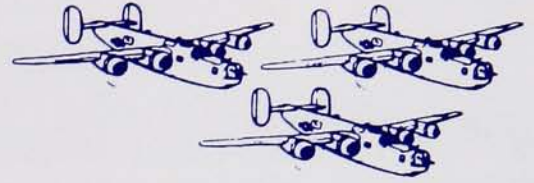


44th Bomb Group VETERANS ASSOCIATION



8 BALL TAILS

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Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

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Non Profit Veterans Organization

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The need for more planes became evident after the Ploesti Raid, and the government hurried to send replacements. The **Frank Sobatka** crew of **NICE'N NAUGHTY #42-7476** delivered this new plane to Shipdham, but the crew soon found themselves flying in other planes. On January 4, 1944, returning to Shipdham from Kiel, both main landing gears on **NICE'N NAUGHTY** collapsed and the plane crash landed. It was salvaged. Then on January 21, 1944, in an unnamed plane, the Sobatka crew was shot down at Escalles Sur Buchy. Two members of the crew survived and successfully evaded: **Milton L. Rosenblatt**, Co-Pilot and **Abraham Teitel**, Bombardier.



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The "Milk Run" That Brought Down the Sobotka Crew

TOP L TO R: CLARENCE REEVES, CHARLES SHOCKLEY, ANDY ROSS, THOMAS CAPIZZI, AUGIE SMANIOTTO, G. CLAIR SHAEFFER.

BOTTOM L TO R: MILTON ROSENBLATT, FRED BUTLER, FRANK SOBOTKA, ABE TEITEL AND IRIM TAB OUR MASCOT.

PHOTO TAKEN IN CASPER, WYOMING BEFORE WE HAD TO DRESS HER.



D-Day was 6 months away. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin had met the month before in Tehran to plan the invasion of France. Eisenhower had been named to direct the invasion of Europe. Kiev had been liberated and German defenses at Dnieper had begun to crumble. Allies had crossed the Sangro River in Italy. Like a cobra in its death throes, Adolph Hitler ordered the most vile of his weapons to date--unmanned missiles into London, the V-1s.

Both the 66th and 68th Squadrons set out on January 21. The target was the V-1 launching sites, Pas Des Calais Area at Escalles-Sur-Buchy. It was January 21, 1944. There was heavy cloud cover, and bombing was at a very low 12,000 feet. The mission was considered a 'milk run,' since the target was very close to the English Channel. The 68th

Squadron sent out seven aircraft and only three returned. Hartwell Howington, pilot of *RAM IT-DAM IT*; Gary Mathisen, pilot on #42-7514, possibly called *VALIANT LADY*, Frank Sobotka, pilot on #42-7501, and Alfred Starring on *VICTORY SHIP* all went down with their planes. Of the four planes, eight crew members successfully evaded, thirteen became POWs and twenty were KIA, including the fathers of Lois Cianci and Jackie Roberts. Among the evadees were Milton Rosenblatt, co-pilot on the Sobotka crew. He tells his story very factually, so the tensions, the anxieties, the physical discomfort of his experience can only be surmised.



MILTON ROSENBLATT, LATE 1942, 20 YRS Old.



"After graduation and a few days leave I was slated to go to Casper, Wyoming where I joined a B-24 crew as co-pilot. We did all our training from Casper, formation flying, navigation, bombing runs, mock air battles with a group of fighters using camera guns and getting a thorough familiarization of our aircraft. We got to know each other and our capabilities. We became friends.

"It was time to get our assignment to a theater of operations, and we drew England - the Eighth Air Force. We decided to name our plane and add a little nose art. About that time on Broadway a popular stage show was playing called Naughty but Nice. It had long legged chorus girls in it. We voted to change the name to Nice and Naughty and add a long legged nude on the nose. We found an artist on base that did a great job. It only lasted a couple of days until the Major of our provisional group saw it and made us give her panties and a bra. We started out for the east coast. Our route was Casper to Goose Bay, Labrador to Reykjavik, Iceland to Prestwick, Scotland.

"We finally arrived in Prestwick about the end of October '43. While our plane was being readied for combat, we were quartered in a castle and had time to explore the town.

"We flew to Norwich and landed at Shipdham about the 1st of November, and our first mission was five days later.

"We flew eleven missions, had some flak damage, made two emergency landings at various fields, suffered some damage from enemy aircraft, but lucked out and came home safely each time, except for our last mission, the twelfth.

Tail End Charlie at Escalles-Sur-Buchy

"We were scheduled to fly a 'Milk Run' just over the Channel to bomb the so called 'ski sites' - the ground equipment used to launch the buzz bombs

toward England. They were called ski sites because they looked like ski jumps.

"We drew 'Tail End Charlie' and because this was supposed to be a milk run at a comparatively low altitude (about twelve thousand feet), I didn't bother to dress with any heavy clothes. Just my light leather jacket and regular shoes. No boots.

"No problems with our take off. We got into position and headed for the coast. We arrived over our intended area but couldn't find the target. Not an enemy plane in the sky and the flak was light. We had great support from our P-47s. We circled the fields looking for our target. I don't recall how long we looked before we finally saw them (they were well camouflaged). By this time our air cover had returned to England to refuel.

"Almost immediately the sky was filled with enemy aircraft. Of course they started at Tail End Charlie. The tail gun was knocked out first. They circled and came at us from eleven o'clock high, knocking out the top turret and spraying the instrument panel with lead. The control cables were severed, and the two engines on the left were on fire. The plane started to roll to the left, went completely over and ended up in a flat spin. The bail out alarm had been sounded and looking out the window, I could make out three chutes, not knowing whether they were ours or not. I knew we didn't have much time to bail out due to our low altitude, but the flat spin gave us a few more minutes. I quickly put my chute on, grabbed my pilot's chute and put it in his lap as he continued to fight the controls while yelling at me to get going.

"As I went toward the bomb bay to bail out, I glanced up at the top turret and all I saw was a hole where it had been. The radio operator was putting his chute on and signaled me to go ahead, he was following. I learned later that he didn't make it. Neither did the pilot. I was the last to jump.

“Those that didn’t make it were **Frank Sobotka** the pilot, **Claire Shaeffer** the crew chief (top turret gunner), **Tommy Capizzi** the radio operator and **Clarence Reeves** the tail gunner.

“I later learned that the rest of my crew were all captured except for **Abe Teitel**, the bombardier and myself. We ended up in the Underground. Abe and I were in different parts so I never did get to see him, although I learned later that he got back okay.

Bailing Out

“When I jumped and pulled the rip cord, the chute opened and I was so low that it only swung once before I hit the ground. Luckily I landed in a clearing that was in a forested area. I immediately gathered my chute, ran for the woods and hid out under the low lying branches of a pine tree. I buried my chute and after thinking about it also hid my 45 pistol. After all, who was I going to shoot?

“Things had happened so fast, and I was so hyper, I decided to stay there, calm down and decide what my next move would be. I rested for about a half hour before I crawled out and looked for a way out of the woods. I thought I would head for Paris feeling that in a big city, it would be easier to get lost and possibly find a way to get into the Underground. The only problem was my uniform. How could I walk around with an American uniform on? As luck would have it, as I came out of the woods and started walking down a dirt road a woman came around a bend walking toward me. She seemed startled at first then seeing my uniform and realizing I was an American, started chattering in rapid French. I couldn’t understand a word, but I finally figured out that she had seen the dog fight and the chutes of the men that had bailed out and realized that was where I had come from.

“She was very excited and grabbed my hand, practically ran with me to her house which was

close by. I found out by sign language and using a few French words, that her husband had been taken by the Germans to a labor camp and she was working the farm by herself. I stayed there that night, but couldn’t stay longer because the Germans often came by. Before I left she gave me some of her husband’s clothes. I felt a little better about walking in the open, now that my uniform was hidden.

“That day I walked until I was exhausted, thinking that I would hide in a barn for the night; but every time I approached a barn, a dog would start barking. I ended up going into a field and finding a haystack that I could burrow into and get a little sleep. This happened for two more days, I hadn’t seen a German soldier in all this time.

The Kindness of the French

“Nothing to eat or drink I was getting a little light headed and decided to knock on the next door I came to. Toward evening of my third day I came across a small house and knocked on the door. A man opened the door and we just stood there looking at each other. I opened my shirt and showed him my uniform with the U.S. pin on it. He quickly pulled me in and closed and locked the door. He spoke no English and I spoke no French, but we made ourselves understood. He realized I was hungry and tired, so he fed me and took me into a back room where there was a mattress that I fell on and promptly fell asleep. When I awoke he called a school teacher who spoke fair English. I told him I was trying to get to the Underground. He said he could help. He left and when he came back, he had two bicycles with him. He told me to follow him, and he led me to a house that looked deserted. When I entered, I saw three men standing in the middle of the room. They immediately surrounded me and started asking me questions. What plane did I fly, where did I take my training, where did I live in the states, what school did I go to. When they were satisfied that I was an American they shook my hand, patted me on the back and told me that I was now in the



Underground. I later found out that if they had any suspicion that I wasn't who I said I was, they would have shot me at once.

"One of the men drove me to a farm house where I stayed for about a week. A man and his wife and their teen age daughter who was studying English lived there. I helped with the chores around the house and on the farm and helped the young girl with her English, while she tried to teach me French. I grew to really like the family, but all too soon, I was moved to another location. This time I was with one of the heads of the Underground. He took me with him to help him interview new evadees. He said that I could tell easier than he could if these new arrivals were either American, English, or Canadian, and not German, trying to infiltrate. Another one of my jobs was to help write phoney identification cards. We would have photos taken and attach them to the cards. We also made up travel permits. I still have the ones I made for myself.

"I stayed with these people for over a month. One of the men owned a flour mill, and he would hold meetings there with Underground personnel every so often. By this time I understood enough French to know what was going on. They knew an invasion was inevitable, and they were planning what action they would take. They had guns and ammunition hidden in various parts of the city that could be obtained easily and quickly.

"One day word had filtered through that the Germans were suspicious of one of the men and were looking to question him. The man whose house I was living in at that time said that he would probably have to get to England. He was afraid the Germans were getting too close. I told him that I would go with him and we started to plan our route. We could either go through Switzerland or across the Pyrenees to Spain. We decided on Spain. It was easier to get to England from there. Before we got started word came back that I was to be evacuated from a beach in

Brittany by an English Corvette. I was to be driven to the railroad station in Paris with my I.D. and travel permit.

Getting Past the Germans

"When the day came that I was to leave, I was driven to the depot and told to wait with one other evacuee at a certain place in the station. We were to keep our eyes on three men that were standing under a clock on the far side of the station, and when they started to walk toward the ticket taker we should calmly follow them. Not too closely. I wondered how we would get through. We had no tickets. While we were looking into a store window and smoking a cigarette, a German officer approached us. We were given orders not to say one word to anyone, not even oui (yes) as our accent could be detected. The officer approached and asked me, in French, if I would give him a light. He had a cigarette but no matches. Luckily I understood him and like most Frenchmen that I had observed, I offered him a light from my cigarette. He thanked me and left. No sooner was he out of sight than one of the men under the clock rushed over and asked me what had taken place. I told him and assured him that I had not spoken one word.

"People were starting to go toward the ticket taker's gate and it was time for us to go also. We followed the men under the clock and when they got to the gate they nodded to the ticket agent and gave him their ticket. They got back a stub and continued on to the train. I got to the gate and held my breath as I started through. Without hesitation the gate man nodded at me and gave me a ticket stub which I have to this day. Obviously he was part of the Underground also. I got on the train, and as it started, I noticed two German soldiers checking the passengers ticket stubs and I.D.'s. This made me a little nervous because I saw them asking some of the people something. When they came to me I had my ticket stub and I.D. in my hand ready for them. They asked me for my travel permit and I breathed a

Sneaking to the Channel and Freedom

sigh of relief. I didn't have to talk to them I just reached into my pocket and showed it to them. They looked it over, seemed satisfied and moved on.

