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8TH AF NEWS

Volume 16 Number 3 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"



Punchy HAS GONE WEST





8TH AF NEWS

Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

OFFICERS

President/Treasurer

David Nowack (Lois) 2017
4878 College View Court
Schnecksville, PA 18078
Tel. (610) 799-4640
DLNowack@ptd.net

Vice President

Dr. Nancy J. Toombs 2018
5213 North Cedar Street
North Little Rock, AR 72116
Tel. (501) 681-3126
chase221@swbell.net

Secretary

Benjamin J. Jones (Krista) 2019
15115 E Jones Beach Dr.
Kent, NY 14477-9780
(585) 682-4737
LimeyBJ@gmail.com

DIRECTORS

COL Edward "Ed" Wexler
USAF, (Ret) 2017
8 E Back St.
Savannah, GA 31419-3343
(912) 308-2940
EWexler06@comcast.net

CHAPTER/UNIT LIAISON

Jonathan Delgado-Levin-Turner
(Sandra) 2019
256 3rd Street – Hangar 12
Niagara Falls, NY 14303
(416) 568-3780
8thafhs.9thsr@gmail.com

8TH AFHS NATIONAL OFFICE

Managing Director Editor, 8th AF News

Debra Kujawa (Joseph)
PO Box 60369
Savannah, GA 31420-0369
(912) 748-8884
ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org
www.8thafhs.org

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

UNITED KINGDOM

Jeff Hawley
44 Belle Isle Crescent
Brampton Cam
PE28 4SJ
United Kingdom
011 4414804 13503
Yankee2100@btinternet.com

Paul Bellamy
21-22 Warkton Village
Kettering Northants
NN16 9XF
United Kingdom
011 4478660 84743
Paulbellamy1939@hotmail.com

John P Gilbert
Glen Ann
42 Chapel Street
Norwich Norfolk
NR10 4BG
United Kingdom
011 4416038 71124
Adrian@gilbertafreeserve.co.uk

BELGIUM

Edouard Renière
Dieweg 296
1180 Brussels Belgium
Riiren.belsuo@skynet.be

FRANCE

Jean-Paul Favrais
La Haye-Ouisais No. 85
35310 Breal
France
Jeanpaulfavrais1@orange.fr

CHIEF OF VETERANS AFFAIRS & EDUCATION

Joe Garber (Joan)
46 Coquina Ridge Way
Ormond Beach, FL 32174
(386) 672-5359.
paljoe2@aol.com

DIRECTORS EMERITUS

Earl Wassom
John Pearson
Ivan McKinney

MIGHTY EIGHTH AF MUSEUM STORE

Museum Store Director
Felice Stelljes
175 Bourne St.
Pooler, GA 31328
P.O. Box 1992
Savannah, GA 31402
912-748-8888
store@mightyeighth.org

Inside this issue

Presidents Message	3
Editors Message	4
Punchy Has Gone West	5-7
2016 Reunion Information.	8-11
Berlin Revisited	12-14
The Jigs Up!	15
Texas Raiders Rides Again	16-17
D-Day + 72	18-20
Farewell To Gordon	21
Living in the Shadow.	22-25
Recognition 71 Years Later	26
A Journey Through Time	27-31
French Legion of Honor	32-33
Hal Minerich And Me	34-38
Taps	39-44
Chapter & Bomb Group News	45-46
Book Review	46
Reunions • Memorials • Ceremonies	46
How About It?	47



From the President's Pen



Being affiliated with the 8th Air Force Historical Society (8AFHS) has been a very rewarding experience for me. This is despite the fact that I don't "have skin in the game." That is, I don't have a relative who served in the 8th. Instead I came to the 8AFHS as an amateur World War II historian and World War II Air Corps reenactor.

My historical reading led me to the 8th Air Force. The more I read about it, the more intrigued I became. I joined the 8AFHS hoping to increase my knowledge and pick up some tips to improve my reenacting.

I have not been disappointed.

I have met some wonderful veterans and indeed have learned much from them. Reading the articles in the 8th Air Force News and listening to the veterans' war stories at reunions have shown me that each sortie of every mission had its own unique tale. The ground crews have their own individual stories about preparing the planes so the crews could fly them. Many had similar experiences, but all had some differences. Former prisoners of war have added their own poignant experiences. This is what makes history.

I have been blessed to know these heroes. I have also met many wonderful NextGens, from

relatives of the veterans to our British cousins who have their own connections to the 8th. My experience with the 8AHS continues to be enjoyable. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our reunion in St. Louis in October.



*David Nowack
President*

Looking forward to seeing all of you in St. Louis!

Dave

WWII Vets attending the St. Louis reunion are eligible to receive a \$250 rebate to help cover registration and meals. Rebate available at reunion check-in.

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROPOSED BY-LAW CHANGE

CURRENT

7.8 The Board of Directors or the membership may create the office of Director Emeritus, which office shall be a non-voting, non-compensated directorship for the purpose of utilizing the advice, counsel, and services of former Board members.

PROPOSED

Eliminate 7.8

REASON

Large organizations with many board members frequently have some individuals whose service rises above that of others. In these cases creating an emeritus position makes sense to recognize that service. In a small organization, and with a smaller board, such as ours (and getting smaller) making such a distinction is not as meaningful. By eliminating this by-law, we respect the advice and service of all past board members. Advice from former board members is always welcome with or without a special title.

Editor's Message

BITTERSWEET MEMORIES

If there are any real drawbacks to my position as Managing Director with our Society, it would have to be this: getting to know so many amazing people through the years and then...they are gone. Every member's passing is difficult for me emotionally. It would truly be impossible for me to list the names here—even if I used every page of this issue to do it, but I would be beyond remiss if I didn't take the time and space to share a few memories about someone who was totally responsible for me becoming part of this amazing organization: Darrel Lowell.

Many of you got to know Darrel during his years as treasurer and/or when he succeeded Nancy Toombs as president a couple of years ago. I first met Darrel shortly after my arrival as Director of Marketing and PR for the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in 2000. Darrel was both an energetic and active volunteer at the Museum, while equally enthusiastic within the Society. Even though his own military service as a B-47 pilot during the tenuous Cold War days of the 50s was not extensive, his passion for WWII veterans and those who served and/or continue to serve was undeniable and contagious.

Sadly, Darrel was diagnosed with cancer several months ago which turned out to be even more aggressive and insidious than first thought. His valiant battle ended, June 21st.

As much as Darrel loved both the Society and the Museum, the true love of his life was his wife Becky and his family. No matter what the circumstances or situation, Darrel ALWAYS put his family first and I admired and respected him for that immensely. His career was full of exciting stories,

world travels, and accomplishments—yet his singular focus always remained on family. He reminded me constantly that it was important never to be consumed by anything or anyone else beyond family, because unlike all of the wonderful causes and activities we all enjoy, nothing is more important than our loved ones.

Over the past 15 years Darrel and I shared a lot of amazing and eventful adventures and challenges, but my life is certainly richer for having known and loved him as a friend.

“On the death of a friend, we should consider that the fates through confidence have devolved on us the task of a double living, that we have henceforth to fulfill the promise of our friend's life also, in our own, to the world.”

~ Henry David Thoreau

Blue skies and
Godspeed, Darrel.

Deb



*Debra Kujawa
Managing Director/Editor*



Continuing the Legacy with your 8th Air Force News Magazine Staff L-R: - Debra Kujawa, Donna Neely & Telisha Gaines



CONTACT INFORMATION

Editor & Managing Director Debra Kujawa
PO Box 60369, Savannah, GA 31420-0369
8th AFHS
8 Rose Hill Dr., Savannah, GA 31419
(912) 748-8884
ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org

MATERIAL DEADLINE

November 1, 2016 for the **December 2016** 8th AF News

We welcome all of your articles!!!
Please include photos & more!!
ALL file formats are accepted
We encourage you to send
digital images when possible.



PUNCHY Has Gone West

Pete Mecca



The email from my friend and aviator John Laughter was simple and to the point: “Punchy has Gone

West.” Dated June 22, 2016, John’s email conveyed the heart breaking news that celebrated WWII fighter pilot Robert “Punchy” Powell had gone to “a place, way up in the sky, where pilots can go, when they have to die. A place where a guy can go and buy a cold beer, for a friend and comrade, where memory is dear.”

The aviator’s expiry hymn, “Flying West” by Capt. Michael J. Larkin is well-known to pilots worldwide. Pilots understand, pilots sense every word, they fathom what a friend or enemy accomplished to become an “aviator.” There is an exclusive club of Blue Skies, mythical legends, the joy of touching the face of God.

Robert “Punchy” Powell was made from the stuff of heroes. A native of West Virginia coal country, Powell was known as a kid you didn’t push

around. Feisty enough to duke it out with a star football player, Powell earned the dub “Punchy.” After winning a Golden Gloves Championship the nickname stuck.

Athletic, particularly on the Field of Dreams, Punchy received a baseball scholarship to the University of West Virginia. The Cincinnati Reds only saw him play three games and offered him a contract. The anchorage at Pearl Harbor ended his promising career.

Aggressive and gutsy, Punchy Powell seemed destined to crawl behind the controls of American fighter aircraft. Punchy reported to the 328th Fighter Squadron, 352 Fighter Group. Not known for their self-control, rather, as a band of fearless aviators, the 352th served for a short time on “Alert Duty” at

LaGuardia Airport in New York. Ground crews and control tower personnel would watch the 352th pilots begin acrobatic maneuvers as soon as their wheels left the runway, New York residents gawked at the flyboys practicing “dogfights” over the city, and the boys routinely buzzed Yankee Stadium. Rumors had it that city officials were relieved to see the 352th pack their parachutes and deploy to England.

April 1943: Punchy arrives in Bodney, England. On flying the rugged P-47 Thunderbolt, Punchy said, “We loved the Thunderbolt. It was tough, powerful, easy to land, well-protected and sported eight machine guns.” In time, Punchy returned from a mission to notice curious-looking aircraft parked all over the field. His crew chief jumped on the P-47’s wing and told Punchy, “Lieutenant, the colonel said for you to hop in one of those new planes and get 30 minutes under your belt. You’ll be flying one on your mission tomorrow.” Snug behind the controls of his P-47, Punchy replied, “Like hell I will!”

The next morning Punchy buckled up and went into combat with what was arguably the best fighter in WWII, the marvelous and deadly P-51 Mustang. With the noses of their P-51s painted blue, the pilots of the 352th were soon known to the Germans as The Blue Nose Bastards of Bodney.

Punchy racked up an impressive record during the war: Six destroyed, two probable, seven damaged, including the first kill of a long-ranged new Luftwaffe bomber, the HE-177. Recalling his first encounter with German fighters, Punchy said, “The German flyboys weren’t expecting Mustangs. We shot down 27 of theirs while only losing two of ours.”

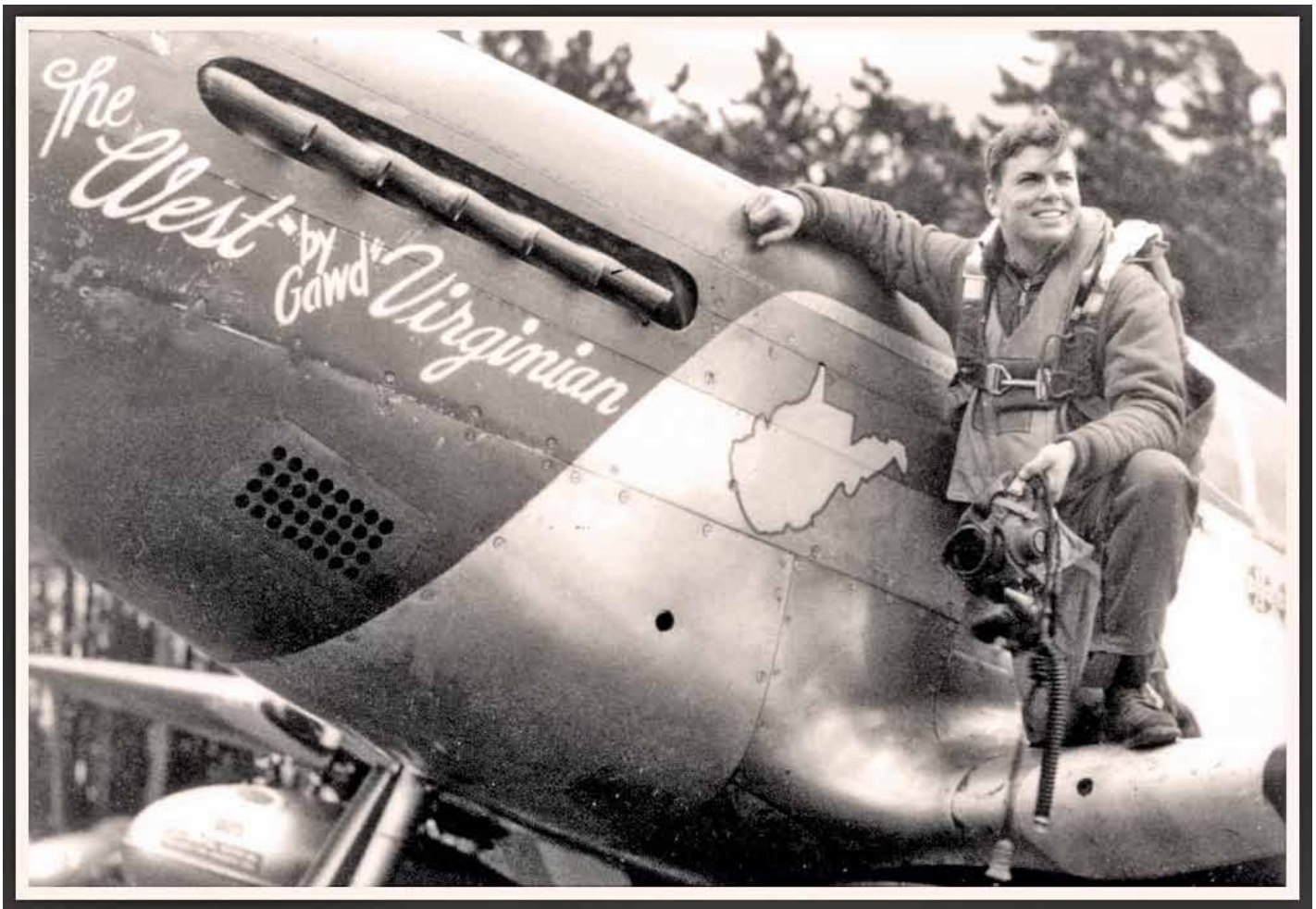
June 5, 1944: Punchy’s P-51, the “West ‘by Gawd’ Virginian,” receives a quick, and somewhat sloppy, paint job. He recalled, “The fuselage and wings of our P-51s were painted with black and white invasion stripes. The next day there would be thousands of planes covering the D-Day Invasion and we didn’t want our ships mistakenly firing on us.”

June 6, 1944: The flight surgeons were authorized to provide the pilots with pep pills to keep them flying. From treetop level to 30,000 feet an air armada of over 1,000 fighters kept enemy fighters at bay. Airborne by 4 a.m., Punchy would remain in his cockpit for 16 hours, flying back to England to refuel and rearm twice before returning to the fight. The Longest Day finally over, his legs cramped beyond use, drained mentally and physically, Punchy had to be lifted out of the cockpit by “Chief,” his Native American crew chief. “I couldn’t move,” Punchy said. “I felt like I was paralyzed.”

During the interview, Punchy asked, “Did you ever wonder where the expression ‘the whole nine yards’ came from? Well, our gun belt was nine yards long. You could go through the belt in 30 seconds, in other words, we used up ‘the whole nine yards.’”

During one takeoff, Punchy was less than 300 feet off the ground when the engine caught fire. He crash-landed near a tree line then





jumped from the plane before the fuel tank exploded. He said, "I ran into the woods and continued on until I reached the HQ hut. The S-2 officer was on the phone telling someone, 'Punchy has had it. He just crashed into some trees and caught fire.' I yelled, 'I ain't dead yet!' Scared the heck out of the guy."

Robert "Punchy" Powell completed 87 combat missions. During his life, he flew 22 different aircraft. In closing Punchy said, "I wasn't flying the airplane, God was. I was blessed, and like my mother always said ... it's better to be lucky than good-looking." A replica of "The West 'by Gawd' Virginian" is on display in front of the 57th Fighter Group Restaurant at DeKalb-Peachtree Airport.

I met Punchy Powell several years ago. A remarkable man, a patriot, a great American, eulogies of "they don't make them like that any-

September 2016 (16-3)

more," or "one of the Greatest of the Greatest Generation," seem trite if not predictable. Perhaps the words of an aviator constitute a final proper tribute.

"One More Roll" by POW Commander Jerry Coffee, from Hanoi in 1968.

We toast our hearty comrades who have fallen from the skies, and were gently caught by God's own hand to be with Him on High.

To dwell among the soaring clouds they've known so well before, from victory roll to tail chase, at heaven's very door.

As we fly

among them there, we're sure to hear their plea, to take care my friend, watch your six, and do one more roll for me.

Blue skies, Punchy.

Pete Mecca is a Vietnam veteran and freelance writer: aveteransstory@gmail.com.





42nd ANNUAL 8th AFHS REUNION

Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, MO

October 19-23, 2016

Wednesday, October 19

1:00pm — 6:00pm	Reunion registration open
1:00pm — until	Memorabilia/Gathering room open throughout reunion
1:00pm — 4:00pm	8th AFHS Board Meeting
6:00pm — 7:00pm	Welcome Reception, followed by dinner on your own

Thursday, October 20

7:30am — 8:30am	Continental Breakfast for Package #1 participants
8:00am — 12:00pm	Reunion registration open
8:30am — 9:45am	Individual Group Meetings
10:00am — 11:30am	American Indians in WWII
11:45am — 4:00pm	Our Military Heritage Tour*
1:00pm — 6:00pm	Reunion registration open
6:00pm — 9:00pm	Cash Bar Open
7:00pm — 9:00pm	Rendezvous Dinners

Friday, October 21

7:30am — 8:30am	Full Breakfast for Meal Package participants
8:00am — 12:00pm	Reunion registration open
9:00am — 1:00pm	Gateway to St. Louis City Tour*
1:00pm — 6:00pm	Reunion registration open
2:00pm — 3:30pm	Presentation on AAM Duxford
3:45pm — 5:00pm	Q & A WWII Vets
6:00pm — 9:00pm	Cash Bar Open
7:00pm — 9:00pm	Dinner Buffet—Donald Miller Presentation

Saturday, October 22

7:30am — 8:30am	Continental Breakfast for Meal Package participants
8:00am — 12:00pm	Reunion registration open
8:45am — 10:15am	General Membership Meeting
10:30am — 11:30am	Researchers/Webmasters Meeting
12:15pm — 4:30pm	Anheuser-Busch Brewery/Grant's Farm Tour*
12:00pm — 4:00pm	8th AFHS Board Meeting
1:00pm — 6:00pm	Reunion registration open
6:00pm — 9:00pm	Cash Bar Open
7:00pm — 10:00pm	Gala Dinner and Program

Sunday, October 23

7:30am — 8:30am	Full Breakfast for Meal Package participants
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*It is important that you be in the bus boarding area at least ten [10] minutes prior to the scheduled departure times. All tours require a minimum of 40 participants, unless otherwise stated. Driver and Staff gratuities **ARE** included in the tour prices.



42nd ANNUAL 8th AFHS REUNION

Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, MO

October 19-23, 2016

HOTEL RESERVATION INFORMATION

314-878-1500 or 888-627-7066

(Reference 'CHALET' and 8th AFHS)

Location

The Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet is located in Westport Plaza, (191 Westport Plaza, St. Louis, MO 63146) which features 18 shops, popular restaurants, and entertainment venues like the Westport Playhouse, The Funny Bone Comedy Club, Jive and Wail Piano Bar, and Backstreet Jazz and Blues. Guests will enjoy convenient access to popular destinations and attractions. We're located just 10 minutes from historic St. Charles, 15 minutes from Forest Park, home of the Saint Louis Zoo, Science Center, Art Museum and the History Museum. We're also close to the world-famous Gateway Arch, the St. Louis Cardinals baseball stadium, Six Flags® and Missouri's Wine County.

