

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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T. S. Tessie



Usually the cover of the 8 Ball Tails is reserved for a plane with a crew and a colorful story. This cover deals with a picture with an amazing story. It was made with color film, a truly rare commodity in wartime England.

T.S. Tessie #42-95001 Z (68th Sq.) led a charmed life. She arrived in Shipdham in April 1944, and flew her first mission April 22, piloted by 1st Lt. **Charles F. Kuch**. One of her more colorful events was on January 16, 1945, when the mission was to

Berlin, but the target was fogged over, so the second choice was Dresden. On the return home, along with many other B'24s, they were low on fuel; and learned that Shipdham was "socked in". Along with about fifty other A/C, they landed at Orly Airport, outside of Paris, and it was a golden opportunity for many of the airmen to see the City of Lights. (It was rather dark in those days.)

One hundred seven missions later, *T.S. Tessie* flew on the 44th's last mission, piloted by 1st Lt. **Trent Ackerman**, 25 April 1945. A month later, the plane and crew were back in the United States.

The image of *T. S. Tessie* #42-95001 Z (68th Sq.) landing on the E-W Runway at Shipdham has had a charmed life. It reached **Will Lundy** via **Bob Seeger**, whose brother sent him color film when he was at Shipdham, an unimaginable treasure. The negatives came to Will in glass cases; and he had to hunt a specialist to develop them.

Will sent it to this editor for use in the 'Tails'; and the Post Office lost it for no less than seven months. The package arrived weather-beaten, but with contents intact.

The picture depicting the glorious moment of a plane arriving safely to the Shipdham airfield should stir the soul of airmen and ground crews alike.

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MICHEL YUSPEH
ENGINEER, ELECTRICAL EXPERT,
COORDINATOR OF REUNIONS



'Mike' Yuspeh enlisted in the service as an Air Cadet, moved into the school for Navigators, passed up a commission and went to war as an Aircraft Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Thomas Waters** crew. The members of the 44th BGVA know him as Reunion Chairman Supreme.

"I lived all my life in New Orleans," Mike explained, "and it was really a small town. Everybody knew everybody. I got into the politics of the community by serving on lots of committees." When he got home from the War, he opened a warehouse, stocked auto parts and sold them throughout southeast United States. In 1947 he married Rose Faye Rabenovitz, and they raised two enterprising boys—Alan and Larry. Both sons found themselves in the arena of Capitol Hill. Alan became the Chief Counsel and Deputy Director of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. He wrote a book of Ethics for the U. S. Government, still in use. Larry became an expert on missiles, and at the tender age of twenty, spoke to Congress on the over-expenditures of the missile program.

These contacts took Mike and Rose to Washington from time to time, where they rubbed shoulders with Senators and Congressmen on a personal level. This worked to Mike's advantage when he set

out to get money to restore the *Louisiana Belle*. He called on his congressman for help, who called on the congressman at Shreveport, and the money flowed. Can any of us forget the Reunion in Shreveport? The war on terror had begun; the Barksdale base was closed to all groups except ours. There were the B-52s, lined up for the trip to Afghanistan. We cannot forget the beautiful dedication ceremony, reminding the 44th BGVA that the plane belonged to us, and was refurbished in honor of those who flew in it. It was all orchestrated by Mike Yuspeh. He stepped up to the plate when he was needed.

"When **Jim Clements** wanted to give up the job of Reunion Chairman, **Roy Owen** asked me to take over," Mike recalled. "My first reunion was at Savannah. We were late getting reservations, so accommodations were limited. Needless to say, we started early to prepare for the next Reunion."

There is no denying, Mike's most dazzling achievement in coordinating a Reunion was in New Orleans. The banquet event turned into a Masquerade Ball, a 44th BG Mardi Gras, replete with twirling costumed figures, feathered masks and even a Bag Lady. No question, it was New Orleans at its finest.

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The memories of War have not dimmed for Mike. After D-Day his crew, piloted by **Thomas Waters**, was at Petersen Field, expecting to get a brand new B-24 to fly to England. Suddenly it was decided that crews were needed, more so than planes. Hustled onto a train, they rode across the country to the dock in New York where the Queen Mary was awaiting. They climbed aboard, and immediately the gangplank was pulled up behind them. From there, it was on to Scotland, Ireland and Shipdham where they became members of the 506th Bomb Squadron. On 1 August 1944 Mike flew his first mission. "We flew our 35 missions, and all survived, unharmed," he recalled. "I still stay close to my crew. Now there are only four of us left."

Every airman has a 'worst mission' memory, and Mike's was #25, November 6, 1944, an oil refinery at Sterkrade, Germany.

"We had been hit with flak, one engine was down and we had lost fuel. I was transferring fuel; and at that point, was sure we couldn't make it back home. We wondered if we could make it to Belgium. "The 32 ships that the Group dispatched formed the 14th Combat Wing, and were the third Wing in the Division. The target was covered with 10/10 clouds with unobservable results. The 506th sent eight ships to Sterkrade. We were on instrument flying for 1 hour and 15 min, carrying four 2,000 # GPS bombs. When ordered, fused wire was pulled and we dropped three bombs; the fourth would not release. That meant a 2000 # bomb was stuck in the Bomb Bay. There was no way we could get back to England with this bomb aboard and two or three engines to conserve fuel with this load. So I put on a portable oxygen bottle and walked on the cat walk in the Bomb Bay. This walk is about six inches wide. I looked down, and all I could see was clouds and some ground when the clouds broke. It was frightening, but I knew I had to do what I was trained to do. I manually tripped the

bomb release. It would not release. My oxygen was running low. In frustration, I kicked the bomb. Out it went, falling someplace in France. Fortunately, I had on heavy flight boots, so I didn't feel the kick.

"We did make it back to Shipdham, sent out our flares and landed; we had twenty minutes of gas left."

Returning to the states, Mike studied electronics; and soon was in charge of an electrical shop, repairing any plane with an electrical problem. Then, like everyone else in the country, he remembers where he was on VJ Day—Denver, Colorado. Four days later he was discharged. He was free to go back to his beloved city of New Orleans.



ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF AVIATION

Aviation was a risky business from the first time Orville Wright took off from a cliff near Kitty Hawk, N.C. and in twelve seconds, flew into history. Although he and his brother Wilbur are touted as great bicycle mechanics; in truth, they were first class scientists and engineers—self taught. They studied all the failed attempts of the past, and benefited from the knowledge.

Although it took five more years before anyone saw value in this achievement, undoubtedly, they changed the history of the world. Certainly they were the inspiration for Charles Lindberg, 'Hap' Arnold, Ira Eaker, Jimmy Doolittle, and all the airmen of the 44th Bomb Group. Members can view their plane at the Air & Space Museum in Washington, D.C.



THE MAYNARD CREW

By Will Lundy

Due to poor weather conditions, on 29 January 1944 the 44th BG attacked their target in Frankfurt, Germany via PFF. German aircraft began making attacks on this formation shortly after crossing the North Sea. Just before the IP (Initial Point) hits were made on two of our aircraft, that of Lt. **H. H. Pinder** and **G. H. Maynard**. Both of these planes eventually were lost. Several 44th BG members visited and attended the ceremony for Lt. Pinder's crew last year. This story is about the other crew – that of Lt. George Maynard.

Tail Turret Gunner S/Sgt. **Derise L. Nichols** gave his description of these events: "We were over France and about an hour from target with all bombs on board, when we were jumped by a flight of fighters and hit immediately. I was the Tail Gunner. Shells hit just behind me and made very large holes in the waist section. #4 engine was hit and put out of action. So were the controls to the tail section. Consequently, the pilots could only control flight with the three remaining engines. With the possibilities of getting back to England now rather remote, the decision was made to head for Switzerland.

"Our bombs were salvoed; but even then, the trouble of trying to steer with the engines, we continually lost altitude across France. We did finally cross the Swiss border, but by then we were less than 1000 feet above this higher ground. We were shot at and hit by ground fire, and #2 engine was put out of commission as well. Not being able to gain altitude over this rising terrain of Switzerland, we had to turn back to get enough space below us to bail out.

"Because we were so low by that time, only three of us got out, two from the rear. The others did not have time to get out and open their 'chutes. We came down about five miles from Switzerland, near Illfurth, France."

A few eye witnesses of the crash indicated that it seemed the pilot was following the canal, probably looking for a flat area in which to crash-land. However, when a German gunboat patrolling the canal fired and hit the plane, it caused the plane to crash almost immediately. This would also explain why the Germans were at the site shortly afterwards. It also explains why none of the crewmen could be hidden by these French people.

Recently, Tony Mabelis stood beside the canal which Lt. Maynard followed, seeking a reasonably safe crash site. The canal lock is to the left of the path, adjacent to the Lock, which gives the viewer an idea of the close shave the lock keeper's house had that day.

