

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association

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8 BALL TAILS

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Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Spring, 2003

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Our Working Landlady

By Roy Owen, Vice President

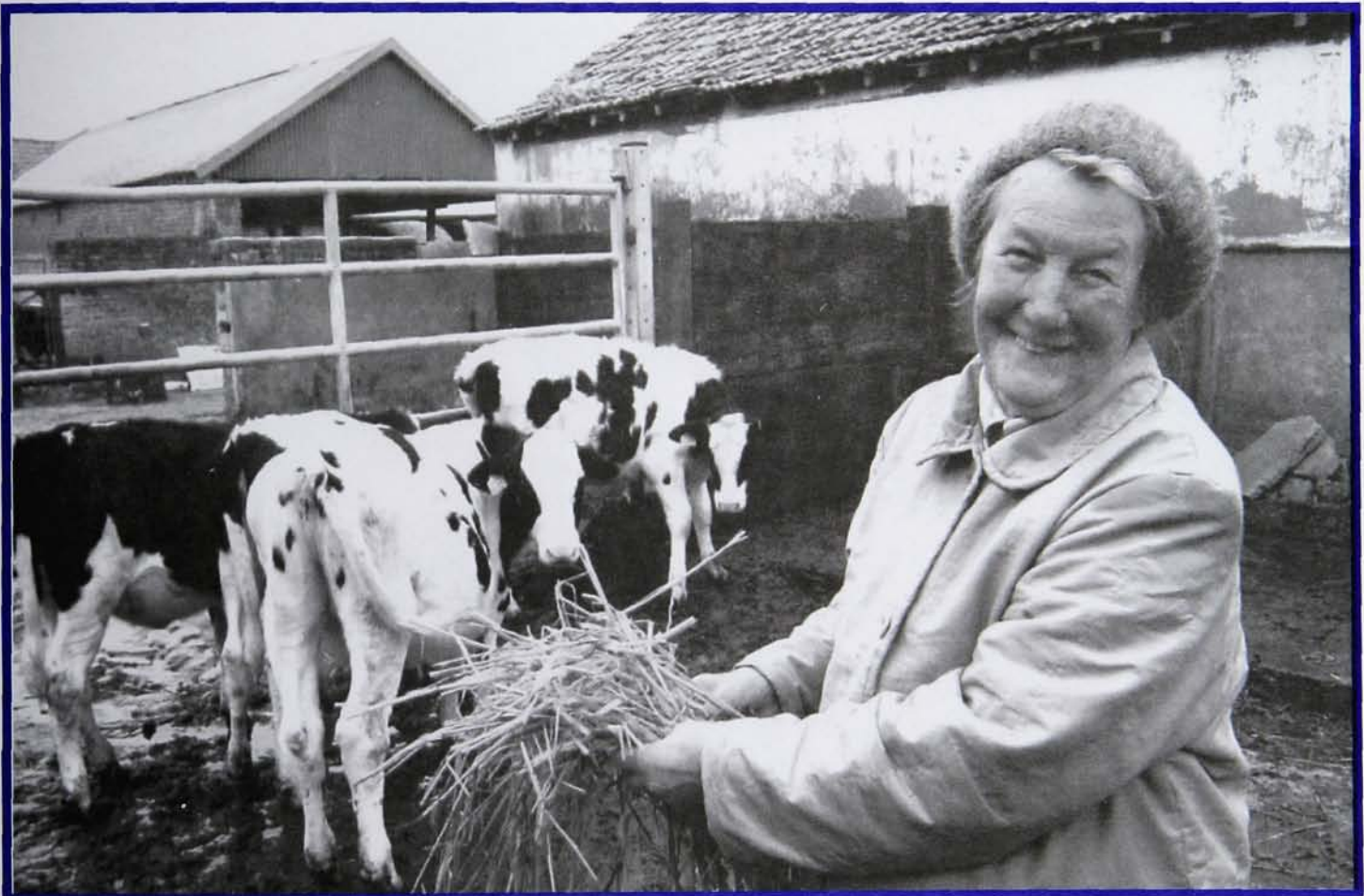


Photo by Denise Bradley

This obvious departure from our regular format of featuring one of our combat aircraft on our cover is the brainchild of the Shipdham visit by this writer and Ed "Mike" Mikoloski over the Remembrance Day weekend (story on page 7). In my seven or eight visits to Norwich and Shipdham over the past ten years, I could only recall perhaps three occasions that Steve Adams had been able to arrange for me a short meeting with Mrs. Eileen Paterson, owner of the large farm, The Grange, from which the wartime AAF Station 115 or known locally as Shipdham Airfield was requisitioned. For each of those meetings she was (I learned) customarily dressed as you see her in the Eastern Daily Press photographs, in a housedress and her "Wellies" doing hands-on work tending to her Holstein calves and displaying one of the sweetest smiles in all of England.

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(Continued from cover page.)

Then, having become acquainted with the determined lady described in the Richard Watts Eastern Daily Press article, at our Remembrance day luncheon, I had the good fortune to see and visit with the fashionable, gracious (same smile) and pretty transformation from the determined cattlemaster I had heretofore known.

I was also privileged to meet and become acquainted with her daughter Rebecca and son-in-law Ken Proctor, Eileen's partner in the Holstein herd. Rebecca was pleased to learn that I had been acquainted with her father and had attended some of the parties he had hosted for the men of the 44th at The Grange during the War. They enjoyed the irony of me telling when the boys went to one of the parties, there always seemed to be a five gallon jerry can of petrol along to ensure that Mr. P's ration remained at a reasonable level.

During this, longest ever, visit with Eileen and the Proctors, it occurred to me, the only acquaintance our membership would have with Eileen and her family would be through the follow up stories in the 8-Ball Tails by one of us that had been to Shipdham or an individual or a Group tour or Reunion. When Rebecca provided me with a

copy of the Eastern Daily Press article, the B-24 photo and article scheduled for this issue cover was put on hold for later. Thus, for those members not acquainted with our gracious and beloved Landlady, meet and remember her. She is so dear to us for the same determination to perpetuate the affection her husband had for the 44th Bomb Group and Shipdham Airfield as she has her family, her farm and those of us left who share this wonderful bond of friendship.



Photo from 8 Ball
Tails Vol. 4, Issue 4 -
Summer, 2002

**Our Working
Landlady**



The Life and Times of **EILEEN PATERSON**

(Information gathered from Eastern Daily Press, Sunday issue.)

While mechanics in the 44th Bomb Group were repairing and maintaining Liberators, Eileen Paterson was servicing the engines in Catalina Flying Boats. Most of the English men had gone to war, so the farm girl from Reymerston moved into an occupation rarely filled by women. It gave her an opportunity to fly and to verify that engine repairs were satisfactory. Eileen had grown up on her father's farm, and the skills she developed in childhood helped her during the War and when it was over.

She married Robert Paterson, who lived at Grange Farm in Shipdham; a piece of land that was converted into an American airfield, and became the home of the 44th Bomb Group. It is currently the site of the Shipdham Aero Club.

After the War, the land and runway were returned to the Paterson family. Just when life should have gotten easy, Robert Paterson died, leaving Eileen with a five year old daughter, Rebecca, a team of twelve men and a large farm to run. Again, skills that were unusual for a woman emerged. She already had a herd of pedigreed Friesian cattle, and she set out to improve it. Richard Watts, a Norfolk journalist elicited this memory from Mrs.



Paterson: "I remember going to the bull sale in Norwich. On the way back on the bus a woman proudly said she went to Norwich to buy a pair of shoes. ... I said I bought a bull." She frequently bought bulls and developed an enviable herd, which is still flourishing today. Eileen dealt successfully with the technicalities of growing, harvesting and marketing sugar beets, corn and 'hard hay', in addition to caring for her prize herd of cattle.

