

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



8 BALL TAILS

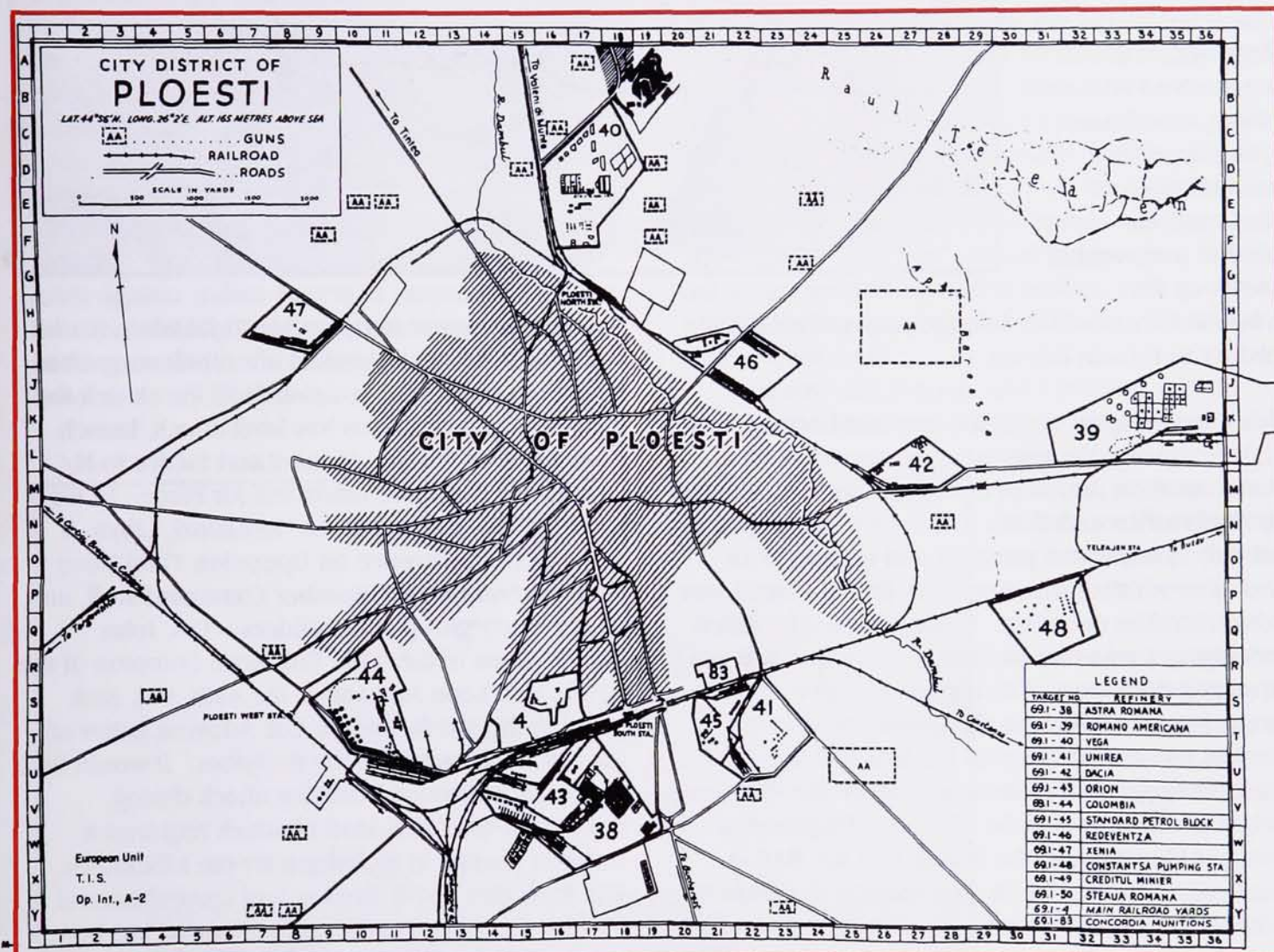
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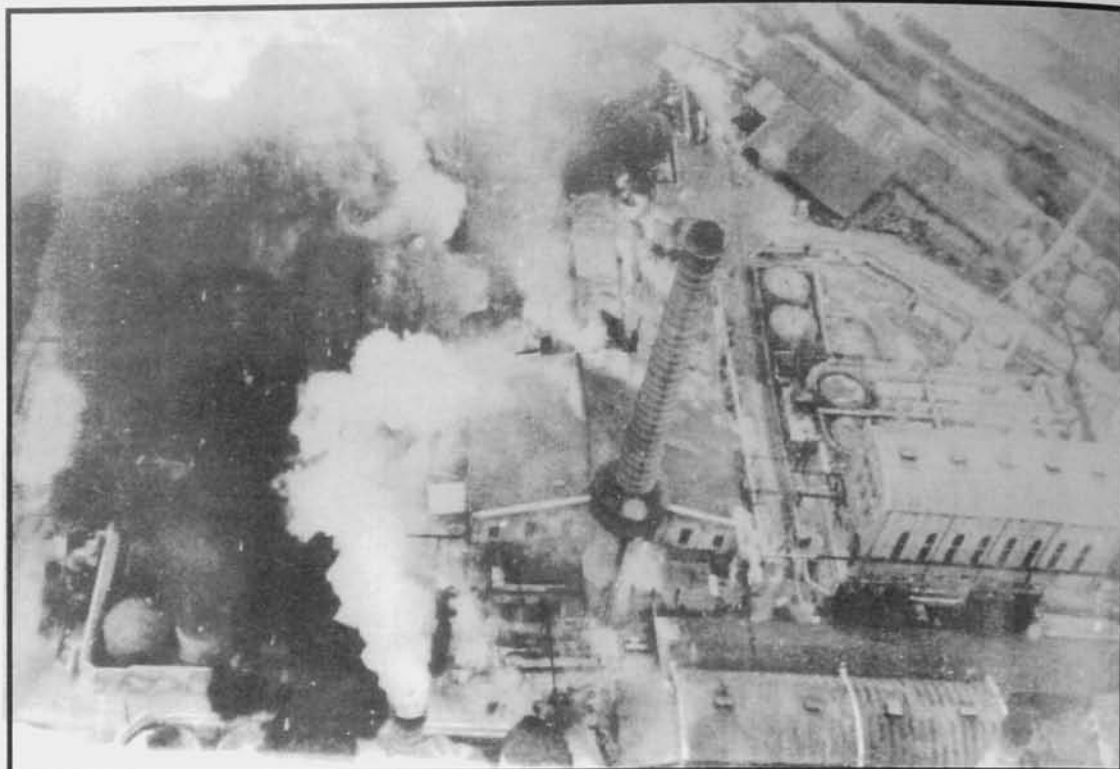
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August 1, 1998, fifty-five years ago today, thirty-six B-24s of the 44th Bomb Group led by its commander, Colonel Leon W. Johnson took off from Benina Main Airfield, Libya to join one hundred forty-two Liberators from the 93rd, 98th, 376th, and 389th Bomb Groups on a daring low-level attack on the Nazi held oil refinery and storage facilities at Ploesti, Rumania, some 1,250 miles from their Libyan take-off bases. This, the longest combat mission ever attempted in the B-24, was to rank forever with the Doolittle B-25 low level attack on Tokyo, Japan as the two most hazardous missions in the history of modern air combat. It is to the ever lasting glory of the men who flew and survived and those who did not return as well as the support element who miraculously sustained the crews and aircraft in terrible daytime heat, cold nights and interminable sand, yet enabled them to launch on time to fly this fateful mission that we dedicate this issue of the 8-Ball Tails.

So much has been written about the Ploesti mission from many points of view, it is not our intent to mark this 55th anniversary of the mission with another rehash of that legendary operation. Our purpose is to briefly examine the character, determination and ingenuity of all those young Americans who supported, maintained and launched the aircraft and combat crews on the mission they would fly into the pages of aviation history to remain forever.

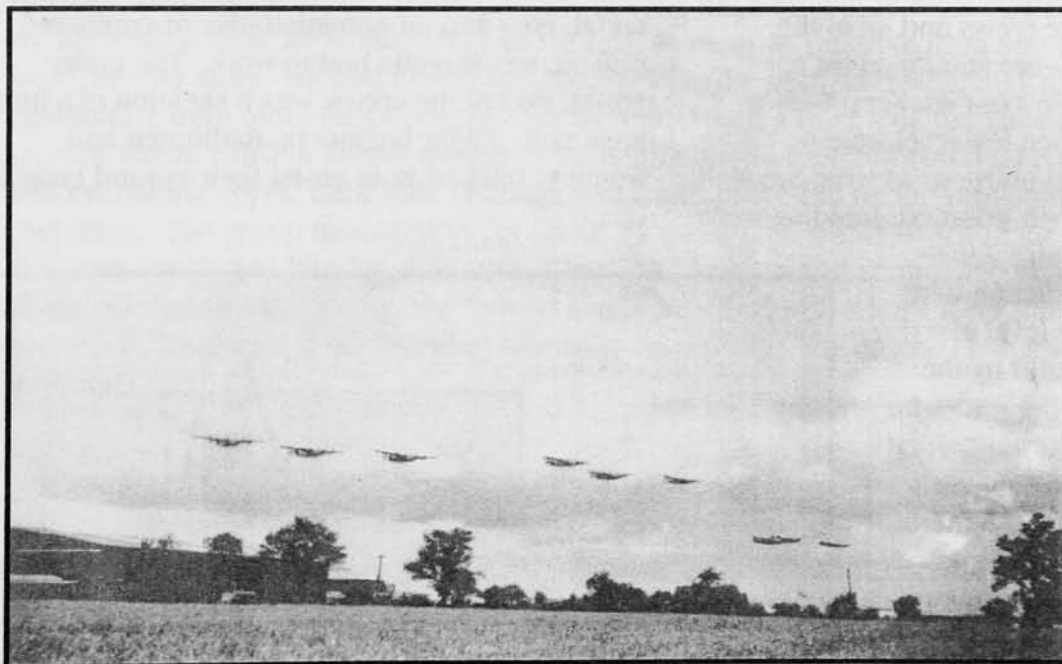


From the onset of WWII, the fact that Germany and Italy both were dependent upon imported oil to carry out their dream of conquest from Scandinavia to North Africa and that a major percentage of the oil they needed was pumped and refined in an area surrounding the Rumanian City of Ploesti was recognized by the Allies. Misunderstood by Allied Intelligence was that Rumanian oil output was approximately 50% of its capability which distorted importance of Ploesti in the priority of strategic targets. Added to this was the fear that a breakthrough on the Eastern front by the Russians might result in loss of the oil fields. Opposed to striking Ploesti were the British and the RAF in particular who had been, and wanted to continue, with defensive attacks on aircraft production which was the root of Goering's air blitzkrieg of England. While the RAF scoffed at the AAF doctrine of daylight strategic bombing, they were outspoken in their opposition to pulling three full B-24 Groups out of the 8th AF daylight raids notwithstanding Winston Churchill's support of the Ploesti raid decision which came out of the Summit Conference in Washington D.C. in late May, 1943. The decision to destruct the Ploesti oil production was passed to Eisenhower who approved the application of five B-

24D Bomb groups to Operation Tidal Wave, (code word for the Ploesti mission) after their support of Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily. He left the decisions of high versus low level attack, launch from Libya or Tunisia, training and tactics to M/ Gen. Lewis Brereton, Cmdr, 9th Air Force. In his Brereton Diaries, he states: "Benghazi, Libya, 6 July 1943. Conference on Operation Tidal Wave with General Ent, the Bomber Command staff, and all the heavy group commanders -- Col. John "Killer" Kane of the 98th, Col. Keith Compton of the 376th, Col. Leon Johnson of the 44th, Col. Jack Wood of the 389th, and Lt. Col. Addison Baker of the 93rd. I announced my decisions. It would be a low-level, horizontal bombing attack during daylight hours. This kind of attack required a decided change in technique for the Liberators. The 98th and 397th Groups had carried several low-level attacks against Italian targets, but here they were faced with an entirely different problem. *I knew that the liberator was definitely not suited for a low-level attack, but I felt that the surprise element would weigh heavily in our favor.* It was necessary to assure the heaviest possible damage in the first attack. Because of the distance involved, over 2,000 miles (averaged 2250), and the danger of bad weather, I felt that our formations might get dispersed and not hit the target so effectively from a high altitude as they

would in a low-level attack. After receiving the target folders, I studied them for two weeks before making up my mind on the low-level attack. *I invited no discussion whatsoever among the Group Commanders. While I do not believe there was a single commander who would have not preferred a high altitude attack, the decision was accepted by all.*"

So the scene is set, the cast is filled and the script is undergoing final adjustments for a production which is the brainchild of a bright colonel assistant to General Arnold. Over 200 B-24D Liberator aircraft and crews, with skeleton ground crew and specialist maintenance personnel were assembled at airfields near Benghazi, Libya. Augmented by 1100 cooks, bakers, clerks, medics, engineers, MP's and various other support personnel from 9th AF resources, they set up tent cities at the various airfields. They then began to train and carry out raids against Italian targets in preparation for the invasion of Sicily and another mission of which nothing certain could be said except it would be flown at a very low level.