"When we arrived at our destination which was a small town on the coast of Brittany, we were met by a truck (there were about eight of us on the train) that took us to a farmhouse about a mile inland. We went into a large barn next to the house. Straw on the floor was pushed aside to uncover a trap door built into the floor. We were led down a ladder into a large room in which there were about thirty escapees. We were all happy to see each other and shook hands all around, gave our names and told our stories. We were told that an English Corvette would come to take us across the Channel as soon as there was a new moon which would occur in two days. In the meantime we were given food and wine. In the evening we were given blankets and pads on which we slept.

"The night we were to leave finally arrived. We were given strict instructions on how we were to proceed to the coast. We were warned that the coast was heavily guarded and we should be perfectly quiet while we walked in single file toward the beach. It was dark as pitch when we started. Not a light was seen. We headed toward the coast single file as instructed. We went down a dirt path bordered by four foot hedgerows on each side. We had gone no further than fifty yards when one of our guides came running back whispering to us to jump over the hedgerow and hide quietly behind it. It seemed to me that we made one hell of a commotion jumping over the bushes and landing on one another before we settled down, but a few minutes later two men came strolling by chatting to each other and not even realizing that just a few feet from them about forty men were waiting for them to pass.

"We continued down the path until we were stopped near the beach. Two German soldiers were on sentry duty walking back and forth. They walked toward each other and when they met would exchange a few words, turn around and walk back. When they were far enough away, the guide in front of our column would tap three or four of us to sneak by and slide down the cliff to the beach before the sentries turned around to come back. When we were all down, we waited for the Corvette to come in and pick us up. (Twenty years later, my wife and I had a chance to go back there; and all I can say is that I was glad it was a dark night, because I don't see how we all made it down without casualties. I never would have tried it in the day light.) We were told to take off our shoes and put our socks in them, tie the laces together and put them around our neck and roll our pants up over our knees. The Corvette launched three row boats toward the beach and we walked out to meet them. Little did it help to roll our pants up. We were up to our waist before we knew it.

We boarded the "Corvette", were treated royally by the crew and cruised to England, interrogated thoroughly and eventually returned to our group.

"My wife and I did go back, and I followed the same route I had taken twenty years earlier. Every one I met remembered me; and at every place I stopped, friends and neighbors were invited in, and we had party after party. I still have many friends in France that I correspond with to this day and we go back to see them quite often."



L TO R: Tony and Lois Cianci, Lila and Milton Rosenblatt
Milt was co-pilot on the plane in which Lois's father, Clair Shaeffer was killed.



"ANOTHER ONE of my jobs WAS TO HELP WRITE phoney IDENTIFICATION CARDS. WE WOULD HAVE PHOTOS TAKEN AND ATTACH THEM TO THE CARDS. WE ALSO MADE UP TRAVEL PERMITS. I STILL HAVE THE ONES I MADE FOR MYSELF."

N° 218
CARTE D'IDENTITÉ

Nom **Bellec**
Prénoms **Jean Marie Simon**
Nationalité **Français**
Profession **ouvrier**
Né le **21 Janvier 1919**
à **St Jean Des Vignes du Nord**
Domicile **Buhulien Côte du Nord**



TAILLE **1m, 66** Dos **brun**
Cheveux **bruns** Nez **brun**
Moustache **brun** Visage **ovale**
Yeux **brun** Teint **clair**
Signes Particuliers

Le Titulaire
J. Bellec
Témoins:
Le Maire

En présence de
Le Maire

Signature des Signataires
Le **5 MARS 1943**
Le Maire



L'émigration ne peut soulever qu'aux per- sonnes en résidence dans la Commune depuis au moins 6 mois.

Département des Côtes-du-Nord



de **Buhulien**

ATTESTATION

BESCHEINIGUNG

Le soussigné, Maire de **Buhulien**
Der Unterzeichnete, Bürgermeister von **Buhulien**

atteste, afin de pouvoir se rendre en zone interdite de la région côtière,
schiebt zum Zwecke der Einreise in die Küstensperzone

le Monsieur, ~~Monsieur~~ **Monsieur Bellec Jean**
s Herr, Frau, Fraulein **(nom et prénom) (Name u. Vorname)**

Mani
né le **21 Janvier 1919** à **St Jean Cdu N.**
(date) (lieu de naissance) (Geburtsort u. Ort)

profession (Beruf)
habitant à **Buhulien**, rue **numéro**
aufhaft in

son domicile légal — sa résidence habituelle
ihren Wohnsitz / seinen / ihren gewöhnlichen Aufenthalt

puis le **24 novembre 1942**, à **Buhulien** hat.
dem in

Le Maire
valable jusqu'au **7 Mai 1943**
27 NOV 1943
27 NOV 1943

A faire proroger tous les six mois.

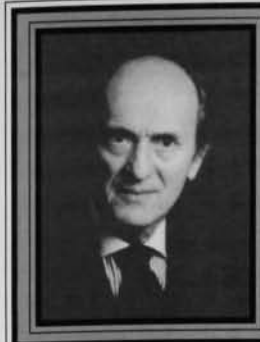
CERTIFICAT DE TRAVAIL Mod 1
délivré sous la responsabilité de :

Monsieur **le Maire de Buhulien**
Qualité : **Côte du Nord**
(L'Employeur indiquera ses titres, la raison sociale et l'adresse de ses Etablissements)

A **Buhulien** le **17 AVR 1943**
Signature et cachet du **Maire**

J. 37280-43, (B)





From the Desk of our President

Last month (May 30) I completed my prescribed two (2) years as President of this thriving organization that my predecessor, Colonel Roy W. Owen, presided over for five years. You put me in charge of a remarkable organization and a strong Executive Board, broad and deep enough, to fulfill our mission of perpetuating our illustrious history, honoring the memories of our deceased comrades and providing the compassion, beneficence and friendship to the families of our fallen colleagues. I thank all of you for giving me this opportunity to represent and serve you in this capacity which I consider to be a profound privilege and unique pleasure.

I inherited from Colonel Owen a number of initiatives that he had tendered and that would come to fruition on my watch. One of the greatest of these is the Master Historical Data Base (MHDB) that will not only computerize the archival exploits of the 44th Bomb Group but also the personal histories of every man or woman who served with the 44th in WWII.

Much has been accomplished but much remains to be done and we cannot rest on past laurels.

As you know, the MHDB program requires funding that is clearly above our normal operating budget that averages in the area of \$30 - \$35,000 per annum. It is for this reason that I established the special MHDB Fund and appealed to you for donations to insure its success and perpetuity. To those who responded with your donations I thank you for your generosity and to those who have not yet made their contributions I appeal once again for whatever you can donate. Let's make this year the year "CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME" and, instead of responding to those appeals we are "deluged" with almost daily by mail, phone, fax, e-mail, etc., send your donation this year to the MHDB FUND, 44th BGVA, P.O. Box 712287, Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287.

Also, when I assumed the office as your President, I committed to insuring the financial stability of the association and the growth of our membership. I am pleased to let you know that according to our Treasurer's Annual Report for the period ending December 31, 2000, we are financially stable and have been showing an annual surplus for the past two years.

Our membership also continues to grow despite the ever growing attrition due to deaths that are occurring with ever increasing frequency. As of this writing our membership stands at 1,065 members and it is my goal that with the membership drives still in effect and/or planned, this number will continue to grow. Many of you are enrolling members of your family which I believe is one of the best "gifts" you can give your children and/or grandchildren. It is their key to the record of your service and contribution to that great victory over totalitarianism that made you one of those referred to by Tom Brokaw as "The Greatest Generation." Keep enrolling them and urge your fellow crewmen/colleagues to do the same.

Thanks to Jerry Folsom's efforts, our 44th BGVA Web Site is now up and running and the "hits" are growing daily. Keep in mind that it is new and we will be making improvements as needed. Also, our newly appointed AWARD COMMITTEE under the Chairmanship of Robert Lehnhausen received Board approval to inaugurate THE GENERAL LEON W. JOHNSON DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD this year. This award will become an annual event and the Year 2001 Honoree will be announced and receive this award at the Shreveport Reunion scheduled for October 15-18, 2001. Make your reservations NOW for another one of Mike Yuspeh's fantastic reunions. We will visit the 8th Air Force Headquarters, dedicate the B-24J with dignitaries from the state of Louisiana, city of Shreveport and 8th Air Force, tour Shreveport, dine and dance to the Big Band Music in the mode of the one and only GIENN MILLER. RESERVE EARLY!

Congratulations to Robert "Lee" Aston on his belated award of the DFC and two Oak Leaf Clusters to his Air Medal. He was notified on May 15, 2001 of these awards by the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records for "...extraordinary achievement while serving as Navigator on B-24 airplanes on many missions over enemy occupied Continental Europe" on January 11 and 12, 1945 (Air Medals) and March 15, 1945 (DFC). "Lee and Chris Spagnola are contacting their other crew members to meet and renew their friendships at the Shreveport Reunion in October. Other crews are also planning to attend, including Bob Dunlop's crew, and those few that are still remaining from my original crew in the 66th - Jimmy, Pat, Sam, George are you listening? I am counting on Bill Coll's uncle and some of "Buster" Hazelton's children to be there. See you in Shreveport.

I close with another one of my favorite quotations:

**"When the Love of Power exceeds the Power of Love
Take Heed."**

Edward K. Mikoloski, President



Back Row L to R:
LEON DEL GRANDE, Co-Pilot,
LT. EDWARD COLE,
LT CRAIG HAVENS, AND
LT. JAMES ZAICEK.



CAN ANYONE IDENTIFY THE
CREWMEN IN THE FRONT ROW?

ANOTHER RIDDLE RESOLVED

The mission to Zwickau, Germany on April 21, 1944 was recalled, but not in time to prevent the crash of A/C #41-29418 (68th Sq.) at Teverham Mill Lake, near Norwich, England. Five members of the crew perished: **James Zajicek**, Navigator; **Edward Cole**, Bombardier; **Leonard Lambert**, Engineer; **George Houchens**, Radio Operator; **Hal Wood**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Russell Taylor**, Tail Gunner. Pilot **Forrest Havens** and Co-Pilot **Leon Del Grande** survived, but were injured.

Very recently a police diving team found the wreckage with incomplete lettering on the *Pappy's Chillin*. The explanation of the crash was rime ice. The plane was flying into formation, travelling at 144-160 MPH through overcast, icy conditions. When it reached 14,000 feet, the aircraft lurched violently and started swerving to the right. The pilots could not control the ship, and it swerved back to the left, then



CLEMANS

started to spin tightly toward the ground. The plane then turned on its back and the right wing and tail were torn off by the violent maneuvers. The two pilots were thrown into the top of the cockpit, the cabin ripped apart, and they were thrown clear of the wreckage.

Just recently, fifty seven years later, a memorial stone was laid in honor of the crew, led by a US Air Force Guard of Honor. Cole's sister, Elizabeth Clemans, traveled to the site. Representing the 44th at the Memorial Ceremony was President Mike Mikoloski and U.K. Representative, Steve Adams.



This MEMORIAL was
dedicated in
TAVERHAM, outside of
NORWICH, SATURDAY.

AIRMEN FROM THE BASE HONOR GUARD fold the AMERICAN flag SATURDAY during a CEREMONY at TAVERHAM honoring AN AMERICAN bomber crew THAT CRASHED NEAR THE TOWN 57 YEARS EARLIER. THE flag was presented TO BETTY CLEMANS, THE SISTER OF THE bombardier who PERISHED IN THE CRASH.



MIKE FUSANO AND THE GENERAL

"I was the first one to see the Medal of Honor after it was given to General Leon Johnson," said Mike Fusano. "I congratulated him on receiving it, and he immediately said, 'Don't congratulate me. I am only the custodian of the Medal. This is for the boys who did all the work.' That was so typical of the General's humility. He was the greatest man I have ever known."

Mike had the unique pleasure of being the driver for the great General. Drafted from his family's olive grove in California, he went to Wichita Falls, Texas for his Boot Camp experience, then to Shreveport, Louisiana, where he became a member of the 44th Bomb Group. In Barksdale he remembers being 'just another Dog Face.' From there he became a member of the motor pool in Ft. Myers, Florida, right in the Everglades. The advantage of that assignment was that they could sometimes go to San Carlos Bay and watch the porpoises leap about.

