

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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The name of *Black Jack* was used twice in the 44th Bomb Group. The first, #41-23816, was one of the original planes in the 68th Sq. It had a great, long record. It was lost on 1 October 1943 at Wiener-Neustadt.

The second *Black Jack*, #42-73506, "X" with a bar under it, was assigned to the 506th Sq. It flew 19 missions from 2 February 1944, piloted by Lt. **Albert** until it was lost on 8 April 1944 on a mission to Langenhagen, Germany. The pilot, Lt. **Guy Johnson** was KIA, but his entire crew survived to become POWs. Another photo of the same plane barely shows a nose turret, so that indicates that the one in this picture is 42-73506, a "J" Model.

This picture of *Black Jack* is part of the collection of **Henry Steele**, crew chief, 68th Sq. He shared his collection with **Frank Schaeffer**, who forwarded them to the *8 Ball Tails*. Can anyone identify the smiling gentleman standing in front of the plane?

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD 2004 - 2005

President Emeritus:
Gen. John H. Gibson (Ret.)
7008 Gateridge Drive
Dallas, TX 75254
Phone (972) 239-0559

President: Robert Paul Kay
10411 Brook Lane SW
Tacoma, WA 98499
Phone (253) 584-4425
E-Mail: RKay1017@msn.com

Vice President: George Washburn
11505 N. Armenia Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33612
Phone (813) 932-6425
E-Mail: liberatorpilot@msn.com

Secretary/8 Ball Tails Editor:
Ruth W. Davis-Morse
2041 Village Circle East
York, PA 17404
Phone (717) 846-8948
E-Mail: rdavismorse@aol.com

Treasurer: Richard (Dick) Lynch
109 Jason Road, Box 518
Conrad, IA 50621-0518
Phone (641) 366-2414
E-Mail: r_blynch@netins.net
(first 3 letters r_b)

Immediate Past President:
Roy Owen
108 Wawona Place
Chico, CA 95928-8429
Phone (530) 891-9157
FAX (530) 891-9157
E-Mail: rwowen44bg@sbcglobal.net

Archivist: C. W. "Will" Lundy
2519 Westville Tri.
Cool, CA 95614-2008
Phone (530) 886-8636 (Winter)
P. O. Box 315, Bridgeport, CA 93517
(Summer)
E-Mail: willundy@aol.com

Director: William Ward
120 B Heritage Hills
Somers, New York 10589-1317
Phone (914) 277-5830

Historian: Roger D. Fenton
4311 E. Sunrise Drive
Phoenix, AZ 85044-1010
Phone (480) 893-3761
E-Mail lomadanger@aol.com
E-Mail bhward8@aol.com

Decorations & Awards:
Robert Lee Aston
830 Cardinal Drive
Elberton, GA 30635-2606
Phone (706) 283-1337

U. K. Representative:
Steve Adams
28 Bassingham Road
Norwich, England NR3 2 QT
Phone/FAX 011-44-1603-400221
E-Mail: s.p.adams@btinternet.com

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AFTER PLOESTI--WIENER-NEUSTADT HOME OF THE MESSERSCHMIDT PLANT

The 44th was ordered to be part of an attack upon the Messerschmitt Air Frame Works at Wiener-Neustadt, Austria (approximately 30 miles southwest of Vienna) on August 13, 1943. Originally this was to have been part of a coordinated strategic bombing effort by the 8th and 9th Air Forces. The 8th was to send its 1st Division B-17s to the ball bearing plants at Schweinfurt and its 4th Bomb Wing B-17s to attack the Messerschmitt Air Frame Works at Regensburg. The 9th (including the 44th) was to attack Wiener-Neustadt. All of this was to take place on August 7, 1943.

The plan was to strike at the aircraft production facilities of the German, all at the same time of the day. This was to overwhelm the German defensive fighter forces. A grand plan. Not unlike so many other events in life, the planning was magnificent, the execution lacked greatness. For reasons unknown to us, the planned date was abandoned. Perhaps the date was too close to the August 1, 1943 Ploesti mission, and its resultant battle damage was a factor. We flew our part of the plan on August 13. The 8th did not fly its part of this plan until August 17, 1943. Even then, English weather fouled this well planned saturation of the German defenses. Instead of the two 8th AF elements of the mission penetrating German air space together, they were separated by three hours. This permitted the German fighters to attack both columns with ferocity, resulting in the loss of 60 B-17s that day.

Bob Lehnhausen has vivid memories of the drama of Wiener-Neustadt. "We still had our two additional fuel tanks in the front bays of the bomb bays. It was a target beyond our normal range, thus the extra tanks were essential. The planned landing in Tunis shortened up the total dis-

tance to be flown

"My recall of the briefing of the first mission to Wiener-Neustadt is that the intelligence people told us, as a part of the briefing, that we should not expect any great fighter opposition. There were no combat fighter units close by. However, there were German fighter training activities in the area, and that we might attract some pilot training officers to oppose our attack. As it turned out, the opposition on that mission was very light, both from fighters and from flak."

Twenty six B-24's left Benina for the 12 hour flight, but only 20 planes were able to reach it due to mechanical problems. They dropped 159 x 500 lb. bombs, and the target was well covered. Rear flight observers reported flame and smoke in the target area. Anti-aircraft fire was slight, and a few FW 190s attacked at the target, and on the way home 10-15 Me 109s attacked with little success. Gunners on the B-24s were able to bring down 2 enemy A/C. Twenty one planes from the formation landed in Tunis.

The mission report stated that Lt. **Robert Lehnhausen** from the 68th Sq. made a difficult landing in Sicily when his plane ran out of fuel. This forced landing took place on a small landing strip hedged in by rocky terrain. The strip was pocked with craters from previous bombing by Allied planes. Lehnhausen landed *Wing and a Prayer* dead stick with such skill that none of the crew was injured and the plane suffered only minor damages. When the tallying was complete, no planes or crew were lost.

"The force attacking Regensburg was led by General **Curtis LeMay**. They lost 24 of their 127 a/c and crews. Another first on this part of the mission was that they, the Regensburg raiders, flew on to land in

...continued on page 4

Tunisia. Once again this was to permit them a deeper penetration into Germany. This, rather than trying to return to their bases in England.

"I might add that the history of the 12th AF in Tunisia was poorly prepared to accept his force. This was the last time that this sort of effort was made by the 8th, to go to N. Africa with B-17s.

The 44th flew three more missions out of Benina in August before heading back to England—two to Foggia and one to Caricello. After that they were ready to return to England.

AND THEN

The 44th was called back to Africa with the assignment of clearing the way for General Patton to take Sicily from the Germans; but by the time they arrived, the takeover had been complete. The Germans had gone back into production at the Messerschmidt Plant, so the 44th set forth with 26 planes to complete the job of halting production, 1 October 1943.

Despite heavy clouds, Lt. Col. **James T. Posey**, Commander of the Raid, found a hole in the target area, and 50 tons of bombs were dropped. Fighters rose to greet the planes, as many as 75 Me 109s and 20-25 FW 190's were reported. Flak was also heavy. Eight planes from the 44th were lost, among them, *Black Jack*.

Black Jack (68th Sq.) had arrived in Shipdham 20 September '42. She flew 34 missions, among them, such notorious combat areas as Kiel, Wilhelmshaven, Rouen and Bordeaux, then joined the group that flew to Africa. On the second trip to Wiener-Neustadt, flak and enemy aircraft brought her down.

Black Jack was joined in the downward spiral by *Fascinatin' Witch*, #42-72877 (no name), and *Queen Ann* from the 66th; *Marcia Ann*, #42-41017, #41-23779 (no names), and *Count Bruga* from the 67th; #42-72857 (no name) from the 506th Squadron. Thirty three airmen were KIA, 38 were POW, of which two escaped, one was

repatriated and two were seriously wounded.

The enemy aircraft paid a high price: 50 fighters were destroyed, 3 probables and 6 were damaged. Of this total, the 68th gunners claimed 13 a/c destroyed.

Wiener-Neustadt was such an unforgettable event in Lehnhausen's career, he continues to study all aspects of that mission. "I have found that some of Hitler's detractors (German) complained that the defense of the homeland was based upon the prior day's or night's Allied air attacks. Apparently that is exactly what took place at W-N. On October 1 there were lots of 88's to greet our invasive attack. I have always believed that the planners of this mission were very unfair to the flight crews. My interrogation report shows that our briefed altitude was 18,000 feet. If my memory is correct, the area of W-N is about 5,000' above sea level. If my belief is correct, we were really only an average of 13,000' above those German rifles. That is an anti-aircraft gunner's delight.

"Somewhere, recently, I read that strangely, all of the losses on this mission were caused by flak, not by fighters. However, the personal narratives in the ROH dispel that statement. I heartily concur, there were lots of fighters, and they were firing lethal gunfire."

Coleman Whitaker was piloting *Black Jack* on this disastrous mission. He and four of his crew were KIA; five were POW; **Robert Reasoner** was repatriated. For his injuries, he was awarded his third Purple Heart.

Lehnhausen had warm recollections of *Black Jack*. "This was truly a beloved plane. The marvelous crew chief who babied and cared for this proud bird was M/Sgt. **Alfred Bagdonas**. 'Bag' and his dedicated crew really grieved the loss of this ship. At the time of its loss, Major **John H. Diehl, Jr.** was our 68th Squadron Commander. Diehl was the original pilot of *Black Jack*". It was part of the 44th original flight echelon. I have always wondered about the name. Was this the way the crew chose to honor their pilot, or was it some other association? As I recall,

the side of the nose had a painting that depicted the card game jack and ten beneath the name. At this point, there remains no one to check with."

Finding the unique details of every mission are never complete. An unexpected finding has given rise to another article which will be appearing soon in the 8 Ball Tails.

While the 44th was bombing Wiener-Neustadt on 13 August 1943, Roosevelt & Churchill were meeting in Quebec City at the Allied Quadrant Conference. On the same day of their second trip (1 October 1943), Allies captured Naples. Twelve days later, Italy declared war on Germany.

FOR SALE

THE LIBERATORS WHO NEVER RETURNED *By Peter Loncke*

This 365 page, plastic bound treatise deals with a single event, a low level mission to Wesel, Germany on 24 March 1945. The assignment was to drop supplies to the British paratroopers who had just crossed the Rhine River. The book is dedicated to 1st. Lt. **Leonard Crandell**, Pilot of K-Bar and the uncle of the author's wife Connie. Fifteen crews went down that day, two from the 44th BG. Seventeen men from the 506 were lost; two survived, **Robert Vance** and **Louis DeBlasio**.

Loncke's book has pictures of the airmen who flew, their crash sites, the sixteen year old German lad who aided with ground munitions; the P-47 fighter pilot, **John Delaney**, who crashed while defending the '24s; memorials that were erected at crash sites and much detail about those losses. 1st Sgt. Chief in the Belgium Air Force, Loncke researched many crash sites of many planes of other nations, and has been recognized for his dedication. Besides being a member of the 44th BG, he has Honorary membership in the Irish Guards Assoc., London Branch; 50-61 Sq. Assoc., RAF; 75 Sq. Royal New Zealand AF; and holds the British Ambassador's Meritorious Service Award.

