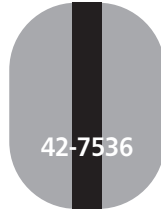


44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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Journal of the

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Veterans Association

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THE BANSHEE

The Banshee was first assigned to the 392nd Bomb Group, but flew no missions with that group. In early October it was sent to the 44th Bomb Group, 66th Squadron, along with its pilot, **Kenneth Jewell**.

The Database has limited information about this aircraft. However, the record shows that 18 November 1943 *The Banshee* transported the **George Insley** crew to Kjeller, Norway. This was a very long mission with heavy losses.

The Kenneth Jewel crew flew 6 missions in *The Banshee*, the first on 13

December 1943. After the raid at Kiel, the A/C was sent to Rackheath for repair of the #3 engine and other battle damage.

The **George Insley** crew flew two missions in *The Banshee* first to the port & storage facilities at Bremen, Germany. Two days later they went to the airfield at Kjeller, Norway. On a later mission (unknown to this researcher) the landing gear was torn off and the nose crushed, but the crew survived. *The Banshee* was salvaged at Deopham Green in early January 1944.



The **Kenneth Jewel** Crew, (not individually identified)
Pilot, **Kenneth G. Jewell**; Co-Pilot, **Walter Milliner**;
Navigator, **Arthur Sakowski**; Bombardier, **Matthew J. Foley**;
Radio Operator/Gunner, **Stanley Lipczynski**;
Engineer/Top Turret Gunner, **William Wike**; Ball Turret Gunner
George Poirrier; Waist Gunners, **Sam Saporito** & **Edward Guzik**; Tail Gunner. **John McCloskey**.

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THE BANSHEE

Apparently this plane was named by its pilot, **Kenneth Jewell**, but two of its most dramatic missions were flown by the **George Insley** crew. The mission to Bremen, 16 December 1943 was a return to the target, following an unsuccessful bombing attempt three days before.

This port was regarded as a prize target, being the second largest port in Germany. It had large manufacturing and storage facilities, and was also a busy rail center. The raid was successful, despite severely cold weather and fierce enemy attacks. There were two losses: **Battleaxe** (66th Sq.) and **J-Bar** (67th Sq.)

Two days later the target was the Airfield at Kjeller, Norway, located near Oslo. Thirty four A/C were assigned this mission. *The Banshee*, piloted by George Insley, was flying Deputy Lead. Both **Webb Todd** and **Will Lundy** reported that the Kjeller Airdrome, a supply, repair and maintenance depot, was hit with uncanny accuracy, but at a heavy price.

The 67th lost four crews, and had one crash landing—**Edward Dobson, Joseph Houle, and Earl Johnson**. **Rockwell Griffith** made a crash landing at Shipdham on only the left main gear. **#41-29139**, piloted by **Edward Mitchell** went down in the North Sea. The 68th lost two A/C piloted by **Baxter Weant** and **William D. Hughes**. The tally: KIA – 42; WIA – 1; POW – 10.

BANSHEE IV/E Z DUZIT

Apparently Kenneth Jewell liked the Banshee name; the next plane that came to him he titled ***Banshee IV/E Z Duzit***. The crew's first of eleven missions in this A/C went to Escalles Sur Buchy 21 January 1944.

The Brandenburg raid 9 March 1944 was damaging to both the plane and the pilot. ***Banshee IV/E Z Duzit*** was hit with flak, just as the bombs were released. Also, Jewell sustained a wound that tore his leg off. Co-Pilot **Harold Koontz** brought the damaged plane back to a crash landing at Shipdham. There was extensive damage to the nose of the A/C; it was salvaged two weeks later.

THE 44TH BOMB GROUP PX

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Flying 8 Ball Squadron Pins (Indicate Squadron).....	5.00 + .50 Postage
44th Bomb Group Stickers.....	2.00 (Postage Incl.)

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Plans for our 2009 reunion have been firmed up, as you can see by the applications elsewhere in this edition. The Sheraton Hotel is now being completely remodeled and will be ready for us in the Fall. We will be the 3rd group booking after the remodeling is complete. All rooms are 2 room suites with a bedroom and a lounge with sofas that make into beds, so 4 can be accommodated.

It is about 2 miles from the airport and shuttle service is available. They also provide complimentary shuttle service to shops within 3 miles, and there is a large mall close by.

There are still several details to be worked out with MacDill Air Base. As you know, that is where the 44th was organized in January 1941 before they moved to Barksdale, more than a year later. Among other things, we plan to have a memorial service at their Memorial Garden where the 44th has a plaque.

The Florida Aquarium is rated among the top 10 in the country.. The lunches available there in the Aquarium include a cafeteria service as well as a sit down service with a full bar. The menu of hot and cold sandwiches, salads, etc. is quite extensive and reasonably priced. Both MacDill and the Aquarium are a short 6 mile bus ride from the hotel.

The Fantasy of Flight museum, about an hour away, has an extensive collection of aircraft and other displays, including a B-24. After a lunch in an Officer's Club setting, there will be flight demonstrations by one or more classic planes.

As this could be our last opportunity to get together, Lets make the most of it. We look forward to seeing many old friends in Tampa .

The Mighty Eighth Museum in Savannah has received a B-17 which is being put into the exhibit hall. The entire place is being rearranged, and finally the voice-over for our Ploesti Diorama is close to being installed.

A reminder to all, in case the dues notice did not reach you, 2009 dues of \$25 can be sent to Jackie Roberts.

George Washburn

Did you know...

The 8th Air Force was activated in Savannah, Georgia. Half of USA Air Force casualties in WWII were suffered by the 8th Air Force. 17 Medals of Honor, 220 Distinguished Service Crosses, and 442,000 Air Medals were presented to members of the 8th AF. Number of DFC's - not known.

(These numbers have risen, as belated awards are still being presented.)

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



For once I really have to comment on the last issue of 'tails' rather than start off with something new from this side of the Atlantic. I was very saddened to learn that so many of 'our' 44th veterans have had to wait such a long time to get the recognition that they so deservedly earned all those years ago. Having thought it through for a day or two, since my copy of 'tails' arrived, it crosses my mind that there must be many other Bomb Groups out there with a similar situation to confront. I just hope they too have their own Lee Aston rooting for them.

I was also delighted to see that the Pavers are setting the names from the 44th B.G., in perpetuity on the Soldiers Walk at AHEC, Carlisle. That seems a most fitting tribute to those men and the 44th Bomb Group, as just recognition of an outstanding military unit.

Back at Shipdham, we have had a 'real winter's' winter. Snow, Ice, Fog, Wind, Rain, Floods...the lot. As you will know, that assortment of weather does not readily assist flying at all, and as the planes we use are real light-weight and tiny compared to your mighty B-24s, we have spent a fair amount of time these last few weeks, on the ground looking skywards. Hopefully the upcoming summer season will reward our patience. The power planes in the club fleet are, by and large, all fitted with pretty good heaters, so apart from the initial start-up period it is OK with minus figures on the outside air temperature. But spare a thought for our Glider Pilots...they have no heating at all (remember that from your B-24s)...and no fur lined jackets issued to them!!!

Mrs Paterson has graciously added to her donation for the memorial garden, and a brand new Garden Seat has arrived ready to be set in place by the maintenance team, in time for this year's crop of visitors. Since the Garden was dedicated we have been slightly surprised to occasionally see people turn up, look at the garden and photograph it, get back in their cars and drive away, without visiting the club or the museum. However, if that is what they want to see, then they are most welcome, but we would just love them to come in so that we can show them the Museum and the rest of the club. Nevertheless, the fact that people are coming to the airfield, just to see the Memorial Garden, is a very rewarding feeling, and in many ways, one of the reasons for creating it.

The 'Credit Crunch' that is affecting so many people across most areas of both the U.S and the U.K. seems to have been rather relaxed around the Shipdham Flying Club, and our club membership is holding up well. Most surprisingly, there has been more money put into the 44th B.G. Museum donation box in the past three months, than several previous three month periods. It could be that we are getting more visitors or it could be people are being more generous, either way it provides most useful addition to the museum funds and our curator Peter Steele will, I'm sure, find a good use for it over the coming months.

