

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association

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8 BALL TAILS



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The Crew of Lt. "Tommie" Holmes and their Plane, Silver Haired Daddy



Front Row L-R: 1st Lt. Robert J. Stine, Navigator; 1st Lt. Tommie Holmes, Pilot; Co-Pilot Donald Fribley; 1st Lt. Howard R. Klekar, Bombardier
Back Row L-R: S/Sgt. George L. Green, Tail Gunner; S/Sgt. Edward F. Bowden, Rear Hatch Gunner; S/Sgt. Michael Ballazovich, R.W. Gunner; S/Sgt. Isaac Flesher, Radio Operator/Gunner; S/Sgt. Sam H. DeBerry, L.W. Gunner; T/Sgt. Tauno Metsa, Engr./Top Turret Gunner.

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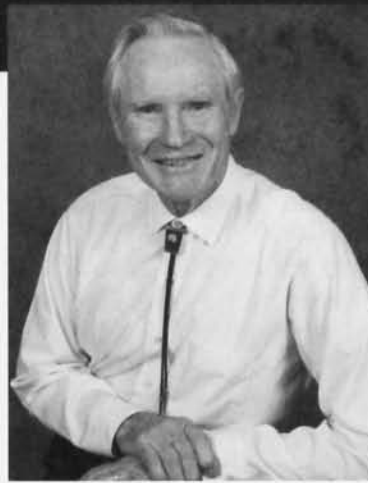
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**MAJOR WALTER THOMAS
'TOMMIE' HOLMES (68th Sq.)
PILOT OF 30 MISSIONS—ALL MEMORABLE**



Major **Thomas Holmes's** first mission is listed as 'diversionary', flying into Germany. His last was the 'big one' into Ploesti, August 1, 1943. His skills and bravery on that mission were recognized at a recent Seminar, held by the Commemorative Air Force. Major Holmes, Col. **William Cameron** and Col. **Edward 'Mike' Mikolowski** were guest speakers. Holmes's colorful moments include the awesome raid on Kiel, and, even more dramatic for him, a raid on the Abbeville/Drucat Airdrome in France. This was the fourth mission for the crew on *Victory Ship*, December 6, 1942.

"The 68th Sq. led the raid. The 66th and 67th Squadrons received orders to turn back, and they did. We did not receive the orders, and so we proceeded on, accurately dropping 111 bombs on the target and jettisoning 20 others over the target," Holmes remembered. "About the time we crossed the coast of France, opposite the White Cliffs of Dover, we were attacked by 30 Focke-Wulf 190 fighter planes. These were the yellow nose fighters, the Herman Goering Group, one of Germany's most seasoned groups.

"They flew in, two to three at a time from dead ahead. To increase our firepower, our six B-24 bombers were in very tight formation. We had three 50 caliber guns on the nose, fired by the navigator and bombardier, but only one could fire dead ahead. We also had twin 50s in the top turret, our most effective firepower ahead, as long as the target (or bandit) was above the nose of the plane."

The first flight was led by Capt. **Tommy Cramer**, number 800, with Lieutenant Holmes in number 813 on the left wing and number 786, Lt. **James Dubard** on the right wing.

Early in the encounter, Lt. Dubard's plane was hit, knocking out number three and four engines. Then engine number two lost power, and the ship pulled off to the right and lost altitude. Once separated from the rest, many of the German fighters withdrew and concentrated on the crippled plane.

All guns on Dubard's plane were seen to be firing and three enemy fighters were downed. Rather than bail out, the crew stayed on their guns and were still firing when the plane hit the water. Only one engine was running when the plane hit and exploded. This was the first loss in the 68th Sq. All on board were awarded the Silver Star.

"We held a very tight and steady formation, about 15 to 30 feet apart; as we felt we could be more effective this way, concentrating our firepower. I noticed a FW-190 some 200-300 yards out at 11 o'clock high, firing directly at our plane. We were looking straight down his gun barrels, and I thought to myself, 'He is going to hit us.' At that moment, three 20 mm. cannon shells struck us at once.

"There was a loud bang; yellow smoke and a flash filled the cockpit. The shell exploded about a foot over my head, and I was knocked uncon-

...continued on page 4

scious for a period of time. My co-pilot, Lt. **Robert Ager**, was also knocked out, and shell fragments struck the legs of the top gunner/radio operator, Sergeant **Samuel DeBerry**. The first shell hit our number two engine, just to my left, causing it to lose power. The third shell exploded into the oxygen bottles, just aft of the main cabin.

"There was no way of knowing how long I was unconscious; however, when I came to, I looked up and saw water. Realizing we were upside down, I righted the plane and began to look for more fighters. There were none, because we were by then half-way across the English Channel, and the FWs had returned to France, probably to avoid British fighters, although the only planes I saw at that time were four of my own squadron just crossing the coastline some 10-15 miles ahead.

"I was told by the rest of the crew, that although our plane had been barrel rolling to the left and diving steeply, the crew was staying on the guns. Some told me later they were unable to bail out because of centrifugal force. We were out of control and really in the Lord's hands for some six to eight minutes – time enough to fall 6,000 feet.

"There was a lot of damage in the cockpit – broken instruments, radios and material hanging from the top of the cockpit. The hole in the top was causing a lot of wind and noise.

"Lt. Ager, co-pilot, was slumped down and still unconscious. The bombardier, Lt. **Howard Klecker**, came up from the nose with our emergency kit and gave him a shot of morphine. He offered me one, but since I was now conscious and felt I could fly home, I refused it. Had I taken the shot, we would never have gotten back; the morphine would have knocked me out again.

"The side of my head was stinging, and I was uneasy about removing my leather helmet. I really thought the side of my head might come off, so I kept the helmet on and flew for an hour and a half back home. When we arrived at Shipdham, visibility was about one third of a mile with fog and light rain. Our navigator, Lt. **Robert Stine**, led us directly to the base. We fired a red flare, a symbol of wounded aboard, made a very tight landing pattern and rolled into the first available dispersal site on the taxiway. We were met by the



Visiting him in the hospital, renowned singer/actress Kay Francis listened to Tommie Holmes description of his mission to Abbeville

ambulance, but I had to wait several minutes while they struggled to remove our 180 pound unconscious co-pilot from the plane.

"Because my infantry helmet had kept falling over my eyes, I had pulled it off, just a few minutes before the shell hit. Had I left it on, I probably would not have been so badly wounded. As it was, I had bled a lot from numerous scalp wounds and others across my hands and arms. I was weak and had quite a headache."

Three weeks later Holmes was flying again. For this raid he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, British DFC and the French Croix de Guerre. He was the first member of the 44th BG to be awarded the Purple Heart. Holmes credits God for awakening him and getting the crew home, along with that valuable B-24, *Victory Ship*. This bomber, on its 50th mission a year later, was finally shot down.

All members of Holmes crew survived the war. Lt. Ager, co-pilot, returned to duty, only to be shot down on his third mission.

(Ed. Note: Holmes reports that he has had many frightening experiences, and has done a magnificent job, recording them for posterity. The trip to Abbeville/Ducat was a precursor to Kiel and Ploesti. More of his dramatic moments will be presented in later issues.)

'TOMMIE' HOLMES (68th Sq.)

