

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 13 Issue #5

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Summer 2013

Non Profit Veterans Association

EIN # 68-0351397

LEMON DROP



Lemon Drop arrived in Shipdham on 20 September 1942, and was assigned to the 68th Squadron. Lemon Drop's first mission was 14 November 1942. This plane flew 48 missions, with twenty different crews, **Reginald Phillips**, **Robert Norsen**, **Thomas Cramer**, **Walter Holmes**, **Wilmer Garrett**, **James O'Brien**, **Francis McDuff**, **Rowland Houston**, **George Jansen**, **Robert Lehnhausen**, **Ben Gildart**, **Harold Slaughter**, **Arthur Marcoullier**, **Shelby Irby**, **George Insley**, **Richard Comey**, **George Maynard**, **Paulino Ugarte**, **Arthur Anderson** and **Kent Miller**. **Leon Johnson** flew as Command Pilot on one mission. Its last mission was 15 February 1945.

Among its famous missions was to Ploesti, flown by **Reginald Phillips** on 1 August 1943.

Once Lemon Drop was sent for repairs at Bradwell Bay in Essix; Another time to Liverpool. It became an assembly in February 1944. In 1 June 1945 this war-weary aircraft failed inspections, and was salvaged.

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The 8-Ball Tails[©]

Official Journal of The
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association,
Inc.[©]

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REGINALD PHILLIPS CREW AND LEMON DROP 68TH SQUADRON



(Not Individually Named) **Reginald Phillips**, Pilot; **Theodore Scarlett**, Co-Pilot, **Carl Haworth**, Navigator; **Herbert Light**, Bombardier; **Donald Ingram**, Radio Operator; **Frank Cross**, Engineer, Top Turret Gunner; **Carl Cleland**, Waist Gunner; **Jack Banta**, Waist Gunner; **Henry Hayes, Jr.**, Tail Gunner.

The Reginald Phillips crew flew twenty of their twenty five missions in **Lemon Drop**. His first mission on 11 November 1943 was a Diversionary. Then on 5 July 1943 they joined the group that flew to Africa, engaging in missions to Sicily and Italy. On 1 August 1943 he flew the Ploesti mission, flying as Wingman to John Diehl, pilot of **Victory Ship** with **James Posey** as Command Pilot. This group went to Target Blue.

In discussing the mission later with **Bob Lehnhausen** he later compared that mission to Dantes' Inferno – a trip into Hell!

Lehnhausen remembers Phillips as a model soldier and a great pilot. He was a close friend of **Tommie Holmes**, who also flew the Ploesti mission. After he completed his missions, he was transferred to the 14th Combat Wing, working under General **Leon Johnson** as Assistant Operations Officer.

Phillips was so revered in his hometown of Watertown, Maine, they named the airport after him.

The devoted Crew Chief of **Lemon Drop** was **Charles C. Pigg**. He was proud to keep it going through its 48 missions, before it became an assembly plane.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The 2nd AD Association was dissolved last November and we are fast approaching Oct.1, the date we will do the same. Ruth Morse, our devoted Secretary and Editor, is planning one more and final issue of the 8 Ball Tails before that date.

I would urge all the next generation members to consider joining the Heritage League of the Second Air Division. They are an active organization with their own publication, The Heritage Herald, and have yearly reunions.

Theirs will be in Savannah in July and they are planning to have their 2014 reunion in Norwich.

Further, Chris Clark, one of our own, is a Vice President of the Heritage League and will be recruiting new members. (See article re that in the last issue of the 8 Ball Tails). Chris's uncle, Charles Frank Clark flew 10 missions with the 44th late in 1944 after doing a complete tour with the 489th Bomb Group.

For more information regarding joining the League, contact Chris Clark or Marybeth Dyer, League President.

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George Washburn

The *8 Ball Tails* is sad to report the passing of two notable members of the Second Air Division, Ray Strong and Ray Pytel. Ray Strong is the last surviving Founding Member of the Second Air Division. Ray Pytel was the Editor of the 2 AD Journal. Pytel had hoped to continue producing the Journal, but that cannot happen. Both will be missed. This information from Andrew Hawker, a member of the Memorial Trust Board of Governors for the Memorial Library in Norwich, England.

70 YEAR OLD FLIGHT JACKET RETURNS HOME

Although **James R. Perry**, pilot in the 67th Squadron, passed away in 1994, the memory of his lost flight jacket confounded his family. His daughter, Michele Tremblay, set out to find it. A Google search paid off. She found the jacket in Bristol, England, and paid a hefty price to get it back. But it is now in the family, and Michele will pass this valuable treasure on to later generations.

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



Like most of you guys I have hung up my flying goggles for the last time a while back and confine any flying that I do to the capable hands of the younger ladies and gentlemen of the commercial airline world. That as you well know, leaves a giant hole in one's life and takes quite a bit of getting used to, but fortunately, by moving to Cornwall, I now I have the opportunity to turn my hands to owning and sailing a small boat and seeing what Carrick Roads and its offshore waters have to offer.

The day to day involvement with the Aero Club at Shipdham was both challenging on occasions as well as great fun. However the creation of the 44th Bomb Group Museum was 100% enjoyment all the way. From my perspective working with Steve Adams and our curator Peter Steele was most enjoyable, as I got to learn a great deal from both. It also allowed me time to learn more about the 44th and the wider 2nd Air Division in a way that books (however well written) were just not able to do. It then of course put me in a position to meet you guys and then to go on and explain to the Museum visitors all about you and what happened for the brief time that Shipdham was your home. It has been a great journey and I have enjoyed it immensely.

Interestingly on UK TV last week I had the chance to see some raids over Ploesti taken from inside the attacking bombers as they swept in over the oil producing plant...but this time it was from the cockpit of a Russian plane, taken as the Red Army pushed inexorably towards Berlin and the final days of Hitler's Nazi regime.

This and other WWII programmes seem still as frequent on the TV, and I'm pleased to say they still seem to attract a really sensible number of viewers, and as such we should have material like this to educate the up-coming generations for years to come. As most politicians seem not to have learned many lessons from history, let us hope the younger generation and the average man in the street sees what you did and understands what it took from you and your generation to achieve the works that we have today.

I look forward with a mixture of both sadness my usual quota of pleasure, in putting pen to paper for the next couple of 'Letters From Shipdham'...Like flying, it has kinda become a pleasant habit, but until then, you guys all look after yourselves.

Cheers for now

Peter

History buffs looking for photos and memorabilia are David Webster at b24man@gmail.com and Richard Holliday at hapholiday@yahoo.com. Any piece of 44th BG history that can be saved will be there for future generations to understand that freedom is not free.

AN AMAZING TURN OF EVENTS AT SHIPDHAM AS REMEMBERED BY RODERICK RICE, CO-PILOT ON THE FOREST MUSGRAVE CREW

This was an operational mission to Brunswick this day, 8 May 1944. All aircraft returned safely, but the 66th Squadron lost an aircraft and two crewmen killed in an apparent unrelated incident.

According to **Will Lundy**, the 66th Squadron had a tremendous turnover in personnel, due to their being established a Pathfinder (PFF) Squadron. One of the new crews being transferred into the 66th was a PFF aircraft #41-28795 and crew from the 466th Bomb Group. On this date, this crew was performing a practice flight at 23,000 feet, while on their way to Shipdham with a practice crew. They did this to gain experience, and were making a practice run using their PFF equipment in the vicinity of Great Yarmouth.

The Co-Pilot, Lt. Rice, described the incident: we flew that day with a skeleton crew that had no gunners. Our purpose was to test the new Pathfinder equipment, two Navigators and two Bombardiers. It was near noon, and we had completed our assigned exercise and were ready to descend and return to the base, but were advised to hold off until the planes returning from that day's assignment were safely on the ground. We were in a "hold" situation at an altitude near 20,000 feet on auto-pilot. Suddenly two sharp thuds jarred the plane and knocked it into a steep right wing down attitude. The auto-pilot was ineffective, so it was disengaged with the thought that maybe it was damage to the auto-pilot that caused this sudden disruption. It required extreme effort by both pilots to bring that wing up again. Then it went into a steep dive. Again it took extreme effort

to correct it, but it didn't stop there. The nose kept rising to an acute climb attitude. Manipulation of throttles and trim tabs were of no consequence. It was at that moment that the decision was made: "THIS EQUIPMENT IS COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL. WE STILL HAVE A GOOD MARGIN OF ALTITUDE. WE'D BETTER EVACUATE WHILE WE CAN".

Permar and Ross were in the nose section, and escaped via the nose wheel hatch. Russell, Branch and Dovey were on the flight deck, and went out the bomb bay, as of course did the two pilots. It is assumed that Cargill was at or near his station, which was located in the waist section of this Pathfinder equipment. He was the only one who did not get away, and no one knows why. The plane had quickly dropped off into a spin. He may have been hit, for all anyone knows. Musgrave got out, but his parachute rip cord was still in place. Again, no one knows why.