Forced to learn to drive, she bought a Mercedes, and used it to conduct her city business. She still has it, stored in one of outlying farm buildings. Daughter Rebecca, now an adult, is married to Ken Proctor, and is able to help her mother with the paperwork required for such a large operation.

When the War was over, members of the 44th Bomb Group returned to civilian life, spreading to all parts of the USA. All remember the Shipdham Airfield as hallowed ground. The generosity of its owner, Eileen Paterson, will never be forgotten. With the growth and development of the Shipdham Aero Club, the name of this modest lady will be perpetuated in both English and American history.



CHARLIE S. HUGHES

*FLOSSIE FLIRT, MYRTLE THE FERTILE TURTLE,
BIG FAT BUTTERFLY AND OTHER GREAT B-24s*

In March, 1943, while in route to England, Lt. **Charles Hughes** contracted a case of the measles. He was held over in Florida and separated from his crew. When he finally arrived in England, he learned that he had been bumped from B-17s to B-24s. He arrived in Shipdham just in time to join the raid to the Krups Submarine Works in Kiel. Three days later he joined the low level mission to Bordeaux wiping out Docks and Sub Pens. These two blows were at the heart of the project to weaken the grip of Commodore Karl Donitz and his U-Boats, so merchant and troop ships could make it safely to England.



Krups Sub Base

While plans for Ploesti were being formulated, Lt. Hughes and his crew were flying into Naples, Rome and the Airdromes and Communication Centers in Sicily, all in preparation for the onslaught of Generals George Patton and Bernard Montgomery.

Then there was Ploesti. It was Hughes' 10th mission. He was part of the last wave of planes consisting of four airplanes bombing at 400 feet on 'White Five', following Col. **Leon Johnson**. *Flossie Flirt*, AC 424077, made it safely across the target only to be riddled with rifles, machine guns and pistols, so (to quote Lt. **Spencer S.**



Major Charles Hughes, May 1945.

Hunn, co-pilot) 'the fuselage looked like a sieve.' Pursued by a German fighter, they looked for a bomber to tack onto, but it was shot down. They picked another, and it went down. Then a fighter got on their tail, to his own demise. They saw him crash. Hughes moved into the sanctuary of a cloud and took stock of their situation. There was not enough fuel to return to Libya, there were holes in each of the wings, a real control cable was hanging by a few strands. Both Waist Gunners, Sgts. **Stanley G. Nalipa** and **Robert L. Albine** were wounded. So the pilots made the decision to take *Flossie Flirt* and her crew to the neutral country of Turkey and internment.

Six weeks later, with the help of a local AAF Attaache', Hughes and three of his fellow captives managed to escape, two by train, two by boat to Izmir. (They couldn't run off during the day as they were on parole duty, and had signed a paper, promising not to use that opportunity to escape). At that time, the British were recruiting young Greeks for help in fighting the Germans. Working for the British, the captain of an Italian fishing vessel was in the business of transporting volunteers in groups of eight to Cyprus. So, passing themselves off as recent recruits, the four airmen sailed across the Mediterranean, along with four Greek enlistees. Once an Italian officer boarded to search the boat. Eight men hid in the

bottom of the boat, escaping detection. Two months later, the Americans were back in England with a new crew.

Big Fat Butterfly took Captain Hughes to Pas de Calais; *My Sad Ass* carried Major Hughes to Weimar, Brunswick and Passau. He flew in *Queen Marlene*, *Myrtle*, *the Fertile Turtle*, and many more. He became Assistant A-3 in the 95th Combat Wing, a temporary assignment as the Wing was disbanded after their commander Col. **Frederick Dent** was seriously wounded. Next he went to the 44th Group Operators and then to the 66th Squadron and shortly thereafter assumed command. His last mission was April 18, 1945. He came home from England in a new B-24 M, which had never flown in combat, then turned it in at Bradley Field, Conn., to go to the scrap pile.

Returning to the States in May, 1945, Hughes flew B-29s in Mexico. When the Pacific War was over, he took advantage of the G.I. Bill, going to Stanford to complete his education. While there, he returned to active duty in the regular Army as a Major on flying status. After graduation, he was assigned to the Research and Development Board in the Pentagon. This was followed by five years in California, involved in the Development of Ballistic Missiles, followed by five years of R&D at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. His last



Charles Hughes at 14th Combat Wing Headquarters in Shipdham.

tour of duty, was Commander of the Air Force Satellite Test Center in Sunnyvale, California, which was the Command Control of all Air Force Satellites. He was the part of the team that developed the technique for recovering the Space Capsule. Much of the work in which he was involved is only now being declassified.

Charlie Hughes retired as a Colonel in 1971. He and his wife Maria reside in California. He has one living daughter (having lost one daughter), and three grandsons.

Decorations include: Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal w/6 OLCs, ETO Ribbon w/9 Battle Stars, Air Force Commendation Medal, Legion of Merit w/OLC.

ON THE JOB

Betty Lynch, Edith & Sam Miceli kept business going at the Registration and Sales Desk at the Omaha Reunion.



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Flying 8 Ball Shirts \$25.00 + \$3 Postage
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SHIPDHAM REVISITED

By Vice President Roy Owen

Responding to an invitation from the officers of the Shipdham Aero Club (SAC) and the civic leaders of Shipdham, our wartime home, to join in the Remembrance Day ceremonies of 2002, our two Past Presidents, Roy Owen and Ed "Mike" Mikoloski packed up and departed for London on November 6. After a couple of evenings of London theatre, the two trained to Norwich, where they were received by our UK Representative Steve Adams and his talented pal/driver Paul Wilson. That evening 'Mike' Mikoloski hosted a dinner at the Ramada Jarvis Hotel in Norwich for Mike Artherton, Vice Chairman of the Shipdham Aero Club, Steve and Janice Adams, Paul Wilson and Roy Owen. This enjoyable occasion afforded an opportunity to lay out a schedule for the Saturday Remembrance Day ceremony at the Shipdham Church, followed by Sherry and a canape' reception, then a visit to the Airfield.

Saturday an early start and pick up by Paul and Steve gave us time to visit the new Memorial Library (my first visit since before the fire) and a very pleasant welcome and tour by the 2nd Air Division Library Staff Director, Derek Hill.

The entire Library is awesome, and particularly impressive is the 2nd Air Division wing, so obviously popular by the number of patrons present doing research. I was so impressed, in fact, I delayed my return to London by a day, to afford time for some research associated with my writings on our own Bomb Group wartime history. Now I am convinced we should mount another 44th BGVA UK reunion, while we are still able, to afford those members who have not taken the opportunity for that "One Last Look" trip, to see the wonderful things that are going on at our old Airfield; also to visit the wondrous resurrection of the Memorial Library.



Rainy weather was no deterrent to the ceremony of honoring the fallen heroes of WWII. Col. Edward "Mike" Mikoloski and Col. Roy Owen (ctr) walk away from the wreath they placed under the cross in the yard of the Shipdham Episcopal Church, honoring the 44th Bomb Group.

While the weather on Saturday was rainy, the spirit of Remembrance Day was indeed not dampened by the downpour. The Church Service, prayers, laying of the floral wreath by the British Legion, a wreath by each Roy and Mike, which, of course, was provided by Steve Adams, all contributed to the solemnity of the memorable day. The warm reception given us by our Shipdham friends, along with repeated thanks for our travel from the USA to provide a 44th Bomb Group presence to this most honored annual tribute by the English people to their own and our men and women war dead, made the trip worthwhile.



Col. Roy Owen and Col. Edward Mikoloski present a lithograph of the Shipdham Control Tower to Eileen Paterson, owner of the land on which the Shipdham Aero Club is located. Mrs. Paterson's 60 year loyalty to the 44th BG is legendary.



