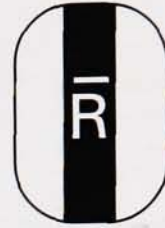


44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



8 BALL TAILS

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Forget The Wesel Mission? No Way!

Bob Vance and Louis DeBlasio as told to Ruth W. Davis-Morse

Louis DeBlasio and Bob Vance shared a unique WWII experience. After miraculously surviving the crash of their aircraft, as POW's in a German hospital, peering through bloody bandages, they witnessed the last days of Germany's downfall.



**FRONT COVER PHOTO: AT FAR RIGHT, 44th A/C Call
LETTER BAR R 42-50896, LT. MAX E. CHANDLER'S B-24.
(Louis & Bob's plane.)**

**Caption from album photo was taken from:
"This B-24 WENT ON INTO THE GROUND + exploded.
CAUSE WAS MACHINE GUN FIRE."**

It all happened as a part of Operation Varsity, the airborne assault planned to help the Allied ground troops establish and hold a bridgehead across the Rhine River around the town of Wesel, Germany.

"The forces under General George Patton were scheduled to make the river crossing assault at 9:00 p.m. on March 23, 1945 in his anxiety to beat his arch rival Ally, British General Bernard Montgomery, to the crossing, General Patton launched his attack early and made the crossing at 10:00 p.m. on March 22. Nonetheless, Operation Varsity was executed on time in the early morning of March 24.



MARCH 24, 1945 - Low level supply drop.

This was the last and biggest one-day airborne operation of the war. The enormous forces involved included 3,044 transport planes and gliders; more than 3,000 fighter sorties and 21,680 troops of the U.S. 17th and British 6th Airborne Divisions. One hundred artillery pieces, along with 109 tons of ammunition and 695 vehicles made the flight with the troops. Following them by about one hour were 240 B-24 Liberators with another 582 tons of air dropped supplies. By 2:00 p.m. they had taken every objective and linked up with the Allied ground troops a few miles

South of Wesel. It was a successful, but costly operation with 500 men killed and 1,250 wounded. The 2nd Air Division lost fourteen of the nineteen bombers lost that day.

The Lt. Max E. Chandler crew of the 506th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, flying B-24J, Bar R SOUTHERN COMFORT III, with DeBlasio and Vance in the Waist Gunners positions, were assigned to salvo the drop bundles out of the opening of the removed Ball Turret Guns. They were flying the left wing of the left element of the second of three nine-ship squadrons at approximately 200 feet. The 44th dropped 60 tons of supplies, while battling through an intense storm of 20mm cannons, machine gun and small weapons fire. Upon reaching the drop area, Sgt. Thomas Clark opened the bulkhead that accessed the bomb bay and released his supply bundles. Lou and Bob shoved theirs through the Sperry ball opening. The plane was banking to get out of the area when suddenly the entire ship seemed to stall in midair and shudder. They had been hit!

Clark was the first to see the flames coming up through the bomb bay. Louis, right waist gunner, saw the flames and shouted, "We've had it." Then he and Bob assumed the 'ditching position'—flat on the floor of the waist section on top of the unused flak suits, hands behind their heads and feet against the Sperry ball platform bulkhead. As it happened, unlike other members of the crew, neither had removed their flak suits. "That is what saved us," Louis declared. "We were protected from the impact of the crash."

From 200 feet above, Richard Lynch, nose gunner in Lt. Lee's aircraft, saw the crash, and described it as follows: "...I noticed number four engine on Lt. Chandler's ship begin to smoke and then noticed the plane hit the ground with its belly and bottom part of the rudders, and then bounce up into the air and maintain level controlled flight at approximately 100 feet for about a minute and a half. The plane then, apparently out of control, bunched sharply to the right, with the right wing hitting the ground and continued to revolve to the right in a clockwise direction,

pivoting on the right wing tip and ending up skidding along the ground on its belly, 180 degrees to our path of flight."

Fate intervened in a strange way. The plane split at the waist, and Louis and Bob found themselves partially thrown clear. Louis' arm was badly injured and his left eye was bloody and beginning to swell. Bob had a deep head laceration, a fractured clavicle, and had lost one tooth. Bleeding and in semi-shock, they crawled away from the plane, minutes before it exploded. The crash took the life of Max E. Chandler, Pilot; Hugh O'Donnell, Co-Pilot; Engineer Sakis Nedder; Left Waist Gunner Thomas Clark; Radio Gunner Eugene Elliott; Nose Gunner Thomas Cordes and Navigator Robert T. Dantzer. A second ship, AC #42-100314, piloted by Lt. Leonard J. Crandell, went down also, exploding near the SOUTHERN COMFORT III. There were no survivors.

"Knowing the Germans would be watching to see if anyone got out of the plane, we crawled across a field, and hid under a wagon," Louis remembered. "I bandaged Bob's bleeding head and he bandaged my eye. I never lost consciousness, but due to his head wound, Bob was "incoherent for some time." They tried to take off their parachute harness, but weren't able. Bob's right clavicle was fractured, and Louis' left arm was practically non-functional. Neither had the strength nor coordination to open the buckle.

German soldiers were hiding in the woods nearby, but they would not come out for fear of being strafed by our fighters. Instead they sent civilians to find the survivors.

"Immediately they took our guns. One ordered me to take mine apart. I took out the clip and field stripped it," Louis said. "Then they told me to put it back together. I pretended that I didn't know how. I decided that if they were going to shoot me, it would not be with my own weapon. They carefully wrapped the parts in a handkerchief, creating a little sack. They studied our Escape Kits, taking the pain pills, chocolate and other candy. I had five English Pound notes, which they took out. To my amazement they returned them to me.

"Actually, they were surprised to learn that we were Americans. They kept asking us if we were Canadians, knowing that the British were operating in that area."

A German officer who had been hiding in the woods, took command of the two, along with a pilot from a P-47 that had crashed nearby. The officer spoke a little English, and was able to provide some first aid to their wounds. The fighter pilot had managed to bail out of his upward spiraling craft, but had a badly injured leg. The three prisoners were kept hidden in the woods, presumably to avoid the continuous strafing. When night fell, they were put on a horse drawn wagon to be transported to where? They had no idea. Both recall the driver's commands to his horse, shouted out in the darkness, "Hooh hot."

They woke up the next morning on the kitchen floor of a farmhouse, with German guards standing by. Louis' strongest memory was of suffering from overwhelming thirst; and with his multiple contusions, could hardly walk. From there, they were moved to a First Aid Station where a German doctor ordered a tetanus shot for both. Because they were wearing so many clothes, the injection was placed in the pectoral muscle in their chests. Louis had a grossly abnormal reaction, tremendous swelling at the needle site and a case of hives that lasted five days. The misery of the itch kept him awake for five nights without relief. Next they were marched across a field and into the woods to an artillery unit. Fully expecting to be shot, they were relieved that their luck continued to hold. Once again darkness brought another move. The next morning they woke up on the straw covered floor of a dance hall, along with other wounded soldiers, German and Allied side by side. Bob's memory upon waking up was seeing a Coca-Cola sign on the wall. It took him a minute to remember he was a POW.

With the fuel shortage, Germans were using ambulances to pull other ambulances. Only later did the two airmen realize that it was because of the rapid speed of American tanks, that their captors kept moving them further inland.

The Germans became increasingly kind. Apparently they were aware that the war was nearly lost; and saw that they, themselves, might become prisoners. Repeatedly, they reminded Louis and Bob that they were being well treated, and they should tell that to other Americans.