Low-level formation training prior to Africa deployment. Flight passing over Shipdham, notice the hangars to the left.

All of the groups involved had been flying low-level training sorties; the 44th, 93rd and 389th in England prior to deployment for detached service with 9th AF; and the 98th and 397th of IX Bomber

Command already in North Africa. Even, at that point, without the rationale for the low-level training, they were gaining new piloting, navigation and bombing skills at low level.

Like everyone, no matter the crew position, when the shock of being assigned to B-24's subsided, a real hatred set in. Lt. Keith Schuyler, 67th Sqdn., in his book "Elusive Horizons" describes these emotions perfectly "I hated her guts; I hated everything about this pot-bellied bitch of an airplane --- If it had to be heavies, why the B-24? The hate I had developed for big airplanes squeezed over to admit fear the first time I looked at a Liberator on the ramp. They never were a pretty sight at best-those four huge engines tacked onto a slip of a wing, belly nearly dragging the concrete, and hognose stuck way too far forward. And, like pregnant hippopotamuses, they bucked and snorted their way around the hangars, letting out an occasional squeak of rubber, their constant bloat seeming to substantiate the foul odors that drifted from them.

But now she is gone, and I swallow a lump every time I hear one of the heavies going over (his

POW camp). For, in between the time I came to hate and fear her and the time I jumped from her flaming bowels (over enemy territory) I had come to love and respect the beast." {Schuyler's first B-24 Instructor Pilot prophesied that in 90 hours of flying time he will have come to love the Lib}."

So with what turned out to be a period of just over two months before execution; we find the entire IX Bomber

Command in a serious operational contradiction. On the Command and Planning Staff side of the operation, we have a commander and staff planning to commit 178 Liberators and crews to a mission which will require tactics completely alien to the purpose for which the aircraft was designed

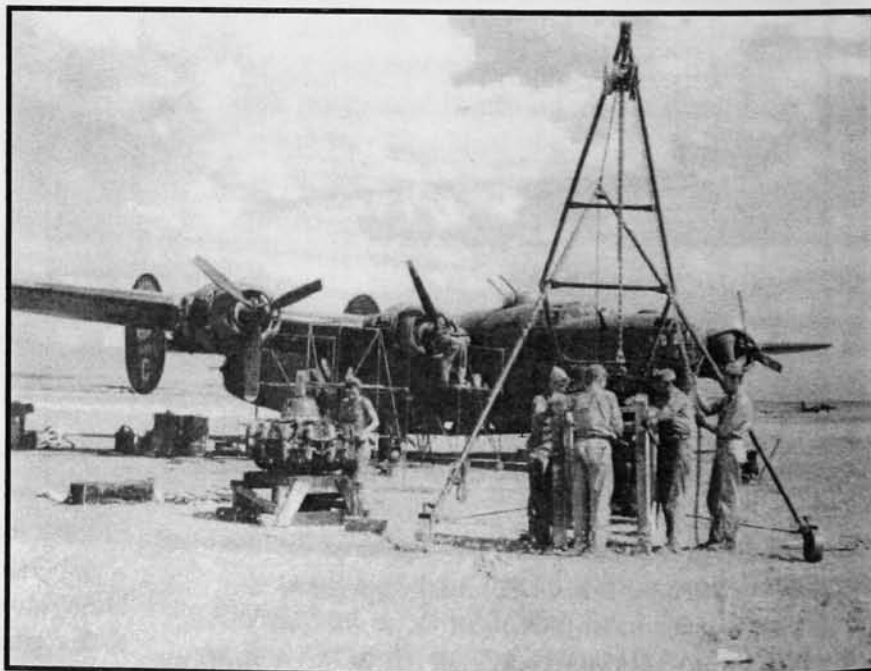
and the crews trained. A few three aircraft low altitude sorties against weakly defended Italian targets flown by the 376th and a "cowboy" like raid which launched 13 B-24's on 11 June 1942 from Fayid, Egypt, and after flying all night, struck the Ploesti oil refineries at dawn from ten to twelve thousand feet altitude was the only unorthodox bombing experience known to the B-24. This early raid was made by a small provisional bomb group led by Col. Harry Halvorsen. The purpose, more than damaging the oil supply, was a morale builder in the fashion of the Doolittle raid. Although largely ineffectual, there were no losses to enemy action; no doubt because of the complete surprise of an attack from the south. This, however, bode danger for the IX Command bombers to come, because the following year saw a great strengthening of fighter and anti-aircraft defenses in that southern sector. So the decision to commit the B-24 to this untested theory of attack was based upon its range, bomb load capability, and, in the minds of the planners, its ability, in formation, to defend itself and fly into enemy territory unescorted.

On the other hand, we had the "troops" (small t), the guys who were the cast in this production; the combat and maintenance crews and all of the support personnel who were settling-in for an unknown period to live, fly combat, keep B-24's flying, have some fun when low-level training sorties were resumed; all oblivious to what the staff in the Secret green, heavily guarded, building were planning that would require a low-level attack. The contradiction here was the difference in the level of confidence in the B-24 held by the planners as opposed to the men who flew and maintained this "pot-bellied bitch of an airplane." You see, the prophesy of Lt. Schuyler's Instructor Pilot had come to pass. The air and ground crews had come to love and respect that tough old slab-sided airplane with those four dependable Pratt & Whitney R-1830-43 engines hung on that "slip of a wing."

68th SQUADRON
"MARQUERITE ANN"
GETS AN ENGINE
CHANGE.

The word "live" in the previous paragraph should be struck and replaced with "survive." Life in the Libyan Desert in the summer is not Life, it is an exercise in survival. What the "troops" accomplished in that hell of red sand, daytime heat, nighttime chill, lousy chow and lousier water, dysentery, crickets, dust and sand, dust and sand, and more dust and sand was nothing short of miraculous. The indignities of standing buck naked in a line with a towel over a shoulder waiting for a turn to stand under a salvaged aircraft fuel cell to take a Mediterranean Sea water shower. And worse, to answer to "Crap Call" and sit on half of a cut-out 55 gal. drum dug into the sand, trying to defecate while looking aloof and unconcerned, while others are waiting their turn.

The abhorrent living conditions notwithstanding, everyone worked. The cadre of personnel that came to Benghazi were limited to the crew members and the number of support personnel that the B-24 oxygen system could support in-flight. This usually meant an extra four people; Crew Chief, Assistant Crew Chief, a Maintenance Specialist (Prop., Electrician, Hydraulic, Sheet metal, etc.) and an administrative or command person, so everyone had to work. The entire group, except the crews, was a skeleton of a home base unit. Flight Engineers, Radiomen and Gunners pitched in to assist their ground crew on



engine and tire changes. There were not enough maintenance specialists, so they were always in demand and worked tirelessly; instead of complaints, one was more likely to hear "What the hell, there ain't nothin' else to do around this stinkin' place!"

Mike Curtain, 67th Sqdn. Crew chief talks about the life in Africa: "We were welcomed by dust, sand, Arabs, kids and very hot weather. The toughest thing was the sand, it was terrible. It wouldn't be unusual to have at least two engine changes after a day of practice flights. We would trade parts with the 98th BG as needed - propeller frames, carburetors, etc.

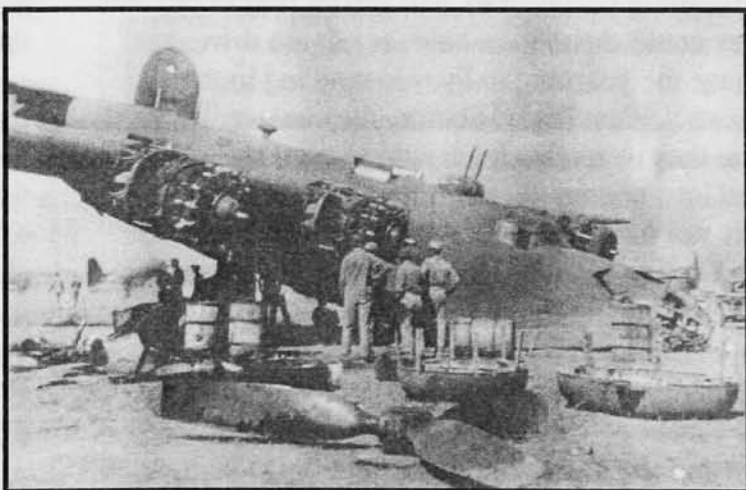


67th Sqdn.
Mike CURTAIN in
the "ENGINE
Shop."

Daytime temperatures were extremely hot, making the handling of tools and equipment rather difficult. We knew what tools we would need, so we took as many as possible from Shipdham. Replacement parts were another story. We had to beg and borrow from the 98th, and what they didn't have, we would cannibalize from other out-of-commission aircraft. When a B-24 took off, the clouds of dust and sand created would cause a twenty minute delay before another aircraft could take the runway. That dust got into everything...eyes, ears, hair, clothing, tents, and proved to be the principal cause for our engine problems. The group managed to get about 25 water tank trucks which made a trip to the Mediterranean Sea each evening to fill with sea water. They would return and commence to water down the runway about midnight. By morning, the runway would be dried with a hard layer that resembled plaster of paris and would last through the morning take-offs. To our glee, the engine changes became less frequently required.



67th
SQUADRON
GEORGE
BACCASH
AND DICK
WARD in
the
"HANGAR."



68th Sqdn. "WING AND A PRAYER" the "PARTS bin."

To get a cool drink we would send up our filled canteens in our planes. When they landed, we would bury the frozen canteens in the sand in our tent for a cool drink later. We also used to hoard our ration of one can of beer per day until we had a few, then send them up on a test hop like the canteens.

The four squadrons were fairly widely dispersed. We had a Weapons Truck to travel to each squadron. We all worked as a team; all four squadrons worked together where it was needed. This was especially true immediately before Ploesti. We were up day and night right up to take-off. The claim is true, the work never ended. For that mission especially, every plane possible had either new engines (as did Suzy Q) or was completely checked over as "Ready."

One of the great under estimates Hitler made was his contempt for the young men of America being able to transition from what he perceived as pampered school boys and pool hall hang-outs to soldiers and airmen that could ever hope to match the disciplined young men of Germany. However while the Hitler youth were goose-stepping to the blind hysteria of the Third Reich, the young men of America were being raised in a society that loves individual performance, but loves it best in a team effort. "Let's get one for the Gipper." And they were, and always will be, tinkers, ingenious, curious tinkers. They were out on the farm always fixing and running farm equipment or if they were town kids, they were tinkering with some fifty dollar Model T. They knew all about blown dual Stromberg Carburetors and Ruxtel rear ends, and they could drive, man how they could drive. For many, the yearning to fly was swelling in their chests. When the war came, they answered. And yes, they were chock-full with patriotism, freedom and love of country, but deep down in every heart was not the fear of war, it was the fear that your buddies were going off to fight and you might be left behind. So these school boy, farm boy, pool hall loafer, tinker, team player cream of America's young men were turned into soldiers and airmen. All across Europe they beat the German Tiger Tanks with an inferior Sherman tank because they could drive 'em and tinker, making do with what

they had to keep 'em running and firing. When their Sherman tanks were unable to move in the hedgerows of France, they kicked the Germans out with platoons and squads of infantry who were raised on team work. Each individual doing his job and his biggest concern being not to let his squad buddies down.

Whether it is an infantryman slogging in the mud; a tail gunner lifting himself through the aft hatch preparing to launch on a mission; the crew chief who has completed his preflight and is waiting for the "cranking #3" signal from the cockpit; there is that haunting fear that you will do or have not done something that will let your buddies down.

One last thing about the Hitler misconceptions; ingenuity. The Nazi German mind of that era (especially) was in lockstep with Nazi fanaticism. There were hopes but no imagination. Thus Hitler again underestimated the American fighting man. Imagine, if you will, the July 31 initial briefing for the Ploesti raid when General Brereton visited each of the groups and introduced the low-level attack mission. In the mind of every pilot was the thought: given what I've learned in our low-level training and given the minimum amount of maneuvering space I will have in the target area, what can I do to bring my crew through this mess alive? Bill Cameron, Pilot of "Buzzin' Bear," and full of American ingenuity, had already faced that question:

"When other aircraft were practicing low level formations, we (he and his Co-Pilot, Bill Dabney) would visit with the British anti-aircraft gunners that provided protection around Benghazi. We would ask them, "What aircraft would you shoot at (in a low-level formation)? They would invariably say "the highest aircraft." Therefore when we came out of the smoke of the Ploesti oil refineries flying at the assigned altitude of 250 feet, I dove so sharply that the boys in the rear of the "Bear" were thrown off their feet. We leveled off low enough to see clearly the faces of a number of anti-aircraft gunners. We skidded around in our turn to keep our wings level and just above the ground. We stayed at that level until at least 30 minutes out from the target. Ground gunners could not easily

aim at us and fighters could not dive on us." So that small town (Hanford, Calif) young college (UC, Berkeley) man took "Buzzin' Bear" through the holocaust following his ingenious plan and landed at Benghazi, right behind "Suzy Q" with four engines running and not a crew member scratched!