Gathering at the Shipdham Aero Club for a festive celebration are Steve Adams, U.K. Board Member of the 44th BGVA; Col. Roy Owen, 1st VP; Paul Wilson, overseas member; and Col. Edward Mikoloski, Immediate Past President.

Fortunately, by the time we reached the Airfield and the SAC Pub, the weather had lightened, and we were able to properly tour the Aero Club facility, both inside and outdoors.

One purpose of the Airfield visit was the invitation to a sumptuous, sit down Norfolk Turkey dinner prepared by the Aero Club's Chef, Miss Carli Whitside. She was assisted by her mother, Jean Bonnick. It was hosted by Peter Bodle, Chairman; Michael Artherton, Vice Chairman and Barry Cator, Treasurer of the SAC. The other purpose was the Director's desire for us to review the Club plan for construction of a 44th Bomb Group Memorial Garden with a flagpole which would have a yardarm to bear both our American flag and a 44th Bomb Group Flying 8 Ball flag. It was clearly explained that, while they desire our approval, they intend this memorial project to be the financial responsibility of the Flying Club as their tribute to the 44th BG wartime service to England.

Finally, for Mike and me, the highlight of our Airfield visit was sharing the dinner and having the opportunity to chat and visit with our gracious "Landlady," Eileen Paterson.

She was accompanied by (and our first meeting with) her daughter, Rebecca, and son-in-law, Ken Proctor. Bless her heart, she still possesses the sweetest smile and pleasant personality in all of England. She is always the same Lady, whether dressed fashionably, as she was that day, or in a housedress and her "Wellies" tending to the chores of her fine Pedigree Friesian dairy herd, alongside her partner, son-in-law Ron.

I returned home with the October 26, 2002 issue of the Eastern Daily Press Rebecca proudly gave me featuring Eileen in an article written by Staff Writer Richard Watts. I wish to share this article with our members as the feature (Cover Story) of this issue. Mr. Watts has contributed a real tribute to a determined Lady who has vowed that the portion of her farm occupied by the wartime airfield AAF Station 115 will remain so to the memory of the 44th Bomb Group.

She is our "Landlady."



2nd AIR DIVISION REUNION



Dick Butler, newly installed President of the 2nd Air Division and his wife, Ardith, First Lady and staunch supporter of the organization.

*Still glowing in the joy of achievement, the 2nd Air Division's 55th Reunion met at the Hyatt Regency in Baltimore. The incomparable Grand Opening of the Memorial Library in Norwich England was still foremost in everyone's mind, reinforced by a video of the momentous event. Walter Mundy, President of the Association presented awards; among them, recognition to **Dick Butler** for his outstanding creation of the beautiful medallions which members wore throughout the UK celebration.*

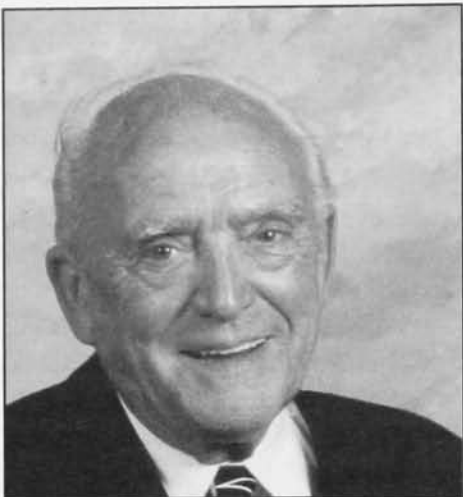
The following evening Dick stepped into the presidency of this distinguished organization, the first member of the 44th to move into this office in 20 years. (Bill Robertle and Pete Henry had previously held this honor.) Happy with the successes of the past, and reminded that 'today's work is tomorrow's memories,' Dick set new goals for the upcoming year. He promised continued efficiency in administrative activities—preserving the glorious history of the 2 AD, support of the Memorial Library; and ongoing efforts to recruit membership in the Heritage League.

David Hastings, Chairman of the Memorial Trust, presented an endearing expression of gratitude to the 2nd Air Division for their contributions to his country. Formerly a pilot in the RAF, he spoke knowledgeably about the sacrifices America had made for his country. He thanked

the men for coming to England's aid in her darkest hour, for creating the Memorial Library, for providing Fulbright Scholars for library service, and for coming to England after 9/11 despite the horror which had recently transpired. He reminded the 2 AD that the 6,700 airmen, all volunteers, who gave their lives flying from England, would never be forgotten. Hastings accepted a check for \$50,000 from the 2 AD Treasurer for continued maintenance and development of the Library.

One speaker reminded us of the reality of American life in a poem: "It's not the reporter who gives you freedom of the press. It's the soldier. It's not the politician that gives you freedom to demonstrate. It's the soldier. It's not the preacher that gives you freedom of religion. It's the soldier. (How true.)"

Julian Ertz, 44th representative to the 2 AD, brought a special prize to the evening's unplanned entertainment-his daughter Beth. Every wonderful old tune that we could name she strummed out on the piano; and on - or - off key, we sang. Voices from other groups couldn't resist joining, many of whom even remembered all the words. It truly closed the evening on a high note. The next gathering will be in Chicago, the birthplace of the 2 AD.



From the President's Note Pad

The most personal experiences of men of the 44th Bomb Group are moving onto the Web Pages and the Database. They are listed under 'Legacy Pages' in the Database. Long ago Will Lundy had the foresight to begin collecting and filing personal stories and diaries in a room that eventually resembled a warehouse. Currently, his Roll of Honor, the listing of plane crashes and casualties, is being updated and revised. That information will soon be entered into our Database. This information is an integral part of our history. Because of Lundy's lifetime effort, the 44th Bomb Group is ahead of all other veteran organizations in preserving our history for future generations. Unfortunately, not every member of the 44th is on file because his information has never been submitted.

Some time ago we sent out a request for donations for this valuable but expensive endeavor. The generosity of our members and their families has been of tremendous value in advancing the project; and along with the gifts came new memberships. In some instances we received bad news that a veteran had passed away. That meant that his war experiences may not have made it into the Database. That is very sad.

If you have a personal diary, photograph or story that has not been submitted, or if you know an event that your husband, dad, brother or other relative told, send it in. It's not too late. Don't wait for someone else to do it, as it may not get done. We need these personal accounts to make WWII meaningful to people who will read them long after we are gone.

Have you sent in your Biography? These are essential to completing our history. We are the Greatest Generation that undertook the most daunting assignment in history, and we prevailed. Future generations should know that WWII was won by ordinary people who did extraordinary service when it was needed. Send us your life history and your war experiences before it is too late. Do you need a Bio form? Let us know, and we will promptly mail one to you.

You may have noticed a change in the line up of the Board of Directors page in this issue as well as the Winter issue. I must apologize for my oversight in acknowledging a very important thing. Since my inauguration to the Presidency, for lack of a volunteer to replace me in the Treasures job, I have been wearing both hats. While I was not complaining, I must confess, with both jobs, I was trying to keep many balls in the air. At the Omaha Reunion, the Board addressed the problem and to my great pleasure, our, ever willing to help, Board Member, Dick Lynch, volunteered to take the Treasurer's job effective January 1, 2003. The transition is now complete, Dick (and Betty) is in charge of our money, and I have more time to devote to the Presidency. To Dick and Betty, you have my heart felt thanks and admiration for taking that one step forward when our Association needed you.

Herold Johnson



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Become Part of the Future!!





AN INVITATION TO WASHINGTON, DC FOR THE 2003 REUNION

(PRESENTED BY THE ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.)