The book is in it its second printing. The price is \$50 including postage. E-Mail Peter at b24kaybar@insightbb.com or contact him at 19343 Springfield Road, Groveland, IL 61535.



**SILENCE IS
OFTEN
MISINTERPRETED
BUT
NEVER MISQUOTED.**

PRESIDENTIAL BRIEFING

This is my first communication to our members as your inexperienced president. In the military, you have Staff Support. In business you have an organization to assist. This group, as you know, is all volunteers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those volunteers for their support and their time and efforts they give to the 44th Bomb Group.

Dick and Betty Lynch – Treasurers. They do our full time accounting, record keeping, collecting and dispersing our funds. Just handling the monies for annual meetings is a major effort, extremely demanding and time consuming. They do these things exceptionally well.

Ruth Davis-Morse – Secretary/8 Ball Tails Editor. The communication job she does is monumental, requiring more time and effort than most volunteers are willing to give. The *8 Ball Tails* is second to none in quality and value to the 44th BG.

Roger Fenton – Director and Historian continues to research and answer questions for many about individuals participating in our war. In addition, he holds a full time job. His time and contribution to our group is very much appreciated.

Robert Lee Aston – Decorations and Awards. For many who earned a decoration or award in our War, but never received it, are truly thankful for Lee's efforts. No one is more dedicated in allocating his time to this noble purpose than Lee.

Will Lundy – Archivist. I call Will the 'Oracle', which as you know, refers to a deity or anyone speaking with great wisdom, inspiration or authority. That's Will. He has been the keeper of the flame. The history of the 44th Bomb Group, the stories of our heroes would have been lost if not for Will's foresight. We cannot thank him enough for this dedication of more than forty years.

Perry Morse – 2nd Air Division Representative. This irreplaceable man is in charge of our Annual Meeting Hospitality Room. Without the help of Tony Cianci and others, you would not drink as much - or as well - or at the price you choose. Perry dedicates much time and effort to managing a happy gathering place. **Please, Perry, Keep it Up.**

IMMEDIATE GOALS FOR THE 44TH BGVA

1. Complete the Voice-over for the Ploesti Raid exhibit in Savannah, Georgia.
2. As you know, the Group has worked for many years to place Will's collection and our history into a Database. This effort was financed by members who saw value in computerizing our history. Many of you have contributed your personal biographical information to this bank. Very shortly we expect to complete the mailing of disks containing this historical information. Every member will receive a copy.
3. Transferring Will Lundy's records and his collection of our history to the United States Army Heritage & Education Center at the United States Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

(On a personal note: Will keeps writing and using his material and delaying the shipment to Carlisle (and it is his right to do so); but I go to California in the winter, and I have told Will, if he doesn't get this material shipped, Carlisle will send a major to package and ship the material because they want it that badly. I am coming by his place and intend to crate him and the material for shipment.)

4. Organize the Annual Meeting for 2006.

I am leaning on Past Presidents Roy Owen and Bob Lehnhausen and their experiences. I will try and serve your needs and wishes in the coming year. I hope your holidays were happy, and the New Year brings you all the best.



Paul Kay

THE 44TH BOMB GROUP AT TACOMA



On duty to greet the arrivals were L-R Mary Aston, Jackie Roberts, Betty Lynch and Will Lundy. Mary made her military pins available, Jackie & Betty supplied guests with tickets and Will introduced his recently completed book, *The Roll of Honor*.

Nearly 100 44thers arrived at the north-western state of Washington for another fun opportunity to get together and remember solemn moments in the past. It was a time for family members, a generation later, to hear of experiences that are rarely discussed at home.

Paul Kay's careful reunion planning had interesting competition. A beauty contest was going on simultaneously at the Doubletree, and beautiful teenage girls in splendid costumes wandered the halls, along with the gray haired veterans who enjoyed the festivity.

The Boeing Museum of Flight was a winning trip, especially the walk through the old Red Barn, where the company followed the example of the Wright Brothers and built vehicles to soar through the air. The gallery is full of notable aircrafts, and one wing is devoted to pilots who demonstrated outstanding personal courage throughout the history of flight.

Many of their planes are on loan to government museums, particularly Air Force One, #707 121, "The Flying Oval Office." Notable for its contribution to WWII, Boeing built the B-17.

Some of the crowd opted to go to Seattle, to sit atop the space needle and view the scenery of a very sophisticated city. Considering the number of bags that were carried from the bus, the shopping had to have been a successful adventure.

Mt. St. Helens attracted half the crowd, and that tour provided a glimpse of all the splendor and devastation that Nature can impose. A box lunch in a picnic area started the trip, and at different levels, rangers described the volcano's unique performance. Whoever thought a volcano would explode sideways and throw stones 350 mph? Mt. St. Helens did. It was still steaming a bit in the crater that was left behind.



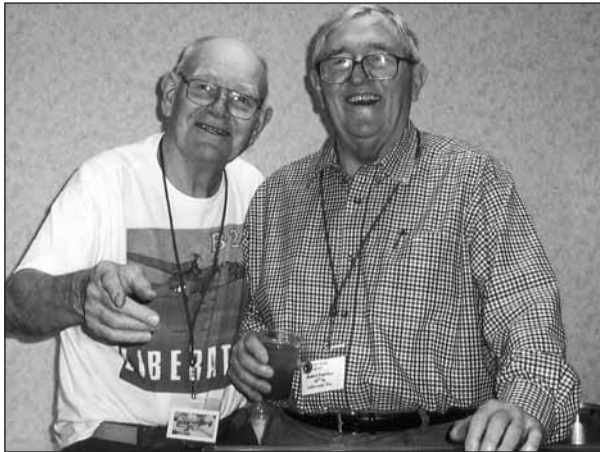
Frank Schaeffer enjoys a box lunch before the trip up to view Mt. St. Helen



Sam Miceli ponders the power of a volcano

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The Hospitality Room had space for groups to gather and chat, get an education on the Database and view videos of outstanding missions, particularly the Ploesti Raid featuring Dick Butler. On display was memorabilia from the David Webster collection.



Perry Morse, procurer of beverages, and Paul Kay, Reunion Chairman, on duty in the Hospitality Room.



Webster, a private collector, demonstrates a 60 year old chunk of barracks wall, decorated by an unknown artist at Shipham. This piece of 44th history was collected by Steve Adams and presented to Webster on a recent journey to U.K.



Dick Butler and Mary Aston (Roy Owen in Background)

It was a night for long overdue awards: The efforts of **R. Lee Aston** came to fruition when awards earned 60 years ago reached Tacoma. The moments were somber when Lois Cianci received two Air Medals for her lost father, T/Sgt. **Clair P. Shaeffer**, an aerial gunner in the 68th Sq.; and Jackie Roberts received an Air Medal for her lost father, S/Sgt. **Jack N. Ostenson** who was an Aircraft Engineer in the 68th Sq.

It was a joyous moment when 1st. Lt. **William W. Ward**, a Lead Bombardier in the 506 Sq. received the DFC + DFC/OLC#1 + AMOLC #5. Equally delighted was 1st. Lt. **Bernard W. Bail**, Lead Radar Navigator, 66th Sq., who received the **Distinguished Service Cross**, 3 DFCs and AM/OLC #4.

Presentations were by Col. **Richard Butler** (Ret.); after which, Mary Aston presented a 44th BG Suncatcher to him, a gift from her husband Lee.

The gavel passed from Roy Owen to Paul Kay, and the 44th's next chapter began.



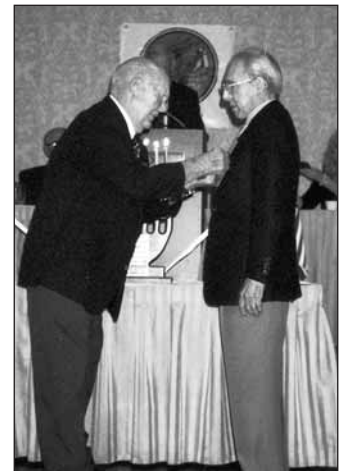
Lois Cianci



Jackie Roberts



William Ward



Dr. Bernard Bail



Leon Johnson



Robert Lehnhausen



Roy Owen

The Banquet was a night for long overdue recognitions. The 44th Board and Awards Chairman **Lee Aston** chose to honor two outstanding leaders of the organization, **Robert Lehnhausen** and **Roy Owen**, naming both to be recipients of the prestigious Leon Johnson Award. Both had been part of the group that founded the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association after the previous organization had folded. Both had served on the Board for many years and both had held the office of President (Owen, 5 times). Lehnhausen was also awarded a mahogany B-24. Owen received a model of the Blackbird, which he flew after the war. (This was a gift from Lowell & Jackie Roberts.)

SAN ANTONIO ROSE



The unidentified officer on the cover of the Summer Issue of the 8 Ball Tails was **William L. Warner**, pilot of Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose.

When Warner completed his missions, his wife, Coloma, who was nurse, told her co-workers the happy news that he had returned home. Her Head Nurse learned that a war-weary plane was on exhibit at Willow Run. She ordered a limousine to pick up Warner and transport him to the Ford Plant. To his surprise, it was his plane on exhibit. When he informed the workers he had flown that plane, out came the camera to snap this pic-

ture. 'Bill' never saw the picture until the Eight Ball Tails came out.

Paul Kay, Navigator, has a vivid memory of flying in Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose on 3 March 1945. Twenty one A/C were dispatched, five from the 68th. The target was the Rothensee Oil Refinery at Magdeburg, Germany. Flak hit, and the plane was living up to its first name—limping.

"We had no electrical power, no radio, no intercom for about 2 _ hours," he recalled. "One engine was hit and not operating. The bomb bay doors were hanging open and would not close. We were pulling a very high power setting since leaving the target , and still falling behind every formation that came along. With no communication to our formation, we came back out of Germany alone.

Bill Warner wanted to head straight for our lines, but I showed him we would be too low crossing some heavy flak areas in Ruhr Valley. So we flew almost due west and then turned south.

"We had crashed on the mission before, and the pilot was not sure how long we could keep flying. Many in the crew did not want to ride another one down.

"I had received a photo static copy showing where the lines were that day. We would be

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crossing three rivers after turning south, the River Rhine, River Waal, River Mass. Fighting was along the Waal. We would be in friendly territory after crossing the middle river. Much of this communication was done by notes in my maps being passed up between the pilot's legs. Two crew members, the engineer and radioman went back to the waist to jump. This was Engineer Carns first mission with us, as our original engineer was injured on the prior mission crash.

"I could not let the nose gunner, Cliff Bengston out of his nose turret at that time because the wind would have blown my charts all over. He had been in the nose turret for about two hours with no communication except hand signals from me.

"He went up to the pilot and co-pilot, and came back and said the pilot was going to jump. I said, 'the @\#*%& he is.' So I climbed up to the pilot and said, 'I'm afraid to jump.' He said, 'I am too.' Then I told him there was an airfield straight ahead.

"We decided to send Bengston back to the waist to inform the crew we were going to land. I helped with his chest chute, but he got hung up between the uprights on the catwalk in the bomb bay...and the bomb bay doors were open! Our hands were cold and stiff from no heat since leaving the target.