T/Sgt. JAMES GARVEY (68th Sq.) And his DIP IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

Jim Garvey has the unique distinction of having been shot down twice. The first time was July 4, 1944, just off the French Coast, while enroute to an airfield at Beaumont Le Roger. He was flying with the **B. L. Schaffer** crew as Radio Operator. The plane was at about 23,000 feet when flak knocked out one engine. The runaway engine became uncontrollable, so Lt. Schaffer decided to turn around. As they approached the English coast, it became apparent they could not make an emergency landing with a runaway engine. "Abandon ship as soon as we see the coast," rang out over the intercom.

"First I discovered that my chest chute was upside down. It took about ten minutes to work out that dilemma," he remembered. "Going down, I narrowly missed the steeple and lightning rod on a country church, then landed in a herd of dairy cows feeding in a pasture." An armed British soldier met him, rifle in hand, believing him to be a German airman. He led him to the castle of that infamous turncoat, Lord Haw Haw. There he was interrogated, met the other crew members and returned to Shipdham.

Only a week later he flew with the **Alfred D. Bonnett** crew to Munich, July 11, 1944. The target was the Rein Airfield near Munich, but with heavy cloud cover, they were forced to go to the secondary target, Munich City. They bombed on a PFF assisted attack, but just prior to 'Bombs Away,' it appeared that #4 engine on *Flak Alley II* 41-29544 had been hit with flak. The propeller began to run away, oil pressure dropped, so the pilot, 1st Lt. **Alfred D. Bonnett**, feathered this engine. He dropped his bombs and held formation until approximately one hour from the enemy coast.

"One at a time, our engines began to fail. Every 500 miles, we would lose another." T/Sgt. Garvey, remembered. "When we got to the English Channel, we were down to one engine,

and it was coughing and faltering. 1st Lt. Alfred Bonnett and 2nd Lt. **Thurston E. Van Dyke**, Co-pilot, were trying to bring the plane down slowly.

Four P-38s had been escorting *Flak Alley II* from the time that Bonnet left the formation. At the coast #3 engine went out, so he ordered all unnecessary equipment to be jettisoned. When it was obvious that the plane could not make it to England, he radioed a distress signal to the P-38; and ordered the crew to assume 'ditching' stations. The P-38 continued to circle, overseeing the ditching and fracture of the plane as it struck the water.

When the '24 hit the Channel water, the nose and top turret caved in. The aircraft broke apart at the #6 bulkhead and the rear section sank almost immediately. **Edward W. Kushinski**, Engineer, was either pinned or killed by the falling top turret. **Richard J. Butler**, RW Gunner; **George Belsky**, LW Gunner; **Charles E. Banning**, Tail Gunner, all went down with the back section of the plane. The nose turret collapsed, taking **Donald G. Candless**, Nose Turret Gunner, to the bottom.

"I was in 'ditch' position with my back to the pilot. Kushinski, lay between my legs. We hit the water so hard," he recalled, "the plane split in half. Kushinski's head struck my shoulder and fractured the bone. Part of the front turret landed on him, causing his death. A piece of armor plating crashed into my 5th & 6th vertebrae, so when I was dashed into the icy water, I was helpless. The waves were eighteen feet high, but somehow the three officers were able to get the dingy.

Looking at death, Garvey had a strange thought: "I remember seeing a green translucent light above me. It was the sea. To me, there was a glimmering of hope in this lightened space. I

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thought 'I could fill my lungs with bubbles and escape this certain death.'"

Suddenly someone grabbed him by his epaulets. It was Lt. **Olaf W. Olsen**, his Navigator. Despite the fact that Olaf's leg had been torn off, he managed to pull Garvey alongside the dingy. With his wounds, Garvey could not summon the strength to climb into the dingy, so Olsen continued to hold him by his epaulets until help arrived.

Overhead the pilot of the P-38 radioed for help, then continued to circle until help arrived. An English destroyer came to their rescue. The ship's crew threw ropes attached to life preservers, and were able to pull the three officers into the vessel.

"With my broken back, I could not even hook my belt to the life preserver," Garvey explained. "Then an English guy jumped overboard and grabbed me. I remember him as being a really big fellow. He carried me up the 'Jacob's Ladder', and after that, I got medical care. The next day this man visited me and tried to give me my watch. He had taken it apart and oiled it for me. Gratefully, I told him to keep it.

"Around 2:00 or 3:00 A.M. I was unloaded at the famous White Cliffs of Dover. Someone found a donkey cart that was customarily used to haul that chalk from the Walls. I was placed on a stretcher and elevated to the top of the wall, where there was an enclosure the size of a city block. It was like a tent with no top; it looked like telephone poles were holding up the canvas walls. It was full of wounded men, and even though I was heavily sedated, it seemed to me there were hundreds of nurses and dozens of doctors taking care of everyone."

Adding to the misery of the men's wounds was a German attack with 'Buzz' Bombs. "They piled us on stretchers, took us to a local airport; and aboard British medium bombers, (*Mosquitos*)

the four crew members of *Flak Alley II*, along with other patients, were flown to Oxford General Hospital.

"I was in bad shape – hands cut up and lungs full of water. I was having a really difficult time breathing. Around two or three in the morning, a very large nurse came in to see me. She was all dressed up for a date, and she saw me struggling for breath. She picked me up, placed me on an X-Ray table, then placed her stomach and all her weight against me. I absolutely exploded. Water squirted from my nose and mouth, all over her dress. After that I was able to sleep. (*Ed. Note: That nurse used true ingenuity to empty the water from the English Channel out of Garvey's lungs. She undoubtedly saved his life.*)

At the Oxfore-Magdalen Hospital, clad in a body cast, Garvey educated and amused himself with the available literature. Then he got more ambitious in his quest for knowledge, so he got a male nurse to take him to the commanding officer, to ask whether he could be enrolled at Oxford University. Two days later he became a student, studying Economics. The Magdalene students all wanted to push his wheel chair. The courses were very uplifting for the young T/Sgt., and he continued in that field upon his return to the States. Years later he attended and graduated from the University of Minnesota.

Inducted at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, Garvey had served his basic training at Leonardwood, Missouri. An ear infection kept him from flying out with his friends on the Shannon crew. Later he was to learn that the *Natchez-Belle* was lost on the Foggia mission. Three of his friends were KIA, two were retained as POWs; five escaped and survived in the Apennine Mountains until the American army came through.

Along with the misery of war, he remembers some fun times. "Once Bucky Butler and I stole a taxicab in downtown London. Then we

started out to pick up girls, but they all seemed to recognize that we had guzzled too much booze. They got out of the cab QUICK! Looking back, Garvey realizes, he could have spent years in jail for that prank, but he got away with it.

"Another time we went to Convent Gardens where Glen Miller was playing with a European orchestra—Sylvester's. Before I entered the Army, I had played a tenor sax in a small orchestra. At one point the guys at my table noticed that the saxophone player was absent from his chair; so with their urging, I walked on stage, picked up his instrument to play. The band began to play "The Dipsy Doodle," and I knew there was an 11 bar tenor sax solo. So 'wot-the-hell', I jumped to my feet and played that 11 bars from memory! I thought I was pretty good, but Major Miller courteously thanked me and said that his regular horn player was on his way back! (In other words, get lost!)

(Ed. Note: How many WWII vets can honestly say they played music with Glenn Miller? That was undoubtedly a high moment in Garvey's life. One week later he had to be fished out of the English Channel.)

Garvey's sweetheart, Vivian, a graduate nurse, was enroute to Europe; but had a break long enough for the pair to get married. Pregnancy immediately ensued, but Vivian stayed overseas long enough to care for the victims of the 'Battle of the Bulge.' They settled in Glenwood, Minnesota, and busied themselves raising six children, all of whom became high achievers in their different fields.

