from shards of steel from exploding shells. He lost one eye, but the other was saved by a German doctor, who used magnets to removed slivers of steel from it. Hall died several years after the war ended.

Schroeder was not able to run, having been shot in the back. He was promptly captured, and by sign language he was able to convince the civilians not to beat him, as he had no weapons. Then a German citizen, Mr. Irbrukker, took him to his home for treatment of his injuries. Later he was befriended by a German soldier who spoke good English. The German said his brother was in Texas. He took him to the wreck of his plane which had both nose and tail sticking up from the ground. He was placed in a church for a while, then to a POW camp, but later repatriated.

Sgt. **Charles H. Freeburg**, Engineer, bailed out through the bomb bay doors and became POW. Lt. **James King**, Co-Pilot, bailed out but was wounded by a 20-mm shell and died a few minutes after hitting the ground. This was his fourth mission.

Lt. **Bell** parachuted to safety, but was promptly captured.

Reporting later, Hall stated that this crew had been up five times, but had only two missions credited. Just a couple of days earlier they had aborted in *Flak Alley* when the props ran away. On the Gotha mission they went over the target, but when swinging around to return, two engines on the same side had the props run away again. The pilots tried to counteract this strong torque with all their strength, but could not do so,

...continued on page 4

fell out of formation, and apparently were attacked by fighters, finishing them off.

Witnesses on the ground reported that the aircraft had been shot down by an Me 109. They stated, also, that a man from the village pulled one of the crewmembers from the burning bomber. This man was later abducted after the war by the Soviets and never heard from again.

The 66th lost one plane that day, #41-29148 B. Etheridge. Total losses from the two planes: POW — 8; POW & Injured – 5; KIA – 7.

BOB LEHNHAUSEN REMEMBERS HIS MISSIONS AND CREW ON FLAK ALLEY

I am especially proud of this group of men. We only flew five combat missions together, but gained significant recognition. **Robert Peterson, George Hulpiau** and **William Morton** were members of my original crew that joined the 68th in March 1943. Those missions were:

#77	30 December 1943	Ludwigshaven	Squadron Lead
#78	31 December 1943	St. Jean D'Angely	Wing Lead
#80	5 January 1944	Kiel	Deputy Wing Lead
#82	1 November 1944	Meppen	Division Lead
#87	5 February 1944	Watten	Wing Lead

Missions #78 and #80 were exceptional. In his *History of the 68th Squadron*, Webb Todd reported the following message from General **Dexter Hodges**, "...your bombing today was the finest example of precision bombing yet accomplished by the Division. We are proud of all of you..." That is something! It is the best of fifteen months of effort!

The mission to Meppen (#82) was a Target of Opportunity. Although we were briefed to attack Brunswick, we were recalled just as we crossed the German-Dutch border. Col. **Frederick Dent**, who was flying with us as Command Pilot that day, was determined to bomb Germany. **Robert Peterson** selected Meppen as the target, Hulpiau aimed for a concentration of barges on the Dortmund-Ems Canal. He didn't put his lead bomb into the pickle barrel, but he did put it into the middle of the barges. The photo reconnaissance verified the excellence of his work. A portion of the Groups bombs reaped a bonus result. They fell into an ammunition dump southeast of the town. Pure chance! The Germans were unaware, and we were just lucky. Once again the 2AD and General Hodge were very pleased and sent a message of congratulations. Colonel Dent was ecstatic.

All of these five missions were flown in *Flak Alley*. As I recall, I flew eleven of my missions in this wonderful "bird".

I also recall that **Sid Bolick** flew both of the Missions, St. Jean and Meppen, with us. Altogether Sid and I flew five of his missions together. In each of those missions he flew as the Tail Gunner with the responsibility of 'Formation Control' officer. This role was valuable to the Command Pilot in assuring that the formation was compact and defensible.

It should be noted that while it served as the 68's lead ship for some period of time, it eventually lost that special status once each of the squadrons became equipped with "Pathfinder" aircraft. Those PFF ships came to us equipped with radar gear as a part of the planes' original equipment. They were only used as lead aircraft. Plus, they were NEW. New crews had little affection for battle tested planes with a rich history of service and survival, ships like *Flak Alley* became 'war weary' and were assigned to the newest crews... and were lost in combat. Only our famed *Lemon Drop* survived. I flew that wonderful 'ole' beauty many, many times. An added bonus for the *Lemon Drop* was that I had a special regard for its crew chief, **Charlie Pigg**. He was a gifted mechanic with a personality to match.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



We had a very successful reunion at Harrisburg with 127 attending.. It was especially good to see all the family members there. All the events- visit to the Civil War Museum— Medal presentations and ceremonies at Carlisle- tour of Gettysburg went very smoothly thanks to the hard work and organizing abilities of Ruth and Perry Morse, Jackie and Lowell Roberts and Lee and Mary Aston. Thanks to them and all others who contributed.

As everyone seems to feel that we should have another reunion in 2009, I will be looking into setting it up for Tampa next fall. As many of you know, the 44th was organized at McDill Field in Tampa in January of 1941. There is a 44th Monument at the base, and we will try to arrange a visit there. Tampa airport is a very convenient one to navigate through and most hotels have shuttle service.

Cynthia and I made our annual trip to England in August and it was quite eventful.. We usually visit the Flying Club at Shipdham, and so we informed some of them that we would drop by on Saturday and visit. After arriving in England, I checked my e-mail and discovered that they decided it would be a good time to dedicate the Memorial Garden and Museum on Sunday. They had already arranged for a Color Guard and Chaplain from Lakenheath Air Base.

On the Saturday we stopped by, the place was a beehive of activity, preparing for the occasion. People were cleaning the clubhouse—Mike Atherton showed us the plaque that would be on the stone monument. and said it he would have it mounted that afternoon.. Chris Barrett's mother was sewing up a cover for the unveiling of the monument (Chris is a young man who has a great interest in the 44th, collects artifacts and serves as Assistant Curator of the Museum).

Sunday morning started off with heavy rains, but the sun came out shortly before the 11AM start. Mrs. Paterson and I cut the ribbon- the Color Guard raised the Stars and Stripes- the Chaplain - Col. Dowling did the blessing and we all sat down to a nice lunch in the Flying Club Lounge. Special thanks to Peter Steele, Peter Bodle , their wives, Mike Atherton and all the others who contributed. We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated group of friends there who put so much effort into keeping our history alive. Thanks to all.

The event was covered by the newspapers and I must say that one article made me a magician. It stated that I came over in June, 1944, and then stated that I flew the Ploesti Mission in 1943!! (At that time I was trying to learn to fly a BT – 13!!!)

Hope all had a good Christmas and New Years.

George Washburn

WILLIAM G. MORTON'S BIG SURPRISE

"I was finished with all my missions and ready to go home, when I got a call to report to 68th Squadron Headquarters," **William G. Morton** remembered. I went to Major **Robert Lehnhausen's** office. He just told me to get into his Jeep, then drove me to Group Headquarters. We both saluted General **Leon Johnson**. The General said nothing, but put a bar into Lehnhausen's hand; they each put a bar on my right and left shoulders and at that moment I became a lieutenant!!

"Why was I given this unexpected honor? My crew says I shot down 17 enemy aircraft." (The official record credits him with only six, but that was enough for the English author Roger Freeman, to name him an 'enlisted ace'.)

Morton was a member of Lehnhausen's original crew when they were first assembled at the Casper Army Air Base in Wyoming, where they were learning combat techniques in B-17s. Later, when they arrived in England and learned that they were re-assigned to B-24s, it was a sobering moment.

"I'm not going," Morton announced.

"If I go, will you go? Lehnhausen asked.

Of course, the answer was 'Yes, Sir.'

Lehnhausen remembers Morton as a brilliant and highly skilled engineer who distinguished himself on the second mission to Wiener-Neustadt, — 1 October 1943. Morton was flying with Captain **William D. "Doc" Hughes** in the **AVENGER**, 'Tail End Charlie' behind the Ninety Third and the Three-Eighty Ninth Bomb Groups. The enemy fighters permitted the first planes to pass, waiting for the tail-end group. They attacked with a vengeance.

Captain Hughes described the scene that ensued. "They were queuing up for a head-on attack, and in flights of three or four abreast, they started through the formation.

The first attack crippled some of our forces and broke up our formation. We managed to get our bombs away and started a running battle for home. The Luftwaffe was out 120 strong, attacking by twos from every position of the clock. It was every man for himself, as the pilots attempted to get back into some semblance of a formation. The **AVENGER's** gunners were fighting desperately, alone, and they drove off attack after attack, shooting down three ME 109s and damaging several others. However, before we were out of the battle area, our hydraulic system was shot out, and an elevator cable cut.

T/Sgt. **William Morton**, our engineer, cinched the hydraulic lines to save the fluid by bending the severed ends and affecting a splice in the elevator cable. This made it possible for us to return to base."

For his outstanding ability to act in extreme emergency, Sgt. Morton was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

When Morton was transformed into a Lieutenant, Major Lehnhausen loaned his late brother Edward's gear to Morton until he could acquire an officer's attire. He stayed in Shipdham and became a Gunnery Instructor. After the war, he attended flight school, became a fighter pilot and became a Squadron Commander in both Korea and Viet Nam.

Although Morton could not attend the Carlisle Reunion, he was very eager to learn how his great hero, General **Leon Johnson**, was being honored by the men who flew with him, the veterans of the 44th BG.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

For the first time since before the 44th Bomb Group moved in to Station 115 erosity of Mrs Paterson, the runway that The Shipdham Flying Club uses 20/02, (Now realigned as 21/03) has been replaced. Four inches of (very) old, and well used, concrete and tarmac have been removed and replaced with new aviation compatible tar-macadam. The runway surface is so unbelievably smooth several club members (myself included) rode up and down it on a pedal bicycle, just before it was re-opened for aviation use, just to try it out. The club's runway repair team will now be able to turn their full attentions to the maintenance of car park and other less important areas of the airfield's infrastructure.

