

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association

*Happy
Holidays!*



8 BALL TAILS

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Kay Bar

Kay Bar, A/C #42-100314 G+ was one of two lost at Wesel, Germany on March 24, 1945. In the original documents it had no name, but Steve Adams undertook to find its history, and learned this: The plane had journeyed through several Bomb Groups. It was originally assigned to the 389th BG, 564 Squadron and carried the call letter K. In March '44, it was transferred to the 44th BG. It was given to the 67th BS and had the call sign K bar. It remained as such until it was transferred to the 66th in September '44 and changed to V+; changed again to N+ in October '44; changed again to G+ in March '45. Then, on a low level mission to drop supplies to British paratroopers who had just crossed the Rhine, on its 57th mission, *Kay Bar*, along with *Southern Comfort*, was hit with anti-aircraft fire. It crashed and immediately exploded. All members of the Crandell crew were KIA. According to Steve, the nose art was "a goofy type" wearing a flying helmet and GI fatigues, holding a magnifying glass in his left hand and a bomb between the thumb and forefinger in his right hand.



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Another Look At Europe



*There was time to laugh; a time to cry,
a time to be inspired; a time to remember.*



Kneeling: Larry Herpel. First Row (standing): Left to Right: Sidney Paul, Elizabeth Paul; Jack Schiffer, Delores Shipley, Jackie Roberts, Mary Aston, Marie Hughes, Ruth Morse, Ann Natilli, Louis DeBlasio, Carole Amato, Frank Amato. Back Row: Jerry Folsom, Bill Kelly, Norman Powell, Beverly Folsom, Charlotte Huntley, Lee Aston, Russell Huntley, Perry Morse, Lois Cianci, Tony Cianci, Charlie Hughes, Will Lundy, Irene Lundy, Rose Maglione, Larry Maglione, Lowell Roberts.

Larry Herpel is probably one of the great optimists of this century. Imagine trying to put another trip together after the cancellation on Nine-Eleven! Grounded in New Orleans for four days, he had to cancel the first trip by phone, begging those he could contact to notify others. He managed hotel and guide cancellations, sent refunds; and then worked on the next adventure. In late May the entourage reassembled and Paris was waiting.

The City of Lights was celebrating Liberation Day with a ceremony at the Arch of Triumph and a parade of well groomed horses and riders in stately uniforms. We couldn't get near the Arch, as dignitaries were everywhere.

Walking steps down the Eiffel Tower is a bit laborious, but there is lots of trivia to be learned along the way. The French flag was taken down in June, 1940, when France fell. Lucien Sarniquet carried it back up August 25, 1944, when Paris was liberated, but at his own peril. A lingering German shot at him. (Until then, the Germans were loving Paris. They hated to give it back to the French.)

The Castle at Versailles was breathtakingly beautiful, but its beauty was overshadowed by bad weather. To see the rail car where the Treaty of Versailles was signed, and where Hitler danced in triumph when France fell, required a longer journey. We'll see that on the next trip.



Jackie Roberts and the Administrator at Normandy.

At Normandy, Jackie Roberts found her father's name on the Wall of Honor; and when the Administrator learned that the daughter of a missing airman was present, he hurriedly grabbed wet sand and highlighted Jack Ostenson's name, so it photographed clearly. Although most of us have been to Normandy previously, and had seen the monument and endless rows of graves; it is no less awesome on a return trip. It truly is hallowed ground.

Our Belgium friend, Peter Loncke, led us to the monument at Winbrin, honoring the Pinder crew. On hand for a beautiful ceremony were Joseph Lafalize, the Burgomaster and his wife, Marleen, who donated the land for the monument. It is

located only about 100 yards from the crash site of AC #42-7547 *X-Bar*. This gentleman was mayor at the time of the crash. Many of the local people came to the event. Some remember January 29, 1944, when the plane went down; and many have a very clear memory of German occupation. A representative of the current mayor delivered a stirring speech of appreciation to Americans. Peter read his poem of gratitude (printed on Page 6), and called for a moment of silence, in memory of those who perished at that site.

Along with the plaque naming the crew, is a smaller plaque inspired by **Forrest S. Clark**, in honor of his friend **Abe Sofferman**. Wishing to complete his tour, Sofferman flew that mission in place of Clark, forfeiting his life for this decision.

Sidney Paul at Normandy.



Peter Loncke, Jerry Folsom, Joseph Hofalize and a dignitary from the local village honored the members of the Pinder Crew.



The next day, Peter led the bus to the Town Hall at Hamminkeln, Germany. Here a mayor's representative and a capable interpreter honored the members of the **Crandell** and **Chandler** crews; who crashed in nearby Wesel. While enjoying tea, coffee, soft drinks and snacks, 44th BG members listened to declarations of gratitude for peace between our countries. In the audience was Peter Emmerich, the anti-aircraft gunner whose careful aim brought down *K-Bar* from the 67th Squadron; and *Southern Comfort* from the 506 Squadron; and according to the records, two from another group.

Bastogne stands as one of the most ferocious battles in Europe, and it took place in the coldest winter that the Continent had ever known. Called 'Hitler's Last Gamble,' it was the Fuhrer's last ditch effort to turn back the tide of Allied soldiers that were painfully but steadily advancing toward the Fatherland. A well preserved Sherman Tank sits in the Town Square, and the Museum tells the story of the grit and determination of Americans to prevail. A look-out tower, shaped like a five point star, provides a view of the distant town.

The names of all the 48 states are listed, all credited for contributing to the victory which Americans call "The Battle of the Bulge." Europeans call it "The Ardennes Battle." General George Patton was assigned to bring relief to General McAuliffe's beleaguered troops. In his earthy way, General Patton sized up the situation. He said, "This time the Kraut has stuck his head in a meat grinder; and this time I've got the handle." When Patton arrived and when the skies cleared, the planes unleashed furor on the enemy and supplies to our soldiers. Hitler's last gamble was a loser.

When we crossed the Channel and saw that historically welcome sight, the White Cliffs of Dover, we remembered the song, and we sang it. In Norwich, Steve Adams joined us at the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library. For those who had not seen it before, it was absolutely captivating. No matter how long anybody stays there, it is never long enough.

Andrew Doubleday, his wife Debbie, neighbors and friends joined together in hosting a spacious setting of delightful treats in the complex where B/Gen. **Leon Johnson** commanded the 14th Air

Division. Doubleday's efforts to preserve and enhance the complex were very apparent. We wandered through the old buildings, trying to imagine their uses 57 years ago. It is a farm again, but the land shows traces of its glorious history.

Our British friend John Page accompanied us to the Control Tower, now tragically dilapidated. Its owner sells construction cranes all over the world.

From the tower, you can look across at the Aero Club. There are lines of light green amid the dark green plantings. Those are traces of the 44th runways. The asphalt was removed years ago, but still shows evidence of past glory. The members of Shipdham Aero Club prepared a reception and dinner for the group that was magnificent. Mike Artherton, Vice Chairman, had told me on the previous night, that they were planning a festive event. It was truly delightful, climaxed by inviting Jerry Folsom to cut the ribbon to a beautiful newly-constructed deck.

Mike gave Jerry and me a tour of the changes which have been made, and his aspirations for the future. The Club is eager for an on-going relationship between their members and the families of the 44th; and they have much to offer



Will Lundy climbed to the top of the tower he worked so valiantly to preserve. Unfortunately, time and circumstances have brought the tower to almost complete ruin.

for the arrangement. They plan to expand the Museum and strengthen the sixty year old structures which were hurriedly constructed to meet the immediate needs of the War. Mike is in charge of the grounds, and envisions a Memorial Garden. *(Editors Note: Do you have any ideas of how the Club should be preserved? What should go into the Memorial Garden? They would like to hear from the 44th. Do you have a child or grandchild who is interested in flying? The Aero Club would like an exchange program with American and British children. What a fantastic arrangement that could be.)*

Lois Cianci, **Charlie Hughes** and **Lee Aston** took advantage of the invitation to fly. Lois rode in a glider, and was given the opportunity to sit at the controls. What a joy for her, looking down on the same runways her father had looked upon long ago. The Aero Club has 75 members who fly, plus their families and 30 social members. Currently there are fourteen planes and five gliders based there. Are you interested in a contact? Mike Atherton can be reached at M.Atherton@Netcom.co.uk

The history of the 44th is tied to the Shipdham Aero Club. All of the members, plus Mrs. Paterson, owner, want to maintain an on-going contact with Americans. It is a relationship that we cannot allow to wither. The planes at Duxford, the graves at Cambridge, the monuments in London are all part of our history and our psyche. We know it, and so do the English people.

When we were ready to go home, Beverly Folsom summed up the trip very succinctly. She said, "We thought the 1997 trip could never be equaled, but we were wrong. This one was just as amazing."



To all Aircrew of the United States Army Air Force who flew in WWII.

By Peter Loncke
Sgt. Belgium Air Force

Boys of then,
who are men today,
turned in their civvies
to free my land.

Volunteers they were,
these aircrew chaps,
who gave the Hun
no place of fun.

Belgian people in those days
would listen carefully to their voice,
the voice of their engine
who night and day boasted their morale
in a magnificent way.

