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# 8TH AF NEWS

Volume 17 Number 2 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"





# 8TH AF NEWS

June 2017

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## Inside this issue

**On our Cover:** The last gentleman seated on the 2nd row right side with the mustache and the cigarette is Capt Albert L. Schlegel (front cover). A fighter ace who was brutally murdered and MIA for nearly 72 years until they passively ID'd his remains in France and brought them back. The fate of Capt Albert L. Schlegel, 4th FG, 335th FS (Story on Page 32).

Editors Message .....	3
The Berlin Bombing Mission.....	4-22
43rd Annual 8 <sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical	
Society Reunion .....	23-26
Waverly Gardens .....	27-30
Society Web Page .....	31
Capt. Albert L. Schlegel .....	32-34
Chapter & Bomb Group News .....	35
Taps .....	36-43
Witchcraft Brings Past Alive .....	44-45
Reunion • Memorials • Ceremonies ...	46
How About It? .....	47



## Life in a Box

A few weeks ago I received a small box—about the size of a shoe box—filled with a handful of items...in fact, the last bits and pieces of the life of an 8th Air Force veteran. According to documents inside, T/Sgt Joseph A Czerwonka flew over 62 missions with the 303rd Bomb Group—"Hell's Angels" and had requested more missions, but health issues put an end to his military career.



Here is the sum total of the contents of T/Sgt Czerwonka's worldly possessions:

- ☐ The Distinguished Flying Cross (and supporting citation)
- ☐ The Air Medal with multiple oak leaf clusters and citation
- ☐ Separation papers
- ☐ Stack of letters to the VA requesting help due to medical issues and VA pamphlets
- ☐ A fly fishing reel with line
- ☐ 2 artificial fishing lures
- ☐ A rusted fishing knife and sharpening stone
- ☐ A set of tweezers

A paragraph for his epitaph:

T/Sgt Joseph A. Czerwonka (WG) - 59 credited missions flown: 2 with 1Lt Eisele as Waist Gunner (121, 124); Was then Transferred from 360th BS to 427th BS and flew 57 credited missions with other 427BS Pilots as Waist Gunner (WG) - 6 missions, as Ball Turret Gunner (BTG) - 50 missions and Tail Gunner (TG) - 1 mission. 3 with 1Lt Steve Lingo as RWG (166, 168, 170), 3 with 2Lt Chester E. Flick as LWG (172, 174, 175), 8 with 2Lt Donald W. Keating as BTG (202, 203, 208, 209, 211, 214, 215), 4 with 2Lt Richard R. Johnson as BTG (218, 220, 222, 223), 23

with Lt James W. O'Leary as BTG (235, 236, 237, 239, 243, 244, 246, 247, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 262, 263, 265, 266, 271, 273, 275, 277, 283), 11 with 1Lt William H. Petersen (313, 314, 315, 316, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 333) and 5 missions with 5 other Pilots - As BTG (164, 212, 221, 227), As TG (165). Completed first combat tour on 27 September 1944 (32 missions). Volunteered for a second combat tour and completed 27 additional missions on 10 March 1945 (Mission 333).



Debra D. Kujawa  
Managing Director/Editor

The above info I was able to locate online through the 303rd's great website. No one in the little Massachusetts town where Joseph lived and died after the war knew much about him, and I think I know why. It is my understanding Sgt Czerwonka passed away quietly in 1991. I can imagine him spending time in the rivers...fishing, probably in solitude. He never married, he never became a captain of industry or successful entrepreneur or famous "anyone" of note. But he NEVER stopped being a hero. God bless ALL of our veterans. We must ALWAYS preserve their legacy. Life should never be reduced to life in a box...

Deb

PS ~ PLEASE register for the reunion ASAP! All the info you need is in this issue. The hotels are full but call Donna Lee directly for additional reservation information. New Orleans is shaping up to be the largest reunion in recent memory for us!



Continuing the  
Legacy with your  
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### MATERIAL DEADLINE

**August 1, 2017** for the **September 2017**  
8th AF News

We welcome all of your articles!!!  
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We encourage you to send digital images when possible.



## 8TH AF NEWS

The Eighth Air Force News is dedicated to the memory of Lt. Col. John H. Woolnough, Founder of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society and Editor for sixteen years. It is published quarterly and is the official news magazine of the Society, a 501(c)3. The 8th AF NEWS is distributed to members of the Society and is not for public sale.

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# The Berlin Bombing Mission: April 29, 1944

## "No certainties. Usual possibilities."

By Annette Tison

*This article describes the bombing mission flown by the 8th Air Force on April 29, 1944, with an emphasis on the role of the 392nd Bomb Group. The Wyatt crew, including my uncle, 2Lt Douglas N. Franke, were among those from the 392nd who were killed in action during this undertaking.*

*As Robert E. Vickers notes in his book, *Wendling's Crusaders, Remembrance of the Missing* (p. 251-255), approximately 3,850 men flew combat operations as part of the 392nd Bomb Group. Of these, 825—over 20%—lost their lives in combat-connected operations. Another 445 men became prisoners of war, 98 were interned in neutral countries, 37 were shot down but evaded capture, and 181 were wounded.*

*This account describes only one of the 285 missions flown by the 392nd Bomb Group in World War II. It is written in grateful appreciation of all these men who took part in the air war over Europe.*

*The data in this article come from Army Air Corps documents in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and survivor accounts. I also relied heavily on interviews with Kamenitsa and Ofenstein crew members conducted by Greg Hatton, published in *The Journal of the SAN ANTONIO ROSE*. I am indebted to the 392nd veterans who answered hundreds of questions and double-checked my work to make sure their crew's story was accurately portrayed. Unless otherwise noted, all survivor recollections were from information in the Archives or from personal communications with my father, Robert Franke, or me.~ Annette Tison*

### 29 APRIL 1944: BERLIN

#### Mission Overview

The 8th Air Force called for a massive strike against the Friedrichstrasse Railroad Station in Berlin—751 bombers from eight B-17 and four B-24 Combat Wings—arranged into three forces:

- The first force was 263 B-17s from four Combat Wings in the 3rd Bomb Division. Each plane was loaded with three 1000-pound General Purpose bombs and four 500-pound incendiary bomb clusters.
- The second force was 236 B-17s from four Combat Wings in the 1st Bomb Division. Most of these planes also carried three 1000-pound GP and four 500-pound IB clusters, but some were instead loaded with five 1000-pound GP bombs or with 100-pound incendiaries. Several others carried "nickels"—bombs filled with propaganda leaflets.
- The third force was 252 B-24s from four Combat Wings in the 2nd Bomb Division. The Liberators carried either five 1000-pound GP and three 100-pound IBs or 52 100-pound IBs.

Per the Intelligence Annex to Field

Order No. 279, the mission was "a concentrated effort on this target alone with the idea of striking a really, damaging blow at these facilities. This target is a key point in the city's [railroad] passenger traffic system. The city is ringed and crossed with elevated and underground [railroads]. This target is one of the few places where [railroad] passenger facilities may be considered an important target for air attack. Tremendous dislocation would be caused to employees of war industries by disruption of these [railroad] facilities. At this point these facilities are most vital, for the main E/W-N/S lines cross."

Their Tactical Mission Report (p. 2) detailed the 8th Air Force battle plan: "The first force consisted of four B-17 Combat Wings from 3rd Bomb Division. The Combat Wings were to form in pairs with a four-minute interval between the heads of the two pairs. Two Pathfinder aircraft were assigned to the lead Group in each of the first three Combat Wings and one each to the lead Group of the fourth Combat Wing and the low Group of the first. The second force was constituted of four B-17 Combat Wings from 1st Bomb Division. These Combat Wings were to fly in trail at close intervals. Two Pathfinder aircraft were detailed to each Combat Wing. The third force comprised four B-24 Combat Wings from 2nd Bomb

Division. The second Combat Wing (two Groups) was to fly echeloned left on the lead Combat Wing and the third and fourth in trail at five-mile intervals. Two Pathfinder aircraft were assigned to each the first, third and fourth Combat Wings and none to the second." This plan was generally followed, although reports from Groups in the 1st Bomb Division indicate they actually flew three Groups abreast and one Group in trail.

#### First Force (3rd Bomb Division)

##### 45th Combat Wing

96BG, lead  
452BG "B" + 7 a/c 388BG, high  
452BG "A", low

##### 4A Combat Wing

385BG, lead  
447BG, low

##### 13th Combat Wing

390BG "A", lead  
95BG, high  
390BG "B" (=7 a/c 95BG + 7 a/c 390BG + 7a/c 100BG), low

##### 4B Combat Wing

4BG, lead  
100BG, high  
388BG, low



## **Second Force (1st Bomb Division)**

### **1st Combat Wing**

91BG

381BG

398BG

### **40th Combat Wing**

305BG, lead

92BG, low

306BG, high

### **41st Combat Wing**

303BG, lead

379BG, high

384BG, low

### **94th Combat Wing**

401BG, lead

457BG, high

351BG, low

## **Third Force (2nd Bomb Division)**

### **14th Combat Wing**

44BG + 4 a/c 392BG, lead

392BG

### **2nd Combat Wing**

389BG, lead

453BG, high

445BG, low

### **96th Combat Wing**

"B" = 458BG (lead & low left)

3+ 2 sq. 467BG (high right)

"A" = 466BG (lead & low left)

+ 2 sq. 467BG (high right)

["B" Group was abreast and to the left of the "A" Group]

### **20th Combat Wing**

"A" = 93BG (lead & low left)

+ 2 sq. 448BG (high right)

& "B" = 446BG (lead & low left)

+ 2 sq. 448BG (high right)

["B" Group was echeloned to the right of the "A" Group]

## **8th Air Force Bomber Participants**

According to the 8th Air Force Tactical Mission Report (p. 1), the entire formation was to make a "direct penetration and withdrawal along a common route. The course was designed to keep the bombers north of the known strong ground defenses in the Dummer Lake and Hannover regions and to allow

a downwind bombing run to minimize the strong and effective fire expected from the target defenses." Fighter support by sixteen groups from VIII Fighter Command (593 planes), four groups from IX Fighter Command (183 planes) and two RAF Mustang Squadrons (24 planes) was supposed to ensure "continuous escort for all forces over enemy territory." (p. 4) Two of the P-47 Groups from VIII Fighter Command were scheduled to make second sorties during the bombers' return trip to provide support for stragglers.

Most of the first force had a fairly easy mission (if any mission could be called "easy.") However, their 4A Wing, the 385th and 447th Bomb Groups, had a vastly different experience. Radar equipment in one of their Pathfinder aircraft failed completely and it only worked sporadically in the other. With their navigational tools thus impaired, they veered to the south on their way to Berlin. Off-course and unescorted, the Wing was hit hard for over 30 minutes by an extremely determined and aggressive force of about 125 enemy aircraft in the Brunswick area, continuing through the target area and for the first few minutes of the withdrawal.

With the exception of that unlucky Wing, the first force and all the second force had ample fighter protection to the target. The third force, the B-24s from the 2nd Air Division, was not so fortunate. They met 60 to 80 enemy aircraft northeast of Hannover. These fighters attacked for 10 minutes and then, after reforming, attacked for another 20 minutes on the final approach to the target. They finally broke off after the formation had made its final turn to the target. In less than 25 minutes, five B-24s crashed as a result of these attacks and many more were damaged.

## **Bombing Efforts**

The off-course B-17 Wing, which was thoroughly disorganized by the strong enemy attacks, bombed Magdeburg as a visual target of opportunity. Two groups of Fortresses bombed that city while the third, which had endured especially severe attacks, jet-tisoned their bombs in the same general area.

The rest of the enormous formation-only 580 bombers by that time-

dropped over 1,408 tons of bombs on Berlin, with "fair to good" results. (8th Air Force Narrative of Operations, p. 1-2) According to the "Bombing Data" section of the 8th Air Force Tactical Mission Report, bombing altitudes ranged from 21,500 feet (445th BG) to 26,425 feet (100th BG).

## **Returning to England**

The B-17s were generally protected on the withdrawal. Again, it was the B-24s that suffered. None of the P-38, the P-51, or the P-47 Groups designated to protect the B-24s on the return trip located the Liberators when scheduled. As a result, they were vulnerable to attack by a great number of enemy aircraft. Nearly 100 enemy fighters found them in the Hanover area and hit in strength until the P-47s assigned to sweep the withdrawal route arrived in the Dummer Lake area. Sporadic attacks were then made until the bombers reached the Zuider Zee.

## **8th Air Force Losses**

Eighth Air Force losses on April 29, 1944 (not including planes that crashed in England) were 26 B-24s, 38 B-17s, and 14 US fighters, as follows:

First force (3rd Bomb Division): Of 263 planes airborne, 225 were credited with a sortie (meaning they had flown far enough to enter an area where flak might be effective or where usual enemy fighter patrols occurred). There were 28 losses. Eighteen of the downed planes belonged to the unlucky 4A Wing, which lost one-third of the 55 planes it dispatched. Three P-51s were lost while escorting this part of the formation.

Second force (1st Bomb Division): Of 236 planes airborne, 214 were credited with a sortie. There were 10 losses, nine caused by flak. Three P-38s, one P-47, and four P-51s were lost while escorting the second force.

Third force (2nd Bomb Division): Of 252 planes airborne, 230 were credited with a sortie. There were 26 losses, 18 due to German fighters. Three P-51s were shot down while escorting the third force.

A total of 355 bombers had some degree of battle damage, most (325) due to flak. (All loss statistics are from the 8th Air Force Tactical Mission Report, "Bomber Summary" and "Fighter

Summary.”)

### The 14th Combat Wing

According to its Mission Journal, the 14th Combat Wing of the 2nd Bomb Division (44th and 392nd Bomb Groups) was alerted about the upcoming mission at 1730 hours on Friday, April 28. At 1850, they were notified how many planes they were required to provide. By 2000, it was decided that the 44th would furnish 24 ships and the 392nd, 18-and four of these would fly with the 44th. It was later determined that these four planes would comprise “the high element of the low left squadron” of the 44th’s formation. Sometime in the planning process, four crews—led by 2nd Lieutenants Fryman, Prell, Shere, and Wyatt—were chosen to fly with the 44th.

At 2005, the bomb load for the 14th and 2nd Combat Wings was established as five 1,000-pound General Purpose bombs and three 100-pound M47A1 incendiary bombs per plane. The other B-24 Wings would carry 52, 100-pound incendiaries per plane.

