

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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In April 1943 the light hearted officers of *Sad Sack II* stand beside the ill fated plane that would be lost at Ploesti. L-R Lt. Henry Lasco, Pilot; Lt. Joseph Kill, Co-pilot; Lt. Dale Scriven, Bombardier; Lt. Harry Stenborn, Navigator. Four months later Lasco and Kill became POW; Scriven and Stenborn were KIA.

Sad Sack II flew ten missions before its fatal trip to Ploesti, Lecce, Italy; Messina, Gerebina and Catania, Sicily; Regio Di Calabria, Italy; Crotone, Sicily and Foggia, Naples and Rome Italy.

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**LT. HENRY LASCO # 23239 (66th Sq.)
PILOT OF *SAD SACK II*
AND HIS TRIP INTO THE CAULDRON**



Henry Lasco was driving an armored truck in Chicago when the War broke out. When he heard of the Cadet program, he immediately went to the recruiting office, passed his physical and mental test. Then he got drafted into Infantry, September 1941, three months before the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor.

His basic training was at Ontario, California; after which they let him look at an airplane (January '42.) Ten months later he became a 2nd Lieutenant. He learned to fly a twin engine in Victorville, California, moved to Pueblo for further training, next to Davis Monthan, Arizona; then Tucson, Alamogordo and Clovis, New Mexico. Finally he got into '24s at Topeka Kansas, and then he got his first plane—*Sad Sack*. Flying the southern route, Lasco went to Morrison Field, Florida; Puerto Rico; Trinidad; Brazil; Maltese; South Africa; then to Dakar and Marrakech — an eleven hour jaunt. The bomb bay was loaded with tanks of extra fuel.

When he landed his plane in Marrakech, the right strut on the landing gear failed, wheel collapsed, and the plane was 'washed out.' Later when he got to Shipdham, they gave him an older model which had been modified, named *Sad Sack II*.

"Flying in formation was a new experience for me," he recalled. "My first mis-

sion was to France, and then I joined the group who went to Bengazi, Libya."

Generals Patton and Montgomery were getting ready to move from North Africa to Sicily; so to prepare the way, Lasco and 22 other planes bombed the Marshalling Yards at Messina, the closest port to Italy. Three days later they hit Catania, knocking out the Germans' communication systems. From there it was to Reggio Di Calabria, outside of Rome, then Foggia and Naples. After that, it was two weeks of low level practice flying, in preparation for the trip to Ploesti.

"They had box-like replicas of the oil fields. It was fun, whipping across the ground in those big planes. Life in Libya was awful...the heat, the sand, the bugs. They had us testing planes to determine fuel consumption in the different planes. I did the testing for the 44th Bomb Group, and our group was best in fuel consumption.

"Col. Leon Johnson was truly a compassionate man. He understood people. He was a true man's man. He said that many may not get back; but even if every plane is lost, if the mission is carried out, it is worth the loss. He said, 'I will lead. If any man chooses not to fly this mission, he will be excused, and there will be no ill consequences to his decision.' Not

...continued on page 4

one person opted out. We believed in him, and would go to hell for him.

"One of my saddest memories is that when we were getting ready to board, my radio man hadn't shown up. The engines were going...we were ready for take-off. A young man called **Joseph Spivey** came up and said, 'I'm your radioman replacement.' I never had a chance to talk to him, and he was killed over the target. I have always felt bad about that.

"Col. Johnson was in the lead, headed to White Target. I was flying as left wingman on the fourth wave. We were following the railroad track, when the sides of a boxcar fell down and anti-aircraft guns began shooting. My tail gunner, **Thomas Wood**, was killed. My #2 engine was knocked out. The smoke and flames from the oil wells were reaching high in the air, but Col. Johnson proceeded through them, dodging planes from another group that had chosen White Five as a Target of Opportunity. Lt. **Thomas Scrivner's** plane, *Scrappy II*, which was beside mine, was on fire; nevertheless, he dove into the fiery cauldron and dropped his bombs. Right after that, his plane exploded.

"At 'Bombs Away' **Harry Stenborn**, my Navigator, was hit in the chest. He tried to climb to the back of the plane, but fell dead. When we got through the target, we joined a group of six planes, only to be attacked by ME 109s. **Dale Scriven**, Bombardier and **Leonard Raspotnik**, Engineer were both hit. Lt. **Joseph Kill** (co-pilot) and I decided to head for Turkey.

"We were low to the ground, but a 109 circled around us, moving in at 10:00. I saw his wing light up, and felt a sock in the jaw. The shot went through both cheeks and my upper palate, and I was rendered powerless.

"Our right rudder was gone. Lt. Kill turned a full right wheel to compensate, but our left wing went down. We rolled over...rolling, breaking, smashing on the ground, turning everything to rubble. We were in a corn field; the plane was on fire. "My legs were burning; both of Kill's legs were broken."

When Lasco was able to untangle himself from his harness, he pulled his co-pilot from the plane. The two waist gunners made it out. When they looked for help, local peasants stoned them, extracted watches and rings, and rifled through their pockets. When their captors arrived, Lt. Kill declared that all survivors were officers; therefore Sgts. **Charles B. DeCrevel** and **Albert L. Shaffer** (Waist Gunners) were kept with Lasco and Kill in the Officers Camp.

Other civilians came and finding the injured men, they took them in a wooden cart to some sort of Clinic or First Aid station where they received minimal care. Next they were loaded on stretchers onto a rickety bus which traveled along a rough dirt road to Bucharest. The traveling was extremely painful, especially for those with fractures. However, at the hospital they were given kind attention with the limited supplies that were on hand.

The Romanians were having plenty of problems of their own, as the Russians were trying to move onto their area. At that time, they considered the Russians to be worse enemies than the Germans. Many of the Romanian soldiers were in dire need of medical and nursing care.

At the 60th Anniversary Celebration of the Ploesti Mission, **Albert Shaffer** (LWG) met Henry, his pilot, and reminisced about their experiences. "We were all together in a hospital in Bucharest. We all had injuries, and were a forlorn-looking bunch, but Henry's facial injuries seemed the most tragic. Nevertheless, he managed to keep the rest of us laughing. He would inhale from his cigarette, and blow the smoke out of the openings on both sides of his face."

In time the Nazis were booted out of the area; and after thirteen months of captivity, the prisoners were released. Henry found himself in Tuscaloosa, Alabama where he underwent a year of plastic and orthopedic surgery. Something wonderful happened there. He met a nurse called Nancy, who he ultimately married. She was a Second

Lieutenant. In September of '45 he was back on active duty. He learned to fly B-29s, and was stationed in the Philippines.

In 1947 Henry entered civilian life, moved to Texas, and became an Accountant in Aerospace Sales Engineering with the 3M Company. Thirteen years later he was transferred to St. Paul as the National Sales Manager. By this time the Air Force was moving into new directions -- Jets, '47s and '52s, and the Gemini Program was underway. The world of flight was changing rapidly. Finally, in 1986 he decided to retire and move to Rio Verde, Arizona. Henry and Nancy have a son and two daughters, all high achievers in different fields.

For a gentleman who got a major 'sock in the jaw' from a sure-shot German fighter pilot and survived a devastating crash, Henry considers himself to be one of the lucky ones.



When the POWs returned to Shipdham, General Johnson invited them for a snack at his headquarters. By then they knew that their Colonel was now a General and had received the Medal of Honor. L-R General Leon Johnson, Lt. Henry Lasco, Sgt. James Brittain, Lt. Gerald Tottan and Lt. Walter Sorenson.



ANOTHER LOOK AT THE ESCALLES SUR BUCHY MISSION



*Linda Howington Guyton:
"About 1 1/2 years ago my son-in-law, Seth, started asking me questions about my father, for which I had no answers. I told Seth that for years I had wished that I could find some of the men from his crew. I also dreamed of finding a French girl who had wit-*

nessed the plane going down, and had made it her 'destiny' to find my mother... which she did. With the crew list and internet Seth was able to locate Mrs. Earl Boggs, the widow of one of the survivors who had died recently. She led me to Charles Blakely, a surviving crew member, and Charles Blakeley led me to Will Lundy. The rest is history! It has been a truly wonderful experience for me..."

The target on January 21, 1944 was the V-1 launch site in the Pas De Calais area. The cloud cover was heavy, and the bombing altitude was very low, 12,000 feet. Determined to be successful in wiping out the deadly 'doodle-bugs' that were devastating London, the formation circled the target several times, waiting for a break in the clouds. That was time enough for the German fighters to find them and put their 20 mm. guns into action. Four 68th aircrafts and their crews were lost.

Three little girls became fatherless that day—Lois Cianci, Jackie Roberts and the 44th's newest find, Linda Howington Guyton.

Lt. **Hartwell R. Howington's** aircraft, *Ram it-Dam It*, was badly damaged during the third or fourth attack by enemy aircraft, according to their MACR. It was observed to make a wide circle to the left, smoking, and then went into a spin, one chute observed. The fighter attacks were so intense at that time that no further observations were made or reported by other crews in this formation.