*Come join your comrades in beautiful Washington, DC
October 9-13, 2003
for the 44th Bomb Group Association Reunion.*

We will be staying at the Doubletree Hotel in Crystal City, Virginia. The hotel is conveniently located near the Reagan National Airport, with complimentary shuttle service. For those driving, there is on-site parking with reduced fees for our group. The Metro station, the Pentagon, the Pentagon Fashion Mall and many fine restaurants are all a pleasant walk from the hotel.

The Doubletree is just over the bridge from DC, with many rooms providing views of the skyline. Possible pre-arranged tours include the Virginia Hunt Country (a nearby escape from the bustle of the city) and a city tour with a knowledgeable guide to describe all the historic sights. After the tours, take some time on your own to be inspired by the American spirit throughout the nation's capital with visits to the museums, monuments and other sights, using readily available public transportation. Complete reunion information, including a detailed program, activity registration form, hotel reservation form and travel information will be published in the next issue of the 8 Ball Tails.

SCOUTING OUT WASHINGTON, D.C. FOR THE 44th BGVA WITH THE DFC

Eager members of the Distinguished Flying Cross met at the Doubletree Hotel in Crystal City, the site of the upcoming Reunion of the 44th BGVA. The Armed Forces Reunion Inc. orchestrated the event, as they will ours in 2003. They were truly efficient. The DFC's current goal, in addition to swelling the membership list, is to support the soon-to-be Aerospace Museum, an extension of the Smithsonian. It will be alongside Dulles Airport, south of Washington.

Entertainment included a bus tour of the city by a very knowledgeable guide and a boat tour of the Potomac. (Scratch that event. You are looking at warehouses and listening to lousy music.)

The Aerospace Museum was awesome. I asked to see **Algene Key's** original plane, *Ole Miss*. Our ever-eager guide rushed to show it, along with the Spirit of St. Louis and floors of other planes that are familiar to any airman. We would have enjoyed a longer stay, but time marched on, as always.

The Banquet Speaker was General John R. Dailey, USMC (Ret), Director of the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum. The conversations later were

engaging. One pilot in the Pacific Theater, who flew from Samoa, described the attrition rate as he saw it. "We would get a very young pilot from the States, send him out on his first mission, watch his plane go over the horizon; and we would never see him again. That happened so frequently, we had to steel ourselves to get used to it." (*Thanks to our great researchers in the 44th, we know what happened to those who did not return.*)

A pilot from the 15th Air Force thought he figured out the problem of the August 1st, 1943 mission to Ploesti. He explained that 'the planes didn't go down because of small arms fire; the problem was that they flew too low'!!!!!!! Nothing that Perry or I could say convinced him flying low was the plan. (*We hope the gentleman goes to the 60th Anniversary Celebration next year to get straightened out. We couldn't do it.*)

Being true to our code of exercising, Perry and I walked through an open area (*sniper be darned*) to get to the Mall and to the Metro, an underground rail. That mode of transportation is splendid. We went to the Spy Museum where we stood 1-1/2 hours to get in. The history of spying and deception is on parade

there—the words of Cicero, the Trojan Horse, Hannibal's majestic trek across the Alps are all featured. Also, the story of the 'Man Who Never Was' and the rubber tanks in Scotland before D-Day, featuring General Patton strutting about—all to confuse Hitler about the landing site. Gadgets used by the CIA or KGB during the Cold War are on exhibit. It was worth the wait.

An ideal way to see the sights in Washington is by the Trolley Tours. They will drop you anywhere you want to go, and pick you up for your next destination — The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Smithsonian, Vietnam Wall, Korean Memorial (*Don't miss that*), the Capitol, the still unfinished WWII Memorial, and many other sights that are near and dear to Americans. Phillips Flagship Restaurant was a part of our tour. If you are a seafood lover, you can't beat it.

Perry and I go to Washington from time to time, living only 100 miles away. I never stop reminding myself that this is the greatest, most powerful city in the world. The members of the 44th BGVA will love being there.



CELEBRATING IN OMAHA AT THE 2002 44th BGVA REUNION

Roy and Lolly Owen laid out a blazing schedule of events that provided camaraderie, sobering moments and an education of the Air Force History at the Omaha Reunion. The long corridors of the Holiday Inn were challenging, giving 44thers the opportunity to get some daily exercise, along with an opportunity to share the memories of cold showers in Shipdham, and colder adventures while traveling to Berlin, Cologne and other colorful places.



Roy and Lolly Owen

Sitting in the Strategic Command Underground Command Center at

Offutt AFB was a powerful experience. It was in the inner sanctum of American power. On September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush had occupied that same room. From that room, any skirmish in the planet could be viewed with intensity. Was the Base safe from an atomic explosion? "Not at all," reported the guide. "We don't even keep food here. If a Bomb came, we'd be gone." Despite that single weakness, we viewed the great communication system and dramatic photographs; and listened to carefully worded descriptions of the Base's activities. The telephones in the deep chamber connect to the White House, the Pentagon, Donald Rumsfeld and other important places; and we were told, "If the phone rings, do not answer it. It is not for you."

Once known as the Strategic Air Command, it has taken on many more activities, and is now known as the Strategic Command Center. The

55th Wing provides worldwide reconnaissance, command and control, presidential support, treaty verification and airlift missions. Despite these heavy responsibilities, they permit scheduled tours, with uniformed guides surrounding the groups.

It is reputed that General Curtis LeMay's fist was the model for this symbol. (Those who knew him remember his iron clad policies.)



Lunch at the Officer's club was delicious and healthful... sans dessert, to the dismay of a few who yearned for more calories.

In the Rotunda of the Strategic Air Command Museum hung the SR-71, a plane which Roy Owen had the pleasure of flying. Below it, cast in metal was his name and those who shared that honor.



Lee Aston's photographic skills were on display at the Command Center. He snapped this picture upon the crew's return from a mission. L-R: Lt. Curt Silverthorne, Bombardier; S/Sgt. George Chigaris, (Deceased), Waist Gunner; 1st. Lt. Chris C. Spagnola, first pilot; Driver unknown.

Lunch at the Mahoney State Park Lodge on the Platte River was delightful, and except for a few unfortunate ones who had to hitch-hike to the next attraction, it was uneventful. The Lee Simmons Wildlife Safari Park was an adventure. Whooping cranes really whooped, and a pride of lions lay casually about. Wolves were not shy to come view us, from behind a fence, of course. The big moment came when the bus refused to continue. There we were-stuck 'out where the buffalo roam'. Lowell Roberts and the driver concocted a scheme to get us to the trading post and safety.

President Folsom officiated at the Grand Banquet, and Immediate Past President 'Mike' Mikoloski with great solemnity, conducted the Candle Lighting Ceremony. President 'Jerry' lit the source candle. Representing each group, the following members lit each successive candle: **George Insley** (66th), **Walter Sorenson** (67th), **Robert Swage** (68th), **James Hagen** (506th) **William Wickham** (Hq., Mntee, Ordinances, Comm), **Dale Lee** (POWs), **Worden Weaver** (Ploesti), **Arthur Aronoff**(Kiel), Jacqueline Roberts (Pentagon, World Trade Ctr., Penna).

The 2002 44th BGVA's Meritorious Medallions were presented to: Beverly Folsom, Lolly Owen, Irene Lundy, Edith Miceli, 'Fritzi' Selasky, Lois Hand (accepted by her son, Charles A. Hand), Betty Lynch, Estelle Voelker, Beth Ertz, **Perry Morse** and Ruth Dobbs.

Will Lundy presented Peter Frizell a monogrammed clock in recognition of the contribution he has made in preserving the history of the 44th by acquiring valuable photographs.



Left: Pete Frizell accepts a special award from Will Lundy. IPP 'Mike' Mikoloski officiated at the Awards Program.

Right: Lois Cianci looks at her 'Happy Birthday' video, recorded by her husband, Tony.