Now we know how Cameron got his crew and aircraft through that mess, which supports our contention about American ingenuity, we must now ask why. We must see if his presence on the mission supports the theorem of bravery performed, not through fear of death, but fear of being left behind and letting your crew buddies down. In his personal diary, Bill commenting on the Ploesti raid, says this: "After the Rome raid, we started extensive practice bombing and flying in larger formations of aircraft at low, very low, level. I had actually completed my combat tour of duty with the Rome raid and I don't believe that Howard (Moore, Cmdr. 67th Sq.) or Col. Johnson really expected me to fly it. I don't know why I did. However, it was 'high adventure' and although I didn't know where we were going, I hated to miss out on it. Furthermore, the crew of 'Buzzin' Bear' didn't want to go with a new pilot, and as an additional incentive, I was enjoying the low level flying! — Bill Dabney was ill before, and during the entire mission, but wouldn't be left behind." *

So the curtain comes down on this fateful production, the raid, of course, was the play. It had a perilous script with a new role for the B-24 and the probability of failure was high. In the beginning of this feature story we stated our intention to avoid covering again the attack itself, which so much has been previously written. We will however, to the memory of our comrades who lost their lives in the attack, say that even with the terrible blunders made by the two lead groups, the 44th led by Col. Johnson was the last wave in and although finding their White V target had already been struck by some other part of the force, never faltered from the planned attack on their assigned target. For the 44th, it was a day when uncommon valor was common. For Adolf Hitler, it was a harbinger of what the spoiled young men of America had in store for the Third Reich!

*A tragic note: After the Ploesti mission, Major Howard Moore departed for the U.S. and Bill Cameron took command of the 67th Sqdn. Bill Dabney was sent to the hospital with asthma and then returned to the U.S. On 16 August, the 67th was tasked to put up eight aircraft on a mission to Foggia, Italy. (Cameron's first mission as its Commander.) The 67th lost five of the eight launched. "Buzzin' Bear" went down with its crew on the first mission they had flown without Cameron. "Suzy Q" also went down with a new crew on its first combat mission.

1998 REUNION

October 25 - 29

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*Friends, Tours,
Museum,
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ONE RECOLLECTION OF THE PLOESTI MISSION

By Dick Butler

We were in "Earthquake McGoon" and flying as the lead ship in the second element, second flight. Our aiming point was the distillation plant of the Blue Target, Creditul Minier refinery at Brazi. Walt Bunker was pilot and I was co-pilot. We encountered light flak and machine gun fire continuously from about half way between the IP and the target. Off to our right a train was travelling in the same direction we were. We saw the side of a freight car lower and guns on the car start firing at us. We flew over a building that had a red cross painted on the top of it. We received fire from there also. As we approached the target, our bombardier, Henry Zwicker was calling "left, left, left," so Walt was skidding our plane to the left. Henry released our bombs and we saw them skip into the still. Just then we took a hit in the left wing close to the fuselage. We either hit a barrage balloon cable or received close to a direct flak burst. Number three engine stopped so I pulled the feathering button to feather that prop. The blast had also damaged some electrical lines, so we lost instrument readings for both number three and four engines. Walt saw the RPM go to zero on number four, so he hollered "feather four." I looked out and number four looked ok to me, so I didn't pull that feathering button. Walt hollered again and then reached up and pulled it himself. Now we were in really serious trouble. Two engines feathered or feathering on the same side at an altitude of about one hundred feet. Walt and I had both hands on the wheel trying to keep the right wing up. Other crew members said later that the wing tip came within about twenty feet of hitting the ground. At this time either Loy Neeper, our flight engineer or I managed to push the number four feathering button in and the feathering stopped and we regained use of that engine.

George Jansen, who was one of the best pilots I ever knew, was flying "Margaret Ann II" on our left wing. He said that when we got hit, we slowed down real fast, like we were dragging an anchor. He said he put down some flaps and lowered the gear momentarily in an effort to stay with us and still couldn't. He did all this while we were receiving intense fighter attacks as we left the target. This took great effort and skill by George. No wonder he went on to a career as a test pilot at Douglas Aircraft Company. We made it back to Benina on three engines and a shot up hydraulic system, which necessitated a landing without brakes.

We are proud of the fact that our target was completely destroyed and was not rebuilt for the duration of the war. Of those of us in "Earthquake" on that day, only four of us still survive. We are: Bill Newbold, navigator; Loy Neeper, flight engineer; Warren Kookan, waist gunner; and myself, co-pilot. Henry Zwicker was killed on the 1 October 1943 Wiener Neustadt mission. Our other crew members all survived the war but have since passed on.

Editor: After reading Dick's story the thought came to me, it could be titled "As If Things Weren't Bad Enough!" Also I was struck by the heroic determination of George Jansen to maintain the integrity of the formation to the point where "Margaret Ann II" was about to fall out of the sky when Dick and Loy got #4 going again and both aircraft could regain some airspeed. I asked Dick to tell me something about the attack on the Blue Target. I appreciate his candor. I'm sure in all the confusion, excitement and stress of smoke, flames, flak and fighter attacks, there were many more "close calls" which occurred as a result of some cockpit confusion and a wrong switch being turned on or off requiring a hairy recovery from a narrow scrape with death. Come on guys, sit down and write 'em down and send them to me so we can add them to the lore of the 44th.

PASSENGERS TO AFRICA 23 JUNE 43

66TH SQUADRON:

42-40182 R.J. ABERNETHY, PILOT

GEORGE W. BANKSTON 14035406

JOHN V. TOMHAVE 37116222

ROBERT F. McCOY 34079411

DEXTER L. HODGE 0-389555

Crew Chief
Asst. Crew Chief
Operations Clerk
Commanding Officer

42-40375 JOHN Y. REED, PILOT

ROY G. WOOD 11033216

MICHAEL BOGOSTA 12030009

HAROLD G. FAUST 0-854339

GOODMAN G. GRIFFIN 0-337352

Crew Chief
Asst. Crew Chief
Engineering Officer
Administration

41-24015 GEORGE W. WINGER

DELBERT V. SMITH 37148438

ROBERT L. JAKUBIAK 36128535

JAMES W. KAHL 0-437414

JAMES H. KOONTZ 13013618

Crew Chief
Asst. Crew Chief
Operations Officer

41-23769 ROWLAND M. GENTRY

EARL MORRIS 13023329

THOMAS M. CARDWELL 13046225

GEORGE R. LATHROP 14048010

JAMES PRINCE 6395417

Crew Chief
Asst. Crew Chief
Armorer

41-23788 CHARLES E. HUGHES

JOSEPH M. MILLER 14039909

THOMAS G. BARBER, JR. 34163105

DURWOOD DICKERSON 38009672

GEORGE R. GOODRICH 11038567

Crew Chief
Asst. Crew Chief
Armorer
Administration

41-23778 THOMAS E. SCRIVNER

ERNEST J. CHARTIER 13027244

WILLIAM S. BARTEET 34153446

VERNON G. WAGUESPACK 14039868

C. A. JACK 0-433336

Crew Chief
Asst. Crew Chief
Armorer
Capt.

41-23811 ROBERT E. MILLER

ROBERT M. PUGH 14031552

GRADY N. BRUCE 18063407

J. W. SIMS 14070589

JOHN E. NITSCH 0-23557

Crew Chief
Asst. Crew Chief
Armorer
Major

41-24153 HENRY A. LASCO

THOMAS D. HARBOUR 13032142

JOHN F. HASSENKAMP 14064174

WILLIAM D. GRAHAM 12031443

Crew Chief
Asst. Crew Chief
Armorer



41-23936 JOSEPH E. FLAHERTY

TROY J. EAGAN

14031560

Crew Chief

JOHN W. COMENS

36048709

Asst. Crew Chief

LLOYD KRAGER

6899083

Line Chief

MICHAEL J. NERI

0-854195

1 Lt.

42-40764 SHELBY L. IRBY, PILOT

WALTER L. PITTS

16019369

Crew Chief

JAMES H. DIXON

36308123

Asst. Crew Chief

EDWARD G? GOLDSTONE

36170187

Radio Operator

42-40777 ROBERT E. FELBER

CHARLES S. ALBA

7021772

Crew Chief

CHARLES W. WHIPPLE

11046226

Asst. Crew Chief

67TH SQUADRON:

41-23817 ROBERT E. KOLLINER

MICHAEL ULOSOVICH

36047434

Crew Chief

LEO J. THUOTTE

31067664

Instrument Spec.

HOWARD W. MOORE

0-402027

Commanding Officer

ROSE F. HAGER

0-954344

Engineering Officer

42-63761 WORDEN WEAVER

KUN D. GONG

34132946

Crew Chief

ELBERT H. GALLATIN

18060293

Asst. Crew Chief

ANTHONY R. STOWE

13030028

Armament

42-40267 REGINALD L. CARPENTER

FRANCIS J. NAMIOTKA

13027363

Crew Chief

MARTIN R. ANDERSON

39837655

Sheet Metal spec.

JEAN F. BRESSLER

13031072

Armament

CARL J. WAND

16031072

Armament

41-23918 EDWARD R. MITCHELL

GEORGE N. BACCASH

16013811

Crew Chief

MILO C. STRICKLAND

34103811.

Asst. Crew Chief

GEORGE R. HILL

16067339

Radio Maint.

42-40371 ELMER H. REINHART

MALCOLM C. ARTHUR

11031947

Crew Chief

DONALD A. EVANS

13026126

Asst. Crew Chief

RICHARD C. WARD

14038135

Line Chief

42-40780 FRED H. JONES

HORACE H. GRISHAM

37100515

Crew Chief

WILLIE L. SWANK

18060942

Asst. Crew Chief

GILBERT C. HESTER

37132854

Operations Clerk

41-24229 WILLIAM R. CAMERON

MARION W. BAGLEY 13024480
 THOMAS E. ROORK 32186276
 WILLIAM J. HALL 0-401119
 BRUCE A. PAULY 0-434434

Crew Chief
 Propeller Spec.
 Operations Officer
 Group Engineering Of.

41-24232 JAMES E. HILL

MICHAEL F. CHAYKA 32028950
 JOHN H. CHRISTENSON 14064056
 HERMAN WAGENFUHR, JR. 18031358
 EMERIC J. MICHALIK 33076905

Crew Chief
 Electrical Spec.
 Turret Spec.
 Medical

41-23779 CHARLIE P. HENDERSON, PILOT

JOSEPH E. BAILEY 28044687
 EDWARD P. HANLEY 6981417
 LEO L. McCREERY 37139406
 NUMA C. HERO, JR. 0-437691

Crew Chief
 Aircraft Inspector
 Armament
 Weather Officer

42-63763 CURTIS S. GRIFFIN

MICHAEL A. CURTIN 19076732
 BENJAMIN G. MARTIN 18063342
 HOWARD D. COX 35275530

Crew Chief
 Asst. Crew Chief
 Turret Specialist

68TH SQUADRON:

41-23813 WALTER T. HOLMES, JR.