Garvey and his wife Vivian live in two homes in Fargo, North Dakota — one by a lake, (where all his wartime pictures are stored) the other in a retirement center. Formerly a salesman for Proctor & Gamble, he is now fighting a disabling disease. From his wheelchair, he is still able to assist in some administrative chores for their new community.

Does Anyone Know This Man?



The gorgeous "dish" and its admirer are not familiar. Picture from the Dale Lee Collection.

Can you identify? Remnants from the Past...



The tail markings are backwards, so the negative was reversed. The numbers are 445393.



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S NOTEPAD



Recording and preserving our history: This project is moving along quite well, but much more information is needed. Unfortunately, there are many who still have not sent in their biographies. Your input is a critical aspect to the success of this project. Time is passing all too quickly. We thank those who sent their bio the last few months. I know many do not like to fill out forms. Completing the form presents the information in the order it is entered into the database. It doesn't have to be typed – just makes it easier to read. Do the best you can. If you have no pictures, OK. This is your personal history we are preserving for posterity.

Whether you were a cook, typist, MP, radio or radar repairman, sheet metal worker, medic, ambulance driver, fireman or mechanic, write what you did in your biography. Every job was important and necessary. You don't have to have something exciting to write about; just telling what it was like, living in England in wartime, that should be recorded. We have lots of names of men who served in the 44th BG, but sadly, we have no information about them. It took the efforts of all of us to win the War.

Most of the diaries, stories and letters that **Will Lundy** has collected over the past years have been recorded. Again I will ask if you have an incident or story that is part of your wartime experience—send it in.. We need that. I know for some, it will be painful to relate some past memories. Perhaps it would be easier to use a tape recorder, rather than filling out the form. We can transcribe it to the computer disc for you; then it will become part of our recorded history.

Some time ago a member told me he did not want to recall or think about past things...too emotional...did not think he could handle it. He called several months ago and said, "I finally did it. My daughter talked me into it, and she has recorded for me. I knew I ought to, but could not bring myself to write it down. I am glad I did it. I feel better now." A couple of others have told me it was not as bad as they thought it would be.

If you have not sent in a biography, try to do it. As for widows and relatives, it is not too late to send in a biography of your husband or other relative that was a member of the 44th.

The 2003 Reunion: In the past we have had many requests to hold a reunion in the Washington D.C. area. We have been reluctant, as we have heard how expensive it would be. Now, final arrangements are being made for the reunion in that area in October. Yes, it will cost a little more, but that is to be expected. The rooms are reasonable, but the meals and services are more expensive than in other places. However, there is much to see and do there. For many who have not been there in years, you will enjoy seeing the changes. It will be a once in a lifetime trip. Already several people have stated a desire to stay a few extra days. The hotel has offered up to five days extended stay.



A note to E-Mail users: If you have sent your provider a list of e-mail addresses from whom you are willing to receive messages, please be sure and include the 44th Bomb Group.<44thbgva@xmission.com>. We receive requests for information; and when we reply, we get a message back that the mail was undeliverable, as delivery was refused. Then we get another request for the information, thinking the original request has been ignored. **We answer all requests for information. Don't shut the door on the 44th BGVA. Include us in your E-Mail acceptance list.**

THE NEWS FROM SHIPDHAM

Peter Bodle, Chairman, Board of Directors, Shipdham Aero Club, Shipdham Airfield, Norfolk, England (AKA AAF 115) has become a 44th BG correspondent. The Club is eager to maintain a close relationship with the 44th BGVA, and we are fortunate to have this connection. News of their activities is truly welcome.

Hi,

This is the first of a regular letter to our friends of the 44th BG from the current residents of Station 115 Shipdham. In this we hope to keep you informed of what is happening at your old airbase and the area around Shipdham and Norwich.

So what is new? Well certainly Roy Owen and Mike Mikoloski took all the good weather away with them after their last visit in the autumn. Since then we have had a typical English winter. I wrote in the club's newsletter that flying had been suspended on several days for the following reasons: too much wind, too much snow, too much ice, too much fog, too much rain. I would point out this was on separated days. I mention this as I am sure those who stayed any length of time at Shipdham will remember that in East Anglia it is possible to get several of these weather conditions all on the same day. Some things don't change!

Just before Christmas a young man named Simon Wilcocks, a factory worker from the seaside resort of Hunstanton became our first ab-initio student to earn his wings, since we re-activated the airfield. See guys, the tradition continues.

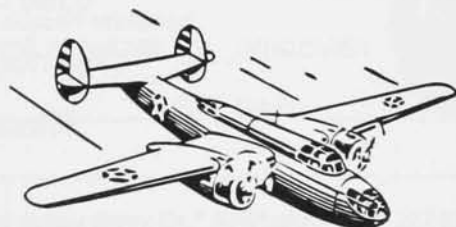
Well spring is just upon us and the work programme for the club has just been formulated. There is more work to be done in maintaining Runway 20/02 or 03/21 as you remember it. The new roof is completed on the clubhouse, and work will soon be starting on the extension to the Flying Eightball Museum. Committee member Peter Steele has taken this on as his prime function on the committee. The hangar floor is to be repainted during the summer months, when we can safely leave the aircraft outside overnight when the paint dries.

Our 2003 programme of events kicks off with a Safety Evening presented by the Civil Aviation Authority, (Our equivalent of your F.A.A.) where we host other clubs in the area, so we can all learn to be safer pilots. On April 6th we will be celebrating three years of existence for the Aero club. On that day we will also have the honour of hosting a small group of veterans from another 2nd Air Division station, Station 141 Bodney. They will be visiting the site of their old station, which, sadly, no longer exists as an aerodrome. There will be an over fly of a Thunderbolt and a Mustang at Bodney as a salute to the Veterans, then the P-47 and the P-51 will come into Shipdham, and the Veterans will be brought by road to the club to meet the warbirds' pilots, Steven Grey and Robs Lampleigh. Weather permitting, there will then be a fly by of a Spitfire as a salute to the assembled planes, pilots and visitors. I now pray to the gods of the weather on a nightly basis!

I guess I have used most of my space up by now, and yet there is so much more I want to tell you. I guess it will have to wait until my next letter. I hope we will see some of you during the course of the year. We think of you guys a lot. In the meantime, look after yourselves.

Your friend,
Peter

Bodle@btinternet.com



WILL SEZ

Will Lundy's column, **WILL SEZ**, does not appear in this publication. Will is recovering from rather severe complications following shoulder surgery. Send him a Get Well card, but no E-mails. He is getting physical therapy, which is painful enough, without adding to the stress of pointing, clicking and typing at his computer.

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The Doubletree Hotel Crystal City-National Airport is located at 300 Army/Navy Drive, Arlington, VA 22202. The hotel is ideally situated in the Crystal City corridor just minutes from the nation's capital. Hotel vans will shuttle you to the nearby Pentagon City Fashion Mall or Pentagon City Metro stop. The Metro provides transportation into the city to visit any of Washington's many world-famous museums and monuments. If you are driving, please contact the hotel directly for directions. The Doubletree offers 630 guest rooms. Each guest room features cable TV, Spectravision, and Spectradyne (in-room check out.) They offer same-day valet service and a fully equipped health club. Treat yourself to a swim in the enclosed rooftop pool and then the sauna. The hotel's gift shop is located in the lobby. Best of all, Doubletree's famous homemade chocolate chip cookies will be waiting for you the night you arrive! Handicapped accessible and non-smoking rooms are subject to availability. Please request these special accommodations when making your reservation. Self-parking is available in the hotel's garage for the current fee of \$6 per day. (This does not include valet parking). Check-in time is 3:00pm, and check-out is 12:00 noon. **The Café**, serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the charming atmosphere of an outdoor bistro. **Window's Over Washington Restaurant**, serves dinner only, Tuesday - Saturday. Continental and New American cuisine plus a spectacular view. **Skydome**, a revolving rooftop lounge, well known as one of the city's most popular nightspots. **The Lobby Bar**, which serves drinks and hors d'oeuvres. Room service is available.