The Leon Johnson Meritorious Service Award was presented to **Arthur A. Hand** (66th Sq.) by General Johnson's grandson, Leon Johnson Abbott. Art has dedicated his life to locating members of the 44th Bomb Group, and bringing many of them into membership.

The evening ended with a presentation of WWII songs by a group of five, called The Avi8ors. They sang *Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree*, *Der Fuehrer's Face* and, of course, *Coming In On A Wing And a Prayer...* all the great songs that we simply can't ever forget. Nobody could resist tapping their feet and singing along. It was fantastic.



Above: Everybody joined the Avi8or in singing the Air Corps Song.



Left: Perry Morse and Richard Lynch served up beverages and snacks.



Right: Ann and Nick Garza at the 506 Squadron Dinner

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**A CORRECTION TO THE REPORT
OF THE SEMINAR HELD BY THE
COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE**

From the Editor:

The missing half of a sentence in the report of the Ploesti Mission must be noted, to give full credit to the heroism of Col. **William R. Cameron** and **Thomas Holmes, Jr.**

Immediate Past President 'Mike' **Mikoloski** had written, "Both Colonel Cameron and Tommy Holmes had completed their combat tours, but volunteered to add their experience and leadership on this dangerous mission." *Only when it is recognized that this was a mission they made by choice, can anyone appreciate their courage and determination.*

The war experiences of both of these pilots are forever imprinted in the history of the 44th, just as Ploesti is the mission against which all other missions are measured.

**THE 2nd AIR DIVISION
REUNION
June 4-8, 2003**

The 2003 Reunion of the 2 AD will be at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Oak Brook, Illinois. An Early Bird party will be the evening of June 4. Evenings of June 5 & 6 will be Group Nights. The Banquet will be the evening of June 7, with departure on June 8.

This is an opportunity for many groups to meet and participate in the organizational skills and bargaining power of the larger organization.

It is also an opportunity for the 44th members to come and honor one of our own--Col. Richard (Dick) Butler. Dick has made major contributions to the 2 AD, as well as the 44th BGVA, besides the help he has extended to individuals who have served under his command. He is deserving of our support.

**PLOESTI 60th
ANNIVERSARY REUNION**

July 30 - August 3, 2003

*From: Blaine Duxbury
Associate 44th Member*

All 44th Tidal Wave veterans are invited to attend the 60th Anniversary Reunion to commemorate the low level bombing raid on the Ploesti oil refineries on August 1, 1943. The Reunion will encompass all five bomb groups that participated in the raid.

The Reunion will be held at the Best Western Salt Lake Plaza Hotel, Salt Lake City, Utah. The Reunion schedule is as follows:

July 30 - Early Arrivals.
Registration; Display/Hospitality Room Open, First night get together - Buffet.

July 31 - Registration. The day will consist of symposiums and lectures by historians and archivists. Tidal Wave vets will be invited to participate. Hospitality & memorabilia rooms will be open. Buffet Dinner. Evening—visit the Mormon Tabernacle for a practice session with the Choir.

August 1 - Visit to Hill Air Force Base to view a recently restored B-24D. A Memorial service at the base chapel. Lunch in the Officers Club. A banquet that evening with a special program to commemorate this historic day.

August 2 - Additional forums. Opportunities for social events; hospitality & memorabilia rooms open.

Aug 3 - Say good-bye to comrades and head home. In addition to Tidal Wave combat crews, ground crews and relatives of participants are invited. The Low Level POW organization will be meeting also. An informational packet including registration will be mailed out soon.

For further information, contact
Blaine Duxbury
524 Weston Hills Court
Eagan, MN 55123
Phone: 651-456-5372.
E-mail: bdux@aol.com

The General Leon W. Johnson Distinguished Service Award

From Art Hand

All 44th BGVA Members,

Just a few words to let you know how proud I am to have received the General Leon W. Johnson Distinguished Service Award. What made it special was having General Johnson's grandson, Leon Johnson Abbott present it to me. I was surprised, shocked and speechless.

I search for former bomb group members hoping to get old friends or crew members together. I like a challenge and it has been one. When I find someone that has requested information about a friend that was in the 44th, it makes me feel very good. When I find a widow or relative of a deceased member, it makes me feel bad.

One I remember is a widow I called and asked if I could speak to her husband and she replied no. He passed away yesterday and will be buried tomorrow. What can one say except I am very sorry to hear of him passing and wish we could have located him sooner.

If there are any requests about any former members, I will do my best to locate him or them for you. Thanks to all 44th Bomb Group members that have helped me in the past.



Art Hand (right) and son Charles.

Art

'THERE HE WAS'

THE CONTINUED SAGA OF LT. JAMES TOMBLIN

Lt. **James Tomblin** called his book, *There I Was*, Story No. 45,001, in recognition that 45,000 equally imposing accounts of WWII had been written. In a previous issue he describes his mission on October 30, 1943, when as Navigator on the Arthur Ledford crew, 66th Sq., they were in the group leading the 14th Combat Wing and the 2nd Air Division to the Marshalling Yards in Hamm, Germany.

A/C # 44-10531, unofficially named *My Sad Ass*, exploded after four bursts of flak set the plane ablaze. Trapped behind one of the nose wheel doors, Tomblin and Lt. **Richard Pascal**, Bombardier, were caught in the flames, but escaped when the plane blew up, tossing them free. They pulled their rip cords and floated into the waiting arms of the Germans. They shared the hospital experience with their pilot, Lt. **Ledford**. There were some acts of compassion from their captors. A German soldier put salve on Tomblin's burns; a physician gave him a shot of morphine. Both Tomblin and Pascal were blinded by their facial burns. It took about a month for the swelling to go down so they could see.

Tomblin kept notes on the hospital diet. Breakfast at the hospital consisted of two slices of white bread and one or two of black bread, usually with honey, and coffee. Noon was boiled potatoes, as many as they could eat. Twice a week they had a little piece of meat. Sometimes they had soup, sometimes spinach. They had fruit for dessert about four times per week. In the evening they had more bread with cheese or baloney (sic) on it. Those 'good' meals were short lived.

On October 19th a nun packed them a lunch, gave them an apple and sent them off to a train, and ultimately to jail. Here, cold, hungry and lonely, Tomblin survived on bread that

was sometimes moldy. Gratefully, he once received a Red Cross care package with two packs of cigarettes, a tooth brush, tooth powder, two handkerchiefs, a razor, shaving stick and a towel.

In time he was permitted a shower, and then something good happened. He met the American Commanding Officer of the camp, a Col. Stark. He provided quiet reassurance that helped the captives through the stressful times. That night they were fed a good meal. Some of the men ate so much, after a long deprivation, they threw it back up. Tomblin managed a little better; he just felt bad. The International Red Cross supplied food parcels that made life quite bearable. In time Tomblin, Pascal and Ledford were placed in the same room.

Fortunately, somebody smuggled a short-wave radio into the camp, so each day a fellow prisoner (called a Kriegie by the Germans) would come to their room, close the door and provide the war news broadcast from BBC. Like all Americans, they hoped the War would be over by Christmas; so when they heard the news of Bastogne, it was truly depressing. Sad, too, was the knowledge that Glenn Miller was killed.

In March 1944, eighty prisoners escaped through a 30' x 300' tunnel they had dug. Seventy-seven were recaptured, fifty were shot, and three got back to England. That story was later made into a movie, *The Great Escape*.

A reasonable level of comfort was always temporary. They were moved by box car to Sagan, Stalag Luft III, a three day trip. They had to sleep in shifts, taking turns with seats and one man on the floor. After that there were frequent moves, many times within hearing distance of the battle, and frequently bombs

were falling in their vicinity. They were marched through bitter cold weather, frequently through snow, and sometimes with only a slice of bread to eat in a day. It has been written that Hitler demanded that imprisoned airmen be kept from the hands of the invaders, as he planned to use them for bargaining chips. His officers were following his command.

