

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Spring, 2002

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Poop Deck Pappy



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Poop Deck Pappy limped and crash-landed into the Shipdham runway on 28 November 1943 with a collapsed right landing gear. It had just returned from a mission where their gunners had shot down three enemy aircraft. On December 11, their next mission was to Emden, Germany on the *Callaban*. Richard O'Neill, 67th Squadron, a veteran of the Ploesti raid, was the Pilot. His Bombardier, George Carvour, flying in another airship, watched his crew go down. Only the Engineer survived (Robert McAdams) and was interned in Turkey. Carvour's plane went to Switzerland.

Poop Deck Pappy, #42-7521 B-Bar, sat in the hanger for several months before it was repaired. Then it was loaned to the 448th BG and the Bar was changed to D.

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Shreveport and the 44th BGVA Reunion

President "Mike"
Mikoloski



Shreveport was an emotional roller coaster and a continuous celebration of happy times, coupled with somber

recollections of lost friends. September 11th was still clearly in our memories. After a monumental effort on many fronts, the Louisiana Belle was ready for its unveiling; a long awaited Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded; the first Leon Johnson Distinguished Service Award was presented; a bevy of nine ladies were recognized for their contributions to the group; Lois Cianci received a flag that had flown over the U.S. Capitol; three Directors moved off the Board, replaced by three new faces; and '**Jerry Folsom**' became the new President.

For many, it was a return visit to the same airfield, Barksdale, where President Bush was flown when terrorism first raised its ugly head. All other gatherings except the 44th had been immediately canceled. On the bus ride through the

base, it was easy to see that the airmen at Barksdale were major players in the new War.

The Isle of Capri & Casino provided spacious quarters for notable happenings and a short walkway where anyone who wished could take a chance at the Slots, Roulette and Black Jack tables. More of the participants reported losses than gains. Were they keeping the gains a secret?

Mike Yuspeh and later **Roy Owen** arranged tours into the heart of this once-Confederate stronghold, including a trip to Natchitoches, Cane River Country, and two amazing plantations, complete with tour guides who sometimes spoke as though the old South was still alive and perking.

Squadron Dinners were truly times of remembrance. President '**Mike**' Mikoloski's Aircraft Commander, Dr. James Kahl, revealed the truth about Mike, his Navigator: After the worst of the bomb runs, when all members of the crew were a bedraggled mess, Mike still looked 'spit & polished.' (Ed. Note: He still is.)



Col. William Cameron lit the candle for the 68th Squadron.

Candle Lighting Service

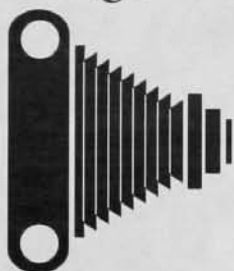
A candelabra created by **Art Hand**, Membership & Search Chairman, was used for the first time. Representing their respective groups were: 66th Dr. James Kahl; 67th Col. **William R. Cameron**; 68th Lt. Col. **Robert Lehnhausen**; 506th **James Clements**; Hqtrs. **Louis Rabesa**; POW, **William Newbold**; Ploesti, **Tom Holmes**; Kiel, **R. H. 'Phil' Phillips**; 9/11, B/G **Delos Burks**.

The General Meeting and Election brought new faces to the Board: **Lee Aston**, **Paul Kay**, and **Richard Lynch**, Directors.

Lt. Col. **Robert Lehnhausen**, Chairman of the Awards Committee, passed out medallions and gifts to the ladies who were deemed deserving, by virtue of service to the organization: Mary Aston, Ardith Butler, Beverly Folsom, Elizabeth Lehnhausen, Irene Lundy, Kathy Mastradone (absent), Ruth Morse, Lolly Owen and Estelle Voelker.



Shreveport and the 44th BGVA Reunion Continued



Below: The General Leon Johnson Distinguished Service Award as presented to Will Lundy.



Will Lundy

When the General Leon Johnson Distinguished Service Award was presented to Will Lundy, it brought a standing ovation. The presentation was made by the grandson of the great General, Leon Abbott. (Ed. Note: It was totally coincidental that Will had been featured in the previous 8 Ball Tails, but there is a general recognition that he deserves all the accolades that come his way.)

The New BGVA Board



Left: The new members of the Board take office, Roy Owen, now V.P.; Jerry Folsom, President: Dick Lynch. Lee Aston, Paul Kay, Directors and Julian Ertz, appointee to represent the 44th to the Second Air Division.

The new President!

President **Edward 'Mike' Mikoloski** read the Mission Statement of the 44th BG, a firm reminder of why everybody was present: ...to perpetuate the history... remember the deceased...provide friendship and comfort to the family survivors...to provide an information network... It was a sobering remembrance. Then he passed the gavel and the responsibility to the next man to carry this heavy burden. Treasurer and now President, **Gerald 'Jerry' Folsom**.



Congratulations to the new President.

Lois and Milt

A closing event of the evening was the presentation of a flag that had flown over the Capitol to Lois Cianci by **Milton Rosenblatt**, in honor of her father, the late **Clair Shaeffer**.



After many years and a lifetime search, Lois met Milt, her father's co-pilot, and the Reunions have become a great place to renew their friendship.

Everyone who flew in the Louisiana Belle, everyone who helped with its rebuilding.



It's financing and the Dedication stepped forward for the great moment.

Shreveport and the 44th BGVA Reunion

Photographs



Sam and Edith Miceli



Lunch at Melrose



After the Board Meeting: Bob Lehnhausen, "Mike" Mikoloski, Roy Owen and Ruth Morse.



Col. Richard Butler, MC at the 506th Sq. Dinner.



Enjoying the banquet.



Dr. James Kahl & Mrs. Jenny Kahl.

Jack Schiffer (66th Sq.) and Delores Shipley.



B/Gen. Burks (left) and daughter, Marsha Burks Megehee (below).



Leon Abbott, grandson of General Leon Johnson.

President "Mike" with son Stanley at the 67th Sq. Dinner.



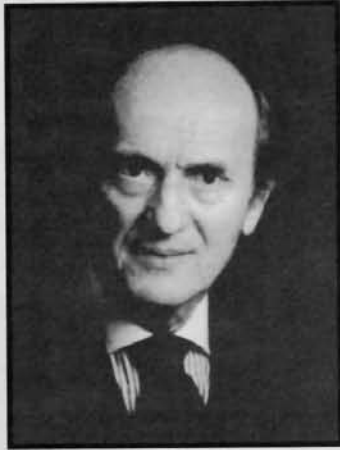
A Word of Thanks

to our Immediate Past President

Edward "Mike" Mikoloski

from

Gerald "Jerry" Folsom:



Since the decision at the Shreveport reunion by our President Mike Mikoloski to step down from the office and appoint me to succeed him, we were unable to pass the gavel with the customary ceremonies.

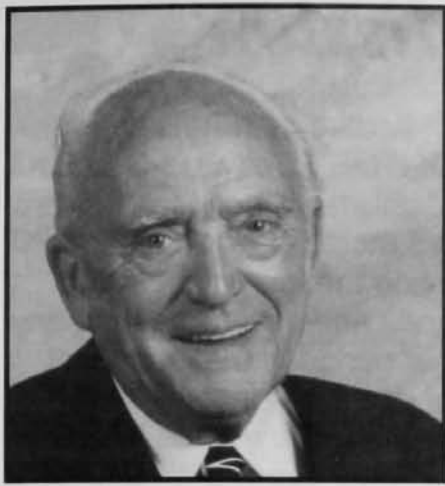
While we plan to honor his service and contribution to our Association during the forthcoming Omaha reunion. I do not anticipate any less fervor in our gratitude to Mike in this delay. However, for the time being, may I say, in behalf of the membership, a few words to tell him how much we care.

Mike, to my mind, the defining benchmark of your leadership is the eloquence of your representation of the Association and the enthusiasm you demonstrate in doing so. For those fortunate enough to be present at the dedication of our B-24J "*Louisiana Belle*" at our Shreveport reunion and hear your address, all felt their hearts swell with pride for being a member of our Association. It was the shining hour of your presidency.

Further, your "Let's go for it!" manner is catching and has buoyed the support of the members for the goals and programs you have established to fulfill our mandate of keeping the 44th "family" together and interactive.

While in your time in office, you have suffered the grief of losing your most loved family ones and personal health problems, you have always gone to the well of your inner strength and heroism where you put on your "game face" and carry on demonstrating the same brand of valor you gave to your country in combat.

We are in your debt for your service and
to you, Sir, we Present Arms!



From the President's Note Pad

To begin with, I hope everyone had an enjoyable holiday season and a happy New Year, and that you made a New Year's resolution that you are going to keep. You did, didn't you? I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the Christmas cards, letters, phone calls, and emails I received congratulating me on my assignment as President of the 44th Bomb Group Veteran's Association. I will endeavor to uphold your confidence, and trust I can persevere with your help.

It may be well to review this past year's operations briefly. Our current membership has increased by 147 members, which includes 31

life memberships. This makes a total of 1,087 members of the 44th Bomb Group Veteran's Association as of October 1, 2001.

Our website on the internet has proven to be interesting and successful with responses beyond expectations. Many widows, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, and grandchildren are writing in to ask about their husband, father, brother, and uncle. Generally we can find some information on the Heritage Database to send to them.

We have contacted many widows of members regarding their husband's biography. Many had not heard about the Heritage Database. This remains an on-going project. Our next step is to contact children and relatives of the deceased members regarding biographies. This is also proving successful. We are now in the process of recording diaries, Lundy's Roll of Honor, and the Folded Wings into the database for preservation. We intend to then move on into the stories, letters, and pictures that Will Lundy has accumulated over the years.

The biographies are coming in – slowly. If you

have not sent yours in, please do before it's too late. If you need a form, let our office know. Please use the form when submitting your biography. It is the format by which it is entered in the database; otherwise, someone has to transfer it on to the form before it is entered.

In regards to the 2001 Barksdale Reunion, it was successful and everyone appeared to enjoy it and have a good time. It was said by some to be the best yet. Yes, they continue to get better each year! As one wrote who was at the reunion for the first time, "I hate to think what I have been missing. It was like a big family reunion."

My objectives are to:

- 1) Continue to find new members. This includes searching for our lost members and to continue to encourage the young relatives of our members to join.
- 2) I will also continue to encourage our members, past and present, to submit their biographies and preserve their history.

Gerald Folsom



Alvin Thorson's Second Mission

Alvin Thorson, his son Al, and grandson Kyle treated themselves to a great experience. They attended the 44th BGVA Reunion for the first time, enjoying the dedication of AC B-24J-42-50806, the *Louisiana Belle*, and all the comraderie of being with that great group of 44th members. The last time Sgt. Thorson was on a B-24, he was a Right Waist Gunner on Rubber Check. That was April 8, 1944. The mission was to an airdrome in Langenhagen, Germany. Me 109s hit them in a flashing pass, knocking out #1 and #2 engines. Moments later, #3 engine caught fire, and soon the whole right wing was engulfed.



Sgt. Alvin Thorson

Sitting in the top turret, Sgt. **John J. Brown, Jr.**, Engineer, could see what was happening. He reported this information to his pilot, Lt. **Ernest Herzing** and co-pilot, Lt. **Virgil Fillbach**. This was only the second mission for this crew. The two officers debated for only a minute, then Herzing ordered "Salvo the bombs," then rang the Bail Out bell signaling the crew to bail out.

April 8 was a black day for the Flying Eightballs. The raid on the Langenhagen Airdrome in Germany was a Target of Opportunity, as the Primary Target. Brunswick, was obscured by a successful smoke screen. The 44th BG lost eleven aircraft, five from the 506 Squadron. Sgt. Alvin L. Thorson, Right Waist Gunner on AC #42-110023, saw a plane beside *Rubber Check* explode before his eyes. Minutes later he was joining all other members of the Herzing crew on a downward drop via parachute. All became POWs. This mission was the most devastating of all missions in the War for the 'Flying Eightballs.'

According to Will Lundy's *ROLL OF HONOR*, the month of April, 1944 was the 44th BG's most disastrous month, costing the loss of the most planes and casualties than any other period in the War. April 8th was the worst single day. The entire crew of Lt. **William M. Richardson** (66th Sq.) was KIA. The 67th Sq. lost the crew of Lt. **Robert A. Mayes** (one survivor); on Lt. **George J. Thom**'s plane. "Thom was seriously wounded." Despite having both #3 and #4 engines shot out and other serious battle damage, Lt. **William Wahler** was able to bring *Judy's Buggy* back to Beccles, England, where he found an emergency airfield and bailed out five of his crew near the

airfield where he made a successful crash landing. All survived but the tail gunner, St. **Joseph Meskinis**, who, after being extricated from his almost totally demolished turret, fitted into his parachute harness and successfully bailed out by Bombardier, Lt. Tom Murphy; he was found nearby with his chute unopened. Apparently confused, he had his heated suit cord in his hand and the rip cord still stowed. The 68th Sq. lost three planes and crews, Lt. **William Altermus**, Lt. **Warren Barry** and Lt. **Raymond Townsend**. Of the thirty men in the 68th, eighteen survived to become POWs.