One of the eye witnesses, a lady, said that she had time to help a survivor out of his parachute, probably Lt. Carol Mundt (Navigator); she thought he was an officer. He barely had time to tell her in good French, that he was of Canadian origin, was married and had a four year old daughter.

Then the Germans came, took him away, put him with the two other survivors; and she saw the three prisoners lined up, stripped of their clothing to their shorts and examined. She felt terrible she was unable to help, but was only 16 years old at that time.

In the early 1990s, the residents of Illfurth contacted Roland B. Prior, Superintendent of the Epinal American Cemetery, Dinoze, France, seeking information about the crash and the names of the crew. They wanted to place a memorial plaque in their church to honor the seven Americans who had perished there. As Mr. Prior was acquainted with our 44th, **William A. Rendall**, he wrote to Bill, who contacted "**Pete**" **Henry** and Will Lundy. The official data was relayed back to the citizens of

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Illfurth, who began plans for the plaque in the Church and later, a memorial stone at the crash site.

On 8 June 1996, 10 AM, the Illfurth monument was unveiled as planned. A French Army band and a French Air Force Honor Guard rendered the Honors



Tony Mabelis honors the seven men who died at the crash site.

The three survivors of the crash, S/Sgt. Derise Nichols, Lt. Carol Mundt and S/Sgt. Clarence Swaile, Ball Turret Gunner all became POWs.

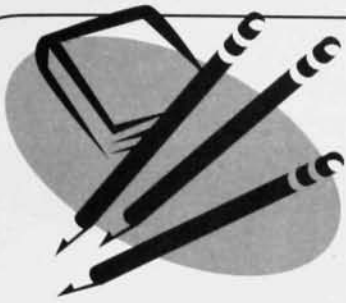


with a group of French Veterans bearing their Unit Flags. The Illfurth school children also participated. The Mayor of Illfurth and many other dignitaries were in attendance: the Subprefect of Mulhouse, representing the French Government; LTC Humphryes, USAF, representing the U.S. Embassy in Paris; a French Army Colonel representing the French Armed Forces; 2 Congressmen from the region, etc. Roland B. Prior represented the 44th BG and Lt. Maynard's family with honor and pride. Three wreaths were presented.

In his address Roland Prior expressed his gratitude to the members of the 44th BG, to the people of Illfurth, to all who were present and to those who had worked so hard on the project of honoring our War Dead.

In January 2003, Tony Mabelis, a British citizen, happened to be walking along the canal path and saw the stone and memorial plaque. Mr. Mabelis has an office in Germany, but works occasionally in the Illfurth area. He was quite impressed, and wanted to learn more about the crew and the circumstances of the crash. First he contacted Jerry Folsom, who referred him to me for specifics. After sending Tony as much data as I had, he replied that on his next visit, he would like to lay some flowers in honor of these men. On his second visit, the weather was quite bad, so he switched from flowers to plants, and planted them at the base of the memorial stone. In answer to my request for photos, he had his son take his roll to a professional, who did an excellent job, printing several for us. Thank you Tony!

Now, both crews, Pinder's and Maynard's, have been honored by the installation of memorials.



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S NOTEPAD



With much reluctance and regret, I must advise you that this is my last Notepad. Father Time is catching up with me, and after nine years of being deeply involved with the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association, it is time that I step aside.

In the spring of 1995, Roy Owen, President of the new organization, asked me to be the Treasurer. I consented, expecting two or three hours of time a month. Little did I know what lay ahead.

I have no regrets. It has been a rewarding and enjoyable nine years, serving you and the organization. I have made many dear friends and acquaintances during this period of time. The following is a review of some of the projects the Association has undertaken:

Starting early in 1995 the Association had only a few dollars and about 500 members. We now have about 1,100 paid members and a few extra dollars. Since that time the Association has installed a diorama in the Eighth Air Force Museum in Savannah, GA of the Ploesti Mission, depicting the planes over the burning refinery. A B-24, which has been renamed the *Louisiana Belle* is at the Eighth Air Force Headquarters in Barksdale, Louisiana. We, 'the 44th Bomb Group', along with donations contributed by the local businesses of Bossier City, Louisiana, made the restoration of this plane possible.

There has been a group reunion each year starting in 1995, with one in San Antonio. The following years they have been at St. Louis, Salt Lake City, Savannah, New Orleans, San Diego, Bossier City, Barksdale, Omaha and this year in Arlington, VA, which is just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC. This is a choice location for a reunion, with its many places of interest. Because of your enthusiasm and support, these conventions have been successful. To quote one new member recently, "It is like a huge family reunion."

Over several years the 44th Bomb Group has developed the Military Heritage Database, where all 344

missions of the 44th are listed, along with the flight crews for each plane, (6,229 names), the mission targets and many mission reports. There are over 450 biographies that members have sent, now recorded in the Database. The letters, diaries and stories that Will Lundy has accumulated over 50 years are being recorded and preserved in the Database. Over 670 entries have already been recorded. The goal is to preserve the history of the 44th Bomb Group for your children and their children's children.

It has been a pleasure to work with Roy Owen, Will Lundy, Art Hand, Ed Mikoloski and Tom Shepherd. These men have devoted innumerable hours of time to the organization; and to them, I extend generous thanks for their support; and also to the many others who have helped along the way.

It is with reluctance and remorse that I must step aside at the Annual meeting. Father Time and Mother Nature are powerful persuaders.

It has been my goal to help preserve the history of the 44th BGVA and the 44th BGVA Roll of Honor. This part of the Database lists names and an accounting of those who gave their all. I now must relinquish this goal to my followers.

I sincerely appreciate your support during the seven years I have served as Treasurer and the two years as your President. It was a treasured experience that will long be remembered.

My prayers and blessing are with you and for your continued support of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association.

Sincerely,
Gerald Folsom,
President



PLOESTI, 60 YEARS LATER

The 60th Anniversary of the low level raid on the oil fields in Ploesti was a heartwarming, soul searching, funny, sad and memorable event. 287 people showed up to pay homage to the Tidal Wave veterans in attendance; and also, those who did not make it back from the Raid. The 44th Bomb Group was the most populous group present in Salt Lake City.

Remarkable, too, it was orchestrated by two young men, Blaine Duxbury and Kent Jaquith who had never served in the Air Force, had no relatives present, had never undertaken such a venture, worked for three years to coordinate the event, yet were most surprised at its success. The hospitality room was lined with photographs of life in Africa, pictures of the raid, WWII posters; snacks and liquid refreshments abounded in one room. The other room had memorabilia that had to be a delight for ground crews to look upon. These were items that had to be functional, notwithstanding the worst sand storms that regularly hit the Libyan desert.



Kent Jaquith & Blaine Duxbury

Tucked in the pocket of Leon Johnson Abbot was the Medal of Honor which had been presented to his grandfather, General **Leon Johnson**. Anybody who wished was urged to hold it, continuing the tradition that his grandfather had started, immediately upon receiving it from Lt. General Devers.



For the first time in many years, four Squadron Commanders were in attendance. L-R Major Charles Hughes (66th) Col. William Cameron (67th), Lt. Col. Robert Lehnhausen (68th) and Lt. Col. James McAtee (506th).



Perry Morse and Leon Abbott hold General Johnson's Medal of Honor. Leon is the grandson of General Johnson, Commander of the 44th Bomb Group.

Hill Air Force Base opened its heart and its arms to the group. Reconstruction of their B-24 is progressing slowly; but enough parts had been accumulated for people to stand under the nose turret to be photographed.

A ceremony in the Chapel was awesome. A representative of each bomb group spoke. Lt. Col **Robert Lehnhausen** was first, and he delivered a powerful report on the events that transpired when the 44th pilots were told they were to start low level flying. At first, great consternation arose. Then Col. Johnson stood up and said, "If the Air Force wants us to do a low level raid, we will do it; and I will lead you." Silence reigned, and low level practice began. Speakers from each Bomb Group spoke, after which a 21 Gun Salute and a fly-over climaxed the ceremony at Hill Field.

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Russell Huntley sat on the POW panel, and laughingly described his failed schemes to escape from the Romanian prison. Later he admitted that he had not mentioned the fact that he was soundly beaten for his daring (and failed) escapades. He did not consider that part of the experience to be important. Pete Frizell presented a dramatic video of the raising of *Hadley's Harem*, a B-24 that, upon returning from Ploesti, crashed 1000 feet off the coast of Turkey. Pete made many trips to this country which was considered neutral in WWII. He joined the dive teams and provided amazing underwater photographs of the operation. When the Turkish government finally decided to help with the retrieval, large pieces of the plane rose from the depths, lifted by huge cranes, with a cheering audience watching the effort. Pete was the only American present to join the throng.

Two members of the 44th were part of the Candle Lighting Ceremony. Col. **Richard Butler** (Dick) lit one for those lost at Ploesti; Col. **Roy Owen** honored today's servicemen, who are putting their lives on the line. Crews were recognized; the 'Spare Parts Big Band' played dance music; and of course, with great enthusiasm, we all sang the Air Corps Song. It ended on a very high note.