The plane went down in a spin and burned. Very few minutes elapsed between the time of the attack and the plane's impact with the ground. No one reported having seen or heard anything other the two explosions, so there was no eye-witness among the surviving occupants of the plane, but is my firm belief that we were victim of an invading aircraft that had shadowed the homb group's formation that was returning from the bombing mission, and had spotted an easy target.

Studies made near the crash site, shows that this aircraft, in fact, was shot down. Official records show they found five 20-mm holes in the plane, which was burned after crossing, so not much

**AN AMAZING TURN OF EVENTS AT SHIPDHAM
AS REMEMBERED BY RODERICK RICE, CO-PILOT
ON THE FOREST MUSGRAVE CREW**

CONTINUED

was left for further examination.

The Crew: **Forest Musgrave**, Pilot – KIA; **Roderick Rice**, Co-Pilot – Parachuted; **Weldon Branch**, Navigator – Parachuted; **Arnold Dovey** – Parachuted, Injured Spine, Hospitalized;

Donald Permar, Bombardier – Parachuted; **Arthur Ross**, Bombardier – Parachuted; **George Russell**, Engineer – Parachuted; **Lawrence Cargill**, Radio Operator – KIA.

Losses: Two dead, one injured, two unhurt.

CHRIS CLARK AND THE HERITAGE LEAGUE

Chris Clark, one of the great researchers of the 44th BG, is still recruiting second and third generations to join the Heritage League, an outgrowth of the 2nd Air Division. The 2 AD was the group that encompassed many bomber groups, including the 44th BG. Their most notable accomplishment was the establishment of a Memorial Library in Norwich, England. That has an unbelievable amount of information about America, including the 44th BG's contribution to the battle to defeat the Nazi regime. They have Arlo Bartsch's CD, listing so much information about the combat missions flown by each Squadron of the 44th and each individual participant. English children know much about America – it's history, geography, culture and government (more than American children know about England, or about the war.)

When the Library held its grand opening, seventeen busloads of

American attended. We had a police escort, went the wrong way on one way streets, ignored street signs and got everyone to the Library in time for a beautiful ceremony. Along the way, horns blew; people stood outside their doors, waving towels to the passing buses; and shouting kind messages.

The League is trying to maintain that close relationship. They are holding their Reunion in Savannah, July 22-26, alongside of the 8th Air Force Reunion. In 2014 they plan a Reunion in England. This is a very vibrant group. You would enjoy sharing their efforts to preserve the history and legacy of our WWII veterans.

In addition to their customary reports, the League will also carry Folded Wings of every group. So the history of 44th BG members who pass on will continue to be made known.

You can contact Chris Clark at clarkhistory@aol.com.

OTHER LAWS OF MURPHY

A FINE IS A TAX FOR DOING WRONG. A TAX IS A FINE FOR DOING WELL.

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE, EXCEPT FROM A VENDING MACHINE.

IT IS SAID THAT IF YOU LINE UP ALL THE CARS IN THE WORLD END-TO-END, SOMEONE FROM CALIFORNIA WOULD BE STUPID ENOUGH TO TRY AND PASS THEM ALL.

GERMAN RESEARCHER UNEARTH'S CRASHED B-24'S



Enrico-Rene Schwartz found some crashed B-24's, some still holding human remains. He appealed to Chris Clark, to help him find the US Airmen who were flying in those planes. They did the research in the National Archives, where Clark regularly does research for different groups.

Pictured here are: (L-R) Schwartz and Clark holding picture badges, saying "Missing Air Crew Research Team".

Photo by Brian Mahoney

**IT'S NOT WHAT YOU GATHER, BUT WHAT YOU SCATTER
THAT DETERMINES WHAT KIND OF LIFE YOU HAVE LIVED.**

HOWARD HENRY'S (PETE) FAVORITE MEMORY

The one mission that sticks in my memory above all others was #19 on 18 September 1944 to Best, Holland. We were carrying supplies for airborne troops that had landed there 17 September 1944. It was a most wonderful mission, and none of us would have missed it for the world. We went into target on top of trees, Dutch civilians waving like mad as we went past; waving Dutch flags, British flags and anything they could find. Cattle were running wild all over the place. The whole western end of Holland for 50 miles inland had been flooded by the Nazi. We pulled up to 500 feet over the target area, and parachuted supplies (ammo, food, medicine) to the troops, then back down to deck again. We saw no opposition, but discovered a .30 cal. hole in the leading edge of the wing on return to Shipdham. It cut the electric line to #1 and #2 manifold pressure and put a hole in the gas tank. Some others had it worse, engines, hydraulics, etc. shot out. One ship ditched in the North Sea. I saw 3 men getting out of it.

We were flying with the 66th Squadron as Deputy Lead of the 3rd Squadron in **HENRY**. The mission lasted 5 1/4 hours.

Ed. Note: Could it be that this mission was so memorable, as being welcomed in a country is a rare occasion?

*Losses from this mission include the loss of #42-50596, 68th Squadron, piloted by **Gus Konstand**. Six members of this crew were KIA; three others survived the ditching, but were picked up by the Germans and became POW.*

*The 506 Squadron, flying in Bar-V, piloted by **Richard Habedank** had two members seriously injured by small ammo fire, but all survived.*

CHARLES RUNYUN'S UNEXPECTED FIND



Charles Runyun searches crash sites for pieces of history that he can place in his unique museum, located in Lebanon, Tennessee. Recently he received a rare picture of the crashed plane, *Victory Ship*, 68th Squadron. It went down 21 January 1944. The Co-Pilot, Lt. Rice, described the incident: we flew that day with a skeleton crew that had no gunners. Our purpose was to test the new Pathfinder equipment, two Navigators and two Bombardiers. The mission was to Escalles Sur Buchy; the target was the V-1 sites. The purpose was to end the unmanned attacks that were striking London and other important locations in England. *Victory Ship*, piloted by **Alfred Starring** was one of six planes lost on that mission.

The French have started a museum in that area, honoring the French Underground who aided Allied airmen to escape the Nazis and return to England. The *Musee de Resistance* is located at Grateneoix, which is near the crash site of the **Frank Sobatka** crew.

Anyone with significant pictures or artifacts of the 44th BG can offer them to the Runyun Museum. His e-mail address is: Wrememberd@aol.com. Among the historic treasures in Charles Runyun's museum is a Doolittle data plate from Plane 8 of the Doolittle Raiders. The story was featured in *Aviation* magazine, explaining that after the surprise attack on Tokyo the plane ultimately flew to Siberia. 50 years later, a friend of Runyun's found the severed cockpit section in a disused part of a Russian airport. It had been dismantled, run over by a tracked vehicle – probably a tank – and all that was left was an unnoticed data plate. It made its way into the Runyun Museum.

After the article came out, to Runyun's surprise, he and his wife were invited to attend the last Reunion of the Doolittle Raiders.

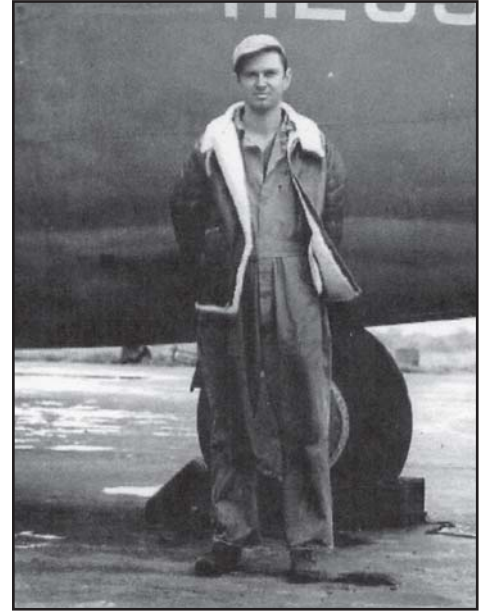
SOME OF THE CREWS THAT WON THE WAR



BEIBER CREW

Back Row L-R: **Paul Boensch**, Bombardier; **Willis Edgecomb**, Navigator; **Gerald Folsom**, Co-Pilot; **George Beiber**, Pilot.

Front Row L-R: **Nathan Woodruff**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; **Carl Miller**, Waist Gunner; **Perry Morse**, Tail Gunner; **Harold Maggart**, Waist Gunner; **William Regham**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Willie Uvanni**, Radio Operator.



CREW CHIEF

The Beiber Crew flew most of their missions on the *Consolidated Mess*, but cannot remember the name of their Crew Chief. Does anybody know the gentleman's name?



TOM MCKENNA CREW

Front L-R: **Gerald Gross**, Navigator/Bombardier; **Russell Dowell**, Co-Pilot; **Tom McKenna**, Pilot.