Best wishes from all at your old base in England.

Peter Bodle

From the Diary of Capt. Walter T. Holmes, May 14, 1943:

Kiel, Germany. Today the 44th dispatched 21 aircraft, but only three were from the 67th. One of the six planes that the 506th sent aborted. The target was the Krupp submarine building works. The planes of our Group were the only Liberators participating, following approximately 125 Fortresses.

This proved to be a memorable day, as later the Group was awarded its first Distinguished Unit Citation. The flak was terrific, along with swarms of enemy aircraft engaging in furious duels. To show the ferocity of the enemy attacks, this Group alone claimed thirty-two enemy aircraft as destroyed, five probables, and seven damaged out of one hundred and seventy-two enemy aircraft attacking.

The 67th's three aircraft were flying "Tail End Charlies" and were challenged early and often. In addition to our three planes, the 506th lost Lt. **John Swanson** in A/C # 41-24295; The 66th ship piloted by Lt. **Malcolm C. Howell** and crew in A/C #41-23819 **Rugged Buggy**. The 66th plane piloted by Lt. **John Reed** was so badly damaged that he ordered his crew to bail out over the base and then headed his ship to sea and then jumped.

Lt. **Hartley Westbrook** said that he was asked to fill the vacant co-pilot position on Lt. **Robert Brown's** plane in order to make a full crew for the third plane for the 67th, and they did not return. The 68th gunners leveled the following claims against the enemy: twelve destroyed, five probably destroyed and one damaged. This is believed to be one of the largest scores to be made by a total of five ships from a single squadron in this theater.

One 506 plane was badly damaged, and upon their return to the base, the control tower was only interested in whether the tires were flat. The control tower could see all the holes and feared that a flat might cause a crash and considerable damage to the runway. So they diverted the plane to Belfast, Ireland where the plane was landed without incident.

The Kiel Mission brought the first Distinguished Flying Citation to the 44th BG. Seventeen B-24s were to follow 109 B-17s. Part of the horror of this mission came when some of the Fortresses fell out of formation and were flying above the Liberators, dropping incendiaries. These were in sticks that burst into flame, immediately after being released, so the Liberators were flying through sticks of exploding fire.

The ferocity of Luftwaffe response can be measured by the losses. The 44th lost five A/C; one was abandoned, nine were damaged. Crew losses were huge: 20 POWs, 20 KIA plus one Evadee who was later KIA; WIA—four.

The purpose of this mission was to wipe out submarine production and protect the cargoes of men and supplies coming to Allied Bases.

A voice from another war:

"The experienced fighting pilot does not take unnecessary risks. His business is to shoot down enemy planes, not to get shot down. His trained head and eye and judgment are as much a part of his armament as his machine gun, and a 50-50 chance is the worst he will take or should take – except where the show is of the kind that ... justifies the sacrifice of plane or pilot."

Captain Edward V. "Eddie" Rickenbacker

Jackie Roberts wants to thank all the people who presented her with unexpected dollars. As Treasurer, she is dutifully preserving and investing the 44th's money, knowing there will be a need for funds now that we have the OK to place a 44th BG monument at Carlisle.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE MELVIN JOHN COLE

By Robert Lehnhausen

Melvin (during service he was known by his first name). In civilian life he chose to go by John. To his pals in the 68th, he was "Red". He joined the 44th on 4 November 1942. He, together with several other young radio operators, joined the squadron as casuals, meaning they were not a part of any crew. Early on he was grounded by what I recall was a sinus condition. Shortly after I joined he squadron, he asked for my help in getting back on combat status. That was achieved. Shortly before leaving for Africa, for Ploesti, he joined our crew (**Wilmer Garrett's**) as the radio operator. I was the co-pilot on that crew.

On our first mission, 2 July 1943 out of Libya, we were forced to ditch as the result of battle damage. When it became apparent that we were going to be forced to ditch in the Mediterranean, and the crew was ordered to prepare for ditching, "Red" Cole did exactly what he had been trained to do in such an emergency. He stayed at his position, he tapped out on his radio set a series of Morse Code SOS signals, and then screwed down his transmission key, to emit a constant signal. After being thrown from the crashed *Miss Virginia*, "Red" and I surfaced a few feet apart, next to the right side of the fuselage. Together we got the two dinghies free of their storage location on the top of the fuselage, lashed them together, and proceeded to recover all of our crew mates that had survived and were afloat in their Mae West's. Five of our fine crew never surfaced and lost their lives. Six of us were rescued.

May I impress upon each of you, that this young airman did exactly what he was trained to do **ON HIS FIRST COMBAT MISSION.**

There was NO established Air Sea Rescue service in the Mediterranean at that time. However, there was a British minelayer enroute from Alexandria, Egypt to Malta, carrying the British General Staff. This was eight days prior to the Invasion of Sicily. Someone on that vessel authorized being diverted to begin a search for us, for their radio room had picked up Cole's distress signal. About four and one half hours later, we were rescued by this British warship. Melvin John Cole was the key player, in my opinion.

After hospitalization and an R & R leave, we returned to the Squadron for duty on the Thursday before the Ploesti low level mission. This courageous young guy volunteered to fly the Ploesti mission, because Bill Hughes needed a radio operator. This was his second mission. How is that for a first and second mission? One, you survive a ditching, two you fly Ploesti with a 30% loss rate!

This was not the end of harrowing experiences for him. He flew his seventh of nine missions to Wiener-Neustadt on 1 October 1943. The 44th lost seven of its twenty five dispatched that day. On that mission he was flying as my crew's radio operator. I can assure you that this mission was a very, very violent experience.

Shortly after our return to Shipdham from the second trip to Africa, Cole's sinus problem grounded him for good. In January 1944 he was transferred to 2nd Air Division Headquarters. I was privileged to have flown seven of his nine combat missions with him, and can tell you that he was a superb crew member. He always carried his share of the crew "load", cheerfully and with excellence.

In civilian life he distinguished himself as a member of the advertising business, and spent most of his working life with the highly acclaimed McCann-Erickson Co.

We remained in contact throughout the years. He and his dear wife Adele, now deceased, were special friends.

So we bid farewell to a true patriot. Melvin John Cole was the best of men.

INNOVATION IN WWII

The truth of this story is verified by Lt. Col. John J. Wikle, Ret., son of Earl E. Wikle, Radio Operator on Paper Doll.

Starting in 1941, an increasing number of British airmen found themselves as the involuntary guests of the Third Reich, and the Crown was casting about for ways and means to facilitate their escape. Now obviously, one of the most helpful aids to that end is a useful and accurate map, one showing not only where-stuff-was, but also showing the locations of 'safe houses', where a POW on the lam could go for food and shelter.

Paper maps had some real drawbacks. They made a lot of noise when you open and fold them, they wear out rapidly, and if they get wet, they turn into mush. Someone in MI-5 (similar to America's CIA) got the idea of printing escape maps on silk. It's durable, can be scrunched-up into tiny wads, and unfolded as many times as needed, and makes no noise whatsoever.

At that time there was only one manufacturer in Great Britain that had perfected the technology of printing on silk, and that was John Waddington, Ltd. When approached by the government, the firm was only too happy to do its bit for the war effort.

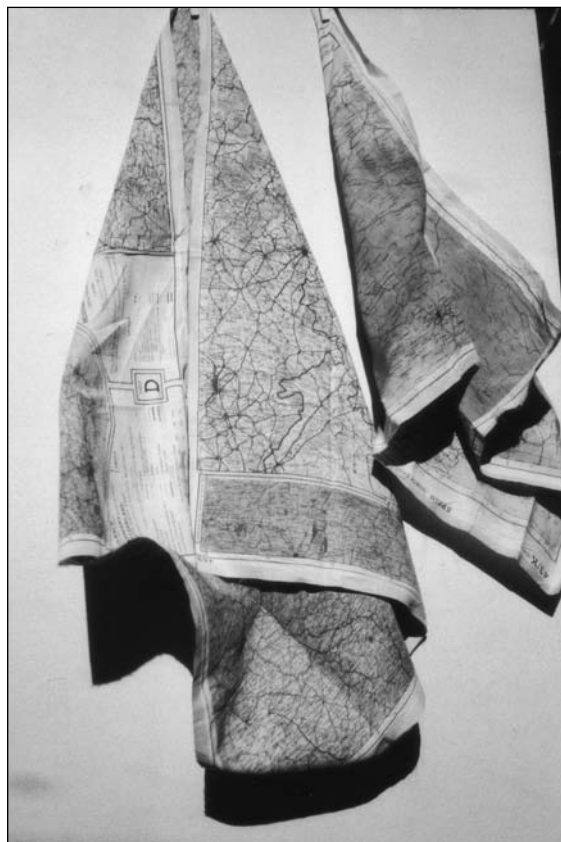
By pure coincidence, Waddington was also the licensee for the popular American board game, Monopoly. As it happened, 'games and pastimes' was a category of item qualified for insertion into 'CARE' packages, dispatched by the International Red Cross, to prisoners of war.