The 44th Bomb Group Museum continues to attract visitors, even over the winter period, and we look forward to re-opening on a regular basis once the spring has really set in. Over the winter, the museum team has added a few more odds and ends to the collection and are delighted to have been loaned a blade from the ill fated McCoy B-24 for display. It will be mounted in room three, with the McCoy story on a placard next to it.

During 2008 we revelled in the formal opening of the Memorial Garden, The 44th Bomb Group Museum, The Open Day for the general public, and our first big corporate day, as well as the new runway...What a year!

Without doubt the Formal opening of the Memorial Garden and Museum by George Washburn, ably assisted by Mrs Paterson, was the real highlight of the year, and we are grateful for their attendance. I make no apology to attach in full Mike Artherton's report to the club members about that day.

"Blessed with fine weather, for once in the early part of August, George Washburn, the 44th Bomb Group Veteran's Association President, Mrs Paterson, one of the Padres from Lakenheath and the USAAF Lakenheath Base Honour Guard, performed the opening ceremony for the Memorial Garden and Museum.



"Press coverage was very strong (thanks Phil) and SFC can chalk it up as another major milestone in its brief history.

"The meal after the ceremony was suitably delightful and our thanks go to Margaret S, Karen, Helen and the rest of the catering team that day. One of our American guests noted that they never got food as good at many of the official functions they went to in the States. That's a great feather in the SFC catering team's hat!!!

"(And the weather stayed kind to us ...how good was that.)"

The young men from the Lakenheath Honour Guard did us proud, and George was quick to comment on this in his few words after dinner.

However the dignity and decorum of the group was slightly dented during the dinner, when one of the young men found it impossible to refuse the offer of a second helping of pudding, much to the amusement of his colleagues and the assembled dinner guests. (I guess some things never change...when did a G.I. ever refuse good tasty food?)

Best wishes from all at your old base in England.

Peter Bodle



THE SHIPDHAM FLYING CLUB MADE HEADLINES



Cynthia Harmonoski, **George Washburn** and Mrs. Eileen Paterson join the dedication of the Flying Club's Museum and Memorial Garden. **Does anyone know where a piece of an old B-24 might be available?** The Club would like to place it in the Memorial Garden.



The good cooks were on duty at the Flying Club, as Cynthia, George and Mrs. Paterson can attest. George was honored for his 35 missions with the 68th Squadron. As a teenager, Cynthia had been employed at the base, and Mrs. Paterson owns the land where the Club, Museum and Garden are located.



Dinner in the Liberator Bar and Dining Room. L-R Mrs. Paterson; Col. Dowling, Chaplain from Lakenheath; Brian Peel, Peter Steele, Chris Barrett, 2 members of the Honor Guard.

DO YOU WANT TO BUY A BRICK?

The Soldier's Walk at AHEC is a brick walkway where your name will be preserved, along with any information you wish to include. A three line brick is \$100. If you want the Flying Eight Ball logo added, the price is \$150. Pavers, which are 2' x 2' are \$1,000. They have space to honor your crew. Call me if you want an application. (717 846-8948)

WWII POETRY

Sing a song of defense and rock it to the sky,
Turn the Axis backwards with bonds that we buy
When the war is over, a victory song we'll sing
For what more could we wish than freedom bells to ring.

THE SECOND AIR DIVISION ASSOCIATION'S 62ND ANNUAL CONVENTION WILL RETURN TO ITS ROOTS IN CHICAGO.

The three day reunion will be at the Westin O'Hare Hotel, September 4-7, 2009. Armed Forces Reunion, Inc. will be making the arrangements. Reservations can be made by calling 1-888 627-8517.

THE HARRISBURG-CARLISLE-GETTYSBURG REUNION

Thanks to the great management and negotiating skills of Lowell Roberts, members of the 44th Bomb Group VA arrived by plane, shuttle or auto to the Sheraton in Pennsylvania's capital city, Harrisburg, PA. Tour #1 went to the Civil War Museum where the sale of a slave was depicted by life-like manikins, and resounding cannon shells desecrated Ft. Sumter.

Perry Morse wishes to thank the anonymous lady who paid for Museum souvenir pens which he wished to give as gifts to all participants. If you were there and didn't get a pen, catch up with him at the next reunion.

The big event was the gathering at the Army Heritage Education Center in Carlisle. When black veils were lifted on the Soldiers Walk, an impressive lineup of pavers & bricks were revealed, each bearing the logo of the 44th, and honoring its leaders and historical contributors: **Will Lundy, Paul Kay, Robert Lehnhausen, Edward (Mike) Mikoloski, Gerald Folsom, Roy Owen, Norm Kiefer, Webb Todd, Art Hand, Ursel Harvel, Arlo Bartsch, and of course, Leon Johnson.**

Michael Lynch, Chief of Educational Programs ushered the crowd into the library for the presentation of the Medal of Honor. 41 veterans lined up in the front row, facing the Medal. Col. James Pierce read the Citation, recounting General Johnson's heroism in leading the raid to Target White in the oil fields at Ploesti, Romania.

With great humility and genuine emotion, Leon Abbott, grandson of General Johnson, extolled the virtues of the great commander.

"I have to confess it's been quite a struggle to find the right words to mark this occasion. I have been blessed with the great fortune to pass on my grandfather's legacy to the nation he loved and defended, and I sincerely hope his character and



Col. James Pierce & Michael Lynch



Leon Abbott

courage will provide inspiration to future generations.

He was the embodiment of what is good and righteous about America. He had the "right stuff". There is no greater testament to that than the expressions of love and admiration, of

...continued on page 10

devotion and genuine gratitude that I continue to hear to this day, and I certainly concur within my limited context as grandson and bearer of his name.

The quality of his leadership is a rare gift that comes along all too infrequently in the history of mankind. There are many examples: here are but a few that have been related to me:

When the crews assigned to the Ploesti raid were briefed shortly before departure, there was understandably much trepidation and dread throughout the room. Col. Leon Johnson reassured everyone that he would not ask them to go anywhere he himself would not go...they had a job to do. When he said, "I will lead you," the room became silent.

When Captain Dick Butler crashed his B-24 upon returning to Shipdam Airfield from a test flight, Leon Johnson arrived first on location in his staff car, ahead of the fire and medical personnel. Fire had broken out and ammunition and flares were beginning to go off. Capt. Butler had a broken arm and ankle. By his account, my grandfather and his driver ripped a gate off a nearby fence, improvised a stretcher and removed Capt. Butler from danger.

On a lighter note, Col. Johnson had quite a reputation for stopping his staff car and offering a lift to any airman walking along. He would take the opportunity to inquire as to their well-being, to listen to their concerns. He gained much respect within the ranks for this consideration. He even allowed himself to be thrown into the pond to mark the completion of the 200th mission...

We had many discussions around the dinner table, and I once had occasion to ask him what form of government he thought worked best.

With a twinkle in his eye, he

replied "A benevolent dictatorship". He had a wry sense of humor, yet there was much truth to his answer, presuming one devotes enough attention to the benevolent part of the equation. He most certainly did (devote attention) in his various responsibilities of leadership. In my opinion, this was the essence of America's post WW2 global leadership, and history will certainly prove that the world is a better place for it. There is no other nation that has exercised its power as generously and wisely, despite our human failings. I can only hope that such integrity will be the standard for the centuries to come, for all nations, for the sake of the human race.

Another important measure of a man is the quality of his friendships. My grandfather had numerous genuine and warm friends; I wish to mention three in particular that have had an impact on my life as well: first and foremost his great friend and mine Col. Edward K Mikoloski. With a heart as big as the sky, with wisdom and devotion, and unwavering loyalty, he also had "the right stuff". They are inseparable in my memory of them, and I owe much to both of them. I cannot imagine how impoverished my life would have been without their influence.

Secondly I would like to mention Mike Fusano who is a fine gentleman in his own right. He was my grandfather's driver during WW2 at Shipdam Airfield. Mike's health prevents him from being here today. We remain in touch, and he sends his best to everyone.

Thirdly I would like to mention Jaqueline Cochran, a truly remarkable woman whose contributions to the field of aviation among others is the stuff of legends. She was fond of me when I was a toddler, and I remember

her well. She was as dynamic a woman as this country has ever produced, far ahead of her time. So many more have contributed their hearts and minds as well; some are here today. They all made a difference in my grandfather's life, and he was richer for their love.

With all that said, there is no great leadership without the integrity of the organization behind it. A leader by definition has followers and it is their qualities that contribute equally to great achievements. The 44th Bomb Group serves as an inspiring example of what can be accomplished in the face of overwhelming odds, when the survival of all that is good is at stake; when doing the right thing is the most important of all. Leon W Johnson clearly recognized and deeply appreciated the loyalty of all that followed him into harm's way. The Medal of Honor was earned by all in the group. My grandfather made that clear at every opportunity.

And so the symbol of the nation's gratitude and respect now passes back to her, where it may best testify to all that is good about us, to the willingness to sacrifice for the greater good, the perpetuation of ideals, of leadership by example, and the true gallantry that time has proven undeniable.

I humbly pass my stewardship of this Medal of Honor to the United States Army Heritage and Education Center, in the secure knowledge that this is its rightful place, alongside the painstaking efforts of Will Lundy and many others, where the history

and character of the 44th Bomb Group may best provide inspiration for as long as our great nation endures... God bless all of you, and God bless America.

The second floor of the Museum houses a display depicting the war from Normandy to entering Germany. Walls of photographs tell the army story and pieces of memorabilia show Air Corps participation. Highly visible was Lee Aston's worn-out 67th Squadron flight jacket. Under the direction of Jay Graybeal, Curator of Uniforms, Lee's jacket looked as good as the day he first donned it. Although few had time to view it, the Courtyard holds materials from many wars—a tank, a helicopter, a WWI Trench, a pillbox, and much more.