Rear L-R: **Louis Spektor**, Tail Gunner; **Mike Allen**, Radio Operator/Gunner; **Jacques Jacobson**, Left Waist Gunner; **James Johnson**, Armament Gunner; **William Hornberger**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; **Glen Allen**, Right Waist Gunner.



KOMASINSKI CREW

Front L-R: **Bernard J. Komasinski**, Pilot; **Scott Gippert**, Co-Pilot; **Edgar W. Michaels**, Navigator; **Charles Lane**, Bombardier.

Back Row: **Stanley J. Hulewicz**, Tail Gunner; **Frank LaFazia**, Ball Turret; **John H. McKee**, Radio Operator; **Nelson E. Brott**, Left Waist Gunner; **Walter E. Jacob**, Right Waist Gunner; **Frank N. Schaeffer**, Flight Engineer & Top Turret Gunner.



ROBERT VAN VALER CREW

Crew not individually identified: **Robert Van Valer**, Pilot; **Warren Carmony**, Co-Pilot; **Franklin Grady**, Navigator; **Clarence LaPorte**, Nose Gunner, Toggler; **Earl Smith**, Radio Operator; **Michael Dono**, Engineer, Top Turret Gunner; **Samuel Hopkinson**, Right Waist Gunner; **Robert Gustafson**, Left Waist Gunner; **Victor Cusson**, Tail Gunner.

B/GENERAL ROBERT CARDENAS HONORED

B/General Cardenas, Pilot, 506 Squadron, is being honored in San Diego for his many efforts to help needy veterans and for his work in creation of a burial site for veterans at the Miramar National Cemetery. Cardenas is also credited for joining other veterans in creation of the monument to the B-24, with the plane pointing to the original site of the Consolidated Plant, creator of this valuable aircraft.

As an escapee from Switzerland where he was interned after his plane went down in Lake Constance, Cardenas returned to the states and became a test pilot for Wright Paterson air base. He flew the B-29 that carried Chuck Yeager into space, served in the Vietnam War,

then returned home to begin humanitarian work in San Diego.

He is being honored in having a six foot statue of himself to be placed in the National Cemetery. The artist will depict his bust as a WWII flyer, the lower part of the statue will depict his later activities. He needed to see a flight jacket, to know how to realistically create the statue. Richard Halliday sent him photographs; then David Webster sent photos plus lending him a flight jacket which has been part of his museum collection.

After WWII, veterans made many great contributions to this country. It is wonderful to see one of them being so highly honored.

JOHN RENZI, BOMBARDIER ON THE LESTER W. HUNDELT CREW-67TH SQUADRON REMEMBERS THIS:

We were taking off to go on a mission to Kiel, Germany with a load of 12-500 pound bombs. When the time came to retract the landing gear, it would not come down, no matter how hard the pilot tried. As we still had the pins in the bombs, we decided to retain the bombs and come back with them, as we weren't very far from the base.

We landed OK with the landing gear still down, but our pilot said "No Brakes!" The plane went past the runway, through a fence, jumped a ditch, skidding onto its belly and finally stopped.

As we were about two fields away from our base, by the time the meat wagon and

fire engine arrived, we were all out of the plane, *Hag, Darell Hagenah*) our Navigator and I broke a record, running and diving into a ditch.

There was just a small fire, and two of the crew were taken for observation and released. The rest of us were OK.

After lunch, what was left of our crew was informed that we were to fly Deputy Lead on a mission to the Pas de Calais area. This was a composite squadron. We also had to replace the two gunners who were taken to the hospital.

We flew the mission which was a milk run, and in fact, got back before the group returned from the mission to Kiel.

SONG OF THE LIBERATOR

To the fear-beset eyes of the tyrant, I come as an angel of death-
For what he has builded I ruin, and his legions are killed by my breath.
And from strive there arose benediction, and Love has come out of the war,
And when men see me fly through the heavens, they thank God for the B-24.

Unknown Poet

A DAY TO REMEMBER BY WILLIAM MCCONNAUGHY GUNNER, 506 SQUADRON

Being a gunner on a crew flying B-24 bombers out of England in World War II was a lark for a twenty-three year old young man, who was positive nothing could happen to him. Actually, it was the "Life of Riley" for a country boy from Kansas.

Then one morning's dreams of the good life was shattered by the barrack's lights being turned on, and the now familiar raspy voice of the first sergeant yelling, "All right you jokers, up and at it." Breakfast at 0200 and briefing at 0300.

The crew had talked about the next mission being our thirteenth, but things were going well, and we would be over half done with our tour of duty, which was twenty five missions.

After an unusually good breakfast, we entered the briefing room to a 'standing room only' crowd. The members of the crew I was with looked at each other. The feeling was different today; we had been routed out of our sack earlier than usual, had a better than normal breakfast, and now had found the briefing room packed. An air of apprehension and tension seemed to fill the room as the curtain was pulled back, revealing our target and flight plan, and the room seemed to come to life, as it dawned on each of us that our target for this day was the marshaling yards in the heart of Berlin. They explained this would be the maximum effort mission with all available bombers and crews scheduled to participate, and the mission would be coordinated with the fifteenth Air Force flying out of Italy.

Our crew, being veterans of missions over the Ruhr valley and synthetic rubber plants in Poland, paid very little attention to information estimating the number of anti-aircraft guns in the vicinity of Berlin,

and that the magnitude of fighter plane opposition we would probably encounter when the Germans realized our target was Berlin. The briefing room was extremely quiet at this early morning hour, as representatives of each faith said a short prayer for the crews involved in this mission.

Our entire crew was in excellent spirits, and we all joked about how this would be a hell of a good time to abort, a term used when a crew returned to the base before being committed to a mission due to real or sometimes imagined malfunction of the plane or equipment.

Our trip to Berlin was uneventful due mostly to a good cloud cover, and the isolated pockets of anti-aircraft fire were far off the mark.

About forty or fifty miles out of Berlin, our cloud cover completely dissipated, and we could see a haze hanging over Berlin. Our flight plan routed us southeast to a point approximately twenty miles south of Berlin and then due north across the city.

As we turned north and quickly approached our target, the whole damn sky, almost as far as the eye could see, was a blazing inferno created by the hundreds of anti-aircraft guns installed there to protect the capital city of Germany. Off to each side, German spotter planes were flying at our exact altitude and relaying this information to the gun batteries below to increase their efficiency for their devastating barrage on our bombers. Although we desperately tried to ignore it, we could see bombers ahead of us falling out of formation, some blowing up, and an ever increasing number of parachutes floating over the city as crews abandoned their crippled planes.

Even at this time, I believe the entire crew thought we lived a charmed life and were going to make it, but seconds before we were to drop our bombs, an anti-aircraft shell exploded in the vicinity of our left outboard engine. We dropped out of formation like a ton of bricks, and continued to lose altitude until we could jettison our bomb load. With the bombs gone, we were able to stabilize our position, and were soon over the outskirts of Berlin. A quick check of the plane by the pilot revealed our condition was not critical, and our navigator estimated we could be in Sweden in approximately thirty-five minutes.

This information was greeted with cheers from members of the crew, and each of us started dreaming about sweating out the rest of the war in a neutral country, surrounded by those beautiful blond, buxom Swedish girls.

My pleasant thoughts were quickly forgotten when I saw four ME 109's small German fighter planes, closing rapidly from the rear. This fighter had a twenty mm. cannon in the nose, and if my memory serves me right, three thirty caliber machine guns in each wing. As the first two fighter planes made their pass at our bomber, their cannons made gaping holes in our left rear stabilizer and the left wing. As the third plane made his pass, I was hypnotized when thirty caliber bullets started penetrating the fuselage of our plane on top and at the rear of the bomber. Like a painter drawing a line, the holes came directly toward my turret. In what seemed like eternity, thirty caliber bullets came crashing through my plastic bubble. Although slightly dazed from this experience, I remembered something had hit me in the neck, and I was

convinced it was a thirty caliber bullet. I immediately had the sensation of blood running down my neck and a very sticky feeling in my flight suit. By instinct, I followed the fourth fighter through his pass and about burned out my gun barrels, trying to get revenge. He came right in on top of us, and just before he turned over to go down and away from us, he raised his hand and waved. Although he was long gone, I remember waving back at him. I guess in a way, we were 'comrades in arms'.

Surveying the damage from my vantage point, I could see that the entire left stabilizer was gone and approximately one-third of the left wing. It seemed like there were thousands of holes made by the machine gun bullets.