Roy Owen honored the heroes of today's conflicts. Will there be a 65th Anniversary Celebration? The idea is just beginning to germinate.

Ed. Note: The value of preserving history can certainly be demonstrated in the two originators of the Ploesti Anniversary Celebration. Kent's inspiration was his uncle, 1st Lt. Jack H. Roach, Bombardier, 328th Sq., 93rdBG. Roach flew the Ploesti mission and returned safely, but was killed later. Blaine was captivated by reading the account of Ploesti many times during his childhood. By the efforts of such young people, the men who braved Ploesti know that their sacrifices will be remembered.

FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

"Black Hole of Wauwilermoos" by **Dan Culler**, a member of the Lt. **Tedford** Crew. This paperback is a description of Culler's torturous experience in a Swiss prison, from which he could foresee no relief. He escaped. Write: Circle of Thorns Press, Green Valley, Arizona.

"Those Brave Crews" by Ray Ward is a multi-award winning account of that epic drama, the Ploesti Mission. Ward's book has gained acclaim from the USAF Association of Graduates, his work read by cadets. It has been featured by the USAF Museum Wright-Pratt AFB. Now in its second edition, "Those Brave Crews" is in a 7 x 10 format, and the photos have been technically enhanced. The price is \$14.95 plus \$5 S & H. Autographed copies can be secured from author Ray Ward, 432 Pennsylvania Avenue, Waverly, NY 14892. A website will soon be available: www.bravecrews-rayward.com

"Ruth-less and Far From Home" is Kevin Watson's account of the crash of the **James Bolin** crew on Butts Brow over Eastbourne, England. This crash aroused such tragic sentiment, the community has rallied to produce a monument, and tribute is paid annually to the ten lost airmen on Remembrance Sunday. The price is \$20.00. Contact the author at: MonsieurKevin@aol.com or write 10, Jevington Place, 6, Jevington Gardens, Eastbourne BN29 4 HHH. UK

"Wild Blue Yonder", by a Martin W. Bowman, UK aviation writer historian, is a provocative account of the air war and the airmen of WWII. Reviewed by **Forrest S. Clark**, the book is 224 pages of dramatic photos and colorful accounts of missions of both B-17 and B-24 flyers, including many from the 44th BG. Ground crews, mess halls, Londoners dealing with V2 bombs and much more are colorfully portrayed. Cassell Publishing Co., London, \$29.95 (American)

THE 2ND AIR DIVISION'S CHICAGO REUNION

The 2 AD returned to the site of their origin, to celebrate the completion of their great dream—the completion of the Memorial Library in Norwich, England. Re-elected to the presidency of that organization is **Richard Butler**, of the 44th BGVA. In recognition that the 44th was celebrating his leadership, the 2 AD hosted the 44th Board to a Welcome Dinner

Jordan Udall, one of the Founders of the 2 AD, presided over the Banquet, and introduced the new Chairman of the Heritage Trust of the Museum, Matthew Martin, who is replacing David Hastings. Both Hastings and Martin lauded the 2 AD for their foresight in creating an institution that has cemented the close relationship between England and America. Both declared that the 6,700 American airmen who died, flying from Anglia, would never be forgotten. Hastings expressed his gratitude that the 2 AD was able to place a Fulbright Scholar in the Library, an American presence that adds to the educational climate that exists there.

Martin described the positive influence that the Library has had in the life of the Norwich community, culturally, historically and educationally. School children and college students are regular frequenters to this institution. Everybody sang

“The Star Spangled Banner, but unexpectedly, Udall called upon the Englishmen to sing, “God Save The Queen.” That brought a round of applause and a few tears. The featured event was a new video of the Grand Opening of the Library, leading to the shedding of more tears.

The Candlelight Ceremony took on a new dimension. After each candle was lit, a relative accompanied the veteran from the stage, indicative of the 2 AD's eagerness to bring second generation family members into the activities of the organization.



Newly elected to the 2 AD Board, representing the 44th Bomb Group is **George Washburn**. **Perry Morse** will be his back-up, appointed by President Butler.

Dick Butler lit the candle for the Ploesti mission. His son, **Richard, Jr.** met him onstage, and they walked off together.



A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT LADY

A sad message came to this Editor, that we had lost one of our great contributors to the Database project. **Ruth Dobbs**, wife of LTC **Sterling Dobbs**, has passed away. With her computer skills, Ruth was able to format information for the Database onto a form that made it easy for **Arlo Bartsch** to enter it into the 44th history. Because of her efforts, our history moved more rapidly from paper to digital, and at little expense.

Ruth was recognized for her generosity of time and effort at the Reunion in Omaha. A hundred years from now, family members, scholars and researchers will benefit from her efforts. Her name will not appear, but her imprint will be reaching to them.



THE ENGLISH AND AMERICAN TWOSOME BERYL FLEET AND GEORGE APGAR



The Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes flew high when **George Apgar** met Beryl Fleet at the 50th Anniversary of WWII, sitting opposite each other at the Banquet Table in Norwich. Two

years later they were married.

"We may have danced together during the war, but we don't remember each other. I was only fourteen, when I danced with the Americans. I wasn't even allowed to go to the dances, except when my sister (Cynthia Harmonoski) accompanied me."

Beryl was 9-1/2 years old, before she was aware of the disaster that was befalling her country. Her father had died years before, in fact she has no memory of him. She was raised by her mother and grandparents. Her grandfather owned a small farm; she was assigned small chores, particularly carrying tea to the workers at 4:00 PM. She had four sisters, two are deceased, one lives in England and Cynthia lives in Tampa, Florida.

With lots of boys around, entertainment on the farm was playing 'Goalie', (similar to football); and "Rounders, (the forerunner of baseball). Beryl remembers Christmas in England, turkey or capon dinner with plum pudding or mince pie. Each child got one present, along with stockings filled with candies, oranges and nuts. She can still remember her first doll.

At the age of fourteen, she worked at the Ground Officers Club as a waitress. "My favorite officer was **Goodman Griffin**," she recalls. "He always gave me his candy ration. I looked on him as a father, he was such a kind man."

After meeting George in Norwich, they met again at the 44th Reunion in Dayton, Ohio. Their relationship clicked; and when they were married in '94, her English family came to the wedding, and her son gave her away.

"My husband had been with the RAF for 27 years. Later we ran a convenience store in Reading, England. After 40 years of marriage, he passed away in 1991." Beryl has three daughters, one son and five grandchildren, all in England.

George's wife died after 41 years. He has one daughter, who is a school teacher. In the war he was a member of the Ground Crew at the 50th Station Complement Squadron, which was attached to the 44th BG. They were available to help any Squadron that requested assistance.

His recollections of the incoming planes are very clear—planes riddled with holes, many with two engines gone, one landing with only one engine; and most awesome, seeing the dead and wounded being pulled from the plane.



Death was no stranger to George, whose brother had served in the Infantry. He survived the Battle of Bastogne, but was killed later in Luxemburg.

Both George and Beryl have tender memories of Col. **Leon Johnson**—Beryl serving him at the Executive Table; George seeing him thrown into the lake at the party after the 200th mission.

George was drafted from his hometown in Chester, New Jersey. When he returned to his old job at the Buick/Cadillac Agency in Dover, New Jersey, he had every right to claim his old job from his replacement, a man with a wife and three children. He decided, "That's not what I fought the war for," so he declined the job and started his own agency. He opened the GMC Truck and Sales Service; then later added a Jeep Agency. He retired in 1984, but couldn't keep his hands from under the hood. He became an Antique Car Buff.

Maintaining his 1936 GMC half ton Pickup and 1935 Ford V-8 Pheaton in their heated 6 car garage, his entertainment became attending 'Car Meets.' He has many awards to prove his maintenance and mechanical skills. He has lived in Chester, New Jersey since 1933, the same house since 1947. Both he and Beryl are ardent followers of the 2 AD and 44th BGVA Reunions.



Gathering at the 2 AD in Baltimore are:
L-R Maria Hughes, Charles Hughes, Cynthia Harmonowski,
George Washburn, Beryl and George Apgar.

A Tale of a Tail-End Charlie

Lt. Col. 'Tommie' Holmes AF Ret.
(Holmes Tribute to Pratt Whitney)

"I don't know how I happened to be 'Tail End Charlie' – the last plane in a long line of bombers, but every bomber formation has one. I was aware that the last plane frequently falls behind and is vulnerable to being shot down.

"On this particular Willheimshaven raid, we climbed out to 28,000. Our leader did a lot of S-turns, and those of us in the back had a difficult time keeping up. If you have ever played crack-the-whip, you can understand our problem – the guy on the end really gets popped off. The real difference here is that the "Tail-End-Charlie" is in a very serious situation.

"We kept getting a little further behind, so I reasoned that it was either the engines or us – 10 in the crew. If we got too far behind, the engines would go down with all of us.