But soon it was time to jump into the buses and enter the historic Carlisle Barracks. The first stop was to the Chapel, where the 44th heard a resounding message, based on Hebrews 12, Verse 1, presented by Chaplain Arthur Pace.

"The writer of Hebrews tells us an amazing thing: Death is not a disappearance; death is not the end. Instead, these heroes transitioned from the field of play into the stands, like at a football game. Having served with energy and vigor on earth, they now take their rightful place in the stands of glory, and



Leon Johnson's & Will Lundy's pavers



Treasurer Jackie Roberts views the paver honoring her father, Sgt. Jack Ostenson.

cheer on those of us who remain. They are the great cloud of witnesses. They did their part, and that right well. They then passed the torch of freedom onto us, asking only that we do not let it dim, and that we care for it as sacrificially as they did. If we listened carefully, we would hear

our departed brethren cheering to us from the stands. *"Live,"* they yell. *"Live free. Enjoy your life. Put aside anything that is holding you back, any*

excuses that you have made to limit yourself, and do what God has asked of you. Run your part of the race to the fullest. Do not tire. Do not falter. Do not fail." They tell us that one day each of us will take that same journey and join them in the stands. When we do, we want to do so with our heads held high, able to say to our friends and comrades that we took that torch of freedom that they gave to us and ran our best with it. Then, when our portion was done, we too passed that torch on to capable hands that will care for it just as we did. The world may never take notice or appreciate any of this. But our comrades in the stands will notice, and will cheer us all the louder...My friends, we will surely miss our departed brethren, and well we should. But we are comforted to know that they are not really gone. Rather, they have taken their place with the other heroes who have already gone before..."

Luncheon at the Letort View Community Center was a fast moving event, with the number of guests swelling as word of the event got around. The event was orchestrated by **Lee Aston**, Director on the 44th BGVA Board and Chairman of Awards & Decorations.

It was the late President **Paul Kay's** wish to bring the 44th BGVA to Gettysburg, and it finally happened. The season was right for viewing colorful trees and fields of Black Eyed Susans, but when we got to the Tourist Center **the power was out!!** Not to be dismayed, we jumped back on the bus with our Step On Guides and toured Seminary Hill, passed Jenny Wade's House, the Wheat Field and Devil's Den. The buses stopped at Little Round Top where General Armistead, leading his brigade, fell to a Yankee bullet. The last stop was at the Torch of Freedom, scene of Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address.



Chaplain Arthur Pace

44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

2008 FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR AWARDS



Frank Stoltz (R) of Miles City, Montana, on June 25, 2008, received the French Legion of Honor medal from the Consul General of France for San Francisco at a VFW ceremony, Miles City, MT for his heroic WWII military service to France. Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer, Miles City Mayor Joe Wheeler, and VFW Miles City Post Commander, former Lt. Col. Robert Johnson, AF Ret., were the principal speakers honoring Stoltz. Gov. Schweitzer presented Stoltz with a letter of commendation. Stoltz family members, wife Patricia of 60 years, and children were in attendance. Stoltz was nominated by Legion of Honor Chevalier R. Lee Aston for the French medal.



S/Sgt. Frank Stoltz-1944

S/Sgt. Frank Stoltz was a member of the 506th Squadron and an aerial gunner on the Norman Howe crew. Howe's aircraft was shot down on June 21, 1944 on a mission to Berlin. All crew members were made POWs except Co-Pilot Gordon W. Henderson, KIA. Stoltz was held POW until freed a few days after the War ended on May 8, 1945.



Col. Charles E. Hughes, 66th Squadron



Capt. Ernest C. Holmer, 67th Squadron




Col. Hughes of San Jose, Ca. and Capt. Holmer of Reno, Nevada, both decided to receive their Legion of Honor medals by mail rather than have a presentation ceremony at the French Consulate in San Francisco. Both finally received their diploma and medal in the Fall of 2008, over a year after nominated by R. Lee Aston, and are, at last, Chevaliers (Knights) of the French Order of the Legion of Honor for their services in liberating France from the Nazi yoke.

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44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS, continued

2008 REUNION MEDAL AWARDS AT THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE, PA.

The WWII Belated Combat Awards Ceremony and luncheon was held at Noon, October 18, 2008 in the Letort Community Center at the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks. 44th BGVA President George A. Washburn welcomed the 230 persons attending the luncheon and turned the awards ceremony over to R. Lee Aston. Nine WWII belated combat awards were planned for the occasion, but the highest medal, the DSC for Lt. Col. Holmes did not come through in time for the ceremony. Eight belated WWII combat medals were made to 44th Bomb Group veterans and presented by the Honorable John H. Gibson II, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, with Major General Robert M. Williams as the Base Host and R. Lee Aston as Master of Ceremonies. Appropriately for the medal presentation event, AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson is the son of our 1944 44th Bomb Group Commanding Officer, Col. John H. Gibson.

   <p>44th Bomb Group Veterans Association</p> <p>44th BOMB GROUP (H) Shipdham AFB, England</p> <p>WORLD WAR II BELATED COMBAT MEDAL AWARDS CEREMONY October 18, 2008</p> <p>Letort View Community Center Carlisle Barracks. U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE Carlisle, Pennsylvania</p>	<p>Programme</p> <p>11:45 a.m. – Luncheon Seating (before eating) Master of Ceremonies, Dr. R. Lee Aston Invocation Pledge of Allegiance Brief Introduction of Gen. Williams & John Gibson Lunch *** Introduction of Distinguished Guests</p> <p>WWII Combat Medal Presentations by The Honorable John H. Gibson, II Assistant Secretary of U.S. Air Forces Pentagon, Arlington, VA</p> <p>Distinguished Guests</p> <p>Maj. Gen. Robert M. Williams Commandant, U.S. Army War College</p> <p>The Hon. & Mrs. Walter E. Stadler, Pres. & CEO National Defense University Foundation, Fort McNair, D.C.</p> <p>Ms. Nancy Miller, Chief Development Officer National Defense University Foundation</p> <p>Ms. Pam Shilling, Outreach Program Manager National Defense University Foundation</p> <p>Ms. Alice Zimmerman (Representing the Executive Director, Mr. Mike Perry) Army Heritage Center Foundation, Carlisle, Pennsylvania</p>	<p>WWII, 8th Army Air Force, 44th Bomb Group Belated Combat Medal Recipients* October 18, 2008</p> <p>****</p> <p>Lt. Col. Walter T. Holmes – Distinguished Service Cross Jasper, Texas</p> <p>Capt. Robert L. Aston - Silver Star Elberton, Georgia</p> <p>S/Sgt. Chauncey H. Steele – Silver Star Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania</p> <p>1st Lt. George A. Washburn – Distinguished Flying Cross + AM/OLCs #5, #6 Tampa, Florida</p> <p>1st Lt. Russell G. Erikson – Distinguished Flying Cross + AM/OLC #5 Quincy, Massachusetts</p> <p>Capt. Sterling L. Dobbs – Air Medal/OLCs #4, #5, #6 LaGrange, Texas</p> <p>Capt. William D. Smythe (<i>post humus</i>) – Air Medal T/Sgt. Walter Fitzmaurice – Air Medal/OLC #5 North Reading, Massachusetts</p> <p>1st Lt. George W. Temple – Prisoner of War Medal Monroe, Louisiana</p> <p>*Note: The above medals were earned by the recipients in combat during WWII, but for some unknown, inadvertent, administrational error were lost or not awarded. The errors have been corrected.</p>
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The eight veterans from the 44th Bomb Group that received belated combat medals from WWII from Air Force Assistant Secretary, the Honorable John H. Gibson II, are, L to R: *post humus* for William Smythe to son James J. Smythe; C.H. (Jay) Steele, Robert Lee Aston; Russell G. Erikson; George A. Washburn; Walter Fitzmaurice; George W. Temple; Sterling L. Dobbs, by John H. Gibson II.

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The 44th BGVA's Host, Major General Robert M. Williams, Commandant of Carlisle Barrack's Army War College Base (R) talks with the Ceremony's principal guest, Air Force Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II from the Pentagon, who made the belated combat medal presentations



James J. Smythe, receives a *post humus* Air Medal for his father, Captain William D. Smythe, from AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II. Capt. Smythe was a 68th Squadron Intelligence Officer who flew five periodic combat missions to gather combat information about enemy tactics and flak installations.



Former S/Sgt. C.H (Jay) Steele, an aerial gunner and amorer, 66th and 68th Squadron, was presented the Silver Star by AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II for gallantry and extraordinary heroism on a mission to the Eckner ball bearing plant, Berlin, Germany, on April 18, 1944. Jay Steele was originally recommended for the Silver Star on April 18, 1944 by his Pilot Morrison and Col. John H. Gibson, CO of the 44th BG. Jay Steele also received AM/OLC#6 for completing 35 combat missions. Steele flew 34 of his 35 missions with Pilot Harold C. Morrison. Unfortunately, on his last mission, his Pilot, James A. Wilson's aircraft was shot down on their mission to Bernburg, Germany, July 7, 1944. Nine of the crew, including Steele, were interned as POWs with radio operator D.P.Yocco KIA. Steele remained a POW until freed a few days after the end of the war.



Former Captain Robert Lee Aston, 67th Squadron Navigator, was presented the Silver Star by AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II for gallantry and extraordinary heroism on a mission to the oil refinery at Hamburg, Germany, on October 30, 1944. Aston led his late aircraft alone on the deep penetration mission to the target area. On arrival at the IP, he found scattered B-24s in total confusion, without leadership, all from other Bomb Groups, rallied and reassembled the Liberators leading them on the bomb run to successfully bomb the target. Aston's aircraft was the only 44th Bomb Group aircraft that day to bomb the primary target. (All other 44th BG aircraft went to the secondary target.) Lt. Aston was originally recommended for the Silver Star by Col. John H. Gibson in October 1944.



