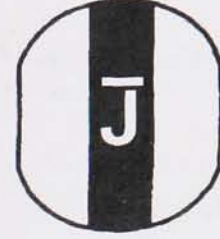


# 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



## 8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 2 - Issue #2

Journal of the  
44th Bomb Group  
Veterans Association

Spring, 1997

Non Profit Veterans Organization

EIN #68-0351397

## ***“Sweating it Out!”***

*Crew Chiefs and Maintenance personnel awaiting return of the Kiel Mission.*



# **THE KIEL RAID**

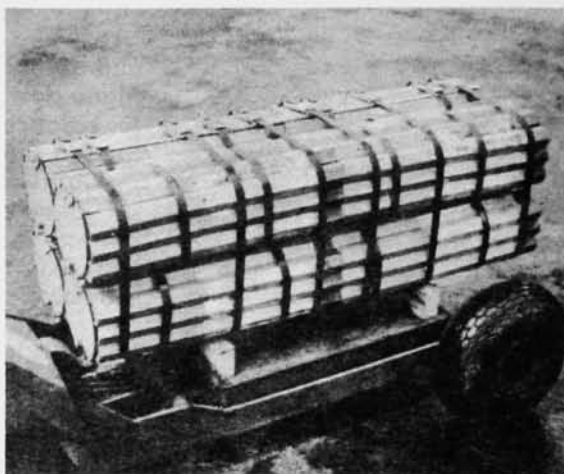
# **14 MAY 1943**

*Bill Cameron Photo*

Since the episodic story of Col. Bill Cameron and the terrible decimation of the 67th Squadron in our "And Then There Was One" article in the Summer '96 issue, it seemed appropriate that we followed up with a broader look at the mission for which the 44th Bomb Group was awarded its first Presidential Unit Citation and the 67th Squadron was reduced to the last one of its original nine pilots. Thus, for this issue, we are departing from the practice of featuring one of our aircraft and its combat experience in favor of a more detailed look at the 44th mission which turned into one of the greatest aerial battles of the War, when on 14 May 1943 the 44th, along with three B-17 groups of the 1st Air Division attacked the Krupp submarine shipbuilding installations and German Navy submarine pens at Kiel, Germany.

The narrative that follows was derived from the book Fields of Little America, author Martin Bowman, publisher Wensum Books, Ltd., 33 Oxford Place, Norwich, England; official 2nd Bombardment Wing Critique of Mission 107, 14/5/43 (Secret) declassified per Executive Order 12356, Section 3.3. and 745005 on 2/7/94. General Orders No. 66, 12 July 1944, Battle Honors Citation of Units; combat crew post mission debriefing reports and missing air crew reports (MACR) contained in the 44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor, C.W. Lundy; and The History of the 68th Bomb Squadron, Webb Todd, author.

In early 1943, the North Atlantic shipping lanes were virtually at the mercy of the German U-boats, which preyed on the shipping convoys that were the lifeline of the allied resistance to the German occupation of most of Europe. Although the convoys were escorted by allied naval destroyers, the escorts were limited in the protection they could provide without accompanying long range air patrol to locate the sub-packs. Until the long-range patrol gap could be filled, the allied strategy was directed to destruction of the U-boat construction to slow the relentless "Battle of the North Atlantic" U-Boat campaign to prevent the allied supplies reaching the friendly ports of England and Russia. So important was the success of this strategy, the heavy bomber forces of 8th Air Force were, for the first time, directed to attack the Kiel complex in daylight.



*Incendiaries*

The Kiel attack was an experimental first by the 8th Air Force planners in the respect that aside from previous missions where the B-24 forces flew diversion missions in support of B-17s making strike sorties, the two types of aircraft had not been assigned to attack the same target in concert. Kiel was one of the most heavily defended targets in all of Germany, not only with anti-aircraft weapons, but the best of the FW190 and ME109 forces. The strike plan was for the B-17s to attack first with 500 lb. HE bombs followed by the B-24s with a new type of 100 lbs. incendiary clusters. In an attempt to compensate for the differences in aircraft performance, the briefed assembly called for the 44th to fly below and behind the high B-17 lead group. The capability of the faster airspeed of the B-24 and the

slower climb speed of the B-17 necessitated the B-24 lead to make wide S's to maintain a relative position. Col. Johnson reported that these maneuvers were satisfactory until the formation reached 25,000 at which point the B-17 lead group made a rapid climb to 28,000 feet and even pulling 38" MP and 2300 RPM, he could not keep up. To avoid stringing out his group attempting to stay up with the lead group, he elected to go below the lowest B-17 group which was flying at 25,000

feet. As they turned to target, Col. Johnson had to slide his group to the right of the B-17 group above to avoid their bomb drop.

The formation had been under attack from the coast in by an estimated 120 enemy fighters. When the 44th swung right, the attacking fighters then concentrated their attack on the rear echelons of the 44th. As the 44th reached the target, they were required by the briefed trajectory of the cluster incendiaries to remain on course for an additional two miles. To make matters worse, the released incendiary clusters came apart immediately, rather than the 200 foot clearance for which they were fused. With stick incendiaries flying through the formation, those pilots following, spread their formation somewhat to avoid colliding with the incendiaries. This further invited enemy fighter attacks. Five B-24s in the rear echelons were lost in the target area and one on withdrawal. The ferocity of the defenses are evidenced by the 44th being credited with 23 enemy aircraft destroyed, 13 probables and one damaged. After bomb drop by the two B-17 groups preceding the 44th,

they made an immediate left turn leaving the 44th alone to stay the course for the incendiary drop. As the 44th turned off target, the B-17 groups throttled back to allow catch up by the 44th and the groups withdrew, with the B-24s sandwiched between the higher and the lower of the two B-17 groups.

On 15 May, the day following the raid, Brig. Gen. C.G. Hodges of Hq 2nd ADIV assembled members of his staff with Col. Leon Johnson and members of his staff to critique the Kiel mission. Their comments were:

Conclusions

1) Because of the performance of the B-24 at various altitudes is so different from that of the B-17, it is virtually impossible for B-24s to fly a tight formation and maintain the proper relative position with the B-17s during most missions-especially in emergencies when extreme action must be taken. The B-17 evidently has a higher rate of climb and a slower airspeed in the climb than the B-24s. Consequently our units do not get sufficient protection from the B-17s and until we can put up larger formations of B-24s, it is extremely dangerous for us to attack heavily defended targets.

2) When elements of a force are carrying bombs of different dropping angles (i.e., HE versus incendiaries), the entire formation should continue on the course to the target until the bomb release point nearest the target has been reached.

Recommendations:

1) B-24s not be sent on combined operations with B-17s until a combat wing of at least two full strength groups is available. Missions at this time should consist of long range attacks on targets where fighter opposition is not intense (preferably diversion sweeps to aid the B-17s and attacks on shallow targets in the same area as the main B-17 effort after the latter is committed).

The dauntless heroism displayed by the 44th crews against a fiercely defended target on a mission ill fated by poor planning, mismatched bomber performance, dissimilar bomb loads with faulty fusing and tactics which required the 44th to maintain bomb run heading alone and unprotected was characterized by S/Sgt. Richard M. Castillo, Tail Gunner on A/C #819 piloted by Lt. Malcolm C. Howell and Major James E. O'Brien, 68th Squadron Commander.

Major O'Brien reported that they had received flak damage to #3 and #4 engines causing a drop in manifold pressure and trailing smoke and knocked out intercom

to the rear of the aircraft. The smoking engines made #819 prey to the enemy fighters. According to the Tail Gunner of A/C # 8 1 6 , approximately 15 to 20 FW190s had begun to concentrate their fire on #819. A report from the Waist Gunner of another ship states that the tail turret of #819 was "firing like hell" and he saw

three chutes come from the plane. At this time,

Lt. Howell was trying to get back into formation and almost succeeded when an overwhelming number of enemy fighters closed in on him. Throughout this fierce attack, the tail guns of #819 were in operation and firing. No less than two enemy fighters were seen to go down in flames as a result of hits by Sgt. Castillo. Finally his turret was disabled and he suffered an injured foot, which was wedged in by this ammo box. This attack was by two FW190s which pulled up within 30-40 feet and fired at will into the tail section. Three crew members pulled Sgt. Castillo out of his turret, pushed him out of the aircraft and pulled his rip cord, whereupon they bailed out just prior to the entire tail section separating from the fuselage. Lt. Howell apparently was killed when his chute failed after ball-out. Sgt. Castillo later reports he had no recollection of his escape from the aircraft. He remained a POW until Wars end. He was last reported living in Springfield, Ohio.



*Kiel Mission Briefing  
Major Strong & Captain Morris*

*Capt. Robert Abernathy and Lead Crew of the 44th Bomb Group - Kiel Raid.*



## Kiel Mission ~ 14 May 1943

### 66th Squadron

Capt. Robert J. Abernathy/2nd Lt. Spencer Hunn	936-J	Group Lead
1st Lt. Rowland M. Gentry/1st Lt. Chas. E. Hughes	769-B	
Capt. Robert E. Miller/FO Arthur W. Callahan	811-K	
1st Lt. Robert E. Kolliner/1st Lt. Curtis S. Griffin	779-G	
1st Lt. John Y. Reed/1st Lt. Geo. W. Winger	014-P	Bailed Out-England
1st Lt. Thomas E. Scrivner/2nd Lt. Everett P. Anderson	778-F	

### 67th Squadron

1st Lt. Rober I. Brown/1st Lt. Hartley A. Westbrook	278-Q	Lost
Capt. Chester L. Phillips/1st Lt. E. W. Wilborn	807-U	Lost
1st Lt. William A. Roach/1st Lt. Ross A. Tenney	126-T	Lost

### 68th Squadron

Capt. John H. Diehl/Col. John Hayden	816-X	
1st Lt. Wilmer J. Garrett/1st Lt. Rober J. Lehnhausen	094-Bar-E	
Capt. Walter J. Holmes/Lt. Willie Baxter Weant	813-V	
1st Lt. Rowland B. Huston/1st Lt. David W. Alexander	699-Bar-P	
1st Lt. Malcolm C. Howell/Major James E. O'Brien	819-Bar-A	Lost
1st Lt. George R. Jansen/1st Lt. Louis V. Girard	0009-W	

### 506th Squadron

Capt. William N. Anderson/Major James C. Beam	172-Bar-N	
1st Lt. Walter I. Bunker/2nd Lt. Richard D. Butler	234-Bar-U	
1st Lt. Nathaniel H. Graham/1st Lt. Harold J. Laudig	283-Z	
1st Lt. William H. Strong/2nd Lt. Lyle S. Davenport	201-Bar-O	
Capt. John W. Swanson/2nd Lt. Douglas B. Myers	295-J	Lost

GENERAL ORDERS  
No. 55

(G.O. 56)  
WAR DEPARTMENT  
Washington 25, D.C. 12 July 1944.

Section

BATTLE HONORS - Citations of units - - - - - XII

XII - BATTLE HONORS

4. As authorized by Executive Order No. 9596 (sec I, Bull. 22, WD 1943) superseding Executive Order No. 9075 (sec. III, Bull 11, WD, 1942) citation of the following unit in General Orders No. 40, 2d Bombardment Division, 29 November 1943, as approved by the Commanding General, United States Army forces in the European Theater of Operations, under the provisions of Section IV, Circular No. 333, War Department, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction is confirmed. The citation reads as follows: + 63<sup>rd</sup>

The 44th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H), HEADQUARTERS 66th, 67th and 506th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRONS (H), have distinguished themselves by outstanding performance of duty in the attack on the naval and shipbuilding installations at Kiel, Germany, on 14 May 1943 one of the greatest aerial battles of this war.