Under the strictest of secrecy, in a securely guarded and inaccessible old workshop on the grounds of Waddington's, a group of sworn-to-secrecy employees began mass-producing escape maps, keyed to each region of Germany or Italy where Allied POW camps were located.

(Red Cross packages were delivered to prisoners in accordance with that same regional system). When processed, these maps could be folded into such tiny dots that they would actually fit inside a Monopoly playing place.

As long as they were at it, the clever workmen at Waddington's also managed to add a playing token, containing a small magnetic compass, and a two-part metal file that could easily be screwed together. Useful amounts of genuine high denomination German, Italian and French currency were hidden within the piles of Monopoly money!

British and American air-crews were advised, before taking off on their first mission, how to identify a 'rigged' Monopoly set –by means of a tiny red dot, one cleverly rigged to look like an ordinary printing glitch, located in the corner of the Free Parking Square!! Of the estimated 35,000 Allied POWs who successfully escaped, an estimated one third were aided in their flight by the rigged Monopoly sets. Everyone who did so was sworn to secrecy indefinitely, since the British Government might want to use this highly successful ruse in still another future war.



...continued on page 8

The story wasn't de-classified until 2007, when the surviving craftsmen from Waddington's, as well as the firm itself, were finally honored in a public ceremony. At any rate, it's always nice when you can play that 'Get Out of Jail Free' card.

Lt. Col. John Wilke wrote that maps of Germany, France, Northern Spain, Austria and other countries were printed on both sides of very thin cloth. Apparently only one crewman carried them.

44th BG Veteran's Comments: Lee Aston: Interesting story, probably true. However, I don't recall ever being briefed before a mission about a Monopoly set with a red dot on it to mark it for escape maps.

MEMORIES OF CAPTAIN STERLING DOBBS PILOT 68TH SQUADRON

"This happened during and after D-Day, when U.S. Troops were starting to make their first big assault. The Air Force issued an order that Bomb Groups would provide air support by dropping supplies to the troops at low levels. To support his mission, the bomb bays of the B-24s had to be modified.

"Up to that time, I had flown 15 missions as a Co-Pilot. Operations called me and said that I was to fly an aircraft to a designated airport for modification. They assigned me an Engineer, Co-Pilot, an airplane, with instructions of where to deliver the airplane.

"This flight was to be at night. It was my first as Pilot in command. Everything went as planned.

"It was also my first night landing at a strange airport. As a result of the success of this operation, I was assigned a crew, and continued to complete my missions, the last several as Command Pilot.

"The mission was flown with the 44th in support of the ground troops. The aircrafts returned with little damage from ground fire. One crew member was hit in the buttocks. He received his Purple Heart on that mission.

Sterling Dobbs frequently e-mails bits of wisdom. Here is a recent one: At one time there was a tax on playing cards. The buyer paid extra for the Ace of Spades. Those who saved money by purchasing only 51 were said to be dumb or stupid because they weren't 'playing with a full deck.'

THE INSIGNIA OF THE 464TH SUB-DEPOT



In early 1944 Lt. Col. Hyman Shactman, 464 Sub-Depot Commander desired their organization to have a distinctive insignia. S/Sgt. Gine Repessi designed the one that was accepted, a Flying Wrench. Due to the fact that the primary duty of this organization was to keep planes in the air by repairing battle damage and doing second and third echelon maintenance on planes, plane parts, and accessories, a wrench - the tool most used by mechanics was chosen as the figurehead for the unit insignia. The sub-depot was an Army Air Corps Unit, so they gave it wings. The colors were blue and yellow, the colors of the AAC.

FROM THE DIARY OF THE LATE BERT CARLBERG NAVIGATOR – 67TH SQUADRON

In October Lt. **Leonard Crandell** and his crew (including me) departed New York on the Ile de France – an ocean liner converted into a troop ship. Strange though it may seem now, we were all afraid that the war in Europe would be over before we got there. Generals Patton and Bradley and Field Marshall Montgomery were moving rapidly across Western Europe, and the newspapers were predicting the war would be over by Christmas. The Ile de France was loaded with replacement troops, aircrews and glider pilots. We were packed in like sardines and could not do much except sleep, write letters, read, play cards or shoot dice. At times we would go out on deck for fresh air and exercise. Traveling with us was a USO group – led by comedian Jack Oakie – going over to entertain the troops. They may have put a couple of shows on as we crossed the ocean, but I was not aware of any. The glider pilots were a very unhappy group. They had all been instructor pilots in the Army Air Corps training command, and abruptly pulled out to fly gliders. They envied those of us who were going over to fly aircraft with engines. I've often wondered how many of them survived; because before the war was over, gliders were used frequently, supporting the advancing armies.

The trip over the ocean took only seven days. We were not part of a convoy, so the Ile de France changed its course heading every three minutes, which prevented an enemy submarine from being able to draw a bead on it. We docked at Glasgow, Scotland and went by train to Stoke-on-Trent, where we spent a couple of days awaiting assignment to the various air bases in East Anglia. Finally we were on our way – again by rail - to Shipdham, but delayed enroute when a buzz bomb narrowly missed the tracks that we were on. This

incident made us realize that we were in the war zone, and the enemy had not yet given up. Because of the delay, we did not arrive at the air base until late in the evening.

Our Assignment, the 67th Squadron

Our crew was assigned to the 67th Squadron, and Lts. **Crandell, (W. B.) Croll** and myself quartered in the rear most Quonset hut on the left side adjacent to a large sugar beet field. The hut was divided into four sections with two officers to each section. Crandell and Croll were put in one section, and I was put in the adjoining section with Lt. **Ed Reynolds**, who had arrived there three weeks earlier. He was the first pilot and his co-pilot, **Stan Fransted** and Navigator, **Hal Pendleton**, were housed in the section opposite us. (Several years later when I revisited the 67th Squadron area, our hut was gone with only the concrete slab on which it had rested, remaining.)

Lt. Reynolds and I hit it off right away, most likely because we were both from the same part of the country - he from Lowell, Massachusetts and I from Meriden, Connecticut. We both had spent our teen years during the very rough times of the depression, so we appreciated the basic needs of warmth, food and security more than our younger colleagues.

Both of our crews – Crandell's and Reynolds = became very friendly and often got together in one or the other's section to exchange skuttlebutt, experiences, and to have an occasional night time snack. Local farmers found they could make a bit of extra money by selling fresh eggs to the American airmen. We were steady customers, and some evenings we would bring bread from the mess hall, fry some of those delicious fresh eggs over our potbellied stoves and

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make ourselves some great egg sandwiches.

My roommate was an animal lover, and soon after he arrived at the 6i7th, he took in a stray black cat. We had a window at the end of our hut, so we left it partially open so the cat could get in and out. This cat was quite a hunter, and often caught mice and small rats in the drainage ditch just outside the hut. On occasion – at night – the cat would bring in its catch and drop it by my cot or Ed's and loudly announced his hunting ability.

We had a radio in our room and enjoyed listening to the music from the Armed Forces Network, as well as the BBC news programs, which were identified and preceded with chimes. On occasion we tuned in a German propaganda station, which fed us a lot of garbage. One morning, however, we were surprised when, returning from a scrubbed mission, to hear the German station announcer inform us that they were disappointed that our mission was cancelled because they were going to be waiting for us near the target. Even late in the war, they still had some means of receiving intelligence information.