Archie Barlow, Engineer, reported a fighter raked the plane with several 20 mm hits. "One exploded directly on the nose, killing the bombardier and navigator, and turning their compartment into an instant inferno. We think the co-pilot, Lt. (**Herman M.**) **Curtis**, was killed by that same blast. Another round must have gone off, either on, or very near, the top turret I was manning, blowing off the Plexiglas dome and sending shrapnel into my left chest and arm. I grabbed the seat release cable and dropped to the flight deck.

"The right wall above the radio station was on fire, and **Al Rosenblatt**, radio operator, was putting on his chute. He yelled that we had other fires in the waist area, and had been ordered to bail out by the pilot. A quick glance forward showed the Pilot, Lt. Howington, fighting the controls and was apparently unharmed at that time. I snapped on my chute, opened the door to the nose wheel compartment and dropped down, to be hit by heat and flames blowing back from the nose area. I stepped out on the catwalk ...I took one final glance back into the cockpit. The pilot was looking back at us and motioning with one hand for us to jump...

Ram It-Dam It crashed, carrying Lts. Howington, Curtis, Richard Kasten, Navigator and Wayne Crawl, Bombardier. Five members of the crew evaded and returned: T/S Alvin Rosenblatt, T/S Archie Barlow; S/S **Charles Blakley**, Right Wing Gunner; S/S **Alfred M. Klein**, Left Wing Gunner; S/S **Earl Boggs**, Tail Gunner; T/S **Ray P. Reeves**, Photographer. One member became a POW, S/S **Nicholas M. Heiter**, Belly Gunner.

One plane from the 67th Sq. went down, four from the 68th. In that single raid, 28 men were KIA; 8 became POW; 9 evaded & returned and 1 became POW, later listed as KIA.

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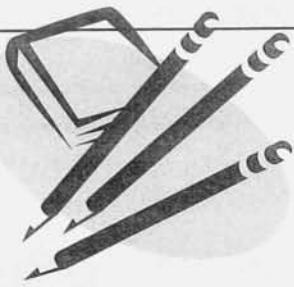
The Howington story and that of his daughter Linda has many more facets, which will be continued in the next publication. On Veterans Day 2003, Linda expressed her feeling: *"On this Veterans' Day I have spent much time thinking about the millions of veterans who have made sacrifices over a long period of time and in many places all over the world. Mostly I*

have been thinking of all of you who are a part of the 44th BGVA. ... Because of you, there are many of us who have learned much about our heritage to pass on to future generations."

Ed. Note: Linda and her husband Tom expect to attend their first Reunion with the 44th BGVA in San Antonio.



Howington Crew, (Before Leaving the States) Upper L-R- 2nd Lt. Herman M. Curtis, Co-Pilot; 2nd Lt. Richard Kasten, Navigator; 2nd Lt. Wayne Crowl, Bombardier; 2nd Lt. Hartwell Howington, Pilot Lower L-R- S/Sgt. Earl Boggs, Gunner; S/Sgt. Mitsche, Gunner, S/Sgt. Nicholas Heiter, Gunner; T/Sgt. Archie Barlow, Engineer; Charles W. Blakely, Asst. Engineer; T/Sgt. Alvin Rosenblatt (now Ross)



FROM THE DESK OF OUR PRESIDENT



I welcome this opportunity to communicate with the 44th family. Once again I wish to commend you for the marvelous spirit that you continue to display in matters that relate to the affairs of your old Bomb Group.

Shortly after becoming your president, in fact the day after, I was told that my first obligation was to address a 'donation' letter to you. It was necessary to assure that the Master Data Base could be completed. We had exhausted the funds for that purpose. As you know, the MDB is the glorious history of our 44th.

Fundraising is, for me, a most onerous task. However, I addressed a plea to you, and you responded...Oh! How you responded! Once again you wonderful guys and gals have given of your treasury. Bless you for your generosity, for your sense of history. My sincerest thanks to each of you for being so very supportive. It is heart warming to know that the admirable concern that you had, one for another, back in 1942-45, still exists.

History books already record that we won WWII. It is important to have a record of how it was won—by everyone doing his assigned duty. Thank you for helping preserve these historical details.

We look forward to seeing you in San Antonio.



Bob Lehnhausen

Bob Lehnhausen



THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Furstenfeldbruk to Daharan to Furstenfeldbruk

By Clay Roberts, Colonel (Ret.), USAF

Thirty days after our arrival at Furstenfeldbruk, Germany in December 1947 we stood down from patrolling the Berlin Airlift corridors and in early January 1948 prepared for a long-range navigation mission to Daharan, Arabia. It was winter in Germany, hot in Arabia, and we had no summer uniforms.

It was nighttime when we took off but was daylight when we were over Tel Aviv, Israel. Our leg from Tel Aviv was east to Baghdad then south from Baghdad along the west shore of the Persian Gulf to Daharan. With the aircraft on autopilot I had a chance to view the desolate and lifeless land below. It was brown, brown, brown, as far as you could see. There wasn't a plant, tree or life of any kind to be seen. I now understood why Moses wandered for forty years in the wilderness. I soon learned that Moses wasn't the only one lost. When I asked my navigator our ETA to Baghdad he said he didn't know. That his maps had run out at Tel Aviv and that the dead reckoning time to Baghdad had run out thirty minutes ago. Knowing the Persian Gulf and Daharan were south of Baghdad, but not knowing how far we had to go, I took up a heading of 180 degrees and had the flight engineer give me the power setting for maximum cruise at our present weight and altitude. Power was reduced to approximately 25 inches of manifold pressure and the props were turning so slowly you could actually count the blades. I was starting to get an uneasy feeling in my stomach. I had never been lost in my years of flying and the thought of crash landing in the desert for lack of fuel was starting to consume my thoughts. Some time later radio contact was established with an aircraft, having departed ahead of me, calling Daharan Tower. Continuing south we finally saw on the horizon the only navigational aid for finding Daharan - - a huge column of fire and smoke from burning oil well gases. After sixteen plus hours of flying time we arrived at our destination.

After three days of sand and more sand we made a night departure for return to

Furstenfeldbruk, Germany via Tel Aviv and Algiers. With Tel Aviv behind us we encountered a squall line - - severe torrential rain and turbulence. The rain hitting the plane was deafening. I could no longer talk to my co-pilot and flight engineer - - I had to shout to be heard. The turbulence was so bad that I had to shut down the autopilot and take over the controls manually. Turbulence was so fierce that my instruments on the rubber mounted instrument panel were a blur. It took all my powers of concentration to focus on the flight gyro and maintain a semblance of level flight.

As the rain continued and the turbulence lessened my bombardier brought my attention to a ball of bright blue the size of a marble, dead center in the nose of the ship. Sure enough it was St. Elmo's fire. From past experiences, St. Elmo's fire was a harmless display of static electricity, which was nothing more than little fingers of bluish light that danced across the windshield. This was different. This was a concentration of static electricity in one location and foreign to my flying experiences. My concern was increasing rapidly. The marble had now become a quarter! The quarter became a golf ball. Now we had two to three inches of the blue fire off the propeller tips resulting in a circle of fire around each propeller. I had always understood that St. Elmo's fire was harmless but with the ball of fire now the size of a baseball, and the ring of fire on the propellers approaching 10 to 12 inches, I had the bombardier get out of the nose. We were lit up like a Christmas tree. As we continued to watch the "baseball" it suddenly shot between me and the co-pilot, past the flight engineer, past the navigator, past the radio operator, through the tunnel connecting the two pressurized compartments and out the top aft turret. Gone also was the fire around the propellers. That was my last and worst experience with St. Elmo's fire. After seventeen plus hours we arrived at Furstenfeldbruk in the middle of a snow storm. Subsequent examination of the aft top turret revealed that one of the 50 caliber machine gun barrels was badly burned. St. Elmo wasn't harmless after all.

A NEW BREAK IN OUR PURSUIT OF SAVING OUR HISTORY

United States Senator John Warner, Chairman of the Armed Forces Committee, recognized the value of the 44th Bomb Group's Database, and has made important contacts for us, in pursuit of the funds needed to complete the project. The letter below was sent to the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress, National Museum of American History, Air Force Historical Society, The Honorable James G. Roche, Secretary of the Air Force and Dr. Richard Hallion (title unknown).

Have you done your Database? If you need the proper form, call me:
717 846-8948. We are nearing completion. Be sure your personal story is included.

JOHN WARNER
VIRGINIA

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April 6, 2004

General John R. Dailey
Director
National Air and Space Museum
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Washington, D.C. 20560-0310

Dear General Dailey:

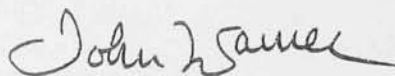
I am writing to forward to your attention this remarkable history of the Eighth Air Force's 44th Bomb Group in World War II. The creator, Mr. Arlo Bartsch, flew with the 44th Bomb Group and has assembled an innovative data retrieval system that includes a database of the unit's missions, biographies of the aircrews, audio from interviews with bomb group veterans, and video clips. By paying particular attention to collecting the personal recollections of those who were there, he has added a rich oral history to 44th Bomb Group's record of achievement.