Former 1st Lt. Russell G. Erikson, Pilot, 68th Squadron, was presented the DFC/OLC #1 for extraordinary achievement by AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II. Mr. Erikson was Pilot of the Louisiana Belle and flew 33 combat missions.



Former 1st Lt. George A. Washburn, Pilot, 68th Squadron and President of the 44th BGVA was presented the DFC for extraordinary achievement by AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II. Mr. Washburn also was awarded OLCs#5 and #6 to his Air Medal for completing 35 combat missions.

The Banquet and Hospitality Room provided great opportunities for crew gatherings, serious ceremony and jolly conversation.



Roy Owen lit the first candle in the candelabra.
Lou Rabesa lit the Ploesti candle.



Belle War, daughter of **George Temple**, sang in his honor at both the Squadron Dinner and the Banquet.



Jim Strong, **Roy Owen** & Jackie Strong enjoyed Ursel Harvel's book in the Hospitality Room.



After the Banquet, **Sterling Dobbs**, Roberta and **Robert Jackson** exchange memories in the Hospitality Room.



Two crews had three members present: **Clay Roberts** & **George Beiber**. Pictured here from the **George Beiber** crew are **Jerry Folsom**, Co-pilot; **Nathan Woodruff**, Engineer and **Perry Morse**, Tail Gunner.



Former T/Sgt. Walter Fitzmaurice, 68th Squadron radio operator and aerial gunner was presented with OLC #5 to his Air Medal by AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson II, Mr. Fitzmaurice completed 30 combat missions. He served on Pilot 1st Lt. George Washburn's crew



Former 1st Lt. George W. Temple, Navigator, 68th Squadron, was presented with a belated POW medal by AF Assistant Secretary Gibson as Citation Reader Col. James Pierce looks on. Lt. Temple was shot down at Foggia, Italy, 8/16/43 and broke an ankle upon parachuting. He was held 25 days under armed guard but escaped and reached Allied lines 9/22/43.



Former Capt. Sterling L. Dobbs, 68th Squadron Pilot, received OLCs#4,5,6 to his Air Medal from AF Assistant Secretary John H. Gibson for flying 35 combat missions.



Mary Pierce Aston presents a 44th Bomb Group Flying 8 Balls suncatcher to AF Assistant Secretary Gibson in appreciation of his medals presentation.



Master of Ceremonies Lee Aston receives 'thanks' for Flying 8 Ball suncatcher presented to Major General Robert Williams for hosting the 44th Bomb Group's 2008 Reunion at the Army War College, Carlisle, Pa.

POST-REUNION UPDATE ON DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS FOR TOM HOLMES



Capt. W. Tom Holmes ca 1943

On November 26, 2008, Counsel R. Lee Aston for Lt. Col. Walter Tom Holmes for his DSC claim was advised by the Air Force that the DSC for Mr. Holmes' claim had been approved. Mr. Holmes' former Silver Star for his target leadership on the 1943 Ploesti low level mission was upgraded to the Distinguished Service Cross.

Arrangements for a notable presentation of his high-ranking medal are being made.

* * * *



Ivy and Ivo DePiero. At the Banquet, Ivo introduced his wife of 64 years. She had been a member of the RAF. Unfortunately, Ivo passed away two weeks after the Reunion.



Taylor Woodruff, grandson of **Nathan Woodruff**, was the youngest member present. At the banquet, his father, Atty. John Woodruff spoke for the second generation of WWII veterans. He described an emotional moment when he had the first opportunity to meet his father's crew, and his ongoing gratitude and delight in meeting the men who flew those dangerous skies in WWII.



Two members of **Perry Morse's** family, Ken Kelly and Nancy Schmehl, took over his hospitality chores. Richard Schmehl took his turn pouring liquids and Ellen Kelly held the leash while Jessie, the dog, greeted the folks

The newly restored Cyclorama, depicting Pickett's Charge, was the highlight of the tour. The Museum had nooks where a person can sit and learn about the Civil War—battle by battle. It was difficult to tear everybody away to go back to the Sheraton for the Banquet.

What a happy gathering! The Harrisburg High School Color Guard per-

formed professionally. Jackie Roberts passed out Certificates for those who had been honored with pavers and bricks at the Soldier's Walk in Carlisle. It was an opportunity to declare the greatness of the 44th BGVA, all because of those who worked to make it great.

After Monday Breakfast, **Clayton Roberts** went to Carlisle to see his brick.



The children of the late **Paul Kay** received the certificate for his paver from Ruth Morse at the 68th Squadron Dinner. (*It was Paul's plan to bring the 44th BG to Carlisle and also to Gettysburg. I hope he was looking down on us and smiling.*)

L-R Rebecca Sprague, Ruth Morse & Paul Kay, Jr.





Berle Apgar, wife of the late **George Apgar**, brought the biggest family to the Reunion, some all the way from the Island of Cypress. President Washburn introduced the family and informed the Cyprus family that their island was sometimes a haven for 44th BG planes that were running low on fuel.

L-R Beryl Apgar; Denise Davies (Beryl's daughter), Georgia Case (Beryl's stepdaughter – George's daughter), Alan Davies Alan and Denise from Cyprus, Cynthia Harmonoski (Beryl's sister), George Washburn.



Col. Pierce listens to Lowell Roberts the 44th BG's ideas for enhancing the collection at AHEC.

PRESERVING YOUR MEMORABILIA

Since the men who flew in the Army Air Corps were under the direction of the Army, the Army Heritage Education Center in Carlisle, PA is inviting WWII Airmen to consider this location as a repository for their memorabilia. Of course, if your family wishes to keep these items, they should have first consideration. However, if this would be difficult for them to care for old uniforms, badges, diaries, flight records, letters or any other personal items, AHEC is more than delighted to preserve them and make them available to historians, researchers and families.

AHEC will soon be breaking ground on their new Education Center, and on a regular basis will be displaying materials from different wars. It will contain bleachers where school children, members of the community and veteran groups can attend educational programs about the Army's history and your history.

If you would like to discuss this with any of the administrators at AHEC, call Greg Statler, 717 245-3094 or John Warsinske 717 245-4114.

BOOKS OF GREAT EVENTS IN 44TH BOMB GROUP HISTORY

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

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

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

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

Barlow's wife Aline has copies of the book. 190 Johnson Drive SE, Calhoun, GA 30701-3941 Tel. 706-629-2396. The cost is \$20.

MESSAGES FOR DEEP THOUGHT FROM ROGER FENTON

1. Would a fly without wings be considered a walk?
2. Why do they lock gas station bath rooms? Are they afraid someone would clean them?
3. I went to a bookstore and asked the saleswoman, 'Where is the self help section?' She said if she told me, it would defeat the purpose!

HUMOR INSIDE THE NISSON HUT

(as remembered by **Bob Lehnhausen**)

This story began in another of our evening bull sessions in our Nissen hut on our airbase at Shipdham, England. **David Alexander**, the pilot of the other B-17 crew who had joined the 68th Squadron at the same time that we had, and who was an occupant of our hut, had just returned from a short leave to London. He had made an acquaintance with an attractive young English woman who lived in a private home. Her husband was in the British Army, stationed abroad.

She had entertained Alex in her home. She was a person who enjoyed sun bathing in her privacy fenced back yard, in the nude. She had given Alex a copy of a photo of herself in the back yard, sans clothing. With a degree of pride, and an air of conquest, he passed the picture around for all to view.

Once again, **George Hulpiau's** sense of moral values was offended. To show his displeasure, he began to needle Alex about his transgression. He began his campaign with that famous chuckle. His needling went like this, "Alex, have you ever given thought that your forays with this gal are offensive to God? Have you ever given thought to the fact that the B-24 has this BIG piece of armor plate BEHIND each of the pilots' seats on the flight deck, but NOTHING UNDERNEATH?" With hand gestures he created a graphic visual that he meant as an upward rising piece of ragged anti aircraft shrapnel (flak). His gestures were accompanied by this verbal admonition, "Have you ever thought that God in his displeasure with your conduct, might direct some of that German flak up through the bottom of that thin metal pilot's seat and rip off the family jewels?" With that, Alex reacted with a very pained expression on his face, and at the same time, grabbing his crotch with both hands.

George was pleased that, at least, Alex had heard him. George had gotten his

attention. Noting the initial success that his questions had aroused, George continued his campaign. He jogged Alex with short jabbing questions, always clothed in that chuckle, reminding Alex of the inadequate protection which the airplane provided for his testicles; that his conduct was a test of God's tolerance of Alex's conduct.

The airplane that Alex flew, *Flak Alley*, became the 68th Squadron's lead ship. It had been fitted with a few special items, at the pleasure of the pilot. When our crew finally got back together in December, 1943 we became the Squadron's Lead Crew. **George Jansen**, our Squadron Commander, told me that since we would be using *Flak Alley* for our missions, that I was free to make whatever changes in the cockpit that I desired.

Shortly after our conversation I walked to the hardstand where *Flak Alley* was parked on the flight line. I was by myself. I crawled up into the cockpit and did a bit of minor rearranging. Time wise, this is months after George had begun his campaign on Alex about the relationship between his conduct and the lack of protective armor.

The Pilot and Co-Pilot seats in this model of B-24 were bucket shaped to accommodate the American style seat pack parachute. However, we were using British type, snap on, chest type parachutes. To fill up the seat, we used multiple Air Corps issued cushions to offset the space that the parachute would occupy. Alex had been the pilot of this plane, and he used a pile of cushions. I didn't use as many cushions, so I grabbed Alex's pile of cushions and lifted them out and erupted in laughter. At the bottom of this pilot seat...beneath his pile of cushions was a cast iron stove lid, about six or eight inches in diameter. It was David Alexander's personal armor plate. George Hulpiau was an effective campaigner! **Alex had gotten his message!**

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS SOCIETY



The DFC's bi-annual reunion was held October 27-30 at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida. It was a non-stop, event-filled gathering at a time when Pensacola was suffering a cold spell.