GEORGE W. BRYANT 34146071
 EUGENE H. SNAVELY 0-22364
 HARVEY G. HOLMES 37139906

Crew Chief
 Gp. Oper. Officer
 Operations Clerk

41-23816 ROWLAND B. HOUSTON

ALFRED A. BAGDONAS 13027644
 FRANCIS E. BALZ 6949175
 ROBERT L. DEAN 0-431615
 MILLARD F. SAWYER 14004151

Crew Chief
 Flight Chief
 Gp. Armament Officer
 Ordnance

42-40094 WILMER J. GARRETT

HAROLD L. HILL 17037076
 JOSEPH F. MOONEY 32178047
 MILTON FELDMAN 12057764
 JAMES F. PATTERSON 0-440002

Crew Chief
 Instrument Spec.
 Armament
 Chaplain

41-23699 REGINALD H. PHILLIPS

CHARLES C. PIGG 14052877
 HARRY J. SINGER 12029414
 JOHN L. KOCH 35257034
 HENRY G.V. HART 0-468561

Crew Chief
 Electrical Spec.
 Sheet Metal
 Group Intelligence

41-24225 DAVID W. ALEXANDER

RICHARD D. WILLIAMS	14044294
YBUR G. CAMPBELL	6265900
MAX E. GOUCHER	15083422
NELSON T. HOLDEN	W2104151

Crew Chief
Line Chief
Armament
Group Operations

41-23112 WILLIAM D. HUGHES

BARTON D. CRAMER	18089242
HERBERT J. RUSSELL	33119603
LOUGHRIDGE C. MURRELL	18030353

Crew Chief
Inspector
Armament

42-40071 GEORGE R. JANSEN

CLAUDE E. LEE	14043005
CHRIS SAND	0-366917
RUSSELL HRYNIAK	32173830
AUGUST L. BLASCHKE	18101868

Crew Chief
Engineering Officer
Asst. Crew Chief
Personnel Clerk

42-40373 EUNICE M. SHANNON, PILOT

FRANCIS M. WOOD	34133012
GEORGE T. CRUMP	14061955
IRVIN E. ROSCHER	37143003

Crew Chief
Asst. Crew Chief
Armament

41-24211 ROBERT E. PETERSON

HAROLD J. FOLEY	36022088
CECIL A. JOHNSON	18030038
NORMAN L. HALE	6897324
THOMAS R. CRAMER	0-23923

Crew Chief
Propeller Spec.
Radio Maint.
Commanding Officer

42-40731 GEORGE P. MARTIN

FREDDY SCHEIDEGGER	16046001
JOHN W. ZARNOSKY	7021651
HOWARD F. DART	38009511
JOHN H. DIEHL, JR.	0-427313

Crew Chief
Flight Chief
Armament
Operations Officer

506TH SQUADRON:

COLONEL LEON W. JOHNSON'S AIRCRAFT:

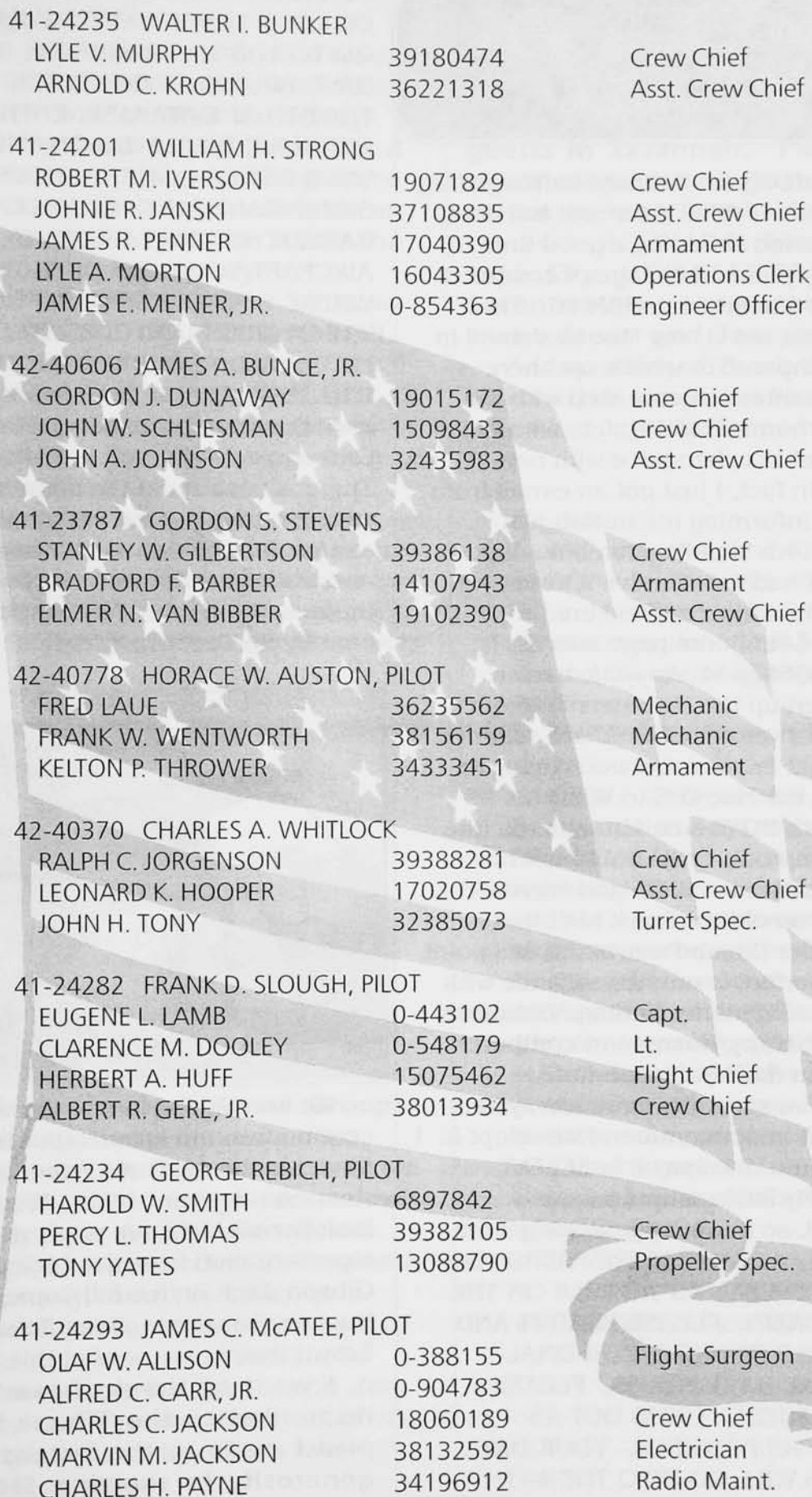
WILLARD L. MICHAELS	0-730568
HERMAN J. SEIGFELDT	6890587
ALBERT G. KERNS, JR.	39310090
LONNIE L. ACKERMAN	39094739

Asst. Engineering

42-40172 WILLIAM N. ANDERSON

JAMES C. BEAM	0-406217
AUGUST T. GOODMAN	19074334
RUSSELL A. WOLD	39606205

Sqdn. Commanding Officer
Crew Chief
Asst. Crew Chief

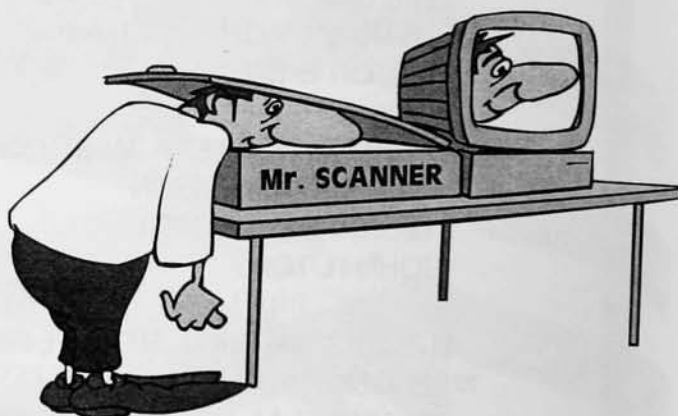


41-24235	WALTER I. BUNKER		
	LYLE V. MURPHY	39180474	Crew Chief
	ARNOLD C. KROHN	36221318	Asst. Crew Chief
41-24201	WILLIAM H. STRONG		
	ROBERT M. IVERSON	19071829	Crew Chief
	JOHNIE R. JANSKI	37108835	Asst. Crew Chief
	JAMES R. PENNER	17040390	Armament
	LYLE A. MORTON	16043305	Operations Clerk
	JAMES E. MEINER, JR.	0-854363	Engineer Officer
42-40606	JAMES A. BUNCE, JR.		
	GORDON J. DUNAWAY	19015172	Line Chief
	JOHN W. SCHLIESMAN	15098433	Crew Chief
	JOHN A. JOHNSON	32435983	Asst. Crew Chief
41-23787	GORDON S. STEVENS		
	STANLEY W. GILBERTSON	39386138	Crew Chief
	BRADFORD F. BARBER	14107943	Armament
	ELMER N. VAN BIBBER	19102390	Asst. Crew Chief
42-40778	HORACE W. AUSTON, PILOT		
	FRED LAUE	36235562	Mechanic
	FRANK W. WENTWORTH	38156159	Mechanic
	KELTON P. THROWER	34333451	Armament
42-40370	CHARLES A. WHITLOCK		
	RALPH C. JORGENSEN	39388281	Crew Chief
	LEONARD K. HOOPER	17020758	Asst. Crew Chief
	JOHN H. TONY	32385073	Turret Spec.
41-24282	FRANK D. SLOUGH, PILOT		
	EUGENE L. LAMB	0-443102	Capt.
	CLARENCE M. DOOLEY	0-548179	Lt.
	HERBERT A. HUFF	15075462	Flight Chief
	ALBERT R. GERE, JR.	38013934	Crew Chief
41-24234	GEORGE REBICH, PILOT		
	HAROLD W. SMITH	6897842	
	PERCY L. THOMAS	39382105	Crew Chief
	TONY YATES	13088790	Propeller Spec.
41-24293	JAMES C. McATEE, PILOT		
	OLAF W. ALLISON	0-388155	Flight Surgeon
	ALFRED C. CARR, JR.	0-904783	
	CHARLES C. JACKSON	18060189	Crew Chief
	MARVIN M. JACKSON	38132592	Electrician
	CHARLES H. PAYNE	34196912	Radio Maint.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Running late again! I thought after getting the Spring issue of "The Tails" out the door, the "quiet" period would be a good time to undertake my planned change of computer systems from Macintosh to IBM PC. The reasons for this are (1) my Mac was small in capability compared to what's out there today; (2) I wanted to get in step with the ever growing number of 44th'ers who are going "on line" in cyberspace with new PC computers. In fact, I just got an e-mail from Mike Yuspeh informing me he has just brought our 44th Web Page on line. It is so new I haven't had time to give it a visit yet. For those with computers and are on Internet, the 44th home page address is: gnofn.org/~506bgp44. Anyway, back to reality, I boxed up the Mac, gave it to our son, and had a whole new system, scanner and all brought in. Now between trying to convert from the Mac O/S to Windows 95 and some 44th BGVA small brush fires (the usual) to stomp out, Lolly and I both have been taking classes in W-95 and Microsoft Word and for an old soldier, it ain't that easy! Reason number (3), and maybe, at this point, the most important is our new alliance with the 8th Air Force Military Heritage Database. Our Archive/History/Roster and computer database team (Lundy, Mastradone, Shepherd) have seen this database system demonstrated and recommend we adopt it. I have seen it and must say it is REALLY impressive. My little computer was overwhelmed, so it was upgrade or get left behind. ANYWAY, TOMMY SHEPHERD HAS WRITTEN AN EXCELLENT ARTICLE ON THE PROGRAM HEREIN. PLEASE READ IT AND YOU WILL ALSO FIND THE PERSONAL BIOGRAPHICAL DATA FORMS. PLEASE, PLEASE FILL THESE FORMS OUT AS COMPLETELY AS POSSIBLE. YOUR DATA AND STORIES WILL GO INTO THE 44TH DATABASE AND THENCE INTO THE 8TH AIR

FORCE DATA BASE. ONE DAY SOON YOU OR YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE ABLE TO GO TO THE LOCAL LIBRARY (IF YOU DON'T HAVE YOUR OWN COMPUTER) AND CALL UP THE 8TH AF DATABASE, ENTER YOUR NAME AND HAVE DISPLAYED ON THE SCREEN YOUR ENTIRE COMBAT RECORD AND SIGNIFICANT PARTS OF YOUR SERVICE CAREER. COMBAT MISSIONS, WHICH AIRCRAFT YOU FLEW ON EVERY MISSION, WHERE YOU WERE IN THE FORMATION, WHICH AIRCRAFT YOU CREWED OR WHICH MESS HALL YOU STAFFED. THE DATABASE WILL HAVE IT ALL! But remember the most important computer adage "Garbage in - Garbage out!" Or, nothing in-nothing out! There is a lot of data in the archives which we are retrieving, but the personal stuff, stories, family, combat memories, your life and work after the war, all has to be your input, so do a job on it, one that you'll want your family to read with pride!



We are looking forward to the dedication ceremonies and unveiling of the bronze B-24 model in the Air Force Academy Court of Honor on September 24. It is beginning to look like we will have pretty good representation from the 44th present. Jack Gibson, Dick Butler, Bill Cameron, Charlie Hughes, Roy Owen, Jerry Folsom and Del Brown that we know of at this writing.