"Once when we were being hidden in a wooded area, we saw B-24's," Louis recalled, "which I assumed were enroute to Berlin."

Looking up and seeing so many in formation, I said to my guard, "Why do you continue? Can't you see that you are losing?" His answer, "We have to keep doing this until we get other orders."

Their next stop was a large brick hospital, where both Louis and Bob got badly needed medical attention.

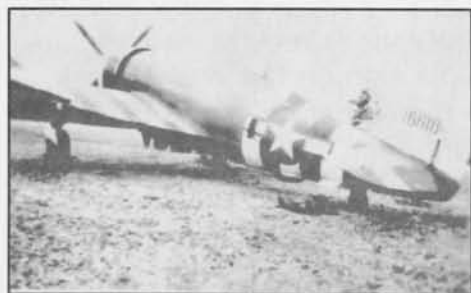
"Don't get nervous," the physician counseled Louis, when he asked for relief from his hives. "A nun will give you a shot, and you will have a strange sensation." That was quite an understatement. "I felt like my feet were on fire and the rest of me promptly followed," Louis remembered. "But then I could finally get some sleep."

The German doctor trimmed and redressed Bob's head wound. Across the room he watched other doctors amputate the leg of a British prisoner, tossing it into a basket. Later, when the Brit awoke in his ward, he was furious that they had taken his leg.

The journey ended at a town called Ahlen, where they were moved to one of several hospitals housing wounded of many nationalities—German, French, English and Americans.

There was a B-24 pilot who was very badly burned. He was really in misery. Bob and Louis were assigned to different wards. P-47's were

strafing the town, and every time they were overhead, the French patients ran to the window and cheered.



A P-47.

"Later on we could freely walk around the wards," Bob remembered, "Once I ran into a German patient who had been my guard when I was first captured. Strange that a man who had been my captor was now lying in the same hospital. We also encountered a British soldier whose trousers were totally in shreds. I took off my flight pants and gave them to him."

Much of the care was given by nuns, who were considerate and kind. The Nazi nurses had no compassion for the wounded Americans. One nurse took little care in removing the dressing from Bob's head wound. He was forced to lower his head to his knees, to keep from passing out.

"They wanted to put me to work, but I was so weak, they had to give up on that," Louis said. "They ordered me to peel potatoes. With only one eye, I had no depth perception, and I took off too much of the potato. With the scarcity of food, they promptly gave up on that idea. They were running out of everything—no running water, no heat. The only food was potato soup and black bread, which they covered with lard. It was horrible. We had to put on the lard to get the bread down. However, we could see that the German guards weren't eating any better."

On the eighth day of their capture, they heard the welcome rumble of American Sherman tanks. The Germans in the ward said, "Tiger Tanks." We knew better.

On April 1st Louis noticed that the Chaplain was pulling guns from under the beds of the German patients and carrying them out of the ward. Then he saw them hanging white sheets up to the windows.

"Something's happening," Louis observed. "Let's walk to the front door and see if anyone stops us." Nobody did.

Next they walked out the door. Still nobody paid attention. The three airmen, Louis, Bob and the P-47 pilot, walked down the street a short distance and encountered the Americans roaring into town. The three airmen's uniforms were so dirty and blood-stained, the driver could not recognize that they were Americans until they started to speak English. They quickly learned that

Ahlen had been declared an 'Open City,' in recognition that it was an area that housed many wounded. Hostilities within the city had been discontinued.

"What a wonderful sight it was, seeing American Forces roaring into town in jeeps, tanks, armored cars and trucks," Bob remembered. "Those guys looked tough and battle hardened. They tossed us K-Rations, cigarettes and candy. I was proud to be an American."

An ambulance picked up the three airmen and transported them to an American hospital at Munchen-Gladbach, where their wounds were attended. Here they got their first decent meal in eight days. The wounded from the Allied Forces were pouring in so rapidly, doctors could not take time away from the freshly wounded, whose conditions were more critical.

For the three of them, the war was over. At this point they were separated. Bob was sent to a field hospital in Liege for the night. The next day he was taken to an airfield where he boarded a C-47 and was flown to Cheltenham, England, then to the 4153 U.S. Hospital in Gloucester. From there he was given a pass to go back to his base at Shipdham for interrogation.

Being assigned to an Ex-POW detachment in London, he happened to be at Picadilly Circus on May 8, 1945, V.E. Day. He described it as a 'madhouse.' He remembered people climbing light poles and bus tops in their celebration. From there he went to Southampton to board a transport ship that sailed in a convoy to Boston, Mass.

Louis was sent to a hospital in Paris. From behind hospital windows on V.E. Day, he watched Paris celebrate the largest party ever in its history. The professional staff considered it unsafe for patients to join the throng. More wounded filled the wards in

Paris; and before long, Louis was enroute to the States. Doctors predicted he would never be able to straighten his left arm, but with grit, exercise and daily weight lifting, the arm became functional.

The whereabouts of the fighter pilot is still unknown. As the documentation of WWII unfolded, Bob and Louis learned that their crash, and that of the Lt. Crandell's plane were photographed by Capt. U.P. Harvell, Intelligence and Photo Officer of the 44th Bomb Group. Harvell's pictures are considered unique in the film record of WWII air battles. The daring low level flights which supplied the airborne troops on Rhine Day are regarded as one of the U.S. Air Force's greatest accomplishments, second only to the Ploesti Mission in losses for a low level mission.

About a year after they were back in the states, Bob and Louis met again in Ohio. Then Bob moved to California, and it was nearly forty years until their next reunion. Through time and space, their friendship has never wained.

When they are together, the years fall away, and they are again, the two buddies who shared an awesome experience in American history.



AMERICAN G.I.s, HOLLAND CIVILIANS & JEEPS.



LOUIS DEBLASIO & ROBERT VANCE
AT 1997 BOMB GROUP REUNION
IN SALT LAKE CITY.



The 1998 REUNION, SAVANNAH GEORGIA



DORIS McCLANE with the
GEN. LEON W. JOHNSON PORTRAIT.

It was a BIG BLOW OUT! How else could you describe it? The hotel was sold out, the lobby was too small; from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, it was a mad house with early arrivals and folks who had not made their reservations in time to assure a

room; the registration/hospitality room was too small, the 48 seat restaurant was a joke, service was so slow you would have been served best if you had placed your order when you sent in your hotel reservations! We were forced to cram our annual general membership meeting into a restaurant across the street with no P/A system and the Sunday reception, although in a larger hospitality room was still so crowded and hot we had two people faint, yet, would you believe we had more on-the-spot compliments and follow-on letters telling us what a wonderful reunion it was from beginning to end. Financially we had less hassle and made more than enough to pay the bills and put some money in the treasury. You just never know.

Because the hotel did not have a banquet room, we had our Ploesti display dedication luncheon and Squadron night dinners out at the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum. We had our banquet at the Savannah Convention Center and our closing night, we had a great Southern Barbecue dinner and show out on the banks of the Savannah River at the Old Fort Jackson which protected the City of Savannah during the Civil War. We were protected that evening by a company of Confederate soldiers and entertained with Southern banjo music. The dinner was catered

by Johnny Harris', one of the great barbecue rib houses in the country.

At our Banquet we were honored with some descriptions of the Ploesti Raid by Tommy Holmes who wears the first Purple Heart medal awarded in the 44th Bomb Group. We were then entertained by Mr. Cornell Iliescu, a Romanian native now living in Costa Mesa, CA. Cornell was a six year old boy who lived in Ploesti and witnessed the raid from his yard. It was a unique experience for the Ploesti veterans present to hear a story from someone in their bombing target area.