Shuttle Service

For those of you flying into St. Louis, there is complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport to the hotel. Go to Baggage Claim/Hotel Shuttle exits—the shuttle runs every half hour.

Upscale Amenities

Enjoy complimentary wireless High Speed Internet in all public areas, concierge service, plus signature amenities you'll only find at Sheraton. Wake up energized after a restful night's sleep in a plush Sheraton Sweet Sleeper® Bed. Sheraton Club rooms and suites provide guests with special access to the Sheraton Club Lounge, offering complimentary breakfast, evening hors d'oeuvres, and a variety of beverage options. Stay connected at our lobby's connectivity hub, the Link@Sheraton™ experience with Microsoft®. Stay fit with a visit to our Sheraton Fitness center, programmed by Core Performance™.

Dining Options Abound

The Terrace Restaurant and Lucerne Restaurant feature a wide variety of menu items served in a friendly, casual atmosphere. There is also a private dining area perfect for intimate gatherings. In the summer, enjoy poolside refreshments every weekend at the Tiki Bar, serving snacks, beer, wine and frozen drinks. We also offer guests the convenience and privacy of in-room dining service. Stroll through the Westport Plaza Complex and visit any one of their many casual and fine-dining options, from seafood restaurants to specialty cafés.

RESERVATION INFORMATION

Group Name: 8th Air Force Historical Society
Reunion Dates: October 19-23, 2016
Rate: \$109 + tax (currently 15.363%) Rates are offered 3 days prior and 3 days post reunion based on availability.
Cut off Date: 9/15/2016
Cancellation Policy: All reservations have a 48 hour cancellation policy, or attendee will be charged one night room rate plus tax.

WHEELCHAIR RENTALS

ScootAround: (888) 441-7575 or ScootAround.com

HOSPITALITY SUITES

This year, the 8th AFHS is pleased to announce that we are offering **HOSPITALITY SUITES** to groups at **NO CHARGE**. The number of suites is limited, so we ask that you reserve your suite as soon as possible. Suites are located in close proximity to one another and most are large enough for two or more groups to share space.

In order to guarantee your suite,
please call or email ASAP:

Debra Kujawa
Managing Director
912-748-8884
ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org



REGISTRATION FORM

42nd ANNUAL 8th AFHS REUNION

Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, MO
October 19-23, 2016

CUT-OFF DATE IS September 15, 2016	Price Per	# of People	TOTAL
REGISTRATION FEE	\$ 40	#	\$
Registration fee for children ages 8-16	\$ 25	#	\$
MEAL PACKAGES			
#1 Includes 7 hotel meals beginning with breakfast Thursday, Oct 20	\$ 212	#	\$
#2 Includes 5 hotel meals beginning with breakfast Friday, Oct 21	\$ 148	#	\$
Please select your entrée choice for the Gala banquet Saturday, Oct 22:			
Sliced London Broil with Bordelaise Sauce		#	
Pan Seared Salmon w/Balsamic Reduction		#	
SEPARATELY PRICED MEALS (If not purchasing a meal package)			
Thursday, Oct 20 — RENDEZVOUS DINNER Chicken Marsala	\$ 46	#	\$
Friday, Oct 21—EVENING DINNER BUFFET Roasted Pork Loin & Grilled Chicken Breast	\$ 46	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 22—GALA BANQUET (Please select entrée)			
Sliced London Broil with Bordelaise Sauce	\$ 46	#	\$
Pan Seared Salmon with Balsamic Reduction	\$ 46	#	\$
TOUR OPTIONS:			
Thursday, Oct 20: Military Heritage Tour— INCLUDES BOX LUNCH	\$ 45	#	\$
Friday, Oct 21: Gateway to St. Louis City Tour—Lunch on your own	\$ 25	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 22: Anheuser-Busch Brewery/Grant's Farm Tour	\$ 37	#	\$
Total amount payable to: 8th AFHS			\$

MEMBER NAME (for name tag): _____

WWII Veteran _____ BG or FG Affiliation _____ POW: _____ Other: _____

SPOUSE or PERSON attending: _____

ADDITIONAL GUESTS: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

DAYTIME PH #: _____ EMAIL: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT: _____ PH #: _____

PLEASE INDICATE ANY PHYSICAL OR DIETARY RESTRICTIONS: _____

IF PAYING BY CREDIT CARD:

CARD #: _____ EXP. DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ *Your contact information will only be shared with attendees.*



42nd ANNUAL 8th AFHS REUNION

Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, MO
October 19-23, 2016

REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

STOP!

◇ RESERVE YOUR HOTEL ROOM FIRST!

The reunion hotel has a liberal cancellation policy—in the event you are unable to attend the reunion, you will be able to cancel your reservation without penalty within 48 hours of your scheduled check-in time. However, if you wait until the last minute to book your room reservation, you may not receive the reunion rate or rooms may no longer be available at the reunion hotel. Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that our vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less a \$5 processing fee.

Canceling your hotel reservation does NOT cancel your reunion activities.

◇ COMPLETE THE REGISTRATION FORM

Please fill out the registration form completely.

- ⇒ Fill out your name as you wish it to be on your name tag—and for any others registering with you. If you are a WWII veteran, and/or affiliated with a bomb or fighter group, please indicate which group.
- ⇒ Meal packages include either seven [7] hotel meals [package #1] or five [5] hotel meals [package #2]. If you purchase a meal package, do NOT select separately priced meals. If you plan to attend some or all of the dinner functions, but do NOT wish to include breakfast, simply select the dinners you wish to attend in the area indicating “Separately Priced Meals.” Be sure and select your entrée if you plan on attending the Saturday evening gala.
- ⇒ There are three [3] tour options available during the reunion. Please read the information [here in this issue] on each tour and then make your selection on the form. **The Military Heritage Tour INCLUDES** a box lunch.

◇ MAIL IN YOUR REGISTRATION FORM

Once you have completed your registration form, please total up the amount owed and include a check, money order, or complete the credit card information on the form, payable to the **8th AFHS** and mail to:

**8th AFHS
P O Box 60369
Savannah, GA 31420-0369**

ALL registration forms MUST be received by September 15, 2016 in order to guarantee your place. If you have any questions or problems in completing your registration, please contact:

**Debra Kujawa
Managing Director
8th AFHS
912-748-8884
ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org**

ALL reunion information and forms are available on our website: 8thAFHS.org

BERLIN Revisited

By Donald F. Kilburg Jr.

In 1946 3.4 million new babies were born, evidence that the war was over and the troops had come home. I was one of that first class of “baby boomers.” My Dad, 1LT Donald Kilburg of the 8th Air Force 487th Bomb Group, went back to the job that he had prior to enlisting in the Army Air Corps shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I was the first of an eventual six boomers in our house. Life was good. We were part of the generation of peace and prosperity. Dad worked hard to support his rapidly growing family, but also found time to be an integral part of the family. While every kid I knew growing up had a

WWII veteran as a father, I never heard much, if anything, about the war

The last visible remnant of my Dad’s war in Europe was his leather A-2 jacket. But he had that worn out before I learned to walk. It was his favorite for shoveling Chicago snow in the winter and washing the car in the early spring and late fall. He never spoke of the war, as I recall. That was past. The concerns of making up for lost time, raising a family, and enjoying life were the priorities. I later learned that every Christmas included an exchange of cards and an update with a few members of the crew he had trained with and flown with from Rapid City, SD, to Lavenham, England, in 1944. But the message was “Merry Christmas”; nothing was said about the war. Dad’s civilian career was going well and we always had a late model car...station wagon, one that saw plenty of family vacations.



Don Kilburg
John Edwards
1944 Cambridge

In 1960 we all packed up with camping gear and rode out to the Black Hills of South Dakota and were introduced to all of the beautiful country that Mom and Dad experienced during that brief combined honeymoon/flight training period in 1944. They had been married in March of 1944 in the base chapel at San Angelo, TX, the weekend he had



Edwards Crew



Berlin bomb-damage

graduated from Bombardier school and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant. Together they went to the Rapid City Air Base (later renamed Ellsworth AFB) where Dad met up with his initial crew and their new B-17 and began crew training in preparation for transfer to England in late July.

During our family vacation years later we were introduced to Mt. Rushmore and all the streams and lakes that had been sources of recreation for our then newlywed parents and their new found crew mates and a few war brides. As we kids retraced their steps, we heard nothing of the military training or experience of that first crew. There was no mention of Dad's war experience as we enjoyed the beauty of the Black Hills.

As the mid '60s rolled around, I was busy getting a college education and my draft board was anxiously filling spots in Viet Nam. Many of my buddies were already gone, both literally and figuratively. Dad and I frequently debated the wisdom of the Viet Nam War. Eventually I "won" the draft lottery and was on my way to basic training. Many

who left before me had already returned, many with a new diagnosis of PTSD, something my Dad said they never heard of in the "Big War."

In the mid 80s my folks were transferred to Phoenix, Arizona. One of Dad's old Air Force buddies wrote and asked if they had gotten there in time for the annual reunion of the 487th Bomb Group Association. As it turned out they had missed it, but--armed with contact information--Dad reached out, joined the organization and made arrangements to attend their next reunion. That set off a series of annual contacts that eventually involved each of us 6 kids and spouses. The annual events were and still are a great opportunity to get together with some wonderful folks and encounter memories of the war. These were happy gatherings of comrades in arms, all survivors.

At one of these gatherings I first learned that the 487th was the lead group in the largest bombing mission in history, Christmas Eve, 1944 with over 2000 heavy bombers and 800 fighters in the air with more than 20,000 airmen. The 487th, at the spearhead of

the day-long formation, was attacked and took heavy casualties. It was there that I learned that my Dad and his crew were decorated heroes who took the lead when the Command Leader, General Frederick Castle, was blown out of the sky. I learned of this for the first time almost 45 years after the event. My Dad didn't brag or even mention his Distinguished Flying Cross.

As the years went by, I got to know the men of the 487th well. At one reunion they were expressing dissatisfaction that the Christmas Eve mission was not ever documented beyond the death of General Castle and his being posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. I have done some writing and my Dad promptly volunteered me to tell the story.

I set out to do the necessary research and regularly consulted with my Dad to get my facts in order. He had great respect for Castle, but repeatedly insisted "his story has been told; you need to tell the story of the men who successfully completed the mission and helped to stop the Ardennes offensive in its tracks."

Dad lost Carole, his beloved war bride in 2003 and, while I was collecting material, we spoke often by phone about the mission. Quite by chance, as we were preparing to meet for a 487th reunion at the newly opened World War II Memorial on the Mall in Washington DC, Dad located the address of his long lost friend and pilot, CPT John "Pappy" Edwards. By astonishing coincidence, John lived about 5 minutes from me in Greenville, SC. The two had a wonderful reunion and suddenly more stories about their wartime experience together began to flow. Dad returned to his home in Scottsdale, AZ, but we continued to talk weekly and at length about the Christmas Eve mission.

As my work proceeded, John passed away. Dad was doing well and was a voracious reader, usually picking up and returning 3-4 books a week at his local library. I was collecting my own library of research materials. At one point I mistakenly ordered a duplicate book and put the extra copy in the mail to my father. I will never forget the title: "Fire and Fury: the Allied Bombing of Germany 1942-1945" by Randall Hansen.

About a week after sending it, I made my weekly call, only to find Dad under the weather. He really didn't want to talk, though said he was having trouble sleeping and was experiencing severe nightmares. He was unusually distressed and having trouble staying focused, something new for this alert, energetic and active 89 year old. I asked what he thought was causing his problems and he shot back "that damn book you sent me!"

I protested, saying I thought it was an excellent book, carefully researched and very well written. He said "I know, I know, I know. But it has reminded me of something I did 60 years ago and totally put out of my mind until that damn book showed up. I can't sleep, I have recurring nightmares, and I don't want to talk about it!" When he settled down a bit, I learned that the specific issue revolved around the bombing of Berlin on February 3, 1945. It was the only one of his 30 missions where the 8th was commanded to abandon their usual strategic targets and carpet bomb the city full of citizens and refugees. Dad explained that he thought it was

morally wrong at the time and continues to see it as morally wrong. He and others who protested that February morning were told that they would face Court-Martial if they refused to accept the order. His nightmares were about killing thousands of innocent men, women, and children in the German capital. He finally cut off our conversation and said he never wanted to talk about it again

I have since learned that the carpet bombing of Berlin on Feb. 3, 1945 was the result of change in US policy at the highest levels. In contrast to the British who had experienced terror bombing on their own cities and responded in kind, the US Air Corps had steadfastly committed to strategic bombing of industrial and military targets. Frustrated with the stubborn resistance of the Nazis, the American Command Structure approved the bombing of the central city of Berlin, despite the fact that its population was swollen with refugees fleeing the Russian advance from the East. Originally, Berlin's central city was only approved as a target of opportunity if oil processing plants were fogged in. But in planning the Feb. 3 mission, the total bombing of Berlin was approved. General Carl Spaatz, as Commander of Strategic Air Forces in Europe approved the plan, though he was not to publicly admit it until six years before his own death in 1974 when he said "We never had as our target, in Europe, anything except a military target—except Berlin."

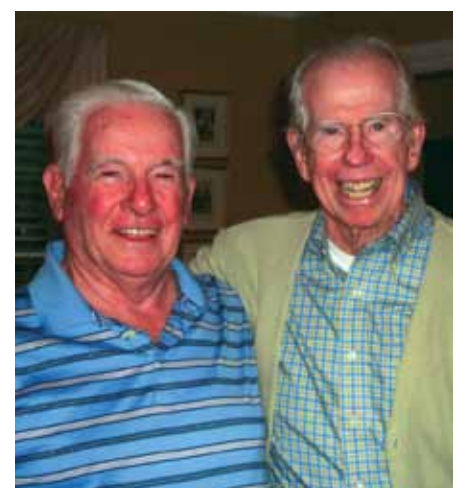
Over 900 heavy bombers and more than 400 escorts were involved in that attack. Each bomb group was informed that the aiming point was the thickly populated city center. The objective was to demoralize the leadership and the people of the Reich. The Berlin bound formation was at least 300 miles long. Immediate estimates of fatalities was 25,000, though later identifiable deaths were less than 3000. Yet no one was able to ascertain the number of people seeking refuge in the city's rail system and no one knows how many of the refugees crammed into the city's train stations were cremated in the conflagration that lasted for 4 days after the attack. It is, however, known that over 20,000 survivors were injured. And approximately 120,000 residents of the city were left homeless. It was clearly terror bombing that day in Berlin, something

new for the American airmen, and something that weighed heavily both on the victims and the bomber crews, including one who was unwittingly revisited by the horror some 60 years later.

Dad never had access to the eventual reported casualties on the ground, but reminded of the day, he imagined the worst. Yet he was eventually able to escape the nightmares. He moved on to other matters. About three months later he died in peace as a result of a ruptured aneurysm, just shy of his 90th birthday. He was buried with full military honors.

Through this event, I learned more about the war and more about my father than I never knew. And to this day I have mixed emotions about sending him "that damn book" and opening memories of a long latent trauma. I can only hope that his internal wounds from the past were healed. Our WWII population is dwindling rapidly. May those who currently survive never have to suffer painful memories of the war and be at peace with the memories of the war they won, bringing the tyranny of the day to an end.

It is extraordinary for such a distressing memory to lay hidden for more than 60 years only to emerge in a most painful way. Yes, there was PTSD during wars before Viet Nam. In the Civil War it was "Soldier's Heart." WWI it was known as "Shell Shock." And in WWII it was known as "Battle Fatigue." As Tolstoy said "war is not a polite recreation." And recognizing the regrets of war and recovering from them is no easy task. It is a continuing reminder that war is truly hell, even a just and noble war.



Don Kilburg John Edwards Reunion 2004

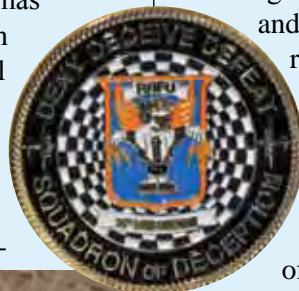
The JIGS UP!

By Stephen Hutton

Last May 6, my wife Pam and I were invited to attend the 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron (36EWS) change of command ceremony at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. The special reason for the trip was that our family had unanimously decided to loan the Florida squadron our father's WWII 36th Bomb Squadron Radar Counter Measure Unit (36th BS) A2 leather flight jacket – painted The JIGS UP on the back. Father was a B-24 tail gunner with the so called “Gremlins” of the 36th and flew 55 missions, many of them in “The JIGS UP” before it crashed in December 1944. All the siblings believed loaning the jacket to the Air Force would prove to be of inspiration to today's airmen.

On our way traveling South we visited the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force near Savannah, Georgia. That's always guaranteed to be a fantastic stop! Having thrown a 36th BS reunion there in 2000 it was once again wonderful to see the many famous aircraft, exhibits, library, chapel and gardens.

Today's 36th Squadron carries on the electronic warfare mission of father's World War II unit. The 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron's new commanding officer is Lt. Col. Thomas R. Moore. Lt. Col. Moore directs a 172 person squadron that is responsible for the operational electronic warfare capability of billions of dollars in resources installed on our combat air force aircraft. Today's 36th leads the development, testing, and fielding of electronic warfare mission support software, thus impact-



ing the success of operational combat missions. Lt. Col. Moore leads a wartime mission posture to rapidly reprogram the combat air force electronic warfare systems for changes to threat operations. He also manages millions of dollars in electronic warfare mission equipment.

The Air Force Master of Ceremonies plus both the incoming and outgoing commanding officers made mention of me and my father, and my 36th BS unit history book titled Squadron of Deception. The Florida squadron has even engraved the WWII 36th BS Gremlin insignia, and Squadron of Deception on their Challenge Coins. Neat huh?! Also, I am most honored and pleased that last year my book Squadron of Deception was used as part of the 36th EWS Outstanding Awards Program.

All this sure makes me very proud of my father and those of his special outfit.

Finally, to go along with “The JIGS UP” flight jacket, I made an Iredell Hutton notebook for today's squadron that pictured my father, 36th Bomb Squadron crews, crash photos of “The JIGS UP”, father's mission records, photos with my mother and family plus news stories of father's lifetime accomplishments during and after WWII.

So then my friends, know that when you go to bed tonight you can rest peacefully knowing that those U.S. Air Force Gremlin's of today's 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron are really great people, and of whom their contributions and service you can assuredly be most proud.



Lt. Col. Moore & Stephen Hutton

TEXAS RAIDERS Rides Again!

By Nancy Toombs

Father's Day weekend brought a very special surprise for 7 WWII veterans. The Gulf Coast Wing of the Commemorative Air Force asked the 8th Air Force Historical Society to extend an invitation to area 8th Air Force veterans to enjoy a day of food, flight, and friendship at David Wayne Hooks airport at Spring, Texas, the permanent home of the B-17 "Texas Raiders". "Texas Raiders" came to the CAF in 1967 and was the first B-17 to be acquired for the sole purpose of being a flying museum and preserving the heritage of this historic war bird.

The idea of preserving and literally saving the lives of these aircraft was the brainchild of Lloyd Nolen and a group of his WWII buddies who were dismayed by the destruction of WWII aircraft after war's end. His goal was to preserve American Military History "one aircraft at a time." This handful of air corps veterans felt that every plane lost to scrap was a loss of America's history of the air war. No one will argue that the heavy bomber played the pivotal role in grasping air domination which resulted in the ultimate defeat of the German Luftwaffe.

Nolen's idea of saving aircraft resulted in the birth of the CAF which today hosts 165 airplanes distributed over 79 units, with locations in 25 states. Texas alone has 8 wings and the dedicated volunteers at Spring, Texas are solely responsible for the care and feeding of "Texas Raiders". It is reported that Gen. Curtis LeMay was consulted regarding the naming of the aircraft. The General's opinion was that the plane should not carry the name of any WWII aircraft and that she should be named to honor the WWII veterans of Texas and so, "Texas Raiders" was chosen.

