

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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Top row L-R: **Thomas Kay**, Pilot; **Erwin Friday**, Co-Pilot; **Daniel Valenti**, Navigator, **Charles Blatchley**, Bombardier. Front Row L-R **Robert Swank**, Engineer-gunner; **Nelvin Olson**, Gunner, **Fred Blue**, Radio Operator, **James Casey**, Gunner, **Kenneth Smith**, Gunner; **Edwin Summers**, Gunner.

Flight Officer **Thomas C. Kay** and crew picked up *Little Audrey* in Kansas under Movement Order dated 29 May 1944. They developed engine trouble and were forced to land in Manchester, New Hampshire. Repairs were made and they proceeded to Labrador to gas and have further repairs. They flew the Atlantic, still dealing with problems of the gas flow to the engines. With the expertise of **Robert Swank**, engineer and gunner, they made it safely to Belfast, North Ireland, where *Little Audrey* was dropped for the problems to be resolved. The crew proceeded to England via boat, then on to Shipdham where the Kay crew was assigned to the 44th BG, 68th Squadron.

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Little Audrey had been named for a friend of Flight Officer **Kay**. When repairs in Ireland were completed, the plane was assigned to the 445th BG, 701st Squadron. It was shot down and crashed 2.5 km. east of Polch and 18 km. southwest of Koblenz on 27 September 1944 on a mission to Kassel, Germany.

James Casey, Gunner, was searching through old photos and found the cover photo, along with other prints of historical value. Roger Fenton, 44th BG Historian, researched the plane's history with the help of Tom Brittan, an expert on ETO planes.

Coincidentally, when *Little Audrey* went down on the mission to a tank factory in Kassel, Germany, flying with the 445th BG, her original crew was on that same mission in an unnamed plane.

Most of Casey's missions were into the heart of Germany, hitting industries and petroleum refining plants, all in preparation for D-Day.



Can this be the Engineer that
babied *Little Audrey* all the
way across the Atlantic?

A CORRECTION

In his tribute to **Herman "Joe" Eckstein** in the Spring Issue of the *Tails*, **George Washburn** described a mission on 18 October 1944 to Leverkusen, Germany in which he stated that **Robert Lehnhausen's** brother **Edward's** plane was lost, having been hit with flak. Sad to state, when it came out in print, it credited the loss to a lightning strike. Since the *8 Ball Tails* is expected to be totally accurate, I wish to state that Washburn's message had credited flak with the loss of the plane. I extend my sincere apologies to George and to the Lehnhausen family.

Ruth D-Morse



Anti-aircraft gun

**Sign in a muffler shop:
No appointment necessary.
We'll hear you coming.**

GEORGE WASHBURN'S PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Writing this in mid- June to make the Summer edition of *8 Ball Tails*, I can not say too much about the forthcoming reunion as you will be receiving this either just before or just after the reunion. I can say that we all owe many thanks to Ruth and Perry Morse and Perry's daughter, Ellen , for making the arrangements. Also thanks to Jackie and Lowell Roberts for driving over to Branson from Oklahoma City and fine tuning things.

A few other things have occurred in the past few months. Arlo Bartsch has entered the histories of the 68th and 506th squadrons into our 44th Bomb Group Web Site. The web site does generate inquiries from relatives or friends of deceased 44thers who are looking for information. I, as well as others, have had several such contacts over the past year or so and have been able to provide quite a bit of information, which is a very satisfying experience.

Ruth and Perry obtained four B-24 display models at the Reading, Pennsylvania WWII Celebration. Ruth packaged them up individually and sent one to each of Paul Kay's four Grandsons along with a very nice letter outlining their grandfather's accomplishments. We all had been trying to think of some memorial for his family and as usual Ruth came up with a fitting one. Another round of thanks to Ruth!!

Ruth has been in touch with the 8th Air Force Museum at Savannah regarding the status of the " Voice- over" for the Ploesti diorama. It seems that every thing has been done except installing it. They are in the process of rearranging all the exhibits, including the new B-24 " Fighting Sam" nose section exhibit, so hopefully the voice-over will be installed in the not too distant future.

Brenda Phillips, who keeps our roster up to date sends out lists of membership renewals to the officers as they come in to the treasurer.. The rate of renewals for this year has now slowed down . We presently have well over 600 up to date members and associates in our organization. Regular members also include family of 44th Veterans . We welcome Roger Fenton as our new Vice President.. His Dad was a 47 mission Veteran of the 66th Squadron. Among other next generation members who have been active are Jackie and Lowell Roberts and Lois and Tony Cianci. We certainly appreciate all their help.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

For once the main bulk of the words from your old station, here in East Anglia, are more to add comments to articles that were published in the spring edition of 'Tails', rather than adding anything new.

The article about the Griffith landing (arrival) in H-BAR was very interesting, not the least because we have the actual footage of both Forrest Clarke's parachute jump from H-BAR to Shipdham, followed shortly by the Griffith landing. Messy it was, successful it very much was. It was good to get some of the background on how the plane came to be in such a mess, and how long Griffith and Grano had fought the crippled plane to make it back that far. That footage is on a club produced DVD that shows what you guys got up to and had to go through on a daily basis to get the job done. (Another friend of the 44th, Brian Peel had the original {on VHS Tape} and made it available to us. Club member Julian Horne then transferred it to DVD). That DVD will soon be installed in Room Three in the museum and will be able to be played on demand by visitors.

The second story I simply have to comment on is Will Lundy's appraisal of Steve Adams. Guys, you only know the half of it. Without Steve, his generosity, help, knowledge and enthusiasm, our museum at Shipdham would only be a shadow of what it is today. Over the years, he has helped enormously by providing exhibits, photos and knowledge. Having done that, he then disappears for a while and lets the Shipdham Museum team just get on with it. Only on his next visit will he review the work we have done, and correct any errors that may have crept in. At that point he will usually produce another gem of an exhibit or photo to add to the collection. His knowledge and understanding of the 44th is beyond belief.

On a personal note, Steve contributed greatly to the paperback booklet that we produced together last year. (By the way, I have placed the order for the re-print; we are on the last box of the first edition. It's selling that well. Shipdham Airfield, as well as the 44th Bomb Group, has a real good friend in Steve.

Flying has been very high on everyone's mind over the last few weeks, as the English weather has been most odd...It's been good for at least 90% of the time! As you well know, that rarely happens here in Norfolk. We are all trying to make the most of it.

Ed. Note: Peter Bodle lectures regularly at Station 115 to local groups, Lions Clubs, Round Table, Women's Institute, Town & Village History Societies. The Rockwell Griffith single wheel landing and Forrest Clark's contribution to this memory is recorded on DVD. Bodle ends his lectures with this presentation. The Americans at Shipdham are not forgotten at the base that was once part of the Paterson farm.

THE CONTINUED SAGA OF SIDNEY BOLLICK INTERNMENT IN SWITZERLAND

I parachuted into Switzerland on 18 March 1944 from The *Paper Doll/Lady Dot*, #42-10012Q. We were bombing the Dornier aircraft factory at Friedrichshafen and I was flying Co-Pilot for **Hollis "Nick" Nichols**. It was our first mission together. Nick had recently been checked out as First Pilot, and I was the 68th Squadron's Gunnery Officer; I had flown nine missions as Tail Gunner/Observer whenever the 68th was leading the Group. The rest of the crew was recent replacements, with the exception of the Ball Turret gunner, **John Scott**. Scotty was on his twenty-fifth mission, and had volunteered to fly with us when the regular Ball Turret Gunner got sick.

The mission was uneventful until we approached the target, but then we ran into heavy anti-aircraft fire. We turned onto the bombing run, and just as we released our bombs, we took a hit in the number three engine. The prop governor was damaged, and the prop went into uncontrollable fully fine pitch, causing the whole plane to shake violently and forcing us to reduce our air-speed almost to the stalling point. Unable to stay in formation at that speed, we followed our briefing instructions and turned across Lake Konstanz toward neutral Switzerland.

By the time we had crossed the lake, our altitude was down from 20,000 feet to 8,000, and the violent shaking had increased. Knowing that the prop might come off at any time and perhaps come right through the aircraft, we decided to bail out.

Nick engaged the autopilot and put the plane into a shallow glide at 130 miles an hour. I pushed the bail-out button and got on the intercom to make sure all the crew understood we were bailing out. Then I unhitched myself from the cockpit, snapped on my chest pack parachute and climbed down into the bomb bay. After a quick look back through the waist to make sure that everyone back there was out, I dove headfirst through the open bomb bay door.

Just in time...

I had just rolled over onto my back and looked up at the *Paper Doll* for the last time when I saw Nick fall clear of the plane. At almost the same instant, I saw pieces of metal fly off the bottom of the fuselage. We learned later, from a Swiss civilian who took pictures of the crashed plane, that the prop had come off and spun through the fuselage, just about where Nick and I had been sitting just seconds before. With the runaway prop gone, the aircraft flew on in its gradual descent for about a hundred miles before it made a very good pilot-less belly landing in a field behind a little village in the foothills of the Alps. The nose broke off at the point where the prop came through, and it also broke in two at the ball turret, but otherwise, it was in pretty good shape.

I pulled the ripcord on my chute and watched it stream out above me until it snapped open with a solid jerk on the shroud lines. It was oscillating pretty badly, and I was swinging in a big arc like a pendulum on a clock; so I tried pulling on the shroud lines on one side to minimize the swinging. But about all I seemed to accomplish was to spill some air out of one side of the big canopy, which caused me to drop faster. So I thought "to hell with it" and let it swing.

As I neared the ground, I could see snow covered fields and a barn, and a wooden rail fence enclosing what was probably a pasture underneath the snow. For a second or two I thought I was going to land on top of the barn, but I gave a final swing and plopped down knee-deep in snow. Just before I hit the ground I had seen two soldiers in dark green uniforms and German-looking helmets climbing over the fence toward me. For a horrible moment I thought we had made a mistake and had landed in nearby Austria. But that fear was quickly dispelled when the first soldier shouldered his rifle and stuck out his hand and said, "Englander?"