Reassigned to Ed's Crew

In early March 1945 Ed had some problem with the performance of his navigator, so without my knowledge, he had me transferred to his crew, which had been given lead crew status. I was a little upset, because I wanted to finish with Len Crandell, but the gods were with me through Eddie Reynolds. On March 24th 1045, while we were flying practice missions, Lt. Crandell and crew flew a low level supply dropping mission for Field Marshall Montgomery's troops crossing the Rhine River and sustained a direct hit that wiped out the aircraft and the entire crew. It took me a while to get over that.

My rating was that of aerial navigator. Following graduation from navigator

training, I was fearful of being assigned to the Pacific theater, in as much as many combat missions there required flying over long stretches of ocean with few navigational aids and frequent use of flying by the stars. I had been taught celestial navigation, but it was slow and cumbersome, so when our crew was assigned to the ETA, I breathed a big sigh of relief. There celestial navigation was rarely required. We had good maps with roads, railroads, towns, villages and cities clearly marked. Also, radio beacons were readily available.

The GEE Box

In the last few months of the war, we were given a new aid – called a GEE box. Special maps were made that contained curved lines which emanated from a master radar station and a slave station. These lines crossed to give perfect fixes over the central and southern England, and all the operator had to do was to place the setting or fix of his destination in the GEE box and steer the aircraft toward the fix which he would reach when the radar blips joined. The master station was powerful enough to reach into Western Germany, but the slave station did not go far enough east to enable a fix. However, the master station was a good indicator of course direction. I was able to use it to follow a course from southern Germany to an alternative field in France when we were flying in solid cloud, and had no other means of navigation. Also, when returning to base in early winter darkness and a snowstorm, I was able to find our Shipdham base without any problem.

Hallein Austria

Our last combat mission was on April 25th, 1945 when we flew to the outskirts of Salzburg, Austria to bomb a small refinery. It was a long mission – total fly-

ing time of 9 hours - but not one bit of enemy activity to challenge us. This was the last combat mission for the 8th Air Force in Europe.

The Trolley Missions

The war in Europe ended on May 8th 1945, but that day and the following one, we were kept busy flying what we called "Trolley" missions. On these flights we carried many of our ground support personnel at low level over Holland and the Ruhr Valley of Germany, to show them the devastation that had resulted from day/night bombings. I remember looking down at the bombed out cities, bridges, railroads, factories and highways, wondering whether they would be able to rebuild. Obviously they were able, because some of the most modern and beautiful cities have risen from those ashes – due to the Marshall Plan.

On one of those afternoons – right after May 8th – our squadron commander and a Capt. Fitzgibbons – who lived in the other corner of our hut – took a B-24 and flew to a part of the French coast famous for its wine production. They brought back quite a supply, and I'll never forget a wine drinking party that followed. I over-indulged, ending up throwing my guts out in the ditch next to our hut.

Going Home

My only use of celestial navigation came into play when we flew our B-24's home in early June 1945. On one leg of the trip – between Iceland and Greenland, we were told to fly a course 10 degrees left of the true heading in the field in Greenland and shoot celestial readings of the sun, which would give us speed readings. When we were within 10 minutes of the projected speed line, abeam the airfield, we made a 90 degree turn to the right and after coming over the southern tip of Greenland, soon reached the air-

port. Landing there was a bit difficult though, because the sole runway could only be reached by flying up a narrow fjord leading directly to that runway.

Prior to our departure from Shipdham, we flew a couple of nighttime training flights to brush up on navigation before leaving for the States. Ironically, we flew the entire trip in daylight, overnighing at Valley, Wales; Keflavik, Iceland and Blue West One in Greenland.

We landed our aircraft at Windsor Locks, Connecticut, and I never flew in a B-24 again.

Ed Reynolds and I Met Again

After the war Ed remained in the Air Force and spent time at various locations, including Alaska, where he flew to remote fields including the Aleutian chain, where he checked out navigation aids, often under horrendous weather conditions. He once checked out the GCA unit at Gander, Newfoundland when I was stationed there as chief dispatcher for Scandinavian Airlines.

After Ed retired from the Air Force he took a job with FAA as a pilot, and he performed the same functions that he had done with the Air Force – flight checking navigation aids. In the last years he rode as check pilot on airline pilots.

Lt. Carlberg flew sixteen missions with the Crandell crew, nine with the Reynolds crew. He is the only member of the Crandell crew to survive the war.



**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR THE
44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
2009 REUNION
SHERATON SUITES TAMPA AIRPORT**

Thursday, October 22

9:00 AM Meeting of Executive Board
1:30 PM Open Registration

Friday, October 23

Breakfast
11:00 AM Bus Tour to MacDill Air Field
Lunch at MacDill Dining Room
Return to Hotel 3:00 PM (approx)
7:00 PM Welcome Reception

Saturday, October 24

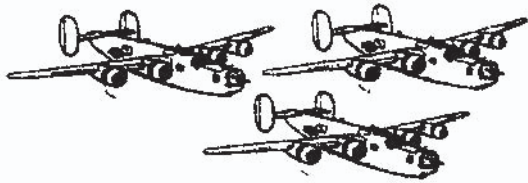
Breakfast
9:00 AM Annual Meeting
11:30 AM Bus Tour to Florida Aquarium
Lunch on you own at the Aquarium
3:00 PM Return to hotel
7:00 PM Squadron Dinners

Sunday October 25

Breakfast
10:00 AM Bus Tour to Fantasy of Flight
Lunch (incl)
3:00 PM Return to Hotel
7:00 PM Banquet

Monday October 26

Breakfast & Farewells



**THE SECOND AIR DIVISION
REUNION SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2009
THE WESTIN O'HARE, CHICAGO, IL**

In the past couple of years, the 44th BGVA's reunion occurred on the same exact weekend of the 2 AD's. **Dick Butler**, single-handedly represented our group. A Past President of the 2 AD, Dick would like some company this year. Registration begins on Thursday September 3rd. On Friday you can enjoy an Architectural Cruise and a Cocktail party that evening, (Cash bar).

Breakfast, and meetings are on Saturday, then off you go to the Museum of Science and Industry. Then more cocktails (Cash bar).

On Sunday there's a City Tour; later there is a Ceremony for Past Presidents and Banquet.

On Monday, it's Breakfast and Farewells.

This Reunion is coordinated by Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. Register online and pay by Credit Card: www.afr-reg.com/2ndAir

For more details contact Betty Lee, Chairman, Phone 321 259-6861

E-Mail betbrown331@aol.com

Or: Maxine Mackey, Phone 480 641-3033 E-Mail oakmackey@msn.com

To all of the 8 Ball Tail Readers: Because of the increased number of Folded Wings, and because our printer gives me over-runs, I have a lot of back copies of the Tails. They are already being distributed in many historical libraries, but we are looking for more. If you personally would like back copies, let me know and I will send them. Instead of reimbursing the postage, please make a contribution to the treasury, c/o Jackie Roberts.

If you have a college or museum in your town that collects historical literature, approach them and ask if they would accept sets of 8 Ball Tails. Along with the magazines, they will also receive an updated CD with the Bomb Group's history. If we do not push the 44th's history into every nook and cranny in this country, future generations will never know of the individual sacrifices of more than 8,000 young men, who helped to keep this country the bastion of freedom which all of us enjoy.

MORE THINGS TO PONDER FROM ROGER FENTON

1. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A CIVIL WAR?
2. WHY IS THERE AN EXPIRATION DATE ON SOUR CREAM?
3. CAN ATHEISTS GET INSURANCE AGAINST ACTS OF GOD?

THE LATE LT. COL DALE F. BENADOM'S HISTORY WAS PRESERVED BY HIS LOVING FAMILY

When a pilot has flown a PT-19, BT-13, AT-6, P-36, P-40, B-24, L-4, L-5, P-47, P-51, B-25, A-20, A-26, C-47, C-54, B-29, T-33, B-47, B-52, KC-97, B-17, RB-66, F-86, F-104 and British Oxford, he hardly had time to write his personal story. His wife Jean kept the list for him. He trained to be a fighter pilot, then came to England and found himself flying in B-24s.