On this mission a single group was, for the first time, fully loaded with incendiaries to be dropped after the lead groups had released their high explosive bombs. Because of the trial of the incendiaries the 44th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H), which had been assigned this task, was required to continue its bombing run for some 2 miles beyond the release point of the other groups in order to bomb effectively. To accomplish this it was necessary to fly alone, without supporting fire power of other groups, over one of the most heavily defended areas in Germany with a formation considerably smaller than the minimum for mutual self-protection. The mission was undertaken with full knowledge of the extreme hazards involved. Its successful performance demanded the highest degree of bravery and skill.

With only 19 B-24's, the 44th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) followed three B-17 groups to the target. Fierce and determined attacks by some 120 enemy fighters commenced at the German coast and continued until after leaving the coast on the return route. After the B-17's had reached their release point and turned away, the 44th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) proceeded alone in the face of continuous attacks by swarms of enemy fighters and increasingly concentrated flak. By opening its formation as required to clear the incendiaries of ships ahead, it was rendered particularly vulnerable to enemy attack. Five of its airplanes were shot down on the approach to and over the target. Despite these losses, the group held the necessary formation and continued on its run alone to its bomb-release point. Bombing was extremely accurate and the target was blanketed with incendiaries. Widespread fires destroyed or damaged many enemy installations. One additional airplane was lost after leaving the target.

This small force was officially credited with 25 enemy aircraft destroyed, 13 probably destroyed, and one damaged.

The successful fulfillment of this highly dangerous mission was due to the extraordinary courage, skill, and devotion to duty of all concerned, which will always be worthy of emulation. Such heroism reflects the greatest credit on the Army Air Forces.

By order of the Secretary of War:

G. C. MARSHALL,  
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

J. A. ULIO,  
Major General,  
The Adjutant General.

A TRUE EXTRACT COPY:

*Mattew J. Gatti*  
MATTHEW J. GATTI,  
Captain, AC.

DECLASSIFIED PER EXECUTIVE ORDER 12356, Section 3.3, **AND 745005**

By 28/08 NARA, Date 2/17/94

**SECRET**

14 MAY 1943

HEADQUARTERS 2nd BOMBARDMENT WING  
APO 634

CRITIQUE OF MISSION NO. 107. 14/5/43.

Target : Kiel.  
Date : 15/5/43  
Hour : 1045

Attendance:	Brigadier General Hodges O.G.	Headquarters 2nd Bomb Wing
	Colonel Hayden, Executive	"
	Lt. Col. Fearing, Asst. A-3	"
	Lt. Col. Miller, Asst. A-3	"
	Lt. Col. Sullivan, Asst. A-3	"
	Capt. [Name], Asst. A-2	"
	Capt. Starr, Asst. A-2	"
	Capt. Leatherdale, L.O.	"
	Major King, F.L.O.	"
	Col. Johnson, Commanding Officer	44th Bombardment Group
	Lt. Col. Snavely, S-3	"
	Capt. Holmes, Pilot	"
	Sgt. Carrard, Gunner	"

1. Colonel Johnson told of the assembly of the 44th with the 1st Wing which he said was accomplished without trouble. The 44th, flying at 8300' was over the rendezvous point when the 1st Wing arrived, flying between about 5000' and 6000'. On the flight to the target the 44th made wide Ss in order to stay behind and to keep up a comfortable speed. Colonel Johnson said that this worked very satisfactorily.

2. When the enemy coast was reached, the top group of the B 17s was flying at about 25,000' with the 44th just above. Upon crossing the coast, the 1st Wing climbed about 3000' at a very rapid rate. The lead ship of the 44th was pulling 38" with an RPM of 2300 but could not keep up with the B17s as they climbed. Hence for fear of stringing out the group by pouring on power in order to keep up with the B 17s, the leader of the 44th elected to go below the lowest group of the 1st Wing which was flying at about 25,000 ft. As the formation was turning to the left towards the target it was necessary for the 44th to fly just to the right of the B 17s above it and this subjected the 44th to heavy attacks from the E/A which had gathered to the right of the formation. However, the 44th apparently did not keep far enough to the right of the B 17s above them because bombs of the 1st Wing were seen to fall between elements of the 44th. It was also reported that an incendiary bomb of our own ships hit the nose of another B 24; and there was some discussion of the necessity of pilots taking precaution to clear their ships of the bombs and clouds when incendiaries are dropped in a stepped-down formation.

3. Since the 44th was dropping incendiaries it was necessary for our group to continue two miles further toward the target than the B 17s which were dropping bombs. Two groups of the 1st Wing turned away from the target immediately after dropping their bombs and this left the 44th alone in the target area except for

**SECRET**

DECLASSIFIED PER EXECUTIVE ORDER 12356, Section 3.3, AND 745005

By 2210 H

NARA, Date 2/4/94

**SECRET**

Office of Mission No. 107 172/A (Continued)

another group of B 17s which apparently had a different aiming point and continued on its run until about the same time that the B 24s released their incendiaries. The B 17s that bombed earlier throttled back immediately after leaving the target and the 44th was able to catch them quickly. The B 24s took up a position just above one group of B 17s and below another for the return trip.

4. It was brought out that the enemy fighter attacks were very numerous and ferocious. The FW 190s attacked mainly from 12 o'clock while the ME 109s came in mostly from 6 o'clock. When discussing the position of the various A/C in the formation of the 44th it was revealed that all of the 5 ships lost in the target area were flying in the rear part of the formation.

5. In discussing use of communication facilities, it was brought out that an A/C of the 44th sighted a B 17 down in the North Sea and reported the location over the HF/DF channel. The pilot got no reply. Lt. Col. Miller said that he had checked with the HF/DF station and found that no signal had been picked up from any of our A/C. General Hodges directed that the HF/DF equipment of all ships be tested for night flying.

6. General Hodges complimented the 44th on its bombing and general conduct of the Mission in the face of extremely heavy enemy opposition.

CONCLUSIONS.

1. Because the performance of the B 24 at various altitudes is so different from that of the B 17, it is virtually impossible for B 24s to fly a tight formation and maintain the proper relative position with the B 17s during most missions - especially in emergencies when extreme action has to be taken. The B 17 evidently has a higher rate of climb and a lower air speed in the climb than the B 24. Consequently our units do not get sufficient protection from the B 17s and until we can put up larger formations of B 24s it is extremely dangerous for us to attack heavily defended targets.

2. When elements of a force are carrying bombs of different dropping angles (i.e. H.E. versus incendiaries) the entire formation should continue on the course to the target until the bomb release point nearest the target has been reached.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. B 24s not be sent on combined operations with B 17s until a combat wing of at least two full-strength groups is available. Missions at this time should consist of long range attacks on targets where fighter opposition is not intense (preferably at the same time that 1st Wing is on a shorter mission in the same general area), diversion sweeps to aid the B 17s and attacks on shallow targets in the same area as the main B 17 effort after the latter is committed.

WARREN E. ALBERTS,  
Major, AO,**SECRET**

**66th Bombardment Squadron (H) AAF  
OFFICE OF THE OPERATIONS OFFICER  
AAF STATION 115  
TRAINING SCHEDULE FOR 1 JANUARY 1944**

***COMBAT CREW AVAILABLE FOR SATURDAY, 1 JANUARY 1944***

	#203	#236	#157
P	Jewell	Harleman	Ugarte
CP	Milliner	Benedom	Koontz
N	Johnson, H.	Cobane	Loeffler
B	Foley	Sturgeon	Holm
E	Wike	Price	Kokta
AE	Saperito	Melson	Dwyer
R	Lipczyaski	Mirkin	Lenley
AR	Guzik	Alexander	Forgich
BG	Perrier	Bourque	Beauchesne
TG	McClosky	Carroll, L.	Dave

**Training:**

This is the set-up for New Year's Day,  
Not a ground class is scheduled,  
In bed you may stay.  
You worked mighty hard the whole of last week,  
Stay in bed, Combat man,  
If you can, you may sleep.

There may be a mission on this New Year's Day,  
If this is the case,  
We are sorry to say,  
The crews listed above will be rousted from their sleep,  
Under that circumstance,  
They have good right to weep.

A very Happy New Year we wish to all you men,  
If you're needed at all,  
We'll let you know when,  
You now have the set-up for this New Year's day,  
Rest and relax is the order,  
We pray!



**SPENCER S. HUNN**  
Captain, Air Corps  
Operations Officer

**CHARLES L. ARMSTRONG**  
1st Lt., Air Corps  
Ass't Operations Officer



# ENGLAND, FRANCE, BELGIUM TRIP UPDATE

Everything is on schedule; on May 26, forty-three adventuresome 44th Veterans, wives, husbands, significant others, children, and one grandson will depart for a great 44th BGVA Memorial tour, and it's going to be a GREAT ONE!

Leaving from various Gateway cities, we will all assemble in London at the Kensington Hilton for a three day sightseeing/shopping/theatre or whatever spree. Then on to the Norwich Hotel for three days to include tours, shopping, a visit to the Memorial Library, climaxed with a day in Shipdham and the Airfield, and an evening reception and barbeque dinner with our local friends at the Arrow Air Hangar.

Next we travel to Eastbourne with a stop at the American Cemetery at Maddingly and the new American Museum at Duxford. Three days at Eastbourne will include tours of "1066 Country," a leisure day, and a visit to the "Ruthless" Memorial for a Remembrance Ceremony to include the Lord Mayor, a member of Parliament and other civil dignitaries and citizens who organized and financed the memorial, followed by a Gala dinner with this group.

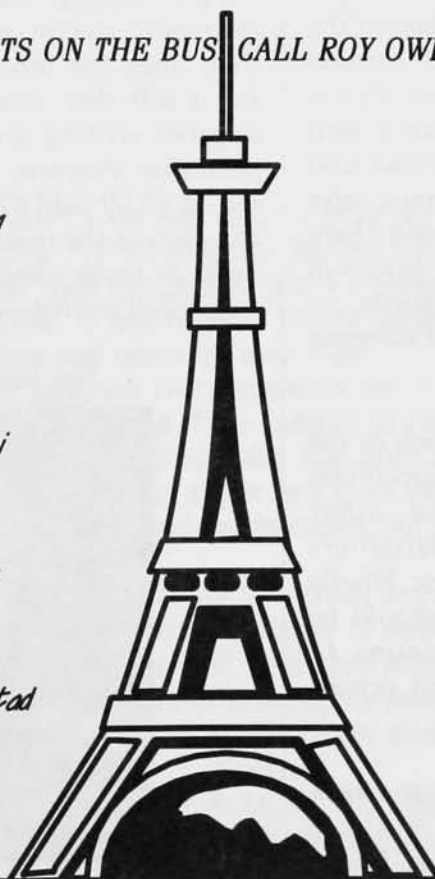
The next day we leave for Rouen for a three night stay. While there, we will be met by members of the French Air Force Reserve who will escort us to the small town of Villiers-Ecalles where we will be met by the Mayor and taken to visit a memorial marking the crash site of two 44th Liberators downed on a raid on Rouen Airfield. On June 6, the 53rd anniversary of "D-Day," we will visit the Normandy Beaches and the Magnificent American Cemetery at Omaha Beach.