"I had almost gotten shot down on my 3rd raid December 6, 1942, so I chose to get everything out of the engines that I could. For the next hour and ten minutes we flew wide open – 2700 rpms, throttles all the way forward and the supercharger the only control left. We were pulling as much as 58" of manifold pressure at 28,000 feet. Take off power on a B-24 was 2700 rpm and 48" manifold pressure. Normal fuel consumption was 200 to 225 gallons in an hour. We used over 900 gallons in an hour and ten minutes, which gives you a good idea of what we did. All the engine instruments – cylinderhead temperature and oil temperature were redlined to the extreme limits of the gauges and shaking badly. Oil was coming from under the cowlings and flowing back over the wings. There is no question, we were pushing the engines far over their normal limit. Later, when we told the Pratt & Whitney technical representatives what we had done, they would hardly believe our story. However, we had nothing but praise for those four 1200 HP engines.



"Sand was a greater enemy to the B-24 engines than the extreme power required of a "Tail-End-Charlie". But even the sands of North African Libya did not destroy them. *Victory Ship* did its job this day and for another 35 missions until it was shot down on its 50th mission early in 1944." (Ed. Note: *The 44th put up 9 planes on that mission. Two were lost. Gunners are credited with wiping out four EAC.*)

'Tommie' Holmes at the Ploesti Celebration

THE BLACK DAY WHEN VICTORY SHIP WENT DOWN

(ALONG WITH FIVE OTHERS)

“(Lt. Col.) **Posey** called me to tell me my plane had gone down,” **Tommy Holmes** remembered. Holmes had completed his missions, and his beloved plane was being flown by **Alfred A. Starring** on his first combat mission. “*Victory Ship* had twenty eight swastikas on the side when I left, and fifty when it went down. It was scheduled to return to the States on a bond tour.”

The target January 21, 1944 was the V-1 launching sites in the Pas de Calais area at Escalles Sur Buchy, France. It was a mission to stop the nightly raids of the ‘Buzz Bombs’ that were decimating London. Fifty nine years later, the impact of that mission still rings in the hearts of many 44thers.

Queen Marlene (66th), *Ram It-Dam* (68th), *Valiant Lady* (68th), *Nameless A/C # 42-7501* (68th), *Victory Ship* (68th) all went down. Two second-generation members of the 44th BGVA lost their fathers on that mission: **Lois Cianci**, daughter of **Clair Schaeffer**; and **Jackie Roberts**, daughter of **Jack Ostenson**. Of those five planes, 29 men were KIA; 13 became POWs; nine evaded.

At the same time a second formation of the 44th BG attacked Military Installations at Agathe D-Aliermont, France. Thirteen crewmen were aboard *Liberty Belle* (67th) when it went down. Eight survived, two were KIA, three became POWs.

The 68th Squadron was “Tail End Charlie” in the formation, in which seven planes went out, and only three returned to England. In his book, “68th Bomb Squadron”, **Webb Todd**, documented the memories of **Robert C. Schild**, Tail Gunner on *Victory Ship*

“I was a newcomer to the crew, having flown with them only twice before that mission. We came under heavy fighter attack by both FW 190s and ME 109s. They eventually knocked out three of our engines.... Our co-pilot, **Lewis W. Rhodes**, was killed on the very first pass by enemy aircraft. Our pilot was wounded as well, probably also on the first attack. As our co-pilot was already dead, Starring found it impossible to stay in formation, especially with two engines out. When later attacks knocked out the third engine, we were on our way down. At that time the waist gunner (**Robert A.**


Mitchell) came forward and jumped through the bomb bay. I opened the rear hatch and went out from there, just as the plane went into its final spin. We must have been quite close to the ground then, as my parachute had barely opened a few seconds before I hit the ground.

“Our navigator, **Weldon Maneval**, must have jumped from the front end at about the same time as I jumped, with his parachute opening, but not quickly enough, and he was killed by his impact with the ground. I was taken prisoner and spent 16 months in Stalag Luft #4 and #8. **Robert A. Mitchell**, our Right Waist Gunner, survived POW camp, but found that he had tuberculosis when he returned home after the war.”

On that same day the *Liberty Belle* led a formation from the 67th & 506 Sq. to Military Installations at Agathe D’Aliermont, France. Cloud cover was heavy; and after five runs over the target, they started back home with the all bombs still in the bomb bay. As they were crossing the French Coast, the German fighters moved in. Thirteen men were aboard #42-99970 that day including Major **William Anderson**, Command Pilot, (506) and Captain **Robert Ager**, (68), both of whom were killed. An explosion blew three from the plane; fortunately they were wearing parachutes. The plane made it to the English coast, eight survived, two were KIA, three became POWs.

It was a black day for the 44th Bomb Group. Six planes were lost, thirty one men died, nine evaded, seventeen became POW and eight survived. None of them could see that the hope of victory was dawning. Only five days previously, Dwight Eisenhower had been appointed Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe. On January 22, the Allies established a beachhead at Anzio; so by increments, the web was beginning to tighten on the Nazi regime.


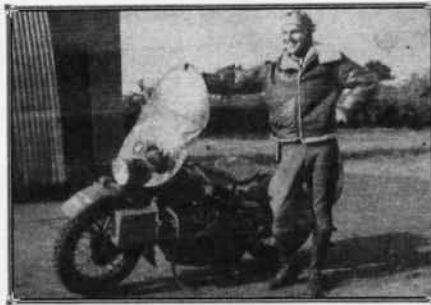
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS DONALD O'REILLY MILITARY POLICEMAN



Donald O'Reilly (#16092908) has interesting tales about the way he retained his PFC status for two years during the war. He attributes it to the fact that he 'didn't use good judgment when he opened his mouth.'

Don describes his work as an MP in two parts: one was to 'Clear the Perimeter.' That order meant "Clear all vehicles from the roads that crossed runways." The need for this service arose, every time the planes took off, and every time they returned.

The second part of his job was to maintain order in the Enlisted Men's Club. If any of the men drank too much and became rowdy, it was the MP's job to quiet the situation; and if necessary, evict the bad



actor. It was an easy job, he recalled. "They just served beer and soft drinks, so we never had a serious problem. We wore MP Bands on our arm and carried a side arm, a '45. Every couple of weeks the Morale Officer would bring Red Cross girls into the Club. That was always a good night for the guys."

"The first time I got a Corporal stripe, I was riding on a motorcycle with the Sergeant of the Guard. It was 6:00 AM, and he was driving. Suddenly I saw a fox run across our path; so without thinking, I pulled out my handgun and shot a round. Unfortunately, I was holding the gun right beside the Sergeant's head. For that ill-placed decision, I lost my Corporal Stripe.

O'Reilly & His Shipdham Transportation

"The next time I was awarded a stripe, I rapidly lost that one, also. I was in the NCO Club with my friend Kelly. It was our day off. The Sergeant of the Day came in and ordered us to 'Clear the Perimeter.' Kelly reminded him that it was our day off. I started to carry out the order anyhow, but Kelly yelled, 'Take one step out there and I'll bust your ****'. Kelly was a really big, tough guy, and the Sergeant was much smaller, so I didn't go out to 'Clear the Perimeter'. So..... I got busted again.

"I can't remember what happened the last time; but I did get three, and lost them all."

Among O'Reilly's interesting memories as an MP is his association with **Curtis LeMay**. "When he saluted you, he kept his cigar between his index and right finger. The cigar was part of the salute. I never saw him without that cigar," O'Reilly stated.

"I went to England in January, 1943, a 21-22 day trip. We were on a ship that had been used for passengers between New Zealand and Australia. We were part of a convoy; and in the back of the convoy, we could hear explosions. We never knew what was happening.

"At first, as MPs, we were sent to the 491st Bomb Group. Then one night the bomb dump blew up. There were two hours of continuous explosions. We saw a B-24 come in, and the wings folded. Trucks were disintegrated from the blast.

"They took us from that base and sent us to a Fighter Base at Medfield, which is south of Shipdham. Later I went to Shipdham, and stayed there until June 1945. When I was about to be discharged, I was recommended for another stripe. However, the discharge came before the stripe, and I was glad to get out and go home. Looking back, I have to say those were the best

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years of my life. I went into the service as an irresponsible kid, and the service helped me mature.

O'Reilly's son was born while he was overseas. He was two years old when he finally met his father.

Under the GI Bill, O'Reilly was able to get a degree in Engineering at Marquette University. He has eight children. He and his wife reside in Naperville, outside of Chicago.

THE CONSOLIDATED MESS'S RE-APPEARANCE

The *Consolidated Mess* flew 69 missions, then faded into history. According to Steve Adams, it made it to the end of the War, then went to the Willow Run Factory for an open day for the Ford workers and their families to admire the A/C they built, and what it had achieved. This created a small stir, as that particular plane was built by Consolidated, not Ford.