"We could not free him, and we were concerned his chute might open in the bomb bay. I said, 'Cliff, you will just have to stand in the

bomb bay and hold on until we land.

"We had been told earlier at base, if you are going to be captured, try to surrender to the Luftwaffe; second choice - German Regular Army; third - SS; and last choice - civilians. The crew of five in the back all bailed out. Bob Swegell, Tail Gunner, didn't get the message about being in friendly territory when he bailed out. He landed in a thicket. Planning his escape, he ran one way, dropping his chute and May West, then turned the other way when he saw a farmer pitching hay. The farmer ran to him, but did not drop his pitchfork. Swegell retreated into the bushes and out the other side. A civilian ran to help, but he was smoking a pipe, didn't drop it, so Swegell thought he had a pistol. So back to the bushes he went. Finally some soldiers captured him—British Soldiers!

"We think we are the only crew that had a member surrender to the British Army!!!"

2nd Lt. **Dudley Drake** was Co-pilot on that mission; T. Sgt. **Clifford Bengston**, Nose Gunner & Toggler; S/Sgt. **Albert W. Leibner**, Radio Operator; Sgt. **Keith Springer**, RWG; Sgt. **Antonio Scorpio**, LWG; **Robert Swegell**, TG.

Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose was flying High Element Left Wing; the Command Pilot in the lead plane was Major Robert Lehnhausen, flying with the James E. Brownlowe crew.

THE 2006 REUNION

DOES THIS SOUND LIKE PLAN II?

WELL, IT IS

We're going to Washington! As you may recall, the Board announced that we would be off to Branson in 2006. By popular request, the decision was made to join the merriment at the unveiling of the U.S. Air Force Memorial. We were reminded by many—that this event will happen only once. If we miss it, we will always regret it.

It's a great opportunity for our veterans to see the WWII Memorial that was finished after our last trip to the Capital. Also, a chance to show that the airmen who flew to Munich, Bernberg, Berlin and other Nazi strongholds are still standing up to be counted.

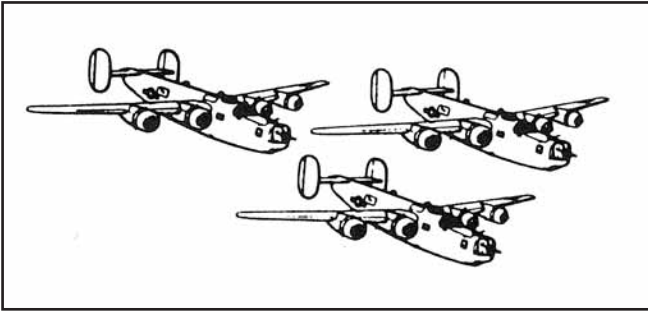
I wish we could give you exact dates for the entire celebration. The unveiling is October 14... that date is firm. Other great events are being planned around it, and it sounds like a celebration we will never forget. Stay tuned. The next 8 Ball Tails will give you the entire schedule.

B-24 SCULPTURE

VETERANS MEMORIAL GARDEN

BALBOA PARK, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

By Col. Richard D. Butler (Ret.)



A bronze B-24 model of the Liberator, was dedicated on Veterans Day, 11 November 2005. A splendid one-sixth scale model is mounted on a pedestal in the center of a reflecting pool. A number of men who flew combat mission in B-24s were present for the dedication ceremony. Also present were a significant number of men and women who helped build B-24s at the Consolidated Aircraft Factory, the birthplace of the B-24. The factory was located on Lindbergh Field; the B-24 model is pointed toward that location.

Retired Air Force Brigadier General, **Robert L. Cardenas**, is Chairman of the Veterans Memorial Garden and Center Committee. He was also Chairman of the B-24 Model Committee. Our B-24 is the centerpiece of the Veterans Memorial Garden. Army and Navy sections and monuments for those services will be forthcoming.

General Cardenas was in the 44th Bomb Group, 506 Squadron. Then a Captain, he was shot down on what he said was his 20th mission while flying as Command Pilot with the Ray LaCombe crew on a mission to Friedrichshafen, Germany on 18 March 1944. Along with the crew he was interned in Switzerland.

At the dedication ceremony General Cardenas described to the audience how the Veterans Memorial Garden and Center and the B-24 model had come into being. The City of San Diego, together with a grant from the State of California had provided the funds and the site on former Naval Hospital property for this most impressive location. The B-24 model

was made possibly by donation by many people and organizations. The leader for the entire B-24 model project was Mr. George Welsh, former B-24 Liberator Club administrator and currently publisher of the Bomber Legends magazine. He originated the idea for the model and pursued that idea to its fruition and the model as it exists today. We B-24 veterans and the citizens of San Diego are deeply indebted to George and his wife, Michelle, for all their efforts over several years to establish this wonderful memorial for a great airplane.

There were several speakers at the ceremony, one of whom was the former Mayor of San Diego, who during his term of office had worked tirelessly for the Veterans Memorial and the B-24 model installation; as that aircraft had been such a significant part of the city's World War II history. Another speaker was a gentleman that had been an engineer at Consolidated Aircraft during the design of the B-24, and had flown on the first test flight of the first B-24. He described that flight and his experiences on some other flights, as well as some aircraft manufacturing matters. As I am a native of San Diego and flew B-24s in combat, I was asked to describe some of my experiences, particularly those of the 1 August 1943 low level bombing attack on the oil refineries of Ploesti, Romania.

The 44th Bomb Group was well represented at the dedication ceremony. General Cardenas had his wife and daughter there. With me were my wife Ardith, our son Dan with his wife and two children, and our daughter Emmy Lou. **Will Lundy** was there with his two sons and his daughter. **John Gately** and his wife Bernadette also attended.

This beautiful B-24 model installation is a true memorial to all B-24 veterans-- those men that flew it, those who maintained and repaired it, and those men and women that helped to build all those planes. It is particularly a remembrance to all of those men that gave their lives, flying B-24s in the defense of freedom.

FLYING BLIND WITH NEEDLE BALL AND AIR SPEED INDICATOR

By Jerry Folsom

While attached to the 61st Troop Carrier Group near Grantham, England and Sherwood Forrest, the first part of December or last of November 1944, I was instructing the Command Officers in flying B-24s. The planes had a 500 gallon tank in each of the four bomb bays with the idea of ferrying gas over to Patton. The pilots were flying C-46s and C-47s, carrying troops and supplies to the continent.

One forenoon I went down to operations as I had often done, hoping I would get a chance to fly a C-46 or C-47. Only one person was there, a Major who was sick. He told me that there was a maximum effort on, and that all planes and pilots were on it. He told me there was a plane grounded over in France with a flat tire, right behind the unstable combat lines; and they needed to get a tire over there that afternoon before dark, as they did not want to leave the plane there overnight.

"You have been wanting to fly one of these planes," he reminded me. "Here is your chance." He asked whether I would fly a plane to France, delivering wheel and tire. He said he would go with me to help with take off and landing, and that he knew the landing strip where the plane was down. However, all that was available and flyable was one C-47 that had been redlined for flight instruments.

He assured me that we would be all right, as the weather would be good and clear. No weather front was expected until later that night, about midnight; and we would be back long before dark. We would be able to fly vfr. (visible flight rules); and since we will be able to see the ground and terrain, we would not need flight instruments.

He got a Radio Operator and Flight Engineer, and there were two or three others coming along to handle the wheel. We took off and had a nice flight to the temporary landing strip. We could hear artillery and guns in the distance. The tire was unloaded and the wheel replaced on the plane. I had a chance to stand on French soil for a few minutes before we took off to return.

A Change in the Weather

Things went well crossing the Channel on return flight until we approached the English shore. There was a big black cloud covering and obscuring the English Coast. It looked like a black curtain. Soon it was raining ... then raining harder and harder. The front was here now, and we were in it. Soon we could see spotlights flashing toward us, and there were colored flares being shot up – like several colored roman candles. It dawned on me that they were challenging this unidentified aircraft. Of course we had not filed any flight plan because we were going to be home long before dark.

I asked the radio man if he had picked up a radio packet containing the code words and colors of the day. Thank goodness he had. The men scoured the plane and found a couple of flares that were the colors of the day at that hour of time. They fired one, and that seemed to satisfy ground personnel. We did not see any more flares challenging us.

No Help From Instruments

It was raining hard – buckets full. One could see nothing through the windshield, it was raining so hard. We were on instruments, but actually no instruments – only the turn and bank indicator and magnetic compass. This was not much help in keeping direction, because it bounces around too much, especially in the turbulence of a storm. It is just a disc floating in a liquid, and not very stable. And as far as helping to keep a direction – it indicated only general direction. We could not go above a 1000 feet, as the RAF was coming out. We could see a plane exhaust occasionally, so we knew they were there.

It was raining so hard and it was so dark, we could not see the ground. We really did not know where we were – only that we were flying in the general direction of the Grantham base. Next we discovered that the radio did not work nor the radio compass.

Can you conceive the feeling of being in a plane and not knowing where you are or

...continued on page 13

where you are heading or where you are going to be able to land...if you can? It is a hopeless feeling.

The Major was so sick he could hardly hold his head up. Finally realizing it was time we should be in the area of our base, I suggested to him that if I see a landing strip (runway) that we should attempt to land. He agreed. I spotted a row of runway lights. They are like a slit - in - half ball. When lined up with them, you can see a row of lights.

The Major agreed we should land if we could. I flew a downwind leg over the lights to get set up, and started a landing pattern, called on the radio that we were an unidentified plane that was lost and had spotted their landing strip lights and asked permission to land. I advised them that the radio was not receiving and that I would turn on landing lights on the downwind leg, and asked them to give me a green light if it was OK. Well, I turned on landing lights so they could spot me better, and they gave me a green light. So

I proceeded with the landing pattern. The Major roused up enough to help land the plane.

Touching Down

Well – when we turned off the runway a couple of jeeps came out to meet us as we stopped. It was still raining by the bucketsful, as it can in England. When we opened the door, they wanted to know who we were and where we were headed. When we told them ‘Grantham’, they advised us that we were at Grantham, the base that we had left and to which we were hoping to return. If anyone thinks that we were not a group of happy fellows, he would be grossly mistaken. I said a few thank you’s and so did the others.

Out of hundreds of airfields in England at that period of time, Somebody guided us to the right field. Somebody was helping us.

This is just another example of Divine Intervention that I experienced while flying ‘over there.’

For Sale:

44th BOMB GROUP ROLL OF HONOR AND CASUALTIES

By Will Lundy

This book is probably one of the most researched documents of any Group in WWII. It is a hard cover book of 454 pages that represents more than 40 years of unrelenting effort to record the story of every airman in the 44th BG who gave his life for the noble cause of **Freedom**.

The 44th BG was the first Bomber Group to train in new B-24 Liberators in early 1942 and shared with the 93rd BG the honors for taking this new and untried Liberator into action against Germany.

Will remembered numerous close friends who were lost, and he did not want their stories to die. So he first had to find their stories that were buried in the rolls of microfilm available at Maxwell AFB and the National Archives at Suitland. But once the search was underway, it immediately expanded to ALL of the 44thers who died for liberty and freedom.