### The 392nd Bomb Group

At 0115 on April 29, mission planners at the 392nd decided to hold the gunners’ briefing at 0400 and the officers’ briefing at 0430, followed by the navigators’ briefing at 0530.

underground tracks. According to notes used at their Main and Enlisted Men’s Briefings, this mission represented “a shift in 8AF strategy” as its purpose was “to strike a real blow” to Berlin’s railroad passenger traffic system. This was “one of the few places where passenger facilities [were] important enough for air attack.” Destroying the railroad station would cause a “tremendous dislocation of employees in war industries.” The briefer emphasized that the effort would be “all out on this one target” as all three Bomb Divisions had the same objective. B-17s from the 3rd Division were scheduled to hit Berlin eight minutes before the B-24s, which would bomb concurrently with B-17s from the 1st Division. With dimensions of only 500 x 100 yards (per the 392nd’s Statistical Summary of Operations), the target was just a tiny dot in a city with over four million residents.

The Initial Point (IP)—where the B-24s turned into their bomb run—was east of Friesack, 36 miles from the target. Code word for releasing chaff (aluminum strips intended to confuse the radar used by German flak batteries) was the imaginative “throw it out.” Special instructions cited in the Bombardier’s Briefing Form included, “Cameras on at bombs away. Turn off all power turrets from IP to bombs away. Keep right rear bomb bay switch off.

Usual possibilities.”

It was anticipated the Bomb Group would be over enemy territory at 0952, over target at 1127, and back to base at 1430. Length of time above 12,000 feet when they would have to use their oxygen masks was five and a half hours.

After all the briefings were over, personal items turned in, equipment collected and protective clothing put on, 392nd crews were at their stations at 0625. They started engines at 0705, taxied at 0710, and their first plane, under the command of lead pilot Capt. Robert D. Copp, took off at 0725.

The Group was fully formed at 0832; Wing and Division assembly was successfully completed and the formation departed the English coast at 0923. Almost immediately, they began falling behind schedule due to an unpredicted wind shift. They crossed the enemy coast at 0957 at 20,000 feet; a few minutes later, one of the 392nd’s planes aborted due to mechanical problems. The rest gradually climbed to 24,000 feet.

Per the Command Pilot’s Narrative, “Very little ‘S’ing was done until we approached the first flak area near Osnabruck and Hanover.” Shortly afterward, about 50 enemy fighters attacked the Wing at 24,000 feet. They caused four 392nd planes to crash and two more to turn back due to damage or wounded



When the curtain was pulled back in the 392nd’s briefing room, the crews saw this mission map.(NARA files)

Briefers told the 392nd’s crews that their Mean Point of Impact (MPI, or target) was the Friedrichstrasse Railroad Station in the heart of Berlin, the crossroads of north-south and east-west traffic and a network of elevated and

Have navigator salvo after fifth indicator light goes off.” And—most intriguing of all: “Bring bombs back if not in trouble.”

As for enemy opposition expected, the briefer said tersely, “No certainties.

crewmembers, and completely scattered the formation. The P-47s had seen the fighters coming but unfortunately could not engage as they were at the limits of their endurance. Most of the P-51s that were supposed to replace the P-47s had



mechanical problems and they turned back at 1116 hours without ever finding the B-24s. (*VIII Fighter Command Narrative of Operations*, p. 2.)

After the attack, Copp reported in his Immediate Priority Message of Aircraft in Distress that “9 ships seem to be unaccounted for.” He approached the target with just four ships from the 392nd (his own, Reed’s, Brunn’s, and Bell’s); most of the remaining 392nd planes had merged with the 44th Bomb Group as they reformed after the fighter attacks near Hannover. Several Groups approached Berlin simultaneously from different headings, causing more disorder. The 392nd’s Lead Bombardier’s Report put it concisely: “Too many

aircraft in very poor formations over target.”

The Lead Bombardier’s Narrative summarized the mission status to that point: “Of the 18 aircraft taking off, 4 aircraft were shot down by enemy aircraft prior to the target, 2 aircraft returned early because of battle damage, both aircraft jettisoning full load in enemy territory, 1 aircraft returned early bringing bombs back and 11 aircraft went over the target.” Then he gave bombing results: “[Shere] and [Wyatt], missing in action, are believed to have bombed the primary target and their bombs are included in totals. Two aircraft bombed off [Copp], lead ship of this group. The other eight aircraft

dropped off lead aircraft of the 44th Group.” There was no photo coverage of the 392nd’s lead section, but those flying with the 44th Bomb Group hit 7 ½ miles southwest of the primary MPI. (When the 2nd Bomb Division Photographic Section completed its Photographic Analysis of the mission, it noted that 11 aircraft from the 392nd “attacked Berlin on 44 Group which in turn bombed on 389 Group which was bombing on 453 Group.”)

After bombing, the Wing and Division rally (where the planes reformed into Wings, and then into Bomb Divisions) was “very poorly accomplished”. At different times, the 392nd’s Lead Navigator found himself to be either north or south of course by his dead reckoning, indicating to him that the wind had shifted “considerably.” Stunning proof of the difference between predicted wind speed and direction and what was encountered is given in the 20th Combat Wing’s Summary of Wing Critique: An autoplots carried by one of their navigators showed his position as 75 miles north of Berlin but when he made a visual check, he was actually about 50 miles due west of the city.

The wind had a direct impact on US fighter support, especially on the return. Copp noted in his Command Pilot’s Narrative, “... no [fighter] support was observed at the target or on the withdrawal.” The 8th Air Force Tactical Mission Report (p. 5) was even blunter: “...the B-24’s were unescorted from a point a short distance west of Berlin on the penetration, through the target area and for more than 200 miles on the withdrawal.” This was due in large part to winds “both stronger and more northerly than predicted” that “caused the bombers to lag considerably behind the time schedule and resulted in several Combat Wings flying a few miles south of course.” This Report’s Weather Annex said the B-24s encountered winds 10 to 20 degrees more northerly than forecast and 10 to 15 knots stronger than predicted.

American fighters were greatly frustrated by their inability to find the bombers they were supposed to protect. For example, the 361st Fighter Group was scheduled to provide withdrawal



(NARA files) This 44th BG photo array, taken at 23,500 feet, shows the cloud coverage over Berlin. Since 8 of the 392nd’s planes dropped bombs when the 44th did, this photo no doubt shows the conditions they saw as well.

support for the B-24s from 1232 until 1305, between Steinhuder Lake and Lingen; their Deputy Commander's "Report on Mission of 29 April 1944" stated:

"...I continued on with the lead squadron, orbiting the Steinhuder area, arriving there at 12:40. At that time, [radio] contact with B24's was made but no accurate report as to their position could be received from them except that one [Combat Wing] stated they were thirty-five minutes late. While I orbited with the lead squadron, I directed Titus squadron to penetrate deeper in search of the B-24's. At 13:10, B-24's called saying they were northeast Hanover. Because of the penetration and length of time we had spent orbiting, I directed the pilots who had at least two hundred gallons of gas to follow me and the remainder to return to base... Then, at 13:15, B-24's again called and said they were forty miles north of Hanover under attack. We still were not able to sight the B-24's and, because of our endurance, could not penetrate any deeper. At 13:15, the Group, according to briefed courses, should have been at the west coast of the Zuider Zee, but, being in the Hanover area instead, I gave recall at 13:15... Pilots on this mission averaged four and one-half hours flying time. Group could not possibly have remained any longer in search of B-24's." (p. 2)

Taking advantage of this lack of support, German fighters harassed the B-24s intermittently all the way to the coast. Attacks were particularly strong in the Dummer Lake and Zuider Zee areas and the German focus on stragglers caused two more 392nd losses.

The 392nd left the Dutch coast at 1425, flying at 18,000 feet. They were over the English coast at 1512, altitude 3,000 feet, and above the base at 1528 at 1,300 feet. Pilot 2Lt Jones, who had badly wounded crewmen on board, fired his red-red flares and landed immediately, without completing the landing pattern circuit. His plane, the first from the 392nd to return, was almost an hour later than forecast at the mission briefing. Seven more planes touched down at Wendling in the next six minutes. The last plane from the 392nd to return landed at 1544.

In its assessment of the German fighter reaction to this mission, the 8th



This Track Chart shows the discrepancy between the route planned and actually flown by the 392nd. (NARA files)

Air Force's Tactical Mission Report 29 April, 1944, noted:

"An estimated 350 enemy fighters, nearly all single-engine aircraft, opposed this operation, with as many as 50 making double sorties. Concentrating a force of more than 100 fighters in the Hannover area, the enemy elected to attack the lightly escorted B-24 force, striking as soon as the P-47's turned back and apparently diverting the single Group of P-51's remaining with the bombers with a flight of 30 single-engine fighters while 60 to 80 enemy aircraft struck the bombers in a two-

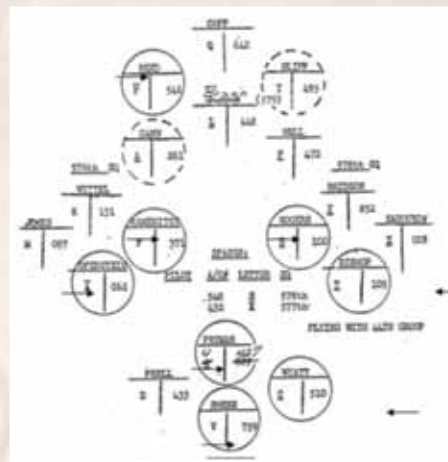
phase attack continuing to the Initial Point.... Again, on the withdrawal the B-24's, then without any support, were hit even harder than during the penetration by a force of 100 enemy aircraft, many of which were making second sorties.... This operation was marked by the skillful manner in which the [German Air Force] controller handled the forces at his disposal, particularly in the exploitation of temporary advantages." (p. 6)

### THE 392nd'S CREWS

Eighteen crews from the 392nd Bomb Group participated in the mission against Berlin that Saturday in April 1944. Here are their stories, given in the order they took off. Names in italics were killed in action on this mission. Dates of death for individuals who were killed on later missions are also indicated.

### THE COPP CREW, 577th Squadron Plane #42-52642, *Short Round*

Capt Robert D. Copp, command pilot  
1Lt Winston Dorrell, pilot  
2Lt Marvin E. Roberts, copilot  
1Lt Robert F. Gries, lead navigator  
1Lt Robert R. Rapenport, lead bombardier  
T/Sgt Gilbert L Hodge, engineer  
T/Sgt Bernard R Bisnett, radio  
S/Sgt Avila D. Mathews, right waist gunner  
S/Sgt Harold Hohman, left waist gunner  
S/Sgt Martin M. Nowicki, ball turret gunner  
S/Sgt Thomas E. Noone, tail gunner



The position of each plane in the 392nd's formation. Arrows indicate planes that crashed. Crews were assigned to the 392nd on these dates: original cadre (Aug. 1943): Copp, Slipp; 4 Dec. 1943: Jones, Wittel; 9 Mar. 1944: Prell; 21 Mar. 1944: Bell, Bridson, Kamenitsa, Ofenstein, Rogers, Sabourin; mid-Mar. 1944: Brunn; 10 Apr. 1944: Bishop, Gann; 11 Apr. 1944: Wyatt; 14 Apr. 1944: Fryman, Shere; 16 Apr. 1944: Reed. (NARA files)



As lead plane for the 392nd, Capt. Copp's ship took off right on time at 0725. At 1104, 50 single engine fighters in double line abreast attacked his formation. These fighters not only shot down four of the 392nd's bombers, but also disrupted the formation as a whole. 1Lt Gries made this terse entry in his navigator log: "Both wing men gone. Formation scattered." With the deputy lead on his right (Slipp) and the wingman on his left (Reed) turning back because of battle damage, Lt Gries' Lead Navigator's Report noted that the formation proceeded toward the target "just following one another."

Further difficulties arose when bombardier Rapenport prepared to drop his bombs. When he opened the bomb bay doors, the left one-damaged by a 20mm shell-only opened partway. After several frantic moments trying to fix the problem, Rapenport's Lead Bombardier's Narrative told how he went back, "pulled the two pins and told the Pilot to salvo. The bombs went away at 1148 and the point of impact was in the southeastern part of the city..." Getting out of Berlin unscathed was not easy. At 1208, 1Lt Gries recorded in his log: "Made wide right turn and continually S'sed to avoid flak. Very heavy. 10 minutes."

On the return, a group of seven FW-190s attacked the Group ahead around 1330 and then came back and

passed from front to right of Copp's plane. Lt Roberts, in the nose turret, fired about 200 rounds at one fighter from 200 to 700 yards and saw some bullets hit the ship. It was seen smoking and spiraling toward the ground out of control. Because the crew was "too busy watching other fighters to note its crash," Lt Roberts received no credit. During the next 33 minutes, they recorded five B-24s going down with only 10 parachutes seen.

They landed at 1530 hours with minor damage to their plane from 20mm cannon shells.

#### **THE SLIPP CREW, 577th Squadron** **Plane #42-7495, *Axis Grinder***

1Lt Floyd Slipp, pilot  
1Lt A. H. Jensen, copilot  
1Lt Robert J. Beatson, navigator  
2Lt John S. Lawrence, bombardier  
T/Sgt William C. McKinley, engineer  
T/Sgt William H. Lorenzen, radio  
S/Sgt Fred A. White, right waist gunner  
S/Sgt Walter J. Kolczynski, left waist gunner  
S/Sgt James M. Buzick, ball turret gunner  
S/Sgt Donald H. Cordick, tail gunner

Like Capt. Copp's, 1Lt Slipp's was one of the original crews to man the 392nd in Aug. 1943. Initially the copilot

on the Gonseth crew, Slipp became first pilot on Mar. 18, 1944, when Gonseth took over lead crew responsibilities in place of Capt. Graper, who had been injured in a car accident.