Veterans in attendance were, R.B. Kelley 457th BG, of Montgomery, Texas; Ted Kirkpatrick 379th BG, of Spring, Texas; Perry Kerr 466th BG, of 3 Rivers Texas; Dale Bottoms 448th BG of Beaumont, Texas; Charles Kehlenbeck US Navy, of Beaumont, Texas, W.C. Bill Toombs 493rd BG of Little Rock, Arkansas; and Col Jesse Jacobs, 493rd BG, who heard of the event and traveled all the way from Las Cruces, New Mexico to participate in the festivities. All of the veterans were encouraged to bring their family and the Gulf Coast Wing made sure that *everyone* had ample time to tour the plane and share personal memories.



Top: Bill Toombs, Dale Bottoms, Perry Kerr, Jesse Jacobs, Ted Kirkpatrick

Middle: escort on the wing AT6 Texan, "Ace in the Hole"

Bottom 1 to r: Michael Carr [photographer], Charles Kehlenbeck USN, Perry Kerr, Ted Kirkpatrick, Nancy Toombs, Jesse Jacobs, Dale Bottoms, Bill Toombs, R B Kelley



Few, if any, opportunities arise where WWII air corps veterans are invited to fly (at no cost) on one of these historic aviation marvels AND have the chance to take their family aboard for a personal tour. After the flight, the Gulf Coast Wing hosted a special Bar-B-Q lunch just for these gentlemen, their families and friends.

A grand *“Thank You!”* goes out to the Gulf Coast Wing of the Commemorative Air Force for making this a very special Father’s Day for 7 very special gents. Everyone in the CAF volunteer their time [thousands of hours] and talents to the organization—from the pilots and mechanics to the ride coordinators and floor sweepers—all of the volunteers are deeply committed to maintaining the history of these iconic aircraft and equally committed to providing WWII veterans with opportunities to re-connect with their personal history.

I can’t remember spending a better day, with old friends and new, sharing good food and telling stories in the shade of a B-17 wing.

Top left:

1. Dale and Perry
2. Back row: Charles Kehlenbeck USN, Perry Kerr, Ted Kirkpatrick, Jesse Jacobs, Dale Bottoms, Bill Toombs, R. B. Kelley
- Crew:** Michael Hart Loadmaster, Ole Nygren co-pilot, John Cotter pilot, Wayne Kennedy flight engineer/wing leader
3. R. B. Kelley
4. Cockpit John and Ole
5. Jesse Jacobs
6. Charles Kehlenbeck USN, Perry Kerr

Top right:

1. Jesse and Dale
2. CAF Volunteers assisting Jesse on board
3. Dale Bottoms sharing the joy
4. Post lunch debrief
5. Jesse giving John some post flight instruction
6. Texas Raiders

From The Longest Day to “A PERFECT DAY”

by Bruce Smith

On June 6, 2016, the 72nd anniversary of the Normandy invasion, my father, Harold Smith, received the award of the French Legion of Honor and the Jubilee of Liberty Medal in a ceremony at the Garden Care Center in Franklin Square, NY, where he now resides. His tour of duty with the Mighty Eighth consisted of 30 missions over Germany and occupied France, including Coutances on D-Day with his group leading the mission as allied forces landed at Normandy. After the ceremony, my father, now 98 years of age, thanked his presenters and guests by saying that they had given him “a perfect day.”

This ceremony was the end result of a process that started in the fall of last year, when my father somewhat casually pointed out an article to me in the 8th Air Force News magazine stating that some 8th Air Force veterans could be eligible



Capt Harold Smith

for the French Legion of Honor, as noted by 8th Air Force Historical Society vice president Dr. Nancy Toombs. He rather offhandedly asked me whether I thought it was worth trying for. My wife, Jean, and I both immediately replied together “Of course it is!” A quick Google search confirmed that the Legion of Honor, established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, is the highest decoration bestowed by France. I told him I would call to find out more information.

After an informative and very helpful and encouraging conversation with Nancy Toombs, we got started. Along the way several questions came up, but with Nancy’s excellent advice, these were quickly settled. We gathered the necessary documentation and submitted it to the French Consulate, and by mid-March Dad received a letter stating that he would be awarded this great honor in a ceremony to be held on May 23 at the French Consulate in New York City. The only problem was that in the period between filing the application and the granting of the award, Dad’s health had become a concern. He was hospitalized in late February and entered a nursing home later in March. While his health had since stabilized, it was clear that a trip to New York City would not be possible.

I contacted the French Consulate to inform them of our problem and asked if they would consider sending



the medal to me so that we could arrange for our own ceremony at his nursing home, and this they did. We weren’t sure how we would arrange a ceremony, and of course we would need the cooperation of the nursing home, but we felt something might work out. When I asked my father what his first preference would be, he asked if perhaps the Air Force could have one of their representatives officiate a small ceremony.

I told him I would pursue this and see where it led.

My first call was to the Air Force Public Relations office, where I spoke to Mr. Michael Dickerson, Chief of Media Relations. I told him my father’s story and he asked if I could explain my father’s situation and background in an email to him, which I did. He was very interested and thought something would be possible. Mr. Dickerson forwarded my email to Colonel Maureen G. Murphy, Director of Staff, New York Air National Guard in Latham, NY, and within a few days I received a call from her. Col. Murphy asked for a few more details and said that she would start working on this. Several days later, coincidentally on May 23, which was the day of the ceremony in New York that my father could not attend, I received an email from Col. Murphy saying that she had coordinated with Brigadier General Thomas J. Owens, Assistant Adjutant General – Air

for the New York National Guard, and former commander of the 106th Rescue Wing in Westhampton, NY, to conduct the ceremony at the nursing home on June 6, and that he would be honored to do so. Col. Murphy asked if in the meantime could I provide some additional information about his service in order to make the ceremony more detailed and personal, so I searched his records and found something he had typewritten several years ago. It was an account of his experiences in some detail, beginning with his early training and eventual assignment to the 448th Bomb Group, 2nd Air Division, Eighth Air Force, based in the small village of Seething, East Anglia, England. These notes also included his remembrances and impressions of various missions and individuals.

I was amazed that everything was coming together so quickly, and my hopes and expectations had by this time already been exceeded. I couldn't believe this was going to take place, with such enthusiastic support, with an individual of such high rank, and on June 6, the 72nd anniversary of D-Day no less. I knew my father would be thrilled with all of this, and of course he was.

As the date approached, Col. Murphy and Mr. Eric Durr of the Air National Guard sent out a press release about the event, which was picked up by the Associated Press and printed in many locations. They contacted the nursing home, and arranged all the details while keeping me up to date every step of the way. By this time I had been in touch with Col. Murphy quite a few times by both phone and email. She had become my main contact for the upcoming event, and I was very happy to hear that she and her husband, Mark, would be able to attend the ceremony with Brig. Gen. Owens. Like Brig. Gen. Owens, Mark is a former F-16 pilot. He is now an

airline pilot and was scheduled for a flight that Monday night out of JFK Airport, not far from the nursing home, so this worked out perfectly.

Col. Murphy also told me that Brig. Gen. Owens had arranged for Col. Frederic Vigneron, a member of the French Air Force Citizens' Reserve and a high-level consultant to the French Air Force leadership, to take part in the ceremony and perform the actual presentation of the medal on behalf of the French government, as approved by the French Consulate. Now the final piece had fallen into place, I thought, but another surprise awaited: two days before the ceremony Brig. Gen. Owens called to me ask if my father had ever received the French Jubilee of Liberty Medal. This honor is given only to Normandy veterans and was originally presented in France on June 6, 1994, the 50th anniversary of D-Day. This was not something I was familiar with, but after checking I found that my father had not received it. Brig. Gen. Owens said that he would try to obtain it through Mr. Fred DiFabio of the Air Force Association, Long Island chapter, and this, amazingly, came about as well. Mr. DiFabio also attended the ceremony and assisted with the presentation. In the space of two days they had arranged for my father to receive this second great honor in addition to the French Legion of Honor Medal. Again, we were so surprised and thrilled at how everything was coming together,

and this second honor was completely unexpected by us.

The ceremony was attended by myself, my wife and son, some family friends, and nursing home staff and caregivers. It was covered by some local TV channels and a local newspaper. Col. Murphy started with a welcome and introduction, followed by remarks by Col. Vigneron and the bestowal of the French Legion of Honor Medal. Brig. Gen. Owens then spoke, followed by the presentation of the Jubilee of Liberty Medal. This was followed by a wonderful speech by my father, during which he paid tribute to the French freedom fighters who helped many downed American airmen to escape and to the courage and endurance of the British people during the war, mentioning their continued special friendship to this day with America. He spoke about the Statue of Liberty, that great gift of the French people, and how it brings hope to "all those who are enslaved and oppressed, yearning to breathe the fresh air of freedom." It was truly inspiring, and was greeted with



Capt Harold Smith

thunderous applause by all present.

After a few additional words by myself, Col. Murphy followed with some closing remarks. The nursing home had provided some wonderful food and refreshments including cake and coffee and everyone remained to talk and take pictures. My dad related some of his wartime memories to Brig. Gen. Owens, Col. Murphy, Col. Vigneron, and Mr. DiFabio. Even at 98 years of age, he remembers these events in great detail, and I know everyone was impressed by that.

I know that everyone has had the experience of trying to make something come about, hoping for the best, most of the time with varying degrees of success. But I can't say enough about everyone who became involved in this ceremony, from beginning to end; they all went way over and above to make it happen, and they made it happen perfectly. As I thanked them all, everyone told me that it was *their* privilege, *their* honor, to be part of this and to meet my father, and how they considered him a hero. Everyone was so respectful, kind and accommodating, not only to my father but to me and my family, and it truly touched me. I want to especially thank Dr. Nancy Toombs, vice president of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, who guided me and my dad through the process of obtaining the French Legion of Honor. Without her help none of this would have happened. I again want to thank Brigadier General Thomas J. Owens, Colonel Maureen G. Murphy, Mr. Eric Durr, Colonel Frederic Vigneron, Mr. Fred DiFabio, and Mr. Michael Dickerson for all of their efforts. They really did make it "a perfect day."

My father, an 8th Air Force veteran of WWII, was given a great honor but initially was unable to be present to accept it. Today's Air Force was not only willing, but highly honored, to step up and perform a great service for him. I



New York Air National Guard B/Gen Thomas Owens (left), the Deputy Adjutant General for Air; French representative Col Frederic Vigneron; and Col Mauren Murphy, Chief of Staff of the New York Air National Guard. Capt Harold Smith, seated in the wheelchair.

think that if anyone finds themselves in a similar situation this could be a wonderful possibility to look into. I can say from my experience that everyone involved was enthusiastic about this project. No one felt it was a chore or an assignment. I know that they considered it an honor to take part in it. As Brig. Gen. Owens said in his speech, these men are "national treasures." I know that the Air Force is keenly aware of their history as a military organization and of the crucial role of these WWII Air veterans.

Harold Smith is in frequent contact with his sister, Irene Dunn, who lives in Florida, and they have always been close over the years. Irene, an amazing person in her own right, is now 96 years old and is a veteran of the Women's Army Corps in WWII, having been among the earliest to join that group. We

have a lovely picture of them taken together during the war years, both in their uniforms, both looking just terrific. Irene has said to me about her brother on many occasions "He's my hero, he always has been and he always will be."

After the ceremony, I called my Aunt Irene as I had promised. She told me that all day long she hadn't been able to think of anything else besides the ceremony and couldn't wait for my call. I told her how wonderful everything had gone and what a "celebrity" her brother was now in the nursing home, and she was thrilled. Once again Irene said to me in her naturally sweet voice, "He's my hero, he always has been and he always will be."

Mine too, Aunt Irene. Mine too.

Farewell to Gordon



For the past several years, Connie and Gordon Richards have been the face of the 8th Air Force Historical Society in England. When Connie passed away in the spring of 2010, Gordon continued to manage both the membership and distribution of the 8th A F News in the UK and Western Europe, and selflessly represented the Society at countless memorial services and dedications.

In fact, during the 2013 annual reunion held in Savannah, Gordon received the prestigious Roger A Freeman Award in recognition of his years of service in the Society. However, all good things must come to an end, and Gordon has decided he can no longer continue in his role with the Society. While it is difficult to put into words the extent to which we will miss Gordon, we would be remiss in not recognizing him one last time for his service and dedication to the veterans, their families, and their memories through the years.

We are in the process of reorganizing and updating all of our memberships in the UK and abroad. As soon as plans are finalized, we will share them with all of you. For those of you currently living in the UK and/or Europe, you will continue to receive your 8th A F News magazines without interruption as well as membership renewal notices in January. We are also working on some exciting opportunities for growth and enhanced communication among all who reside across the pond as well!

So, farewell, Gordon. Thank you for everything.



Living in the Shadow of Uncle ‘George’

By Laurie Diefenbach



2nd Lt Samuel J. Levine, navigator

Growing up, we always knew that Dad's brother, our Uncle George, was killed in World War

II. Uncle George's Army photograph was prominently displayed everywhere: in our house, our grandmother's house, Uncle Max's house, and Auntie Esther's house. We would catch a glimpse of Uncle George, clad in uniform, complete with officer's hat, smiling at us with our dad's smile, every time we walked into the den.

That photograph wasn't the only reminder. There were living reminders, because every one of his siblings named one of their children for him. In our house, it was my brother, George, but Auntie Esther named one of her sons George, and Uncle Max named his oldest, Ira George.

But that was it – we saw Uncle George everywhere, but his presence was nowhere, because no one was allowed to talk about him. Questions about Uncle George were strictly taboo. He was the proverbial

elephant in the room – always there, but not acknowledged.

Occasionally there would be a glimmer of who he was.

One year around Christmas, when there was a story on the television news about Toys for Tots, my dad mentioned that the year after his father died, the family received free toys for Christmas from a local charity. My dad, who had just turned 12, took his toy outside to play with it, and his oldest brother, George, told him to take it inside – no one should know that they were receiving charity.

From that we learned that Uncle George had assumed the role of father figure, that the family was ashamed of being poor, and that having pride was an important value. Uncle George was 16 years old at the time. His mother was a 38 year old widow with four children, with George being the oldest. The younger three were 15, 12, and the baby, a girl, was 2.

I was at the train station with my father when I was about 10. We were waiting to pick up a relative who was coming in from New York City. A man came up to talk to my dad. I didn't pay any attention – this was grown-up talk. After the man walked away, Dad said "that was a friend of my brother George." And he started to cry. I knew better than to ask anything else.

When I went away to summer camp, I would receive letters from my father written on index cards. It never seemed peculiar; my dad was an elementary school principal, and it made sense that he had a large supply of index cards. But when

I was away from home in my first year of college, my dad asked me once, "Laurie, do you know why I don't like to write personal letters?" I said no. He said, "Because I used to write letters to my brother George, and he never answered my last one, because he was killed." And then I realized: an index card is not the same as stationery. When my dad sent me "letters" written on index cards, they really weren't letters; they were notes, or facts, or whatever one used index cards for, but definitely not personal letters.

Somehow, we kids knew that Uncle George was an officer in the Army Air Corps in World War II. He was a navigator in an airplane that dropped bombs. He flew out of Westover Air Force Base, near our home town of Springfield, Massachusetts, and was stationed at a Royal Air Force Base in England. We were told that he was shot down over Germany on July 7, 1944, when he was 23 years old, and that when he parachuted to earth behind enemy lines, he landed in a field and was shot dead by a farmer.

Later, I learned that after Uncle George graduated from high school, he had started college; that's why he was an officer in World War II. He had a fiancée, too, but no one said anything about her, either.

We also understood that Uncle George's death was a family trauma. It both destroyed and consumed the family, and no one recovered from his death. My dad was not just sad; he was angry. He stopped believing in God after his brother died. What kind of God would allow a 23 year old man to die? My dad also had an



explosive temper, which would flare over the smallest slight.

My dad was the best man at his best friend's wedding in 1951. Even though seven years had passed since his brother's death, every wedding photograph that my dad appeared in showed him looking like he was at a funeral, and not at his best friend's wedding.

When my Auntie Esther was going to get married, her in-laws requested that the wedding be postponed until her fiancé's twin brother returned from his Army service, so he could attend his brother's wedding. My father's reaction: Esther's brother will NEVER come back to see his sister get married; the answer is no.

Almost sixty years after Uncle George died, our family learned a lot more about Uncle George. My
September 2016 (16-3)

father, who was then retired, decided he would write his memoirs. This was a two year project. He dictated his 130 page book to my mother; the dedication page carried the Army picture of Uncle George, and the inscription "*In loving memory of our brother George, May 15, 1921-July 7, 1944.*"

Finally, we heard the stories of my father's childhood years, including anecdotes about the mystery man, Uncle George.

We learned that Uncle George did not list his mother as his next of kin when he went into the Army (he enlisted in the Army Air Force in 1942); he listed his aunt and uncle, Thelma and Phil Levine, instead. It was clear he was trying to spare his widowed mother from ever having to endure a knock on the door in the event he was killed. Plus, Uncle

George was very close to his uncle and aunt; his aunt introduced him to his fiancée, who was her cousin.

In my dad's book, there were more details about Uncle George's death. Dad wrote that after the war they received letters that George's B-24 Liberator Bomber (392nd BG) was shot down over Junkers Air Base in Bernberg, Germany. George parachuted to safety but when he landed, he was shot and killed by a civilian named Jacob Kemf. Dad wrote that Kemf was arrested and stood trial for this crime.

Dad forgave the man who shot his brother. So did Auntie Esther, and their mother, our Bubby Ida. We don't think Uncle Max, who was also a World War II vet, ever did. Dad carried a note in his wallet with the name of the man, Jacob Kemf, that he thought was his brother's

murderer, his entire life.

Bubby Ida died in 1975. Dad died in September 2007, four months after Uncle Max died. Auntie Esther died in August 2015.

Sadly, none of the people who actually knew Uncle George were alive when, in May 2016, two World War II historians contacted me to ask if I was the niece of Samuel Joseph Levine. Marilyn Walton, from Ohio, called our house, and spoke with my husband. Paul knew that Uncle George's real name was Samuel Joseph Levine (he read my dad's book!), and told Marilyn that I would call her when I came home. At the same time, I received an e-mail from Susanne Meinl, a historian in Germany, who said she found my name on an attorney website called Avvo, and somehow determined that I was Samuel Joseph Levine's niece.

Both women advised me that the circumstances surrounding my Uncle George's death in World War II Germany was going to be the topic of a documentary that German film maker Nils Werner was putting together. Did we have any information we wanted to submit?

Wow! What our family always considered to be a private tragedy, was actually a documented war crime. For the first time, we learned that Uncle George was not alone when he died – that two other airmen from his airplane also parachuted to safety along with him, and were murdered alongside him. We never knew, until this documentary was brought to our attention, that B-24 Liberator bombers had 9 or 10 men crews. And, for the first time, we learned that Uncle George's murder was not a random act committed by a scared farmer, but that a Nazi officer gave the order to murder these three American airmen, in contravention of the Geneva Convention



which mandated that prisoners of war be transferred to a POW camp and treated humanely.

Who knew?

I shared this information with the rest of my cousins. My cousin George, who inherited Uncle George's Purple Heart when his mother died, supplied a photograph of the medal, which we shared with the historians. When the documentary was finished, we were able to watch it, as it was available on a website link for a week after its June 1, 2016 premiere.

The title of the documentary was "My Uncle, the Nazi Commissioner." The story was about the man who gave the order to murder Uncle George, as told by his nephew, Leopold Jetzinger. It was mind-blowing to learn that for sixty-plus years, when Uncle George was a taboo subject in our family, the Nazi officer Arthur Jetzinger was a taboo subject in their family, too. It was also very painful, because it was clear that the nephew was very troubled by the revelations about his uncle's actions.

That prompted me to write him a letter. I wanted him to know that my father had forgiven his uncle, as well as all the others involved in the murder of our Uncle George. And I

wanted to thank him for his bravery in sharing his story.