I want to thank those who responded to the "Thank You Steve" plea I made in the last issue. Your generosity in showing Steve Adams your appreciation for all he does for

and in the name of the 44th in the U.K. was great. But there weren't enough of you! Maybe this is because the page in my Presidents Corner that had my plea was printed so lightly. Whatever, the fund stands at about a third of what we need to bring Steve and Jan Adams over to be with us at Savannah, and this just isn't like the 44th when it comes to saying THANKS for a job well done. It is so difficult, with the distance involved, for us to personally express our gratitude for the many days of his earned vacation time he takes from his job and devotes to representing us at local memorial functions and making trips to Cambridge to place the 44th BG Memorial Day wreath he annually designs for the American Cemetery Remembrance. Also the organizing and preparations he makes



for visitations by 44th Travel Groups or by individual and small family visits. As our U.K. representative, he keeps the 44th BG recognized as the preeminent 2nd Air Division Bomb Group organization active in England all without pay, and I'm sure, at considerable personal expense which he refuses to reveal or discuss. So with an invitation for Steve and Jan to come to our reunion from all of us, we have the means by which we can

express our individual thanks by making a small contribution to make it possible for Steve and Jan to be our guests in Savannah. Please send a check made out to 44th BGVA, marked in the memo "Thanks Steve." Send it to: 44th BGVA, P.O. Box 2367, Salt Lake City, UT 84110-2367. Then at Savannah you can shake hands and thank Steve and Jan personally!

And speaking of Thank You; I just received this e-mail that Steve forwarded to me. Read it, you will see what I mean.

14 July 1998

Mr. Adams,

My name is Robert C. (Bob) Drake and I live in Centralia, Missouri. My father was Frederick J. (Bob) Drake. He was the pilot of a B-24 Liberator named "Bachelor's Delight," 8th Army Air Force.

I understand from my nephew and my father's grandson, Michael Anthony of Atlanta, Georgia, that you have been a tremendous help and a load of inspiration in his quest for information regarding his grandfather. He was very excited when you answered his note that was posted on the B-24 website.

Later this month my family will visit Michael and his parents in Georgia. We plan to go through all of the information that Michael has gathered at that time. I am sure I will have questions for you later, but at this time all I want to say is THANK YOU for your help, interest and information. We all really appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Bob Drake

617 Porter St., Centralia, MO 65240

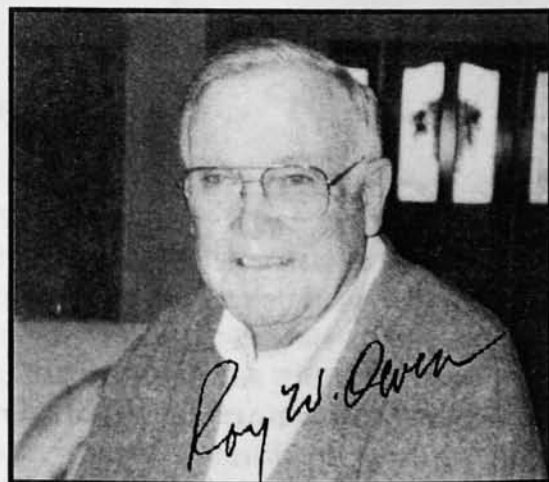
e-mail: rcdnd@socket.net

Man O Man! The time is running down on my Presidency; this is my next to last President's Corner! Talk about mixed emotions. On the one hand, I'm really looking forward to reclaiming my wonderful retired life with Lolly, playing golf just about whenever the course beckons (my handicap has gone from 8 to 15 in these five years since we rose to battle those who would have our organization fold its wings). The lack of physical activity sitting at this computer has resulted in an insidious gain of forty pounds to my once slender and handsome physique. On the other hand, I want you all to know, it has been the labor of love. I have always felt extremely fortunate for whatever fate it was that placed me in the 44th Bomb Group to serve my country in WWII. Before I ever arrived at Shipdham, the 44th had become legend, and many of those who had written the pages of that legend with their valorous deeds were still there as Squadron Commanders and Group Staff to lead and teach us the ways of combat. The Bills, Cameron and Strong, and names like Lehnhausen, Hughes and of course Johnson. At wars end, I left the AAF with the sense that I had mingled and fought with true heroes, and for the experience I was indelibly marked as a lifetime 44th man. It was that intrinsic pride as an 8-Baller that refused to allow me to sit idly by and see the demise of our group; again, perhaps, the same fate that placed me at Shipdham, saw me to become the first president of our resurrected Association. Still travelling on my WWII inspired pride in the 44th, I was honored to take the lead. I soon, to my wonderment, found that I barely knew the 44th from my six months of combat experience. With all the history, heritage and archives which documented the real life of the 44th from the peaks of glory to the depths of despair open to me from the advantage of my office, I truly began to recognize the fabric of my pride in being a member of the 44th. I have had the opportunity to associate with you, read your letters, write stories for your 8-Ball Tails that you have told me first hand. I've seen the

humor and the humility that comes with heroes and I know the heartbreak when one of us folds his wings. It was a wonderful experience for me, truly a labor of love and learning why I am so deeply proud of my country and to have served her with you under the colors of the 44th. I don't know what got me off on this, but in the words of Forrest Gump "That's all I'm going to say about that!"

Few, if any of you, probably ever read the disclaimer we are always obliged to print in every issue of this journal. It's the part in the box that says "The 8-Ball Tails" Official Journal of the 44th, etc., etc., and you would otherwise pass it up in this issue, but I want you to look at it this time and take note of the ©which means The 8-Ball Tails is now under copyright and for anyone to use our material, they must request our permission. I hope you like the material in our "Tails." It appears there are others out there who like it enough to plagiarize it without as much as giving credit to our Journal, thus we decided to apply for copyright, which has been granted by the U.S. Patent Office.

Signing off now,
WE HOPE TO SEE YOU IN SAVANNAH,
Your Prez,



THE 44th GOES FULL ELECTRONICS

By Tom Shepherd

The 44th BGVA has been invited to connect with the 379th Bomb Group (1st Adiv/B-17) and the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum (M8AFHM) in a Multi-Media Format to record electronically (personal computer) our history.

This effort actually began several years ago in a letter from Lt. Gen. Shuler, Chairman, of the Museum to the 44th BGVA and other similar organizations. General Shuler noted that the 379th BGP, by the energies and talent of one of its WWII members, had designed and developed a multi-media software capability specifically designed to store an 8th AF-wide history. Arlo Bartsch (Lt., Pilot) now of Milwaukee, WI, holder of this copyrighted software, has volunteered to attend our Savannah reunion and demonstrate his program. A number of 44th'ers attending the recent ZADA Reunion in Chicago were given a demonstration by Arlo of his program. All have reported strong support and enthusiasm for its adoption by our Association. We are doing this and, as reported in the "Will Sez" column last issue, Will and our Archivist/67th Director Tony Mastradone have been busy copying the combat mission folder data at the National Archives for several months.

It is expected that by the time October arrives and we convene our reunion, you will be able to "see" for yourselves what a marvelous program this is -and- better yet, understand the excitement it has generated in terms of recording our history in such a modern day media open to everyone all over the world to see and read and marvel as we "know" it. A lot of work still remains to be done. It will take hours upon hours and attendant expense to complete; but oh, what a marvelous, accessible history we will have! Even those who do not own a computer will be able to go to their public library, enter the Internet address and the individual name, and in an instant, the personal combat history of that individual will appear on the monitor screen! Even pictures and a voice recording. An unbelievable amount of cross referenced data; number of missions, aircraft names and numbers flown, crew members flown with, targets flown against for combat crews, for support personnel, jobs, promotions, decorations, personal stories, whatever you put into your data.

For those with World Wide Web capability, you may visit this program at: <http://www.8thairforce.com> and begin to "feel" the excitement of what it will be when we are connected as one of the active in the program. This is History's time to become dynamic. Now and into the ions of the future.

The COMBINED(!) inputs from all known written records, documents, and squadron/bomb group books will be a major source of data and written text for inclusion in this super multi-media program. To give this effort the strength of the human quality that it deserves, there is one major program element exclusively titled: BIOGRAPHY. Your personal input!

Within this issue is included the key element of the 44th History: YOUR PERSONAL BIOGRAPHICAL DATA FORM. Allow some time to complete this form as accurately as you can. Get out whatever records you have to substantiate dates and places. OUR TEAM WILL RESEARCH YOUR COMBAT RECORD. The rest is yours.

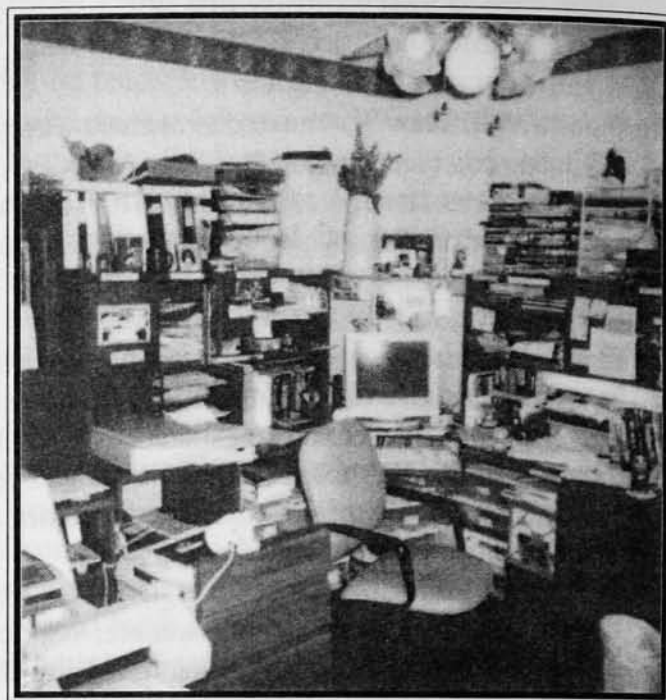
The National Archives research and copying has already made a serious dent in our budget (at 10 cents per copy) and there are many boxes and thousands of pages of data to go, and we cannot and must not falter or even think of stopping. The archives at age 53 to 58 are becoming brittle and faded after so many years and being handled. They must be copied and put in storage electronically while there is still time. You will be pleased to know, once again, your 44th has taken the Division lead in this project. We are the only Group in the 2nd AD undertaking this project to-date. Arlo Bartsch, when looking at the amount of archival material we have recovered, was amazed at the effort. We have our brave and tireless Historian Will Lundy and his Archivist sidekick, Tony "Bulldog" Mastradone to thank for this.

Now, how do we plan to finish the project without breaking the bank? Since this is to be an all encompassing history to include everyone whom we can find a record of 44th service, and many are gone, we once again must turn to the living. While the plan is to recruit volunteers among us who possess an IBM compatible computer to do the data entry and hold

down costs, we still have the data collection costs past and remaining estimated at \$6,000 to \$8,000. To spread these costs with equanimity, there will be a \$10 data collection and entry fee to accompany the Personal Biographical Data Form without photos and of average length (without extra pages of text), and \$15 for two photos or one photo and one extra page of text done in #12 type single spaced. Follow the instructions on the Data Form.

We can and we will do this. It is something we have wanted to do for a long time. It is something we will give to our families and the World. Yes - it is about us and by us -- In a living and dynamic form available in our homes, libraries, and museums all over the world!

We are the #1 B-24 Bomb Group on the planet.
Let's keep showing 'em our Tail Turret!



Tommy Shepherd's workshop!

Volunteers - We need some Volunteers

When the members respond to our historical database program by sending in the completed biographical forms, we need some of you who are IBM compatible and equipped to help us enter the data on the member's mailed-in personal data forms into the program. We cannot afford to have this data entry done commercially, and we cannot afford to let this opportunity to lead the 2nd AD into the 21st Century slip by us. If we share the task, we can do it at minimum cost. You will be thoroughly trained for the task and it will be something you can sit down to do whenever you have some time to spare. Here is what it takes to do the job:

Personal skills:

- Average competence with any two of the Microsoft Word Processing systems.
- Average typing skills are essential.

