

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



8 BALL TAILS



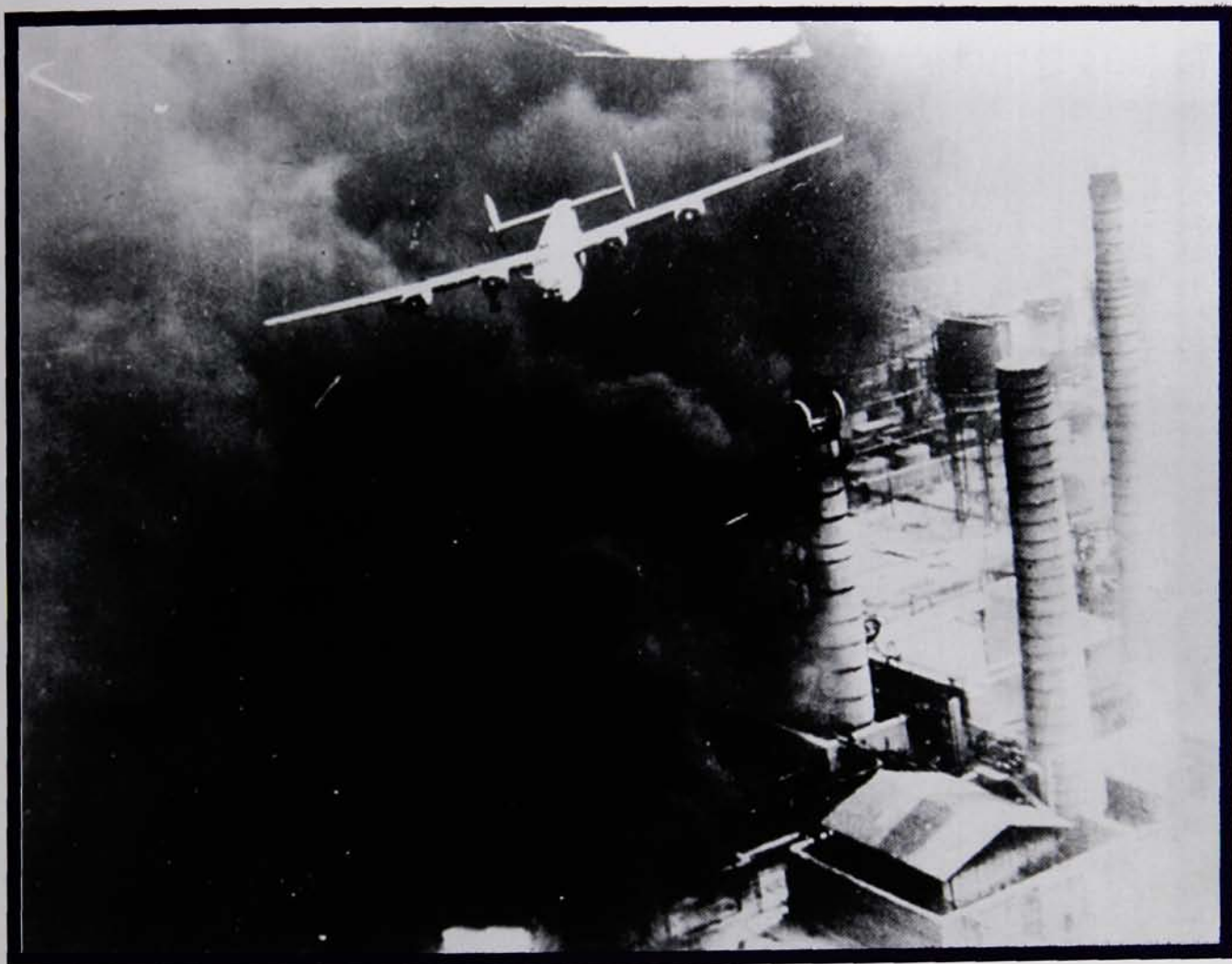
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THE ATTACK ON PLOESTI HAS GONE DOWN IN HISTORY AS THE MOST DARING AND DANGEROUS MISSION IN AIRCRAFT HISTORY. SOME WRITERS CONSIDER IT TO BE THE TURNING POINT OF THE WAR.

S/SGT. ROBERT REASONER REMEMBERS PLOESTI CLEARLY,
EVEN THOUGH HIS CREW CAME THROUGH UNSCATHED.

His 21st mission on the *Black Jack* to Wiener-Neustadt changed his life and earned him Purple Heart #3.

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ROBERT REASONER'S ADVENTURES WHILE EARNING PURPLE HEARTS

Sgt. Robert
Reasoner in
1942.



The German Luftwaffe was not the only problem the crew of *Bat Out of Hell* encountered when the 68th Squadron set off for the submarine pens at St. Nazaire, France on Sunday, January 3, 1943. B-24s followed the B-17 formations, dropped their bombs and continued following them out over the ocean and back toward England. Returning home, Reasoner's plane made it across the Channel to Wales, but Pilot Lt. Roy Erwin had no gas to continue. At 600 feet the plane dived straight down into a cabbage patch. Fortunately, without gas, it did not explode. Reasoner was one of the lucky ones that survived the crash. The impact was so powerful, his shoes flew off-still untied, and he sustained an injury to his heel. For that crash he earned Purple Heart #1.

Less fortunate was Clark Swanson, co-pilot, who died instantly. Roy Erwin died two days later in the hospital; and on January 8th, Thomas Davenport, Navigator, passed away. Reasoner lived to fly again.



Out of gas, *Bat Out of Hell* crashed in Wales.



Fifty-five years after *Bat Out of Hell* crashed near Haverfordwest, Wales, (1998) Reasoner returned to the crash site to lay a wreath on the monument to his fallen crewmen. The president of the Pembrokeshire Aviation Group, Malcolm Cullen, arranged a flight over the Denant area for Bob and Bernice Reasoner in a Cessna as part of the memorial celebration and expression of the gratitude of the Welsh people.

"After spending a week in the hospital, I was sent back to Shipdham. At first they didn't have anything for me to do. I just hung around, doing nothing. Finally they sent me to Lancashire to Turret Maintenance School." Reasoner enjoyed that for about a month, but the easy life was short-lived. In March they assigned him to the crew of Pilot George Jansen on *Margaret Ann*, and on May 14th, he was on his way to the Sub Pens at Kiel, Germany.

Fighters and anti-aircraft weapons protected the Krupp Submarine Plant, where 17 B-24s followed 109 Fortresses. The B-17s were dropping high explosives, some of which were falling through the Liberator's formation. To avoid this menace, the lead pilots maneuvered away from the B-17 bomber column, becoming easy targets for the German fighters. The 100 lb. incendiaries dropped by the Liberators broke open immediately, so the pilots in the rear planes had to fly in loose formation to avoid the masses of incendiary sticks from the lead planes. The 44th lost five planes, one was abandoned, 9 damaged, 12 men wounded and 51 MIA. Among the wounded was Reasoner, whose head met a .30 cal. bullet. This earned him Purple Heart #2.

"From my position in the tail turret, I was shooting at the fighter and watching the tracers. He was coming right at me," Reasoner recalled. "All of a sudden I found myself looking straight up at the top of the plane." He could feel the warm blood seeping out of his wound, matting his hair.

With four wounded men on board and a plane that had been badly damaged, Lt. George Jansen managed to get them safely back to Shipdham, succeeding in making a perfect landing. When the 44th was awarded a Unit Citation for the Kiel Mission, Reasoner was still recovering from his wound.

With the upcoming attack on Sicily, Reasoner joined the 44th's flight to Benghazi in late June, 1943. From this airfield they bombed Italian and Sicilian fortifications, in preparation for General Patton's and Montgomery's entry onto the island. This was the prelude to the attack on mainland Europe. They carried their bombs to Foggia, Naples and Rome; and when the decision was made to cut off the German oil supply at Ploesti, the *Margaret Ann*, Jansen's plane was among the attacking force. This was another Unit Citation mission.

"It turned out that our assignment to Benghazi was for the low level attack on the Ploesti oil fields. After some low level flying over England and over the desert of Libya, the day arrived for the low level mission. We took off at dawn for the target," Reasoner stated.

"It was a long mission. We were in the air a total of 13 hours and 5 minutes. We had to fight off fighters and fly through heavy flak before entering the fire, smoke, and explosions in the target area to deliver our bombs. We came through with only a few small holes in our aircraft, but I saw several planes go down. We had a lot of small arms fire over the target." August 1, 1943 is recognized as one of the most costly missions in the War, in terms of loss of men and aircraft, and also men captured.

"As a reward for this mission, we were given a three day pass and a plane to carry us to Jerusalem, which was at that time, a part of Palestine. Then we set out for England.

"Spain was a neutral country, so we couldn't fly over it. Instead we went over Gibraltar into the open Atlantic. I looked out the window and saw a stream of oil coming from under the plane. Another plane signaled to us that we had a problem, so we turned back to North Africa, this time landing in Marrakesh, French Morocco. It took ten days to get the plane repaired, so when we returned to England, we flew solo.

"Two weeks later we got word that the Army was holed up at Anzio and needed help to break through. By the time we got there, they had made the break, so they were ready to send us back to England. Then came the Mission to Wiener-Neustadt in Austria. It was a Messerschmidt plant.



CAN ANYBODY IDENTIFY THESE TWO STRATEGISTS WHO ARE POINTING OUT THE ROUTE IN AND OUT OF PLOESTI?

"The first time we went to Wiener-Neustadt on August 13, 1943, the Germans were unprepared, thinking our planes could not fly that far. We had very little resistance. Two months later, on my 21st mission, October 1, 1943, they were ready. This time I was with Lt. Coleman Whitaker's crew on the *Black Jack*. I thought it would be a milk run, and going across the mountains of Yugoslavia, I was wondering what I should do after I finished my last three missions-go back to the states, join a maintenance crew, or what? As it happened, my decision was made for me."

The ME 109's came straight toward the formation. These were experienced fighters -- 60 or 70 of them. Then came the heavy flak. It hit the bomb bay and set it afire. The plane fell back, peeled to the left, losing altitude. At that point there was no radio contact among the crew. *Black Jack* passed under another aircraft, and three crew members bailed out. Reasoner walked through fire with his eyes closed to find an exit. The bombardier's camera was occupying the camera hatch, so he leaped out the waist window, intending to open his parachute when he hit the clouds below. However, drifting out of consciousness, he woke up in the clouds with the chute opened. The plane drifted to the left, passing over the top of another plane in the formation. Two more crew members emerged. At that point the plane turned right and broke into two pieces, taking the lives of Coleman Whitaker, Pilot; Francis Badman, Radio Operator; Wilson Riche, Asst. Engineer; Robert Smith, Gunner and Anthony Domico, Assistant Radio Operator. Seven planes from the 44th went down that day. Reasoner earned his third Purple Heart.

"My parachute got caught in a tree, a few feet from the ground," Reasoner remembered. "By that time I was totally blind, and the Germans pulled me from the tree.

"Since I was sent to a hospital and not interrogated, I was not legally a POW," he continued. "I was in a room with five Germans with an Austrian doctor taking care of me. If the other patients were present, he did not talk. When they were out, he spoke very kindly in perfect English and was extremely gentle in the painful procedures he had to do in caring for my burns.

"He told me that I needed a great deal of work done on my face, and that he had a friend in Vienna who was a plastic surgeon. 'Would I like to see him?' Of course I wanted anything! that would make my life better, so he promised to make the arrangements. I had been in the hospital four months, most of them in total blackness. Now I could see a little."