Our plane at this time was completely out of control, and I'm sure the pilot was far too busy to inform the crew exactly what we could expect. In the confusion, I forgot I had a thirty caliber machine gun bullet through my neck and probably was bleeding to death. Remembering this, I was positive I was going to die and became hysterical. I can remember hollering incoherently over the phone's intercom system, but just as quickly I became calm and at peace with the world. I thought about my mom and prayed she could 'hang in there' when notified by the War Department that I was missing in action. I've thought about this short interlude in my life many times, and I'm positive most people, left to their own means, can and will die with self respect and dignity.

I was brought back to reality when the pilot announced over the intercom, he could not handle the plane, and we should parachute out as soon as possible. I immediately crawled out of my turret and

desperately started looking for my parachute that I had so nonchalantly tossed on the flight deck earlier that morning. Crawling around on my knees, I finally found it under some other paraphernalia. As I stood up and started to unbutton my heated jacket to snap on my chute, I noticed several fragments of plastic about the size of a dime fall out on the floor. As I continued to unbutton my jacket, I realized my flight suit was soaking wet. It slowly dawned on me I had found my thirty caliber and the blood.

During this period I was trying to remember the several classes I was required to attend on the art of parachute jumping. The things that came to mind were: if you want to try to bail out, delay opening your chute as long as possible; land facing downward; bury your chute; and stay out of small wooded areas.

Thinking I might be considered somewhat of a hero if I walked out of the center of Germany, I quickly made plans for a quick descent to the enemy territory below. Knowing my reflex action might cause me to open my chute as soon as I cleared the plane, I decided to hold my right hand which would pull the rip cord with my left hand, mentioning to it not to let go until I was ready. Crawling over to the bomb bay, I jumped out, putting my plan into action. The free fall was a fascinating experience but suddenly I was in a small low-flying cloud, and could not see the ground. I immediately decided to open my chute, but nothing happened. With my heart skipping beats, I looked down and there was my left hand desperately trying to keep my right hand from pulling the rip cord. After a short stern conversation with my left hand, it let go with ample time for my chute to open

for the short ride to the earth. There was a brisk wind blowing, and like the man said not to do, I landed on the ground going backwards. The back of my head hit the ground, and the next thing I remember was my chute dragging me across a tidy, well-kept German potato field. I quickly knocked the chute down, rolled it up, dug a hole and buried it.

With all of this activity, I had completely forgotten about the rest of the crew..... Looking up, I quickly counted eight chutes which accounted for all of the crewmen. They were all in the same general area and still about a mile up. For the first time, I realized my desire to be a hero had left me very much alone in the middle of, to say the least, a very hostile country.

Breaking another rule, I headed on a dead run for a relatively small wooded area. My flight carried me approximately fifty feet inside these woods where I stopped, sat down beside a large tree, and became violently sick in my stomach. I had not been there long when I heard the roar of airplane motors, followed by limbs being crushed off trees and then a shower of airplane parts and tree limbs. Looking up, directly over my head, and not over thirty feet high, a four engine bomber was crashing through the trees and finally coming to rest, less than a quarter of a mile in front of me. It was impossible to believe this was the plane I had so willingly left what seemed like only minutes ago. Unable to move,

I sat there as the plane burst into flames and fifty caliber machine gun bullets began to explode. The first large explosion, probably a gas tank, jarred me back to actuality. I jumped and ran out of the woods into the potato field. I noticed a small green spot, probably between and

**A DAY TO REMEMBER BY WILLIAM MCCONNAUGHY
GUNNER, 506 SQUADRON**

CONTINUED

quarter and a half mile away. Realizing anything would be better than an open field, I headed full speed for this spot. This green spot turned out to be far better than I dreamed of; because it was a hole, perhaps thirty feet in diameter, about eight feet deep, a small pond of water in the middle and small trees and shrubs around the entire inside bank. I ran down the bank, emptied my pockets and eased my body into the water up to my arm pits. My head and shoulders were well covered by a small tree and shrubs. Here I felt relatively safe and was able to take a much needed rest. Possibly thirty minutes later, I started to hear people talking, the sound of horse-drawn carts, and an occasional motor vehicle. As this activity continued to accelerate my curiosity overcame my better judgment, and I crawled up the bank of my haven to peek over and witnessed an almost constant stream of people walking, riding bikes, horse driven carts and scattered motor trucks making their way to the wrecked plane, which would be used in the German war effort. I soon became tired of watching this procession and eased myself back down to my safe hiding place.

About dusk, the noise of moving people and equipment had almost completely stopped. I decided to have one more look before dark. I worked my way up the bank and peered over it into the eyes of an elderly man with a rifle, apparently standing guard about twenty-

five feet from my sanctuary. I assumed he had seen my head move as I raised it over the bank. After what seemed like an eon, he slowly turned away and I quickly returned to my refuge. It was soon dark, and I quickly fell asleep, exhausted from "A Day to Remember".

Ed. Note: Amazingly, McConnaughay ended his story at this point, even though much more took place. Will Lundy completed the story.

The mission had been to Berlin. As the pilot, **Norman Howe** approached the target, they came under fire by anti-aircraft guns. A German spotter plane flew alongside the formation, radioing their altitude to the anti-aircraft gunners below. A shell exploded under #1 engine, just as they were ready to drop the bombs. They dropped them, then started to head toward Sweden when two 109s attacked, hitting the fuselage and left rear stabilizer and left wing. A third attack crashed bullets into the top turret through the plastic bubble.

The plane was completely out of control. McConnaughay and the rest of the crew bailed out. That's when 'A Day to Remember' took place. He was captured 10 or 12 days later, trying to hike to Sweden. Along with the other crewmen, was sent to Stalag 1.

Two planes were lost on that raid: **Flak Magnet** – 68th Squadron and **E-Bar** - 506 Squadron.

SENTENCES FINISHED BY KIDS

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE THERE'S.....POLLUTION.

LAUGH AND THE WHOLE WORLD LAUGHS WITH YOU.

CRY AND YOU.....HAVE TO BLOW YOUR NOSE.

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED.....GET NEW BATTERIES.

A PENNY SAVED IS.....NOT MUCH.

GENERAL LEON JOHNSON HONORED AT KEESLER AFB, MS

CMSgt. Craig M. Kirwin, Enlisted Functional Manager in the Weather Operations Division sent photos of the newest exhibits in the weather schoolhouse at Keesler AFB in Mississippi. Before Leon Johnson came to Shipdham, he was stationed at Keesler, and was director of many operations from that base.

From time to time, Kirwin works up historical displays, such as the Johnson display, and places them in the weather schoolhouse at Keesler. He is also supplying materials to Ft. Hood. He sent vintage equipment to Keesler, and a WWII Weather Office's uniform jacket and also WWII enlisted weather jacket.



Leon Johnson and another officer.



SMSgt. David Strickland holding display picture.

According to Kirwin, the photo on display was made on D-Day, after returning from his flight into Normandy. According to the database, General Johnson led the group that flew to Colleville/St. Laurent.

The 3rd Weather Squadron (3WS) at Fort Hood has an entire room dedicated to their heritage and to General Johnson.

According to CMSgt. Kirwin, the displays are to reach young airman at an early age, and get them interested in the history of these great bases, and their potential to make contributions in their careers.

ATTENTION: FAMILIES OF VETERANS OF PLOESTI RAID

A reunion commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the low level Ploesti mission of 1 August 1943 will be held at the United States National Museum of the Air Force in Dayton, Ohio. Reunion dates are 30 July through 1 August. Reunion headquarters will be the Hope Hotel, adjacent to Wright Paterson Air Force Base. Events will be held at the hotel and the AF Museum. Ploesti vets and their families are welcome. Families of deceased Ploesti vets are welcome. For reunion details, contact Blain Duxbury. bdux@aol.com 317-697-9584.

Ed. Note: As an attendee at the 60th Anniversary of Ploesti, I can truthfully say, this was the best organized reunion I had ever attended. Their pictorial displays were outstanding, and the comraderie among the guests was very special. You need not be a veteran or family of a veteran to be welcomed to this event. An honest interest in the activities of the 44th BG is your only requirement.

**WARREN MCPHERSON, GUNNER
JAMES N. WILLIAMS CREW, 66TH SQ.
REMEMBERS HIS 27TH MISSION MISSION
FROM HIS BOOK, THE WILD BLUE YONDER**

The mission was to Hanau-Langendiebach, Germany. The newspaper headline shouted, "Terrific Flak Costs 56 Heavies," and a sub-heading added, "30 Fighters Also Lost in Big Oil Blow". Then the article said, "The Germans yesterday met one of the heaviest air blows of the war against their fast-dwindling oil production with a furious barrage of anti-aircraft fire that knocked out of the air 56 of the attacking U.S. Heavy bombers and 30 fighters. More than 1,250 B-17s and B-24s were on the raid.

This was our proud day. We led the 392nd Bomb Group and on down to the entire Eighty Air Force. In addition to our crew we had dignitaries on board with us. We took off at the briefed time and flew to the 392nd base and circled. We then received word to set everything up one hour and to cruise for that time. There was trouble with the VHF set due to no fault of ours. We formed our bunch, then the Division and headed out to sea.