The Doubletree Hotel provides free shuttle to and from Ronald Reagan National Airport. Call the hotel from the courtesy phone in the Baggage Claim area for service. No advance reservations. You may want to consider other transportation services, as space is always limited on complimentary services.

The hotel provides a RV parking lot behind the hotel, which is currently \$9 per day. For full hookup service, the Pohick Bay Park on the Potomac River is the closest park to the hotel. Call (703) 339-6104 for information, reservations, and directions.

Should you need to rent a wheelchair for the reunion, ScootAround rents both manual and power wheel chairs by the day and week. Please call their toll free number at (888) 441-7575 for details.

Vendors, Schedules, and Prices are subject to change.



CUT HERE AND MAIL TO THE HOTEL

**44th BOMB GROUP – HOTEL RESERVATION FORM
REUNION DATES: OCTOBER 9 - 13, 2003**

NAME _____ SHARING ROOM W/ _____

ADDRESS _____ ZIP _____

TEL. NUMBER (____) _____ ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEP. DATE _____

OF ROOMS _____ # OF PEOPLE IN RM. _____ HANDICAP ACCESS _____ SMOKING _____
NONSMOKING _____ KING BED _____ 2 BEDS _____ If room type requested is not available, nearest room type will be assigned.

RATE: \$89 + tax (currently 9.75%) for 1-2 people in room. \$20/night for extra person(s) in room (max 4 in a room).

CUTOFF DATE: 9/8/03. Reservations received after this date will be processed on space & rate availability.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Deposit is refundable if reservation is canceled by 4pm (EST) on your arrival day.

Adjustments to departure date after check-in, resulting in a shortened length of stay, will result in a \$50 fee.

All reservations must be guaranteed by credit card or first night's deposit enclosed.

___ AMEX ___ DINERS ___ VISA ___ MASTER CARD ___ CARTE BLANCHE ___ DISCOVER

CREDIT CARD NUMBER _____ EXP. DATE _____

SIGNATURE (regardless of payment method) _____

Mail to: Doubletree Hotel * ATTN: Reservations* 300 Army Navy Dr.* Arlington* VA* 22202

44th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION
OCTOBER 9 – 13, 2003
DOUBLETREE CRYSTAL CITY, WASHINGTON DC AREA

Thursday, October 9

- 11:00am - 6:00pm **Reunion Registration open**
12:00pm - Hospitality Room opens. Hours will be posted at the reunion.
5:00pm - 6:00pm Welcome reception, Cash Bar, Light hors d'oeuvres.

Friday, October 10

- 7:30am - 9:00am Breakfast Buffet
8:30am - 9:30am **Reunion Registration open**
10:00am - 4:00pm VIRGINIA HUNT COUNTRY (description follows)
4:30pm - 5:30pm **Reunion Registration open.** Additional hours will be posted at the reunion if necessary.
6:00pm - 7:00pm Cash Bar
7:00pm - Squadron Dinners

Saturday, October 11

- 7:30am - 9:00am Breakfast Buffet
9:00am - 10:00am General Membership Meeting
11:00am - 4:00pm CITY TOUR (description follows)
5:00pm - 6:00pm Cash Bar
6:00pm - Posting colors and Candle Lighting ceremony
7:00pm - Dinner is served, followed by entertainment

Sunday, October 12

- 7:30am - 9:00am Breakfast Buffet
Free day to explore Washington on your own.
6:00pm - Cash Bar
7:00pm - Dinner Buffet

Monday, October 13

- 7:30am - 9:00am Breakfast Buffet
Farewells & Departures

44th BOMB GROUP
TOUR DESCRIPTIONS

VIRGINIA HUNT COUNTRY

Board the bus for Middleburg, for lunch at The Red Fox Inn. Established in 1728, The Red Fox Inn is among the most popular and award-winning Country Inns nationwide and is on the national Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. Lunch will consist of a beverage, house salad, grilled chicken breast with fresh fruit chutney, rice, vegetable, and dessert. Upon leaving the Inn, enjoy time on your own to browse through the many fascinating shops along the main street in Middleburg. The charming village has earned a reputation as the "Nation's Horse and Hunt Capital," attracting prominent visitors from across the United States. Serving as a host community for more than 250 years, it is no surprise that Middleburg has developed such a high concentration of fine inns, shops and restaurants. Reboard the bus and we'll wind through the back roads of the Hunt Country past rolling fields and picturesque farms to the areas where Thomas Jefferson strived to produce wine to lessen the colonies' dependence on tobacco as a cash crop.

10:00am board bus, 4:00pm back at the hotel
\$58/Person includes bus, guide, and lunch.

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS, CONTINUED

CITY TOUR

Board bus for Union Station for lunch on your own and shopping. Built in 1907, this Beaux-Arts train station houses 125 stores that include unique shops, restaurants, galleries, and more. After lunch, reboard the bus for a driving tour of major highlights of Washington D.C. Drive by the Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, the Mall, Capitol Building, Washington Monument, White House, and other notable monuments and federal buildings.

**11:00am board bus, 4:00pm back at the hotel.
\$32/Person includes bus and guide. Lunch on your own.**

Driver and Guide gratuities are not included in the tour prices.
Please plan to be at the bus boarding at least five minutes prior to the scheduled time.

Other options for activities on your own:

- **Tourmobile Sightseeing Bus** – This is a fantastic option for touring Washington, DC. Tourmobile is a shuttle service with specific pick-up points and about 15 stops, which include Arlington Cemetery, Kennedy Gravesites, Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington House, Washington Monument, Air & Space Museum, Museum of American History, plus many more! At this point, Tourmobile is not traveling to their destinations on Pennsylvania Avenue. You can board and depart the shuttle at your leisure. There are narrators aboard to tell you about what you are seeing as you cruise around town. Buy a ticket at any of the nine specific stops. At time of printing, you can ride all day for \$18/person. Call 1-888-868-7707 for more information or visit www.tourmobile.com for details on specific stops.
- **Holocaust Museum** – Established by a unanimous Act of Congress, the museum contains a permanent exhibit of artifacts, films, photographs, and oral histories that document the Nazi genocide. The Hall of Remembrance serves as a place of reflection. This museum is not recommended for children under the age of twelve. Prepare to spend 2-3 hours here. You must call ahead for tickets: 800-400-9373
- **International Spy Museum** - This museum has the world's largest collection of International espionage artifacts ever placed on public display. Explore interactive displays about disguise, surveillance, threat analysis and more! Call 866-779-6873 for tickets or visit www.spymuseum.org for more details!
- **National Cathedral** – This amazing 14th Century style gothic cathedral, gardens and shop is located on 57 acres in upper Georgetown. It is the 6th largest gothic cathedral in the world.
- **City of Baltimore's Inner Harbor** – About 45 minutes from Washington, DC, the Inner Harbor in Baltimore is one of America's oldest seaports. Fun and educational attractions literally surround the Inner Harbor! Visit www.southbaltimore.com/InnerHarbor for more details.
- **The Smithsonian Institution** - The Smithsonian Institution is the world's largest museum complex and research organization. Composed of sixteen museums and galleries, as well as the National Zoo, the Smithsonian's exhibitions offer visitors a glimpse into its vast collection numbering over 142 million objects. Visit the Smithsonian and you will see why it represents for so many the treasured icons of our past, the vibrant art of the present and the scientific promise of the future. Visit www.smithsonian.org for details about any of their 16 museums, a few of which are described below.
- **National Air & Space Museum** – Walk through 23 galleries showcasing the evolution of aviation and space technology. Must-sees include the original 1903 Wright Flyer, Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis, Apollo 11, and many more exciting sights!
- **Museum of American History and Museum of Natural History** - The Museum of American History has exhibits that chronicle our nation's heritage in the areas of science, technology, and culture. The Museum of Natural History has exhibits that explore all aspects of the natural world, from prehistoric times to present day.