No one else
as those involved,
will ever understand
the meaning of it all.

A song of freedom high above,
who would bring relief
for the people
I so dearly love.

My father and mother,
and many more,
have prayed for you
to win the War.

We think of them,
these magnificent men
of the United States Air Force,
who served and died to free my land.



Photo Album

44th BGVA ~ Trip of Europe 2002



In Belgium: At the Wall of Honor, Jackie Roberts and Lois Cianci pay tribute to T/Sgt. Clair P. Schaeffer, Lois's father, whose plane piloted by Frank Sobotka, was lost January 21, 1944.



In Shipdham: John Page, longtime friend of the 44th BGVA, and Peter Bovell, Chairman of the Shipdham Aero Club, discuss the Club's future.



The bus driver was able to wind his way to the little village of Gratenois and to the wooded area we had visited in 1997. The scenery at Beauassault looked different. Trees had been cut and the dirt road was widened. Nevertheless, we found it, the monument to the crash site of the Sobotka Crew. It had been recently painted; and to Lois's delight, she saw that the townspeople had placed a fresh bouquet of flowers on the monument. It reminded us that the tragedy of the Sobotka Crew was not forgotten. Lois posted a tiny flag into the bouquet, honoring her father and letting the local people know we had been there.



Steve and Jan Adams. Steve has made major contributions to preservation of the history of the 44th, both at the Aero Club and in the Memorial Library of the 2nd Air Division in Norwich.





Jerry Folsom and Mike Atherton look over the area where a Memorial Garden is proposed. Mike's enthusiasm spills over when he discusses his plans for developing the Shipdham Aero Club into a functional, living monument to the 44th Bomb Group.



Andrew Doubleday points to old buildings which he is working to preserve on his historic farm, former headquarters of the 14th Combat Wing.



Larry Herpel stands at the entrance to the 506 Squadron Headquarters, honoring his uncle, 1st Lt. **Virgil R. Fouts**. Fouts was pilot of the A/C *Cactus*, which went down off the coast of Holland. There were no survivors. It was the crew's first mission and the 506 Squadron's first loss. Virgil Fouts is recognized on the Wall of Missing at Cambridge.

Brian Peel and Perry Morse renew an old friendship that started 57 years ago.



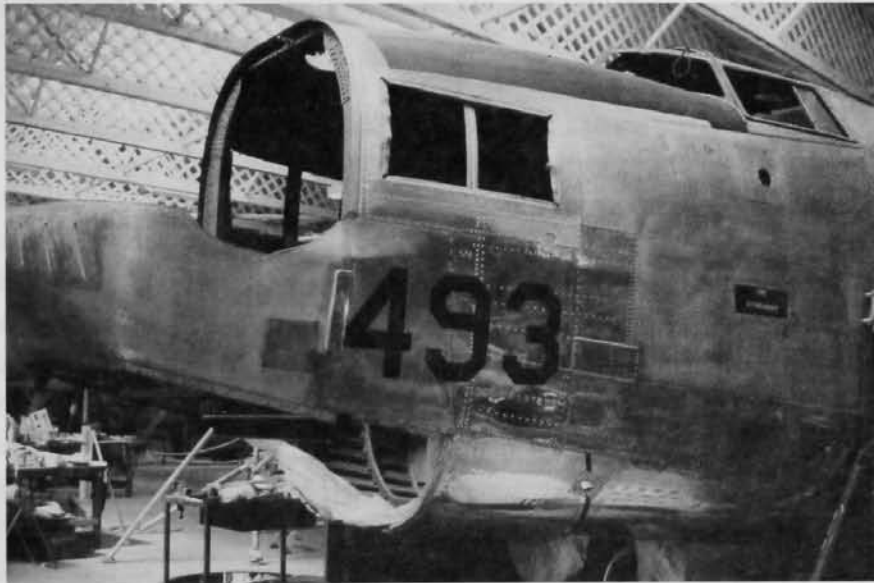
It is not possible to walk into the area, as noisy dogs provided a secure barricade. However, in the interest of protecting against the epidemic of animal infections, a posted sign requested that nobody enter without carefully de-contaminating their shoes.



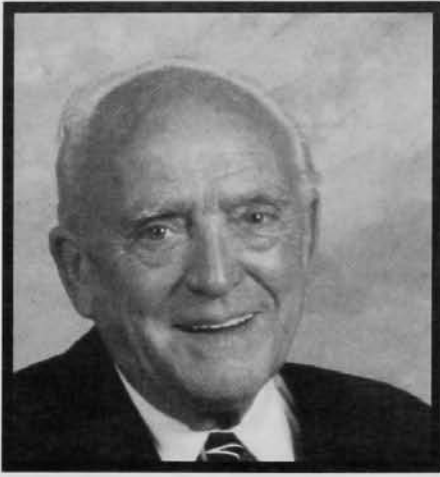


In Germany: Peter Loncke, Louis DeBlasio and Jerry Folsom listen attentively to the moving ceremony in the Mayor's office in Hamminkeln, Germany. The hospitality was truly gracious. Orchestrated by Peter, the Mayor's representative delivered a beautiful statement of gratitude for peace. A piece of art depicting B-24's at nearby Wesel, painted by a Belgium artist, hangs on the wall of the Mayor's office, a reminder of a time when the skies were less peaceful.

The restoration staff at the air museum at Duxford, England are optimistic that they will find the necessary parts to rebuild a very old, very dilapidated B-24.



Ready to debark from the Rhine cruise are Lois Cianci, Jerry Folsom, Tony Cianci, Larry Herpel and Beverly Folsom.



From the President's Note Pad

The 2,500 letters which were sent out several months ago brought in a sizable donations in the amount of \$13,400.00, which will be used to record volumes of information about our War experience onto our database. Thankfully, it also brought 40-45 new members who never before belonged to the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association.

Unfortunately, some letters came back stamped "Deceased." Those men were once with us, and now they are gone, along with their recollections of the War.

Many of the responses came from widows and children of members of the 44th. Their messages were so gratifying, I feel that I should share some with our readers:

"Thank God for Will Lundy!! He answered my plea for help in locating my first husband's military records and his time at

Shipdham. He is irreplaceable, a real treasure himself. Thank God his work is being saved."

"Thank you for calling on me for this most worthy cause, Will Lundy's valuable and dedicated work. It is very important that it be preserved. I would like to think that historians will look back 200 years from now and find our story of the Greatest Generation."

"Thank you for the decal and trying to preserve this collection of stories. Please accept my donation in memory of my Dad."

"Sending this donation in memory of my Uncle."

"Pleased to send this donation in memory of my beloved husband, who gave his all."

"Sending this donation; wish I could do more."

"Donating my first month's pay."

There are many letters written in this vein. I wish I had saved some of the first, but I never expected such a flow of memorial letters. It does tell me that WWII is still very much a part of the awareness of the families who still want to know about those who fought. The Military Heritage Database will have true value, long after all of us are gone.

I want to personally thank all who supported this project.

Gerald Folsom, President

Introducing...



Roger Fenton
44th Bomb Group Veterans
Association Board Historian

With the approval of the Board I have, with his assent, appointed Roger Fenton to fill the vacancy of our Historian left when our long serving, beloved **Will Lundy** stepped down in order to direct his attention to entering the remaining archives into the Military Heritage Database, and update and add to his Roll of Honor and Casualties book.

Roger began as a researcher for families seeking information about the 44th BGVA. He works with the Internet, database, and frequent discussions with Will Lundy, Archivist *par excellent*, researching for relatives seeking information of someone that was in the 44th. At last count, Roger has responded to over 200 requests.

Roger is a Member of the Association. His father, **Milton Feinstein** (Fenton) flew two complete tours with the 44th BG. Milton passed away in 1991.

(Editors Note: Getting help from the offspring of a veteran is a blessing to the 44th. Our history is so complex, and technology is so challenging, the value of Fenton's help cannot be overstated.)



Operation Varsity Revisited



Sgt.
Louis
DeBlasio

"They told us it was a 'milk run'," **Louis DeBlasio** stated, recalling March 24, 1945. It was a low level drop of supplies for the British Paratroopers who had established a bridgehead across the Rhine River, 2-1/2 miles WNW of the little town of Wesel. DeBlasio had been RW Gunner of the Chandler crew. The recollections of Sgts. DeBlasio and **Robert Vance**, Tail Gunner, were documented in Vol. 1, Issue 7 Winter, 1998 of the *8 Ball Tails*. Returning to Wesel on the recent trip to Europe sparked new interest in the details of that crash.

Fourteen of the nineteen bombers dispatched by the 2nd Air Division did not return. The 506 Squadron, 44th Bomb Group led the 14th Wing on the mission. On the previous night there was a leaflet-dropping operation by other B-24 Units and British Mosquitoes. On the 24th, sixty-nine tons of supplies were loaded onto the B-24's, with each plane carrying 2-1/2 tons of over 20 bundles. Twelve bundles were stashed in the

bomb bay, six around the Sperry ball turret aperture and three in the emergency hatch in the Tail, displacing Vance from his tail position. This made the plane tail heavy; so to compensate, the guns and ammunition were removed from the aft section of the plane.