I didn't know much German, but I knew

...continued on page 7

enough to say, "Nein, Amerikaner." When he smiled and shook hands instead of pointing his rifle at me, I knew that we had reached the sanctuary of Switzerland.

By this time the rest of the crew had been rounded up from where they had landed and were waiting in the back of a Swiss Army truck. I was happy to see that we had all made it without so much as a sprained ankle among us. We spent that night at an inn in the little village of Deutschwil, and the next morning, after what we came to know as a typical Swiss Army breakfast of hot chocolate, black bread and cheese, we were loaded onto the same truck and driven fifty miles or so to the Swiss Air Force Headquarters at Dubendorf Air Base just outside of Zurich. We spent that night there, after being interrogated by Swiss Air Force Intelligence and dutifully giving just our name, rank and serial number. The next morning we were put on board a train at the Zurich Bahnhof and transported to Neuchatel, a very pretty city on a large lake, also named Neuchatel.

Quarantined

The Swiss were deathly afraid of epidemic diseases, so we spent the next two weeks quarantined in an old hotel on a hill above Neuchatel. Our quarters were comfortable and the food good, if not overly plentiful. We were allowed to walk around the grounds of the hotel under the watchful eyes of a Swiss Army guard, and were separated from the curious Swiss civilians, who took the ride up the hill every day to see the American airmen, by a waist-high hedge that ran across the entire front of the hotel grounds.

At first these civilians were very friendly, speaking to us across the hedge in English, asking where we were from, what it was like there, and did we know their cousin Hans who also lived in Chicago (or New York or Peoria). However, on the fourteenth day of our quarantine an event occurred that changed their attitude toward us dramatically.

A Tragic Error

On April 1st American planes bombed the railway marshalling yards at Schaffhausen, Switzerland, mistaking them for similar railroad yards just across the border in Germany. As we were driven by truck to the Neuchatel railroad station the next day for the trip to our Internment Camp at Adelboden, the Swiss yelled insults and shook their fists at us, calling us 'murderers' and 'butchers' and other nasty names. After we had boarded the train and were pulling out of the station, one man ran alongside, yelling, 'Jew York, Jew York', as if that was the worst epithet he could hurl at us.

The train ride to Interlaken took only a couple of hours, and there we changed to a local for the short ride up the mountains to Adelboden. The view from the windows of the train went from being merely interesting, as we rolled across the broad valley that opened out to the lake at Interlaken, to breathtakingly beautiful as we climbed one side of the valley and it narrowed until all we could see ahead of us were majestic snow-capped mountains that seemed to rise right up to the sky! Having grown up in the Carolinas, I had seen mountains before, but nothing that I had ever seen in the Appalachians could compare to the sheer size and rugged grandeur of these Alps.

The train continued its climb up the mountainside, and after an hour or so it began to slow down as it approached the end of its line, the station at Adelboden. When it rolled to a stop, the Swiss Army guards lined us up on the platform for the walk up the hill to the village that was scheduled to be our home for the duration of the war.

Our New Quarters

Adelboden was a village of about three or four hundred people, almost all of whom derived their living from the tourist trade in normal times; from skiers in winter, hikers and climbers in summer. But these were not normal times. Even though Switzerland was a neutral country, it still depended on

imports from other countries which were now at war, for many of the necessities of life. And so the Swiss were on an austerity program almost as strict as if they were also at war. Food and other essentials were rationed, there was almost no gasoline available for civilian use, and travel for pleasure was severely restricted. Since this put a real crimp in the tourist trade, the people of Adelboden welcomed the American Internees as another kind of 'tourist' to help bolster the local economy until the skiers and hikers returned.

While our crew was in quarantine at Neuchatel, we had been joined by the crews of four more B-24s and two B-17s that had landed or crashed in Switzerland the same day that we did. Prior to our arrival there were only about fifty or sixty Internees in the camp at Adelboden, so our group more than doubled the camp's population. This presented some housing problems, but the Commandant of our Swiss Guards solved this by taking over another old hotel and separating our officers and enlisted men. Nick, **John McNamara** (Navigator), **Dolph Slovacek** (Bombardier) and I were moved into the Nevada Palace Hotel with the other officers. I was lucky enough to get a very small single room to myself. It looked out across the valley at a magnificent mountain called Lohrner.

Clean Clothes

We had parachuted into Switzerland in our flying gear, which consisted of heated long johns, one piece of coveralls and flying boots. Except for a change of underwear provided by our guards, we had lived in these clothes for two weeks. So upon arrival at the Nevada Palace, (which incidentally, although quite comfortable, was far from being a palace), we were overjoyed to learn that a Post Exchange and Supply Room had already been set up in the hotel. We were issued two changes of clothing; G. I. underwear, enlisted men's khaki shirts and pants, shoes, socks, and a toilet kit. The clothing was supplied by the American Legation in Berne, and we were even allowed a small

ration of cigarettes, chewing gum and candy. The PX was run by 1st Lt. Pete Zarafonetic, Bombardier on one of the first crews to be interned, and he was scrupulously fair in seeing that everyone got his fair allotment.

After changing into clean clothes and checking out the rest of our quarters in the Nevada Palace, we set out to explore Adelboden.

There wasn't much to explore. The village consisted on one main street with several shops, another hotel, the Hotel Baren, and a few other narrow streets winding around the mountainside. On these streets were two more hotels, a number of tourist homes or 'pensions', and the houses of the villagers. Most of these houses were two-story chalets with balconies, built against the hillsides and either painted sparkling white or left in their natural wood color. All of them had colorful painted designs on the front of the balconies and along the overhanging eaves of the roofs, very much like the 'distelfink' designs of the Pennsylvania Dutch in the United States.

Above the village the hillside steepened until it became the lower slope of the mountain that guarded the western side of the valley. A single one-lane dirt road wound upwards around this mountain slope to the few chalets that dotted its sides, ending at the pasturelands for cattle and goats, about a

thousand feet higher up.

Below the village the valley flattened out for perhaps half a mile, before starting the steep ascent up the sides of *Lohrner*,

and continued its gentle climb southward until it reached the impassable barrier at the foot of the *Enslingenalp*. From there a cable car lifted skiers and sight see-ers fifteen hundred feet



Distelfink

up to a natural bowl that provided some excellent skiing.

Since the only railroad ended at the Adelboden station, and the only roads dead-ended at the mountains surrounding us, there was no need for the Swiss to keep us under close guard to prevent escape. They stationed a guard at the railroad station and one at the road just below the village, and otherwise left us free to roam about as we pleased, just taking a roll call at breakfast each morning and one before 'lights out' at night.

We soon settled into the routine of the camp, breakfast at seven, clean up your quarters, take a walk up the hill to the main street of the village, window shop and talk to the storekeepers, sit on one of the benches in front of the little General Store and swap stories with the other Americans, walk up the hill a little further to the hotel where the enlisted men were billeted and visit with them. Then back to the Nevada Palace for lunch at noon, maybe take a nap, then repeat the procedure in the afternoon and be back to the hotel for supper at six. After supper there were usually a couple card games in the big room that had once been a night club, but had been turned into a sort of 'Officers Club.'

The club even had a bar, which was run by the owner of the hotel, an elderly gentleman named Monsieur Richard, who housed us and fed us under contract to the Swiss Government. We could get a beer if we had the money to pay for it, which we seldom had. We were paid our monthly salary by the American Legation in Berne, but to avoid conflicts with the Swiss military, they were only allowed to give us as much as a Swiss soldier or officer of our rank was paid. In the case of a 2nd Lieutenant, that came to forty dollars a month. The rest was held for us, to be paid when we were released and returned to our units at the end of the war. In some cases this could have amounted to a tidy sum, but as G.I.'s usually do, we found a way to get around these regulations.

Some of the pay that we received each

month was lost at the blackjack games or crap games that went on to relieve our boredom, and what was left was spent in a local café for coffee and any food that wasn't rationed. The Swiss Army fed us as well as they could, and the meals were well prepared, but the portions were not too plentiful. Breakfast was either coffee or chocolate, black bread and either butter or cheese, whichever they happened to have the most of. For lunch and supper we had some kind of pasta and a vegetable, sometimes with a green salad. Once a week we had meat for a main dish, usually veal. It was a lot better fare than we would have gotten in a German prison camp, and we didn't go hungry. But we didn't get fat either.

The Entrepreneurial Spirit Arose

Since there was very little seasonal tourist trade, the local shops were well stocked with merchandise, including some very good cameras. Seeing a potential gold mine in the American Internees, the merchants got together and petitioned the Swiss and American authorities to allow the Internees to charge merchandise in their shops, with payment to be made out of the Internee's account by the American Legation. Much to our surprise, their petition was successful, and we went on a colossal spending spree.

Although all of the shop owners benefited from this arrangement, the biggest and most immediate beneficiary was Willy Klopfenstein, a former Olympic Skier who ran the local photography shop. We just about cleaned him out of cameras and film in the first few days. Some of us had chipped in to buy an enlarger, which M. Richard allowed us to set up in a small storeroom in the hotel's basement, giving us our own darkroom. We spent many hours in that room, developing, printing and enlarging everything from mountains to chalets to St. Bernard dogs.

I bought a twin lens Rolliflex camera and several rolls of film, a pair of ski boots which I converted into hiking boots by putting hobnails in them, and a pair of tough civilian trousers. Armed with my new camera and

equipped for hiking, I set out to climb the hillside above the town and take pictures of everything in sight.

My usual companion on these hikes was **John Scott**, our ball turret gunner. There was very little rank consciousness at Adelboden, and although Scotty was a Staff Sergeant and I was a 2nd Lieutenant, we just seemed to hit it off. Maybe it was because we were both Southerners, he from Georgia and I from North Carolina, but whatever it was, we became good friends in the short time we spent together. I never saw him again after I left Adelboden, but I heard later that he had escaped through Yugoslavia and had spent some time with Tito and his Partisans.

Not all of my money (credit) was spent on photography. Quite a bit of it was spent at Frau Schumann's Pipe and Tobacco Shop. Although I had never been a cigarette smoker, I had started smoking a pipe when I got overseas, and it didn't take me long to discover Frau Schumann's shop.