As you know, time is running out to collect the eyewitness accounts of this "greatest generation." I believe this information may be of interest to the Air and Space Museum and that collaboration with Mr. Bartsch may be of mutual benefit. His contact information is included in the compact disks.

My staff point of contact, Mr. Marc Tranchemontagne, can be reached at 202-224-2023.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely,



John Warner

JW/mgt
Enclosure

WE LOST IRENE



On Tuesday, March 30, 2004, the E-Mail from Will Lundy told us, "The light of my life has just gone out." Irene Haines Lundy was lost to all of us in the 44th BGVA.

A few of us knew that time was running out on our English bride who had accepted America as part of the natural flow of her life. As a little girl, Irene had grown up in Norwich, England. She remembered life before WWII, and how the War changed everything.

Meeting the young Will Lundy at St. Andrews Hall gave her new directions for her life; however, they had no plans for marriage until he was all the way across the world in Lancaster, California. The War suddenly ended, and by telephone they both agreed to marry. After 1 1/2 year wait, engine trouble on the trip across, then bad weather, she finally joined the man she loved, and they were finally able to marry.

Irene was the quiet assistant in all endeavors. She was among the first to learn of the history-gathering effort that was going on in Norwich, in anticipation of a future library. It inspired Will to advance his research project. Her patience and forbearance of the time and expense in his dedication and effort in recording the *History of the 67th Squadron*; then later, *The Roll of Honor*,

made it possible for this information to be available for future generations. For both of them, it became a mission. Ultimately, it provided a reason for the 44th BGVA to exist.

At Reunion time, nobody asked her to help with Registration and routine chores. She would show up and say, "I guess it's time to get busy." She knew what needed to be done, and just jumped in and did it.

The work and dedication of this beautiful lady was honored by the 44th BG in a ceremony conducted by the late **Edward 'Mike' Mikoloski**, two years ago.

Irene's loyalty to the activities of the 2nd Air Division was equally fervent. She was among those fortunate travelers who journeyed to Norwich, only two months after the nine-eleven tragedy, to celebrate the opening of the 2nd AD Library. Her appreciation was boundless, that this monument to history was established in her home town.

When special people pass on, they leave an empty spot that nobody can imagine could ever be filled. Irene was one of those special people. We will all miss her.



(COMPLAINTS OF) A YANK IN MERRY ENGLAND

By an unknown author

Where the heavy dew whips through the breeze,
And you wade the mud up to your knees,
Where the sun doesn't shine and the rain blew free,
And the fog is so thick you can hardly see,
Where we live on Brussels sprouts and Spam,
And those powdered eggs ain't worth a damn,
In town you eat their fish and spuds,
And down the taste with a mug of suds,
You hold your nose when you gulp it down,
It hits your stomach and you have to frown,
For it bites your tongue and makes your throat feel queer,
It's rightly called bitters, it sure ain't beer,
Their prices are high, their queues are long,
And those Yank G.I.s are always wrong,
Where you drink watered Scotch, fourteen bucks a quart,
And those limey cabbages must stand short,
And those pitch black nights when you stayed out late,
Is so rudely dark, you can't navigate,
There's no transportation on, so you have to hike,
And you get your can knocked off by a G-d – damned bike,
Where most of the girls are blonde and bold,
And they think that your pocket is lined with gold,
And there's the Piccadilly Commandos with their painted allure,
Stay clear of them, or you're burnt for sure,
This Isle isn't worth saving, I don't think,
So cut loose those balloons. Let the damn thing sink,
I'm not complaining, but I'll have you know
Life is tougher than hell in the E. T. O.

(Ed. Note: This poem came from Jim Heller of the 50th Sta. Compl. Sqdn. Control Tower. He thinks it was written by ladies in the East Dereham Post office. Perry Morse's evaluation of those complaints: It wasn't that bad!!)

FROM THE LIBRARY OF ART HAND

BOOKS FOR AUCTION

Chuck Hand, son of the late Art Hand, (former Board Member and outstanding historical researcher and searcher of lost flyers) sends this message: "I am gathering the books from my father's library, and am donating to the 44th BGVA, along with other memorabilia, to be auctioned at the next Reunion.

Bowman, *Fields of Little America* Bowman, *The B-24 Liberator* Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth in Color* Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary* Kaplan, *One Last Look* Unknown Author, *Target Germany* Kiefer, *The Green-Nosed Flying 8-Balls – The History of the 506 Bomb Squadron* Lundy, *44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor and Casualties. (Signed)* Todd, *History of the 68th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, The Flying 8-Balls. (Signed)* Harvell, *History of the 44th Bomb Group "Flying Eight Balls" + Liberators Over Europe (Reprint that Art Hand had done), 44BG – BW – SMW – Heritage Memorial Group, 44th Anniversary 1985. (Wraps.)* Rust, *Eighth Air Force Story. (Wraps) (2 Copies).* Newby, *Target Ploesti – View from a Bombsight. BCE.(Signed)* Door, *B-24 Liberator Units of the Eighth Air Force. (Wraps).* Lundy: *Photocopy in 3 ring notebook of 44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor and Casualties (used by Art Hand to make copies of pages for people searching for relatives.)* Harley, *A Brief History of the 15th Air Force. (Wraps)* Bombs Away! 1947 Nalty, *The Men Whom Bombed the Reich.* Campbell, *Consolidated B-24 Liberator.....Britain's Homage to 28,000 American Dead (1952)* Birdsall, *Log of the Liberator (Signed) + The B-24 Liberator + The B-24 Liberator (Wraps)* Blue, *The B-24 Liberator* Porter, *Cuckoo Over Vienna. (Signed)* McClendon, *The Lady is Good* Dugan, *Ploesti* Jablonski, *Double Strike (Regensburg/Schweinfurt)* Dmitri, *Flight to Everywhere* Davis, *B-24 Liberator in Action (Wraps)* North, *Liberator Album (2nd Air Division – 8th Air Force)* Greer, *B-24 Liberator in Action. (Wraps)* Hoseason, *The 1,000 Day Battle (2nd Air Division – 448th BG)* Ward, *Those Brave Crews (Signed)....Flight Manual for the B-24 Liberator (Wraps).....Camouflage & Markings – Consolidated B-24 Liberator (Wraps)...*

Magazine Articles:

WARBIRDS: "We Fly the Last Liberator", a Journey in Delectable Doris. Sept/Oct. 1989
1945 issue of the Air Force Magazine – printed in manila Annals of War – Jan. 1986 – article by Tom Blow, "The First Raid on the Ploesti Oil Fields".

The Fiftieth Anniversary of D-Day, (from the Imperial War Museum.)

40th Anniversary of D-Day – D-Day over Normandy

"The Eighth Air Force: Its War Over Europe".

Life Magazine, Target: Germany – The Army Air Forces, Official Story of the VIII Bomber Command's First Year Over Europe.

44th BG. Air Force Magazine for March 1989 History of the 66th Bombardment Squadron – with article about General Johnson.

Paperbacks:

Frankland, *Bomber Offensive – The Devastation of Europe.*

Wolff, *Low Level Mission (Ploesti).* Sweetman, *Ploesti Oil Strike*

Schuyler, *Elusive Horizons (B-24 story)* Jeswick, *Combat Cameraman (Ploesti photos)* Irving, *The Destruction of Dresden*

Photo. 8x10 B & W of Convair B-24 Liberator.

B-24 prints and Original Water Color painting of a B-24.

Stained glass emblem of Flying 8 Ball

RIVALRY OF THE GENERALS

Did you know: While Field Marshall Montgomery was planning the Rhine Crossing at Wesel on the night of March 23-24, 1944 General George Patton was planning to outdo him. He rushed his 3rd Army to Nierstein, sent the 11th Infantry across the River surprising seven German soldiers. The Germans surrendered, then obligingly rowed themselves to captivity on the west side without a guard. Patton timed his triumphant announcement to the world, just when Monty was ready to start his assault at Wesel.

The Germans had wired the bridge at Remagan, planning to detonate it. The bridge bounced, but settled back into place, staying solid enough for hundreds of soldiers to reach the east side before it collapsed. The Corps of Engineers spent 50 hours without stopping, to build a pontoon bridge that could accommodate tanks.

All the while, the 44th Bomb Group was hitting rail lines, oil refineries and marshalling yards, all aimed at keeping the Germans from stopping the flow of American soldiers who had landed on the homeland.

AN ENGLISH CHILD'S CHRISTMAS MEMORY

Megan Joseph
1943

I was 11 at the time, I used to cycle down to the airfields every day I could. I used to watch the mechanics load the gigantic bombs and the big CLASH! when the bombs were being put in the metal trailers. I longed to see them up close.

After a long wait, the day came when most of the children in England were invited to a huge Christmas party. On the exciting day we were picked up by American soldiers into these open trucks. They just had a single strap with a clip and a little door about a foot high, holding us in.