The highlight of the reunion, of course, was the dedication and profferance of the 44th Bomb Group display depicting the "Tidal Wave" 44th Bomb Group lead element over the White IV target at the instant before bombs away. Brig. Gen. Jack Gibson was scheduled to make the dedication, but was hospitalized in Dallas with severe neck pains, thus the presentation was made by President Roy Owen. For the benefit of those unable to attend, the presentation is repeated in part here:

44th Bomb Group Display Dedication Program

Welcome and Introductions: Col. Roy W. Owen, President, 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association.

Pledge of Allegiance (remain standing).

Invocation

Introduction of Brigadier General Jack Gibson, last living Commander of the WWII 44th Bomb Group by President Owen

Good Morning, may I add my welcome to that of President Owen.

It is indeed my great honor to be standing here in what I feel are rightfully the footsteps of General Leon Johnson who led the 44th through its shining hour in the holocaust over the blazing oil refineries of Ploesti on August 1, 1943.

General Johnson folded his wings the 10th of November last year. I know as surely as I stand here in his footsteps that the gentle, brave and modest leader we loved is proudly watching his Eightballs commemorate one of the proudest days in aviation history.

Our purpose here in Savannah is threefold: first to unveil and dedicate this magnificent display to the everlasting glory of every man who flew or supported the Tidal Wave mission with a special prayer of thanks to those who paid the ultimate price for our victory. Second, to proffer the ownership and care of this display to this beautiful Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum that it will add to the public understanding of the immense contribution made by the men and women of the 8th Air Force to our American way of life.

Lastly, we are once again gathered in a reunion to enable us to see, and enjoy one another in the spirit of comradeship, love and respect that comes to those who have bonded in selfless service to our country.

Before the unveiling, let me give you some brief background. Some two years ago, the museum issued an invitation to all of the current and former assigned 8th Air Force units to place a display in the museum. This is a simplification, of course, but the concept of a display emblematic of the Ploesti raid was developed when Roy Owen was visiting the Aviation Art Gallery of Virginia Bader in Costa Mesa, California. His conversation with Ms. Bader was overheard by a young artist who introduced himself as Keith St. Aubin, free-lance model maker for the movie industry. He inquired if Roy was a member of the 44th. He then opened a large brief case which stored a beautiful model of Suzy Q. From that, the idea of depicting the four ship lead element over the target the instant before bombs away as being representative of the entire group crystallized. Roy briefed the Executive Board which approved the concept with this admonition: The 44th must be the pre-imminent group display in the museum. In a very few minutes you will be the judge. Tom Parsons was appointed project

manager. While Keith St. Aubin was completing the models, Tom commissioned the International Plastic Modelers Society, Atlanta Chapter to design and create the scale model of the Columbia Aquila refinery complex. Historians Will Lundy and Ed Dobson, Jr. were responsible for checking all facets of the display for authenticity.

I am going to ask this group to unveil the display. Tom Parsons, Keith St. Aubin, Jim Elmore, President Of the International Plastic Modelers Society, Atlanta Chapter and Director of the overall diorama fabrication, and our Historians Will Lundy and Ed Dobson, Jr.; but before this long awaited ceremony, a very few words about this event we commemorate today. To this gathering there is no need to repeat so much that has been written and filmed about the most vicious air battle in aviation history which took place over Ploesti, Romania on 1 August 1943. It seemed to me that the poetic verse inspired by the Ploesti experience of Technical Sergeant Delores R. Brumagin, Radioman on the Lt. Ed Mitchell crew captures the enormity and terror of the raid.

Equally fitting to the occasion is that it be read for us by two members of our 44th family who are widows of two valorous Ploesti veterans. May I introduce Fritzie Selasky, wife of Charles J. "Jim" Selasky, Lead Navigator on Colonel Johnson's aircraft "Suzy Q," and June Carpenter, wife of Reginald "Rege" Carpenter, Pilot of "Bewitching Witch" flying on Colonel Johnson's left wing.

JUNE
CARPENTER
AND FRITZI
SELASKY
READING
THE
BRUMAGIN
POEM
"PLOESTI ON
THE DECK."



Normally these two men were crewmates, but for this mission Col. Johnson chose Jim Selasky as his lead navigator. As fate would have it. "Rege" and "Jim" folded their wings in October, 1996 just 17 days apart.

It is with great honor that I introduce these two lovely ladies: Fritzie Selasky and June Carpenter who will alternate reading the gripping verses of the Brumagin poem "Ploesti on the Deck." The Poem is repeated following this report of the presentation. Thank you ladies, we are in your debt for that touching reading.

Please be seated.

The profference

General Shuler, will you please join me at the podium.



Roy OWEN INTRODUCES LT. GEN. "BUCK" SCHULER,
CHAIRMAN OF THE MIGHTY 8TH AF MUSEUM.

General Shuler, on behalf of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association, it is my great honor to proffer to The mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum this display depicting the lead element of the 44th Bomb Group attacking Target White V of the Ploesti, Romania refinery complex on the August 1943 "Tidal Wave" low level strike. The display is representative of not only the 44th Bomb Group, but additionally the entire "Tidal Wave" task force which overcame the worst that the North African desert and the Ploesti air and ground defenses had to offer to complete their assigned mission.

We know of no more fitting and beautiful edifice to entrust the keeping of the glorious heritage this display represents.

General Shuler's acceptance noted that it was with great pride he accepted on behalf of the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum this magnificent emblematic display of one of the most momentous events in the annals of Air Warfare. He also pointed out that in the few days the display had been on the floor in preparation for this ceremony, it already had become one of the most attended displays in the museum.

Blessing ~ Closing thanks by Col. Owen

Bagpipes play Amazing Grace

PLOESTI ON THE DECK



Bob LEINHAUSEN TELLS IT LIKE IT IS TO THE 68TH FOLKS.



GLASS ENCLOSED display AT MUSEUM.



By T/Sgt. Delores R. Brumagin, Radioman, Lt. Ed. Mitchell Crew

"This task will be accomplished,
with an 'on the deck' attack,
with every Lib around Benghazi
that'll fly to there and back."

The night before the mission, the
Chaplains blessing gave, and
The message made things brighter
For the soul that God can save.

It was early in the morning
August first was then the date.
Every man and plane was ready
Just to shake the hand of fate.

The sun was shining brightly
As we flew across the Med;
With the words of General Brereton
Still droning through head.

The minutes grew to hours
And we crossed the mountains high
Where Yugoslav Guerillas
Were watching us go by.

Then we streaked across the valley
Rousing peaceful peasants there;
And the roaring of the engines
seemed like thunder cracked the air.

There was Rumania's golden wheat
fields,
but their beauty soon was lost,
with oil fields in the distance and
the Blue Danube as we crossed.

The river will be remembered,
The loveliest in the land.
But we used it for a landmark
to know the target was at hand.

Then every heart was heavy,
Every eye was open wide,
as we asked the Lord, our maker,
to be our strength and guide.

Our mind's eyes saw a picture of
loved ones we hold dear.
God placed it there to aid us
through all the strife and fear.

In the distance the target,
And to us a gruesome sight
we lost our thoughts of reverence,
in preparing for the fight.

We could see the flaming debris.
Some group had marked it so.
By mistake they'd left their bombs
there.
Why? No man will ever know.

The time bombs were exploding
And oil fires were raging high.
We could see their guns a'blazin'.
It was for us to do or die.