Frau Schumann was a most interesting character. She was a widow, about seventy years old; and like most Swiss, she spoke English, French, German, Italian and Switzerduetsch, which was a combination of the last three. I had taken a couple years of French in high school, and when I told her this, she insisted on teaching me to speak French. She absolutely refused to speak English with me, and I can still hear her saying, "Pas parlez Anglais, parlez Francais." As a result of her persistence, I was soon able to speak passable French, and more importantly, to understand it when it was spoken to me or when I heard it on the radio. Of course, in the process of these French lessons, I also bought a lot of pipes and tobacco.

Listening in...

One of my other early purchases was a small radio for my room. I kept it tuned to a Swiss station during the day, listening to music and trying to understand the news broadcasts in

French and Switzerdeutsch. But every night I listened to BBC from London broadcasting messages to the French Partisans. The broadcasts always began with the first few bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the "V" for Victory bars. Dit dit dit dah, dit dit dit dah, over and over again several times, then, "Ici Londres, Ici les messages pour cette nuit." (This is London. Here are the messages for tonight.) This would be followed by several messages like, "Allo Claude, allo Claude, allo Claude. La neige is sur les mountains, la neige est sur les mountains. (Hello Claude, the snow is on the mountains) and "Allo Pierre, allo Pierre, la jeune fille est tres jolie" (Hello Pierre, the young girl is very pretty).

I listened to these messages by the hour and tried to imagine who they were intended for and what they meant. Some of the names, like Claude and Pierre, were repeated so often that they came to seem like old friends. And as I listened, my understanding of French continued to improve, until one night I realized that I was thinking in French, not translating it in my head from French to English!

Boredom was our biggest enemy at the camp, and we were all getting very restless. There was a lot of talk about escaping, and a few men tried it but were quickly caught and sent to a very unpleasant Swiss Army prison. **However, our boredom came to an end with the events of June 6.**

*Ed. Note: Sidney Bolick has written a very long treatise, which I am using in the Tails. His POW experience in Switzerland is another glimpse at the events which our men lived through in WWII. His story will continue in the next issue. In contrast I am writing of the experience of **John Joseph Brown**, who was a POW in Germany.*

President John Kennedy once said, "War is not fair. Some men get easy assignments; others go through horrible combat experiences. Life, itself, is not fair." How true.

JOHN JOSEPH BROWN'S THIRD MISSION ON RUBBER CHECK TO LANGENHAGEN

On 8 April 1944 we were hit by enemy fighters. I believe they were mostly Me-109s. The number of B-24's in our Group that was lost that day varies in reports from different sources. Some reported five planes on up to eleven. Well, as for the plane we were flying, it was hit on the first pass by the German fighters. By the time we knew they were there, we were being fired at. As Engineer, and being up on the flight deck in the top turret, I could observe everything. The damage was this: No 1 & 2 engines were out and smoking, No. 3 engine was on fire. The flames had engulfed the whole wing area. No. 4 engine was the only engine that was operating.

I reported this to Lt. **Herzing**, our Pilot, and it seemed that a long time elapsed, so I reported it the second time. But he and the Co-pilot, Lt. **Filbach** surely had their work cut out for themselves at that moment. Lt. **Herzing** then said to the Co-Pilot, "What do you think Phil?" The reply was "Let's get the hell out of here." The next order was to "Salvo the bombs and prepare to jump. Go ahead and jump."

Well, it was our first jump; all practice jumps prior to this were done on the ground, just to orient each person which exit to take. To complicate matters, after the bombs were salvoed, the bomb bay doors were swinging back and forth. After checking the swing of the doors, it was decided to jump as they were about to open, because they swung back almost immediately.

Well, we all bailed out and arrived back to the ground with a few bumps and bruises, banged up legs and backs, but other-

wise in good shape. I was told that shortly after we left the plane, it blew up.

We then were taken by German soldiers to a German Guardhouse, somewhere near Hanover. Within a few days we were shipped to Dulag Luft in Frankfurt.

We were held in solitary confinement for several days; and on occasions, brought out to be interrogated. Later we were shipped by boxcar on the railroad to Stalag 17-B in Krems, Austria. We were interned there until about April 7th or 8th, 1945.

At that time we were forced to march to Brauneau, Germany. During this forced march, which took a few weeks, we were fed only six meals - of slop. I think that a pig would have turned away from it. Once there, we lived in the forest until the U. S. Army came along, and we were liberated.

[The pilot (**Ernest Herzing**), Co-Pilot (**Virgil Filbach**), Bombardier (**William Ball**) and Navigator (**Gayle Dunkerly**) were sent to an Officer's Camp, Stalag 1 near Barth.

The non-coms were shipped to Stalag 17 -B in Krems, Austria - Engineer (**John Brown**), Radio Operator (**William Weiss**), Ball Turret Gunner (**Moren Hirsch**), Right Wing Gunner (**Alvin Thorson**), Left Wing Gunner (**Albert Leblanc**), Tail Gunner (**Francis Mahaney**)]

Ed. Note: According to Will Lundy's book, Roll of Honor and Casualties, the month of April 1944 cost the most plane and crew losses of the entire war. April 8th was the single worst day.

The mission to the Airdrome in Langenhagen, Germany cost the 44th eleven A/C; 35 KIA; 73 POW (with one escapee); 8 WIA; 1 seriously burned.

SWEATER GAL, RIGHT CREW, WRONG PLANE



SWEATER GAL # 41-100150
 Standing L-R: Captain **William B. Earleywine**, pilot; 2nd Lt. **John H. Steid**, Co-Pilot; Lt. **Gerald Clinch**, Navigator; Lt. **Walter Tomaszak**, Bombardier; T/Sgt. **Willaim May**, Engineer. Kneeling L-R: T/Sgt. **Joseph Capossela**, Radio Operator; S/Sgt. **Michael Kellaher**, Waist Gunner; S/Sgt. **Ron Dieck**, Belly Gunner; S/Sgt. **Julius Carter**, Assistant Engineer/Turret Gunner; **Elder Williams**, Tail Gunner.

How did a 93rd Bomb Group plane get to be the background for a 44th BG Crew? Roger Fenton's explanation sounds logical: after the Earleywine crew completed their missions a member of the Ford Motor Company snapped their picture, then commandeered the plane for upgrades, then sent it to the next needy BG. This picture was discovered in the Ford Reporter on 1 August 1944.

Ginger Carter Schwager sent the picture, honoring her father **Julius Carter**, who was Assistant Engineer and Gunner in the 66th Squadron. Carter flew thirty-two missions during his nine-month tour of duty.

Ed. Note: Can anyone remember which movie star was labeled 'The Sweater Girl?' Answer: Lana Turner.



Lana Turner

ANNE LEHNHAUSEN SHAULES HONORS HER LOST FATHER ON MEMORIAL DAY

From the San Diego Union Tribune: *More than 60 years after her father **Edward Clark Lehnhausen**, died in World War II, San Diego resident Anne C. Lehnhausen Shaules says Memorial Day isn't for closure - her loss will always be painful - but about honoring our war dead. Here in her words are thoughts of the day she visited her father's grave several years ago in Luxembourg.*

As I looked over the sea of pristine white gravestones, I was struck by the magnitude of them. All these fine young Americans. When will we ever learn? Let us never forget the ultimate sacrifice these young people made for our freedom.

I finally got to visit my father's grave in Europe at the American Military Cemetery in Luxembourg. The experience was overwhelming. Not many family members were able to visit his grave site because of the distance. My father's plane went down over Holland on October 18, 1944. He was first declared "Missing in Action." It took a year before his plane was found in six feet of water...

Mom talked about how good he was and how movie-star handsome he became as a young man. But his actual death was never discussed. I know it was extremely difficult for her. She was nine months pregnant with me when he was killed. He was waiting every

...continued on page 13

day for a telegram from her telling him about the birth of his first child. He was a young man, only 23 years old, and mother was only 24. I arrived two weeks after he died.

I took flowers to my father. It was raining that day as we wandered around the lovely Luxembourg countryside. We saw an old barn, and my husband went inside to ask where the American cemetery was. I had such a sinking feeling that I had come so far and could still not find Daddy. Then I saw a sign pointing to the cemetery. We walked and walked, having no idea how far it was. The misty rain did not help, and our hearts were heavy. At last, I saw the sea of grave-stones, and I found daddy right away. It was a most moving experience. I got to talk to him at last. I felt that he was there.

The death of my father was a great tragedy from which my mother and all the family never recovered. I have always felt

that part of her stayed in a fantasy perfect world when she was young and he was with her. They were so young and so much in love. Their time together was so very short, only a few years. But up until the day she died 60 years later, she spoke of him fondly and her loss was as raw as if it had happened the day before...

I do not know if I ever will get back to visit my father again. But I am content that I was able to go at least once. I hope that my daughters and grandchildren can visit my father, as I do not want him to be forgotten.

All those brave Americans. How can we ever thank them? How can we ever forget? Four A/C were lost on 18 October 1944. The Edward Lehnhausen crew was flying in Flak Magnet. All members of his crew were KIA. Edward is the brother of Robert Lehnhausen, Commander of the 68th Squadron.