Two trips to the heavily defended sites in Watten, France brought two crash landings for Benadom, flying as Co-Pilot with **Walter Milliner**. On 2 February 1944 they managed to get the heavily damaged plane #42-99996 across the Channel. Everyone but Milliner and Benadom bailed out, and the two pilots crashed the A/C at Shoreham, Sussex. That plane survived the crash and flew again with replacement of two engines and a section of the tail.

Six days later in *Shoo Shoo Baby*, all four engines were barely able to limp back across the Channel. The crew bailed out near Manston, Kent. Again, the pilots brought the plane down and were able to walk away. Four engines were replaced before it could fly again.

(It has been said any landing where you can walk away is a good landing. If the plane can fly again, it's a great landing.)

Apparently Benadom survived other crashes of lesser note, as his fellow airmen began to refer to him as 'Crash Benadom'. On 10 October 1944 he moved across to the pilot's seat, and he signed up for a second tour. By the war's end, he had risen to the rank of Major.

Benadom flew different planes during the Cold War and the Korean Conflict. When the Korean problems arose, he was based at MacDill Air Force Base. He was appointed Group Material Officer, and had the responsibility of moving all planes and other necessary materials to

Okinawa, in preparation for the air war that followed. He flew nine missions in that conflict.

From 1959 to 1962 he served as chief of Spadats Saint Division, working on the logistic support for space programs.

Apparently 'Crash' Benadom's luck with planes improved. Late in his career he received the Flying Safety Award for the longest record of consecutive accident-free months.

Among the pictures in the Benadom collection are four that will tweak the memory of our veterans.



P-47 Thunderbolt, one of the 44th's Little Friends.



Jeep Does that background look familiar to anyone

...continued on page 17



Somewhere in Germany. Undoubtedly taken by Benadon on one of his post war assignments.



Bull of the Woods This plane flew 15 missions. It was first assigned to the 392nd BG, but they did not fly a mission in it. It came to the 44th in October 1943 and crashed the following December on a mission to Ludwigshaven, Germany. Does anyone recognize the crew kneeling before it?

Ed. Note: It is notable that many men like Benadom, who survived World War II, made major contributions to world peace and the progress of aviation.

WILEY NOBLE'S RESEARCH OF A GERMAN TOP SECRET BIRD



Crew Chief assists pilot with checks before takeoff of the Komet.

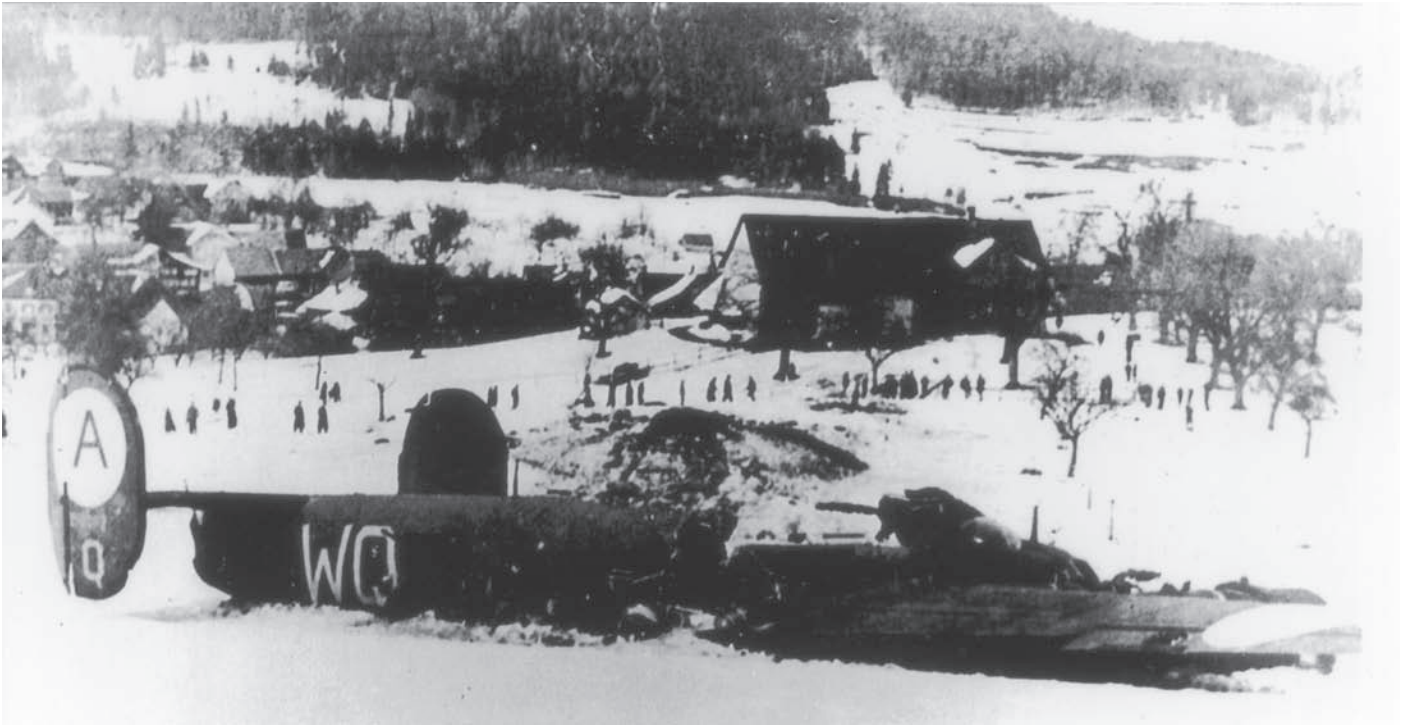
Construction of the rocket-powered ME-163 was kept a total secret from the rest of the military. It was constructed at the Messerschmitt factory in Augsburg, and was called the Komet. Production was slowed because the 8th Air Force was so successfully destroying German industrial plants, making spare parts unavailable.

The flights of the ME-163 were unsuccessful because it flew so fast, its pilots had only 2 seconds to select, aim and fire at a bomber before speeding past the formation. It was so fast, the ME-163 pilots said it appeared that the USAAF bombers were flying backwards!

The ME-163 required 3500 feet of runway for take-off. Fuel lasted only about 10 minutes, half of which was used in take-off. After the rocket engine fuel had been exhausted, the A/C became a fast, controllable glider, each armed with a cannon and 2 Cal. 30 machine guns. The 12" propeller on front of the flying wing powered the navigational and communication systems.

The Komet was considered a dismal failure. Their recorded 'kills' were 20 B-17s, one B-24 and one Mosquito bomber. At one point Herman Goering asked the Me-163 pilots to consider ramming the 8th AF bomber formations/ Twelve volunteered for this suicide mission, but no 'kill' was ever recorded.

ANOTHER LOOK AT *PAPER DOLL* AND HER ONE-WAY TRIP TO SWITZERLAND



Paper Doll at Dietschwil, Switzerland

Lt. Col. John J. Wikle, (Ret) flew to Zurich Switzerland, to follow the footsteps of his father, S/Sgt. **Earl P. Wilke**, Radio Operator on *Paper Doll*.

"It was March 18, 2001, my dad's birthday, and it was also 57 years to the day when he was shot down over Germany. The raid was a maximum effort put up by US forces, with over 700 planes targeting the city of Friedrichshafen on Lake Constance in southern Germany and its Zeppelin factory. The dirigibles had been dismantled, but the factory still made aircraft and liquid oxygen to fuel V-2 rockets, which the Germans would use to attack England. They were also making a new fuel, liquid hydrogen, for rockets with a range long enough to hit the United States, making the raid especially critical to U.S. strategy.

"We were still letting down, and I thought back to the day I learned my father was missing in action. I was in junior high school, and was called to see Mr. Mikesell. He was the superintendent,

and I was no stranger in his office. He told me to sit down as I entered. It was then I noticed Mr. Hildebolt, the principal, also in the room, and the one who administered corporal punishment. I could not think of anything that I had done to warrant this kind of meeting, but it wasn't about me, I soon learned. Mr. Mikesell asked if I knew my father, S/Sgt. **Earle P. Wikle**, was flying combat in the war. I told him I did and said he was on a B-24 as the radio operator/gunner. Mr. Mikesell explained that Western Union had been trying to reach someone at my house with no luck, so they called the school.