"When we went to England, our priest, Father Lamb went with us, and I was his driver. When he got transferred to the 1st Division, I became a full-time driver for General Johnson. He had a wonderful sense of humor. When we would leave the base, there was an Indian from Oklahoma on guard duty. It was his job to stop and challenge anyone



MIKE AND COL. JOHNSON

going in or out. When nothing was happening, the man sat in a little cubby hole and pulled a blanket over himself. The General jested that perhaps they should get him a teepee."

From his position as driver, Mike could enjoy some of the hospitality of great leaders. Once when General Johnson

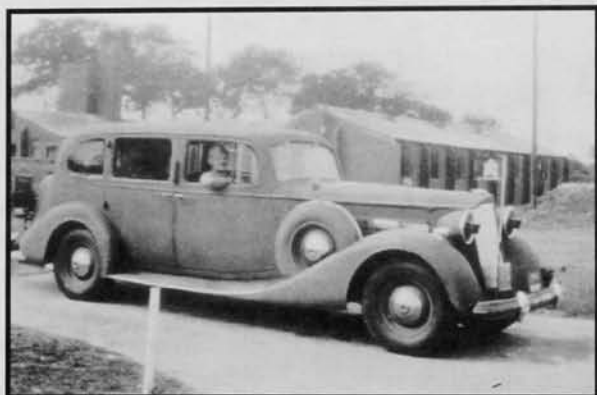
went to Hingham to visit Lord Ironside a British General, the maid came out to the car to serve Mike tea and crumpets. Lord Ironside had been relieved of his command after the disastrous battle of Dunkirk, so he returned to his special interest of growing a variety of apples. When Mike would meet him on the streets, he was always greeted warmly; and each time Lord Ironside wanted a report on how the General was doing.

"I was directed to pick up any walking soldier," Mike remembered. "The General would use that opportunity to find how things were going on the base. One night we picked up a Master Sergeant going off duty at midnight. He stated that there was rarely any food in the mess hall at that hour--just odds and ends. That was because the men on Liberty Runs got there first and ate it all.

"That didn't ever happen again," Mike declared. "The General changed that, immediately making provisions for those going off duty to eat.



"When the 44th was going on an especially hazardous assignment, the General would tell me to get his parachute, he was going along. He would say, 'This is going to be tough. I have to go along to take responsibility.' On base he drove himself, and I drove him when he went to other bases. Sometimes we would leave at 2:00 a.m., but he would always insist that I get back for some sleep, or catch up on a meal. When I wasn't driving, I had to take care of the car, a 1935 Custom Packard." On the celebration of the 44th 200th mission, the General took the wheel and drove Mike through the base.



Look who is driving Mike FUSANO

Mike had the great experience of being on the same plane with General Johnson for the Trolley Run, and heard him explain the details of everything that had been done. It was truly a moment of pride for everyone who had contributed to the war effort.

The friendship between the two men continued until the General's death. If Johnson was in Los Angeles, Mike and his wife Kaye would visit with him; and in the latter days of his life, they visited him in the nursing home in Fairfax, Virginia.

When the War was over, Mike returned to growing olives and making oil in Sylmar, California, where he resides with his wife, Catherine. He regards his time spent with General Johnson as some of the brightest moments of his life.



Mike FUSANO

WILLIAM MENGES

WILLIAM MENGES ARMY COMBAT, 44TH BOMB GROUP & MISSILEER



1955

William Menges, AF Retiree, got 100 free hours from ATT, so he called to tell me his war experiences. He also called Jerry Folsom to chat. HE HAS NOT YET DONE HIS DATABASE, but promises to do it soon.

Menges started out with the CCC, an organization created during the Great Depression for young men who couldn't find jobs. In 1942 he was drafted, and found himself in the 3rd Army, manning the anti-aircraft search lights in the Ardennes for General Patton. Later, as a combat engineer, Menges built bridges for the advancing army in Luxemburg and Pruuen, Germany.

When the War was over, he took advantage of the G.I. Bill to study radio, then enlisted in the Air Corps and was assigned to the 44th BG at Rapid City, S.D. (He claims to be among the first to don the Air Force blue uniform.) At Ellsworth he became a Radar Mechanic. When the 44th had its transformation into the Missileers, Menges was there on Permanent Staff. His next assignment was Expediter on the ICBM and Minuteman Missiles.

Menges speaks with true enthusiasm of the high points of his service experiences. He says in England he danced with Col. Leon Johnson's wife, and at Geiger Field he worked with Captain Chuck Yeager. He says he has four Battle Stars and some Oak Leaf Clusters. Straddling three branches of the service in one short lifetime has been a heady experience for M/Sgt. William Menges.

SOME THINGS ONLY HAPPEN ONCE ... THE EUROPEAN TOUR

September, 2001 44th BGVA Europe/England Trip (A perfect trip to share with a child or grandchild.)

The trip will be a step back in time and a look into the progressive world that YOU made possible by your valiant sacrifice, fifty seven years ago. Not only will you see the cities where you helped wipe out Nazi strongholds, but also visit shrines and cathedrals that survived from medieval times to the present. From September 11-26, you will barely have time to see the wonders that lie ahead, and the history that YOU helped make. Did you know the Parisians cut the cables of the Eiffel Tower when the city fell, so the Germans could not use it as a radio tower? It re-opened after V-E Day, with free rides for any G.I. who happened along. Did you know a day at the Louvre is not nearly long enough to see the work of the Old Masters? You might get through one section.

At Caen the Wehrmacht was desperately holding onto the city, acting on Hitler's mistaken idea that the main invasion would be at Pas de Calais. Now Caen's biggest attraction is a Memorial Museum for Peace, honoring those who fought both wars--WWI and WWII. At Normandy, even those who have previously seen the exhibits and cemetery will again marvel at the awesome undertaking of that landing, assisted by B-24 bombers that cut off German support of the troops at the coast. Enemy cannons still protrude from cement bunkers, testimony of the deadly battle that ensued.

We will have lunch in Reims, a 2000 year old city and scene of Napoleon's last victorious battle. Reims is now famous for its champagne, and the home of General Eisenhower's SHAPE headquarters. From there, we will see Verdun and Luxembourg.

Day 6 takes us to Bastogne, Belgium, where an American tank is the centerpiece in the two square. Our Belgium friend, Peter Loncke will be joining us at the towns of Wibrin and Haufalize, where local people will dedicate a memorial at the crash site of the Pinder crew. From there we move to a medieval tour, Trier, Germany on the Mosel River for dinner and our evening stay. The next day's adventure will be a 4-1/2 hour cruise on the Rhine River.



WAR ROOM of the 14th Wing Hq. CAN ANYONE identify THESE STRATEGISTS?

though the entire city was devastated by the bombing. At Wesel we will visit the crash site of **Louis DeBlasio's** and **Bob Vance's** plane, then later to the cemetery where their crewmen are buried, then on across the Channel, past the White Cliffs of Dover and on to Norwich. We will see the Memorial Library, the Shipdham Airfield and the 14th Combat Wing Hq., and have an opportunity to meet our special guests from Shipdham Village and the British Legion. Too soon we will say good-bye to Steve Adams, Phyllis DuBois, Peter Loncke, Luc Dewez, Andrew Doubleday and all our other friends; then on to Duxford, Cambridge and London. Coming home, our heads may be swimming, but our hearts will be brimming at the memories of a holiday that can never be replicated.

*Take a young family member.
It's a great lesson in history.
Call Larry Herpel at
1-888-317-7483.*





THE REUNION IN BARKSDALE EARLY HOME OF THE 44TH BOMB GROUP

I recently heard the reason for veterans to go to a Reunion. They don't go because they want to talk about the good old days, and they don't go to talk about how great they once were. They go because they have been with other men whose courage has been tested to the utmost degree of human endurance, and yet stood tall. They want the company of such men one more time. To me, your editor, that says it all.

Barksdale will be a fantastic experience, as the dedication of the Louisiana Belle has great significance to so many 44thers. (In 2001, a B-24 is hard to find.) The efforts of **Clem Haulman** and Dick Butler in gathering parts for the reconstructed treasure has paid off, and the staff at Barksdale are eager to show off their work. A number of crews will be holding their own small gatherings; and there should be some pretty strong discussions, as memories of the same events unravel differently.

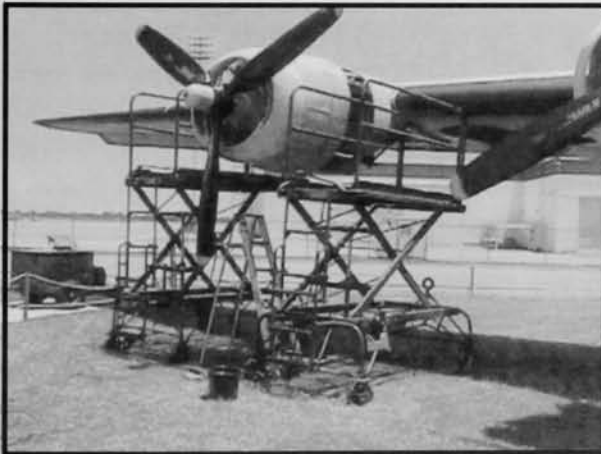
Mike Yuspeh's skills at arranging grandiose events is unparalleled in the upcoming program at the Isle of Capri Hotel at Bossier City. With the planned tours, he piques your interest in the history of Shreveport, once the capital of the Confederacy, and gives you a taste of the Southern culture and Creole cuisine, unique in the nation.

Most impressive, however, will again be the Squadron Dinners, Candlelight Ceremony and gala Banquet, where memories of the past can be 'rehashed' and revitalized. Could anything touch your heart more successfully than a 17 piece band with the 'Glenn Miller' sound? Don't miss this great opportunity. The Barksdale Reunion will happen only once.

PHASES OF THE RESTORATION



OF THE "LOUISIANA BELLE"



**JOIN US IN
BARKSDALE!**





**44th Bomb Group
Veterans
Assn. Reunion - 2001**



Isle of Capri Hotel - Bossier City, LA

Barksdale AFB

October 15, 16, 17, & 18, 2001

Reunion Registration Form

Please print or type. All Information must be complete:

Last Name _____ First Name (Tag) _____

Spouse _____ Squadron # _____ Life Member _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Guests & Relation _____

Number to Attend _____ @ \$215.00 Each Amount \$ _____

Tour #1- City Tour of Shreveport
Number on Tour _____ @ \$25.00 Per Person Amount \$ _____

Tour # 2- Tour of Natchitoches & Lunch
Number on Tour _____ @ \$55.00 Per Person Amount \$ _____

Total Amount Remitted Amount \$ _____
Check # _____

Description of tours are in last issue of the 8 Ball Tails.

Registration Includes: Everything on agenda except tours as listed above.

Registration must be received by September 10, 2001.

Hotel registration must be made directly with Isle Of Capri Hotel & Casino by phone only

Toll free (800) 843-4753.

Check Made Payable to: 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association (44th BGVA)

Mail to: Mike Yuspeh - 7214 Sardonyx Street - New Orleans, LA 70124-3509

Phone: (504)283-3424 Fax: (504) 283-3425 (Picks up on 6th ring)

E-Mail: Mikeyuspeh@juno.com



MAJOR URSEL HARVELL AND THE WOLF PACK.

MARCH 10, 1943



"This bit of history was made aboard an old French passenger vessel that had seen better days, the *Chantilly*. It could have been considered a luxury liner twenty years ago, that is, in the Indian Ocean trade. The British took her over and ordered her to

England via New York. We went aboard her there for the memorial crossing of the North Atlantic, a normal crossing in that ship was a feat without the menace of the jerry wolfpacks. Concrete gun turrets and gun emplacements had added considerably to the weight of the upper structure which may have interfered with the ship's balance on its usual run from Capetown, Durban to Suez on the East Coast of Africa, but one look at this tub and the calendar was enough to forecast the type of crossing we had ahead.