The highest losses were sustained by the 506 Sq. Lt. **Guy Johnson** was KIA. Two members were wounded. All others became POW, one of whom escaped and returned to duty. The entire crew of **Robert H. Marx** survived and became POWs; Lt. **Dallas Sprinkle**'s crew lost six members (KIA), four survived and were captured, two of whom were injured; all ten of the crew of **Jack M. Winn** survived and were captured. Lt. **John McCaslin** managed to bring *Gallavantan*' *Gal* back to England, but the co-pilot was KIA. This was the first mission for many of the men who were replacements for earlier crews.

According to Lt. McCaslin, the 506 Sq. was leading the 44th, and the 44th was leading the 2nd Air Division. Lt. Col. **Robert Lehnhausen** was flying on the right wing of Col. **John Gibson**. Flak and fighters took a heavy toll on all squadrons.

"We had P-51s accompanying us, but when they left, the Germans moved in." Thorson recalled. "I saw a plane beside me blow up. Then our plane was hit. It all happened so fast, we didn't have time to get scared. I was the last one off the plane. Shortly after I jumped, the plane blew up. German soldiers quickly rounded us up and took us to Dulag Luft for interrogation.

"Then we were sent to Stalag 17B, Krems on the Danube in Austria. We were not badly treated, but the food was terrible. It was a starvation diet." The GIs sometimes amused themselves by teasing the guards. Fortunately, the game did not become so annoying as to bring strong retaliation. "We were always anxious," Thorson recalled, "never sure what was going to happen next."

VE Day gave Thorson a return trip home on the U.S.S. LeJeune. In thirteen days he regained thirteen of the pounds he had lost in prison. He went back to his life of farming in Illinois. Later, he became an equipment mechanic, then a building finisher, and assembler of heavy equipment. He retired in 1986. His wife Delores passed away in 1999.

During the Vietnam War, son Al followed his father's interest in planes. He volunteered before he finished high school, and received his Draft Notice while he was in Basic Training. He was stationed in Guam, later Thailand, loading munitions on B-52s and other aircraft. After serving four years in the AAF, Al became a licensed private pilot. He works as a Safety Training Instructor for a Public Utilities company.

Twenty-five year old Kyle was interested enough in his grandfather's great stories, he went to visit a B-24 when it came to town. For his occupation, he chose to become a chef and declares that if drafted, he would like to cook for the servicemen, anywhere he is stationed.

*Three generations of
Thorsons*

*Kyle, Alvin, and Al
(2002)*



Lt. Col. Robert Lehnhausen's Memory

It was Easter Sunday, 1944, and Langenhagen became the Mission. "The 44th BG put up 44 planes that day. We lost eleven.

The 44th was the lead group of the 2nd Air Division in what was a maximum effort. This mission was Col. John Gibson's first as CO of the 44th. The two lead aircraft were (PFF) Pathfinder Aircraft of the 389th Group. I flew as Command Pilot of the Deputy Lead Plane. The 506 Squadron was the day's Lead Squadron.

The attack by 50-75 German fighters penetrated our fighter escort in a head on attack (12.30 high) with devastating results -- eleven losses. (We also lost eleven in Ploesti.)"

BGVA POSITION AVAILABLE

Announced by: Gerald Folsom, President

**The 44th Bomb Group Veteran's
Association needs a new Treasurer.**

**You should have accounting
experience, have a computer and
accounting software.**

Phone: (801) 733-7371

Fax: (801) 942-9988

EMail: 44thbgva@xmission.com





Irene Haines Lundy



44th Bomb Group Honoree



Irene Haines,
a teenager in
England.

When members of the 44th BGVA see Historian **Will Lundy**, they can be sure that Irene is somewhere nearby. A post-war bride who was willing to be transplanted from her native home in Norwich, England. Irene has been a quiet supporter of goals and projects of the Bomb Group, and can always be counted on to help out at any Reunion.



Irene Lundy,
Shreveport, 2001

Irene's father, like other members of his family, had been involved in the military for many generations. At that time the 'Sun never set on the British Empire.' He married Irene's mother, also from a military family, who had been born in Rangoon. The couple had four children, Irene being the youngest. She had three older brothers. Her father died when she was two years old. Then her mother married a widower with two boys and a girl, providing new siblings for the family who was living in Norwich, 20 miles from the North Sea. She remembers happy times, swimming in the Wensom River and in the Bath, a swimming hole that was a part of the River.

Irene was fifteen years old when England went to war. "The War changed everything," she remembered. "Soon after it started, we got ration cards. Sugar, clothing, petrol and many other items were immediately in short supply. Bananas and oranges were available only for children under 14. We survived on fish and chips.

Irene got a job at the Caley Chocolate Shop in Norwich. She considered joining the Naval Wrens, but decided against it after she met Will at St. Andrews Hall. He was there with three of his buddies from Shipdham. She and Will dated at every opportunity, but never talked of marriage during that time. Whenever they could get together, they frequented Castle Gardens and enjoyed the local shows and dances.

When Will left for a furlough at his home in Lancaster, California, it was good-bye forever, they thought. He had every expectation of being sent to the Pacific Theater, as the Marines had not yet cleared all the islands that were to be the stepping stones to Japan. Mercifully, the War ended before he was reassigned. He asked Irene for her hand in marriage; then after her consent, as a true gentleman, he wrote to Irene's mother, asking permission to marry her. Her engagement ring came by mail, but she had to wait 1-1/2 years to get across the ocean for the wedding.

If Irene and Will had been married in England, she could have easily gotten transportation. Since she was single, she had to apply to the Embassy in London for a Visa, proving first that she was in good health and had no criminal record. A travel agent helped her finally get a flight, taking advantage of a cancellation. She got a four (4) day notice, and on January 18, 1947, flew from London to Nova Scotia. There an engine went out, so she was delayed for two days. When a new engine was installed, they flew to New York and were held two more days because of weather. She arrived in Los Angeles, along with the other sleepy passengers, and found that Will was not there to meet her. He had not been notified that the plane was leaving New York. Long after all her fellow passengers had departed from the airport, Irene finally met the man she had waited so long to see. Five days later, they were married.

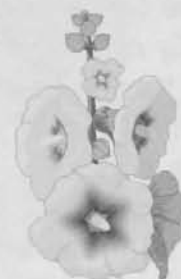
Will helped her through her homesickness, and his family was very considerate. Life was good. They bought a house and raised a family -- two boys and a girl, and now have a step granddaughter. In 1950, five years after VE Day, Irene visited her family in England, along with her nine month old baby. To her surprise, she learned that she had to get a ration card for each of them to be able to get food. England was still suffering from the War.

After one trip to her homeland, Irene told Will that the Norwich Library (which later burned to the ground) was collecting the history of the 2 AD. It inspired him to seriously pursue his historical search for the 44th. This two-nation marriage was beneficial to accumulation of information which still crowds the files in his office, but is gradually moving onto the Military Heritage Database.

One of the luxuries which the Lundys have enjoyed is a cabin formerly owned by his family, located in Bridgeport, California at Twin Lakes. They purchased it, rebuilt much of it, expanded the living space, and now enjoy their summers there. Last year they sold their home of 40 years in San Bernardino, California and moved farther north to Cool. Their biggest adjustment from the move was to find space for Will's stacks of information. He has catalogued a great deal, and a permanent repository is being sought. The burden of maintaining these records has been gracefully born by this very loyal and patriotic couple. When they were both honored at the Reunion in Shreveport, the applause was resounding.



Irene and Will Lundy 2001



LEE ASTON

and the

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS



B/General Koziol congratulates Lee Aston.

Fifty six years after 1st Lt. **Lee Aston** earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, it was awarded at Barksdale. He completed his combat tour in February, 1945,

and was told that he would receive the award in March. Unfortunately, like many other veterans, he had the misfortune of learning that his records have been destroyed in the St. Louis fire.

As 67th Sq. Deputy Navigator, Aston flew with the **Spagnola** crew. His pilot received DFC the following December. Aston spent the next fifty five years, writing and inquiring about his medal. Finally, with documentation by Spagnola and one other officer, the Air Force informed him that he was to receive the DFC and three additional Air Medals for flying other exceptional combat missions, and for flying ten additional combat missions over the required number.

The presentation was made at 8th Air Force Headquarters, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, in conjunction with the dedication of the *Louisiana Belle*. The two events were highlighted by a fly-over by a B-52. B/General John C. Koziol, Vice Commander of the 8th Air Force, stated that awarding this prestigious Medal to a WWII veteran was a 'humbling experience.' He recalled his father's description of entering Europe soon after D-Day as a young soldier, and knew that every medal was hard-earned.

B/Gen. Koziol reminded the group that the first DFC had gone to Richard Lindberg. Later, Admiral Byrd received one for his journey to the North Pole. The General reiterated the qualifications for receiving this award ... for valorous and exceptional courage and achievement in combat with the 8th Air Force during World War II. In addition to the DFC, Aston was awarded three Oak Leaf Clusters.



After returning to the States, Aston became an Air Force single engine pilot. In civilian life, he is a Georgia and Virginia attorney-at-law and Adjunct Professor of Mining Law and Environmental Law at UMR.

In attendance at the ceremony were Aston's wife, Mary; two of their five children, Laurel Aston Burnes and Roger Aston, as well as four members of his flight crew.



Lee Aston's crew and family members.

67th SQUADRON #5128 HAS FIRST CREW REUNION

56 YEARS AFTER COMBAT TOUR



Standing: Co-pilot Robert J. Keyes, pilot Chris C. Spagnola, bombardier V. Curt Silverthorne, navigator Robert Lee Aston.

Kneeling: Sgts. Harry Sierk, radio operator; Tom Currie, flight engineer; George Chagaris, waist gunner; (Pondfield didn't finish tour with crew); and Norman Sutherland, tail gunner; John Gately, waist gunner (was on sick call the day the picture was made, thus, missing from picture).

The 67th Squadron aircrew #5128, Lt. **Chris C. Spagnola** airplane commander, reunited for its first reunion at the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association annual meeting at Barksdale, La. in October 2001, since they separated 56 years ago at Shipdham on February 19, 1945. Lts. Spagnola and Aston completed their combat missions ahead of the rest of their crew and were returned to Stateside.

Lts. Spagnola and Aston, along with 67th Squadron Lead pilot, Capt. **E. C. Holmer** (of Reno, Nevada), were shipped back to the States from Liverpool, England, aboard the Dutch luxury liner Nieu Amsterdam. Lt. Spagnola went to Air Transport Command (ATC) for further training and flying. Lt. Aston was trained as a single engine pilot. Other crew

members, Co-pilot, Lt. **Robert J. Keyes**, Bombardier; Lt. **V. Curt Silverthorne**, S/Sgts. **Harry Sierk**, Radio Operator; **Thomas Currie**, Aircraft Engineer and Top Turret Gunner; **George J. Chagaris**, Waist Gunner; **Norman Sutherland**, Tail Gunner; and **John Gately**, Waist Gunner, finished their combat tours shortly afterward.

Re-entering civilian life after the War, 1st Pilot Spagnola returned to his family-owned iron foundry business in Auburn, New York. Chris married a former WWII nurse from New

York and has been happily married to his wife, Dutch, for a bit over a half-century mark. Chris is still active in his foundry business, but now finds more time to enjoy golf and for him and Dutch to visit their daughters, grandchildren and relatives around the country. Dutch was an added treat to the crew's reunion.

Co-Pilot Bob Keyes spent his life doing law enforcement with the New York City police, as did Tom Currie, also of New York City. Bob is now retired. Bob's wife, Marie, a former New York City school teacher, very educated and entertaining, accompanied Bob to the Barksdale reunion.

Little is known of George Chagaris, waist gunner, who was of Gastoria, North Carolina. George died in 1987 leaving his wife, Alice in Charlotte, North Carolina, and one son, now a lawyer in Davidson, North Carolina.

Nothing is known of Harry Sierk, radio operator of Minnesota, who reportedly died in 1973.

John Gately, waist gunner, on return to Stateside, went through OCS and received a commission as a 2nd Lt. just before being separated from service. John Gately attended college after the war and graduated with a degree in Chemical Engineering and worked in the ceramics industry. Though retired, he still does some consulting.



V. Curt Silverthorne, Bombardier; Bob Keyes, co-pilot; Chris Spagnola, pilot; Lee Aston, navigator; and John Gately, waist gunner. Photo taken in 2001.



John, formerly of Rockaway Beach, Long Island, New York, and his wife, Bernadette, had four sons and one daughter. The Gatelys moved to Huntington Beach, California, in their mid-life and are near several of their children which translates to enjoying seeing grandchildren and children. The Gatelys celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in June, 2001, with an extravagant party at Las Vegas, Nevada, with some 50 family members and close friends.