In the recent trip to Wesel, DeBlasio was amazed to learn that when the plane stopped burning, a teenage boy entered the wreckage, and he was able to fire one of the guns stowed in the front of the plane. Crew members had been told they dared not to fire them, for fear of hitting their allies.

Most of the crew had not bothered taking their 'flak' suits; but Vance and DeBlasio decided to prepare for the worst. Their decision to take the suits saved their lives. This was the 8th mission for the Chandler Crew on the *Southern Comfort IV*.

Leading the formation, the 506 crossed the North Sea at 1,000 feet, and when they reached the coast of Holland, they descended to 500 feet. The progress of the war was apparent as the planes plowed eastward. Cologne and other cities, bridges and docks were almost completely destroyed. As they approached Wesel, they could see Allied gliders on the fields, some smashed into each other, and

scattered about were abandoned parachutes left by the advancing paratroopers. The planes dropped to 300 feet as they crossed the Rhine to assure pinpoint accuracy. The bell rang, and the two gunners shoved out the supply bundles.

Then, looking out the waist window, to their horror, they saw a man fall from the aircraft flying alongside, and watched as he hit the ground. He had become entangled in some parachute shrouds, and was pulled from the aircraft with the supply drop. (This was Sgt. **Anibal Diaz**, LW Gunner, on Lt. **Leonard Pyle's** crew.)

Sitting at an anti-aircraft gun was a Peter Emmerich, age 16. Peter was doing as he was told--shooting at American planes. He shot down four. Just as the *Southern Comfort* was pulling from the drop zone and banking to the left, Emmerich's ammunition struck the plane, causing it to stall momentarily and shudder. Sgt. **Thomas Clark**, LW Gunner, who was in the waist with DeBlasio and Vance, helped them open the bulkhead door to the bomb bay; but they had to close it immediately. Number three engine was afire.

DeBlasio and Vance assumed ditching positions; the plane went down, then bounced

upward. It flew another 100 feet, went down again, circled and split. DeBlasio and Vance rolled out. Clark stumbled to the split; but the plane exploded before he could exit, and he died with Chandler; **Hugh O'Donnell**, Co-pilot; **Robert Dantsler**, Navigator; **Thomas Cordes**, Bombardier; **Eugene Elliott**, Radio Operator; and **Sarkice Nedder**, Engineer and Top Turret Gunner.

A member of **Leslie Lee's** Crew, flying

as nose gunner, **Richard Lynch**, watched the destruction of both Crandell's and Chandler's planes. Nineteen men to the 44th died on that mission.



Thomas Cordes, Bombardier on Southern Comfort KIA at Wesel.

DeBlasio and Vance survived and were rescued ten days later by the advancing 2nd U.S. Armored Division, along with John Delaney, a P-47 pilot who crashed after diving at the AA guns and dropping white phosphorus.

Through Internet activities of Peter Loncke, Thomas Cordes's family has recently become interested in this crash. It was awesome for them to learn that this task force supply drop suffered all of the B-24 losses. A total of 22 A/C went down,



Sgt. Robert Vance returning to Shipdham after his crash and POW experience.

second only to Ploesti in losses for a low level mission.

Meeting the man who shot him down was an awesome experience for Louis DeBlasio and his family. Peter Emmerich explained that he was 16 years old when he was pulled from school and

taught to shoot the anti-aircraft gun. With Peter Loncke interpreting, Peter talked eagerly to Louis; and later, presented him with a gift of a hand-carved wooden cannon. The crash site did not look familiar to

Louis--the rows of corn were replaced with hay; the wagon he and Robert Vance hid under

was long gone. Contrary to the assumption that the plane's wing had been caught on a tree, he learned that an electric power pole had caused it to circle and split at the fuselage. That made it possible for the two gunners to roll to safety, just minutes before the plane burst into flames. With Peter Loncke interpreting, Peter Emmerich eagerly told his story; and even when there was no interpreter, he continued explaining his experiences in WWII.

Living in the area is an elderly gentleman who also watched the plane go down; but being in ill health, he could not be present. His wife and several of the townspeople came to meet us; and through their gestures, we felt their goodwill and friendship.

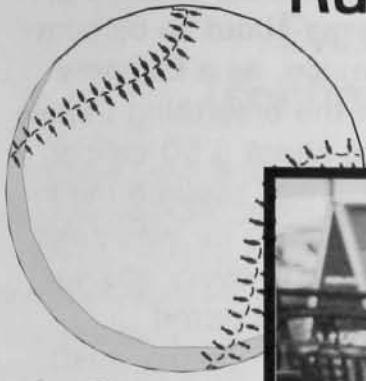


Peter Emmerich and Louis DeBlasio meet 57 years after their first encounter.

From a film made by Ursel Harvel, Loncke was able to locate the crash site and then find Emmerich and others who had been present in 1945. As it happened, the negative had been turned upside down; so by watching the screen in the mirror, he was able to locate the site.



Russell Huntley's Games With The Romanian Guards



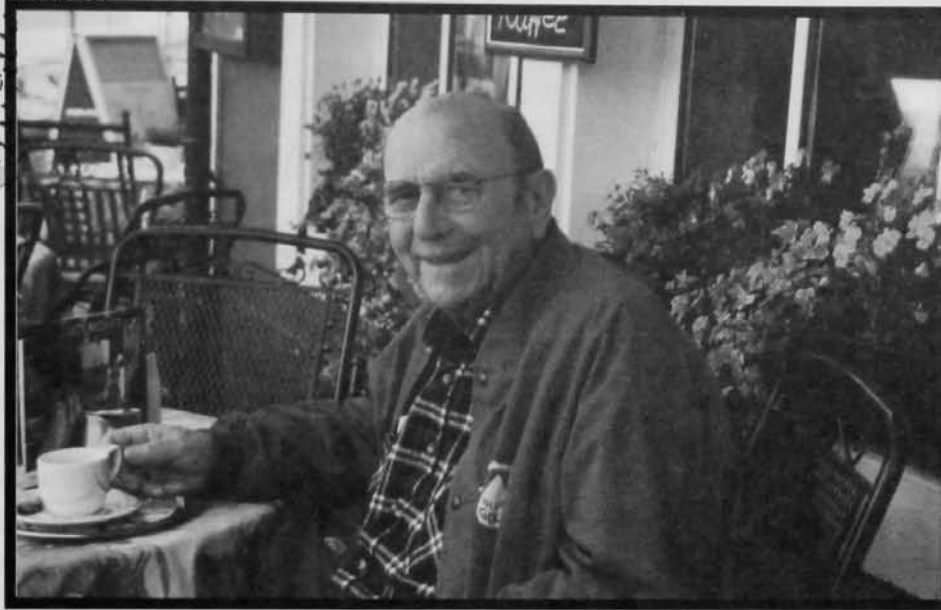
If the German and Romanian guards of the Ploesti POWs spend any time reminiscing about prisoners who were a 'pain in the neck', I'll bet they can't forget

Russell Huntley,

67th BS. He laughs when he describes his six escape antics, all of which brought him back to interrogations, solitary confinement and considerable discomfort.

"As prisoners, we were allowed to play baseball, and sometimes the ball would go over the fence. A guard with a gun would permit one of us to climb the fence and retrieve it, so the game could go on. Once I climbed the fence, and the group created great excitement so the guard wouldn't notice that I ran away. They soon caught me, and a very polite German officer said, 'We won't punish you if you tell me how you did it.' Of course, I was not able to tell the truth, so I told him I escaped through a drain pipe. They sent a man through the rusty pipe, and it broke. The officer accused me of lying, so I reminded him that they sent a heavier man. He must have believed me, as I didn't get punished that time."

"Another time, a group of us started digging. We dug and dug and dug. After a long time, we realized that effort was hopeless. We were just tunneling up and down under a big mountain. Another time, we had a pretty



Russell Huntley at Bern Castle.

good tunnel going, but then there was a big rainstorm. Our tunnel collapsed. The guards started checking out our tunnels; and each time they sent a man in, he came back saying that it ended in dirt. They just couldn't figure out why we did that."

"At one point, the Romanians asked us if any of us would like to work for them, in exchange for better food, more freedom, etc. We would be asked to sign a paper that we would not try to escape. I don't know whether any Americans would have accepted; but we would have threatened anyone who might have considered it. Why should we help our enemies win the war?"

Operation Tidal Wave, which targeted Ploesti, was Sgt. Russell Huntley's 7th mission. The crew of 1st Lt. **Elmer H. Reinhart**, A/C 42-40371 G named *G. I. Gal*, was following Lt. Col. **Posey** to Target Blue, the Nazi's source for aviation fuel. It was totally destroyed.

G.I. Gal was the last ship away from Blue Target. With part of a wing shot off, the plane emerged into criss-cross ships, and the pilot was unable to catch up with his formation, making him an easy target for the ME 109's. They shot away most of the tail turret, but, miraculously, **George Van Son** crawled away alive. Waist gunners **Alfred A. Mash** and **Robert Wolfe** were injured; radio operator Huntley gave them first aid.