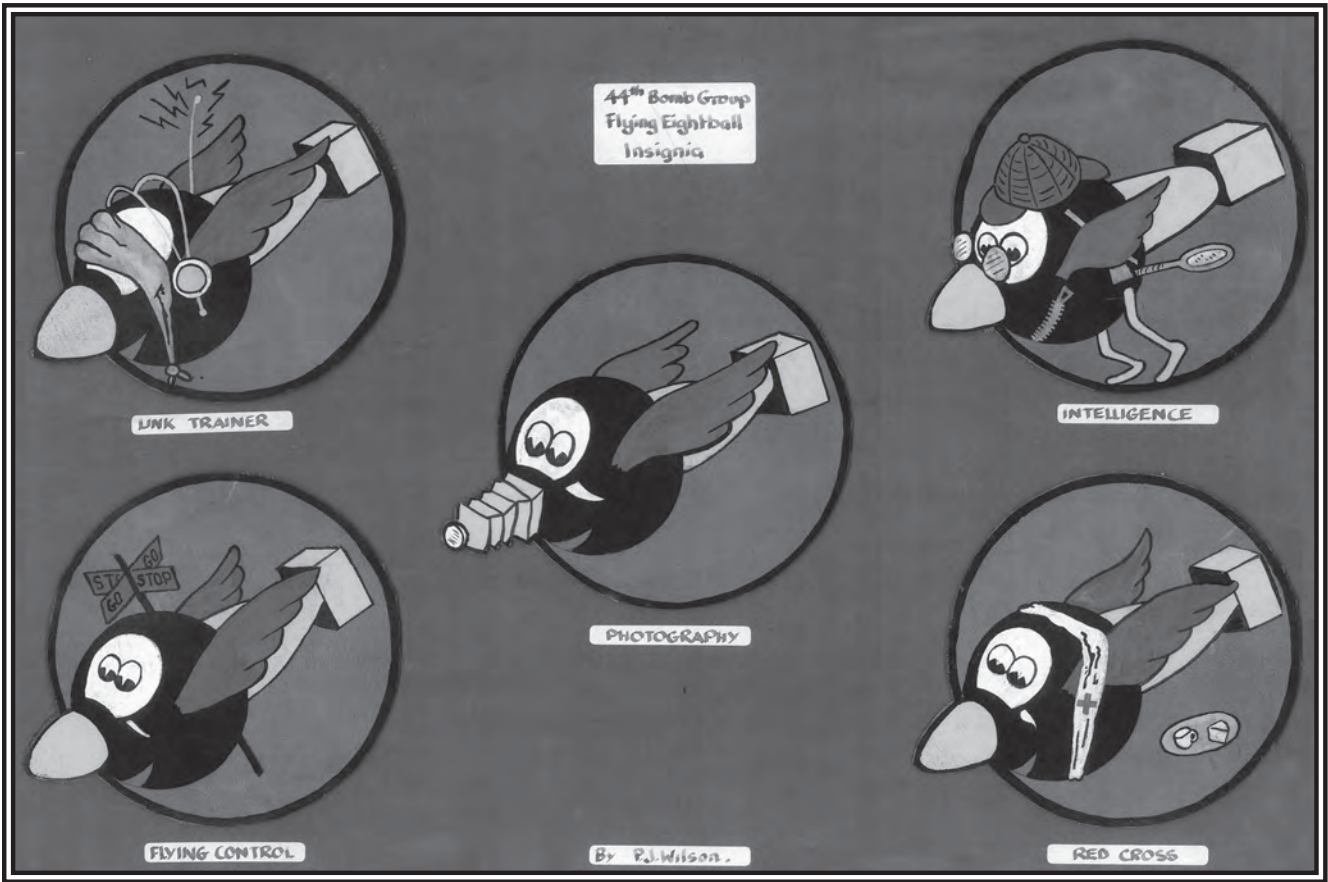
AN ODE TO ANOTHER FATHER

by Mary Esther Wheatley, (age 11)

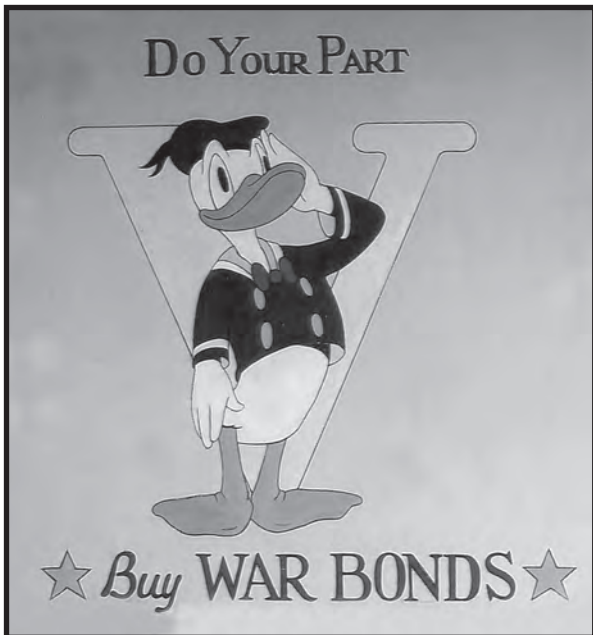
They say my daddy died. He did not die.
Why just tonight, I heard him fly
Above my roof.
Is that not proof
That he's alive and breathing where
The world is safe and free from care?

They say he 'folded wings' at sea
But daddy would have wanted me
To doubt those things.
You can't fold wings
That for a lifetime have been spread
To fly above a first child's head!

Tonight when all the world is still
I'll lean upon my windowsill
And listen for you, Daddy Bill,
And though the whole world fails to note
A fast approaching flying boat
With ghostly motors in its throat,
I'll hear it come, and I shall be
Proud - proud that you flew west to me
On wings that no one else could see.



This cartoon submitted by Will Lundy.



THE MIGHTY EIGHTH MUSEUM IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

The Museum is undergoing a major streamlining. As you will recall, the 44th BG placed a large diorama depicting the Ploesti Raid. It featured White Five, one of the refineries that Hitler depended on to fuel his tanks and trucks. About two years ago **Roy Owen** had the planes lowered to a more accurate level. (They advanced at tree-top level, and some were low enough to pick up pieces of corn stocks from the neighboring fields.)

According to Vivian Rogers-Price, Curator, the Ploesti exhibit will be part of a larger display depicting the activities of the Mighty 8th Air Force, which originated in Savannah. Included will be the nose Fightin' Sam, a contribution from the 2nd Air Division. A person will be able to enter the back of this B-24 nose, look down through the Norden Bomb Site and blast an imaginary target.

One piece of unfinished business is electronically placing a 'Voice-Over' on the exhibit. When Roy helped design the exhibit, he wrote a description of the Ploesti mission, which is printed on the base of the diorama. However, it is acknowledged that having a voice describe the event would be more powerful, as most people respond to sounds more strongly than printed material. **Tom Parsons** answered the call for help, and had a professional speaker

record the words on a DVD, which is now in the hands of the Curator. Hopefully, the project will soon reach fruition.

Currently the Mighty Eighth is featuring original art from artists who served in WWII. The exhibit is called "A Brush with Destiny," and features the work of men who were POWs, pilots, mechanics and other occupations during the War. An acrylic of a B-24 battling two Messerschmits over the English Channel was created by Charles Doyle. Some of the men who painted the unique nose art on planes are now preserving history through their art.

Anyone visiting the Savannah area would enjoy a glimpse back into the realities of WWII.

*Ed. Note: Equally impressive and worthy of its own exhibit was the raid on Target Blue, led by Col. Posey on August 1. This was the refinery that produced oil for Hitler's A/C. The Creditul Minier Refinery was totally destroyed, forcing the Luftwaffe to limit training and operations for the rest of the war. Among those flying at treetop level was **Richard Butler**, a former Board Member of the 44th BGVA, former President and currently a Board Member of the 2nd Air Division.*

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED:

Military Historical Tours is inviting members of the 44th BGVA to celebrate the 65th Anniversary of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in England. This organization works with FOX News, taking veterans & families to the site of airfields of the 8th AF. The first tour is 2-10 October. The stated goal is "To honor the men and women who helped defeat Nazi aggression by serving in or supporting the greatest air armada the world had ever seen-the 8th Air Force."

The second tour is 3-14 September, "Americans in Enemy Hands", the POW experience in Germany. The tour is working in conjunction with the OFLAG 64 Survivors Association. It will focus on the 350,000 members, 28,000 who became POWs during WWII. This tour is aimed at those airmen who experienced the German prison camps.

Contact can be made by e-mail: <http://www.miltours.com> or by contacting Major Bill McCullough, Military Historical Tours, 4600 Duke Street, Suite 420; Alexandria, VA 22304-2517; Tel. 703 212-0695.

FROM THE DIARY OF SAM CERVELLERA Radio Operator

3 May 1944 Mission #3

Fred Stone crew.

Target: St. Omer, France Visibility Poor...21,000 ft. *Shack Rat*

Temp minus 24

The target was a military installation at St. Omer, believed to be secret rocket installations... (V-1 site) It was 5 hrs. and 35 minutes long. We did not see much flak until we reached the IP. There we had a 25 min. straight flight to target with good visibility. Over the target there were clouds, neither the tail gunner nor I could see our bombs hit. I was still looking when we caught a burst of flak, not direct, but close enough to knock the boys around in the back. It was 2 ft. over my head, and I did not know about it till after we landed. Then we saw the flak holes in the fuselage. Those boys sure shoot straight over there on the French coast. No enemy fighters were around. P-51s swept the area. The flak was close enough... 27more to go...

8 May 1944 Mission #5

Fred Stone, Pilot; **Merritt Derr**, Co-Pilot; **Andrew Patrichuck**, Navigator; **Glen Hartzell**, Nose Gunner/Toggler; **Charles Brown**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; **William Strange**, Right Waist Gunner; **Robert Foust**, Left Waist Gunner; **Robert Ryan**, Ball Turret Gunner, **Morrie Meunitz**, Tail Gunner.

Target: Brunswick, Germany Visibility-- pretty good 22,000 ft. A/C #42-9997

Temp minus 32

Today we had the book thrown at us. Next to Berlin, this is the toughest target in Germany. Going in we encountered the usual flak, but it was inaccurate and not well concentrated. Just before the target we saw fighters forming at three o'clock and low. They were called out 'ME 109s and 190s'. After forming, they went out to one o'clock and started to press home. We were in the high formation and second element. That's just where they come in. **Hartzell** yelled out 'here they come' and let fly away, and so did **Brown** from the upper turret. They swept by, and **Strange** got a short burst at three o'clock as he kept going. He did not hit it, as it came by too fast. **Morrie** was going to get it at five o'clock, but his turret went out, and he couldn't get a shot. **Brown** came the closest to the 109s tail. In the meantime **Foust** was cussing the krauts because they would not come to his side. **Ryan** was screaming at **Stone**, to let him put the ball turret down, but it would have cost us the formation. The fighters made their sweep and did not knock out a single B-24, although they did some damage. They went around to form another sweep at 12 o'clock.