There were about a dozen WWII veterans present, more from the Korean Conflict, many from Viet Nam. Helicopter pilots were in abundance, and their stories were dramatic. Leighton Anderson, recent recipient of the Medal of Honor, addressed the group at Hurlburt Field.

Involved in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Anderson was part of a ten man team, dropping Special Ops into Pakistan. Using night vision equipment, they cross the border, looking for terrorists. The secret need for the operation was compounded by the fact that the tension between India and Pakistan had escalated, and Americans were being blamed for civilian deaths.

At the village where terrorists were in hiding, the team found only a few teenage armed goat herders. They took their weapons and sent them on their way. However, the operators did find a terrorist stronghold. When it was time to leave the area, Anderson had to park the gunship on top of a mountain 2,000 feet high. He was able to place only the rear section of the craft on the mountain and hold it steady until the team of thirty six Special Ops plus two detainees climbed aboard. For this outstanding flying skill, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross

Anderson described flying conditions: the dust is totally formidable, making day or night flying hazardous. The landscape is brown, similar to sights on the moon, so the maintenance crew is constantly challenged to keep the engines running. For many missions, refueling over enemy territory is threatening but necessary.

DFC members saw Eglin AFB's amazing collection of armaments. The Navy Museum on the base is filled with historic planes, including the one flown by John McCain.

The educational program for young inductees is amazing. Escape techniques for planes on fire, ditching in the ocean and parachuting into enemy territory are taught with great precision – all based on the experiences of those who survived other bad scenes and lived to advise the next group. An inductee can earn 95 college credits in that department.

The highlight of the tour was the magnificent performance of the Blue Angels. (Cold weather be darned), many members of the community joined the DFC Society in exclaiming over the Angels' aerial escapades. And wouldn't you know it — Pensacola warmed up the day we left.!

Editor's Note: Many stories are stuffed in my file cabinet, and I pick them out at random. Too much can never be written about Wiener Neustadt. Here's another memory that I could not return to the cabinet.

WIENER NEUSTADT THEN PALERMO, A TEMPORARY VISIT AS REMEMBERED BY MARK MORRIS

When I was about 15 years old, I lied about my age to see the then adult movie, *Ecstasy*. Somewhere through the years I had been informed that it was filmed in the area of Wiener Neustadt, Austria. True or not, I was again reminded of that bit of trivia when we were briefed on the bombing raid to be made there October 1, 1943. That is not all that is familiar about the name. Our 44th BG, 506 Sq. aircraft, *Old Crow* had been there before. On August 13, only two weeks after the Low Level Ploesti mission, we had flown out of Benina Main Air Field in Bengazi, Libya, to hit the Me-109 fighter works located near Wiener Neustadt. For our crew, it hadn't been too bad. Though our ship suffered enough damage to force us down at Palermo, Sicily, with one engine out, 2 smoking and low on fuel, we were all OK. After returning next day to Libya, we had changed bases twice. We flew back to England for a short time and then again to Africa. This time we were attached to the 12th Air Force.

Returning to the Messerschmidt Plant

October 1st 1943 flying out of Ounida, the field near Tunis, Tunisia, we were in for a heck of a Wiener Roast. The briefing information concerning expected defenses for Wiener Neustadt was that fighters weren't expected to present much of a problem. It was mentioned in passing, that there was an advanced fighter pilot training base there.

We had a new crew member. Previous Co-Pilot Lt. **Laudig**, now had a ship of his own. We were introduced to his replacement, Lt. **Waino Hannuksela**. Otherwise we boarded *Old Crow* with the same crew that she had carried to and from Ploesti (the **James McAtee** crew). Again this time the crew was reduced to nine, as it had been at Ploesti, but this time it was because our hatch gunner, S/Sgt. **Charley Loftus**, was hospitalized with Sand Fly Fever.

We faced an approximate 12 hour flight which was extending our fuel limit, but we still had bomb bay tanks installed. The over-land part was all at high altitude. We had loaded 1000 pound bombs.

A Strange Plane Riding With Us

Crossing the Mediterranean Sea, the flight was routine. We crossed the European coast, climbed over the mountains in clear weather and remained at high altitude. As we neared the target area, we began to receive flak. Our group seemed to be in excellent formation, but for one exception. I noted a lone B-24 about 1000 yards out at the 9:00 o'clock position. It wore the desert camouflage of the group we had been stationed near in Bengazi. I stopped scanning to examine it. Something else was peculiar about that ship. I could hardly believe it, but the waist window hatch covers were in place and closed. Mighty comfortable huh! About then the

flak which had been well below us increased in intensity as well as accuracy. Bursts were at our exact altitude. I had no doubt then, that its occupants were supplying a lot of good information to the flak gunners below. After getting the flak gunners zeroed in, the intruder peeled off and I lost sight of it. The flak was so accurate that it had simply blown the formation apart. In addition to the evasive action being taken by our pilot, Capt. James McAtee, we were literally being bounced by concussions. Fighters immediately appeared, well before the target, and they were all over us. **They were eager to the extent of flying right through their own flak.** Unbelievable!

By the time we hit the IP and Bombardier 1st Lt. **Joe Young** took over for the straight and level flight in, we were sitting ducks. I and all other gunners were firing a lot of rounds. There must have been 30 fighters interested in just our squadron. They would climb above the flak, stabilize to pick a target, then come diving down to us.

Sometime shortly after bomb release, I was suddenly pinned to the ceiling. At the time my thoughts were that we had been badly hit or that someone at the controls had. (Later I learned that a fighter had made an unwavering head-on attack, and **Mac** had evaded him by diving). I was pinned on my side against the ceiling.

We Waist Gunners had small 24 foot British chest type parachutes. We wore a chute harness, and if the chute was needed, one grabbed it by the cloth handle and attempted to slam it onto 2 large snaps on the chest portion of the harness. There was my chute lying alongside me, also pinned to the ceiling. I managed to reach it and just got a grasp on it when bang! I hit the floor. I was on my knees. I hit so hard that even with the heavy clothing, I dented the catwalk. I scrambled up and took a quick look around. Sgt. **A.G. Kearns**, Right Waist

Gunner, was also getting up. S/Sgt. **Jack Edwards**, in the Tail Turret, seemed OK and was pawing furiously at his guns.

Surprise! We were still in the air and in a more or less normal flying attitude. So back to work. Big problem. My gun was jammed. I got it cleared, but our ammunition was all over the floor. A.G. and I broke some of the ammo into short belts of approximately 20 rounds per belt. They didn't feed well and caught on the waist ledge during each short burst. I couldn't see any other B-24s even close. Not a nice feeling for a bomber crewman. We were all alone after that dive. Any ships still flying have apparently been spread all over the sky. More fighters appeared, but no guns seemed to be firing from our ship. Apparently all positions had the same problem of scrambled ammunition. I knew that must be corrected if we were to have any chance of survival.

Scattered Ammo

A.G. was rummaging around on the floor for ammo again. At least we had waist gunners who could get at our ammunition. The other positions had a greater problem. Our ammunition storage was thus arranged. Each waist position had a box fabricated from wood. It was about 30 inches long, 24 inches high, and just wide enough for the caliber 50 round to lie in. The ammunition was routed through a metal chute attached between this box and the side of the gun. The box was permanently mounted on the side of the ship, about a foot aft of the waist window and overhead. There was barely room to get one's head between the curved ceiling and the box to stock it. I pushed most of the hanging ammunition back into position. Then I placed my foot on the ledge of the waist window and heaved myself up. There I hung precariously balanced, one foot practically out the window of a

maneuvering B-24, hanging on for dear life, out of breath and half in panic, with oxygen hoses, communication cords and other stuff interfering. Chinning myself on the box, I reached in, feeling for the double-link end. We had been taught in gunnery school at Ft. Myers, Florida, that the ammunition would not feed unless the double-link end was fed first. I turned all that ammo completely over at least three times, while searching for a double-link end. After being tossed off the ledge more than once, and still not finding it, I was no longer only half in panic. With the last unsuccessful try, I decided 'enough of the technicalities'. Instead, I just grabbed a single-link end, fed it down the chute anyway and charged the gun. I had to open the cover and physically place a starting round in the gun to get it charged, and when I pulled the trigger it worked. Just in time! Three more Me-109s had queued up. They sat just above us at 9:00 o'clock high and 500 yards out. I called **Mike Davis**, top turret for help. Hearing no response and no other gunfire, I began berating, 'Mike, get those fighters', 'Mike, can't you see them?' 'Shoot Mike shoot!' As I took a quick glance around to A.G., I noticed one of my communication cords had hung upon the ammo box. I grabbed and re-connected it. As I did so, I heard Capt. Young saying, "Whoever that is screaming into the mike, knock it off". Now I knew which cord that was. I had had a mike, but no earphone. Sorry! The last three 109's that had queued up pulled slightly ahead of our left wing tip, turned in and began raking us. I resumed praying and firing, long bursts of both. They came diving in nose to tail, one right behind the other. They were so close that they drifted less than to our 7 o'clock position before they had to break off. At that, they were no more than 50 yards out when they went under and disappeared from my sight. They had fol-

lowed each other so closely that before the first one broke, all three were visible in my ring sight at the same time. I recall accepting the fact that we were going down, and it was just a matter of going down fighting. I promised that if God would just get us through, I would make no claims of taking a life. Well, maybe I am renegeing a little. Forgive me. Not those pilots lives, maybe, but I'm sure I knocked hell out of those 3 Me-109s.

Luckily, that was the last of the direct attacks on *Old Crow*. We had been under attack for a long time. The entire attack force (later estimated to be 100) must have been about out of ammunition if not fuel, having attacked before, during and long after the target.