Norman Sutherland, our "Ridge Runner" from Rural Retreat in Southwest Virginia, has been "lost" to all crew members. A recent search failed to locate him. We are hoping he is just "lost" and has not yet folded his wings.

Nothing had been heard from our bombardier, Curt Silverthorne, since the War. Silverthorne was from Wisconsin. A search revealed he had moved to Nashville, Tennessee, in 1947, where he has remained to date. Curt is married, no children, but attended the reunion alone, as his wife of many years was physically unable to travel. Curt is still a handsome fellow, but his former head of curly hair has turned snow white.



Spagnola Crew at Squadron Dinner
2001

After the meeting, an email from Tom's youngest son, Tim, of Orlando, Florida, advised Tom had died on October 17, 2001, the day after our 67th Squadron reunion dinner at Barksdale. We missed you, Tom. God Bless You.

Lt. Robert Lee Aston, after 51 years as a Mining and Geological Engineer and attorney-at-law, and still actively practicing law, had five children. Two of them, Laurel and Roger, attended the Barksdale reunion to see their father receive his long awaited Distinguished Flying Cross presented to him at the 8th Air Force Ceremonies, Barksdale, AFB. Lee discovered his wife, Mary, at the University of Missouri while he was teaching law as an Adjunct Professor. Mary also served at the 44th BGCA registration desk. Lt. Spagnola's crew #5128 was featured at the 67th Squadron night on Tuesday. He showed a series of photo projections of pictures taken during the crew's training period in early 1944 at Casper Air Force Base, Wyoming, through their months stationed at Shipham airfield during combat missions.

Pre-Barkdale contact with Tom Currie, as late as July, 2001, indicated he planned to join the crew for its reunion. Tom spent a life in law enforcement as a New York City policeman. He had retired from Titusville, Florida. We all were looking for Tom at the meeting, but he didn't show...

Introduction of fellow crew members and wives, and Aston's two children, followed. The crew made a presentation of a Certificate of Appreciation to their aircraft commander, Chris Spagnola, for his excellence as a pilot in getting his crew safely through their tour of combat. So, Spagnola's aircrew is now reduced to five. All five survivors appear to be in fairly good health; not quite as fast as we used to be, but reliable. We're looking forward to gathering again at forthcoming 44th BGVA annual meetings for quite a few years!

WHEN YOU HAVE CHANGES

In your:

**Mailing Address, Email
phone number, area code
or zipcode,
please let us know at:**

**44th BGVA
P.O. Box 712287
SLC, UT 84171-2287**

**Email:
44thbgva@xmission.com**

44th Bomb Group 2002 Reunion



Wing/Strat. Missile Wing
October 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11, 2002



Holiday Inn, Omaha Central I-80 - Omaha, Nebraska

Hotel Reservation Form



Reservations may only be made by telephone directly with the Hotel's Reservation Department by calling (402) 393-3950. To receive the contract rate, the attendees should identify themselves as being with the 44th Bomb Group. All reservations should be made by September 6, 2002. After this date, the hotel will release the remainder of our room block. Additional reservation requests will be honored on a space and room available basis.

Guaranteed Reservations. Rooms can be guaranteed for late arrival to an individual's credit card or by advance deposit equal to one night's room and tax at the time of reservation. The deposit will be credited to the attendee's account. Check in time is 4:00 p.m. on reserved date, or refunds will be made only if the reservation is cancelled 48 hours prior to the scheduled day of arrival. Guarantee may be made by check or credit card.

Guaranteed Group Rates: \$90.00 tax included, Single or Double

Please fill out this information prior to making your reservation call. It will serve as your record and you will be given a confirmation number by the reservation person.

Confirmation #: _____ Name: _____

Arrival Date: _____ Organization: 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Additional Person in Room: Yes No Name of additional person _____

Credit Cards: American Express, MasterCard, DiscoverCard, and VISA

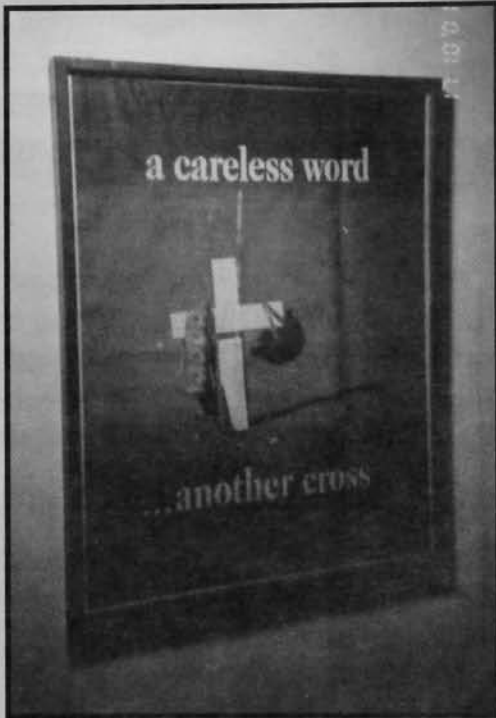
Credit Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Name of Credit Card: _____

Your account is due upon conclusion of your stay and must be reviewed and paid at the front desk at departure.



MEMORIES



WWII Poster at Barksdale Museum.



The kids at Shipdham who have not forgotten the 44th BG.



Shoveling the Runway in 1943.



44th Bomb Group 2002 Reunion

October 7-11, 2002

Holiday Inn, Omaha Central 1-80 • Omaha, Nebraska



Registration Form

Please print or type. All information must be completed.

Last Name: _____ First Name (Tag): _____

Spouse: _____ Squadron (Circle one): 66th 67th 68th 506th Hq or _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Guest(s) & Relation: _____

Number to attend Reunion _____ @ \$210.00/each Amount \$ _____

Tour #1: Monday, October 7 - Omaha Historical Tour \$ 19.00 per person
Time: Bus leaves hotel at 1:00 p.m. An exciting and informative escorted historical tour of Omaha.

Number to attend Tour _____ @ \$19.00/each Amount \$ _____

Tour #2: Tuesday, October 8 - Exit 426 Tour \$36.00 per person
Time: Buses leave hotel at 9:00 a.m. return at 3:00 p.m. First we will visit the Strategic Air and Space Museum. The newest and one of the largest military museums in the U.S. We will have an included buffet lunch at Mahoney State Park Lodge, which overlooks the scenic Platte River. After lunch we will visit the Lee Simmons Wildlife Safari Park. We will see a variety of wild animals in natural habitats.

Number to attend Tour _____ @ \$36.00/each Amount \$ _____

Tour #3: Wednesday, October 9 - Omaha Heritage and Art Tour \$ 23.00 per person
Time: Buses leave hotel at 10:00 a.m. A look at Omaha's glorious past! We'll split our day between the Druham Western Heritage Museum, former main terminal of the Union Pacific Railroad and then shuttle to the Grand Dame of Omaha's art galleries. You will have lunch on your own in the Old Market District, center of the restored original city center. Buses return to the hotel at 2:30 - 3:00 p.m.

Number to attend Tour _____ @ \$23.00/each Amount \$ _____

Tours #4 and #5: Wednesday, October 9 and Thursday, October 10 \$16 per person
Lunch at the Offutt AFB Officer's Club and tour of the Commander U.S. Strategic Forces Command Center.
Time: Both days, the buses will depart the hotel at 11:00 a.m. A rare opportunity to see where the planning for the application of our nuclear forces takes pace and the command center which would direct and control them. Whether you go on Wednesday or Thursday will be dependent on the earliest receipt of your Registration Form for the tour. The first 84 received go Wednesday and so on. See Reunion Schedule of Activities.

Number to attend Tour _____ @ \$16.00/each Amount \$ _____

Total of Registration and Tours enclosed by Check: Amount \$ _____

Registration must be received by August 1, 2002. No registrations will be taken after that date.

Mail a copy of this Registration with your check to:

Roy W. Owen • 6304 Meadowridge Drive • Santa Rosa, California 95409-5839

Phone (707) 538-4726 • Fax (707) 538-1212

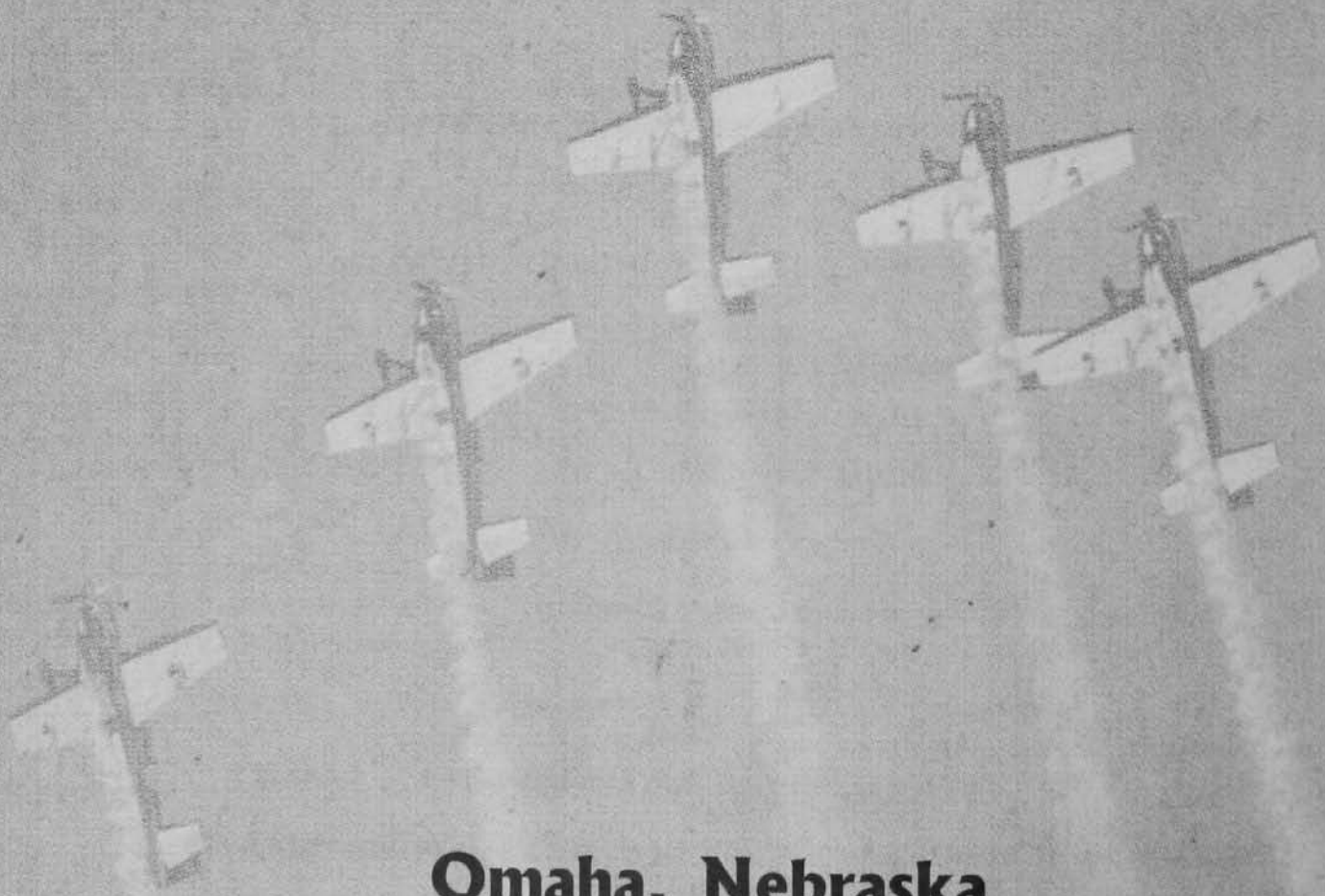
BE PROMPT!