A question my brother and I continue to ponder is how would our lives have been different if Uncle George had returned from World War II? What would it have been like if Uncle George had come home, finished college, and married his fiancée, Shirley? How would the family dynamic been changed, if instead of living in the shadow of Uncle George, we would have been out in the sunlight, enjoying our lives with our war hero uncle, and maybe, more cousins.

Sadly, we will never know.

In early May 2016 Laurie was contacted by a historian in Ohio named Marilyn Walton, asking if she was the niece of Second Lt. Samuel Joseph Levine who was killed in action during WWII. At the same time, Laurie received an e-mail from a historian in Germany named Susanne Meinl asking the same thing. Both women indicated that they had information regarding Uncle George and the circumstances of his death. Furthermore, a freelance filmmaker named Nils Werner of Leipzig, Germany was putting together a documentary on the subject.



Uncle George's airplane, the *Ski Nose #42-52160*, was on a mission to bomb the factories in the town of Bernberg, where the German Air Force *Jung* airplanes were manufactured. He was the navigator in a B-17, *Flying Fortress* airplane. Uncle George flew in the 392nd Bomb Group of the U.S. Army Air Corps. He had flown 8 missions previously in June and July 1944. If you go to www.b24.net and click on *Air Crew Photos* you will see a picture of Uncle George (under Levine, Samuel J.) The plane normally carried a crew of 10; on this particular mission, they only had 9. This was the second time that Uncle George flew with this particular captain, Captain Prouse. Prior to that, he was with the *Henry Porter* crew.

When his plane was shot down, he landed in *Kleinzerbst* – a town close to *Dessau* – which is in eastern Germany. After WWII, these towns became a part of Communist East Germany.

Three men from the *Ski Nose* airplane (the airplane was named for *Bob Hope* – old *Ski Nose* and a famous entertainer of the U.S. troops), parachuted to earth in *Kleinzerbst*: *Samuel Joseph Levine*, *Walter Dinsmore* and *John Chojecki*.

Nils Werner is a freelance journalist whose documentary on Uncle George is being shown on a German public television station. *Nils* works out of *Leipzig*. He knew of the story of *Leopold Jetzinger* – the Nazi who gave the order to execute the surviving members of the American B-17 bomber *Ski Nose*. His story was brought to the attention of Historian *Susanne Meinel* and *Nils Werner* by *Jetzinger's* nephew, *Arthur*. *Susanne Meinel* works out of *Munich*. At first the historians thought Uncle George's airplane was Canadian – probably because the flyers all came out of England – but later learned

that they were American. *Jetzinger* joined the Nazi party as early as 1933. He served as a Nazi police officer – a category not commonly known about.

The show is called *Ancestry Traces*. This story is one episode, pretty much entitled “My uncle the Nazi officer.” It was aired on June 1st, and then stream live for a week afterwards. *Nils* sent us a link to the program. (It is <http://www.mdr.de/mediathek/index.html>.)

According to *Susanne*, it was not uncommon for downed airmen to be executed, rather than be taken prisoner. Prior to 1944, Germany followed the Geneva Convention and put prisoners of war into camps. When the war started turning against the Germans, Hitler and his henchmen gave an order to execute prisoners rather than place them in camps. She believes there are 350 known cases of murdered airmen in Germany, but that there are probably about a thousand incidents. *Susanne* said there are at least 600 boxes of evidence that has not been gone through regarding untried cases of war crimes.

There is no plaque to the memory of these murdered airmen in *Kleinzerbst*, even though they are quite common throughout Germany. Many Germans, especially in the east, do not want to be reminded that their ancestors participated in lynching survivors of downed Allied aircraft (referred to as airmen lynching). Both *Nils* and *Susanne* hope that after this episode is aired on German TV, that the people of *Kleinzerbst* would be more receptive to a commemorative plaque in this town.

Three men participated in the actual murder of Uncle George, *Walter Dinsmore*, and *John Chojecki*. *Arthur Jetzinger* gave the order to kill the three downed

airmen. The three men were *Fritz Pohla*, *Jacob Kemf*, and *Ernst Vogler*. *Jacob Kemf* was the only one not prosecuted. He was questioned, but then disappeared before the trial in 1946. The other two were prosecuted in 1946, and served two years in prison. The war crimes are documented in a book called *The Dachau Defendants* that *George Levine* purchased as an e-book (page 77 provides the details.) After the airmen were executed, they were buried in a German cemetery. Their bodies were exhumed, and Uncle George's body was transported to the U.S. for burial in the *Sons of Israel Cemetery* in *Springfield, MA*. One of the murdered airmen remains buried in Europe.

The following link contains 19 pages from the case analysis of this incident prepared by the Deputy Theater Judge Advocate's Office, War Crimes France, United States Forces, European Theater, dated 20 December 1945. In it, you can see a German document entitled “*Angaben Uber Gefangennahme von Feindlichen*” – which means “*Disclosures about Capture of Enemy Air Force Members*” that pertains to Uncle George. Please note that after his last name, *Levine*, it says “*Jude*.” Uncle George was identified by the German *Gestapo* as a Jew when he was captured.

Laurie Diefenbach, niece of *Samuel Joseph Levine*, resides in North Las Vegas, Nevada with her husband, *Paul*. *Laurie* is a semi-retired criminal defense attorney, and active in the American Legion Auxiliary in Las Vegas. She can be reached at lauriethelawyer@aol.com.

RECOGNITION 71 YEARS LATER

Submitted by James L. Bass 457th BG
Radio operator in the 748th Squadron

On March 19th history was relived with the remembrance of The World War II Crew of Flying Fortress 812 and the honoring of Staff Sergeant Clifford Heinrich, the sole survivor, with the presentation of medals.

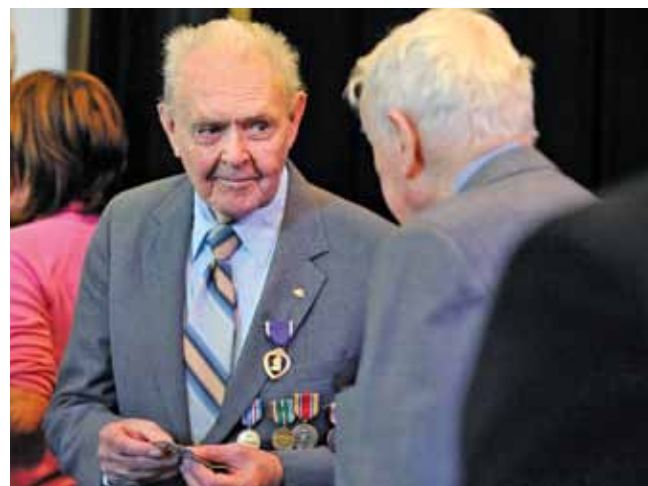
Before a packed auditorium composed of school children, relatives of the crew, friends and Clifford Heinrich the past was relived, the crew remembered for their sacrifice for the cause of freedom and for Clifford Heinrich to receive his long overdue Purple Heart, EAME Campaign Medal with Bronze Star, American Campaign Medal, WWII Victory Medal, Good Conduct Medal and WWII Victory Medal, Good Conduct Medal and WWII Lapel Button. After the program ended, tapping the lapel of his jacket Clifford said “These medals were all for my crew”!

Mission No. 161 of the 457th Bomb Group ended for Flying Fortress 812 in a field near Oxford, England on the foggy afternoon of December 23, 1944. The Flying Fortress had taken off earlier from a Royal Air Force Base in Southwest England on a flight to its home base when it plunged into the ground.

Lt. Megan Lewis serving in Queen Alexandra’s Imperial Military Nursing Service was home on Holiday Leave. Hearing the unmistakable sound of a crash, she rushed to the scene and without regard for her own safety, entered the hazardous wreckage and pulled Heinrich and two others from the plane. For her acts of bravery a commendation was ordered by King George VI and signed by Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Diane Gomersall, daughter of Lt. Lewis attended the service.

Clifford Heinrich and the other two survivors were transported to a nearby hospital where the other two succumbed to their injuries the next day. Clifford suffered a concussion, broken leg and ankle and multiple cuts and bruises. He was transferred to an American Army Field Hospital, where he was stabilized and later returned to the States for a prolonged period of hospitalization and recuperation all of which lasted fourteen months. He was discharged from the military at Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

The first contact Clifford Heinrich had with any of the families of the crew was at the ceremony.



Top: Retired U. S. Navy Commander Lawson Burgfeld, right, shakes hands with U.S. Army Air Corps veteran Sgt. Clifford Heinrich after presenting Heinrich with a Purple Heart. Heinrich was also presented with an American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with Bronze Star, WWII Victory Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal and a WWII Lapel Button for his service during WWII.

Middle: James Bass, a 457th navigator and historian and former president of the 457th Bomb Group Association gives an oral history of the Flying Fortress 812 .

Bottom: Heinrich, left, speaks with Bass at the end of the living history event honoring the WWII lost crew of the Flying Fortress 812.

A Journey Through Time...

Masters of the Air Tour

By Jerry McLaughlin

I had the wonderful opportunity in May of this year to participate in the National WWII Museum's *Masters of the Air Tour* of 8th Air Force historical locations in England. This was the second time the Museum had offered this special tour, which was both conceived and led by Donald L. Miller, author of *Masters of the Air*, the definitive history of the 8th Air Force in WWII.

Don designed the tour to give participants a broad picture of the 8th Air Force in WWII, starting with a visit to the Churchill War Rooms in London (part of the Imperial War Museum), and including the local pubs where the *Bomber Boys* of the 8th Air Force drank their beer when off duty. I was traveling with a friend and major contributor to this article, Paul Clifford, with whom I have been attending the National WWII Museum's 70th Anniversary of World War II Conferences in New Orleans since those conferences began in 2011. When Paul and I arrived in London we found our fellow tour participants to be good people who also had interests and backgrounds that related to the tour's goals.

The Flick family, mom Judy, daughter Gena and son John were remembering their husband and dad, Captain Chester Flick, a pilot in the 427th Squadron of the 303rd Bomb Group. Chester was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross during his tour with the 303rd in May-July 1944, a time of such heavy combat for the 303rd that he completed his combat tour, plus one additional trip, for a total of 36 missions, in only 42 days! Dr. Joe Ciotola and his wife, Linda were looking forward to visiting the site where Joe's dad had been a senior NCO in the 100th Bomb Group. Penny Linsenmayer, an attorney from Texas, was doing research for her upcoming novel on the American "*Red Cross Girls*" who brought coffee, donuts and smiles to the 8th cadre of flying personnel and support troops. Susan Jowers

had a very special story that began as we assembled and that remained part of our tour from start to finish. George Liao and Howard Bethel, avid students of military history, and Michael Dickert, a professional pilot with a deep interest in aviation, rounded out our group. Don Miller's 15-year-old grandson, Austin, accompanied his grandfather. As a former junior high school history teacher, I found it interesting to watch how Austin reacted to comments and various activities as a young teenager to whom WWII was ancient history, while most of us were from the generation who heard our parents speak of having lived through the WWII years. Maddie Ogden was our "Local Cultural Guide," another term for the lady in charge of details, problem solving, and herding her tour participants from one location to another, in our "coach" (we were told it was not a bus). As our leader and historian-in-charge, Don Miller insured that we knew the story behind every tour stop.

Writing about our entire adventure would take a great deal more space than this article allows, so I am limiting my focus to what I considered the highlight of the entire trip, our visits to the three WWII USAAF base locations, Thorpe Abbots, Horham and Snetterton Heath,

which were home to the 100th, 95th and 96th Bomb Groups between 1943 and 1945. While Maddie and Don had told us that the members of the bomb group organizations at each location were looking forward to our visits, none of us were prepared for the highly emotional, and uniquely different, receptions we would receive at each location.

Our first stop was Thorpe Abbots, which had been home to one of the first and better known of the B-17 groups to arrive in England in the summer of 1943, the 100th Bomb Group. The Ciotolas were particularly excited about this first stop, as Joe told us that his dad, Joe, Sr. – a law student who enlisted after Pearl Harbor - had been the Maintenance Shop Superintendent in the 456th Squadron of the 100th for the entire time that the 100th was at Thorpe Abbots from 1943 to 1945.

As we emerged from our coach it seemed as if every resident of the town of Thorpe Abbots was there to welcome each of us with big smiles, handshakes, and what we Americans called "British Hospitality." We immediately knew we were among friends!

Our arrival at Thorpe Abbots was almost chaotic due to the overwhelming welcome of what seemed like everyone



The original 100th Bomb Group control tower at Thorpe Abbots.

in the village greeting us. Joe and Linda were immediately engaged by the local historians as the rest of us were making new friends on a minute by minute basis. Soon the major conversations began to calm down and we began having individual dialogues with our new friends, many dressed in WWII 8th Air Force casual uniforms, including caps with a “50-mission crush” and A-2 leather jackets. One of our hosts, Mike Nice, took me into a workshop where he is restoring a B-24 ball turret. We discovered we had mutual friends in the WWII turret restoration field – a small group of individuals to be sure. After speaking with Mike I met Ron Bately, who introduced himself and began to explain the compound that surrounded us. Ron is essentially the “Base Commander” and knew what he was talking about. I was wearing a shirt with the *B-17 City of Savannah* restoration crest and Ron asked me what it represented. When I told him of my connection with the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force as the project manager for the Museum’s B-17 restoration, he asked if I knew General “Buck” Shuler. I told him that I knew “Buck” as one of the founders of the Museum, and that I considered him to be a friend. Ron immediately took me by the arm and steered me into a nearby restored WWII Nissen hut housing the group’s museum, and began telling me the story of when General Shuler, then Commander of the 8th Air Force, had visited Thorpe Abbots on March 7, 1990, to present the 100th Bomb Group Memorial Museum organization with a

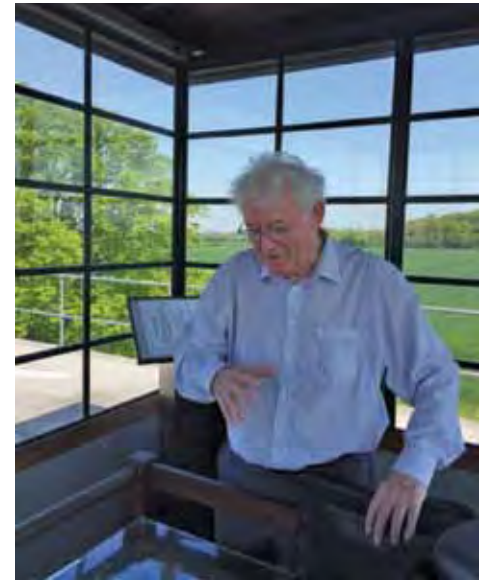
letter of gratitude and an inscribed plate for the work they were doing to preserve the history of the 8th Air Force.

Ron and several of the other senior members of the group remembered, quite fondly, that General Shuler had arrived in “flight gear” rather than in a formal uniform, something that had particularly impressed the group, enough so that it was mentioned several times during the conversation. If you ever visit Thorpe Abbots you might want to mention “Buck” Shuler’s name – it will make you a friend of everyone in the room.

Following my conversation with Ron I was introduced to Tony Mark. I was intrigued by the story that Tony was telling, especially of his description of life in Thorpe Abbots during WWII. When he realized my interest, he invited me on a special journey that will always be an important part of my memories of that day. Tony took me inside to the top of the Thorpe Abbots control tower and pointed across the large open area that had once been an intersection of the runways at the base. “Do you see the top of that house between the trees,” he asked, as I followed where he was pointing. I could see the top of a house, maybe a mile in the distance. “That house is where I was born and raised,” he told me. “In the mornings, as a young boy of about seven years, I would watch and count the bombers as they took off on their mission, before I left for school, and then I would count them again when I came home from school and they were returning from their missions.” Tony

spent the next twenty minutes describing his boyhood during the period between the arrival of the 100th Bomb Group in 1943 and its departure in 1945. The young Americans of the 100th Bomb Group were his heroes and obviously remain so today.

Tony then told me a story over the next half hour that nearly had both of us in tears. He vividly related how excited everyone in his village was on June 7, 1943, when the B-17s of the 100th Bomb Group began to



Tony Mark telling his story in the Thorpe Abbots control tower.

arrive at Thorpe Abbots. Seventy-three years later he still recalls the noise of the arriving bombers and how he stood at his bedroom window with his mother, watching the bombers circle and land. He counted how many bombers were landing, something he would do for the next two years, and anxiously awaited *his* bomber, the one assigned to the hardstand that had been built only yards from his family home. Eventually *his* bomber did taxi into the hardstand and park. He read the name on the nose, *Squawkin’ Hawk*, and hoped that he would get to know the bomber’s crew. His wish came true. He became friends not only with the original crew, but eventually their replacements. The *Squawkin’ Hawk* was the first of the original B-17s in England to survive 50 missions – two full combat tours at that time – and was later flown back to the United States to conduct a war bond tour. With all the excitement surrounding the arrival of the 100th his mother had always told him, “Tony, what you see today will be history tomorrow.” Said Tony, “...and she was right!”

Following Tony’s animated account of the arrival of the 100th, his voice became lower and he began to tell me of the months that followed, during late 1943 and into 1944, when the 100th suffered dreadful losses and were given the nickname *The Bloody Hundredth*. He described how he would count the planes leaving, and then was saddened by the smaller count upon their return.



Ron Bately with the letter and plate presented to the 100th Museum by General “Buck” Shuler in 1990.

Of those that did return, he remembered, “Some would come home with enormous holes in them, some with parts missing, and some with engines not working. It was quite frightening.” He told me how the local children learned that if an approaching B-17 fired flares as they turned into their final approach to Thorpe Abbots, it meant there were wounded aboard requiring immediate medical attention. He also described how some of the bombers would not make it to the runway, but would crash in the surrounding countryside. “There would be great plumes of smoke and fire as well as the noise of the sirens of the fire engines.” The emotion of his childhood memories was evident in his voice as he described the crashes of the bombers and how his fondness for his American friends would be overcome by apprehension and fear – a difficult memory to be absorbed by a seven-year-old that was still evident almost eight decades later.

Tony paused for several moments and then continued with more pleasant memories. He spoke of the Christmas parties the Americans held for the local children in 1944 and 1945, and how he proudly carried his own “pass” to cross a portion of Thorpe Abbots to attend school.

Finally, his mood shifted again as with obvious sadness he told me about the changes his world endured when the Americans departed – not just the individual crewmen, which often happened during 1944 and early 1945, but entirely, in the fall of 1945. “Once they were gone it was so quiet,” he stated, “and there was so much left behind. Local people just came along and helped themselves. A new life had begun.” He told me how he watched the grass and weeds grow high on the base, and that local farmers began to cultivate the soil between the concrete runways, taxiways and hardstands. His final comment before we departed the control tower was to remind me of what his mother had told him on the day the 100th arrived: that what he had seen, had indeed become history.

I had become mesmerized with Tony’s story and had lost all track of time. I heard calls from below the tower for our group to assemble and board the coach. As soon as we came down from the tower we were told that our visit at

Thorpe Abbots was ending. Tony disappeared and returned with a manuscript which he told me covered more of his life, not just the years from 1943-1945 and his relationship with the 100th Bomb Group airmen. I accepted the manuscript from Tony and promised him that I would share it with my friends at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum and the 8th Air Force Historical Society when I returned to Savannah. Tony Mark had indeed provided me with a most powerful and dramatic lesson in first-person history.

The trip from Thorpe Abbots to Horham, former home to the 95th Bomb Group, took about 20 minutes. Everyone on the coach seemed to be talking at once. Joe and Linda Ciotola were the center of attention. Joe was absolutely ecstatic to have been connected with his father’s WWII history, and had made some very good friends during our visit. It seemed that we had all been adopted by a person, or persons, as I had been by Mike, Ron and then Tony. Penny Linsenmayer told a wonderful story of how one of the locals had described to her that a bomber would occasionally take off in the middle of the day, be gone for several hours, and return with gallons and gallons of ice cream—basic ingredients which had left the ground separately, been mixed and frozen at high altitudes, and then returned to earth—and distributed to the local children. We all experienced an emotional beginning to what would continue to be an amazing day.