Our leader knew his duty,
Disregarding fear for life,
Holding course without hesitation,
He led his "Eightballs" to Aquila
And left behind devastation.

Turning off target from out of
the flame,
they must now fight their way out
on the route which they came.

We saw many things distinctly,
As swiftly we flew.
We saw German gunners.
We could see them dying too.

The battle was a nightmare,
unreal in every thought, but
be needn't be reminded
how fiercely it was fought.

Of the tempest o'er the target,
no man can tell.
There was shooting, burning, dying,
It was a pure living Hell.

Though the action minutes,
'twas a lifetime to us all.
As we watched the big guns
blasting,
And our planes and comrades fall.

As the target flew behind us
and through the thickest of the fight
every plane of ours was damaged
and their holes a ghastly sight.

There were many started homeward
But failing to return.
They had crashed up in the
mountains
And were left up there to bum.

Some fell out with engine trouble
To the "cause" their lives they gave.
When their fuel had been
exhausted
And crashed into the waves.

There were several airmen
wounded,
But their will surpassed the cost.
They knew they had the vengeance
For the blood that they had lost.

Now in tribute to those heroes
Who died but not in vain,
Their deeds will be remembered,
Nor forgotten be their names.

They had answered the duty call so
bravely.
Yes, every loving mother's son.
We thank God for all our airmen
and the victory they had won.

There was training in the Desert,
There were Twenty-Fours galore;
And flying o'er the sand dunes,
Had sometimes proved a bore.

Now we had a practice target,
Built to scale and bombed for fun;
But we knew the day was coming,
When we'd use it on the "Hun."

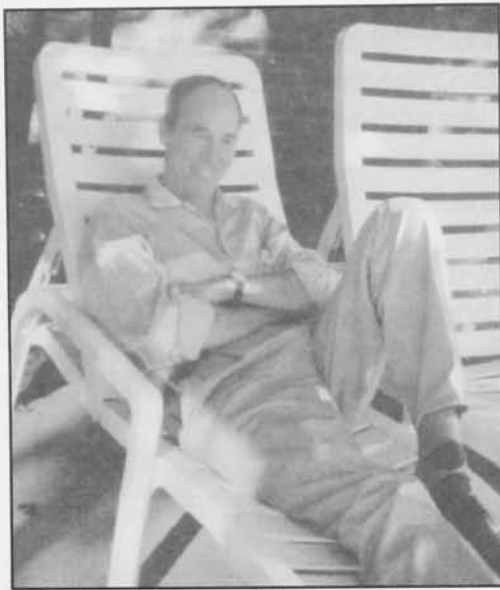
We'd been assigned a target,
Ploesti was the name,
General Brereton was commanding
The raid that was to come to fame.

He called his group commanders,
All leaders for the "Day."
And with words that have since
made history,
so proudly did he say,

"It's the most important mission,
Any force has been assigned;
And with quick, complete
destruction,
A victory we will find."

"They need that oil so badly,
the problem here is clear;
we'll bomb it from existence,
though the price we'll pay is dear."





Did we have beautiful weather? Here is Ralph Becker relaxing by the pool.



Betty Lynch and Cornell Iliescu give us an international pair of smiles.



Perry Morse and Jerry Folsom 506th Squadron crewmates sharing a laugh.



Left: Perry Morse, Mike Yuspeh and Dick Lynch at the bar.



Left: Phyllis DuBois, former 2nd AD Memorial Librarian, now freelance research librarian (and friend of the 44th) still residing in Norwich.



Bob Leinhausen, Pete Frezzel, Janice & Steve Adams, Roy Owen and Mike Mikoloski

Below: Cornell and Elena Iliescu (formerly of Rumania) take a rest during the museum tour.



Right: Trying to capture the display on film.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Well, here we are again! This was to be an introduction of your new president, and his first President's Corner, or whatever he chooses to call this part of the "Tails," where he shares with you the "inside stuff" that's going on in your Association. However, for several reasons, here I am, doing business at the same old stand,

newly re-elected and thinking maybe I do need a little psychiatric attention.



Now let me tell you what really happened. The first thing was Ed Mikoloski who had agreed to accept a nomination for the presidency, did so conditionally, because for the last 10 months or so he has concentrated his attention to assisting his daughter who is fighting for her life in a battle with cancer. The added responsibilities of the 44th BGVA presidency to his consuming concerns for his daughter have been a nagging worry for us both. To make matters worse, we could find no one (and the nominating committee was searching) willing to take on the presidency.

The next thing was, about two months ago, an insubordinate board member (who shall remain unnamed) wrote a letter (postmarked Collierville, TN) to the other members of the board in which he threatened physical harm to any board member who would accept my refusal of nomination for a third term. While I did not take this threat seriously, it did prompt me to review the projects already underway and the agenda for the new year, then call Mike to discuss the coming year and the demands on

his time versus his daughter's state of health and his family concerns. He said: "Roy, I will not fail the 44th, I love it too much. I can and I will do the job, my mind tells me so. On the other hand, my friend, my heart tells me I want to be with my daughter and I will be much more comfortable if you will continue to serve and see me through this thing. So here we are, we are going to hang tough, hold the course and keep Mike and family in our prayers.

I did make a stipulation in accepting the nomination, and that was that I could no longer wear both the president's hat and that of Editor and publisher of the 8-Ball Tails. Ruth Morse, aka Mrs. Perry Morse (506th) of York, PA, a professional writer (see, already more prestige), has graciously accepted the challenge to keep our journal alive. She will have her own ideas and there must be some changes. As we struggle to bring the other 44th eras into our association, we must produce a journal which will have news and stories that will be of interest to all. We will still have our own "war stories" to tell, but we can't just remain a bunch of old WWII Liberator Lovers. Give Ruth your support, she is taking this responsibility in a time of change and that's always tough.

For the benefit of you who did not attend the Savannah reunion (Boy! Did you miss a BLOW OUT!), here are the changes in the Board:

Vice President, Edw. "Mike" Mikoloski* (66)
Secretary, Nancy Van Epps* (Hq, Sqdn.)

*Indicates an officer who will represent his/her squadron along with performing the duties of the office he/she holds. The Board acted upon a recommendation by President Owen and Director Mikoloski to allow officers to serve in the office they hold and at the same time, represent the squadron to which they belong. This board structure will allow a reduction in total board members plus make room for the addition of a Board seat for the 44th SMW. In our four years experience, we have not had an occasion that required a vote by unit. Should this occur, those officers with dual representation will cast their unit vote only. The Board voted to phase in this board structure starting with this term. The first term Squadron Directors elected last year will

either become a dual representative officer/unit representative or be dropped from the board next election. This restructuring and reduction in the size of the board resulted in the retirement of Ed Dobson, Jr. from the Board. We are grateful to Ed for the fine job he has done as our Secretary in the two terms he has served. I'm sure he will see more service in the Association future.

Other board actions will be covered in another article elsewhere in this issue. One very important item is the announcement of the 1999 New Orleans Reunion to take place at the New Orleans Airport Hilton Hotel September 2 - 6, 1999. Remember the mob scene at the Savannah Days Inn/Suites from Friday night through Sunday noon as all the folks who had delayed making reservations were being shuffled off to other hotels for one or two nights. Don't let it happen to you in New Orleans! Send off the reservation form provided in this issue. Put it on your credit card then your room is assured. If it becomes necessary, you can cancel.

WE WISH EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU WILL FIND YOUR HOLIDAY STOCKING CHOCK FULL OF GOOD CHEER AND HAPPINESS!