44TH BOMB GROUP 2002 REUNION



October 7 - 11, 2002



Omaha, Nebraska

44th Bomb Group 2002 Reunion

October 7-11

Holiday Inn • Omaha, Nebraska • Schedule of Activities

Monday, October 7	9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.	Registration
	9:00 a.m.- 11:00 a.m.	Board Meeting
	1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Board Meeting
	1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Guided Tour of Omaha (Optional)
	12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open
	6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Reception (Finger Food & Cash Bar)
	8:30 p.m.- 11:00 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open
	8:30 p.m.- ?	Hotel shuttle to Casino
Tuesday, October 8	7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Cornhusker Breakfast Buffet
	9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Registration
	11:00 a.m.	Tour Buses to Strategic Air Command Museum, Lunch on your own at Museum.
	3:00 p.m.	Buses return to hotel.
	4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open
	7:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.	Squadron Dinners
	9:00 p.m.- 11:00 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open
Wednesday, October 9	7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Cornhusker Buffet Breakfast
	10:00 a.m.	Bus leaves for Joslyn Art Museum and Old Market Area (Bus will shuttle between the Market area and the Museum).
	2:30/3:00 p.m.	Buses return to hotel.
	11:00 a.m.	2 Buses leave for Offutt AFB (42 people each).
	11:30 a.m.	Bus #1 Group to O'Club for lunch.
	11:30 a.m.	Bus #2 Group to Strategic Command. Underground Command Center tour.
	1:00 p.m.	Bus #1 Group to Strategic Command. Underground Command Center tour.
	1:00 p.m.	Bus #2 Group to O'Club for lunch.
	2:30 p.m.	Buses leave for hotel.
	3:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open
	6:00 p.m.- 7:00 p.m.	Cash Bar at Banquet
	7:00 p.m.- 7:30 p.m.	Post Colors; Pledge of Allegiance, Candle Lighting & present Awards.
	8:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.	Grand Banquet
9:00 p.m.- 11:00 p.m.	Dance, Visit & Have Fun.	
Thursday, October 10	7:00 p.m.- 9:00 a.m.	Cornhusker Breakfast Buffet
	9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	General Membership Meeting
	12:00 noon	Those not on tours, lunch on your own.
	11:00 a.m.	Bus #1 Group to O'Club for Lunch.
	11:30 a.m.	Bus #2 Group to Strategic Command Ctr Tour
	1:00 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open
	1:00 p.m.	Bus #1 Group to Strategic Command Ctr Tour.
	1:00 p.m.	Bus #2 Group to O'Club for Lunch.
	2:30 p.m.	Buses leave for hotel.
	5:00 p.m.	Hospitality Room Open
6:00 p.m.	Cash Bar Cocktails	
7:00 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.	Dinner, Entertainment & Dancing in Hotel.	
Friday, October 11		Check-Out, Farewell, Safe Journey Home, Be seeing you in 2003!



Norwich and the Memorial Library

The 2nd Air Division Association coupled their annual Reunion with the Opening of the 2AD Memorial Library in Norwich, England, November 3-9. It was a week of ceremony, nostalgia and grandeur. Evelyn Cohen, VP of Membership of the 2AD and David Hastings, Vice Chairman of the 2AD Memorial Trust, covered all bases in arranging an amazing week. Twenty two members of the 44th made the transoceanic leap, and our hosts made it all worth while.

Three buses transported the group to the cemetery in Cambridge, the burial ground for the brave airmen who "gave all." From there we went on to Duxford, where American fighter planes swing from the ceiling, various planes were spread across the floor, all in the shadow of that gigantic B-52. A memorial plaque names the airmen who were lost in the cause for freedom. Is it possible to visit these hallowed places without shedding tears for the brave young men whose bodies lie beneath the memorial markers?

Freedom of the City Award

The highest honor that Norwich can offer an organization is the Freedom of the City Award. Councillor Keith Ratcliffe, Lord Mayor did the presentation on Tuesday, November 6 in St. Andrews Hall. The scroll read, "In recognition of the close historic ties between the City and the Second Air Division Association, and to mark the Contribution the 2AD has made to the City, in particular the Second Air Division Memorial Library ... (*The 2AD Association was therein admitted to the Freedom of the City of Norwich.*) St. Andrews Hall is connected to Black Friars Hall, where food and wine were generously dispensed. Prayers for those who died in the September 11th tragedy accompanied speeches of gratitude to the survivors of the War, who defied the terrorism threat, and came for the Dedication of the Library. With unbelievable grace and efficiency, our hosts were able to feed and provide beverages for all 550+ guests.



*Julian Ertz & Mrs. Paterson
at the airfield.*

Shipdham

It was interesting to see the new look at the Shipdham Airfield. The site of the original 44th BG Hospital is now Wymondham College. John Page shared his historical knowledge of all the changes. The old Control Tower still stands partially repaired, a tragic reminder of a glorious era. The site of the 67th Squadron Ground Crews is

gone. The site of the 506th Squadron is nearly intact, but in poor repair. Some of the huts are now gone. Only a concrete slab is left of the 67th Sq. HQ. and the 68th Sq. is totally gone. A few of the buildings remain of the 506th Sq. at Site 2. Two buildings remain in Site 6, home of the 66th, 50 MPs and Weathermen.



*Steve Adams & John Page Norwich &
Shipdham Tour Guides*

Many of the communal sites are private property, closed to visitors. The 14th Combat Wing HQ remains in good condition, and the 464 Sub Depot is intact, except for the loss of a few Nissan huts. These are privately owned, and permission must be gained for entrance.

When Brian Peel and Perry Morse began re-hashing the Shipdham days, they came to the realization that they had probably met before. Twelve year old Brian was among the English 'kids' who frequented GI barracks, and used that familiar phrase, "any gum, chum?"

The Shipdham Aero Club greeted us fondly. Mrs. Paterson, owner, was there, along with other members. The walls were bedecked with aviation history, and cabinets were filled with



*Perry Morse & Brian Peel.
Friends again after
68 years.*

photos and memorabilia of the 44th's past glory. Daniel Butler (son of Col. Richard and Ardith) and Will Lundy laid a poppy wreath on the monument, but the weather was rapidly turning vicious, so we did not linger. Only two runways remain of those from which the '24s took off. Lunch was at the Golden Dog in Shipdham, a familiar hang-out to many young airmen.

Andrew Doubleday and his wife Debbie opened their doors and their



Andrew Doubleday

hearts to their home, former 14th Wing Headquarters. When he purchased the farm, he had no idea that he was purchasing a piece of history. The

dwelling is enlarged and beautifully preserved, and the art work on the back walls is still there. Although the images are fading, there is a plan to preserve them.

Alongside the drawings will be a photo of their original grandeur. (Ed. Note: Perhaps the artist of those beautiful female images would like to



Dan Butler & Will Lundy placed a wreath on the memorial at Shipdham.

contact the 8 BT and claim credit for his creations.)

English weather was at its best until we started for Shipdham. We had snow, high winds, fifteen minutes of bright sunshine, then sleet and cold. Between the winds and cold, wet deluges, Daniel Butler and Will Lundy laid a poppy wreath on the Shipdham memorial.

Back to Norwich

Steve Adams led us to the monument of *Pappy's Chillun*, alongside Taverham Mill Lake. The plane still lies underwater, surrounded by a peaceful countryside. It was a wet day, but the bus proceeded as close to the Memorial as was feasible. Later, with Steve outside directing, John Page in the back of the bus, interpreting his signals and the driver dutifully followed their counsel, he backed out of a precariously narrow and muddy road and the trip continued.

The Grand Opening

The buses taking us to the big event were given magnificent clearance – police escorts. Traffic was held up for our passage. We traveled the wrong way on one way streets, ignoring red lights; and every mile of the way, people were cheering. They waved from doorways, on the sidewalks and from inside their cars and trucks.

A moving ceremony at the beautiful Norwich Cathedral preceded the trip to the Forum, site of the Library. Organ music thundered through the beautiful church, soprano voices rang in jubilation, and the Bishop prayed for

the 6700 airmen who lost their lives in the cause of freedom.

Daniel Butler carried the Roll of Honor from the Cathedral to the Forum. Government and church leaders, dad in fine robes, conducted a magnanimous Dedication Ceremony. Major General Kenneth Hess, son of a WWII airman who flew out of Hethel, arranged for a fly-over by two Jaguars followed by a Tanker. That was fast but dramatic; in one "whoosh," they were gone. The Band of the Dragoon Guards provided stirring music - The Star Spangled Banner and God Save the Queen. There were glowing speeches – some serious, some whimsical. Paul King, chairman of the Memorial Trust, drew attention to a difference in English and American thinking: "In English, 100 years is a long time."

The message from President George W. Bush, referring to the men who were being memorialized: "They gave their lives in the defense of free men everywhere."

From Queen Elizabeth: "All of us will remember with everlasting gratitude their bravery and sacrifice in the defense of freedom during this

country's hour of need. I hope their entire visit to Norfolk will be a happy one, strengthening still further the unique bond of friendship between our two countries."

More than 800 people attended the Banquet, both English and American. Speakers reiterated the chain of events leading to the Grand Opening



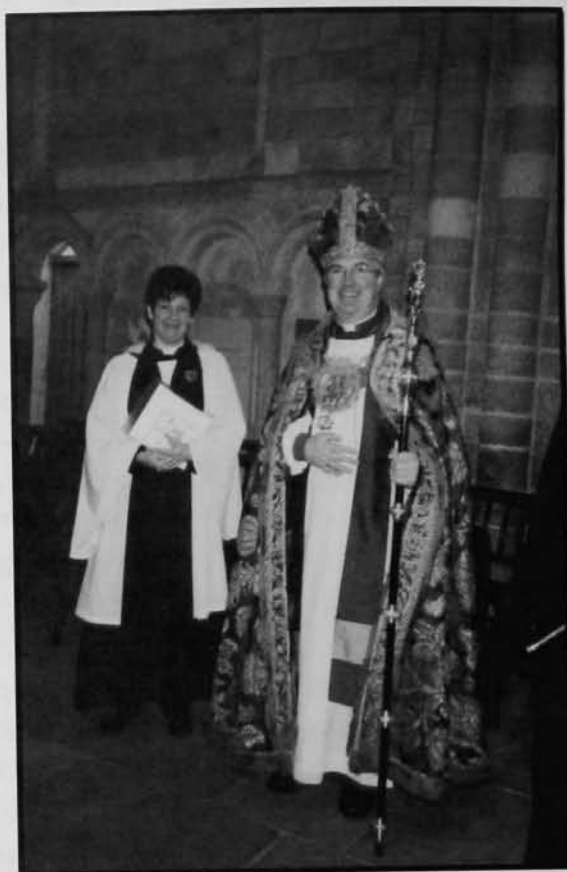
Daniel Butler carried the Roll of Honor from the Cathedral to the Forum.



of the Library. Already it is a resource for students from local high schools and colleges for research about America. It is all there – the story of America, its history, folklore, customs, geography and much more. By computer a student can find information in the 44th database. Books about WWII carry pictures of our heroes, with descriptions of their combat histories.

The Americans' presence in WWII England is called, "The Friendly Invasion." Time after time we were reminded of their deep gratitude. The 2AD's brochure responded succinctly: "We came as friends; we stayed as friends; we have remained friends."

One tragedy accompanied all the happiness of the UK trip. Frank Drake, son-in-law of Dick and Ardith Butler, became ill and was hospitalized in Norwich. He flew home several days after the group's return, and passed away several weeks later. Our sympathies go out to his wife Kay and the entire Butler family.



*Colorful dignitaries
at the Forum.*



Congratulations are in Order

With no fanfare whatsoever, Col. **Richard Butler** was elevated to a position of distinction: Executive Vice President to the 2nd Air Division. It is no secret that attending the Grand Opening and Dedication of the Memorial Library is the culmination of a great dream for Dick. The 8 Ball Tails salutes Col. Butler and the 2 AD for bringing a great dream to fruition.

Representing the 44th BG to the 2 AD is **Julian S. Ertz**, whose title will be group Vice President of the 44th BG.

Banquet

Grand Opening and Dedication of the Memorial Library

Banquet



Painting by T/Sgt. Ludwig Lund
Planes in Flight



Jan & Steve Adams



George & Beryl Apgar



Lt. Robert Dubowsky and Irma



Col. James & Marian Wright



FOR SALE

**Flying 8 Ball Patches - \$15 + \$1 Postage
(Please specify Squadron)
Back Issues of 8 Ball Tails - \$5**

**Write: 44th BGVA
P.O. Box 712287
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287**

**Flying 8 Ball Shirts - \$25 + \$3 Postage
Flying 8 Ball Caps - \$15 + \$2 Postage
Pins - \$5 + \$1 Postage**

**Write: Sam Miceli
6398 Dawson Blvd.
Mentor, OH 44060-3648**

Memories of “a Young Yank”

by Julian S. Ertz

In 1990, my wife and daughters and I attended the 2 ADA reunion in Norwich.

We 44th attendees were hosted by English families at a Sunday dinner in Shipdham. The Ertz family was hosted by a lovely young lady named Sandra Howson and her then 10 year old daughter, Karen. I invited Sandra to attend our banquet at our November, 2000 reunion. Also I visited her daughter's home. When I was ready to leave for the Jarvis Hotel, I had trouble getting up out of a soft large chair. Young Karen offered to help me, but I told her I thought I could make it. Her clear and cute response to this over 80 year old was, “Oh, that's okay. We like to help you good looking young Yanks.”

Recent months have been most enjoyable with attendance at the 44th BG reunion at Shreveport, Louisiana in October, and the Second ADA at Norwich in November. Those responsible deserve the greatest credit. My hats are off to Mike Yuspeh, Roy Owen, Mike Mikoloski, Jerry Folsom, Dick Butler, the marvelous Evelyn Cohen, and, of course, our wonderful English friends, David and Jean Hastings, John Page, Steve Adams and others.