From Rouen, we travel to Paris for three days of sightseeing, then on to Liege, Belgium for an overnight stay and a visit to the Argonne Cemetery where T/Sgt. Clair Shaeffer, father of Lois Cianci, one of our group, is buried. We will also stop in Bastogne, site of B/Gen. McAulliffe's famous "NUTS!" reply to the German offer to surrender his Airborne troops or be killed. We still stop over in Brussels for lunch and some sightseeing around the famous Plaza. Then on to Calais for the ferry ride to Dover and then to London for the trip home on June 11.

**THERE ARE TWO MORE SEATS ON THE BUS CALL ROY OWEN @ (707) 538-4726, FIRST COME.**

**HERE ARE THE 8-BALL TOURISTS**

Joan Adrian  
Kenneth Adrian  
George Apgar  
Beryl Apgar  
R. Lee Aston  
Mary Aston  
James Caillier  
Jean Caillier  
Anthony Cianci  
Lois Cianci  
Cleome Dovey  
Arnold Dovey  
Louis DeBlasio  
Ann Natilli  
Gerald Folsom  
Beverly Winger  
Cliff L. Fremstad  
Vi Fremstad  
Karl Grube  
Marilyn Grube  
Richard Haft  
Betty Haft



Kevin Lundy  
Diana Lundy  
C. Will Lundy  
Irene Lundy  
Betty Lynch  
Richard Lynch  
Charles McPhail  
Perry Morse  
Ruth Morse  
Marilyn Murrack  
Melvin Murrack  
Roy Owen  
Charlene (Lolly) Owen  
Donald Potter  
Miriam Potter  
James Reville  
Loy Vance  
Robert Vance  
Donald Wells  
Gloria Wells  
Brice Williams

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Once again, I will use the President's Corner as a "bully pulpit" to discuss one of my favorite subjects, which is also one of my major concerns: The perpetuation of the 44th as a proud veteran's association. We, the 44th Bomb Group members, are running out of time. While it is true, our membership committee co-chairs, Art Hand and Tom Shepherd, with help from Will Lundy, have in the past two years kept our membership total ahead of attrition by finding 44th Bomb Group veterans who had never belonged to any 44th Veterans organization and are now members; we have also expanded the membership to include full membership (as well as Life Memberships) to the wives and widows. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that recruiting within this categorical universe of people is leading us to that "last person standing, drink the bottle of wine and turn out the lights as you leave" ceremony. I don't think any of us want that to happen.

The thing we must do, and must do soon, is to freshen our membership. We must abandon the mentality that makes us predominantly a WWII Bomb Group organization. We have begun to bring our progeny into our midst which is really positive. Through them, we can be sure that our WWII heritage will be preserved. The much broader dimensions of preserving the valorous history of the 44th in defending our nation in war, cold war and the preservation of peace is more than we should ask exclusively of our sons, daughters and grandchildren. Instead we must turn to those who served under the 44th colors in all its assigned roles and missions. We must not only welcome them among us as having honorably served our nation in their individual and organizational assignments, we must depend upon them to perpetuate the valorous heritage of the 44th into the future.

There are 44th organizations that exist, such as the 44th Air Refueling Squadron Veterans Association from the 44th Bomb Wing era and other organizations such as The American Missiliers Association which has many 44th Strategic Missile Wing veterans in their membership. We should be communicating and visiting these groups to familiarize them with our Association and extend an invitation to join us.

As your President, I feel strongly that these expansion efforts are my responsibility. I must say to you that in fulfilling this part of my job, I have been remiss. I am not begging forgiveness, but I

want to point out a reality and explain the underlying reason and what I think we must do to fix the problem.

Going back to our battle to save the organization, we (the Board and Officers) took those tasks we recognized as essential, divided them up and pressed on. In most cases the allocation of work and responsibilities went well. In the case of the Presidency, the job is overloaded by the regular administrative and correspondence responsibilities and the added load of also being editor/publisher of the 8-Ball Tails.

At the Board meeting in St. Louis, where the majority of the Board and Officers began their second term, I pointed out this situation to the Board with a request that they consider the problem and come up with nominations for a replacement 8-Ball Tails editor by mid-term (the October, 1997 Salt Lake City Reunion). My recruiting efforts have been fruitless and I have had no nominations from the Board. At this point, I turn to the membership. We need a volunteer.

I think we have the job arranged to be easily managed by one person with a computer. We now have a "cottage industry" publisher who does all the typing, design and layout, contracts the printing, then does the labeling and mailing. The editor's job is just that, selecting the material, doing some original writing and submitting the copy to the publisher. Anyone interested, please write or call me at (707) 538-4726 or fax (707) 538-1212. We can discuss the transition help I will provide. I don't want to think about nominating both a President and 8-Ball publisher before the current term expires.

See you in Salt Lake City!



**Roy Owen, President**

## France Remembers

**Editor:** At the present time we have correspondence from three towns in France near which some of our 44th aircraft shot down over French targets came down and crashed. Apparently the citizens of these towns and villages feel very emotional about expressing their gratitude for those who lost their lives in the battle for French liberation. This has been manifested by diligent research by these citizens to learn the identity of the deceased airmen and the memorialization of their sacrifice by funding and building memorial markers naming the crews and where possible, the circumstances which resulted in the loss of the airplane and crew.

The correspondence package which follows is characteristic of the sincerity we have been seeing when one of these villages write requesting information which will assist them in establishing a permanent means of expressing the gratitude of the entire village or town populace for the sacrifices made by our valorous American Aircrews in the cause of French freedom. As usual, Will Lundy is the linchpin in providing our French friends the information they seek. In this case, it was the 5 February 1944 raid on Tours Airdrome in central France. One 68th Squadron aircraft #42-100181 Z "Star Valley" with the 1st Lt. Carl I. Bohnisch crew aboard was shot down by enemy fighters. The only survivor was RW Gunner Warren E. Klein who was taken prisoner. It is he that Will is currently trying to locate.



Roy:

Last summer I got a letter from Chaplain James A. Marvin regarding one of our planes which crashed near Blois on 5 Feb. 44. I answered back that it was 68th Sq. Carl A. Bohnisch, with only Warren E. Klein surviving. I planned to have you run this in the next Tails, but it did not happen. But I asked Art for addresses, got eight of them; but only two with full names. Wrote to two, one was wrong, the other returned, as it did not have unit number at that address. I did not follow up, apparently overlooked until now. I've tried to telephone this guy, but get no answers. One hard dude to verify.

In the meantime, I got this letter from P. Canonne of Blois seeking more info on this same crash and crew. Am trying to find W. Klein. But I thought that the article telling about the attack and downing of our plane was very interesting, might go well in Tails, if you have space.



May 19, 1996

Dear Mr. Lundy:

*Paydirt! After all this time you don't know how happy I am to get some solid information to send back through the chain to France. It would be nice if you can locate Warren Klein to know he still lives and even better, if I could pass on some communication from him or even just his present address. Most important though, I think, from the French villagers' perspective, is just to know that he made it home. The 50th Anniversary celebrations evidently stirred up a lot of emotions and memories over there.*

*Enclosed (in translation by my wife) are two documents which describe quite well what happened to that particular plane and its crew. It would be nice if the families of these dead were to know of the consideration shown by the French and the Germans alike. Considering how much propaganda was spewed out on both sides to get us to hate enough to kill, the level of civility shown here gives me hope for us all yet. The fact that the French villagers turned first for information on the surviving American, not to us, but to German friends in their German sister city is even more encouraging.*

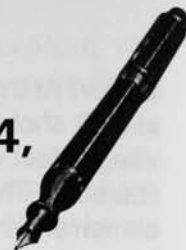
*I hope you can make something of this story for your group Journal "8 Ball Tails." Some of your readers may have known these men. They certainly knew too many similar to them. It would be nice to think that others of our dead received such considerate treatment. I, myself, have been shot at a bit and once measured a shrapnel miss at three inches from my head. I had to periodically write letters home to the families of others who had not been so lucky. Not once did I have information like this to give proper closure. This is my belated chance. Please try to do something with it.*

Sincerely,

James A. Marvin, Chaplain  
1082 East Washington Road  
Hillsborough, NH 03244

**Translation from French to English**  
**by James A. Marvin**

**St. Leonard in Beauce, Saturday, 5 February, 1944,**  
**10:00 German Time**



After a white frost, the weather is very calm and the sky very clear. Coming from the east there appeared in the sky at a medium altitude a very large formation of bombers heading west to return to England. The significance of this Squadron in perfect order made witness to a sight never seen.

The rising sun illuminating under the planes reflected to earth luminous streaks which moved. The inhabitants had gone out into the street, alerted by the strength of the roaring of the motors of such quantity of planes, and this in spite of the altitude of these last ones. Each one commented on thinking that the place of the bombing must have been seriously hit.

Among the group of neighbors where I found myself, a wife of a Spanish lumberman who was there with his daughters, following a glance at this aerial parade, in terror cried "fire." All turning at that moment, flames exiting from the left wing of the one (pair) near the outer motor. Several minutes afterwards, the aircraft reduced its altitude and a little after a parachute was seen opening behind the fortress. The fire spreading rapidly, one then saw the aircraft start a downward spiral to the left - the ellipses reducing and in spite of the reduced speed, the ground was soon reached. Immediately a giant black cloud was visible rapidly following a loud explosion. Flames and smoke were quickly dissipated. The last lines of bombers disappeared to the west, when at very low altitude and at lightning speed, a fighter plane passed several meters from the last houses in the direction from south to north. Was the pilot the originator of the chute and who went across to see the result of his shooting? Before the last moments, the eyewitnesses put forth some probabilities of where this plane could have crashed, to the west past the village of Sigogne.

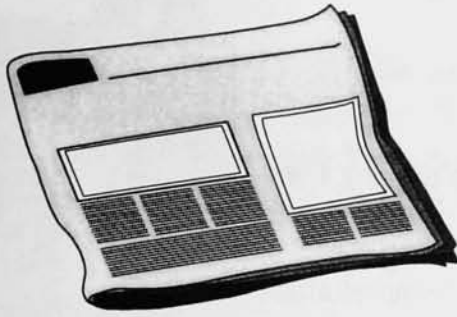
From afar, the people knowing the region had seen the impact not far from the farm of Monchaux. All the eyewitnesses of the unfolding of this catastrophe were certainly impacted by that which they came to see. Without hesitating, the mayor, Monsieur Redouin, took his bike and in parting said, "It is necessary to look over the spot immediately." On returning, he indicated

that the victims had been gotten out of the plane with the help of the people who were there, lined up and covered with their parachutes. The Mayor had taken down the identity of the flyers of whom the state of the burns made it possible. He asked the people of the village to stay away or to not let their dogs wander over the plane.

After lunch we went with the son of the Mayor to Sigogne to see the place. The wreckage was broken up, a motor was pulled off. A propeller was lying rather far away. Under the detached motor and half buried in the ground, one noticed a brown leather bag under this metallic mass. The ground was littered with metal, machine gun cartridges, pieces of organs, such small electrical motors used inside this fortress. This visit to the place did not last long, for we noticed a column of German military come out from the hamlet of Sigogne where the trucks were parked. With the other curious, who like us, wished to make a report on the plane, we believed the soldiers at arms coming from Blois.

From this moment on, there were no eyewitnesses for the transfer of the bodies or the salvage of the plane. The mature students wanted to help and to decorate the graves, but they couldn't leave the site.

