



## 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



### 8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 3 - Issue #6

Journal of the  
44th Bomb Group  
Veterans Association

Fall, 2000

Non Profit Veterans Organization

EIN #68-0351397

## GRATEFUL EVADER

The first mission of the **Komasinski** crew was on OLE COCK #42-110024. The target was Bremen, Germany, bombing by PFF. According to **Frank Schaeffer**, flight engineer and top turret gunner, the crew had eleven men. They called the eleventh man a Carpetbagger. He was in charge of the radar jamming equipment, located in the left rear corner of the flight deck.



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The 8-Ball Tails ©

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

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# FRANK N. SCHAEFFER, GRATEFUL EVADER

Frank Schaeffer avoided the Army draft by joining the Army Air Corps in 1942, but after his sixth mission from Shipdham, he found himself climbing into back rooms and hiding in pits to elude marauding Germans and wondering what was the difference. After enlisting, he had to wait six months before he



FRANK SCHAEFFER 1943

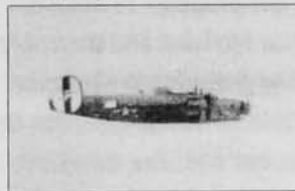
was inducted. So he took the opportunity to take night school courses at the local vocational school along with flying lessons. When the call came to report, he rode the Northeastern Railroad through a snowstorm, to arrive on time at the 8th Street Theater in Chicago.

Unfortunately, his dream to be a pilot faded, and he was sent to Shepard Field to study Airplane Mechanics, where the biggest irritant was the CQ who wakened them in the morning, "Drop your ---- and grab your socks." When he finished AM School, he went to Tyndall Field for Gunnery School; where he moved up to Buck Sergeant. To celebrate the completion of that program, and the rank that went with it, Schaeffer drank many beers and smoked a cigar. It didn't sit well. He barfed all over one of his roommate's foot locker!



FRONT LEFT TO RIGHT: BERNARD J. KOMASINSKI, pilot; W. SCOTT GIPPERT, co-pilot; EDGAR W. MICHAELS, navigator; CHARLES H. LAIN, bombardier. STANDING: STANLEY J. HULEWICZ, tail gunner; FRANK LAFAZIA, ball turret; JOHN H. MCKEE, radio operator; NELSON E. BROTT, left waist gun; WALTER E. JACOB, right waist gun; FRANK N. SCHAEFFER, flight engineer and top turret.

Soon attacks of pneumonia and rheumatic fever separated Schaeffer from his buddies. When he got back on his feet, he was assigned Engineer on Lt. B. J. Komasiński's crew. His memory of working with his new crew in Pueblo, Colorado was harrowing, exciting and coupled with bouts of air sickness--problems that passed when the serious business of war came to them. When their training was over, they set out for the trip on the Queen Elizabeth to the Firth of Clyde in Scotland.



BAR P, Ole Cock, 42-110024 FROM HARRY STEELE'S COLLECTION.

From Shipdham Schaeffer

flew in a succession of planes: *Ole Cock*, *Bar-P*, *Bar-L*, and *My Gal Sal*, each time getting back safely, notwithstanding holes in the planes. (*My Gal Sal* crashed on take-off several weeks later, but Schaeffer was not on board.)



HARRY STEELE, CREW CHIEF OF "OLE COCK," 42-110024

August 8, 1944 was a foggy morning, delaying take-off on the mission to the German airdrome near L'Perthe, France. Komasiński's plane, *My Peach*, had a substitute gunner, Coley Richardson, who was on his last mission. As it turned out, it was the last for all of them.

## Trouble Beginning

Until the plane reached the IP, Schaeffer remembers little flak activity. When they reached the bomb run to the target, the #2 engine began to speed, and he could not bring it back to cruising speed with the synchronizing switch. The rpms increased, and he could not slow them.

"We had a runaway propeller!!" he recalled. "She really howled and went to 4,500 rpm. Our co-pilot, W. Scott Gippert operated the feathering button, and the throttle was closed, but the propeller refused to feather.



"Meanwhile I had gone into the forward end of the bomb bay to turn off the #2 fuel selector valve. The fuel booster pump switch was also turned off, as well as the generator for that engine; but with everything off, it continued to run wild. Lt. Gippert asked me to replace the feathering fuse, but I shouted 'No fuse. Circuit breakers here' and pointed to four little red buttons. He pressed on the button, but that was useless because the breaker had not popped. Oil pressure was at zero, which probably made any further feathering efforts useless."

By that time Schaeffer figured out that the freezing temperature had made the oil in the propeller spinner cold and thick, causing failure of the propeller to feather. Meanwhile the engine continued to howl and the cowling shook so violently, he expected the propeller to come flying off, possibly into the fuselage. In desperation he tried to replace the supercharger amplifier, but didn't depress the retainer catch, so it would not come out of its receptacle.

With all this excitement going on, they reached the target and Charles Lain, bombardier released the bombs; delaying a little, as the plane had fallen behind in their formation.

### Jump?

At that point, Schaeffer released his flak suit, took off his oxygen mask, headset, throat mic, helmet and gloves, and unplugged the heated suit. He saw his co-pilot doing the same thing, so he signaled Nelson Brott, to come down from the top turret.

Standing on the catwalk, he suddenly realized that he had not been given the signal to jump, so he swung out and around the right side of the forward bomb rack, and back onto the catwalk behind it. Since he was wearing a chest pack parachute, he could not have gotten through the center of the bomb bay between the bomb racks. But in swinging around the rack, his parachute rip cord handle snagged on a bomb shackle and pulled out about 3/4 inch. Immediately he pushed it back in, but the damage was done. The chute suddenly began to spill while he was getting into position on the catwalk.

"Quickly I gathered the folds in my arms, but with so much air rushing through the open bays, more folds kept spilling, and I had my hands full gathering them together. It was all I could do to keep my arms around that bundle of silk. I recall seeing one of the fellows drop from the nose wheel door, and our pilot urging John McKee, radio operator, to get going.

Schaeffer took a minute to weigh his options...whether to change chutes or risk exiting in his disheveled pile of silk. Komasinski, seeing his indecision, bailed out, leaving Schaeffer alone on the plane. He worked himself forward to the front end of the rear bomb bay, crouched and rolled out.

The chute was pulled out of his arms with a jerk that jammed him painfully down in his harness, and he found himself swinging in 180 degree arcs, with the chute nearly collapsing with each swing. Watching *My Peach* from his billowing chute, he saw it follow the formation as though a pilot was still at the controls. (When the formation took a right turn, the plane continued forward until it was out of sight.)

Schaeffer could see other parachutes, but could not make voice contact. His hands were freezing cold, having jumped at 20,000 feet; his harness was cutting into his crotch; and the air was so thin, he just dangled weakly until the air got warmer. Then he could look down and see the French landscape, knowing he was coming into German Occupied Territory.

### Meeting the Underground

One shot rang out and missed him, and soon he found himself surrounded by French people who seemed to want to help him. Some locals were so afraid of the Germans, they refused to permit him into their home. Others risked death to provide him with civilian clothing, food and transport into a wooded area where they hid him in a deep hole. He was accompanied by different members of the FFI (French Underground) from time to time, leading him to an unknown destination which hopefully would provide safety. His companions did not speak English, and he did not know French. With no idea



where they were headed, he followed them through woods, over hills, fields, swamps and dozens of barbed



BENIER FAMILY ~ LUCIENEE, COLETTE, GASTON, GRANDMOTHER, BLANCHE, JEAN-PIERRE, AND ANDRE

wire fences. Ultimately he ended up at the Benier home at

Orbais L'Abbaye, which is south of Reims. It was the residence of an elderly woman and her two adult children, who were kind enough to feed him and provide quarters where he could reside in relative safety. He could not leave the house, but sometimes sat in the back yard, which was surrounded by a high wall.



FRANK EVAADING IN THE BENIER BACKYARD.

In time he learned that Richardson, gunner, was badly injured, and was under German control; and McKee, radio operator, became a POW. The rest of the crew hid in the woods and traveled at night, protected by the FFI.



HENRY MEYSONET, FFI FRIEND.

A French spy called Shorty, working for the English, befriended Schaeffer and shared the same bed. He proudly displayed his working materials-- batteries, weapons, and equipment for communicating across the Channel. Only a few trusted people knew that Shorty and Schaeffer were residing at the Beniers.

Sometimes Schaeffer would help Shorty with his radio transmissions. Other times he helped Andre pitch hay in the barn or help care for the honey bees, which frequently

stung him. Cigarettes were \$3.60/ pack, but Shorty solved the problem by buying a pound of black market tobacco in Paris; and in return for rolling them, Schaeffer had a regular supply for himself.

Looking out the family's front room, Schaeffer could see German convoys passing, trucks piled with straw, men riding the fenders, on motorcycles and afoot. German planes went over; and some days he could see American bombers in tight formations, too high to see what kind they were. From the radio, which the family played only once a day, they learned that the Americans were approaching Paris.



LOUIS GUYOMARD (SHORTY) ~ SCHAEFFER'S SPY FRIEND.

On August 28 the Patton's Third Army arrived at Orbais L'Abbaye. The town people brought out homemade flags, greeting the soldiers and throwing flowers at the tanks. Every time the convoy stopped, someone would run out with a glass and bottle of wine and pass it to a soldier, who swallowed it with a gulp and returned the glass for the next soldier. This continued until the convoy moved on.



The FFI came out, wearing the Cross of Lorraine inside a V on their arm bands. The people of the town were delirious with delight. Coincidentally, on an effort to find someone called Bill, another evader who the family had come to know, Schaeffer passed his own crew who were already on trucks headed toward the coast, enroute England. Schaeffer returned with Bill, joining the family in a champagne party. He dug out his old clothes



and shared them with Bill, so both had some semblance of a uniform. (Bill Weatherwax was a B-17 pilot who had lived with the Beniers, but later moved into the forest with the FFI.)