We went in behind our lines and into the target area to bomb through clouds. We were carrying 100 pound bombs, two M-17 bombs, and two smoke bombs. The left two Bombay doors would not fully open so Len went out on the catwalk without parachute or oxygen to open them. He almost fell out of the bomb bay. That would have been a fall of almost five miles. Fortunately, he got back to the safety of his oxygen mask. The bomb bays were open only halfway, so we toggled our bombs through them. To our amazement, the doors then blew back in place. But then the two right bomb bay doors would not close. Later, at a lower temperature, they closed after going some

time with them open.

We made a left turn, and where we had been, the sky was full of black smoke from the terrific flak. In it there was a Lib going down in a hideous ball of orange flames, tearing apart as it fell. We saw no parachutes come out of it. We certainly had more than our share of trouble today. We flew the same airplane as on our 11th mission, now called 'D'. The mission took 7 hours, 30 minutes, and it was minus 43 degrees in the violent blue yonder today!

Warren McPherson became a minister after the war. He calls the next event as "The Shortest Sermon."

After having been special guests at dreaded and deadly fireworks displays and, after having too many ring side seats, watching fellow bombers nose over and dive into the ground or disintegrate in a ball of fire before our eyes, we were all close to what was called "flak happy."

Every day – or I should say every night – nightmares got more intense and more realistic. Our bunks were lined vertically from the hut wall, and since I was on the top bunk, the hut roof curved in toward me. One night I dreamed we were going down in flames. It was terrifyingly real. I woke up at the foot of my bunk clawing at the wall - trying to find a way out.

The other crew members were always inviting me to go drink with them or do something else. I realized it was their way of letting me know they accepted me, and I appreciated it. One afternoon I came into the hut, tired and on edge. Jack, my friend from one of the other crews said, "Hey Mac, let's go..." and he said something that hit me wrong. I

**WARREN MCPHERSON, GUNNER
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REMEMBERS HIS 27TH MISSION MISSION
FROM HIS BOOK, THE WILD BLUE YONDER**

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responded, "Oh blankety blank!" Those words weren't in my vocabulary, and the guys had not heard me use them

A poker game was underway on one of the bunks. Hal was astride the bunk with his back to me. The card game came to a halt! Hal raised up, swung his leg over the bunk, and pivoted right into my face. He said, "Mac, I don't ever want to hear you say that again!" Then he swung back astride the bunk and resumed the

game where he left off. That was the shortest one-sentence sermon I ever heard. Those men knew my life, and they didn't want me to change.

Although other bomb groups had heavy losses on this mission, but according to Will Lundy, the Forty fourth had members who sustained injuries, all made it back to Shipdham and the injured were hospitalized.

**THE CONTINUING SAGA OF ESCAPEE
RICHARD A. MAYHEW**

I left Pamiers about noon and continued toward the mountains along this same road. I walked the rest of the day. After dark, I came to a town called Faix. I was really cold and tired and started looking for a place to hole up. I came to a building, which I later found out, was a school house. The door was unlocked, so I went in, saw a staircase and crawled up. I struck a match and saw it was a loft with straw on the floor, so I pulled straw over me and went to sleep.

Although it was still pitch dark, I assume it was toward morning. I awakened to hear footsteps some place in the building. I got to my feet, opened the door a crack and listened. I peered out the door with one eye and saw the light of a candle coming down the hall. My heart was pounding so loud, I couldn't hear anything, and I thought, "Oh God. I'm caught." I stepped back and the door opened. There was a woman; she screamed and I screamed. She ran back down the hall, and I ran down the stairs and out of the building as fast as I could. I had

noticed some potatoes on the floor with the straw, and I imagine she was coming to get some to fix for breakfast.

By this time the sun is rising, and I felt that I should get out of this village, so I left the road and followed a trail cutting through the fields back south toward the mountains. About two hours later I met a man coming down the trail. I could see he had a military tunic, and once again my heart started to pound, but since there was no place to run or hide, I knew I would have to face him. When we met I once again explained that I was an American flyer. He motioned me to follow, and after about 15 steps, we sat down in a niche in a stone fence at the edge of the field. As we sat down, he reached in his pack and gave me some cheese and wine. He also gave me some tobacco; I hadn't had any cigarettes or smokes since I left Paris, so as you can imagine, they looked good to me. As we talked, he kept impressing upon me to be alert. "Regards, regards," he kept saying,

RICHARD A. MAYHEW

which I knew meant “watch, and keep your eyes open.” I knew from what he was saying, that I would run into people further up the mountain. He gave me some cheese and tobacco, and I started on up the trail, but I was apprehensive. I didn’t know if I would run into somebody to help me or the enemy. It was still early in the morning as I came to the top of a ridge. I stopped to survey and saw a plume of smoke coming up further on. I thought it looked like a campfire, so I kept my eye on it as I moved cautiously down the trail. About ten minutes later, a man suddenly stepped out from behind a tree and confronted me. Frantically, I again explained, “American, American.” He motioned me to follow, and after about 15 yards he left the trail and started down the hill. I followed. We passed through dense thicket and came to a small opening, with a rock outcropping on the north. I could see that the smoke had originated there. He went on ahead, and in low tones said something that I knew was his way of identifying himself. An answer came back, and we then moved forward, and I saw the mouth of a cave with a man standing in front of it. As we got closer, other men came out and greeted the man I was following. He explained to the others that I was an American flyer, and we went on into the cave. Counting the man I was with, there were eight men living there. The man who brought me in told me his name was “Ponga” and introduced me to the others. After introductions, we sat down around the fire. They asked me if I had tobacco; I took out what I had, and we all rolled a cigarette. They had a pot of potatoes cooking, and we ate them while they all threw questions at me. After eating, they made me stand while they searched me. Finding my escape map and compass, they were satisfied I was telling the truth.

One Frenchman was curious as to why I didn’t have a gun. I assured him I had never had one on this mission. We talked as best we could, and I found out they were a group of Partisans who were living in the Pyrenees foothills, or the Machee carrying on sabotage and guerrilla warfare. They called themselves a French Resistance group. There were three Spaniards, five Frenchmen, and I made the only American. I spent about nine weeks with this group. During that time I went along with them on their forays in the surrounding areas. They called themselves Camp Jean Robert, after the group leader. During the first few days I learned the names of the others. I can’t remember them all. We used first names only: Ponga, Hasea, Joseph, Coze, Robert, Maurice. The Spaniards were refugees from the Spanish Civil War.

On about the third day I was there, Ponga and I left early with one morning with jugs to get water from the river down in the valley. After we had filled our jugs, Ponga leaned toward me and sniffed, which was a not too subtle hint that I stunk. We both stripped and plunged into the icy water. He had soap, and I washed myself faster than I ever have, before or since. We crawled out into three feet of snow on the bank, got into our clothes fast and hurried up the mountain again. Despite the discomfort from the cold, I felt great. We carried water every day, and the men took turns doing it, but for the next week or so, they sent me along with whoever was doing it that day. Finally, after some discussion, they decided I could take my turn alone. On my first day alone, Ponga gave me a pistol to carry along. I had filled the bottles and about half way back up the hill, I saw a wild sow with four or five piglets following. I shot the last piglet and dragged it back to the cave. When the group saw me walk in with the pig in my arms they hooped and danced around. We had eaten nothing

but potatoes for days and days, and this was "meat on the table".

Two of the men started skinning and cleaning the pig, and Joseph asked me if I was careful, was I sure the shot wasn't heard. I answered him, I was as careful as possible, and as sure under the circumstances as I could be. They finished dressing out the pig, then carefully cut off the head and put in a pot of water to boil. I didn't realize until later, that the head was the choice portion, and that the choice portion always went to the hunter who had shot it. They reverently told me that the head was mine, complete with ears, eyes, tongue, snout, brains and anything else within the skull. Needless to say, I wasn't exactly looking forward to it, and would have much preferred a nice piece of leg meat, but I was determined I would eat it and act like I relished every mouthful. When it was done, they split the head and laid it before me, brains and eyeballs oozing out all over. With a smile on my face, I dug in and forced it all down. Those Frenchmen weren't going to say an American couldn't swallow it. To this day, I'm not sure they really did prefer the head, or whether they wanted to see if I could take it.

The next night we were to go to the village of Fiox to get supplies. I was asked to go along, and I knew then that I was accepted in the group, and that they trusted me.

At that time the German Occupation Army was rationing the food out to the French citizens. The flour at that time was laced with sawdust, and the baker was allotted only enough flour, so each family would get two loaves a week. However, he would take a small portion of dough from each loaf and make extra loaves, which he hid for the Partisans. The citizens of Fiox fed our particular group. They would gather two or three potatoes from each family, and

eggs were probably gathered the same way.