"Your father is missing in action over Germany," he said. Mr. Hildebolt added, "He may have bailed out. Do you wish to go home?"

"I didn't realize how serious the matter was. To me, going home to the dairy farm meant cleaning stables. Not being close to my father, I couldn't see how my

...continued on page 19



Officers (not individually identified) **Hollis Nichols**, Pilot; **Sidney Bolick**, Co-Pilot; **John McNamara**, Navigator; **A. Slovacek**, Bombardier.

going home could help him, so I said 'no'. Eventually Western Union got the message through to my grandmother, and she came to school to get

me." 57 years later, Earl's son decided to follow the steps that his father had taken.

Glimpsing into a dark period:

"My trip to Zurich was uneventful, unlike my father's arrival in Switzerland. The number of planes lost in the U.S. raid on Friedrichshafen was 43, about six percent. His B-24, nicknamed *Paper Doll* was one of 16 that wound up in Switzerland."

L/Col. Wilke did a great deal of research about interment in Switzerland. He learned that the first Americans that arrived in that country walked across the border from France through the underground. Others got there after their planes were damaged by flak or caught in fighter plane action, or after they suffered a loss of fuel, mechanical failure or simply became lost. Some aircraft that strayed into Swiss territory were forced down or shot down by Messerschmitt Me 100s sold to the Swiss by Germany. The US crews were detained and their aircraft were impounded. In the early part of the war, a few Americans were exchanged for German prisoners. But by August 1943, just a few months before *Paper Doll's* crew bailed out into the rough Swiss Alps, the Swiss stopped this practice. In addition, the US government was paying the Swiss to house the interns, giving the Swiss government some incentive to hold onto the Americans.

Finding the right book:

John Wilke did a great deal of research on internees in Switzerland, and one book which told the grim story of an internee who escaped and was recaptured was *The Black Hole of Wauwilermoos* by M/Sgt. Dan Culler. His father had suffered the same black experience.

Soon after the crew of *Paper Doll* arrived in Adelboden, the United States sent an officer from the military attaché in Bern to brief the internees. His advice to the detainees was 'disregard what you have been trained to do, escape, because if you are apprehended, you will be treated as a criminal.' When they followed this advice, they were treated properly and permitted to travel about the country.

At one point Sgt. Wilke volunteered to be the radio operator at the US Embassy in Bern. Having worked for Western Union before the war, he would have been an ideal candidate for the position. Circumstances drove him in another direction.

Several months ago the *8 Ball Tails* carried a series of articles by

Sidney Bolick, an airman who has the unique experience of joining the RCAF, RAF, AAC, then became an Internee in Switzerland. Luckily, with the help of the French Underground, he succeeded in escaping. 947 of the 1,740 internees tried to escape. Of these, 184 were recaptured, among them Radio Operator **Earl P. Wilke**.

Earl's son John visited all the hotels



Enlisted men: **Earl P. Wilke**, Radio Operator/Gunner; **W. E. McGoldrick**, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner; **John P. Scott**, Ball Turret Gunner; **G. E. Counts**, Right Waist Gunner; **Carroll Waddell**, Left Waist Gunner, **Joseph Cumbia**, Tail Gunner.

where internees were housed, and viewed the splendor of the mountain peaks, beautiful cloud formations and well tended farms. Life was good for the internees, but apparently the desire to be free prevailed.

The Underground contacted Earl, urging him to bribe the guards, promising they would turn their heads on their escape. Unfortunately, other guards were in place, the escapees were captured and ended up in Wauwilermoos, a maximum security prison. They were housed alongside of sex offenders, murderers and other hardened criminals. Only when Earl was near death from malnutrition and ghastly living conditions, was he exchanged and permitted to return to England. John Wilke's research indicated that sixty one US airmen died in Switzerland. *It was the opinion among the detainees that the Swiss worked six days a week for Germany and prayed for an Allied victory on the seventh.*

Returning to England created new problems for this radio operator. Unfortunately, his flight records were lost, and at first he was considered AWOL. He had to seek help from a Senator to receive his flight pay, and his service-connected disabilities were never recognized. Along with thousands of other GIs, his records were destroyed in a fire in St. Louis.

Even returning home did not solve all of his problems. He could not get care in the VA Hospitals.

In going through his father's papers, John found a card from B/Gen B. R. Legge, saying that he had been accepted for the radio operator position in the U.S. Embassy, and that he was to return to the Embassy and work for "Mr. D." John believes that the reference was to Allen Dulles, who was in Switzerland at the time, working for the OSS, forerunner of the CIA, in an effort to recruit spies. John believes his father never saw this card until after the war. The tragedy of his

ghastly imprisonment at Wauwilermoos could have been prevented, if only he had received that card in time.

The father-son relationship:

John Wilke remembered his family as 'never being the huggy-kissy' type. A handshake was the typical greeting and farewell expression. Thus, when he was ready to board a plane as a US Marine enroute to Korea, he extended his hand to his father.

"He took my hand and pulled me to him and embraced me. I got on board and sat down, shaken by his sudden show of affection. It was then that I realized what he had done was soldier to soldier; and why a handshake on this occasion just wasn't enough."

During the Korean War, John J. Wilke enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps, later he enlisted in the Ohio National Guard. He served 30 years and retired as a Lt. Col.



THE GROUND CREWS PLAY WHEN THE PLANES ARE AWAY



Jim Boyer, Barton Cramer, Charlie Pigg, Willie Williams, — Wolfe and Snowgirl.
December 30, 1942



Jim Boyer, Crew Chief and assistants
not identified.



Believed to be Jim Boyer in front of
#42-95209 (*Sabrina III*). Picture is
labeled "In service one year".
Database credits 105 missions.

A challenge: Spike Jones kept us amused during WWII, and here is one of his noteworthy songs, *Der Fuhrer's Face*. I am omitting one line. See if you can fill it in.

Ven der Furher says, "Vee ist der Master Race,"
Vee 'Heil, Heil,' right in der Fuhrer's face.
Ven Herr Goebels says, _____
Vee 'Heil, Heil', right in Herr Goebel's face.
Ve bring the vorld new order, Heil Hitler's vorld, New Order
Everyone of human race will love der Fuhrer's face
Ven we bring to the vorld dis-order.

Answer: What is the missing line?

Ven Herr Goebels says "They'll never bomb dis place."
(He really said it back in 1942.)

JACK BUTLER, NAVIGATOR, REMEMBERS MISSION #8

It was exactly 9:55 AM over Magdeburg, Germany on June 29, 1944. I had just seen two of our B-24s from the 44th Bomb Group in the flight immediately ahead of us get hit by flak, and then collide with each other and go down in flames. I did not see any chutes open, but I did hear much later that five of the twenty men aboard had managed to bail out and had become POWs.

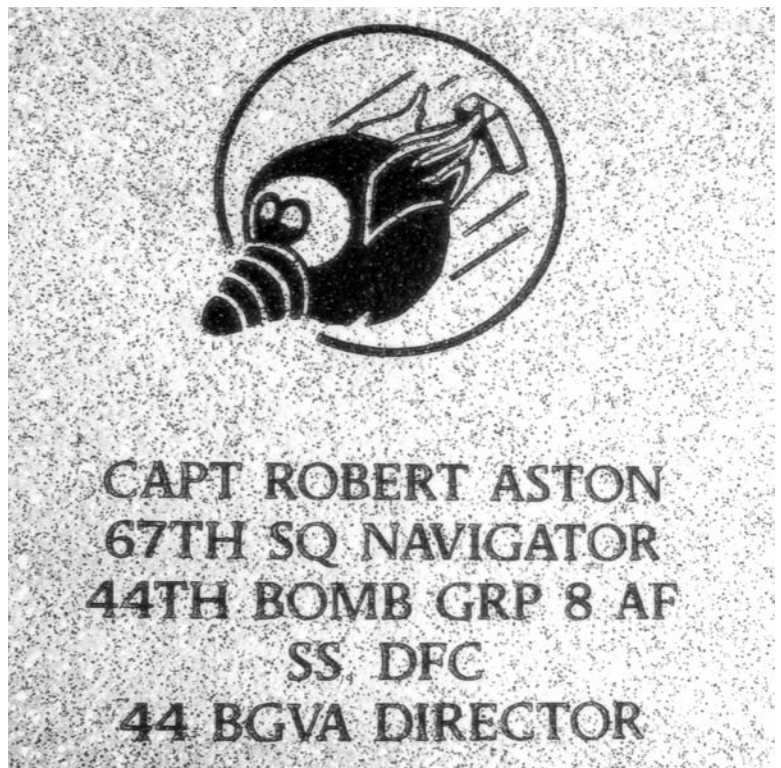
Two of our planes from the 44th were flying directly *behind* the 44th; but instead, were flying with the 392nd that day because of the special radar/bombsight equipment we had on board - (*GEE & PFF*). I was flying in *I'll Be Back* with Captain **Raymond Craig**, the Lead Pilot. Captain **Charles Handwright** was flying Deputy Lead until we were so badly damaged, we had to turn over the lead to Captain Handwright. A third B-24 in our box of three was part of the 392nd.