Old Crow was in trouble

AS I again looked rearward, I became aware that a good portion of the left vertical stabilizer was completely gone. I had been so busy that I will never know just when that happened. Be that as it may, either flak or fighters had knocked it off. As things began to get quiet, we went about the task of assessing damage. Again, all of the crew was OK. *Old Crow*, however, showed signs of wear. In addition to the missing tail feathers, she had a lot of holes, and she had taken up smoking.

2nd Lt. **McCash** plotted us a route to Palermo, Sicily. As mentioned before, we had been there not too long after that field fell into U.S. hands in August. We knew the approach wasn't easy. Capt. **MacAtee** & Lt. **Laudig** had taken us in banking to the right through the pass around the mountain and into this short 3000 ft. fighter runway. It was a new approach for 2nd. Lt. **Hannuksela**, but for the rest of us, it was deja-vu. We were low on fuel, but made it without the engines coughing, as they had on the previous landing there.

Mac knew he was going to be very busy on the approach, and he called me

forward to stand behind him and call out the airspeed if it got down to 135.

Last time we had been there, Lt. McCash had lost his parachute. It had vibrated out the nose wheel door during the short field run-up and take off. (We speculated that he just wanted to retrieve it, so that explained his desire to return to Sicily.) We settled down safely and taxied to a stop. I don't remember exactly how many, but I think there were 4 other damaged B-24s either there already or coming in. We were given a short debriefing in the operations room there before we split. I mentioned my close in shots, but remembering my fervent promise, I didn't pursue a claim.

S/Sgt. **A. G. Kearns**, S/Sgt. Radio Operator, **Norm Kiefer** and I spent the night in the ship. The rest of the crew disappeared. I slept fitfully in the back of the dented catwalk, reliving the whole nightmare over and over.

When we were there before, we had been served at the outdoor mess arrangement that served the troops occupying the airfield. They had no spare mess kits. We ate out of the large gallon cans that their rations came in. They heated the food for us and did all they could to make us feel welcome. As a joke, I had packed a mess kit with other belongings in my B-4 bag in the aircraft, and bantered that only I would have one if needed. It served well now.

A New Problem

On our second day in Palermo, the three of us had just finished eating, and were meandering across the tarmac toward our aircraft. While swinging my mess kit in the air to dry it, I dropped my fork. Just then the wind suddenly came whistling across the field. As I stooped to retrieve my fork, a large sheet of corrugated metal came flying right over my back. As I straightened, the wind noise grew to a sound like an approaching locomotive. The three of us, Kief, A.G.

and I broke into a run for the remaining 200 yards or so and climbed into *Old Crow*. **We were in the midst of a tornado!** We clambered into the cockpit, I into the pilot seat and Kief into the Co-Pilot seat. A.G. busied himself closing hatches and securing loose stuff and starting the 'put put Auxiliary Power Supply. We held the foot brakes on and actually flew *Old Crow*, holding her on the ground. She never got lifted as did the other B-24s, and even a huge British Walrus were blown off the field. The worst part of the wind only lasted about five minutes. As it cleared, we looked around us. A lot of the fighters of the black 99th fighter group stationed there had been flipped over on their backs. A huge stucco wall separated the field from a road, and many of the aircraft that had performed a ballet past us now rested either against or half through that wall. One B-24 had gone into the wall backwards and rested nose down. The tail turret had ridden up the wall. There, about 20 feet above the ground was the vertical stabilizer intact, which later was to be installed on *Old Crow*.

That night the three of us slept on the cement floor of one of the empty buildings that the ground troops offered. I did not feel like spending another night inside the aircraft. Next day Lt. Hannuksela came out to the field. He talked to us a bit, then left. Repair of all the damaged aircraft was progressing, but I knew we would be there at least another day. I dragged Kief and A.G. along to downtown Palermo. There I went to the Red Cross and asked for a place to sleep. They had none, but suggested that I talk to a Colonel that had headquarters in the same building. I reported to him and made the same request. He asked if we were on one of the aircraft that they saw come into the airfield; then he called for a command car and had us taken to an infantry battalion

where clean beds of some hospitalized members were temporarily vacant. They welcomed us and someone gave us a bottle of vino. After supper we sat on the curb outside, swapped stories with the infantrymen and retired early. Next morning we made it to breakfast with our new found friends. Then we hitchhiked back to the airfield.

Sometime that morning all of our crew except Jack, the Tail Gunner, appeared. The repairs of *Old Crow's* tail was completed and she was refueled. Engine run-up went OK. The weather was checked, McCash plotted the course for Tunis and flight clearance was secured. As on the previous visit to that field we taxied into a church yard and turned around with our tail inside the yard to have as much runway as possible, since it was downhill and then up over a small mountain.

Down the short runway, up, up and away. *Old Crow* was a bird again for the last time over the Mediterranean Sea she labored along for few hours to Tunis. Upon landing we discovered that our group, the 44th, had left for England. We were to follow. First though there had to be some repairs.

Hatch gunner S/Sgt. **Charley Loftus**, now out of the hospital, sat alone in our tent in the middle of a large expanse of desert. As we approached he came rushing out, stopped short, looked perplexed, but could not quite voice his question. We hurriedly assured him that our Tail Gunner Jack was OK. Just off on a spree somewhere in Sicily.

The next day during inspection, the aircraft engineers inspected the aircraft at Tunis and discovered that *Old Crow* was damaged beyond repair. They found it difficult, in fact, to believe that she could even have brought us home, let alone the stress of landing and take off that she had borne us through. For one thing, the left main wing spar was partially severed by a 20 MM cannon shell that had gone in, remained and smoldered. That did, however, explain one of the large holes we had noticed there.

Ecstasy! I can tell you about Ecstasy. Climbing safely out of *Old Crow* in Palermo. **That was Ecstasy!**

*Jack Edwards, Tail Gunner, must have hitchhiked back to England. He later flew with the **George Insley, Raymond Houghthy** crews and others.*



A PLEASANT ENCOUNTER

By Dick Butler

During the Second Air Division Association Sixty First Convention this past October in Dallas, Texas, a local resident saw an item in the newspaper that said B-24 veterans that had served in England during WW II were having their annual convention in the Gaylord Resort in the community of Grapevine. This gentleman came to the hotel to see if anyone there had possibly known his father. The first person he met was Mr. Matthew Martin, the Chairman of The Board of Governors of the Memorial Trust of the 2nd Air Division USAAF. The visitor asked Matthew if he knew if there was anyone present that had served at Shipdham. Matthew knew that I had been in the 44th Bomb Group at Shipdham and was the only attendee at the convention that had done so. Matthew quickly found me and introduced me to Jamie MacCammond.

Jamie had done quite a bit of research about his father's WW II service, including some on the 44th's web site. His father was **James A. MacCammond**, a gunner in the 68th Squadron. He had departed Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma with the original 44th Bomb Group air echelon on or about 10 August 1942 for Grenier Field, New Hampshire. The B-24s were there for a few weeks getting some retrofitting and doing a very limited amount of flight training. The force then flew across the North Atlantic to England. By 10 October 1942 all twenty seven 44th B-24s were at Shipdham.

On 15 February 1943 seventeen 44th B-24s made an attack on the German Raider "Togo" in the port at Dunkirk, France. The force received very intense and accurate flak. Two B-24s were lost. James MacCammond was flying as a waist gunner on the plane "**Captain and the Kids**." It received extensive damage. Sgt MacCammond was slightly wounded by one of two 20 mm shells that hit the waist position. Three of the crew members bailed out and were killed. When it became apparent that the plane could not make it back to Shipdham, the pilot, **Thomas R. Cramer**, made a crash landing on the beach at Ramsgate. The landing was made without using flaps or landing gear and luckily all those still aboard were not seriously injured.

As a result of his aforementioned injuries, Sgt MacCammond was awarded the Purple Heart Medal on 11 May 1943. Then just three days later on 14 May 1943, S/Sgt James A. MacCammond was the right waist gunner on the B-24 "**Rugged Buggy**" in the attack on the Krupp Submarine Building Works at Kiel, Germany. This mission was the 44th's toughest to date and for the mission the 44th Bomb Group was awarded the first of its two Presidential Unit Citations. The 44th lost five aircraft, one was abandoned, nine were damaged, 12 men were wounded, and 51 went missing in action. **Rugged Buggy** was the target of numerous German fighters and their incendiary bullets started a roaring furnace in the bomb bay. The crew bailed out. S/Sgt MacCammond came down off shore in the Baltic Sea. He was rescued by fisherman and turned over to German authorities. He spent the rest of WW II in Stalag 17. Upon repatriation he was awarded his second Purple Heart Award.

Jamie MacCammond has gathered numerous papers and photos about his father's B-24 experience and it was a very pleasant experience to review some of them with him and offer some helpful comments about them. Jamie is very proud of his son that is currently serving in the Marine Corps and just recently returned from a tour in Iraq. While he was there he was wounded by enemy action and received a Purple Heart Award in May 2008. Jamie is very proud of the fact that both his father's and his son's injuries that occurred while they were serving our country were appropriately recognized, particularly that both were in the month of May.

Robert D. Vance's Chance Meeting And A Tribute to a Lifelong Friend

In reading the summer issue of *8 Ball Tails*, I came across an article about TINKER BELLE. In reading the article about that aircraft and its demise, it mentioned how five of the crew ended up in a large prison camp, and on the ninth day of captivity, a platoon from the 78th Infantry Division arrived in the camp and set the five fliers and others free. Two of us 44thers were at one time members of that great Division.

Alex Toth of Titonsville, Ohio and myself, a former Ohioan who lived up the river from Al, seemed to recycle into each other's life.

I spent 9 months in a weapons platoon of a rifle company, Company G, 309th Infantry. Al was in another regiment of the Division. Although both of us were from small towns along the Ohio River, we had never met. Unknowingly, each of us put in for transfer to the Air Force Aviation Cadet Training. After having several physicals and getting the paper work in order, I finally shipped out from Camp Butner near Durham, N.C. A number of us boarded a train for Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi.