Fifty eight years later, **Perry Morse**, Tail Gunner, hung the image of his plane on his Rec room wall. The *Consolidated Mess* carried the **George Bieber** Crew safely through many of their 35 missions. The image is a print from a pencil sketch, created by Gary Kennedy of Steelton, PA.



Gary will personalize any plane with tail markings and nose art for a mere \$10, including shipping. It is a 12 x 14 in. pencil sketch. It would make a great gift for a deserving family member. E-Mail Address: Kennedyclan@earthlink.net.

MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Jack Butler**, memories written April 24, 1944: Leaving Goose Bay, Laborador, headed for Iceland by way of Greenland.

'Nine and a half hours estimated flying time from Goose Bay to Reykjavik, Iceland. Nothing but water below and the stars above to guide us. Setting our course was the easy part. The course was a well established fact. Estimating the wind shifts was another matter. The wind in the North Atlantic has incredible variations in direction. All we could do was get weather information readings from Goose Bay, Iceland and ships at sea. So I set out, based on that information and opened our star charts and went to work.

There is absolutely nothing on this earth that is more awe inspiring than my first look out of the navigators celestial dome while flying at night over the North Atlantic Ocean. My job was simple enough, all I had to do was pick out three good navigational stars every couple of hours and go to work. We were flying above the few clouds, and I had a spectacular view of all the stars. There were thousands, probably millions of stars, and all I needed was three. Yes, finding those three was somewhat of a problem. But how could you go wrong when you have a million to pick from?

Henry Ford built a wonderful airplane. Our B-24 did not miss a beat over the ocean on the way to Iceland and beyond. After we left Goose Bay and climbed to altitude, I gave Knowles the heading I wanted, and away we went. When I passed the "Point of No Return", it was too late to worry any more, so I quit worrying and decided to go up front to see what the rest of the crew was up to. Sure enough, everybody else was sound asleep. I knew Knowles and Robb were on Automatic Pilot, so I let them sleep until I had to make a course correction.

Dawn came up as usual on

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the morning of April 25, 1944. Just as the dawn broke, there came our beautiful B-24, right on time, as we crossed the coast of Greenland, headed for Ireland.

Ed. Note: John E. Butler was Navigator on the Robert P. Knowles Crew (66th Sq.)



From **Roy Owen**, this bit of philosophy about flying:

"There are Rules and there are Laws. The rules are made by men who think they know better how to fly your airplane than you; and, the Laws (of Physics) were made by the Great One. You can, and sometimes should, suspend the Rules, but you can never suspend the Laws."



From: STARS and STRIPES, July 20, 2003: This publication belatedly reported that the crew of *Pappy's Chillun* were honored in a ceremony in Taverham, England. Actually, this ceremony took place some time ago, soon after the plane was discovered in Taverham Lake, near Norwich. The ceremony was orchestrated with the help of M/Sgt. Mark Brotherton, an American airman, stationed at RAF Lakenheath. The event included music by a choir at a local school, and prayer by the Lakenheath chaplain. Airmen from RAF base folded the flag and presented it to Betty Clemens, sister of **Edward A. Cole**, Bombardier. Most of the information about the plane and its crash was supplied by Steve Adams. Increasingly, Adams is being recognized as the 'expert' on 44th BG's planes.



Airmen from RAF Lakenheath fold the American flag during a ceremony at Taverham, honoring an American bomber crew that crashed near the town 57 years ago.



A request from BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE: Jennifer Buckman, a Historian for Barksdale AFB is seeking information about Barksdale Field from veterans who were stationed there during WWII. Any veteran who was stationed there between 1940-1946 could supply valuable information for their archives. The main areas of concern are: information of the AAC Bombardier School that was there from 1940-41, and any personnel who did any type of field training on the Base.

If you have photographs from the 1930s through the 1960s, and would consider donating them, they would be welcome. Call 1-877-454-6376 or

e-mail NJ1299@aol.com. Ms. Buckman, a historical researcher, is assisting The 8th Air Force Museum Director, Buck Riggs, at the Barksdale Air Force Base.



From **Clayton Roberts: "THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES"**

"As you may remember, **Bill Lundquist, Art Aronoff, John Roberts, Bob Dunlap** and myself met for the first time in 55 years at the San Diego Reunion. It afforded us the opportunity to finally learn what roads each of us had traveled since our disbandment as a crew at Sioux Falls, SD in 1945. The days spent in San Diego were an endless telling of tales, jokes, sharing perceptions of our experiences as a crew, of which there were many different ones, and catching up on where our lives had taken us over the past 55 years.

At the Group dinner we shared a table with others. During dinner something was said that caused the question, "Are you a crew?" From there on, the conversation focused on our experiences as a crew. Following dinner that question triggered discussion amongst us, as to the best way to identify to all, that we are a crew. It was decided that a jacket was the answer. Art Aronoff didn't want the jackets to be red. Bill Lundquist wanted gray. "Junior" Roberts wanted lettering on the back, identifying us as WWII veterans having served in 8th Air Force at

Shipdham. Bob Dunlap didn't care what was on the jacket, just so long as he had one and all were identical. Those were my marching orders.

Two months before the Shreveport reunion I found a shop that could do the embroidery, in all places, the town of Chicopee Falls, Mass. Months of searching had come to an end, and within a week I had a prototype. Gray jackets were nowhere to be found; red was still out, so we settled for a navy blue with lettering to be in red. Next time you see someone wearing a blue wind breaker with the 44th 8 Ball Logo on the left breast, the individual's name on the right breast, "1945 Lost - Found 2000, 55 Years The Adventure Continues" on the back—that's us! That's our crew! (See Photo)

Since San Diego we have made it to Shreveport, Omaha and are looking forward to Washington next October with great anticipation and expectation. Hope to see you and many family members there. Don't forget to say 'Hello.'



L-R & sporting their new jackets are: John "Junior" Roberts, Armorer/Gunner; Bill Lundquist, Co-Pilot; Art Aronoff, Navigator; Bob Dunlap, Armorer/Gunner; Clay Roberts, Pilot

Sgt. Mark Brotherton has been one of our 'English Connections'. Serving in the United Kingdom, he has graciously forwarded our mail to English friends, and served as a Tour Guide to veteran groups who came to renew 50-60 year old memories. Mark has been transferred to another area, and we miss him already. His response to our gratitude was this: "I hope all is well with the 44th. Being a part of your organization has been one of the most

rewarding and honoring experience of my career and life."



From **Daniel Culler** (66 Sq.) to **Will Lundy**: I was shot down on 18 March 1944 on raids to Munich and Fredrichshaven. It was our last mission before our tours were up and we were to be sent home. Our left fuel tanks were ruptured by flak; and while I was up above wing, transferring fuel to Rt. Tanks, the pilot reported we had lost oil pressure on #1 & #2 engines on the left side. When I got back from transferring fuel, we were surrounded by Swiss FW 109 planes escorting us to a field in Switzerland.

I was interned at Adelboden, SW until 12 July 1944 when our belly gunner **Howard Melson**, Matthew Thirlaway (an escapee from the British Army that was a prisoner from Italy) and myself attempted an escape from interment camp to make our way to Italy and hold out until allied forces came north (not knowing that they would be bogged down in south of Italy). We were captured by the Swiss, close to Italian Border; and I had to return to camp because of sickness that was caused by eating some poison plants while we were up in the mountains.

All three of us were then put in a regular prison camp called Wauwilermoos, which was a prisoner of war camp for anyone who failed to obey the Swiss Neutral Status. It was filled with all nationals—from Russians to Poles.

After spending about 3 months at Wauwilermoos, I was covered with boils and sores from the straw and filthy conditions. I was sent to a Hospital where I was treated and sent to a camp up close to the Austrian border. From there, I again escaped, making my way crisscross across Switzerland to Geneva, and got with Swiss Underground. I was put in a taxi to be taken to the French border where the driver was to get close to barbed wire at the border, so we could jump out and climb over wire and get into France. Unfortunately, the driver, fearing he would get caught by border patrol, stopped about a half mile from the border, and we had to run under a hail of bullets from the

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Swiss border patrol. We jumped over three rolls of barbed wire to make it into France. One person was shot in the escape, but we got him across. We then walked on a dirt road until two men came by with bikes and guns slung over their shoulders. They rode ahead about a half mile and jumped off their bikes and into a ditch until we came up to them. Then, with their guns on us, wanted IDs; and since we were in civilian clothes and not knowing if they were French or Germans, finally let them know we were Americans. They were the French Underground.

They took us to some small town close to Lyon, France, where we spent several weeks until one evening they landed a C-47 in on a grass field and flew a group of us back to England.

I think the thing I remember most is that what happened when we got back to England. We were at Stone, a deportation or processing center. Because we didn't have mess kits and were in civilian clothes, they wouldn't feed us. I had to go in back of the mess hall and eat out of garbage cans until they finally got me a mess kit and uniforms.

Another thing I remember was the Military Attaché for America was a Brig/General from the Cavalry. He visited me once in Wauwilermoos and told me that if we won the war, that Swiss wouldn't let me go because I had broken their neutral law and was not under the American care. That is why I tried so many times to escape.