On May 1st, General Patton strode through their tent, followed by a 2-Star General, two 1-Star Generals, a full Colonel, and a British Group Commander. The Yankees had arrived! Eight days later they were moved by truck to an airport, loaded into C-47s and flown to Camp Lucky Strike. When a ship was available, they sailed to Southampton, England, then home.

Tomblin's detailed account of his War and POW experience was created at the urging of his mother, whose secretarial skills made the

undertaking much easier. His mother had an amazing way of dealing with his travails, beyond ESP. Every day that she walked to work, she looked to see a bird fly between her and the corner. If she saw it, it meant that Jim was flying that day. Once it flew into a bush, and she interpreted it to mean that 'something happened.' When she got to work, she looked at his picture and saw a purple heart. She interpreted it to mean he was injured, but alive. Her intuition was accurate.

Unlike many POWs whose treatment was so vile they cannot forget. Lt. James Tomblin looks back on instances where a nun and a German guard extended unexpected kindness, and when a prisoner extended kind consideration to a guard. Years later he visited a German cemetery. He wrote this poem, in recognition that there must be an innate spirit that unites all mankind, regardless of their role in life:



TWO GRAVEYARDS

*One lies there in regal splendor, an eternal flame there burns.
With grass and trees minutely trimmed, imposing sculpture everywhere.
Brick pathways lead a visitor throughout the gorgeous plot.
It takes your breath, it numbs your mind, so beautiful it is.
Ten thousand graves, each marked with plaques, to help locate a loved one there.
We call them heroes, 'cause we won; and Victors write the history books.*

*Just four hundred kilos distant rest ten thousand other souls.
A lonely cross marks each four graves, with lawn and trees untrimmed.
No sculpture here, no constant flame; just weeds and rock strewn paths.
No heroes either, 'cause they lost, and Victors write the history books.*



BERLIN-My Third Mission

By George R. Insley

It was a dark October night when they ousted me out of my bed. I looked at my watch to find it was just 0200 hours. I hadn't expected to be called for a mission, so I had been reading an interesting book till 2300 hours. Only 3 hours of sleep.

I quickly dressed and wondered where the mission was headed this morning. I went over to the mess hall and had breakfast of scrambled powdered eggs. I caught transportation down to the briefing room. We sweated out the time till the briefing started. The curtain was withdrawn that covered the map and my heart skipped a beat as my eyes traced the red course line to Berlin! Berlin!!! Right into the center of all those FLAK guns. The Weather Officer said there was freezing rain falling over all of Europe. Everything would be coated with a layer of ice.

I looked at the formation chart to see what position I would be flying and was surprised to find that I was in position 3 of the lead squadron, flying off the lead ships left wing. In the lead element; but this was only my 3rd mission! My first mission had been longer and I remembered how scared I was when I saw the flak and fighters on that mission to Danzig, Poland. The 44th Bomb Group had never flown to Berlin before. Berlin, I was scared. Berlin! Why, the Germans would have every plane they could muster against us and flak guns! We had heard of all the flak installations around the city.

I don't remember everything that was said, but the map was speckled with red blotches indicating where the flak installations were located along the route, as well as at the target. They reported the expected fighters concentrations. The good news was that on this cold October day of 1943, a FREEZING RAIN was falling over all of Europe and that the fighters would not be able to get off of the ground nor fly without having de-icing equipment. That was all well and good,

but I was still SCARED. They could still shoot the flak cannons even with freezing rain. Much more was said, but all I could think of was the fear, the overwhelming fear, I felt.



After the briefing, I went out by myself and fell on my knees and talked to God whom I knew about, but I was not intimately connected with Him. Sure I went to Sunday school, some of the time, even to Church. I believed in Him. Did I love Him? Did I follow His teachings? Some! As I talked to Him, laying my fear burden before Him, the fright slowly melted away and I had peace. I went to check out my parachute and other items I took on my flights. I had peace about this flight. God gave me peace, a peace that continued as I flew my two tours of combat. Yes, the fright disappeared. I was calm as I went to my plane and waited with my crew. As we waited, a jeep drove up and said that the flight was scrubbed. PRAISE GOD!

As I reflect back over the past 60 years, I dedicated my life to serve as a missionary pilot for the Wycliffe Bible Translators from 1951 to 1990 serving in Peru and Brazil. I gave my life to God that morning. I had a need, I came seeking help and I was helped; now I have helped others to find Christ.

As you can see from the story, this mission was scrubbed, but it was the most important mission of my life. After that experience, I do not fear for what life might bring, nor in death.



George R. Insley

(Ed. Note: George Insley, 66 Sq. signed on for a second tour, completing a total of 49 missions, and rising to the rank of Captain. He flew as Lead Crew on his last mission, the Rothensee Oil Refinery in Magdeburg, Germany, February 15, 1945.)

Will Sez



In my last message to you, I tried to outline the procedures we were following to replace my old book, "*Roll of Honor and Casualties*." So now I would like to bring you up to date on our progress with the project.

I have reviewed and forwarded all of your stories to Brenda Phillips , our new secretarial support, to type and scan, and she has been and will be sending all of your data to Jim Hamilton to 'cut and paste' in the new book format. So we are closing in on the possibility of printing out the first book, now measured in months.

For you who do not know the background of my first Roll Book, I should tell you that it attempted to identify all aircraft that we lost during the war - over 150 of them. Also, a definite effort to tell what happened to cause the loss of each plane and your personal accounts telling what happened to you and the other crewmen on board. The text is written in each man's own words as nearly as possible. Some evasion action have been included, but limited. Most evasion stories were entered into a Legacy Section of the cd rom.

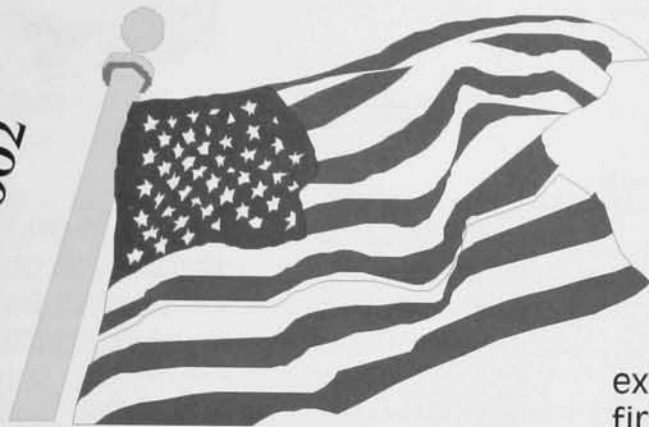
It would help us a great deal to get a rough estimate of just how many of you members might be interested in purchasing these new books. Our numbers are dwindling, of course, so there is a distinct possibility that there might not be enough of a demand to get them published. So, before we move along too far, it would help a great deal to learn approximately how many members might be interested. If we go to a printing, it will require two books of course. So take that into consideration. No price is available, but we will make it as reasonable as possible. Could I ask those of you who might be interested to drop me a card?

*Many thanks,
Will*



FOLDED WINGS

DECEMBER
2002



PREPARED BY:

Will Lundy

BARTEET, WILLIAM S.

12 October 2002

35153446 66th Squadron

"Bill" Bartteet was a member of the 66th Squadron ground echelon that sailed to England on board the Queen Mary on 6 September 1942. He served with the 66th Squadron and returned to the U.S. on 16 June 1945 at the close of the war in Europe. He was 82 at the time of his death, was the owner of the Bartteet Plastic Pipe Company. His wife, Mable, survives him.

BUCHNER, KENNETH

Date Unknown

Headquarters

Sgt. Buchner has been a long-time member of the 2nd ADA. Although he has had two residences -- in Ft. Lauderdale and the other in Akron, NY, little is known about his service with us. Nothing has been located at this time.