The next day was a day of revelry, traveling from home to home and celebrating with families that pulled out champagne that had been stashed away years before, awaiting their day of liberation.

Many Germans were hiding in the woods, more afraid of the FFI than of the Americans. American troops pressed forward at a rapid rate, taking no time to pick up lurking German soldiers, so the Underground sought them out, showing little consideration to the invaders who had been occupying their homeland.

On October 18, Schaeffer boarded a C-54 ATC in Scotland, and eighteen hours later, was joyfully back in the USA. He has taken the time to write a detailed account of his experiences, and to look up members of his crew.

His work experience after the war had been in a chemical laboratory; then with General Electric Company, making X-rays; with the Chrysler Corporation, making outboard motors; and he is still working two days a week in a machine shop.



FRANK SCHAEFFER AT  
SAN DIEGO REUNION  
2000.

## HARVEL'S BOOK

Things become more precious as time goes on, but only in the right hands. Do you have *Harvel's Liberators Over Europe or The History of the 44th Bomb Group?* Do you know anybody who does, who would be willing to donate it to the Historical Library in Barksdale, Louisiana? Barksdale, the home of many 44thers at one time, is building a research library, and these items would be greatly appreciated.

## A PLEA FOR LOST RECORDS

**There are 8,085 Sorties entered into the Database, but Will Lundy has discovered that reports are missing from May 8, 1944 to April 7, 1945. Is there any chance that members might have them in their files, or in boxes in the attic? Please check; and if so, please get them to Will. Nobody is working harder to complete the 44th history for future generations than Will.**

**If you can, please give him a hand.**

## PAULA ERTZ, A TRAGIC LOSS TO THE 44<sup>TH</sup> BGVA

After enjoying the company of Paula and Julian Ertz over the run of our San Diego reunion, news reached us that on the following Friday they were involved in a serious automobile accident that took the life of Paula while Julian escaped with minor injuries. Besides Julian, Paula is survived by daughters Beth Ertz and Bera Dordoni, sons Gary and Scott Ertz and grandchildren Christopher, Jarron and Ashley Ertz.



Paula had just begun to devote some of her multi-faceted talents to the intra communication among long-lost members mission of the 44th BGVA. She and Julian, a semi-retired attorney, were also assisting in finding a producer for our own "Lois Cianci Story" as a movie. No doubt she would have contributed substantially. We will miss the amazing lady, and send our love and support to Julian.



## From the Desk of our President

FIRST AND FOREMOST, I thank you for the beautifully fitting floral tribute, the many kind letters, faxes, e-mails, notes, telephone calls and other warm expressions of compassion, concern, and sympathy on the recent loss of my precious and beloved wife, Yelena.

I am especially grateful to Roy Owen who readily and willingly stepped in to carry on the duties and responsibilities of the office of your President --- this he did despite the personal problems he and Lolly were struggling with as an aftermath of the death of Lolly's father.

It is during difficult days like these that you find your true friends and sincere supporters very much like your own family...and family you are indeed to me, and one I am extremely proud of and love dearly.

Now to the business at hand. Our San Diego Reunion hit another new high with Five Star accommodations, elegant amenities (The Presidential Suite as our Hospitality Room), gourmet cuisine, terrific tours, nostalgic music for dancing and a floor show that captivated and energized all of us, especially, Charlie Hughes who impressed all present with his tepsichorean talents as he responded to the enticing calls of the alluring and energetic vocalist to join her on the dance floor. Great Reunions are becoming a habit with our Reunion "Impressario", Mike Yuspeh and I urge all members to make plans NOW for Mike's next Reunion in Shreveport/Barksdale, LA. In my congratulatory message to Mike, I paraphrased a quotation from the Greek Philosopher, Aristotle, who wrote, "We are what we repeatedly do. EXCELLENCE, therefore, is not an act but a habit." Thanks Mike and "thanks" to the fine and beautiful ladies mentioned in Mike's MY SENIOR MOMENTS (page 21) article for

their invaluable help. Also, our appreciation to Cathy Mastradone who was instrumental in obtaining the Cambridge Cemetery photograph that was presented to Jackie Roberts. No easy task under the best of circumstances but completed brilliantly through Cathy's, and Tony's resourcefulness, perseverance and invaluable contacts in Washington.



### **Congratulations to the "EVERY MEMBER GET A MEMBER CONTEST" (EMGAM) winners!**

Pictured Above: Fritzie Selasky (\$300); Cynthia Harmonowski (\$200); Robert Dunlop (\$100); Alex Toth (\$50). Not Pictured: Col. Larry R. Huey (Cross gold pen & pencil set); William H. Sims and Don Wells (Cross gold pens). The success of this "first ever" contest may dictate its repetition.

The MASTER DATA BASE FUND DRIVE is off to an eventful start with our members generously "opening their wallets" and hearts to the tune of some \$16,000 as of this writing. Our goal of \$50,000 remains a valid objective to meet the long and short term requirements of entering the personal data on ALL members of the 44th Bomb Group (H) living and deceased. This, undoubtedly, is one of the most noble projects undertaken by this Association and I am totally committed to reaching our goal.



My thanks to those who have not yet made their contribution. Remember that ALL donations are tax deductible, so please GIVE and GET a tax deduction. As an incentive to your future donations, I am endeavoring to establish a CHALLENGE GRANT FUND which will MATCH dollar for dollar any donations made by the members.

Donations to the MASTER DATA BASE FUND can be mailed to:

Gerald Folsom, 44<sup>th</sup> BGVA  
% MDB FUND  
PO Box 712287  
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

The personal BIOGRAPHICAL forms are still arriving slowly and I urge all members to submit their data as soon as possible. We especially need biographies on our deceased and ground support personnel. Their data and contributions are critical to insure the thoroughness and the completion of the illustrious history of the 44th Bomb Group (H) in the World War that Ended All World Wars.

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Robert Lehnhausen as Chairman of the new AWARDS COMMITTEE. Bob has already proposed several innovative ideas that the Board will consider for implementation at their next meeting.

Your Board of Directors and I continue to maintain the financial stability and solvency of the Association under the astute and financial wizardry of our highly professional Treasurer, Gerald Folsom. His Semi-Annual Financial Report for Calendar Year 2000, as of 30 June 2000, showed TOTAL ASSETS at \$52,106.05; TOTAL LIABILITIES at \$33,014.34 and a NET WORTH at \$19,091.71. Copies of this report and one ending on December 31, 1999 were distributed to the members attending the General Meeting in San Diego. My Budget for Calendar Year 2001 lists INCOME at \$32,500 and EXPENSES at \$28,080 with an expected SURPLUS of \$4,420.

Your Board of Directors approved Shreveport/Barksdale AFB, Louisiana as the site of the next Reunion of the 44th BGVA during the month of October, 2001. The firm dates will be announced as soon as final arrangements are consummated by our Reunion Chairman, Michael Yuspeh. Make your plans NOW to attend this Reunion which promises to top them all. Shreveport/Barksdale AFB is the home of Eighth Air Force, 2nd Bomb Wing, the Eighth Air Force Museum and the B-24 J, and the Eighth Air Force Museum Curator are jointly restoring and repainting with the 44th Bomb Group Markings.

Members are advised the CDs of the Master Data Base are available at a cost of \$150 of which \$50 goes into the Master Data Base Fund. The CDs come with two (2) free upgrades from Computer Generated Data Co. (CGD). All purchases and payments are to be made through our Treasurer, Gerald Folsom by writing him at the following address:

Gerald Folsom, 44<sup>th</sup> BGVA  
% MDB CD  
PO Box 712287  
Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

Lastly, on behalf of the members and personally I send our sincerest expressions of sympathy and compassion to Julian Ertz on the tragic loss of his dear and beloved wife, Paula, in an automobile accident shortly after their attendance at the San Diego Reunion. Our thoughts and prayers are with Julian and his family.

My closing thought is a tribute to our ladies.

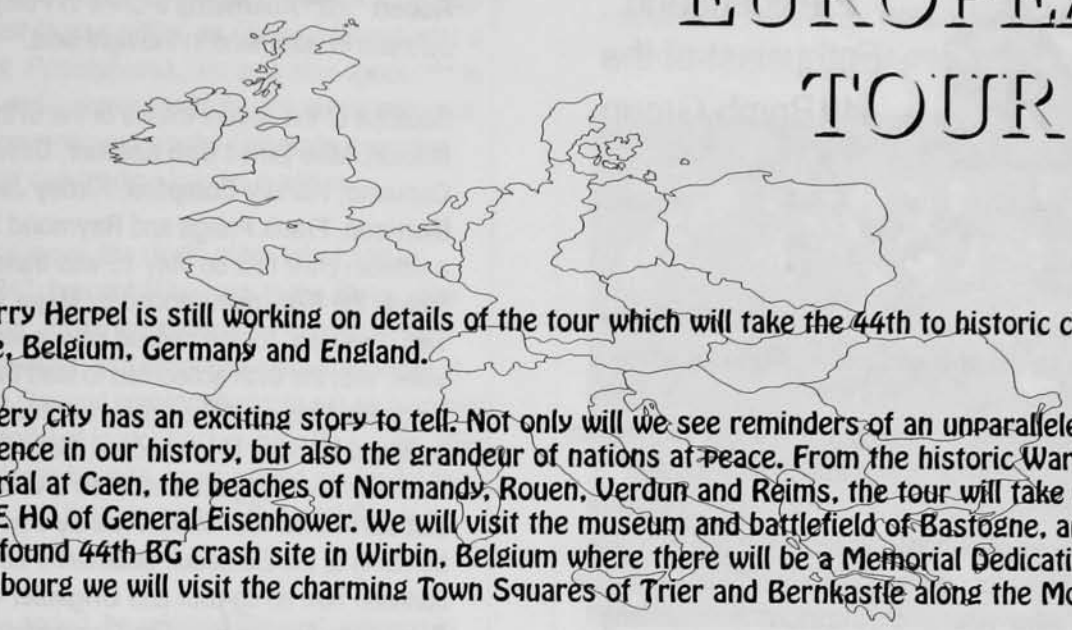
"When you educate a man,  
you educate an individual.  
When you educate a woman,  
you educate a whole family."