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less the non-refundable AFR registration fee (\$5 per person). Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less the non-refundable AFR registration fee. **Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9:00am until 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time, excluding holidays.** Please call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Canceling your hotel reservation does not cancel your reunion activities.

44th BOMB GROUP REUNION ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order (no credit cards or phone reservations accepted). Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before September 10, 2003. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
242 W. 22nd Street
Norfolk, VA 23517
ATTN: 44th BOMB GROUP

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Check # _____	Date Received _____
Inputted _____	Nametag Completed _____

CUT-OFF DATE IS 9/10/03

	Price Per	# of People	Total
REGISTRATION PACKAGE PER PERSON:			
Includes Thursday Reception, Breakfast Buffet on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, Friday Squadron Dinner, Saturday Candle Lighting Dinner with entertainment, Sunday Dinner Buffet with entertainment, \$5 non-refundable AFR registration fee, and reunion expenses.			
You must make your entrée selections by indicating the number of each:			
FRIDAY: Squadron Dinners: Chicken Chardonnay # _____ London Broil with Mushroom Gravy # _____			
SATURDAY: Candle Lighting Dinner: Sauteed Halibut # _____ Roasted Pork Tenderloin # _____			
	\$265		\$
TOURS			
Friday: Virginia Hunt Country	\$58		\$
Saturday: City Tour	\$32		\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

PLEASE PRINT
 NAME (for nametags) _____ SQUADRON _____

SPOUSE NAME _____

GUEST NAMES _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, ST, ZIP _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

ARE YOU CONFINED TO A WHEELCHAIR? _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEPARTURE DATE _____

ARE YOU STAYING AT THE HOTEL? YES ___ NO ___ ARE YOU FLYING? ___ DRIVING? ___ RV? ___

For refunds and cancellations, please refer to our policies outlined at the bottom of the reunion program. CANCELLATIONS WILL ONLY BE TAKEN MONDAY - FRIDAY 9:00am-5:00pm EASTERN TIME (excluding holidays). Call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain your cancellation code.

OLD MEMORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES

In a document from the past, labeled 'Secret': **Louis W. Schuette** won a quart of White Horse Scotch for climbing a fifteen foot greased pole. (Ed. Question: *Did he share it with anyone?*)

"On 1/September 1944, a Farewell Party was given for the 'Ploesti' returnees on the grounds of Mr. Patterson's home, just adjacent to the station. Since the majority of the men were members of the 67th Bomb Squadron, Major **William R. Cameron**, the Squadron Commander, took it upon himself to arrange this party. All squadron commanders in the group and old friends were present, with Brigadier General **Leon W. Johnson** as guest of honor. Everyone present enjoyed an evening full of songs and tales to bring back old memories. Refreshments, both liquid and solid, were plentiful, and it was a fine send-off for a fine bunch of boys."

April 1944, the monthly newsletter at Shipdham—stamped Secret—carried a picture of T/Sgt. **Wade F. Bond**, of the Station Technical Inspector's Office, and his Deluxe Model Velocipede (bicycle). Sgt. Bond spent his spare time rigging radio, lights, horns and other accessories onto his tandem bicycle; the editor assumed it was to attract the ladies. (Ed. Note: *Did it work? Does anyone have a picture of this hi-tech contraption?*)

MAIL & E-MAIL

From Capt. **Donald J. Williams**, 67th Sq. & Hq. to Will Lundy: (*Describing the difficulty of retrieving history from old documents*). "I recall that there was an order that we were not even supposed to keep a diary that would have any information that could be of a classified nature."

"I remember that we 'adopted' an RAF war orphan, and had a birthday party for her on the base. **Huntley** and his crew even managed to come up with cake and ice cream. In 1995 I went back to England, tracked down little Virginia, now a grandmother, met her whole

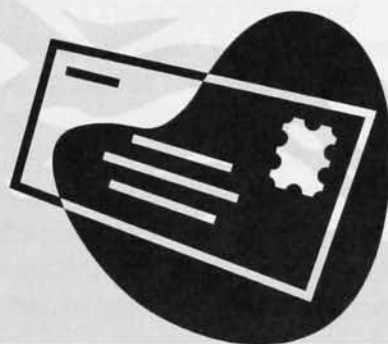
family and they took me out to the base. (The War) was not all blood and guts—easy for me to say. But there was a lighter side.

"Say hello to Bill Cameron for me. He definitely falls into my 'most admired persons' category. We had an executive plane for transportation between bases, a twin engine Oxford. Bill used to take me up in it, just fooling around. I know we frightened some of the neighboring farmers' chickens.

Recollections of **Bob Norsen**, 68th Sq., on patrolling the Gulf of Mexico: "As Squadron Ops O and pilot, I suspected that if we ever saw a sub, the chance of the bombardier doing every detail of the procedure right in the few seconds we would have from sight to 'bombs away' position was rather poor. So without any approval from anyone, the 68th started to carry 10 practice bombs in the rear bay, 8 live 500 and depth charges in the front bay. We intended to drop practice bombs on cloud shadows or other sudden targets to get the procedure in mind, practiced and tested.

"The first 10 or so 'drops' nothing came out. Another several. Nothing. I got on the intercom to Sgt. Gillford – "OK, the next drop either a bomb or you, one is going out." The next ten went out, one on every target!

"Sub patrol experience would pay off in Europe. I was Operations Duty one night, planning a



44th mission to Danzig North around Denmark (04/10/43), a flight well over twice as far as Berlin. We had not gotten all planes back from Berlin on missions because of fuel shortage. Using what I learned about stretching miles flying like we did on sub patrol, we got the entire 44th flight to Danzig and returned with fuel to spare."



A recollection of **Forrest S. Clark**: One of my first memories of the Shipdham Base was the time a group went out to cut down some woodland for the fire, and found they were violating the Queen's Royal Forest.

A few days later a local town constable turned up and demanded to know who cut down the wood. We all denied we knew, and one even went so far as to blame it on a crew that had gone down and did not return. The truth is, we were all ignorant of English laws, and thought the woodlands belonged to everyone.



From **Frank Schaeffer**, Flight Engineer & Nose Gunner on **Bernard J. Komaskinski** crew, 506 Sq. sends this report:



"We are losing many of the Evasion Helpers from Europe. Some are living in the USA, and are welcome attendees of the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society Reunion. Most of my personal helpers have passed on.... Jean-Pierre Benier, who was only four years old in 1944,

returned one of my dog tags. Apparently it had been given to one of the family as a souvenir."