*(Ed. Note: T/Sgt. Culler was Engineer & Top Turret Gunner on the crew of 1st Lt. **George Tedford**. Their plane was #42-7618, "Scourge of the Skies".*

*All other crew members were interned and returned: Co-Pilot, 1st Lt. **France Coure**; Navigator, 1st Lt. **Donald McConnell**; Bombardier, 1st Lt. **William Carroll**; Radio Operator/Gunner, T/Sgt. **Francis Testa**; Ball Turret Gunner, S/Sgt. **Howard Melson**; RW Gunner, S/Sgt. **James Hancock**; LW Gunner, S/Sgt. **George Petrick**; Tail Gunner, S/Sgt. **John Hughes**. The Target was an Aircraft Component & Assembly Plant.*

When Culler and his co-prisoners were trying to get to Northern Italy to meet the troops moving northward, British and American infantrymen were bogged down at Monte Cassino. With Air Force aid, they broke through and made it to Rome, just before D-Day. It was the first Axis capital city to be conquered, but received little attention because of the drama at Normandy.)



From Col. **William Cameron** (Ret.): In my collection of photos which I shared with Will Lundy and Roger Freeman (a renowned English Historian) I found several pictures of this lovely little girl. From **Don William's** message in the last 8 Ball Tails, I learned it was our adopted orphan, Little Virginia. Don was my Adjutant during the two times when I was C.O. of the 67th Squadron. **I wonder why Don and the rest of the 67th troops in the photos did not include their Sqdn. C.O. in this rare feast of ice cream and cake.**

The LADIES HOME COMPANION carried the story of Virginia's adoption and these pictures:



M/Sgt. Illick and Captain Don Williams watch Little Virginia cut her birthday cake.



With six of her foster fathers, Virginia poses beneath the tail of their ship. After the squadron chose Virginia through the Stars and Stripes War Orphan program, she and a Red Cross supervisor immediately visited her new daddies' base. Her mother was a WAAF; Virginia lived with her grannie.

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BEATING THE BUSHES

Art Hand, our armchair detective, found two more members of the 44th Bomb Group:
Ross K. Marion, 3510 Vandover Road, Poplar Bluff, MO 63901-3053; Phone 573-686-1579.
Earl G. Walker, 774 U.S. Rt. 1, Robinson, ME 04671

Art was honored at the Reunion in Omaha, and not a moment too soon. His search for lost members has been a major effort in his life. Back in the 70's and 80's he began working with Will Lundy, searching for lost members of the four Squadrons. Many times he got in a car and drove to a distant city, trying to locate lost members. Later, he became proficient with the computer, locating men

through his technological skills. When he could not get a phone number, he sent self-addressed post cards. At present Art has several shoe boxes full of returned cards. **He would appreciate if someone would find a storage place for these historical documents. Can anybody help him out?**

Art has been dealing with health problems for several years; and is having a difficult time at present. He would appreciate if you dropped him a card, so he knows his work has not gone unnoticed.

The 44th Bomb Group PX

Sam and Edith Miceli are still on duty with the 44th BGVA's wares:

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



Order From:

Sam Miceli,

(Make check payable to Sam Miceli)

6398 Dawson Blvd., Mentor, Ohio 44060-3648



FROM THE ARCHIVES

(Just to let you know it took a lot of different operations to win the War)

From HEADQUARTERS, 806 CHEMICAL CO.(AD), AAF 115, APO 658

"This is to introduce you to the "Skunk Works", the 806th Chemical Company, Air Operations. We are divided into five departments, (1) the bomb handlers, (2) smoke bomb refilling point section, (3) reporting unit, (4) transportation department, and the (5) supply department. Our authorization is 2 officers and 65 enlisted men, comprising one-half of a Chemical Company, the other half forming a detachment which is located at another base. We have been called on to furnish men for other duties and at present, our strength is 2 officers and 54 enlisted men.



Can anybody identify the four armorers, dressed for winter weather, who are demonstrating the bomb sizes as the war progressed?

We are here to service incendiary bombs, and our purpose is to have them available at all times. To distinguish between the various types of chemical bombs, and the personnel concerned in servicing them, we have the 100 lb. oil bomb and the 500 lb. cluster magnesium bomb, wherein are the duties of our bomb handlers. To date our record month of expenditures on these two types of incendiaries are: for the 100 lb. oil bomb, March 1944 with 243 tons expended; and for the 500 lb. cluster, October 1944 with 284 tons expended.....

The department of which we are particularly proud is our smoke bomb refilling point section... This work is done by a small number of men, one Non-Com and about four EM... Approximately a year ago we were called on to furnish a suitable type of sky marker for pathfinder planes, and at that time our original filling point was not up. 10 lb. bomb casings had to be filled with a mild smoke producing acid. After ironing out many difficulties, the refilling point section is now a smooth, efficiently run department. The largest number of these bombs to be used in a single day was 39. That was on D-Day. On the day before Christmas 1944, 27 were dropped on a single mission.

Now we come to the "White Collar" boys, the reporting section. In many instances, when the planes return late from a mission, long hours would be kept, compiling accurate information to be forwarded to higher headquarters, so they might have a complete picture of expenditures. Our clerks, in addition to their normal duties, have often given their time for a good cause. In the War Bond drives they have done exceptionally good work in helping us go over our quota.

We have special purpose vehicles for our type of work. We do our own dispatching. The transportation department is most important in that we are dependent on them for transporting munitions... Beyond their regular duties, our drivers have consistently given their time by assisting the station motor pool in picking up crews returning from missions and carrying them from the dispersals to the tech site...

This report continues, describing the duties of the supply department. It required a constant striving for efficiency, as the War required a never-ending supply of material. Ingenuity and hard work were in constant demand..

"At present our major problem is experimenting with a new type of chemical munition - Napalm Gel. The 44th Bombardment Group and our unit can take pride in being chosen to develop the possibilities of this new type of bombing.

"Since the larger portion of our work is done at the bomb dump, we are faced with the constant problem of maintaining adequate safety precautions, meeting requirements of higher headquarters, and storing bombs as to make them easily accessible... We have seen many improvements in our bomb dump. The widening of roads has greatly speeded the movement of bombs from the dump to the dispersals...

"We all know our primary purpose in being here - to service Liberators with incendiary bombs; to see that there are no delays when our munitions are needed. Our aim is to accomplish this end, and know that we have done our part in bringing this war to a successful conclusion."

806 Chem Officers: **Capt. Roxie J. Marotta, 1st Lt. Bernard J. Wolfe, 2 Lt. Irvine g. Smith;** later—**1st Lt. Oliver W. Rusling, 1st Lt. Irving G. Smith, 1st Lt. Edward L. Squires.**

I am sorry that I was unable to write my usual column for the last issue, but circumstances beyond my control got in the way. I really was not ill, but the botched surgery on my left shoulder prevented me from typing with my left arm and hand. Now, at least, I can type, but usage with my left arm continues to be a problem.

So now I would like to thank all of you lovely people out there who were so kind to send me get-well cards. I want you to know how deeply you touched me. Thank you!

During my forced inactivity, I often thought about the development of the 44th BG from the 2nd ADA to the 44th HMG, and then finally the 44th BGVA. During those many years that I've been associated with it, one of the most consistent performers has been **Art Hand**. Back in the 1970s, Art had already put together a roster of 66th Squadron personnel, and guided me on means to find some of my 67th Squadron buddies. I had an old address book, but by then most of my old buddies had married, moved, etc. Art was using telephone directories and calling area code-555-1212 (information). The operator could and would tell you if she has a number for the person he sought.

This method worked well until the companies decided to charge for that service. So about that time Art learned about and purchased the new technology of Phone Disks. As these were relatively expensive, I then sent my requests to Art; he would check them out and send me a print-out of both exact names or names very similar. We set up a procedure with a form letter to be used, and then prepared a Post Card with our address. On the reverse side, we typed some questions appropriate for the person we sought. We'd send the letter and the card enclosure, and hope for the best.

Art then designed and initiated his own database on which he placed all of the known addresses for the entire 44th BG. Norm Kiefer and Webb Todd supplied their respective

Squadron addresses, so now we had a full 44th BG current address register. Art kept these listings up to date, as new members were located or men located us. In 1993 the current president and his board announced that the organization was being disbanded. That event occurred in conjunction with the closing of the Strategic Missile Wing, which was their sponsor. The date was 1994. Art received orders from the President to destroy his entire membership data; but of course, he refused to do so. Instead, he made it available immediately to the newly formed organization, the 44th BGVA.

Art has continued his work in searching for long missing 44thers, still having good success in locating them. But with the passing of time, many times he learns the sad news, that his man is now deceased. So our listing of Folded Wings continues to grow.