During that period, kindness came from unexpected sources. Reasoner was 'adopted' by some southern Europeans—Serbians and Croations. They saluted him with great respect; and even though they had no common language, they talked.

They came in different numbers—two, three or four, and they each brought him the same treat, apples, sugar cubes or cigarettes.

"One evening an aide came and told me to come with him to get some clothes, that I was going to Vienna. I was outfitted with German infantry pants, ill fitting GI shoes and an old jacket, and at 5:00 A.M. I was off on a bus to a ski resort doubling as a medical facility.

"That doctor assured me that I needed a lot of plastic surgery. He told me to go back to my hospital and he would send for me when he had room. I never saw him again.

"Back at the hospital we had a new doctor who was very stern. I could hear him coming down the hall, 'Heil Hitler' to everyone he met.

"Several days later they repeated the call to get clothes to go to Vienna. This time, instead of the hospital, I ended up in a large warehouse filled with a collection of laboring POWs. We were transported to 17-A, which was mostly an English camp. I was treated great. Some of the POWs had been captured at Dunkirk, and I was the first American they had seen.

"After about a month I was sent to Frankfurt-on-Main to be interrogated and was assigned to Stalag Luft VI prison camp. I expected a lengthy questioning, but it was very brief. When the German folded up the paper he was writing on, I said, 'Is that all?' He assured me he already knew all about me and my crew, and did not need to question me further."

There was a rumor in Luft VI prison camp that in accordance with the Geneva Convention, wounded prisoners could apply for repatriation. A prisoner, an English doctor, acted as advisor as to who might qualify. He advised Reasoner to apply.

"I had to pass a long table with doctors from many nationalities who were supposed to be neutral in their evaluation—German, Swiss and Swedish. Each of them just passed me along, and the last one said, 'Sergeant Reasoner, you may go home.'

'Go home! Go home! It was almost too good to be true.'

This was the beginning of a long period of hospitalization for Reasoner. He had more skin grafts than he could remember at the Newton D. Baker Hospital in Martinsburg, West Virginia. When that closed, he went to Valley Forge Hospital in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. The surgeons created new eyelids for him, and rebuilt ears which were almost totally burned away.

Returning to civilian life was difficult, as he was self-conscious about his appearance. However he went on to get a degree in Botany at the University of Miami, becoming a landscape architect. In time he landed a job with the Department of Agriculture in Miami, Florida, and has been retired for 20 years. He and his wife Bernice reside in Mountville, South Carolina.



BERNICE AND BOB REASONER

DECORATIONS

Distinguished Flying Cross
Bronze Star
Air Medal w/3 OLC
Distinguished Unit Citation w/1 OLC
POW Medal
European Theater of Operations Medal w/4 Battle Stars
Three Purple Hearts

CREW OF THE MARGARET ANN



KNEELING L-R:
FRANCIS BAUMAN,
LOUIS GIRARD,
PILOT 1st LT.
GEORGE JANSEN,
BOB REASONER
STANDING L-R:
CLARENCE STRANDBERG,
CORWIN HUFF,
EUGENE VICKERY,
GEORGE KELSEY,
GEORGE GUILFORD,
ROBERT SMITH.

44th BGVA Board Meeting

At the 44th BGVA Board Meeting, Mike Yuspeh reported that the site for the 2001 Reunion will probably be in Barksdale, as that group is working very hard to complete the B-24, now under reconstruction. The plane will be renamed *Louisiana Belle*, and will have the serial number and stripes of the 44th.

Roy Owen is organizing a team of members to make personal calls to inactive members of the 44th in an effort to increase membership.

Following the meeting, Owen is going to Savannah to inspect the diorama of the Ploesti Mission at the Mighty Eighth Museum. He is also invited to Shipdham to speak to a group about 44th activities during WWII.

By-law change: The Nominating Committee is required to submit only one nominee for each office. Each Squadron will have a representative, but a Unit vote is not required. The number of representatives is unchanged.

Board membership: Tony Mastradone has agreed to continue as Archivist. Mike Yuspeh wishes to go off the Board after this year, but will work with his replacement.

Farewell

to the 506th Bomb Squadron

"Mum"

On July 10, 2000 the 506th Bomb Squadron lost its wartime "Mum," when Mrs. Linda Weston, age 89, quietly passed away at her home in Portsmouth, England. Linda, her husband Bill (Davies), and daughter



Beryl 1944

lived in the farmhouse just over the fence of AAF 115, Site 2, home of the 506th. We featured the Davies family in our Winter 1995 issue of the 8-Ball Tails.

Linda was the surrogate mother to all the 506th guys. She laundered our underwear,

baked us bread, welcomed us into her home and laughed her way into our hearts. We last saw her at our Shipdham barbeque party on the England trip in '97. She was a faithful member of 44th BGVA and is



1997

survived by her daughter Beryl, son-in-law, Ron and their children Rebecca, 20, and son, Christopher 17. We will miss her smiling face and the care she so willingly gave to the lads across the fence who were so far from home.

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association Reunion August 31 - September 3, 2000 San Diego, California

If you haven't registered for the 44th BGVA Reunion, you'll be missing a lot of fun. Mike Yuspeh has taken great pains to see that it will be another unforgettable event. The Naval Air Stations, Aircraft Carrier, Balboa Zoo, the shops around Westin Plaza and the historic Hotel Del Coronado are all on parade in this multi-culture metropolis. Located a short distance from the Mexican border, San Diego is one of the most exciting cities in the country.

There are no bonds like the bonds of war buddies. Don't pass up this opportunity to be together in a unique, sometimes quaint location.



2nd AIR DIVISION REUNION

The 53rd Convention of the 2nd Air Division Association met at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Tampa, Florida. Along with the flurry of old friends greeting each other in a hotel, which is famous for its splendor, there were boat trips, shopping opportunities and a trip to the Fantasy of Flight Museum.

The big event after the Buffet Dinner was a film presentation "Music at Theater Royal Norwich," a foot stomping, rip roaring, tear jerking presentation of an American show which many of the 44th had enjoyed on one of their English tours. The Stars and Stripes never looked better than they did on that English stage.

At the Banquet on Sunday evening, David Hastings, Vice Chairman of the Memorial Trust Board of Governors of the Norwich Museum/Library, reported on progress in the building program. He stated that this library will be unique in the world, and it honors the 6,700 American airmen from the 2 AD who died in WWII.

"This is the finest building in Norwich," he declared. "It is because of your vision that we have this living memorial. It promotes a unique bond of friendship between our two countries."

In addition to the library, there will be a restaurant, a heritage attraction center in which the history of Norwich is told and the 2 AD honored. There will be a model of a B-24 on



PERRY MORSE AND JERRY FOLSOM ADMIRE THE ICE SCULPTURE OF A LIBERATOR OUTSIDE THE BANQUET HALL AT 2 AD REUNION.

display and murals on the wall that tell the story of the war.

As a special consideration to the 2 AD members and expression of their gratitude, Norwich has extended an ancient but valuable designation: Status of Freedom of Norwich Award. This gives 2 AD members the right to have riotous parades through the city, complete with banners and loud music. Also the right to raise sheep within the city limits.

Long range plans include a Memorial Garden, six study areas for historians and researchers, a B-24 simulator and a 'Mission Room.' He announced that a banner will be displayed for every group that flew from there.

The 2 AD presented Hastings with a check for \$10,000. At present there are 499 reservations for the tour to the Grand Opening in November, with a waiting list of 25-30.

The candle lighting service honored those lost on particular missions, the ground crews who maintained the planes and those who have passed away in later years. Two members of the 44th participated in the lighting ceremony—Bob Lehnhausen and Will Lundy.



Will Lundy and Dick Butler.



Lighting the candles for lost buddies.



This story is dedicated to two young men, William F. Coll of Park Hall, Maryland, and Robert Zoller of Longmont, Colorado. Their uncles flew on B-24 #41-23778 F of the 44th Bomb Group. Both are new members of the 44th BGVA.



ENGINEER ON SCRAPPY II,
T/Sgt. William L. Coll, KIA AT Ploesti.

THE FIGHTING LADY: B-24 #41-23778 F

By: M/Sgt. Walter M. Patrick, USAF (Ret.)

GUNNER ABOARD Lady Luck THAT
WENT DOWN ON THE AUGUST 16,
1943 FOGGIA MISSION WAS
S/Sgt. HARPER F. ZOLLER.



This is the story of a fighting lady. Her official name was #41-23778 F, but she also had several other stand-ins, namely *Jenny* and *Lady Luck*. As a member of the 66th Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, she carried approximately 30 young men into battle over the skies of Europe, namely France, Germany and Italy, from December 6, 1942 until August 16, 1943.

Jenny appeared over the skies of Abbeyville, France with Lt. Jimmy Kahl at the controls on December 6, 1942; and on August 16, 1943, that same B-24, *Lady Luck*, made her final exit at Foggia, Italy with Lt. Rocco A. Curelli in the left-side seat. This account is about the trials and tribulations of #41-23778, the men who flew her, their exploits in the air, their leisure time, and a few of the men's post-war adventures.

The initial crew of *Jenny* was put together at Barksdale Field, Louisiana during July and August, 1942. They were: Pilot: Lt. Jimmy Kahl; Co-Pilot: Lt. Thomas S. Scrivner; Navigator: Lt. Edward Mikoloski; Bombardier: Lt. Edward Brennan; Engineer: T/Sgt. William L. Coll; Radio Operator: T/Sgt. Channing Satterfield; Right Waist Gunner; S/Sgt. Hank Balsley; Left Waist Gunner: S/Sgt. Walter Hazelton; and Tail Gunner: T/Sgt. George DeLacy.

The two well gunners joined the *Jenny* crew during the fall of 1942. Sgt. Harold Samuelian, who had some early contact with the *Jenny* crew at Barksdale, was assigned in September, 1942. I was assigned in October, 1942. I had arrived earlier in England, in May 1942, with the 15th Bombardment Squadron. The 15th was an A-20 outfit that made the first attack on Europe by Americans when we hit airdromes in Holland. It was a low-level attack in conjunction with the Royal Air Force. I was one of a few 44th gunners to have attended gunnery school with the RAF. Because of losses to combat and other attrition, I quickly moved up the ranks, so to speak, from well gunner to waist gunner to tail gunner.

The *Jenny's* first mission took place on December 12, 1942. Like most 44th crews, we flew our first mission to the FW-190 Yellow Nose base at Abbeyville on the French coast. The first crew loss was suffered on a mission to Romilly Sur Seine, eight days later on December 20, 1942, when tail gunner T/Sgt. George DeLacy's fingers froze while working on malfunctioning guns. This injury ended his combat career; and he would later be returned to the States.

PICTURED

CREW OF JENNY (Lady Luck) #41-23778 THAT WENT TO WILHELMSHAVEN, GERMANY ON JANUARY 26, 1943.



THEY ARE FROM LEFT, STANDING S/Sgt. Hank Balsley, Tail Gunner; Lt. Jimmy Kahl, Pilot; Lt. Edward Mikoloski, Navigator; T/Sgt. Don Siebert, Engineer; Lt. Ed Brennan, Bombardier; Sgt. Walter Patrick, Right Waist Gunner; and T/Sgt. Channing Satterfield, Radio Operator.