It had little bench-like seats for us to sit on. On the journey, it was really exciting. When we were on the truck it made my stomach lurch because of all the stones. One boy was asleep, his head rolling up and down, up and down, so I woke him up, because I thought he would have had the most terrible headache. When we got there, I felt all dizzy. I looked around. I had never been this close to a real used airfield. When we got inside, I was glad to be out of the cold.

The American who was looking after me took my waterproof coat. I looked around. There was lots of food that I hadn't had for about 2 years. There was the fanciest Christmas cake. My friends and I played for a while, then it was time to eat. I could not wait to taste that stuffing and turkey, and when I would go home, I should thank my parents so much for letting me go to the Christmas Party. The food was delicious. I had never tasted so much lovely food ever. Then there was the tree. It was the most beautiful thing I ever experienced in my life. It had gleaming golden balls and a bright silver star shimmering in the light. I was ever so upset when we had to go home. I really wanted to go back in, every body was so happy and nice. I really wanted to stay, but we couldn't.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

Hi to you all from a slightly wet, cool England, where at the time of writing, spring has just started to emerge.

I make no apologies for devoting all of this edition's space allocated to Shipdham, to a single subject, The 44th Bomb Group's Shipdham Museum.

Since I wrote to you last, Shipdham Aero Club had been working hard at providing a separate, dedicated home for a museum on Aero Club site, dedicated to the 44th Bombardment Group and all the men who flew and served with the Flying Eight Balls.

I am delighted to tell you that the museum's home we have been striving for, in the shape of a large pre-fabricated building has now arrived on site.

In January we were donated a complete pre-fabricated building approximately 40 ft. x 40 ft. by British building company Persimmon Holmes Ltd. It had served for a few years as a master control room at a nearby construction site and as the work on site was nearing completion, it was no longer needed. It arrived on January 6th and was assembled on site over the next couple of days by a team lead by ex-flying instructor Tony Haisman. By March the new roof had been completed and the interior had started to be cleaned up, ready for its transformation into a Museum and library. We hope to have it ready to be opened in September this year.

At present it has four rooms joined by a corridor. The plan is to re-structure it internally into just two rooms, the main one being the museum section and the second, a smaller one, to be transformed into a combined library and seating area that can also double as a crew room for flight planning and study purposes.

As I believe I mentioned earlier to you, one of our club members, Peter Steele, an ex-RAF pilot himself, has taken on the role of Curator. Already he has had offers of assistance and has a nucleus of helpers starting to get the building licked into shape. Books have started to be brought in for the library, and soon we hope to have a computer in place, ready for electronic archive storage, as well as more modern usages, such as flight planning and weather forecasts. We have been in constant touch with the 44th's UK Representative, Steve Adams, and will be asking him to delve deeply into his archive for some additional photographs to add to those we already possess.

We are all very excited about it here at Shipdham. We hope that some of our friends in America will get to see it, once it is completed. For sure we will photograph it and send the photos across for those who cannot make it.

Look out for yourselves, Peter Bodle

44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

REUNION — 2004

RADISSON AT MARKET SQUARE

San Antonio, Texas

Labor Day Weekend – September 2, 3, 4, 5

Reunion Registration Form

Please print or type. All information must be complete

Last Name _____ First Name (Tag) _____

Spouse _____ Squadron # _____ Life Member _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Guests & Relation

Number to attend _____ @ \$210.00 Amount \$ _____

Tour #1- Highlights of San Antonio
Number on Tour _____ @ \$25.00 per person Amount \$ _____

Tour #2 – Fredericksburg
Number on Tour _____ @40.00 per person Amount \$ _____

Total Amount Remitted Amount \$ _____

Check # _____

Description of tours are in this issue of the 8 Ball Tails

Registration includes: Everything on agenda except tours as listed above.
Registration must be received by August 25, 2004

Hotel Registration must be made directly with the RADISSON ON MARKET SQUARE
(See copy of hotel registration form in this issue)

Check Made Payable to: 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association (44th BGVA)
Mail to: Richard Lynch – 109 Mason Road, Box 518, Conrad, IA 50621-0518

RADISSON AT MARKET SQUARE SAN ANTONIO

502 West Durango Boulevard, San Antonio, TX 78207

Telephone 1=210-224-7155 FAX 1-210-224-9130

www.radisson.com/sanantoniotx

HOTEL RESERVATION FORM

Meeting Dates: September 2-6, 2004

Reservations must be received by August 3, 2004

Reservations for this event must be made by individual attendees directly with the Hotel's Reservation Department by calling the hotel directly at the telephone number listed above or FAX. The reservation will be accepted at the special group rate.

Please type or print:

Name _____

Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____ FAX Number _____

Additional person in room Yes _____ No _____

Name of additional person _____

Additional rooms-----One form per room please

Organization 44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Check in Time—3:00 PM; Check Out Time __ 12 Noon

For revisions or cancellations call 210 224-9130

Rates \$88.23/room (single or double)

Request Non-Smoking Room

Request Accessible Room

Request Rollaway Crib

First Night's Deposit

Credit Card (American Express,

Diners Club, Visa, Mastercard,

or Discover. Circle One

Credit Card Number _____

Name on Card _____

Expiration Date _____

Send check to the above address. Reservations are guaranteed by first night's deposit or accepted credit number & signature. If arrival is after 6:00 PM, call to verify reservation.

Departure dates are confirmed at check-in. Departures prior to due date will result in a \$50 departure fee.

SAN ANTONIO REUNION PROGRAM

Thursday, September 2, 2004

Board Meeting 3:00-7:00

Friday, September 3, 2004

Board Meeting 8:00-11:30

Registration 9:00 A.M. ----- 1:00-5:00 P.M.

Welcome Reception ----- 6:00 PM

Cash Bar

Saturday, September 4, 2004

Breakfast 6:30 - 9

General Meeting ----- 8:00-11:30 PM

Trip to Fort Sam Houston for Lunch

Buses leave Radisson at 12:00

Luncheon 12:30 – 1:30 PM

Optional Tour of the Highlights of San Antonio

Return to Hotel at 5:00 PM

Light Snacks, Cash Bar

Squadron Dinners

Sunday, September 5, 2004

Breakfast 6:30-9:00

Optional Tour to Fredericksburg

Buses leave Radisson at 8:00 A.M.

Lunch on your own

Return to Radisson at 4:00 P.M.

Hors D'Ouvres and Cash Bar at 6:00 P.M.

Candle light Ceremony, Awards

Banquet

Music, Dancing & Karaoke

Monday, September 6, 2004

Breakfast 6:30-9:00

Farewells



THE RADISSON ON MARKET SQUARE

Eager to greet WWII Veterans, the Radisson offers spacious rooms with all amenities—hair dryers, coffee makers, voice mail, irons with ironing boards. You can enjoy a swimming pool, exercise room and Jacuzzi. Parking is free. A two suite Hospitality Room provides space for sitting and chatting where 44thers can exchange remembrances of the War and latest reports on grandchildren. Complimentary shuttle service will take you to downtown area attractions, and Trolley service is right out the front entrance.

Travel from the Airport must be by cab, \$9.00 one way by S. A. Trans.

SAN ANTONIO IS ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST HISTORIC SITES

The 44th has been to the Lone Star State before. The Alamo hasn't changed much since Santa Anna's Army moved in and a troop of determined Americans gave their blood and their lives for freedom. An IMAX theater tells the legendary tale, from the American viewpoint, of course.

San Antonio is ever-changing, but still clinging to its heroic past. A trip to the Riverwalk is an introduction to the charm and innovation of a city that turned the San Antonio River into a multi-cultural fiesta. You can see it by a water taxi or a on a guided tour boat. Lady Bird Johnson's creative ideas sparked new uses for the stream that flows through the heart of the City.

San Antonio has been called 'The Venice of the West,' and justifiably. The Downtown Market Square has shops and restaurants to delight any one who wishes to probe the inner city. The Radisson provides a shuttle to any area of the City. Beyond that, there is a trolley just outside of the hotel. Downtown there are four streetcar routes, color coded to make your destination easier to find.

Several years ago Perry and I visited the monument area. WWII is recognized—years before the idea caught fire in Washington, DC. Most awesome, however, is the Viet Nam monument. That is true drama in stone. Don't miss it.

THE TOURS

Tour #1, Saturday, September 4, **Highlights of San Antonio** includes a visit to **Mission San Jose, San Fernando Cathedral**, a brief stop at the **Alamo, LaVillita, RiverCenter Mall, Riverwalk, Mexican Market**, and the new **Quarry Market**.

You will be picked up at the hotel at noon, taken to **Fort Sam Houston** for lunch, load coach at 1:30, return to hotel at 5:00 PM.

Tour #2. Sunday, September 5, **Fredericksburg, Texas/Nimitz Museum**. This city is the birth-place for Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief in the Pacific Theatre of WWII. The exhibits contain many artifacts of that historic conflict, as well as audio presentations of WWII veterans who were active in those battles.