ROY AND LOLLY OWEN

Roy W. Owen



44TH BCVA 1999 TRAVEL

IT LOOKS LIKE A GO FOR THE SPRING 1999 TRIP TO ENGLAND.

From the show of hands at the General Membership meeting in Savannah, it looks like we can plan on a ONE BUS LOAD TOUR. So here is the deal: We will plan a trip for two weeks (approximate) to leave on May 21 and return on June 2 (these are plus or minus a day at this point).

**WE WILL TAKE THE FIRST 44
PEOPLE WHO CALL JERRY
FOLSOM (801-733-7371)
AND MAKE A RESERVATION, FOLLOWED BY A
DEPOSIT FOR THE GROUND PACKAGE (YOU
WILL BE INSTRUCTED HOW THE DEPOSIT IS TO
BE MADE WHEN YOU MAKE YOUR
RESERVATIONS).**

- The itinerary we are planning will be (approximately):
- Arrive London leave by bus to hotel for a day and nights rest.
 - Then the tour will proceed up the West side of England through Stratford-upon-Avon, Chester, and Liverpool (lunch at Penny Lane), Blackpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh.
 - Then South to York, Lincoln to arrive in Norwich and Shipdham for the Memorial Day weekend (Airfield tour, picnic and barbecue party).
 - And finish up in London for two nights.

Our Ground package will be handled by Waterhouse Tours, who handled our 1997 tour so successfully. Our Air travel will be handled by Four Star Travel of San Jose, Calif.

For those who have Frequent Flyer mileage, or Airline Employee privileges, you may arrange your own travel to arrive and meet the group in London. Both agencies are working on costs and finalizing dates as we go to press, but you can be certain the trip will be reasonably priced and will include breakfast and dinner every day. You will be on your own for lunches.

THE OWENS' PASSPORTS ARE CURRENT, CHECK YOURS!

One Step Closer- A Visit With The Missileers

By Roy Owen

We took a small, but very important step toward the realization of our hope to bring all the eras of the 44th back into a single family when, at the invitation of Colonel Charlie Simpson (Member of our Board), CEO of the Association of Air Force Missileers, Lolly and I attended their biennial reunion in Cocoa Beach, Florida, October 21- 24 just preceding our reunion in Savannah.

While the AAFM is an organization parallel to the 2nd Air Division in that its membership includes Missileers from all of the USAF missile units, Charlie was a member of the 44th Strategic Missile Wing at Ellsworth AFB in his active duty years, and shares with me, not only his allegiance to the 44th, but the desire to see the Bomb Group, the Bomb Wing and the Strategic Missile Wing all together keeping the heritage and history of the legendary 44th alive for the generations to come.

With the next AAFM reunion not to take place in Colorado Springs until sometime (dates to be announced) in 2000, and the close proximity of our respective reunions this year, it seemed an opportunity not to be missed for me to attend this gathering of missileers and to extend the hand of welcome to the 44th SMW members to join with us to bring the 44th family together.

Lolly and I, under the wings of Charlie and Carol Simpson, were most warmly welcomed and positively treated as if I was wearing a Missile Badge. I met and got acquainted with Lt. Gen. Jay Kelley (Ret) the new AAFM president, and while there were only ten 44th SMW members present, I met them, including B/Gen. Jim Crouch of Austin, TX. Each responded enthusiastically to my welcome to join with us. "Send me the membership information" was the word I got. Additionally, Charlie has since sent me two requests for membership applications from 44th SMW members who were not present at the reunion. They were responding to a Mighty 8th AF Ass'n. recommendation that all Missileers contact and join their predecessors in the Bomb Groups and Wings, so it looks like we are starting to move toward an overarching 44th Heritage Group.

Charlie has provided me with a printout of the 165 Missileers in the AAFM who are former 44th SMW members and the first thing on my agenda for the new year will be a personal letter to each of those 44th'ers to COME ON IN!

At this point, I want to say some more about Charlie Simpson and his lovely wife Carol. Charlie was Commander of the 68th Strategic Missile Squadron and held other senior staff positions while with the 44th. He joined us in the first year of our rebirth, attended our first reunion in San Antonio

and hasn't missed a reunion or a Squadron Dinner since. He has just been elected as the SMW member of our Executive Board, and a worthy member he will be. He, long ago, volunteered to assist me in enticing the former 44th SMW veterans to join us and with his help, I'm certain we will be seeing a lot of new and very welcome faces in our midst. Oh Yes! We are going to need some help, so don't be surprised if you get 'volunteered' to do some telephone work in the recruiting area.

Lolly and I had a great time with the AAFM. We had to leave on Saturday to get on up to our own reunion, but we got to see one launch to put up a satellite and we got to see the pad all prepared for the John Glenn launch when we were on an escorted tour of the Kennedy Space Center. The most awesome feature was an entire Apollo system in the giant Apollo Memorial Center. The size of the First Stage fuel cell and rocket engine boggles ones mind!



Lolly standing beneath Stage #1 of an Apollo Moon Orbital Vehicle.

MASTER DATABASE PROJECT

The program we have been pumping you up for so much is up and running!

I have appointed Tom Shepherd as the head of an implementation team with Tony Mastradone and Will Lundy to support him in seeing this great program brought to life as the living history of the 44th. This is Tom's first report. Read it carefully and you will understand the dimensions of this great undertaking we have embarked upon.

Dear Fellow 44th BGVA Members:

Reference our MASTER DATABASE PROJECT. Considerable progress has been made since our Savannah reunion, and it continues. Here are the highlights:

President Roy Owen has approved an Ops Plan, covering Three Phases for the Management and Operation of the Master Database Project (MDP). He assigned me the role of Principal. We will undertake each phase as we can manage it effectively in terms of time, talent and finances. An outline of that plan follows:

Phase One: (a) Input of all available mission interrogation reports (sortie by sortie), (b) Input all available biography material furnished by a member, (c) Input of all collectable biography material of the deceased, and, (d) The Lundy Roll of Honor and other similar documents. As time provides, we will recirculate each of the sub-phases and enter new and updated data. NB - this same recirculating operation applies to Phases Two and Three.

Phase Two: (a) Input all available mission summaries, and (b) Statistics: Group, Squadron, Support Units (Statistics is a broad title).

Phase Three: (a) Major Events (VIP Visits, Stand downs, etc), (b) Awards and Decorations - Group, (c) Enemy attacks on Shipdham AF, (d) Photographs (of all types/slides), and (e) Potpourri.

Computer Generated Data (CGD), Arlo Bartsch's company, will directly input hardcopy data furnished them by Will Lundy; and, import electronic data furnished by the "volunteer cadre." This centralized operation is designed to ensure that the very minimum of duplication will ever occur, and the highest level of competence is achieved. The end product will be a Classic and a model for other 8th AF units to record their history. It will be a product you will wish to have of your very own - once it has become available.

The "volunteer cadre" will perform the first-line of input for all biography material. Whenever the bio material exceeds maximum limits of data length - the volunteer member will return the bio material requesting its originator to furnish a shorter version and kindly resubmit. In simple/minor situations where the volunteer feels comfortable in accomplishing required editing he/she will do so - and - send a copy of the edited version we (I) will do what can be done to resolve the matter.

The "volunteer cadre" will use the Internet (operation) to Upload their inputs to a dedicated computer within the CGD operation. CGD will review the bio material with the Personnel data (already entered in the database) - thus the highly technical aspects of data input will be effected with the minimum of duplication and error.

CGD Invoices for work accomplished will be forwarded to the President for review and approval processes.