At the annual reunion last year in Omaha, Nebraska, the 44th BGVA selected Art to be the second recipient of the annual Leon Johnson Award. Art was able to attend, thanks to his son who drove him over from Paris, Illinois. Art has been battling some health problems for several years, but has continued efforts to locate as many missing 44thers as possible, working from every possible source. Surely he has located close to fifty percent of the men on our current records.

I am very sorry to say that Art contacted me this past week to give me, and us, the sad news that he must cease his work due to doctor's orders. He must now devote his efforts to control his medical problems. Art has been a brother to me for such a long time, has helped me so much (and all of us). I wish him much success in his fight for his health. On behalf of all of us, I thank him from the bottom of my heart.

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Amick, Kenneth C. 8 April 1951 35654732 68th Sq. S/Sgt. Amick was the Engineer on the C. Roberts crew that joined the 68th Squadron on 19 February 1945. His first mission on 10 March, quickly followed by 6 more in that month. This crew probably flew one or two missions in early April, but records have not yet been located. He completed his 12th (at least) on 18 April. This crew then returned to the U.S. on 21 May 1945, flying in A/C # 44-49425. Sgt. Amick served as a Reserve in the National Guard, was recalled for the Korean War. While on board a military aircraft, it crashed, killing him and 20 others. The date was 8 April 1951. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.

Arms, Lester A. 29 June 03 0-668696 66th Squadron Captain Bombardier. Captain Arms was a member of the John J. Testa crew that was transferred into the 44th BG, from the 492nd BG in mid August, 1944. This was an experienced PFF crew, one of several arriving at Shipdham during August from that Group. Lester flew 16 of his 18 missions with this crew, nearly all of them Pathfinder lead missions. On 16 January 1945, the Testa crew was shot down by enemy action, but all members managed to parachute safely, returned to duty. They completed their final mission on 25 April, the last mission flown by the 44th BG.

Bernard, Albert F. 22 February 03 0-734871 Bombardier for the Fred H. Jones crew, 67th Squadron. This crew arrived at Shipdham in mid June, 1943, just prior to the Detached Service orders sending the Group to North Africa. They quickly completed nine missions in July, and then flew the famous Ploesti mission on 1 August in their aircraft, *Available Jones*. After successfully hitting their assigned target, they hit and broke a barrage balloon cable, and received considerable other damage during their withdrawal. With insufficient fuel to cross the Mediterranean, they were forced to ditch, with all men surviving! The entire crew became POWs.

Bethel, Raymond W. Date Unknown 0-819730 Pilot in the 67th B Squadron. 1st Lt. Bethel and crew flew their first 14 missions with the 489th BG, 844th B. Sq., starting on 21 September 1944. He and his crew were transferred to the 44th BG, 67th B. Sq., completed their first mission with the 44th BG on 21 November 1944, and their final mission on 8

March 1945, a total of 35 in all. Dr. Bethel finished college and medical school at the Ohio State University. He was an eminent physician in Columbus, Ohio until retirement in 1992.

Boyte, George Bryan 26 December 02, Age 95. George did not fly to England with the 66th Sq. echelon in October 1943, but he soon was assigned to combat and flew the first mission of the war on 7 November 1942 as a gunner on the Capt. Adams crew. Switching to the McCoy's crew, he flew those tough early missions of three in December, one in January and four in February. Luckily, he was not on the practice flight of 20 February when Capt. McCoy crashed and all of the men were killed. Apparently, he was removed from combat after his last mission with R. J. Abernathy, dated 26 February 1943.

Chown, Norman 22 March 03 19137335 Norman was the Radio Operator on the Louis C. Confer crew when they were transferred to the 44th BG, 506 B. Sq. on 16 November 1944. They transferred in from the 489th BG with several on this crew having completed 27 missions. Norman flew his first with the 506th Sq. on 26 November, and his last on 18 April 1945. When Lt. Confer completed his tour on 6 February 1945, he was replaced eventually by Milton Parrish. Norman had completed 20 or more missions with the 44th BG at war's end. Norman had a passion for older restored automobiles, and always sent his letters in highly decorated envelopes. They were a joy to receive.

Counts, Charles Bernard 27 June 03 67th Sq. Right Waist Gunner for the A. C. Kleiderer crew. He was



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born 8 Sept. 1923 in Selton, Virginia. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps just out of high school. The Kleiderer crew flew their first mission on 6 November 1944, flew 11 missions up to 31 December. Then they spent nearly a month in training for Lead Crew status. Then on 15 February 45, they flew their first of many as a Lead Crew both for the 44th BG as well as several other Groups. Their 30th and last mission was dated 11 April 1945.

S/Sgt. Counts married Beverly Rose Olson in 1946, retired from Chrysler Corporation after 33 years, moved to South Texas to Zapata. He enjoyed many hobbies, active in King's Way Church. He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Beverly, son Charles Jr. and daughter Connie.

Howard R. Dakin, 17 August 1978 36402052, 68th Sq., Howard joined the 68th Squadron on 3 August 1944, was assigned to Ordinance, but there are no records available. On 26 May 1945 he was a passenger aboard A/C

42-50806, *Louisiana Belle*, with the Russell G. Erikson crew to return to the U. S. He was living in Cedar Springs, MI at the time of his death.

Davies, Gomer B. 4 April 2003 31326950 66th B. Sq. Right Waist Gunner on the John J. Testa crew that transferred from the 492nd BG to the 66th B. Sq. on 20 August 1944. They soon flew their first mission with the 44th BG on 8 September. Obviously, this crew had previous missions, as they immediately flew as a section lead crew. On their third, they flew Deputy Lead for the entire group; also, as a lead and a PFF (Pathfinder) they flew mostly on bad weather days.

Their missions were scheduled and flown, five in September, four in October, 3 in November, two in December. In the following year, their first and only one in January was on the 16th, then bad luck struck them. Returning from the target, they lost two engines; and under attack, further damages caused the entire crew to bail out over disputed territory. All parachuted safely, but several were injured, mostly upon landing. Luckily, none were taken prisoner, but were rescued by Allied troops. The pilot, John J. Testa later was hospitalized twice, so it was 16 April 1945 before they flew their next mission. Their final mission was also the last mission of the war, 25 April 1945.

Desotelle, George A. Sr. 28 July 2003 19993 67th B. Sq. Sgt. Desotelle was a Tail Gunner on the Deltas A. Brown crew that was assigned to the 67th Squadron in September 1943. He flew his first of six missions on 4 October as a Sgt. By the time he flew his sixth, he had been promoted to S/Sgt. The date was 18 November, and the target was an airfield in Norway, a very long flight, mostly over the North Sea. On the return flight, the formation was attacked by enemy aircraft, with several planes lost. This crew was attacked, and one Waist Gunner was killed.

Later, George was assigned to the 67th Squadron Engineering Section, worked in the Squadron Drying Room. He returned to the U.S. in June 1945..

Francisco, Eugene M. 23 June 1999 25694 66th Sq. Eugene was the Engineer on the E. W. Hornberger crew that flew their first mission on 14 February 1945. This crew completed 18 plus missions; they probably flew one or two more missions in early April, papers unavailable. Their last mission flown was also the last flown by the 44th BG – that of 25 April 1945. They flew aircraft #42-110030 U+ proudly back to the U.S., as it was a veteran ship with more than 90 missions to her credit. Eugene was not a member of the 44th BGVA. He resided in Scottsville, VA.

Frazier, Leo O. 9 June 2003 0-659012 1st Lt. 67th Sq. Leo was the Navigator on the R. W. Blaine crew, an original combat crew that arrived in England on 5 October 1942. This crew was on their 9th mission, aboard A/C #41-23988 E, *Double Playmate*. The date was 8 March 1943, target was Rouen, France, when they were surprised by an attack by E/A, were shot down. Lt. Frazier was the only crewman to parachute; the others failed to escape from the doomed ship and were KIA. Leo lived in Oakley, Utah.

Gaus, John F. Sr. 1984 37582838 68th Sq., S/Sgt. Gaus was the Tail Gunner on the Ned L. Anderson crew that joined the 68th Sq. on 28 Oct. 1944. John flew his first mission on 2 December 1944, and all of his missions with the Anderson crew. They had a close call when on the mission of 16 February, all airfields in England were closed, so all crews were forced to land on the Continent. Anderson's aircraft 42-94895, had

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the nose tire blow when landing, and the nose wheel assembly collapsed. There were no serious injuries. Their final mission was flown on 20 April, making a total of at least 32. Additional missions possibly were flown in early April, but records are not available. The crew returned to the U.S. on 28 May 1945 flying A/C 42-51224. John was living in Cloquet, MN at the time of his death.