Our experience at Horham was totally different from Thorpe Abbots. I think we all expected to see another one of the classic control towers, surrounded by individuals standing about in casually dressed military garb. Well, the dress code was the same, but the overall picture was very different. Our new 95th friends were almost in a military formation as they greeted us when we left the coach. There was no control tower, and while they were all smiling, they did not break formation. When we were out of the coach, the man standing in the center of the formation, James Mutton, the Chairman of the 95th Bomb Group Heritage Association, welcomed us to Horham in a light, but formal, manner. Then he invited us to follow his group into the compound of small huts known as the Red Feather Club – and what a

club it turned out to be! The formality of our arrival disappeared as soon as we entered the club, and the special jovial side of the Horham group emerged – they are party people! Once again, my *City of Savannah* logo was noted and I was soon speaking with James and Mike Ager, telling them that I had two friends from the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Savannah who were going to be very interested in our visit to the 95th. First I told them about Bud Porter, who had flown as a ball turret gunner in the 95th bomb group, 412th squadron, and then John O’Neill. John’s dad had been a tail gunner in the 412th squadron as well. When these names were mentioned the reaction was similar to that when I had mentioned General Shuler at the 100th. Mike immediately went into research mode and shortly thereafter I was provided with a large glass of beer and pictures of Bud and of John’s dad. They were particularly excited that John’s dad had been part of a well remembered crew, who had become Pathfinders and the first B-17 crew to fly over Berlin, on March 4, 1944.

While we were talking, there was a sudden commotion and most of the people in the room headed for a door from behind which came a blast of 1940’s “swing” music. It turns out that a major portion of the social action at the Red Feather Club is dancing to swing music – in period dress if possible. As a historian by nature and education, and a tone deaf terrible dancer, I was caught between wanting to see what was going on in the next room and the one-time opportunity to talk with James and Mike. My historian gene won out, and we continued our discussion. They shared with me that the buildings on the base had been nearly destroyed in the years following the departure of the 95th in 1945. In 1981 a group known as the Friends of the 95th bought the buildings and began to repair them. In 2000 a group of local residents formed the Horham Airfield Heritage Association, and like their neighbors at Thorpe Abbots, they remembered their WWII heroes from America and began an effort to restore things as they were when Bud Porter and John O’Neill, Sr., were in residence as the Red Feather Club. Then the fun really began.



Original 1943 wall painting in the Red Feather Club.

The group decided to honor the 95th by restoring the former NCO Club/Mess Hall, which still had original paintings on the walls done by WWII artists from the 95th cadre, as the centerpiece for the 95th memorial to include not only the Red Feather Club, but a library and visitor center.

I thoroughly enjoyed my conversation with James and Mike, particularly the spirit that they showed for their on-going adventure with the Red Feather Club. I told them that I appreciated their spirit because it matched that of the volunteers on the *City of Savannah* restoration project, and that we shared the same ultimate mission – to honor the veterans of the 8th Air Force. During our conversation one of the group who was wearing his “suntan” khakis, a 50-mission crush hat and an A-2 jacket, brought over another round of beers for the table and shook my hand. I thought that I remembered the face and outfit from our Thorpe Abbotts visit and asked him which organization he called home. He gave me a big smile and introduced himself as Glenn, home-based at Horham with the 95th. “Okay,” one of the group said, as everyone smiled, “Now tell Jerry the *full* story about your name.” Glenn explained that he had been born in a local town during WWII to a Mr. and Mrs. Miller. It seems that the Millers named their new son “Glenn” in honor of the American band leader who was so popular in England at that time. Then Glenn did something that has become a tradition for him at 8th Air Force related events – he brought out a copy of his birth certificate! Yes, the document stated that the man was named Glenn Miller! Everyone at the table took great delight at hearing the story – yet again

– and we drank a toast to both Glenn Millers! What a great group of people!

It was no easier to depart from Horham than it had been from Thorpe Abbotts, particularly with the music still playing, and the bar still open. Somehow Maddie got us all back on the coach and we headed for our hotel in Cambridge, where we would have time to think about the unique events that had made up our day visiting with a very unique group of English patriots. New friends with a history and appreciation for what our fathers and grandfathers had done in service to both of our countries in WWII.

The following morning we visited the Duxford Air Museum facility and then made the final stop on our tour of 8th Air Force Bomb Group WWII historical sites. This stop was by far the most subdued and emotional for all of us, but particularly for one of our group, Susan Jowers. A brief explanation...When we gathered together for the first time in London and were introducing ourselves, Don Miller arrived with very sad news. The sole WWII 8th Air Force veteran who was to share the tour with us, Mel Rector, had passed away shortly after arriving in England the previous day. One can imagine our shock! Mel had served as a radio operator in the 338th squadron of the 96th Bomb Group in 1944-

45. Susan and Mel had become friends when Susan was working as a volunteer in Florida with the Space Coast Honor Flight organization that brings WWII veterans from Florida to Washington, DC, to visit the National World War II Memorial on the National Mall. Mel told Susan that he had never returned to England since he left in 1945, and had always wanted to visit his WWII base at Snetterton Heath. Susan, through her efforts with the Honor Flights program, had become well acquainted with supporting veterans on trips, told Mel that she would be glad to be his escort on a trip to England, and so, the two of them had signed up for the *Masters of the Air* tour.

In addition to the sorrow that Susan had to endure over losing her good friend, the logistics and legal aspects of the situation were significant. Despite the challenges, and not wanting to be alone while waiting for those issues to be resolved, Susan completed most of the tour with us, as the bureaucratic, legal, and logistical issues associated with Mel’s death were completed.

The first stop on our visit to the 96th Bomb Group home at Snetterton Heath was at St. Andrew’s Church in Quidenham, near to where the main gate of the base was located from 1943 to 1945. When we disembarked from the coach



Red Feather Club members in period dress. The famous Glenn Miller is at left.

we were met by a wonderful gentleman by the name of Geoff Ward. Geoff is the Secretary of the local 96th Bomb Group Memorial Association, and would guide us on our tour of St. Andrew's, which, we would learn, had become an important part of the 96th Bomb Group history in England.

It wasn't until we entered the church and Geoff began to tell the story of the 96th's relationship with St. Andrew's that I learned there was an unexpected story, a story that I related to personally regarding the church. Having been associated with the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force for more than a decade I am very familiar with the Museum's chapel and its magnificent stained glass windows. When entering St. Andrew's, which was originally constructed in the

12th century, I was amazed to see a stained glass window depicting Jesus and a WWII USAAF crewman. Further, it then came to me that the same window can be seen in the Mighty Eighth's Chapel of the Fallen Eagles! I immediately asked Geoff if I was right about having seen the same window in Pooler, Georgia, and he smiled, "Ah, you know about that window," he said. Then he told me two stories. First, of how the original window, depicting Jesus welcoming an 8th crewman into heaven had been commissioned and installed in April of 1944, under the sponsorship of the 338th Squadron's Flight Surgeon, Captain Herbert Allen, and several other officers from the 96th, symbolizing that the church had, during WWII, been "a part of America in England."

The second story concerned the window that I was familiar with in Georgia. Geoff told me that when the Mighty Eighth had built its chapel several 96th Bomb Group veterans had provided financial support, to include having the window from their beloved St. Andrew's replicated in the Mighty Eighth Museum's chapel.

Geoff explained that many of the



The original stained glass windows depicting Jesus welcoming an 8th Air Force crewman into heaven, at St. Andrew's church in the village of Quidenham.

96th's airmen had worshiped at St. Andrew's, and that several had married local girls, with the ceremonies taking place in the church. His description of the weddings between the local girls and the American airmen seemed to register with all of us – perhaps because of the wonderful experience we were having with our new British friends. As we walked back to the coach the group began discussing the marriages of the Americans and their British brides. Don Miller got a great deal of support from the group when he suggested that it might be appropriate to include a wedding at St. Andrew's in the script of an upcoming TV mini-series based upon his book *Masters of the Air*. All of us enthusiastically agreed – several even volunteering to appear as extras in the church congregation. Penny Linsenmayer mentioned that St. Andrew's might also find a part in her novel as a wonderful place for an American Red Cross girl to marry her 8th Air Force true love. The visit to St. Andrew's had certainly touched each of us in a personal way.

We departed Quidenham for the final stop on our tour of former 8th Air Force bases - Snetterton Heath. This

was, perhaps, the most fitting way for us to end our base visits since this was the base from which Mel Rector had flown his combat missions, and to which he had wished to return. At Snetterton Heath the community school is located in buildings that housed the base hospital. They have also established a wonderful museum in a Nissen hut that had been an ambulance garage. As had occurred during our other visits, people from the community turned out to welcome us with refreshments, and as before, several of them who had been children living on the edge of the base during the War, regaled us with stories and showed us photographs from the WWII years. In a final tribute to Mel Rector, everyone gathered around the museum's flagpole, which was flying the American flag, for a moment of silence as Susan Jowers said a few words and placed a plant next to the pole in memory of Mel.

Our time at Snetterton Heath was the quietest of our three base location visits, and in retrospect perhaps the most appropriate. While the friendship of the wonderful people at the 100th, and the magnificent spirit of our hosts at the 95th had been appropriate to the memory of the 8th Air Force in England during WWII, the ultimate emotion that we all needed to share was respect for the sacrifices and suffering that so many of the Eighth's airmen and their families endured during and after WWII.

Having been a life-long student of the air war in Europe, brought about by the loss of an uncle in the skies over Normandy during the dark hours of D-Day morning, I found the days that I shared with my fellow WWII Museum travelers on this tour to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. History, by definition, refers to the past. What we experienced in the three visits to these historic sites related to events from the past which had been brought to the present by some very good people who have not forgotten their history.



FRENCH LEGI

Manny Abrams	392nd BG	Eddie Deerfield	303rd BG	Walter Hendricks	452nd BG
Stewart Ackerman	303rd BG	Harold L Dietz	466th BG	Lewis E Herron	100th BG
J R Akin	95th BG	Jack F Disney	94th BG	John R Hildebran	453rd BG
Jay D Allen	94th BG	Donald A D'Lugos	466th BG	Robert H Hitchcock	303rd BG
Andy Anderson	100th BG	Jack Dodson	398th BG	Bill Holden	1st B RNR
Ed Anderson	453rd BG	John H Doyle	94th BG	Don Holmes	458th BG
Richard Andrews	379th BG	Norman R Dunphe	448th BG	Dewey A Holst	448th BG
Albert Arreola	100th BG	George Durgin	493rd BG	Theodore C "Ted" Hood	306th BG
Albert Audette	385th BG	Peter Durso	493rd BG	James Howell	447th BG
George W Bachmann, Jr	306th BG	Alfred Dusey	447th BG	Jake Howland	Unknown
Orville Baker	445th BG	Harold Dwyer	34th BG	Jack C Hubbard	306th BG
Willis Barney	379th BG	Don Echols	458th BG	David Huckabay	489th BG
William Becker	492nd BG	Stanley Edelman	351st BG	Melvin Hurwitz	493rd BG
Richard L "Dick" Bedford	353rd FG	William "Bill" Eisenhart	303rd BG	Albion Kenneth Hutcherson	95th BG
Sheldon Beigel	306th BG	James H Eshelman	385th BG	Joseph O Ingram, Jr	96th BG
Caesar J Benigno	452nd BG	Dr. James Facos	388th BG	Gustave W Jacobson	94th BG
Nelson Berger	100th BG	Joseph Fischer	94th BG	Bennie L Jefferies	306th BG
Tony Bezer	490th BG	David Foss	29th Troop Carrier SQ	Arthur Jenkins	390th BG
Leo S Bielinski	44th BG	Donald M Frank	389th BG	David Johnson	1st B RNR
William D Bodiford	487th BG	Herbert Friedlander	351st BG	Martin Jordan	351st BG
August C Bolino	388th BG	Joel Friedman	34th BG	Jay Karpin	493rd BG
Bob Bowen	398th BG	James E Froking	479th FG	John Katsaros	401st BG
James M Bond	385th BG	Frank Gaccione	7th Photo Recon	Samuel Katz	389th BG
Gordon Breeding	34th BG	Joseph Garber	96th BG	George H Keating	452nd BG
Carl F Brown, Jr	4th FG	Ted Gary	493rd BG	Victor Keech	1st B RNR
Dudley Brown	94th BG	William Gerecitano	388th BG	Perry Kerr	466th BG
Joe Burdis	388th BG	Albert Gese	20th FG	Michael D Kindya	385th BG
Ed Burnham	95th BG	Dr. C W "Bill" Getz	491st BG/2AD SF	James King	1st B RNR
Donald Casey	379th BG	Reuben Glazer	445th BG	Russell A Knudson	303rd BG
Clarence F Cherry	100th BG	Stanley Goldstein	466th BG	Carroll F Knutson	447th BG
John Chopelas	452nd BG	Hewitt B Gomez	492nd BG	Donald L Koons	401st BG
Samuel Christiano	18th Weather SQ	Sidney Grant	493rd BG	Ralph J Kurka	93rd BG
John A Clark	100th BG	Charles J Greenough	379th BG	Herbert J Kwart	381st BG
James O Clemons	484th BG	Robert Gross	34th BG	Dean C Larson	401st BG
Grayson Cocharo	492nd BG	Joseph "Joe" Gualano	493rd BG	William G Lathrop	94th BG
Murray Codman	447th BG	Rudolph "Rudy" Guerrero	493rd BG	George A Lawson	7 PRG
Myron Cohen	91st BG	Milton R Gunther	487th BG	John Lemons	445th BG
Paul J Collins	447th BG	Carl Gustafson	453rd BG	Mathias J Leupold	385th BG
Joseph Connaughton	319th BG	Russell W Gustafson	452nd BG	Donald D Levine	453rd BG
Marbury L Councell, Jr	96th BG	Paul C Haedike	452nd BG	Richard B "Dick" Lewis	493rd BG
Thomas L Creekmore	305th BG	Percival L Hanson	305th BG	George R Leyva	351st BG
Howard Croner	452nd BG	Haas M Hargrave	493rd BG	Robert M Littlefield	55th FG
Robert Culp	100th BG	Alfred B Harris	390th BG	James L Livingston	44th BG
John F Curcio	458th BG	Robert B Hastie	95th BG	Robert "Bob" Livingston	351st BG
Wayne Davis	452nd BG	Robert Haynes	493rd BG	Stan Loftsgard	493rd BG
Steve de Pyssler	VIII Bomber Command	Robert Hecker	401st BG	Ken Mason	1st B RNR

ON OF HONOR



Elmer "Lucky" McGinty	95th BG	Anthony W Pircio	7th PRG	Christopher Spagnola	44th BG
Hugh McGinty	379th BG	Wilmer "Will" Plate	489th BG	Colin D Storey	94th BG
Jay McIntosh	94th BG	Michael H Prestia	452ndBG	William E Stovall	390th BG
Russell Madsen	100th BG	Vincent J "Bill" Purple	379th BG	Herman Stroupe	390th BG
Elmo Maiden	466th BG	Walter "Mike" Quering	487th BG	Walter Sturdivan	34th BG
David Marshall	381st BG	Albert Rapvano	466th BG	John S Swarts	351st BG
William Massey	401st BG	Joseph H Reus	445th BG	John Roger Swihart	388th BG
Walter M "Boots" Mayberry	388th BG	George Roberts	306th BG	William M "Bill" Thorns	96th BG
Seward M Meintsma	466th BG	William L "Bill" Roche	452nd BG	William C "Bill" Toombs, Sr	493rd BG
Julius M Micek	381st BG	J Warren Roundhill	379th BG	William "Bill" Varnedoe	385th BG
James Mikusi	447th BG	Jack Rude	493rd BG	Jay Walker	384th BG
Charles Mills	492nd BG	Peter "Rupy" Ruplenas	486th BG	James H Walston, Jr	466th BG
Rex Mills	453rd BG	Bradford Saivetz	305th BG	Douglas J Ward	305th BG
E E "Mitch" Mischler	94th BG	Jesse Sandlin	447th BG	Charles Warren	351st BG
Lloyd Mitchell	96th BG	Frank N Schaeffer	44th BG	Earl E Wassom	466th BG
Kenneth Moulden	448th BG	Carmen Schiavoni	447th BG	Billy D Welch	361st FG
Clayton A Nattier	306th BG	Robert Schuberg	306th BG	Charles Wheelwright	392nd BG
William J "Bill" Nevitt	353rd FG	Bob Schuh	398th BG	John M Williams	448th BG
John W Newman	94th BG	Horace Shankwiler	445th BG	Paul Willson	305th BG
William J O'Leary	384th BG	Marvin Silbersher	447th BG	Lawrence Wolfson	493rd BG
Allen G Ostrom	398th BG	Taffe Simon	445th BG	Richard P Woodson, III	96th BG
Frank D Perez	401st BG	Harold W Smith	448th BG	James Zographos	388th BG
LaVerne Peters	389th BG	Heber H Smith	94th BG		
Stanley Peterson	96th BG	Samuel W Smith	303rd BG		

List current as of press time

If you or someone you know has received the French Legion of Honor, but is not on this list, or if you would like information, please contact:

Dr. Nancy Toombs
(501) 681-3126 or
Chase221@SWBell.net

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If you see someone you know on this list, please call them and ask if they received the Medal or if they need help with the application.

For information or help.
Call Nancy Toombs at
501-681-3126

APPLICANTS

* James Antipas	447th BG PA.
* Fred Ricketts	385th BG TX.
* Vergil Rodgers	467th BG TX
* Richard Searer	489th BG PA.
* Robert Gross	34th BG CO
* Wayne Davis	452nd BG N.J.
* Arthur Trilli	361st FG PA.
* Bill Brown	36th Sq. DE.
* Lewis Smith	385th BG KA.
* Al Villagran	306th BG MO.
* Albert Ratuamo	466th BG NY.
* Herman Stroop, Jr.	490th BG NC
* Joseph Filion	94th BG NY.
* Carl Crisp	390th BG IN
* Horace Seyster	457th BG CA.
* Edward Corker	447th BG N.J.
* Earl Hawkins	466th BG MA.
* Norman Klare	381st BG CA.
* Edward York	401st BG FL.
* John Paladino	447th BG FL.
* Russell Carrier	398th BG CA.
* Richard Bland	381st BG OK.
* Howard Polin	352nd FG AL.
* John Bersee	91st BG OH.
* Frank Buschmeier	100th BG OH.
* James Roughgarden	357th FG N.J.

Hal Minerich AND ME

By Derek Sherwood

Although Hal Minerich died on October 8th, 1943, he frequently occupied a place at the dinner table during my own family's gatherings more than sixty years later.

My grandfather, 1st Lieutenant Thomas Paxton Sherwood, never spoke much about his experiences in the 8th Air Force in World War II, but as he aged, one topic did come up repeatedly. It was generally Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter; when everyone was gathered around the table for dinner. At some point, he would remind us to be thankful to be alive, because many of his friends weren't so lucky – especially Hal Minerich. “The Germans took his head off with a 20mm cannon,” he would recall with finality.

When my grandfather passed away in 2006, he left behind seven diaries and nearly 40 cubic feet of files and letters regarding the 381st Bomb Group, his wartime experiences, and the men he had served with. Using these resources, I have been able to uncover some of the stories he took with him to his grave. The story of the life and death of 1st Lieutenant William J. “Hal” Minerich is one of these stories.

HAL MINERICH

Born in Hibbing, Minnesota on November 11th, 1918 – the final day of the “war to end all wars,” and a year before Woodrow Wilson would proclaim his birthday a National Holiday, William J. Minerich entered the world as the only child of Yugoslavian and Slovenian immigrants Vinko and Amelia Minerich.

His father was a miner by trade; part of the grueling underground iron ore mining operations that comprised the Mesabi Iron Range – the largest iron ore deposit in the United States. It was here in Hibbing, three years after William's birth, that a local transportation company known as Greyhound would begin its growth into the world's largest bus line. Musician Bob Dylan, baseball player Roger Maris, and Charles Manson prosecutor and author Vincent Bugliosi all hail from Hibbing. Before all of this, though, Vinko and Amelia had their hands full with their new son.