Lunch is on your own.

Fredericksburg retains the marks of its first settlers, German immigrants. The city is famous for its quaint shops, handmade items and 'Texanna' handcrafts.

HONORS AT ARLINGTON



Five members of the 44th and many members of his family and friends attended the interment of Lt. Col. **William Cameron**, 67th Squadron Leader of the 44th BG. **Lee & Mary Aston, Tony & Kathy Mastradone, Chris Clark, and Perry & Ruth Morse** were present for the event. A small memorial service was held in the Chapel of the Administrative Building, after which the flag-draped body was placed on a horse-drawn carriage, accompanied by a band of marching soldiers. Guests walked about a mile behind the parade to the burial site, where the band played several religious songs, after which the flag folding took place. It was handed to his two daughters, Laurie and Katherine.

The day was rainy, the field was muddy, but nothing detracted from this very ceremonious event. It concluded with the playing of *Amazing Grace* by a bagpiper. This was a somber ending for a man who had helped change history by his adventurous and courageous spirit.



Uniformed horsemen lead the parade to the site of the interment.

L-R Paying last respects, and representing the 44th BGVA are: front, Kathy Mastradone & Ruth Morse; back, Tony Mastradone, Perry Morse, Mary Aston, Chris Clark and Lee Aston.

MAIL & E-MAIL

Two prominent members of the 44th BGVA, Col. **Richard Butler** and B/Gen. **Robert Cardenas** are engaged in raising funds for the B-24 Memorial in its birthplace, San Diego, CA, to honor those who built, maintained and flew the B-24. A bronze sculpture, similar to the one at the Air Force Academy, will be placed in front of the Veterans Memorial Center at Balboa Park.

The Liberator was designed and test flown in December 1939. More than 8,000 were built here. The location of the Memorial will be right under the final approach to Lindberg Field. The same approach was flown by the first B-24 and thousands more.

The Board of the 44th BGVA has voted to donate \$1,000, which will make it possible for our organization's name to be listed on the base of the Memorial. Individual contributions are welcome. Write: B-24 Liberator Club/B-24 Memorial San Diego, 1672 Main Street, Suite E, PMB-124, Ramona, CA 92065. Visit the Web Site: www.b24memorial.org

Jack T. Francis, (68th Sq.) remembered his first association with an A/C. He took Navigator's training, but flunked out one month before graduation because he was always vomiting. He threw up in the elimination tube, making the plane smell bad. Next he got sent to gunnery school. In England, he learned that they needed navigators, and were using bombardiers instead.

"I went to **Lehnhausen** and told of my education in navigation. He assigned me to the **R. C. Pitts** crew," he stated. Thus Sgt. Francis flew five missions as a Navigator, starting March 31st to the 44th's last mission, April 25th, 1945, whereupon the vomiting was no longer a problem.

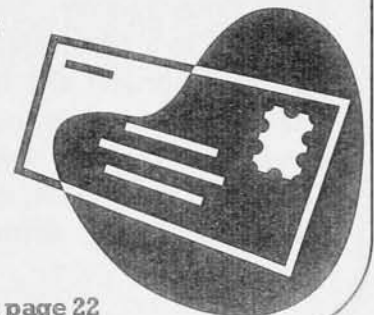
A challenge from **Joe Milliner**: At Barksdale Field the original wing was divided into groups. Three colonels were appointed to lead them. The colonels drew straws to determine the selection order of the Groups personnel. After the first two groups were selected, the Colonel that drew the short straw turned to the other two and said, "I want to thank you guys. You've left me nothing but a bunch of 8-Balls."

Editor's Question: Who were the three Colonels, and which one drew the short straw and sent the 44th Bomb Group forth to write a new chapter in the history of air warfare?

Do you want to place a piece of WWII history in your local library? Ray Ward's Book, 'Those Brave Crews' is available for \$14.95 each/plus \$5 S & H. It is the detailed story of the Ploesti Mission. Every gift is tax deductible. Contact author at 432 Pennsylvania Avenue, Waverly NY 14892 or e-mail Weldon@sg23.com

From **Robert Reasoner**: Bob & Bernice sent a copy of a story written for their local paper by Neigel Gillespie. It describes his three Purple Heart experiences; the most awesome while flying as a Tail Gunner on the **Coleman Whitaker** crew, October 1, 1943. The mission was to Wiener Neustadt, a Messerschmidt plant aboard *Black Jack*. He walked through fire to get out of the burning plane that took five of the crew to their deaths, four became POW; Reasoner was POW, then repatriated.

The author of the article recorded the deception of the German military in depriving him of promised medical care; but inadvertently opened the door for him to be repatriated. (Sgt. Reasoner's story is recorded in the *8 Ball Tails, Summer Issue, 2000.*)



...continued on page 22

From Bill Ennis, son of the late S/Sgt. **Donald Ennis** (68th Sq.): "Dad never really considered himself a WWII 'hero', but in my eyes and in the eyes of his beloved family, S/Sgt. Donald Ennis truly was an American hero! He was especially proud of his service to his country, and many times spoke of the great friendships he developed with his fellow crew members on the two crews with whom he flew. I had done some researching over the past few years, and had been able to communicate with some of these great men who served proudly with my father... All of these fine gentlemen bonded together to form a great friendship that helped each of them to make it through some very tough times during this very important time in their lives. Unfortunately, a good share of these men have passed away after serving as 'brothers' on many bombing missions some 60+ years ago."

Ed. Note: Bill Ennis is requesting help in the following items: 1. Does anyone have a copy of the Stars & Stripes publication about Colonel Snavely's 50 Mission Hat?. 2. How his father acquired the name of 'Dutch' while in the service. If you have the answers, write Bill Ennis, RR 1, Box 190B, Towanda, PA 18848. Tel. 570 265-8694.



From the Reunion News, East Anglia:
POET & PILOT OVERTURE
 To fly on wings of war in alien skies,
 To know exalted life and sudden death,
 Then lay your spirit on the line & by
 The churning in your gut to realize
 That fear and courage draw a common breath.
 Emmett J. Lancaster

From Fritzi Selasky: My granddaughter was working in a restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia. Conversationally, she told a young man in uniform that her grandfather was in WWII. On further inquiry, she added he was a Navigator on a B-24, and his name was **Charles Selasky**. Immediately the uniformed

man said "I know who he was. He was the Navigator for General Johnson's plane, *Suzy Q*, that led the mission to Ploesti."

"How do you know that?" she asked. His answer: "I went to the Air Force Academy, and we studied that mission. A model of the *Suzy Q* is featured in our courtyard."



Would you like to get you picture on a postage stamp? Bob Dubowsky managed it, but he had to go to Israel to make it happen. If you want instructions, write irdub@aol.com.



From Dick Bastien to **Tony Mastradone**: I want to thank you for your help in rounding out the story of the 04 June 1944 plane crash and the rescue attempts in which you participated...

S/Sgt. **James O. Auman** and **Harm Krull** (66 Sq.) were riding their bikes when they saw the plane go down. Auman later remembered the agonizing sound of the straining of the engines on a heavily loaded B-24, heard the crunch-like sound when a large section of the right wing severed, and has been haunted by the screaming sound of the engine as it went down, then the crunch and the muffled explosion.

Bastien's archival material contained Mastradone's recollections of the Casualty Report of the **J.A. Hey Crew**, flying B-24H 42-95160. "I drove an ambulance to the crash with Captain (**Cyrus**) **Worrall** and **George Houston**, another Medic. Some Officer

wanted us to retrieve those two downed men despite the exploding oxygen tanks, 50 cal. Shells and fire everywhere. So we had to crawl down a ditch, dragging a stretcher to get them. It took two trips. A Chaplain met us when we got back to the base and wanted to know if we had administered last rites to them. I had not, so he showed me how it was done, in the event that it happened again."



From **George Insley**: After the Washington D.C. Reunion I drove to West Chester, PA where I visited my Co-Pilot, **Wallace B. Money**. We hadn't seen each other since



April 1944. Wallace finished his tour and I finished mine a few days later. He had 4 missions when he joined my crew. Wallace had volunteered and became a pilot in the RAF. In 1943 he joined the 44th in England. After flying the B-24 tour, he flew P-38 Photo Recon, taking photos across Europe. After the War he worked in West Chester in utilities as a lineman. He was recalled to Korea and did a tour there as Foto Recon pilot. When he returned to the U.S. he returned to his job, then retired.

After returning from England, he married. His wife Alice had one child, "Terry." She became an attorney, working with the elderly in the West Chester area.

Health permitting, Insley and Wallace hope to meet again at the San Antonio Reunion.



Rules of the Air, according to Clay Roberts (from Australian Air Magazine):

1. Every takeoff is optional. Every landing is mandatory.
2. Flying isn't dangerous. Crashing is what's dangerous.
3. The only time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire.
4. A 'good' landing is one from which you can walk away. A 'great' landing is one after which they can use the plane again.