We left the cave in the afternoon, and it was dark when we got to the village. We went directly to the barber's home where the party split up in groups to go out and gather supplies. When they returned, we found we had a full sack of potatoes, three dozen eggs, eight loaves of bread and cabbage. We sat around and drank wine and talked for another hour, and then started up the mountain to the cave.

About halfway up the mountain Coze, who was carrying the three dozen precious eggs, fell down. Avoiding all caution, we screamed and kicked and yelled at Coze. We were sure our eggs were all scrambled. But after checking, we found that only one egg was broken and one cracked, so satisfied, we all went up the mountain to the cave.

Several days later, a stranger (to me) arrived at the cave. He and Robert talked privately outside the cave for a while. After he left, Robert came in and told us that a British plane had made an air drop which had been retrieved. It contained guns, ammunition, dynamite explosive caps and so forth. Robert explained that we were to meet at a pre-scheduled place and pick up our explosive supplies. He said our mission was to go to Talouse and set the charges to blow up the main tracks at the rail yard there, as they had heard that a German military train was to come through at a given time.

The German train was to come through in the early morning hours, so the night before, we left the cave after dark and met at our appointed spot where we got our supplies. The walk to Talouse was about ten to fifteen miles, so we had to walk steadily all night, as it was imperative that we have our charges planted, and be ready to detonate the charge when the train got

there.

It was pitch black when we arrived, and we hurriedly completed our mission, then we all hid ourselves and waited for the train. In the early dawn light, I noticed several flat cars sitting on the siding next to the track, which were loaded with what I thought were rockets. I found out later that they were not rockets, but were small one-man gliders that were jet propelled up to make a single attack on an enemy bomber, and then glide back down.

Our mission was successful. We blew everything to hell. We found out later that the underground had deliberately arranged our explosions to be detonated at the same time American bombers were overhead. As soon as the charge went off, we all took off as fast and cautiously as possible to the cave.

We slept and rested the rest of the day and night. The next day we found out we were out of tobacco. The men knew they could get it from a smuggler about two miles away, but they needed money. I went into my survival kit and pulled out some money, and since I was the only one with money, I insisted on going along. It was decided Maurice and I would go.

Early the next morning we left, Maurice leading the way. As we descended into the valley, we came to a farmhouse on a dead end road. Maurice went in and talked to the farmer, and we borrowed two bicycles. Maurice and I got on the bikes and started down the hill. It was a steep downgrade, and my bike picked up speed. I realized I had no brakes. I yelled at Maurice, and he indicated I should ram my foot on the front tire.

We finally came to a hard topped road; and as we rode along, my heart flipped. There ahead of us, stopped along the road

was a German patrol car. It apparently had engine trouble, as they were out with the hood up.

We rode by them nonchalantly, and finally arrived in the small town of Aurnant. We left our bikes behind a building and walked to the house of the smuggler. We got our tobacco and some candy bars. I was overjoyed when I saw he had Hershey bars. I didn't think I would ever see good old Hershey bars again. We stayed and had some food and wine, and he and Maurice talked. Then we left and retraced our steps back to the cave.

While we were enjoying our candy and smokes, I noticed Joseph and Robert were gone. The guys said they were gathering wood. They came back later and told us they had met and talked to a shepherd who lived near Fiax, and he told them that the Germans were questioning people in Faix about resistance groups. He knew of a family in Fiax who were pro-Nazi, and who were sneaking around, trying to find out about us. He warned Joseph and Robert to be careful.

We were all filled with rage and ready to kill this French citizen who was selling out his country to the Germans, and after discussing the situation, we decided to pay him a visit. We were going to use any means possible to persuade this miserable pro-Nazi to stop.

That night we took off. We got to the door of the house. Robert ahead and me following, and the other men hid. Robert knocked on the door, and a voice from upstairs wanted to know who was there. Robert answered with the name of the next-door neighbor. He came down and opened the door. Robert shoved him back, and I shoved a revolver in his stomach. He threw his hands in the air saying, "What do

you want? I didn't do anything." His face was ashen. The other Partisans burst in the door and shut it. While I held the revolver on the pro-Nazi, the others went through the house.

It was plain to see that he had been collaborating with the enemy. He had food – meat, bread and stuff that other French families hadn't seen for a long time. The gang collected all the food, tobacco and money that they could carry. As we left, Robert told him, "This is only a warning. If we hear that you tell anyone about this, even your neighbor, we will be back, and the next time we will kill you!" I truly believe that to this day, he has never told anyone. He was so scared.

We divided the money when we got back, and for the next week or so, laid low, eating our food and playing poker. I had good luck and won most of the money. A few days later when we had run out of tobacco, a few of the guys made the trip to the smuggler again. I didn't go, and when they came back, they had word that the German Border Patrol in the Pyrenees between France and Spain, had seemingly increased, and they seemed to think something was going to happen.

We talked about the situation, trying to make some sense out of it. We thought it could have something to do with the weather. At that time, the storms in the mountains on the border into Spain were quite bad, and we thought maybe the Germans might think more people would be trying to get across. We heard nothing more, and a day or so later, Ponga asked me to go with him to the friend's place in the forenoon. Hasea had come along with Ponga and me. Ponga and his friend talked; then Ponga, his friend and I decided to have a game of cards.

Hasea had his eye on the man's daughter, and they were in another room. After playing cards until about noon or so, a knock came to the door. The man opened the door, and two French Gendarmes were there with their pistols drawn. They told Ponga and I that we were under arrest, and led us out in the street. At that moment, Hasea, who had jumped out a window, was taking off on a bicycle. The police shot at him, both firing several shots. I was ready to fight, but knew I had to follow Ponga's lead.

I wondered why he was standing there doing nothing, but he was counting the shots. When he knew the guns were empty, he hit one policeman and I the other. We took their guns and ammunition and ran. We took off in the opposite direction of the cave, since we didn't want to disclose, in any way, our hiding place. Ponga and I hid out for two nights, and late the third night, made our way back to the barber's house. He let us in, and I sat in the barber chair so he could cut my hair while we talked. The barber yelled at his daughter to bring some food and wine. When she entered the room with the tray, she was so dumbfounded to see us, she dropped the tray. It was like looking at a ghost, because they had heard that we had been captured.

We made our way up to the cave, and of course the other guys were anxious to know where we had been and what had happened.

Ponga and I slept for a couple of days and got rested up. Shortly after a shepherd who knew us came by to tell us we better do something, because the day before the Germans found the hideout of a group of Partisans about five miles away and had killed them all.

This came as a shocking blow. We knew there were ten guys in that certain group, and we realized the Germans were

intensifying their search.

We decided to move our hideout. Gathering up the supplies we had moved about five miles further in the mountain and in the dense forest we made a shelter of boughs and twigs that were practically undetectable until you were right on it. This scare had made us all edgy and suspicious. For some reason, Maurice picked me out to vent his anger on. He started by questioning me with snide remarks about America and my life. I realized he was scared as we all were, and I tried to ignore him, but one night, while we were sitting around eating, he kicked my plate out of my hand. That was enough, and we went at it, slugging and punching. The guys finally broke us up, but the fight had cleared the air.

After we had moved, we knew the situation called for more caution, and one of us stood guard day and night. There was a rock outcropping, which made a watch out. You could see the whole valley below, and in that way we kept track of German activity on the roads below.

You may think standing watch was a distasteful and tedious job, and during the cold, dark nights, it was just that; but in the early dawn, as the sun was rising over the mountains, the church bells in the various towns throughout the valley would start to ring, and it was a moving, pleasant experience. I would feel tranquil and at peace, and wonder how man could louse up the world so badly.

We finally came to the conclusion that in order to survive, we would have to split up. I knew my goal was to get to Spain, which was over the Pyrenees. Ponga and Hasea were from Spain, and had families there, so that was their goal also. Robert wanted to go to Africa and join the French African Army, where he would ultimately get back

to France. The rest of the guys decided to stay in France.

Ponga, Jasea, Robert and I all took off for the smuggler. We hoped he would be willing to guide us over the mountains. He said he would, for a price. I had the money, enough for us all, and we got our instructions. The smuggler stressed the fact that it would be a difficult trip, and we would need good shoes and warm clothes. We all assured him we would be ready. We were to be back there, ready to go in two days. As we left his place, I knew that I did not have good shoes. I was still wearing the high top shoes I had taken from the cabin. My feet were covered with sores from blisters that had formed, so on our way back, we stopped in the village, and Robert and I bought two pairs of string soled French shoes. They had canvas tops and thongs to wrap around your ankle. They felt much better and were easy to walk in.

Back at the hideout, we prepared to leave. We finished the food and gathered our belongings. Before we said our good-byes, Robert asked us to pose for a picture. He took our addresses, and said when if ever he got to a place to have them developed, he would send us one.