As deputy lead, the Slipp crew was the second to take off, at 0726. During the first major attack, S/Sgt Cordick fired three bursts at an FW-190. He saw it go straight down, enveloped in flame. Less than 10 minutes later, while still about 75 miles from Berlin at 24,000 feet, flak and fighters hit them and Slipp had to feather the #3 engine. Fifteen Me-109s came from above and from the east, forcing the gunners to look directly into the sun to spot the fighters. The top turret gunner saw them, almost at the last moment, and yelled a warning over the intercom. The plane was hit by five 20mm shells, seriously wounding the navigator in the hip and the left waist gunner in his foot and leg. In his account of his war-time experiences, "A Story of Three Years," ball turret gunner James Buzick recalled (p. 10), "We were all alone in deep Germany with two wounded people on board, and my guns were inoperative. One of the explosive shells had hit the ammo can of my ball turret and the ammo in the can started to explode. The explosion was so strong it broke the inch thick Plexiglas on the ball turret that I used to sight through. I'm not sure what happened next but I found myself out of the turret



The fully assembled 392nd Bomb Group heads toward Germany. (392nd BGMA files)



(Photo from James Buzick)

This crew photo was taken in Oct. 1943, before 1Lt Slipp became their pilot. Since they were a lead crew at the time, it includes the command pilot, lead navigator, and lead bombardier. Back row (l-r): Sgt Fred White, Maj. William Taylor, Capt Mel Graper, Lt John Jones, Capt Harold "Doc" Weiland, Sgt Walt Kolczynski. Front row (l-r): Sgt James Buzick, Sgt Don Cordick, Sgt Bill McKinley, Sgt Bill Lorenzen, Lt Don Williamson, and Lt Rapenport, who was the lead navigator on Copp's crew for the mission to Berlin.

and in the waist area of the airplane trying to help the wounded waist gunner, and putting on my parachute. I was too big to wear a parachute in the ball turret. We later found the butt end of a 20 mm explosive shell lodged in my left machine gun, which was situated only inches from me when I was in the turret. I did not have a scratch... I tried to get [S/Sgt Kolczynski] to lie down so that I could take over his guns. Blood was running down his legs from a wound... he refused. He said, 'No damn German is going to shoot me and get away with it!'" He stayed at his gun the whole way back.

Slipp salvoed his bombs and left the formation from 24,500 feet. Soon after, two Me-109s spotted the lone plane and attacked. Slipp dove for the cloud cover at 10,000 feet. After eluding the fighters, Slipp went on the interphone and gave the crew a choice: Sweden or England? The crew voted for England, where they thought there'd be better medical treatment for the wound-

ed crewmen. They stayed low and in the clouds for miles-occasionally venturing above or below the clouds, but always spotting German fighters. In fact, they flew so low across Holland that two crewmen remember German soldiers in a windmill shooting at them with rifles.

They crossed the English Channel just above the water and actually had to gain altitude to get over the cliffs as they approached England. They landed at Wendling at 1316; S/Sgt Buzick remembers (p. 11) that their brakes didn't work very well since they had lost most of their hydraulic fluid. S/Sgt Kolczynski was "stiff as a board" by then and the crew had to carry him to the floor exit by the tail and lower him down.

*Axis Grinder* had a badly damaged ball turret, a hole in the wing by the #3 engine that was "large as a wash tub" and many other smaller holes.

#### **THE REED CREW, 577th Squadron** Plane #42-7546, *Alfred II*

2Lt John W. Reed IV, pilot

2Lt Harry C. Bate, Jr, copilot

2Lt Stanford Birnbaum, navigator  
(KIA 6-23-44)

S/Sgt Clyde G. Whitt, bombardier  
(KIA 6-23-44)

S/Sgt Stanley Jankowski, engineer  
(KIA 8-12-44)

S/Sgt John H. Holling, radio (KIA 8-12-44)

Sgt William C. McGinley, right waist gunner (KIA 8-12-44)

Sgt Clare W. Hultengren, left waist gunner (KIA 8-12-44)

Sgt Frank Minick Jr., ball turret gunner (KIA 8-12-44)

Sgt Jack O. Shaeffer, tail gunner  
(KIA 8-12-44)

According to the 577th Squadron diary, this was *Alfred II's* 50th mission, 46 without an abort.

The Reed crew took off on their third mission at 0727. Sometime before



the IP and flying at 24,000 feet, five Me-109s-the first wave in a group of about 50-attacked from 12 o'clock. As noted in the crew's Interrogation Form and S/Sgt Whitt's Combat Diary, their



Alfred II's nose art (392nd BGMA files)

plane was badly damaged: the hydraulic system was knocked out, gas tanks punctured, controls shot out, #2 engine shot out, #4 engine bad, right rudder shot off, and they had been hit in the bomb bay, cockpit, and radio compartment as well. 2Lt Reed made a sharp turn to the left, got out of the formation, and headed down toward the clouds, quickly jettisoning his bombs. A crew check revealed that everyone was okay. Reed got the plane back to England, but realized he couldn't land the plane safely and ordered the crew to bail out. At about 1320 hours, some of the crew jumped out and landed near Beccles, Suffolk; another crewman jumped out a little later and landed near Ingham, Norfolk. Reed then set the automatic pilot and bailed out himself. Alfred II flew on for a few more miles before it finally crashed and burned near Walcott, Norfolk, at 1329. The only casualty was 2Lt Reed; it was believed he hit the plane while exiting and was unable to open his parachute.

## THE BRUNN CREW, 579th Squadron

Plane #41-29448, *Carol Ann*

2Lt Walter S. Brunn, pilot

F/O Henry L. Reinbold, copilot

2Lt Richard C. Griffith, navigator

2Lt James D. Coyle, bombardier

T/Sgt Thomas R. Hassett, engineer/LW gunner

T/Sgt R. V. "Mac" Adams, radio



(Photo from Walter S. Brunn)

This photo shows several of the Brunn crew at Wendling, probably after a game of volleyball. The volleyball net was located just outside their hut. Back row (l-r): S/Sgt Ernest Fund, F/O Henry Reinbold, S/Sgt James Hair, S/Sgt William Harris. Front row (l-r): 2Lt James Coyle, S/Sgt Richard Goric.



Photo from Henry L. Reinbold)

This photo of the Brunn crew was taken in mid-July 1944, after they had completed all required combat missions. Some of the enlisted crew had already been transferred to other assignments; S/Sgt Fund, for example, was a nose turret instructor in Ireland. Back row (l-r): T/Sgt "Mac" Adams, T/Sgt Thomas Hassett, F/O Henry Reinbold. Front row (l-r): 2Lt Walter Brunn, 2LT Richard Griffith, 2Lt James Coyle.

S/Sgt. D. L. Smith, right waist gunner

S/Sgt William T. Harris, top turret gunner

S/Sgt Richard D. Goric, ball turret gunner

S/Sgt Ernest J. Fund, tail gunner

The Brunn crew was unique among the 18 that took off that morning: They were originally assigned to the 376th Bomb Group in San Pancrazio, Italy, and flew 12 missions with them

to Toulon, the Anzio beachhead, Regensburg, and Steyr, Austria, among other targets. In mid-March 1944, they were hurriedly transported from Italy to Casablanca to Prestwick, Scotland, and then to Wendling. Their first mission with the 392nd was on 1 April 1944. Having lived in a tent from January to March 1944 while in Italy, 2Lt Brunn wrote his parents that the 8th Air Force was "the Park Avenue of war fronts." At the time, the mission requirement in Italy was 50, in England, it was 30, and their 12 missions with the 15th Air Force were recalibrated to count as 7 missions for the 8th Air Force.

They took off at 0728. Pilot Brunn recalls that the scene over Berlin "was an awesome gray mass like flying into a thunderstorm." They dropped bombs at 1146 from 23,700 feet. At 1328, ten to twelve enemy fighters attacked the formation in front and then two FW-190s went back through Brunn's formation. T/Sgt Hassett fired about 100 rounds at 200 yards; he saw some bullets hit and the plane went down smoking, but he got no credit. This may have been the same attack that put a hole in the #3 gas tank. Hassett hurriedly transferred the remaining gas to another tank while copilot Reinbold prayed that they wouldn't get hit again while all that fuel streamed out.

Their luck held, and they landed at 1530.

#### **THE GANN CREW, 579th Squadron** Plane #42-100261, *Sweet Chariot*

2Lt Dewey L. Gann Jr., pilot  
2Lt William C. Dick Jr., copilot  
2Lt Russell E. Spensley, navigator  
2Lt Vincent L. Cunniff, bombardier  
S/Sgt Charles Shrader, engineer  
S/Sgt John T. Carroll, radio  
S/Sgt J. K. Wright, right waist gunner  
Sgt John Puchir, left waist gunner  
Sgt Robert L. Reynolds, ball turret gunner  
Sgt Raymond E. Sinclair, tail gunner

The Gann crew lifted off at 0729. While north of Amsterdam at 19,700 feet, the pilot noticed a large oil leak in the #3 engine. Gann feathered the propeller and turned back at 1000, landing at Shipdham. Inspection revealed that

an empty shell case, ejected when ships in front of him test-fired their guns, had severed the propeller feathering line. The line was removed and replaced, and the airplane returned to Wendling at 1122. All bombs were brought back.

#### **THE BELL CREW, 579th Squadron** Plane #42-7472, *Bull Bat*

2Lt Charles L. Bell, pilot  
2Lt Walter A. Dorn, copilot  
2Lt David Orenbach, navigator  
2Lt Walter W. Bogie, bombardier  
S/Sgt Elbert E. Gilmore, engineer (KIA 5-28-44)  
S/Sgt Joseph S. Knight, radio (KIA 6-23-44)  
Sgt Alden S. Seymour, right waist gunner  
Sgt Howard W. Asch, left waist gunner  
Sgt James W. Blanco, ball turret gunner  
Sgt Arthur J. Egan, tail gunner

Bell took off at 0729. He was flying in the 44th BG's formation when they neared the IP. At 1117, four or five enemy aircraft came through in a pack. The bombardier, in the nose, fired at a Me-109 from about 200 yards; he saw the plane smoking, its engine on fire, and parts of the right side cowling flying off. The waist gunners confirmed seeing pieces of the enemy aircraft go past their windows. (For his efforts, Bogie earned a "probable.")

Bell dropped his bombs at 1145

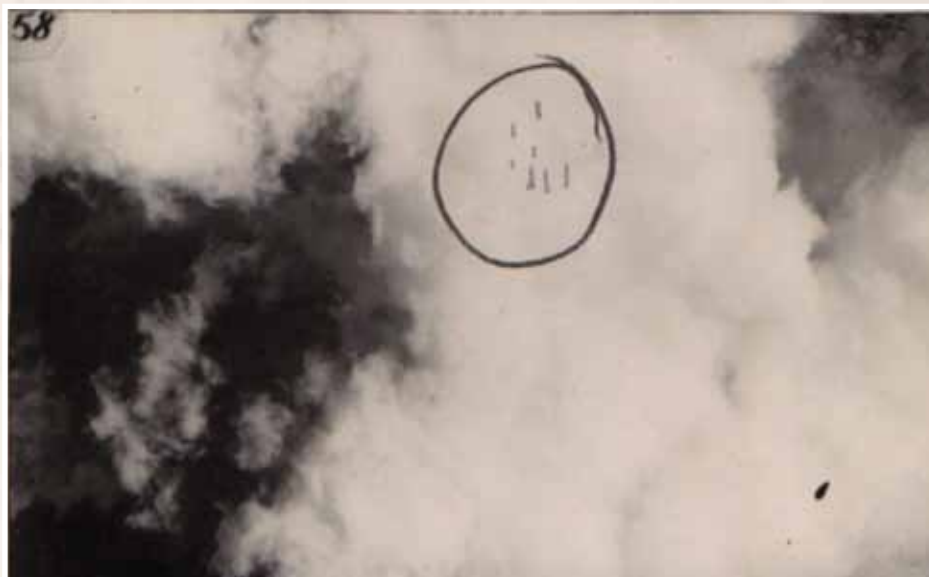
from 23,500 feet along with the 44 BG's lead squadron. They saw smoke up to 18,000 feet coming from the target. At the crew interrogation, he said there were "too many planes over target waiting around for bomb run." He also commented that enemy aircraft seemed to concentrate on stragglers as they were "hanging about in clouds waiting for them." They returned safely to base at 1531 with only minor damage to the plane, but reported that four oxygen masks-for Blanco, Dorn, Bogie, and Seymour-had failed.

#### **THE WITTEL CREW, 576th Squadron**

Plane #41-29131, *Spirit of '46 Flying Patch*

1Lt Edward F. Wittel, pilot  
2Lt Warren R. Marsters, copilot  
2Lt John F. Karl, navigator  
2Lt John C. Zuk, bombardier  
T/Sgt Vernon P. Cannada, engineer  
T/Sgt Cletus M. Jeffcoat, radio  
Sgt Bertrand J. Prost, right waist gunner  
T/Sgt E. L. Lewis, left waist gunner  
S/Sgt P. M. Lancaster, ball turret gunner  
S/Sgt D. A. Roti, tail gunner

The Wittel crew took off at 0731. At 1102, about 30 miles northeast of Hannover, 50 enemy aircraft struck head on in a massed attack. Wittel recalled afterward that friendly fighter support was changing when the first pass was



Wittel's bombs fall toward Berlin. (NARA files)



made and by the time P-38s came in and engaged the enemy at 1105, it was too late. Their top turret gunner fired 75 bursts at an FW-190 and thought 30 to 40 hit. He saw the plane go down smoking but there was too much fighting to positively say it crashed. Wittel dropped his bombs from 24,000 feet when the lead ship of the 44th did and was one of the few ships from the 392nd to have photographic coverage of the event.

His group was attacked at 1220, one pass from the nose, and again at 1310—an attack by scattered enemy aircraft against stragglers, three to five at a time.

Wittel's was the last plane from the 392nd to land that day, at 1544.

According to T/Sgt Cletus Jeffcoat's diary, this mission "was the longest time over enemy territory. We had a big headwind and it took us a long time to get out. We made it back to the field and couldn't get the wheels down. After a while we got them down, but not locked. We began to think we were going to have to bail out. We finally got them locked and came in on three engines. We were all in the back for crash landing. We thought we had no brakes, but our auxiliary system worked. Everyone was sweating us in, had lots of other crews to come out to our plane. Really drew a crowd. No one hurt, thank God."

## THE KAMENITSA CREW, 576th Squadron

Plane #42-100371, *Doodle Bug*

2Lt William T. Kamenitsa, pilot  
2Lt George E. Graham Jr., copilot  
2Lt John J. Caulfield, navigator  
2Lt Gene A. Miller, bombardier

S/Sgt Edwin J. Heater, engineer  
S/Sgt Joseph R. Trivison, radio  
Sgt Jack J. Krejci, right waist gunner  
Sgt Oliver R. Guillot, left waist gunner  
Sgt Archie B. Young, ball turret gunner  
Sgt Lark C. Morgan, tail gunner

Pilot William Kamenitsa had originally enlisted in the infantry. His name was misspelled as "Kamenitsy" on his initial paperwork; whenever he tried to have it corrected, he was admonished, "The Army doesn't make mistakes, you must be wrong!" The misspelling followed him when he transferred to the Air Corps, and all official documents

entire left aileron. Graham immediately salvoed the bombs from the pilot's pedestal while Kamenitsa fought to keep the plane under control. Because of the missing wing section, the left side of the plane was getting very little lift, causing the left wing to drop and making the plane circle to the left. To compensate, Kamenitsa put full power to the left engines and reduced power on the starboard engines. The correction did not allow them to fly "straight" but it did keep them from going into a full spin and certain death for most of the crew. He told the crew he thought he could get them back to England, if he could just get into some cloud cover.