We ran into foul weather about the 8th of March, the a/c carrier turned back the 10th, about 4:40 p.m., the taffrail boom was dipping the water with every roll, chairs and tables were lashed down; then at 6:30, just two hours after the main escort had turned back, the most terrifying sub attack you've ever read about hit us. First to go was the deputy commodore starboard to forward, then a freighter directly opposite us, starboard, which saved us the first time, by taking the torpedo which was intended for us. Our silhouette was much higher on the surface than the smaller vessels around us and having the characteristics of a troopship was naturally the prize target for the Hun. I felt sorry for the little fellows who unknowingly were running interference for us and paying with their lives. Another tanker further to starboard was hit and sunk without burning. Then it became quiet. I clenched the railing at my station expecting the deck to heave up in my face any moment. I glanced out at the red light that always goes on at top mast when a ship was hit. There were three such distress signals and dozens of little red lights around each ship. I knew they were attached to men who could live only a few minutes in that Arctic water. Convoys never slow down or stop to pick up

survivors, and the escort was entirely too busy. As I contemplated these things, one by one the big red lights on the mast head would disappear leaving only the small red lights moving up and down on the heavy swells, gradually disappearing astern. I began to move about to get warm and ordered the men to move around, but stay in the vicinity of their assigned boat stations. I suddenly realized that I hadn't checked the top side boats to see if the native members of the crew (Lascars of India) had not already found refuge in them. I had been ordered to shoot them if necessary to keep them out. I moved forward a little uncertainly at first with legs that seemed tired on a deck that never seemed level. Glancing into the blackness of the life boats was a mere routine, knowing full well that the boats could never be launched anyway. I looked out to port, hoping that I couldn't see the nearest ship, but in vain, as its full outline was visible to me, black against lighter sky. I felt my heart quicken a little as the realization of periscopic sighting dawned on me.

My nerves had settled down a little bit and my hopes had risen some as we had made a turn since the last attack. I had just ducked into a gangway to light a cigarette, and was coming back on deck when a terrific explosion off our port bow nearly lifted our ship out of the water. At first I thought it was our ship and I listened for the alarm bell, but the red light on the ship nearest to us told me it was not yet our time. This little freighter started to settle very fast and seemed to settle to its watery grave even before we had fully passed it. There were more little red lights in the water, more gripping of the railing, yes, yes, and more prayers. In quick succession two more ships were torpedoed beyond the point where the freighter had just been hit. I could also hear depth charges going off in that direction and thought that it was about time somebody started to fight back and could feel a little warmth stealing through my veins from anger. Anger at the Navy at so little defense, anger at the enemy for operating on such a night not giving a man a chance, anger at the Army for putting skilled troops in an eight knot convoy, and anger at yourself for standing there unable to do anything but watch the slaughter. Then again, farther to starboard, this time two more ships put up red lights. All was quiet once more. An hour went by and nothing more happened. It was then midnight.

I went below to the main lounge to see what was going on below. There were twelve Dutch fliers from Java, an American



submarine officer, with several underseas cruises to his credit, with a jaw like a bulldog and a face white with fear. Perhaps he knew better than any of us what our chances were. An American paratroop officer was there, full of chatter and bragadoccio, until the next attack began, sitting nearest the passageway to the deck, with fear written all over him, looking from one to the other as if searching for consolation in the countenances of his fellow passengers. There were also some Red Cross men, infantry officers, one or two Marine officers, British Naval officers and a British padre. All were quiet and reminded you of men waiting to be sentenced. None wanted to go to their stateroom because of the possibility of passageways bulking closed and doors jamming in case of a hit trapping them. The ship was rolling and pitching, more violently than usual due to the constant change of course, and the movement only added to the taunt nerves of the passengers. One of the exit doors became unhooked and slammed shut with a resounding noise. Everyone was frightened, the paratrooper and submarine officer were on their feet in a flash; then settled back to their seat on the floor, a little sheepishly for the lack of control.



URSEL HARVELL, CAPT.

I returned to my station again and had hardly become accustomed to the darkness when the third attack of the night began at 0230. Several ships were hit in quick succession, none too near this time, thank goodness. Most of them were on the outside line of the convoy, several lanes to our starboard. The most spectacular of them all and a fitting finish to a devil show was a hit on the tanker loaded with 4,000,000 gallons of 100 octane gas. The engine room was apparently hit and the fuel oil began to burn amidship. The flames grew higher and higher and cast a reddish glow over the entire convoy. Every ship could plainly be seen and everyone was waiting for the inevitable explosion to the gas tanks and an end to the menace of illuminating the targets for the Jerry. How could he miss us now? I could not understand. We were like sitting ducks and to me it seemed only a matter of lining us up in his sights.

The outline of a Destroyer was seen circling the burning tanker, apparently waiting for the crew to get clear. A few seconds later she put a torpedo into the gas reservoirs. The resulting explosion is indescribable. There was a cloud level with a ceiling 4,000 ft., the exploding gas went up through the overcast and continued to burst beyond, creating a translucent illumination which was almost blinding. Each row of white caps on the top of the heavy swells looked like torpedoes heading for our ship in this weird light. To me, with nerves on edge it seemed only a

matter of where we were going to be hit, and I had practically resigned myself to that fate. However, the exploding tanker lasted only a few seconds actually, and the resulting flames soon died out and all was black again over the convoy.

Astern of us, gunfire was going on, mixed with the vibrating muffled sounds of depth charges. I thought for a moment a sub had been under fire of our escort vessels but a red light going on a top mast of one of our convoy soon faded any hope I had of seeing one of the enemy subs sunk. Later I learned from the wireless men that the cocky enemy had surfaced and shelled the straggling freighter to the bottom as a parting gesture of respect to our escort which was too little and too late.

Aside from sleeping equipped to abandon ship on a moment's notice and a few radio scares of enemy aircraft, nothing of consequence happened after the memorial night of March 10-11 to report on. I can truthfully say that the land of the British Isles never looked so good as it did to the passengers on the ship which should have stayed on its run up and down the East Coast of Africa.

Editor's Note: Harvell was a photographer. Fifty six years later, many pictures of crews, maintenance personnel and combat events can be credited to this dedicated airman. An original copy of his book "Liberators Over Europe" will be presented to the library at Barksdale during the 44th BGVA Reunion. Thanks to Jerry Wilner. (68th Sq.) a reprinted copy will be available for historians and researchers to peruse.

Wilner took stock of his memorabilia, and recognized its historical value. By his foresight, he preserved a valuable treasure, and passed it on for the next generation to know and appreciate the meaning of war.

In his 46 year old collection was the pamphlet, "The Destruction of Germany as seen on The Trolley Mission. The pages unfold the work of the 8th Air Force in bringing Germany to its knees, featuring the photographs of Capt. Ursel P. Harvell. The booklet ends with this powerful statement: "The Infantry, Field Artillery and Engineers--in fact, every man who ever participated--could lay claim to final victory. And deservedly so. But for sheer destruction of enemy installations the heavy bombers had no peer. Precision bombing, as exemplified by the 44th Bombardment Group, paid off."

From Dick Butler, this letter from the Memorial Trust of the 2nd Air Division USAAF:

DJH/2ADA/12/1/01

Brigadier General Patrick Adams, USAF (Retired)
President of Operations
Air Force Memorial Foundation
1501 Lee Highway
ARLINGTON
Virginia. 22209-1198. U.S.A.

Dear Brigadier General Adams,

Here in the United Kingdom we have been watching with the great interest and hope the progress towards your much needed Air Force Memorial. As we are finding here in the UK time is not on our side with our own Battle of Britain Memorial in London and it is the question of "time" that I am writing to you with a plea for help.

As you know during World War Two East Anglia was the base for the USAAF Eighth Air Force and in Norfolk and North Suffolk we were proud indeed to host the 2nd Air Division USAAF flying the B-24 Liberator with their 14 bomber airfields plus 4 fighter fields. A great friendship developed which has increased each year since then and we will never forget their bravery and sacrifice including the loss of over 6700 young US airmen who died fighting for their freedom we all enjoy today while flying from our Norfolk bases. As a Norwich schoolboy in those dark days I was privileged to meet many of the Crews and hence my pride now as an old Ex-RAF retired pilot to serve their Memorial Trust.

When the 2nd Air Division left us in 1945, they were unique in all the 8th Air Force by deciding that they did not want to leave us just a statue or a plaque, but they had the vision of leaving a living Memorial that could be enjoyed by future generations and so their wonderful 2nd Air Division Memorial Library was borne. This library is the only one of its kind in the world and covers all facets of American life as well as aviation and the air war in Europe. We also hold one of the finest archive collections in the world of the daylight bombing during the war, much used by writers and historians from all over the globe. Since the Library opened as part of our Norwich main Central Library, the 2nd Air Division USAAF Association have generously funded their memorial and only just over 7 years ago they raised over \$800,000 to give Norwich and Norfolk the priceless gift of an American Fulbright Scholar Librarian each year in perpetuity.

Sadly in 1994 our Central Library, including the Memorial was devastated by fire but within 3 months a temporary library was up and running. Now six years later, after having won millennium funding, we are watching a superb building arise from the ashes of the old library, a £60 million project which will be one of the finest structures in our ancient city. Included in this magnificent building will be the new 2nd Air Division USAAF Memorial Library, twice the size of the old and fully equipped with all the latest technology. The new building will also include a 200 seat lecture theatre, Norfolk Heritage Attraction Centre, restaurant, tourist and business centre and archive facilities. On November 7th of this year the US Ambassador in London will



formally open this new facility, which will be the finest American Memorial Library of its kind in the world and a fitting tribute to the debt that we owe to the United States Air Force. At the moment we have over 690 US Veterans and their families flying over for this historical occasion. This week the Norwich City Council formally approved the rare award of the Freedom of the City to the 2nd Air Division USAAF Association, the only unit of the US Air Force to ever receive this honour.

Keeping the records of the 8th Air Force has been one of our essential tasks and we were all so delighted when we first saw the Military Heritage Database project and realized the massive benefits. Last year at the 2nd ADA Convention at Tampa, we and our archivist looked at it in more detail and came away convinced that this is the most unique record we have ever seen. Indeed the Memorial Trust has agreed to help the project financially because of the importance. Here is a chance for future generations to see, learn and understand what happened in those days and a vital part of our records.

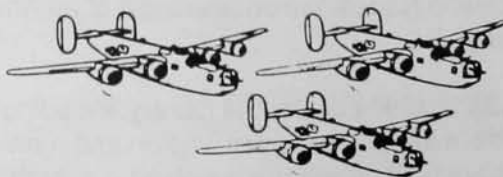
However, as I began my letter, time is against us, for unless we can get these records, histories, stories and people on the database now, many items will be lost forever in the next year or so. Here in the UK that database will be a vital part of the Memorial Library as I am sure it must be in your American Air Force Memorial. Therefore may I end with this heartfelt plea that you can support this database project as a most urgent item, for this understanding and detailed record of history needs to be available both in the USA and the UK as well as elsewhere, so that future generations will never forget the debt that they owe to the United States Air Force.

In Norfolk we have a saying about the 2nd Air Division USAAF, "They came as friends, they stayed as friends, they have remained friends and we and future generations will always remember them with pride and affection." This unique database will play a great part in that appreciation.

Finally, I hope you will not object to me writing to you, but we realize that your support is vital to the success of this outstanding project. We do hope you will be able to make the dream become a reality.

Yours sincerely,

David J. Hastings
Vice Chairman



Editor's Note: The information on the Database will be used on both sides of the Atlantic. Do you biography now. Your story is important.

VIVID MEMORIES OF T. J. FEENEY, LTC USA (Ret)

66th Squadron 44th BG (Staff Sgt. Tail Gunner)



THE KLEINSCHMIDT CREW

BACK ROW: KLEINSCHMIDT--PILOT,
SPOVER--CO-PILOT, ROSSEVELT--NAVIGATOR.