MACRs (Missing Air Crew Reports) divulged the home town addresses for all of these men, so many years were spent searching for the survivors of these downed airplanes, in order to obtain **FIRST PERSON STORIES** of what happened. He made thousands of telephone calls, sent letters, post cards, etc. over many years. Many official documents provided the personal stories for this huge undertaking of obtaining as many facts as possible. This new book provides the answers to most of the questions of: “What Happened to These Heroes”.

Cost: \$50, which includes shipping and handling.

Order from: Will Lundy

2519 Westville Trail

Cool, CA 95614

A SURVEY BY MARY ASTON
Regarding
A LAST HOORAH TRIP TO SHIPDHAM, ENGLAND
AND PERHAPS NORMANDY & BELGIUM

If you or your offspring would like to take another look at the areas where the youth of The Greatest Generation committed themselves to overcoming the Nazi Regime, 60 years ago, contact Mary Aston:

830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635-2606. Phone 706 283-1337.

E-Mail: leeaston@elberton.net

For Sale:

Mary Aston is selling lapel pins of WWII Medals: 8th Air Force, DFC, Air Medal, Purple Heart, POW, European-African Mediterranean Theater and WWII Victory Medal. The price of each is \$9 + 37 cents postage. Specify pin name and number of each type.

Also available, a leaded glass suncatcher featuring the Flying 8 Ball. The price is \$115.00 (\$90 + \$25 S & H) Proceeds go to the 44th BGVA. Contact Mary at 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635.



Flying Eight Balls Suncatcher

THE 44TH BOMB GROUP PX

- Flying 8 Ball Golf Shirts \$25.00 + 3.00 Postage
- Flying 8 Ball Caps (Indicate Squadron) 15.00 + 2.00 Postage
- Flying 8 Ball Felt Patches (about 6 inches diameter) 15.00 + 1.00 Postage
- Flying 8 Ball Squadron Pins (Indicate Squadron) 5.00 + .50 Postage
- Blue Liberator Shirts (Light Blue with B-24 designs) 30.00 + 3.00 Postage
- 44th Bumper Stickers 2.00 (Postage Incl.)

Order From:
Sam Miceli

(Make check payable to Sam Miceli)
 6398 Dawson Blvd., Mentor, Ohio 44060-3648

Roy Owen found this document in his files, describing the situation in Shipdham after the 44th had flown 17 missions. It backs up Howard Moore's statement, "When the missions began, the losses were horrible. We were losing planes and crews at an unbelievable rate. The Luftwaffe was slaughtering us."

**HEADQUARTERS
44TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) AAF
Office of the Commanding Officer**

APO 634

March 9, 1943

SUBJECT: Depletion of strength of 44th Bomb Group (H).

TO: Commanding General, 2nd Bombardment Wing, APO 634

1. Attached hereto is an analysis of losses of this group by squadrons, since arrival in this theater. The group has become so depleted that its combat efficiency is seriously impaired.
2. Monday, 8 March 1943, there were three mental cases developed, which required hospitalization, one prior to the combat mission, one man became unconscious at 1500 feet due to hysteria and collapsed mentally upon completion of the mission. The post surgeon has expressed it as his official opinion that two more weeks of operations similar to those performed in the past month and those crews remaining will all collapse mentally. This opinion is based upon the observations of the surgeon and his assistants in the squadrons. The strongest and most stable individuals are showing evidence of flying fatigue.
3. The only replacements from the U.S. are the five crews for the 44th squadron of this group. These will be placed in combat as replacements in existing squadrons. As soon as they can be given training in high altitude flying and bombing. Unfortunately these pilots and bombardiers have had practically no training at altitude.
4. An analysis of the attached reports indicate that the following personnel have been lost for operations:

66th Bomb Sqdn. --- 67 of 120 or 55 per cent
67th Bomb Sqdn. --- 78 of 112 or 65.1 per cent
68th Bomb Sqdn. --- 62 of 118 or 52.5 per cent
The losses for the group has been 57.5 per cent. An examination of the attached lists shows that the losses are not always in the same categories with the result that it is impossible to form the total number of complete crews for B-24 type A/C which the figures of personnel available would seem to indicate.
5. Although replacement aircraft are being received, replacement crews for B24 type A/C have not arrived to date.
6. The group can stand its combat losses, without loss of morale or efficiency as soon as replacements arrive promptly.
7. This letter is submitted because of the seriousness of the situation as seen by the undersigned.

LEON W. JOHNSON,
Col., Air Corps,
Commanding.

BONNIE BROWN'S TRIBUTE TO HER FATHER

S/Sgt. Raymond Shirley

Raymond Shirley was young—only 20 years old—when he signed on with the Army Air Corps in September 1941; but then, many of the men who enlisted were very young. He was assigned to the Eight Air Force, 44th BG, 67th Sq. after being stationed at various air bases to receive training. He arrived at Shipdham Air Base to begin his duty.

His first mission was April 20, 1944. One week later, April 27th, on his fourth mission to Moyenneville, France, his plane Tuffy went down. Two members of the crew were able to get into their parachute before the plane exploded: **S/Sgt. Raymond Shirley**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner and **S/Sgt. Paul Chagnon**, Radio Operator.

All other members of the crew were KIA: 1st Lt. **Howard A. Clarey**, Pilot; 1st Lt. **Carl E. Rhodes**, Co-Pilot; 2nd Lt. **George W. Forrest**, Navigator; 2nd Lt. **Glenn E. Hinkle**, Bombardier; Sgt. **Leslie Lytle**, Ball Turret Gunner; **S/Sgt. Martin Rieger**, Right Waist Gunner; **Allen W. Phillips**, Left Wing Gunner; and Sgt. **Charles Youse**, Tail Gunner.

Bonnie remembers her father's recollections: "At briefing that morning (April 27, 1944) we had been told that there was one battery of four guns at the target

"We were on the bomb run. Paul Chagnon, Radio Operator, was on the catwalk holding the bomb bay doors open; I was in the top turret. Immediately after dropping our bombs we took a direct hit just outboard of #3 engine and lost the wing from there out. I saw it start spinning like a seed pod falling from a tree in the fall season. (#4 engine was also hit.)

"I was thrown forward in the turret as the aircraft started spinning to the right. I started coming out of the turret, at which time I saw Chagnon bailing out from the cat walk with my chest chute. Someone pulled the plane out briefly, and then we started spinning again to the left. I managed to get Chagnon's chute from his position, got it on and went to the catwalk to bail out. When I bailed out, Lt. Clarey was on the catwalk ready to bail out when I left the ship. I finally found the ripcord and started my descent slipping the chute on

the way down and ending up with a badly sprained right ankle upon landing.

"After getting to the ground, Chagnon came to help me and French civilians were trying to help us. They carried our chutes off; and of course, were speaking French. Chagnon had been born in Canada and had been brought up on French until they moved to the U.S. when he was six or seven years old. But that day he didn't remember one word of French, so the civilian efforts were of no avail. Anyway, Chagnon was helping me. Then the French abandoned us as the German military began to arrive at the scene.

"Chagnon and I approached a barn, hoping to get inside and hide. As we rounded one corner of the barn, the Germans came around the barn corner at the opposite end with their little 'burp guns' and that was it. They put us into a small truck; the bed portion had a cover on it, and inside the truck was Clarey's body. His chute failed to open. We saw no other bodies than that of Lt. Clarey.

"The Germans took us to a building with an underground bunker, where we stayed one or two nights; then through Paris to Dulag Luft, and from there to Stalag Luft VI on the 40-or-8 rail cars.

We were subsequently evacuated from Luft VI to Luft IV via that damned freighter down the Baltic. From IV, I was shipped to Luft I, again on a 40-or-8 rail car; Chagnon wound up on one of those forced marches as the Germans fled from the approaching Russians. Germans abandoned us at Luft I, just a few hours before the Russians arrived. We were eventually evacuated to Camp Lucky Strike in France."

Bonnie stated, "My dad rarely talked about his experiences, and it's obvious from his summary of his POW experience, that he was short on words when speaking about himself. One thing is for certain, with all of the men and women who served our country during WWII, they did it with tremendous pride and a sense of duty and patriotism."

Ed. Note: Raymond Shirley passed away October 12, 2004.



The Clarey Crew

Howard A. Clarey, Pilot; Carl Rhodes, Co-pilot; George Forrest, Navigator; Glenn Hinkle, Bombardier; Raymond Shirley, Engineer, Paul Chagnon, Radio Operator; Leslie Lytle, Nose Turret Gunner; Martin Rieger, RW Gunner; Allen Phillips, LW Gunner; Charles Youse, Tail Gunner.

Identities do not match the picture, except for Raymond Shirley, (top row, far right). Perhaps the reader can identify some of this crew. Only two members survived this crash—Shirley and Chagnon.

THE DAY AFTER THE PLOESTI RAID

From the Diary of Stanley F. Olson, Co-Pilot on the William Strong crew:

August 2, 1943: Yesterday we had it! We flew 2,400 miles round-trip to Ploesti, Romania and back. One of the most important targets of the war. We wound our way over the mountains through Albania, Yugoslavia, Romania and others.

When we neared the I.P. I believe I was scared. The target area was covered with smoke; flak was bursting, and it looked as if all hell was breaking loose.

As we turned on the I.P., Strong gave it power and we overshot Bunker. However, we moved into attack position in trail of Bunker; I took over. With Strong handling the throttles, I was busy trying to keep the plane level, out of prop wash, and hit the target. Once I swore we had been hit, but we went on. I had the wheel turned upside down once, trying to hold a wing up. Strong even gave right throttle, trying to pull it up. Had trouble keeping the ship straight because off Nos. 1 & 2 having more rpms, but adjusted them.

Just as we dropped our bombs (we barely had time before having to turn off), one ship went into a vertical climb, then quivering, reared back head first into the ground, bursting into flame. Two men bailed out, one jumped without a chute. It was Houston's ship; he incidentally had finished his missions. (All in Houston's ship were KIA, in spite of Stan having seen parachutes.)

Sixty airplanes are unaccounted for. So far we have 14 missing.

Olson was a Co-Pilot on the Strong crew, (506 Sq.) flying in Baldy and his Brood to Ploesti. Two months later, as pilot, he was KIA on the mission to Wiener-Neustadt, Austria, flying Star Spangled Hell. His bio and this report were submitted by his son, Dr. Terry Olson.

WARREN McPHERSON REMEMBERED THE WAITING GAME

From his book, *The Wild Blue Yonder*

We flew our first six missions in rapid succession. That was great, as far as we were concerned. When we got home from a raid we were so exhausted, sleep usually came quickly. The longer we waited between raids, the worse it was. We had too much time to think of the horrors of prior missions. Even sleep didn't help because nightmares began to come more frequently and more violently.

Many times one or both the other crews in our hut flew when we didn't. When that happened, one of the men from another crew, **Jack Frost** from Rifle, Colorado, would get dressed, then step to my bunk, shake my shoulders and say, "Mack, I gotta go fly, but I'm not going until you pray for me." So I would pray for him, and off he would go. I'm glad to say, he always came back, too.