On the ride to Keesler, Al was walking down the aisle and happened to spot the 78th Division patch on my shoulder, and so we got into a conversation. We had a long talk and realized our homes in Ohio were along the Ohio River, and not too far apart. We parted at Keesler and never saw each other again at that base.

Later I was released from the Cadet program (through no fault of my own) and went to Radio School and then to Gunnery School. From there I went to Westover Field near Springfield, Massachusetts for transition training. I trained in B-17s in Gunnery School and ended up in B-24s at Westover. I believe Al ended up about the same way, although I am not sure to which schools or bases he was sent.

The next time I saw Al was in the Mess Hall at Shipdham. Here are his words, **"It was a pleasant sunny day around 1:00 pm. Most everyone had eaten. I was walking down toward the serving area, and I saw this GI sitting there alone. He had on a GI sweater and a full red mustache, (auburn was the right color). This you never had when we first met. Anyway, we struck up a conversation and got reacquainted. There was never any doubt that I knew you from our first meeting on the train to Keesler. The last time I saw you at Shipdham was the 23rd of March, the night before the Wesel drop at low level. After learning about the mission on that day, I went down to the flight line to sweat out your return. Needless to say, your plane didn't return. I never gave up on you, always asked anyone from up the river if they knew Bob Vance. Finally this woman at the local bar told me you made it back. I was thrilled and happy to hear the good news. She got me your California address. You know the rest of the story."**

Al and I met again a number of times, some at the 44th reunions, and we still keep in touch. In my time in the infantry, my time in the AAC 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, but one fellow stands out the most, and that fellow is Al Toth, a great guy and a dear friend.

Southern Comfort III (the fourth *Southern Comfort*) with **Max E. Chandler's** crew was shot down on 24 March 1945 on Operation Varsity. There were two survivors, **Robert Vance** and **Louis DeBlasio**.

Charles Burton Remembers His Father's Plane

Charles Burton, a second generation member of the 44th Bomb Group wrote an article for the 8th Air Force News about *Tinker Belle*, the plane that went down on the 44th's last mission, 25 April 1945. After seeing *Tinker Belle* on the cover of the Summer issue of the 8 Ball Tails, he forwarded an article he had written for the 8th AF News. In it he had included information about his father, **Robert Burton**, Crew Chief on *Tinker Belle*. With the permission of the 8th AF News, I am copying his story.

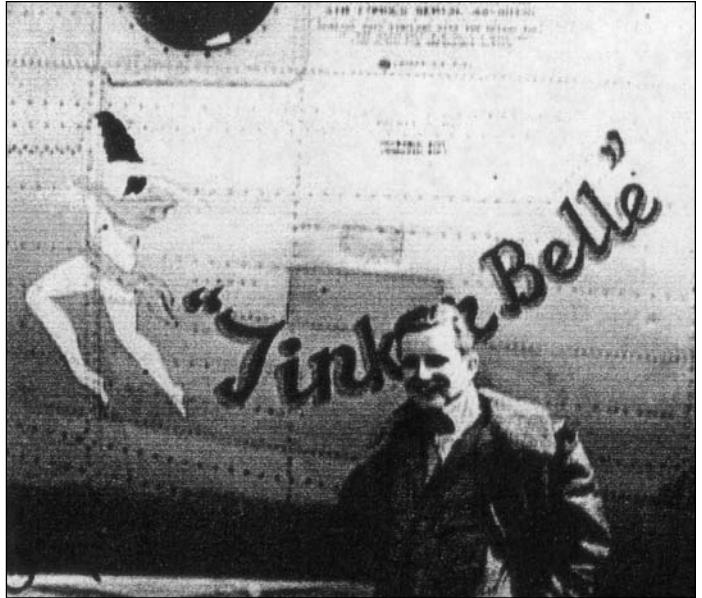
"My father served with the celebrated "Flying Eight Balls" during his entire military service during WWII. He had an intense respect for the aircrews.

Although all individuals in the command were subject to danger (crashes, accidents, bombings, etc.), the air crews of course were subjected to danger on an intense and daily basis. The main strain on the ground echelon was 3 years service versus a combat tour and the emotional strain of increasing combat losses, the loss of friends and buddies.

"I remember my dad saying that he learned quickly that war was not very glorious when you had to clean up the remains of your buddies after a crash. I was named for one of his close friends in the service, "Bucky", Richard Butler, who was killed on July 22th, 1944, when the B-24, dubbed *Flak Alley II* ditched in the North Sea following a mission to Munich. He serviced 10 planes during the war, and none of them survived the war. I also remember him telling me that he flew on a few missions during the war. When he flew, he threw 'chaff' or 'window', from the Waist Gunner's compartment. That was tin foil, used to confuse the German anti aircraft.

"The last plane he serviced was *Tinker Belle*, which turned out to be the last combat casualty of the 44th. I believe my dad received his sergeant stripes when he became crew chief for *Tinker Belle*.

The fate of *Tinker Belle* demonstrates that the war could be just as deadly at its conclusion, even though planes were flying more missions and the allies controlled the skies. With *Tinker Belle*'s demise, the war was almost over. My dad probably would have been able to fly home on *Tinker Belle*, had she survived. Instead he saw occupied Europe from another plane on one of the 'Trolley Missions', and returned home on the Queen Mary, the same ship on which he had arrived, approximately three years earlier."



Robert Burton, Crew Chief on Tinker Belle.

PASTOR'S COMPLAINT

The only time some people are willing to come to the front of the church is when accompanied by pallbearers!

Don't forget that people will judge you by your actions, not your intentions. You may have a heart of gold - but so does a hard-boiled egg!

ADVICE FOR GUNNERS

(From a poster at the Mighty Eighth Museum)

Every enemy fighter is DANGEROUS and needs watching
But he becomes really dangerous ONLY when he starts a direct attack
on you!

Luckily – THAT IS WHEN HE IS EASIEST TO HIT!!

DON'T depend on Tracers. They are very likely to fool you! Even
when they appear to be going through the fighter, they may be miss-
ing him completely – over, beyond, short or under him.

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MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Dick Butler**: I recently learned of the death of Mary Henry, wife of **Howard C. (Pete) Henry**. Pete was the 44th Group Vice President to the 2 ADA for eighteen years. He was a true leader of the 44th in those days. Under his leadership, the 44th always had the largest number of attendees at 2 ADA conventions. Pete also served as 2 ADA President in 1979-1980. Pete and Mary have been inactive in the 2 ADA since 1996, because of poor health. When Dick became President of the ADA, he led the group in financing a book endowment at the Norwich Library in Pete's name, in appreciation of his work with the 44th



MEMORIAL TRUST OF THE 2ND AIR DIVISION, USAAF

From Norwich: Libby Morgan, Trust Librarian informed **Dick Butler** that four books were purchased in his name through the Book Endowment Programme.

The dream of the 2 AD to leave a lasting memorial in England has fully blossomed. Children and young people can study American history, geography, culture, sports, art, biographies and politics as well as the contributions to victory in WWII by young Americans. Members of the Memorial Trust make a constant effort to let people in England know the availability of this unique Library and its many offerings. It came about because some very forward thinking visionaries chose to leave a piece of America behind when they returned home.



SALUTE INSTEAD OF HAND OVER HEART

According to '*Short Bursts*' the publication of the Air Force Gunners Association: There is a grass root movement for veterans to hand salute, rather than place their hands over their hearts when honoring the flag, fallen comrades and/or the country.

"It's referring to saluting when we pledge the flag, when the National Colors pass or are presented, when the National Anthem or honors are played, or when taps are played and firing squads or guns render honors. Those who object can continue the hand over the heart salute.

"There are no regulations that tell veterans what we can and can't do on this matter. What a positive and patriotic gesture if all veterans did salute on the proper occasion. It would reinforce the message of the many who served this country in the armed forces. You can help get the word out."



From Elizabeth Mills in Eastbourne, UK, we received news clippings of Remembrance Day in England, honoring Americans who died in the fight against the Nazi Regime. Every year they hold a ceremony on Butts Brow, honoring the men who lost their lives in the **Ruth-less**. The British said they will never forget, and they never do.





FOLDED WINGS

*Undaunted spirits held high, death a passenger in the sky
Through dark clouds of hellish fire,
Through beehives of stinging fighters
We tempted fate - some survived.*

William J. Fili

Caillier, James #19623 67th Squadron
23 September 2008 T/Sgt. Caillier was a Gunner, later Engineer on the **Frank Stough** crew. His first of 26 missions was 1 May 1943. On some missions he flew with **Horace Austin, Robert McCormick** and one mission with **James C. Bean** as Command Pilot.

With the Stough crew, Caillier flew the awesome missions to Kiel and Ploesti. The planes they flew were **Ruth-less, Old Crow, Raggedy Ann II, Baldy & His Brood, Miss Emmy Lou II, F for Freddie, Chief & Sack Artists, The Impatient Virgin and 4-Q-2**. The crew's original plane, **Ruth-less**, was lost at Butts Brow near Eastbourne, England. Caillier had the opportunity to visit the site in 1997, when the 44th BG toured the UK and France.

Although gunners usually hold the rank of Sgt., Caillier had an extra stripe. On a training mission in Pueblo, Colorado, when a Stough's plane crashed with another, Stough ordered the crew to bail out. Unfortunately, the Co-Pilot jumped also. Caillier stayed on board and assisted his pilot bring the plane to safety. For this act, he was awarded the DFC.

Calliere served in all gunner positions for his first 23 missions. On his last three, he was Engineer and Top Turret Gunner.

In a letter to **Will Lundy** in 1983, he stated that when he completed his tours,

General **Leon Johnson** gave him a choice of going to the states for retraining on B-29s or staying in England to instruct new crews. He chose the latter and was in UK until VE Day.

Caillier and his wife Jean resided in Sumner, Washington.