Computer Hardware should be a minimum of:

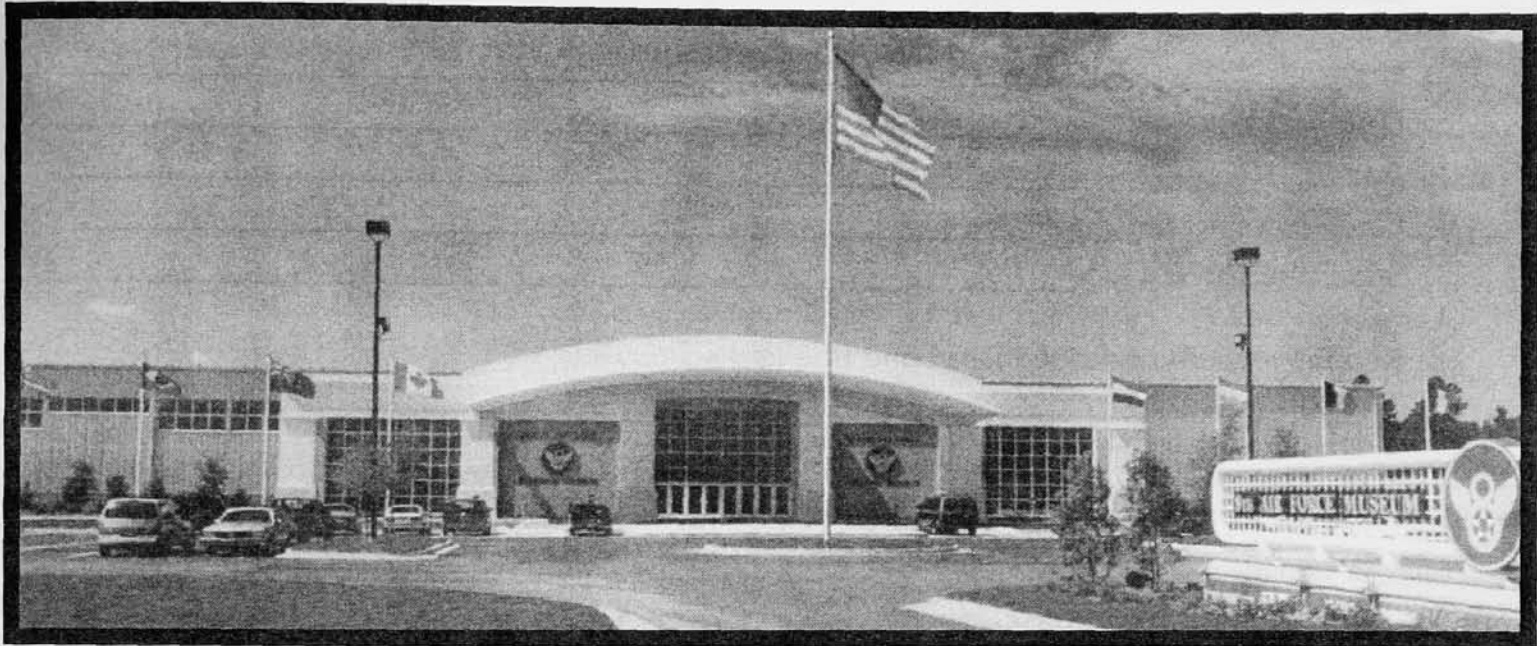
- Windows 95
- 120 MHz Pentium processor
- 16 MB Ram
- 2 GB Hard Drive
- 3.5 Floppy Drive
- 28.8K Modem
- Internet and E-Mail capabilities.
- 150 MB of available Hard Drive space
- CD ROM Drive



You will be provided with step by step procedural instructions and a program disk to slip into your floppy drive to load the program. Please contact Tom Shepherd at this e-mail address: sheep@wspice.com. This will be a great way to make a contribution to your Bomb Group heritage!

October 25-29, 1998

Savannah, Georgia



COST OF REUNION - REGISTRATION

Complete Reunion - \$140

This price includes:

Registration

Reception Days Inn

Transportation to Mighty 8th Museum

Admission to Museum, Lunch at museum

Transportation to Banquet, Convention Center, buffet, open bar (45 min.).

Transportation & Squadron Dinner.

Transportation & Old Fort Jackson admission and buffet.

All tours subject to number of people who sign up.

If not enough interest, tour will be cancelled.

Registration must be received by October 11, 1998. No Registration will be taken after that date. We would like to firm up our reservations as soon as possible. Please send this Registration form with your check right away to:

Mail To: Mike Yuspeh • 7214 Sardonyx Street • New Orleans, LA 70124-3509

44th Bomb Group Reunion

October 25 - 29, 1998

Days Inn/ Days Suites • 201 West Bay Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401



(912) 236-4440/Reservations Dept. (9 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)

Please print or type only. All information must be completed.

Name: _____

Daytime Phone #: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zipcode: _____

Spouse or Guest's Name: _____

Reservation - Accommodation: Send (the 1st Night's Deposit)

Arrival Date: _____ Departure Date: _____

Smoking: ☐ Non-Smoking: ☐ Room Type: Standard Double: ☐ 1 Bdrm Suite: ☐

Cost + 12% tax - Total *or current tax rate.

1) Standard \$62 + 12% tax = \$69.44/night

2) Suites \$82 + 12% tax = \$91.84/night

★ 1st night deposit should be sent to hotel with reservation
prior to 9/25/98!

★DISCOUNT NOT AVAILABLE THROUGH 1-800 NUMBER!

You may send a check or indicate your credit card number and expiration date.

Hotel Policies

★ The hotel accepts credit cards and cash at check-in.

★ Check-in time is 3 p.m. Check-out time is 11 a.m.

★ Cancellation is no later than 48 hours prior to arrival.

We offer a cafe on property, open 6:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. , re-opens at 5:30 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. the next day.

If you are driving to the hotel, complimentary garage parking is available. Should you require taxi service from the airport or Amtrak, the following telephone number may be helpful: Coastal Shuttle ~ (912) 964-5999.

★Please send one copy with payment to the hotel and keep on copy for your records or call (912) 234-0841 Ext. #147 and identify your group for the discounted rate (Monday - Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) ☎

We look forward to seeing you in OCTOBER, 1998!!!



44th Bomb Group Reunion

October 25 - 29, 1998

Savannah, Georgia

Registration Form

Please print or type only. All information must be completed.

Last Name: _____ First (Name Tag) _____

Spouse: _____ Squadron: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State: _____ Zipcode: _____

Phone (____) _____

Guests & Relation: _____

Total to Attend: _____

REUNION COST: \$140 PER PERSON

Tour #1- October 24 - Historic Savannah City Tour \$16 # Attending: _____ Amount \$ _____

Time: o 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

o 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 pm.

Tour #2 - October 25 - Historic Savannah City Tour \$20 # Attending: _____ Amount \$ _____

w/Mansion admission 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Tour #3 - October 27 - Low Country Tour \$25 # Attending: _____ Amount \$ _____

Time: o 9:00 a.m. - 12 noon

o 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Tour #4 - October 28 - Narrated River Tour \$17.50 # Attending: _____ Amount \$ _____

Time: 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Total Amount: \$ _____

Registration must be received by October 11, 1998. No Registration will be taken after that date. We would like to firm up our reservations as soon as possible. Please send this Registration form with your check right away to:

Mail To: Mike Yuspeh • 7214 Sardonyx Street • New Orleans, LA 70124-3509

Phone: (504) 283-3424 • Fax: (504) 283-3425 (6 rings to pick up.)

NOTE: If you have sent in previous information, please fill out this form and mail with check.

Savannah Reunion - 44th Bomb Group



Early arrival Saturday, October 24th

- Registration
- Tour Historic Savannah City Tour - Gray Line 1 1/2 hour (Cost \$16)
- #1 - Leave Hotel 1:00 p.m. - Return 2:30 p.m.
- #2 - Leave Hotel 3:00 p.m. - Return 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 25th

- Registration 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Historic Savannah City Tour with Admission and tour on one of Savannah's Mansions. Leave Hotel 1:00 p.m. - Return 3:00 p.m. (Cost \$20)
- Reception - Days Inn: Cash Bar 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- Dinner on your own.

Monday, October 26th

- Registration 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- First shuttle bus leaves Hotel at 9:00 a.m. for Mighty 8th Museum.
- Visit Mighty 8th Museum.
- Buffet lunch at 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
- Program to dedicate Ploesti Exhibit - 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
- Shuttle bus returns to Days Inn at 2:45 p.m.
- Shuttle bus leaves at 5:00 p.m. for Convention Center.
- Banquet at Savannah Convention Center - Buffet and open bar.
 - ~Ceremony
 - ~Bag Pipes and Disk Jockey will provide entertainment.
- Shuttle bus returns to Days Inn 9:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 27th

Tours

- 9:00 a.m. Board Meeting for 44th Bomb Group Association (Hospitality Room)
- Low Country Tour (plantation site) - Cost \$25 - Leaves at 9:00 a.m., returns 12:00 noon. or Leaves at 1:00 p.m., returns 4:00 p.m.
- Squadron Dinners - Mighty 8th Museum.
 - Shuttles to begin at 5:30 p.m.
 - Dinner served at 7:00 p.m.
 - Shuttles to return at 9:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 28th

- Annual Meeting 9:00 am. (Whereabouts to be announced)
- Tour on Savannah River Queen. Dock at 1:30 p.m., return at 3:00 p.m. (Cost \$17.50)
- Visit to Old Fort Jackson
 - Shuttles to leave at 6:00 p.m.
 - Dinner at 6:45 p.m.
 - Shuttle returns at 9:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 29th

- Leave for home.

When you have completed this form, if you have no pictures, mail it with \$10; if you have two photos or one photo and an extra page of text (single spaced in 12 point font), mail the form with \$15 to:
44th BQVA, P.O. Box 2367, Salt Lake City, UT 84110-2367.



8th Air Force Military Heritage Database

Personal Biographical Data -- Your "Living Monument"

It is our goal to assemble a complete record of all personnel who at one time served with the 8th Air Force during World War II. The records of those who were on flying status will be obtained from declassified group mission reports which have been stored in the National Archives. From this, a matrix has been developed which will allow for the search and retrieval of the following information: who flew on what mission, with whom, in what plane, to what target, on what date, enemy opposition, aircraft and personnel losses, and hundreds of cross referenced bits of detailed information.

To make this database come "Alive," your stories, memories, photos and voice recordings are essential.

Cassette recordings of your memories should be limited to 2 minutes or less per each incident.

Please provide a "Then and Now" photo of yourself and a Crew photo, if available.

A Master Copy of this multi-media database is now a part of the Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, GA. Other copies will be available to Museums, Libraries, Universities, Schools and on the World Wide Web Internet. You may also have your own copy of the full database, on a CD, to run on a home computer.

Last Name: _____ First: _____ Initial: _____

Address #1: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip Code: _____ Phones ~ Home: _____ Other: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Nickname: _____

Date Deceased: _____ Date Enlisted: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Spouse: _____ 8th Air Force Group/s: _____ Squadron/s: _____

Special Military Training: _____

Graduating Class: _____ Location: _____ State: _____

Group Rank: _____ Group Duties: _____ Ret. Rank: _____

Your ASN (Serial Number/s): _____

Occupation Prior to Military: _____

Occupation After Military and/or Continued Military Service: _____

Arrival at ETO base: _____ Arrived From: _____

Arrived How (Any Details): _____

Personal Memories, Experiences & Stories: _____

Specific Mission Comments: _____

Date Departed ETO: _____ How: _____ Destination: _____

Trip Details: _____

Military Honors & Decorations:		Stars or Clusters		Stars or Clusters
Congressional Medal Of Honor:	_____	_____	Air Medal:	_____
Distinguished Service Cross:	_____	_____	Purple Heart:	_____
Distinguished Service Medal:	_____	_____	Presidential Unit Citation:	_____
Silver Star:	_____	_____	Prisoner of War:	_____
Legion of Merit:	_____	_____	Good Conduct Medal:	_____
Distinguished Flying Cross:	_____	_____	Victory WWII:	_____
Soldiers Medal:	_____	_____	European Theater Ribbon:	_____
Bronze Star:	_____	_____		

Other Awards: _____

Special Status: Shot Down:☐ POW:☐ Evaded:☐ MIA:☐ KIA:☐ Ditched:☐ Crashed:☐ Interned:☐

Escaped:☐ Parachuted:☐ Wounded:☐ Hospitalized:☐ Disabled:☐ Other:☐

Details: _____

Ground Crew:☐ Crew Chief:☐ Assistant CC:☐ A&E Mechanic:☐ Armorer:☐ Radio:☐ Radar:☐

Instruments:☐ Sheet Metals:☐ Refueling:☐ Bombsight:☐ Hydraulics:☐ Other: _____

Duties: _____

Aircraft You Crewed: (Names and Numbers): _____

Aircraft Lost or Damaged: _____

Memories: _____

Base Operations: Administration:☐ Clerical:☐ Communication:☐ Medical:☐ Security:☐ Photo Lab:☐

Engineering:☐ Mess Hall:☐ Supply:☐ Intelligence:☐ Other Duties or Assignments: _____

Your Contributions Must Not Be Forgotten, Please Provide Details: _____

WILL SEZ

In the last issue of 8 Ball Tails (Spring '98), I tried to advise everyone about the efforts being taken to collect all of the Interrogation Reports held in the mission folders in Washington, D.C. and about our efforts to develop a system to make all of this information readily available for our members and the general public.

Tommy Shepherd conducted a search for a software program which could be adapted to perform this type of recording. In short order, Tommy made contact with Arlo Bartsch, a computer expert who had developed such a system which he had used to record his own B-17 Bomb Group, the 379th, 8th AF during WW#2. Arlo had served as a B-17 pilot, so used his own experiences to help pave the way for usage in a very flexible program. A demonstration model is available on the Internet address:
<http://www.8thairforce.com>.

As Arlo and his company is based in Milwaukee, Tommy arranged for him to bring his program to the 2nd Air Division Association reunion in Chicago for we 44thers who were attending to view it. Dick Butler, 44th BG's VP representative on the 2nd ADA's board, announced in their board meeting that Arlo was making this presentation and invited everyone to view it with us. It would be a golden opportunity to observe and make an appraisal of the quality of this program for use by the entire 2nd Division.