FRONT ROW KNEELING FROM LEFT ARE Lt. THOMAS SCRIVNER, Co-pilot; Sgt. HAROLD SAMUELIAN, ASST. ENGINEER; S/Sgt. WALTER HAZELTON, LEFT WAIST GUNNER; AND REAR WELL GUNNER, S/Sgt. JAMES YOUNG.

The *Jenny's* fifth mission took place on January 26, 1943, and proved to be a real zinger. As all of the crews gathered in the briefing room to get the "poop" from the briefing officer, Captain William F. Strong, we immediately noticed that something was different. The route to the target was covered with a sheet. "Why?" we wondered. Captain Strong made his pitch. "Gentlemen," he said, "we have finally come to the point of why we are here, and" - his hand flipped the sheet off - "here it is." A lot of "ooohs" and "ahhhhs" answered our question. The *Jenny*, along with many others, was going big-time. The string of the flight path reached a long way, all the way from Shipdham, England to Wilhelmshaven, Germany. This was bound to be quite an experience. And for the crew of *Jenny*, it was.



We were hit with everything they had. The German fighters were so thick, it was like we had an FW-190 escort from the German border all the way to Wilhelmshaven and all the way back to the North Sea and beyond.

Anti-aircraft fire was intense, especially over the target area. Over the target itself, we had trouble with hung-up bombs in the bomb bay. It was at this point that Radio Operator T/Sgt. Channing Satterfield became a real hero. He went into the bomb bay and managed to get the stuck bombs to drop. Also over the target area there was real sweating by *Jenny* crew members when the B-24 off our right wing was decapitated. A German FW-190 fighter pilot flew his plane into the B-24 amidships. Both went down in flames.

After leaving the German coast, it was determined that our aircraft had undergone serious damage. The crew was told that there would probably be a crash landing upon reaching base. No "probably" about it. With no hydraulics and no brakes, the future looked bleak; and the crash landing took place. But Pilot Jimmy Kahl and his flight deck crew really came through in true heroic style. When that heavy landing gear finally fell safely into the down-and-lock position (there was no hydraulic fluid to operate it), I could not believe it. It was still "sweat-time" at landing. Most of the crew gathered back around the waist area to take their crash positions. But on landing *Jenny* held together; and we made it. That was just one of many miracles performed that day by the 44th. "Thanks" go to Pilot Jimmy Kahl and yes, to Don Siebert, also. Flight Engineer T/Sgt. Don Siebert told Waist Gunner Walter Hazelton a number of years later that he didn't think anybody aboard expected to see England again. He said Lt. Kahl, the pilot, did a masterful job taking the battered but still reliable Liberator back home.



Pilot of *Scrappy II*, Capt. Thomas E. Scrivner (left) and his Co-pilot, Lt. Everett P. Anderson were KIA when their plane came out of the smoke and fire at their target, White Five at the Colombia Aquila Refinery.

The battle report of damage to *Jenny* from my Combat Crew Report said that the ship was badly shot up. Over two-hundred holes were found in the fuselage, controls were cut, landing gear was damaged, there was no hydraulic system

KIA AT PLOESTI WAS T/Sgt. CHANNING N. SATTERFIELD, RADIO OPERATOR ON "JENNY," "Lady Luck," and "Scrappy II."



and no brakes. We would stand down for approximately a month. In the mean time, some drastic changes took place related to crew assignments. Lt. Kahl moved on to *Jenny II*, and Lt. Thomas Scrivner moved over from the right seat to become pilot of *Lady Luck*, the new name for #42-23778. The new co-pilot would be Lt. Everett P. Anderson, a transfer from the RAF Eagle Squadron. For quite a spell there would be new well gunners on every mission. The well gunners continued to change until we got to Benghazi.

Upon return from that January 26, 1943 mission to Wilhelmshaven, the flight crews found that the ever-loving ground crews had taken all of the regular buses to town and left the flight crew boys stranded at home base. Not to be left behind, some of the flight crew boys, myself included, decided that a weapons carrier would work as well as a bus, and off we went to town. In town we hid the weapons carrier in an alley so the MP's wouldn't see it. Some time afterwards, an elderly English gentleman pedaled his bicycle around the corner and into the alley, crashing headlong into the truck. Upon returning to the scene of the crash later that night, we flight crew boys, discovered that the Englishman had reported the presence of the truck to the MP's. The MP's had then confiscated the distributor cap of the truck, thus grounding us and making us easy prey for the lurking MP's. Within several days, at least six airmen were reduced to privates. It was General Johnson's policy that you had to be at least a buck sergeant to fly combat, so this was well and good with the bicycle casualties. We all volunteered to fly again.

In my case, I flew several more missions before *Lady Luck* was scheduled to fly again. The extra missions I flew may have been life-saving for me. By the time the mission to Ploesti came around, I had amassed 27 missions and was not required to make that fateful trip.

That first Wilhelmshaven raid was a turning point for a lot of things. It was at this time that the *Lady Luck* crew was selected to do some US War Bonds work. The crew was directed to report to the B-17 base for a radio broadcast back to the USA. This was about a five-day assignment. After many rehearsals with John Daly, we were ready for the presentation, we thought. Our parents and friends in the States were alerted to the big broadcast. Everybody I spoke with afterwards swore that we were reading from a script. Ha! Ha!

Following the January 6 mission to Wilhelmshaven, *Lady Luck* went to Kiel, the Friesian Islands, Dunkirk, Rowen, Brest, and back to Wilhelmshaven again. At this time, some of the crew



members volunteered for extra missions. So when the March 18, 1943 mission to Vegesack rolled around, both Balsley and I flew with other crews. This proved to be the undoing of Balsley. He took a hit through the stomach while flying with Major William H. Brandon on the *Suzy Q*. He was the first *Lady Luck* crew member killed -- until Ploesti. I flew that day with Capt. Robert E. Miller's crew. I volunteered for the mission to Vegesack in order to get my sergeant stripes back following the infamous attack of the Englishman's bicycle.

On May 17th, the illustrious mission to Bordeaux, France was pulled off with beautiful results. Enormous damage was done to the submarine pens there by Lt. James DeVinney, 67th Squadron Bombardier. Lt. Edward Mikoloski, the old *Jenny Navigator*, was the mission's lead Navigator aboard Maj. Howard W. Moore's plane "*Suzy Q*" co-piloted by Colonel Leon W. Johnson. Also aboard was Brig. General James P. Hodges, 2nd Air Division, Commanding General.

Life was not all flying, and we had some leisure time for crew leave to London. Needless to say we had some great stories to tell our barracks buddies when we returned. On one London trip Hazelton and I brought back a phonograph and a big stack of records. We had purchased all of the latest hits of the early 1940's: *Green Eyes*, *Blue Champagne*, *Chattanooga Choo-Choo* and *Amopolo*, just to name a few. These records were played and replayed in the barracks prior to our departure to Benghazi.

During this time in late 1942 and early 1943, we fought some terrific battles over Germany, missions to Rotterdam, Brest, Antwerp, Belgium, and Hamm, Germany. We also managed to drink lots of swell beer. And the English folks, especially the young ladies, treated the Yanks with respect. Low level training began around June 15th, 1943. We all knew that this foretold something special further down the line.

It was about this time that I had my perceptive dream. I'm not sure if I was partially awake when it occurred, but one thing is for sure, that dream was embedded deeply into my mind, and it is still there today. During this time I was *Lady Luck's* third tail gunner, and Walter Hazelton was the right waist gunner. The dream picture is as follows: Although I didn't see myself on the in-going flight, I did see that our plane had crashed in the target area. Walter Hazelton and I were outside the plane looking in. We saw that everyone else on board was dead. I could see a small stucco farmhouse a bit off to the left of where I was standing by the nose compartment of the crashed plane. Standing in the doorway of the farmhouse

was a man and a woman; two children were hanging on to the parents' legs. Between the plane and the farmhouse was a wheat field.

The target area itself was as pictured in many photos that I would later see. It was definitely an oil refinery area. In the dream I clearly saw all of the installations: cracking plants, storage areas, etc. It was a mess, bombs exploding all around us and fires raged. In the dream I didn't see any other planes nearby (although later facts revealed that Lt. Henry Lasco, flying in *Sad Sack*, had also crashed in the general area.) What I saw in the dream was as if a snapshot had been taken of the crashed plane, the dead crew, the target area in the midst of being bombed, and Hazelton and I standing there at the scene of the crash. As it turned out, Hazelton and I were the only survivors. We did not go on the Ploesti mission.

When we went out to *Lady Luck* in the early morning hours of August 1st, 1943 to board, Lt. Scrivner noticed profuse leakage of gasoline from the wing tanks. He decided on the spot that the plane was inoperable for the mission to Ploesti. So he and the crew were transferred to another bomber parked nearby, *Scrappy II*. Hazelton and I had already flown the required twenty-five missions (in both cases twenty-seven missions), and were not required to go on the Ploesti raid. As the crew was boarding the plane Lt. Scrivner asked me, "Pat, are you going with us on this mission?" I was undecided and for some reason did not even remember the dream. "Lt. Scrivner, this is what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna flip a coin. 'Heads' I go, 'tails' I stay." The coin turned up "tails" and I stayed. I don't know why Hazelton decided to stay. The crew was cut from eleven to nine, going without well gunners, and a new tail gunner took my place.

In 1854 at Balaclava, which is very near Ploesti, the famous *Charge of the Light Brigade* under Lord Caridigan took place. There the English light calvary ran headlong into Russian artillery. Loses were staggering.



PLAQUE HONORING CAPT. THOMAS E. SCRIVNER, PILOT ON *SCRAPPY II* THAT WENT DOWN AT PLOESTI ON AUGUST 1, 1943 IS DISPLAYED BY FORMER CREWMATES WALTER M. PATRICK (LEFT) AND COL. EDWARD MIKOLOSKI. THE PLAQUE WAS PRESENTED IN THE NAME OF COLONEL "MIKE" AT THE MIGHTY EIGHTH AIR FORCE MUSEUM DURING THE 44TH BOMB GROUP'S ANNUAL REUNION AT SAVANNAH, GA.



Similar to the Light Brigade's losses in 1854, were the losses suffered by American forces during the August 1 air raid on Ploesti in 1943. The percentage losses were the same. So the crew of *Lady Luck* now aboard *Scrappy II* with Tom Scrivner in the pilot's seat, dashed headlong into the 44th's target code-named White Five, the Colombia Aquila Refinery at Ploesti. It was there that they ran into the German command's most prized air defense secret: the deadly Q Train. It racked the attackers with vengeance, and possibly took out *Sad Sack II*, piloted by Henry A. Lasco, with the same blast of fire that brought down *Scrappy II*.



LEFT WAIST GUNNER ON SCRAPPY II AT PLOESTI WAS
 SGT. THOMAS F. SCHAPPERT,
 ALSO KIA.



RIGHT WAIST GUNNER ON SCRAPPY II WHO WAS KIA AT PLOESTI WAS
 SGT. MARVIN R. MICKEY.

In a letter to former *Jenny* gunner Sgt. Harold Samuelian, former Squadron Commander of the 66th Squadron, Major Dexter Hodge, wrote, "I was leading seven planes from the 66th. Thomas Scrivner was on my right wing and Lasco was on my left wing. Between the IP and the target area I saw flames coming over the right wing of Tom's plane. He was still flying when we went into the smoke and explosions at our target. I think I saw his plane crash but am not sure. All crew members were killed."