The surviving parachutist, pushed north-east by the light breeze in the morning, needed his descent close to the farms of La Coudraie, south of the Marchenoir road from where, at that time, the path to the cow shed went off. The airman, after having rolled his parachute, approached the houses and went in by the north entrance at the Leroux-Genty farm. The people of the house, not up to date on the events and surprised by this presence, had the visitor come in for refreshments, but he accepted only some milk. To leave his name at the French house, which he came to enter, he discreetly wrote his name on the back of an almanac taken from a hook on the wall. The German soldiers from the watch post of Boisseau burst into the house at the same moment Madame Leroux treated several wounds on his head. This woman and her son died about 20 years later without having news of the American.



## City of Blois - Cemetery Service

I undersigned, CRUSSY Henri, Commander of the Legion of Honor, Mayor of the city of Blois, certify that:

Sunday 6 Feb. at 3 PM the German military authorities carried nine bodies to the city cemetery. The commanding officer of the detachment declared that it is a matter of nine servicemen of the American Army Air Corps fallen over the jurisdiction of the community of St. Leonard in Beauce. After having examined the papers, the German servicemen left the bodies in the hut located behind the caretakers dwelling and sealed it.

7 Feb. at 5 PM Doctor LAND of the Field Command at Blois took us to proceed immediately to identify the bodies and put them in coffins which we did in the presence of a German military doctor.

After having removed the seals and opened the door of the hut, we certified that the bodies carried no distinct marks, no papers or objects and that one of five bodies had a name tag on their clothing. We immediately made the following statement:

After this operation we had the bodies placed in the coffins furnished by the German supply depot on the Avenue Chateaudun. The coffins were closed and numbered, we placed them, following the orders of the Feldkommandantur, in the public shelter.

8 Feb. at 10:00 the Feldkommandantur ordered us to place the coffins in the graves which had been prepared in the Basse Street City cemetery from the West along the outer wall.

The graves have been numbered from one to nine in accordance with the list below.

8 Feb. at 4 PM a detachment from the German army came to render military honors. Then we were given orders to fill the graves.

Drawn up at Blois, the 8th of Feb. 1944

The Mayor



## The 8-Ball Tails

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

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Due to space limitations and to ensure the clarity and brevity of submitted material, the Publisher/Editor reserves the editorial license to add, cut or otherwise modify all submitted material so long as the original context of the material is maintained.



"8 Janvier 1997

Dear Mr. H.C. Henry,

I write to you this letter from France in the frame work of a memory I am writing on "The air war over Loir-et-Cher, 1939-1944" (area of Blois, a town settled between Orleans and Tours on river Loire, middle France).

The maister of the town is agree with my project to install a Commemorative Stone to express our recognition for the Sacrifice of the American Aircrews for our Liberation.

Therefore, I have to ask you help about two point of my searches:

1 - I am writing a special memory about the bombing on Blois, the 11 June 1944.

According to american archives one B-24 (PFF) from 44th BG was incorporated in this mission and bombed with others elements of 2nd Air Division.

Please sir, would you be so kind to confirm this aspect of the bombing?

2 - On 5 February 1944, an aircrew attached to 44th BG crashed nearby the village of St. Leonard en Beauce killing:

Eugene Edgerton, Turret  
Kenneth Hall, LW Gunner  
Bernrd F. Ohler, Rad Officer  
Joseph Morin, Tail Gunner  
John Giffin, Co-Pilot  
Harold W. Spink, Bombardier  
Carl A. Bohnish, Pilot  
William F. Levrich, Engineer  
Hubert J. Ede, Navigator  
Warren E. Klein, RW Gunner

It seems to be after the bombing on Tours.

I would be very pleased, very honoured to correspond with veterans of this Bomber Group or with they comrads or members of family to relate me this event.

I know that it is confidential life about a sensitive period and I engage my word to preserve their memories. Is it possible to find information to write a little memory to relate their last mission?

Perhaps, if you want, their names would be probably write in the Commemorative Stone for future generations?

In return, I offer my help to you Unit if you have inquiries about missions over France, missing aircrafts, etc.

I am 33 years old and, after studies at the University of Tours (where I specialized in military aeronautical life of the thirties), I teach History and Geography at Issoudun.

Your reply would be greatly appreciated by the American Air Force enthusiast (being Second Air Force and 8th AF Associate member( I have never ceased to be).

I hope my english understandable.

Thanking you in anticipation...

Sincerely yours,  
Philippe Canonne  
2, RUE ASSOLANT  
41.000 BLOIS  
FRANCE"





# *Beating the Bushes*

*By Art Hand & Will Lundy*

*For the past few months Art Hand has been concentrating his attention again to the Ursel P. Harvell's Roster in the back of '44th Liberators Over Europe.' As a consequence, several of those located dated back to the early days at MacDill and Barksdale fields.*

**MARK PARKINS:** P.O. Box 40, Shawnee Mission, KS 66201. Mark is the son of William M. Parkins, Lt. in the roster, and who folded his wings 5/15/94.

**CLARENCE C. PRICE:** 907 Lancaster St., Rocky Mount, NC 27801. Clarence was listed as a Corporal in the roster.

**CURTIS P. BABIN:** 670 Mahler St., Houma, LA 70363.

**SAM N. BARBER:** 1645 L. "B" St., Blackwell, OK 74631. Sam has moved, relocated. 67th Squadron.

**LUEY BARRINGER:** 10597 Summitt, Rockford, MI 49341. Luey served with the 464th Sub Depot.

**RUSSELL I. BROCKHOFF:** 309 Miami St., Hiawatha, KS 66434. Assigned to 66th Squadron, and with Base Defense Unit.

**HAROLD E. BRUBAKER:** 14722 Mishey Road, Rt. Fredericktown, OH 43109. Harold is listed as a 1st Lt. in the 66th Squadron.

**LESTER O. COLLINS:** P.O. Box #3, Easton, KS 66020. Assigned to 68th Squadron (756). Flew home with Lt. Kiggins in A/C #44-50755.

**CURTIS L. BROITZMAN:** 117 Vermont Street, Beaver Dam, WI 53916. Served with the 67th Squadron, as well as the 491st Bomb Group.

**ROBERT D. EASTERS:** 573 Davis St., Elba, AL 36323. Robert was with us at MacDill Field.

**GEORGE R. GOODRICH:** Road #2, Box 761, Morrisville, VT 05661. George was a M/Sgt., served with headquarters.

**BRUCE E. GRALEY:** HC 64, Box 784, Ashford, WV 25009. Bruce served with the 506th Squadron.

**BURDE A. DUNCAN, JR.:** 497 Wallace St., Northumberland, PA 17857. Served with the 66th and 506th Squadrons. Combat.

**JOHN A. DITONDO:** 393 Delta Road #1, Amherst, NY 14226. John was assigned to the 66th Squadron and an MP.

**FRANCIS T. BEECHER:** 4406 Cherokee Drive, Madison, WI 53711. Served as a medic at Barksdale Field, 1942.

**ELMER O. BEIGAY:** 988 Polk Ave., Franklin Square, NY 11010. Elmer served with the 831st and 340 Engineering.

**EMIL BURBACK:** 19317 NE Pacific St., Portland, OR 97230. No records on Emil. If anyone knows him, let us know.

**KENNETH G. BERKMAN:** 401 S. Carver, Winthrop, MN 55396. Kenneth is listed with the 66th Squadron. He too was on the Queen Mary in Sept. 1942, ground echelon.

**CHARLES T. CARTER:** 605 West Brown Street, Seymour, IN 47274. Charles served at HQ, Barksdale.

**JOSEPH S. DOMINO:** 451 Layton Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15216. Joseph was originally with the 44th, 68th Squadrons, but went to the 98th when it split off in 1942.

**GRADY M. BRUCE:** 5000 Lake Englewood, Waco, TX 76710. Grady served in the 66th Squadron, was with the ground echelon on board the Queen Mary in Sept. 42. He worked with crew chief Robert M. Pugh on #811, Fascinat' Witch.

**LOREN L. OSHEL:** 26 Holly Drive, Olathe, KS 66062. Loren was assigned to the 66th Squadron. Instrument mechanic. He attended Compass School in July, 1944.

**HOWARD L. BOREHARDT:** 1618 South Rose Farm Road, Woodstock, IL 60098. Howard served in the 66th Squadron also, but data could not be located at this time.



# Hickam Air Force Base Patriotism Park

By Roy Owen

In late September last year, I was in Honolulu to attend an annual get-together of a fliers organization to which I belong. I was staying in the VOO next door to the officer's club and had lunch there out on a beautiful lanai that overlooks the entrance to Pearl Harbor. Having been stationed at Hickam during my active duty career, I am familiar with most of that beautiful base. The previous evening, I had occasion to meet Col. Bruce Brown, the Base Commander at the club. He asked me if I had seen the new ALOHA 'AINA PARK and memorial. I had not. He informed me that the next day was POW and MIA Remembrance Day and at 12:45 p.m. there would be a short memorial service and "missing man" fly over by the Hawaii Air National Guard in honor of these lost to us. He invited me to attend.

As I finished lunch, I saw military and civilian people beginning to arrive; they were walking toward an area overlooking the entrance to Pearl Harbor which was out of my line of sight. I departed the lanai area and joined the numbers headed in that direction. As I reached the boundary of the ALOHA 'AINA PARK (Patriotism Park), I was able to see across the lawn to the most beautiful model of a flight of four jet fighter aircraft in the "missing man" formation with the number two man just pulling up heaven bound to leave that spot vacant. The formation is set in a three level terraced garden area at the waters edge where the formation will be headed into the sunset each evening. This is one of the most breathtaking memorials I have seen.

After a brief, poignant, presentation of the meaning of the national POW/MIA Memorial Day by Col. Brown, there followed a touching remembrance of his days as a POW in Germany by an 8th Air Force Veteran. The program finished with the bugler sounding TAPS and the Hawaii National Guard flying F-15 Falcons making a spectacular "missing man" fly over.

Those of you who know me and are aware of my very low emotional threshold when it comes to memorializing our lost comrades, can picture me standing at attention in that beautiful spot listening to the bugle sounding TAPS with that magnificent aerial tribute to our MIA and POW comrades overhead. Through my tears, I felt so wonderfully proud to be an American and to have served my Country in the company of those valorous men and women we were honoring and remembering that day.

I urge anyone visiting Honolulu to make the trip out to Hickam Air Force Base (it is open to the public) to visit this beautiful memorial. THE BUS (the on-base bus stop across the street club. Plan to arrive about 11:00 am. to the back of the club. Then have beautiful buffet lunch on week memorable day.

(it is open to the public) to visit this beautiful memorial. THE BUS (the on-base bus stop across the street club. Plan to arrive about 11:00 am. to the back of the club. Then have beautiful buffet lunch on week memorable day. I promise it will be a



*Photos by Lolly Owen*



## ALOHA 'AINA PARK





# WILL SEZ

Over the years as I've "worked" in my War Room (as Pete Henry calls his), I've seen the pages drop off my calendars year after year, but keep telling myself that I am not growing older. Not me! But I am reminded of an old saying which a fellow worker used to say of his work, "The hurrier I go, the behinder I get." You know, that is exactly the way I am feeling these days - I must be slowing down because things just are not getting done like they used to.