FRONT ROW: DIGGINS--ENGINEER,
THOMAS--WAIST GUNNER,
GOTTSHALL--WAIST & BALL TURRET GUNNER,
FEENEY--TAIL TURRET GUNNER,
GROWDEN--NOSE GUNNER & TOGGLEER,
GORNETT--RADIO OPERATOR.

Thomas J. Feeney "Joe" volunteered for Aerial Gunnery School when he learned that with a problem of depth perception, he could not be a pilot. He became a Tail Gunner at Tyndall Field, Florida, then went to Lincoln, Nebraska to join his crew. From there it was OTU at Gowan Field, Boise, ID, then on to Shipdham to join the 66th Sq. of the 44th Bomb Group.

"Our first three missions were to Magdeburg, where we encountered the most flak of all the missions we went on," he recalled. Equally disconcerting was the ominous briefing on the morning their crew was assigned to fly over Cologne. It still rings in Feeney's memory: "If you hit the Cathedral, don't bother to come back." Pilot Lt. **Arnold P. Kleinschmidt**, on the *Glory Bee* was flying lead. They flew past the famous Cathedral and hit their target--the Deutch Bridge which was a primary artery for the German supply lines, and they did come back. Forty nine years later, Feeney was pleasantly surprised to see the photograph that had been shot at 22,000 feet by their bomb-sight camera appear in *National Geographic*.

The *Glory Bee* and the German Jet

"On April 25, 1945 we were on a mission to Swabische Halle. Our photo interpretation people had spotted an airfield there with elongated runways. They

figured it was a jet base, so we were sent to bomb it. However, in looking up, I saw one diving straight down at us from 12:00 o'clock. I turned my turret up and then watched as the jet went straight down through our formation. It was traveling so fast, my guns were always behind him as I tried to track him; and so close, I could see the German pilot's face as he passed by. I often thought (mistakenly) I could have hit him with a rock instead of trying to get that turret to move fast enough to get him. However, the mission was successful.

Bomb Stuck in Bomb Bay

Feeney and **William H. Diggins**, Engineer, are the last surviving members of the Kleinschmidt crew. Previously they had written recollections to each other, all treasures in Feeney's book of memories. Kleinschmidt wrote, "On one mission we had dropped our bombs and realized we had a bomb hung in the bomb bay. The bombs were attached to a shackle by a cable which activated the bomb as it left the bomb bay. This one didn't leave. The engineer crawled out with a pair of pliers and seven minutes of oxygen at 22,000 feet to cut the wire. He had to crawl out on the catwalk in the bottom of the ship over the open bomb doors. He did it. If he hadn't, the bomb could have detonated and blown us out of the sky."



Feeney's eyes followed the dropping missile. "As we moved away from the release point, the bomb left a trail of smoke until it hit the middle of a large; solitary farm house in the middle of a huge German field. We were unable to assess the damage we inflicted on this 'no choice target'."

Remembering Frankfurt

In Feeney's records he found this report by his pilot in correspondence with LTC **Maury Dyer**, another friend who served in the 66th Sq. (deceased).

"I guess the worst situation I was ever in was when I lost two engines in a snow storm over Germany.

"We were flying blind on a mission to the interior of Germany when I got hit by flak and lost an engine. The rest of the squadron flew off and left me. We could see the black shells exploding all around us and we were losing altitude. I got out of the main flight pattern and tried to restart the engine," he said.

"When I tried the engine, I lost oil pressure in another engine and saw the prop of the second engine fly off past the window into space."

"Now we were down to two engines. We were out of the Frankfurt flak area, and I called in code for fighter help. We were losing 200 feet per minute and I had only a 17-mile corridor to fly through to try to make it to a safe landing place. We got our fighter escort and he took us across the bomb line where the ground fighting was taking place in France and then broke radio code by saying, 'Sweetheart, I'm home. You can make it now.' That was a big no-no.

"Sure enough, the Germans heard him. I told the crew to watch for them and here they came. We headed for the overcast 9,000 below. As the nose gunner turned his turret to fire, the door flew off the turret and struck the wing between the two engines and ripped a gash in the wing. I could see the latex liner swell out of the gas tank on the right wing. If it broke, that was it. We were in a high-speed stall and almost shaking apart. But I dropped the nose and we were okay again.

"I was trying to contact the British to get permission to land on the crash strip just across the Channel when we broke out of the overcast and I thought we

had enough altitude to make it home. When we got there we were at 250 feet and the tower told us to go around. We didn't go around and that liner held."

The crew remembers one more interesting facet of that adventure. "As we continued back across the Channel and losing altitude rapidly, Kleinschmidt ordered us to ditch everything including our machine guns, ammo and our A-3 bags. Our A-3 bags! They contained our escape kits, mainly stocked with cigarette and silk stockings." (*Editor's Note: While Kleinschmidt worried about getting them back to Shipdham safely, Feeney was thinking of the loss of bargaining power, tossing cigarettes and silk stockings.*)

Delivering the Gas

When the War was nearing the end, Patton's Third Army was swiftly and forcefully breaking through enemy defenses. They ran short of gasoline for their tanks, and the 44th was one of the groups that supplied them. This was a very low level drop. Feeney remembers dropping 50 gallon drums of gasoline at tree top level.

"I did not see any of them spill or shatter," he recalled. "The reason they didn't, was the wooden construction shaped like an hourglass with rounded wooden tops and bottoms that permitted the drums to roll when dropped." They did not encounter flak on this mission, but did contend with small arms fire.

One memory of that mission continues to haunt him. He saw a flyer from his own outfit hung up with his chute draped over the rudder of another B-24.

Encountering a 'Maverick'

On one of our missions we were forced to abort just short of our target and return to England. On the return flight we had no fighter cover. I spotted a single fighter above us directly approaching our tail. I fired above him so he could see my tracers. He continued and I fired below him. Since he continued in I zeroed in on him and forced him to turn off. The Martin Turret also fired on him. He radioed our craft and pulled parallel to us but out of range. He identified himself as a P-51 fighter and wanted to know why we

were firing on him. Needless to say we kept him well covered and he eventually pulled off and disappeared.

The matter was the subject of much discussion among our crew. When we were debriefed we were told it may well have been a P-51 but it was not one of ours. We were also told that we had no aircraft in the area and the marking were unknown to our intelligence people. We were told we did the right thing in firing on the craft.

In June, 1994 the USAF Historical Agency at Maxwell AFB, AL advised me that they had no record of downed P-51's being rebuilt by the Germans. Then in July, 1994 I learned from LTC Maury Dyer USAF (Ret) that when he flew with the 44th, he was informed that the Germans did use cannibalized parts from aircraft that crashed or were forced to land in Germany. He said that "what got our people's attention was that we could be shot down by one of them."

They were called 'Mavericks.'

Before the war, Feeney was attending Northeastern University in Boston, MA. Following discharge, he returned to the University, earning a BS in Business Administration. Shortly thereafter he reenlisted in the army in CIC. After training at Ft. Holabird, MD and serving as an agent in Washington DC, he received a direct commission in the Finance Corps. He served with the Army Audit Agency and held a number of General Staff assignments in Alaska, the U.S. and Korea.

The army decided to send him to the University of Colorado where he earned his MBA in 1962. His last foreign duty was a Comptroller Advisor to the Iranian Forces and their SCS (DOD equivalent). He was stationed with ARMISH MAAG Hqs. in Tehran, Iran. (The Shah was still ruling at that time, and the relations with American personnel were very good. After Feeney left, his replacement was murdered, and matters continued to go down hill after that.) His last assignment was a Chief Pay Systems, Office Chief of Finance, D.A. He also served as chairman of the DOD Military Pay Conference Committee. He retired in November, 1968. Following retirement he was

employed by Fairfax County, VA as Deputy Director of Assessments until 1976.

Feeney and his wife, Mildred, the former Mildred Caverly of Toronto, Canada, live in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. The couple celebrated their 51st anniversary in this past March. Mildred now a U.S. citizen, served in the R.C.A.F., the Women's Division at Air Force bases in Canada and England from 1942-46. Feeney joined the Keystone Capital Chapter of the Retired Officers' Association, and continues to serve as its Treasurer. He assists in fund drives to help the Hospice Unit of the Lebanon, PA Veterans Administration Medical Center.



JOE AND MILDRED FEENEY WITH COL. ROY DEVECCHIO

AWARDS and DECORATIONS

Legion of Merit, Hq. Dept. of Army, July 31, 1968
AM w/1 OLC, 8th Air Force, 1945
DOD Joint Service Commendation Army Medal,
11 March 1965
DA Army Commendation Medal, 11 March 1965
Army GC
American Campaign Medal
Europe-Africa-Middle East Campaign Medal
w/4 Battle Stars
World War II Victory Medal
National Defense Service Medal
Armed Forces Reserve Medal
Imperial Iranian Forces Commendation,
November 18, 1967



COLLECTING OUR HISTORY

by *Will Lundy*



In the last issue of 8 Ball Tails under Will Sez I complimented and congratulated our Prez, Ed Mikoloski and Pete Frizzell for working so hard and successfully to salvage many of our 44th BG's photos. Pete had made a long flight from Florida to Massachusetts to meet Ed Mikoloski and a quick drive to southern Maine. These two men managed to get great cooperation from Rick Becker, a dealer, to copy many photos already sold on the Internet and to purchase the remaining 44th BG photos on hand at a bargain basement price.

At that time we were sure that we had obtained all of the photos that Bill Robertie had accumulated after the war, having worked with Capt. Harvell, our official photographic officer, for years to get copies of all that Harvell had in his 44th collection. I had contacted Bill Robertie's widow, Hazel, verified that she would donate all those photos remaining in her possession. She said that she had placed them all in a medium sized box and would be mailing them to me shortly, as she was moving that next weekend.

Two weeks later the box arrived with numerous photos, but most of them were nose art of other groups, along with some fine photos used in Harvell's book. But there were no crew photos! Disappointed with the lack of those precious photos, I wondered if perhaps they did not take or at least keep copies of our later 1944 and 1945 crews? It was a mystery.

But shortly afterwards Deja Vu came into the picture. Yes, again, many beautiful 44th BG crew photos were up for bid on the Internet! Astounding and frustrating!

How can that be -- where had they come from? Had we not got all that Hazel had in her basement? No! It was soon learned that again, Rick Becker had many more of our crew photos up for sale! Source? Again, it was from Robertie's basement. And again it was Pete Frizzell rushing to his airport in Florida with all of his camera equipment, flying up to meet Prez Ed, and driving back to South Berwick, Maine to try again to make a deal with Rick.

But this time it was different because the man who had purchased all of the remaining things in Hazel's basement -- things she could not take with her -- had learned the value of old photographs after his first sale to Rick. This time it cost Rick \$3,000, so there was no way the 44thers could afford to purchase his remaining photos. Instead, Rick was good enough to permit Pete to take his own photos of his originals -- approximately 200 of them. We did not get the originals back but we did not lose those rare crew photos that had eluded our efforts over the past 10 years. I am sure that in the approximate 200 "new" crew photos, I have very few in my collection. Now, when those negatives are converted to pictures, we will have photos of so many of our combat men available to add into our data base.

Steve Adams was able to outbid others to obtain several of these photos, but for the most part, one bidder, Huckleberryduck has outbid almost all others. Per Steve's arithmetic, he has already spent over \$2,200 for those that he has acquired. And there will be many more on which to bid. Fortunately, too, two other men who were very interested in these photos, managed to successfully bid on several of them. When contacted by Steve Adams, both men volunteered to provide copies for us. One asked to join our organization. He is most welcome, of

course, and he even suggested that as a member he might donate all of his originals later in his life. Great! Some wonderful things have resulted even through the bad luck we've experienced.

This is a story up to date. Surely now there will not be a third "appearance" of new Harvell/Robertie photos. But I can't emphasize enough how extremely lucky we have been to have the interest and support of Pete Frizzell. Without his alert searches of the Internet, as well as his taking time off work and having the photographic equipment on hand, dropping all activities, we surely would have lost forever a large portion of our photographic history. Rick Becker was so impressed with his character that he fully trusted Pete with complete control of those precious photos. Rick even took Pete to dinner! Rick himself, deserves the thanks and appreciation of all of us. He, too, helped make it possible.