The Scrappy II crew was: Pilot: Lt. Thomas Scrivner, Co-Pilot: Lt. Everett P. Anderson, Navigator: Lt. Philip P. Phillips, Jr., Bombardier: 2nd Lt. Robert E. Young, engineer: T/Sgt. William F. Coll, Radio Operator: S/Sgt. Channing N. Satterfield, Left Waist Gunner: Sgt. Marvin R. Mickey, Right Waist Gunner: Sgt. Thomas F. Schappert, and Tail Gunner: S/Sgt. Hugh J. Malone. With the exception of Tommy Scrivner, the entire crew has been interned at the National Cemetery at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri.

Between the time I experienced the dream and the day of the fateful raid, I never told Hazelton or anyone else about it. But I certainly had thoughts about it when I sat in on the mission briefing the night before that last mission. Sitting there that night I again recalled the events of my dream from several months before. The next day I knew in my heart and without a doubt that as Hazelton and I sat around waiting for the planes to return, our crew wouldn't make it. They never did.

That night Major Jimmy Kahl drove up to our tent, and asked Walt and me to get into his jeep so he could take us for a ride. We rode out to the parking area and sat as Jim told us what actually happened to our comrades. Captain Robert E. Miller had led his flight into the White Five target, which was already on fire when he got there. When he emerged from the fire and smoke, both of his wingmen were gone. One of the wingmen, Captain Thomas E. Scrivner, did come out of the smoke, the plane in flames and the pilots were seen fighting gallantly for a crash landing. They managed to crash land into a farmer's wheat field, but before the plane had ground to a halt the aircraft exploded, killing all nine men aboard.

As he spoke about the last moment before the plane exploded, it seemed like that was the exact same time Hazelton and I showed up in the dream. I was so deeply touched by this mission that I mourned for my lost comrades. Even now they are remembered in my prayers. I am sure that most of the survivors of that particular era will say the same. I never told Hazelton about the dream until just recently when we got back in touch. I do not know what his feelings are about my story, but I will swear on a stack of Bibles that this is the whole truth so help me God. As a result of the great air battle at Ploesti, five Congressional Medal of Honor were awarded. Three were awarded posthumously. Another went to Colonel Johnson, commander of the 44th Bomb Group (he would eventually achieve the rank of General), and the fifth Congressional Medal of Honor went to Colonel John R. Kane, commander of the 98th Bomb Group.

Following the Ploesti debacle, all combat crews of the 44th were sent on one to two weeks of Rest and Recuperation in Telaviv. What a treat that was to enjoy fresh sheets and wonderful food. Following R&R, all who had completed twenty-five missions were started for the States via Cairo and then back to Shipdham for a few days. After Shipdham we left for Prestwick where we caught the jump-off flight to the good ol' USA.

Just before leaving for the States, the 66th Squadron Adjutant called Hazelton and me into his office and presented us with T/Sgt. Chevrons. "Well deserved," he said. We then hung out at the Red Cross center and presented the Red Cross girls with the phonograph machine and the records. While at the Red Cross club, I met T/Sgt. Tauno Metsa, Engineer on Lt. Walter Hughes' plane. When we got back stateside, Metsa and I were assigned to the Standardization Board at Westover Field, Massachusetts. We would be roommates, as well as fly together on Standardization Board missions, until Victory Day in Europe.



The final curtain for #41-23778 (viz. *Jenny and Lady Luck*) came August 16, 1943, two weeks and two days after the Ploesti debacle. Lt. Rocco A. Curelli from the 66th Squadron flew *Lady Luck* with the 67th Squadron on a bombing mission to the Italian port city of Foggia. This was an all-new crew flying on their second mission. The 44th Bomber Group had already visited Foggia prior to the Ploesti mission on July 15th, 1943, and had lost quite a few planes. This second visit proved however, a bigger disaster than the first. Seven B-24's were lost including old faithful, *Lady Luck*. All of the crew except Radio Operator T/Sgt. Wesley L. Zimmerman, was killed. Zimmerman was taken prisoner and was only a POW for five weeks when he escaped the Italian POW camp and made his way back to the 44th. After the war he returned to his hometown in Winston Salem, N.C. He married his hometown sweetheart, Gladys Hege, in June of 1943 prior to going overseas. After the war he worked for AT&T out of Winston Salem and was issued his "Folded Wings" in 1991. Of the 25 planes dispatched to Foggia, only 13 returned to Benghazi. As usual the 67th Squadron was the big loser followed by the 506th and the 68th. The 66th escaped without a loss.

The crew members of *Lady Luck* on her not so lucky day were: Pilot: Lt. Rocco A. Curelli; Co-Pilot: John G. Papadopoulos; Navigator: Lt. Walt Rossi; Bombardier: Lt. Victor T. Torrou; Engineer: Sgt. John H. Grinde; Radio Operator: Sgt. Wesley L. Zimmerman (POW and only survivor); Gunner: DeForest L. Ela; Gunner: Sgt. Raymond C. Shafer; Gunner: Sgt. John R. Hughes; Tail Gunner: Sgt. Harper F. Zoller.

Coincidentally, *Lady Luck* at Foggia and *Scrappy II* at Ploesti, were flying in similar positions: the right wing slot off the element leader. Another coincidence is that *Lady Luck's* radio operator at Foggia, Wesley Zimmerman (POW), and Walter Hazelton; who completed twenty-seven missions and was an original crew member of *Lady Luck*, passed away during the 90's and were the last two crew men of #41-23778 to "Fold their Wings."

Another casualty of the Foggia raid that made a number of important missions including Ploesti, prior to Foggia was Lt. Leighton Smith, pilot of *Buzzin' Bear*, a real warrior. Half of his crew lost their lives at Foggia; the other half became POW'S. *Suzy-Q* also went down at Foggia. She had carried General Johnson and Major William Brandon to glory at Ploesti. *Southern Comfort* of the 506th was lost; two of the crew died, but the remaining eight members of Lt. Horace A. Austin's *Southern Comfort* were taken captive. Another veteran of the Ploesti raid, Lt. Austin, escaped from the Italian POW camp. It seemed to be in vogue that American airmen

were able to escape from Italian POW camps. I met a number of POW's while stationed at Westover, MA, who had waltzed away after as little as a week in captivity.

The four survivors of the more than thirty crew members who flew in #42-23778 include Dr. Jimmy Kahl, pilot of *Jenny*. He resigned as Major to attend the University of Kansas, School of Veterinary, then opened up a flourishing business in his hometown of Winona, Minnesota. He still practices there today.

President of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association, Colonel Edward Mikoloski, is another. Colonel Mikoloski stayed in the service after the war and spent a great deal of time on the staff of General Johnson. He spent time in posts around the world, from England to the Pentagon, and retired in 1968.

The *Jenny's* first well gunner, Harold Samuelian, is still with us. When the war ended, he returned to his home in Fresno, California. Harold has been a prominent member of the merchant's community for years and years in Fresno. If you need a good bargain, he is the one to see!

I remained in the service after the war and served with then Captain Mikoloski at Westover Field for several years. We pioneered the concept of I&E presentations that prevailed for years. I went on to serve in Germany, Japan and Panama, and retired a Senior Master Sergeant with 28 years service in 1969. I then spent time working on a monthly magazine for the US Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. for 15 years before coming to my present home in Mt. Pleasant, SC.

The story of #41-23778 cannot end without the mentioning of her happy-go-Lucky shadow, Mr. Bob Hope and his USO troupe that among others, included the very talkative Martha Ray. Bob first showed up at Shipdham shortly before the 44th went to Libya. Then several days prior to Ploesti he appeared again at Benina-Main. We thought we had seen the last of the comedian at Benghazi, but when we boarded the C-54 at Prestwick headed for the States, who should show up but Mr. Bob Hope himself. We had a continuous poker game going from Prestwick to Iceland, and Bob kept wanting to join in; but we kept telling him that enlisted personnel were not allowed to gamble with officers, and in his case, civilians.

Near the end of hostilities in Europe, I was finally able to meet the real life and blood *Jenny*. I was stationed at Westover Field, MA, at the time and was surprised one day out in the parking lot in front of Base Operations to hear my name called. It was the now Major Jimmy Kahl, the first pilot of #41-23778. He had just been assigned to base operations.



He introduced me to his most gracious wife, Jenny. Of course it was a real honor to have met the lady that was the namesake of the plane in which I flew a number of exciting missions. To this day I stay in contact with Jimmy, the courageous pilot who carried us through the Wilhelmshaven mission.

One of my most momentous experiences related to the 44th Bomb Group came around Thanksgiving 1996. Colonel Mikoloski had asked me if I would drop in on General Johnson at his nursing home near my daughter's home in Springfield, Virginia, when he found out I was going up there for the holiday. I was taken aback at this request. Why would a retired Master Sergeant be visiting a four-star General - no matter what the circumstances? But I would give it my best try. My wife of over fifty years and I were warmly and graciously welcomed by both the staff and by the General. I wore my eight-ball hat.

The General was sitting in the den having a piece of pumpkin pie with whip cream. I knelt down in front of him and said, "General, I know you don't know me, but I flew with Colonel Mikoloski on *Jenny* and *Lady Luck*. I just wanted you to know that I represent all the enlisted men who served under you. We thought you were the best B-24 pilot on the face of the earth, and the bravest and most dedicated leader any of us has ever met." He smiled his heart warming smile and said, "Sergeant, you don't realize how your words bring back to me just how proud of the men of the 44th I am."

We went on to talk about the old days; and my wife told him how we used to baby sit Colonel Mike's children when we were stationed at Westover Field during the early 50's. "Yes", he said, "that was a long time ago." I may have been the last enlisted man to visit him before his death.

Lt. CURELLI AND CREW
(THE 2ND CREW OF "Lady
Luck" #41-23778)

FRONT ROW: GUNNER, S/Sgt.
HARPER F. ZOLLER;
GUNNER, S/Sgt. DEFOREST L. ELA;
ENGINEER, S/Sgt. JOHN H. GRINDE;
GUNNER, S/Sgt. JOHN R. HUGHES.



REAR ROW:
NAVIGATOR, Lt. WALTER ROSSI JR.;
PILOT, Lt. ROCCO A. CURELLI;
BOMBARDIER, Lt. VICTOR T. TORRINO;
CO-PILOT, Lt. JOHN G. PAPADOPULOS;
RADIO OPERATOR, WESLEY L. ZIMMERMAN.
GUNNER RAYMOND C. SHAFER
(NOT IN PICTURE).

In closing out this article about *Jenny* and *Lady Luck*, I'd like to tell about an unusual event that happened to me at Westover Field in early 1945. I was taking a shower one morning when a runner from an orderly room called my name to inform me that I was to report to the Base Commander's office at 1:00 PM sharp. The big sweat began - what had I done now? Upon arrival I was rushed into Colonel U.G. Jones' office. After the proper protocol he said, "Sgt. Patrick, you have been recommended for promotion to Master Sergeant, but by your record I see that you spent some time behind prison bars." "Yes, sir", I said, "I was a guard at a North Carolina State Prison and entered the service a day after Pearl Harbor."

He smiled about his humor and then asked, "What does your father do?" I told him that he was a retired Master Sergeant with 30 years service, mostly in the Corps of Engineers, and that I was an "Army Brat." "Where were some of the places you grew up?" the Colonel continued. I mentioned Fort Bragg in 1926 - 1927. "Oh, is that right? For your information I was a 2nd Lieutenant there and was probably your school teacher in the first grade." Wow! Was *Lady Luck* shining on me! He went on to tell me that his son, who had graduated from West Point, where else, I thought, was serving with General Patton in Europe.