A formation of P-38s showed up; and Jerry seeing them, broke up and headed for cover with the P-38s in pursuit. We went on to make our bomb run and back to the Channel and home. Two B-24s collided over the target, but we saw no chutes. **Derr**, **Stone**, **Pat** and I had to sweat out the fighter attack, as we had no guns. I am going to get **Foust** to take over Radio Operator duties and shots too. I had to stomp on the bomb bays to get them to open, as the hydraulic fluid was frozen. It was tough... 25 more to go...

PS. We received the Air Medal for this mission...

Ed. Note: Will Lundy's book, Roll of Honor & Casualties, records the loss of one A/C from the 66th Squadron and 2 crewmen.

WWII NUMBERS

Americans who served in WWII - 16.1 million
61 % of U.S. troops were drafted - 671,000 were wounded
78,000 U.S. troops are still not accounted for.
464 Medals of Honor were awarded, 266 posthumously
90,000 men were POW
303,700 U.S. air craft were produced; 59,300 were lost.
Average pay for enlisted troops - \$71.33/month
Average pay for officers - \$203.50/month
6.5 million U.S. women entered the work force
55-60 million people from 311 nations died
50 countries were involved
12 million Europeans were left homeless
\$17 billion in US post war aid went to Western Europe
13.3 million pints of blood were donated to the Red Cross
420,000 performances were given by the USO

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

At one time the U.S. was looking for new ideas for winning the war, and serious consideration was being given to turn bats loose with incendiary bombs attached. A high ranking general in the weapons development department of the Army said he liked the bat idea better than that **'half baked idea of making atoms into bombs!'**

More Solutions of the Qantas Ground Crew To Pilots' Complaints

- P. Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.
- S. Almost replaced left inside main tire.

- P. Suspected crack in windshield
- Q. Suspect you're right.

- P. Number 3 Engine missing
- S. Engine found on right wing after brief search.

America is the land of the free because of the brave.

Graham Austin of Ipswich, England remembers the details of life in a country where bombs fell during many of the early years of his childhood.

"We had two kinds of shelters, the Morrison and the Anderson. The Morrison Shelter was used in homes. It was made of steel sheet metal and was like a big table placed down in the basement. When the sirens went off, the family could huddle under this structure; and hopefully, survive the raid.

"The Anderson Shelter was made of six inch corrugated steel. It had a rounded top, held together with bolts. The shape is similar to a cage that is used on airplanes for transporting an animal-but much bigger. It was big enough for a family to sit out an air raid. The soil was dug out, the shelter was placed in the hole, then covered with the soil."

From the Editor: Back copies of many of the 8 Ball Tails are available without charge. We ask to be reimbursed only for the cost of mailing. Call my phone number or e-mail me at the address on the inside cover of this magazine.

The *8 Ball Tails* is named for the identifying numbers on the tail of the featured A/C. Do you have a picture of your favorite plane, which could be used on the cover? Send it to me; I'll try to use it. (I am eager to learn what treasures are laying in our veterans' attics.)



Top left: American Red Cross Club Mobile, a traveling canteen, was borrowed from the London Passenger Transport Board.



Bottom right: Coffee and doughnuts were dispensed from the hatch on the side of the Club Mobile.

ONCE AN ENEMY...



Gottfried P. Dulias as a Cadet, Berlin Gatow, June 1944

Perry Morse met Gottfried Dulias at the WWII Celebration in Reading, Pennsylvania. Like other participants in the show, the pilot of a Me-109G was decked out in his German aviation attire, and celebrants were purchasing signed copies of his book, *Another Bowl of Kapusta*, (Cabbage Soup)

Morse and Dulias exchanged life stories. Morse was drafted into the army at age 19. On Miami Beach, Florida he volunteered for gunnery school, and in a few short months, he was flying in a B-24 with the **Beiber** crew.

Dulias was a member of the Hitler Youth. At age 18 he was summoned to Munich to be tested for military service. He was inducted into the Luftwaffe, became a trainee at the German Air Academy, and in six months was a fighter pilot in the 53rd Squadron, the Ace of Spades. He flew a Messerschmidt Me-109G, and was assigned to knock down the bombers flying out of England and the fighters that accompanied them.

Dulias claims shooting down two B-17s and a number of British Spitfires. The camaraderie of airmen was real, regardless of national identity. Within a few hours after shooting down a British plane, he met the pilot in a POW camp. The man walked up to him smiling, saying "Are

you the fellow that shot me down?" They shook hands like great friends.

At age 19 he was in combat; at age 20 he was a POW in Russia. Flying in *Gustav*, he shot a Russian 'Rata' and followed it down, wanting to photograph it and get credit for the victory. This took him into Russian territory; his plane was hit, but he managed to bring it safely to the ground. *Gustav* exploded seconds after he stepped out. From there he went on a starvation diet of Kabusta in a Russian Gulag.

Morse could report that when the war was over in 1945; he and his crew survived and returned to civilian life. Dulias spent three ghastly years in the Russian Gulag, returning to his family in January 1948. He could not return to his hometown of Konigsberg in East Prussia, as that was part of the territory which Russia claimed at the Peace Treaty. He and his wife Hedwig came to America in 1953. They rapidly sought citizenship and employment. They had three children.

Although Dulias shot down five planes, the Germans had no designation of Ace, as was the recognition in the AAF.

As the two WWII airmen agreed to stay in touch, Morse commented, "I'm glad you didn't shoot me down."

Ed.Note: At the Gathering of the Eagles and the graduation of the cadets at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, 16 Eagles were honored, among them, Gottfried P. Dulias.

He is a member of the Luftwaffe Aircrew Re-enactment Association, an organization of volunteers who participate in re-enactments for special WWII events. They come in uniform, but the swastika is never a part of their décor.

Why is it hard for giraffes to say they're sorry?"

Answer: Because it takes so long for them to swallow their pride!



MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Will Lundy**: Re the man on the front cover of the Spring edition of the 8 BTs:

"I was thumbing through Steve Adams book and page 52 found the same photo, but identified the man as: 1st LT. Fred H. Jones, the pilot who flew it. The man certainly is not dressed like an officer, but he does have a large object in his shirt pocket. It could have been taken Africa, where tans were worn, and most ground crewmen would have been dressed in coveralls, not khaki.



Can anyone identify this person?



From Arlo Bartsch, 44th Bomb Group Database Custodian: The 44th Bomb Group Web Site has been updated to include the latest issue of the *8 Ball Tails*. It also includes **Web Todd's History of the 68th Squadron** and **Norm Kieffer's History of the 506th Squadron**.



From Peter & Connie Loncke: The Air Force Escape and Evasion Society met in St. Louis, Missouri to reminisce the drama of Underground Belgium, French and Hollanders helping airmen who parachuted or crash-landed into their country. Three dozen airmen met with their 'helpers', remembering the dangers they faced from a determined enemy. Any member of an occupied country who was discovered helping an Allied airman would immediately be executed.

Members of the French Resistance, the Dutch and Belgian Underground, and partisans and soldiers from the former Yugoslavia led more than 2,000 U.S. airmen to safehouses and farms where they were kept and fed until it was safe to travel an escape route out.

Present at the Society' gathering were Peter and Connie Loncke. Peter has recently retired from the Belgium Air Force. He spent many years in his homeland, locating crash sites and informing families of his findings. He is married to Connie Crandell, niece of 1st **Leonard Crandell**, whose plane was lost in Belgium after dropping supplies to British paratroopers at Wesel, Germany.



From **Lee Aston**: Sixty four years later, the Ploesti mission continues to make news. The body of Lt. Archibald Kelly of Detroit, Michigan was found in Croatia. Apparently Kelly was a member of the 15th Air Force, flying out of Lecce, Italy.

The losses of the raid on 1 August 1943 by the 44th and 93rd Bomb Groups were so devastating, the plan was temporarily abandoned. However, as the War progressed and when bases in Italy became available, General Eisenhower made the decision to continue those raids (but not at treetop level.) Lt. Kelly was a participant in that plan. Eight members of that crew bailed out and survived. Two were lost.

The advantage of continued raids was that it tied up German forces, keeping them away from the Allied invasions planned for the coast of France. As German fuel supplies continued to drop, less training was available for new German aviators, making them an easy target for P-47s, P-51s and gunners on the bombers. *The 44th lost eleven A/C on the Ploesti raid, two of which were interned in Turkey.*



From: **Lawrence Cantwell** (66th Sq.) to **Will Lundy**: We arrived at the 44th in May '43. In retrospect, getting there was almost as 'hairy' as being there. Enroute to England via the southern route, we crash landed in Casablanca, with nearly a month delay in repairing the plane. From Casablanca to Norfolk, we carried a passenger, a captain, command pilot, ex-commercial airman. We

...continued on page 21

were lost over England in 18/10 cloud cover, low on gas, with no options. Fortunately, the Navigator located an RAF fighter airfield, the Captain took the left seat and took us through the cover, almost to the deck. He landed very nose high, hit the brakes, and ran off the end of the runway. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that without him, we would not have made it.

My first mission was on 29 May 1943 to the sub pens at La Pallice, France, replacing the Radio Operator on Lt. **John Reed's** crew. We lost an engine near the French coast, aborted, was attacked by 2 JU 88s, got away into cloud cover, lost instruments and wound up with an emergency landing at a Royal Navy Base in southern Wales. I was the bum on this mission who could not tune the radio to find out where we were. Thank God for the Navigator, who got us located with the radio compass. I resolved that day to learn my job when I got back to base-and I did, becoming a lead R.O., usually flying only when we led the 44th or the 2nd Air Division or the entire 8th AF.

I went with Lasco's crew to Benghazi for the Sicily/Italy invasion; but for the August 1 low level to Ploesti, I was hospitalized for over a week with amoebic dysentery. The Lasco crew went down over Ploesti. The survivors, **Henry Lasco**, Pilot; **Joseph Kill**, Co-Pilot; **Charles "Shorty" DeCrevel**, RWG and **Albert Shaffer** (LWG) were interned.