Little is available on William's early years. Both of his parents died in the 1960s, his younger brother Robert passed in 1997, and very few people alive remember the young man who was killed so horribly seventy years ago. It was only by delving into the phone books in Hibbing, Minnesota – phone books that still carry many listings for relatives who carry the Minerich name, that one can begin to piece together what kind of man “Hal” Minerich would become.

* * *

“We called him Vinko, after his father,” says a shaky voice with a Minnesota lilt. The voice is that of Vic Minerich, Hal's

nephew. “He was very intelligent. He played piano without lessons – as children, we would go and watch him play. He played like Tchaikovsky,” Vic recalls, his voice still welling with emotion.

He doesn't remember if Hal attended college, but his age and eventual status as the pilot of a B-17 almost guarantee that he attended further schooling than the other boys who left the hardscrabble immigrant mining town of Hibbing during the war years.

“We were all so poor,” recalls Vic. “Most boys left high school when they turned sixteen and went to work, earning money to help their families. During the war, a buss full at a time would leave for the military.”

Vic's own brother, George Minerich, was one of those young men leaving by the busload, along with his uncles Hal and Robert, who served in the Army during WWII. “George was an organizer,” Vic remembers lovingly. “He would get us together to play hockey; he would bring the team shirts, etc.” After leaving Hibbing, George made his way to Illinois, where he talked his way into a job as a welder, having never turned a welding machine on before. Later, he became a gunner in the 464th Bomb Group, 777th Squadron.

Official Records indicating whether William Minerich was drafted or enlisted voluntarily are missing, but it's not hard to imagine the young man looking at a possible future underground in the iron mines of Hibbing and choosing the uncertain but seemingly glamorous life of an airman instead.

The pull of flight was strong for many in those years, and enlistment allowed a choice of services, while being drafted meant Uncle Sam would choose your placement. It's not hard to imagine him waving goodbye to his parents, boarding one of the hometown-founded Greyhound buses, and leaving for the unknown – flight training, then deployment overseas.

The specifics are lost to history, but regardless of the circumstances, William J. Minerich ended up in the cockpit of Lockheed-Vega B-17F, serial number 42-5846, “Tinker Toy” as a pilot for the 381st Bomb Group, 535th Squadron, in Ridgewell, England.

THOMAS PAXTON SHERWOOD

A thousand miles away from the mines in Hibbing, several years before the American entry into World War II, another young man was finishing the work that the immigrant miners in Minnesota had started deep below the ground. Circumstances would soon bring him together with William Minerich, the miner's son.

Born in 1914, Thomas Paxton Sherwood, the son of a Pennsylvania Rail Road employee and dairy farmer, lived a pleasant but mostly poor life on his family's 212-acre farm in Hickory, PA, just south of Pittsburgh. The farming life in the Depression was no easier or more lucrative than mining was in Hibbing, and Sherwood's parents enrolled him in prep school in order that he might one day attend college. He did, successfully enrolling in Penn State University, and with the help of multiple jobs and the kindness of neighbors (including a Civil War Veteran who loaned him \$50 to pay for one semester at Penn State), he graduated in 1937 and took a position in a steel mill, turning the raw iron churned out by miners across the U.S. into usable steel products. Nearly fifty



The Minerich Crew: Back: S/Sgt. Henry Miller, Sgt. William Truchler, Sgt. John Wood, Sgt. Ralph Tutine, Sgt. Earl Motzmer, Sgt. Harold Harrington. Front: Lt. William Minerich on the right, Lt. Duncan Sellers in the middle, and Lt. James Stickel or Lt. Henry Palas on the left.

years later, Sherwood recalled his time at ARMCO in a letter to a war buddy.

After college, I was hired as a management trainee at ARMCO, American Rolling Mill Company at their plant in Butler, PA. I had to work two weeks in every department, writing reports on the processes as I saw them, etc. First night I wore out two pairs of heavy gloves helping my other three college buddies (one in metallurgy, and one in mechanical engineering and one in electrical engineering) unload a railroad car of blast furnace brick for the tuyeres which were huge tunnels under the open hearth carrying the hot gases back to be fed over the top again to the molten bubbling 3000 degree mass. At the time we looked at each other and wondered what good our degrees were!! Ha! But in the end we had worked in every one of the manufacturing departments of the basic steel plant.

There was always a future in steel in that era – and as an essential worker, had he remained with ARMCO, Sherwood could have probably avoided the war altogether. As a child, Sherwood’s father had taken him to see barnstorming events and aircraft races, and his curiosity about aviation gradually overtook his interest in civilian life. He enlisted in the Air Force the summer prior to Pearl Harbor, and by 1942 was graduating in the Class of 42-B from Randolph Field as an Army Air Corps pilot.

In September of 1942, he arrived with the Operations division of the 305th Bomb Group at Chelveston, England, as one of only ten pilots in the ETO certified to instruct blind and Small Beam Approach guided landings. When the SBA program was disbanded, Sherwood was given a choice of which Bomb Group he would like to transfer into. On September 1st, 1943, he arrived at Ridgewell, England, as the Chief Instrument Flight Instructor for the 381st Bomb Group, 535th Squadron. As an experienced co-pilot assigned to both training and combat duties, he moved around among the group and was able to befriend a number of crews. One of the first of these crews was Hal Minerich’s, and their plane was “Tinker Toy.”

AIRCRAFT NUMBER 42-5846, “TINKER TOY”

Before she would ever go on to fight in the skies over Europe, aircraft number 42-5846 was already a star. The 1943 war musical “Hers to Hold” starring Deanna Durbin contained scenes shot in the Burbank Lockheed-Vega assembly line. In the background of several shots, Aircraft number 42-5845, (which would become Whale-Tail II) rolls by, then aircraft number 42-5846, which became “Tinker Toy,” follows. It was an auspicious beginning for a ship that would have a checkered future.

Delivered to Ridgewell on May 25th, 1943, the B-17F that became known as “Tinker Toy” would fly some of the



An unidentified aircrew walks away from Tinker Toy under happier circumstances.

toughest missions of the early air war. The *Lewiston Daily Sun*, reporting on January 22, 1944, called her “the ship that couldn’t go down,” noting her history of getting crews home from these tight spots. Her career would be relatively long for a combat aircraft in 1943; and bloody – the deaths beginning with a mission to Hamburg on 7/26/43, where, according to the 381st War Diaries, a flak burst killed navigator Sidney Novell on his first mission up.

Later, during the disastrous Schweinfurt mission of 8/17/43 when the 381st lost 10 of 25 aircraft put up for the day, “Tinker Toy” ball turret gunner S.Sgt. Bathrick, wounded by 20mm cannon fire, was able to shoot down the fighter that injured him and continued to return fire and protect the plane until he ran out of ammunition. Even then, wounded and refusing to leave the ball turret for treatment, he swung his empty guns around to ward off enemy fighters.

In recent years, “Tinker Toy” has been referred to as a “jinx ship,” most famously by author Roger Freeman, who claimed to have gotten his information from a medical officer of the 381st. A reference to Bremen being a “jinx” for the ship was published in 1944 in the *Lewiston Daily Sun*, so perhaps this is where the rumor started. However, many members of the 381st vehemently rejected the appellation. In 1980, fellow pilot 1st Lieutenant Robert Weniger expanded on his thoughts about the plane.

I would like to make a slight correction on good old “Tinker Toy.” She was not a jinx ship. I flew her a number of times and particularly recall one flight I made with the squadron commander, one Major Ingenhutt. We did some buzzing of a fighter field that he was once a member of the fighter unit stationed there. We made a number of low passes and found one hanger open at both ends. He said to me: “Let’s fly

through it.” And being young and dumb at the time, I said, “Yes, it would be great. We can show these fighter jockeys what can be done with a good bomber-type aircraft.” We came around again and made a run on the hangar. At the last moment we saw an aircraft parked inside. He pulled up and we cleared the hangar by a few feet. Then he said “Looks as if it would have been a little tight with one aircraft parked and the other flying through.” I was never sure if he would have taken “Tinker Toy” through the hangar had the aircraft not been parked inside. I can say for sure that the old man was not short on guts and “Tinker Toy” handled like a dream.

Regardless of whether or not there were dark forces hanging over her, the flying career of “Tinker Toy” finally came to an end on December 20th, 1943, her 25th mission and another sortie over Bremen, when she was rammed mid-air by a floundering ME-109. Seven of her crew were killed and the other three were taken prisoner. “Whale-Tail II,” the ship that had rolled off the line right before her, was lost on the same mission. Including the casualties of Dec. 20th, “Tinker Toy” had claimed no less than 9 crew members over the space of 25 credited missions in eight months’ time.

381st Bomb Group, Mission 36: Bremen, October 8th, 1943

Fate would align for Minerich, Sherwood, and “Tinker Toy” as The 381st Bomb Group received one of its worst beatings on October 8th, 1943, on a mission to bomb the shipyards at Bremen.

The 535th Bomb Squadron war diaries reported that “Participating crews called [the Bremen mission] tougher than the Schweinfurt mission, under continuous attack from all types of enemy aircraft, including Dornier bombers, for nearly 2 1/2 hours.”

The bombing results for the entire 1st Combat Bomb Wing, according to the diaries, were “poor.” And losses were high. “Thirteen officers, including the squadron commander, Major Ingenhutt, Capt. Jukes, Squadron Operations Officer and 11 enlisted men of this squadron are missing in action after the group’s 36th mission, an attack on Bremen. This is the heaviest loss to the squadron since the Schweinfurt raid in August, and probably more serious in that the squadron loss contained a high percentage of veterans. The group as a whole lost seven ships and crews of the 18 that went over the target.” Only the heroic actions of the crew of “Tinker Toy” kept her from being the 8th ship lost that day.

At some point over the target, 20mm high-explosive rounds had penetrated cockpit of “Tinker Toy,” near the A-pillar of the front windscreen. The 535th war diaries report tersely that: “Lt. Minerich [pilot] was killed instantly when a 20mm shell exploded in his face. A second shell wounded Sellers in his

left arm. His navigator and bombardier were both wounded. His engineer was unable to stand on his turret platform because of the slick layer of blood covering it. Sellers flew the ship home alone, holding perfect formation and successfully performing evasive action.”

In Lt. Sherwood’s diaries from that day, he recalled what he saw in raw form.

Today our group lost 7 planes & crews – my squadron lost 3 crews & planes & one pilot Lt. Minerich killed 2 -20mm shells in cabin – Lt Sellers, co-pilot flew it back – Oh, oh, the terrible bloody plane – the terrible smell – his bloody head – decapitated, was in chunks, dearest ... the plane was shot nearly to pieces – plastic nose off – 2 others Lt Palas & Sellers wounded!

Years later, in a 1977 letter to a friend, he elaborated on how he arrived at the scene:

“I was on-duty officer of the base the day [co-pilot] Dunc Sellers brought “Tinker Toy” back with Hal Minerich’s head blown off. I couldn’t get past the bomb bay when I tried to remove him – for the sickening smell. I’d be a poor doc or undertaker. I called for the medics and they did it.”



A ground crewman points to the entry hole from the 20mm cannon shell that took Minerich’s life.

Chaplain James Good Brown in his book “The Mighty Men of the 381st: Heroes All,” recalled the events similarly.

At the side of the pilot’s seat were two holes. First Lieutenant William J. Minerich lay dead at his post. The two shells which penetrated the window hit him and decapitated him. His head had been severed as though cut with a knife. To place his body on a stretcher with his head beside him is enough to make one conclude that war is not the best way of solving the world’s problems.

In the little town of Hibbing, Vinko and Amelia Minerich would soon learn that they had lost their oldest son. It was not the last tragedy that would befall a member of the Minerich extended family as a result of the air war.

Sherwood later flew as co-pilot of “Tinker Toy” on December 5, 1943, on a mission to Paris where no bombs were dropped due to excessive undercast compromising target visibility. Just two weeks later, on December 17th, “Tinker Toy” co-pilot 1st Lieutenant Thomas “Duncan” Sellers received the military’s second-highest award, the Distinguished Service Cross, for his actions on 10/8/43. 1st Lieutenant Sherwood recalled taking him on several easy flights around England after the Minerich incident, to help him regain his confidence. Sellers went on survive the war, leaving the Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel, with the DSC, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf clusters, and a Purple Heart to his credit. He passed away on October 27th, 2004 – almost 61 years exactly since that fateful mission in “Tinker Toy” that claimed Minerich’s life. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



The crew of Tinker Toy, less 1st Lt. Minerich, upon their return from Bremen. 1st Lt. Sellers is on the left.



EPILOGUE

In a neatly-arranged cemetery just north of Highway 169 in Hibbing, Minnesota, lightly-wooded and situated between a Lowe's Home Improvement store on the right and a wooded area on the left, lies the body of William J. Minerich. He is buried with his parents, Vinko and Amelia. Nearby, his brother Robert and his wife are buried. It is one of the few remaining traces of their existence. With the passing of time and many of his friends and fellow crewmen, most of the memories of "Hal" Minerich have gone away. Few people left remember the bright young man from Hibbing.

His nephew Vic remembers, however. "I go to the cemetery where they are buried," he told me. "I like to see them."

His own family had not been as lucky as Vinko and Amelia, who had at least been given "Hal's" body to bury. On April 12, 1944 during a training flight near Oudna, Tunisia, Vic's brother George Minerich's B-24 "Wise Wabbit" was observed losing control after takeoff. It nosed into the ocean, killing everyone aboard. In an ironic twist of fate, just before the flight, a fellow

airman had noticed something wrong with George's parachute, and had swapped him a fresh one in order to return his to be repacked. It didn't matter – none of the crew were able to bail out, and neither the bodies nor the plane were ever recovered. Listed as "Died, Non-Battle," George's official resting place is in the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and Memorial in Lazio, Italy.

Vic remembers his mother was deeply affected by the loss of her son. "She cried and cried – she had no place to pray for her son. Finally, we made a mound in the yard, planted flowers, placed a statue of an angel there, so she could sit there and pray for George." Many years later, after his mother had died, Vic received permission to place a marker in the cemetery for George – at his mother's feet.

"Who knows what they could have done with their lives?" Vic asks. George, the welder and organizer; and "Hal," the self-taught pianist and gifted intellect – two lives cut short by war. It is a question asked by hundreds of thousands of families after World War II and since. There is no way to know the answer.

Editor's note: We regret that parts of Mr. Applegate's obit were inadvertently omitted in the March publication. Here is the complete notice.

Applegate, Marvin Lenza Sr., 90, son of Lenza Applegate and Leota Florence Sharpton, was born on May 31, 1925 at Strafford, (Green County) Missouri. Strafford is a small town a few miles east of Springfield, Mo. Marvin's parents moved to Augusta, Kansas in the spring of 1926 where his father was employed at the oil refinery. After his father was laid off during the depression the family moved to Burrton, KS and later to the Haven, KS area where they lived on an oil lease where his father was employed as a "pumper". Marvin's first job was also in the oil fields where he was employed as a "roustabout" at ten cents an hour. Marvin completed high school at Haven in 1943 and entered the Army Air Force a few months after turning 18 years old. While in the Army Air Force he completed aircraft armament school and gunnery school. While stationed at an Eighth Air Force base in England with the 305th Bombardment Group he completed 25 missions over Germany and occupied France in a Boeing B-17 bomber. Marvin's assignment on the combat aircraft was the Togglier, who is an enlisted man, who performed the bombardier function without a bomb sight. Marvin was awarded the Air Medal and four Oak Leaf clusters and attained the rank of Staff Sergeant. Marvin also had one year of active service with the Air Force during the Korean War, but did not see any foreign service. After the end of World War II he attended Hutchinson, KS Junior college and Kansas State College at Manhattan, KS and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from K-State in 1950. Marvin married Mona Jean Newman on December 3, 1955 at Oklahoma City, OK. To this union was born two children: Marvin Jr. of the home and Jean Ellen Walker, who resides in Grand Prairie, TX. He is survived by his sister Beatta Smith of North Richland Hills, TX, and four grandchildren: Sarah Walker Bentley and her spouse Andrew of McKinney, TX; Valerie Walker Harris and her spouse Casey of Grand Prairie, TX; David Brian Walker of Grand Prairie, TX and Kevin Michael Walker of Grand Prairie,



Marvin Lenza Applegate

TX. He is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews, cousins, and many other family members and friends. He was preceded in death by his younger sisters Letha Oller and Elizabeth Wagner and his brothers Loyal and Chesley. On April 2, 1978 Marvin's public profession of Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior was made at Southwest Baptist Church, and he was baptized the following Sunday. While at Southwest Baptist Church he served on the Usher, Budget and Finance committees, and also served as church financial secretary for 32 years from 1983 until January 2015. In 2015 he became a member of Parkview Baptist Church in Wichita. Marvin retired from Boeing on June 1, 1987 after approximately 31 years with Boeing at Wichita, KS and Huntsville, Alabama. While at Boeing he held several supervisory jobs in accounting, auditing, and budgeting including Internal Audit, and Pricing Audit Manager. Marvin enjoyed several hobbies and pursued them with great gusto. He spent many happy hours golfing, skeet shooting, hunting, wood carving, and metal detecting. One of his fondest pursuits was researching his family genealogy; he spent countless hours researching national archives and registries searching extensively for distant relatives in any way linked with the Applegate, Sharpton, Pruet, Parker, and Calhoun lineage in his typical meticulous detail. To our family, know that you were known, researched, recorded, written down, valued by, and most of all, cherished by Marvin.

Bean, Donald W. "Don", 93, formerly of Freedom Drive, died June 16, 2016, at Westview Meadows. Don was born August 23, 1922, in Corinth, Maine, at home, son of Everett C. (E. Carroll) and Grace (Brann) Bean. A 1940 graduate from Higgins Classical Institute, a high school, in Charleston, Maine, he attended the University of Maine, Orono, Maine, for one year and then enlisted in the Army Air Corps as an aviation cadet. Called to active duty in January 1943, he graduated from flight training in November as a second lieutenant. He was later assigned to the 384th Bomb Group of The Eighth Air Force in England as a B17 bomber pilot. He

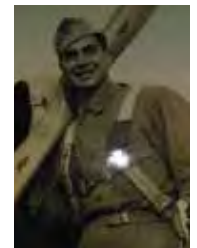


Donald W. "Don" Bean

completed 31 combat missions over eastern Europe, the last as deputy group air commander with the rank of captain. Returning to civilian life, he met and married Dorothy B. "Dottie" Burke, R.N., of Bangor, Maine.

He found employment in the property insurance field as an insurance adjuster with The General Adjustment Bureau and worked in Augusta, Maine, for seven years. The Vermont Mutual Insurance Co. recruited him in 1955 and he, with his wife and two daughters, moved to Montpelier. His family promptly increased by a son, and Don applied himself to his new work, eventually retiring in 1987 as vice president of claims of that good company. Don was a secretary of Rotary Club of Montpelier for many years, also a Mason, and a past patron of The Eastern Star. In retirement, he and his wife were avid Scottish country dancers and he enjoyed flying with his pilot son, reading, puzzles and traveling with family. He is survived by his three children: Brenda Bean and her husband, Phil Morse, of Montpelier; Donna Willett and her husband, Mike, of Barre; and Greg Bean and his wife, Pam, of Burlington. He is also survived by four grandchildren: Sarah Patterson; Jennifer Willett with daughters Makenzie and Madilynn; Chris Willett; and Scott Masch with his wife, Kim, and daughters Katelyn and Christina. Also by a brother, Omar Bean, and his wife, Euretta, of Millinocket, Maine; and a sister, Helen Grasser, of Lamoine, Maine; and by several nieces with offspring and a nephew. He was predeceased by his beloved wife, Dottie.