*Edward K. Mihalovich*





# 2001 EUROPEAN TOUR



Larry Herpel is still working on details of the tour which will take the 44th to historic cities in France, Belgium, Germany and England.

Every city has an exciting story to tell. Not only will we see reminders of an unparalleled experience in our history, but also the grandeur of nations at peace. From the historic War Memorial at Caen, the beaches of Normandy, Rouen, Verdun and Reims, the tour will take us to the SHAPE HQ of General Eisenhower. We will visit the museum and battlefield of Bastogne, and view a newly found 44th BG crash site in Wirbin, Belgium where there will be a Memorial Dedication. From Luxembourg we will visit the charming Town Squares of Trier and Berncastelle along the Mosel River.

From Koblenz we will cruise the Rhine to Cologne, enjoying the many sites along the way. From Cologne and its beautiful cathedrals, we will go on to Wesel, where Louis DeBlasio, Bob Vance and our new member, John Delaney (Fighter Pilot, 513 Sq., 401 Group), were housed as POWs until Patton's army came through and liberated them.

In Wesel we will inspect another crash site of one of our fallen aircraft from the 67th Sq. Here we will have the opportunity to meet Peter Loncke, a member of the Belgium Air Force, who has dedicated himself to locating crash sites and enlightening Americans, British and New Zealanders of his finds. Our Belgium friend and WWII researcher, Luc Dewez, will be joining us also.

Our trip to Liege will extend to Neuville-en-Condros home of the American War Memorial (Ardennes). 103 of our 44<sup>th</sup> BG are honored here, including Clair Shaeffer, father of Lois Cianci. We will tour the beautiful city of Brussels with its wonderful architecture, then the medieval towns of Ghent and Brugges for some great shopping and sight seeing. From Calais we cross the Channel to England and on to Norwich, home of the Memorial Library. Of course the trip will include Shipdham and surrounding areas, so clearly remembered as the 14<sup>th</sup> CBW Hq. A special day is scheduled around many activities while visiting that familiar site. The tour continues to Duxford and a visit to that fabulous Air Museum. The tour concludes in London. There are provisions for those who wish to stay over. Contact Larry for details: Phone (512) 376-7780; E-Mail [ascotttravel@thrifty.net](mailto:ascotttravel@thrifty.net).

*From the Editor: We have a limit of 48 people. Please send your deposit (\$150 per person) to Larry Herpel, 215 So. Medina, Lockhart, TX 78644. We have 42 paid applications, and others who have expressed an interest, but have not reserved a seat. Of course, we will accept names for a stand-by list, as this tour is still 12 months away. However, because of the negotiations involved in getting the best price, Larry needs to be certain we can fill the bus. More information will be forthcoming to those who have signed up, and will be announced in the next issue of the 8 Ball Tails.*





Col. Mikoloski, 1960

## Mike Mikoloski

### President and Enthusiast of the 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association

**General Leon Johnson** once said of President Mike: "(he) has a remarkable ability to inspire in his fellow officers the same enthusiasm with which he habitually undertakes projects..." Mike proved himself to the great general while in England, and this complimentary statement came to him years later in the States. Mike hasn't changed since those years. With true optimistic drive, he strives for continued success for the 44th at a time when other veteran organizations are dwindling.

Mike was born, raised and educated in Worcester, Mass. where, after graduating from Clark University in June, 1941, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps with hopes of entering their flight program. He achieved his goal on July 4, 1942 when he received his Navigator Wings at Mather Field, California. He joined the 44th BG at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma as a crew member on *Jenny*, later renamed *Lucky Lady*, and flew to Shipdham with the 66th Sq., commanded by **Major Algene Key**, veteran pilot from the Pacific Theater and civilian pioneer of Air-to-Air Refueling.



Mike was 24 years old when he started flying combat missions in the fall of 1942 with his roommate and friend, **Tom Scrivner**, who replaced **James Kahl** as Aircraft Commander. By chance or choice, he was selected to lead the 44th on the May 14 Raid on Kiel in Captain **Robert "Ab" Abernethy's** Crew in *Forky II*, with Colonel Johnson in command in the right seat.

Because of the severe losses of the 67th on the Kiel Mission, Mike joined **Bob Kolliner**, **Dave Arnold**, **Frank Capuano**, **Harvey Compton**, **Kirtley Jarvis**, **Kelley Morrison**, **Frank Paliga** and **Raymond Shelton** to form a veteran crew that on May 15 was transferred from the 66th to the 67th, commanded by **Major Howard Moore**. Two days later, for the second time in less than one week, with the 67th scheduled to lead the group on the Bordeaux Mission, Mike again, by chance or choice, was assigned to Major Moore's crew, *Suzy Q*. They led the formation on a long nine-hour low level over-water flight that culminated with **Jim Devinney's** perfect pinpoint bombing of the Bordeaux Submarine Locks. Colonel Johnson flew as co-pilot and **Brigadier General James P. Hodges** flew on board as Commander of the Second Air Division.

At that time Mike's wife, Katherine, was awaiting the birth of their first child. This mission and the upcoming birth are recorded poignantly in the book *"SKYWAYS TO BERLIN"* (Chapter 6 "Sweating It Out").



Mike &  
KATHERINE  
with infant  
daughter.

Left to Right:

LT. **JAMES KAHL**, pilot; SGT. **JAMES YOUNG**, waist gunner; LT. **Edward Mikoloski**, navigator; SGT. **WALTER SUMMERY**, photographer; LT. **Edward Brennan**, bombardier; SGT. **Harold Samuelian**, gunner; SGT. **Channing Saterfield**, radio operator; SGT. **Walter Hazelton**, engineer (not visible, only legs); LT. **Thomas E. Scrivner**, co-pilot - later became pilot and aircraft commander; SGT. **Walter M. Patrick** (cap is only visible); SGT. **Harold Balsley**, tail gunner. Our crew chief was SGT. **Walter Pitts**.

When he finished his combat tour June 19, 1943 he joined General Johnson's staff as Group Navigator, later as First Wing Navigator at the 14th Combat Wing. Along with the Staff of the 55th Bomb Group and the 14th Combat Wing, he attended the presentation of the Medal of Honor to Col. Johnson by **General Devers**. (*This has a special interest to your editor, as General Devers was a native of York, Pennsylvania.*) He was also appointed to provide BBC radio correspondents with some personal and official commentaries on the General's executive, leadership and outstanding human qualities.

An emergency leave, the death of his infant son in December 1943, brought Mike back to the States. The War was raging. Air transportation was difficult if not impossible to obtain, and Mike was reticent to leave at that time. The General convinced him to act as a courier, to carry his Medal of Honor back to his wife Lucille. Mike accepted and with his wife, hand carried the Medal to Mrs. Johnson and their daughters, Sue and Sarah in Savannah, Georgia.

When the war ended, he rejoined General Johnson in 1947 as his Aide-de-Camp and I & E Staff Officer at the 15th Air Force, Colorado Springs. He continued serving under him as his Executive and Principal Staff Planner at 3rd Air Force, London and Continental Air Command, Mitchell Field, New York. After these Air Force assignments, he served with the General in joint and unified Dept. of Defense assignments at the NATO Standing Group and Military Committee in Washington, D.C. and later in SHAPE Hq. in Paris. After the General retired in Paris, Mike remained at SHAPE as Executive and Staff Plans Officer to **General Samuel Anderson**, who was Air Deputy to SACEUR, **General Lauris Norstad**.

Mike had the honor of serving as the Project Officer for the U.S. in the dedication ceremonies for the American Chapel in St. Paul's Cathedral. It was a ceremony that brought out the luminaries of both countries: Queen Mary, with Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret, represented the British government. General and Mrs. Dwight Eisenhower represented the U.S. government. Other dignitaries at the Joint UK-US ceremonies on July 5, 1951 included Prime Minister Clement Attlee; Winston Churchill; Anthony Eden, Lord Trenchard, Father of the RAF & Marshall of the Royal Air Force; Sir John Slessor; Lord Tedder, Former Marshal of the Royal Air Force; Sir Arthur Henderson, Air Minister; General Lauris Norstad, SACEUR **General**

**Curtis E. Lemay**; General Leon W. Johnson; Admiral Louis Mountbatten; **General Jack Wood**; the Lord Mayor of London and, of course, the Dean of St. Paul. Members of the British and American Armed Forces served together as the Joint Honor Guard and Marching Elements. *Editor's Note: Will anybody dispute that the British know how to hold a great ceremony?*



Distinguished Guests Departing St. Paul's Cathedral.

FROM BOTTOM TO TOP (NOT ALL GUESTS CAN BE IDENTIFIED):

GENERAL AND MRS. DWIGHT EISENHOWER WITH THE GENERAL'S BRITISH AID-DE-CAMP; COLONEL AND MRS. JOHN EISENHOWER; PRIME MINISTER AND LADY ATLEE; LORD AND LADY TRENCHARD; SIR WINSTON AND LADY CHURCHILL; FORMER PRIME MINISTER ANTHONY EDEN (IN CENTER WITHOUT HAT); REMAINDER OF GUESTS ARE CURRENT AND FORMER MEMBERS OF THE UK GOVERNMENT. MEMBERS OF THE US AND UK ARMY, NAVY AND AIR FORCE FORMED THE JOINT US-UK HONOR GUARD AT THE DEDICATION CEREMONIES.

From 1960 through 1964 Mike served in the Pentagon in the office of Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Policy; as Chief of the International Affairs Division, where he was responsible for the direction and supervision of the military missions in Latin and South America. The Air Force Global BASR rights negotiations and the Military Advisory and Assistance Groups (MAAGS). During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Mike was the principal planner and advisor to General Lemay, c/s USAF, on the Jupiter Missile Removal programs in Turkey and Italy.