Ten years after that promotion, as *Lady Luck* continued to shine on me, I would be privileged to photograph and document the retirement of Colonel Jones, Inspector General of the Atlantic Division of MATS there at Westover Field. Several days later I presented the Colonel a nice album of all the important events of his retirement ceremony. I doubt that he knew who I was, and I didn't say anything about my

"promotion interview" with him ten years earlier. I should have said, "Thanks. You were a very good teacher."

MEMORIES OF A WARTIME TEENAGER

Cynthia Ledger Harmonowski went back to Norfolk to visit a family member. While she was there, she and her 28 year old son set out to find the Control Tower at Shipdham. At that time, 1983, it was not easy to find. They climbed through nettles and other weeds, passed mechanical works, climbed the winding steps and looked out over the airfield.

"It really took me back in time," she stated. "I had stood up there in 1945 and watched the American planes take off for home, one by one. Reliving it, almost 40 years later, was absolutely tearful. I was so glad my son, Simon, could be with me. I always wanted him to know what it was like in England during the war, the lost lives, the shortages, the fear of the bombings, and the young American flyers who came to help us.



Among her clearest memories is that before departing for home, ground personnel were treated to Trolley Runs. It was an opportunity for them to fly over the areas where the air and ground battles had taken place. Working in administration, she had become friendly with many of the personnel, so an officer offered to slip her aboard a Trolley Run. With all the enthusiasm of a nineteen year old, she accepted, even though she did not qualify for the privilege. Fitted with gear and parachute, she was ready for the big moment when another officer stepped aboard and said, "Skip, you can't go." So she climbed off and walked back to her work station.

Realizing her disappointment, one of her American co-workers got her a pass to ride in a military vehicle and took her to London. On Charlotte Street, the officer knocked on a small manhole cover, and an Italian man emerged. He led them down a set of steps, and there, below the London street was a cache of black market liquor.

"The officer bought some and took me to a restaurant where we ate and drank champagne. To me, it was just amazing. It was the first time I had ever eaten in a restaurant," she recalled. "All of these memories came back to me when I was looking out of the Control Tower."

Cynthia met her husband, the late Lt. John L. Harmonowski in a railway station, and they rapidly became sweethearts. She felt the loss when he left twice for the missions in Africa. And when the war was over, she knew he was gone forever. Fate intervened, however, and years later they got together in America and were married.



CYNTHIA LEDGER
(HARMONOWSKI)
1944



LT. JOHN HARMONOWSKI
1944

John's health began failing several years ago, but when he knew the survivors of the Ploesti Raid were to be recognized in Savannah, he was determined to go. At the dedication of the diorama at the Mighty Eighth Museum, John rose from his wheelchair to be recognized as one who had flown on the awesome mission. Three weeks later he passed away.



The President's Corner

This column should be entitled The President Pro Tempore (for the time being) Corner for sadly our President is, once again, suffering the anguish of losing a beloved family member to cancer. You will recall on November 30, 1998 his daughter Peggy lost her fierce battle with the disease. Death came again to Mike's door on Sunday, May 14, to take his precious wife and love Yelena. She finally had to seek Heaven's rest from her struggle to survive the cancer that was taking her from him.

I hope that all of the 44th family will keep Mike in their personal prayers as he bears the enormous burden of grief he suffers from the loss of his loved ones. We hope you will find peace from your sorrow and return to us soon, Mike.

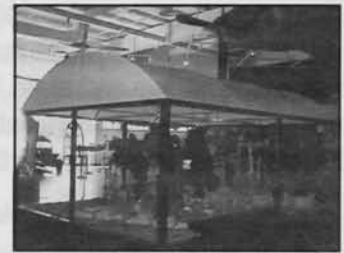
Meanwhile, to bring you up to date on who is minding the store, when Mike decided to move Yelena to a Houston cancer treatment center, he asked me to assume his duties as President Pro-Tem since Dick Butler, our Vice -President, was deeply involved with his responsibilities as our Group Vice President to the 2nd Air Division. So, here we are, back in the saddle again. I am able to do this because of Ruth Morse taking over publication of the 8-Ball Tails has made it possible. I wish to also point out that Ruth is doing a commendable job with the "Tails."



VIEWING THE 44th BOMB GROUP COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE AT MacDill AFB, May 26, 2000 DURING THE 2ND AIR DIVISION REUNION. L TO R: JERRY FOLSOM, BOB LEHNHAUSEN, MEL MURRACK, HARRY SNEAD, WILL LUNDY, AND ROY OWEN BEHIND THE CAMERA.

One of my recent actions also involved Ruth Morse when Nancy Van Epps notified President Mike that Hugh, her husband who has been long suffering with deterioration of the vertebrae in his neck, had reached the point that he was in too much pain for any significant amount of travel. Thus she submitted her resignation as our Board Secretary. Our solution was, since the Board had recently invited Ruth Morse to attend the Board meetings in order that she could properly report the board proceedings in the management of our association in the 8-Ball Tails, it was a short step to appointing her to replace Nancy Van Epps and also take the minutes of the meetings as our Secretary. This proposal was submitted to the board, unanimously approved and the appointment accepted by Ruth Morse.

Other significant activities by your PPT were a post Tampa Board meeting trip to Savannah to visit and see the progress on our Ploesti display in the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum. Also a visit to Shipdham which I tacked onto a personal trip to attend a memorial ceremony in Aston Clinton, England. Both of these activities, along with other agenda items from the Board meeting are covered elsewhere in this issue.



THE NEW TOP ON THE PLOESTI display IN SAVANNAH.

I want to close with telling you, Lolly and I will be attending the San Diego reunion, along with several new, first reunion, members and some former members we've recovered contact with, polished up and have all pumped up over getting active in the 44th family again. It will be a wonderful reunion and we would like your support in showing both the new and re-tread members what they have been missing when the family gets together. Your attendance will also give us the opportunity to thank you personally for the beautiful gifts you bestowed upon us in absentia at New Orleans marking our retirement as your President and First Lady.

Roy W. Owen



A Quick Visit to Shipdham

By Roy Owen

Taking advantage of an invitation to attend a June 4 memorial dedication honoring a 406th Bomb Squadron (Carpetbagger) crew piloted by an old friend that crashed on January 3, 1945 killing the entire crew at Aston Clinton, England, I tacked on a visit to Norwich and Shipdham. Phyllis Dubois was involved in assisting the Aston Clinton committee in locating family and friends of the deceased crew and traveled from Norwich to attend the ceremony. Thus she was able to transport me to Norwich and also graciously provide and drive her car to facilitate my visit to AF 115 to visit the new Aero Club and pay my respects for the 44th BGVA to Mrs. Eileen Paterson and Mr. Andrew Doubleday, owner of the old 14th Combat Wing Hq. Site.

Contrary to an unsubstantiated report by a former 44th HMG member (and emphatically denied by our representative, Steve Adams) that the airfield was closed and fenced off, the main runway was closed and the buildings and main hangar were a shambles. As I had previously reported that Mrs. Paterson had leased the airfield to the new Ship-

dham Aero Club and I found the old Aero Air complex completely cleaned up, freshly painted and the Museum Room being decorated by Steve Adams, the pub bar all refinished and the pub room being refurbished. The kitchen is newly painted and the installation of new kitchen equipment is forthcoming. Best of all, the main hangar has all been cleaned up and they are hangaring eight aircraft including a beautiful twin engine Beech. The club is open from Friday afternoon to Sunday sundown. The underground fuel tanks and refueling system have been repaired and certified and the main runway has been resurfaced and CAA certified. Steve Adams has joined the club, is in charge of decorating and takes his turn operating the club on occasional weekends.

So in spite of what the naysayers report, it is obvious that our desire to see our old "Home Base" is still alive and firmly in the flying business keeping the doors open and the Welcome mat out when we wish to revisit AAF 115. Mrs. Paterson says, as far as she is concerned, this is the way it will remain.



The 8-Ball Pub Room



Adams in the kitchen



HANGAR with the TWIN BEECH



Mike King of the Aero Club, Mrs. E. Paterson and Steve Adams standing by the Flying 8-Ball Marker in front of the Aero Club.



Andrew Doubleday and Steve Adams in front of 14th CBW Headquarters. Note the Stars and Stripes flying atop the tower in honor of my visit.



WILL SEZ

First, let me express my thanks to you, one and all, for your generous support of our appeal for more funds to keep the data entry work going, adding more data into our basic data needs for your history! I don't have the exact amount of funds contributed so far, as money continues to arrive; but I do know that we now have additional funds to continue on with this work.

Except for three days in early April, 1945, all individual sorties have been entered into our history base. Tony Mastradone continues to work with the personnel at the Archives to first locate these missing files, then copy so we can have the data entry team complete this work.

Arlo Bartsch's team has also continued work to enter summary reports of each of these 344 missions in support of all the individual sorties already in the data base. At last count they were well past the half way point with these brief summaries.

We still need to locate and add the many names of our members other than combat personnel who supported our operational activities as they all contributed to the results that brought us final victory in Europe. Basically, these are the men who supported the 44th BG itself - units like the M.P.s, Weather, 50th Station Complement, Quartermaster, etc. If any of you out there have rosters or data about these support units, could you please copy and send to me? We want to make sure that we give credit to each and all that served with us.

Surely many of you readers may wonder why we are trying so hard to collect the data to enter it all into the computer program and wonder what it will accomplish. Perhaps I can better illustrate the good that it is doing already by telling you of my experience this past month while making my annual relocation of residence from San Bernardino up to Twin Lakes, here in the High Sierras. To do so over the past ten years or so, it was necessary for me to box up as many of my paper records, books, photos, etc. in order to respond to the requests for data about our history. It required a fair sized two-

wheel trailer to haul all of these boxes of records, as well as the computer, copier, FAX, printer, etc.

My old computer that I leave up here now will no longer be adequate to utilize the CD-ROM on which all of our history is stored. So a new one is vital and is expected any day. Yesterday I drove to the "big" city of Bridgeport to use their library computer to access my e-mail. Would you believe I had 43 messages waiting!

Yes, some of it was personal, but the bulk of it covered appeals from relatives or friends of our combat personnel asking if I, we, have any data about this man who served with us. These requests come not only from the U.S., but from Europe as well. One from northern Ireland, one from Sweden, from England, etc.

People are using their computers to surf the Internet and are finding WEB sites with data about World War #2. They are learning that AFTER ALL OF THESE MANY YEARS, it now may be possible to get answers that were denied to them during that war. They are searching now to get those answers, and we now are in position to get those answers for them.

Before we found Arlo with his great data entry program, I found it difficult to come up with these answers. To do so took many hours of digging, checking, and frustration, as I did not have sortie reports for reference and particulars. But now with an adequate computer and a few key strokes, I (or anyone with this CD-ROM) can quickly find and copy all of the missions flown in summary or in great detail for every mission!

The volume of requests continue to rise. So much so that Larry Herpel has volunteered to assist with this work, and is taking quite a load off me. At times there are requests that go beyond our combat men, sorties, etc. We work together on them. Some are referred to me so I can possibly answer them from the other records compiled by our other historians Webb Todd with the 68th Sq. and Norm Kiefer with his 506th Sq. book. Also, Steve Adams, our representative in England, does his share of work with the 66th Sq. history, as well as fielding many requests over there.