Engineer **Frank Garrett** reported, "Gas was pouring out of a hole near #3 engine; the tunnel was a wreck; the tail turret hanging by a thread. The left vertical and horizontal stabilizers were almost shot off; the left aileron was practically gone, and there was a big hole under the #1 engine with oil streaming out."

Reinhart tried to gain altitude. The crew put on their parachutes as the plane heaved and quivered from nose to tail. At 3,600 feet, he turned on the automatic pilot and hit the bail out button. **Gerald Totten**, Navigator; **Richard Pendleton**, Bombardier; and **Charles Starr**, Co-pilot, joined the rest of the crew in the downward plunge. Apparently Starr's chute did not open properly; and it was later reported that in his misery, he asked to be shot. He was listed as KIA.

Huntley was interned for thirteen months at Timis de Just, 17 km south of Brasov, North Romania. Among his interesting recollections was on August 1, 1944, a group of soldiers came with wine and cheese, celebrating the happy event of 'defeating the American Air Force.' Circumstance rapidly refuted their dubious celebration. Only about a month later, the Germans were evicted from the area, and the Americans were set free. Flying in a B-17 decorated with American flags, they were transported to Bari, Italy.

Huntley's post-POW experience was no less dramatic. He was sent to Atlantic City for redistribution, and was hoping to become a cadet, and ultimately a pilot. A psychiatrist politely told him 'that he was proud of him; but after his combat and POW experience, he needed R & R, and was to be sent to Florida for 120 days. Immediately thereafter, Huntley had another physical, and twenty minutes later sat before the same psychiatrist. This time he was declared in fit condition, and was to be sent to the Pacific, flying in a B-29. Huntley called the man some unpleasant names, and did not go to the Pacific.

Next he was told that he would become a Master Sergeant, and was about to be sent to Almagordo, New Mexico, as a Gunnery Instructor. "I told them the only thing I knew about guns was how to shoot a 50 caliber out the nose of a B-24. They assured me I would do fine; and all I had to do was pass this test. I took the test; and every answer that I knew, I deliberately answered incorrectly. Those that I didn't know, I left blank. The next day I was congratulated for doing so well on my test!!!"

Huntley got out of that assignment by signing up for Radar School. He was assigned to a camp in Truax, Wisconsin, along with a group of combat crew returnees. The first morning a corporal came in and ordered them, all sergeants, to mop the floor and clean the barracks. An uproar ensued; the corporal ran off to report their disobedience, and a kindly major from WWI came in and alleviated the situation. The travails of being a returnee and ex-POW continued; and finally Huntley got discharged.

He gave himself time to think it over, and decided to re-enlist. He attended OCS, became a Second Lieutenant, and worked his way up to Major, specializing in electronics. His last position was head of Communications for the SAC Headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska. After his discharge in 1965, he started a business selling Blue Gold, a non-hazardous cleaning substance. His customers are Pratt Whitney, Rolls Royce and other notable corporations. Russell's wife Charlotte started a business, selling vitamins and herbal substances. They retired recently, and are traveling to all the reunions that they missed by keeping their noses to the grindstone.

(Editors Note: It would be interesting to know what the Romanian guards talk about, when they remember the War. I wonder if they still think Americans dug useless tunnels for recreation!)



Sgt. Dale Lee's Saga of Evasion (continued)...

Sgt. Dale Lee (506 Sq.) survived the Ploesti Raid, but his plane, *Southern Comfort*, went down after a successful mission to Foggia. Captured and harassed by civilians, along with six other detainees, Lee broke from the Italian stronghold and set forth on a harrowing trip back to Africa, then England, then home.

The day before they managed to break out, the Germans planned to move the prisoners into Germany. A commotion among the guards gave the prisoners the opportunity to use their crude tools, smash through a brick wall, and make their escape.

"We ran like hell, as far as we could that first night," he recorded. "When we could run no more, we slid off the slope of a steep mountain road." Straddling trees or any kind of brush, they leaned against the mountain and took a brief rest. Years later, with his wife Alice, Lee retraced his escape route, and learned that they had run 18 km that first day; and had climbed 4,000 feet up the mountain.

They headed for Italy's high mountains, resting and planning by day; walking at night, using the North Star as their guide. They headed for the boot of Italy, figuring the allied invasion would come from that direction.

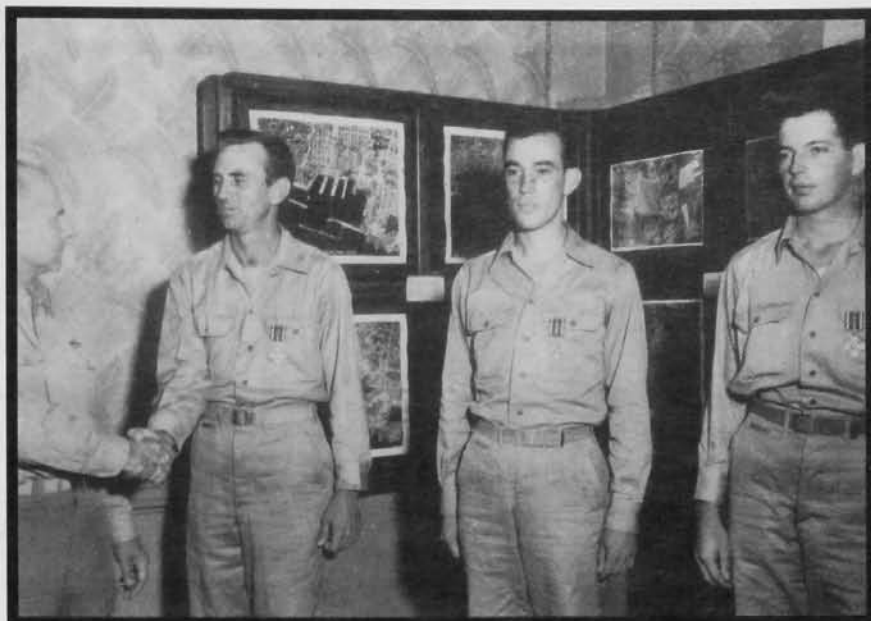
The Unending Quest For Food

For food, they stole figs, grapes and garden vegetables. One man traded his jacket for cheese that was absolutely delicious. Unfortunately, when morning came, they saw what was in the cheese--"big fat worms." "We ate it anyway," he recalled, "flicking the worms aside when they crawled out."

Having been told that garlic was a good blood purifier, Lee ate three big cloves, hoping it would clear up the infected shrapnel wounds in his legs. Its biggest effect was to give him bad breath. Their search for food was unending and generally unsuccessful. Every sound was threatening--even a falling leaf.

Finally, two Canadians from the British 8th Army arrived in a 4 wheel drive vehicle; and out-running Germans, who lobbed shells at them, they arrived with joy at a British camp, where food and hot coffee awaited them. Later the driver of the jeep drove them through a rainstorm to a Red Cross station where they enjoyed the luxury of sleeping on dry cots. From there they made their way to the 47th Fighter Group (P-40's), who helped them to the next camp, the 101st Airborne.

Lee's most vivid recollection of that brief encounter was a rollicking battle with an Italian POW over his right to have second portions of the dinner. The men of the 101st cheered



Left to Right: General Jimmy Doolittle, Joe Jett, Tom Pursell, Dale Lee.
(Editors Note: Years later Doolittle autographed this picture right under his nose, but the writing could not be picked up photographically.)

him on, as pots and pans clattered around from the skirmish. The men of the 101st are forever endeared in his memory, for supporting his right to more food.

Getting Back Into The System

After that, they got a flight to Africa, near Tunis. By then they looked so totally disreputable, nobody could believe they were American airmen. Only when the major at the base found their names on the list of those who were to receive the DFCs, by virtue of their mission to Ploesti, did he believe they were telling the truth. They were finally back in the system.

The DFC medals were pinned on them by none other than General **Jimmy Doolittle**, who was genuinely interested in their experiences at Ploesti, and also their experiences as escapees. He gave them secret orders for their return to England.

Frustrating moments continued, and tolerance was in short supply with these escapees. At the air base near Tunis, a mess sergeant refused to feed them because they didn't have a mess kit. They went to the Supply Sergeant, who upbraided them for losing their mess kits. Finally, **Joe Jett**, normally a quiet, gentlemanly sort, grabbed the Supply Sergeant by the throat and pounded his head against the wall, shouting, "When I bailed out of that G-- D--- plane on fire, the last thing I thought about was my mess kit." Immediately there was no further arguing about mess kits.

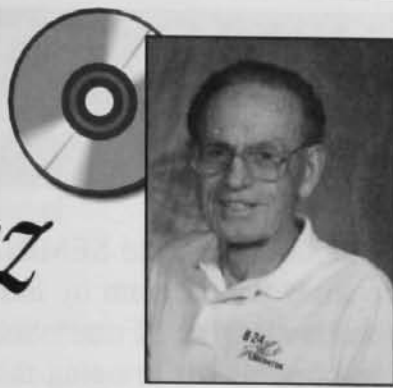
The 8th Air Force in London interrogated the group, then sent them to various camps to speak to the troops about their experiences behind enemy lines. In time for Christmas, 1943, they made it home.



This cartoon from the collection of Lt. James Tomblin (66th Squadron) from his account "There I was, Story #45,001."