Arlo made arrangements for a single viewing of his program on Saturday, but it proved so popular that he stayed two more days and made several presentations. The general consensus of those attending ranged from quite good to absolutely SUPER, with most of us 44thers at the top end of that scale. Personally, I was ecstatic! Here and available was a program so powerful and flexible that it could be utilized to record

(data entry) most if not all of the material which I have been collecting for nearly 25 years. It will also handle photos and audio - such as personal and crew photos, airplanes and personal accounts - both written and spoken. Better still, the program has been so designed as to have the capability to retrieve data in most any format. It is so flexible that one can access the data bank and have a complete history printed out in book form about a person's combat records, etc.

Arlo has agreed to work with us this summer to take one month's operational data (January, 1944) and build it into a sample presentation at our own reunion down in Savannah this October. This will be a great opportunity to demonstrate to our members how our entire history could look if we can make a complete data entry of our history. Hopefully, we will have a large number in attendance so that our members can see first hand what a treasure this program will be.

Although I've written only about combat records above, this program will handle equally well data about all other phases of our activities. However, for the most part, all too little has been preserved in our microfilm records. To improve this situation, efforts are being made to provide a worksheet to be included in this issue of "Tails" so that each of you can fill in and return to us, giving us as much personal information about yourself and your time in service as practical. The form will be self-explanatory and will help us develop more information about each of us individually to be used in this program's data bank. Please, all of you, do your best to fill in the blanks and return it to us so that we can have the best and most complete database of all bomber groups.

Hope to see you all in Savannah in October.

Will Lundy

*See Pages 17 and 18 for Program Description.
Pages 19 through 22 for Database Form.*

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ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS:
44th BGVA
P.O. Box 2367
Salt Lake City, UT 84110-2367



MISCELLANEA



ANGELS CORNER

Our newest Angels are Robert and Kay Eddings of Westmoreland, TN. "Bob" served in the 67th Squadron as Aircraft Mechanic for over three dedicated years out on the "line" helping to keep the planes flying. He did take time off to find his Scottish bride, Catherine (Kay), and they have been very staunch supporters of the 67th Squadron and the 44th BG. They have contributed generously at every opportunity over the years and recently donated \$500. More to help cover the cost of completing the copying of our historical records at the National Archives in Washington D.C. WE OWE BOB AND KAY A TIP OF THE HAT AND A MIGHTY BIG THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT OVER THE YEARS. We love you guys!

Gem of the Day (credit Chicago columnist Zay N. Smith): A T-Shirt spotted in ancient Rome:
"Tatre Troiae X Annos Proeliato Nihil Mihi Datum Nisi Haec Tunicula Pedicuiosa."
Which means, My Father Fought 10 Years at Troy, and All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt."



The Mailing Address Problem Still Goes On



Snowbirds and others who fail to let us know when you move. This last issue we had 11 returns which, counting original production, mailing, return and remailing costs us about \$4.50 a piece. Please, send a USPS change of address card to our Association mailing address well in advance of your move so we can change our records and you will receive your 8-Ball Tails on the original mailing. We are also going to cut costs by mailing only one copy to a household where both husband and wife are paid-up members. We hate to deny these couples the luxury of sitting down and each having a personal copy of the "Tails" to read, but to help cut costs, I'm sure these faithful members will be understanding.

44th BGVA, P.O. Box 2367, Salt Lake City, UT 84110-2367



Another "Cal" Coolidge Vignette (You may recall "Cal" was the President who, when being briefed on the need to expand the Army Air Corps, asked: "Can't we just buy one airplane and have the pilots take turns flying it?"

More "Cal" President Calvin Coolidge invited some Vermont friends to dine at the White House. They were worried about their table manners and decided to do everything the President did. The meal passed smoothly until coffee was served. Coolidge poured his coffee into a saucer. The guests followed suit. He added sugar and cream. The visitors did likewise. Then Coolidge leaned over and gave his to the cat.



The 44th is on the Internet!

Mike Yuspeh has succeeded in creating and placing a 44th Web Page on the Internet. For those of you who are computer equipped and Modem equipped, the address is: <http://www.gnofn.org/~506bgp44>. Try it, it is a great start. For the time being, and properly so, Mike is giving some hoopla to our reunion. Later on we will use the Web page to tell the story of the 44th. Another site you might wish to take a look at is the Ellsworth AFB Web Page. It is at: <http://www.ellsworth.af.mil/~history/44mw.htm>.

Our list of members who now have computers is growing. If you are one of these and are on the Internet, by all means send your e-mail address to Tom Shepherd, the keeper of our 44th Roster so it can be included in our next revision of the 44th Directory. Come on in! The water is fine.



Reunion Notice



Tom Parsons (68th), Vice President of the 8th Air Force Historical Society urges all 44th BGVA Members who also belong to the Society to mark your calendar to attend their annual reunion October 13 - 18, 1998 at the Hilton Hotel, Cherry Hill, New Jersey. All necessary forms and details appear in the May and August issues of your 8th Air Force News.



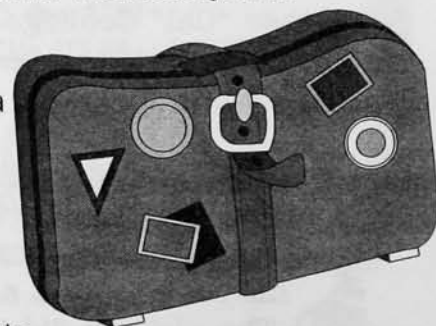
1999 TRAVEL WITH ROY & LOLLY OWEN

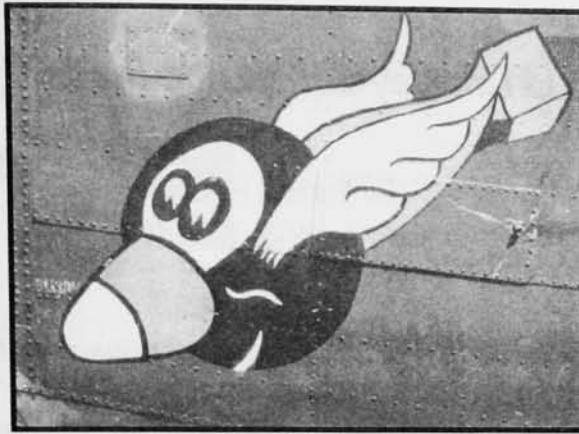
Before I go to a lot of work planning a trip for the late spring of next year, I would like to get a feel for how many would like to make a nice visit to the Norwich/Shipdham area with some day trips out of Norwich, then either North to York and Edinburgh or West to Bath and Wales or South to Eastbourne and the 1066 country.

I have in mind at least one nice 55 passenger bus load of 8-Ball'ers on a pretty laid-back tour that will include your breakfast and dinner every day and lunch on your own wherever we may be. A general itinerary that will allow us to swing off and see something or place that interests us along the way, and when we make a major stop, you will be free to do whatever interests you in the area. My tour man says, for a little extra, we can make a day trip over to Dieppe for some big time shopping.

We will handle the finances through our own treasury and I've got a good connection that will arrange the hotels and transportation, so the cost will be quite reasonable.

If this sounds good to you, drop me a card, letter, e-mail or fax (all that is in the Board Directory herein) and let me know if you'd like to go, how many of you, and which direction you would like to go from Norwich. This will be a two week trip with add-on, if some would like to stay over for a few days.





THE EIGHT BALL NEARLY GOT THE
PURPLE HEART!



44th Bomb Group Veterans Association

6304 Meadowridge Drive • Santa Rosa CA 95409 • 707 538-4726 • Fax 707 538-1212 • rowen@sonic.net

Last May we asked Steve Adams to present a copy of our 44th Bomb Group History to the Shipdham Village Heritage Centre for their display. The letter of profferance below accompanied the History. Mr. Harold Pyne, Shipdham leader, sends word the letter has been framed and is on display in the Centre.

May 7, 1998

To Our Friends of Shipdham,

The reason the 44th Bomb Group "Flying Eightballs" were assigned to Shipdham notwithstanding, it was our great fortune the fate of our wartime assignment brought us to your community to be nestled into the Patterson Farm which had been transformed into AAF Station 115. From Shipdham Airfield, not only did we fight the war, we also found ourselves embraced by your community in a friendship that has endured to this day.

With our combat and support elements living areas dispersed over the airfield area, it placed our people literally in the back yards, or just over the back fence from a neighboring farm family. Through the first months of getting acquainted and into the early days of the terrible air war that raged over Europe, the relationship between our "Yankee" airmen and our Shipdham hosts grew from reluctant acceptance to admiration to family-like love. With the deprivations of war, your community had so little in the way of material things to share, but share you did. Not only the meager necessities of life, but the sharing of your homes and family lives with our young Americans far from home and engaged in a terrifying quest that held the likelihood they would not survive. In the early dawn of mission days our Shipdham neighbors would grimly watch the heavily loaded bombers roll thundering down the runway and struggle to become airborne to carry the battle to the enemy. Then came the uneasy wait while they went about their work, worrying and wondering if that young, friendly American face they had come to love would be knocking on the door to ask if he might take your daughter for a stroll.

Thus was life for three and a half years; loneliness, love, laughter and joy all blended into a bond of friendship forged and tempered in the crucible of a terrible war in which our freedom was at stake. We survivors of both the Shipdham community and the 44th Bomb Group, to this day, carry on with that love and friendship that has not waned in the many years that have past since we went home in 1945. It is our hope that by placing our 44th Bomb Group History in the Village Heritage Centre your progeny and the generations to come will read the history and feel great pride in the generosity and love bestowed upon their American visitors by their forbears.

Sincerely,
Ray W. Owen
Col. Ray W. Owen, USAF (Ret)
President

Tail End Charley and the Little Black Clouds

By Forrest S. Clark
October, 1943 - April, 1944
67th Squadron

It was my first mission, 5 Nov. 1943 and the target was the dreaded German munitions town of Munster, said to have 400 flak guns around it. I didn't know this at the time of takeoff. Somehow that information hadn't reached me from briefing.

We got off all right in the 44th BG formation and rendezvous without major incident.

The 44th BG that day was relatively far up front in the formation, so when I took up my position in the tail turret, I had an excellent view of the rest of the entire formation stacked up behind us. It was a sight to behold indeed and gave me a momentary elation and a shot of confidence. But that was not to last very long.

We crossed the North Sea headed for the Dutch coast. The sky was a china blue as far as I could see and not a cloud. I marveled at the elements of our bombers flying in what looked like a perfect rather close formation. I tried my guns and cracked the turret controls to check if everything was working.

At long last I saw the thin ribbon of beach and knew it must be the Dutch coastline. We were at medium altitude and all systems had checked out okay. I knew Munster was still a couple of hundred miles inland near the Ruhr Valley. What I didn't know is that bombers had gone to Munster two weeks before and got the hell shot out of them.

But In my Innocence I even began to enjoy the ride a little. Then I began to notice small black clouds forming off to both sides of the plane. "What do you see back there," came the call over the intercom from the pilot up front. "Oh nothing much, sir, I replied," confidently. "Are you sure?" came the reply. "Nothing but a few small clouds," I said this time into the intercom pressing the button against my throat. "Small black clouds," came the answer. "Damn it that's FLAK." The last word, FLAK, had an immediate sharp bite to it and from then on we had plenty of it on all sides, sometimes shaking the aircraft. It seemed like we were flying through a sky pock-marked with black clouds. I saw many close ones.

Luckily we got our bombs away and headed for home, but I had learned my lesson which stayed with me for the rest of my missions. For the sake of privacy, I won't reveal the name of the pilot; but I knew why he looked at me rather strangely as we made our way to interrogation.