E-mail is instant action, instant answers, whether in State or in Europe. Snail mail is almost obsolete, but is necessary to send the data we get from our CD-ROM back to those requesting. We find the data, then print it out on excellent forms developed by Arlo Bartsch so these people will finally have a hard copy to answer their questions, and keep for family records.

Even at present, it is possible to send much of this data back via e-mail or downloading it. But surely, as the public obtains more computers and becomes more proficient, answers will be sent to them computer to computer.

I cannot say this often enough or more sincerely. The program developed by Arlo Bartsch has provided the means for our great history to be made available to the public. It is alive, very vibrant and open ended. Now, it can be **AVAILABLE IMMEDIATELY**, as long as computers are utilized. It should be the answer to every Air Force historian of WW#2. We urge them to join with us in this endeavor.

Will Lundy

President Mike's request for donations is moving forward, but more funds are still needed. Any donation of any size will be helpful to complete the monumental goals which the 44th is undertaking to preserve the glorious history of this very special group of veterans. The goal is \$50,000. Don't delay. Your place in history is at stake.



Larry Herpel
215 S. Medina
Lockhart, TX
(512) 376-7780
<lherpel@juno.com>

A 44TH BG 2001 EUROPE-ENGLAND TRIP IS ON!

Be not discouraged that the 2nd AD Norwich trip for next year is full; Larry Herpel is fine tuning the itinerary for a 44th BGVA trip for September 2001 when the weather is pretty.

Generally, this tour will start in Amsterdam or Brussels followed by a visit to the Rhine seeing Cologne, Karlsruhe and Wesel, then on to the Battle of the Bulge area and on to Paris or through the Belgian coastal area on the way to Rouen and the Normandy Beaches. We will then cross the Channel and make our way to Norwich for a visit to the New Library. We will spend a day at Shipdham where we will have a picnic at the 14th CBW Headquarters followed by a tour of the Base and an evening cocktail party and Bar-B-Que with our friends in Shipdham before leaving for home.

For any who wish to stay over to visit more of Europe or England, Larry can arrange an extension as an "add on" to the group travel plan. A detailed itinerary will be ready for study in the next issue of the 8-Ball Tails and at the San Diego Reunion (meaning we've cut ourselves a little slack for reasonable adjustments before finalizing).

In the meantime, for information on making a reservation and deposit, call Larry at 1-888-317-7483 during business hours (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST), or at home in the evening at 512-376-7780. His e-mail address is: lherpel@juno.com.

THIS WILL BE A GREAT TRIP!

Better save the number of seats you'll need by making your reservations and a deposit with Larry early.



Déjà vu

By Roy Owen



CLAIR P. SHAEFFER holds his daughter, Lois, in a photo from 1943.

January 21, 1944, the 44th Bomb Group was targeted to strike the German V-1 missile sites at Escalles-Sur-Buchy in the Pas de Calais area of France. Being a part of Hitler's array of secret weapons intended to bring England to her knees, the area was strongly defended by fighters and AA. It was not only a heavily protected complex, the small dispersed sites were so difficult to hit from normal bombing altitude, the attack was made at 12 thousand feet.

Lower clouds in the target area further made it necessary for second passes over the missile sites to ensure any effective bombing results. All in all, what was expected to be a rather routine mission, turned into a terribly costly raid. Especially for the 68th Bomb Squadron which launched seven aircraft to have only three return.

One of those losses; the *1st Lt. Frank W. Sobotka* crew with *T/Sgt. Claire P. Shaeffer* aboard as Flight Engineer was documented in the Winter 1995 issue of the 8-Ball Tails. This poignant story came to our attention because T/Sgt. Shaeffer was, in that era, a rarity being a single parent. His death on that raid left an orphaned four year old daughter who, after 51 years of never having been informed of the details of her father's death, made contact with us. That story came to a dramatic and emotional climax when Lois Cianci (Claire's daughter) and her husband Tony accompanied us on the 1998 trip to England and France where she visited the crash site of her father's aircraft and was presented one of his fire blackened ID "Dog" Tags recovered by the French Resistance.

Back in February this year, I received a letter from Oklahoma City written by a Mrs. Jackie Ostenson Roberts which was an impassioned request for any information about her father *S/Sgt. Jack Ostenson*, 68th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, killed on January 21, 1944. Something was jogging my memory as I was turning the pages of the Will Lundy Roll of Honor to the Missing Aircrew Reports (MACR) of 21 January. Lo and behold, on the page facing the MACR of the Sobotka Crew was the MACR of the *1st Lt. Gary Mathisen* crew on which her father, S/Sgt. Jack N. Ostenson was Left Waist Gunner. Referring back to her letter I read that she was born January 30, 1944 to her Mother, Wilburta, in Boise, Idaho and her father Jack, killed only nine days earlier along with T/Sgt. Claire Shaeffer of the 68th, both leaving fatherless daughters.



Jackie OSTENSON 6 months old.

So, as with Lois Shaeffer Cianci, we have filled the void left by the scanty information of the MIA notification and later KIA confirmation given to her Mother. Jackie since has excitedly joined our 44th BGVA family as a Life Member. She "can hardly wait" to join us at our reunion in San Diego. HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME, SHE AND LOIS CIANCI WILL MEET. WHAT AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR ALL THAT WILL SURELY BE!





BEATING THE BUSHES

By Art Hand
July, 2000

BAUC, ANTON R. 1016 Cora Street, Joliet, IL 60435; (815) 722-6047.
68th Squadron fire fighter. Deceased February, 2000 (See F.W.).

COLL, WILLIAM P.O. Box 269, Parl Hall, MD 20667; e-mail:
w.coll@erols.com. Association, William is nephew of William Coll who was
KIA on 1 August, 1943, Ploesti while an engineer on Lt. Scrivner's crew.

SENF, ELMER T. 2339 Redwood Road, York, PA 17404-3942; (717)
764-6678. Our only listing shows that Elmer was a Pfc. from York, PA.

Note: Art's doctor has instructed him to do no more work at the present time due to an irregular heart beat. Otherwise, this listing would be more extensive. Let us all wish Art a QUICK recovery.



Lost 44th members - Can you help??

MAIL HAS BEEN RETURNED, FORWARDING ORDER EXPIRED, NO SUCH ADDRESS OR MARKED UNKNOWN NAMES
WE HAVE LISTED THE LAST KNOWN ADDRESS OF SOME OF THESE INDIVIDUALS.

CAN YOU HELP US LOCATE THEM?

Lawrence H. Massey
No Street Number
Seth, West Virginia

William A. Croft
120 West Hillcrest Dr.
Carlisle, Pa 17013

Harold J. Brumm
406 21st Ave. SW
Rochester, Minnesota 55902

Earl A. Burns
10704 Decatur St.
Omaha, Nebraska 68164

Wallace Penny
3623 Taluga Dr.
Miami, Florida 32129

Stanley Reich
1111 Alvarado Ave.
Davis, Calif. 95616

Phillip Fanning
1534 SE 15th St.
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33316

William S. Strange
RFD # 3 Box 489
Marshall, Texas 75670

William R. Brady
3139 Sam Houston Forest Rd.
Moss Bluff, Louisiana 70611

Hal D. Farmer
1681 Greenbrier Dr.
Huntsville, Texas 77340

James E. Keith
14919 Redwood Cove
Houston, Texas 77062

Albert T. Wheaton
13209 Oak Park Blvd.
Garfield Heights, Ohio

Kenneth L. Buchner
669 E. Oakland Pk Blvd
Oakland Park, Florida 33334

William H. Martin
3781 Goldfinch St.
San Diego, CA 92103-3911

James E. Keith
Houston, Texas

IF SO, PLEASE CONTACT US AT P.O. BOX 712287 • SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84171-2287 • PHONE (801) 733-7371



Folded Wings

July, 2000

Compiled by

Will Lundy



BARLOW, ARCHIE D. T/Sgt. 14151313 68th Sqdn. FW on 23 April 2000. Archie served as an Engineer on the H. R. Howington crew which joined the 44th BG on 5 October 1943. He flew 9 missions from 5 November 1943 to 21 January 1944. On January 21st this crew was shot down, with Archie and four others from this crew managing to successfully evade capture and eventually returned to duty. Details of this evasion can be read in Webb Todd's book, *History of the 68th Squadron*. Four crew members were KIA while one was captured and became a POW.

BAUC, ANTON R. Pfc. 36658870 68th Squadron. FW in February, 2000. He served as a Fire Fighter, primarily involved with aircraft crashes on or near the Shipdham Base. On 4 June 1944, a B-24 from another base crashed several miles away, but Shipdham crews responded. Explosions killed two of these fire fighters, but Anton and four others continued to search for survivors. For this action Anton was awarded the Bronze Star.

CHAFFEE, THOMAS L. 1st Lt. 0-704147 67th Sqdn. FW in September, 1999. He served as a Navigator on the George B. Haag crew while assigned to the 492nd BG and then transferred to the 67th Sqdn. in August 1944. His first 44th BG mission was on 14 August 1944 and last one was dated 25 August, completing his tour of duty of 25 (?) missions. On 15 September 1944 he was transferred to the 12th RCD to return to the U.S.

CHANDLER, JAMES A. 17010687 68th Sqdn. FW on 10 February 2000. He joined the Squadron on 12/10/42, assigned to Ordnance. On 5/28/44 he was promoted to Munition Worker and on 2/5/45 was promoted to 905. He returned to the U.S. on the Queen Mary in June, 1945.

CRANE, JAMES J. 12074922 66th Sqdn. FW in February, 1992. He served as a gunner on the R. E. Harleman crew that flew their first mission on 21 February 1944 and last one on 27 March 1944. On this date they were shot down near the Spanish border after bombing their target. It was their eighth mission. James was one of the four crew men who survived the ditching to become a POW.

COX, HOWARD D. 35275530 67th Sqdn. FW on 4/10/2000 reported by Mrs. April C. Nicola. Howard was a Pvt. when he went over to England on the Queen Mary in Sept. 1942. Unable to identify his activities while he served with us while based at Shipdham.

DOMINO, JOSEPH S. FW on 17 September 1999. Last contact was made with him on 2/1/90. He was an early member of the 44th BG, but was transferred to the 98th BG in early 1942 at Barksdale Field, LA.

FITCH, ALLEN A. 13047486 67th Sqdn-FW on 13 February 2000. Allen was a member of the Ground Echelon that went to England on the Queen Mary, departing NYC on 5 Sept. 1942. He served first as an Aircraft Mechanic until promoted to Assistant Crew Chief from H. Grisham's crew. He was on S. Calloway's crew, Sgt. in January 1945 until returning to the U.S. in June, 1945. He returned in 1981 after 41 years of working at the Penn Tech Paper Mill.



GALLATIN, ELBERT H. 18060293 67th Sqdn. FW on 9 January 2000. As with Allen Fitch above, was a member of the Ground Echelon that went to England on the Queen Mary in September, 1942. He, too, was an aircraft mechanic, served on a line crew. By January, 1944, he had been promoted to an Assistant Crew Chief on the K.D. Gong crew, and continued to serve in that capacity with Sgt. Gong until the 44th BG returned to the U.S. in June, 1945. (See K.D. Gong below.)

GONG, KUN D. 34132986 67th Sqdn. FW on 24 December 1999. "KD" was an early member of the 67th Sq, was assigned as an engineer on "Blue Goose", piloted by G.W. Warne on 29 May 1942. He was part of a three plane unit selected to perform secret photographic work of NE Canada, Greenland and Iceland. In late September joined the 67th Sqdn. to fly to England. "KD" became a Crew Chief, assigned to Flight "C", promoted to M/Sgt. As with most ground personnel, he, too, returned to the U.S. after victory in Europe, flew home with his combat crew.