From the back, Sgt Morgan

reported that his guns had jammed. At the waist, Sgt Krejci was so intent on firing at the Me-109s that he wasn't aware Kamenitsa had lowered his wheels as a sign of surrender. When he heard Kamenitsa telling the gunners over the interphone to "cease fire" he didn't understand why. It wasn't until Sgt Guillot pointed to their left wing that he realized they were in trouble. The fighters finally stopped shooting at the crippled B-24 but they continued to circle the plane all the way down.

Engineer

Heater stood between the pilots' seats and used his fingernails to scrape ice from the windshield so Kamenitsa could see. He headed for a large field, with the B-24's undercarriage brushing the trees at its edge. They touched down at about 150 mph and all went smoothly at first. Then the nose wheel hit a ditch or road and collapsed, burying the nose in the ground where it plowed a furrow for a few hundred yards. The top turret caved in, cutting Heater's legs and pushing the armor plating behind the pilots forward, ramming them against their steering columns.



(Photo from Oliver "Bud" Guillot)

The Kamenitsa crew in early April 1944. Back row (l-r): 2Lt John Faas (KIA 7-7-44), 2Lt John Caulfield, 2Lt Gene Miller, S/Sgt Edwin Heater, Sgt Jack Krejci. Front row (l-r): Sgt Oliver Guillot, 2Lt William Kamenitsa, Sgt Archie Young, Sgt Lark Morgan, S/Sgt Joseph Trivison.

show his name as "Kamenitsy."

The crew had gone through training with the Rogers crew and the twenty men were close friends.

The Kamenitsa crew took off at 0732. Around 1100 while north of Hannover, fighters attacked Ofenstein's plane, which was flying just to the left and slightly behind Kamenitsa. They apparently scored some direct hits to the front part of the plane as Ofenstein's plane first tilted, with the right wing just above Kamenitsa's left wing, and then abruptly dropped, breaking off about ten feet of Kamenitsa's left wing and the

When the plane finally stopped moving, the nose section was buried under the cockpit and there was nothing in front of the pilots but dirt. In the back, the two waist gunners had been holding tightly to their guns. When the nose hit and the plane abruptly stopped, they were hurled toward the front of the plane over Sgt Young's head, finally colliding with a forward bulkhead. Survivors agreed it was miracle that the plane never caught fire.

The German fighters kept close watch on the downed crew from the air until civilians took them prisoner. They were eventually taken to an air raid shelter in Hanover where someone commented that the Rogers crew was probably already back in England drink-

S/Sgt Tommy Lane, left waist gunner  
S/Sgt William C. Surber, ball turret gunner  
S/Sgt Vincent H. Rossi, tail gunner

Jones took off at 0733. Bombardier Thomas recalled that when they got up to 24,000 feet, the temperature had dropped to 34 degrees below zero. He was still cold after turning the thermostat on his electrically heated flying suit up to high.

Just after 11 a.m., he saw a dozen enemy aircraft attack the B-17 formation about two miles to his left. When the friendly fighters went out to engage, 40 German fighters came in from above. About 10 or 12 seemed to target Jones' ship. Bombardier Thomas, in the nose

leg. Another round cut through Jones' oxygen line and he had to make do with portable oxygen bottles for the rest of the mission.

Radio operator McAdams somehow maneuvered Sandoz out of his seat and onto the flight deck, where he cut Sandoz's flying suit away and applied a tourniquet to the mangled leg. He sprinkled sulfa powder, the only antibiotic available, onto the wound and tended to Sandoz the whole way back.

Jones, who was now formed with the 44th BG, was attacked again on the return trip by four enemy aircraft that swooped down from 11 o'clock high. S/Sgt Surber, who had moved from the ball turret to the left waist gun, shot the right wing off a Me-109, destroying it at 1327 while simultaneously the tail gunner fired at four more Me-109s coming in from 4 o'clock, causing one to smoke.

Bombardier Thomas recalled that as they neared the Zuider Zee, seven Me-109s began "playing around and picking on stragglers. We were all nearly out of oxygen at this time and were really sweating out the coast and leaving so we could drop down below the formation. I was worried about George giving out of oxygen, as there was no one to keep an eye on him. We finally saw the clouds break and the beautiful Channel. Also the [enemy fighters] left just as we had to drop down on account of oxygen."

Jones flew the whole way back by himself, getting a replenishment oxygen bottle as needed. When they finally got back to Wendling, 2Lt Thomas fired three red flares, signifying injured on board, and they landed at 1528 without flying the traffic pattern. They pulled off the runway into a revetment as soon as they slowed down and Sandoz was quickly taken away by ambulance. The doctor later told Jones that Sandoz would have died if they'd been just 15 minutes later getting him medical attention. Three crewmen (Marvin, Lane, and Surber) had frostbite on their faces; Marvin's was considered "pretty severe." When their plane was inspected later, it had two holes in the nose turret, two 20mm holes in the wing, and several flak holes.

The Jones crew had the most success against enemy fighters of any



(Photo from Enrico Schwartz)

The Kamenitsa plane shortly after its crash. The white object was Sgt Guillot's parachute, which he was planning to use to burn the plane. That scheme was abandoned when a quick head count showed three men were missing, presumably still in the wreckage.

ing beers in their honor. Then the door opened and the surviving members of the Rogers crew walked in.

#### **THE JONES CREW, 576th Squadron** Plane #42-110097

1Lt George E. Jones, pilot  
2Lt Richard R. Sandoz, copilot  
2Lt Jack C. Morris, navigator  
2Lt Harry E. Thomas, bombardier  
T/Sgt Allen E. Bodoh, engineer  
T/Sgt Ralph E. McAdams, radio  
S/Sgt Henry E. Marvin, right waist  
gunner

turret, fired at an FW-190 until it caught fire and exploded about 150 yards off the left wing. A minute later, at 1111, S/Sgt Marvin destroyed another FW-190 from his position in the right waist.

Jones released his bombs at 1146 from 23,500 ft. while under attack by 50 German fighters. As Jones put it later, "They looked like a swarm of bees and they certainly stung us." During the melee, a bullet came through the left side of the nose turret between Thomas's neck and shoulder, passed by the navigator's head and hit the copilot in the right ankle, nearly severing his





THE OFENSTEIN CREW, 576th Squadron (392nd BGMA files)  
 The Ofenstein crew. Back row (l-r): 2Lt Leo Ofenstein, 2Lt John Wall, 2Lt David Purner, 2Lt Harold Buzzi. Front row (l-r): S/Sgt Vitold Krushas, S/Sgt Roy Kennett, Sgt Hyman Hatton, Sgt Oliver Schmelzle, Sgt Robert Rowlett, S/Sgt Arthur Smith.

392nd plane that day: three destroyed. They were the only 392nd crew to have more than one claim against enemy fighters approved.

#### Plane #42-110062

*2Lt Leo E. Ofenstein*, pilot  
*2Lt John J. Wall*, copilot  
*2Lt David J. Purner*, navigator  
*2Lt Harold G. Buzzi*, bombardier  
*S/Sgt Vitold P. Krushas*, engineer  
*S/Sgt Roy L. Kennett*, radio  
*S/Sgt Arthur M. Smith*, right waist gunner  
*Sgt Hyman J. Hatton*, left waist gunner  
*Sgt Oliver G. Schmelzle*, ball turret gunner  
*Sgt Robert W. Rowlett*, tail gunner

The Ofenstein crew took off at 0734. Sgt Guillot, Kamenitsa's left waist gunner, was in the perfect spot to see what happened to Ofenstein's ship during the attack. "We had just gone through heavy anti-aircraft fire and I could see heavy anti-aircraft up ahead of us that was shooting at the first wave of heavy bombers that were over Berlin. 062 was up on my left... Suddenly, a German fighter's shells hit the Ofenstein plane. It lifted 062 up, maybe ten to fifteen feet, and blew it forward! Pointed in the nose up position above us, it rolled over, came down and

hit our wing. The last time I saw them they were in a steep descent to the left with their left wing much lower than the right."

Navigator Purner told Greg Hatton he had just logged a position report when the bombardier yelled from the nose turret that fighters were coming in from 11 o'clock high. They flew in from the left and the interphone resounded with calls of "fire in the bomb bay" and "fire in the engine" and "fire all over." Then they hit Kamenitsa's plane and their tail assembly was ripped off. Almost immediately, the plane went into a flat spin to the left and lost altitude rapidly. The #1 and #2 engines were gone, and a third engine was on fire. Purner put his navigator's desk up and sat on the edge of the nose wheel door. They dropped through the cloud cover at 15,000 feet at almost the exact time he heard the bailout bell.

Ofenstein had lowered the landing gear as a sign of surrender, so when Purner slid out the hatch he immediately wound up astride the mudguard, just above the lowered nose wheel. The slipstream pulled both his felt boot liners and fur-lined flying boots off his feet. He'd previously been hit in the left leg and foot by shrapnel, so this was quite painful. Try as he might, centrifugal force kept him pinned against the nose wheel, spinning as the plane did and

seeing the ground come ever closer. At less than 1,000 feet, he was blown free when the ship apparently exploded; he didn't pull the ripcord but suddenly saw his parachute open above him. After landing, he buried his chute and then lay alone in a grain field until S/Sgt Smith joined him. Together, they watched the B-24s fly away. He and S/Sgt Smith evaded capture until German civilians found them at 2215 on 1 May. Purner later told the Johnson City Press (April 29, 2000) that "Civilians captured me, and that was not a pleasant situation. One of my gunners was with me, and we were beaten. They had a rope around my neck, and we had resigned to the fact that we were going to be hung. Two older German men armed with Luger pistols managed to persuade the young hotheads in that mob that we should be held for military interrogation."

As he told Greg Hatton, S/Sgt Krushas had been enjoying the scenery from his top turret. At 11 a.m., it was a beautiful spring morning with white puffy clouds. His appreciation of the fine day ended abruptly when the bombardier yelled "Fighters off the nose, eleven o'clock!" Krushas immediately pinpointed a swarm of German fighters, maybe over 100 in all. He fired as the fighters approached, but 20mm cannon shells quickly put his turret out of business.

The radio operator, standing between the pilots' seats, saw about 20 to 30 fighters attack his group of about 14 airplanes. He told Greg Hatton of the terrifying events that soon followed. When they got hit, a fire started that quickly spread into the bomb bay. Gasoline was pouring down from the punctured tanks and was feeding the fire, a frightening sight with 5,300 pounds of bombs still on board. S/Sgt Kennett went down to try and put the fire out. While he was standing on the catwalk, the bomb bay doors opened. The fire was "just tremendous" by then and Kennett had no chance of putting it out. He looked toward the flight deck and saw Wall motioning for him to get out. He went to the flight deck, snapped on his parachute and tugged at Krushas' feet where they dangled from his top turret. Finally, Kennett recalls, "I gave up and figured [Krushas was] going to ride the ship down. I didn't know what

[he] was doing and I had to bail out. Things were getting pretty risky there.” The pilots were still working furiously at the controls when Kennett went out the bomb bay. He was captured right after landing.

As Krushas told Hatton, he had in fact climbed down from his top turret when he heard Ofenstein yelling over the intercom for the crew to bail out. He went forward to the flight deck and witnessed the pilots’ Herculean efforts to keep the ship flying. Then, it occurred to him, “Hey...we’re in battle! I’ve left my post!” He was back UP in his turret when Kennett grabbed his legs. In a quick glance around the plane, Krushas saw the whole top of the wing on fire; on the flight deck, the gas in the fuel sight gauge was also ablaze. Burning gasoline was landing on his parachute where it lay atop the radio transmitter cabinets. He yanked the parachute out of its case (which thankfully was not yet on fire), snapped it on, and went to the edge of the flight deck, about three feet above the catwalk in the bomb bay. There, too, burning gas was dripping onto the bombs. Figuring he had no other options, he dived off the flight deck, slipping neatly between the bottom thousand-pound bombs. As he descended, he watched Kamenitsa’s attempt to land his plane in the field. Krushas wound up unconscious in a treetop with parachute cords wrapped around his neck; an old German climbed up and cut him loose.

Sgt Hatton was first out the escape hatch between the waist and tail positions, expecting Smith, Rowlett and Schmelzle to quickly follow. Both Hatton and Smith remember that as Schmelzle was putting on his parachute, it unexpectedly opened up; he was gathering it together when they jumped. Smith got out just as the plane jerked into a tight spin at about 10,000 ft. The last thing Smith saw inside the plane was Schmelzle

and Rowlett stuck to the bulkhead by centrifugal force.

Hatton and Krushas had already been captured and were locked up in a silo when they heard an air raid siren that afternoon. They looked out a small window and saw American bombers on their way back to England. Then they were taken for interrogation and afterward put in a large room with many other captured airmen. Krushas vividly remembers German fighter pilots walking through the room asking, “What plane were you in? What bomber? What letter was on your plane’s tail?” as they tried to find someone from the planes they had just shot down.

### THE FRYMAN CREW, 579th Squadron

Plane #41-29427, *Ready Willing and Able*

2Lt Bernard Fryman, pilot  
 2Lt Kenneth A. Barber, copilot  
 2Lt Robert L. Young, navigator  
 2Lt Norman R. Christian, bombardier  
 S/Sgt Randall C. Viosca, engineer  
 S/Sgt Joseph Myers, radio  
 Sgt William A. Chaplinsky, right waist gunner  
 S/Sgt Christopher J. Reilly, left waist gunner  
 Sgt William J. Childress, ball turret gunner  
 Sgt Rudolph H. Grossi, tail gunner

Fryman’s was the first of the four

crews chosen to fly with the 44th BG to take off, at 0735. Despite extensive battle damage, the plane made it back to Wendling and was in a landing-pattern circuit over the field. At 1522, the plane suddenly exploded and then crashed two miles south of the base, killing the entire crew.