Of the three B-24s in our box, all were damaged so severely, we each had to limp home separately. All three of us were well aware that a disabled B-24 flying alone was duck soup for a ME-109, but fortunately for us, no Me-109 showed up as we struggled on our way home. Two of our three A/C crash landed in England. Our plane was so badly damaged, we were afraid we would crash in the North Sea, which would mean a long, cold swim to England, so we changed course until we got to near Calais and only 28 miles across the Channel. We finally made it safely all the way to our base, but were two and a half hours overdue. The next day our Crew Chief estimated over 300 holes in our fuselage. (I believe the Crew Chief counted one hole where the flak went in and another where the flak came out.)

Ed. Note: This mission was to the Krupp Aircraft Factory. 26 of the 36 A/C from the 44th were damaged. Two planes from the 506 Squadron were lost; ten men were KIA; 9 were POW. The 67th Squadron had 1 WIA.

The 44th Bomb Group expressed gratitude for great service.

Robert Lee Aston has done what nobody else had even undertaken—getting belated awards for men who earned them long ago. At every Reunion he manages to recruit a notable person to pin Air Medals, OLCs, Distinguished Flying Crosses, Silver Stars and Distinguished Service Crosses on our members. Lee has acquired 63 belated medals for 44th BG members. He also purchased the plaque on the Control Tower in East Anglia. Right now he is working on creating the 44th BG monument for the courtyard at Carlisle. The design is impressive. All that work earns him a Paver in the Soldier's Walk.



44th BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

Lt. Col. Walter Tom Holmes, 68th Squadron, received the Distinguished Service Cross for his target leadership on the 1943 Ploesti Low-Level Bombing Mission

At 8th AFHQ, Barksdale Air Force Base on Feb.2, 2009



8th AF Vice Commander Maj. Gen. Floyd Carpenter congratulates Tom Holmes after pinning DSC medal on Him two days before Tom's 90th Birthday



2 Feb. 2009: Maj. Gen. Floyd Carpenter, Vice Commander, 8th AF; 44th BG veterans: Landrum, Aston, Holmes (wife, Nida), Dale Lee, Geo. Temple.



Mary Aston presented a 44th BG Flying 8 Balls suncatcher logo to Maj. Gen. Carpenter for making the presentation of The DSC to Lt. Col. Holmes.



Tom Holmes, DSC with 44th Bomb Group veterans Dale Lee, Lee Aston and George Temple. Dale Lee and George Temple flee the 1943 Ploesti mission with Holmes. Lee Aston was the attorney for Tom Homes that successfully won his claim for an upgrade of the Silver Star to the DSC, and made the ceremonial arrangements of the second highest medal at Barksdale AFB to Holmes. About 100 family member, friends and base personnel attended. A luncheon was held after the ceremony.

FROM THE ARCHIVES, 68th SQUADRON:

26 February 1943 Wilhelmshaven, Germany

The 44th put up 9 planes that proceeded to the target: the city of Wilhelmshaven and its dock installation. #813 with 1st. Lt. **Walter T. Holmes** and **Howard R. Klekar**, Bombardier, dropped its bombs on the city of Wilhelmshaven. #699 **Lemon Drop** dropped its bombs on slips in the northwest corner of the harbor. 1st. Lt. Reginald h. Phillips, Pilot, and 2nd Lt. **Robert A. LaFleur**, Bombardier, participated.

The reason for the many attacks on #813 and #699 was that they were protecting Lt. **Miller's** ship, #811, which was crippled and fell out of the formation. The pilots of #813 and #699 dropped down to protect #811, although they knew they would suffer increased fighter attacks.

T/Sgt. **Frank W. Gavin** is credited with one FW 190 destroyed. Ship #699 was attacked by an FW 190 from 1 o'clock above in the vicinity of Wilhelmshaven. It was fired upon by Sgt. Gavin in the top turret at a distance of 400-500 yards. At 0630 position it was seen to burst into flames and go down. This is confirmed by the Right Waist Gunner, S/Sgt. **Jack O. Banta**. About forty minutes later, ship #699 was attacked again. It was attacked from 1 o'clock above by an ME 110. It was first hit by the right waist gunner, Sgt. **Jack O. Banta**, at approximately 100 yards, S/Sgt. **Henry G. Hayes**, Tail Turret Gunner, also fired at this EAC which came out at 5 o'clock. The EAC was seen by the Tail Turret Gunner to fall out of control and hit the water. This was also confirmed by the Left Waist Gunner, Sgt. **James M. Garrand**. The enemy aircraft is claimed as destroyed, and credited to the Tail Turret Gunner, S/Sgt. **Henry G. Hayes**. At that time Ship #813 was attacked by two ME 110s between 0630 and 0700 above. The Top Turret Gunner, T/Sgt. **Tauno I. Metsa**, started firing on the EAC at 650 yards and continued firing on it until about 150 yards. Toward the latter part of the attack, the enemy plane was so low that the top turret gunner called through the inner phone to the pilot to pull up the nose, which he did. The starboard engine of the ME 110 burst into flames and the plane fell into the sea. It was seen to hit the water by S/Sgt. **Patrick H. McAttee**, Tail Gunner. 2nd Lt. **Robert J. Stine**, Navigator, confirms the fact the ME 110 was diving straight down with the starboard engine on fire, but he lost sight of it before it hit the water. This EAC was claimed as destroyed and was credited to the Top Turret Gunner, T/Sgt. **Tauno I. Metsa**.

Ten minutes later ship #699 was attacked by an ME 110 from 6:00. This EAC attacked level with the plane at 500 yards. It was first fired on by the Tail Gunner, S/Sgt. **Henry G. Hayes**, and while firing at it, #699 was hit with two 20 mm shells. As this EAC came within 200 yards of the Tail Turret Gunner, it burst into flames and went down. This EAC was claimed as destroyed and credited to the Tail Gunner, S/Sgt. **Henry G. Hayes**.

*Ed. Note: All 68th Squadron planes made it back to Shipdham. The 66th Squadron lost two, **Maisie and Sad Sack**. **James Garrand** and **Robert LaFleur** were KIA on a mission to Lecce, Italy, 2 July 1943. **Frank Gavin** became an Internee in Sweden after a mission to Kjeller, Norway. He was later returned to Shipdham.*





MAIL & E-MAIL

From: Malcolm Holland in England:

I am trying to make contact with any ground-based veterans who were stationed in the UK during WWII with the 8th Air Force. It would include anybody who was involved with running the camps in any way, from Ground Crews, Cooks, Fire Fighters and Administrative Staff.

I am trying to do research on the ground operations, to fill a gap that so far appears to have been largely overlooked, that of the sterling efforts required 'behind the scenes' to keep the bomber offensive going.

I am looking for any first hand accounts of life on or off duty from surviving veterans or memories from more recent generations. I would like to hear about any tasks that were carried out, no matter how mundane, to get a clear picture of how things were organized and done, especially as there were variations of operational procedure from base to base.

(Anyone who wishes to respond to this researcher can contact him at MAHoll200@aol.com.