After returning to England, I continued flying with various crews, making my last mission on 8 September 1944. I turned down a commission, as it meant one more year overseas. I was sent home later that month.

Looking back now, I realize I've seen the days of maximum effort being 150 bombers with no fighter support (except Spitfires to the Dutch Coast) to 1500 bombers with a thousand 38s, 47s & 51s all around and over us. I have been on thirty five missions, including the first daylight over Berlin, a crash landing in an English meadow after coming back from Ludwigshafen, and never a Purple Heart.

That's true Irish Luck.



From Kevin Watson: The Remembrance Sunday ceremony in Eastbourne, England for the *Ruth-Less* crew is on the Internet:

[http:// youtube.com/watch?v=NqEvhkgxBAE](http://youtube.com/watch?v=NqEvhkgxBAE)

The story of the **Bolin** crew that was returning to Shipdham is told on the You Tube web site, as is the annual memorial service in their honor. Returning from a V-1 launching site in Watten, France in bad weather and badly damaged, *Ruth-Less* crashed on Butts Brow at Eastbourne. All members of the crew were lost.

An English gentleman, the late Arthur Smith, paid homage to those lost Americans every Remembrance Sunday for fifty years. Kevin Watson, a young man living in the area, convinced the Councillor Ron Parsons, Mayor of Eastbourne, to place a memorial on that site. Every year since then, a memorial service is held at the crash site. **It is a town that never forgets.**

Watson has written a book, '*Ruth-Less and Far From Home.*' Copies are available by contacting him at MonsieurKevin@aol.com.



From **Will Lundy**: If you think you are being snubbed by E-Mail messages bouncing back, please forgive. Blame my computer or blame AOL, but I am about to make some changes-a new computer. Try my other address: cwlundy@earthlink.net



From the Editor: A new museum is under construction at Normandy. The 44th Bomb Group is among the honorees at the new museum, by virtue of having been a participant on D-Day. The Flying Eight Ball will be proudly on display.



ABOUT BRANSON

According to Jackie and Lowell Roberts, the hills of Missouri are 'alive with the sound of music'. You will love being there. The deadline for registration is past, but register anyway. We will work overtime to get you into the hotel. It is important that you let us know when you are arriving. Our awesome Roberts couple have rented a van to transport you to the Grand Plaza Hotel.

Besides the planned events, you can opt to see Presley's Country Jubilee - Gospel, Classic Country, New Country and Comedy. The Welkresort Theatre offers a magic show. Jeff Gordon says his race car appears nightly. Does it also disappear? We're not sure.

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION GRAND PLAZA HOTEL 245 N. WILDWOOD DRIVE, BRANSON, MISSOURI 2007 REUNION SCHEDULE

LODGING: GRAND PLAZA HOTEL FOR 3 NIGHTS STAY

Friday, August 31, 2007

Registration 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 PM

Welcome Reception 6:00 PM

(Dinner on your own)

Sunday, September 2, 2007

Breakfast

6:00 P.M. Banquet

Cash Bar

Saturday, September 1, 2007

Breakfast

9:00 A.M. Membership Meeting

5:00 P.M. Cash Bar

6:00 P.M. Squadron Dinners

Monday, September 3, 2007

Breakfast and Goodbyes

OPTIONAL SHOW PACKAGE

Saturday, September 1, 2007

12:00 pm Showboat Branson Belle
or 1:00 pm Titanic Museum

Sunday, September 2, 2007

10:00 am Red Skelton Tribute
2:00 pm Veterans Memorial
Museum

44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

REUNION REGISTRATION

August 31-September 2, 2007

Grand Plaza Hotel, Branson, Missouri

Please fill out a form for each registrant

Please Print or Type. All Information Must Be Complete

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse/Guest _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Per Person Pricing: Single: \$456.00 Double: \$308.00 Triple: \$266.00 Quad: \$245.00

Please indicate bed preference: King _____ Double _____ Single _____

Includes: Welcome Reception, three free breakfasts, Hospitality Room, free parking,

Squadron Dinner. Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Chicken _____ Shrimp

Banquet: Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Prime Rib _____ Salmon _____ Chicken

OPTIONAL TOURS:

Saturday September 1, 2007

12:00 pm Showboat Branson Bell (with lunch) \$60.00 each
or 1:00 pm Titanic Museum \$30.00 each

Sunday, September 2, 2007

10:00 am Red Skelton Tribute \$36.00 each
2:00 pm Veterans Memorial Museum \$19.50 each

Payment

Number of Registrants (See Prices Above)

Single _____ \$ _____
Double _____ \$ _____
Triple _____ \$ _____
Quad _____ \$ _____

Tours: Show Boat \$ _____
Titanic Museum \$ _____
Red Skelton Tribute \$ _____
Veterans Memorial Museum \$ _____

Extra nights are \$99.00 per room per night, all taxes included. If you are planning on spending extra days before or after the Reunion, please inform us of your plans. It will help our treasurer get the correct information to the hotel.

Please send checks to 44th BG Treasurer:

Richard Lynch, 109 Jason Road, Box 518 Conrad, IA 50621, 0518



RECOLLECTIONS

For the past few months I have been collecting and combining as much data as possible about the 44th BG's participation in the low level bombing attack on the Oil Fields Refineries of Ploesti, in Rumania, 1 August 1943. The courage displayed by these airmen that Sunday morning was truly remarkable, where each combat airman earned all of the awards this nation could give to them. It was, after all, designed a "suicide" attack, but for most of these men, they were willing and often eager to be participating, come what may. They insisted on going, no matter whether they survived or not. No one can do more than that! So we must keep their deeds and their memory alive. Over all, five airmen were awarded this nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor, the most for any event in U.S. history.

When one traces back the origins of both the B-24 Liberator and the first Group to be trained in and on that new aircraft, one will find that it was our own 44th BG that fits that category. The 90th, 93rd and the 98th Bomb Groups were formed from the 44th BG in early 1942 at Barksdale Field, Shreveport, LA. Although the 389th BG did not have its origin from either the 44th or the 93rd, both of these groups supplied nearly all of the Ground Support personnel for the 389th BG during their first several months in operations. The Ground Support personnel for this new 389th Bomb Group were stuck on the U.S East Coast due to the shortage of ships, so the only answer was to utilize personnel from the 44th and 93rd Bomb Groups. Immediately, nearly 150 ground personnel from each of us were

rushed to the 389th BG, and then on to North Africa. So, of the five Groups that participated, only the 376th BG did not have roots from within the 44th BG!

The 93rd BG takes the honor of being the first Liberator Group to fly a mission in the ETO (European Theatre Of Operations), but they were only one week ahead of us, as we were delayed until after we had formed three additional Liberator Groups. The 44th was also short one Squadron, the 404th, as they were taken from us in July, 1942, quickly flown to Alaska to help stop the Japanese. Then, early in 1943, three 93rd Squadrons were rushed to Africa to help with the invasion of North Africa. So, in reality then, only four Squadrons of Liberators (approximately nine crews) were actually flying those early 1943 missions over Europe.

So at that time, there were only two depleted B-24 Bomber Groups in England to help the British prevent the imminent invasion by German forces. Our new aircraft, only recently designed, built and rushed into combat, had many problems from unsatisfactory equipment, was not designed for very high altitude attacks, which the accurate and very dangerous German anti-aircraft guns forced us to fly. Worse still, was the fact that even the clothing and equipment furnished to our airmen were not only unsatisfactory, but were downright dangerous, and caused several more deaths. Our machine guns would "freeze" at altitude (due to inadequate lubrication), so we could not keep our enemy aircraft at bay, no replacements of aircraft lost, nor killed or injured airmen except by volunteers by untrained ground personnel.

The arrival of the 506th Squadron in February, 1943, certainly brightened things a bit, but due to our heavy losses, we were still quite understaffed. Obviously, we certainly were losing the war against Germany, and the future looked very bleak. The mission to Kiel, Germany of 14 May almost put the 67th Squadron "out of business", with only Suzy Q remaining in service. Indeed, we were not only losing but there were very few replacements of men and airplanes. At that time I often was reminded of the fairy tale about the little Dutch boy who stuck his thumb into the small hole in a dyke until help could arrive. That scenario supposedly took place only about 100 miles from us, but seemed quite similar to our situation. Could we hold out until more help arrived? Surely our combat men had the same thoughts and feelings of futility, and worse still, how could anyone manage to survive a tour of 25 missions. There were so few of us, and so very many of the seasoned and well equipped enemy. Those were very, very bleak days!

For a short time in late May there was some speculation and several activities related to switching from daylight to night bombing; and then a period when we two Liberator groups started practicing very low level flying and even some formation flying at near tree top altitudes. Nearly all of us had his own opinion about this drastic change in flying procedures, but of course, most of us were quite wrong.

In late June 1943, when our Air Echelon got the orders to fly to North Africa and to bring along a maximum of four Ground personnel per aircraft, for an unspecified period of time, our airmen probably perceived that things surely would be better down there. There still remained a shortage of personnel and Liberators, but it surely had to be better than in England, the weather certainly would have permitted many more missions to be completed more quickly there.

When those several July missions in North Africa ended and the low level practice flights again resumed, nearly all of the airmen thought it great fun - especially the pilots. But when they finally learned the true reason for all of these unusual activities, it became very serious business. Shortly before 1 August 1943 it finally was announced that this would be a suicide mission, that it would be at a minimum altitude, and that if anyone did not want to participate, he would be excused, no questions asked. There were several men, and even a crew or two that had finished and exceeded their required 25 missions, so normally these men would have been returned to the U.S. However, all of those men elected to remain and fly this "suicide" mission, it being so important to our war effort. There are no records indicating that anyone having completed less than 25 missions requested to have his name removed from the listings of men assigned to fly that mission. They all insisted on going!!!.

Also, due to the fact that the bombing would be at near ground level, there was no need for a belly or "hatch" gunner. So, one of the gunners from each crew had to be selected to remain behind. Some crews drew "straws", others used different means to identify their extra crewman that must remain behind. It proved to be a sad situation for these men selected as they all had strong ties within each crew and NO ONE wanted to be left behind.