On days we didn't fly, I went to the canteen to have tea and crumpets. The British servers identified me as the Yank who didn't take milk in his tea. At the canteen there was a big map that showed where the front lines were on the Continent. We liked to keep tab on how much more ground our troops had taken.

Back at the hut there was often a poker game going on around one of the single bunks. Those of us not in the game would read, sleep, work on hobbies, or write letters to family and friends. But we still had lots of time to think and dread the next mission.

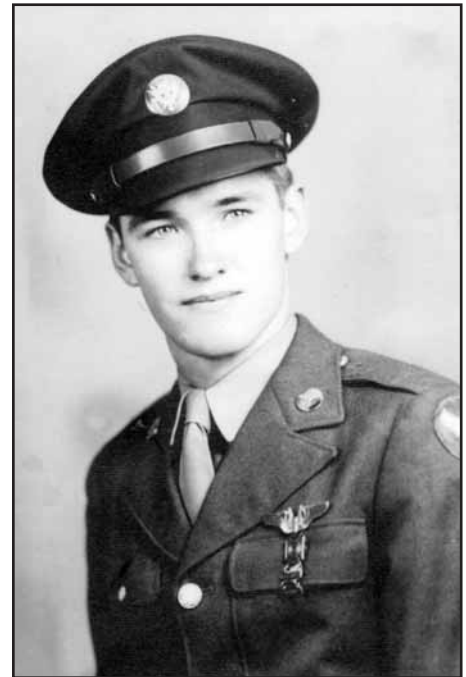
When we didn't fly a raid, we went to the flight line to 'sweat out' the planes as they returned. We counted them in as they landed, and the suspense would get intense. When a plane came in shot up and crippled, we became like a football crowd—rooting, cheering and pulling to help them make it. When a plane didn't come back, it deeply affected everyone.

After our sixth raid, for reasons we never knew, we were pulled off flying raids and assigned to fly a jet black B-24 at night all over the British Isles. Sometimes giant spotlights on the ground would lock onto us, so Willie and Everett would put the plane through all kinds of maneuvers to get out of the lights. That was hard to do.

When any of us asked what we were doing, we were told it was a secret. Not really knowing what we were doing in this strange assignment was bad enough, but doing it night after night for so long made the stress get worse and worse. As far as we were concerned, this could not end soon enough.

Our hut could be a noisy place, but we learned to shut out the noise and go to sleep. However, a couple of the quietest things in the dead of night would wake everyone in an instant. One was the low hum of the intercom speaker in the hut, which was used to announce an air raid. The moment that hum came on, we would be wide awake. The other was the way Pappy opened the door and entered to awaken us to fly a raid.

Sgt. McPherson was a gunner on the James N. Williams crew. After the War, he followed his calling and became a minister.



S/SGT. Warren McPherson

44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director



Shown at the presentation are: L=R Brig. Gen. Charles W. Collier, CO of the NC ANG; R. Lee Aston and William Overhultz. The 44th BGVA was represented by Lee and Mary Aston. Lee arranged the award event through the Air Force.

1st. Lt. William R. Overhultz, Co-Pilot on Lead Pilot Harry M. Garbade's crew, 68th Bomb Squadron, received the DFC for 16 Lead missions, and AM/OLC #4 in a formal AF presentation at ANG Morris Field, Charlotte, NC on 2 October 2005. The 44th BGVA was represented by Lee & Mary Aston. The AF Award event was arranged by Lee Aston.



L-R: R. Lee Aston; grandson, Chris Kelly; son, Bill Kelly, Jr., and wife, Carol; daughter Susan and husband Gary Zoeller, nephew Bill McAllister; and Mary Aston.

A Memorial service was held on June 14, 2005 for 1st Lt. **William D. Kelly** of Springfield, IL, a lead pilot, 68th Sq., 44th BG (1944) at Camp Butler National Military Cemetery, Springfield, IL. Representing the 44th BGVA were Director Robert Lee and Mary Aston.



Lee Aston, Jessie and Wade Elliott, Mary Aston

S/Sgt. **Wade T. Elliott**, DFC, and aerial gunner, 66 and 506 Squadrons, flew 30 missions from Feb. to June 1944, mainly on Pilot **J. W. Grow**'s crew. S/Sgt. Elliott was belatedly awarded two Air Medal OLCs at an informal presentation at his home at Peterborough, N.H. on 18 October 2005 by 44 BGVA Director R. Lee Aston and Mary Aston, with Mary pinning the Air Medals on S/Sgt. Elliott after Aston read the AM/OLC citations.



Frank J. Colella

1st. Lt. **Frank J. Colella**, was the Co-Pilot on Pilot **Edgar J. Spencer**'s crew, 67th Squadron. He flew 37 missions during his tour of combat from 4 August 1944 to 7 January 1945. This is the first time I've seen Frank, or photo of him, since I left him in 1944/45. He was a short little fellow back then. He was a close buddy of 1st Lt. **Robert (Bob) Keyes**, 67th BS, co-pilot on my crew. Frank is now largely unable to travel as he is pretty much wheel-chair-bound. He and his family were thrilled with the presentation; a lasting memory for his children and grandchildren.

...continued on page 20



Lt. Col. Sam Ramsey, Operations
Commander of the 151st Air Refueling
Wing, UTAH ANG and Gerald Folsom

Past President of 44th BGVA, 1st Lt. **Gerald W. Folsom**, Co-Pilot on the **George M. Beiber** crew, 506th Bomb Squadron, received three Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal in a formal AF presentation at the Utah Air National Guard Base, Salt Lake City on 2 October 2005. The ANG presentation was arranged by Lee Aston through the AF Review Board Chief William Anderson. The Air Medal presentation to Folsom was made by Lt. Col. Kurt R. Davis of the 151st Air Refueling Wing, UTAH ANG.

Capt. **Ernest W. Rommelfanger**, a Lead Crew Navigator and 67th Squadron Navigator in the latter part of 1944, received an OLC to his DFC and OLC#4 and #5 to his Air Medal at a presentation at his Omaha home. AF Col. Jonathan George, 55th Wing Commander, Offutt AFB, Nebraska, made the presentation in the presence of Mr. Rommelfanger's wife, Gerry, and children. The award arrangements were made through AF Review Guards Chief William Anderson by Lee Aston.



Captain Ernest F. Rommelfanger
receiving the DFC/Oak Leaf Cluster#1

SUMMARY OF SUCCESSFUL BELATED AWARDS SINCE 2004 REUNION

- 1ST. Lt. **William D. Kelly**, Lead Pilot, 68th Sq.; DFC/OLC #1 and AM/OLC #5
- 1st. Lt. **Gerald W. Folsom**, Co-Pilot, 506 Sq. 3 AIR MEDAL OAK LEAF CLUSTERS
- S/Sgt. **Wade T. Elliott**, Aerial gunner, 506 Sq. 2 Air Medal OLCs
- T/Sgt. **Clair P. Shaeffer**, aerial gunner, 68th Sq.; 2 AIR MEDALS
- S/Sgt. **Jack N. Ostenson**, aircraft engineer, 68th Sq. 1 AIR MEDAL
- 1ST LT. **William R. Overhultz**, Lead crew co-pilot, 68th Sq.; DFC + AM/OLC #4
- 1st. Lt. **William W. Ward**, Lead Bombardier, 506 Sq.; DFC + DFC/OLC #1+AM/OLC #5
- 1st. Lt. **Frank J. Colella**, Co-pilot, 67th Sq. DFC, AM/OLC #5 and #6
- Capt. **Ernest f. Rommelfanger**, Lead Navigator, 67th Sq., DFC/OLC #1 +AM/OLC # 4 & 5
- 1st. Lt. **George J. Gaudaen**, Navigator; 301 BG, 15th AF AM/OLC #1
- 1st. Lt. **Bernard W. Bail**, Lead Radar Navigator, 77th Sq., The Distinguished Service Cross,
3 DFCs and AM/OLC #4

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

We hope you all had a really great Thanksgiving Day; it's really great when you can get a day that families, friends and neighbors can spend time together and share a nice traditional meal and celebrations.

We did a similar thing here at Shipdham just a week or so earlier when we celebrated Guy Fawkes Night. So as you see it, here's how it works...you guys celebrate some of the main historic and significant features of the founding of your great country, while here in England we celebrate our most notorious home grown terrorist...who failed abysmally in his ill-planned attempt to murder our king and parliament!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Yup, that's us Brits for you. As you know, our sense of humour can be a bit quirky as well.

While our sense of history and sense of humour can sometimes be called into question, our sense of loyalty and regard for friends who have shared our joint heritage and still share our sense of values, can never be called into question. That is why your U.K. Representative Steve Adams and I have spent the last three months writing and producing a small (60 page) book entitled 'The 44th Bomb Group in Norfolk'. Unlike any of the excellent and very definitive books on the combat history of The Mighty Eighth, The Second Air Division or The 44th, which are aimed at the serious student of WWII and those times, this is a mainly pictorial book, aimed at a wider audience, local people, school children, tourists, general history students, etc., that hopefully shows what it was like to be at Shipdham during 1942-1944. The publication date is December 9th.

As you know, there are a great many tourist-oriented shops and stores in Norfolk aimed at our huge tourist industry. They all carry a wealth of books on The Norfolk Broads, The City of Norwich, The North Norfolk Coast etc, but there seems little to attract the casual historian or visitor describing the history of places like Station 115. So Steve and I thought we would change it. We hope you approve of our attempts to bring your history to a wider audience. Our friends at Hethel (Station 114) have seen the first proofs and have asked to have some copies to sell in their small museum shop. A really great idea, but needless to say, there was a catch. They wanted a book of their own on the 389th Bomb Group. Again, with Steve acting as go-between, Paul Wilson of the 389th history group and I have started one together for them.

Finally, I would like to share with you a notice that has been circulated a lot in recent months since the London bombings: "The general security level for the civilian population is to be raised from 'miffed' to 'peeved', though unofficial sources indicate that it could rise yet again to 'irritated', or even 'a bit cross'. Londoners have not been 'a bit cross' since the Blitz in 1940 when supplies of tea all but ran out. In keeping with this, the Terrorists have been re-classified from 'tiresome' to 'a bloody nuisance'. The last time this level was reached was during the Great Fire of London in 166. The Government advice from Prime Minister Blair to the population has been raised from 'pretend nothing's happened', to 'make another cup of tea'. There are only two higher levels of recommendation: "Remain steadfast and cheerfull' and the highest category, 'WIN' (used in 1939-45...but then you remember that...you guys were there with us.)

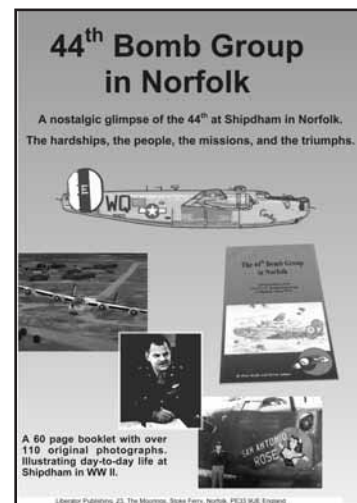
Have a great Christmas and New Year.

With our very best wishes from your old base Station 115.