INDORF, FRANK E. 0-694877 66th Sqdn. Navigator-PFF-Radar. FW on 9 May 2000. Frank's first mission occurred on 28 June 1944, with H.D. Stanhope's crew and several more. His last of 29 was flown with the Elmer W. Smith crew, dated 06 February 1945.

MAHANEY, FRANCIS X. 33198065 506th Sqdn. Tail Turret Gunner. FW on 25 August, 1999 at age of 78. Francis flew his first mission (of two) on April 1, 1944 with the E.A Herzing crew. But his second one was the terrible 8 April one where they were shot down along with ten other 44th BG ships and crews. Happily, though, all ten men on board survived to become POWs. Aircraft flown was Rubber Check.

MORAN, JOHN V. ASN #? 506th Sqdn. FW on 4/1/2000.

MYERS, DOUGLAS B. 0-730575 Co-pilot 506th Sqdn. FW in 1999. Lt. Myers was one of the original members of the 506th Squadron. He served as co-pilot for Capt. Swanson, flew to England in early 1943 via the southern route, south America to Africa, etc. He flew five missions, his first being on 22 March 1943, and his last one was 14 May, 1943 (Kiel). The 44th was awarded a Unit Citation for this one. This crew was shot down by swarms of fighters, with only four men surviving to become POWs.

NESBITT, FLOYD M. ASN ?? 506th Sqdn. FW on 1 April 2000. Floyd served as Engineer on the P. J. Durett crew. They departed the U.S. on 6 June 1944. He flew his first 34 missions with Lt. Durett on 7 August and ending 31 December. He then flew his final mission of his tour with Lt. Confer's crew.

PICK, RICHARD S. 0-747102 66th Sqdn. FW on 29 December 1999. Richard flew many of his early missions with the R.E. McCormick crew as Navigator-GEE. But with that classification, he flew mostly in cloudy weather and with lead crews; he served with various crews. He completed his tour of duty on 7 October 1944 flying lead with the Lt. C.C. McDonnell crew.

SAFOS, VANGELO STEPHEN 0-795302 67th Sqdn. FW in July 1994. Vangelo flew his first of five missions while in north Africa on 25 Sept. 1943 serving as Navigator for the J.D. Kessler crew. His next was a very tough mission to Wiener-Neustadt on 1 Oct. 1943 with this same crew. His fifth mission was with the W.S. Aldridge crew on 4 Jan 1944 to Kiel, Germany. Later, on 12 April 1944, he transferred to the 50th Station Complement Squadron. Later still, he transferred to the 491st BG. He remained in service, retired as a Major.

SCHROEDER, JAMES A. 0-678513 68th Sqdn. FW on 16 May 1990. James served as a Navigator on the Philip W. Bell crew which was assigned to the 68th Sq. on 1/31/44. He flew his first mission on 20 Feb. 44. Crew had to abort on Feb. 21, but flew their second mission on 24 February. Just after bombing their plane was attacked and shot down. Six crewmen were KIA, with four men being captured and made POWs. Lt. Schroeder was seriously injured, apparently, as he later was repatriated.



THOMPSON, RALPH WILLIAM 0-706012 67th Sqdn. Pilot FW 1 March 2000. Lt. Thompson flew his 30 missions as co-pilot on the W.F. Gilbert crew. First mission completed on 30 May 1944, with his final one of his tour completed on 3 August 1944.

WILLIAMS, RICHARD 14044924 68th Sqdn. FW on 11 March 2000. Richard served as a Flight Chief, M/Sgt. He was with the Ground echelon that departed NY Harbor in Sept. 1942, was with the 68th Engineering until departing England again for the U.S. on 16 June 1945. He was with the men on Temporary assignment to North Africa, departed 6/26/43 for Benghazi. In late August, returned to Shipdham. But again, on 16 September, returned to Africa, to Tunis, until shortly after 1 October 1943.

WOLFSON, MURRAY R. ASN 506th Sqdn. FW in 1992. Murray flew his first mission as Radio Operator with the V.J. Scherzberg crew on 27 February 1945. His remaining missions were flown with the L.G. Pyle crew. His 8th and last mission was flown on 25 April 1945, the last mission of the war for the 44th BG.

My Escape

by T/S Forrest S. Clark

67th Squadron 44BG
Swiss internee on mission to Lechfeld, Ger.
3 April 1944—

I took many risks in my life but one of the greatest, if not the most dangerous, happened in the closing days and weeks of WWII when as a young airman I attempted to escape into liberated France. I attempted this as a risk with another airman because we wanted to get back to the U.S. by Christmas.

We eluded our Swiss armed guards at the Bern railway station and mixed with the crowds on the city streets. Dressed as civilians we got a taxi to the legation disguised as Swiss.

We hid in the American Legation in Bern, Switzerland, and were taken to the border with France and turned over to a French freedom fighter guide to get us across the border. It was risky because the border was patrolled

by armed guards and there were mines to cross. There was also a risk that we might be captured or shot by snipers in German holdout pockets or resistance or be mistaken for the enemy by the French maquis.

We walked at night over the Alps from Geneva to the border. It took three days. We hid by day in abandoned farm buildings. It was bitterly cold and snowing most of the way.

It was all a gamble to see if we could make it. We were walking into a confused wartime situation where nobody trusted the other and even the guides could not always be trusted. But we went on.

Finally we got to the border, crossed under some barbed wire, avoided the patrols and waded across an icy stream. We were told to go to an isolated farmhouse just inside France. We did as we were told and knocked

on the farmhouse's huge wooden door. A Frenchman answered and welcomed us. But we could not wait, so the next morning at first light we started walking again toward a small village. As we did so we were apprehended by a US army patrol. The colonel on the patrol told us we were walking in the direction of a mine field and there were snipers about.

Our risk taking had paid off this time and we did make it home a few days after Christmas 1944. It was then we learned that there had been a great battle to the north of us. That battle was the Battle of the Bulge, the last great German offensive of WWII.

After that my life was never the same. If I had failed that risk I likely would not be here to tell the story. I learned that there is nothing so strong as the desire to return home, to one's country, and it is worth taking risks for.



From the Editor:

Mail & E-Mail

Bob Vance and our new-found Belgium friend, **Peter Loncke** are keeping a stream of information flowing about Operation Varsity. In addition to Peter finding the *Southern Comfort*—Bob and **Louis DeBlasio's** plane— he has located the Fighter Pilot who went down the same day. His name is John Delaney, and he lives in Asbury, New Jersey. Now Louis, Bob and John have an information exchange communication going; and interestingly, their memories of events differ a great deal. Each refreshes the other's memory.

Joseph Crandell of Groveland, Illinois wrote that his brother, **1st Lt. Leonard Crandell** piloted the other plane that went down at Wesel, as shown on the Harvel film. That plane is about 75 yards from the *Southern Comfort*, and the depression is still there in the ground where it crashed and exploded. The entire crew was KIA. Joseph is contacting Peter to learn more details about his findings.

Peter is in contact with veteran groups from the RAF, New Zealand and Australia, helping them locate planes, lay memorial wreaths, and find burial plots.

Can anybody identify these three cheerful gentlemen? I assume the picture was taken in a pub in England.



ABOUT THE OTHER QUEEN

Sgt. Lyle Latimer returned from England on the Queen Elizabeth in October, 1944. To Latimer, the trip home was a wonderful experience. Four of his group shared the B-Deck of that luxurious liner enjoying every comfort.

To dodge a storm the Queen E took a southern route, so when they came to the East Coast of the U.S., they got an off-shore view from Florida to New York Harbor. When they swung into landing position, the Queen was in the middle of various sea-going vessels that blew whistles and horns at and for the returning veterans. The people on board waved and cheered them from all sides as they came into the last phase of landing.

"There was a WAC Dance Band ashore, waving and playing modern American style music," he recalled. "We had time to watch others leave the ship, and also, to observe the various items involved in unloading a ship of that size. For a farm-boy, it was especially informative.

"At Camp Shanks, NY we were delighted all over again. We found fresh American bread, T-bone steaks and fresh milk!" He and his buddies rode a Troop Train to Jefferson Barracks, MO, an unforgettable ride, because it was GOING HOME.

Editor's Note: Latimer's first bomb run was on D-Day to the invasion targets of Caen. He flew with the crew of 2nd Lt. Joseph Hermann, pilot. Latimer said that as the tail gunner, he did not care where they went, but did like to see where they had been!"

Paul Oberlin to **Will Lundy**: ... (describing a European vacation) "**Steve (Adams)** met us in Norwich, and we drove to Shipdham. For me, the biggest best highlight was to see and go in the Control Tower, as my Dad had spent a lot of time there...

Would you like an artist's rendering of our plane? John Bills, the son of a Liberator flyer, will do individual pictures, complete with insignia, nose art, serial numbers, battle damage, tail identification. The price is reasonable. The samples are impressive. Call 770-346-9517 or E-Mail john7linda@mindspring.com.

Dear American Friends,

I would like to wish you a great Independence Day 2000.

I hope that the Veterans will receive a lot of attention from the youngsters.

If you think they do not pay enough respect to your fight for the cause of freedom, be sure that in the other side of the Atlantic ocean, at least one Belgian guy does.

May they never have to pay the price for their easy-going way of life. The less you care about freedom, the more you risk to lose it.

Thank you for MY freedom.

Your dedicated friend from over here, waiting eagerly to be over there with you.

Luc Dewez



I always look forward to receiving my copy of the 8 Ball Tails. The picture on the front page of the Spring 2000 edition showing the "Delectable Doris" (now renamed "Joe"), and the "All American" (now renamed "The Dragon and his Tail") flying together, are a very pretty sight indeed. When reading your comments on page 3 regarding these two planes however, you state the "All American", the last fully restored, flying Liberator in the world....".

I would take issue a bit with this statement. The Confederate Air Force's "Diamond Lil" a completely restored B-24 has been in continuous service since it came off the assembly line in the Spring of 1940. It carries serial number 18. Almost certainly Diamond LIL is the longest continuously serving World War II era aircraft flying today.

Some people do not consider LIL a true B-24 because in appearance it does not have the cowling of turbocharged engines and the exhaust stacks are on top like a PBY. Additionally, the plane is about 9 feet shorter than a D Model. From a non cosmetic standpoint, LIL is significantly different from later model B-24s. However it is and was a B-24A. It also was designated an LB-30A Liberator I, under its original lend lease purchase order.

There have been times when the airplane underwent repairs and restoration, but it has never missed a scheduled tour season with the CAF. It did not go out on tour last summer because the aircraft it flies with, a B-29 "FIFI", did not go out on tour, and the two planes always travel together. Although the LIL was having new fuel tanks installed, and other maintenance performed, it could have been put together to go on tour last summer had FIFI been in a position to go. Today, LIL is coming together nicely and will probably be undergoing recurrency flights within the month of May.

Larry Herpel <lherpel@juno.com>



SIX SETS OF INITIALS
by Jack Butler (44th)

Let me tell you about 6 men to the 44th Bomb Group... All I know about them is that on six separate occasions, prior to May, 1944, each of them took off into the wild blue yonder. They were headed east into the rising sun over Germany. They never returned. I never met them and never knew them, yet I can never forget them. Let me tell you why I can never forget them.