To give us - one and all - a sense of the enormous magnitude of the MDP (as described above) and what has been accomplished since the Savannah reunion -- the MDP demonstration model included only 200 sorties. Currently that figure has doubled; 400 plus. Remember if you will, there are 344 missions flown by the 44th. Then consider how many individual sorties were flown on those 344 missions. It is believed that we have close to 7,000 of these type entries - ALONE! Thanks to a lot of you and in particular to Will Lundy and Tony Mastradone for accumulating all that hardcopy material. To Art Hand for organizing the collection of biography material on our deceased. I am thankful to Arlo Barsch (CGD) in demonstrating his MDP software program, and working with us on this immense project of recording "electronically" our WWII history. We have begun what for so many of us a few months ago was still just a dream! What is it said about dreams and invention?

The 44th BGP is still Out-Front and Leading. Let us keep it that way! Get your biography in today! Also - if you have any additional information, photographs, etc., write me a letter, or an e-mail: sheep@wspice.com/ and let's see how we might put it to use to "better record the 44BGP History."

Tom Shepherd • 10597 Cambrooke Cove • Collierville, TN
38017-3600.



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 BGVA, P.O. Box 712287, Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287.



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

Reunions are always great events. It is wonderful to meet old friends, as well as to meet new ones. Great, too, in that I as a historian, often have members bring me data about our distinguished history -- everything from photos, Orders, diaries, even a jigsaw puzzle of a B-24 in flight. This reunion was, once again, all of the above and I got to see and experience the relatively new Mighty 8th Air Force Museum. It was disappointing that evidence of the B-24's history was so difficult to find. Hopefully, the Ploesti diorama will help lessen this void.

At the Monday night banquet honoring our many Ploesti veterans, Mary and Ray McNamara, Irene and I were among the last bussed there, so we were poorly situated far to the rear. There we shared a table with three couples - Robert Seevers, a pilot from the 68th Sq., along with two of his crewmen, none of whom I had had the pleasure of meeting. Shortly, we were old friends.

During the evening Robert casually told me that he had kept a diary of his 30 missions and that he also had taken many photos of friends and airplanes with his personal camera. Better still, he had managed to obtain several rolls of color film, used them to take shots from his plane during flights and missions! Here was a treasure that I had been searching for during the past few years since Roger Freeman, author, had contacted me, requesting color photos of our airplanes. He was compiling a new book, was requesting color photos of planes from all 8th AF Groups. Unhappily I could not provide any.

So I suggested to Bob that I would dearly love to borrow his color slides in order to get copies made for our history. Too, if he would be so kind, also permit me to copy his mission experiences from his diary. He indicated that he would check when he got home.

About two weeks later, the mail person delivered a medium-sized box to our door, so I hurriedly opened it. True to his word, Bob had not only sent his diary with his color slides, but he also included much more, but better than Christmas. It included his navigator's diary, a photo album of black and white full pictures of the 68th Sq. site, cities like London and Edinburgh, "flak" house, airplanes in flight, etc. etc. Still more was a portable slide viewer, a video, "B-24 A View From The Cockpit." One more jewel was his copy of every mission he flew showing his crew position in each mission, as well as the dispersal number of each aircraft that participated in the mission.

Why would such information be so important to me? Because long ago I had created an 8 x 13 inch map of the flight line showing the exact layout of all dispersal areas, properly numbered. By using Bob's mission sheets, I could prepare a

daily mission sheet showing all of the aircraft that took part, as well as the pilots that flew them. By adding the names of the planes, I had a pictorial view of the location of each dispersal where each plane was based, but these sheets even show the layout of how each plane took its position in line for take off. It is a view of how the base had produced our attacking forces for that day. It takes a bit of effort, but does tell an interesting story for the viewer.

These color slides are very rare jewels, must be handled with great care. One must somehow get copies made, but I've not done this in many years. I suspect that with the recent development of technology, especially in the PC area, there could be some new method to make and store copies. So, could I ask you readers if you have had any experience with color slides to reasonably get copies made other than the traditional way? If you know of any, would you please contact me? This is truly precious history. Seeing our own B-24s flying, in full color is a rare treat. I suspect that a few of these would make great wall photos, etc.

I should mention one other rare find during the reunion -- that of newly located combat photographer, Robert L. Hooper, who was attending his first reunion. S/Sgt. Hooper, 66th Sq. was a member of 1st Lt. Ray Hilliard's crew that was interned in Spain on 17 May, 1944. Just prior to that mission, 14 May, "Bob" flew our other famous citation mission to Kiel, as a "well gunner-photographer" abroad 1st Lt. Robert Kolliner's plane 4-Q-2. Bob brought along proof that the famous photo taken of the 44th formation over Kiel was taken by him, NOT a B-17 formation above them. Proof in a citation dated 12 June, 1943, G.O. #74 where Robert L. Hooper risked his life to take the photos in an open bomb bay, awarded the Air Medal. He also had a letter of commendation from General Hodges and his famous photo signed by the General. Time was short, so I never did get to view all of his black and white photos in his album or to get copies.

Another activity that seldom gets the attention of most of us in the concerted efforts which John McClane makes at all of our reunions. John always brings along his video camera, records most of the activities when he foregoes his own dinners, catches flash shots all during the reunions, supplies his own film. Then he always donates a copy of the entire reunion activities, sends it to me for our archives. All of this is at his own expense. We owe John and Doris a very big thanks - it would be nice to tell him so next time you meet him or write. In the meantime, from all of us, John and Doris...

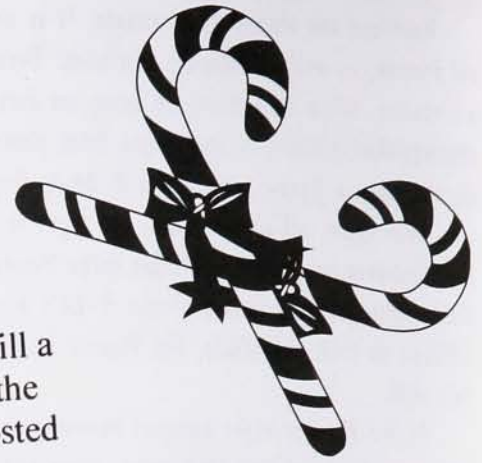
MANY THANKS FOR A GREAT JOB VERY WELL DONE!

Will Lundy



November, 20, 1998

To All of Our Dear 44th Family Friends,



We have just been home for two weeks and we can still barely comprehend how we could be so fortunate to have such wonderful, loving friends caring enough to host us on a magnificent trip to the Savannah reunion. Then to go on to fulfill a lifetime dream of visiting both The San Francisco Bay area in the hospitality of Roy and Lolly Owen and Southern California hosted by Will and Irene Lundy was something we shall never forget.

When we look back over the some 12 years since our relationship with the "Eightballers" began, we try to weigh the joy, happiness, love and respect we have been given by you magnificent people against what seems to us to be routine courtesies done as the labor of love and no way comparable to the wonderful things you have made happen in our lives.

As your United Kingdom representative, and Shipdham Airfield contact, I have come to realize that I am the point of contact between the English people of Norfolk and the best organized and most respected World War II Bomb Group in the Second Air Division. Your trust, respect and funding, which allows me to represent you, has brought Jan and me great pride and recognition among the community of WW II historians in the region. We feel these things alone more than compensate us for what we do, and now this wonderful trip has simply taken our breath away. All we can say is we will be forever grateful for God giving us you to call our friends. We love you all.