Peter

Peter Bodle and Steve Adams have created a booklet, "The 44th Bomb Group in Norfolk." It is a pictorial history of the three years you served your country and help crush a vicious regime, making a safer world. On the cover is your beloved plane, the B-24, and inside are glimpses into the life you lived over there. The price is \$5. If you wish to purchase this piece of your own history, contact me and I will place the orders.

By the time you receive this magazine, you may have already received your Database Disk. Do not set it aside. Put in your computer, and as many others as you can. Your wartime history and that of your special buddies is contained on it. NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD IS THERE SUCH A VALUABLE PIECE OF HISTORY. If you do not receive this disk, or if you have a problem using it, feel free to call our Webmaster, Arlo Bartsch (501) 922-5247.



WEBSITE REPORT

If you have not visited your Website, you are missing something. In the past year 2,300,000 people checked it out. In the past three years, 6,400,000 people visited it. If you don't have a computer, somebody in your family does, so ask them to pull it up.

Access the Internet by typing in the following. <http://www.8thairforce.com> When you have accessed the Web Site - - - SELECT Search Database from the selection menu.

Next, from the Search Our Database screen - - - SELECT If Not A Member - Click Here To Join

Identify yourself, invent a password, type in your address & phone number, submit the information. You will receive confirmation of your selected ID and PASSWORD at your e-mail address.

You will now be a registered member and be able to enter your selected ID and PASSWORD and search our database. From there, you can click on any of the following categories:

All Missions and Crews Flown By - - - type in your name or anyone you wish to research.

Group Mission Listing - - - you can check out any mission that you or the Group flew.

Aircraft Special Status - - - tells whatever happened to any plane.

Roll of Honor - - - is where Will Lundy's

careful recording of lost buddies is available. (This is temporarily on hold, but will return soon.)

Personal Legacy - - - contains personal stories from letters and diaries. Search Biographies - - - where your personal history is recorded.

All data retrieved and displayed from the Database is printable. Share it with your family and friends.

Don't be intimidated by this technology. Jump into it. This trip into Cyberspace is FREE, and Arlo, our Webmaster, keeps adding to it. We do not have all the Fallen Wings in it, but we're working on it. You will soon be receiving your own computer disk, from the 44th BGVA. It contains more complete information about the Legacy of the men and women of the 44th Bomb Group, during WWII and later.

If you have any problems accessing 8thairforce.com, feel free to contact Arlo Bartsch @ 510-922-5247.

The 8th Airforce Website provides entry to many other Groups besides the 44th, all of which are interesting. The 44th did something no other Group accomplished: a complete history of every person who was a member, their planes, their missions and the ground crew that kept them flying. A long time from now, researchers and/or great grandchildren will look at this and say WOW!!!

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

"I was a kid in high school, living with my parents, a brother and sister, when the bells rang, whistles blew and the radio said that the Japanese had surrendered. It was VJ Day. People ran out in the streets shouting that the War was over."

Ann Natelli

"I was a nurse on duty in the Emergency Room in a hospital in New York. All nurses were frozen in their jobs at that time. When the radio reported that it was VJ Day, the ER filled up with people, especially servicemen. They had cuts and bruises from falling, bumping each other, breaking bottles and pouring drinks over each other's heads. All the time we were sewing them up, they were laughing."

Elsie Diaczun, RN

"I was stationed at Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi on VJ Day. I wanted to celebrate; but instead, I got sent on guard duty with a bunch of other guys. We had to drive around the field, making sure the celebrations didn't get too disorderly."

Perry Morse

Louis DeBlasio's strongest memory is May 8th, VE Day. He was in a hospital in Paris, and they wouldn't let him go out, as the authorities believed the riotous behavior was too dangerous. He had been rescued from a hospital in Ahlen, Germany on April 4th by Patton's army along with Bob Vance and John Delaney. With his arm in a sling and a bandage over his eye, he watched Paris celebrate from his hospital window.

"I remember the bombing of London in 1943-44, the blackout of that great city and the nightly raids and V2 rocket bombs. I remember standing on street corners with no lights, afraid to flick on a Zippo lighter, and afraid to turn on a flashlight. But dark as it was, behind the blackout curtains, gay and

boozy parties took place, where the scotch and the spirits flowed. One afternoon the air raid alarm sounded and I sought refuge in the Haymarket Theater. I stayed all through four performances of a play, and only emerged well after darkness had fallen, to be told that there had been a great air raid, and many had died."

Forrest S. Clark

Clark's book, Innocence and Death in Enemy Skies, can be purchased by writing to Forrest Clark, 703 Duffer Lane, Kissimmee, FL 34759-4114. The price is \$10.

"I was in Pratt, Kansas checking out in B-29s for deployment to the Pacific theater on VJ Day. The training was stopped and I ended up on recruiting duty in Maryland, which I hated.

Clay Roberts

"We were so busy, I hardly knew it was VE Day. Bill was stationed at Harlington, Texas, and we had a brand new baby. He was discharged from there, and we promptly set off for Paducah, Kentucky, where we spent the rest of our married lives.

Nell Uvanni, wife of the late William Uvanni



Sixty Years....August 15, 1945 to August 15, 5005



WILL SEZ

In my last article I mentioned my sincere interest in obtaining stories from our VOLUNTEERS during those early years of the war – late 1942 into late 1943. S/Sgt. (then) **Herbert J. Wilson**, 506th Sq. responded to this, and has sent me much information about himself both as a combat man and later. Also, I made a search of our records and was surprised at the large number of these ground personnel men who did volunteer successfully. It simply was impossible to identify all of them, especially in the 506 Sq., due to lack of necessary data in their early microfilm history.

My search started with a copy of Orders that Col. **Goodman Griffin** gave me that covered the 44th BG's Ground Echelon Listing of men on board the HMS Queen Mary on the 'cruise' to England 5-11 September 1942. At that time none of them were on 'Combat Status', so if they later appeared in combat, I assumed that they volunteered, as no one was forced to do so.

When the 44th BG arrived in England, the Germans had conquered most of Europe and were poised on the beaches of Europe, hesitating before attempting to cross the English Channel. Invasion could start at any time. Also, our new B-24's were fresh off the factory floor, untried, ill equipped for high altitude bombing and fighting. Our combat men did not have the time or opportunity to learn to fly at high altitude in close formations, in daylight, all of which were necessary to better protect against the enemy, and yet to bomb successfully.

As a quick result of these failings against a strong enemy, casualties came all too quickly and high in numbers. We did obtain a few American replacements from the Canadians and British, but very few in numbers. So,

when vacancies occurred in our combat personnel, we were forced to ask for volunteers from our ground personnel – and volunteer they did.

It was obvious to all, that the odds were stacked very high against anyone ever completing a 'tour' of 25 missions, the number required to get a return 'ticket' back to the US. About the only other inducement was additional 'flight pay', but nevertheless, these men stepped forward, helped fill the gaps in combat crews, and made it possible to put more planes in the air when we desperately needed them the most.

The 506th Squadron replaced our 404th BS that was sent to Alaska in July 1942. They arrived in late February and early March to give us eight more planes and crews. They did a great job of fighting and surviving for many months of combat, with the loss of only one airplane and crew. But several of their ground personnel stepped forward, also volunteered to help fill the gaps. S/Sgt. Herbert J. Wilson was one of them.

Sgt. Wilson was one of the later volunteers for combat in December 1943; he flew his first mission on 6 February 1944 with the Lt. **F. Albert** crew. Being a 'spare' crew member, he flew with many different 506th Sq. crews, mostly as a substitute for men who were sick or injured.

To quote him: "May I thank you for your specific words, as I was one of those who volunteered for combat duty, having served in the ground crew for but a few weeks after arriving at Shipdham in January 1944. Now all these years since then, I have been telling everyone that I had no permanent crew, but that the rule was that the planes could not go on the mission without a full crew. If anyone called in for sick call or had not come back from leave, or wounded, etc. the whole crew missed out.

"The 'training we substitutes had was minimal, since we were well acquainted with the power turrets and the .50 calibers and the bombs. I was given some flying experience around the British Isles, going up with other crews fresh from the States. I had been told that the most dangerous part of being an airman was during the training period, and an experience (more hair-raising than during my 31 flights over Europe) seemed to corroborate this hearsay.

"It occurred when the 'green' Navigator on a training flight mistook the English Channel for the Thames Estuary. At 10,000 feet we suddenly heard a 'vroom-vroom-vroom' and then saw little holes of light in the fuselage. We quickly realized that we were over the Pas de Calais area and managed to re-cross the Channel at Ramsgate. I recall that chaff had just come into use and there were many boxes stashed in the waist compartment. In our ignorance and haste, we threw about half the cartons out the waist window until we were out of danger. We did not know that the tinsel strips were practically ineffective when packed in the carton!

"Well, Will, you said that we COURAGEOUSLY VOLUNTEERED, and then later you used the adjective BRAVELY. I doubt if either word was the case with me, though today I cannot explain the feeling that made me want to go up. I never told my parents until I had completed my fifth mission – my Dad was a total disabled veteran of WW#1, and I was an only child. I am afraid that I did not think of my poor mother.

"I am glad for the recognition you gave of my particular quirk in the history of the 44th. As I recall, there were about 15 of us ground crew that volunteered for the 506th.

Incidentally, I met a WAAF from Bylough Hall and took her for my wife in 20 January 1945."

Sgt. Wilson completed his tour of 31 missions on 29 May 1944, and in May he was instrumental in helping set up the use of A. M. I., Bomb Trainer for use in helping the men who replaced the Bombardier with a "Togglier". When our procedures changed from individual bombing by each airplane to that of bombing on the lead airplane, the following planes in the formation started utilizing a nose gunner/togglier. This made it very important that the man in the nose turret released his bombs correctly and at the exact time.

As Sgt. Wilson had flown many of his missions as a 'Togglier', he was well qualified to become the lead Instructor for this new Bomb Trainer. This he continued to do to until the end of the war

To sum up the numbers of volunteers for combat, I have identified at least these numbers from each Squadron. No doubt there are more of them!

66th Squadron	25	5	completed their tours
67th Squadron	27	0	completed their tours
68th Squadron	33	6	completed their tours
506th Squadron	15	8	completed their tours

After determining that the 44th BG had at least these numbers, I had a discussion with Arlo Bartsch to determine with him the possibility of recognizing them and honoring them in a separate identity within the Master Database. Arlo thought that it was feasible, and would check it out, see if they can be given special recognition for their most valuable assistance when we needed it most.





MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Steve Adams** we received the tragic news that **Roger Freeman** has passed away. A true friend of the airmen who served in England, Freeman is renowned for his accurate recording of the air war in *"The Mighty Eighth," "8th Air Force War Diary," "Fortress at War,"* and more. In 1977 he spoke to the 8th Air Force Historical Society, and his memories of Americans at war were beautifully stated.

"...I remember you on your bicycles, the laughter, the singing and the shouting, how you would go to the local pubs, complain bitterly about the wet, warm English beer and then drink the pubs dry. I recall your generosity with the local children..."

"I remember getting terrified as a B-24 Liberator spiraled down with one wing aflame, and I was down there on the ground; and some equally terrified, or far more frightened young men were parachuting down from that blazing bomber....I recall seeing the humps on the stretchers being carried to the waiting ambulances..."