Dipiero, Ivo 30 October 2008 A member of the 44th BG Armament team, Dipiero served in Shipdham until the war's end. While serving in the UK, he met and married Ivy, an English girl serving in the RAF.

Ivo and Ivy were faithful attendees of the 44th BGVA Reunions; and his death occurred only two weeks after leaving the Harrisburg/Carlisle reunion.

Elliott, Wade #20133 66th Squadron
31 October 2008 Sgt. Elliott was trained as a ground crewman, but when he was offered the opportunity to fly, he took gunnery training and served on many crews on both the 66th & 506 Squadrons. In his 28 missions which began 8 February 1944, he filled all four of the gunner positions. Most of his missions were with **J. W. Grow**, but he also flew with the crews of **Wayne H. Middleton, Dean Miller, Guy Johnson** and **John McCaslin**. Elliott entered combat four months before D-Day and continued until two weeks after that big event. Because of the importance of the air war at that



FOLDED WINGS

time, no less than ten command pilots flew the missions on which he was assigned: **David Saylor, William H. Strong, Frank Stough, C. C. Parmele, Reginald Phillips, Robert Felber, W. A. Polking** (from the 392nd BG), **James Kahl, James McAtee and Frank Davido**. On D-Day Wade flew two missions to Caen (Vire) and Colleville/St. Laurent.

Elliott served as gunner on seven different A/C: **M'Darling, Consolidated Mess, Lucky Strike, Greenwich, Prince'Princ Ass/Princess, Ole Cock and Hell's Kitten**.

After the war Elliott attended Dartmouth College. He found employment in sales for General Electric and Northern Industrial Chemical companies. He leaves his wife of 56 years, Jessie Barton Bontecou and one son. (Two other sons are deceased.) The family lived in several different cities, finally retiring with in Peterborough, New Hampshire, where he raised Arab horses.

Gavette, Franklin P. #20339 66th Squadron 4 August 2002 T/Sgt. Gavette was a Radio Operator on one flight with the 44th BG. He flew with Capt. William Ogden to the Chemical & Dye Works at Ludwigshafen on 31 July 1944 on *Bi U Baby*. This name was found from the Social Security Death Index.

Goodrich, George R. 30 July 2004 No information available.

Helfenbein, Dr. Abraham #20618 67th Squadron October 2008 1st. Lt. Helfenbein was a Co-Pilot on the **Lawrence Parks** crew for his first 25 missions. On 18 April 1944 he moved to the other seat and finished his last two mis-

sions as first pilot. On one mission he flew with **William Brandon** as Command Pilot.

Heffenbein flew in ten different aircrafts: ***Seed of Satan, The Shark, Avenger, Raggedy Ann II, Lil Cookie, 4-Q-2, D-Barfly, Chief & Sack Artists and Shack Rabbit/Starspangled Hell***.

In his letter to **Will Lundy**, he stated that after the war, he studied dentistry and was engaged in that profession for 30 years in Montrose, CA. Research indicates he joined a group of professionals called the Flying Samaritans. They provided oral surgery on needy Mexican children in Baja California. He and his wife Muriel resided in Camarillo, CA.

Pinder, Harold H. #21686 67th Squadron 21 October 2008 Lt. Pinder was the pilot on *X-Bar* which was lost on a mission to Frankfort, Germany. His first of twelve missions was 10 October 1943. The Pinder crew flew in six different planes, ***The Shark, F for Freddie, Avenger, 4 Q 2, Sky Queen and Liberty Bell/Lass***.

When the plane reached the coast on 29 January 1944 Me 109s and FW 190s began the attack, making three different passes that hit under the flight deck. They cut the control cables, knocking out the autopilot. One wing was on fire and the #4 engine was knocked out.

The Bombardier, RW Gunner, Ball Turret Gunner and Tail Gunner were KIA. Pinder, the Co-Pilot, Navigator, Radio Operator, Engineer and LW Gunner succeeded in evading but later became POW. The Co-Pilot was repatriated but died later of tuberculosis. The Radio Operator



FOLDED WINGS

evaded but was later killed; the LW Gunner was wounded, but along with the others, was housed at Stalag Luft 1.

After the war, Pinder moved to Florida to fly Cargo planes to Cuba. Shortly thereafter he returned his hometown of Pittsburgh and attended Washington & Jefferson College. He became a draftsman with Ruthraff Sauer Inc., and was involved in heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems for a variety buildings, especially hospitals.

Both Pinder and his wife became active in scouting. They had four children and six grandchildren. He taught one daughter to fly, and she later became a helicopter pilot.

Rosenberg, Edwin H. #21856 506 Squadron 16 April 2008 Lt. Rosenberg was a Navigator on the **Richard Hruby** crew. His first of eighteen missions was 20 April 1944. At that time missions were dedicated to preventing movement of troops and knocking out the aircraft plants, disabling the Nazi war machine. On D-Day the mission to Caen (Vire), was to prevent the advance of the German Army in their effort to support the troops at Normandy.

The Hruby crew flew in **Down De Hatch, Ole Cock, Sabrina III, Glory Bee, Passion Pit** and many unnamed planes. Among the crew members were the famous Bartley twins, Waist Gunners, the only identical twins in the 44th BG. On one mission, Capt. **Ursel Harvel**, 44th BG Photographer, flew with this crew. On another mission, **Alfred L. Lincoln** piloted the Hruby crew. Rosenberg's last mission was 12 July, 1944.

Schuyler, Keith, Sr. #21979 66th Squadron 7 November 2008 Lt. Schuyler was a pilot. He flew 12 missions, the last into Berlin 29 April 1944. The Schuyler crew flew in **Gipsy Queen, Banana Barge, Patsy Ann II and Tuffy.**

The target was the Underground Railroad in the heart of Berlin. Three planes were lost, one from 66th, 67th and 506. The formation was attacked by flak over the target, and 30 to 50 enemy A/C fired on them all the way to the English Channel.

With flak damage, Schuyler's plane lagged behind the formation, losing fuel on the way. He dived in and out of clouds to avoid the fighters, but frequently had to emerge to de-ice the plane. In his book "Elusive Horizons" he described an attack by 10-12 FW 190s in which he dove straight into their formation and scattered them, but they regrouped and damaged **Tuffy's** fuel tanks. **Tuffy** had insufficient fuel to get to England, only one gun had any ammunition left and there were two fires in the tail section. He gave the 'bail out signal', turned the plane east so it would crash in Germany, and leaped out. All members of his crew survived and immediately became POWs.

Losses from that mission were: 13 POWs, 7 KIA, 10 ditched in North Sea and rescued.

Schuyler wrote a book, *Elusive Horizons*, describing his experiences as a pilot on a B-24. He and his wife Eloise resided in Berwick, Pennsylvania. Report of his death came from his son Brad. His death occurred three weeks after attending the Harrisburg/Carlisle Reunion.



FOLDED WINGS

Smith, Richard E. #22072 68th Squadron 2 January 2008 1st Lt. Smith was a Co-Pilot on the **Robert Peter** crew, with whom he flew 34 missions. On his 35th mission to Irlaching, Germany on 20 May 1945, he flew First Pilot. Five days later he flew to Hallein, Austria on the last 44th BG mission of the war.

Smith flew in *T S Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Flak Magnet, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Three Kisses*

For Luck, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Scotty Mac and Louisiana Belle.

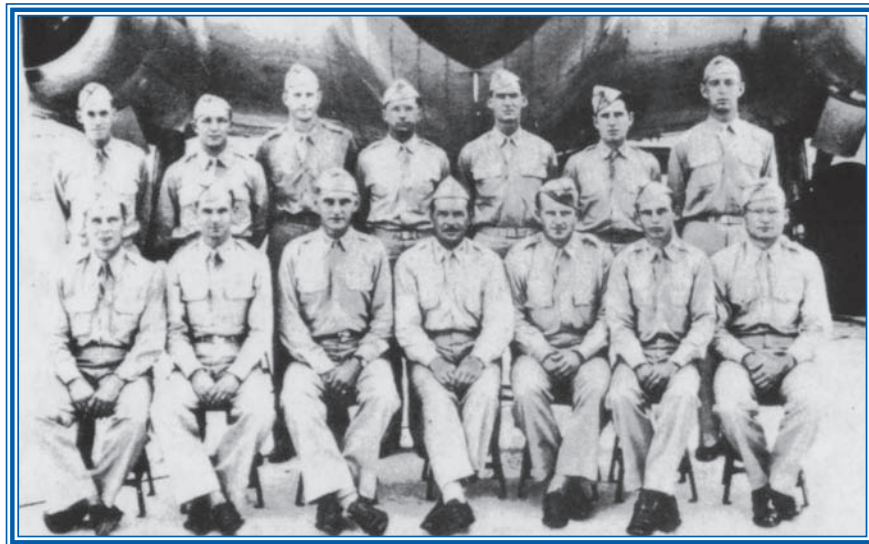
After the war Smith returned to Alfred University where he studied Ceramic Engineering. After college he worked for Pittsburgh Plate Glass and later, Sylvania Electric. His last occupation was in Commercial Real Estate. He and his wife Madge lived in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire.



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Top Row - L-R 2nd.Lt. **Marion Morgan**, Weather, Nav; 1st. Lt. **Jewell Ewing**; 1st Lt.**G. G. Griffin**; Lt. Col. **L. H. Ostjen**, Surg;1st.Lt. **D. W. MacDonald**, Asst. Engr.; 1st.Lt. **James Lee**, CWF; 2nd.Lt. **C.R. Heffner**, Morale, A & R;
Front Row – Capt. **Joe Moffitt**, Adjutant; Major **Curtis Sluman**, O.O. 68th Sq.; Major **Walter Bryte**, Instr. & Educ; Gp. Commander **Hugo P. Rush**; Major **Edward Timberlake**, O.O. 66th Sq.; Capt. **James Posey**; 1st. Lt. **C. M. W. Ruster**, Comm.

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