### THE WYATT CREW, 579th Squadron

Plane #42-7510, *El Lobo*

2Lt Bert W. Wyatt, pilot  
 2Lt Aubert M. Tufts, copilot  
 2Lt Douglas N. Franke, navigator  
 T/Sgt Byron E. Hassett, nose gunner  
 S/Sgt. William S. Womer, engineer  
 S/Sgt Robert W. Monroe, radio  
 Sgt John F. Sorrells, right waist gunner  
 Sgt Robert E. Thompson, left waist gunner  
 S/Sgt David E. Harbaugh, ball turret gunner  
 Sgt Alfred P. Archambeau, tail gunner

The Wyatt crew took off at 0735 and joined the 44th BG formation as ordered. Capt. Copp saw them in formation over the target and it was presumed they had dropped their bombs. They crashed at 1345 in a forest near the small town of Dinklage, Germany, about 230 miles due west of Berlin. The plane was apparently a straggler as no US airman saw what happened to it. German records show that both a flak battery

and a fighter claimed to have caused the crash, although they don’t say in what order, under what circumstances, or what damage either caused. A young German saw *El Lobo* in the air just before it impacted: neither starboard engine was working and thick black smoke was coming from the



Fryman’s crash site. (392nd BGMA files)





(Photo from Robert Franke)

This photo of the Wyatt crew was taken on 17 April 1944. Back row (l-r): S/Sgt David Harbaugh, S/Sgt Jack Goetz, S/Sgt Robert Monroe, Sgt Robert Thompson, Sgt John Sorrells, Sgt Alfred Archambeau. Front row (l-r): 2Lt Bert Wyatt, 2Lt Walter Gichan, 2Lt Douglas Franke, 2Lt Aubert Tufts

St.Nr.	Ortsbezeichnung	Uhrzeit	Typ	Abgesch. durch	Verbleib des Besatzungs	Georgie Friedrichs	Georgie Friedrichs	Bemerkungen zum St.Nr. 41-28759
9	1.5 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
10	1.5 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
11	2 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
12	2 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
13	2 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
14	2 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
15	2 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
16	2 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
17	2 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
18	2 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
19	2 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.
20	2 km o. Lorchdeken	11:30	Flak	Jäger	1. Tot	Leb-	3. Tot	K.K.

(Bundesarchiv Militararchiv Freiburg/RL 19 files)

This document, from Headquarters, German Air Force Region XI, lists 4 of the 20 crashes in that area on April 29, 1944. The Wyatt crash is at the bottom, Shere's is just above it. The columns (from left to right) show the location of the crash on the German military grid system; the geographic location; time of crash; plane type and amount of damage; who claimed the crash; what happened with the crew-number dead ("tote") or captured ("gefangen"); what military authority was responsible for salvaging the aircraft; who actually salvaged it; and additional remarks. Enough of the tail section remained after Shere's crash for the Germans to identify the B-24 by its serial number, 41-28759.

forward part of the fuselage. Other witnesses at the crash site remember seeing unexploded bombs in the wreckage that German soldiers from Vechta Airbase detonated a few days later.

### THE PRELL CREW, 576th Squadron

Plane #41-29433

2Lt Donald D. Prell, pilot (KIA 5-19-44)

2Lt Daniel B. Weiss, copilot (KIA 5-19-44)

2Lt Charles R. Anderson, navigator (KIA 5-29-44)

2Lt Harvey E. Stetson, bombardier  
T/Sgt Donald G. Backus, engineer (KIA 5-19-44)

T/Sgt Harvey J. Byler, radio (KIA 5-19-44)

S/Sgt Demur Edwards, right waist gunner (KIA 5-19-44)

S/Sgt Wilho Simila, left waist gunner (KIA 5-19-44)

S/Sgt Byron T. Pearson, ball turret gunner (KIA 5-19-44)

S/Sgt John F. Dreher, tail gunner (KIA 5-19-44)

One of the four planes assigned to fly with the 44th Bomb Group, the Prell crew took off at 0736. When just a few minutes from the IP, three Me-109s pressed the attack. The bombardier fired at the middle plane until it went into a spin off the right wing, where the right waist gunner saw it explode 4,000 feet below them. Almost simultaneously, the top turret gunner fired at the Me-109 on the left. It was smoking as it went past the B-24. Prell dropped his bombs at 1145 from 22,500 feet. Navigator



Their plane, #433 (392nd BGMA files)

Anderson recorded intermittent attacks from Berlin all the way to the Dutch coast, with the largest attack about 1327.

Prell landed at Wendling at 1529-the only one of the four crews designated to fly with the 44th BG to return.

## THE SHERE CREW, 577th Squadron

Plane #41-28759

2Lt Fred C. Shere, pilot

F/O Milan R. Zeman, copilot

2Lt Patrick J. Ryan, navigator

Sgt Fonzy M. Wilson, nose gunner

S/Sgt Orlando H. Friesen, engineer

Sgt Fonzy M. Wilson Jr., radio

Sgt Thomas L. Hampton, right waist gunner

Sgt Frank A. Bennett, left waist gunner

Sgt Joe B. Maloy, ball turret gunner

Sgt Marvin O. Morris, tail gunner

At 0737, the Shere crew took off, the last of the four 392nd planes chosen to fly with the 44th BG on this mission. Excluding Sgt Wilcox, who was a substitute from 2Lt Larson's crew, ball turret gunner Joe Maloy was the most experienced man. He was on his third mission while everyone else was on his second mission.

They were hit by flak after dropping bombs but while still in the Berlin area; Maloy remembers that the shrapnel bouncing off the B-24 sounded like hail on a tin roof (The Fayette Citizen Online, Nov. 4, 1994). Shere feathered one engine but was able to keep up with the other planes. A short time later, German fighters came down through the formation, knocking out two planes above Shere's and causing another of his engines to windmill. With this damage, they could no longer keep up with the formation and they headed toward England alone, losing altitude with every passing moment.

In his story, "*Mooning Frankfurt*," navigator Ryan provided a detailed account of what happened next. The nose turret was out and he remembers thinking that if it was a hydraulic problem, then probably all the turrets would have to be worked manually, a slow and therefore ineffective operation. The intercom was silent, leaving Ryan to



Photo from Joe Maloy)

The Shere crew. Standing, l to r: 2Lt Fred Shere, 2Lt Milan Zeman, 2Lt Robert Cox (KIA 8-12-44), 2Lt Patrick Ryan. Kneeling, l to r: Sgt Fonzy M. Wilson, Sgt Marvin Morris, Sgt Joe Maloy, Sgt Frank Bennett, Sgt Thomas Hampton, S/Sgt Orlando Friesen.

wonder if the plane was on autopilot. He knew the flight deck had taken a lot of damage and he wasn't sure if the pilots were even flying the airplane anymore.

Then Ryan saw a single Me-109 that sprayed the damaged B-24 with bullets until it was finished. The bailout bell sounded, and Ryan went out the nose wheel well. As he was hiding his parachute in a bush, Joe Maloy came "hot-footing across the field... There were a lot of people chasing him and by the time he got to me, he was gasping and wheezing, blood was streaming down his face, and I thought he must be seriously wounded. In the minute or so it took to convince me that his wounds were slight, the German people were on us... We were surrounded by people from a nearby village. A young boy was acting as interpreter. The first question he asked was 'Do you want to go to Berlin?' We said, 'Hell, no, we just came from there.' That probably was not a good thing to say because they immediately shook a few pitch forks at us." They were taken to the village jail where they were reunited with Bennett, Wilcox, and Hampton (who had been hit in the stomach by a piece of shrapnel-luckily, the many layers of clothing he was wearing kept the metal

from doing serious internal damage). Morris was brought in later with two leg wounds; one of the fighter's bullets had gone completely through his calf and another through his thigh.

Joe Maloy's ball turret had been raised and as he climbed out, he saw two bright orange flashes and heard two loud bangs. He felt like someone had hit him hard with a handful of rocks. He had no time to wonder what had happened, though, as he immediately took over the right waist gun in place of wounded Thomas Hampton. He remembers that the fatal attack was by three fighter planes. The crew shot one down, another abandoned the assault, and the third attacked from below and to the left-it was this plane that caused the fatal damage.

After he had bailed out and was floating down to earth, Maloy finally had time to remove his helmet and goggles. He discovered that his helmet was filled with blood. After he and Ryan were captured and taken to a jail, Maloy found ten more wounds on his right side from his waist to his shoulder. He and Ryan used a small knife to dig out most of the 20mm shrapnel.

Engineer Orlando Friesen had a difficult time escaping the plane. When the hydraulics went out, his top turret



got stuck in an awkward position. He tossed his parachute down (he had been sitting on it) and squeezed out of the turret as quickly as he could. A glimpse onto the flight deck convinced him, the copilot and radio operator were already dead and the pilot was almost dead. He promptly sounded the bailout bell. Hurriedly putting on his parachute-a difficult job since the plane was then in a steep dive-he jumped through the opened bomb bay doors. The plane was quite low when he finally got out and he hit the ground hard. In fact, he didn't really become coherent until he was in Stalag 17B.

Tail gunner Marvin Morris spent about two months at a German hospital in Lingen and later told Maloy that the downed German pilot came to visit him there. A bullet from one of the bomber's .50 caliber machine guns had hit the German pilot and they compared war wounds.

The crash occurred shortly after 1330, less than 15 miles west of where the Wyatt crew would crash at 1345.

### THE SABOURIN CREW, 578th Squadron

Plane #42-110028

2Lt Roland E. Sabourin, pilot  
2Lt Elmer F. Amble, copilot  
F/O Joseph Lipschitz, navigator  
2Lt William T. Singleton, bombardier



(392nd BMGA files)

The Sabourin crew. Back row, l-r: 2Lt Roland Sabourin, 2Lt Erwin, 2Lt William Singleton, 2Lt Elmer Amble. Front row, l-r: S/Sgt Walter Mateski, S/Sgt Eugene Mahon, S/Sgt Frederick Hollien, Pfc Joseph Spagnola, Sgt Edward Moran, and S/Sgt Kenneth Robbins.

S/Sgt Frederick J. Hollien, engineer  
Pfc Joseph T. Spagnola, radio  
S/Sgt Walter J. Mateski, right waist gunner  
S/Sgt Kenneth H. Robbins, left waist gunner  
S/Sgt Eugene M. Mahon, ball turret gunner  
S/Sgt Edward J. Moran, tail gunner

They took off at 0738. They had already flown so many times in #028 that they regarded her as their ship. Being a superstitious lot, they refused to name her or have nose art painted on her, because they felt those ships were shot down more often.

They were particularly vigilant. They carefully logged when Gann turned back at 1000 and they reported Bishop and Rogers pulling out of formation during the first attack, and then Slipp at 1114. They noted that the first attack was by 24 planes in a good formation coming in at 11 o'clock. S/Sgt Hollien, manning the top turret, fired 100 rounds at one of these planes, an FW-190; it emitted black oily smoke and then blew up under their stabilizer. Although P-38s eventually chased the Germans away, the formation was greatly scattered.

Navigator Lipschitz felt they were all alone over Berlin and they dropped their bombs at 1145 with the 445th BG (the "F" group) from the 2nd Combat Wing-who was supposed to be flying

abreast of their own 14th Combat Wing. The formation was very disorganized. From his vantage point at the front of the plane, Lipschitz thought the flak looked like he could walk on it, 640 guns. He recalled that after bomb release, Sabourin made a quick right turn, put the nose down and left Berlin, looking for a B-24 formation to join. He saw a cluster ahead and merged in, surprised to see planes from his own Group.

Sabourin remembers, "The German fighters had a field day with our formations. The timing for our fighter cover replacements was off perhaps 10 or 15 minutes. Evidently, the German ground radar picked up this delay and directed their fighters, so enabling them to strafe the formation, and they literally did strafe them. You could see them up ahead. They looked like little birds, swallows. The next thing you knew they were coming through the formation firing at you and the little 'Christmas tree lights' would be popping up all around you." (20th Century Crusaders by Ian Hawkins, p. 128-129).)

They landed at 1532.

### THE BISHOP CREW, 578th Squadron

Plane #42-110105

2Lt Robert R. Bishop, pilot  
2Lt Arthur W. Luce, copilot  
2Lt Donald W. Hess, navigator  
2Lt Thomas Digman, bombardier  
Sgt James T. Blong, engineer  
S/Sgt Joseph J. Karaso, radio  
Sgt John J. Harringer, right waist gunner  
Sgt Michael A. Chiodo, left waist gunner  
Sgt John P. Bonnassiolle, ball turret gunner  
S/Sgt Ralph L. McDonald, tail gunner

The Bishop crew took off at 0739. Around 1103, after the first fighter attack, the Sabourin crew saw them pull away from the formation, reporting that it "looked like the right elevator was shot up badly. No chutes." Sgt Guillot, Kamenitsa's left waist gunner, remembers that when his airplane came to rest after the crash and the dust had settled, he could see a huge fire and black smoke near a farm house or barn a few hundred yards away. He was sure it was a bomber from his own Group, perhaps



(Photo from Sgt Blong's family)

The Bishop crew. (L to r): Sgt John Bonnassiolle, S/Sgt Joseph Karaso, Sgt Michael Chiodo, S/Sgt Orus Baxter, 2Lt Robert Bishop, Sgt John Harringer, 2Lt Thomas Digman, 2Lt Arthur Luce, and 2Lt Donald Hess. Not shown: Sgt James Blong and S/Sgt Ralph McDonald.



(Photo from Oliver "Bud" Guillot)

This aerial photo, taken in 1945, has been edited to show how close to each other the Bishop and Kamenitsa planes crashed.

Ofenstein's, since their two planes had collided and left the formation at the same time. As it turned out, the plane was actually Bishop's. German witnesses remember seeing the dogfight between the fighters and the bombers in the sky over the farm, and then the B-24 spiraling down toward the horse pasture below. They confirmed that everyone was killed in the crash. About an hour after the impact, a bomb exploded in the wreckage, destroying much of what

remained of the plane and sending debris far and wide through the little town.

#### **THE BRIDSON CREW, 578th Squadron**

Plane #852 and #42-52548, *Jaw-Ja Boy*

2Lt George L. Bridson, pilot  
2Lt James A. Green, copilot  
2Lt John L. Quail, navigator  
2Lt William W. Willemin, bombardier

dier

S/Sgt Blaine Ashcraft, engineer

S/Sgt Umberto Paolucci, radio

Sgt Jacob A. Stafford, right waist gunner

Sgt James B. Seery, left waist gunner

Sgt George Powers, ball turret gunner

Sgt Edward Coleman, tail gunner  
(died 4-14-45 while a POW)

The Bridson crew started out in plane #852 but it developed uncontrollable turbo superchargers while forming up. They returned to base, landed, quickly transferred to the spare (#42-52548), and took off again at 0747.

The first attack was at 1103, seven or eight FW-190s coming from high and head on, two or three at a time.