Will Sez



It seems appropriate at this time to advise everyone that earlier this year I found it absolutely necessary to ask that I be dropped from the job of 44th BG Historian as it was taking nearly all of my available time. For years I have been attempting to correct, update and add to my Roll of Honor and Casualties book as the first edition was printed in 1987. Since that time I've learned of many errors in it that needed corrections. Many more events have been located that should be added to that text to better describe what took place in many of these incidents.

The Board acted on this request, dropped me from that position and put Roger Fenton into it. Roger accepted the offer and now is busy doing a great job of responding to the many people asking for data about our men who served during WWII. I am sure that he will perform with excellence. Perhaps this will start a trend to have more, younger people to step in, take over to lead our Group into the future.

Another younger man, Jim Hamilton, became acquainted with the 44th BG when he was researching for his book. The *Writing 69th*, (now in print). He kindly offered to re-design my book, and then to make the actual corrections and additions into that book. Photos will be added, as well, but due to all of this, it will be necessary to produce two books. The first is nearing completion and will cover the time period from mid 1942 through 31 December 1943. The second, of course, will span the period of 1 Jan 1944 to June, 1945. If possible, we will have a manuscript available at our reunion in Omaha for examination by you that attend.

My hope is that as soon as this change in Historian permits, I will be able to move along more quickly with the book revision. As soon as the text is completed, it can be transferred into the Master Data Base. Also it can help make progress in moving more of our archival material into the Master Data Base.

Arlo Bartsch is now well underway in his plans to place more emphasis on our Roll of Honor, make it more prominent in his program. Jerry Folsom is relaying much of this material to his secretary, Brenda, who processes it, makes it ready for data entry.

Of course we are limited in the extent of this work depending upon these costs. But my hopes are that somehow, someday, someone will locate donors who see that it is needed for the future generations to learn. It seems very important to me that we do our best to keep the deeds performed by our Combat Men forever readily available. These deeds against terrible odds managed to hold the advances of Hitler's might away from England until others arrived to help us take the war back to Germany.

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For more information regarding biographies, please contact Jerry Folsom @ P.O. Box 712287, Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287. He has the necessary forms to be submitted for this database. He also has details for ordering your very own disk. E-mail: 44thbgva@xmission.com

Do It Now!

COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE SPONSORS SEMINAR ON "PLOESTI" WITH 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION PARTICIPATION.

The names of Colonel **William R. Cameron** and **Tom Holmes, Jr.**, will long be remembered in Midland, Texas, where these two distinguished members of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association captivated the 150-200 members and guests of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) attending the PLOESTI Seminar sponsored by that organization and the American Air Power Heritage Museum on Saturday, June 15, 2002. (*Editors Note: The Commemorative Air Force was formerly known as The Confederate Air Force of Midland, Texas.*)

These two veterans of the daring low-level raid on the oil fields in Ploesti, Romania, related their personal experiences and observations of this dangerous but vital mission in their typical low key, sensitive but thorough, accurate and non-judgmental manner. Both, Colonel Cameron and Tommy Holmes, had completed their combat experience and leadership on this hazardous mission. Colonel Cameron, as pilot of "*Buzzin Bear*," led the six plane element on General Johnson's wing serving as the Deputy Group Leader. Their target was the Colombia Aquila (White V) target that was already ablaze having been mistakenly bombed earlier by aircraft of the 93rd Bomb Group, who following the mission leading 376th Bomb Group, turned at the wrong IP (Initial Point), missing their assigned targets and selecting "targets of opportunity." "Tommy" Holmes, as pilot of "*A Wing and a Prayer*," flew in a separate 21 plane formation led by Colonel **James Posey** against the Creditul Minier at Brazi, (Blue Target) which they destroyed completely.

The focused, attentive and appreciative audience responded to the presentations with long and loud applause followed by an animated "Question and Answer" session that reflected their intense interest, respect and appreciation.

Also attending were Colonel **Edward K. Mikoloski**, Nida Holmes and Fritz Selasky.

Bill Coombes, the SEMINAR MODERATOR, opened the program by introducing and acknowledging "Fritzi" Selasky as the person most responsible for bringing this seminar to fruition. He stated that it was Mrs. Selasky who wrote him several months ago when she heard of the monthly seminar programs the CAF were conducting, and suggested that they consider sponsoring one of the "greatest air battles of all times," PLOESTI. After several exchanges of letters and numerous telephone calls, the program became a reality.

Among others invited, but unable to attend were the following veterans of PLOESTI: Lt. Gen. **K.K. Compton**, 376th BG and Mission Commander, M/Gen **William H. Brandon**, Group Ops 44th BG and Pilot of "*SUZY Q*", Colonel **Richard Butler**, **Reginald Philips**, **Robert Lehnhausen**, **Henry Lasco**, **Charles Hughes**, **William Dabney** and Colonel **Dexter Hodge**.

Bill Coombes, in his letters to us, referred to the affair as "...a GREAT seminar series program!" and also the following, "The many, many regular attendees of these programs came to me and said that it was an outstanding event." Mr. Coombes also expressed his thanks to the participants for the unique LONDON CLOCK presented to him and his wife, which they will place in a position of honor in Bill's office with an inscribed placard listing the 44th BGVA and names of the donors.

Members of the 44th BGVA have a standing invitation from the CAF to visit their Museum, Memorial Gardens, Annual Air Show and Seminar Programs.

(Editors Note: This report was written by the 44th's Immediate Past President, "Mike" Mikoloski. In his customary modesty, he failed to mention that he was also the principle speaker at this event. His topic was a glowing history of the 44th Bomb Group.)



LT. ROCKFORD C. GRIFFITH'S AMAZING FEAT

As preserved in a yellowed, updated newspaper from the collection of Dale Lee:

"While the parachutes of their crew dotted the horizon, the pilot and co-pilot landed a "junk heap" Liberator bomber at 150 miles an hour-saving the life of the wounded ball turret gunner who could not bail out.

"A crowd of 500 airmen and ground crews gathered to greet returning raiders, who watched in awed silence, and broke into thunderous cheers when the landing was completed.

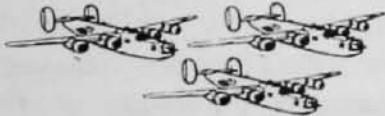
"The pilot was Second Lieutenant **Rockford C. Griffith**, a twenty-three year old farm boy from Oklahoma. Damaged controls forced Griffith, with the aid of his co-pilot, Second Lieutenant **Lawrence W. Grono**, to hit the runway with only one wheel. The bomber roared along on the wheel; then one wing touched the ground, and the Liberator swung around, skidded backwards 300 yards of the runway, and came to rest, right side up.

Floating all around the airfield were seven members of the crew ordered to jump because the plane was unmanageable. All landed safely.

Twice on the way home from Norway, Griffith's bomber fought off attacks by FW 190's and Ju 88's, which raked the bomber from nose to tail with cannon and machine-gun fire. This knocked out two engines, destroyed the hydraulic system and reduced the plane to a flying junk heap. "I knew I had to bring her in because of the ball turret gunner. He couldn't get out."

(Editors Note: The date was November 18, 1943. Can anybody name the turret gunner whose life was saved by Lt's. Griffith and Grono's courage and expertise?)

44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287



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Due to increased costs, the Board of Directors at the annual meeting, authorized an increase of dues to \$25.00. The last increase was five years ago. Membership in the 44th Bomb Group Veterans's Association is still a bargain in today's world.

Searches and Findings

A Mission of the 44th Bomb Group Veteran's Association



Photo Identification Needed!

From Steve Adams, another Ursel Harvel's photograph: Can anyone identify any of these men, believed to be the cooks for the 68th Squadron?

Arthur V. Cullen Crew!

Tim Mackey, nephew of 2nd Lt. **John L. Mackey**, 67th Squadron, is hoping to find someone who remembers his uncle. Lt. Mackey, Navigator on the **Arthur V. Cullen**



John L. Mackey

crew. He was killed on his 5th mission to Dunkirk, France, February 15, 1943. A/C #41-23783 *Betty Anne Gallopin Ghost* was brought down by enemy fighters. Seven airmen were killed, including **Donald MacDonald**, Command Pilot.

Tim Mackey can be reached at 80 Hollow Woods Drive, Pequea, PA 17565; telephone: (717) 284-4414.

Lt. David Saylor 44ther Discovered in British Columbia

This past July 28, Mary and **Lee Aston** had an amazing chance meeting with a lost 44th Bomb Group air crewman, **Warren Rohrer**, in the Butchart

Gardens, Victoria, B.C., while both were touring the Pacific Coast of Canada and Alaska. While walking the gardens, Lee stopped to rest on a bench and puff on his pipe as Mary went to the gift shop. Lee turned to see a man that was sitting on a bench behind. Lee could hardly believe his eyes. The man was wearing a blue, baseball-style cap with lettering that read "44" Bomb Group."



Warren Rohrer, 506 Squadron, and Lee Aston meet in Victoria, British Columbia.