After attending the 2 AD Reunion in Baltimore, Schaeffer set out on a journey to visit old friends. He visited Lavern Breaky, brother of **Karl Breaky**, who was killed in the crash of **Myron Jacobs's** plane, *Flying Log*. There were no survivors. That same day, August 8, 1944, *My Peach* went down, leading Schaeffer into three months as an

Evadee in Belgium. (*Schaeffer's experience is documented in Vol. 3, Issue 6, Fall 8 Ball Tails.*)

Schaeffer also visited his co-pilot, **W. Scott Gippert**, and learned an interesting end of the story of *My Peach*. According to Gippert, after bombing its target, La Perth Airfield, Romilly, France, with two engines out and one afire, the crew bailed out 60 miles east of Paris. Apparently A/C # 42-100415 dutifully continued flying, straight and level on autopilot. Over Paris the unmanned plane was finally shot down by the Germans. (*Ed. Note: I'll bet they were surprised to see what efficient A/C Willow Run was building.*)



From **Jack Butler**: Bombing of Baghdad (March 21, 2003)

Like most Americans, I sat up the last few nights watching Baghdad burn. Saddam Hussein must have suffered from a death wish when he passed up the chance to clean out his palaces and move to Switzerland where he could keep an eye on his money.

As I sat in my nice, safe and comfortable easy chair, I flipped from channel to channel, so that I could see it all. I was so impressed with our boys' ability to put those bombs exactly where we wanted them to go. We can only hope that Saddam was in that bed when we dropped that bomb in his living room. Obviously we were very serious about keeping civilian damage to an absolute minimum or we would not have gone to the trouble and expense of selecting such specific targets.

My mind wandered back to June 1944. That time I had a spectacular view of a bombing attack on Berlin. I don't think any of us ever forgot the last ten or fifteen minutes on the bomb run when we had to maintain a steady air speed of 155 MPH and could make no turns that would upset the bombardiers' calculations. The flak at this point was so heavy, not even the German Luftwaffe would go after us in this area.

If we got 75 percent of our bombs near the target, we had a successful day. What happened to the other 25 percent was another matter. All we knew for sure was that they hit the ground somewhere. There was no point in discussing those missed bombs, so most of the time, we did not. But 60 years later, I still wonder what those stray bombs hit. I guess that at 23,000 feet, and the usual bad weather, plus other things to think about, we did not have much time to worry about where the stray bombs had gone.

I am very happy that our modern flyers have the skill, the training, and the equipment to land one of our bombs in Saddam's living room.



From Sgt. **Fred Willmann**, Commander of the Guard at Shipdham: The 987 MP Company (AVN) left for England on 28 December 1941. We sailed on the Empress of Scotland, a converted Ocean Liner that was originally on the Pacific Ocean as the Empress of Japan.

We arrived in Scotland, then went by train to Norwich, England. We were stationed at Horsham St. Faith. This base later was a base for Col. Zempke and the P-47 Fighter planes.

We were assigned to patrol Norwich until we could be moved to Shipdham. At that time the base was still being built by Irish laborers from Northern Ireland. We were given Site Nine, a long way from the Mess Hall. It was common to have a German lady talk to us and tell us when we were to have German bombers over at night to bomb our runways. A lot of time, therefore, was spent in bomb shelters at night, up to our ankles and more in very cold water. But eventually our base was ready, and then we got B-24s! Wow! What a day. (10/10/42)

By this time the air was being controlled around us, so we didn't have many more night raids. I remember, though, one time that they came over and dropped anti-personnel butterfly bombs. The English reportedly used cattle or

sheep to help clear those small bombs.

My Company was increased in number, and we had detachments all over Norfolk County as part of the elaborate early warning system. At the end of the war in Europe, my Company was again reduced to 200 men; and all but us went home to be reassigned to the Pacific conflict. I remained in England, and we moved from base to base, eventually up to Scotland. I came home on the Queen Mary in December 1945. There I rejoined my Child Bride. We lived and raised three children in Illinois. Then we retired in Arkansas in 1982. No more winter and snow.

I am almost eighty now, and I often think about those planes flying out in the early mornings, and then seeing less of them returning, many shot up. I remember those bicycles we had, rode them to Mess, and also used them at night to go to a Pub. After a week, no one was riding his own bike. We didn't fly combat, but we did our part to win the War.



To **Roy Owen** from **Jim Casey**: Your article "Our Working Landlady" triggered fond memories; and for me, was most timely, as you will see from the following story.

The New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center has currently interviewed approximately 400 veterans from all wars. These interviews were on tape, and are now part of the Museum Research Center. I was solicited to be interviewed as a veteran of the 8th Air Force....

"We arrived at the 44th Bomb Group, 68th Squadron with the **Thomas Kay** crew. Soon thereafter they removed the ball turrets, leaving one gunner extra. We voted to continue as a crew, rotating missions. Thus the gunners did not have the 25 missions completed together. Four of us were left behind, and we moved to a mission hut located in the furthestmost part of the farm (The Grange).

"We had a Mississippi country boy who hunted

rabbits at night on the farm and cooked them on the pot bellied stove. Not bad as I remember. The cows were nearby, and I decided that steaks might be in order. I managed to get a cow into the nearby bomb shelter. I was a kid from Brooklyn, New York, who had never seen a live cow before, nor did I know they had to be milked.

“Butchering the cow was beyond the scope of the Mississippi rabbit hunter; and by the second day, the cow was roaring. I arrived back from a mission and saw a commotion at the bomb shelter. It turned out someone from the farm heard the cow, and was in the process of extracting it from the shelter, much to the cow’s relief. Needless to say, we never had steaks and settled for rabbits occasionally. I completed 35 missions and was home in Brooklyn before the war was over. Many years later I attended a reunion at Dayton, Ohio and the pilot re-introduced me to Col. **Robert Lehnhausen**. It was then I admitted to the Cow Caper. He said, ‘aren’t you a policeman?’ I said ‘yes’, and we all had a good laugh.

I enjoyed your article and say thanks.”

THE MIGHTY 8TH MUSEUM

A recent visit to the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum, outside Savannah, Georgia brought some interesting discoveries. The B-47 that was being refurbished and reconstructed four years ago on our last visit, is now on the front yard of the building, a striking landmark when driving up Route 95.

Their latest accomplishment is the completion of the Chapel of the Fallen Angels. Each stained glass window tells a different story, relating the War experience to the Almighty. The Holocaust, which was very commanding at the entry corridor is reduced in size, and replaced with much about the English travails before the U.S. entered the War. Hitler’s erroneous declarations are still prominently on display, accompanied by pictures which show how wrong he was.

According to Judy Walker, Director of Development, the Museum is planning ahead for replacement of exhibits which have been in place for ten years. The activities of the Women Pilots, the WASPS, will be featured in a future display. Exhibits, showing post-war advancement in aviation, are part of the planning. Portrayal of the Strategic Air Command is already prominently on display.

We watched visitors study the 44th’s Diorama of Ploesti with intense interest, carefully reading the description of the Mission, written by Roy Owen. Further changes are in the planning, to bring detailed accuracy to this unique piece of art.

New faces have moved into the administration offices, but the theme of the Museum seems to be unchanged—to recognize those who weathered the storm of war, and those who gave all for the noble cause of freedom.