His final assignment was as Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans & Programs at the 8th Air Force Headquarters (SAC), Westover AFB, MA, retiring on Feb. 1, 1968.

He was married to the former Katherine Mahoney, Worcester, MA with whom he raised six children. They



were blessed with eight grandchildren. Three of the Mikoloski surviving children and one grandson are life members of the 44th BGVA.



On Thanksgiving Day, 1986, Mike married the former Yelena Krasnochekova, a Russian actress, who he met in Moscow.

Tragically, Yelena passed away several months ago, after a lingering illness. Mike has expressed sincere gratitude to members of the 44th, whose messages of condolence continue to help him through this difficult time.

After his retirement Mike took post graduate courses at American International College, Springfield, NM and Nichols College, Dudley, MA in Business Law, Cost Accounting, Management and Computer Technology. He was owner and operator of a calculator and office equipment company in Webster, MA before joining TRIGON ELECTRONICS of California as their manufacturers representative for England, Ireland and the Eastern United States.

With all of the ceremonious occasions that Mike had attended in his military career, his rise to the Presidency of the 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group had no pomp and no ceremony. He simply took the gavel from outgoing President Roy Owen in Austin, Texas, and the job began. Then, being eager to credit his renowned predecessor for his outstanding accomplishments in a beautiful and well-orchestrated event in New Orleans, Mike ended up doing it in absentia. Roy and Lolly couldn't make it to the Reunion. *(Editor's Note: because of Mike's need to be with Yelena during her lengthy illness and ultimate death, Owen consented to serve as President pro tem.)*



PAST PRESIDENT ROY OWEN  
&  
PRESIDENT MIKE MIKOLOSKI  
IN SAN DIEGO.

Mike's granddaughter recently interviewed him for a class project, and when she learned his history, she exclaimed, "Grandpa, you were a hero." This he stoutly denied,

saying "No, I am a survivor. The heroes didn't come back."

Mike's leadership commitment is firm: he wants to build on the 44th past glory, and continue the bomb group's winning tradition into the new Millennium.

*Editor's Note: General Johnson's and Mike's moments of danger extended beyond wartime Europe. In 1952 they flew to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania in an Army transport plane to attend a Governor's Day Celebration. The plane crashed while attempting to land, bursting into flames. One crew member sustained minor injuries; all other occupants escaped unharmed.*

### Great Moments in President Mike's Career



MAJOR GENERAL LEON W. JOHNSON  
AND  
CAPTAIN "MIKE" MIKOLOSKI II



GENERAL CURTIS LEMAY  
AND  
MAJOR "MIKE" MIKOLOSKI II

### AWARDS & DECORATIONS

Legion of Merit, Hq. Dept. USAF Dec. 30, 1966  
DFC w/I OLC, 8th Air Force June 12, 1943  
AM w/3 OLC, 8th Air Force, April, 1943  
AF Commendation Medal, 8th Air Force, Feb. 1, 1968  
American Defense Service Medal  
American Campaign Medal  
Europe-Africa-Middle East Campaign Medal  
WWII Victory Medal  
Medal for Humane Action (Berlin Airlift)  
National Defense Service Medal  
Occupation Medal (Germany)  
AFLSA w/3 Silver OLC  
Distinguished Unit Citation w/2 OLC  
French Croix de Guerre w/2 Silver Palme





Roy OWEN, Lois Cianci, Jackie Roberts

Lois Cianci presents the color lithograph of the National Cemetery at Omaha Beach, France to Jackie Ostenson Roberts as a welcome to the 44th Bomb Group Family.

## WELCOME TO THE 44<sup>TH</sup> BOMB GROUP FAMILY

By Roy Owen

Another highly emotional event took place on Banquet Night at our National Reunion in San Diego when the two daughters who were orphaned by the loss of their respective 68th Bomb Squadron fathers on the January 21, 1944 raid against the German V-1 missile launch sites at Escalles-Sur-Buchy, France met personally for the first time.

We told the related events of leading up to this tragically beautiful meeting in the last (Summer 2000) issue of the 8-Ball Tails.

To mark the event with Lois Cianci, our first orphaned daughter of that raid, welcoming Jackie Roberts into the 44th BGVA Family, Tony and Cathy Mastradone acquired from the American Battle Monuments Commission a stunning 15"x 24" color lithograph of the central memorial statue in the Omaha Beach National Cemetery. They framed the litho beautifully and shipped it to the Westin Hotel for the ceremony. The point of this was the remains of S/Sgt. Jack Ostenson, Jackie's father, were never recovered. Thus his name is inscribed on the marble "Wall of Honor" and a white marble cross has been placed over the buried remains of one of those unidentified which states "Here rests in honored glory AN AMERICAN SOLDIER known but to God.

Jackie, in a tearful acceptance of the beautiful gift, gave the gathering of members her heartfelt thanks for providing all the information she had been seeking about her Dad in her lifetime. Looking at the members through tear filled eyes she said "You all are now my family, and I love you for all you have done to bring me to this moment!"



# The Reunion ~ San Diego, 2000

There are few cities quite like San Diego; and Mike Yuspeh managed to show the best of it to the 44<sup>th</sup> BGVA. Lunch at the Island Club at the North Island Naval Air Station was bountiful and luxurious, and the bus driver's account of the way navy men looked at housing three major aircraft carriers was whimsical--the Constellation, a standard carrier, the John C. Stennis nuclear carrier, and soon will be hosting the Ronald Reagan, also nuclear. They call them the Connie, the Johnnie and the Ronnie!

The Westin Hotel is a block from Horton Plaza, a shopping mall that looks like it was designed by Walt Disney. Architecturally dramatic shops are connected top and bottom, side to side by escalators, bridges, and ramps. Prices weren't bad and food choices demonstrated the many cultures that inhabit that area.

Tony Cianci



JIM  
AND  
JEAN  
CALLIER

Squadron Dinners at the Westin Hotel were a golden opportunity to catch up with old friends--and old accounts of war experiences. Will there be a time when buddies can get together and run out of memories of amazing events? Never.

Touring the USS John C. Stennis was an athletic adventure. The deck is three football fields long, with catapults for accelerating the speed of outgoing planes, and hooks for grabbing them when they return. It is very easy to see that the huge craft was designed to flourish in the global arena. Those who felt ambitious climbed the seven steep stairways to the Bridge, and were surprised to learn that the mammoth vessel housed another seven decks below. The 97,000 ton floating city is complete with galleys capable of feeding 5,000 members of the crew, a photo laboratory, aircraft repair shop, ship repair shop, fuel tanks for planes and escorts, and all the amenities to permit it to stay at sea for years, if necessary.

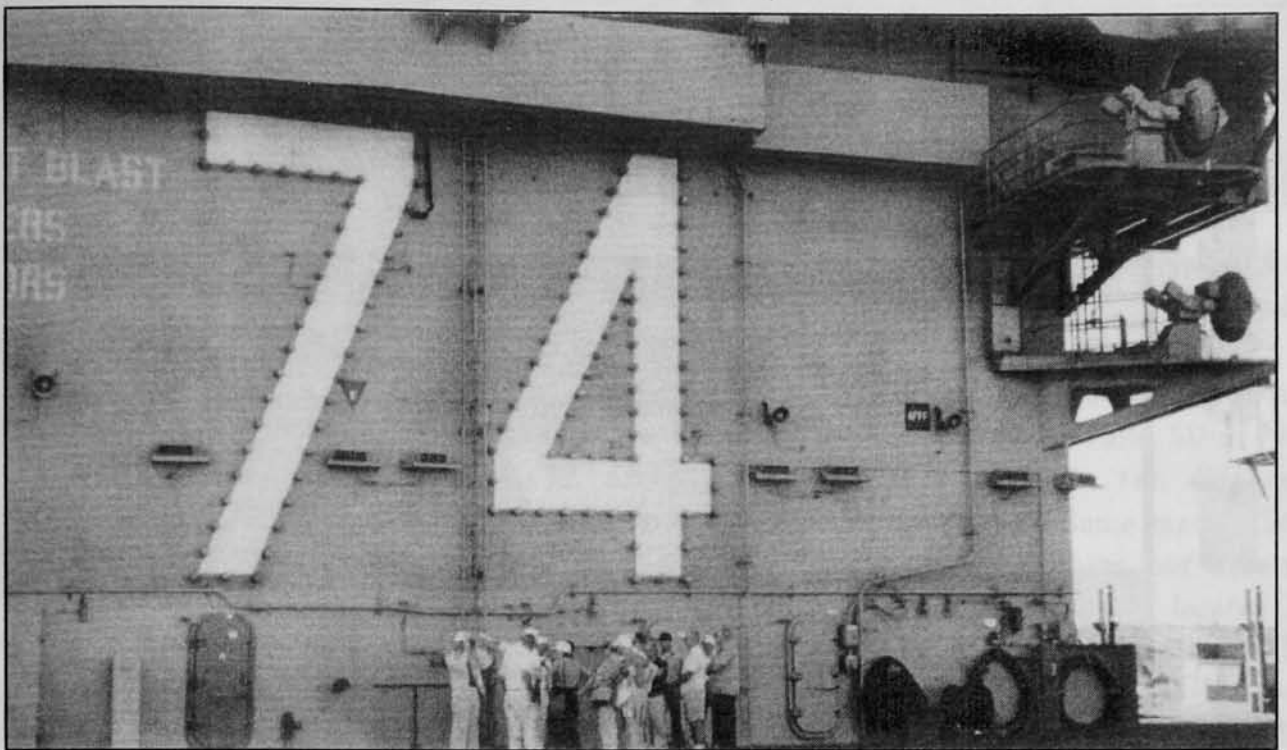
EMBLEM OF  
JOHN C.  
STENNIS



The Candle Lighting Ceremony and the Banquet were special, replete with dashing young men who made up the Honor Guard. It was here that the 44th met our newly-found orphan of the war--Jackie Roberts. The 50 year search that this young lady made to locate someone who could tell her about her father, S/Sgt. Jack Ostenson, is a dramatic saga which will be told in the next issue. Ostenson's plane went down on January 21, 1944, the same day, same mission in which Lois Cianci lost her father. Were there any dry eyes when Lois handed the lithograph of the Omaha Beach Memorial to Jackie? I don't think so. Welcoming Jackie and her husband Lowell into the Bomb Group was a solemn moment for all.