Lee immediately moved over to sit by the man and introduce himself. Pointing to his own 44th BGVA cap with the 8 Ball logo, Lee gave his name and discovered Warren Rohrer, a B-24 gunner from the 506 Squadron

who served from October '43 to November '44. He completed his 35 missions with his crew piloted by Lt. **David Saylor**. AMAZING! to run into a fellow 44ther on holiday in Canada. Warren said he had had no contact with his former crew members and didn't know about our 44th BGVA.

He would like to know if any of them are still alive. CAN ANY OF YOU ALL HELP HIM FIND HIS CREW MEMBERS? If anyone can, write Warren Rohrer at 1321 Cherry St., Wellington, Kansas 67152; or telephone at (620) 325-3222.

Are you a Veteran who flew the low level mission to Ploesti?

From Luc Dewez, our Belgian friend: "For years I have been collecting memories of the veterans who flew the low level mission to Ploesti. Recently I have been working with an editor, a 100th BG Veteran; and we are now seeking a publisher. I would be so grateful to hear from 44th BG veterans who were on that mission, and who would share their experiences, anecdotes, official documents, photographs -- any information that would describe the awesome event."

Luc is making a serious effort to inform young people in his country, the awesome experience of WWII. He is the author of *Cruel Skies*, a studied account of the air war in Europe. Luc can be contacted at 8 Paul Pastur Street, 5190 Han-sur-San, Belgium. E-mail: luc.dewez@skynet.be



FOLDED WINGS

September,
2002

Prepared by:

*Will
Lundy*



AYERS, EDWARD 1 May 2002. Not in 44th BG. Was brother of man KIA only.

BILLMAN, ROBERT J. 23 March 2002 68th Sq. 37137220. Joined the Squadron on 5 March 1942, arrived in England on 2 October as an Engineer for the R.E. Erwin crew. He flew five missions, the first being 7 Nov. 1942 with M.V. Sullivan; and the fifth on 13 March 1943 flew with M. C. Howell. Possibly transferred to the 389th BG later.

BLAINE, HAROLD E. Date unknown. 31110213. Harold first served with the 806th Chemical, later transferred to the 67th Sq. where he worked in Tech Supply.

BOLGER, JAMES M. June, 2002. 506th Sq. Flight Engineer with the James Clement's crew for many of his missions. He arrived in England in January 1943. He flew his first mission on 18 October, 1943 with the Bunce crew and his third with J. Clements. He was on his second tour at end of war when he completed his 38th mission dated 18 April 1945. He was discharged in September, 1945. DFC medal.

BRUMM, HAROLD J. 29 June 2001 506th Sq. Harold was a Flight Engineer, flew his first mission on 25 May 1944 as a member of the J. C. Titter crew. He completed his tour of 35 missions on 9 August 1944, apparently all of them with the J. C. Titter crew.

BURKE, RICHARD

M. Date unknown. 31170058 68th Sq. He joined the Squadron on 19 June 1943 and flew his first mission on 13 August as a Waist Gunner on the R. J. Lehnhausen crew. His next one was with B. H. Gildart on 1 October and most of his total of 31 with that crew. He completed his tour on 22 April 1944.

CANNETTI, DOMINICK Date Unknown 32626523 He joined the 68th Sq. on 14 April 1944 as a member of the C. D Peretti crew. They flew their first mission on 22 April 1944, he as a Tail Gunner. Their last of 31 missions was completed on 2 October 1944. The crew transferred to the 70 RCD on 9 October for assignment back to the U.S.

CARPENTER, WILLIAM W. 18 January 2000 T-129133 67th Sq. He flew his first mission on 6 November 1944 as Navigator on the J. M. Bledsoe crew. This crew flew their last mission of the war on 25 April 1945, with Lt. Carpenter finishing with 30 missions or more. They returned to the U.S. flying A/C #42-50741.

CLAESSEN, KENNETH 5 March 2001 67th Sq. Cannot identify any data.

CLARK, CLETUS C. 9 February 2002 17157054 506th Sq. He served as Aerial Engineer on the R. J. Hruby crew. Their first mission was dated 20 April 1944. On their sixth, 29 April, the crew made an amazing safe ditching in the North Sea with no injuries. They completed their 32nd and last mission on 12 July 1944.

CLIFT, REESE R. 4 Sept. 1999 14071610 68th Sq. Aircraft Mechanic. Like most of the ground personnel in the Engineering Sections, Reese made both trips, to England and return, on the Queen Mary. The "cruise" over in early September 1942 and the return in late June, 1945.

COINER, MAYO L. Date Unknown 0-678688 67th Sq. Lt. Coiner, Navigator, flew his first mission on 21 September 1943 with the W. S. Aldridge crew and most of his 33 missions. His last few were flown with different PFF crews serving as Navigator-GEE. His final mission of his tour was with the T. L. Harrocks crew.

COSTELLO, GEORGE B. Date Unknown
36216016 506th Sq. Aerial Engineer. George was a regular member of the J. S. Gurman crew, flew his first mission on 19 May 1944. But on their fifth mission, 28 May, their aircraft was shot down, and the entire crew became POWs.

CURRIE, THOMAS 10/17/01. 12175210 67th Sq. Thomas served as Aerial Engineer on the C. C. Spagnola crew which completed their first mission on 26 August 1944. He completed his 35th and last mission on 6 February 1945.

DAMBACHER, ALBERT N. July, 1995. 67th Sq. Al was a replacement Waist Gunner on the John J. Mueller crew. This crew started their tour on 1 April 1944, while Al completed his first mission on 24 February 1944 with the G. W. Johnson crew as a Gunner. His next few were with various pilots until his 9th when he joined the Mueller crew on 19 April. He completed his tour on 25 July 1944 serving as a Waist Gunner.

DELACY, GEORGE W. June, 2002. 66th Sq. George was one of the original and oldest of the 66th Sq. combat gunners at Barksdale Field. He was the Tail Gunner on the aircraft *Jenny/Lady Luck* on the first missions flown by the 44th BG. Unfortunately, he suffered severe frostbite on 12 December 1942 that ended his combat career. He was 97 years old at the time of his passing.

DOWD, JOHN F. 2/11/01 20113596 68th Sq. John was a Gunner on the D. F. Tofte crew that joined the 68th Sq. on 8 July 1944. Their first mission was flown on 18 July, second on 19th, and last on 21st July. Badly damaged by flak, they crashlanded in Switzerland, and all of crew were Interned. John escaped twice, was badly treated, and finally was repatriated back to the U.S.

FINK, ROBERT D. 31 July 2001. Served in 44th Headquarters.

FLISTER, HENRY ODELL Date Unknown
36232737 67th Sq. He flew his first mission as Tail Gunner for the newly arrived W. A. Roach crew on 1 May 43. In succession he then flew as Tail Gunner for R. I. Brown on 4 May, Left



Waist for H. W. Moore on 17 May, and Tail Gunner on E. R. Mitchell on 29 May 1943. His tour ended when he was Interned in Switzerland on 18 March 1943, Tail Gunner for R. J. Lacombe.

GARRISON, EDWIN 13 February 2002. Cannot identify at this time.

GILSENAN, HOWARD STEVE 3 May 2001 68th Sq. (Difference in spelling) Gunner for the E. K. Kohler crew that joined the Sq. in early July 1944. They flew their first mission on 16 July most of them with the aircraft "*Corky*." They spent a week in Scotland at a Rest Home, for R & R, (3 to 10 Sept.) and continued their missions through to 30 November 1944, completing 34 missions for Gilsenan. On 13 December they rotated to 70th RCD to return to the U.S.

GRALEY, BRUCE 16 April 2002 506th Squadron Ordnance. No further data located yet.

GRAY, ARNOLD 12 June 2001 506th Sq. Arnold was a Navigator, flew his first three missions with different crews. His first one was 9 September 1943 with the L. S. Davenport crew; second with H.J. Laudig on 21 September; and his third on 24 September with J. A. Bunce. Apparently, he was assigned to the W. M. Maynor crew, as his last four were with this crew. They were: 5 November, 18 November, 26 November and his 11th mission came on 20 December 1943 when they were shot down, became POWs.

HADDOCH, SAMMY W. 1993. 14181734 66th Sq. Sammy was a Ball Turret gunner on the D. R. Talbott crew that flew their first mission on 30 January 1944. On 20 February, this crew made a rough crashlanding. Then on 15 March, on their 10th mission, they were attacked and forced to bail out over Holland. Sammy became a POW.

HICKMAN, F. JACKSON October 1996 67th Sq. Ground Crew. "Jack" was an Aircraft Mechanic. He was a member of Ground Echelon that went to England on the *Queen Mary* in early September, 1942. He first served on the M. Bagley crew, but later, he became an Assistant Crew Chief on the R. D. Davis crew. He returned



to the States in May, 1945 with orders for a month furlough and then return to duty. However, orders were changed, most of the men had too many "points" for further overseas duty, so were assigned to bases near home.

HOBSON, THOMAS B. 11 July 2002. 506th Sq. 0-791426. Tom was one of the original 506th Sq. pilots that joined the 44th BG in England in late February, 1943. He served as Co-pilot for G. Rebich on their first mission on 31 March and on until after Ploesti. On 21 September 1943, he flew his first mission as 1st Pilot after he and his crew were transferred to the 66th Sq. His plane was damaged badly by fighters, most of crew bailed out, and he was captured to become a POW on 1 Oct 1943. That was his 21st mission. Tom was recalled into the Army during the Korean War. He then retired as an Army Colonel.