FOLDED WINGS

ADAMS, FRANK "Jack". 1994 0848547 506TH Sq. Co-pilot for O. L. Leonard crew. He had been ill for a long time. His first mission was flown on 9 May 1944, and his final one was dated 30 August 1944 while being with the George Insley crew. His last few missions were on Lead aircraft, serving with different crews. Jack was sent to the 12th Replacement Center Depot on 5 September 1944 to return to the US, having completed 21 missions. His rank at that time was 1st Lt.

BERTHONG, MERRILL GRAY 0-805891 14 January 2003 66th Sq. He served as a co-pilot on the J.O. Bolin crew, flew their first mission on 16 November 1943 and again on 20 December 1943. Then he served with several different crews, starting with 1st Lt. Irby, C.E. Hughes, R.A. Johnson, W.O. Peterson and several others. Most of the crews were Lead Crews, PFF & GEE, covering the latter part of 1944. A total of eleven missions were completed before he was promoted to Squadron Operations Officer. Records show that he served as Operations Officer in January 1945, but nothing beyond that time. Prior to his arrival at Shipdham, he had flown missions in the Coastal Command, both in the US and the UK.

CARSTENS, JOHN H. 32456875 11/7/02 68TH Sq. Sgt. Carstens was a Gunner for the Sam D. Williams crew that joined the 68th Sq. on 1 September 1944. One week later, this crew participated in a Diversion over the North Sea. After a first mission on 9 September, they accompanied the 44th BG men sent on Detached Service to North Africa. There they flew one mission on 24 September, and returned to Shipdham in early October. John continued his missions, flying in the Waist Gun Position until 21 January 1944 when Lt. Williams was hospitalized. Then he joined other crews, starting with Lt. N. J. Peterson, J. W. Parks, J. B. Williams. He completed his tour of 30 with Lt. A. V. Larson on 21 May 1944. Later he was

transferred to the 66th Sq. for a period, then placed on DS with the Commandos.

CHURCH, WILLIAM D. 0-805891 1/23/2003 67th Sq. Co-pilot on the C.H. Mercer crew that arrived in the Squadron on 7 February 1944. His first mission was flown on 23 March 1944; and he completed his 30th on 22 June, 1944. This crew often flew both *Lil Cookie* and *Glory Bee*. This crew finished their tour with only two Purple Hearts among them. From very incomplete records, 1st Lt. Church is listed on 14th CBW rosters with one showing him as Watch Officer and temporarily from the 392nd BG. One other report stated that he also served as a 66th Squadron Operations Officer.

CLARVOE, FRANK A. t-?? 5/26/86 506 Sq. Bombardier for the Leo S. Bielinski crew that departed Boston on the 'Ile De France' in late December 1944, unescorted, five days enroute to England. They arrived at Shipdham, probably near 1 January. This crew flew their first mission on 9 February 1945, but Frank was assigned temporarily to Thompson, Clements and Jarvis, before returning to the Bielinski crew on 19 March 1945. Frank completed his tour on April 20th 1945 with 22 missions. This crew made the return trip the US by flying Bar K 42-50643 via the Azores, Gander and Mitchell Field in June 1945.





FOLDED WINGS

CLARK, CHARLES F. 14 August 1987 506 Sq. Charles was a Gunner on the L. C. Confer crew that was transferred from the 489th BG, 845th BS on 16 November 1944. He flew his first mission with the 44th BG on 26 November 1944, serving as Nose Turret Gunner and Toggler. Records show that this Confer crew completed 27 missions prior to their arrival at Shipdham, but individual records are not known. However, Charles then completed nine more missions to finish his tour of duty. The Confer crew then continued for several other missions before completing their tour of duty.

FEENEY, THOMAS "JOE". 20179 4/29/03 66th Sq. Feeney rose from Sgt. in WWII to Lt. Colonel during his service through three wars. Sgt. Feeney was the Tail Gunner on the Kleinschmidt crew. His first mission was Feb. 14, 1945, his last April 15, 1945. After completing his education, he reenlisted in the Army in CIC, and received a direct commission in the Finance Corps. He served with the Army Audit Agency, and held a number of General Staff Assignments in Alaska, the U.S. & Korea. His last foreign duty was Comptroller Advisor to the Iranian Forces, and was stationed in Tehran, Iran, at the time when the Shah was still ruling. His Awards and Decorations include: Legion of Merit, Hq. Dept. of Army; Air Medal/w 1 OLC; WWII Victory Medal, Imperial Iranian Forces Commendation. Feeney is survived by his wife Mildred, who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force in WWII.

GNIADK, JOSEPH F. January 2000 31248858 68th Sq. He served as Aerial Engineer on the Ted L. Weaver Crew that joined the Squadron in April 1944. Joseph flew his first mission with the C.D. Peretti crew on 19 May 1944. Two days later he returned to the Weaver crew. Unfortunately, the Weaver crew was shot down on 7 July 1944 when Joseph was on his 22nd mission. He became a POW along with five other crewmen. Two KIA and one evaded.

LaPORTE, CLARENCE B. Date – several years ago? 66th Sq. Sgt. LaPorte was a Nose Turret Gunner on the R.R. Van Valer crew that arrived from the 70 RCD on March 5, 1945. In the short time remaining before V.E. Day, he flew four or five missions with his crew.

MARSHALL (KUCUKAS) DONALD A. 0-2058214 Date Unknown Lt. Kucukas was a co-pilot on the H.W. Crump crew that arrived in the 68th Squadron on 4 February 1945. He flew all but two missions with this crew. His last mission was 20 April 1945. Lt. Kucukas later served as co-pilot to Robert Lehnhausen on their return flights back to the US on A/C # 44-421889 at the end of the war in Europe.

McGEE, ROBERT E. 15133325 20 December 2002 68th Sq. Robert served as Left Waist Gunner for the J. H. Dayball crew, but flew only three missions. They were: 5, 12 and 18 September. The reason for dropping from that crew is unknown, but it saved his life. Just one month later, the entire Dayball crew was shot down, all killed.

MOORE, JAMES A. 8 June 2002 He served with the 1646 Ordnance Company. James was a long time member of the 44th HMG and 44th BGVA.

HOWARD MILTON LUCAS 15 March 2003 21149 S/Sgt. Harold Lucas entered the AAC two days after Pearl Harbor, Dec. 9, 1941, and served to Sept. 16, 1945. As a Waist Gunner, his first mission was to Abbeville, France Dec. 12, 1942 with the Alfred Damron crew. On the Kiel mission, May 14, 1943 he flew with the lead crew, with Col. Leon J. Johnson as the Command Pilot. Ex-President of the 44th BGVA, **Edward (Mike) Mikoloski** was Navigator on that mission. Lucas served on the Charles Hughes crew on the Ploesti Raid, August 1, 1943. With a disabled A/C and injured crewmen, the pilot was forced to fly to Turkey, where all members became POWs. Lucas is survived by his wife Darlene and two sons.

FOLDED WINGS

HAROLD MAGGARD April 20, 2003 21175 506 Sq. S/Sgt. Maggard was a Waist Gunner on the George Beiber crew; his co-pilot was 44th BGVA President, Gerald Folsom. He flew his first mission July 7, 1944 to Bernberg, Germany; his last on November 2, 1944. The Bernberg mission was the only one in which the crew encountered the Luftwaffe; but flew all others into areas protected by flak. This crew was considered to be 'charmed,' having the unique status of flying 35 missions, with no member wounded or killed. Maggard returned to the US on the SS Washington. In civilian life, he was a shoe salesman and distributor. He died exactly one year after the death of his wife, Bonnie. The couple have one daughter, who is commemorating his life with a flower garden in the family yard.