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)50 + .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

MEMORIES OF WESEL REKINDLED

From **Edward Serbin**, (66th) Navigator on The Big Headed Kid, April 24, 1945 to his longtime friend, **Robert Lehnhausen**:

"I was on the **Elmer W. Smith, Jr.** crew with **Lt. Col William Strong** as Command Pilot. We led the Wing to the supply drop and back. We had 3 or 4 passengers, including Harvel along for the 'milk run.'

"We rehearsed the mission on two occasions, stopping ten miles west of the river. On the day of the mission, we had no idea any of our Wing planes were lost, but I can now see how it could happen. I guess our Wing dropped the supplies, while the others decoyed the Germans."

From Serbin's collection of clippings come these pieces of information: "In the greatest airborne operation of all time, 40,000 British glider troops and U.S. paratroopers were dropped yesterday on the east bank of the Rhine, near Wesel, to secure a bridgehead for Montgomery's men. Between 5,000 and 6,000 aircraft were employed; and the whole 40,000 were landed, with equipment, in two hours.

"The glider troop-carrier column stretched for more than 100 miles, and in addition, there were 1,500 transport planes and hundreds of protecting fighters.

"In brilliant sunshine our men plummeted down from the plane-studded sky against ineffective enemy opposition.

"There was intense small arms fire and moderate flak, but the Luftwaffe failed to appear, for the good reason that their airfields had already been knocked out.

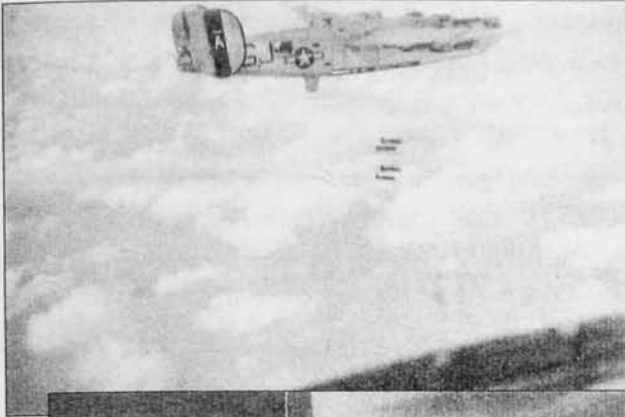
"Air crews who witnessed the operation said that the spectacle of the gliders over the Rhine was something never to be forgotten."

Another article reported: "Liberators which dropped supplies to the airborne fighters bore the brunt of the losses—20 out of approximately 240 which followed directly behind transports and gliders and dropped the sky-fighters some 600 tons of weapons and medical supplies from 100 feet. The Libs had to battle through an intense storm of 20 mm. anti-aircraft, machine-gun and small weapons fire."

Ed. Note: This was Serbin's 29th mission. The Big Headed Kid was the Lead Plane in the Lead Squadron in the 14th Combat Wing. It had the good fortune to come through the drop area with no battle damage. Lt. Col. William Strong, CP, was Group Operations Officer at that time.

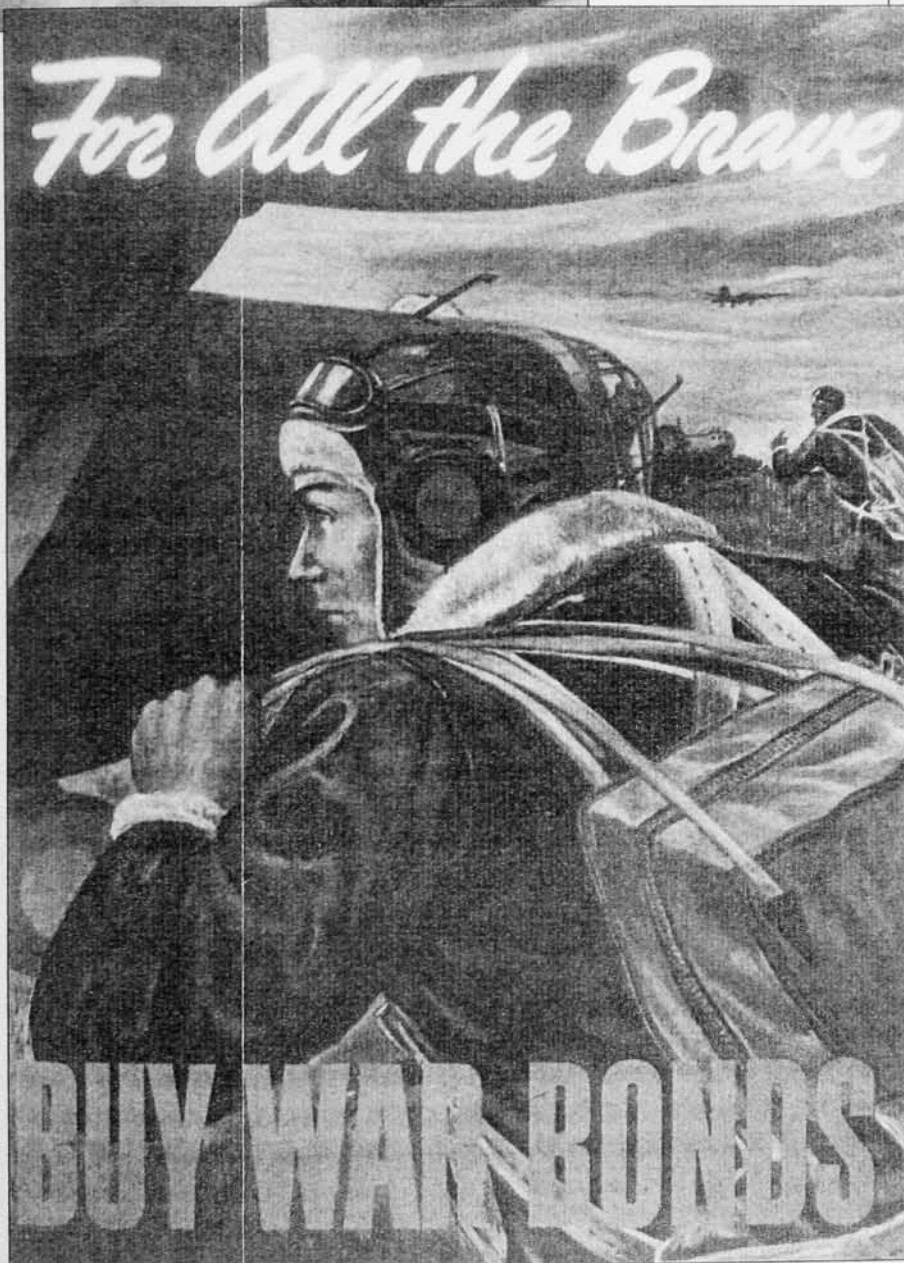
The photographs taken by Ursel Harvel that day have provided valuable historic information for researchers since that momentous event.)

William S. Chaffin (67th Sq.) took this picture on March 29, 1945 on his mission to Wilhelmshaven. He was the Tail Gunner on the Arthur C. Kleiderer crew. He reports that 'When I took this picture, I turned the tail turret all the way to one side and opened the door. That way I was looking out into open air.' He snapped it with a small camera using 127 film.



Ed. Question: Can anyone identify the plane that flew alongside 1st Lt. Kleiderer's, who was flying Deputy Lead?

A BACKWARD GLIMPSE
War Bond Poster and Betty Grable



Betty Grable

First, I want to thank all of the friends of Irene who sent her flowers, sympathy cards, letters and e-mail messages. I am deeply touched by them all, and I know she would have been also. She was always eager to get to the Reunions early, so she could be on hand to greet and talk to everybody. All of you 44thers were her friends, true friends. Bless you all.

The first three months of this year have been the worst of my life, and one could even include the fourth month. I am attempting to relate this to you all in the hope that any of you could benefit from the lessons that my family and I learned.

About Christmas time the light and love of my life, Irene, started having a pain in her right side, and she thought it could have been a muscle strain; and her doctor more or less agreed. About a month later she discovered a lump on the right side of her abdomen, so again sought her doctor's advice. He, in turn, suggested she see a specialist; and it took ten days to get an appointment. The specialist made his examination and set up two dates for upper and lower tests.

However, as pain was becoming a factor, she again visited her primary doctor, and he ordered a 'cat-scan' to be scheduled. This took place in about another week, with nearly a week before we could view the results of that amazing test. A surgeon then set up a viewing time; and it was finally, positively, established that she had a large cancer in her colon; and worse still, had spread to her liver. This surgeon could not perform the operation for over two weeks.

The operation was performed in just over two hours, and it was successful; but he

could not do much for the liver. After seven days in the hospital, Irene came home, appeared to be improving, gaining some strength, but quickly started downhill again. By the time that she could get an appointment with an oncologist, she needed daily IVs and then a wheelchair to get to his office. The oncologist told us that it was too late for him to administer any remedies. All that my family could do was to bring her home, keep her comfortable and as pain free as possible. Irene never complained, was her sweet self right up to the end. All she said was that "We will not reach our 60th."