HUGHES, WILLIAM D. 1987 0-727993 68th Sq. Pilot. Joined the 68th Sq. on 8 March 1942. He arrived in England on 2 October 1942 with the 68th Sq. Air Echelon. He was co-pilot for Lt. Cramer; then became a 1st Pilot on DS to Africa, flew both tough missions to Ploesti and Weiner Neustadt. Completed his tour of 25 on 18 Nov. 1943.

HURLEY, DAVID G. Date Unknown 35330744 68th Sq. Aircraft Mechanic. Was a passenger on A/C #42-109805 on 25 May 1945 upon return to the U.S.

JACOBS, L. G. Date Unknown 67th Sq. 16146649. Radio Operator for the J. A. Struthers crew. He flew his first and all 37 of his missions with this crew. Mission #1 dated 18 August 1944 and mission #37 dated 23 February 1945. Crew returned to the U.S. on 19 April 1945.

JOHNSON, NORMAN B. Date unknown. 39454377 68th Sq. Gunner on the H. C. Palmer crew. Flew his first mission on 3 March 1944 and his 14th and last on 9 April 1944. Crew was force to land in Sweden on 3 March. He was released on 16 October 1944 and returned to base.



JONES, CLARENCE R. 9 February 2002 12096377 68th Sq. He joined the Squadron on 8 July 1944 as an Aerial Engineer on the D. F. Tofte crew.

They flew their 1st mission on 18 July and their 31st on 21 July 1944. On this last mission they were force to land in Sweden and Interned. Later, on 19 October, they returned to base.

KRYSZCZUK, CHESTER J. May, 1998. 506th Sq. Chester was the nose turret gunner on the A. R. Rockman crew that flew their 1st mission on 1 November 1944. They completed their tour of 30 missions plus on 11 April 1945.

KIRMSE, ROBERT 6 Sept. 2000 68th Sq. 0-699530. Bombardier on the A. V. Larson crew, when on their first mission dated 21 May 1944. Then he flew missions with several different crews. From 16 August, he was assigned to the S. L. Dobbs crew, a PFF crew. He completed his tour of 33 missions on 15 October 1944.

MILLER, ALLEN W. 18 May 2002 67th Sq. "Bill" served as a Gunner on the Roger S. Markle crew from February to May, 1945. He flew his first mission on 12 March and his last on 18 April 1945. He is credited with at least nine missions, but could have flown more during early April. He is survived by his wife, Marcella and two sons.

McFARLANE, ROBERTS 30 November 2001 0-885100 68th Sq. Served as Assistant Armament Officer in the 68th Squadron.

NELSON, ODIS E. (Curly) 23 January 2002 18085241 67th Sq. "Curly" was an Aerial Engineer for the Capt. Howard W. Moore crew, one of the first crews in the 67th Sq. On 5 October 1942 they departed from Gander Lake, destination England. He flew five combat missions with this crew from 6 Dec. 42 to 16 Feb. 43, but was "grounded" due to severe ear problems. Reassigned to Crew Chief, he soon established exceptional records of missions flown without an "abort" or early return due to mechanical problem. He and his assistant, Carl Hall, crewed *Old Iron Corset*, recorded at least 129 missions with no early returns. It completed the war, and I was proud to have flown back to the States with these two mechanics. On the last leg of the flights. *Old Iron Corset* took off 45th from Greenland and was first over the base in Connecticut. Old and war-worn, but still one of the fastest and best. Curly was exceptionally popular and one of the best!



NUTTER, KENT 30 May 2002. 13071509 68th Sq. Kent joined the 68th Sq. on 26 Oct. 44 as a Tail Gunner on the H. M. Garbade crew. Their first mission was dated 29 November 1944. Their last of 26 or more was dated 18 April 1945. (Possibly flew one or more in early April, reports missing) They returned to the U.S. flying A/C #44-40276 in late May, 1945.

O'BRIEN, JAMES E. 2002, 0-435700 68th Sq. Pilot. Jim flew his first mission and first for the 44th BG on 7 November 1942. His second was on 9 November. On 14 May 1943 he was flying as Major and 68th Sq. Commanding Officer. They were shot down and Jim became a POW. Jim was very active, attended reunions and wrote several very good recollections of his wartime experiences.

REED, JOHN Y. 16 May 2002 0-660004 66th Sq. Pilot Lt. Reed flew his first mission on 12 December 1942 as a co-pilot for R. J. Abernethy. Following that, he continued to serve as co-pilot for several pilots, including Bill McCoy, T. E. Scrivner, and R. E. Miller. On 4 April 1943 he flew his first mission as a 1st Pilot. He took part in the difficult 14 May raid on Kiel, and then on to North Africa. John completed his tour of 25 missions on 21 August 1943 in Africa.

PARTRIDGE, WILLIAM R. February, 2002 0-685953 66th and 68th Squadrons. Lt. Partridge was a Navigator on the W. O. Peterson crew that had transferred into the 44th from the 446 BG. They had already completed ten missions with that Group. He flew his first mission in the 44 BG as a Radar Navigator for the W. O. Peterson crew on 5 June 1944. On 10 October he was transferred to the 68th Sq. and completed his tour as a Radar Navigator on 22 February 1945 with the H.M. Garbade crew.

RAY, CHARLES W. May 2001. 14170302 67th Sq. He was a Gunner, flew his first mission with the D. H. Dines crew on 24 February 1944 as a Waist Gunner. His second one was with the W. E. Wahler crew, also as a Waist Gunner. Then he served with several other crews. He finished his 29th mission with the E. C. Holmer crew on 30 December 1944.



ROSENGREN, ROBERT E. 19 March 2002 506th Sq. Robert was a Gunner. He flew his first mission as Waist Gunner with the G. S. Stevens crew. His second was with the J. Clements crew, Belly Gunner on 30 November. His third and fourth were as a Hatch Gunner for the N. Purdy crew on 11 January and 14 January 44. He then joined the L. Waine crew, flew two missions with them. Then, the entire crew was transferred to the 15th A.F. in Italy where they completed their tour total of 50.

SMITH, FREDERICK J. 26 January 1991 3031080 68th Sq. Sheet Metal worker. He was a member of the Ground Echelon, Engineering Section, that went to England in early September 1942 and returned to the States with them in late June, 1945. He also was one of the men who was on D.S. to Africa in the middle of 1943 to attack Ploesti, Weiner Neustadt and many other targets.

SNYDER, BETHEL A. Date unknown. Service data also unknown.

STIEFEL, MAX A. 1 June 2002 0-801102 66th Sq. Max was a Navigator on the R. E. Felber crew when he flew his first mission on 13 August 1943. He then transferred to the R. W. Bridges crew, flew with them on 16 and 19 August; then 7 and 15 September. On his ninth mission, 1 October 1943, the Bridges crew was shot down and he became a POW.

TAYLOR, WILLIAM Date Unknown. Cannot locate him in our records.

THOMPSON, MOODY E. 29 June 2001 18085261 67th Sq. Moody was a member of the 67th Ground Echelon that went to England in early September 1942. He served there until June 1945, when he returned back to the States on the same Queen Mary. His job classification cannot be located at this time.

TITKEMEYER, CHARLES W. 17 July 2002 0-796626 66th Sq. Lt. Titkemeyer was the Navigator on the R. E. Felber crew that joined the 66th Squadron in June, 1943 and very soon assigned to D.S. in North Africa. His first mission was to the Oil Fields of Ploesti, 1 August 1943, by far the toughest. With but two exceptions, he continued to fly as Navigator with the Felber crew until late December, when



they became a Lead crew. As a Lead Navigator, he occasionally flew with other crews, until he finished his tour of 28 missions on 12 March 1944. Charles kept a fine, detailed log of his missions that he donated for our history.

TUREK, BENJAMIN J. 1988 67th Sq. Ground Personnel, Engineering Section. Ben served as Aircraft Inspector during 1943, later he was promoted to T/Sgt. in charge of Tech. Supply. He returned to the U.S. on board the Queen Mary in late June, 1945.

TODD, MARK or MACK 13 March 2002 68th Sq. Cannot identify.

VILLEMEZ, LAWRENCE R. May, 1999
18062086 68th Crew Chief. Lawrence was one of the Ground Echelon personnel who sailed to England in early September, 1942. He served in that capacity until he returned to the U.S. by flying home on A/C #44-49397, piloted by 1st Lt. T. R. Williams. He also served in N. Africa on D.S. in September and early October, 1943.

WAGNER, CHARLES H. Date Unknown
13029488 68th Sq. Aircraft Mechanic He, too, was a member of the Ground Echelon that went to England on board the Queen Mary in early September 1942. But he returned to the U.S. in late May 1945 as a passenger on A/C #42-95021.

WHITWORTH, JOHN L. 2 January 2002
34448789 68th Sq. John served as Left Waist Gunner on the W. H. Barry crew that was shot down on its very first mission, 8 April 1944. John kindly supplied his recollections of that mission and how the crew parachuted to become POWs.