In retrospect, our problems resulted from assuming that Mrs. Robertie was fully aware of the records that Bill had accumulated over the years. Obviously, she did not because several years ago she told me that there were NO photos in her basement. Too, Hazel was deep into the confusion of moving. I can relate to that problem having just moved for the first time in 40 years. She was having to pack herself alone and time was running out. So she elected to call for help to dispose of what remained in her basement as she had no need for it.

Although it was a difficult situation, nevertheless, we all should give our sincere thanks to the Robertie family for the years that they served in the 2nd ADA and for their treasure trove of 44th BG historical material.



WILL SEZ

May, 2001

I suspect that most of you 44thers are aware that I have been working at the "job" of 44th BG Historian for many years. So I should have and did accumulate a goodly number of your personal diaries and your accounts of personal experiences. Many of these I used in my old book, Roll of Honor and Casualties, and some of these could have made their way into the data base for those connected with the loss of our planes and crews. For the most part, however, they had not been processed, but should have. The main reason that they are not yet data entered is their condition and cost to process. So many of them were handwritten, and are now scattered through out all of my inept file system.

Obviously, here in these personal stories and diaries there are considerably more elements of our history tied up, both large and short, that should be added to our data base. I have saved them for years in the hopes that we could get them into other books, or hopefully, into a computer program. But much to my amazement, I have learned that it truly is possible! I have mentioned these diaries to Arlo Bartsch on several occasions in the past two years but never in any detail. He would always assure me that it could be done and that he had foreseen the value of them and wrote programs to do that type of data entry.

A few days ago I got serious with that subject, wrote a letter to Arlo describing my hopes and including some forms and suggestions and sent them to him. Earlier I had given him two very good diaries for him to read so that he could appreciate how valuable they were for our history, and hoped that he might try to find a solution to get them entered. It had not happened and therefore I had incorrectly assumed that it could not be done. Perhaps my hopes that these diary stories could not be made readily available to the reader straight from the sortie reports that have already been entered. If they could, then our readers would be able to view the sortie reports and know immediately if any crew member had recorded his experiences of what

happened to him/them on THAT DAY. It then would seem to be more like a book, adding the many interesting and appropriate information to bring out the personal touch. If there were additional diaries written covering this same mission, how much greater the scope of the "picture" could be. This data could include the bomb load, time of takeoff, altitude, temperatures, types and number of aircraft attacks, type and severity of enemy actions, on to events that occurred in this or other planes that day. With so much of this type of information already collected, there surely must be some way to utilize it.

A few days after writing that letter I got a phone call from our great friend, Arlo, reminding me that he had foreseen this need when he developed the program and already had it available. He had me turn on my computer and then "walked" me through it! Yes, indeed, his program was up and running, needed only to be provided the stories! So, the program is already there, the stories and diaries are here, then the next step, of course, would be to get a move on, have them data entered.

Arlo had an answer to that eventually, as well. I must first "dig" them out, and that is almost literal, to make them available to a data entry team. Hopefully, there could be volunteers found out there among our members who would be willing to type the stories onto a computer disk in a uniform way. If sufficient volunteers cannot be found, then we should pay for this service. Then Arlo need only to get the disks to transfer the data to the proper places in the data base. IF we get enough volunteer cooperation on this project, we could save money on data entry costs and we could make our current funds go so much further, enriching our data base history. In other words, it could furnish the readers with so many more interesting and factual details about the way this war was fought and won in the air.

For those of you who haven't already obtained one of Arlo's CDs let me try to detail for you how these diaries and stories could be located in the data base. See the following instructions, but please bear with me as I have little knowledge of the proper computer terminology to use in such a procedure.

Will Lundy



HOW TO USE THE DISK FOR PERSONAL STORIES AND DIARIES IN ARLO'S 44TH BGVA
MILITARY HERITAGE DATA BASE PROGRAM

- 1 - Bring up the 44th BG Data Base Program from Start Up.
- 2 - CLICK on LOAD SEIected GROUP in the upper left section - 44th BG - it is the default Bomb Group already loaded and waiting.
- 3 - On this Main Menu Screen CLICK on PERSONAL MILITARY RECORDS (top left block).
- 4 - This will bring up the Personal Selection Form. In 'FIND WHO' type in the Block Space the last name of the person you are checking and CLICK on SELECT.
- 5 - This will bring up the 44th BG's complete listing of personnel, but specifically to the ALPHA area of the name that you selected. Find the specific full name of your search, move cursor to this person's line, then CLICK on it LEFT SIDE BLOCK to darken it, and CLICK on the top right hand box, SEIect.

This will bring up a summary listing of all missions flown by this person, in date sequence.

- 6 - Also available here are buttons to obtain Personal Biography and Crew Photos.

Move the cursor to the Mission Number desired or date or mission target and CLICK on the small box, left side. It will darken. Then move cursor to bottom of page.

CLICK on box SHOW CREW. A FULL SCREEN SORTIE REPORT will appear for that mission. Select the name of the crew member that has an incident or story to tell. Move the cursor to the small box to the left of his name and CLICK on it. This will highlight that box, then move cursor down to bottom of page to the box labeled VIEW PRINTOUT, and CLICK on that box.

This will bring up a new full screen, again with some mission data but set up only for this airman and his story or account of this mission. It will show his full name, Rank and Duty. Below this line and for the remainder of the page is space available for this crewman's complete story. If the story is extensive, it will continue on to another page. Or it might show only some basic facts, such as bomb load, time of takeoff, degree of flak, etc.

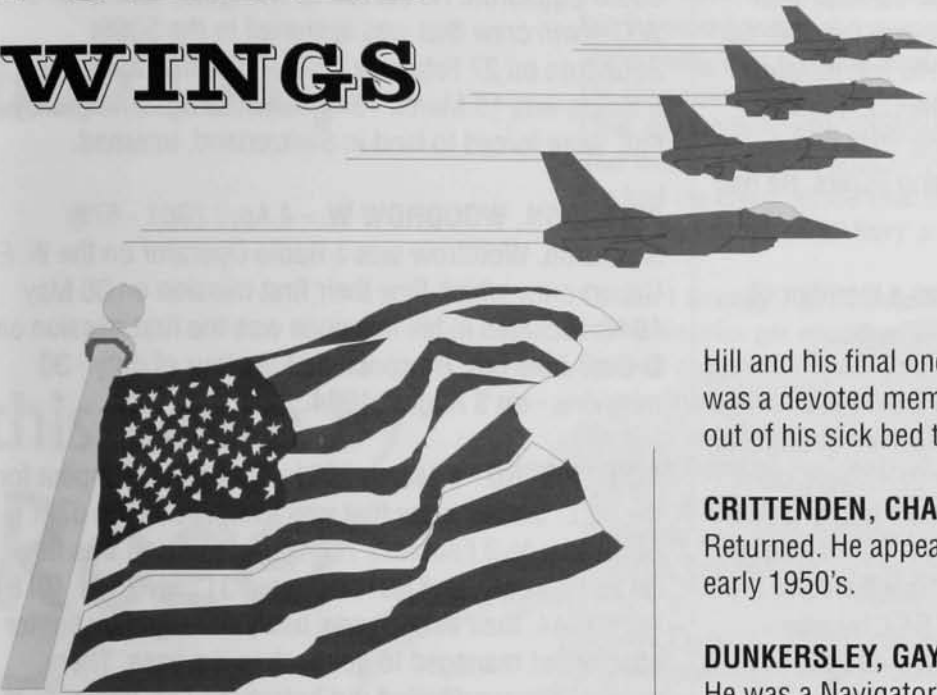
If other crew members also have personal accounts, they, too, can be accessed by the same procedure. To return to the Flight Crew Report for this mission, CLICK on the "X" box, top right corner.

DISKS ARE AVAILABIE FOR \$153. WRITE:

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association, P.O. Box 71228, Salt Lake City, UT 84171-2287

Visit our Website @ www.44thbombgroup.com

FOLDED WINGS



February, 2001

Prepared by:
Will Lundy

BEEBE, TRAVIS - 17 August 1997 - He was a member of the 806 Chemical Company that worked closely with the Ordnance sections of the four Squadrons.

CHANDLER, LAWRENCE W. - 24 November 2000 - 36427258. 68th Squadron. He served as Engineer of the A. A. Starring crew that arrived at Shipdham on 8 December 1943. This crew was involved with learning many of the RAF lessons about the German A.F. tactics and several practice flights. On 21 January 1944 they flew their first and last mission, were shot down by enemy aircraft. They were one of the four planes and crews lost by the 68th Sq. that day. Lawrence was the only crewman to evade capture, had many dangerous moments before he successfully made his way back to London on 20 May. He spent two days at Shipdham before returning to the US on 23 May 1944.

COLIC, PATRICK L. - Date Unknown - 506th Squadron. "Pat" was a gunner on the T. G. Water's crew that arrived in the 44th BG in June, 1944, and the last of his tour on 14 January 1945. His last mission with the Waters crew came on 2 January 1945, flown as Right Waist Gunner. Included in these last few missions were those with the crews of H. C. Tyree, Ogden



Hill and his final one with the V. J. Scherburg crew. Pat was a devoted member of the 44th BGVA, once getting out of his sick bed to attend another reunion.

CRITTENDEN, CHARLES A. - Date Unknown - Mail Returned. He appears to have been a member in the early 1950's.

DUNKERSLEY, GAYLE J. - Date Unknown - 0-688006. He was a Navigator on the E. A. Herzing crew that was assigned to the 506th Squadron in March, 1944. They flew their first mission on 1 April and their second and last one on 8 April 1944. All crew members became Prisoners of War for 13 months.

FEINSTEIN, (FENTON) MILTON S. - 1991 - 0-735298. Navigator. 66th Squadron. He flew his first mission with the G.R. Insley crew on 27 September 1943. This crew completed their tour on 20 April 1944, returned to the US for R&R. But these dedicated men returned to the 44th again, and were assigned to the 506th Squadron. Flew their first mission of the second tour on 1 August 1944, many times flying in A/C Southern Comfort. Capt. Feinstein completed his 47th mission on 25 April 1945, the last mission of the war.

FLESHER, ISAAC A. - August, 1998 (incorrectly shown as Flesber in Spring issue). 16053266. Joined the 68th Squadron on 3/31/42. Was with the ground echelon that departed NYC in September, 1942 on board the Queen Mary. Was a Radio Operator, transferred over to combat, flew his first mission 27 January 1943 with the W.T. Holmes crew. He was wounded on the Kiel mission 14 May 1943. He also flew the Ploesti mission on 1 August 1943 with the J. H. Diehl crew and completed his tour of 25 missions with the Hughes crew on 18 November 1943. He continued to serve on DS and finally returned to the US on 14 April 1944.



FOREHAND, CHARLES C. - 14 February 2001 - 67th Squadron. He flew his first mission on the first 44th BG mission of 7 November 1942, but with the 68th Sq. crew of J. D. Dubard, Waist Gunner. His last mission on Kiel raid, 14 May 1943 was with the C.L. Phillips crew, 67th Squadron. The airplane was shot down, with Charles and three others becoming POWs. He had a total of eleven missions.

JENNEY, THELO - 5 July 2000. He was a member of the 464th Sub-Depot.

LIGHT, HERBERT M. - 11 March 2001. 0-727354. He joined the 68th Squadron on 8/3/42, arrived in England on 10/2/42 as the Bombardier on the J. H. Diehl crew. He was a member of the R. Phillips crew that attacked the Ploesti Oil Fields on 1 August 1943. Completed his tour of duty on 22 August 1943 and transferred to the 2nd Air Division in mid-September, 1943. He was credited with shooting down one enemy aircraft, FW 190 on 3/18/43.