Copilot Green recalls that on the bomb run and just above his altitude of 25,000 feet there was a thin cloud layer between 50 and 100 feet thick. German fighters used this cover to get ahead of his formation, turn and make a head-on dive through the formation. He was positioned high right and slightly ahead of the main formation so he was unable to see how effective the German tactics were. The flak was the worst he had ever experienced, completely blocking any sight of the Groups ahead. At about two minutes before bomb drop, he happened to glance up to a "most horrifying sight":

B-17s with bomb bay doors open and converging on our line of flight. I tried to alert the formation to this and asked for an immediate break to the left. This didn't happen. As I looked up I could see the bombs dropping from the B-17s and we were flying right through their pattern. At this point our formation also released our bombs and the entire formation made a sharp left turn to try and get out from under the 17s. The results of all this is that the formation we were in scattered in what seemed total chaos, which I guess is about the only way to describe it. I recall seeing several ships going down, both 24s and 17s but there was just no way to determine who they were in all the confusion. After getting out of the Berlin area there were many, many single ships trying to re-gather into a semblance of protective formation. This was not as easy as it would seem because if your aircraft



couldn't be positively identified the formation just wouldn't let you join up... On the long flight back we finally did manage to get close enough to another formation for some protection, but not near as much as we would have liked. After crossing the English Channel we made our way back to our home base alone and didn't find out until the next day who in our Group didn't make it." (from a 1993 account by James Green)

Those B-17s may have belonged to the 303rd Bomb Group, part of the second force (1st Bomb Division). Their "S-3 Narrative of Combat Mission Flown 29 April, 1944 to Berlin, Germany" reported that "B-24's were making runs on the city below us as well as other B-17 formations at our altitude [25,800 feet]."

Bridson's crew was one of the few in the 392nd to bomb when Copp did, releasing at 1145 from 24,500 feet. The other attack noted in their records was from ten Me-109s at 1329; these planes came from both sides at 11 and 1 o'clock high. They landed safely at 1534.

## THE ROGERS CREW, 578th Squadron

Plane #42-100100, *Double Trouble*

1Lt Gerald E. Rogers, pilot  
 2Lt Richard A. Weir, copilot  
 2Lt Jack A. Roper, navigator  
 2LT Fred J. Kane, bombardier  
 T/Sgt Robert L. McCalicher, engineer  
 T/Sgt Earl J. Lawson, radio  
 Sgt Robert J. Longo, right waist gunner  
 Sgt Harold L. Andrews, left waist gunner  
 Sgt Robert W. Danford, ball turret gunner  
 S/Sgt Edward J. Gienko, tail gunner

As Sgt Longo told Greg Hatton, "The morning of April 29 was really something because... we were really down. None of the fellows talked to each other or said 'Hi'...everybody was down in the dumps. Our plane, *The Bad Penny*, was getting fixed and so we were flying *Double Trouble*." The Rogers crew had flown *The Bad Penny* on nine of their ten previous takeoffs at the 392nd, so having to fly in a different



(392nd BGMA files)

The *Double Trouble* girls and Carroll W. King, their artist

plane undoubtedly seemed like a bad sign.

Rogers was the last of the 18 planes to take off, at 0755. S/Sgt. Gienko recalls that even before being hit in the first attack, engine problems made it hard for them to keep up with the formation and they had begun to fall back. As a safeguard, he hung his flak armor above and to the rear of his tail turret instead of wearing it, because he thought he had more protection that way. This precaution obviously worked, as it kept him from being wounded during the fighter attack.

German fighters roared in from the

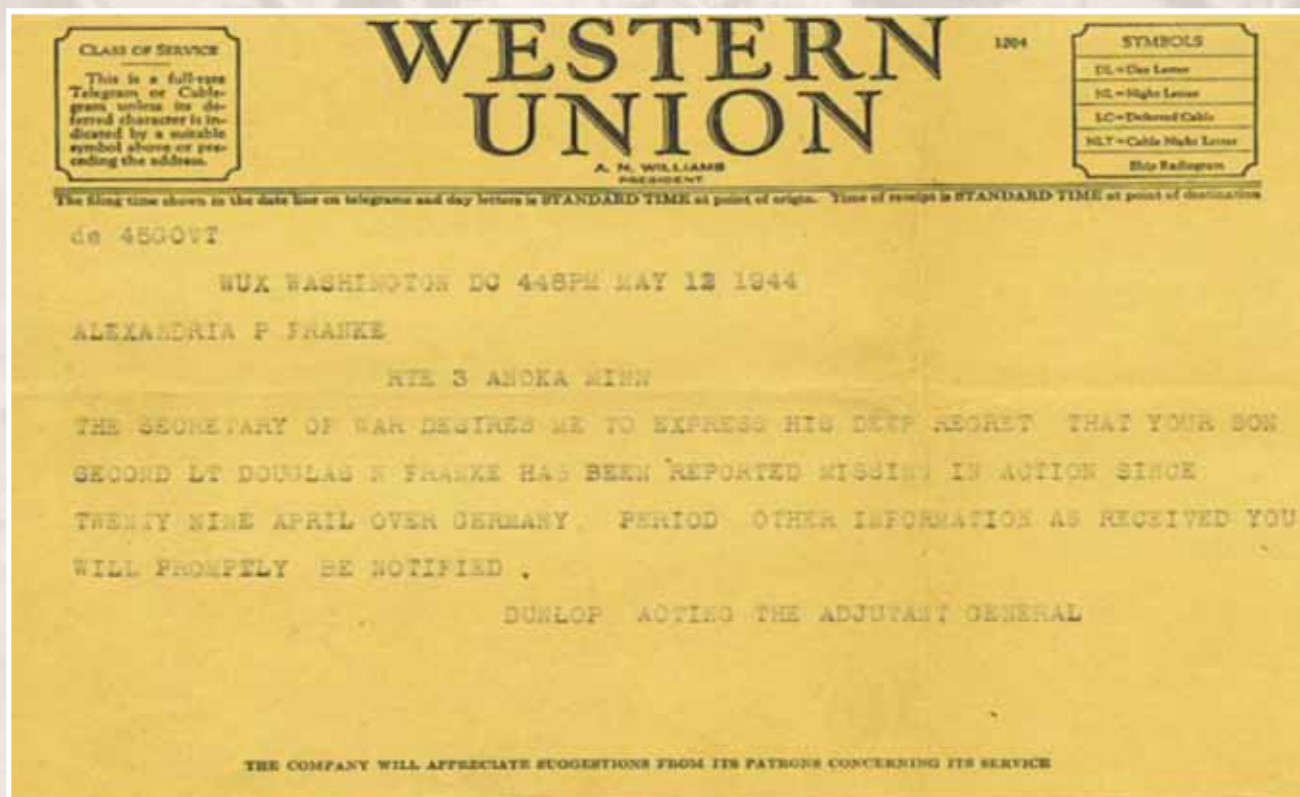
front of the formation, scoring a direct hit on the nose with a 20mm shell, demolishing the nose turret, killing the bombardier; and sending a line of bullets down the middle of the plane. Two bullets hit Danford and another bullet went through Longo's leather jacket but didn't touch him. Gienko got off a few rounds as the 190s and 109s flew past him, but it wasn't long before the plane left the formation; at 1103, Bridson's crew saw Rogers pull out at 24,000 feet with "1-2 engines smoking."

The plane was on fire and the bail-out bell soon sounded. The men left the plane by any means possible-navigator



(Photo from Dennis Rogers)

The Rogers crew. Back row, l-r: 1Lt Gerald Rogers, 2Lt Jack Roper, 2Lt Fred Kane, 2Lt Richard Weir. Front row, l-r: T/Sgt Robert McCalicher, Sgt Robert Longo, Sgt Robert Danford, T/Sgt Earl Lawson, S/Sgt Edward Gienko, and Sgt Harold Andrews.



(From Robert Franke)

This telegram announced the MIA status of 2Lt Douglas Franke to his parents.

through the nose hatch (after first trying to drag the bombardier out of the nose and realizing he was dead); copilot through the upper hatch; engineer, and radio operator through the front bomb bay; and both waist gunners and ball turret gunner through the waist windows. By the time he got out of his tail turret and up to the waist position, everyone else seemed to be gone and S/ Sgt Gienko thought he was the last one left. After frantically struggling to open up the floor hatch, he went out the right waist window. Narrowly missing the right stabilizer, he descended in constant fear of being shot at by all the German fighters that were still in the area. After landing, he, Lt Weir, and T/Sgt McCalicher were taken to an anti-aircraft battery. Later, some Gestapo agents drove them to the same air raid shelter in Hannover where the Kamenitsa crew survivors were being held.

The plane crashed at 1106 in a deer enclosure near the small town of Meitze. One man (Kane) was found dead in the wreckage and eight more were rounded up within minutes. The fate of 2Lt Rogers, the pilot, remained a mystery until 1947, when his body was found in a forest some distance from the crash site with his parachute still intact.

### 29 April 1944 Summary

Losses for the 392nd on 29 April 1944: eight planes crashed, 44 men killed in action, 27 taken prisoner, and several more who got back to England were wounded or frostbitten. Simply put, 71 of the 181 men who left Wendling that morning did not return that afternoon. It was the second worst of the 285 missions flown by the 392nd Bomb Group.

Three of the 18 planes flown to Berlin by the 392nd were survivors of the mission to Friedrichshafen on 18 March 1944, when the Group had its highest losses of the war. All three—*El Lobo*, *Double Trouble*, and *Doodle Bug*—crashed.

What were the folks back home told about the mission? Lucretia Boothe Maloy saved an article about the Berlin raid that she saw in her local newspaper, *The Montgomery [Alabama] Advertiser*, on 30 April 1944. She was unaware that her son Joe, on Shere's crew, had participated in the mission and become a prisoner of war; she simply thought the size of the headlines meant that the article was about "something big" and therefore worth keeping. It began:

*"Two thousand U.S. warplanes smashing through box-like stacks of hundreds*

*of German fighters in the greatest daylight battle of the war cast a 2,500-ton torrent of exploding steel and incendiaries on invasion-jittery Berlin today at a cost of 63 bombers and 14 fighters.... The Berlin assault was declared to be not only the fiercest air battle ever fought at the Nazi capital: It was the fiercest ever fought in the whole course of the war... The assault on Berlin was perhaps unequalled by any previous daylight blow of the war. Roaring more than 500 miles across Europe through a gauntlet of German fighters and anti-aircraft bursts, about 1,000 American Flying Fortresses and Liberators converged on the Nazi capital at the noon hour, bringing to Berliners once more the real and terrible preliminaries to invasion."*

The MIA telegrams began arriving in mid-May.

For more information and history on the 392nd Bomb Group during WWII, please visit: [www.b24.net](http://www.b24.net)

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# 43RD ANNUAL 8<sup>TH</sup> AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REUNION

## SEPTEMBER 27 – OCTOBER 1, 2017

### NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

#### NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MUSEUM

**Thursday & Friday,  
September 28 & 29**

Dedicated in 2000 as the National D-Day Museum and now designated by Congress as the country's official WWII Museum, this remarkable attraction illuminates the American experience during the WWII era. From the Normandy invasion to the sands of the Pacific Islands and the Home Front, you will see the courage, teamwork, and sacrifice of the men and women who won the war that changed the world. Explore moving personal stories and powerful interactive displays. Visit the U.S. Freedom Pavilion: The Boeing Center, which tells the story of our nation's unprecedented industrial capability during the war years. Explore the evolving strategy for fighting across the Pacific and in Asia, and the cultural differences and tremendous range of extreme conditions that confronted our soldiers. Learn about the faltering first battles in North Africa to the bloody struggle at Germany's doorstep. The immersive galleries recreate actual battle settings and villages. Included in your ticket price is the film, *Beyond All Boundaries*, narrated by executive producer, Tom Hanks. Embark on a 4D journey through the war that changed the world. *Beyond All Boundaries* features dazzling effects, CGI animation, multi-layered environments, and first-person accounts from the trenches to the Home Front. The film will be shown on Thursday at 11am and noon. Your time slot will be determined by which bus you are riding and announced that morning. Simple box lunches including a sandwich, chips, cookie, and a

bottle of water will be provided each day.

**9:30am board bus, 2:30pm back at hotel**

**\$94/Person includes bus and escort for both days, two-day admission, a box lunch for both days, and the film.**

**WWII Veterans Price is \$66 per person** which covers bus and escort for both days and a box lunch for both days. Admissions are complimentary for WWII Veterans.

**National WWII Museum Member price is \$71 per person** which includes bus and escort for both days, a box lunch for both days, and the film. General admission is complimentary for National WWII Museum Members. Please provide your member number on the form to be verified.

**Tour Options for  
Saturday, September 30  
Choose Only One**

#### CITY TOUR

Today's tour takes you into the French Quarter, where a blend of French and Spanish cultures intermingles with a modern lifestyle. Also witness the bustling seaport activities, which are such an important aspect of the city's economy. Lunch is on your own in Jax Brewery, an old landmark transformed into a modern complex of shops and eateries. Today's tour also includes a trip down historical St. Charles Avenue complete with universities, parks, old oaks, stately charm, and an operational streetcar line. Hear the stories of Hurricane Katrina and see first-hand the long-lasting effect

it has had on New Orleans. Your tour of the Crescent City includes views and stories of unique above-ground cemeteries and Lake Pontchartrain as well.

**10:30am board bus, 3:30pm back at hotel**

**\$39/Person includes bus and guide. Lunch on your own.**

#### PLANTATION TOUR

A day learning about plantation life awaits. Hear stories and learn the history of several local plantations. Once at Oak Alley, built in 1839, experience a bygone area in one of the South's most beautiful settings. Marvel at the unbelievable view of a quarter mile long alley of twenty-eight magnificent oak trees, each over 250 years old. Perhaps the most photographed plantation ever, Oak Alley has been the setting for many motion pictures. Enjoy a Cajun buffet outside under a tent. Lunch includes a salad bar, soup, crawfish etouffee with rice, jambalaya, red beans & vegetables, rolls, dessert, coffee, tea, and water. Your guided tour will reveal the fascinating stories of the home and its history. Notes: The second floor of the house is only accessible via stairs. This tour is limited to the first 150 people registered.

**10:45am board bus, 3:45pm back at hotel**

**\$77/Person includes bus, guide, admission, and lunch.**

- All Trips require a minimum of 35 people, unless otherwise noted.
- Please be at the bus boarding area at least five minutes prior to the published time.
- Driver and Guide Gratuities are not included in the tour prices.