With deepest sincerity,

Steve and Janice Adams



JANICE AND STEVE ADAMS
FROM THE MOTHER
COUNTRY VISITING THE
COLONIES.

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ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS:
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P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287



*Dual Representative



Wishing you the best in 1999!
Happy Holidays!

THE AFA BRONZE MODEL B-24 DEDICATION

On September 24 and 25 some 250 people gathered in Colorado Springs, CO to attend the September 25 Dedication of the Robert Henderson 1/6th scale bronze model sculpture of a B-24J Liberator which is the sixth and last model to complete the "Bronze Squadron" of World War II combat aircraft. These model aircraft are permanently displayed in the Air Force Academy Court of Honor, a large concrete and marble paved area adjacent to the beautiful AFA Chapel. The other aircraft comprising the "Bronze Squadron" are the P-51 Mustang; P-38 Lightning; P-47 Thunderbolt; P-40 Warhawk; and B-17 Flying Fortress.

The support pedestal of each aircraft contains a bronze plaque enumerating by user group the individuals who contributed to (in the case of the B-24) the \$175,000 cost of the model. Those 44th contributors are:



*Johnson, Leon W. Gen. USAF
Bethel, Raymond W. Lt. USAAF
Butler, Richard D. Col. USAF
Clements, James H. LTC USAFR
Ertz, Julian
Fremstad, Clifford L. Lt. USAAF
Gunton, Robert J. Capt. USAAF
Henry, Howard C. Capt. USAAF
*Houston, Rowland B. Capt. USAAF
*Lawson, Robert Col. USAFR
Lipczynski, Stanley F. SSgt USAAF
Mastradone, Anthony SSgt USAAF
Owen, Roy W. Col USAF
Schuler, William M. Lt. USAAF
Tilton, Charles W. Lt. USAAF
Yuspeh, Michel (Mike)

Gibson, John H. Bgen. USAF *44th BG Assn.
Brown, Dells A. Col. USAF
Cameron, William R. Col. USAF
Dubowsky, Robert
Folsom, Gerald W. Lt. USAAF
Griffith, Rockford C. Lt. USAAF
Hawkins, William F. PFC USAAF
Hewlett, James A. Lt. USAAF
Hughes, Charles E. Col. USAF *Betty Seal, Sister
Lundy, C. Will SSgt USAAF *Ruth Lawson
Mansir, Everette W. SSgt USAAF
Murrack, Melvin C. SSgt USAAF
Rosen, Eugene D. Capt. USAAF
Tillner, Norman N. SSgt. USAAF
Wells, Donald L. Lt. USAAF

PART OF THOSE ATTENDING THE DEDICATION:

L TO R, BOB VANCE, LOY VANCE, RUTH MORSE, PERRY MORSE, JERRY FOLSOM, BILL SEAL, BETTY SEAL, ARDITH BUTLER, MARIA JORDAN (with CHARLIE HUGHES taking the picture), THE PREZ AND DICK BUTLER.

OTHERS ATTENDING:

JACK GIBSON, LOY & ARLENE NEEPER, MEL & MARILYN MURRACK, AND MARK MORRIS.



On Saturday the 25th, the Prez and Jerry Folsom drove down to Pueblo, Colorado to visit the International B-24 Museum and to visit the birthplace of our 506th Bomb Squadron. The activation of the 506th is well documented there by Mark Morris. He is in the process of building an entire display on the 506th. For a town no bigger than Pueblo, the Museum has a remarkable amount of B-24 artifacts, parts and history. It is only an hours drive down from Colorado Springs.

1999 REUNION



*September 2-6
New Orleans,
Louisiana*

*Friends, Tours • Fine Food • Fun
Entertainment*

REUNION SAVANNAH:

It was the best of times-it was the best of times!

Savannah provided us with picture - perfect weather for our 44th Bomb Group Reunion this year. Three hundred and sixty strong, we invaded Georgia, and the results were very rewarding. Honoring the Plœesti raiders, we also were visiting the new Mighty Eight Air Force Museum, recently opened in Savannah. The combination made for a stunning four days of fellowship and remembrance.

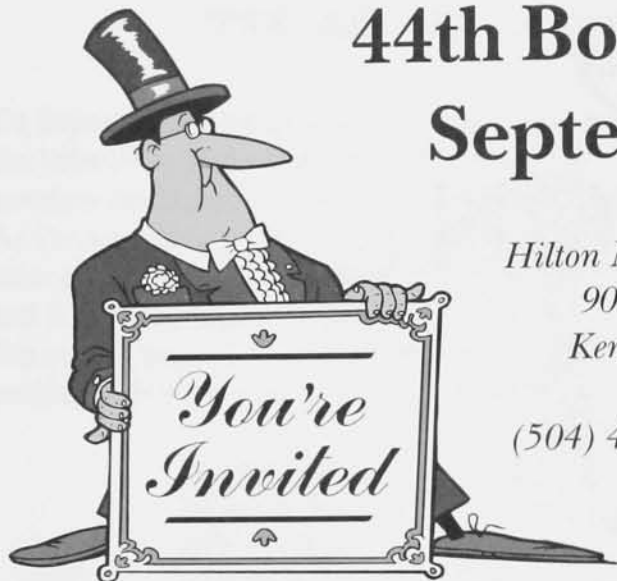
Mark your calendar for September 2-5 of 1999 when we will gather once again- this time in my home town, New Orleans. New Orleans doesn't need a convention to define it. It has so much to offer that I'm sure you'll find that four days are not enough to fully enjoy this exciting city.

I want to thank all of you for making my job easy. Your cooperation and enthusiasm were hallmarks of this reunion, and I look forward to hosting you once again in the great city of New Orleans.

Mike Yuspeh

44th Bomb Group Reunion

September 2-6, 1999



Hilton New Orleans Airport
901 Airline Drive
Kenner, LA 70062

(504) 469-5000 / Reservations Department (9am-5pm)
or 1-800-HILTONS (24 Hours)

Hotel Policies:

- Hotel accepts all major credit cards.
- Check-in time is 3:00 pm and Check-out time is 12:00 pm.
- Early Departure Fee: A \$50 early check-out fee will apply to any guest who checks out of the hotel before their stated departure date. Guests will have the opportunity to change their departure date at check-in without being assessed the \$50 fee. Any changes in the departure date after check-in will result in the fee being assessed.
- Parking is complimentary.
- Complimentary Airport Shuttle service available 24-Hours
- Group Rate is \$80 and tax is 11.75 %
- Cut Off Date for reservations is August 1, 1999.

A credit card guarantee is required to secure a reservation for late arrival (after 4 pm).

- Group rate is available up to 3 days before and after Convention dates.

**44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS
ASSOCIATION**
SEPTEMBER 2-6, 1999

I'd like to make reservations at the New Orleans
Airport Hilton, 901 Airline Hwy., Kenner, LA 70062.
(504) 469-5000:

Last Name _____ First _____ Middle _____

Firm _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Guaranteed by Credit Card # _____

Credit Card _____ Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

SHARING
WITH

Last Name _____ First _____ Middle _____

Reservations must be received by: **8/1/99**

Arrival Date: _____ Time (Circle One)
2-4 p.m. 4-6 p.m. 6-8 p.m. 8-10 p.m.
10 p.m. - midnight after midnight

Departure Date: _____ Time (Circle One)
Before 7 a.m. 7-9 a.m. 9-11 a.m. 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Early Checkout Fee:

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MISCELLANEA

THE 8TH AF MUSEUM NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

The 8th Air Force Museum at Savannah (remember them?) would like to have some volunteers to come to Savannah and work in the museum for one week (any week). If you are interested, call Mary Beth Barnard at 1-800-421-9428, Ext. 112 or Jack Prescott, Director of Volunteers, at 1-912-748-4699. Wives are included. Ideally, you might combine it with some vacation time in and around Savannah which is a great place to visit.