Centola, Edward V, 92, was World War II veteran who received four Bronze Stars & the Air Medal for his bravery as a nose gunner with the 466th bomb group, 8th Army Air Corps over Europe. He served as a Sergeant with the City of Rochester Police Department from which he retired in 1974. Ed was predeceased by his wife, MaryAnn Centola & daughter, Joann Centola. He is survived by his children, Bruce (Anna) Centola, Edwina (Bernard) Farnand & Duane (Susan) Centola; grandchildren, Gina, Andrea & Paul Centola, Danica (Matthew) Goebel, Melissa Anne (Noah Stupak) Farnand, Lisabeth (Scott) McDonough, Ellen (Sean) Phelan; several



Edward V Centola

nieces & nephews.

Coughlin, Charles H., 92, of West Boylston died Thursday May 26, 2016.

He was born in Worcester, son of Frank and Hazel (Young) Coughlin and graduated from Commerce High School.

He was a Staff Sergeant in the 8th Army Air Corps and a Veteran of WWII serving in the 385th Bomb Group. Charles served two years in the European Theatre and was a recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters.

Charlie was the Director of the West Boylston Municipal Lighting Plant for many years, before retiring. He was a member of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, the Greendale Retired Men's Club, a founding member of the Harold N. Keith American Legion Post #204, a life member of the 8th Air Force Group, and a member of the former Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #6907. Charlie was an avid golfer and longtime member of the Wachusett Country Club and in his younger years enjoyed skiing.

He leaves his wife of 67 years, Concetta M. "Connie" (Russo) Coughlin; a sister in law, Florence Coughlin of Sterling; nieces and nephews and grand nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his son, Charles P. "Spud" Coughlin and two brothers, Francis and Arthur Coughlin.

Curcio, Christopher, passed away on his 92nd birthday, a WWII veteran who joined the Army Air Corps (later the Air Force) in 1943, and served proudly in World War II as a member of a the 486th bomb group,

flying 35 missions over Germany. He continued his service with the Air Force until 1963, at which time he retired and joined the Internal Revenue Service, raising his family in Norwood, New Jersey. He retired from the IRS after a 20-year stint, and moved to South Carolina with his wife Ann, where he continued to reside happily for the ensuing 32 years, and where he developed a second family in the



Charles H. Coughlin

community at Keowee Kee. Chris led a full life, and was always active and caring. He was eager to meet and better understand everyone he encountered, and was easily and fondly remembered by all who were so fortunate to meet him, whether in English, Spanish, or his native Italian. He will leave a lasting legacy in all remaining family members, and will continue to live on in all of their hearts. Beloved husband of the late Mariann (nee Verde). Loving father of Mark (Tresie) Curcio, Adele (the late Michael) Gabanski, and the late Christopher (Teresa) Curcio. Proud grandfather of Rachael, Addie, Alexis, Griffin and Blaine. Fond brother of Walter Curcio and the late Joseph and William Curcio.

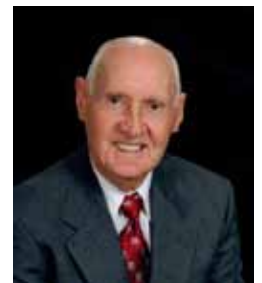
Gunther, Milton R., 95, was brought up in Cresskill, NJ and graduated from Tenafly High School Tenafly, NJ in 1939. He attended Stevens Tech, an engineering college, in New Jersey. A member of the greatest generation, he was called to active duty with the Army Air Corp's Cadet/Pilot training program in October of 1942. He became a B-17 pilot and was sent to England to join the 839th Squadron of the 487th Bomber Group of the Mighty Eighth Army Air Corps in July of 1944. He flew 23 bombing missions to include the Battle of the Bulge, the Battle of Northern France, and numerous missions deep into Nazi Germany. When the war ended in Europe, he received orders to go to the Pacific Theatre. Those orders were canceled as the war ended there while he was home on leave. After his discharge, he joined the reserves and continued to serve. In 1948, he embarked on a career with the Federal Aviation Administration, first as an air traffic controller, then as an Inspector/Pilot for thirty-two years. He was called to active duty for the war in Korea and retired from the reserves as a Lt Colonel. Milton was preceded in death by his parents, Eva and Rudolf Gunther, his daughter Carol Lynn, and his first wife and high school sweetheart, Leonora. He is survived by his wife Marilyn, sons Milton (Elizabeth), Karl (Anne), his sister Pearl (Werner), three grandchildren, nine great grandchildren, four step children and three step grandchil-



Milton R. Gunther

Heller, Harry H., 99, of Purcellville, VA died July 25, 2016. Born 12/22/1916 in Brazil/Knightsville, Indiana to father Myer K. Heller and mother Litha P. (Bell) Heller. Mr. Heller Moved to Flint, Michigan as a high school sophomore in 1935. Sold daily newspapers on Saginaw Street until graduating from Flint Central High in 1937. Worked at local General Motors Fisher Body plant until outbreak of WWII. Joined U.S. Army Air Corps in early January 1942 (one month after attack on Pearl Harbor). He was assigned to the newly organized 303rd Bomb Group (Boeing B17 heavy bombers) and trained for months in Seattle, WA, Boise, ID and Alamogordo, NM before moving to England as part of the 303rd. Remained in England until the end of the War in Europe. He then was ordered to Morocco awaiting orders to move to the Pacific Theatre of conflict. The war ended before those orders were carried out and he returned to Texas and Fort Sheridan, Illinois where he mustered out of the service in September of 1945. Harry returned to Flint where he worked as a newspaper distributor for several years. He then started his own window cleaning business (Heller Cleaning Company). Over the years he expanded the business to include cleaning of carpets and furniture and eventually general house cleaning under contracts with home insurance providers assisting in losses following smoke, fire, and water damages. In 1968 Harry expanded business further when he purchased a local business on Davison Road and named it "Aquarius Lounge". He pursued that business for 33 years until his retirement at age 83. He moved to Port St Lucy, FL and again in 2012 to Purcellville, VA He is predeceased by his wife Juanita G. (Peterson), his second wife Barbara J. (Root), and his sister Dorothy May (Heller) Zacki. He is survived by his daughter, Penny K. (Heller) Nedela, her husband David, two granddaughters, Nicole Nedela Schadle, her husband Erich and daughter Anais (great-granddaughter) as well as granddaughter Tiffany O'Reilly, her husband Jeffrey and daughter Taylor (great-granddaughter).

Hunter, Jim, 91, of Lexington, was born August 7, 1924 in Dyer, Arkansas. He was the youngest of five children born



Jim Hunter

to Telford and Regina (Cecile) Hunter. He began school there before moving near Holdenville, Okla., graduating as Valedictorian from Moss High School in 1942.

Jim joined the United States Army and served his country proudly during World War II. On October 7, 1944, the plane Jim was on during a mission was shot down over Cologne, Germany. He would spend the next 6-1/2 months as a prisoner of war, before being liberated on April 29, 1945.

Jim was awarded the Purple Heart and the Air Medal for his sacrifices for his country. He was honorably discharged in the fall of 1945. Jim was a respected veteran and a true hero, though he reluctantly ever spoke about it because of the memories it brought back.

On January 12, 1946, Jim married his true love and life partner, Geraldine "Geri" Luckett in Horntown, OK. Together they raised two children, daughter, Kathy, and son, J. Michael.

Jim attended college at Eastern Oklahoma A&M where he played varsity basketball. He received his degree in Ag. Ed at Oklahoma A&M and this catapulted a successful career as a Vocational Agriculture teacher. Balancing life as a husband and father, all along while providing for his family was not always easy, however Jim pushed on to get his Masters in Agricultural Education at Oklahoma A&M and a Master's in Education Administration from the University of Oklahoma, just short of his dissertation for receiving his PhD.

Jim began his teaching career in August of 1948 with Lexington Public Schools. He spent the next 32 years teaching, 26 as the Voc. Ag instructor. During this time, he received the Cleveland County Teacher of the Year award. He served as President of the Vo-Ag Teachers Association of Oklahoma, and his club won the Gold Medal Chapter Award, among many other honors.

After retiring from teaching, Jim worked as a real estate broker and enjoyed helping people realize their dream of home ownership.

Jim loved the Lord, and was a man of strong faith and outstanding character. He was a long time member of Lexington Baptist Church where he served as Deacon and Sunday school teacher. Jim remained active in spiritual training of youth and adults throughout his life. Jim influenced many young men's lives during his teaching career.

Jim was a wonderful husband to Geri and

a remarkable father and grandfather. He cherished his ranch, livestock and spending time outdoors in God's creation.

Jim leaves behind his wife, Geri of the home; daughter, Kathy Coker and husband, Terry, of Round Rock, Texas; son, J. Michael Hunter and wife, Susie, of Austin, Texas; his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Stephanie Coker of Round Rock, Texas, Tiffanie Boxrucker and husband, Matt, of West Chester, Ohio, and their children Cody and Cade and Kassie Coker of Round Rock, Texas, and her son, Taylen, Shallon Hunter of Washington, DC and Hayden Hunter of Los Angeles, CA., and a host of other family and friends.

Knudson, Russell, 90, was born May 1, 1925 in Minneapolis, MN, and passed peacefully February 27, 2016 in Arroyo Grande, CA. He flew as Navigator on 25 missions with the 303rd Bomb Group out of Molesworth.



Knudson, Russell

After graduating from the University of Minnesota, he and his wife Betty moved to Seattle, WA where he was employed as a navigator with Northwest Airlines flying to the Orient—when Doppler navigation was overseen by the pilots. Russ continued working for United Airlines and Lufthansa. He finished his airline career working on the ground as charter sales agent and passenger agent for United retiring in 1989.

Russ was a charter member of three prominent museums: The American Air Museum in Duxford; the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, GA; and the World War II Museum in New Orleans. He was always proud of his service and happily received the French Legion of Honor in July, 2015.

Russ is survived by his wife of 64 years, Betty, his son Eric, and daughter, Lisa. Grandchildren: Amanda, Carter, and Joshua. He was a loving, kind man, and is greatly missed.

Koons, Charles Wilson, Jr. 91, served in the 8th Army Air Corp as a ball turret gunner with the 100th Bomb Group/351st Squadron Unit (the



Charles Wilson Koons

Berlin Buzzard). He flew 30 missions over Germany and was awarded five Air Medals and a Presidential Unit Citation. Charlie had a love of all things canine, so after retirement from McDonnell-Douglas, he bred and showed collies throughout the area. He was the proud papa of Bella, Handsome, Little Flower and Spencer. He was a member of the St. Louis Collie Club and North St. Louis County Obedience Training Club (NCOTC). He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Melba (Naumann) Koons.

Larson, Wendell C., Colonel, USAF Retired, passed away December 17, 2015, in Buffalo, Minnesota, at the age of 94.



Wendell C. Larson,

Wendell (Doolley) was a WWII B-17 Navigator with the Eighth Air Force 306th Bomb Group. He flew 35 Bombing Missions over Germany, between August 1944 and January 1945, flying out of England. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart and Airman's Medal six times. Colonel Larson also served his country during the Korean War.

After the Korean Conflict, he served with the 179th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Air National Guard out of Duluth, Minnesota, until his retirement in 1979, completing 29 years of service in the Armed Forces.

Lowell, Darrel Dean, 83, passed away on June 21st. Known as "DD" by friends and "Papa Bird" by his family, Darrel was best known for storytelling and his love of humor. He was proudly born on 3-3-33 and grew up on the family farm in Kansas. One of his favorite stories is about his brief presence on the Kansas State football team. He was quoted as saying "after the first kick-off all I remembered was the ambulance ride to the hospital." His tenure with the Wildcats ended shortly thereafter and to this day claims he still has "four years of playing eligibility." He was a member of



Darrel Dean Lowell

TAPS

Phi Delta Theta fraternity and married the Kansas State homecoming queen, Becky Thatcher Lowell his beautiful wife of 62 years.

Darrel served in the Air Force piloting B-47's and then spent most of his professional career in the fertilizer business beginning in New York City. Becky and Darrel have four children; Amy Lowell, David Lowell, Nancy Lowell, John Lowell, eleven grandchildren and one great grandchild. He leaves behind his two sisters Katherine Langton and Janet Dorman. Darrel and Becky lived the majority of their life in both Atlanta and Savannah, the last 38 years at the Landings. He was an avid, yet mediocre golfer, with a moment of greatness with a hole in one on the 2nd hole of "Deer Creek." He served as both treasurer and president of the "8th Air Force Historical Society" and twenty years as a docent at the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, GA. He was an elder at the Skidaway Island Presbyterian Church.

Miller, James T., 93, was born into a difficult family situation in San Mateo, California, on December 7, 1922. As the next to youngest of five children, early on he developed the characteristic of endurance, which was to serve him well at times throughout his life. As an early adolescent, Jim shattered his knee in a bicycle accident. However, the ongoing pain and impairment brought on by this situation did not stop him from leading a full and active life. Nor did it prevent his joining the Army Air Corps in 1942. He simply concealed his pain from medical personnel.

Jim's endurance was further tested as a tail gunner in a B-17 bomber with the 379th Bomb Group. He was required to sit in a cramped space on a bicycle-type seat, with both legs bent backwards, for eight to ten hours at a time. Other men might have used such an impairment as a way to avoid dangerous combat. Jim did not.

When his airplane was shot down over Eastern Germany in May, 1944, he was forced to bail out along with the rest of his crew. After being captured by German forces, he was transported to a prisoner of war camp for non-commissioned officers. He, along with 200 other airmen, was crammed into a rail freight car meant for no more than 40 individuals. He endured a five day journey with little food or water, never being allowed out of the rail car during the journey. As the war was ending, Jim's captors attempted to elude being captured them-

selves, by marching their prisoners along the length and breadth of Germany. This trek began during the coldest recorded European winter. It was to last a grueling 80 days. Jim endured and survived.

After discharge, he came home to a wife he barely knew and an infant son he had never met. The marriage resulted in the birth of three sons: Frederic William "Bill," Joel Thomas and Steven Wade. It was not always a happy marriage, but Jim committed to it. Jim had already had to cope with the death of his 23 year old brother and his 55 year old father, when his wife, Geneve, died after surgery to remove a brain tumor. This family tragedy was compounded with the passing of his oldest son Bill in Vietnam in 1967. However, not all was sadness and loss in Jim's life. Two years after Geneve's death in 1955, he married who was to become his dearest companion, Vashti Barth. With this marriage, his family began to thrive and prosper. He worked for many years as a Nuclear Inspector Supervisor at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Washington. He and Vashti moved to Hillsboro about nine years ago.

In the end, Jim taught, by example, his remaining sons the value of honesty, fidelity, playfulness and, most of all, endurance. So Godspeed to you, Sergeant Miller, and to all the Sergeants who came before and those who will surely come after. Godspeed to you all.

In addition to his wife of 58 years, Jim is survived by sons Joel (Donna Bauermiller) and Steve (Laura), granddaughters Annie Miller and Molly Bauermiller, grandson Sam Miller (Alina), great granddaughter Hazel, a great grandson to be born in August, and sister-in-law and "surrogate daughter," Sharon Miller.

Myers, Robert F., 92, of Anderson, IN, passed away Monday, August 8, 2016 at Providence Anderson.

He was born on March 17, 1924 in Madison County, the son of the late George and Rhessa (Lutton) Myers and lived his entire life in the area.

Robert was a Staff Sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Force, 385th bomb group during World War II aboard the B17, "Mississippi Miss" as a tail gunner. He also was awarded the DFC. After the war Robert worked at Delco-Remy for 38 years as an inspector. He is survived by his daughter, Cindy (Rick) Clute of Anderson; son, David Myers of Phoenix, AZ; grandchildren, Jodi (Jeremy) Neal and Steven (April) Clute;

great-grandchildren, Landon and Lila Neal, and Evan and Alex Clute; and sister-in-law, Esther Myers.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Lorene Myers, 8 brothers and 6 sisters.

Orban, Balazs (Bill) Martin, (93) died on August 3, 2016 at Bay Pines VA hospital, surrounded by family and loved ones. He was born in Cleveland, Ohio on Jan. 4, 1923, the son of Hungarian immigrants, Balazs and Agnes Orban. During WWII, Bill was a B24 bomber pilot, serving in the 801st/492nd bomber group, as part of the OSS "Carpetbaggers", dropping spies and supplies to the resistance fighters in France and Norway. His first mission to Norway was one Bill Colby was in charge of to disrupt the German production of heavy water for an atomic bomb.

Of nine planes sent out, six turned back because of weather. Bill's plane was one of the three that continued. The weather cleared and they were able to drop their "joes".

He received the US Army Air Corp Air Medal for meritorious achievement and also received the French Legion of Honor award. In February 2015, Bill took his last flight in a B24, his Christmas present from his children. In May 2015, he participated in the Honor Flight to Washington, DC for Veterans.

Bill continued to be an avid flyer and was featured across the country and internationally when, at the age of 92, he made a skilled emergency landing when his engine died, avoiding people and buildings to put the plane down safely in a vacant lot. Bill attended Ohio State University. In 1945, he married Shirley Chaminade from Birmingham, Michigan. In 1946, he purchased Medina Greenhouses in Medina, Ohio. In 1953, he began going to Bradenton, FL, where he owned the Flower Garden on Holmes Beach until he sold the Ohio greenhouses and opened Orban's Nursery in Bradenton, specializing in poinsettias. In



Balazs (Bill) Martin Orban

2013, he was awarded the Manatee County Outstanding Agriculturist of the Year. Bill was preceded in death by his wife, Shirley, whose birthday was on the date he died. He is survived by his sister Irene Johnson of Ashland, Ohio, his three children, Carillon Orban, Audrey Moeller and Marty Orban, five grandchildren and two great-grandsons. In honor of this beloved horticulturist, the family requests that, in lieu of donations, give a bouquet or a plant to a friend or loved one.

A celebration of his life will be held on August 27th from 2-4pm at the American Legion Hall at 2000 75th St. West, Bradenton.

Payne, Frank "Scott", 93, died Feb 5, 2015. He was married to Lillian Jane Hillhouse in La Grande, OR in September of 1939. They were married until her death in February of 2010. He married Helen "Doris" Manwell in August of 2011 in Woodburn.

Scott Payne was a pilot, 452nd Bomb Group, during WWII. His plane was shot down over Germany and he became a POW until freed by the allies in 1945. He worked as an accountant for Crown Zellerbach for over 30 years. He enjoyed reading, hunting and fishing and he was a WWII historian. He is survived by his wife Doris, his children Sandy Frick, Judie Payne, Gale Denis and John Payne, and his stepson Timothy Manwell as well as 16 grandchildren and many great grandchildren.

Perisich, Lloyd W., 91, passed away in his sleep on Wednesday, March 9, 2016 in Sacramento, CA. He was born July 15, 1924 to Eli and Julia Perisich in Fresno, California. He later married Vera Buletti in Sacramento. He enjoyed bird hunting, skeet and trap shooting, deep sea fishing in Mexico and boating. In his earlier years, he made the circuit drag racing when he won an NHRA trophy. Lloyd is a veteran of World War II and was stationed at Burton-



**Frank "Scott"
Payne**



Lloyd W Perisich

wood, England with the 8th Army Air Force. He belonged to the Scottish Rite Temple, the Masonic Lodge, McClellan Sportsman Association and the Grey Eagles. Lloyd retired from McClellan Air Force Base in 1983. He also worked for the Sacramento Auxiliary Police Department. He later worked with his family business, The Hobby Hanger. He is survived by his son Todd (Sheila), daughter Georgette (Curtiss) and grandson Bradley (Sara). He was preceded in death by his loving wife, Vera.