FOLDED WINGS

July, 1998



- Vadis K. Akers 07/22/76 35447356 Waist Gunner for the
Usser J. Mustapa crew. 66th Squadron. This crew was given overseas orders on 5 November 1943, tour began in May, 1944, ended September, 1944. In May, 1944 this crew was on D.S. to 93rd BG for Pathfinder work for ten days. They flew many missions as a Group Lead crew. Last mission to complete tour was 18 September 1944, the low level supply mission to Best, Holland.
- Harold A. Barnes 01/28/97 31283540 68th Squadron. Harold was a Waist Gunner on the
R.C. Knablein crew. This crew joined the 68th Sq. on 29 May 1944 and rapidly completed their tour on 8 September 1944.
- Lt. Homer W. Crump 0-678179 Lt. Crump was killed in an airplane accident in Alaska
in the early 1960s. Lt. Crump and his crew were assigned to the 68th Sq. on 4 February 1945. They flew missions until 25 April 1945 and then brought their aircraft #42-51704 back to the States on 21 May 1945. His bombardier, Charles D. Henry, folded his wings in 1992. (See below.)
- Charlie D. Crutcher 11/18/97 *Unable to identify any data concerning this member.*
- Calvin W. Day 11/09/95 *Per wife, Vivian J. Day. Very limited data suggests that Calvin served with the bomb Wing at Lake Charles in the 1950s.*
- Charles D. Henry 08/92 0-929136 68th Squadron. The Homer W. Crump crew was as-
signed to the 68th Squadron on 4 February 1945. Many of their missions were flown in A/C #42-51704 J, and it also brought the crew home on 21 May 1945.
- Ray M. Higgins 02/20/98 *Ray served with the 806th Chemical section, working mostly with the armament crews. He is survived by his wife, Josephine, a son, Robert and two daughters, Joanne & Maureen.*
- Charles Huntz *Intensive search has not revealed any data about this member.*
- Edmond R. Ingram 01/06/93 67th Squadron. Sgt. Ingram was the engineer on the A.J.
Helfenbein crew (as was Lt. Nadaud listed below in this report). This pilot originally flew from Kansas to England via Gander Lake, Iceland, Nutts Corner and to Shipdham as part of the Vicker's Provisional Group, was co-pilot to L.J. Parks. When he became first pilot, his crew was formed in December, 1943. They flew 27 missions to successfully complete their tour.

- John Willard Jones, Jr.* 0-764327 506th Squadron. Died in early 1990s. Lt. Jones flew his first mission as co-pilot with his own crew. On his seventh mission, Kassel, Germany, he was seriously wounded by flak, necessitating an emergency landing in Belgium for immediate medical attention. Co-pilot C. Holcomb, who also was wounded in his left shoulder and back, was instrumental in making a successful emergency landing, thereby saving Lt. Jones' life, as his leg required amputation.
- Ronald L. Kerry* 01/12/96 36861716 S/Sgt. Kerry was a gunner on Fred P. Hildebrand's crew. This crew was assigned to the 67th Squadron on 24 January 1945, flew their first mission on 16 February 1945. On 25 Feb. their aircraft was hit by flak, lost considerable fuel, and was forced to make an emergency landing at Verdun, France. Last mission was on 18 April 1945, making it a total of 24. They flew their aircraft, #42-50795 N-Bar back to the U.S. the latter part of May. The unofficial name for their plane was "Cowtown Cat" named after a crew member's girl friend.
- Stanley Lipczynski* 06/18/98 66th Squadron. Sgt. apparently arrived in the 66th Squadron late in 1943, but cannot establish which crew or crews assigned. He was promoted to T/Sgt. on 16 January 1944. He flew one mission with the K.G. Jewell crew on 21 February 1944. On 9 March 1944 he was given a four day furlough, and upon returning on the 13th was notified that he had been transferred to another bomb group, possibly the 93rd. Stan moved to Carson City, NV, then returned mail indicated he was deceased.
- Lee A. MacGregor* 1983 68th Squadron 36421814 T/Sgt. Died approximately 1983. Lee, along with Lt. Henry (see Charles Henry), were members of the Lt. Homer W. Crump crew. He served as their Engineer and Top Turret gunner. He, with the other crew member, flew home in late May, 1945.
- Clarence R. Miller* 02/19/98 66/68th Squadrons 35272861 Sgt. Miller served with the 66th Squadron, being one of their ground echelon who went to England in September, 1942 aboard the Queen Mary. After training, he was assigned duty as a Medic. Then on 18 August 1944, was transferred to the 68th Squadron in the same capacity. Apparently he returned home, again on the Queen Mary in June, 1945.
- Melvin L. Nadaud* 02/23/98 0-746542 67th Squadron. Served as Bombardier for Lt. Helfenbein's crew. This crew was assigned to the 67th Squadron on 28 December 1943. Rather unusual for a bombardier, Lt. Nadaud was credited with destroying an Me-109. He also flew with other crews during his tour, including Lts. J.P. Thames, Jefferson, and Howard Metts. He completed 30 combat missions, returned home; served again in Korea and Vietnam; retired in 1968 as a Lt. Col. Lived in Granby, MA, was an antique dealer until his death.
- James Otto* 03/31/98 36316852 67/506th. James worked in Communications Section, 67th Squadron, departed U.S. 6 September 1942 aboard the Queen Mary with the Ground Echelon. Later, he transferred to the 506th Squadron. He was a Life Member of the 44th BGVA.



Richard Hal Pendleton, Lt. 04/06/98 0-661022 67th Squadron.
(USAF Retired)

"Hal" graduated from Texas A&M in 1941, joined the Air Corps, became a Bombardier, joined Elmer Reinhart's crew and on 1 April 1943 was enroute to the 44th BG. This crew flew to Africa on 23 June 1943 with the Group and flew seven missions before the fateful mission to the Ploesti Oil Fields on 1 August 1943. This crew was shoe down returning from the target, eight men parachuted successfully. They were POWs of the Romanians for over one year, returned to Shipdham on 8 September 1944. Hal chose to remain on active duty, continued to fly missions, some with Lt. E.P. Reynolds. He also served in the Korean War; retired from the Air Force and later Internal Revenue Service.

M/Sgt. John R. Penner 03/30/98 506th Squadron 17040390. Assigned to Armament Section. John was a member of the ground echelon which flew to Africa on 23 June 1943 on Lt. William Strong's plane. He again made the trip to Africa in September, 1943 returned to ATC to Shipdham on 3 October 1943. John was one of the original members of the 506th Squadron.

William D. Peoples 11/26/96 66th Squadron. Sgt. Peoples was a later arrival in the 66th squadron being transferred from the 70th Reinforcement Depot on 8 April 1945. Cannot confirm that he was assigned to a combat crew in time to fly any missions.

Lt. Arthur T. Sakowski 08/29/97 66th Squadron. 0-683323. Arthur was a Navigator for the Kenneth Jewell crew when that crew was transferred from the 392nd BG on 6 October 1943. He flew most of his missions with the Jewell crew, but also flew with the S.L. Irby's crew on 6 March 1944. On 16 November 1943 this crew was one of just a few 44th BG planes which managed to get airborne due to severe other bombers of the 2nd Division, very successfully bombed a target of opportunity near Rjukan, Norway.

S/Sgt. Kenneth Scholljergerde 10/19/97 17036153. Kenneth was a member of the ground echelon that made the trip to England in September, 1942 on the Queen Mary. And again with the Group when they returned to the U.S. on 16 June 1945, on the same Queen Mary. Kenneth was an assistant chief as well as a crew chief.

Carl Curtiss Shook Unknown 506th Squadron. He is survived by his wife, Clara. No further data has been located relative to his time with the 44th BG.

Thomas E. Shuffelbarger.. 04/06/98 506th Squadron 0-731233. Lt. Shuffelbarger served in the 506th Squadron in several different capacities: Ordnance Officer, Sq. Supply Officer and Watch Officer.

Donald E. Stroh 66th Squadron 36822565 Armor/Gunner (waist gunner) on the James V. Derrick's which was assigned to the 44th BG on 15 December 1944 crew. On their 8th mission, their aircraft was hit by flak, loss the fuel forced them to bail out over Belgium. Several crewmen were injured upon landing; two did not fly again. On their last mission, 25 April 1945, this crew made an emergency landing in Luxembourg.



T/Sgt. Robert D. Taylor..... 08/15/97 6919417 Sgt. Taylor was one of the early members of the 68th Squadron, was with the ground echelon when they went to England on the Queen Mary in September, 1942. He served as Aircraft Inspector, made both trips to Africa in 1943. In September, 1944, he attended AM School. He is survived by his wife, Kathleen and their daughter.

S/Sgt. Oliver J. Thomsen .. 08/15/97 17164976 66th Squadron. "O.J." was born on August 17, 1924 and folded his wings on 9 March 1998. Sgt. Thomsen was an armorer-waist gunner for Lt. E.B. Hendrick's crew; was assigned to the 66th Squadron in November, 1944. Their first mission was on 30 November, and their tour was completed on 20 April 1945, with 20 credited missions. On the crew's last mission, O.J. calmly released a smoke bomb that was hung up in the bomb bay, lessening greatly the threat of a fire there. As O.J. and John Walker were the only married men on the crew, they became close friends while training at Pueblo, and remained close during their time in England in training.



The 8-Ball Tails ©

Official Journal of The 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association, Inc. ©



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Due to space limitations and to ensure the clarity and brevity of submitted material, the Publisher/Editor reserves the editorial license to add, cut or otherwise modify all submitted material so long as the original context of the material is maintained.

YOUR 1998 REUNION

Savannah, Georgia

It's coming up fast -- Registration forms are right here and we still have hotel rooms and suites available. The programs and dinners have been arranged and it looks like we are going to have a reunion to remember!

It is time to make your reservations and send a check to your hard working Reunion Chair. This will put him at ease; he worries a lot that you will miss all of the fun he has planned for you!

Tom Parsons, Chairman of the Ploesti display has seen the first trial assembly of the diorama and reports that it is magnificent! We want you all to be present at the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum when we dedicate and turn the display over to the Museum in honor of our Ploesti veterans living and deceased. You will be mighty proud that you are a Flying Eight Ball 44th'er!



The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum

P.O. Box 1992 Savannah, Georgia 31402-1992 (912) 748-8888 1-800-421-9428

10 March 1998

Col. Roy W. Owen, USAF, Ret.
President
44th BG Veterans Association
6304 Meadowridge Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

Dear Roy:

I received and very much appreciated your letter of 5 March covering the plans on the reunion and exhibit update. A copy of your letter was passed to the key staff so that everyone is aware of your plans and desires. Rest assured that the "Red Carpet" will be out for the "Eight-Balls" and Ploesti veterans in October. This get together should certainly draw National interest and Wayne Corbett will work with you to make that happen. It will be wonderful if Sue Vandenberg is able to attend.

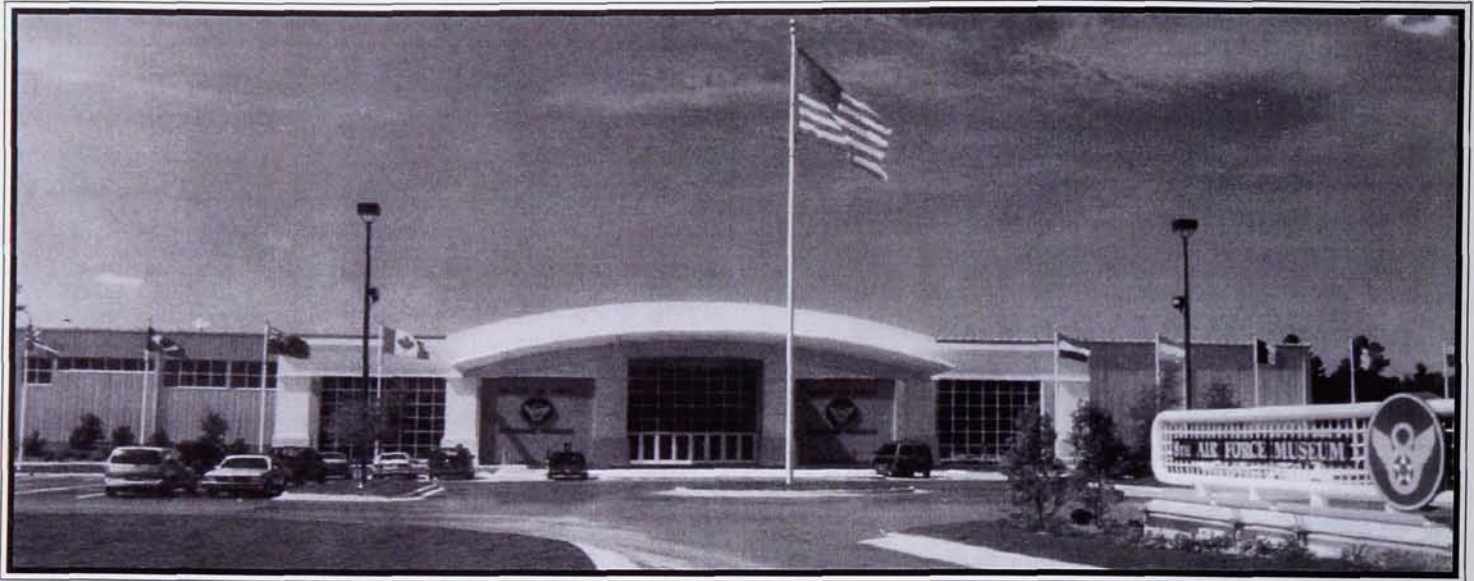
Keep us posted as you proceed and let us know of any additional requirements. We look forward to having you folks visit the museum. Thanks for writing.

With kind regards,

Buck

Lt. Gen. E.G. Shuler, Jr., USAF, Ret.
Chairman and CEO

1998 Reunion



Savannah, Georgia

**44th Bomb Group
VETERANS ASSOCIATION**

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