The briefing reports stated that this target was so important that, if they all hit their specifically assigned targets, it very well could shorten the war by six months, and probably save the lives of up to 200,000 soldiers needed to capture it by ground attack. Although there was a strong possibility that many of these airmen would be lost, EVERY airman wanted to participate! My personal assessment for this very strong response by our combat men is that it was a reflection of

the very, very critical situation and their accepted belief that very few of them would live to complete his tour of 25 missions anyway. The odds were so great against completing a tour of 25. If they probably were going to die anyway, then there could be no better opportunity to do something so very important, knock out those individually assigned targets, and thereby save the lives of so many ground soldiers.

Our combat men did not have low morale - quite the opposite. As a ground crewman, I had been present at my crew's airplane for every one of our missions in England, both for take off and return to base, for practices and for actual missions. These airmen had an almost impossible task to perform, but they always did the best that they could. I felt so sorry for them all when they arrived and struggled to load their gear and make preparations for take-off. It was heart-wrenching when they returned from many of those missions, even without any damages inflicted by enemy actions. Their equipment and their clothing were so unsatisfactory, to say the least. Even after over half a century has passed, I still cannot forget these memories of half frozen very young men as they tried to work their way out of their plane, ice hanging from their oxygen mask bladders and chin, many covered with frost, some needing help to walk, all due to fatigue, the cold, and their inadequate equipment - pitiful and heart wrenching memories. They never quit, but kept coming

back again and again, mission after mission. They were all well aware that the next mission could very likely be their last, but if it were, they were going to do the best to locate and hit their targets first.

It was only a few months later that the historic low-level attack was made on the Ploesti Oil facilities, with many of these airmen being our original combat men. So it should not have come as a surprise that they truly welcomed the opportunity to do serious and wide spread damage to their enemy's oil supplies. They did succeed in hitting their two assigned targets very well, with Blue Target put completely out of service until after the end of the war. White Five had been hit by others Groups in error, smoke and fire made it difficult to find, identify, and bomb their assigned targets, exploding bombs from other Groups downed and badly damage several of our planes. But this refinery also was severely damaged..

Bless those great airmen and thank them all for their "work" so very well done - from start to the finish. It is a shame that our American public have never truly learned how great these airmen performed against a very well trained and equipped enemy.

Will Lundy
P.O. Box 315,
Bridgeport, CA 93517





FOLDED WINGS

Having lost contact with many of the 44th BG's former members, George Washburn conducted a search in the Social Security Files. Many names which he found were of people who passed away before the 44th BGVA was formed. Some were never members of the organization. Nevertheless, they served in the 44th, so we are including their names in the Folded Wings, even when no information of their WWII activities is known.

*O memory! Thou midway world 'twixt earth and paradise,
Where things decayed and loved ones lost in dreamy shadows rise.*

By Abraham Lincoln (at age thirty seven)

ABRAHAMIAN, VANIG #19166 68th Squadron December 2006 T/Sgt. Abrahamian was an Engineer & Top Turret Gunner with four different pilots: **Walter Zerman, Clair Hill, Ray Suddeth** and **Elmer Kohler** (with **George Washburn** as Co-Pilot). His first of fifteen flights was on 11 July 1944. He flew in seven different A/C: *Lili Marlene, Flak Magic, Gipsy Queen, Gallavantin' Gal, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Corky* and *Lady Geraldine*. Abrahamian's last flight was 11 December 1944.

ACKERMAN, TRENT H. #19173 18 September 2003 68th Squadron 1st Lt. Ackerman flew his first of 34 missions on 6 December 1944 as Co-Pilot with **Joseph Gillespie**. Six days later he had his own crew, flying thirty three missions into Germany, one into France and his last, into Austria, 25 April 1945. This was the last day of the 44th BG's missions, thirteen days before VE Day.

The Allies were moving rapidly across Europe at that time, and bombing raids were directed to halt German production of war materials and slow the movement of troops by bombing railroad and bridges.

The Ackerman crew flew in nine different planes: *Lili Marlene, Gallavantin' Gal, T.S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Flak Magnet, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Puritaniical Bitch/Puritaniical Witch, Down de Hatch, Consolidated Mess* and *One Weakness*.

Information of Ackerman's death was located in the Social Security Death Index.

BAYER, ARTHUR #19377 20 August 1999 67th Squadron On his first mission, S/Sgt. Bayer was the Tail Gunner on the **Robert Stamos** crew, flying in *Amblin' Oki* on 13 November 1943. The second mission was to the Aero-casting works in Solengen, Germany, flying in *Seed of Satan*, with **Edward Taylor** as pilot. The target was covered with clouds, and they were bombing by PFF. On their return to the base, the plane was hit with flak and the crew bailed out into Belgium. The pilot was KIA; six members of the crew, Bayer included, were POW; two managed to evade, but were captured and became POW; one member evaded and returned safely to England.

Information of death derived from Social Security Death Index.

FOLDED WINGS

BEAUCHESNE, LIONEL W. #22824 66th Squadron 2 May 1997 S/Sgt. Beauchesne was a gunner on a number of crews, sometimes in the waist, other times in the ball turret. His first of sixteen missions was 5 November 1943. All of his missions were in France, Germany and Norway.

Most of Beauchesne's missions were with **Paulino Ugarte**, but he also flew with **Warren W. Oakley, Charles Armstrong, James Bolin, Donald Heskett, Robert Felber, William Strong** (Command Pilot) and **Walter Milliner**.

He flew in nine different aircraft: *Holiday Mess II, Bull of the Woods, Lemon Drop, Shoo Shoo Baby, Banshee IV/EZ Duz It; Scourge of the Skies, My Ass' Am Dragon, My Ever Lovin' Gal* and *The Banana Barge*.

Information about the death of Beauchesne was obtained from Social Security Files.

BECKER, MILTON #19350 19 January 2004 506 Squadron S/Sgt. Becker was a gunner on the **John C. Titter** crew. The Database credits him with 23 missions, flying into France, Germany and Belgium; and on D-Day he was part of the 14th Combat Wing that went to Colleville and St. Laurent. Becker flew in *Passion Pit, Shack Rat, Feudin' Wagon, Southern Comfort II, Ole Cock, My Ever Lovin' Gal, Full House, My Peach, and Joplin Jalopy*.

Becker's first mission was 25 May 1944, 12 days before D-Day; his last was 9 August 1944.

Information of Becker's death came from Social Security Files.

BURLINGHAM, WILLIAM A. "BILL" #19595 10 February 2007 68th Squadron 1st Lieutenant Burlingham was the Co-Pilot on the **Walter Franks** crew. He is fondly remembered by his Commander, **Robert Lehnhausen**, for his disciplined willingness to do what was asked of him in a pleasant and agreeable manner, even though he possessed a keen

desire to be his 'own guy'. Burlingham had fought the disease of Lymphoma for about thirteen years. With treatment, it had been in remission until last year.

Lehnhausen wrote, "Though small in stature, he was a huge figure of a man. He was always unafraid to express his opinion, but was never offensive in doing so. If it sounds to you that I found this gung ho young pilot a special friend, you are correct. He was not only a great friend, but he was a great patriot, worthy of praise and eternal remembrance."

Burlington's first of 33 missions was 9 September 1944. Although most of his missions were with **Walter Franks**, he also flew with **Jack Liebrich, William Ritter** and **John W. Vaughn**. He flew in such notable planes as *Louisiana Belle, Flak Magnet, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Gipsy Queen, Lili Marlene, Gallavantin' Gal, Lady Geraldine, T. S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys* and *Hellza Droppin*.

In the six months that Burlington was flying on combat missions, the 44th was bombing strategically to deprive the Germans of troop movements, fuel and equipment. During that time, Americans seized the Remagan Bridge over the Rhine River and had enter Nazi Germany. His last mission was 21 March 1945.

CLAUSEN, GEORGE A. #19772 66th Squadron 9 March 2007 T/Sgt. Clausen was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **David Talbott** crew. He flew five missions in two different A/C: *Hell's Kitchen* and *Scourge of the Skies*. His first mission was 20 January 1944; his last, 20 February 1944.





FOLDED WINGS

DEBERRY, HARMON #1966 1 January 2004 67th Squadron T/Sgt. DeBerry was Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Russell Pellow** crew. On one of his 28 missions he flew with **A. J. Hardy** as Command Pilot. Berry's first mission was 5 August 1944 at a time when the assigned duties of the Air Corps was to knock out air craft factories, oil refineries and other industries that contributed to the Nazi war effort, as well as bridges and rail centers to halt transportation of the German soldiers. Most of the missions of that crew were into the heart of Germany.

Pellow flew in *Glory Bee*, *Myrtle the Fertile Turtle*, *Judy's Buggy* and many unnamed planes. His last mission was 14 March 1945.

Information of his death was found by George Washburn, who searched Social Security Death Lists.

DERR, MERRITT #19988 1 April 2007 506 Squadron 1st. Lt. Derr was the Co-Pilot on the **Fred Stone** crew. His first of thirty missions was on 22 April 1944 at a time when the Allies were preparing for Operation Overlord, aka D-Day. On two missions, he flew with the **Thomas Smith** crew.

On D-Day the Stone crew flew to Colleville and St. Laurent. With the goal of keeping reinforcements from Normandy, their bombing raids included bridges, military installations, A/C factories, oil refineries and a V-1 site. They flew in *Shack Rat*, *Passion Pit*, *Feudin' Wagon*, *My Peach*, *Ole Cock* and *Sabrina III*. His last mission was 6 August 1944.

Derr was a life member of the 44th BG. At his request, his wife Francis asked that memorial donations be made to the 2nd Air Division Library in Norwich, England.

GAVETT, FRANKLIN #20339 66th Squadron 4 August 2002 T/Sgt. Gavett was a Radio Operator on the **William Ogden** crew. He is credited with one mission on 31 July 1944 in Bi U Baby to Ludwigshaven. Previous to his death, he resided in Bangor, Maine.