Julian Ertz and Sandra Howson

It is a small world. Immediately before WWII, I attended Temple University in Philadelphia. And, as we often observe, the world gets smaller. At the 44th reunion in Louisiana, I met and enjoyed visiting with Sidney Paul. Sid and I attended Temple University at the same time. He and his wife, Elizabeth, now live in Chicopee, Massachusetts. In Norwich, I ran across Leon (Lee) Lowenthal who also attended Temple University when I did. In fact, we were both varsity athletes at the same time -- he as a fencer and I as a football player.



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY IN EASTBOURNE



If a veteran ever feels lonely and unappreciated, a trip to Eastbourne, England would clear up the problem. Eight members from the 44th accepted the kind invitation of Kevin Watson; and following the festivities at Norwich, took a three day sojourn to south England.

Transported in an oversized van, Kevin gave us a running account of all that happened in the beautiful countryside through which we traveled, including a glimpse at the estate of the one and only Winston Churchill.

We arrived in time to keep a 4:00 p.m. appointment with Mayor Stevens and Mayoress Jane Stevens, and receive a comprehensive report on government policies. "Mr. Mayor," as he is always addressed, is a representative of the Queen. Other Councillors elect him, rather than directly by the populace. When he is addressing the Councillors, he wears a sweeping red robe and two ornate gold chains that drape across his shoulders. He is always preceded by an aide who carries The Mace. This is a heavy Gold Gilt rod with a crown at the top, a reminder that the Mayor always represents the Queen.



Kevin Watson & Dick Butler at the RAF Club.

The Auxiliary of the Royal Air Force hosted a luncheon in our behalf, a golden opportunity for their airmen to exchange stories about their wartime experiences. That evening we dined at the Nelson Hotel with many of our English friends, including Councillor and Mrs. Ron Parsons, former Mayor of Eastbourne. Mayor Parsons was influential in the creation of the Ruth-less monument on Butts Brow. (This came about by the urging and assistance of Kevin Watson.)

He added that he hoped the memorial would attract Americans to visit that beautiful city; and in fact, it did.

Will Lundy carried the Stars and Stripes in The Remembrance Day Parade, walking alongside an English flag bearer with the Union Jack. Remembrance Day coincides with American's Veterans Day, November 11. (It cannot be forgotten that on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the Treaty of Versailles was signed, ending WWI). All Veterans, English and American, who gave their lives fighting for their country, were remembered, as were the victims of the September 11th tragedy.

Perry Morse, marching directly behind Mayor David Stevens, laid a wreath on the town monument for the Americans who died in WWII. Every group of marchers, 25 Veterans Associations, honored their lost members also. When the event was over, the monument at the Square was ablaze with poppy wreaths.



Mayor David Stevens displays his gold chains, presented by the Duke of Devonshire.

Irene Lundy and your editor marched in the



Dan & Dick Butler lay the flowers on the Ruth-less. Butler had flown this plane at times.



procession, and were amazed to find that we were applauded by the spectators all along the block to the RAF Club.

Then we jumped into Kevin's car for the ride up Butts Brow to the Ruth-less Memorial. It was beautiful. Again, Will Lundy carried the flag, holding it erect when the English groups dipped theirs in honor of the moment. Dick Butler and son Danny laid an American flag made of flowers on the monument. Kevin pointed out that grass surrounds the monument, but no other vegetation, presumably the effect of the fuel that splattered when the plane hit the ground.

More than 1,000 people attended the Festival of Remembrance at the Congress Theater that evening. Again, Will Lundy carried Old Glory. There was a standing ovation when the Americans were recognized. Light comedy preceded the serious part of the musical performance. The Real Dad's Army was a take-off of older members of the community who were assigned the task of guarding the coastline. They showed up with brooms, mops and a medieval spear, ready to ward off the Nazis. When they were issued guns, they shot madly in all directions, but before long, they had shaped up as a fitting group of warriors - all except one. He fell asleep when the drilling began, and was finally aroused when the curtain closed on their act.

At the conclusion of a lively night of entertainment, poppy petals showered down on the Eastbourne Silver Band. Band members were literally blanked in red. It was a breathtaking finale to an amazing celebration.



Farewells outside the RAF Club.

(Ed. Note: The Remembrance Sunday celebration is an annual event in Eastbourne. Anyone who wishes to assemble a group to attend this event can contact Kevin Watson. He can provide transportation and all amenities for a truly exhilarating experience. Kevin can be reached at 29 Downs Valley

Road, Eastbourne BN 20 9 QG, or by e-mail; KPWats7@aol.com).



Commemorative Poster

For Sale \$6

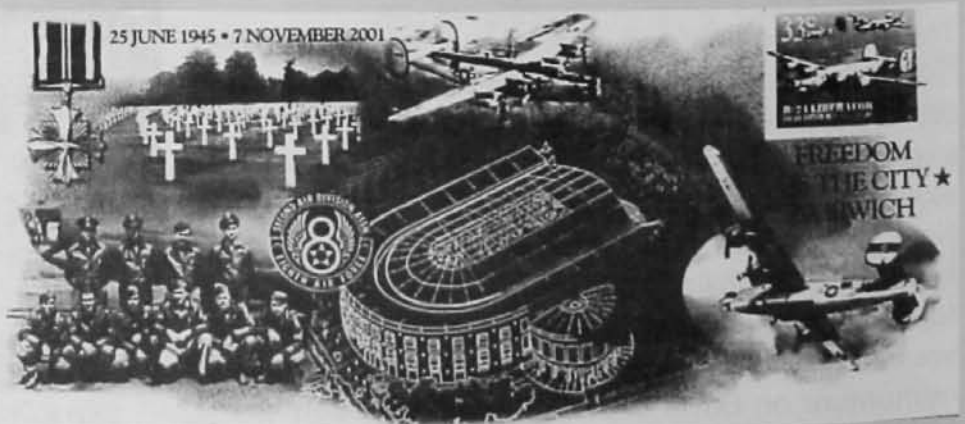
which includes shipping and handling.

Contact: Alan Senior

610 Salerno Street

Sugar Land, TX 77478

Telephone: (281) 494-2445 • Email: sralan@att.net



An Eighth Air Force Liberator Station, England



15 June 1944
The Hruby Crew

1st Row:

Bob Petkoff (Tail Gunner)
w/dog named Mal-Function;
Bartley Twins (Waist Gunners),
Cletus Clark (Engineer).

2nd Row: David H. Appenzellar
(Unknown Assignment),

Ed Rosenberg (Navigator),
Thomas Smith (Co-Pilot),
Richard Hruby (Pilot),
Herman Flugman (Temporary
Bombardier),
Euclide Blanchard (Radio Operator).
Missing from photo: Everette Foster,
(Ball Turret Gunner).

Brad Wallingford, nephew of **Thomas Bartley**, sent this report to Art Hand. Fount and Thomas Bartley were twins and both waist gunners on the crew of Lt. Richard J. Hruby. It was written by T/Sgt. **David H. Appenzeller**, June 15, 1944.

(Editor's speculation: This mission must have been a bridge in Tours, France, only one of three by the author of this article. His descriptions are so poetic, he must have been sent on the mission as a writer.)

The Luftwaffe served notice today that it was not going to give the Allied Air Force freedom of the skies over France. Focks Wulfe 190's swept into Liberator formations and cascaded 20mm shells into flights of the heavy bombers as they attacked military targets in eastern France. I flew in a plane piloted by 2nd Lt. Richard J. Hruby of 1 Marlin Green, Washington, D.C., and, while the youthful pilot put his Liberator through violent evasive action, watched the bullets from the top-turret guns of T/Sgt. **Cletus C. Clark** of Roswell, South Dakota, turn one FW-190 into a smoke-trailing, uncontrollable loss to the Laftwaffe. In other sections of the French skies, I saw furious dogfights between U.S. P-51 Mustangs and German fighters with at least one of the enemy ships hurtling down to destruction.

The mirror-clear June day made the skies an arena of incredible beauty as the planes continually clashed in violent battles. The opposition failed to interrupt the bomb runs and I watched the heavy explosives speed down toward their objectives in patterns that were the acme of symmetry and accuracy.

Flying in the waist of the Liberator with twin brothers **Fount B.** "Boyd" and **Thomas L.** "Loyd" **Bartley** of Keystone, Oklahoma, manning the waist guns, I saw the blue pre-dawn haze of England end as the colorful landscape dipped into the English Channel. Later the equally peaceful appearing countryside of France rose from the waters apparently belying the fact that the greatest military clash of history was taking place on the placid looking beaches and fields. The skies too, were calm and quiet except for the hum of the Allied bombers as the aerial force of the invasion crossed into the Continent of Europe. Not long afterward, the first sign that enemy planes were about broke -- suddenly when a ship, which the keener eyes of the Liberator gunners identified as a FW-190, plummeted down from a height of well over fifteen thousand feet, spinning and twisting out of sight into a low cloud.

As Lt. Hruby continued on his course into France, 2nd Lt. **Herman C. Flugman** of 504 Grand Street, New York City, the bombardier, announced over the interphone that there were repeated 20mm bursts directly ahead. Approximately ten minutes later, the staccato bursts of Liberator gunners to our right gave notice that enemy fighters were sweeping to the attack. Pulling on past the Liberator formations and to the front once more, five or six Focks-Wulfes turned and started back through the flight of heavy bombers again. This time they headed toward Lt. Hruby's ship and as canon bursts exploded beneath the numbers one and two engines, Sgt. **Lark**



opened fire and riddled the attacking fighters. Boyd Bartley at the left waist gun and S/Sgt. **Robert Petkoff** of Carnegie, Oklahoma, the tail gunner, also sprayed bullets into the damaged aircraft as it sped by. The Liberator shook and groaned as the vibration of fifty calibre guns took effect. None of the gunners had the opportunity to watch the finish of the attacking Nazi, as they opened fire again on the second of the two planes.

During the period of this attack, Lt. Hruby put the Liberator into evasive action that mauled and pushed us around the waist of the ship. The Bartley twins who seemed to work in a perfect coordination that could anticipate the move of the other though their backs were turned, clung to their guns, and while I was thrown against the side of the ship, I heard the clatter of Boyd Bartley's gun rattle on undisturbed. Shortly after this, Mustangs and Thunderbolts engaged the enemy planes and also, though the Focke-Wulfes remained in evidence, no further attacks were made on our formation. After seeing our bombs drop on the target, we watched, in a period of comparative quiet, the explosions caused by other formations of bombers. Mustangs and Thunderbolts hovered about in protective groups as we made our way back. A Liberator with one engine knocked out and another smoking, fell to the rear of the formation and four Thunderbolts fell back with it as support for the return trip. From a town to the left, as Lt. Hruby guided the Liberator back, brilliant flashes appeared as anti-aircraft batteries opened fire. In the sky, the explosions appeared as puffs of wispy, black smoke that seemed slight and harmless. As they continued however, the clusters of sooty patches hung motionless in the air and took on a forbidding atmosphere. Finally the welcome blue waters of the English Channel appeared once more and with the break of tension came jocular and raucous chatter over the interphone.

The patchwork of the English fields never appeared so lovely and serene as when they passed smoothly beneath us on the return to base. As we neared our airfield, we looked down and silhouetted upon the light, half-transparent clouds was the show of our Liberator completely circled by a perfect rainbow of the most brilliant reds, blues and yellows. The entire crew watched it with me, forgetting now the earlier encounters, the deadly guns and the load of destruction that had been our cargo as we left the base some hours earlier. The shadow and rainbow glided along beside us, disappearing finally as the airfield pushed into view. Lt. Hruby slowly let the bomber down as we headed in to land.



The Queen Honored Us

After September 11, Queen Elizabeth joined a group outside Buckingham Palace, singing the Star Spangled Banner. She knew the words. Perhaps we should know their anthem. The tune is a familiar one,

"America."

God save our precious Queen

Long live our noble Queen

God save the Queen!

Send her victorious

Happy and glorious

Long to reign over us,

God save the Queen.

Not on this land alone

But be God's mercies known

From shore to shore.

Lord, make the nations see

That men should brothers be

And form one family!

The wide world o'er.

MAIL & E-MAIL



Only the General Complained

B/General Robert Cardenas's article had an error. He was never Commander of the 44th Bomb Group. Nobody else noticed the misinformation. Thanks General Cardenas, for pointing it out.



Interesting quotes from Norwich: One member of the arriving party at Heathrow asked the bus driver whether he stopped at Stop Signs. Answer: "Not Very Often."



A verse by Rudyard Kipling, speaking as the British soldiers who were mortally wounded in battle:

"When you go home, tell them of us, and say,
"For your tomorrow, we gave our today."

Speaking of Churchill, Kevin Watson told of a quote from those who knew this great leader: "It is said that he had 100 ideas a day for winning the War, but only about four were any good!"