# 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society Reunion Schedule

## Hilton – New Orleans Airport - September 27 – October 1, 2017

### WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

1:00pm	-	6:00pm	Reunion Registration
1:00pm			Memorabilia/Gathering room open throughout reunion
6:00pm	-	7:00pm	Welcome Reception, followed by dinner on your own
7:00pm	-	9:00pm	8th AFHS Board Meeting
7:00pm	-		Hospitality Suites open

### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

7:30am	-	8:30am	Continental Breakfast for Package #1 participants
8:00am	-	11:30am	Reunion Registration Open
9:30am	-	2:30pm	WWII MUSEUM (description follows)
1:00pm	-	6:00pm	Reunion Registration Open
3:00pm	-	4:30pm	Curator's Corner
6:00pm	-	9:00pm	Cash Bar Reception
7:00pm	-	9:00pm	Buffet Dinner w/ National WWII Museum Speakers, Stephen Watson & Keith Huxen.

### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

7:30am	-	8:30am	Full Breakfast for Meal Package participants
8:00am	-	11:30am	Reunion Registration Open
8:00am	-	9:15am	Group Meetings
9:30am	-	2:30pm	WWII MUSEUM (description follows)
1:00pm	-	6:00pm	Reunion Registration Open
3:00pm	-	4:30pm	Q & A WWII Vets
6:00pm	-	9:00pm	Cash Bar Reception
7:00pm	-	9:00pm	Rendezvous Dinners

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

7:30am	-	8:30am	Continental Breakfast for Meal Package participants
8:30am	-	12:00pm	Reunion Registration Open
8:45am	-	10:15am	General Membership Meeting
10:30am	-	12:30pm	Researchers/Webmasters Meeting
10:30am	-	3:30pm	CITY TOUR (description follows)
10:45am	-	3:45pm	PLANTATION TOUR (description follows)
12:00pm	-	3:30pm	8 <sup>th</sup> AFHS Board Meeting
4:00pm	-	5:00pm	Heritage League Meeting
4:30pm	-	5:30pm	Reunion Registration Open
5:30pm	-	6:30pm	Cash Bar Reception at the hotel
6:00pm	-	6:15pm	WWII Veteran Group Photo
6:30pm	-	7:00pm	Transport from hotel to WWII Museum for Banquet
7:00pm	-	10:00pm	Gala Dinner and Program, followed by transportation back to hotels.

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1

7:30am	-	8:30am	Full Breakfast for Meal Package participants
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#### *CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.*

*For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less a \$10 per person processing fee. Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less the processing fee. Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9:00am until 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time, excluding holidays. Please call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation does not cancel your reunion activities.*



# 43RD ANNUAL 8<sup>TH</sup> AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REUNION

## HILTON NEW ORLEANS AIRPORT

### SEPTEMBER 27 – OCTOBER 1, 2017

#### **HEADQUARTERS HOTEL: HILTON NEW ORLEANS AIRPORT NEW ORLEANS, LA**

(504) 469-5000 or (800) 445-8667

[www3.hilton.com/en/hotels/louisiana/hilton-new-orleans-airport-MSYAHHH/index.html](http://www3.hilton.com/en/hotels/louisiana/hilton-new-orleans-airport-MSYAHHH/index.html)

#### **LOCATION**

901 Airline Drive, Kenner, LA 70062

Located directly across from the Louis Armstrong International Airport and just minutes from downtown New Orleans

#### **RESERVATION INFORMATION**

Overflow Hotel: At this point, you'll likely find that the Hilton Airport has sold out. Please make your hotel reservation first, and then proceed with the activity registration form. Only those confirmed at the Hilton Airport should register for a meal package, as transportation to/from the overflow hotel can't be guaranteed for the group breakfasts.

Donna Lee, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) is managing the rooming lists for both overflow hotels – the Best Western Plus and Comfort Inn. Both hotels are less than 2 miles from the Hilton. The rate at both hotels is \$109 plus tax per night and includes complimentary parking, airport shuttle, and breakfast. Again, a meal package is not necessary for those staying at one of the overflow hotels, so just purchase the individual dinners. All three hotels will help shuttle attendees back and forth as much as possible. The tour buses will pick up from all 8AFHS 'official' hotels.

**To make hotel reservations at one of the overflow hotels, please contact Donna Lee, preferably by email at [DonnaLee@afri.com](mailto:DonnaLee@afri.com). Please provide the following information:**

Name, Mailing Address, Phone Number, Email Address  
Arrival/Departure Date  
Preferred bed-type (can't guarantee)  
Will there be a WWII Veteran in the room?  
What WWII Group are you affiliated with?

If email is not available, please call her at 706-356-1905. Donna or someone from the AFR office will contact you to reconfirm everything 4-7 weeks prior to the reunion. At that time, credit card information will be needed to guarantee the room.

**If you are holding a room at the Hilton that's no longer needed, please contact Donna to release it.** By confirming a 'name change' with the hotel instead of cancelling it, we can ensure that more rooms go to 8AFHS attendees. Our first priority is to get as many WWII Veterans as possible back to the main hotel. Once they are all confirmed at the Hilton, we'll continue to move people from the overflow hotels back to the Hilton in date order (when reservation was received), only after they've been contacted for verification. We realize some are happy to stay at the overflow hotel with friends and/or family.

**As a point of reference to all, over 190 rooms have been reserved at the Hilton and about 60 at the Best Western as of early May.**

#### **WHEELCHAIR RENTAL**

ScootAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call (888) 441-7575 or visit [www.scootaround.com](http://www.scootaround.com) for more information or to make reservations.

**For additional information about meal packages, please refer to page 19, March 2017 issue of *8th AF News*.**



# 8<sup>TH</sup> AFHS ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

## SEPTEMBER 27 – OCTOBER 1, 2017

total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. Your cancelled check will serve as confirmation. You may also register online and pay by credit card at [www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2017](http://www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2017) (3.5% will be added to total). All registration forms and payments must be received on or before August 25, 2017. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. Your contact information will be shared only with reunion attendees.

**Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.**

**322 Madison Mews**

**Norfolk, VA 23510**

**ATTN: 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS**

### OFFICE USE ONLY

Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received \_\_\_\_\_  
 Inputted \_\_\_\_\_ Nametag Completed \_\_\_\_\_

### CUT-OFF DATE IS 8/25/17

	Price Per	# of People	Total
<b>REGISTRATION FEE</b>			
Includes meeting expenses and other reunion expenses.	\$40		\$
Reg. Fee for children ages 8-16 attending more than 1 function & staying at hotel	\$25		\$
<b>MEAL PACKAGES</b>			
<i>Package #1 includes 7 meals beginning with breakfast on Thursday</i>	\$232		\$
<i>Package #2 includes 5 meals beginning with breakfast on Friday</i>	\$162		\$
<b>SEPARATELY PRICED MEALS (if not purchasing a package)</b>			
Thursday, 9/28: Dinner Buffet (Braised Beef & Fried Catfish)	\$51		\$
Friday, 9/29: Rendezvous Dinner (Chicken Piccata)	\$40		\$
Saturday, 9/30: Banquet Buffet at the WWII Museum – transportation included. (Beef Tips & Mildly Blackened Redfish)	\$50		\$
<b>TOURS</b>			
Thursday & Friday, 9/28-29: World War II Museum (box lunch included both days)			
WWII Veterans Price	\$66		\$
National WWII Museum Member Price (Member # _____)	\$71		\$
All Other Attendees Price	\$94		\$
Please choose one of the following two tours:			
Saturday, 9/30: City Tour	\$39		\$
Saturday, 9/30: Plantation Tour	\$77		\$
Total Amount Payable to <b>Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.</b>			\$

Please Print. If a WWII Veteran is registering on this form, please list his name first.

MEMBER NAME (for nametag) \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ VETERAN ☐ NEXT GEN ☐ OTHER

IF A VETERAN, PLEASE CIRCLE: WWII Cold War Era Korea Vietnam Gulf War Desert Storm Iraq Other \_\_\_\_\_

WWII GROUP AFFILIATION FOR UNIT TOTALS & SEATING ARRANGEMENTS (please list BG, not BS) \_\_\_\_\_

SPOUSE NAME (if attending) \_\_\_\_\_

GUEST NAMES \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ NEXT GEN

PHONE # (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS \_\_\_\_\_

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? ☐ YES ☐ NO (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).

HOTEL RESERVATIONS SHOULD BE CONFIRMED BEFORE SUBMITTING THIS FORM. PLEASE CHECK YOUR CONFIRMED HOTEL: ☐ HILTON AIRPORT ☐ BEST WESTERN OVERFLOW ☐ COMFORT INN OVERFLOW ☐ OTHER

EMERGENCY CONTACT \_\_\_\_\_ PH. NUMBER (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_



# Waverly Gardens

## News From The Neighborhood

Al Sanders

**M**ail time. As usual, we were sorting the day's delivery and chatting when I happened to notice a gentleman looking at a photo. It's fun to share pictures, so even though I did not know him, I asked if he would like to tell me about his. What a story unfolded! What follows is Alfred (Al) Sander's story condensed from an article in the *Space Coast Chapter of the American Ex-Prisoners of War magazine*, a book in French entitled *Once Upon a Time There was a Liberator* by Willy Felix, and memories from his daughter, Winki.

Al Sanders was born in Kentwood, Louisiana in



1st Lt. Al Sanders

1918. He attended Louisiana State University preparing to be a science teacher. In order to pay for his education, he worked for the track team as the team manager. It quickly became apparent that the hours of running barefoot through the piney woods of Kentwood was training in itself, and Al became a track star in his own right and received a full scholarship to the University. He graduated in June 1942 with

his degree in education, married his sweetheart, Millie Allen, and received his pilot's license. Then he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corp.

Al received his wings at Blytheville, Arkansas, aspiring to fly the heavy bombers of the Strategic Air Services, especially the B-24 Liberator. After months of intensive training, he was assigned to Davis Monthan Air Base near Tucson, Arizona where his ten-member crew joined him. Eight were under the age of 21, one slightly older, and Al, the pilot, was 26. Below the cockpit was the painted head of a Bengal Tiger with the caption, "Mike, Spirit of L.S.U.", the university mascot.

On March 5, 1944 the crew headed for Great Britain and more training. After stopping at seven bases along the

way, they arrived in Sudbury, England. Al and his crew flew four major raids without serious problems between May 8 and 28, 1944. The fifth raid was to target the synthetic gasoline plant Wintershall at Lutzendorf, Germany. All synthetic oil refineries were vital for the German effort and were defended by hundreds of AA guns.

The eight-hour round trip was on schedule. When the bomb runs began, the flak became extremely heavy and planes were hammered by exploding shells. The Germans were making a last ditch effort to protect Wintershall. They knew the bombers were coming and were ready for them. The leader plane of the squadron was hit and headed in a dive for the ground. In the confusion and smoke, the deputy leader who took over, never gave the order to release the bombs. The remaining bombs would have to be released on the return trip. However, Sanders and his crew were in definite trouble. His B-24 was hit, and after struggling to keep it flying, the engines began failing one after the other, catching fire in turn and had to be feathered.

Sanders followed orders that stated "when one of the engines has to be shut down, all stores should be jettisoned," and he dropped his bombs into the smoke of the burning refinery. When it became obvious that the plane would not make it back to England, Sanders gave the order to jump as the plane began to lose altitude and burn over Belgium.

Those on the ground saw the bomber slowly turn to the right, away from the village and go into a dive. It crashed and burst into flames in a forest.

Strangely enough, there was a man on the ground who was taking pictures as *The Spirit of L. S. U.* slammed into the ground. Al was the last to jump. He broke his ankle upon landing but was quickly picked up by a Melchoir Resteau, a member of the Belgium Resistance, who had two bicycles with him. The men pedaled as fast as they could to a corn field where Al was left to hide.

The Germans were already searching the nearby houses. Three Resistance members eventually rode up in a fish merchant's van and took Al to a safe garage where they provided him with civilian clothes, a belt to hold up the overly large trousers, and hightop shoes to hold his

ankle in place.

Meanwhile, back in Louisiana, Millie gave birth to Al's son on May 30, 1944. Following a mix-up in plane identifications, it was thought that Al went down with his plane. Millie received the dreaded telegram informing her that her husband was reported missing in action over Germany on May 28.

Al was driven to an isolated, abandoned farm, and, to his surprise, was introduced to seventeen Russians who had deserted the German Wehrmacht (along with a large variety of weapons). Among the group was a horse doctor who proved to be very good with broken ankles. Two days later another American airman arrived named Henry Walcott. Feeding and hiding nineteen men was not an easy task so they were split up. Al, Henry, and three of the Russians, armed to the teeth, were taken in an old truck at night to a farm in Wisbecq. Unfortunately, the owner of the abandoned farm they had just left was arrested and sent to prison where he soon died.

After fourteen days there, things got interesting when Germans encircled the farm and blocked all the roads. The five men squeezed into a narrow hiding place under the wooden floor of an attic. The Germans searched the farm and the attic but failed to move a trunk, which had been shifted onto the hatch that accessed the hiding place. Under the floor, the men could see the German boots above them. The two Americans were kept busy preventing the Russians from bursting out to attack the Germans. Finding nothing, the Germans then focused their attention on two bicycles in the yard. One belonged to a visitor but the other one was registered in another province and actually belonged to a resistance fighter. The farmer was taken away, but released later for lack of sufficient evidence.

The two airmen were hidden next by an owner of a steel mill and lived briefly in a mansion, eating their fill and drinking Heidsieck Champagne. But, on they moved to Chateau Janssens-De Stordeurs and then again to Chateau Rowart. Mr. and Mrs. Rowart were well-seasoned, having hidden many Jews and airmen. It was there that Sanders met Janet, a young Jewish girl, who would eventually move to the United States after the war. Al also became pals with the Rowart's little puppy.

The next move was in a hay wagon, built with a false bottom, to a village a few miles away. They were stopped by a German gentleman who stuck his bayonet several times into the hay, but the airmen remained safely hidden.

In early August of 1944 an employee of the Swiss Embassy in Brussels informed Melchior Resteau that the American airman could get back to Great Britain through Switzerland. Melchoir Resteau met "Anita" in a cemetery and the pass phrase was given: "There are not many rab-

bits this season." A driver and "Anita" picked up Al and Hank and were to take them to safety, but instead took them to German Headquarters. Upon arriving, air raid sirens began to blare. When "Anita" and the soldiers ran for cover, the driver, Al, and Hank took advantage and drove off in the car to Brussels.