YOUR PERSONAL STORY ON TAPE

Many of you have expressed a concern that your stories will be forgotten. Martha Pedersen, niece of **Nels A. Pedersen**, wants your words preserved at the US Army Heritage & Education Center in Carlisle. She will work with Michael Lynch, Historian & Chief of Educational & Historical Programs.

At the Harrisburg-Carlisle Reunion, Martha spoke to a number of people who consented to be interviewed. When you have completed your oral history, she would be grateful if you would name other people to interview. Interviews will be conducted in person whenever possible, and she will come to you.

If you and a number of your buddies can get together, that would make a great history, as you can jog each others' memories.

If you were associated with the 44th through the USO or any other way, your stories are important as well.

Every person in the 44th Bomb Group had a unique experience, none of which was quite the same. Record your story. Never before or since in history has there been anything comparable to the events of the 8th Air Force. Don't let your memories of those amazing experience be lost. Martha wants to hear from you. Call her at (301) 987-5895 or contact her at martha_pedersen@hotmail.com

*Ed. Note: **Nels W. Pedersen**, Martha's uncle, was a Navigator on the **H. K. Landahl** crew. The crew was flying in **Cape Cod Special** on a mission to the Krupp Aircraft Factory in Magdeburg, Germany. Flak hit Landahl's plane, and also the one flying alongside – **My Everlovin' Gal**. Ten men died, Pedersen among them. Nine became POW. The date was 29 June 1944. It was Pedersen's 30th mission. This air disaster was reported in Vol. 8, Issue #5 of the 8 Ball Tails. This is the same mission described by Jack Butler, 66th Squadron.*



FOLDED WINGS

*Be still, sad heart! And cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining,
Thy fate is the common fault of all;
Into each life some rain must fall.*

Cole, Melvin John #23288 68th Squadron 28 January 2009 T/Sgt. Cole was a Radio Operator on three crews. His first of nine missions was with **Wilmer Garrett** to Lecce, Italy. On this mission, the plane ditched in the Mediterranean, and he sustained a chest injury. He flew with **W. D. Hughes** on the Ploesti mission. The last seven were with the **Robert Lehnhausen** crew. A health problem ended his combat assignments.

Cole flew in *Miss Virginia* (the A/C which ditched), *Avenger*, *Lemon Drop* and *Flak Alley*.

Cole was living in Minneapolis at the time of his death. He was preceded in death by his wife Adele. Information of his demise came from his son Dana to **Robert Lehnhausen**.

Dibb, Thomas F. #19999 66th Squadron 22 September 2008 S/Sgt. Dibbs was an Engineer & Top Turret Gunner on the **Albert Boudreaux** crew. The crew flew 8 missions, the first 21 March 1945. They flew in *Glory Bee*, *Jersey Jerk*, *Jose Carioca* and *I'll Get By*. Their last mission was 15 April 1945.

Thomas and his wife, Louise, lived in Greenfield, Wisconsin. They had been married 61 years.

Fusano, Mike #20308 Headquarters, 14th Combat Wing. Sgt. Fusano was drafted and went first to Wichita Falls, Texas for his Boot Camp experience. Next he was sent to Shreveport, Louisiana,

where he became a member of the 44th Bomb Group. From there he became a member of the motor pool in Ft. Myers, Florida.

When Mike went to England, he became the driver to Father Lamb, a priest who had shared the journey across the Atlantic. Before long, Father Lamb was transferred to the 1st Division, and Mike became the full time driver for **General Johnson**. Fusano's admiration for the General was boundless. Their relationship continued long after the war was over.

Jenkins, Donald R. #20819 68th Squadron 17 January 2009 1st Lt. Jenkins was the Navigator on the **Robert SeEVERS** crew. His first of 28 missions was 25 August 1944. In the post D-Day period, every mission except one was to Germany. The exception was the low level supply drop at Best, Holland, 18 September 1944.

The SeEVERS crew flew in *Jose Carioca*, *Flak Magnet*, *Gipsy Queen* and *Lili Marlene*, but most of their missions were in unnamed planes. Jenkins also flew with **H. R. Dimpfl**, **Ray Suddreth**, and once with **Victor C. Smith** as Command pilot.

The SeEVERS crew flew the Lead on several missions, including Jenkin's last mission which was the low level supply drop at Wesel, Germany, 24 March 1945.

After the war he became Professor of Engineering at Lafayette College in



FOLDED WINGS

Easton, PA, later at the General Motors Institute.

Jenkin's death occurred three months after the Harrisburg/Carlisle Reunion, where he and his wife Vinnie were accompanied by their daughter and son-in-law. Jenkins was a longtime friend of **George Washburn**; after the Reunion he and Cynthia visited the Jenkins' home in New Hampshire. Since both had flown many of the same missions, much can be said of their shared memories.

Morris, Mark #22730 506 Sq. 2008 S/Sgt. Morris first of twenty five missions was 29 May 1943 with **Nathaniel Graham**. He was a Gunner on the **James McAtee** crew, with whom he flew to Ploesti and both missions to Wiener-Neustadt, flying in **Old Crow** on it's last mission. He also flew with **Harold Laudeg, Norman Purdy** and **Robert Cardenas**.

He also flew in **Prince/Princess-Ass/Princess, Baldy & His Brood** and one unnamed plane. His last mission was 20 February 1944.

After the war. Morris worked as a civilian employee for the Army. He and his wife Rose were residing in Pueblo, CO at the time of his death.

Ed. Note: This Folded Wing was especially troubling, in that Morris's memory of the Wiener Neustadt mission was in the winter 2009 publication. He did not live to see his story in print.

Noble, Wiley S. was Secretary of the 3d Strategic Air Depot. He joined the 44th BGVA because the Strategic Air Depot did many repairs on 44th BG planes. He was Editor of the 3D SAD Association Newsletter, and frequently used stories from the *8 Ball Tails*. In

return, the *8 Ball Tails* carried some of his research on German aircraft.

Rebhan, William #25072 506 Sq. 2004 S/Sgt. Rebhan was a gunner, serving on a number of crews, mostly with the **George M. Beiber** crew, but also with **Hal S. Kimball, Billy Rosser, Ray Ciesielski, Charles Atkins, Hal Tyree**, and once with **Gordon Henderson** as Command Pilot.

His first of eighteen flights was 12 August 1944. He flew on **Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Southern Comfort III, Lakanookie, Joplin Jalopy, Sabrina III** and **Hit Parade**.

Rebhan's last mission was 10 November 1944.

Robinson, Ernest Conley, Sr. #21826 68th Squadron 18 April 2008 S/Sgt. Robinson was a gunner on the **Russell Erickson** crew. His first of 28 missions was 5 November 1944.

The Erickson crew flew **Lady Geraldine, Lili Marlene, Hellza Poppin, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Three Kisses for Luck, Louisiana Belle**, plus many unnamed A/C. His last mission was the last that the 44th BG flew, to Hallein, Austria on 25 April 1945. The German offense at Hallein put 87 holes in the A/C, destroyed two engines and caused one flat tire, but Erickson managed to land the **Louisiana Belle** safely at Shipdham.

After the war, Robinson entered the ministry, and for 50 years served 24 churches in the Hickory, North Carolina area.

He leaves his wife Myrtle, a marriage of 61 years duration. The couple had two sons, one daughter, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

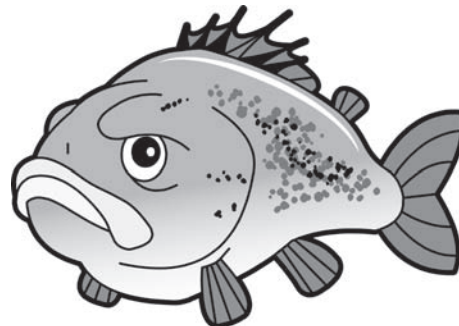
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According to **Ursel Harvel**, 44th BG Photographer, the sum of planes at MacDill AF Base in 1941 were one B-17, two B-18s, one A-17, two PT-17s and one BT-14. Right after War was declared, two 30 caliber machine guns arrived and were mounted on an A-17. This was the first 44th A/C that was combat-ready! The first Liberator that arrived was called the LB-30.

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Cartoon by Brad Fitzpatrick