McCLANE, JOHN W - Date Unknown - 0-814368. 68th Squadron. John was a Navigator on the C. D. Peretti crew that arrived at Shipdham AAF Base on 14 April 1944. In a very short period he flew his first of 29 missions on 22 April. And again in less than a week attacked Berlin. John seemed to consider Lili Marlene as their aircraft. This crew was sent to a rest home for a week on 13 September 1944. John completed his tour on 2 October 1944 and was transferred to the 70th Replacement Depot on 9 October 1944 to be returned to the US. John was very active in his work with the 44th BG. He served on the Board in the early 44th HMG for many years. Too, he was their official video technician, recording all of their reunions, recording many interviews during these reunions even in England and every banquet in their entirety. He seldom was able to enjoy a hot meal at any of these affairs. John also absorbed all of the video expenses and donated the film records to the 44th BG archives. John also compiled three booklets of his experiences from training and all through each of his missions. John had the great courage to tell one and all about his personal fears during many of these missions and in detail. He had the courage to donate these booklets to our archives so that everyone will know just how difficult these missions were for our airmen. We salute you, John.



NORTHFELT, WALLACE D. - Date Unknown - 506th Squadron. He served as Navigator on the W.C. Irwin crew that was assigned to the 506th Squadron on 27 February 1944. Their first and only mission was 18 March 1944, when badly damaged by flak, were forced to land in Switzerland, interned.

PETERSON, WOODROW W. - 4 April 2001 - 67th Squadron. Woodrow was a Radio Operator on the W. F. Gilbert crew which flew their first mission on 30 May 1944. Included in his missions was the first mission on D-Day, June 6th. He concluded his tour of duty - 30 missions - on 3 August 1944.

PINO, PIETRO - 5 March 2001 - 0-807042. Co-pilot for the W. L. Wahler crew that was assigned to the 67th Squadron on 3 February 1944. First mission was flown on 25 February, and last one dated 31 July 1944. On 8 April 1944, their aircraft was badly damaged by fighter attacks but managed to get back to the base. There, most of the crew bailed out before the two pilots skillfully landed their B-24 without further damages or injuries. Pietro's last few missions were flown with different 1st pilots.

SUDDRETH, RAY - 16 November 2000 - 0-817861 Lt. Suddreth joined the 68th Squadron on 3/5/44 and completed his tour on 10/3/44. His early missions were flown as co-pilot for the J. W. Principe crew starting on 5/23/44, and flew two of the three missions of D-Day with that crew. On 9/10/44 he flew his first mission of many others as 1st Pilot.

WILSON, ALFRED R. - 5 February 2001 - 0-753096 - Bombardier. Alfred flew his first mission as a member of the D. H. Dines crew on 26 April 1944. He flew many of his early missions with the R. E. Van Ess crew, including one on D-Day. Then, was with several different 506th Squadron crew until he completed his tour of duty on 2 November 44 with the G. M. Beiber crew.



From **Bob Laas,**

this poem by **Roger Freeman**

September, 1996



Do you remember Little Joe, a guy just five feet one?
But he stood as tall as any man when up against the Hun.
He'd swing that ball and deal out lead, and most times make a kill;
He never seemed to have a care. He thought the war a thrill.
One day he flew with another crew, the ship got hit and blew;
The ball was seen to spin away, and what could poor Joe do?
He had no chute inside that thing; He never had a chance.
There wasn't much to bury at a cemetery in France.

Or am I wrong? I get confused. Was Joe some other guy?
My memories get muddled as the years go rolling by.
Do you remember Little Joe, a forty seven Ace?
A grin that went from ear to ear across his youthful face.
He knocked them down at quite a rate when up there in the blue.
It seemed like he had a winning streak that wasn't going to break.
But Joe got overconfident and made the big mistake.
He made a second strafing pass across a Jerry base.
The flak just blew his plane to bits and spread it round the place.

Or am I wrong? I get confused. Was Joe some other guy?
My memories get muddled as the years go rolling by.
Do you remember Little Joe? Was he the e.m.s. cook
With Brooklyn brogue and olive skin? His was that Latin look.
He always had a cheery word and fed us best he could,
Yet guys bitched about the chow, and never understood,
He had to work with what he had. The rations were so tight,
For oranges and eggs were saved for men who had to fight.
He didn't get a Purple Heart when knocked down by a truck,
And yet he served country well 'til running out of luck.

Or am I wrong? I get confused. Was Joe some other guy?
My memories get muddled as the years go rolling by.
Do you remember Little Joe, a six foot four inch guy?
A bombardier who was the tops when up there in the sky.
In sighting in his targets, he never seemed to fail.
He knew that Norden inside out, and hit them on the nail.
The flak would burst around his ship, and Messerschmidts attack,
But Joe would never leave his sight until he had a shack.
For twenty seven missions, he gave his very best;
And then a Jerry 20 mil exploded in his chest.

Or am I wrong? I get confused. Was Joe some other guy?
My memories get muddled as the years go rolling by.
Do you remember Little Joe? I'm not sure that I do.
If tall or short, or dark or blond, brown eyes, or were they blue?
A pilot or an engineer? A sergeant or major?
A novice in the task of war? A vet', a real old stager?
I only know that he was young, a kid become a man,
Exuberant and sure he'd win to live life's full span.
I guess he was ten thousand guys who didn't see it through,
For cause and county matter not, he did what he must do
To make this world a better place, the challenge of his day,
To give the whole darn human race more time to find its way.



MAIL & E-MAIL

The 8 Ball Tails notes the passing of a devoted friend of the 44th Bomb Group, Salli Johnson-Abbott, youngest daughter of General **Leon Johnson**. Services were held at Faith Chapel Funeral Home, Pensacola, Florida. President Mikoloski, longtime friend of the Johnson family, attended the funeral, February 28. Our condolences go out to her two sons, Leon Barnes and Nathan Abbott.



Jackie Robert's story of the search for her father, **Jack Ostenson**, 68th Sq. brought this unexpected response from Mrs. Mary C. Hoke, widow of **John L. Dickinson**, Engineer on the flight that brought down A/C #42-7514. She read the Jackie's story and called her, learning for the first time that John's name is on the Wall of the Missing at the Ardennes Cemetery.

Editor's Note: It is amazing to me. The number of 44th members with connections to the mission to Escalles-Sur-Buchy, all in one issue: Milton Rosenblatt; Lois Cianci, daughter of Clair Sheaffer; Jackie Roberts, daughter of Jack Ostenson; Archie Barlow; and now, our newest member, Mary Hoke. Like ripples in a pond, every deadly mission slashed into the lives of many people.



From Luc Dewez in Belgium: "My godfather, Luc Vansammilliet, died at the age of 65." The two had a very close relationship. Luc V told his godchild about the death of close friends and family when Belgium accepted defeat; of the four year German occupation; and in '44, the arrival of the Americans. In return, Luc D dazzled his godfather, telling him about the bomber stories which he had collected.

These conversations were undoubtedly the inspiration for young Luc, a member of the 44th BG, to write books about WWII.



The 44th has sustained another tragic loss. Col. **Goodman Griffin** passed away at his home in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida. Not only was he an invaluable administrative officer during the war, but was a uniquely funny speaker at 44th Reunions. The information about this beloved member is not available for this issue. A report of his life will appear in the next 8 Ball Tails.



From Michael O'Neil, Vice President of the Distinguished Flying Cross Society: The 8 Ball Tails carried misleading information regarding this organization, which he wishes to have corrected. First, the DFCS can only advise deserving veterans how to go about getting an earned DFC award. They do not issue them. If any airman feels he has earned the DFC but did not receive it, he should contact his Commanding Officer or ex-Awards and Decorations Officer. Only these officers can recommend the Award. O'Neil further states that the DFC was awarded only when a member of any and all U.S. Military Forces "distinguishes himself by heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight."



From Denis Davison: On page 35 of Volume 3 - Issue #7 - Spring, 2001 is a picture of a sergeant sewing stripes.

I am very proud to say that this man is my father, First Sergeant **William Robert Davison**.

It warmed my heart when my mother showed me his picture had been printed in this newsletter.

I have this original picture here at home along with others that I will soon send to all of you as soon as I can get them sorted and scanned.

I regret to inform the group that my father passed away on January 29, 1997. He was a wonderful man and I am very proud of him.





Roy Owen's step back in time:

I feel so fortunate that I was selected to commemorate this Memorial Day weekend with a flight in the Collings Foundation B-24J that, with a B-17G, was visiting an airport not far from my home. It was while aloft that I silently thanked our 44th Buddies whom we lost and did not make the flight that brought us home in 1945. I also whispered thanks to that tough old bird that, only when shot and torn so badly she could no longer fly, would she give up attempting to bring her precious crew safely back to base. It seemed to be the most fitting and fulfilling Memorial Day I have ever experienced. One I will take with me until I too go to where warriors rest. Let us never forget them.



The 67th Squadron's Insignia

According to the Archives of Walt Disney, an unknown artist designed the pelican that signified the 67th Sq. at the request of Pvt. Charles E. Rogers. The art was sent to Barksdale on April 8, 1942. Disney provided a copy of the original patch, and Eric C.



Wuest sent a picture of the official version. Wuest remembers that the unit's unofficial slogan was "Beware of Pelicans."



First Mission of the Beiber Crew, July 7, 1944: The late **Bill Uvanni**, Radio Operator, 506 Sq. recorded: "It was our first mission, and the target was a bomber assembly plant in Bernberg, Germany. We were pretty tense on the way to the target. About five minutes before target time we were hit by fighters. We flew in the lead element and were right up front. Approximately 60 fighters lined 15 abreast came in on us from one o'clock and slightly higher.

"They fired as they came in, and you could see orange 20mm shells as they came through the air. None of the planes from our squadron were hit, but an entire squadron (of 12 aircraft) was knocked out on the first pass. Some blew up and others went into dives and never came out."

Five of the group's aircraft were lost during the seven hour mission, but they succeeded in turning the German Assembly plant into 'nothing but smoke and flames.'

Paul Boensch, bombardier remembers that mission because the nose turret he was in got stuck, and he came so close to enemy aircraft, he could see the young German pilot who was flying. "He had yellow hair, a crew cut, and he had a white scarf and a black leather jacket," Boensch remembered. "He was very intent as he bent over his bomb site and shot down."

Referring to the 34 missions that lay ahead, **Perry Morse**, Tail Gunner, remarked to **Harold Maggart**, Waist Gunner, "If they are all like this one, we won't make it through five missions, much less thirty-five. The plane had over 200 holes, but they came through safely from Bernberg and the missions that lay ahead. Of the four crews that came together at Biggs Field, the Beiber crew alone returned home totally unscathed. Sharing the expertise in the cockpit was co-pilot **Jerry Folsom**, now Treasurer of the 44th BGVA.

The crew's navigator, **Willis Edgecomb** was killed after the war, taking off from Wright Patterson Air Force Base. They had lost track of **William Rebhan**, Waist Gunner. **George Beiber**, pilot and **Carl Miller**, Armorer, are deceased. **Nathan Woodruff**, Engineer, shares his time between Tennessee and Florida.





From **Art Harvey**, 66th Sq., comes a recollection of those days when the Army was splitting groups to accelerate combat readiness.

“So many of those who went to Ploesti were 44th/66th mates until the group was split in February, 1942 to form the 90th, 93rd and 98th groups. Halpro (**the Halvorson Project**) trained at Fort Myers, Florida while the 98th was also training there. They raided the 98th also for personnel, and some of the 98th people they took then had been 44th people previously.

“Of the 218 men listed on the roster, at least ten went directly into Halpro, probably more indirectly and later. At least one wasn't transferred to Halpro until the 98th was at St. Jean in Palestine in the Fall of 1942. Probably the same loss occurred in the other two squadrons of the 44th.

An Early Raid to Ploesti:

“They (Halpro) were scheduled to go to the Far East and bomb Tokyo from mainland China bases, but these had been overrun by the Japanese by the time the B-24s reached Cairo. With Rommel and his Panzer tanks on the attack, the British were badly in need of help. Consequently, Halpro was held in Egypt. Then on June 12, 1942 thirteen B-24s took off from Fayid for Ploesti. All of them reached the target. The raid was not given much attention, as it was high level bombing, and it was immediately recognized that only low level bombing would be successful.