In the Memorial Library, a quote from an unnamed Italian engineer who is working in the Norwich area: "I was born in Venice, Italy. Even though our house was bombed, we still prayed the Americans would win. Thank you for fighting the War. We have a good life because you won the War."

In the Cathedral, a mother carrying a child, "When I was a young girl, I came to the American planes on your airfields. The American airmen were wonderful to the children. Now I am praying for the safety of our American and Canadian friends. (Ed. Note: *The English share our concerns for terrorists.*)

Before the ceremonies preceding the Dedication of the Library, the police swept the Church, searching for bomb After that it was locked and guarded until Remembrance Sunday.)



A reminder of the past, a reproduced Norwich RATION BOOK was distributed to each guest, entitling the weekly ration of: Bacon 4 ozs; Butter 4 ozs; Sugar 12 ozs; Tea 2 ozs; Meat 6p per week; Dried egg powder 4 ozs. (when obtainable).

In the Nelson Hotel, a quote from George F. Wright: "I was building a few airplane models for fun. When I came across Roger Freeman's book, "The Mighty Eighth," I became really interested in the Formation Planes. When the word got around, veterans sent me pictures of planes. I liked the *Lemon Drop* used at Shipdham, with its yellow and black stripes. In due time members of 2nd Air Division became interested in my models, so I kept making them." (Ed Note: *Wright's Formation Assembly Planes line the walls of the Library in a most creative way. He has preserved an intricate part of WWII history.*)

On Butts Brow in Eastbourne, two middle aged men: "We were on the mountain when the plane struck. We had cut school that day, and the awesome sight has never been lost from our memory."



It Wasn't Miss Diane

The cover picture on the Winter 2001 magazine was labeled *Miss Diane*, an assumption based on the fact that it was presented to the 44th tour when visiting Rouen. Actually, it was *Suzy Q*, General Johnson's plane; the scene was Ploesti. Roy Owen suspected that the picture was mislabeled; Dick Butler confirmed it. He has the original piece of art.





Did You Know This?

If the Liberator crews felt they were outshone by the Fortresses, look at how the 15th AF felt toward the 8th. The tune is "As Time Goes by."

It's still the same old story,
The Eighth gets all the glory
While we go out and die.
The fundamental things apply
As flak goes by.



From the diary of T/Sgt. **Clarence W. Strandberg**: Will Lundy found some unanswered questions. He knew that when the Air Echelon departed Will Rogers Field in Oklahoma, they picked up new B-24DS to fly to England. At that time they were headed for combat, but it was stated that they were short several Radio Operators. However, Will never came across any documents that showed how or from where these men arrived to fill these very important vacancies until he came to page 7 of Strandberg's diary.

May 1942 BUSH PARK, HYWYCOMBE AND SHIPDHAM, ENGLAND

One day a notice appeared on the bulletin board that volunteers with radio experience were needed to go to a radio and gunnery school to learn English radio procedure. The promise was that we would have ham and eggs in the morning and mutton in the evening. The plan was to fly the trained radio operators back to the States where we would have ham and eggs. After breakfast each radio operator was to board a different plane which would be the lead plane in a formation of bombers flying to England. As English trained radio operators, we would have the know-how and equipment to guide the formation on a radio beam to an English airfield where we would get our mutton dinner. Well, to make a long story short, by the time our radio and gunnery course was over, every Tom, Dick and Harry was flying his own

bomber across the Atlantic and they didn't need our services anymore.

Now that we had gone to gunnery school, John Cole, Adolph Brzozowy, Oscar Kreissig, Goodman, Don Bowie and I volunteered for combat duty and were assigned to Hardwick, a B-25 and B-26 Base. The twin tailed B-25 is the same plane that Doolittle flew on the famous Tokyo raid in 1942. I enjoyed flying on the B-25, but the B-26 was another story. The B-26 had stubby wings, and I always felt uneasy when flying in it because it took off and landed so fast. Now I read in The World War II Quiz and Facts Book by Timothy Benford that, "The Martin Marauder B-26, a medium weight bomber was known as the Flying Prostitute because it had no visible means of support. It was also called the Widow Maker for a time after it began service in 1942 because it was said to be unsafe."

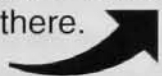
3 February 1943

Our next assignment was to Shipdham Airfield near Norwich. Shipdham was headquarters for the 68th Squadron of the 44th Bomb Group and we would be flying our combat missions on the B-24 Liberator bomber. A few days after we arrived, I became part of Major Norsen's crew that was going to fly up to an altitude of about 30,000 feet to test the viscosity of different oils on the nine 50 caliber machine guns that we carried. At that altitude the temperature can be anywhere from 20 to 50 degrees below zero and it would be suicide to have our guns freeze up and not be able to return the fire of enemy aircraft in combat. We had reached altitude and the performance of the machine guns was being tested. The oil on two of the guns became so heavy and sticky from the cold that they would not fire. We noted the type of oil used on the seven guns that fired and how well they performed.

About this time, I had the urge to relieve myself and went over to the pee tube, I found that the air hose to my oxygen mask was too short to reach over there. Instead of finding and

hooking up to a portable oxygen bottle, I foolishly reasoned that I could hold my breath for two minutes. Well, the project took longer than two minutes and when I ran out of breath and inhaled, I fell forward in a heap. My good friend Adolph Brzozowy quickly reconnected my oxygen mask to the air supply hose and then he straddled me as he pushed the mask firmly against my face. When I came to, I yelled, "What are you doing? You're hurting me! Get off!" As I looked up at him, the moisture from his breath had formed white hoar-frost around his helmet and oxygen mask, and he looked like my guardian angel, which he was, for he saved my life.

Our pilot, Major Robert Norsen had turned the controls of the plane over to his co-pilot with instructions not to fly above 33,000 feet. Norsen was on a portable oxygen bottle in the rear of the plane with us monitoring the performance of the firing machine guns. When Norsen saw me collapse, he moved quickly back up front. There he found the co-pilot unconscious and the plane on automatic pilot, with the ailerons trimmed up to gain altitude. When Captain Norsen seated himself at the controls, the altimeter read 40,000 feet. He immediately dove the plane down at 10,000 feet per minute. We leveled out over an English airfield and since it was an emergency, put the plane down there.



Later, when we were interrogated and asked how high we had flown, Norsen said, "40,000 feet." The interrogator said, "Are you sure? because the plane is designed to go no higher than 33,000 feet." Norsen said, "All I know is that when I took over the controls, the altimeter read 40,000 feet." When asked how fast he dove the plane, he said, "10,000 feet per minute." The interrogator said, "Impossible, the wings would have fallen off." Norsen said, "According to the instruments, I know I dove the plane down at 10,000 feet per minute."

Eddie Waite, our engineer, the co-pilot, and I all passed out but were revived and survived. One of the two men in the nose of the plane

could not be revived and died, **Henry Krustsch**. If mother nature's call hadn't been so urgent, and if the pilot hadn't been so quick and heroic, none of us would be alive to tell the story.

Most of the combat crews were at Shipdham and had all flown and trained together in the States and had developed close friendships. John Cole, Oscar Kreissig, Adolph Brzozowy, Goodman, Don Bowie and I had none of that background and did not belong to a combat crew. On days when combat missions were scheduled, the six of us reported to the briefing room and were put on a standby status. Since we were all trained, in both radio and gunner, we could fill either position when someone else was sick. And believe me, there were always sick radio operators and gunners.

A tour of duty consisted of twenty-five completed combat missions. Being anxious to get in my twenty-five missions so that I could go back home to the States, kept me volunteering for every mission.

The Germans and British flew their bombing missions under the protection of darkness. When the Americans came and announced that we would be flying our missions in the daytime, the English thought we were crazy and that we would never succeed because our casualties of both men and bombers would be too heavy. They were sure that we would be sitting ducks for the experienced pilots of the Luftwaffe under the command of Herman Goering. Many of the German pilots were Aces, which meant that they had already shot down five planes or more. As a matter of Honor and Distinction, and also probably to instill fear in us, each Ace had a bright yellow spinner in the center of his propellers. And believe me, the yellow spinners were very visible as the fighter planes made their many passes through our bomber formations.

From the Shipdham Airfield, I flew a total of ten missions over Germany, Holland, Belgium and



France. The British were right in assuming that our losses would be heavy, but what they probably didn't realize was that Uncle Sam had large reserves of bombers and men to sacrifice for the war effort. Life didn't mean very much, for we were all expendable. You could be here today, and gone tomorrow and replaced, without a tear, by a young man, who would be replaced by a young man, who would be replaced by a young man. By the time I was shot down, there had been 400 percent replacement of the flying personnel in our outfit. The night before a bombing mission, there would be twenty-four guys sleeping in our quonset hut type barracks. The night after the mission, there could be as few as twelve men in the barracks. All the rest were either dead, prisoners of war, or in the hospital. But not to worry, for in a few days, the new replacements from the States would arrive and the barracks would be full again. One crew left the United States, and after a days rest, they went on a bombing mission and were shot down. So for that unlucky crew, it was only three days from the time they left the States until they were either killed or prisoners of war.

From the Editor:

As a publicist, I try very hard not to highlight the same people repeatedly. However, the happenings in this publication were so awesome, the stories could not be related, without showing the people involved. Many of the same members of the 44th Bomb Group Veteran's Association were at all the events, to their delight and great joy.

WILL LUNDY'S FOLLOW UP REPORT:

His diary goes on, but to get back to the Radio Operators, Strandberg flew 10 missions, including Kiel and Ploesti. But on 16 August 1943, he went down as a member of Lt. Shannon's crew that was shot down over Foggio. Captured, he later escaped and returned to duty.

The other five Radio Operators were: Adolph Brzozowy, Donald Bowie, Melvin John Cole, Oscar Kreissig and August T. Goodman. They, too, paid a high price. Briefly, here is their record:

BOWIE, Donald - 66th Squadron - Joined Capt. **Adam's** crew. Flew seven missions with them; first was on 12 December 1942, and the last one was 26 February 1943, when he was KIA, along with nine others.

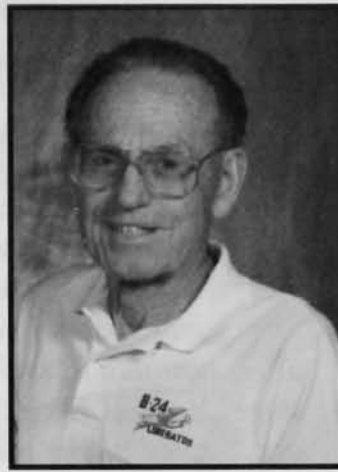
BRZOWOWY, Adolph E. - 68th Squadron - Flew his first mission with the **Cramer** crew on 2 February 1943. His 19th was with the Lt. **Garrett** crew, with Robert Lehnhausen, forced to ditch in the Med and was injured. He is now a Life Member of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association.

COLE, Melvin John - 68th Squadron - Completed nine missions, starting with the 2 July 1943, ditching with the Garrett/Lehnhausen crew, when he was injured in the chest. He recovered sufficiently to fly the Ploesti Low Level Raid. His last mission was again with Lt. Lehnhausen on 20 October 1943.

KREISSIG, Oscar - 67th Squadron - His first mission was on 15 February 1943 as a member of the **Damron** crew. Unfortunately, his eighth mission was on 8 March 1943, with the **Blaine** crew. He was killed when they crashed in France.

GOODMAN, Earl E. - 66th Squadron - Earl's first of several missions was with Capt. **McCoy's** crew in December, 1942. After McCoy was killed in a training accident, Earl went on with other pilots and had finished his tour but volunteered to fly his 26th mission with the Lt. Herbert Gentry crew on 1 August 1943 Ploesti raid flying *Forky II*. They were in the last wave over target "White Five" and after suffering Anti-Aircraft fire damage during entry; when reaching the target explosions took out two engines and killed two gunners. Withdrawing from the target they were attacked and shot down by three ME-109s and left burning in a cornfield. The only survivor was Waist Gunner Charles Bridges who staggered out of the burning wreckage seconds before *Forky II* exploded. He was taken POW.

Will Sez



During the first week in November, Irene and I joined with approximately 20 other 44thers in attending the 2nd ADA reunion in Norwich, England. The primary reason for this big reunion in Norwich was to attend the many ceremonies in connection with the Grand Opening of the new American Room in the new Norwich Central Library in their huge new \$100,000,000 Forum building. Needless to say, everything in connection with it was super. The second big reason for attending was to hear the announcement that our Richard (Dick) Butler was now the Vice-President of the 2nd ADA. Also, every one of us was given the rare honor of "Freedom of the City" and we all wore the pins to prove it. It is sad that more of you members did not have these memorable experiences with us.