Should anybody go to San Diego and miss the Pandas? Perry and I waited in line 40 minutes to see the new baby that hung in the tree and ignored everyone. The guide explained that it's metabolism is so slow, it sleeps 20 hours every day. The rest of the time, it eats. Fortunately, the zoo has no shortage of bamboo for the three exotic critters, father, mother and baby, all on loan from the People's Republic of China.



Small tour group emerging from the superstructure onto the flight deck.



The carrier tour group ready to break-up into smaller groups and go aboard with the Navy Crewperson Guides.

Below: Roy Owen on the Bridge at the Helm.

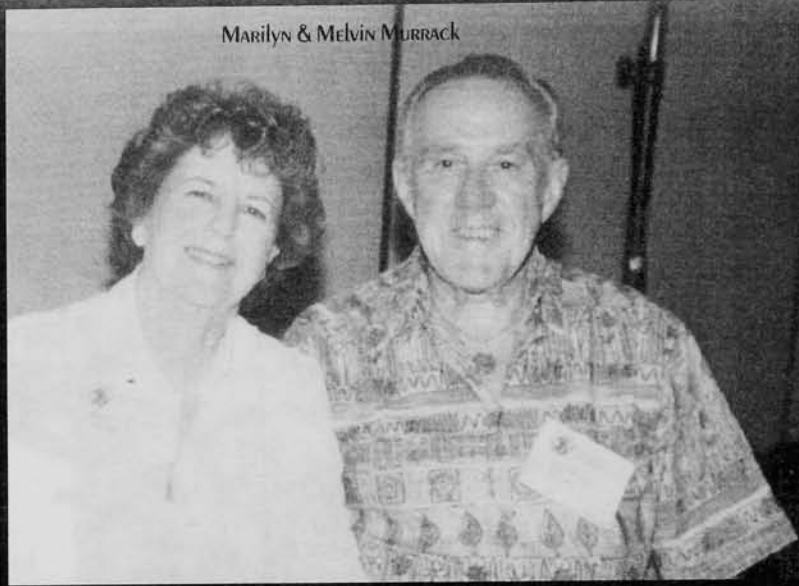


Part of the group in the San Diego Trolley during the North Island Naval Air Station Tour. Julian and Paul Ertz on the right. This could be the last photo of Paula and Julian before her tragic death the following Friday.

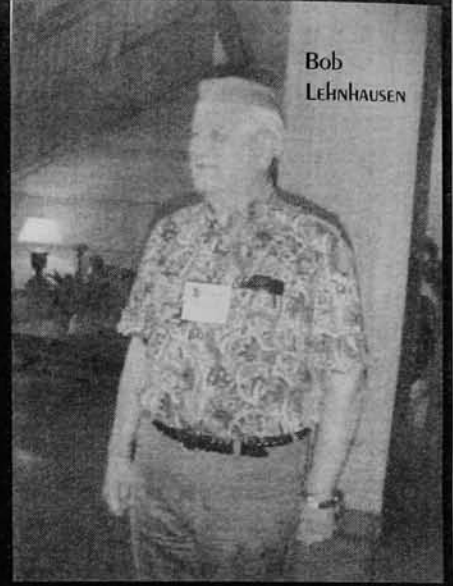


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Marilyn & Melvin MURRACK



Bob  
LEHNHAUSEN



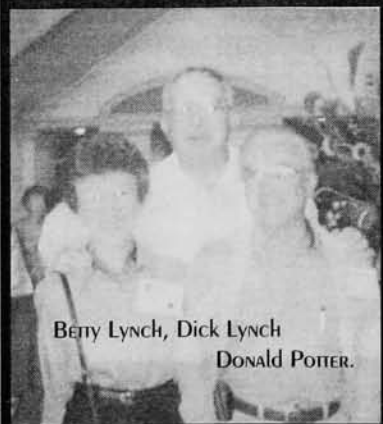
Tony MASTRADONE



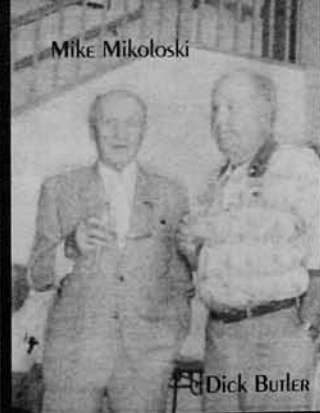
DON & GLORIA  
Wells



"Liz"  
LEHNHAUSEN



Betsy Lynch, Dick Lynch  
DONALD POTTER.



Mike Mikoloski

Dick BUTLER



ANN NATILLI  
Louis  
DeBlasio



BEVERLY FOLSOM, CATHY MASTRADONE, LARRY HERDEL.





# 55 YEARS AND THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Clay Roberts saw a picture in the 2nd Air Division Magazine, asking identities of a crew--his crew. He immediately identified them, which led to a search for all members. Five met in San Diego at the 44<sup>th</sup> BG Reunion.

"We came together as a heavy bomber, B-24 Liberator crew in 1944. We delivered a B-24-J from Mitchell Field, NY via Bangor Field, Maine and Goose Bay Labrador to Valley, Wales. We were assigned to the 68<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, 44<sup>th</sup> BG, and flew bombing sorties over Europe."

The crew suffered no casualties, but the radio operator saved his own life by breaking from procedure. He held the bomb bay doors lever in the open position from the IP to bombs away. His radio compartment was blown out by flak.

Their last flight as a crew was in May, 1945 when they departed for Bradley Field, CT via Bluie West One, Greenland. After flying up a fiord with wing tips brushing rock walls, they landed with a flat main gear tire.

only 22 years old. Needless to say, they were treated like royalty.

When they were broken up as a crew at Sioux Falls, SD in 1945, they went in ten different directions. Some made efforts to contact others, but were not able. Clay Roberts located Joe Stewart in Providence, RI, but he passed away before they could get together. Bob Dunlap had submitted the picture to the 2 AD Journal, which triggered a series of events that culminated in the five surviving members making contact and meeting in San Diego.



Shipdham, England 1944:

STANDING: KEN AMICK (flight engineer/gunner), JOHN CROSS (gunner), BOB DUNLAP (gunner), EDGAR FLOWERS (gunner) and JOHN BOILEAU (radio operator).  
SITTING: JOE STEWART (bombardier), CLAY ROBERTS (pilot), JOHN "JUNIOR" ROBERTS (gunner), BILL LUNDQUIST (co-pilot) and ART ARONOFF (navigator).

Fuel shortage necessitated an instrument landing, 100 foot ceiling and 1 mile visibility at the Air Transport Command (ATC)

field, Mingan, Quebec. They were the first heavy bomber to land there throughout the war. Station personnel could not believe that they were so young, and that the pilot was

"This reuniting and meeting after over a half century surpassed all our expectations," Roberts reported. "The feelings of comradeship, the rush of emotions and bonding have been intense. We are in daily to monthly contact, and are committed to not losing contact again. We are scattered across the country. It almost seems that we were destined to reunite in the year 2000, because for the past 12 years I have passed within five miles of Stockbridge, MA (home of Art Aronoff); and we both travel the Massachusetts Turnpike at least twice monthly.





Sitting: Bob Dunlap (GUNNER).

STANDING: ART ARONOFF (NAVIGATOR), "JUNIOR" ROBERTS (GUNNER), BILL LUNDQUIST (CO-PILOT) AND CLAY ROBERTS (PILOT).

"We are the newest members of the Association and understand that we may be the crew with the most surviving members. (*Editor's Note: This statement will undoubtedly be disputed in future mailings!*) Our coming together this late in life has brought new meaning into all our lives at a time when we thought meaningful experiences were behind us. Our reuniting in San Diego was the 'Mother of Experience' and the feeling was unanimous that we 'wouldn't have missed it for the world!' What we felt and experienced is beyond description and regrettably cannot be shared with others--especially family. We are all 'chomping at the bit' to meet again at the 2001 Reunion in Shreveport.

"We regret and are sorrowed that five of our crew have passed on, but are grateful and overjoyed that our 55 years of waiting and wondering have finally come to an end."

*(Editor's Note: Robert's description of his crew's gathering is the best evidence that every effort must be made to hold the 44<sup>th</sup> BGVA tightly together; and also, to record every detail of its history. WWII was a unique experience in human history, and must be recorded for future generations to know.)*



## An October 27 Update on John McClane

For those of you who were unable to be with us in San Diego, we announced that **John W. McClane** and wife, Doris had sent word they were unable to join us because John was facing surgery to remove a malignant tumor next to his right ear. That was done, but sadly, it was necessary to remove the entire ear. Further diagnosis has revealed presence of a malignancy in the lower back of his skull, which, due to the proximity to his spine, precludes radiation therapy. He was to have another polyp removed from his neck before Chemotherapy could be started.

In spite of all this John was in good spirits. He said he was still driving and, all things considered, feeling pretty good. He sent thanks for all the Best Wishes and Get Well cards, letters and faxes from the 44th Family. It was a wonderful feeling, he said, knowing he had so many friends, and said he really missed being there to videotape the reunion as he always does. John and Doris are two of our most steadfast members; a "Best Wishes" card from their 44th Family will surely make this ordeal easier for them to bear.