The following afternoon, the four of us arrived at the smuggler. As we entered the house, I became aware of five other people in the room. The smuggler informed us that they were four members of the French underground, and an American who they were taking out. The smuggler's wife served us hot food, coffee and schnapps, and he sent us upstairs to sleep until we were ready to go.

I was in a bedroom with the other American, and of course, we talked about our experiences. I think he said his name was Chandler. He was flying on the same

RICHARD A. MAYHEW

mission I was on. He was a gunner, and he told me he thought he saw my plane shot down. A few minutes later, his plane was hit too, and he parachuted out. However the minute he landed, he was contacted by the underground, and they had smuggled him across the country. He had not been out at all during the day, and had not had contact with anyone other than the underground.

We were awakened by the smuggler, and as I came down the stairs, I could see it was pitch black outside. We had hot coffee and toasted bread laid out on the table. We all helped ourselves, and soon the smuggler appeared at the front door and said, "Come. Time to go."

We all quietly tramped out into the cold, dark night and started up the mountain. After walking about one and one-half to two hours, we came to a stream that was about 25 to 30 feet wide, and appeared to be shallow, about knee deep. The leader plunged into the icy water, and we followed single file. The other American was behind me, and when I was about halfway across, I became aware he wasn't following me. I went back to him and said, "What's the matter? Let's go." He replied that he hated to get his shoes wet. They were the only ones he had. I had another pair of French sandals that I had bought earlier, so he climbed on my back and I carried him piggy back across the stream.

As we ascended, the snow kept getting deeper and harder to walk in. We would walk ten minutes and rest for five. We finally came to a plateau. The sun was starting to rise, and we all hid in a stand of trees while the leader surveyed the area with his binoculars. The rest of the journey to the Spanish border was to the top of the steep mountain peak which, from here on, was ice and snow. On looking through his

binoculars, the leader saw a border patrol along the top. He urged us back into the trees to wait for them to move on. We waited for about an hour. During this time we ate and I changed into dry shoes.

The sun came out, and we warmed ourselves. The leader told us to cut ourselves a cane or stick from the trees, as we would need it for the ice, and there were no trees from now on.

When we finally got up to go, the leader for the first time, noticed my shoes and he flipped. He had stressed over and over again that we needed good shoes for climbing, and he was sure I couldn't make it. He was mad, and said he couldn't take me any further. He told me I should go back. Robert and Ponga came to my rescue and said if I had made it that far, I could go the rest of the way. The leader was still mad, but he let me follow along. Robert and Ponga told me to follow the rest of them and step in their tracks, so we took off with me in the rear.

When we were about three or hundred feet from the top, it happened! I lost my footing and down I went. I slid back down the mountain about 1800 feet. When I stopped, I looked up, and nobody was waiting for me. My stick had broken, but not my determination to get across the border into Spain. I felt that if I had made it this far, nothing would stop me now. I struggled and finally topped the ridge. Exhausted, I sat and looked down the other side. The whole valley was below. You could see the village of Andora nestled in a green valley. To me, it looked like Shangri-La. I could see the rest of the men far ahead walking the ridge and down. I knew I would never catch them, but looking down, I decided if I could slide 800 feet back down the other side, why couldn't I slide

down this side and catch up with them.

At that time of my life, I was bold and daring and desperate. I took off my cap, sat on it, and with aid of my broken stick, I slid down the steep mountain side about 700 or 800 feet. I made it to a rock outcropping and was sitting waiting for the rest of them.

When they arrived, the leader ignored me. He was still mad, but I got silent cheers from my friends. I joined them, and we continued on down the trail to a farmhouse, which was about halfway to the village of Andora. We all went into the barn, and the smuggler and one of the underground went into the farmhouse. After about 15 minutes, we saw them leave on bicycles, going toward Andora. Sometime after dark, they returned, and shortly after they came to the barn and said, "We must go". Ponga, Hasea and Robert told me that after we got to Andora,, we would each be on our own. We said our goodbyes, hugging and kissing. It was a sad time for me. I had deep feelings for them. They had played a very important part in my survival, and I wondered if I would ever hear from them again. (About a year after I was back in the states, I got a letter from Robert, telling me he had made it to Africa. He also sent copies of the pictures he had taken when we left the hideout.)

When we got to Andora, the other American and I were taken to a hotel room and told to stay put. We had breakfast and dinner the next day, and the following night, after dark, we walked out of the village, and were met by a car that took us to Barcelona. At Barcelona, we were taken to a restaurant and put in an upstairs room. Later the son of the restaurant owner came up and talked to us in English. He told us the following morning he would take us to the British Embassy.

After arriving at the Embassy, Chandler and I were interrogated and relieved of all our personal belongings – ID cards, dog tags, and I had two guns, which they also took. They then treated us to a haircut and a hot shower, which was like heaven. They issued us civilian clothes, suits, shirts, socks, shoes, all of which fit. The young Spaniard from the restaurant then took us to a photo shop, to have a picture taken to be put on a visa, so we could travel freely in Spain.

The following morning we left by car for Madrid where a week later, we went to Gibraltar, and from there to England.

*Richard Mayhew was a Tail Gunner in the Martin Spells crew. The mission on 21 January, 1944, was to go after the V1 Missile sites at Escalles sur Buchy. These missiles that were wreaking havoc nightly in London. Flying in **Queen Marlene**, they were shot down by enemy fighters. Mayhew was the sole survivor of that crew.*

*The other American in this saga was Lawrence Chandler, Engineer on the Alfred Starring crew. Flying in **Victory Ship**, they, too, were hit by enemy fighters. Five members were KIA; four became POW. Chandler was the only crew member who successfully evaded and returned to England.*

*Other planes lost that day included: **Ram It-Dam It/Aries**, (Hartwell Howington crew); **Valiant Lady** (Gary Mathisen crew); **#42-7501** (Frank Sobotka crew); and **Liberty Bell** (Keith Cookus crew). **Flak Alley's** pilot was severely wounded, but they returned to base.*

Human losses: KIA-28; POW-14; WIA-1; Evadee and returned-10

MEMORIES OF CHARLES SELASKY
67TH SQUADRON
NAVIGATOR ON REGINALD CARPENTER
MISSION TO WIENER-NEUSTADT

When I bailed out of our plane, I counted to fifteen, and then pulled the ripcord to my chest chute. We wore 2 chutes, one seat pack and one chest chute. My chute opened with no trouble. I saw quite a few other chutes in the area. I saw two men go down with their chutes trailing but never opening. Apparently these men had only one chute. I also saw one man whose chute was on fire. It had opened, but it kept burning, and he kept falling faster and faster. A fighter ME-109 came at me, and I thought I had it; but his wings never lit up, as they did when their guns were firing. He flew by and wiggled his wings, a form of greeting used by pilots. As I approached ground, I could see I was going to land in a clump of trees, so I doubled up and put my arms in front of my face. I didn't hit a thing. I ended up swinging under a huge oak tree, suspended about 30 feet from the ground.

I could see soldiers in the distance. I got out of my harness, hung from it and dropped to the ground. I landed on a steep slope and rolled down the hill. At the bottom of the slope was a foot path, about 10 yards. Further was a creek about 30 feet wide. Why, I don't know, but I went into water and waded upstream. How far I waded, I don't know; but I came to a very small heavily brushed island. I crawled in the brush and hid. I then took stock of what I had. I had a hunting knife, about 4 extra clips for my 45, 2 candy bars and an escape kit. My holster was empty, apparently my 45 fell out when

I bailed out. I buried the holster and extra clips, then opened the escape kit. This kit was supposed have a map, dictionaries for the area, pills to keep you awake and other stuff I don't remember. The map was of France, Holland and Belgium, and the only dictionary was French. Like everything else, Intelligence told us in those days, this was totally useless.

All that day I watched German soldiers walk up and down either side of the creek. In the late afternoon the Germans came with dogs and went straight pass the island and on downstream. I heard a commotion downstream, so I figured they had gone into creek, but didn't know where I went from there.

All night I stayed on that island and nearly froze. I was wet up to my waist and had on khaki's, which didn't keep me very warm. I did have on my flight jacket, which helped some. All night the Germans with dogs and flashlights, went up and down either shore. Needless to say, I didn't sleep. The next day the patrols slacked off about noon, and I decided to try and make it to a train track downstream. All night and the previous day I heard train whistles. I walked, mostly in the stream, and I came to a bridge where they had narrowed the stream, and the water was deep. I decided to go around the bridge instead of swimming. I stayed in woods and brush as best I could. But I finally came to an open field. In the middle of the field were three soldiers, a dog and a farmer. The wind was blowing toward me and away from the

MEMORIES OF CHARLES SELASKY

67TH SQUADRON

NAVIGATOR ON REGINALD CARPENTER

MISSION TO WIENER-NEUSTADT

CONTINUED

dog, so I felt safe, but that dog put his nose up, came straight at e. End of my escape!!!