The 2nd ADA space in this new Forum is double that in the library that burned in 1994, and now it is as modern and up to date in exhibits and in equipment as possible. They now have several computers set up for the public's use. So on the last day's visit to "our" American Room, we found our English rep, Steve Adams, installing a new CD ROM furnished by Arlo Bartsch. So, immediately, the public now have access to our Military Heritage Database. We have been placing all available sortie reports, bios, members names, aircraft data and names, parts of my Roll of Honor book, parts of our 67th Squadron History mission summary pages, etc., into that CD, so it is constantly growing. This might not sound that great at first, but it does mean that the 44th BG is the ONLY Bomber Group in the 8th Air Force to accomplish this feat. Better than that, it also means that any visitors to that American Room can now have access to many details about every 44th BG member listed on their newly upgraded Roll of Honor Book. They can learn how each one of our heroes lost his life while fighting to preserve freedom for the Allies. This has been my goal for the past 25 years, but I doubted if it could ever happen.

We are not through yet - - not at all. Arlo has upgraded his program to add the large number of diaries and personal stories that all of you members have so kindly provided. From these diaries and stories, Arlo can and will abstract all of the mission data from these diaries, stories and facts, and attach them to the individual daily missions that were involved. In so doing, persons researching for, or simply browsing, through our individual sortie reports can learn the personal aspects of, or personal stories about, this plane, this crew and this mission. This program can bring to life much of what happened on those sorties, so much more than the basic facts, bring in the personal experiences. If all goes well and we make enough progress, some of this progress could be available for viewing by those who attend our next reunion. Please try to attend our Omaha reunion this October and view it for yourself. I HOPE THAT YOU WILL LIKE IT.

When the reunion was over on November 9th, one of our greatest supporters in England, Kevin Watson, arranged to transport nine of us (five of them, Dick Butler and family) drove us to Eastbourne on the southeastern coast of England on the English Channel. Kevin was the driving force behind that cities' efforts to put in place the Ruth-Less memorial located on the hill directly behind that beautiful city. The Bolin crew is memorialized there and is where they hold an annual memorial ceremony. Kevin has managed to get the full support of the Mayor and most of the local citizens behind this memorial. He also compiled and printed a book 'Ruth-Less' And Far From Home covering the Bolin crew and their plane named 'Ruth-Less.' Very well done.

From the time that we arrived in Eastbourne on Friday evening until Monday morning, we got the Royal Treatment from everyone. On Sunday their annual event was sponsored by the Eastbourne Combined Ex-Services Association, most of whom are former military personnel. When they learned that a few of us American Veterans and families would be visiting their city, they asked Kevin to invite us to join with them in their Remembrance Day activities. This we did on Sunday, Remembrance Day, from the parade in the morning, to the RAFA noon luncheon, the Ruth-Less Memorial that afternoon, finished that evening at the Congress



Theatre. Each of those events was excellent, well planned and professional in every way.

In the two prior events that day, I carried our Stars and Stripes side by side with the British flag bearer. Most of us are aware of how professional the British are in their marching and their ceremonies, and this was no exception, so I did my best to keep in step at least. The evening event turned out to be a rare event where the American Flag was so prominent, I would like to describe this event for you but with YOU being the flag bearer, not me. These grand people were honoring our Flag because of what all of you accomplished here in helping secure the freedom they now continue to enjoy.

This event, the Festival of Remembrance, held at their Congress Theatre, is sponsored by the Eastbourne Combined Ex-Services Association with nearly every type of military unit being represented. Each of them is quite proud of his own banner, etc. so they were excited, and eager to perform. The normal procedure was for each one of them to have one representative. The standard procedure was for he or she to march into the building from the left side near the rear, across to the left main aisle, turn left to go down to the front, turn left again across the front of the stage, up a flight of stairs, and march out to a designated point on the stage. Each single flag bearer was accompanied by strong, stirring marching band music. As soon as that banner carrier reached his position, the next one in line would follow this same routine after being announced. You, as the bearer of the Stars and Stripes, would be the next from last in that long lineup, so you then tried to observe each one of those preceding you, learn how it should be done. But all of those ahead of you appear to be professionals at this exhibition, and you are now wondering how well you can manage to carry that long ten foot flagstaff properly, and try to keep in step with that great music.

Soon it was nearly your turn, the stage was nearly full now, the building was packed with over 1,000 viewers, and the program manager whispers

in your ear. You will be next, be sure to walk slowly, be careful not to hit your flag on an obstruction as you climb the stairs... Now it is your turn! You step into the aisle, raise your flag while the announcer asks the audience to stand please. You are on your way. Slowly, per the orders, you march into this huge building, find the aisle, turn into it, and make your way toward the stage. You feel like raising the flag higher, as you are "walled in" by everyone standing on both sides of you. However, with the great marching music, each step gets a bit easier, and you relax, even start to enjoy the show, buoyed considerably by that music. Near the front, you turn to your left, over to the steps, and wobble a bit as you maneuver the flag to miss the obstruction.

Now on stage, you continue to your assigned position, front and center. You turn to face the audience, plant your feet solidly, and for the first time you can get a full view of the audience. Everyone was still standing, the music continued to play, and those people were clapping, smiling and looking at you and your Flag. BUT it didn't stop when the music did. Those people continued to applaud and applaud, so you have the time to look around, meet the eyes of many up front. Then you search for the rest of our 44thers who are seated in the Honored Guest section close to the Mayor and his family.

If you are like me, you probably have never experienced such an ovation. So it is hard to describe the emotions traveling through your body; but it was wonderful. Sure, it was not for you personally, but it was for your Country, and you probably could never again be so proud to be associated with it. It brought tears to my eyes...

Shortly thereafter, that portion of the program ended, you marched off the stage, and soon joined with the others in the seats adjoining the Mayor. The rest of the evening proved quite invigorating as much as the music and show continued to honor we Americans. What a day!

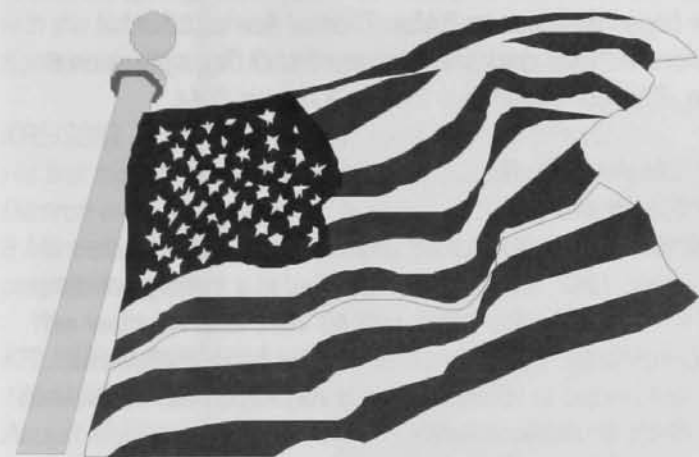
Best of all, they all sincerely requested that we return and bring more Americans with us. Would you like to go?

FOLDED WINGS

February, 2002

Prepared by:

Will Lundy



APPENZELLAR, DAVID Several years ago.
506th Squadron

This man is a bit of a mystery as he is not listed in Norm Kiefer's 506th Squadron History. Yet he is listed as a T/Sgt. and flew three rather widely spaced missions. He apparently performed some other duty than as a gunner. Missions flown: 10 June 1944 Van Ess Crew, listed as "Other." 15 June 1944 Hruby Crew, listed as "Unknown." 15 April 1945 Jarvis Crew, listed as Sgt. Observer. Art was informed that David folded his wings several years ago. He wrote an article about the Hruby crew that ditched successfully on 29 April 1944.

ARCHER, FRANCIS 1997 Squadron Unknown

BARTLEY, THOMAS L..... 2 August 1995 38274340
506th Squadron

Gunner on the R.J. Hruby crew. Thomas was one of the Bartley twins that were gunners for Lt. Hruby. He flew his first mission on 20 April 1944. Nine days later, they made a very rare successful ditching, where no member was seriously injured, and the airplane was almost undamaged. They managed to get both life rafts out, and all men were rescued within an hour. He went on to complete 31 missions alongside his twin brother, Fount. The last mission was dated 11 July 1944. He was 73 years old when he passed away.



BOWIE, DONALD 12 December 1942
66th Squadron Joined the Capt. Adam's crew. Flew seven missions with them; first on 12 December 1942, and the last was 26 February 1943, when he was KIA, along with nine others.

CLARK, CHARLES F..... 14 August 1987
33205104 506th Squadron

S/St. Charles Franklin Clark transferred to the 44th BG from the 489th BG on 16 November 1944, on the Louis C. Confer crew. Flew nine missions, including 23 December 1944 mission to the Battle of the Bulge, Ahrweiler Road Choke Point, for the 44th BG. Drafted June, July or August of 1942. Aerial Gunnery School at Tyndall Field, Florida, Class 43-13. U.S.A.F.F. Technical School at Gulfport, Mississippi September 1942 (748). Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho (29th BG) to Wendover Field, Utah (489th BG) P.O.E. Camp Miles Standish, Boston, Massachusetts, on board U.S.S. Wakefield on 13 April 1944. Docked on 21 April 1944 at Liverpool, stationed at Halesworth until November 1944, when transferred to Shipdham. The Confer crew had completed 27 missions with the 489th BG prior to the period with the 44th BG. Served as Top Turret Gunner, (one mission), Nose Gunner and Bombardier (Toggler), on the Louis C. Confer crew in the 506th. Served in the 2525 A.A.F.B.U. Squadron C, Liberal Air Base, Liberal, Kansas. Greatest event in life, married Luceille Irene Becker of Jefferson City, Missouri. Father to Mary Kathleen Clark (Danforth), Charles F. Clark, Jr., and Ann Becker Clark (Berkbigler). Grandfather to Victoria Danfort of Plano, Texas. Father-in-Law to Alan Danforth and Randy Birkbigler. Died in Sherman, Texas. Interment at Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Aspen Hill, Maryland. This information was lovingly submitted by his nephew, Christopher D. Clark.

CLICK, THEODORE S..... 11 December 2001
14200101 68th Squadron

Ted served as Tail Gunner on the William Dolan crew which arrived in the 68th Squadron on 25 October 1944. He flew his first mission on 4 November and completed his tour of 32 (or more) on 18 April 1945. Mission April 4 through 7 are missing from the Archives, so quite possible he flew one or more of them. He flew home with the Undsay crew on aircraft 41-10504 in late May, 1945.

CURRIE, LEONARD L (Bruno) 24 November 2000
67th Squadron

Sgt. Currie served as Tail Gunner for the John J. Mueller crew for ten missions. His first was on 8 April 1944 and last was with the J.J. Mueller crew on 1 May 1944. A total of ten missions. It is not known why he left the crew. He was born on September 13, 1915 in Cross City, Florida. He graduated from the U of F in 1938. He entered the Army Air Corps in 1942, where he served with the



44th BG as a tail gunner on a B-24. He was discharged in 1945, and was employed by The Texas Company in Tallahassee, Florida. He was transferred in 1947 to Jackson, Mississippi where he worked as a Landman/District Landman for eight years. In 1955, he was transferred to Texaco's Division office located in New Orleans. Since 1980, he and wife Sue, have traveled extensively. They were married on September 13, 1945 on his birthday. They have two children, a daughter and son, and four grandchildren.

DAVIDO, FRANK..... 27 December 2001

0-740007 68th Squadron Pilot
Frank was a co-pilot on the Ben Gildart crew that arrived at Shipdham on 19 June 1943. His first mission was on 13 August when he flew as an observer on the Robert Lehnhausen crew. He was curious to learn what a real mission was like. After three missions as co-pilot for Ben Gildart in September, he began flying with new 1st pilots as an experienced pilot for training purposes. After becoming a first pilot in late March 1994, he was promoted to Operations Officer and received his Captaincy on 7 May. He continued to fly missions as a Command Pilot with many new pilots and crews. His last two missions were flown with PFF Lead crews, still as Command pilot. His last mission was dated 17 October 1944, to complete a 27 mission tour in more than 14 months of combat duty.

DOUGLAS, W. GORDON.....9 December 2001

1st Sgt. of 14th CBW operations or details. However, Gordon has been a long time member of the 44th BGVA.

EDDINGS, ROBERT H..... 5 December 2001 14071665 67th Squadron Ground Crewman

Bob was with the Ground Echelon that went to England on the Queen Mary in early September 1942. He served briefly with the Baccash crew. In late June 1943, Bob was one of the many ground support personnel that were placed on Temporary Duty with the 389th BG, which was sent to Africa in preparation for the Ploesti low-level mission. Upon his return to Shipdham in September, he joined with the W.J. Burrell crew when it was formed, and continued there until victory in Europe in 1945. In 1944, Bob met and married Kay, his Scottish girlfriend, life-long love. They lived near the base. Bob was an active and a generous supporter of the 44th BG organizations, and a dear close friend.