John & Doris McClane

120 N. Wolfe Road

Fernandina Beach, FL 32034

## THE STORY THAT KEEPS UNFOLDING

Only a few years ago, Lois Cianci knew nothing about her father, Clair Shaeffer, Engineer on the Sobatka crew that hit the V-1 sites in the Pas Des Calais Area at Escalles-Sur-Buchy. Just before the San Diego Reunion, she visited with her father's Turret Gunner, August Smanietto and his wife, Elaine in Santa Barbara. Later, at the Westin Hotel, getting on the elevator, she and Milton Rosenblatt, Co-Pilot and his wife Lila met and exchanged hugs. Milt had a long-time



memory of Lois that he shared with her. When Sobatica's started its trip to the UK, it was discovered that there were problems with the fuel

pump, so they stopped in Boston, Massachusetts for repair. Given 3-4 days leave, Clair and Milt informed Lois's aunt of his whereabouts. She and another lady brought the five year old child to LaGuardia Airport, where they had a brief visit. Lois has no memory of the event, but Milt remembered it clearly. For years Lois has had a picture of Clair holding her. Now she knows when it was taken.

Milt shared another piece of interest to Lois: The first time the crew got together for practice, they were so excited, they all rushed to the cockpit to watch the take-off. Unbalanced, the plane never made it off the ground, and had to be sent out for repairs. He also told her about "Trim Tab", a floppy eared, furry mutt that rode with them. Such minute details become pieces of gold to a girl who has known nothing about the father she lost for more than fifty years.

Through Will Lundy she had been able to make her first contact with some surviving crew members, Smanietto and Rosenblatt. On the European trip in 1997, her search for knowledge of Clair's demise culminated at Gratenois, France, where the 44<sup>th</sup> tour group visited his crash site.

PHOTO ON LEFT:  
Lois CIANCI AND MILTON ROSENBLATT.



From **Mark Morris**, Gunner on  
*OLD CROW*, 506 BS:

"The March cover of Aviation History has Keith Ferris' beautiful painting of *OLD CROW*, but the nose art is wrong. The aircraft is mis-identified as Prince-Ass, as it was years ago on an Air Force calendar, and still is mislabeled in the 8th Air Force Museum. Plainly visible is the Ser #124283 and the Prince-Ass wasn't delivered to the ETO until September, 1943. Also, on the museum plaque, **Reinhart's** name is misspelled. He was the pilot of the A/C on our left and was shot down. The artist's conception is really of **Lt. James McAtee** with *OLD CROW* leading *RUTH-LESS* and *G.I. GAL* onto target blue."



## MEETING AGAIN IN SAN DIEGO



Sidney Paul and William Fitzsimmons, shook hands for the first time in 56 years at the Westin Hotel in San Diego. The fortunes of life had taken them in two different directions, and they lived to tell about it. Both had the experience of flying in a Liberator-- Paul as a pilot, Fitzsimmons, a bombardier (506)-- sharing some missions, not all, and on different time tables.

Fitzsimmons, Bombardier on Ralph Golubock's plane, the Princ-ess, was on a mission to Poland on May 29, 1944. The target was an oil refinery. Golubock reported that they were hit by a lone fighter who sprayed at the formation and happened to hit the #1 engine and the fuel cells in the left wing. They lost gas at a rapid rate, and could not feather the engine. With great effort Golubock kept the ship in flying position; Sgt. Walter Dunlop, engineer, transferred enough fuel for them to continue flying. Overboard went all the heavy materials--machine guns, ammunition, even the treasured Norden Bombsight, plus the Tail Gunner, who chose to bail out. He spent his time in a German prison camp.

About the time that all equipment was gone, a large formation of German fighters approached the plane, and with no means of protection, they waited for the blast that would take them out of the sky. It never came. So they limped along to Sweden where Swedish aircrafts--old P-35's picked them up and escorted them to the town of Malmo. Taking no chances, a Swedish fighter, seeing their open bomb bay doors, flew under to look for bombs. His radio antenna smashed against the Princ-ess's damaged wing; but nevertheless, they flew on to a safe landing.

In friendly hands, Fitzsimmons and his crew members were escorted to a King's Palace where they were interred in the same dwelling as German airmen.

What a place to be a POW! They ate well in the palace, had no guards and could go into the city any time they wished. According to some international agreement, English POWs were not permitted such freedom. In the restaurants of Stockholm, American and German airmen ate together, conversing freely in English. They sat out the war together and were repatriated at the same time.

By the time all of this happened, Sidney had finished his missions and was back in the States. He took an Instructor Flying Course at Bryan Field, Texas, then went to Langley Field, Virginia where he flew for Navigator Classes.

"After that I took a teaching position in a junior high school, and two years later I joined the National Guard. When the Korean War came about, our group was federalized, and I was in the service for the next 21 months."

At this point Paul decided to stay in the service. In 1952 he was assigned to Tufts College in Massachusetts as part of the ROTC Staff. From there he had the

opportunity to spend a year in Thule, Greenland, an experience that he remembers rather fondly.

Later, at Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts, Paul met and married an Air Force nurse, Catherine Elizabeth Fields, a lady who shares his life and enthusiasm for bomb group reunions. (*Editor's Note: Sid believes that he and Elizabeth may be the only 44<sup>th</sup> couple in the 44th BGVA.*) In the mid-1950's she was stationed at Lake Charles, LA in the 44<sup>th</sup> Hospital. He says that makes her a bonafide member. *Nobody will dispute her membership, but I'll bet there are other couples who are invited to come forward and proclaim their dual bonafide memberships.*)

In 1967 Paul retired from the service to resume his teaching career in Chicopee, Massachusetts. Thirteen years later he left teaching and began volunteering. Now he helps out at the Springfield Science Museum and Baystate Medical Center in Springfield.

For a short period in their WWII experiences, Paul and Fitzsimmons knew and felt the same fears and exhilaration of flying missions together and surviving. Fifty six years later, in San Diego they caught up with the rest of their stories.



GERALD FOLSOM AND MIKE YUSPEH CONVERSING.

## MY SENIOR MOMENTS

by Mike Yuspeh

*At the Reunion I had a Senior Moment. For those of you who don't know what a senior moment is: I forgot something. When I spoke at the General Meeting I did not acknowledge all the people who helped with the Reunion. I hope to correct that now.*

*First Roy and Lolly Owen who, with Rose Jay, helped pick the hotel. Roy and Lolly had researched the place before Rose Jay and I arrived. They could not have picked a better place. Roy arranged for the aircraft carrier. It took many telephone calls, but he got it done.*

*Dick Butler did a marvelous job getting the color guard. With schools closed for the holiday, he twisted arms and persuaded them to come. The young men were excellent, and they enjoyed visiting with us during dinner. I can't give enough thanks to "Mike" Mikoloski, who helped to get people to attend. He had a telephone glued to his ear. Roy Owen called all of the people on the west coast, and Tommy Shepherd woke up his E-Mail group. The letter Jerry Folsom got out was great. I thank all of them for the help, without which there would have been no reunion. Again Roy came through and bought all the refreshments we had in 1613 at discount prices from the military commissary. Dick Lynch and Perry Morse, to whom we have given the title of Bartenders of the 44th BGVA, have served you well through the years.*

*On registration day, without the help of the following, you would still be waiting in line at San Diego: Bob Schaper, Estelle Voelker, Rose Jay Yuspeh, Cathy Mastradone, Ruth Morse and Tony Mastradone. At the other table we had Bev Folsom and Lolly Owen working with Jerry Folsom and following up on membership. Perry Morse and Estelle Voelker also helped out with getting people on buses, and making sure everyone was aboard before leaving the hotel. Ruth Davis-Morse was all over the place, using her new camera, so that everyone could be seen in the 8 Ball Tails. Thanks to Sam Miceli and his wife Edith, who stored and brought both '8 Ball' golf shirts and caps to the reunion. They are our PX. Handling the reunion is not a one person job. The chairman coordinates and makes decisions; but without the help of a lot of people, this can not happen. Thanks to all of you for your support.*

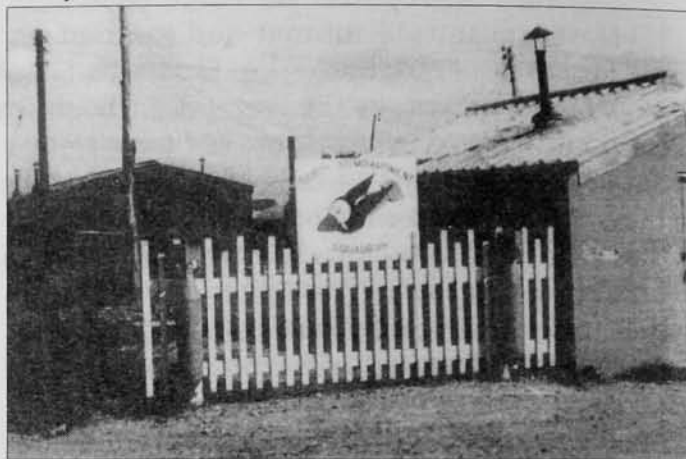
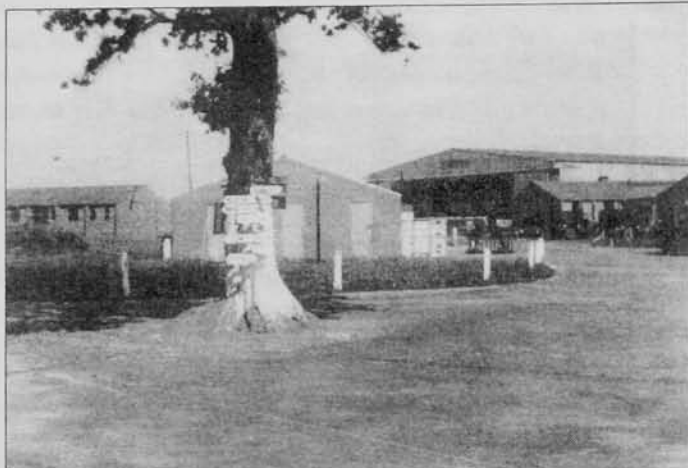
*I hope to see you in Shreveport/Barksdale Field in October, 2001. We will do our utmost to make this another great reunion.*

# Miscellanea

Submitted by:

*Familiar Sights*

*Jerry Folsom*



When you submit your bio, write your story. Each one is different. Jerry gets applications from members who record their birthplace, and the place where they were inducted, but little else. Only family members will care about those details 100 years from now. However, your personal experiences, the moments of fear, the moments of joy, the exhilaration of victory--those are the stories of WWII that must be recorded.