CIESIELSKI, RAYMOND J.

Date Unknown

0-686989

506th Squadron - Pilot

Lt. Ciesielski and his crew were assigned to the 506th Squadron on 11 August 1944.

This was a very unusual day as the base was celebrating their 200 mission party, with beer flowing freely. He flew his first mission as a co-pilot for combat experience on 18 August, and then the first crew mission was dated 24 August 1944. For many of their 35 missions, they flew "Clean Sweep" (42-51351). A break in their missions occurred on 16 November when they were sent to Knightshayes for one week of R&R. For many of their later missions, they flew as a lead crew. Their tour of duty (35 missions) ended on 16 February 1945. On the 28th of this same month, they were transferred to the 70th Replacement Depot for assignment back in the U.S. After the war, Lt. Ciesielski changed his name to Chelsea.

HAUSE, MAURICE E.

11 September 2002

66th Squadron - Bombardier

"Mike" was one of the first replacement crews to join the 66th in April 1943. As a member of the Hughes crew, he had trained in B-17s, but was assigned to B-24s upon arrival in England. He was interned in Turkey after the Ploesti Raid. He eventually returned to England and finished his tour. He left the Republic Steel Company, and became an expert in hunting and fishing. According to his pilot, Major Charles Hughes, he also became expert at telling tall tales about his exploits in all of the above.

PECK, JOHN W.

Date Unknown

506th Squadron - Navigator

Lt. Peck flew his first combat mission as a member of the Confer crew on 26 November 1944. The next day he was with the Lt. Zitzman crew. After a transfer to the Scherzberg crew, he flew his third mission on 12 December 1944 and many more with them. On 16 April 1945, he became a 1st Lt. and flew his last two missions with that rank on that day and 20 April. Twenty-one missions in all.

SANNES, CARL A.

18 October 2002

0-816716

67th Squadron - Co-Pilot

Carl Sannes was the co-pilot for the N. E. Bartlett crew. This crew was assigned on 29 June 1944 and flew their first mission on 7 July. They completed their tour of 32 missions on 12 December 1944. After a short period of temporary duty assignments, they were transferred to the 70th Replacement Depot for assignment back to the U.S. Carl was born on 8 August 1916, was 86 years old, survived by his wife, Dora.

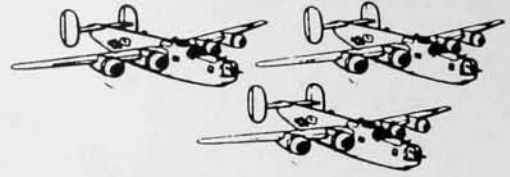
TODD, WEBB C.

2002

18047021

68th Squadron - Aircraft Mechanic

Webb joined the 68th Squadron on 6 August 1942 at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma, three weeks before the 44th BG was assigned to overseas duty. After processing at Ft. Dix, NJ, the 44th BG ground echelon boarded the HMS Queen Mary in New York Harbor on 5 September. The next day, he was with 16,000 others on their way to Scotland and ultimately to Cheddington,



England. Then to Shipdham on 10 October 1942. As most of the ground personnel, the assignment in England was for the duration of hostilities, so he spent the next 31 months at Shipdham. Webb served in the 68th Squadron Engineering Section working on many B-24s. In so doing, these men built up close relationships with each other that carried over into peacetime. Webb and Robert O. Krueger were very active in the 68th Squadron non-commissioned organization. For many years they had annual reunions and published a newsletter. Then the organization expanded to include all 68th Squadron personnel. They joined the 44th BGHMG that was organized in 1980, and reorganized in 1994. Webb compiled and published a fine history of the 68th Squadron, was active in the early 44th BGHMB as the 68th Squadron Historian, and later in the 44th BGVA in the same capacity. He is respected and admired by us all.





MAIL & E-MAIL



From the Editor: *I've been challenged to print this by an anonymous author:*

"The Journal is full of wonderful articles, and I keep looking for an exciting story from a ground pounder; but have just realized that there is no way they will admit to the soft life they had in England.

"You say the fly boys had it good. They had fresh eggs for breakfast. With my own eyes I saw one wrench jockey devour a six egg (fresh) omelet with fresh peppers, English cheddar cheese, chopped onions and English Bacon. Ain't no fat in English bacon. Fresh cocoa off the charcoal heated stove, kept red hot at all times. That stove could boil a helmet full of water in three minutes flat. To continue, toast from fresh bread, English butter with strawberry jam. They traded three jars of orange marmalade for one strawberry. All this action takes place when the fly boys are over the flak guns of St. Nazaire. It would be a pleasure to return to Ploesti with a belly full of that grub."

Editor's Question: Are we all talking about the same War?



From Monica Loman:

"My husband, the artist who decorated the walls at the 14th Combat Wing in Shipdham is delighted that his work is being preserved. At age 85, Jack (Loman) is still painting, despite a stroke!" The Lomans were married in 1943 at St. Gregory's church. They have two sons, four grandchildren and three great grandchildren. They would love to hear from their friends in the 44th. Address: 1527 Kronborg Drive, Salvang, CA 93463. E-mail: MJSYV@aol.com



From Joe and Barbara Crandell:

"Enclosed is the picture of fifteen year old Peter Emmerich, a member of the gun crew that brought down my brother, Lt. Leonard Crandell, pilot on the *Kay Bar*. The plane went down on Operation Varsity, the low level mission to Wesel, Germany."



The Crandell family -- Joe, Barbara and daughter, Connie Moss, stand at the crash site of A/C # 42-100314 G+. Grass has not covered the wound in the earth caused by the crash near Hamminkeln, Germany.



From Fred Browning, a bombsight mechanic with the 67th:

"This picture showing the cartoon on *K-Bar* is **Chester Pearson**, who worked with me. I think he was in the 66th. I took this picture with an old folding camera, and developed my photos in the Bombsight Maintenance Bldg., which is still standing. Steve Adams is a fine and dedicated gentleman, whose research was correct regarding *K-Bar*."

(Ed. Note: Lt. Crandell's plane, K-Bar went down on the Wesel Mission. All crew members were KIA.)



From Brigadier General Robert Cardenas:

The National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC provides three residential fellowships to support research in aerospace history. The application deadline for the academic year 2002-2003 was January 15, 2003. Further information can be found on the Museum website @ <http://www.nasm.edu/nasm/joinnasm/fellow/fellow.htm>. For information regarding fellowships, check <http://web.siu.edu/ofg/>. Information about the Charles A. Lindbergh, Chair in Aerospace History, check mike.neufeld@nasm.si.edu. For contact to the NASA History office, check the NASA History Page @ <http://history.nasa.gov>.

Board News

Because of added expenses of postage and administrative cost the Board has voted a dues increase of \$5. Yearly dues is now \$25, still a bargain in today's world.

An Appeal From the Board:

Will Lundy is making a monumental effort to move the diaries and correspondence from his bedroom library to the Database, which requires much secretarial help. We also need an Editorial Board to oversee that this information which the secretary has typed is technically correct. Only a person who has flown in a B-24 or maintained or repaired one would know these particulars.

Can you give us a hand? Call or write President Gerald Folsom, 3582 East Dover Hill Road, Salt Lake City, UT 84121-5527; Phone (801) 733-7471; e-mail: 44thbgva@xmission.com. WE NEED YOUR EXPERTISE.

FYI:

Bob Norsen, Jackie Roberts and Charlotte Huntley are all experts on Alternative Medicine. Any of the three are eager to advise you on your health concerns.

Tommy Shepherd wants to know:

Why they don't make the whole plane out of the same material used for the indestructible black box? Why do they call the airport the 'Terminal' if flying is really safe? Why sheep don't shrink when it rains?