WOOD, FRANCIS M. 18 May 2002 34133012
68th Sq. M/Sgt. Crew Chief. He was a member of the Ground Echelon that sailed to England in early September, 1943. He also served in Africa on the two Detached Service assignments in 1943. He flew back to the U. S. on 26 May, 1945 on his aircraft number 42-50806 E, Louisiana Belle, piloted by R. G. Erikson.



WILTERDINK, DONALD J. No date. No records can be located for this man.

ZEE, WALTER J. (Zubowicz) 7 August 2002
67th Sq. Sgt. Zee flew his first mission on 24 February 1944 as a crewmen on the R.C. Griffith crew. He also flew as Gunner on the G. J. Thorn crew. Later, he joined the Charles H. Mercer crew that flew their first mission on 21 March 1944. His last of 30 missions was flown on 6 June 1944, D-Day. Awarded the DFC medal.

DUBOIS, PHYLIS 24 April 2002 Phylis, our great friend and former supervisor of the American Room in the main library of Norwich, has folded her wings. She has been a faithful worker for that library and for our 44th BG as well. Even after being relieved of her duties in that American Room some years ago, she continued her efforts to assist us in every way possible. She was particularly concerned with the official Roll of Honour and attempted to help all of us to get it as accurate as possible. We miss her and owe her a great debt of gratitude. Bless you, Phylis.

The 44th Bomb Group's PX

Making friends is as easy as pointing at your cap!

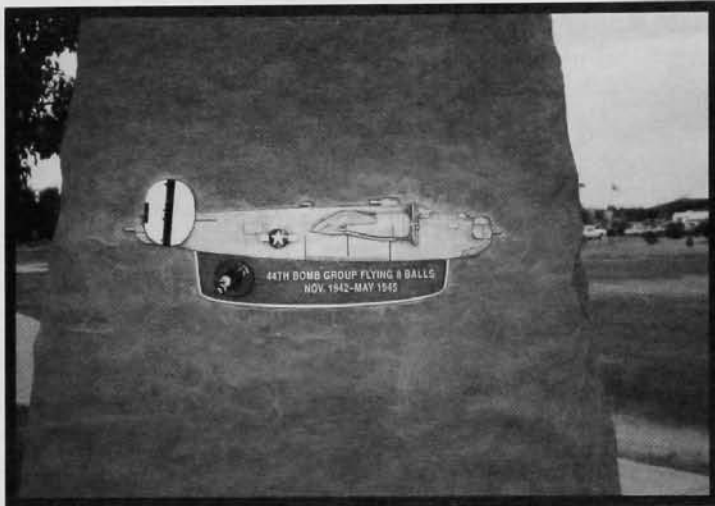
"The man was wearing a blue, baseball-style cap with lettering that read "44" Bomb Group."

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MAIL & E-MAIL



B-24 Plaque at Hill Air Field
on 8th Air Force Memorial.



From Jerry Folsom:

A Plaque with 44th Bomb Group Markings has been installed on the 8th Air Force Memorial near the Hill Field Aero Space Museum at Hill Field, Roy, Utah. Two years ago, the 44th BGVA Board allocated the money for this distinction.

The Hill Field Aero Space Museum is unique in that it has a B-24 that was salvaged from an Aleutian Island, being restored. Completion is expected in the next couple months.

They have on display a 4000 pound piece of rock from the White Cliffs of Dover with a simulated emergency landing field that was on top of the cliff. This is nostalgic to many crews who flew from England.



Attn: Ploesti Participants and Buffs: Plans are underway for a 60th Anniversary Celebration of the Ploesti Mission in Salt Lake City, Utah. The date is

July 31-August 1, 2003. The Ploesti stories are so awesome, a new generation of B-24 buffs are eager to meet the men who flew that mission.



Setting the Record Straight:

From **Ed Mazer**, Radio Operator and Gunner on the Lt. **William Wahler** Crew, 67th Squadron: "The Bombardier who helped Tail Gunner **Joseph Meskinis** was Lt. **Tom Murray**. The mission was to the Langenhagen Airdrome in Germany. Wahler was able to bring *Judy's Buggy* safely across the Channel before crashing. Murray placed Meskinis in his parachute from his turret and placed him in his parachute harness, only to learn later that Meskinis's chute did not open. All other members of the crew bailed out and survived. Besides Wahler, Murray, and Mazer, the following crew members were on that fateful mission, April 8, 1944: **Pietro Pino**, Co-Pilot; **Grover C. Trumbo**, Navigator; **Clyde Bickel**, Engineer; **Carl Hager**, Radio Operator; **Charles Harmeyer**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Charles Ray**, Waist Gunner; and **James Warren**, Waist Gunner. (An error in Lt. Murray's name was in Vol. 4, Issue #3, Spring 2002 issue of the *8 Ball Tails*.)

In a telephone call, I learned why Ed Mazer did not fly with his crew on that mission. April 8, 1944, was Passover, a Jewish holiday. "A Catholic Chaplain came to our barracks that morning. Because I was Jewish, he gave me a pass to London." Carl Hager flew in his place.

Mazer read **Frank Stegbauer's** account in the *8 Ball Tails* about his friend, the late Charles Ray. According to Stegbauer, Ray was shot twice while overseas; then 'shot by a friend while quail hunting.' Mazer said, "I was a friend, but I didn't shoot him. I shot past him at a bird, and just missed his head. It almost scared me to death, that I came that close."

(Editors Note: It had to be rather sobering for Charles Ray, also.)





George Beiber

From Marge Beiber, widow of the late George Beiber.

I enjoyed the article about

George's co-pilot, 'Jerry' Folsom. Unfortunately, George's last name was not spelled correctly in the article. (Editor acknowledges error). Beiber was the beloved pilot on the *Consolidated Mess* and sometimes on *Joplin Jalopy*, and his crew can never praise him too highly.

Paul Boench, Bombardier, describes him as a man with great concern for his crew, a good listener, and a man with a great sense of responsibility. Boench's happiest memory with Beiber was returning home on the *SS Brazil*. "We played checkers the whole way home," he recalled, "using a pocket-size set we had gotten from the Red Cross."

Waist Gunner **Harold Maggard** considered Beiber the best pilot in the 8th Air Force; and his reputation must have resounded through the 506 Squadron. Many unassigned airmen, needing a few more missions to complete their tour, wanted to fly with him. Tail Gunner Perry Morse remembers him fondly for many reasons, including that Beiber loaned him his officer's jacket. Navigator **Willis Edgecomb** loaned his to Harold Maggard. They used it for entry into the Officer's Club to watch the performance of their Bombardier Paul Boensch, a member of the 44th Bomb Group Band. Lt. George Beiber passed away May 23, 1995.

From **Dick Butler**:

The name of the pilot who had to abandon a beloved plane, *Earthquake McGoon*, in Bari, Italy, after a harrowing scene at Wiener Neustadt, was **William S. Aldridge**.

July 14th is Bastille Day in France, ending centuries of rule by monarchy. July 21st is Independence Day in Belgium. Do you know the country from which they were liberated?

Answer: Holland.

From Forrest S. Clark:

"I was the radio operator on a B-24 of the 44th BG. We had dropped our bomb load and were heading as fast as we could for home base. As we did so, the formation loosened up considerably. It usually did. It was a scramble to "get the hell out of there." We were deep over Nazi Germany.

"I recall suddenly looking up from the top turret; and there, to my surprised eyes was another B-24, bomb bay doors open and bombs clearly visible. It looked like it was only 100 feet above us, but I know it must have been more.

"Someone on our crew blasted over the intercom, "Watch out, B-24 above us." Immediately the pilot dove down and out of the way, leaving in a hurry. A few minutes later the B-24 peeled away and dropped out of our sights. If those bombs had gone, we would have been blown to bits.

"Was it an intruder that had infiltrated our loose formation or was it an illusion? We had been briefed that the Germans were employing captured American bombers to infiltrate our formations, and in a suicide mission, try to collide with or drop bombs.

"When we got back at interrogation, the officers told us they had reports of captured B-24's intruding into our formations. Then the question follows: Were there any German pilots trained to fly B-24's? Answer: There were."

(Editors Note: Clark is trying to contact the members of the R.C. Griffith crew, (67th Squadron) including Lt. Bob Weatherwax; Co-Pilot Bill Tinsman and Bombardier, Lt. David Edonds. Any information about experiences with this crew would be appreciated. Write 703 Duffer Lane, Kissimmee, FL 34759-4114; telephone (863) 427-0371; e-mail B24vet@aol.com).



W A L L A R T



Gene Tierney's image, along with a curvaceous nude gal, still grace the walls of a dilapidated building at the Doubleday farm in Shipdham, England. **Jack Loman**, (50 Station Complement) painted many pictures that are still visible 60 years later. Their survival is remarkable. The building is an old kitchen that has stood roof-less for decades. Loman, now living in Solvang, California, is married to Monica, an English gal that he sometimes went AWOL to visit.

Much of the WWII wall art has been lost through time and neglect, but now efforts are being made to save it by the Eighth Wall Art Conservation Society, who have managed to move some murals to the museum in Duxford.

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