The light of my life went out on March 29 at home. The worst part of all of this is that if our medical system had worked as it should, this could have been prevented. My medical insurance through the HMO system guaranteed payment for all doctor and hospital expenses. So there never was a reason for not including a colonoscopy in our annual and regular checkups during the previous 25 years. Had one been performed, the cancer would have been found and easily corrected. We both had maintained a positive healthy life style and were never ill, so we did not insist upon all physical checkups. We left that up to the experts. It was a fatal error.

My purpose for writing all of the above is to remind you that cancers are still a serious and hidden killer, even when one appears to be in great health. Do not be misled due to lack of symptoms, as it can still be there. If possible, insist on having the tests made. It could save your life!

Proof again of this new year getting off to a bad start is the great loss of my friend, a proven great pilot, a born leader and a super person, William R. Cameron. I did not know him personally and did not work on any 67th Squadron aircraft that he flew. But when he moved up to 1st Pilot and selected four of

my ground crew buddies to be his volunteer gunners, I had close ties with him.

It was not until the late 1970s that I learned about the 2nd Air Division Association and the absence of any 67th Squadron (or Group) history. Then I discovered that 'Bill' had had the presence of mind to keep much of the 44th BG records. In addition, he also had a super collection of photos, many of which he had taken. He invited me over to his lovely home at Carmel, CA, where Irene and I spent most of one day reviewing his many boxes of 44th BG actual records. He told me that I could take as many of these records as I wanted, so I took many of those that were so great, copied and returned them to him. They were the solid evidence of the 67th Sq. history that formed the basis of my research data, and gave me the push to move on to the microfilm records at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Steve Adams, Paul Wilson and David Morgan (all of Norwich, England) told me about their efforts to repair the roofs on several of the old building at the 14th CBW site at Shipdham, where the great Wall Art was located. I became interested. The leaky roofs were threatening to destroy this great Wall Art. This led to the old Control Tower's leaky roof, too, and the refusal of the old 44th HMG leader to become involved. Bill Cameron was the first Squadron Commander to agree to be on the Restoration Board, and Bob Lehnhausen, the second. It failed, but they and others were available and willing to

serve on a Committee to carry on when the 44th HMG was closed down. When **Ed Dobson's** small crew reunion expanded to the 67th Sq. Reunion, and then 44thers in Texas were included, the Control Tower Restoration Board agreed to assemble there with them. This Board, which included **Charles Hughes**, 66th Sq., **Bill Cameron** 67th Sq. and **Bob Lehnhausen**, 68th Sq. Commander spent several hours hammering out the plans for the new 44th BGVA. **Edward Mikoloski** was there also. This meeting took place in 1994.

So, the successful organization which we are all now enjoying had its roots in the efforts of Bill in many ways, not to forget Bob Lehnhausen and Charles Hughes. **Roy Owen** later was willing to become our first President. All were true leaders and much appreciated.

One last subject, that of the revision of my old Roll of Honor & Casualties book. Thanks to the efforts of Brenda Phillips and her typing and scanning, Jim Hamilton's formatting and assembly of the corrections and additions, much has been accomplished. Jim recently sent over 400 pages of this new updated text. It looks professional and great. The end is in sight, but still much work to be done. Jim has already placed a portion of it on the Internet, where we hope all will be available, and possibly the 44th BG site as well. If we go to actual printing, it may require two volumes.

Will Lundy



FOLDED WINGS

ADRIAN, KENNETH G. February 28, 2003, #19181, 506 Sq. 1st Lieutenant Adrian flew his first mission July 11, 1944. He was the Navigator on the Louis Wimsatt crew. He flew a total of 38 missions, frequently as the lead plane. On his last two missions, Major C. L. Lee was Command pilot. His last mission was on November 27, 2004. Adrian and his wife Joan lived in Cassville, Wisconsin.

APGAR, GEORGE M. 19227 February 27, 2004 George was a mechanic with the 50th Station Complement Squadron. His Squadron was attached to the 44th, and was available to help any Squadron that requested assistance. He served from July 1943-June, 1945. After the War was over, George opened a Buick/Cadillac Agency, a GMC Truck & Sales Service, and later a Jeep Agency in Chester, New Jersey. He lost his first wife; then years later married Beryl Fleet, an English lady who he met at a 44th BG Reunion in Dayton, Ohio.

BECKINGHAM, RICHARD (Bud) # 19354 February 4, 2004 68th Sq. 1st Lieutenant Beckingham was a pilot, first assigned to the 459th BG, where apparently he flew fifteen missions. He transferred to the 44th on November 19, 1944, and flew 20 missions with this group, qualifying him to return to the States on March 30, 1945. While flying with the 44th, he piloted such prestigious planes as *T.S. Tessie, Hellza Droppin, Gallivantin' Gal, Lady Geraldine and Louisiana Belle*.

After the War, Beckingham worked for the New York State Highway Department as a Heavy Maintenance Foreman. He and his wife, Jean, resided in the Utica area, New York. They had two sons, Richard and Thomas, and one daughter Sandra.

CAMERON, WILLIAM R. March 14, 2004, #19633 (67th Sq.) 37 Missions. Lt. Cameron's first mission was November 17, 1942 with **Chester Phillips** in *Little Beaver*.

He moved to first Lieutenant and had his own crew by April 16, 1943, flying in *Little Beaver* with **Major Howard Moore**.

Without Cameron, the Phillips crew went to Kiel; flak hit the plane; seven crewmen were KIA, four became POWs. All three 67th planes at Kiel were lost, and of the original 67th pilots, only Cameron was left to fly again. His first mission as 1st. Lt. was to Brest, with **Major Howard Moore** as Co-pilot. When the group moved to Africa, Cameron was there, participating in the Raids to Sicily and Messina.

He is best known for his mission to Ploesti in Buzzin' Bear. It is notable that he had completed his missions by the time the Ploesti Raid was in planning; but with his ever-adventurous nature, he opted to fly as Deputy Lead to Col. Johnson. For his bravery in that awesome trip, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, our nation's second highest award for heroism. When the War was over, Cameron had risen to the rank of Lt. Colonel. General Johnson once said that 'Bill Cameron was the finest combat pilot I have ever known.'

After the war Cameron met and married Allison Stilwell, daughter of General Joseph Stilwell. He later served with the Air University in Alabama, Air Force Headquarters, Pentagon, Washington, D.C., was Commanding Officer of the 7th Air Force (Guam) where he had jurisdiction over the care of Iwo Jima, Joint Staff (Hawaii), Vice Commander of a Strategic Bomb Wing (Ohio) where he flew the first swept wing bomber, The Boeing B-47 Stratojet. Col. Cameron was Chief of the Military Advisory Group to Ecuador. His final assignment was Base Commander at McCoy AFB near Orlando, Florida.

Col. Cameron is survived by his second wife, Henri, two daughters, Catherine Cameron and Laurie DeSimone and two granddaughters, Elizabeth and Sarah DeSimone.



FOLDED WINGS

CRUMP, GEORGE T. October 5, 2003. # 14061955, S/Sgt. Crump joined the 68th Squadron June 8, 1942. He came over on the Queen Mary in September 1942. He flew home on A/C #42-51965 piloted by Lt. **Samuel McKenney, Jr.** He lived in Spring Hill, TN with his wife, Grace.

ENNIS, DONALD #20129 April 7, 2004, 68th Sq. S/Sgt. Ennis flew as a Tail Gunner with the **S. H. Boman** crew, later with **E. N. Dyer, Raymond E. Hamlyn**. He moved into the position of Nose, flying with **Robert L. Leel, Glenn Sweigart, Charles V. Deurell, H. R. Dimpfl and Walter Franks**. Ennis flew in many planes, *The Exterminator, Heaven Can Wait II, D-Barfly, Full House, Northern Lass, Lady Geraldine, Gallavantin' Gal, T. S. Tessie and Louisiana Belle*. He flew a total of 35 missions, the last on February 26, 1945.

FOWLER, FREDERICK W. 20264 November 1, 2003 66th & 68th Sq. 1st Lt. Fowler was first assigned Navigator, then Radar Operator with the 66th Sq., but flew no missions with this group. In July he was transferred to the 68th Sq. His first mission was July 11, 1944. Because he was a radar Navigator, he did not have an assigned crew, but flew the majority of his missions with four crews: The Roy Boggs Crew, the John Vaughn Crew, The Harry Garbade Crew and the Robert Seever Crew. His last mission was April 20, 1945, which was his thirtieth. Fowler and his wife Ruth lived in Riverside, California.

HUNTLEY, RUSSELL D. 2004 #20764, 67th Sq. T/Sgt. Huntley was a radio operator on the Elmer Reinhart crew. He flew 7 missions, the last to Ploesti in *G I Gal*, 42-40371. This ship was the last one off the target; it came out with part of a wing missing; and eventually part of their tail was gone. Huntley provided first aid to the two waist gunners who were injured; eventually they all parachuted about 80 miles from the target, then soon

were seized by the Germans. On this fateful mission, one member of his crew was killed, eight became POW. He was freed when the Germans were evicted from the area, and all POWs returned to Shipdham. He was discharged when the War was over, but later re-enlisted, becoming an electronics specialist and earning the rank of Major. Russell and his wife Charlotte entered into a business, selling non-hazardous cleaning materials to companies making heavy machinery.