WWII is a unique period in human history. That rattling old B-24 that carried you into Nazi Germany is a museum piece, (unless it was among those ground up, recycled and now sold as aluminum foil). The things

that happened when you were flying on those missions will never again be replicated. Write about those events. You have no idea who will be searching for that information, long after you have gone to the big hangar in the sky. Somebody will.

## *44th Items For Sale*

Item	Price	Postage
Shirts	\$25	\$3
Caps	\$15	\$2
Pins	\$5	\$1

Send to:

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

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Patches	\$15	\$1
Roster	\$20	\$2
8th Air Force Military Heritage Database Disk	\$150	\$2

Send to:

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

## *8th Airforce Military Heritage Database*

The 44th Bomb Group Database is on-line. Search: 8th Air Force. Then 8th Air Force Military Heritage Database. Then click Personal Biography or All Missions. Then put in your name. If your biography was submitted, you will find your pictures, then and now and your crew's picture.

If you don't find it -- get busy and submit it. You are not going to live forever.

-Dick Butler-



# NOW THE WHOLE STORY CAN BE TOLD

by Estelle Voelker



1st Lt. Edgar J. Spencer

During his lifetime, my husband, **E. Jay Spencer** told this story many times, sometimes with minor variations, depending upon who his listeners were. He did not want it to appear in print, however, because he feared being court-martialled. (Lt. Spencer passed away July 4, 1998.)

It was December 11, 1944, when Jay found himself flying "S-bar" to bomb a railroad bridge at Karlsruh, Germany. They were loaded with four 2000 pound bombs. At the target, three of the bombs dropped, but the fourth hung up in the bomb bay. When they got over the channel on their return trip, the crew tried kicking it out. Jay also tried to dislodge it by putting the plane in a nose dive and then pulling up quickly. Nothing worked. They also heard over the radio other planes in the same predicament being directed to the crash field. Well, Jay thought that field was aptly named -- you went there you were likely to crash. Besides, they had already been there and done that on another mission when their hydraulics had been shot out. So Jay inquired of his armament gunner, **Al Abercrombie (Schofield's replacement)** if the bomb could be disarmed. It could. To be sure, Jay asked him to verify it by showing him the manual. So the crew went about disarming the beast. They even stuffed their handmade mufflers from home in it. In the meantime, Jay also inquired of his radioman, **Henry Fishbone**, if he had his usual burned out fuses in his pocket. He did. So Jay instructed him to listen only, and not to send. And as soon as they touched down at Shipdham, he was to replace good fuses with burned out ones in the radio.

As soon as they landed and Jay put on the brakes, the bomb let loose and skidded down the runway ahead of them, sparks flying, until it rolled off into a ditch. All of the people standing along the runway to watch the returning planes dove for cover, thinking that it would explode at any moment.

Jay proceeded to his hard stand as if nothing happened. However, General Johnson was not amused, and arrived at the hard stand in short order. As Jay was filling out his forms required of every pilot, he could hear the General bawling out Abercrombie. Then Jay calmly descended from the plane through the bomb bay, stood up between the two, saluted General Johnson, and inquired, "is there any message you wish me to convey to my crew?" The general sputtered, "Your radio was out." It sounded more like an order than a question. "Yes sir!" Jay replied. General Johnson turned and left as quickly as he had arrived.

They had gotten away with being the only air crew to drop a bomb on the Shipdham runway!

## The Spencer Crew

FRONT ROW L-R:

**S/Sgt. Henry Fishbone**, radio operator; **Sgt. Eddie Picardo**, tail gunner; **Sgt. Thomas (Tommy) Stewart**, armament gunner; **Sgt. Robert (Bob) Burdick**, belly turret gunner; (Burdick did not fly with this crew, as the belly turrets were not used at that time.) **S/Sgt. Peter (Pete) Moskovitis**, engineer; **Sgt. George Schofield**, waist gunner.

BACK ROW L-R:

**F/O John Beavers**, navigator; **2nd Lt. Frank (Mike) Colella**, co-pilot; **1st Lt. Edgar (Jay) Spencer**, pilot; **2nd Lt. William (Bill) Crean**, bombardier.



## From the 2nd Air Division Journal

this report from R. D. (Dick Butler):

Kevin Watson of Eastbourne, England, a good friend of many 44th Bomb Group veterans, has recently completed and published a book entitled *"RUTH-LESS" and Far from Home*. "RUTH-LESS" was a B-24D, one of the original 506th Bomb Squadron aircraft. The original pilot and the man who named the plane after his wife was Frank Slough. "RUTH-LESS" was flown on many vital missions, including those of Kiel, 14 May 1943, the low level Ploesti mission of 1 August 1943, and the mission to Kjeller Airfield near Oslo, Norway on 18 November 1943. On February 2, 1944, "RUTH-LESS" crashed on Butts Brow, a hill above Eastbourne. The aircraft had received severe flak damage on a mission to Watten in the Pas de Calais area and was attempting an emergency landing at a small airfield at Firston. The pilot, 1st Lt. James "Aagle" Bolln, and the other nine crew members were all killed.

As a young boy in 1971, Kevin Watson played in the area where the plane crashed, and discovered many pieces of the wreckage. Then in 1994, Kevin read in the local newspaper, The Eastbourne Herald, that an elderly gentleman named Arthur King had, for the past fifty years in all kinds of weather, climbed the hill to Butts Brow on every Remembrance Sunday to lay flowers at the crash site. This inspired Kevin to seek out Mr. King and to subsequently start a fund drive to raise money to place a permanent memorial at the site. Kevin's effort was successful, and on 13 May 1995, an impressive ceremony was held at the crash site and the granite memorial was dedicated. Kevin's involvement in raising the funds and his research of "RUTH-LESS" and the men who flew it led him to write this book.

In his book, the author traces the history of the original crew from its training days at Pueblo Army Air Field, the acquiring of the new B-24D at Saline AAF, and the flight overseas to Shipdham. He relates "RUTH-LESS" crew experiences on the missions mentioned above as well as many others. This book is truly a historical masterpiece and no doubt will be used for story and research material for generations to come. With Kevin's permission, the following poem is quoted from his book:

### THE "RUTH-LESS" FELLOWSHIP

We sit and view the Sussex Downs,  
At grazing sheep, as seagulls cry,  
Yet some of us hear other sounds,  
For brave young men, destined to fly.

They came to fight beside the Few,  
To ease the burden of our pain,  
were our cousins, staunch and true,  
And each day we saw them again.

We knew the trouble which they shared,  
The engines coughed amid the cloud,  
We hoped their lives would all be spared,  
And ardent prayers were said aloud.

But "RUTH-LESS" could not make the height,  
And through the mist she came to rest,  
Upon a hill within our sight,  
And God's hand rose on those he blessed.

They died upon a foreign field,  
Defending freedom to the last,  
For what the daylight then revealed,  
Were friends together, hands held fast.

Their youthful spirits walk there still,  
Past flowers blooming in the sun,  
They smile down from Willingdon Hill,  
Aware of duty proudly done.

--Doug Thomas, 1995

This soft-cover book is available from Kevin Watson at 29 Downs Valley Road, Lower Willingdon, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 9QG, England. The price, including postage, is \$20 U.S. It is also available through Amazon.com.UK. The "RUTH-LESS" Web site can be found at AOL. The address is: [www.hometown.aol.com/kpwats7](http://www.hometown.aol.com/kpwats7). There is also more information there about "RUTH-LESS" and the book.



# OLD LIBERATORS NEVER DIE

By: H.L. Watkins, Jr.  
44th Bomb Group, 67th Squadron

...ENGLAND....1944:

General Ike has asked 8th Air Force, to load up and bomb Berlin;  
old Adolph Hitler has, no doubt, p\_\_\_\_ed him off again.  
They've awakened us at four A.M., but we're still half asleep;  
that's our driver honking for us, just outside there, in his jeep.

He drives us to the mess hall, where the coffee ain't the best;  
we chow-down and fill our bellies, piggin' out on S.O.S.  
Then it's onward to the briefing, where I'll wager you a maybe,  
we'll be told this trip's a milk-run; "like taking candy from a baby."

Our Chaplains always pray for us; asking God for a safe day,  
and we take a precious moment; time to bow our heads and pray,  
that we'll all come back this afternoon, without a loss of blood;  
as a member of a bomber crew, you're in a close-knit brotherhood.

Next, we slip into our heated suits, and draw a parachute;  
we'll load lots of ammunition, 'cause today we're sure to shoot.  
The crew believes that this trip, like our last one to Berlin,  
Will be a real bitch-mission - we'll draw fighters going in.

We've flown all of 8th's bitch-missions, dating back a year or so;  
and if you think I'm braggin', we've ten Purple Hearts to show.  
We have also been the lead-ship, guiding less experienced crews;  
we are often held on standby, but our missions we can't choose.

A green flare from the tower, arcs the sky before it drops;  
the pilot says it's time to fly, and winds up all four props.  
We proceed onto the runway, where we're first in line to roll;  
we have radar in our airplane, and our bombs will take their toll.

We call our radar MICKEY; it guides our bombs down through the clouds;  
it sure p\_\_\_\_es off the Germans, which in turn makes us feel proud.  
Our bombardier is well equipped, and MICKEY works like magic;  
in conjunction with his bombsight, the results are always tragic.

High above the English Channel, where there's no more blinkin' fog,  
the air up here is silky smooth, and we'll note it in our log.  
There'll be time to take a puff or two, while the bombers group together;  
then it's onward to our target, hidden from us by foul weather.