Reflecting on this a few days ago, I decided to take a look at the things within the 44th BGVA with which I've been involved. As one thing after another popped into focus, I decided to make a list of these items, events, business, etc. Now it seems I have a reason, but not an excuse. Your 44th Bomb Group President and his Board have made superb progress since he was elected to the new 44th BGVA two and one-quarter years ago. He has brought us back from zero finances and no progress to where we stand today. Take a look at the following list to see just how far we have come in such a short period of time.

- 1) Converted the old Tower Project funds to the support of a new, larger Reading Room and Museum at Arrow Air Center, Shipdham.
- 2) Supported Kevin Watson's project to provide a memorial near Eastbourne to honor Lt. Bolin's crew and Ruth-Less.
- 3) Supported a memorial at Illfurth, eastern France, for their church and the crash site of Lt. Maynard and his crew.
- 4) OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED AND SUPPORTED Stephen Adam's project to compile a 66th Squadron history, as well as to make him our official representative in England.
- 5) Approved a contract with the Turner Publishing Company to compile and print a book covering the history of the 44th Bomb Group.
- 6) Committed funds and manpower to develop an exhibit honoring General Johnson and his men for their famous Ploesti Mission at the new 8th Air Force Museum near Savannah, Georgia.
- 7) Committed funds and manpower to research the archives at Washington, D.C. and elsewhere to develop records about the 44th Bomb Group, so far

as individual personnel, missions, airplanes, etc. Computerizing this data, in conjunction with programs being set up at the 8th Air Force Museum.

- 8) Committed funds and manpower to develop and install new memorial plaques for the 44th Bomb Group's memory at both MacDill and Barksdale Air Fields, where they originated and trained in 1941 and 1942.
- 9) Most importantly, had our new leadership not taken the bit in their teeth when the old HMG was trashed, none of the above would have been accomplished. As a consequence, the 44th BGVA would not exist to be able to respond to the many requests which are now arriving for data about husbands, fathers, brothers records...Where he served? When, how did he die? Who was the crew that crashed? How can we contact survivors? etc., etc.
- 10) Organized a tour of 45 44th BGVA husbands, wives, children, grandchildren and friends of the 44th BGVA leaving May 26, which will be a memorial trip. The tour will visit Shipdham, the towns folk and the airfield which will include a memorial service; then to Eastbourne, Omaha Beach and Ardennes, where we have 44th members buried and we shall honor them according to our traditions.

Just recently, the 44th BGVA was contacted by a group of French Association Nationale Des Sous-Officers De Reserve De L'Armee DeL'Air, who live in the vicinity of Rouen. They wanted information about two planes which crashed near Rouen on 8 March 1943. Now that contact has been made and some data furnished, they would like more data on EVERY 44th Bomb Group plane which went down in all of France. Too, learning that the 44th BGVA Tour will stop in Rouen in early June, they are begging to honor our men with ceremonies, visit the crash sites, one of which has a memorial. Space does not permit the possibilities that this one contact will make.

I hope that I've made the point clear...your 44th BGVA Board has been very busy making sure that the 44th Bomb Group and their record will never be forgotten. Thank you Roy and all.

Lastly, but certainly just as important, is you the members, whose support and funding that makes it possible for our Organization to continue to grow and produce results. THANK YOU!!

Will Lundy

# FOLDED WINGS

## MARCH, 1997



- John T. Altman* ..... 66th Squadron. Ploesti veteran as member of Lt. Felber's crew. .... 8/96  
Radio Operator.
- Ned L. Anderson* ..... 68th Squadron Pilot. Died several years ago. In 44th Bomb Group  
28 October 1944, flew home on May 28, 1945.
- Richard E. Bottomley* ..... 66th Squadron. One of the originals, worked in the Orderly Room. .... 2/7/97  
Served on 44th HMG Board.
- Alvin V. Breeland* ..... 506th Squadron Airman. Flew with Lt. R.L. Hoisington's crew 44-45 12/13/96
- Arnold M. Curtzwiler* ..... Original 506th Squadron. .... 12/5/81
- Lyman P. Frost* ..... Home state, Maine ..... 9/20/89
- Eugene E. Gaster* ..... 506th - Was one of the original complement at Pueblo, Colorado ..... 11/4/96
- John E. Gunnell* ..... 506th Squadron Co-Pilot for Wm. Maynor POW 20 Dec. 43 ..... 8/10/96
- Solomon G. "Sully" Handy* ..... Died several years ago. He was a Gunner on Lt. O. Collins,  
67th Squadron. Completed tour in early November, 1944.
- Ekmer K. Kohler* ..... 68th Squadron. Pilot. Was co-pilot for B.D. Ford, then 1st Pilot. .... 12/7/96  
Often flew Corky.
- Joseph A. Kuklewitz* ..... 67th Squadron Pilot. Assigned to 44th Bomb Group 7 Sept 1944. .... 11/20/96  
Completed tour 3 March 1945 with 35 missions. Joe attended  
several reunions. Later flew many flights in the Berlin Airlift;  
also Flying Tigers Airline.
- Charles H. Lain* ..... 506th Squadron, Bombardier for Komansinski, bailed out 8-8-44 ..... 01/03/97  
Evaded until picked up by Patton Army.
- Robert S. Lawson* ..... Col. USAFR (Ret) C.O. 1132nd QM Co. .... 2/8/97
- Clifford MacDougal* ..... 67th Squadron Co-Pilot for Kuklewicz. Comp Tour 3 March 45. .... 8/96
- Ronald G. McNeeley* ..... 806 Chemical ..... 10/29/96
- Melvin t. Novotny* ..... 67th Squadron Gunner on Capt. Mueller's crew. Later served ..... 1/5/97  
in Engineering Section.
- Richard C. O'Brien* ..... 66th Squadron Lt. assigned to squadron 3 June 1944. .... 11/96
- William M. Parkins* ..... 506th Squadron Lt. .... 5/15/94
- Otis V. Rogers* ..... 68th Squadron Flight Engineer for Zerman. Comp Tour ..... 3/6/95  
30 Missions 25 January 45.
- Pershing G. Rolfe* ..... 66th Squadron. Original crewman at Barksdale in 1942 with ..... 11/96  
Capt. Adam's crew.
- Robert S. Schimke* ..... 67th Squadron Navigator on Lt. Henderson's crew. .... Date Unknown  
Badly wounded on Ploesti Raid, 1943. Served in Korean War.  
Retired as a Lt. Colonel.
- Jacob "Jack" Wind* ..... 506th Squadron Pilot. First mission 8 April 1944, ..... 10/1/95  
completed 33 missions. Served on 44th HMG Board.  
Great supporter of 44th Bomb Group.

## 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD

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Phone: (301) 577-1487

U.K. Representative: Steve Adams  
28 Bassingham Road  
Norwich, England NR3 2QT  
Phone/Fax: 011-44-1603-400221



## MEMORIAL DEDICATION AND REGIONAL REUNION

*May 3, 1997 - Barksdale AFB, Shreveport, LA*

*At 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 3, the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association will dedicate a Memorial Marker at the 8th Air Force Memorial Walkway at the site of the B-24 Liberator Display. This memorial will commemorate the World War II service of the 44th at Barksdale and be a lasting tribute to the effort we all shared in that conflict. We invite and encourage all 44th Veterans, their families and friends to attend; especially those that were with the Group during its Barksdale service 15 February to 26 July 1942.*

*In the evening there will be a Regional Reunion at the Holiday Inn for all attendees. A reception with cash bar at 6:30 p.m. will precede the dinner. The price of the dinner is \$25. Pay when you sign in at the door.*

*It is necessary we have reservations for the Reunion prior to April 20th. We must have names in advance to secure clearance to the base and make name tags. All 44th members within a 250 mile radius of Shreveport, LA will receive an invitation, a reunion reservation and a hotel reservation form in the mail. We have a block of rooms set aside for us for Friday and Saturday nights at the Holiday Inn Bossier, Bossier City. Follow the instructions therein.*

**MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS BY APRIL 20 AND BE SURE TO INFORM THE HOTEL YOU ARE WITH THE 44TH BOMB GROUP. IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE AN INVITATION AND WISH TO ATTEND, CONTACT JIM CLEMENTS BY PHONE: ☎ (972) 243-4657**



BENJAMIN SMITH, JR.  
 ATTORNEY AT LAW  
 POST OFFICE BOX 1586  
 WAYCROSS, GEORGIA 31502-1586

PHONE: (912) 285-8040

FAX: (912) 285-9930

July 30, 1996

Mr. Roy W. Owens, Editor  
 B-Ball Tales  
 6304 Meadow Ridge  
 Santa Rosa, California 95409

Dear Roy:

I am writing to see if you could run an article about the "Wall of Valor" in an issue of your newsletter. The Memorial Gardens project has really taken off and all concerned with it are very excited. They will be installing the first four sections of the wall next week and more orders are coming in every day. In addition, the reflecting pool has been installed and some of the brick walks are in place. Landscaping goes forward.

I have taken the liberty of enclosing a short article which you can use as well as a copy of our brochure which includes the order form.

I appreciate your consideration of this request. Please let me know if you need any other information. Again, thank you for any assistance you can render in this regard.

Most cordially,

Judge Ben Smith  
 Chairman, Memorial Gardens

BSjr:ck  
 Enclosures

## Did you serve in the 8AF?

Join the company of valiant 8AF'ers whose names are inscribed on the "Wall of Valor" of the Memorial Gardens at the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum in Savannah, Georgia.

Your memorial is 4 x 12" on handsome, indestructible granite. Send rank, full name, squadron and bomber or fighter group (or other unit) of 8AF. Cost is \$100 for 24 letters. Add \$1 for each extra letter.

Example:  
 TSGT CLIFF BACHMAN  
 360 SQ 303BG

The quickest way is to use Mastercard or Visa. Call 1-800-544-8878 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. or send check to:

Wall of Valor  
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There are larger memorials and/or crew memorials available. For information, call us.

Your donation is helping to create the beautiful Memorial Garden and preserve it forever.

Join your 8AF buddies in this great undertaking. It is our memorial.



# AUTHOR'S CORNER



Here is a well recommended book by a B-24 guy to open our Author's Corner:

We are the World War II generation of Americans. Mostly born in the Roaring Twenties, hardened by the Depression, we carried America to victory. Of the many books written about us, none are more moving than those written by us. CREWDOG is such a book, written by John Matt. John flew B-24s with us in the Mighty 8th, the flying unit that suffered more combat deaths than the entire Marine Corps in WWII. He lived to tell about it, but that is only half the story.

A new enemy confronts our generations, and the Cold War sets in. CREWDOG's weather recon squadron penetrates hurricanes and nuclear test bomb clouds and travels to the north Pole. John Matt takes us with him, from the Vietnam of the 1950s to the western edge of the Iron Curtain. From the mysteries of Saudi Arabia to the fall of the Berlin Wall, this gifted storyteller brings us clarity and humor, founded on the American idea of freedom.

Learn for yourself why Tom Clancy, Phyllis DuBois, and Jordan Uttal, among others, have nothing but praise for CREWDOG. To receive your hardcover 512-page copy of CREWDOG, please make out a check for \$28.95 (\$24.95 + \$4 postage and handling) to Waterford Books, and send to:

Waterford Books  
P.O. Box 669  
Hamilton, VA 20159

Be sure to enclose your return mailing address.



Also Leroy W. Newby, 346 Pineview Drive, Venice, FL 34293, has authored TARGET PLOESTI which was the Military Book Clubs Battle Classics November Selection. Price to their members \$17.95. Those wishing to join the Doubleday Military Book Club may call (800) 321-7323.