Loman, Jack E. February 2, 2004 # 21126 50S Loman served in England 1942-45, assigned to three different groups: 304th Service Squadron, 50th Station Complement and 405th Air Engineer Squadron. He handled a variety of administrative assignments, particularly tracking and marking the advance of Allied troops on the War Room Map. Thus, strategists would know which areas were to be avoided as bomb targets. On some occasions he was sent to photograph the success of a raid after it had been completed.

Loman is best known to 44thers for the art that he placed on the walls at the 14th CBW in Shipdham, still visible 60+ years later; but also in the Officers & Enlisted Men's Lounges. Many years ago Steve Adams and Paul Wilson repaired the roofs of those buildings to prevent the weather from destroying them. Jack was very proud of the fact that General Johnson, recognizing his artistic skills, requested him to maintain the Allied line movement each day, painted on a large glass exhibit covering the Allied front in Europe. The purpose was to advise General Johnson daily, so that secondary targets or targets of opportunity would always be in the areas under Germany's control. Several years ago National Geographic became aware of his WWII Wall Art, and ran a feature of Loman's legacy. Jack arrived in Shipdham in October 1942



FOLDED WINGS

Jack arrived in Shipdham in October 1942 and stayed until June 1945. He was assigned to three different units at the base. Queen Elizabeth, Ronald Reagan and other heads of state became owners of his unique art.

After the War Loman became a Civil Engineer, working with the navy at times, other times with the City of Santa Barbara. His last position was Manager of the Santa Barbara Airport. He and his wife Monica, an English bride from Norwich, resided in Solvang, California for the last years of his life. They had two sons, Gary and Michael.

Mikoloski, Edward "Mike" March 22, 2004 # 21345 (66th & 67th Sq.) 26 missions. When the enemy skies were not protected by fighters, Lt. Mikoloski flew with such colorful pilots as Col. **Leon Johnson**, Major **Algene Key**, Lt. **James Kahl**, Lt. **Thomas Scrivner**, Lt. **Robert E. Kolliner**, Major **Howard Moore** and Capt. **William Cameron**. His first mission was December 6, 1942, his last, July 19, 1943, by then having risen in rank to Captain. He flew in planes of fame: *Jenny/Lady Luck; Queen Anne, Princess Charlotte/Sure Shot, Queen Anne, Wing Dinger, 4-Q-2 and Suzy Q.*

'Mike's' Air Force career began at Mather Field, CA where he earned his Navigator Wings. When he finished his combat tour, he joined General Johnson's staff as Group Navigator, later as First Wing Navigator at the 14th Combat Wing. When the war was over, he re-joined General Johnson as his Aide-de-Camp and I & E Staff Officer at the 15th Air Force, Colorado Springs. He continued serving as his Executive and Principal Staff Planner at 3rd Air Force, London and Continental Air Command, Mitchell Field, NY. Later he served in Dept. of Defense assignments at NATO, later in SHAPE Hq. in Paris. In 1960-64 he served in the Pentagon, and during the

Missile Crisis, 'Mike' was the principal planner & advisor to General **Curtis Lemay**.

He served on the Board of the 44th BGVA for seven years, ultimately rising to the presidency in 1999, and completing his service to the Board after the Washington Reunion. 'Mike' will be remembered for many things, foremost being his devoted loyalty and generosity to the 44th Bomb Group and his unique ability to express deep feelings, constantly honoring the men who fought and won the War.

MORRISON, KELLY April 2, 2004 #21417 (66th/67th Sq.) S/Sgt. Kelly flew first with the 66th Sq., later transferred to the 67th. His first mission was December 12, 1943 to an Airdrome in Abbeville, France. On March 22, 1943 with the Kolliner crew, Sgt. Morrison and his fellow crewmen flew to Wilhelmshaven to docks and U-Boat pens in Germany. Three members of the crew were wounded, Sgt. Morrison among them. All three were awarded Purple Hearts. Five days later they were back at their gun stations. Morrison was part of the group sent to North Africa, in preparation for a raid on the German oil fields in Romania. He flew to Ploesti in Suzy Q with Col. Leon Johnson. S/Sgt. Morrison flew on a total of 26 missions, completing his tour on August 21, 1943.

MURRACK, MELVIN, Jan. 03, 2004 #21461 506 Sq. S/Sgt. Murrack's first mission was Sept. 8, 1944. He flew with the **Richard Habedank** crew, sometimes as Ball Turret Gunner, sometimes as Nose Gunner/Toggler, on other missions as a Waist Gunner, and once as a Bombardier. His last mission was with the George F. Brown crew on March 23, 1945. Murrack flew in many planes: *Consolidated Mess, Chief's Delight/Chief Wapello, Down De Hatch, Sabrina III, Jose Carioca and The Hit Parade.*



FOLDED WINGS

After the War, Murrack became a banker in Racine, Wisconsin. He and his wife Marilyn have been married 58 years. They have two daughters.

POPPE, WILLIAM F. Date of death unknown. # 21703 (506th Sq.) Poppe has been a faithful member of the 44th BG for the past fifteen years. Unfortunately, his service record cannot be found. It is assumed that he was a member of the Ground Crew.

REICHERT, WALTER E. #21776 (67th Sq.) S/Sgt. Reichert served as a Ball Turret Gunner on the **Keith Schuyler** Crew. He flew 12 missions, the first to Brunswick on April 8, 1944, which was one of the worst mission the 44th flew for losses. His last mission was to Berlin, flying in *Tuffy* on April 29, 1944. The target was the Underground Railroad. The group encountered both enemy aircraft and flak. In a constant effort to evade fighters, *Tuffy* ran out of fuel about 50 miles east of the Zeider Zee. The entire crew bailed out and became POWs until the War ended.

In civilian life Reichert became president of a distribution company for Anheiser Busch in Hawaii. He and his wife Lottie returned to the States, settling in California in 1991. Lottie has one son, an attorney, who lives in Germany. She was 'adopted' by a computer guru and his family, and intends to take over her husband's hobby of connecting with the world by the Internet.

Much of the S/Sgt Reichert's experience has been reported in Schuyler's book, *Elusive Horizons*. Although fictional, it is an apt description of that crew's war experience.

Ed. Note: In my conversation with Lottie Reichart, wife of the late Walter E. Reichart, I

learned that while he was residing in Hawaii, it appears that someone had stolen his identity. He was told that because of the fire in St. Louis, his POW record was lost. He received no benefits throughout the post war years. Several years ago at a Stalag 17 Reunion, it was announced, 'Walter Reichart has passed away.' He stood up and announced the fact that he was alive. A search revealed that a man had posed as Walter Reichart for years, collected his POW benefits; but was now dead. It was an indisputable case of fraud, but it was too late to hold the man accountable. The real Walter Reichart received benefits for his POW experience only the last two years of his life.

THOMAS, ROGER J. Date unknown #22191 66th Sq. 2nd Lt. Thomas was a Navigator on the James Derrick crew. His first mission was January 7, 1945. He and four other members of his crew were injured when they bailed out into Belgium, Feb. 25, 1945. After hitting their target, the Marshalling Yards at Aschaffenburg, Germany, they sustained flak damage, causing fuel loss; and so, unable to reach an airfield, they crash landed.

Twenty five days later, Roger returned to service, and flew until the War was over. The crew flew in *Fifinella*, *Big Time Operator*, *King Pin* and many other unnamed aircraft.

THOMPSON, LLOYD K. August 10, 2003. #22302 68th Sq. S/Sgt. Thompson flew 28 missions as a gunner with the **Principe** Crew, two with the **Dimpfl** crew. His first mission was May 23, 1944; his last on August 16, 1944. He flew in a number of different aircraft: *Battlin' Baby*, *Patsy Ann II*, *Channel Hopper*, *Flak Magnet*, *Full House*, *Gipsy Queen*, *Lone Ranger* and *Puritanical Witch*. Thompson and his wife Wilma resided in Sedan, Kansas.



San Antonio was a quiet Mexican town, until Santa Anna decided to 'take on' the local residents and impose some restrictions on them and their money. Fat Chance!! They had been enjoying freedom, and weren't willing to part with it. The soldiers at Presidio of San Antonio de Bexar thought they were there to fight Indians, and found themselves embroiled in a battle that became legendary.



Three Colonels led the fight to their death: It is said that William Travis drew a line in the sand with his sword, challenging men to leave or stay. His soldiers stepped forward. Jim Bowie was carried across on his death bed, and his men followed. Davy Crockett and his wild bunch, always eager for a fight, strode across the line. The fight was on. Every American school kid knows the slogan, "Remember the Alamo."

Come and see the city where freedom stood up to tyranny, and ultimately won.

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