“Nine landed at Ramadi, Iraq, as planned. Four landed in Turkey and were interned until April, 1943, when Turkey released all internees, Allied and Axis alike. Meanwhile on December 14, 1942, under the pretext of test-flying their now repaired plane, one crew ‘stole’ their airplane from the Turks and flew it to Cyprus, thereby setting up an ‘international incident’ which was appeased months later when our government delivered a brand new B-24D to the Turkish Air Force. The nine men on the ‘stolen’ plane were returned to Halpro at Abu Sueir, Egypt. An additional eight men escaped by land and sea before the total exchange was made April 30, 1943.”

Harvey sent a copy of the Thanksgiving Dinner, November 20, 1941 at MacDill Field in Tampa, Florida. Under the direction of **Earl E. Porter**, Mess Sergeant, the following cooks created a dinner for a

king: **Waldron, Hester, Hayes, Blakely, McLaughlin, Powers, Hopkins, Long, C.E. Miller** and **Douglass**. If you were there, you ate turkey with oyster dressing, giblet gravy, cranberry sauce, candied yams, baked ham, creamed corn and peas and snow flaked potatoes. There were salads, five desserts, healthy beverages and cigars and cigarettes. Not bad!

The Squadron Commander at that time was Major **E. J. Timberlake, Jr.**; The Adjutant was 1st Lt. **Charles L. Jeanette**; First Sergeant, **Ellis W. Hutton**.

On January 2, 1942 the order came for transfer to Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio to test the B-24C, signed by Col. **Young**. From then on, life grew increasingly exciting for this new batch of airmen.

Editor's Note: Wayne Harvey and Art Harvey are not related, but their paths crossed many times. Art's first flight was on a B-17; and he shared his excitement with Wayne, who was on the same flight. The two have continued to be friends throughout their lives.



SHIPDHAM AERO CLUB -- OUR “UK CONNECTION.” President Ed “Mike” Mikoloski reports after his November visit to Shipdham that the newly reconstituted and revitalized SHIPDHAM AERO CLUB (SAC) is in full operation with an active membership of 100 and an ultimate goal of 300. The hangar is completely occupied with 12 aircraft and three (3) additional planes are parked outdoors. Vice Chairman Michael Atherton informed President Mikoloski last month (January 29) that the Club has four (4) additional planes on their waiting list; and, that the Club has opened a GLIDER SCHOOL with two (2) certified instructors, one (1) “tug” plane and three (3) gliders on site. Under the astute, energetic and enthusiastic leadership and direction of its new Officers, the Aero Club is efficiently organized, well funded, and fully operational with continuous flying all year long. The Officers of the Shipdham Aero Club (all of whom are members of the 44th BGVA) include the following: Chairman: Adrian Hall-Carpenter; Vice Chairman: Michael Artherton; Secretary: Peter Bodle; Treasurer: Barry Cator. The Aero Club is on the WEB (www.shipdhamaeroclub.fsnet.co.uk) and their telephone number is 01362-820709. In addition to

flying and gliding, the Club has an active and well attended social program on weekends. Members of the 44th BGVA are cordially invited to visit the Aero Club and attend any of the scheduled social functions by calling the Club Manager, Steve Adams, our Representative in the UK who is also a member of the Shipdham Aero Club and is reestablishing the 44th BG Memorial Room in facilities that have been graciously made available to 44th BGVA by the Aero Club. The Club, also, has undertaken a project to construct and install outdoors a wooden replica of a B-24 with the 44th Bomb Group markings. Once again our new English friends come through and provide the 44th BGVA with an outstanding "UK CONNECTION."



Bob Norsen, (68th Sq.) remembers being sent from B-17 school to Ft. Myers, Florida, along with 10 or 15 other pilots. While waiting for assignment, they enjoyed the beach and the fishing, and tolerated the mosquitos. One pilot caught a 24 pound snook, fishing from the bridge. Just then they got orders to Barksdale.

"We gave half of the fish to the owners of our cabins, baked the other 12 lbs, ate 12 lbs of fish among the group, packed for Barksdale while the fish was in the oven. We ate and left for Barksdale that night, driving all night.

"We found a group of new complexes, and moved in, side by side. The next morning the pilots started to learn the new airplane. Some of my happiest days were living with that group of great people. Since much of the sub patrol was at night, we often slept days. Hot humid weather. No air conditioning. The attic fan made the curtains blow straight out into the room. (My wife) Donna would lay a wet sheet over me. With the fan, going to sleep came easy.

Patrolling for Subs

"...Late in the day we were way off course, south. Sgt. **Carlton**, the photographer, spotted what he thought might be something further south. We flew to where he pointed and the marker beacon came on. Lt.

Johnney Diehl spotted the periscope leaving a wake as the sub headed west into the sunset. I made a tight 270 left to get some run distance. Sgt. **Gillford** laid a

perfect pattern over the sub. The crew in back reported seeing the broken ends of the sub rise up, then sink out of sight. A little wreckage. Bubbles.

"We stayed on site for maybe 20 minutes, trying to radio the Navy. Locating the position, thinking there might be survivors to rescue. By now we were low on fuel, so I put the engines on max range settings, max lean, low RPM. The very light B-24 in the cool of the evening flew home quietly. I think we all had mixed feelings about our 'victory.' Would victory always mean we will kill a bunch of young men just like us doing their job for their country?

"The radio signals had reached Barksdale. There was a big celebration that night as we landed. The first and only sub the 44th sank? Was there another one?

"Today while working in my garden here in Seattle a Spitfire flew over, low. What a lovely memory, beautiful plane, musical sound. So many memories. The best were the happy days as a group, getting ready for the "glory" days."



Administrative Changes at the Database

Arlo F. Bartsch at COMPUTER GENERATED DATA LTD. announces the appointment of Stephen J. Riordan IV, Commander USN (Ret) as President of the rapidly growing computer company.

According to Bartsch, the company's rapid growth, particularly through the participation of the 44th Bomb Group Association, necessitates restructuring of management to accommodate the changes.

At the last count, 320 biographies of the members of the 44th are on record, and they are slowly 'dribbling in.' Although other air force organizations have expressed interest in placing their histories into a database, the 44th stands as the leader in this monumental undertaking.

Ed. Note: Have you done your biography? Please do not leave your yellowing records for your children to sort through and try to piece your heroic history from a handful of papers in the attic. Write it now. Write your unique experiences. No two stories are alike. The application was in the last 8 Ball Tails.





Robert L. Dunlop, whose name appeared in the last issue of *Folded Wings*, wants everyone to know that like Mark Twain, 'the information about his demise has been greatly exaggerated.' Fortunately, this Waist Gunner on the **Clay Roberts** crew (68th Sq.) has a sense of humor, so the incorrect report did nothing to destabilize his sense of well being.

The Clay Roberts crew photo was featured in the Fall, 2000 issue of the *8 Ball Tails*, celebrating their first reunion in 55 years. According to Dunlop, the picture was taken by a member of the maintenance crew with a camera he acquired by trading away two jars of Pickled Pigs Feet. Dunlop's father supplied the film.

Ed. Note: Imagine that! Two jars of pigs' feet, undoubtedly devoured fifty six years ago, provided a piece of history that has become a treasure.



From Fred Campbell, EXPOW VA Outreach Program Committee, 3312 Chatterton, TX 76904, (915) 944-4002 voice/fax to Richard Butler:

Former Prisoners of War: The VA Wants You!

Of all former prisoners of war, with approximately 46,000 still living, only about 35% connected with the Department of Veterans Affairs to accept the benefits for which they are eligible. Now is the time to step forward.

If you are an ex-POW or know of someone who is, please respond to this announcement. The American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc., has worked hard over the past 20 years to determine the effects of the POW experience on the health in later years of our POW veterans. The VA provides benefits related to over 20 health maladies that were presumed to be initiated because of severe prisoner of war conditions suffered in the hands of the enemy. These presumptives include frostbite, heart problems, post traumatic stress, malnutrition, osteoarthritis, and many others. For instance, we who were shot down and experienced the forced marches in the coldest winter, 1944-45, northern Germany had had in years can well remember the swollen, cold feet. Later heart problems and residuals of frostbite are presumed by the VA to have resulted. Tax-free disability compensation is provided for such.

Join American Ex-Prisoners of War, to be kept informed about the special benefits due former POWs and their spouses or widows. Our volunteer accredited National Service Officers will do their best to help you present your valid claim to the Department of Veterans Affairs, without charge. Learn more, call or write:

American Ex-Prisoners of War
c/o New Member Committee
National Headquarters
3201 East Pioneer Pkwy #40
Arlington, TX 76010
(817) 649-2979

or

American Ex-Prisoners of War
c/o National Service Office DVARO
3225 North Central Avenue, Ste 407
Phoenix, AZ 85012-2421
(602) 745-2201; (602) 745-2203 fax



Another Version of the naming of the Flying Eight Balls:

Wayne I. Harvey, one of the original members of the 44th assigned from Langley Field, VA, reports.

"Other members of the 44th that joined later have a different idea of the origination of the name, but here is the real story:

"While the 44th was at Barksdale Field, LA in 1942 we were flying submarine patrol over the Gulf of Mexico, and also receiving new personnel from Tech Schools. We were training and making new B-24 groups from trained and new personnel assigned. We were also preparing for our overseas assignment. The last group that we activated was the 93rd Group. Both groups were assigned only one hangar, and each section was responsible for crating their own equipment for shipment overseas. The 44th and 93rd used different areas in the hangar to store their completed crates of equipment. Each group had to identify their crates. The 44th used the number 8. The 93rd used a question mark.

"The squadron each had a painter assigned, and with much time on their hands, with nothing to do but to wait for more crates to be delivered to their area, someone suggested the 8 ball be used. Then, I'm not

sure who suggested the bomb be painted on also. Perhaps all of the design may have been the idea of the painter. I am not sure. The 93rd painter used the question mark, which was used for the tail of a squirrel. I do not recall ever seeing any of these crates after leaving Barksdale Field and arriving overseas.”

Harvey points out, also, that the 44th was the first UAAF to be equipped with B-24 Liberators.



PURSUIT IN THE PYRENEES is the saga of three months of evading the enemy in German-occupied France by **Archie R. Barlow, Jr.**, Engineer and Top Turret Gunner in the 68th Squadron. Their plane went down on Friday, January 21, 1944 on a mission targeting the Military Installations at Escalles Sur Buchy. With the help of the French Underground, five members of the **H. R. Howington's** crew managed to survive, twice hiding in the Pyrenees Mountains when the Germans were getting close, and eventually into Spain and a return to duty.

Barlow's plane, RAM IT--DAM IT, piloted by Lt. Hartwell Howington, was hit during the third attack of the enemy aircraft. It was observed to make a wide circle to the left, smoking, then went into a spin. One chute was observed, but the fighter attacks were so intense at that time, no further observations were made. Of the eleven crew members (one extra--a photographer) four were KIA, two became POWs; five successfully evaded.

A condensed version of this story appeared in Barlow Kinfolks book. The full story is available for \$20. Write L. B. Wright, 3911 Black Locust Drive, Houston, TX 77088-6904; telephone (281) 931-1932; e-mail Wrightb@juno.com.



Still "BEATING THE BUSHES" is ART HAND HERE with his wife Lois at the 1990 REUNION in Norfolk.



About our U.K. Representative: Can we ever say enough thanks to somebody who is always there when we need him? When the Times newspaper needed information about the memorial at Taverham, they called Steve Adams. When BBC radio needed someone to interview, they called Steve. When Radio Norfolk needed information, you can imagine who they called. If you ask Steve for a picture, he zips it across the Atlantic within hours. He protects our memorabilia, keeps us apprised of progress in the Memorial Library, and is always there to help promote the interests of the 44th BGVA. That's a friend!

Steve wasn't even born when WWII was going on. He learned about it in high school, and has been a serious student and devotee ever since.





Don't Forget!
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Assn. Reunion
2001

Bossier City, LA
Barksdale AFB
October 15, 16, 17, & 18, 2001

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