Another author among us: BLACK HOLE OF WAUWILERMOOS authored by 66th Bomb Squadron member Dan Culler.

For your personal autograph book, please send check with your name and address to:

Dan Culler  
750 South LaBrisa  
Green Valley, AZ 85614-2232  
\$16.50 + \$3.50 shipping and handling per book.



## WAR & WOMEN

Authored by: Jake Elias  
7 East Union Street  
Nanticoke, PA 18634  
Tele: (717) 735-8730

## INFORMATION WANTED

August 2, 1944, Ploesti plus one. Gen. Ent presenting Purple Heart Medals to men wounded on the Ploesti Mission. We need the names and squadron of these men.

**If you can identify any or all, notify the Editor.**





*More  
“Down De Hatch”  
follow-up:*

12/31/96

Dear Roy Owen:

The Vol. 2 No. 1 8-Ball Tails story and photo of “Down De Hatch” was quite interesting to myself, not because our crew ever flew in that airplane, but it seemed that we, six enlisted men of the Komasiniski crew probably shared a quonset hut in the 506th Squadron site with those of a crew who had finished their tour flying that plane.

A further interest is that after being MIA in France for about a month and then returning to the 44th and 506th squadron before being sent to the ZOI by the ATC northern route, I had gone to the supply room and begged for some kind of a warm jacket to wear on the way. I was given a B-10 jacket which is fabric with a fur collar and has a warm lining, much warmer than an A-2 jacket. That jacket had painted on the back “Down De Hatch, 30 Times.” Later when examining it further, my initials and serial number were found on the inside. It had been mine previous to being MIA and apparently must have been appropriated by one of those men in our hut, but had somehow been returned to the supply room. I wore it into civilian life until being worn out; it was discarded.

Something otherwise of note, the last issue of “8th Air Force News” Vol. 4, page 14 lists heavy bomb groups and number of missions that each flew. The 93rd leads with the 44th ranking 3rd and the 303rd, a B-17 group having the 2nd most missions flown, with a total of 364.

With the help of Will Lundy, as usual, contact was established with the son of one of our long lost gunners, Coley W. Richardson. He flew with our crew on the unfortunate mission when we bailed out of that burning B-24, “My Peach,” 42-100415 on August 8, 1944. His story, as related to his son Bill is included. Bill would very much like to hear from any of his father’s original crew or from any one who knew Coley in the 506th Squadron. There is little mention of him in Norman Kiefer’s book. Bill’s address is: Bill Richardson, 2451 Cedar Drive, Laurenceville, GA 30243. He is also a 44th BGVA member and is listed in the membership listing booklet.

As I had agreed with you at St. Louis, my story is being prepared and when ready, a copy will be sent to you. Be aware though that some of it had been previously printed in Joe Warth’s 44th Logbook, but there are a number of typos. See the December, 1989, page 9 and Spring, 1991, page 36 and Summer, 1991, page 46 if you want to read any of it.

I had very much enjoyed our reunions at San Antonio and St. Louis too, even though being stranded at Grant’s Farm when the last bus left just as I was leaving the gift shop. Hope to get to Salt Lake City in October too.

Sincerely,  
Frank Schaeffer

## This is Coley W. Richardson's story as related to his son Bill Richardson in later years.

Anyway, "Here is my fathers account of what happened the day "My-Peach" was shot down. The story was told to me over the course of my life with my Dad, in bits and pieces, so take that into account when reading the material.

He said he volunteered for duty on the plane to get out of a detail (guard duty maybe). He liked to fly and I think this was his 30th flight. Interestingly, he said he frequently flew missions to escape ground duty!

Back to that mission, when Coley (Dad) bailed out of the plane on that fateful day, he said, he pulled his rip cord right away. This slowed his decent down, and he became concerned about ground fire. He had never jumped before but had heard that you could partially collapse a chute and speed your descent. He tried this and successfully sped up his fall. Unfortunately, he was not as successful about getting it back open. Meanwhile, he noticed ground troops closing in on his landing area. He thought they were Germans so he planned to hit the ground running (not having been to formal jump training, he said he did not understand the drop and roll technique to distribute the force). Anyway, when he got his chute back fully open, he was just about to hit the ground. He hit the ground hard with the full force on one leg because he was going to try and run from the people closing in on his location. He suffered a compound fracture of his left leg.

The ground troops turned out to be the French underground. Who, upon seeing the extent of his injuries and knowing they could not care for him, they advised him to wait and surrender to the Nazis, which he did (I think he said they liberated his money, rightfully, for their cause).

After capture or being turned over by the French (I'm not clear about this) the Germans put him into what I think was a normal "French" hospital that was converted for prisoners. His leg was pinned back together by the Germans in this hospital. He had a story he only told when he was inebriated, about the doctor not giving him anesthesia and questioning him while he worked on his leg. Dad said the doctor stopped the drill every few turns and asked him about his unit (plane count, officers on My-Peach, etc.). Apparently they soon realized how tough he was. He passed out from pain while reciting his name, rank and service number. His leg had to be reset and repinned after he was liberated.

You could see the end of the replacement pin from both sides of his knee. He had some trouble walking after his leg healed, and when he tried to reenter the service, they would not take him. This bothered him for a long time, because he had planned a full military career. Although it healed pretty good, he did die with a slight limp. After the operating room experience, he was apparently well treated by the French nurses.

A letter written by my uncle states that the Armed forces notified his mother that he was shot down and missing; however, before they reported his status, she received a letter from Dad in the hospital in "France." This doesn't seem possible, but that is the information I have.

Later he was liberated and evacuated by the Allies before he was completely healed. He also talked about giving his leather flight jacket to a soldier who carried him on his back for miles to get to the liberation point.

## MAIL CALL



*This comes from:*  
**Col. Bill Cameron**  
2/13/96

*Editor: This came to the Lundy's from our man in Carmel, Col. Bill Cameron.*

Dear Will & Irene:

I have a story for you that may or may not be of interest. Sometime in 1943 (perhaps I was in London with a few friends), four of us decided to visit Soho for lunch. We found a restaurant that looked interesting (there were many at that time) and went in. We were in our Class A's, as was appropriate in wartime. The menu was of course very modest, featuring such delicacies as beans on toast, etc. I don't recall that our fellow customers included any other G.I.'s. When our lunches arrived at the table, we were quite surprised to see that each of our four plates was the same, presenting us with a large mound of pureed spinach! For some reason, despite our surprise, we accepted the dishes, and when one of us attempted to taste it, he found that the spinach covered (hid) a juicy steak!

The proprietor came over to our table and introduced himself. It turned out that he previously had a restaurant in Chicago (Greek-American?). This was his way of greeting fellow Americans.

I looked for the place in 1988. Needless to say, the restaurant and our benefactor were gone, but not forgotten.

With very best regards,



*This comes from:*  
**J.T. Elias**  
7 East Union Street  
Nanticoke, PA 18634  
Tele: (717) 735-8730

Dear Roy,

The letter from Dan Culler regretting the lack of interest by the 44th members in his book, BLACK HOLE OF WAUWILERNOOS hit a chord in me. I had similar response for my book WAR & WOMEN. As he says, "Maybe people are tired of hearing about WWII." My literary agent in London told me that the British people think of WWII as "ancient history." But ancient history is very valuable. So I would tell Dan Culler to keep his chin up and keep beating the bushes for customers. During good weather, I spent one day each week visiting bookstores and soliciting orders. Very few turned me down, but most took the book on consignment, paying only upon selling the book. But it keeps selling, though slowly.

A small publisher does not have the clout of the giant book producers with their large advertising accounts and connections to TV stations and book reviewers. So we small guys must work and sweat to put our work before the public. Since we are retired though, we are lucky to have the time.

Lew Robinson gave my book an excellent write-up in the summer issue of the '8 Ball Tails." Dr. Herbert Wilson of Bismarck, SD wrote to tell me my book was the best he'd read on World War II. Bob Lehnhausen phoned me from Illinois to tell me how much he'd enjoyed the book. These pats on the back keep a guy going, and I am very grateful to them, all very dear friends who show their friendship in concrete ways.



Enough of my story. I had to go to the funeral of a dear friend and buddy a few weeks ago. I first met Elvin Scheetz in our hut at the 68th Squadron a short time after D-Day. His crew had just filled the empty cots of a crew that had been shot down. Elvin and his buddies watched us wide-eyed as we came from a debriefing after a mission to France. We seemed to click right from the start, and ever since, we had been buddies. Not long after coming to the 68th, Elvin was transferred to a B-25 outfit in Corca, bombing Germany over the Alps. One day their plane was badly injured, one engine out, and no way of making it back over the Alps. They managed to get close enough to Switzerland for all the crew to parachute into internment. However, the pilot was too low to bail out after he'd made sure all his men were out; so he took the plane down. Elvin landed on a hill and could see the plane crash land into a field on the German side. To his horror, he saw three German soldiers pull out the pilot and shoot him in cold blood. That scene had haunted Elvin ever since.

Since he lived in Allentown, only eighty miles from my home, we often met for lunch. Elvin was always outspoken about the good of America, a true patriot who was not averse to standing up for our Country. He developed cancer, and when I last saw him in the hospital, he was the ghost of himself, dying shortly after. At his funeral, the people kept coming and coming, a tribute to a fine friend and great American.

I'd like to make a suggestion. Why not list the books of 44th Group members with their prices and where they can be bought? That way you would not only help 44th men, but help the group itself by spreading the history of which we were participants. This would take very little space and do a service to both authors and people interested in our history.

Best wishes to you and all our members.

Sincerely

*Editor: All of you published authors out there, let us know where we can find your book(s).*



*This comes from:*  
**Col. (Ret.) Mike Mikoloski**  
**66th Squadron**  
2/13/96

*Editor: This comes from Col. (Ret.) "Mike" Mikoloski, Board Member representing the 66th Squadron. There are some important thoughts about General Leon Johnson, so focus on what Mike and MSG Walter Patrick have to say.*

Dear Roy:

Enclosed are a couple of letters from MSG Walter Patrick who did visit the General after my strong urging. Sgt. "Pat," along with Sgt. Walter Hazelton and I are the lone survivors from the crew of "JENNY," later renamed "LADY LUCK." Tom Scrivner was our Aircraft Commander and my close friend and roommate when I was in the 66th. Tom and the crew of "Lady Luck" went down over Ploesti on their 25th mission. For a long time they were listed as MIA, later listed as KIA. Pat, Hazelton and I, luckily, had completed our tours that summer and we have been in touch over all the years since. Sgt. Pat and I got together at Westover AFB after the war and we, together, conceived and sponsored an Information and Education Program that caught the eye of AF Headquarters and General Johnson, who, at the time, was Chief, Personnel Services. I was brought into the Pentagon, rejoined with the General and stayed on his staff until he retired.

After reading his letter of December 3, I asked Sgt. Pat if we could print his letter. He answered with his permission to print the original and his response. I would like to see them published in The 8-Ball Tails, as it may influence other members of the 44th, who may be in the area, to drop in on General Johnson. I can assure them they will be warmly and graciously welcomed. As for the General, there is a strong and lasting bond between him and those who served with the 44th. These visits also give him a great lift and rejuvenate his mental and physical faculties. Frankly, except for just a few of us like Sgt. Pat, B/Gen. Jack Gibson, Ed Dobson and Bill Taylor, not many others have paid him a visit. All, if not most of his contemporaries have long folded their wings, so we, the former members of his 44th are the only ones left.