PELLETIER, CAMILLO J. 0-743267 66th Sq. Co-pilot for the C. L. Armstrong crew. Lt. Pelletier joined the Armstrong crew, flew his first mission on 5 December 1943. They flew their first Group Lead on 24 January 1944. Shortly thereafter, this crew was placed on DS to train as a PFF crew. During this period they performed at least two missions, but not with the 44th B.G. and no records available. Upon their return to Shipdham, Lt. Pelletier flew most of his missions with other crews as co-pilot, with Capt. Hammer, McCormick, Yoder and Smith, but only one more with Capt. Armstrong. He flew his last mission on 29 June with the Joy Smith crew. His mission total was more than 25.

POLJANEC, RAYMOND L. 0-752935 1990s 506 Sq. Lt. Poljanec served as Bombardier on the R. H. Marx crew that was assigned on 26 February 1944, along with other crews. They flew their first mission on 16 March, with several more coming in quick succession. However, on 8 April 1944, the 44th BG suffered their worst loss of the war, losing 11 aircraft and crews. Lt. Poljanec and all of the Marx crew survived to become POWs. They were on their eighth mission.

RATKE, ROBERT W. 0-701434 3 3/31/03 68th and 66th Sq. Lt. Ratke served as Bombardier for the Q. L. Torell crew for 28 of his 30 missions. This crew arrived at the 68th Sq. on 3 May 1944 and flew 17 missions with them. On 3 July, they were transferred to the 66th Sq. to become a PFF Lead Crew. On 13 July they flew their first PFF Lead Crew, and continued on until 10 September. For Lt. Ratke, he then flew his last two missions with other crews, finishing up on 9 November 1944. He, then, was transferred to the 70th RCD on 20 November for return to the US.

SANNES, CARL 0-816716 18 October 2002 67th Sq. Lt. Sannes served as the Co-pilot for the N. D. Bartlett, whose crew was assigned to the 67th Sq. on 29 June 1944. Their first mission was dated 7 July and their last of 32 was dated 12 December 1944. During the latter portion of their tour, they were promoted to Lead Crew Status. On 19 December, this crew was transferred to the 70th RCD for return to the US.

SYRON, MARVIN I. 19143412 20/12/02 67th Sq. Sgt. Syron served as a Gunner on the J. W. Honmyhr crew. They were transferred into the Squadron in early May, 1944. All of his 34 missions were flown with this crew, most of them at the Waist Gun positions, Left or Right. On 27 June this crew made an emergency landing at Woodchurch, badly damaged.





FOLDED WINGS

WALKER, JOHN H. 34623622 7/10/02 66TH Sq. Sgt. Walker was the Aerial Engineer on the E. B. Hendricks crew. This crew departed the U.S. in July 1944, eventually assigned to the 66th Squadron. Their first mission as a crew occurred on 30 November, flying in a 67th Squadron aircraft. Three missions were completed in December, five in January, six in February, two in March, and eight in April. Among the aircraft flown were: *Jail Bait*, *Glory Bee*, *King Pin*, and *Big Time Operator*. Within a month after hostilities ended, this crew was preparing for and soon returned to the US.

WARTH, CHARLES J. 15117864 9/2002 506 Sq. Sgt. Warth served as a gunner for the H.W. Austin crew that was assigned to the 506th Squadron in June 1943. They caught up with the 44th BG in North Africa, and flew their first mission on 2 July. Sgt. Warth served as Tail Gunner or Hatch Gunner on all 10 missions. The H. W. Austin crew was shot down on 16 August 1943. Sgt. Warth was taken prisoner by the Italians, along with seven others from his crew. However, he along with many of the POWs managed to escape when their Italian guards abandoned their posts on 8 September before the Germans took over. Most of them were successful in evading recapture. When he returned to military control, he was returned to the US. He remained in service. Mr. Warth was instrumental in the establishment of the 44th HMG in 1980, closed it down in 1994.

WELBORN, FRANCIS C. 0-828847 ?/2002 506 Sq. Lt. Welborn served as co-pilot for the H. E. Still crew that joined the 506th Squadron in August 1944. He flew his first mission on 22 September, completed seven in total. Only one mission was not flown with the Still crew. On his last mission, dated 7 October 1944, their aircraft was shot down and he was taken prisoner, along with seven others from their crew. Two crewmen were KIA.

WHEATON, ALBERT T. 4 February 2003 67th Sq. Albert was the Aerial Engineer on the J. F. Hermann crew. This crew was #2387 as it left their training in Utah on 10 January 1944. They departed the US on 28 April, taking the Southern Route via South America, across to Africa and north to England. They arrived at Shipdham in June, 1944. They quickly completed their first mission on the historic D-Day, 6 June 44. Due to the demands for troop support, this crew continued to fly quite often, and with the summer weather cooperating. They completed their tour of duty on 11 September 1944, with a total of 32 missions. Many of these flights were in the aircraft, *Fearless Fosdick*.

The Military Heritage Database is constantly being updated. Look up your history, or that of your buddies. If a member of your family is a serious history buff, buy a disk. Individual stories and the Roll of Honor are there for the reading. The price is \$150; (\$50 goes to the Treasury of the 44th BGVA.) To order, write to 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association, P.O. Box 712287, Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287.

THE BIG PICTURE

“... the faces, the scenes and sounds, and some of the feelings come back, again and again. There is no human experience like war, especially great and extended war; a war that involves whole nations and whole families. World War II was a total war...”

Eric Sevareid

(Ed. Note: It was impossible for anybody to know what all was going on. Everybody just knew and did his own job)

When Tommie Holmes and his crew flew into Abbeville, America was new in the war. The first operational mission had taken place just one month previously. Most of Europe had come under the Nazi thumb, and the English had been battling for three years. They flew bombing raids at night into the occupied territory. There were no ‘Little Friends’ to accompany the raids, and the P-51 was not even on the drawing table. **And nobody knew -for sure- that we would win.**

It was years before historians could find the records to know when major decisions changed the direction of the war. When the **Wilmer Garrett** crew ditched in the Mediterranean Sea, July 2, 1943, half the crew was lost. Co-pilot **Robert Lehnhausen** chewed the rope on the life raft that was in danger of sinking, along with *Miss Virginia*. None of them could have known that simultaneously, Hitler was calling back his wolf packs. The Nazis had lost the Battle of the Atlantic, thanks to many Liberator pilots who patrolled the ocean, checking out the whereabouts of the subs, and contributing to their destruction.

While Mussolini was being overthrown and arrested, **Henry Lasco** in *Sad Sack II* was practicing low level flying in the African desert, along with **Roland Gentry** in *Forky II* and many others, in preparation for Ploesti. Seventeen days later, Generals Patton and Montgomery completed the conquest of Sicily.

When **John Testa** and **Robert Dubowsky** brought down *Lucky Strike* in Friesland, they had no idea that the Battle of the Bulge was over, and the Americans had won. (January 16, 1945.)

When **Louis DeBlasio** and **Bob Vance**, the two survivors of *Southern Comfort III*, and John Delaney, survivor of the P-47 crash, were trying to recover from their wounds which they received on the mission to Wessel, Germany, they certainly didn't know Patton's army would release them in ten days.

(Information source of WWII time line: TIME-LIFE BOOKS, *History of Second World War*, edited by Eric Sevareid.)



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