All of us members of the 2nd Air Division had a lot in common. We are survivors. Would you be reading this otherwise? Most of us

have memories of friends, drinking buddies, guys in the next chair at briefings, etc. who did not make it. It is sad to say that my memory of some of my close friends who did not make it has faded.

Why then do I have such a vivid recollection of these six whom I did not know?

Well, in May, 1944, when I arrived at the 44th Bomb Group as a replacement navigator, I was assigned to an empty sack in a four man room. It was in a permanent building with inside plumbing. There were two double deck bunk beds. The vacant bed was a lower bunk. I thought this was great, but a little strange that the upstairs guys had not claimed it. They had not claimed it because they knew that there were six sets of initials burned into the rails below the upper bunk. Each set of initials had marks burned by cigarettes which counted completed missions. As I recall, the completed missions ranged from 3 to 14. I distinctly remember one set of markers showed the last completed mission as 12. Obviously he had not completed his number 13.

From May until December of 1944, the last thing I saw before I went to sleep were those initials burned into the bed rail above me. Not until recently did I realize those initials were also burned into my memory.

Is it possible that those six guys got together and put in a good word for #7? All I know is that I made it OK, but there were several occasions when I, and my various crews, needed and had incredibly good luck at the right time.

Editor's Note: To locate which of the two Jack Butlers sent this message, I searched the Database AND COULDN'T FIND HIM! However, I learned by e-mail that he was John E. Butler and his new address is 12704 Transit Cove, Austin, TX 78727-5118. Phone (512) 833-7643. E-mail JackB839@aol.com.

Jack was in both the 66th and 67th Squadrons. He went over with Bob Knowles and Howard Robb, and sometimes flew with others. He was over there from May, 1944 to December, 1944.

The news of his life is that he has two German great granddaughters, thanks to his grandson who took a German bride after serving in the Gulf War. Jack was visited by the German grandmother of his two great grandchildren. A resident of Hamburg, she is unable to discuss the war events which occurred when she was ten years old. Among the tidbits of information which Jack learned is that 600,000 women and children were evacuated from the city during the summer of '43. The 44th was bombing oil refineries, but before the War was over, most of the homes were destroyed.

Through cyberspace, Jack's grandson informed him that a 1 kilo ton bomb was found in the middle of Stuttgart. The authorities evacuated half the city to diffuse it. Apparently they find an unexploded bomb over there from time to time. The memory of WWII does not go away for either side.





A REQUEST FOR HELP!

John L. Milliken reported that four members of his crew **Darrel Larsen, Morris Larkin, Leon Allen** and **Irwin Stovroff** have not received the DFC; even though they all completed their combat tour together, and were shot down on the 31st, 13 August 1944. Milliken, **Martin Richard** and **Robert Bertoli** received their DFC on General Order 193, 2nd Bomb Division 17 August 44. **Kenneth Beckwith** received his GO 212, 31 August 44. Milliken received an additional DFC on GO 226, @ 2nd BD dated 14 September 44. Milliken is wondering if someone in the 44th might have the GO's, which could help the four in his crew to receive the decoration which they earned.

Editor's Note: Roy Owen advises those who have not received their DFC to write Air Force Personnel Headquarters, Decorations Department, Randolph Field, Texas.



From the *Stars and Stripes* comes the memory of General Patton's push through Germany, forwarded by **Bob Vance**:

'HELL ON WHEELS' ROLLS HELL-BENT THROUGH REICH Injured Foe, Medics, 30,000 Civilians Welcome End of War--for Them

AHLEN, GERMANY, March 31 (delayed), — German Army medics and civilians alike lined the streets of this hospital town—"the first open city" in Germany left thus far by the retreating Wehrmacht--and cheered and waved at the Second Army Div. tankers rolling through today on the road to Berlin. Col. Sidney Hinds of Nashville, Tenn., who has led his CCB across 36 miles of the Reich in less than two days, was in the first vehicle to reach the town, as forward elements by-passed it to slice through to the Autobahn, northeast of Hamm.

Surrender

At the entrance of Ahlen, his jeep was halted by a pot-bellied, bemedalled Nazi colonel, commandant of the town's dozen hospitals, which held more than 2,000 German wounded soldiers. The commandant offered him the surrender of the town, the soldiers and his own medics and 30,000 civilians who were still here.

As Col. Hinds followed the Nazi bigwig's car into the town, at first the civilians responded with a perfunctory "Heil Hitler!" They then spotted American vehicles and out went the bed sheets and tablecloths of surrender.

No Time for Prisoners

Dozens of Wehrmacht medics, in regular uniforms with Red Cross arm bands, were among the crowd and some of them joined in the waving. A couple of German Army doctors

saluted American officers. The tankers had no time to take prisoners, and so the meek-looking medics were still there when Brig. Gen. I.D. White bustled in for a staff conference in front of the town hall, still there when the tankers gassed up and still there when they rolled out again under cover of night.

*Editor's Note: Nobody was happier to see the armed vehicles enter Ahlen than **Louis DeBlasio, Bob Vance** and **John Delaney**, all POWs in a German hospital in Ahlen.*



Another Request for HELP!

As a school project, two teenagers in Holland are looking for stories about the liberation of their land in 1945, and any expressions of kindness, gratitude and courage which the Dutch people showed to their liberators. Their address is: Evelien aan de Wiel, Wittenstein 183, 3328 MV Dordrecht, the Netherlands.



Fritzi Selasky of Lubock, Texas has donated her husband's medals to the WWII Memorial in her town. Ground breaking will begin by Veterans Day in November. Lt. **James Selasky** was a navigator with the 67th Squadron, and was among the survivors of the raid to Ploesti, flying with Colonel Leon Johnson in the lead plane. In Lubock, Fritzi has dedicated her efforts to educating young people to the tragedies and triumphs of WWII.



OOPS!

For those of you who remember a **Captain Joseph Testa**, but never heard of a **Captain Tesla**, your memory is accurate. His name was Testa. In the article **ROBERT DUBOWSKY'S DROP FROM THE SKY**, Spring issue of the 8 BTs, the Editor got it wrong.

Dubowsky is still searching for parodies to WWII songs. Even if you only remember part of the song, send it to him. A long time from now, in a WWII Museum, some young people will feel the spirit of the young flyers who risked all to make a better world. His address is 650 Grant Court, Satellite Beach, FL 32937; e-mail irdud@aol.com.



*Everyone has a story worth telling and worth publishing.
PLEASE Send it!*

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Memories of **Bill Atkins**, 67/506: ...there are four missions that I remember well: the first, over Rhein Marshalling Yard was supposed to be at high level mission, then changed at the last moment to low level. They gave us a master briefing on a whole lot of flak we could expect. We did make it through without picking up any extra holes. Then there was the trip to Berlin, which seemed to me, went right into the center of town.

Another awesome experience was the mission with Napalm to Fort-de-Royan near Bordeaux, France. I was also on the flight to Wesel with Major Harvel. I transferred his movie to VCR, and it has been the mainstay of my annual report to U.S. history classes. However, the best mission I remember was after VE Day, and we took the political folks from Shipdham for a flight up the Rhine River, looking at the towns that were still standing but had no roofs or floors.



**E-Mail from Fritz-Peter Linden,
Stadtkyll, Germany to Will Lundy:**

We are putting together a magazine this year, celebrating four important dates in the history of our town, including the events of WWII. I am the editor of the "official celebration magazine" and with your information, I was able to translate the U.S. Air Force assessment of the bombings in late 44/early 45.

On behalf of everybody here, I thank you very much for your help. And if it weren't for you and all the other American soldiers back then, I probably wouldn't be able to write this little e-mail to you. This is the first time I can actually say thank you to one of the men who was actually there.

Editor's Note: Could anybody imagine that there would ever be a letter of gratitude from the enemy country? The recognized value of the sacrifices of WWII keep growing in every part of the globe.



George Wright, from Wylde Green, England, started a hobby of making models of WWII planes, and as a tribute to the 50,000 Americans who served in the 2 AD, he is placing them on permanent loan to the Memorial Library in Norwich. The aircrafts represented are older planes used as markers for the division's 14 bomb groups to move into formation over the North Sea, ready to start their missions into Germany. *Lemon Drop* and other colorful lead planes will be on display.



Have you lost your medals, and want them replaced? All honorably discharged veterans are entitled to a one time, free of charge replacement set of their authorized medals and ribbons from the U.S. Government. Submit request in writing to: National Personnel Records Ctr., Attn: NRPMF, 9700 Page Ave., St. Louis, MO 36132-5100.

Include your full name, service or social security number, branch of service and dates of service. Request must be signed by the veteran. If deceased, next of kin can sign the request. Be sure the request is legible. It is also helpful to attach a copy of the discharge certificate, but not required. Allow 90-120 days for processing.



**ABOUT THE DATABASE PROJECT,
ARE YOU LISTENING?**

Speaking as the Editor of the 8 Ball Tails, I can't help wondering whether 44thers do not submit their Database information because the project has not been clearly defined. Here is the plan: the entire history of the 44th Bomb Group - the missions, the sorties, the planes, the crews and the flyers - is being compiled and computerized. This information will be available to every library, high school and museum in the country and some places overseas, not just now but 100 years from now.

How will future generations know what happened in WWII if the people who lived it do not tell their story? Historians, researchers, archivists and family members will have access to YOUR history, but only if you put it on record. EVERY SINGLE JOB WAS IMPORTANT. IT TOOK FULL EFFORT TO WIN THE WAR. RECORD YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO VICTORY.

Is it so difficult to dig in your old boxes and pull out a handful of information and photographs about yourself? Is it so difficult to talk into a tape recorder or put it in writing, the harrowing moments you lived through, the ways you coped with tough times, the funny things you did with your buddies?

As Editor of the 8 Ball Tails, when I try to get details about a particular person for an article, and can't find his bio, I shake my head sadly. I want ALL of you to be remembered.

Write to us for your preprinted bio form:

44th BGVA Bios
PO Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287



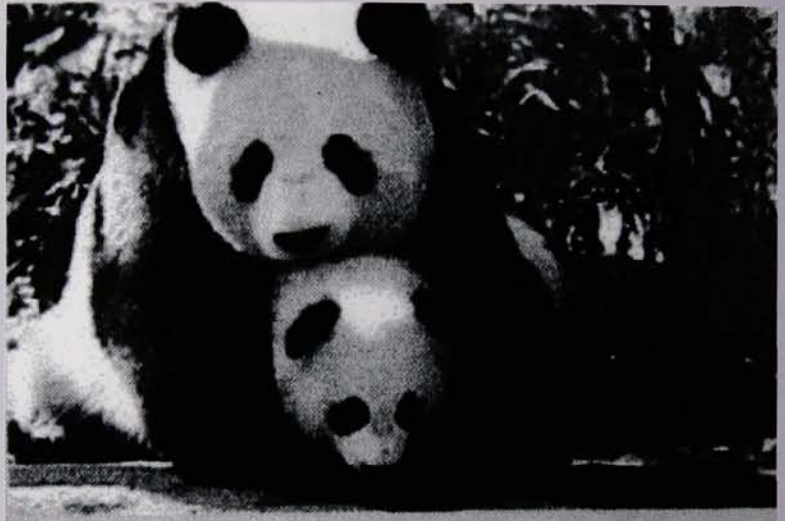
JOIN US FOR THE 44TH BGVA REUNION IN SAN DIEGO!



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ARE WAITING FOR YOU
TO ARRIVE AT THE
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