Thanks and with kindest personal regards,



**Mt. Pleasant, North Carolina**  
**12/3/96**

**Editor:** For all of us who would perhaps feel we were being intrusive by making a call on General Johnson, I'm sure you will read here that those feelings are completely unfounded. And remember, he is 83, we are fortunate to still have him...so, like SMSGT "Pat," JUST DO IT!

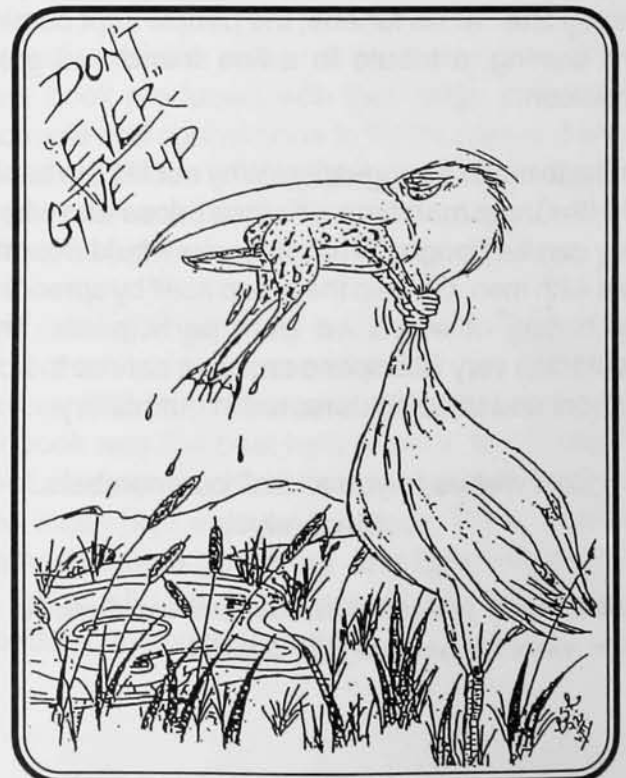
Dear Col. Mike:

What makes the General great can be revealed by the story about Sgt. Cox "The Real Flying Eight Ball" that appeared in the Winter, 1996 issue of the Second Air Division Journal, page 11. Incidentally, I didn't receive my copy until I got back from Springfield, VA on Dec. 2nd. And, yes, I did get with the General...It was a real emotional meeting for me, at least...Evelyn and I were treated Top Drawer by all the staff at the facility...we were offered dinner and dessert but, of course, we declined. Unfortunately, you were right about the medication he takes, he was very cheerful, but slightly subdued. When we arrived he was in the lounge having a piece of pumpkin pie and whipped cream...I kneeled down in front of him and placed my hands over his and began my presentation...I was wearing my Eight Ball hat and pointed to it and said, "I don't think you know me, but I flew with Col. Mikoloski on Jimmy Kahl and Tommy Scrivners crews...I went on to say "General, beside wanting to see you, I wanted you to know that I represent all the Enlisted men who ever flew with you or under your command and we think you are the greatest, most brave pilot and leader who has ever flown." He sort of had a smile on his face and as he squeezed my hand he said, "I really do appreciate your visit and what you are saying...that really got to me...here he was a Four Star General speaking to a Sergeant. This meant so much to me since I had been born and raised in the Army, my father being a 30 year Master Sergeant in the Corps of Engineers...Meeting the General, to me, was like meeting another of my military heroes, Stonewall Jackson...to me they are both the same mold. Evelyn talked to the General also...She told him

about how we used to babysit his kids before we got married...he laughed and said, "That was a long time ago!" I was pleased that, though we visited for over 20 minutes, he seemed fairly strong throughout our stay.

Besides his kind words about General Johnson in the 2nd Air Division Journal, Sergeant Cox' story also brought back an incident that Saterfield and me were involved in...we were both busted to Private, along with six other combat crew members for taking a carry-all and driving into Norwich, where we parked on a back street...An old English gentleman on a bicycle ran into the vehicle. He called the MPs and they were waiting for us to return after removing the distributor cap...Of course, we all had to fly again to at least get our Buck Sergeant stripes back...in my case it may have been a life saving incident, because I volunteered to fly with two other crews, Capt. Miller for one to Vegasack. So by the time Ploesti came along, I had 25 plus. I'm surprised they didn't make me go anyway, but they didn't. Thank the good Lord for that! Yes, Sergeant Cox was right when he said the General wears his star with authority, and his Medal of Honor with humility.

All our love,  
Pat and Evelyn





*Editor: We had answered a previous letter from Dick inquiring about his cousin S/Sgt. Travis Nash, Radio Operator on the 506th Squadron Lt. George F. Brown, Jr. Crew. Brown and Nash were both killed by flak in "Tinker Belle" on the 5 April 1945 raid on the Plauen, Germany Transportation network.*

***This comes from:  
Dick Martin  
ASS Mem #48  
4th FG  
&AFHS  
Tenn. Chapter of Same  
12/96***

Dear Mr. Lundy:

Thank you very much for your swift response to my request. I have requested material from National Archives and Maxwell AFB as well.

I did not know this relative existed until 6 to 8 months ago. This research is as much for Travis' brother, who is an attorney in Louisville, Ky and his 91 year old sister in Texas, who have never known exactly the circumstances surrounding his death. Maybe I can, with your and Mr. Owens' help, relay the information to them. No doubt they will appreciate it, as do I.

Thanks again, and wish you and yours a very happy holiday season.

Most respectfully,



*Editor: We got a lot of feedback from the "Down De Hatch" feature. That's the purpose of these features...to stir up those old memories and swap stories. This is what Will Lundy calls "the gravy" in the history of a great outfit like ours. The first one comes from the 506th's own Ken Adrian.*

***This comes from:  
Ken Adrian (506th)  
2297 Chantala Avenue  
Pueblo, Colorado 81006  
12/12/96***

Dear Will:

I was surprised and happy to see "Down De Hatch" as the honored plane on this issue of 8 Ball Tails.

You had a question mark on the August 26th mission - we (Wimsatt) had a mission flown to Salzbergen Oil on that date. We probably flew Bar Z. I have my records in Wisconsin and could confirm this. I kept a bomb pin with the ship number we flew and the bomb load on each mission. We did fly Bar Z as Deputy Lead on our 19th mission.

On the 27th, we had a mission to Berlin scheduled and flew to Denmark where we ran into a tremendous cold front and had to return to base. We were given credit for that one - we were shot at by the 88s. Mission #20 probably in Down De Hatch, and we flew Bar Z to Calais on August 30. (#21)

I have found a few articles in my 1996 "Intercom" that you might be interested in. It is the "8 Ball Tails" of the AGA (mostly RAF). About eight years ago, I went to one of their conventions in Southport. We were treated like returning royalty. There was a dance each night with a big band. I had a number of meals with Bill Reid (UC) as I had a Grade "A" dairy farm at the time and he had one in England. (I understand that Bill crash landed at Shipdham on his Victoria Cross mission. True). Bill and I compared notes as to who was getting the most welfare from our government. This was about the time of the dairy buyouts where you got paid for NOT milking for five years. No feeding cows, no manure to haul, no crops to put in to feed the cows. You just collected about half of your milk check, then drank beer in the local pub. He said they dumped their surplus butter and cheese into the ocean to keep from having a surplus, keep the prices up.

Peter Crouch, a former S&J Commander sat in on at least one of these sessions. He was a wheel in the outfit, now lives in Spain.

I had intended to go to the Convention in Wales a few years later, but my doctor in Missouri decided I was going to die in about a year - from heart failure. Thank God it was a missed diagnosis, as this happened about five years ago. I have a new doctor, you might guess, as I wasn't ready for the great runway in the sky.

Cheers,

**Editor:** Ken also sends along a couple of contradictory views about how RAF crews flying sub patrol in the B-24 viewed the training in "ditching/dinghy drill. These cut-outs come from "The Intercom", the publication of the Air Crew Association, an English association of combat airmen.

#### "THE FORGOTTEN AIRFORCE

The forgotten Airforce (Intercom - Summer '96) refers to the time available to the crew of a Liberator to reach the safety of the dinghy, which would have been inflated, should they have survived ditching in the Ocean.

I did a Tour of operations with 357(SD) Squadron based at CHINA BAY in Ceylon, flying across the Indian Ocean to drop Gurkhas into Malaya. Averaging 19 hours with 16 hours across water meant that we took our Dinghy-drill very seriously. Because all but the rear turret had been stripped from the aircraft to conserve weight, the time estimated to reach the dinghy was 20 seconds. Each crewman was allocated a task such as was necessary to inflate and launch the dinghy and collect the axe, etc. During the daylight hours, our height was kept at 50 feet above sea-level because our route meant that we passed close to Jap held Nicobar Islands and the northern coast of Sumatra and needed to avoid their Radar. Over the dense jungle of Malaya where the DZs were located, any thoughts of survival due to engine failure were alleviated, due to the explicit trust one had in those 4 Pratt & Whitney Wasp engines. If we had given a thought that, in the remote possibility, we would survive a crash-landing in jungle territory only to be beheaded by the Japs - a fact now revealed in the excellent book by Air Commodore H. Probert called 'The Forgotten Airforce' we could never have succeeded in playing our part.

STAN SMITH, ACA 10666, 5 MAYFIELD CLOSE, DORSET, BH22 9HS"

#### "DITCHING LIBERATORS

The letter by DIC Boissier reminded me of flying Liberators when I served in 224 Squadron in Milltown, Nr. Elgin, Scotland, from October 1944 to March 1945.

All our flights were over the sea and at a very low altitude, as we were on anti-submarine patrol. We heard very early in the tour that the Liberator broke in half on impact with the sea and sank like

stone in about 30 seconds. I can't recall this having any effect on the morale of our crew or indeed of anyone else that we knew. However, it did mean that we had a few extra free afternoons, because when "Ditching Drill" was down on the programme at the local baths no-one bothered to go. No doubt other ex-Coastal Command crew could let us have their comments.

G SHAKESPEARE, ACA 17395"



**Editor:** Francis Peck joins me in my admiration of our Ground Crews and Support people. His short letter to Will Lundy and Will's reply are two beautiful pieces of correspondence. In his reply, Will answers the question I always had about the stand-offish demeanor of our Crew Chief and his men. By the time I arrived, the days of one crew assigned to an airplane they had named were long past. We must have flown a half a dozen different planes among our missions. I figured the constant mixing of crews and airplanes was why we only got barely acquainted, rather than really friendly with those guys. Now it really makes sense. We felt the same way with the other crews in our quonset after the first loss.

**This comes from:**

**Francis J. Peck**

**2620 South Lamonte Street**

**Spokane, Washington 99203-2450**

**1/15/97**

Dear Will:

Until I learned that you were of the ground personnel, I never gave it much thought of what they did. During my tour of duty as an air crew member of the 67th Squadron, to my memory, I never even recognized the men around the bomber prior to take off nor on return.

Now, many times my thoughts go back to the mechanics who worked on the aircraft during the night and many times in inclement weather. The same for the men who loaded the bombs and ammunition and the technicians who checked the electronics, etc. Even the guy who used to wake us for a mission, the clerks who were responsible for the payroll, etc. I wish I could thank every one of them. Hats off to them!