"Most of you wear the 8th Air Force symbol in some form or another, either in the badge of this society or sister societies. I say to you, gentlemen, you have every right to wear that with pride...wear it with pride and so keep the courage and endeavor of the 8th Air Force shining brightly for future generations."

Ed. Comment: Roger Freeman showed his never-ending gratitude to American airmen through his unique skill as a writer to tell the air war story. Even in his last years, he was researching and documenting the details of WWII.



Quite a few members set out to find our friend and former Reunion Chairman, **Mike Yuspeh**, a resident of New Orleans. We are not sure how his house made out from Hurricane Katrina, but we have learned that he is moving to Memphis. His E-Mail address is: Yuspeh@juno.com

From **Bob Dubowsky**: "On a trip to Israel

to visit our daughter and grandkids, we became friendly with a few Israeli pilots. They invited me to fly in an Israeli Air Force six place Cessna. We flew down to Eliat, then across the Sinai desert to an airfield 50 miles east of the canal named Birgafgafa. Irma and three friends were in the A/C as well. The Israeli pilot said, 'OK Bob, you land it.' I made the landing unassisted, which made me feel great, as I had never flown this type of plane before."

Ed. Note: Obviously, flying a B-24 is good preparation for flying a Cessna.



Aviation 101 from **Clay Roberts**: "The probability of survival is equal to the angle of arrival."

"Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make all of them yourself."



From **Jack Butler**: A B-24 from the 44th BG crashed and burned deep in Germany's Black Forest near Stuttgart on 19 March 1945. The roaring fire and smoke from the flames helped the Germans find the exact location of the crash site.

The Germans captured the four survivors and buried the other seven in a shallow grave in the forest near the crash site. Three years after the war an American burial team was able to locate the graves at the crash site and assure the grieving families of a first class Military Funeral at various locations.

The pilot and navigator were from my home town of Cleveland, Ohio, and I have been assisting the pilot's cousin, Roy Podojil, write about the incident. Just two years ago Podojil was able to obtain from government records enough information, that, with the use of metal detectors provided by German friends, we were able to track down the exact location and also find some remaining relics.

The exact location of the crash site in the Black Forest is about 8 miles east of Pforzheim and about 10 miles north of Simmozheim.

Strange things happen in the course of

...continued on page 27

any war. For over sixty years I had been wondering about what exactly did happen to my two buddies from Cleveland. Now I know. But I never dreamed that I would discover the crash site is less than 8 miles down the road from where two of my German great granddaughters were born and raised. My two German beauties speak perfect German and pretty good English.

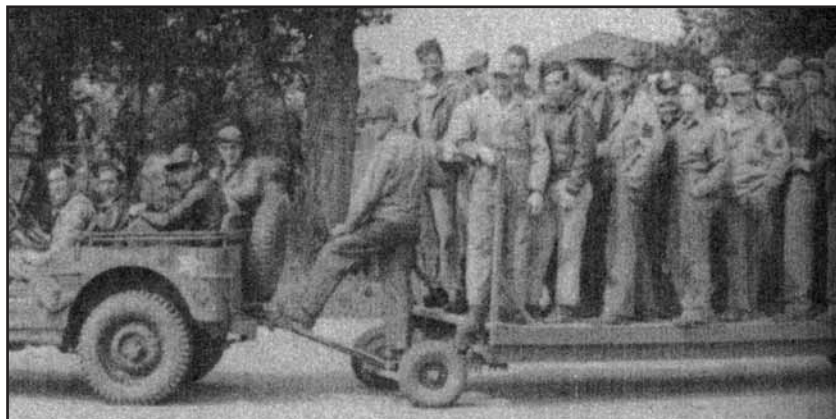
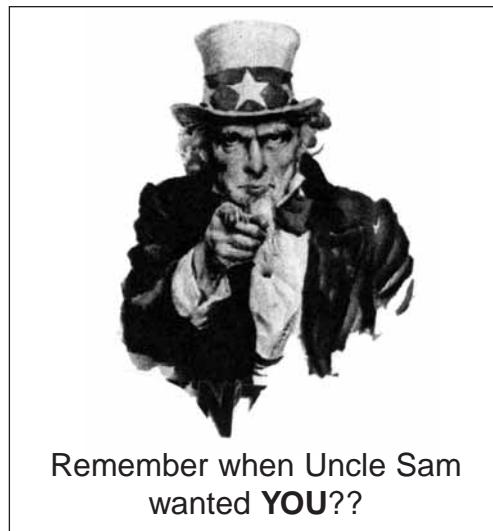
*Ed. Note: This was the 18th mission for the Podojil crew (66th Sq). The target was a Jet Plane Assembly Factory in Neuburg, Germany. A/C # 42-51907 was the only loss. The pilot and six members of his crew were lost. **Norbert Schmitz**, Tail Gunner, was wounded and died from the wounds; **Max Veitch**, Radio Operator and **Walter Mosevich**, Left Waist Gunner became POW; **Bernard Bail** was wounded and became POW. The group was freed 21 April 1945 by 44th Infantry. Bail was honored at the Tacoma reunion for long overdue medals.*



From Mark Osenki: "I work at the Errera Community Care Center in West Haven, Connecticut, a veteran center. I want you to know we will be dedicating one of our

Veteran Houses in the honor of **Frederick W. Clark**, a member of the 44th who was shot down on 28 January, 1943. I just wanted to let you know that we are still thinking about you guys."

*Ed. Note: S/Sgt. Frederick Clark was an Engineer on the **Maxwell W. Sullivan** crew. Flying in "Spirit of 76", they were bombing harbor facilities in Lemmer, Holland when they were attacked by 35 Me 109s and FW 190s. Two planes (68 Sq.) were lost, 1 badly damaged; 21 crewmen were KIA, 2 became POW; 2 returned to base, but badly wounded.*



From Wayne Brown, 506 Sq.: "Some time ago you had a picture which Steve Adams had gotten from negatives he purchased from E-Bay, showing soldiers in a jeep. It was labeled 'Early Shipdham'. The other half of the picture should show soldiers on a trailer. I found this in the 'History of the Fourteenth Combat Wing'. This is part of the **John Docktor** crew. The soldier on the right of the man holding the post is **Clarence Gable**, Flight Engineer. Next right (wearing the cap) is **Charles Heintz**, our Co-Pilot. The picture had to be taken in the summer of '44."

Can anyone identify others in the picture?



FOLDED WINGS

*Life's race well run, life's work well done,
Life's victory won, and now we sleep.*

BERRIER, DALTON # 19394 67 Sq. 2002 T/Sgt. Berrier was Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Robert Schmidt** crew. His first mission was January 11, 1944. He flew one mission with **Rockford C. Griffith**, others with Command pilots **Fred Sloan, David E. Saylor, Howard Holladay, Robert Felber** and **Robert J. Lehnhausen**. In his 32 missions he flew in *The Shark, F For Freddie, Chief & Sack Artists, Raggedy Ann II, D Barfly, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle* and *Phyllis*. Berrier's last mission was June 25, 1944.

CARDWELL, THOMAS J. M. # 19654 67Sq. 8 September 2005 T/Sgt. Cardwell flew his first mission 2 February 1944; on his 32 missions he served most of the time as Engineer/Top Turret Gunner, but frequently in the Waist or Tail Gunner positions. He flew with **Saul Fineman, Charles Hughes, Dale Benadom, Ivan Stepnich, John Winchester, Charles Arnold, Edward Yatkones** and **Lester Hundelt**. In addition, he flew with the following Command Pilots, **John H. Diehl, Jr.; Frank D. Slough; Robert Felber; Lewis Wright; Gordon Brandon** and **Sylvester Hunn**. He flew in *Big Fat Butterfly, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Patsy Ann II, Flak Alley II, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose* and *Phyllis*. His last mission July 25 1944 was to St. Lo, France. That mission was considered so successful, only the church remained standing when the 29th Army Division arrived.

Caldwell's last years were spent in Riverside, California. His death was reported by **Richard Butler**.

COMPTON, HARVEY #19812 66 Sq. April 2005 T/Sgt. Compton was an Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Robert Kolliner** crew. In his 28 missions, he flew with **Robert Abernathy**, Capt. **Chester Phillips** and Major **Howard Moore**. He flew in such prestigious planes as *4-Q-2, Princess Charlotte/Sure Shot, Jenny/Lady Luck* and the most famous plane in the 44th Bomb Group, *Suzy Q*. During that time his missions took him to Occupied France in preparation for the upcoming invasion. Next his crew was part of the group that went to Africa to assist with the Italian and Sicilian invasion. His 28th mission was July 15, 1943.

DUNLAP, ROBERT #25811 68th Sq. 18 October 2005 Sgt. Roberts was a Gunner on the **Clay Roberts** crew, serving in different gun positions in the ten flights that the crew made, the first on 11 March 1945. As the troops were progressing eastward, 44th missions were driving deep into Germany, knocking out airfields and armament plants, crippling German resistance. The Roberts crew flew in *Limpin' Old Sadie/San Antonio Rose; Jose Carioca; Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, One Weakness* and *Louisiana Belle*. Their last mission was April 18, 1945.

After the war, Dunlap attended the University of Texas, then became a broker in real estate and insurance. His latter years were spent in Austin, Texas. He is survived by two children.

Some of the information about Dunlap came from **Robert Hooper** of Fredericksburg, Texas, who found his obituary in his local paper.

Several years ago an erroneous report of Dunlap's demise was placed in several aviation magazines. The Eight Ball Tails was happy to publish his amused reply, that the reports of his recent death are totally exaggerated, (borrowing a quote from Mark Twain.)

GILBERTSON, STANLEY HOWE #20369 506 Sq. 10 March 2005 There is no record of Gilbertson's wartime activities. He and his wife Lois resided in Oregon City, Oregon.

GOEBEL, CLARENCE W. #20399 506 Sq. 1 December 2005 T/Sgt. Goebel was the Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **John Docktor** crew. He flew his first mission on 7 May 1944. The crew flew in *Flying Log/Pregnant Peg, Three Kisses for Luck, Passion Pit, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Southern Comfort II, My Gal Sal* and many unnamed aircraft. On D-Day, June 6, 1944 the crew flew to Colleville/St. Laurent, supporting the invasion. All missions after that were clearing the way for the Invasion Forces and destroying the factories that supported the Nazi war machine. Goebel flew 33 missions, completing his tour on 3 August 1944. He was regarded as a great husband, father, grandfather and 'all around good guy'.

FOLDED WINGS

GRAHAM, ALAN CLARK #20431 66th Sq. 1st. Lt. Graham flew his first mission as Co-pilot on the **Edwards Hedricks** crew, January 31, 1945. He piloted the plane on his second mission, February 21, 1945, and for the rest of his nineteen missions. He flew in *Jail Bait*, *Jersey Jack*, *Henry*, *King Pin* and *Loco Moto*. The Graham crew flew their 19th mission on April 20, 1945.

HOLSTON, CHARLES R. #20709 66th Sq. 15 July 2005 According to Holston's wife, Doreen, Holston was a cook for the 44th BG. There is no Bio on file of his activities.