Cartoon submitted by Frank Schaeffer:



From Yves Vercoutter:

I am a 32 year old Frenchman, extremely keen on anything about the WWII history, and mainly the Landing in Normandy on June 6, 1944. I try to go every year to Normandy, to pay homage to our Liberators, and for me to collect my thoughts about graves in the Omaha Beach Cemetery.

If the Americans had not come in 1944, liberating a land and people that they didn't know, I certainly would not be here. I owe these men my liberty, and I take a pride in writing them to express my gratitude, and especially for the sacrifice of those who didn't return home.

Please publish my e-mail address, and ask your members to contact me, so I can individually thank them.

vercutter.pascale@wanadoo.fr



Steve Adams has questions:

An eBay purchase by Steve Adams - two original pictures of planes from the 68th Squadron. Can anybody identify the mechanic of *The Little Dutchman*? Who flew in it? Who flew in *Shortleg*?



Answering the Editor's question of "Who was the Ball Turret Gunner whose life was saved by the skill of the Crash Landing made by Rockford C. Griffith and Lawrence W. Grone:

Forrest S. Clark remembers the details of that return from the Kjeller Mission. "When the bail out bell rang, I rolled out of the tail turret and Kuban was hit by enemy fire from

German fighters. He went down and I rolled on top of him. He had come out of the ball turret to bring some ammo belts back to me. ...We struggled back for about two hours, just over the sea, and finally had to jump when we had passed over the English coast..." **William T. Kuban** sustained head and body wounds. After recovering, he flew four more missions, the last being March 3, 1944.



COL. CLAYTON ROBERTS AND HIS STRANGE ENCOUNTERS

The Allies had just seized the Remagan Bridge over the Rhine River when Lt. Clayton Roberts went on his first mission into Betzdorf and Frankfurt. The world was changing fast. Defending their home turf, the fighting was increasingly fierce. By the time Roberts made his fourth mission to Berlin, the United States had a new President, Harry S. Truman. Franklin D. Roosevelt died on March 12.

Nine missions later, after bombing the Marshalling Yards at Passau, Germany, Roberts learned that the Russians were storming Berlin. April 18, 1945 was his last mission. Less than a month later, (May 8th), he was celebrating Victory Day in Europe.

His adventures as a pilot took a new turn when he decided to stay in the service. He recently described some unusual happenings. When these events took place, he was a Colonel:

Background: When I was an airplane driver in SAC (Strategic Air Command), we had to practice bombing on RBS (Radar Bomb Scoring) sites. By electronic means the speed and altitude of the airplane, along with the known trajectory of the type of bomb simulated, the point of impact for a given target in the RBS area could be accurately determined, thus providing a means of evaluating the effectiveness of bombardiers without the use of live ordinance. At the time of my two encounters, I was with the 371st BS, 307th BG at MacDill AFB, Tampa, Fla.

First Encounter: One night on Tampa RBS, we were flying a race track pattern at 25000. We had been flying the race track pattern for over an hour when my left scanner (left waist gunner) reported a brilliant light at 8 o'clock and that it had been following us for several minutes. I banked left and saw what looked like a large landing light over my left wing. It was at our altitude and followed me in the turn onto the downwind leg of the racetrack. I had been informed at briefing that I would be the only aircraft on Tampa RBS. Since the light continued to follow me in the race track pattern and remained at the 8 o'clock position "it had to be another plane." I called Tampa RBS and was informed that I was the only aircraft over Tampa at that time. I was the only aircraft on RBS radar. I don't remember how much longer the light continued to follow me but it did not follow as I descended.

Second encounter: Again at 25000 feet, daylight, heading on a northerly course from Tampa into the Georgia/Alabama/Mississippi area (don't remember the exact mission but generally all missions were combination "long range navigation, cruise control, RBS") my right scanner called and reported a brilliant ball at the 5 o'clock position. He could not identify what it was but knew it was not an airplane. He said it was so bright that it was like looking into the sun. After a few minutes, my left scanner reported a similar object at the 8 o'clock position. Both objects were at the same altitude as we were and both maintained the same distance from us. I don't remember the time lapse, but finally both brilliant spheres flashed by the cockpit on their respective sides of the airplane at an unbelievable rate of speed. As I watched, both spheres turned to our two o'clock position, climbed at an unbelievable rate and merged with a larger sphere that had appeared at a much higher altitude moving at a rate of speed I had never seen before or since. Knowing the speed of my airplane the speed of the spheres had to be in the thousands of miles per hour.

Do I believe in UFOs? You bet!!

Clay





This poem found in the personal mementos of Dale Ruland, a name I cannot find in our Database.

THE FLYING EIGHT BALL

*At the break of early dawn
You can hear the engines song
The eight-ball's ridin' high
It's the 44th you know
And wherever you may go
You may see her in the sky.*

Chorus

*With her mighty bombers soaring
On their way to Germany
Hear those engines roaring
Their song of victory.*

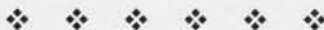
*They are flying over there
And they'll get in Jerry's hair
They're the wings of Uncle Sam
The Eight Ball is their sign
The 44th is on the line
And Berlin will soon be damned.*



FORSALE

Kevin Watson's book *Ruth-Less and Far From Home* is the story of the tragic crash of the A/C # 41-24282, 506 Sq. It is available through Amazon.com; signed copies can be obtained through hometown KEVwats@aol.com. The cost is \$20. His book is a tribute to the James Bolin crew of *Ruthless*.

The 44th Tour Group in 1997 will remember Kevin for graciously traveling with the group through France and Belgium and shopping for amenities to make the members more comfortable on the bus. Watson arranged for an awesome ceremony on Butts Brow, the hillside crash site of the *Ruthless*; and later, the meeting at the Eastbourne Courthouse with Mayoress Beryl Healy. More recently, he arranged a Remembrance Day tour for 44th members after the 2 AD meeting in Norwich.



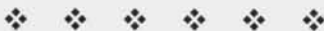
44th BOMB GROUP, *The Flying Eightballs*, a 115 page documentary of the 44th BG is available for \$55 from Turner Publishing Company, 412 Broadway, P.O. Box 3101, Paducah, KY 42002-3101. This hardbound 9 x 11 book has 128 pages of historical material, and biographies of many veterans. A good reference book for new members seeking information.



THE WILD BLUE YONDER is a chronology of the James N. Williams crew, (66th BS) as recorded by Warren F. McPherson. McPherson's detailed report tells the story from induction to his last mission, concluded by a kiss on solid soil. The Tail Gunner, who later became a minister, presents a lively and accurate account of the life of an NCO in the maelstrom of war. Cost \$10 for a soft cover, 32 page ringed book. Write 1016 E. Rockwood Street, Springfield, MO 65807-5092.



PURSUIT IN THE PYRENEES, by Archie Barlow, Jr., is an account of a three month effort of evading the enemy in German-occupied France, 1944. The price is \$20. Write L. B. Wright, 3911 Black Locust Drive, Houston, TX 77088-6904. Tel. 281-931-1932. E-mail Wright@juno.com.



The Angel and the Eagle by Joseph E. Milliner is a personal story, written in 3rd person, of his experiences as a pilot, a family man and a distraught father whose son, a helicopter pilot, tragically disappeared in Laos during the Vietnam War. Milliner describes the fury of the Ploesti Raid, target White V, in dramatic detail. Then there was Foggia, where *Buzzin Bear* crashed, and four of the crew were lost. According to Joe, his ever faithful Guardian Angel JOSEPH saved him from parachuting into the flaming plane. Milliner's signed hardcover book is available for \$11.95, (postage incl.). Write 281 Fincastle Way, Shepherdsville, KY 40165. E-mail Mackie0126@aol.com



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**44th Bomb Group
VETERANS ASSOCIATION**
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