Soon the Channel is behind us; o're the Netherlands we pass;  
the navigator grabs his nose: "Who the hell is passin' gas?"  
The bombardier defends himself: "You smell hydraulic fluid."  
The pilot jokes that both of them, are in a childish mood.

Flying east into the rising sun, the pilot shades his eyes;  
our first attack will come up-front; head-on in clear blue skies.  
The Luftwaffe pilots orders are: "TAKE THE MICKEY LEADER OUT!"  
To carry out their orders, will require a bunch of clout.

Our Skipper is from Texas, age nineteen and highly skilled;  
his records say he's twenty one - that he trained at Randolph Field.  
For more Texans on our team, are a group of teenage men,  
who were trained as aerial gunners, way down south in Harlingen.

Our co-pilot is an Okie - a full-blooded Cherokee;  
he was also trained at Randolph; born and raised in Muskogee.  
The bombardier's a Yankee, who hails from Bangor, Maine,  
and our radioman's from Omaha: Dit-Dot is his nickname.

Our navigator is a lady's man, who loves 'em, leaves 'em, makes 'em cry;  
he's now playing with his sextant, mapping out the route we'll fly.  
Our engineer, age twenty five, is called Pappy on this crew;  
we all met in Arizona, in September 'Forty Two.

Our Liberator bomber wears the name: *THE TEXAS DUDE*;  
she's a mean four engine war machine, who has an attitude.  
Crouched inside of her ball turret, rides a man before his time;  
at four foot eight and age sixteen, he weighs just ninety nine.

He's suspended down beneath the plane, and calls it outer-space;  
it's his office during business trips, and the Luftwaffe calls him Ace.  
Our twin window gunners, age eighteen, are John and Tommy Klyne;  
they've each scored quadruple kills with us - all M.E. One-O-Nines.

Our tail gunner needs but one more kill, and he'll be a double Ace;  
as he sits there riding backwards, he's in an advantageous place.  
He sure boogered-up two Fokkers on our last trip, going in;  
they have armor-plated bellies, Mates, and their pilots play to win.

He gets mean as hell in combat; men who've challenged him are dead;  
when engaging him and Shorty, Luftwaffe pilots fear to tread.  
They have served as our protectors, and today's their final bout;  
we have never lost in combat, 'cause they've always whipped the Krauts.

As we cross the German border, every man is well aware,  
the Messerschmitts and Focke Wulfs, soon will join us in the air.  
We'll face Hitler's finest pilots; one will wear his Iron Cross;  
when they see our bomber's name-plate, they'll salute and call her Boss.

Our gunners say they're ready, and quite anxious for a fight,  
so they'll have a real good story, whilst we sip a few tonight.  
Warm English beer works wonders, on an airman's weary body,  
and Scotch whiskey mixed with coffee, blends a belly-warming toddy.

There'll be a bottle on our table, while the crew critiques the mission;  
our gunners get the first drink - it's our pilot's own tradition.  
He sure looks out for our shooters, which with us is quite OK;  
there will be no crew objections, if they save our butts today.



As expected, comes the Luftwaffe; everybody on your toes;  
there comes a pair of Messerschmitts, diving straight toward our nose.  
Sitting tall in our positions, our adrenaline soars high;  
they're engaging us both front and rear, and some of them will die.

Up front in the nose turret, a young sergeant fires a burst;  
to eliminate the fighter's edge, he simply downs it first.  
POOF! The Messerschmitt exploded; we saw tracers hit its tank;  
our nose gunner just became an Ace, and he'll soon move up in rank.

The twin sergeants at the window guns, will have a chance to fight;  
yonder comes a swarm of Messerschmitts, so get them in your sights.  
Down goes another fighter; our old engineer got lucky...  
he was feared back home by tax men; he brewed moonshine in Kentucky.

A lone Focke Wulf high above us, lingers just beyond our range;  
we all know who's in her cockpit, and his tactics never change.  
Wulfgang Schroeder fears our gunners; he's engaged them twice before;  
our tail gunner sent him earthward, in his parachute, both scores.

His win record speaks quite well for him - a hundred ten, they say;  
but the Texas Dude's still flyin', so he'll try again today.  
Adolph Hitler loves his pilots; awards his best The Iron Cross;  
Schroeder's sure to get his second, should his win be our first loss.

The Focke Wulf is now poised to strike; just watch her engine smoke;  
our machine guns simply tickle her, as her belly mold they stroke.  
'fore she dove toward her target, on her backside she did roll,  
and her armor-plated belly, doesn't show a single hole.

Major Schroeder max'd her engine out, as she closed in from behind,  
but her power plant got riddled; our tail gunner blew her mind.  
Her propeller separated, and its hub was spinning bare;  
she belched out a puff of black smoke, and exploded in thin air.

Her late pilot was unlucky; thrice he's lost to our tail gunner;  
but this kill will surely haunt him; 'tis a real bitch-mission, bummer.  
Ace will see his eyes in nightmares, as he did 'fore Schroeder died;  
he saluted his assailant, and deep inside the victor cried.

Now the fighters have retreated, but the sky ahead is black;  
as we turn onto the bomb run, all we see up-front is flak.  
Our bombardier is set to drop, and the pilot says OK;  
he will interrupt the silence, to announce "OUR BOMBS AWAY.."

Though our bombs have hit their target, our last mission's not complete;  
it's a long flight back to England, and the Krauts despise defeat.  
Their pilots have returned to base, to reload arms and gas;  
they'll be back to hit the cripplers, and we'll kick more Nazi ass.

There are stragglers close behind us; some are shot up really bad;  
parachutes are popping open, and there's several engines dead.  
Junior pilots will come this time, and they'll get an education;  
our Ace gunners are their teachers, and they ain't here on vacation.

We respect the German pilots, in this game of win or die;  
It's a fighter/bomber-gunner duel, we've played out in Europe's skies.  
Perhaps in God's near-hereafter, we will meet them face-to-face;  
we have proven they are mortals, not Der Fuehrer's master race.

Our tour of duty is completed; we'll move to another base;  
way out in the vast Pacific, the Isle of Tinian is the place.  
We thank God for His protection, while we fought in Europe's skies,  
and please bless the Luftwaffe pilots, who dared challenge us, and died.

Their senior pilots took a beating, and their ranks are growing thin,  
we have grounded six more Aces, who will never fly again.  
but the ack-ack gunners on the ground, surely showed a lot of guts;  
them mean, kraut-eatin' bastards, really kicked our Yankee butts.

Our old airplane's shot to pieces, and resembles a huge sieve;  
but we've earned no Purple Hearts today, and God's decreed we'll live.  
This great lady will be grounded - she's served us proud, *THE TEXAS DUDE*;  
but, *OLD LIBERATORS NEVER DIE*, my friend, they just become un-crewed.



## Will Sez & Folded Wings

October, 2000



*From the Editor:*

**With great regret I must tell the 44<sup>th</sup> BQVA that Will Lundy's column and Folded Wings will not appear in this issue. Will, whose dedication to the history of this illustrious organization, is moving to a more convenient location, taking with him the mountains of correspondence and historical documents which he has dutifully preserved for all these years after WWII. At the rate at which veterans are passing on, Will's work expands, and his dedication never wains. We can only wish him the best in his newest venture into a new home.**

# From the Editor:

## Mail & E-Mail:

Bob Reasoner's picture of the two strategists tracking the mission to Ploesti brought some interesting replies.



CAPT. Alfred C. CARR ~ MAJOR HENRY G.V. HART

Joseph Milliner suggested **Captain Schmid** on the left, an older navigation expert that had finished his missions, but wanted to help. On the right, **General Ent**. For further consideration, he included pictures of Gen. Ent, **Gen. Brereton** (who was never without his 'swagger stick'), and **Col. Kane**, thinking it might be one of them.

The person I am betting on for accuracy is T/Sgt. **Jean Bressler** (S 2 Section of the 44th). He says he knows it was **Captain Alfred Carr** and **Major H.G.V. Hart**. Bressler was in Benghazi when the picture was taken. He worked with them, and remembers them both well.

Late report on the picture of the Ploesti strategists. **Col. G.C. Griffin** was Group Ground Executive Officer; and was present at the briefing. He, too, names Capt. Alfred C. Carr on the left; Major Henry G.V. Hart on the right. These were Operations Officers and Intelligence Officers who performed briefings for missions.

*Editor's Note: Enjoy Millner's pictures. They are a page out of history.*



LEFT TO RIGHT:  
GEN. ENT  
GEN. BRERETON  
COL. KANE

It is no secret that the Flying 8 Ball looks like a pool ball turned into a personalized bomb. Of course, nobody in the pool game wants to be behind an "8" ball. Who originated the name, and had it assigned to the 44th Bomb Group? Does anybody know?

*Everyone has a story worth telling and worth publishing.*

**PLEASE Send it!**

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From James Boyer, crew chief of *My Gal Sal*, comes this picture of his beloved plane. The Komasinski crew rode this plane on their 4th mission to Brunswick. **Jim Boyer's** recollection of his delight at receiving the new J series was dampened when, after the 14th mission, she crashed on take-off, with him onboard, for what was to be an errand to London. Although nobody was injured, he writes with regret, that the plane had to be scrapped.



"My Gal Sal."

Sam and Edith Miceli sold pins, hats and shirts at the Reunion. You can still buy them. Here are the bargains:

Shirts--\$25 + \$3 Postage

Caps--\$15 + \$2 Postage

Pins--\$5 + \$1 Postage

Send to: Sam Miceli • 6398 Dawson Blvd. •  
Mentor, OH 44060-3648

The \$5 pin is the best buy you can find in quality memorabilia jewelry. One inch in diameter and in five colors--red, yellow, gold, black and green, it has a green nosed Flying Eight Ball, circled by the words '44th Bomb Group, The Flying 8-Balls'.



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