ANGELS CORNER

After the appeal for funds we made at the Savannah general membership meeting to get the 8th Air Force Data Base program adopted and off to a start, there was a rustle of checks that would warm the heart of even a most cynical treasurer (which ours is certainly not). When out of the ranks stepped our newest ANGEL in the person of Raymond Shirley, 67th Bomb Sqdn. member and resident of Crosby, Texas with a check for \$1,000 in his hand (they still do things BIG in Texas!).

You have our thanks, admiration and a big tip of the Stetson, Ray, for your very generous addition to this wonderful program.

For those of you who were not with us in Savannah to witness the demonstration of the 8th Air Force Heritage Database program. The information is repeated in this issue, along with the Personal Data entry form which you are to fill out with your own personal data. Follow the instructions carefully. ALSO, THERE IS STILL NEED FOR FUNDS TO CARRY ON WITH THE PROGRAM AFTER WE GET ALL THE LIVING AND RECENTLY DECEASED MEMBERS IN THE DATABASE. WE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO SEARCH OUT THE INFORMATION ON THOSE 44TH'ERS WE LOST IN COMBAT AND THROUGH THE YEARS BETWEEN. There's lots of work ahead. Send what you can afford to our Treasurer, 44TH BGVA, P.O. Box 712287, Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287. Many thanks.

The 8-Ball Tails ©

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



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FOLDED WINGS

December, 1998

Most unfortunately, the July reporting of Folded Wings included two serious errors. Happily, one of these men is still "flying."



Shook, Carl Curtis 506th Squadron. Carl attended the reunion in Savannah and was very much alive. It seems that he sent a change of address to us, but somehow he was included in the Folded Wings listing. My sincere apology for this huge error Carl.

Pendleton, Hal Ltc. (USAF Ret) 67th Sq. Date 04/06/98. Hal was born in Munday, Texas on October 15, 1920. He graduated from Texas A&M. He joined the E.P. Reynolds crew just as they were finishing their training in Autumn, 1944. He was a Capt. at that time, a Navigator. At Shipdham, Hal flew with many crews. At war's end, Hal chose to remain on active duty and served in the Korean War. After retiring from the Air Force, he worked for the Internal Revenue Service.

The July Folded Wings reported him as Richard H. Pendleton, also a Navigator, also in the 67th Squadron; but Richard returned home in October of 44, the same period that Hal arrived. It was assumed Hal was Richard H.

Richard H. Pendleton was a navigator on E.H. Reinhart's crew. Was shot down on the Ploesti mission and was a POW/Internee in Romania until released in Sept. 1944. He was killed in an accident in Odessa, TX 1953. 0-661022 ASN.

Addis, Jack L. 6/8/98 35915660 506th Sq. Nose Gunner flying with F.B. Mack crew. This crew departed from U.S. on 4 July, arriving in England on 8 July, was assigned to the 506th Sq. First mission was flown 11 August 1944 and their 30th was completed on 25 April 1945. In their position as lead plane, 15 missions were rated as "Excellent" and three rated "good." On their 1 March 1945 mission, they were forced to make an emergency landing at Chievies, Belgium, where the nose wheel collapsed. Crew returned home on 5 June 1945.

Brown, Norman 1998 0-768430 67th Sq. Lt. Brown flew his first missions as a co-pilot for Lt. E. G. Holmer during the period from September, 1944 to early 1945. Lt. Brown then became a 1st pilot with his own crew, completed his tour on 14 April; flew A/C #44-48821 back to the U.S. Exact date of death not known.

Coddington, James W. 5/9/98 Date of birth 12 January 1924. He served on the C.E. Phillips crew as Radio Operator. This crew flew a total of 35 missions from 5 August, 1944 to 3 January, 1945. Returning to the U.S., he married Margaret F. Wood on 3 July 1945. After graduating from the University of Iowa law school, he practiced law for 35 years.

Dovey, Arnold J. 10/98 0-808009 Arnold enlisted in 1942 as an Aviation Cadet. He finished training as a Navigator; arrived at Shipdham on 5 May 1944, transferring into the 66th Squadron from the 466th BG. Three days later, while on a PFF training mission with the F.M. Musgrave crew, unnamed, they were shot down by an enemy aircraft, crew bailing out. Arnold was seriously injured, but continued on as a special PFF Navigator after recovering. He participated in 22 major PFF/H2X Group Leads, 13 of which were with the 14th C.B.W. and six leading



the 2nd Division. During the latter period, he was based at the 14th CB Wing at Shipdham. He was awarded two D.F.C. medals - for exceptional bombing results on Hamburg and Bremen targets. He returned to the U.S. in May, 1945, remained in the Reserves until 1962. He married in 1946, had two sons, Lee and Douglas. After retirement, Arnold remained very active in his endeavors to make known the very special place PFF bombing had in winning the war in Europe.

Harmonoski, John J. 11/17/98 0-734906 John was a Bombardier on Lt. J.Y. Reeds crew, 66th Sq. when they went on D.S. to North Africa on 23 June 1943. But John flew with the J.E. Flaberty crew on all of the missions flown there, including the famous low-level attack on the Ploesti Oil Fields in Rumania. In recent years John attended most of the 44th BG reunions including this year at Savannah where he was honored for being a Ploesti Veteran. John insisted upon attending although he was in poor health, but had to use a wheel chair. Shortly after returning home, he suffered a massive heart attack.

Leitzel, William I. 06/28/98 13028187 67th Sq. Williams was trained as a Radio Operator, was with the Ground Echelon that went over to England on the Queen Mary in September, 1942. He had joined the AAF on 18 June 1941 and attended school prior to this date. He faithfully served in this capacity for 31 months and returned to the U.S. again on the Queen Mary in May, 1945. After the service, he worked for the Cresline Plastic Company until retirement and was active with the Amateur Ham Radio Operators of Harrisburg, PA.

Russell, John E. 1998 36377085. John was an original crew member of the J.E. Hill crew, 67th Sq, having been assigned shortly before the 23 June 1943 departure for North Africa. This crew participated in most of the missions assigned to the 44th from Benina Airdrome, including Ploesti, and twice was the only 67th Sq. plane returning to base from a mission! They also returned to Africa in September for a second D.S., was again the only 67th plane to return to base from the 1 Oct. 43 attack on Wiener Neustadt. The Hill crew completed their tour in February, 1944.

Spencer, Edgar J. 7/4/98 0-693321 "Jay" was a 1st pilot in the 67th Sq. flew his first mission on 3 August 1944. The crew completed their 35th mission on 12 December 1944, a mission to Koblenz, Germany. Jay and Estelle attended many of the reunions of both the 44th BG and 2nd ADA in recent years even though Jay was restricted to a wheel chair. They were a courageous couple.



An e-mail with good advice from Larry Herpel:

"...Will, I would like to ask the new editor of the Tails to do something for all of us. I am talking to several young persons whose fathers served in the 44th. One may be contacting you. I am encouraging them to join the BGVA as associate members. I believe the Tails needs to have a running article, say down in one of the corners, about joining the BGVA. What the life dues and yearly dues are and where to send them. Mention needs to be made that if vets have loved ones that are interested in joining, then this is how to go about it. This should run in every issue.

We Agree! See Back Cover...

MERRY CHRISTMAS

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