MCKEE, JOHN H. #21284 506 Sq. Sept. 8, 2005. Sgt. McKee was a Radio Operator and Gunner on the **Bernard Komasinski** crew. They flew in *Ole Cock*, *My Gal Sal* and *My Peach*.

On his 7th mission to the Air Field at Romilly, at La Perthe, France, August 8, 1944, flak hit the #2 engine. The propeller could not be feathered, the engine caught fire, and the crew bailed out. McKee was captured by German troops and became POW in Stalag Luft 4. As the Russians advanced, he was among the Kriegies in the Death March described in the Summer 2004 issue of the 8 Ball Tails. This march covered a four month period from January 29 to April 26, 1945.

McKee and his wife, Anita, lived in Michigan City, IN. The couple had three daughters and three grandchildren.

This information comes from his crew mate, **Frank Schaeffer**, who was Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the Komasinski crew. Schaeffer survived the crash of *My Peach*, and successfully evaded, along with seven other members of the crew. The Ball Turret Gunner was wounded, and was taken prisoner.

MILLIKEN, JOHN #21368 506 Sq. August 2005 1st. Lt. Milliken's first two missions were on D-Day, June 6, 1944, piloted by **Richard Hruby**. Immediately after that, he received his own crew, flying in a number of different planes: *Passion Pit*, *Sabrina III*, *Shack Rat*, *M'Darling*, *Old Iron Corset*, *My Peach* and *I Walk Alone*. On August 13, 1944, the mission was to the road junctions between Le Havre and Rouen, France in an area known as the Falaise Pocket. *Passion Pit* was hit by flak and went down. The entire crew was taken POW. Milliken managed to cut

a hole in the canvas over the truck in which they were being transported and was able to evade. He met Canadian forces who helped him to return to Shipdham four days later. This was Milliken's 31st mission.

MONEY, WALLACE B. #22963 66th Sq. October 2005 2nd Lt. Money first flew with the RAF, then transferred to the 44th as a Co-pilot listed as a Flight Officer. He flew 30 missions with different pilots; on the 26th mission he was listed as a Lieutenant.

His first mission from Shipdham was 9 September 1943; his last, 12 April 1944. He flew with such renowned pilots as **Shelby L. Irby**, **Richard E. Harleman**, **Charles Armstrong**, **George R. Insley**, **Richard Comey** and **Sylvester Hunn**. His flights included such awesome missions as *Kjeller*, *Escalles sur Buchy* and *Friedrickshafen*. He flew in *Helen B Happy*, *Lil Cookie*, *Avenger*, *The Banshee*, *Big Banner*, *Lemon Drop*, *Scourge of the Skies*, *Myrtle the Fertile Turtle*, *Patsy Ann II* and *My Ass'am Dragon*. Money was located by **Roger Fenton**, leading to a visit from his pilot, **George Insley**.

After completing his missions with the 44th, he flew a second tour with a P-38 photo group. In civilian life he became a utility lineman; then was called up for the Korean War. He flew supplies and transported wounded from the front lines to base hospitals.

He leaves his wife Alice and a daughter Terry Money.

MOORE, FRANCIS C. #21396 506 Sq., 17 July 2005. Moore was an A & E Mechanic, receiving his training at Chanute Field, IL. He went to Liverpool, England on 17 April 1943 on the *Ile de France*, a ship that had no escort service. In Liverpool he studied Inline Engine Repair before moving to Shipdham. He became Crew Chief on the *Bar W*, a plane that flew 106 missions. After VE Day he returned to the States on the *Queen Mary* on 20 June 1945.

Moore became a farmer in Hiawatha, Kansas. He and his wife Mary Lou had three children, two sons (one deceased) and one daughter.



FOLDED WINGS

RICHARDSON, JAMES A. #21797 66th Sq. 13 June 2005 2nd Lt. Richardson was a Navigator on the **Amos Alley** crew. All of his 24 flights were into Germany, bombing ahead of the troops as Allied forces were approaching the Fatherland. Richardson was in the Air Cadet Training Program at Spearfish, South Dakota, but was redirected to navigation and bombardier training at Kingmen, Arizona. He completed Gunnery Training School and received his Navigator Wings July 1944. He flew one mission with **Albert Leghorn**; later with **Capt. Richard Wynes, Major David Hurley** and **Lt. Col. William Cameron**, Command Pilots.

The Alley crew flew in *Glory Bee, Jersey Jerk, Peace Offering* and many unnamed planes.

After discharge from the service, Richardson completed his college education and became a Park Ranger with the National Park Service from 1963-1986. He completed his career in Seattle as the Regional Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services 1970-86. He was responsible for evaluating and interpreting visitor service programs in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska.

After retirement Richardson and his wife Rowena moved to a ranch near Monroe, Washington and raised French Limousine beef cattle. He leaves his wife of 58 years, one son, one daughter and four granddaughters. He was interred at Tahoma National Cemetery.

ROOD, GEORGE E. #21845 67th Sq. 18 January 2005 S/Sgt. Rood was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **Roger E. Markle** crew. The crew's first mission was 12 March 1945; they flew a total of ten missions in six different A/C: *Mi Akin Ass, Old Iron Corset, Missouri Belle/Missouri Sue, Lady Fifi Nella, One Weakness* and *Three Kisses for Luck*. Rood's last mission was 18 April 1945.

Rood was an electrician for Blawnox Company and Glen Dale Hospital. He is survived by his wife Wanda, son Ronald and daughter Marlene.

SANDS, CHRISTOPHER #0-386917 68th Sq. August 13, 2005. In his 'History of the 68th Squadron,' **Webb Todd** reported that Engineering Officer Sands joined the Squadron on 3 August 1942 as the Assistant Engineering Officer. As a young officer and with a small group of enlisted men, he was the advance man sent to Ft. Dix, NJ to make the arrangements for the embarkation of the 44th ground echelon to England aboard the HMS Queen Mary. He arrived in the ETO on 5 September 1942. In June 1943 he became the Engineering Officer of the 68th when **Tom Landrum** was named the Group Engineering Officer of the 389th Bomb Group, which was newly arrived from the States.

The records show that he was sent on Detached Service to Bengahzi 16 June 1943; returned to the base two months later. Returned to Africa 16 September 1943, returning to Shipdham 12 October 1943, flying both trips to Africa with 44th planes & crews. He had detached service for another week to an unknown area, later was sent to St. Trond in March 1945, and returned to the base six weeks later. He was on leave to Dusseldorph 30 May 1945, returning to the ZOI on #44-42189.

Upon leaving active duty, Sand remained active in the Air Force Reserve. In civilian life he was a successful civil engineer. He retired from Rockwell International where he had worked on the first of the space shuttle projects. He had three sons, of whom he was extremely proud. Information of his FWs came to **Robert Lehnhausen** from Sand's daughter-in-law.

According to Lehnhausen, Chris Sands was an exceptional officer. He and his marvelous band of "grease monkeys" worked mechanical miracles in the maintenance and repair of the 68th's B-24s. Lehnhausen rated Chris Sand the most competent ground officer with whom he served in his military career.





FOLDED WINGS

STRUBLE, ROBERT S. #22914 506 Sq. 20 November 2005 S/Sgt. Struble was a Gunner, flying with many different pilots on many different aircraft. His first combat mission was 9 September 1943. In his 30 missions he flew with the following pilots: **Frank Blough, Wayne H. Middleton, Norman Purdy, Capt. Robert L. Cardenas, Patrick Gallagher, John McCaslin, H. K. Landahl, B. L. Scuddy and D. H. Dines.** His missions took him into France, Germany & Norway at a time when Allies were bombing industries to slow the Nazi war production. Among the planes Struble flew in were *Ruth-Less, Lucky Strike, Baldy & His Brood, Prince/Princ-Ass/Princess, M'Darling, Feudin' Wagon, Jail Bait* and *Subrina III.*

Struble earned his B.S. degree in Accounting from Rider University and a graduate degree at the University of Chicago. He had been Mid-Atlantic States Manager for U.S. Steel, later became VP of Guyon General Piping in New York City. He was active in many veteran, community and professional organizations. After retirement, Struble and his wife, Lamond Doig Struble lived in Newton, New Jersey. He leaves four daughters and four grandchildren.

TYREE, HAL C. JR. #22369 506 Sq. 2 January 2006 1st. Lt. Tyree flew his first combat mission on 2 August 1944 with **Thomas G. Waters.** After that, he and his crew flew a total of 37 missions into Belgium and France, but most into the heart of the German Reich. They flew in such prestigious aircraft as *Down De Hatch, Shack Rat, Glory Bee, Sierra Blanca, M'Darling, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Southern Comfort III, Sabrina III, Hairless Joe* and *Consolidated Mess.* Their last mission was 22 February 1945.

When he returned to the ZOI, he was stationed at Love Field in Dallas where Mary Hayes joined him, and they were wed. Tyree joined the National Guard and rose to the rank of Major General and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard. Tyree had been widowed with five children when he met Joan Fulton who had three children. They raised their families and retired to Ft. Myers, Florida. Tyree became ill the day after Christmas and passed away one week later; his wife Joan followed him in death thirty hours later. Mr. Tyree left 2 daughters and 3 sons; Mrs. Tyrees left 2 son and 2 daughters, 22 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

JOSEPH WACKER #22421 67th Sq. 31 July 2005 S/Sgt. Wacker was a gunner on the John Honmyhr crew, serving as both Tail and Waist Gunner at different times. In his 34 missions, beginning June 15, 1944, he flew with the following Command Pilots, **Howard Holladay, Perry Norris, Eugene Snavelly and Devon Davis.** Wacker flew *Phyllis, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Old Iron Corset, Mi Akin Ass, Peace Offering* and in many unnamed planes. By the time he finished his last mission, 4 November 1944, American troops were rapidly advancing across France. Wacker spent his last years in Meadowbrook, Pennsylvania.

The report of his death came from Jack Brand, a member of the 452 Bomb Group (B-17s), a hospice volunteer and neighbor.

WIMSATT, LOUIS JOHNSON #22599 1 January 14, 2006 506 Sq. 1st. Lt. Wimsatt was a pilot, flying his first mission 11 July 1944. As the Allies were bombing Germany's production facilities and transportation system, Wimsatt & his crew's first mission was to Munich; they flew a total of 37 missions, one with Major C. L. Lee as Command Pilot. Among the planes they flew were *Cape Cod Special, Southern Comfort II, Sabrina III, Shoo Shoo Baby, Down De Hatch, My Peach, I Walk Alone* and *Joplin Jalopy.* Their last mission was 27 November 1944.

Before the war Wimsatt attended Georgetown University before enlisting in the Air Corps. Among the adventurous stories he related to his family was of an emergency landing in Reims, France. When it came time to leave, he could barely get the a/c aloft, as his crew had loaded it with cases of champagne.

After the war, Wimsatt was a pilot on Capital Airlines for several years. Later he became part owner of the Johnson & Wimsatt Lumber Company.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Sarah Mildred Wimsatt, nine children, 19 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren.



B-24 Model at Balbor Park, San Deigo, California

photo by John Gately

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

P.O. Box 712287

Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287

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