Sincerely,

2/2/97

Dear Francis:

Thank you for your recent letter of 15 January, which was waiting for Irene and I when we returned from our cruise. We had taken it to celebrate our 50th.

Your comments about the ground crew and other ground personnel were appreciated by me, and I am sure by all the rest of the support people.

You stated that during your tour of duty, that you never even recognized the men around the bomber, neither on the T.O. or return. I can't speak for all the others, but there is a reason for this.

For most of us non-combatants, we were there for the duration. Most of us went over with the original combat crews, even training with them, lived with them prior to England. So when we got into combat, we started to lose planes and crews. When our friends suffered that fate, did not return from a mission, it was like losing a brother, or brothers. After it happened to me on 8 March 1943 - "my" plane went down - I made a special effort NOT to get acquainted with any new replacement airmen. It was bad enough to lose "our" plane without close friends too.

To avoid all of this, I made a special effort to stay away from you - even so far as not looking at your faces. When you arrived at the plane set for a mission, or even for the practice flights, I did my job and then got away from the plane a good distance and watched from there, making sure that the plane was ready for you. Same was true when you returned - we went immediately to work examining the plane for visible damage, and then care of the plane to get it ready for the next mission. I tried to avoid contacts with you all.

So don't feel badly about it - it was more our fault, not yours. You had a tough job, the enemy was shooting at you! Our's was to make sure that the plane would get you there and back. Sure, it was long and miserable at times, but in no way could it be compared to yours.

Things are fine down this way - hope that your wet and cold winter so far up there hasn't affected you too much.

All our best,  
Will



*Editor: Next we hear from another of "Down De Hatch's" Mother Squadron, crewmen, Frank N. Schaeffer of Montello, WI.*

*This comes from:  
Frank N. Schaeffer (506th)  
Montello, WI  
1/25/97*

Dear Roy Owen:

You may recall that I had written you recently with some information about the B-24 "Down De Hatch" since the 8 Ball Tails was received. Well, a bit more information has surfaced while I had been reading an old issue of the Liberator Club's publication, "*Briefing*." This may be old forgotten stuff, but to myself, it proved quite interesting, especially to any of the crews that had flown that plane. Included you will find a marked copy of that page with the letter by Bus Badgett, the co-pilot from the 453rd and 389th Bomb Groups. I intend to also write him with the combat record of #42-95016, if you don't mind.

Some sad news was word of Charles H. Lain passing away. He was the bombardier on our crew, Bernard Komasiński's. He had bailed out with us on August 8, 1944, been wounded, but evaded capture by hiding out in the forests of France until being liberated by Gen. Patton's 3rd Army. Death was on January 3, 1997. His home was in O'Fallon, Missouri. He is survived by his wife and family.

I'm still planning on getting to Salt Lake City in October.

Sincerely,

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO "DOWN DE HATCH"?

On April 2, 1944, we picked up a new B-24 at Hamilton Field, California and flew it to Morrison Field, Florida. From there we flew the "Southern Route" which took us across the Atlantic Ocean from Natal, Brazil to Dakar, Africa and then on to St. Mawgan, England. After another short flight to Valley, England, we were approached by an artist who had come to negotiate a price for painting something on the side of the aircraft. If my memory has not misled me, I believe we were quoted a price of 60 to 80 dollars for the painting of a nude female

and a title, not to exceed X number of letters. A nude female painting would cost in the range of 30 to 50 dollars. We pooled our money and came up with 40 dollars. For this we got a painting of a bomb heading for a commode with the words "Down De Hatch."

We were very proud of our new insignia, thinking it immediately gave the bomber a unique place in the war with its own name. Still another short flight took us to Worton, England. We landed proudly with our newly christened war bird. Our elation was soon shattered, however, when we were told the airplane would remain there to be fitted with combat modifications such as bullet proof windows, iron plates, etc. This is where we left our "Down De Hatch" never to see her again. Later we flew other planes on combat missions, but, "Down De Hatch" was never one of the B-24s assigned to us. Now in my older years, I frequently wonder what ever happened to "Down De Hatch." Did any of you ever fly in this aircraft? If so, I would appreciate a card with any follow-up historical notes to help satisfy my curiosity. Thank you very much.

Bus Badgett, Co-Pilot on Ralph Woodard's crew stationed part time at "Old Buck" and at Hethel, England (453rd and 389th Bomb Groups, April-July, 1944) 3467 Mt. Laurence Dr., San Diego, CA 92117

*Editor: Before you read this last letter from Roger Tewksbury on "Down De Hatch," I must tell you that about a week after we put that issue in the mail, I got a call from "Down De Hatch" Crew Chief, Jack Morgan wanting five more copies for his kids and grand kids. He said the 8-Ball Tails arrived when they were having a family get-together so the old Sarge got to tell all the family how he and the "Hatch" fought that war! YOU'RE THE MAN, JACK!*

**This comes from:  
Roger L. Tewksbury  
57 Owen Drive  
Littleton, NH 03561  
1/1/97**

Dear Will:

Hope this letter finds you and yours in good health.

As historian, you might be interested in the B-24 Z named "Down De Hatch" appearing on the cover of the Winter 1996 Issue of the "44th Bomb Group Veteran's

Association" Magazine. I'll fill you in on why the Z didn't fly August 25, 1944 to September 1, 1944.

On August 24, 1944 our pilot Firman Mack (now deceased) and crew were given order to fly the B-24 (above mentioned) to Hannover, Germany. The following are notes from my diary which I kept at that time:

"Aug. 24, 1944

Mission: To bomb hangars believed to house aircraft around an airstrip near Hannover, Germany. It had been bombed before but showed signs of reconstruction.

Results: Our squadron dropped bombs about two miles short of the runway.

Reason: Because someone got an itchy finger and dropped bombs too soon. Some of our bombs hit a railroad.

Weather: Raining on takeoff, a little bit hazy over target, otherwise good.

Bombing Altitude: 22,000 ft.

Fuel Load: 2700 gal. not topped off

Plane: B-24-H, Z, not so good for speed, drawing 56 inches on takeoff. Power setting on the way into target was 2400 R.P.M., 42 inches of manifold pressure in Auto-Rich

Flak: Saw flak a few miles inside of Germany, heavy and very accurate flak after hitting IP. A few rockets seen but none very near us.

Battle Damage: #2 engine hit in cylinder bank, broke a rocker-box causing a great oil leak clear from target to base. May need new engine. Right tire hit by flak, hydraulic leak in actuating cylinder on nose gear, wiring in bombay cut up by flak, antenna cut off, flaps full of holes. Wings and Fuselage contained approximately 60 flak holes and scars.

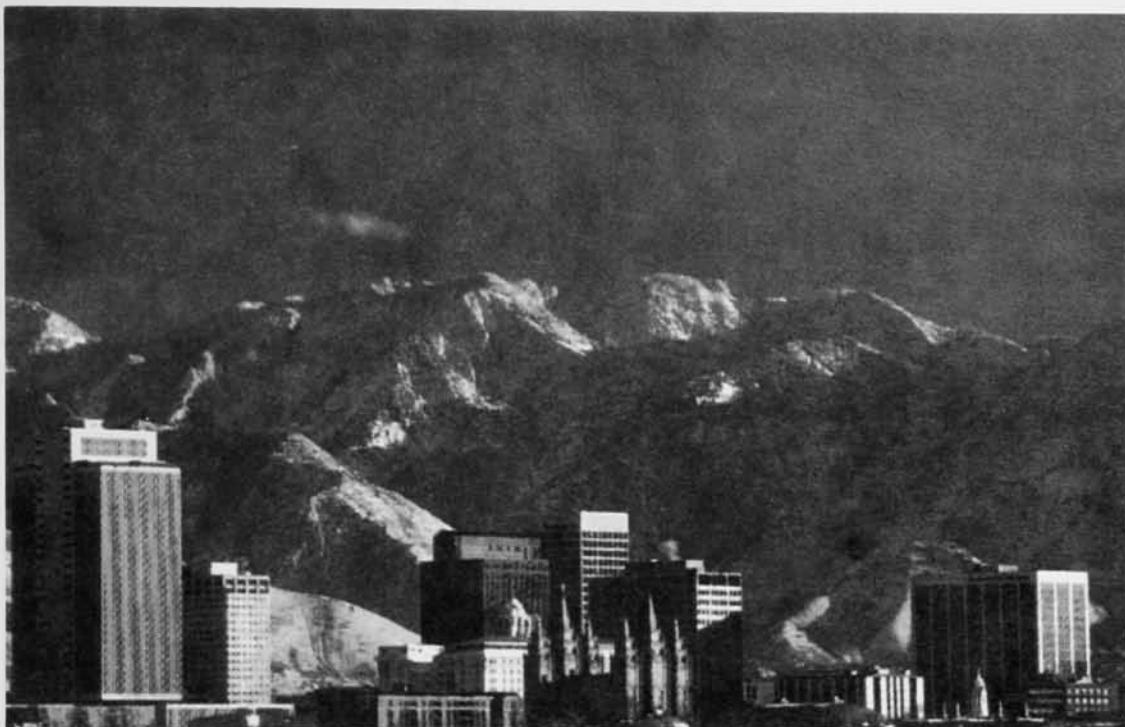
Had a slight vibration on landing due to right flat tire. Went off runway stopping on grass turning around facing opposite of landing direction. Plane would be out approximately two weeks.

Fighters: No enemy fighters seen or reported, had P-47s, P-38s and P-51s for escort."

After checking for flak damage on return to base, I could see a small hole in top of the right wing over the right tire wheel well. Figuring that the right tire may have been damaged Mack landed on the grass so as not to tie up the runway for others. When the weight of the aircraft started to settle down on the right landing gear (tire was flat) the ship did a 180 degree turn before coming to a stop. I couldn't blame the crew chief from being disgusted after seeing the aircraft sitting in the grass and all the battle damage.

Trust this information will be of interest to you. Happy New Year!

Sincerely,



**Announcing a change of dates for our Reunion  
Salt Lake City, Utah**

**Due to a schedule conflict at the Mormon Temple, we must  
move our Reunion forward to October 9 - 13, 1997.**

**Please mark your calendar now.**

The program for our meetings and dinners will follow the one we had at our very successful reunion in St. Louis last year. Those registered for the entire reunion will attend the Reception Thursday evening, the Squadron Dinner Friday night, the General Business meeting Saturday morning, and the Gala Banquet that night. Sunday morning they attend the Mormon Tabernacle Choir concert and on to the Hill AFB to tour the museum. That night there will be a buffet dinner with entertainment to follow.

We will have our traditional Hospitality Room up and running every night.

The same options of last year will be available to those unable to attend the entire Reunion. They will be able to attend all functions scheduled for the days they are there.

There will be some very interesting tours for Friday and Saturday afternoon offered as optional. The tour details, as well as the Reunion registration and hotel reservation forms will be published in the Summer issue of the 8-Ball Tails. Look for them and mail in early.

Like everyone, we are being squeezed by creeping inflation. These rising costs, along with responding to the membership requesting a centrally located prime hotel (so the ladies can shop conveniently), you will see a moderate increase in the cost of the overall Reunion package. We will still be offering a super Reunion bargain you can't afford to miss!

# 1997

## 44th Bomb Group Veterans



## Association Reunion



### OCTOBER 9 - 13, 1997

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**44th Bomb Group  
VETERANS ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 2367

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**OCTOBER 9 - 13, 1997**