POWELL, Jr., Robert H. "Punchy", 95, a WWII Veteran Fighter Pilot, loving husband, respected father, Atlanta businessman, and noted WWII historian and author, passed away June 22nd 2016. "Punchy" Powell, was born November 21, 1920, in Wilcoe, WV. He was the only son of Robert



**Robert H. "Punchy",
POWELL, Jr.**

H. Powell and Gypsy R. Powell. Bob was married to Betty Wiley Powell, of Thorpe, WV, who predeceased him. They were married, for 70 wonderful years. He is survived by 3 children, Robert W. Powell (Nancy) of Atlanta, GA, Linda Powell Catarino (Roger) of Columbia, SC and Betsy Powell Wall (Jimmy) of St. Simons Island, GA, 6 grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren and extended family and friends. We also want to acknowledge and thank his wonderful caregivers. Bob was a member of Oak Grove Methodist Church, 352nd Fighter Group Association, The Order of the Daedalians, Silver Wings Fraternity, The Mighty 8th Air Force Historical Society-GA Chapter, WWII Round Table and the American Legion. He flew 87 missions in the P-47 Thunderbolt and P-51 Mustang in WWII. On D-Day, he flew 3 missions totaling 16 hours in his P-51 Mustang. Bob separated from the USAF in 1954 at the rank of Captain. He attended WV University where he earned his BS in Journalism. Bob and Betty moved to Atlanta in 1956, where he was an advertising sales executive. They resided in Atlanta for 59 years. Honorary Pallbearers were the Faith Class at Oak Grove Methodist Church and Silver Wings Fraternity. Pallbearers were Robert McCreary, Gilly Smith, Steve Hicks, Travis Reynolds, Ken McCoy, Brent Bracewell, RJ Catarino, and Chris Wall.

Tiearney, Thomas Carson, Sr., 91, of

Kalamazoo, passed away Friday, February 19, 2016 at the Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo. He was born October 8, 1924 to Jean and Harriet (Carson) Tiearney in Chicago, Illinois.



**Thomas Carson
Tiearney, Sr.**

Thomas served his country in the Army Air Corps, 96th bomb group during World War II. During his service, Thomas spent three months as a prisoner of war after his aircraft was shot down over Germany. After returning home, Thomas graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He worked for Honan Crane in Lebanon, Indiana. He later worked for Stokes Division of Pennwalt in Ohio and Pennsylvania before retiring in 1988. Thomas then started his own business following retirement. He was a member of the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Portage and former member of the Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Haven.

He was preceded in death by a son – Kevin Tiearney and granddaughter – Rebecca Mansfield.

Thomas is survived by his wife of 67 years – Miriam Tiearney, children – Lynne (Michael) Mansfield of Flint, Tom (Marilyn) Tiearney, Jr. of Avon, Indiana, and Mark (Denise) Tiearney of Streetsboro, Ohio, daughter-in-law – Becky Tiearney of Watertown, Wisconsin. Eight grandchildren and three great grandchildren also survive.

Thatcher David,

Former U.S. Army Air Forces Staff Sergeant David Thatcher, one of the two remaining Doolittle Raiders, died June 22, 2016 in Missoula, Montana. He was 94.

The Doolittle Raid was an air raid led by pilot Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle on Tokyo on April 18, 1942. Sixteen B-25 Mitchell bombers carrying 80 crewmembers bombed military targets on the island of Honshu. Thatcher was the engineer-gunner on the seventh B-25 to take off from



**David
Thatcher**

TAPS

the USS Hornet. After bombing its assigned targets, the aircraft crash landed off the coast of China. Thatcher was the only crew-member not seriously injured in the crash, so he took charge getting his fellow airmen medical attention. He persuaded Chinese fishermen to carry his injured crewmates to temporary safety. In doing so, he saved the entire crew from capture. For his leadership on this day, he was awarded the Silver Star. Thatcher received an honorable discharge from the Army Air Forces in July 1945. Fairchild Air Force Base held a commemorative event in April to honor the 74th anniversary of the raid.

"I hope that airman will continue to honor the raid and remember what was done," Thatcher said, at the event.

Thatcher was recently VA's Veteran of the Day in honor of the raid's anniversary. (Lt. Col Richard Cole is now the last surviving Doolittle Raider.)

Varozza, James W., 90, passed away June 18, 2015.

In 1926 his family moved to a ranch in Latrobe California where he grew up. He worked on the ranch helping build fence, raise cattle, sheep and chickens. He and his brother George also did a lot hunting together. His shooting skills earned him a sharp shooter medal in Basic Training.

Jim graduated from El Dorado High School in Placerville, California in 1942.

In 1943 while working on P-38's at McClellan Field in Sacramento Calif., he was drafted into the US Army. After being assigned to the 8th Air Force he was shipped out to Burtonwood Air Depot in



**James W.
Varozza**



England where he worked as an aircraft mechanic on B-17's and B-24's. With Battle of the Bulge came the demand for foot soldiers. Each week a roster was posted with the names of GI's selected to go to the front. Jim's name was not on the subsequent lists and he remained at Burtonwood where he was involved in the modifying of B-24's for the "Carpetbaggers".

After VE Day, Jim was scheduled to return to the states for training on B-29's. VJ Day changed that and he was re-assigned to the 9th Air Force and sent to the continent where he traveled through France, Belgium, and into Germany. His last assignment was in Kassel, Germany as a guard at a German SS POW compound. He returned to England, boarded the USS Argentina and came home. On 28 Feb 1946, he was discharged from the USAAF at Beal Field, Marysville, Calif.

Upon returning home he went to work as a mechanic for C.S. Collins Studebaker Dealership. That same year he began dating Eva Dawson also of Latrobe and they were married in 1948.

In September of 1956 Jim and 2 partners purchased the Studebaker dealership from Collins. Jim sold his part in 1966 and went to work for the U.S. Forest Service as an equipment mechanic until his retirement in 1990.

Jim enjoyed sharing about his life experiences on his family's ranch, working as a mechanic and escapades in World War 2. He also enjoyed hunting and going to airshows. Throughout his life he epitomized the characteristics that made the "Greatest Generation": hard work, self-sacrifice, and "stickin' to it".

Jim is survived by his wife Eva of 66 years; 3 children, Randy, Bruce and Stephanie; 6 grandchildren, and 8 great grandchildren.

White, Van Ray, On Sunday, May 29, 2016, surrounded by love Van passed

away peacefully at the age of 97. Born in Smithton, MO, to Harold and Leah White, he grew up with two brothers and a sister (all deceased) on a 90 acre sharecrop-per farm. Though times were tough, that life shaped



**Van Ray,
White**

Van with a strong work ethic and wonderful memories.

Van joined the Army Air Corps in 1941 and was a part of the 8th Air Force, 303rd Bomb Group, stationed in Molesworth, England from 1942 to 1945. He was the "Radar O'Reilly" of the 358th bomb squadron. He was the squadron clerk from Boise in 1942 until the end of the war affectionately known as "Rip" as in Rip Van Winkle. His time in the service was a very significant part of his life, remaining life-long friends with his comrades in arms. He was so devoted to the 8th Air Force he helped form the New Mexico Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, was instrumental in the establishment of the National Museum of the Mighty 8th in Savannah, GA, and he never missed a reunion. He was a true patriot.

After the war Dad worked as an engineer on the Santa Fe Railroad as well as a variety of odd jobs. But he found his true calling when he founded Albuquerque Safe Company in 1949. He began by selling safes out of the trunk of his car, opening his first showroom in the 50's. He eventually expanded into banking equipment, larger safes, vaults, and safe deposit boxes. It seemed at some point every business in town had a safe from Dad! He became a well-respected, well liked, and well known businessman. Selling his company in 1988 he remained active in the business until his death, selling his last safe in April. Dad's motto was "Everyone's a prospect until they buy or die"!

Van was very involved in his community and a member of several organizations. He helped found the Executive Association of Greater Albuquerque (EAGA), and the New Mexico Chapter of the Mercedes Benz Club of America, one of the founding sponsors of the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta, belonged to the Albuquerque Country Club, 100 Club and Elks. He also stayed very busy helping support his wife in her many charitable activities.

Van was preceded in death by his beautiful wife Lore'. Dad leaves behind his daughters, Samantha Blauwkamp (Rol) of Albuquerque, NM (along with Rols' 7 children and 16 grandchildren), Donna Motsinger (Ted) of Questa, NM; grandsons, Luke Motsinger (Rachel) and Jeff Motsinger (Melissa); and great-granddaughter, Kaileigh all of Taos, NM; niece, Diane LaMar (Dan) of Missouri and nephew, Rusty White (Fran) of Kansas.



Previous month's meeting of approximately 40 in attendance included from left to right: Travis Shiffer, great nephew of 392nd BG Pilot Dallas Books; Duane Books, brother of Dallas Books, Russ Robinson, B-24 pilot and Dallas Bowman, B-29 Pilot.

ROANOKE 8TH AIR FORCE FELLOWSHIP

Travis Shiffer

The Roanoke 8th Air Force Fellowship was originally established by William B. "Bill" Overstreet in 2001. Bill flew with the 357th Fighter Group as a P-51 Mustang pilot during WW2. The group was organized by Bill and run by him and some other local Roanoke, Virginia combat air crew who served in World War 2. They met once every other month to have breakfast together and to share their stories with one another. Of course, their wives and other friends were and are always welcome and they do especially like having the ladies attend.

Although the years have diminished their numbers, those who remain faithfully attend the meetings which are now held monthly at their request since 2 months can be quite a long time for one who has over 90 years of experience. There are also newer members who have joined that served in combat during the war and includes combat paratroopers to Navy personnel.

Over the past few years there have been a few "younger" people who have joined out of personal interest and to hear the fantastic experiences of our remaining combat crew. Those "younger" folks are going the full distance to provide support and assistance to those remaining members who served during WW2.

The "target for today" and our mission objective is to ensure their stories and experiences are not forgotten since in their words, the true heroes didn't come back.

It is their stories they are telling. We are listening.

The Roanoke 8th Air Force Fellowship does not require a membership fee or dues to be a member. You don't have to be an 8th Air Force Veteran or even a Veteran at all. The only requirement is an appreciation of the sacrifices made by all United States armed forces members to protect our country, our freedom, and in supporting freedom in other countries around the world. We have many members of various ages. It is a benefit if you like airplanes however!

For those in the Roanoke, VA area: The Roanoke 8th Air Force Fellowship meets at the Roanoker restaurant the last Wednesday of the every month at 8:30am for a breakfast meeting, speaker and fellowship. For more information, contact Travis Shiffer: 8thafroanoke@gmail.com and their website: www.roanoke8thairforce.com

WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Cindy Drehmel

On Tuesday, June 7, 2016, over 50 members arrived at the 128th Air Refueling Wing in Milwaukee. At the start of our meeting we were welcomed back to the base by base Commander Colonel Yenchsky.

After the



Col. Yenchsky

usual business reports, a spirited discussion ensued during the membership meeting on whether to remain at the Refueling Wing or relocate our meetings to Post 449. The final vote took place after our speaker, Sheriff Johnson.

The results were as follows:

40 votes: Remain at the 128th Air Refueling Wing

7 votes: Relocate to post 449

4 votes: Divide up meeting location... 1/2 Post 449 and 1/2 128th ARW

The members chose to remain at the 128th Air Refueling Wing one hundred percent of the time.

For those of you wishing to attend a meeting, all quarterly meetings (with the exception of special events) will be held at the 128th Air Refueling Wing, Wisconsin ANG, 1835 E. Grange Ave, Milwaukee.

Special thanks to Sheriff Jim Johnson and Orville Seymer for volunteering to perform the official count.

Jim Johnson served in the United States Marine Corps for 8 years on active duty and 2 years reserves. He also served in the 32nd Military Police Company of the Wisconsin Army National Guard for 5 years. He was activated in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, serving as a Military Policeman in Baghdad, Iraq from 2003 to 2004. Jim is a recipient of the Valorous Unit Award, the Combat Action Badge and the Bronze Star Medal. Sheriff Johnson has served as a VFW Post Commander, a American Legion Post Commander, and is currently the President of Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association, and is a member of the American Legion Riders, Lions' Club International, Badger State Sheriffs Association, and is a member of the American Legion Riders, Lions' Club International, Badger State Sheriffs Association. He also serves on the Board of Directors for Advocates of Ozaukee, Ozaukee Family Services Advisory Board, Ozaukee County Heroin Task Force,



Chet Gardeski voicing his opinion



Group listening to Sheriff



Merle Hayden



L-R: Don O'Reilly, Dick Laske, and Cindy Drehmel

and Ozaukee County Criminal Justice Collaborating Council. Jim Johnson has been in law enforcement for 25 years as a Patrol Deputy, K-9 Handler, Sergeant, Detective, Lieutenant, Captain and Undersheriff. In 2014 he was elected as Ozaukee County Sheriff.

Upcoming Event

Join us Tuesday, September 13, for our quarterly meeting at the 128th Air Refueling Wing, 1835 E. Grange Ave., Milwaukee.

Our speaker will be our very own Merle Hayden, WWII, 5th Army Air Corps. Merle Hayden is one of our oldest members. He will be 96 this fall and still drives! Merle will speak and show pictures of his time in the Army Air Corps maintaining 50 caliber machine guns on the P47, four on each wing, cleaning, repairing, loading with ammunition, and maintenance. As enemy forces subdued, Hayden's group moved up the coast of New Guinea on four airplane bases, then two island bases, then four bases in the Philippines ending on the small island of Ie Shima, just off the coast of Okinawa, for VJ day.

Our meet and greet 10 am; membership meeting 11 am; at noon we will enjoy a four course lunch; speaker 1 pm; door prize drawings begin at 2 pm.

Contact Cindy Drehmel for more information: 414-573-8520. Everyone welcome!

Many thanks to both Bill Streicher and Dick Laske for the great photos!

BOOK REVIEW

One Way Ticket to Berlin

By John Meurs

The author of *ONE WAY TICKET TO BERLIN*, John Meurs, and I became friends several years ago when he was doing research on the book. The book is so important to me because it is totally about the April 29, 1944 raid on Berlin. The raid on which I was shot down. A few months ago, when John told me that the length of the book would be almost 850 pages, I was in disbelief! How on earth could he stretch one raid on Berlin into 850 pages? Well, he did it by infinite research and it is the most complete reprise of that fatal day that I have seen. The amount of research required to write this volume is mind-boggling. I express my deepest respect for his dedication in compiling this mountain of historic data. I am very moved to see in print the enormous losses we suffered in personnel and planes on that day when the sky over Germany was blazing with flaming death. As the Army Air Corps song so aptly puts it: "We live in fame, or go down in flame. Nothing can stop the Army Air Corps." It was a boyish chant that quickly turned us all into men.

That day the Eighth Air Force took its second greatest loss of heavy bombers during WW II and my Bomb Group, the 447th, took its greatest loss of the war losing 11 B-17s with 10 men on each plane. Many were KIA and the rest of us became POWs.

The record of my group, the 447th, begins on page 539. It was difficult for John to locate, not only surviving members of my Bomb Group, but even many children of the men involved with that mission are now deceased. I'm glad I am still around to review the book.

ONE WAY TICKET TO BERLIN is a very special book to me because April 29, 1944 was the most life-defining day of my 92-year existence. But for anyone who is interested in the contribution that the United States Army Air Corps made in defeating the AXIS in Europe during WW II, this is a must read. After more than 72 years, I still feel a blow to my heart on seeing the names of so many buddies who never returned from this tragic mission. I plan to give copies of this imposing book to my family and to many of my friends. It's available through Amazon.com at a price of \$25.00.

Paperback: 848 pages
Publisher: Quail Ridge Press, Language: English
ISBN-13: 978-1-938878-19-7

Submitted by Norman Bussel



REUNIONS • MEMORIALS • CEREMONIES

91st Bomb Group

Charleston, S.C.
 October 14-17, 2016
 Contact: Mick Hanou
 mhanou@comcast.net
 925-425-3220
 http://
 www.91stbombgroup.com/
 All WWII veterans welcome

Annual Remembrance Ceremony

Honoring the Accomplishments of the 351st Bomb Group

Location
 National 8th Air Force Museum
 Pooler, Georgia
Wreath Ceremony in Memorial Garden
 Saturday, Nov. 5, 2016
 12:00 NOON
 For information contact
 Bruce Nocera
 718-721-0924
 bnocera@nyc.rr.com

490th Memorial
 At long last we have a permanent Memorial to

the 490th Bomb Group (H) at Progress Way, Eye England on what was part of the old airfield. Please check out our Facebook pages 490th Bomb Group (H) - 490th BG Memorial Project as there is a lot more on there than just this picture. Boy what a great day it was, you must look at the these pages Eric Swain eric.490thbg@btinternet.com

NEVER GIVE UP !!!

A beautiful new structure was built in our city. An arcade of 10 white vertical columns was erected across the front of the building, covering and sheltering the porch and its main entrance. It had a majestic look emulating the appearance of an antebellum mansion in the Old South. Its massive lawns were clipped to perfection and shrubbery was trimmed with precision, the only exception to its flawlessness was the lack of Spanish moss hanging from the large trees that surrounded the entire campus. During its construction, slick brochures began arriving in the homes of the local 'senior citizens'. An Assisted-Living facility, second to none, was opening up to the "Seniors" of our area. For a financial fee, older citizens could have available medical assistance if needed, all meals, linen services, apartment up-keep... everything was taken care of. The tenants could have a care-free and work-free atmosphere and be liberated of any responsibility whatsoever. They could live there in ease for the rest of their life or until they ran out of money.

Some time after its opening, TV commercials began appearing showing the occupants in action in their new homes. Rocking chairs were lined up in a row, six on each side of the front door, occupied by men on one side and women on the other. They were not engaged in conversation but just sitting there staring into space. The only exception was a gray headed senior lady who was stroking a small dog sitting on her lap. These folks had lost their zeal for living, they were existing day-by-day, their dreams were not pleasant, their goals for living were gone. They only have their daily bath, medications, treatments and their meals to look forward to. All they have is an Assisted Existence. Many have just quit...and quitting is a fool's paradise. I know a fellow veteran who lived in a similar situation. He was not one to quit. He had more ambitious goals for himself so he did something about it. All of his neighbors benefited from his positive actions. At 91 years of age, he still drove his car. He became the vol-

unteer 'taxi driver' for those around him, driving them to doctor's appointments, hair dressers, shopping or wherever they needed to go. He was blessed with a daily routine and those he served got out of their rocking chairs and they too were given a new challenge to enjoy a richer and more purposeful life.

Not a taxi driver? Then how about Tao Porchin-Lynch who was, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, the oldest known living yoga instructor in the year 2013.... she didn't slow down and at 97 years, still teaches multiple yoga classes a week! Yoga not your forte? Well, she has a few words of advice anyway....(1) Wake up right... think this is going to be the best day of my life. (2) Stay positive, look for the good. (3) Don't procrastinate, there is something you can do and so get up, enjoy life and see how wonderful it is. There is so much to do and little time to do it.

If your joints cry out in rebellion when you think about yoga, then remember Dick Van Dyke, who in 1998, received the Disney Legend Award. He had an alternative. He said "its' never too late, a 90-year-old can get up and start moving a little bit and be amazed at what happens". He advocates staying active no matter your age, health concerns and challenges. The moment you run out of activities and something to do, you start getting rusty. To be honest, we cannot deny the fact that there are infirmities connected with old age. We are not as spry as we used to be, many activities we once performed are impossible. We must replace them with 'doable things'. There is a Biblical record of a weakness being present in all age groups...Jesus verified this truth when in Matthew 26:41 He said "the Spirit is indeed willing but the flesh is weak". We really want to do something but we think we just don't have the energy! Certain things do fall by the wayside but they must be replaced by something else. Try some of these activities: (1) Laugh whenever possible. Laugh at yourself, it will be good therapy and it doesn't require energy. (2) Keep moving, it takes time to get all of the essential prelimi-



Earl Wassom

naries done in the morning, that is usually quite a task, but then once they are done, one feels a sense of accomplishment. (3) Act your age, remember years past and how you got there...then revel in your past accomplishments and share them with someone. (4) Embrace your years, the memories of the miles you have come and your past accomplishments. (5) Nurture a hobby...it may be something entirely new to you but accept this as a new challenge.

General Jimmy Doolittle, our wartime commander of the 8th Air Force, reflected on his ninety plus decades of living. He declared:

...we were all put on this earth for a purpose. That purpose is to make it, within our capabilities, a better place in which to live. We can do this by painting a picture, writing a poem, by building a bridge, protecting the environment, combating prejudice and injustice, providing help to those in need, and in a thousand other ways. If a man leaves the earth a better place than he found it, his life has been worthwhile. Never give up until it is up!!!!!!





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The Eighth Air Force Historical Society
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