ELIAS, JACOB T..... 12 November 2001

13100737 68th Squadron

'Jake' joined the 68th Squadron on 3 October 1943. He flew his first mission on 26 April 1944 as a nose gunner. The next day he flew his second mission, also as a nose gunner, was wounded by flak, and spent several days at the 231st Station Hospital. On May 31st, he joined the Joy M. Smith crew to fly his third mission, and many more during the summer. Later he flew missions with several

crews until he completed his tour of duty on 30 December 1944. He was returned to the US on 29 January 1945. He was buried in the Arlington National Cemetery. He is survived by his four children. Jake wrote and published at least two books.

FERRELL, THOMAS N..... 5 December 2001

506th Squadron

Thomas was the Tail Gunner on the J.W. Docktor crew that arrived in the 506th Squadron in late April 1944. After the pilot, Lt. Docktor flew his first mission as a co-pilot on 3 May, the entire crew began their tour on 7 May. Thomas flew all 32 of his missions with this crew, including the first D-Day mission on 6 June. They completed their tour on 3 August 1944.

GOODMAN, EARL E..... 26 December 1942

66th Squadron

Earl's first of several missions was with Capt. McCoy's crew in December, 1942. After McCoy was killed in a training accident, Earl went on with other pilots, until his 26th, as a volunteer with the Gentry crew, piloted by Lt. Gentry. He had completed his tour, but elected to volunteer for this very important mission, and was KIA, with only one survivor.

GREGG, PAUL R..... 31 August 2001

37540403 66th Squadron

Paul was a gunner on the T.H. Daily crew that joined the 66th Squadron in late August 1944, after flying out of Bangor, Maine on 8 August. Paul flew most of his missions as a waist gunner, but also was in the nose turret on occasion. The crew's first mission was dated 30 September 1944. His last mission with Lt. Daily was on 24 February, as the pilot. He returned home due to death of his father. Paul then completed his tour of 34 missions with the A.C. Graham crew. His last mission was dated 14 March. Paul was a member of the 44th BGVA for many years.

KETCHUM, JACK..... 13 June 1945

66th Squadron

Killed in an aircraft accident while on route back to the US. As the war in Europe ended officially on 8 May 1945. Jack Ketchum and his crew were never placed in the official Roll of Honour, as listed in the American Room in the Norwich Library, England. It seems proper that he and his crew should be listed in the Folded Wings records, if not KIA. On 13 June 1944, while in route home in a 93rd BG aircraft, having taken off from Prestwick, Scotland to Iceland, possible mechanical problems arose, and while attempting to locate a temporary airfield in low clouds, crashed near Gairloch, western Scotland. Nine 66th Squadron crew members and six passengers were killed.

Listing of 44thers:

Ketchum, Jack B. - Pilot; Spencer, Jack N. - Co-pilot
Robak, Richard J. - Navigator; Gilles, Eldon L - Nose Gunner
Stammer, James C. - Radio Operator; Cheek, Hollbum L. - Engineer; Riefen, Herman - RW Gunner
Natkin, Albert E. - LW Gunner; Davies, Raymond C. - Tail Gunner



KOMASINSKI, BERNARD J.....Unknown
0-700477 506th Squadron Pilot

Lt. Komasinski and his crew crossed the Atlantic in 'style' aboard the Queen Elizabeth, along with 15,000 others. They arrived in the 506th Squadron on 21 July 1944, and quickly flew their first combat mission on 29 July, and five more until his last mission on 8 August 1944. On this mission to Perth they were having difficulty due to a runaway propeller, and could not keep up with the formation. The entire crew bailed out successfully, with eight of them, including Lt. Komasinski, managed to evade capture, with the help of the Free French, and return to duty. Lt. Komasinski stayed in the service, retired as a Lt. Col.

KREISSIG, OSCAR.....8 March 1943 67th Squadron

His first mission was on 15 February 1943 as a member of the Damron crew. Unfortunately, his eighth and final mission was on 8 March 1943 with the Blaine crew. He was killed when they crashed in France.

KRUEGER, ROBERT January 2001
12044523 68th Squadron

Aircraft Mechanic, ground crew. Robert was with the Ground Echelon that went to England in early September 1942 on board the Queen Mary. And like most of these men, worked the entire period out on the "Line" until the end of the war in Europe. He was successful in obtaining an airplane ride home, A/C #42-95021. Robert was very active in the 68th Squadron organization, was the publisher of their newsletter. He also possessed a color film taken on the base during the war showing many of his friends in action on the job and on bicycles, etc.

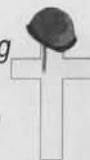
LYONS, JOHN W.....April 2001
0-668714 67th Squadron

'Jack' was the Bombardier on Harry L. Orthman's crew that flew many missions with the 492nd BG prior to their transfer to the 67th BS 13 August, 1944. Being an experience crew, they quickly flew their first mission with the 44th BG on 18 August. On many of their following missions, they were Lead crew. Jack flew three in August, two in September, four in October, four November and three in December. He finished his tour of duty on 3 January 1945, 17 missions with the 44th BG. He was a member of the 44th BGVA.

MEYERS, JOSEPH G..... 28 October 2001
T-128326 66th Squadron

Joseph was the co-pilot on the J. V. Derrick that arrived at Shipdham on 15 December 1944, and assigned to the 66th BS. They flew their first mission on 7 January 1945. Then three more in January and five in February, the last one being on the 25th. Target Aschaffenburg was bombed, but their aircraft was hit in one engine and the fuel cells were badly damaged. Meyers stated that as they were close to an auxiliary field in Belgium, they hoped to land there. But time ran out, and they had no time to locate it. The entire crew bailed out at about

3,000 feet, but five men were injured in landing, including Meyers. At the hospital, he learned he had fractures in his spine, spent nine months recuperating in hospitals in Europe and back in the U.S.



MULHOLLAND, WILLIAM J..... 10 July 2001 506th Squadron
William flew his first of 29 missions on 24 February 1944 as Hatch Gunner on the James Clement's crew, but not a regular crew member. It appears that he was utilized as a spare gunner, seldom flying on the same crew for any period of time nor any one position. His 29 missions covered a long period, from February 1944, with his last mission on 14 March 1945. He was a member of the 44th BGVA.

PAGE, LeROY L..... 18 August 1980 66th Squadron
LeRoy served as a gunner on the F. W. Sanders crew which was assigned to the 66th Squadron on 30 January 1945. After the pilot flew his first mission as a co-pilot on 25 February, the crew flew their first mission on 5 March. Their last mission took place on 25 April 1945, the last mission of the war in Europe. 13 missions completed are confirmed, and probably two more on the 3rd to 7th in April, for which the sortie reports are missing. This crew arrived at Bradley Field, Connecticut on 30 May 1945.

RAWLINS, JOHN M. 13 July 2001
66th Squadron

John was the Engineer on the N. V. Engelhardt crew which had transferred into the 66th Sq. on 17 May 1944 from the 458* BG, after having flown three missions with them. This crew was to fly PFF aircraft to serve as a lead crew. They flew their first lead mission on 29 May flying with the 446th BG. John flew his last one from Shipdham on 29 June, 11 missions in all. In that period, his crew had flown as lead or deputy lead for eight different Groups, none for the 44th BG. Then his crew transferred to the 466th BG. He is survived by his wife, Dolores, two sons, a brother, and two grandsons.

RUBY, ALBERT..... 22 November 2001
Albert served with the 464th Sub-Depot unit that provided skilled personnel for major repair work on the 44th BG aircraft.

RUSSELL, GEORGE E..... 14 April 1996
15330700 66th Squadron

George was the Engineer on the F. M. Musgrave crew that arrived in England in February, 1944, assigned to the 466th BG. They completed eight missions before being transferred to the 389th BG for Pathfinder training (PFF). When training was completed, they were transferred to the 66th Squadron on 5 May 1944. Three days later, on 8 May, while on a practice bombing run without gunners, was attacked, shot down near Great Yarmouth, with two men KIA. George parachuted and was okay. He joined the Paulino Ugarte crew, flew several PFF missions. On 18 September, he joined the M. M. Stevens crew. He completed his tour of 25 missions with them on 1 November 1944.





God Bless America!

SPEARMAN, CHARLES G..... 5 September 2001

14104095 67th Squadron

T/Sgt. Charles was Engineer on the L.M. Hansen crew that joined the 67th Squadron early in September 1943. Being an experienced crew, they were involved in training others until called for their first mission on 13 November. Damaged on their flight to the target, they bombed their target, but again were attacked over Holland. They made an amazing crash landing with no one seriously injured. All crewmen were taken POW immediately. They survived 18 months in Stalag 77-6. A book was written about this crew's time in service, author Jan J. Van der Veer (in Dutch). Unfortunately, it was never printed in English. Charles passed away when he was 80 years old. He is survived by his wife Dorothy, and two children, and two grandchildren.

SPROWL, KENNETH W. ... 4 October 2001

15389068 68th Squadron

Kenneth was the Radio Operator on the Joy Smith crew that joined the 68th Squadron on 26 April 1944. His first mission was dated 7 May 1944. On 29 May, he and one of the gunners were wounded. Kenneth continued to fly with the Smith crew until 6 August, then was on the S. Dobb crew, and then several others. He completed his tour of 34 missions with the W.G. Ritter crew.

TAYLOR, JOHN B..... 27 October 2001

0-812684 67th Squadron

John was the co-pilot on the J.J. Mueller's "Mizpah" crew that joined the 67th Squadron on 12 March 1944. His first mission was dated 8 April, one of the toughest missions of the war due to the loss of so many aircraft and crews. Four days later, his crew collided with the Mercer aircraft, but luckily, both made it back to Shipdham. John also participated in the D-Day invasion, flying both the first and third missions. On 25 July 1944, John and the J.J. Mueller crew completed their tour of duty. He was 80 years old, is survived by his wife, Marion and one son.

WRIGHT, GEORGE D. Jr..... 25 August 2000

0-703840 67th Squadron

1st. Lt. Wright was a Navigator on the E. E. Gossett crew that transferred from the 492nd BG on 13 August 1944. They had completed many missions while in that Group and were an experienced Lead Crew. Their first mission with the 44th BG was on 14 August, and their second the following day. Apparently, John had more missions to his credit, as he was credited with only six missions before he completed his tour on 26 September 1944. Cap?. Gossett continued on with a total of ten missions to complete his tour.



The Truth About Ploesti

I had difficulty believing my eyes when reading the Philip Ardery article in the July issue. Upon rereading this hatchet job on Colonel John Kane, and then Colonel Leon Johnson, I can only assume this is a poor attempt to elevate the stature of Ted Timberlake at the expense of those who flew and performed with gallantry on the August 1, 1943, Ploesti mission.

The article, which includes a confidential letter from Timberlake, is fraught with innuendo, half-truths and outright error and appears designed to mislead, and to reshape the facts. As an avid student of the Ploesti low-level raid and a son-in-law of Leon Johnson, I must, in good conscience, address a few of the most glaring problems with this article.

Ardery states that along with General Leon Johnson, Maj. Gen. Ramsey Potts and General Jacob Smart, he attended a postwar Ploesti symposium. Although invited, Lt. Gen. Timberlake did not attend. He apparently wrote a letter to Ardery in which he repeated a statement he had made to Ramsey Potts that he "couldn't talk to some of those people who really screwed up the mission, but yet pretend they did well." Since Smart was not on the mission and Potts was taken into Timberlake's confidence, only Kane and Johnson remain as Timberlake's reasons for boycotting the symposium.

Timberlake goes on to say in his letter to Ardery that "Kane and Johnson decided they were on the wrong route when they came to the Danube. They turned north on the Danube, just far enough to alert the early warning system." In fact, the early warning system had been alerted well before Kanes turn, and the German early warning radar was first alerted by the two leading groups when they climbed to 15,000 feet to avoid a wall of clouds. Kane's and Johnson's groups later penetrated this same cloud formation at a lower altitude behind the first two groups and could not have alerted the early warning system. Also, winds at altitude further increased the separation between the first two groups and the trailing three groups. Timberlake's claim that Kane and Johnson "decided they were on the wrong route," which caused them to make a turn that alerted the early warning system, is an outright falsehood.

Kane, upon punching through the weather, elevated he had moved in front of the two lead groups, and he made a turn to the west. Realizing he was still behind the two groups, he resumed his route to the target. His turn probably exacerbated the separation mentioned above but had no bearing upon early detection.

The last two paragraphs in Timberlake's letter are petty and self-serving. I have known the Timberlake family since childhood and always admired and respected them. This letter by Ted Timberlake is out of character and must have been triggered by latent jealousy or personal dislike.

The remainder of Ardery's comments, in my view, are questionable suppositions and personal conclusions. I feel that so-called "revelations" of this sort do a great deal of damage to the truth and reputation of brave and selfless commanders who not only put their lives on the line, but who performed their assigned missions with unparalleled efficiency.

Maj. Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg (ret.) • Tuscon, Arizona





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