Givens, Arthur M. October 2002 20385 66th B. Sq. Sgt. Givens's first flight was to Berlin, 22 March 1944. He flew with many pilots, most frequently with the Harry D. Yoder crew, but also Ralph Hayden, William Peterson, Col. A. L. Johnson (Command Pilot) Capt. Frank Divido (Command Pilot) and more. He served as Waist Gunner, Tail Gunner and Ball Turret Gunner in the 17 missions he flew. On 9 August 1944, flying with William Peterson as the Lead Crew to Saarbrücken, Germany, the plane received serious flak damage; and the pilot rang the 'bail out' bell. The men in the rear of the plane did not hear it, and continued to hold their post. The pilot was able to gain control of the plane; a small repair solved the problem, and the flight continued to Shipdham. One crew member did bail out and became POW. Givens's last mission was 30 October 1944.

Ambrouse T. Hanson, June 2003 # 38119464, 68th Sq. Sgt. Hanson joined the Squadron in mid June 1943 and went on Detached Service with the Sir Echelon to North Africa on 26 June. On 23 August he flew as a Tail Gunner with the Robert J. Lehnhausen crew. Records are not clear, but it appears that he was grounded, as he flew no other missions, but remained in the 68th Sq. At war's end in Europe, he was a passenger on the R. C. Pitts crew that flew A/C # 44-50769 back to U. S., departing Shipdham on 22 May 1945. At the time of his death, he was living in Ore City, TX.

Hisrote, Wilbur H. Date 1998 ?? 23136 506 B. Sq. Sgt. Hisrote flew his first mission on 5 November 1943, but no records can be located to show when he arrived, nor with what crew. It appears that he was not assigned to one crew, but as a spare, flew with many crews, mostly as a waist gunner. He completed 31 missions, this last one as a Tail Gunner with the John C. Titter crew. The date was 8 August 1944.

Jones, Paul A. 4 April 2003 0-6760068 68th B. Sq. Lt. Jones transferred into the 68th B. Sq. from the 392nd B.Sq. on 5 October 1943. Four days later he flew his first mission as Navigator for the A. S. Marcoullier crew, and on the next day, 10 October, flew with the R. H. Townsend crew. On 20 October, he again was with the Townsend. In October he flew three missions, one with the Ben Gildart crew and two with the S. J. Meador crew. After two missions with the Frank Sobatka crew in December, he was assigned permanently to the R. H. Townsend crew. ON the 8 April mission, his 28th, 1st Lt. Jones became a POW when his crew was shot down by enemy aircraft. Four others also survived, including Sgt. Nealon, nose turret gunner, who Paul assisted in escaping the doomed aircraft. Paul was a POW for 401 long days.

Linville, Norman B. 11 May 2003 15335394 68th B. Sq. Norman was a gunner on the B. H. Gildart crew that joined the Squadron on 19 June 1943, just in time to go on Detached Service to N. Africa. However, he did not fly his first mission until 15 Sept. 1943. For most of his early missions he flew as Tail Gunner for Lt. Gildart; but eventually he flew with many other 68th Sq. pilots, including Townsend, Weant, Diehl, Smith, Cary – and others. He also flew a few missions in the nose turret position/toggler. His last mission, number 36, was with the E. F. Murphy on 24 July 1944. On 13 August he transferred to the RC Depot for return to the U.S. He is survived by his wife, Sylvia, two sons and one daughter.



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Lucas, Howard Milton 15 March 2003 18063852 66th B Sq. Sgt. Lucas was one of the pioneer combat men in the 66th. He flew his first mission on 12 Dec. 1942 on the A. G. Damron crew as a Waist Gunner. His next was delayed on 15 February, then 27 February 1943, 4, 5 April 1, 4, 14, 17 and 29 May, all with the Abernethy crew. In late June, the group was placed on Detached Service to N. Africa, Sgt. Lucas became a member of the C. E. Hughes crew as Engineer. There, he participated in two more missions as Engineer, and on the Ploesti mission of 1 August 1943, wherein the entire Hughes crew was interned in Turkey.

Later when he returned to Shipdham, Sgt. Lucas was again placed on combat status, flew a mission in June 1944 with the Yoder crew. Months later, he again was assigned to combat duty, flew two missions in November, apparently to fulfill his Tour of Duty. He then returned to the U.S. Howard earned a BS degree from North Texas State University, taught school, then worked 33 years for Amoco Petroleum. He is survived by his wife Charlene and two sons.

Elwood A. Matter, December 1, 2002, 33176555 506th Sq. He was a Waist Gunner on the Richard H. Habedank Crew. This crew flew their plane from the U.S. to England during the last days of July, 1944, and were assigned to the 44th BG on 17 August 1944. Elwood missed two of the first crew missions (reason unknown), flew his first on 11 September. On his third, the mission was a low level supply mission to Best, Holland. He was busy dropping supplies through the ball turret opening when he was wounded by ground fire. Hospitalized, he was awarded the Purple Heart, but lost well over a month of flying, so could not finish up with his crew. Thursday, November 9 he returned to combat duty, flew his fourth mission. For most of his tour he flew mostly as their engineer, completed his last mission on 20 April 1945. While on the 24 March mission, which was another low-level mission, he was concerned with the heavy ground fire, but was not wounded again. After the war, he served in the Air Force Reserve until 1979, retiring with the rank of Master Sergeant.

Myers, Douglas B. 5 April 2003 0-730575 506th B. Sq. 2nd Lt. Douglas was one of the original 506th B. Sq. combat men who joined the 44th BG at Shipdham in March 1943. He was co-pilot for the James C. McAtee crew, one of the eight crews that arrived at this time.

He flew his first mission on 22 March, but engine trouble caused an early return. His second mission with the J. W. Swanson crew, 5 April, was beset with mechanical problems again forced their early return. His next mission to Kiel, Germany was with the McAtee crew, but with J. W. Swanson as 1st pilot. When flak damaged their #2 engine, the loss of power and a fire caused them to drop out of formation, salvoed their bombs, and turned out over the Kiel Bay. Enemy fighters attacked and forced the crew to abandon their aircraft. Only the four officers in the front of the aircraft survived, probably because the others bailed out over the Bay, drowned before being rescued, or wounded. The four survivors came down closer to shore on land, were immediately taken prisoner.

Williams, James B. 9 March 03 0-801316 Pilot in the 68th B. Sq. J. B. was a co-pilot on the R. E. Rose crew that joined the 68th B. Sq. on 8 December 1943. This crew flew their first combat mission on 14 Jan. 1944 and 21st on 20 April. J.B. was promoted to 1st pilot, took over most of Lt. Samuel H. Bowman's crew. Their next mission was on 1 May 1944. J. B. completed his tour on 19 May 1944. He was a staunch supporter of the 44th BGVA, attended many reunions. He will be remembered fondly and missed.



Elizabeth Mills of Southampton, England is still searching for some information about **Jack Holtzman**, close friend to her lost sweetheart, **Edward Ackerman**. Lt. Ackerman was lost in the *Ruthless* crash, February 2, 1944. Holtzman, a bombardier, started out with the Fineman Crew, later with different crews, ending his 35 missions with the Wahler crew. If anyone has any knowledge of Jack, please contact the Editor (717) 846-8948 or write to the address inside the front cover.

From Peter Bodle of Shipdham: Well, the English summer is with us as I write to you. You remember the English Summer? Two days of sunshine, two days of rain, that sort of thing. Some things never change.

The Aero Club continues to thrive and prosper, and in between the showers, there is a good quantity of flying activity being carried out by its hundred or so members. June has seen power flying in light aircraft, micro lights, flex wing micro lights, soaring in Gliders, and visits by many other aircraft, including several vintage aircraft from the WWII era.

A couple of months ago we hosted a visit from the Veterans from Station 142 Bodney. They had a visit to their old base, where a P-51 and a P-47

Thunderbolt did the honors of a fly past. They then came on to meet up with a P-51 Mustang and its pilot at Shipdham, the nearest airstrip. We even had a genuine 'ace' among the visitors who was photographed in the plane, on the plane, beside the plane and with literally dozens of people who all wanted mementos of his and the plane's visit. The real neat trick of the day came when it was found that the nephew of the original war-Mustang was actually in the group of visitors. Naturally the present owner insisted that the nephew was reunited with his uncle's plane and took the rear seat for a series of 'beat-ups' before heading to its home base of North Weald in Essex.

By the time you read this, Autumn will be upon us, and another year will be passing us by. It may have been over 60 years since you were here, but your memory still stays with us.



From the Editor

Have you done your database?

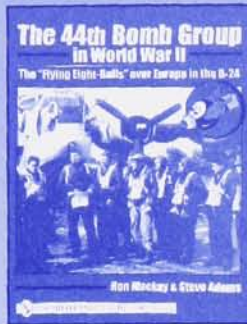
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Ruth Morse
717-846-8948



The 44th Bomber Group in WWII

a new book authored by Steve Adams, has just been completed. Steve, a longtime friend and Board Member of the 44th Bomb Group carefully researched the birth of the 44th, its activities in the States and in the UK, including a history of Shipdham Airfield. The cover features the *A/C Jenny*, featuring the **James Kahl** crew, with IPP President Mikoloski as Navigator.

The price is \$59.95.

Order at:

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