I ended up in a village jail with one cell. Sgt. Booker, our right waist gunner, was already there. All day long the villagers came and gawked at us. Late that night we were loaded on a truck with three other prisoners and taken to Vienna.

In Vienna the officers were separated from enlisted personnel, and I never saw Booker again. In Vienna I joined Carpenter, Carol Pratt and others from our group and other groups. A few days later they put us on trains and took us to Frankfurt to the Interrogation Center.

At Dulag Luft, the Interrogation Center, we were put in completely dark, sound-proof cells. I soon learned that in a completely dark cell, you couldn't stand up unless you were touching a wall. If you stood up in the middle of the floor, you would eventually fall to the floor. They would slide food in a small door on a tray with a pitcher of water. We got two meals a day. In the morning, a bowl of oatmeal, husks included, and a piece of black bread. Later in the day we would get a bowl of broth, potatoes or rutabagas and another piece of bread. Every night the British bombers would bomb Frankfort, which was only a few miles from where we were. The second day I was there I found a wide, partially loose board in the floor in the middle of the room. I worked it loose and removed the nails, so I could put the board back in the

floor. Under the building was 2 feet of crawl space. The exterior had narrow ventilation slits in it about 4 inches wide and about a foot high. At least I could see outside and tell whether it was day or night. They had taken all our possessions including our belts. Through the vent I could see we were on a high hill overlooking Frankfurt. At night I would watch the British bomb, and felt sorry for the crews. They would bomb from 12,000 feet, which made them sitting ducks for every flak gun the Germans had. They would come in one at a time, about every 15 minutes, and the search lights would pick them up. How any of them got through was amazing, but it seemed like only one in ten went down, which wasn't as bad as we had suffered up until that time. They would keep coming until about 2 hours before dawn.

When they left, it seemed like the whole town was on fire, but later in the day, you could see much of the town was still standing. That night the British would be back.

After four days they gave us a shower and our belts, then interrogated us. Next we were put on a train and sent to Sagan, about 90 miles south of Berlin.

Our Bombardier, Bill Swenson never did show up. The last sight of him I had was when I handed him his chest chute. Reg Carpenter said that after he was captured, they took him to see a body, whose chute did not open. He could not identify the man, because of the condition of the body.

When we got to Stalag Luft III, it was filthy. We scrubbed everything, and the

**MEMORIES OF CHARLES SELASKY
67TH SQUADRON
NAVIGATOR ON REGINALD CARPENTER
MISSION TO WIENER-NEUSTADT**

CONTINUED

Germans cooperated, giving us all the soap and scrub brushes we needed, plus new straw for what was used for mattresses. We used cans which we had received in the Red Cross packages, to make pots and pans for cooking our food. Callahan and I made all pots and pans for our combine. The rest of the men were useless when it came to working with their hands.

Selasky described in detail, the ways he spent time in Stalag Luft III. The situation was changing because the Russians were moving west.

In the middle of November Col. Spivey told us there was a possibility we would be marched out of camp and advised everyone to exercise and get their legs in shape. I built a knapsack carrier with shoulder straps & head-band, and was ready. Sometime after Christmas of '44 we got orders by Germans to move out. The Russians were approaching from the east. It was dark, cold and snowing when we left Stalag Luft III. We walked continuously that night and the next day. One night we stopped at a farm and slept outside. The next day we walked again. Two of the men from our combine got sick, and Bill and I pulled them on error make shift sleds. We slept outside again that night, but we only had to pull one man on a sled that day. We walked 4 or 5

days, sleeping outside or in bombed out buildings. We stayed a couple of days in a burnt out factory.

Then we were loaded on a box car; it was so crowded only so many men could sit at one time. When we left, they gave us as many Red Cross parcels as we could carry. This is what we ate on the way.

The train took them to Nurnburg, and we were let out of the car. It gave everyone the opportunity to take down their pants and defecate outside the car.

From there we were put back on the box car and went to Mooseberg, the most dismal place I had ever seen. It was cold, filthy, full of bugs and rats, and the toilet facilities were about a block away and completely inadequate.

All we got to eat was what the Germans gave us, which was starvation rations. We were liberated by General Patton's Army about April 26, 1945.

Selasky and others got tired of waiting for the plane to take them back to England. They were able to get a German car and some GI rations, drove the Autobon to Frankfurt where they met some GI's who had taken over a German airbase. Here they got new clothes, \$1000 cash and a flight to Le Havre, then home.



FOLDED WINGS

*Remember all the best of our past moments and forget the rest,
and so to where I wait, come gently on.*

Unknown author

*Correction in the Spring 2013
Folded Wings: Charles Gordon was
credited with only 33 missions; the
correct number is 35.*

Baker, James R. #19280 66th
Squadron 20 February 2013 T/Sgt.
Baker was a Radio Operator on the
Joseph Gillespie crew. His first of 34
missions was 28 September 1944, his
last, 30 March 1945. Except for one
mission into France, all others were
flown into Germany.

After the war he attended Illinois
State University, earning a Bachelor of
Arts degree; then attended Northern
State University where he earned two
Master's Degrees. He taught High
School in two different schools in
DeKalb, Illinois. While he was teaching
at Bradley High School, he wrote the
school song.

Baker was a participant in a number
of musical organizations in DeKalb. He
leaves two daughters, three grandchil-
dren and one great grandson.

He was living in DeKalb, Illinois at the
time of his passing.

Drysdale, Thomas T., Jr. # 20058
66th Squadron 28 February 2013 Lt.
Drysdale was a Co-Pilot on three crews,
Richard Comey, Elmer Kohler and
Ray Suddeth. He flew on **Princess
Charlotte/Sure Shot, Lil Cookie, Nice
N Naughty** and **Corky**. Drysdale's first
of eleven missions was 15 September
1943; the last was 27 September 1944.

Drysdale leaves his wife, two
daughters and four sons. He was living

in Phoenix at the time of his passing.

Gaffey, Joseph L. ##20313 392nd
& 44th BG 13 December 2012 Sgt.
Gaffey was a Maintenance Supervisor
for both Bomb Groups.

After the war he was employed by
Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.
Several years later he established the
Gaffey Insurance Company in Walling-
ford, Connecticut.

He leaves Jean, his wife of 65 years;
both were avid skiers. He was living in
Wallingford, Connecticut at the time of
his passing.

Taylor, Charles #22269 66th
Squadron 3 February 2013 Lt. Taylor
was a Co-Pilot on the **Kent Miller** crew.
The crew flew eight missions, the last
on 22 December 1943 when they
crashed, with the only member of the
crew, Taylor, surviving. In their eight
missions, they flew in **Holiday Mess II,
Scourge of the Skies, Big Banner** and
Lemon Drop.

On their eighth mission to Munster,
Germany, it was reported that Big Banner
began losing altitude. Three engines
had been damaged, and the plane was
trying to land just over the border in
Holland. The pilot gave the bail-out
message, then realized he was over the
Zuyder Zee, then announced they
should prepare for ditching.

Taylor was able to crawl out of the
plane, was able to inflate the raft, but
lacked the strength to climb into the
raft. He clung to the side and was
picked up by a German patrol. He was

FOLDED WINGS

taken to a jail in Amsterdam, then moved to Frankfurt for interrogation; from there he was taken to Stalag Luft in Germany.

In 1975 he received a call from the Westfield Police, that the Dutch Air Force had found their plane after draining the Zuyder Zee. They also recovered the remains of five crew members. The Dutch hold an Annual Memorial Service at Gronkin on unclaimed land – in memory of the airmen who perished on their behalf.

After the war, Taylor worked for AT&T in New York City for over 40 years. After retirement, he moved to Midlothian, Virginia. He is survived

by his wife Jean Hearn Taylor, two daughters, Duane Green and Linda Clements; two sons, Wayne Hoffman and Warren Hoffman. He had six grandchildren, nine great grandchildren, nine great grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

News of his passing came from his wife Jean. They were living in Midlothian, Virginia at the time of his passing.

*On the day of the crashing of **Big Banner** another plane from the 66th went down with the **Warren Oakley crew**. Total losses on mission to Munster: KIA – 16, POW – 4, one of whom later evaded.*



**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

2041 Village Circle E
York, PA 17404

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When I run my last checklist and make my last flight
I will think of the days I once knew.
It won't be of lightning or ice on my wings
I just will remember – I flew!

With my fuel running low and a wild sea below,
And my options far less than a few,
I will gladly forget all the worry and sweat,
And only remember – I flew!

Some day when I meet and greet Old St. Pete,
I hope he will let me slip through.
I know he will grin and let me come in,
Because he will know that – I flew!