GUEBARD, VIRGIL R. 20486 506 Squadron S/Sgt. Guebard was a Gunner with three different pilots, filling all of the gunners' positions-Left and Right Waist, Ball Turret and Tail. Most of his flights were with **John Doctor**, later with **Thomas Smith** and the last with **John Milliken** on *Passion Pit*.

This Mission, 13 August 1944, was at the Road junctions between Le Havre and Rouen, France, an area known as the Falaise Pocket. Here a large number of German soldiers were entrapped by General George Patton in a pincer movement. The Allies were pushing forward across France, and the bombing at the Falaise Pocket was to prevent their escape and coming to the assistance of the German defenders.

The Passion Pit was hit by flak, #1 and 2 engines caught fire, and the crew bailed out. All became POWs, but the pilot, Milliken, was able to escape and return to Shipdham.

In Guebard's ten missions, he flew in *Flying Log/Pregnant Peg*, *Three Kisses for Luck*, *Passion Pit*, *Mi Gal Sal*, *Joplin Jalopy* and *Shack Rat*.

HARVEY, ARTHUR J., Jr. #20573 66th Squadron 4 December 2006 News of Arthur Harvey's death came from Evie Harvey. He resided in Honey Brook, Pennsylvania. The Database has no records of his activities during the war.



FOLDED WINGS

HESKETT, DONALD #20640 66th Squadron
30 June 2003 1st Lt. Heskett flew two missions as a Flight Officer; the first with **Joseph Flaherty** as Co-Pilot on *Princess Charlotte/Sure Shot*; the second with **Tom Hobson** as Navigator. He was commissioned and flew the mission to Wilhelmshaven as pilot. Eight missions later on 30 December 1943, *Bull of the Woods* was hit by fighters. Two of the Heskett crew were KIA. One evaded, was later captured and became POW; Heskett and six others evaded and returned to England.

Previous to his death, Heskett resided in Chandler, Arizona.

KABAK, SAMUEL #20872 66th Squadron 19 October 2000 The Database has no information about the activities of this member of the 44th BG.

KIEFER, NORMAN # 20916 29 April 2007 506 Squadron T/Sgt. Kiefer was a Radio Operator on a number of crews, most frequently with Capt. **James McAtee**, with whom he flew two historic missions-to Ploesti and Wiener Neustadt. His first mission was 22 March 1943. Before moving into the Radio Operator position, Kiefer served as Belly Gunner, Rear Hatch Gunner and Left Wing Gunner, flying with the crews of **William Anderson, William Strong, John Swanson, Nathaniel Graham, Harold Laudig** and **Norman Purdy**. At that time the air war was directed toward the slowing Germany's submarine production that was attacking convoys and troop ships. When the 44th Bomb Group went to North Africa, Kiefer was among the crews that bombed Italy and Sicily, then prepared undertake the most dangerous mission up to that time-Ploesti.

Kiefer flew in six different A/C in his thirty one missions-*Lynn Bari, Baldy & His Brew, Earthquake McGoan, Mr 5 by 5, Old Crow* and *Prince/Princ-Ass/Princess*. His last mission was 2 February 1944.

Norman Kiefer is best known and beloved for his historical account, *The History of the 506 Squadron*.

Report of his death came from his son, Scott Kiefer. He was residing in Dearborn, Michigan at the time of his death.

PETERSON, ROBERT CARL #21666 19 February 2007 68th Squadron Captain Peterson was a Navigator, flying with many pilots, most frequently with **W. D. Hughes**. His first mission was 31 March, 1943. Peterson was among the group that flew to Africa in 1943, engaging in missions to Sicily, Rome, Lecce, Austria and other strategic targets. He was on the low-level raid to Ploesti, returned to England, then returned to Africa and engaged in the second mission to the Messerschmidt plant at Wiener-Neustadt.

Peterson flew in *Lynn Bari, Captain and His Kids Ride Again, Little Beaver, Victory Ship, Calaban, Wing and a Prayer, Avenger, Scrappy II, Margaret Ann/Satan's Hell Cats, Flak Alley* and *Pistol Packin' Mama*.

In his 25 missions he flew with no less than thirteen pilots: **James O'Brien, Chester Phillips, Walter Holmes, Walter Bunker, Thomas Cramer, W. D. Hughes, Charles Hughes, John Reed, Robert Lehnhausen, William Cameron, Frederick Dent, Charles Benton** and **Homer Gentry**. His last mission was 13 February 1944.

After the war, Peterson returned to college; was recalled during the Korean War, and stayed in the Air Force, rising in rank to Lt. Colonel. He was married to Madge Elaine Burt, a marriage of sixty years duration.

Information of Peterson's death came from Lee Aston.

FOLDED WINGS

SELVEY, NICHOLAS #219996 506 Squadron 2 December 1999 No information is available about this 44th member. He resided in Blue Springs, Missouri.

An addition to the **William Vahrenkamp** obituary came from **Bob Lehnhausen**. Bob remembers him as the Mess Officer of the Combat Officers Mess, and his nickname was "Tex".

It is unfortunate that the occupations of most of the members of the 44th have not been recorded, particularly those in non-combat positions. It took the service of everyone to win the War.

WHITTLE, JAMES "JACK" JR. #22548 506 Squadron 29 June 2007 1st Lieutenant Whittle was the Co-Pilot on the **William 'Don' Edkins** crew. From 26 November 1944 to 20 April 1945 Whittle flew twenty four missions, the last with **Emmett J. Burns**. After VE Day, he survived a B-24 crash in England, an event which is not recorded in the Database.

Information of his death came from his Top Turret Gunner **LaVar Godfrey**. The crew flew in *The Hit Parade, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Joplin Jalopy, Consolidated Mess, Down De Hatch, Sabrina III, Phyllis* and *The Big Headed Kid*.

Almost all the Whittle crew assignments were into the heart of Germany—attacking Marshalling Yards, Railroad Viaducts, Oil Refineries, Jet Factories and Air Fields.

After the war, Whittle flew for a private firm, but was recalled to service during the Korean War. In 1946 he served as a bomber test pilot. He was sent to McClellan Air Force Base, and spent 18 months at a radar site at Mount Hebo in Oregon. He also served a four month tour in Vietnam and Taiwan. During his time in service, he rose to the rank of Lt. Colonel, retiring to Sacramento, California in 1966.

Whittle flew sail planes in Truckee and became qualified as a glider pilot, but his chief interest was buying and restoring vintage Ford Thunderbirds.

Whittle had an admirable academic background: a BS in Military Science from the University of Maryland; a BS in Administration from the California State University in Sacramento and a MS in Business administration from Golden Gate University. He and his late wife Vera Lowe had one daughter.

The following names of 44th BG members who had folded wings were derived by a search conducted by George Washburn. No bio exists of their activities, but in recognition that they were a part of the 44th BG, their deaths are being recorded in the 8 BTs.

ACREE, RICHARD M. #19176 68th Sq. 22 July 2004

ALEXANDER, WILLIAM #19196

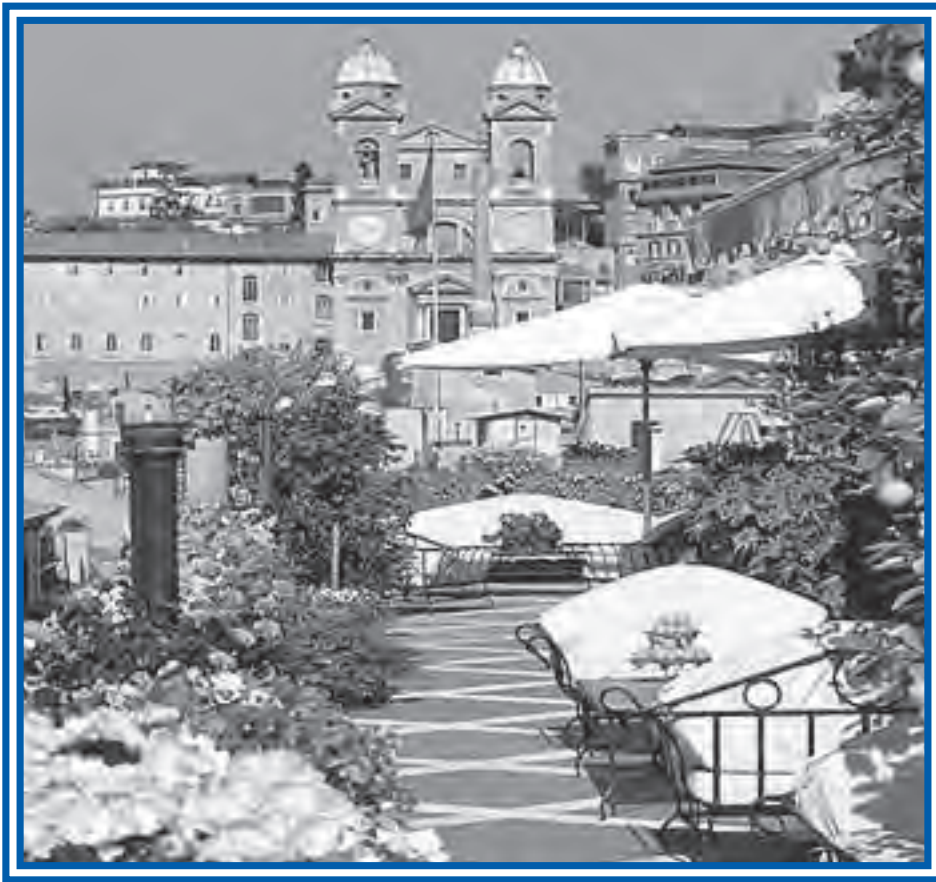
BALDWIN EDWARD J. #19287 28 September 1997

BALL, CLARENCE #19290 66th Squadron 14 October 2000

BALL, ORVILLE #19289 31 October 2006

BADGER, LEVI W. #19266 HQ 13 April 2004





*One of the great sights
in Rome is the Spanish
Steps. Its twin is the
Grand Plaza in
Branson-and you don't
have to walk the steps.*

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

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