There, they were met by a man without his left thumb. He was to help with the last leg of the move. On August 9, when they went to get passports and pictures, instead of going to the photographer, they were taken to the Palace of Justice. Al and Hank were arrested and transferred to Saint Gilles prison where they stayed until August 28. The prisoners had very little food or water and interrogation occurred nearly every day. The Germans wanted to trace Al's movements and find anyone who had helped him. His response was always, "My name is Alfred Sanders. Number 0810227. Second Lieutenant U.S. Air Force. I have nothing else to say." The prisoners were completely isolated and had no idea what was happening outside the prison walls. Freedom had been so close.

On that August morning, the prisoners were taken by truck to the train station in Brussels. They were packed into train cars, some standing so that others might sit. They remained at the station until dark on August 31. The train was constantly delayed because the resistance fighters blew up the railroad ties every night, and the train engineer fell off the train injuring himself. He was unable to drive the train, so a replacement had to be found. Delay, delay. Everyone knew where the Germans wanted to take the train and what would happen to its occupants. The prisoners were determined that it would not leave the station. The train, however, eventually did pull out, but was derailed again a few miles north of Brussels. In the confusion, the German guards all got out on one side of the train leaving their packs in their train car. Sanders slipped into that car and stole one of the packs hoping to find some food, but there was none. How were the guards going to react when they realized a pack was missing? Al decided that the best thing for the other prisoners was for him to jump the train tak-



Al, photo taken at Wisbecq farm





B-24 Crew Al, top left

ing the pack with him. Walcott was going to go also, but changed his mind at the last moment.

After help with the lock, Al hit the ground running. It was probably the fastest quarter mile in the history of man for this track star from L.S.U.! Bullets were flying, but in the dark they missed their mark. Al found himself in a sports park and could hear the dogs behind him. He ran on and reached a street and a canal.

Not knowing which way to go from there, he ran in the opposite direction from the Germans with their lights and dogs. He saw a barge on the river and took his chances. He jumped onto the deck and rapped on the door to the cabin. Inside, Mr. and Mrs. Wijs thinking it was the Germans or a burglar were terrified. But when they heard Al speaking English, they opened the door. Al ingeniously



Mr. and Mrs. Wijs

whispered, "President Roosevelt," and Mr. Wijs responded with "Queen Wihelmina," the name of the reigning monarch of the Netherlands, and hurried Sanders below deck. The guards flashed their lights on the boat but passed by.

Everyone could breathe again. Al hid with the Wijs's until the Canadians arrived and took him with them. There was still fighting to the north, and Sanders didn't want to be captured again in a combat zone, so he was issued a new identification card and set out for France alone. He was helped by the Comte Line, part of the underground that helped allied airmen to escape throughout the war. He reached Amiens, France, where the last of the American C-46 transports waited for him. After being

assured that he was indeed the man they were waiting for, Al was hauled up into the plane, as it was ready to take off and the steps had already been stowed. A few hours later, he arrived safely in England.

On September 7, 1944, a little more than three months later, Millie received a phone call from Western Union. The operator said it was from Alfred Sanders. Millie said, "That isn't funny!" and hung up the phone. The operator called back and repeated that she had a message from Alfred Sanders. Long story short, the telegram read: "Dearest. I am safe and well. Will be home soon. Letter following. Alfred Sanders." He still didn't know he had a son.

Al stayed in the military after the war, retiring after 20 years. During his military service he continued flying different types of aircrafts and was transferred from base to base. He met Harry Walcott again and eventually was able to find and reunite with all of his crew.



Al and Millie Sanders

He requested and was transferred to Ramstein, Germany for three years in 1955.

With his family in tow, he contacted most of the people mentioned in this article, and rich and rewarding friendships followed. On one occasion, with his wife, son, and daughter standing behind him, Al knocked on the door of a former Resistance friend who had hidden him. The owner came to the door, looked carefully at Al and asked him to remove his hat. Tears streamed down the man's face and then he began to laugh, shouting, "Alfred has returned! Alfred has returned!" Since many in the town had known Al, there was quite a commotion that day with people running down the street to see Al and his family.

And the little dog owned by the Rowarts? He was now more than twelve years old but still went crazy when Al walked through the gate to the house, jumping, licking, and barking as little dogs will do when they meet an old friend. What happened to the train that went nowhere? The History channel made a documentary entitled "*The Nazi Ghost Train*" that featured Al and several other men who were on it.

Many years later, Al's daughter, Winki, and her husband, Len, visited Holland on their way to New Zealand and spent time with some of the original resistance fighters, their families, and grandchildren. A highlight of that trip for Winki and Len was boating from Rotterdam, Holland to Cologne, Germany up the river on a barge. It was not the same barge and it was twenty-five years later, but close enough. The trip was arranged by the son of the elder Mr. and Mrs. Wijs. Christmas cards are still exchanged with the children and grandchildren. Count and Countess Melchoir Resteau came to Florida to visit Al and Millie and the Dutch son, wife, and children came to see them and Disney World.



Mr. and Mrs. Rowart had hidden many Jews and airmen. It was there that Sanders met Janet, a young Jewish girl who would eventually move to the United States after the war.



Wisbecq Farm



Rowart Chateau

After Al retired from the military in 1962 he went to Florida State University to get his Master's degree in Vocational Education. He taught electronics at Brevard Junior College in Rockledge, Florida for seventeen years, receiving the Professor Emeritus award. He also received the first Lifetime Achievement Award from Florida State University in addition to the LSU Hall of Honor award.

Following his retirement from teaching, he and Millie took up golf and traveled the world, returning to Belgium several times. Al and Millie moved from Florida to live at Waverly Gardens in October, 2012, to be near their daughter. Al lost his beloved Millie in February, 2013 after seventy-one years of marriage and a lifetime of adventure and memories.

And what about that picture Al showed me at the beginning of this article? It was of the Wisbecq farm with three Russians, the family and the children ... children who would not have been in the picture were it not for a friendship forged between complete strangers during World War II.

**Myrna Camp, Terrace Resident  
Winkie Ruiz, daughter of Al**



Rowarts puppy



# STUDENTS DESIGN NEW SOCIETY WEB PAGE

Tom Townsend

Three Ohio high school students have produced a new webpage for the 8th Air Force Historical Society. Tyler Sowards, Adam Demetriades and Raj Jagu designed and programmed the website as part of their senior year final project in their Information Technology classes at Kettering Fairmont High School of Kettering, Ohio, a suburb of Dayton. The website was presented in a recent showcase of high school student-produced technology at Sinclair College in Dayton, Ohio.

Under the direction of their teacher, Tom Townsend, the students analyzed the two existing websites and made a plan to combine them into one cohesive site. They then designed the new look and programmed the web pages.

"We had a unique opportunity to work with the 8th Air Force Historical Society because of our teacher's connection to the Society," said website designer Tyler Sowards, alluding to Mr. Townsend's position as the new Webmaster for the Society.

Raj Jagu, database specialist added, "We live in the Dayton area,

the home of the Wright Brothers, and this was a neat way to connect our learning with the aviation history of the area."

"I was glad to be able to apply what I learned in web design class to a real-world project such as the Society's webpage," said Adam Demetriades, the lead page developer. "To be able to memorialize the experiences of members of the 'Greatest Generation' is icing on the cake."

Tom Townsend, also of Kettering, the Info Tech teacher at Fairmont High School, has been associated with the Society for several years after having produced his own web page featuring mission statistics extracted from Roger Freeman's *The Mighty Eighth Diary*.

"I love Freeman's books, but get frustrated by not being able to drill down to find the minute detail I am looking for," said Townsend. "So I began a multi-year project to enter the missions, targets, groups and airbases data from Freeman into a database for my own personal benefit." Data entry took over three years. "I always had a laptop and the Freeman book with me - on vacation, at work, everywhere," said Townsend.

Later, he published his database on a personal website where it was soon noticed by then-webmaster of the Society, Robert Books. After several years of website collaboration between the two, in 2017 Townsend became the new Webmaster for the Society. He notes, "This became a golden opportunity to teach my students website programming, while

providing the Society with a new website. It is my intention that each succeeding year's Senior class will serve as website administrators for the Society."

The website can be found online at <http://www.8thafhs.org/>

L-R Tyler Sowards, Adam Demetriades and Raj Jagu demonstrate their 8th AFHS website.



## The fate of Capt Albert L. Schlegel, 4th FG, 335th FS

by Perry R. Nuhn, Col USAF, Ret (nephew)



**T**he invasion: D-Day, June 6th, 1944; the Normandy Breakout; August 13th, 1944. Then Paris is liberated on August 25th, 1944. Fighting in France continues. Eighth and Ninth Air Forces continue targeting German forces, communications, railways and roadways.

On the morning of August 28, 1944, flying in a brand new P-51D, Captain Albert L. Schlegel, Flight Leader and Operations Officer of the 335th Fighter Squadron, 4th Fighter Group took off on an interdiction mission from Debden, England. He was a veteran combat pilot, his home was Garfield Heights, Ohio. A former RCAF fighter pilot, "A Yank in the RAF," who transferred to USAFFE in early 1943, and an Ace with 8.5 confirmed air, 5.5 confirmed ground, and 2.5 probables, a total of 16 kills. He was the last WWII combat loss of the 4th Fighter Group.

The mission was to strafe transportation and other ground targets in the Strasbourg, France area. Sixteen aircraft took off from Debden Air Base at 0655 hours and crossed in at Dunkirk at 0738 hours at 15,000 feet. Albert Schlegel was "Caboose Red" Flight Leader. The weather and viability was limited in the Strasbourg area. At Sarrebourg, France, about 40 miles from Strasbourg, they let down to 4,000 feet. Weather prevented them from going any further. Concentrated flak was heavy.

The P-51s hit ground targets, strafing anything of value or that moved. Later, it was reported they destroyed two locomotives and damaged another 13. Thirty-eight goods wagons and a railroad crane were damaged as well. The pilots reported railroad traffic running west from Strasbourg.

Of the 16 aircraft, only 13 returned to Debden, 3 were missing. One was



seen to crash in some trees. Later, that pilot evaded capture and was returned to action. The pilot of the second aircraft bailed out, was captured and became a POW for the rest of the war.

The third missing pilot, Captain "Smiley" Schlegel, was gone, fate was unknown. He was heard over the radio, telling the rest of the formation that his airplane had been hit and he "might have to bail out."

He was never seen again. Because the formation was over enemy-held territory, no search was made. He was not reported being captured by the German's, which was unusual, especially as his last known location suggested that he either parachuted down or crashed on land. He and his plane had disappeared. No information was forthcoming. A year later, August 28, 1945 he was declared KIA. His fate was a mystery...

Now, nearly 73 years later, we finally know his fate.

Following the close of hostilities, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC) U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps, was the organization charged with recovering and identifying missing U.S. personnel in the European Theater of Operations.

The AGRC initially investigated cases by reviewing captured German documents. One, such report claimed an American fighter plane had crashed into the Saar River, near Saarholzbach, Germany, at 0900 hours on 28 August 1944. According to witnesses, the crash was the result of a dogfight and the pilot did not bail out. The fighter plane had crashed at high speed and exploded upon impact. This left no identifiable pieces of wreckage.

Divers attempted to locate the pilot's remains, but found the riverbed bed was smooth stone, meaning that traces of the aircraft, if there had been one, had been totally swept away. Without further information, AGRC closed its investigation. On 23 March 1949, a Board of Officers found Capt Schlegel's remains to be "Non-Recoverable" the case was closed and the date of his death was established as one year after he had gone MIA as 29 August 1945, with no cause of death stated.



Sixty-six years later, in January 2015, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) was formed by merging several existing organizations. Its mission to provide the fullest possible accounting for United States missing personnel to their families and the nation. The DPAA is a world-class work force that searches for, finds, and returns to their families missing personnel from all past wars and conflicts and from countries around the world. A mission that continues into the foreseeable future.

To accomplish its mission regarding identifying WWII Europe missing, DPAA began systematically evaluating unknown X-files in northern France for possible correlation with unaccounted-for service members. In reviewing the "closed case" of Captain Albert Schlegel, they found that nothing other than date of loss connected him with an aircraft lost in the Saar River.

To them it seemed more reasonable to assume that if he had time to call his squadron to inform them he may need to bailout, Capt Schlegel probably did successfully bail out. Additionally, as a veteran combat fighter pilot who had been flying missions out of England for several years, Capt Schlegel seemed unlikely to have flown north, into Germany, instead of heading for home base after he was hit. The Saar River crash location simply never made sense.

As a result, the DPAA historians were skeptical of the earlier narrative chosen to explain his disappearance. They also noticed that one file, X-73 Champigneul, seemed to bear a resemblance to Schlegel's case. X-73 was a set of remains found near the train station of the village of Valmy, in the Champagne-Ardenne region of France.

During World War Two, it was not unusual for train stations to be used by the Germans as command posts.

Also, on 18 November 1944 a nearly-complete set of remains was found near the train station at Valmy, France by a local resident. A doctor from a nearby village was called to examine the remains and determined that the

individual had been shot behind the ear. The remains were recovered and transferred to the American cemetery at Champigneul where they were designated X-73.

Historical AGRC records indicated that townspeople in Valmy (approximately 200 miles from Strasbourg) reported that an unknown captured American aviator was in their village late on the evening of 28 August 1944.

Multiple residents of Valmy and the nearby village of Sainte-Menehould came forward to give AGRC testimony about what they observed on the evening of 28 August 1944. Mr. Leon Humbert reported that, around 9:30 in the evening, he saw a car carrying five Germans pass through Valmy. The sixth passenger, sitting in the middle of the rear seat, did not appear to Mr. Humbert to be dressed like a German. Mr. Marcel Hennisart, another resident, told investigators that, around 10:00pm, he heard two gunshots coming from "the spot where the body was found." The mayor of Valmy stated that he believed the man in the back seat of the German car had been an American aviator. The American investigator who recorded these statements noted that, in fact, all persons interviewed believed that the man must have been an aviator who had parachuted from his airplane and that he was killed by the Germans after they roughly interrogated him at their headquarters in Valmy. Ironically, Valmy was liberated by American troops on 30 August 1944, just two days later after the unknown aviator had arrived under German arrest.

Despite repeated attempts at identification, the American Graves Registration Command had declared X-73 unidentifiable on 6 December 1948, and the unknown X-73 was interred in the Epinal American Cemetery, France.

Then in 2015, new research concerning X-73 began. The DPAA historians established that X-73 could not have been buried after 30 August when Valmy had been liberated. For DPAA Historians, in 2015, modern databases and access to more-complete his-

torical records allowed for a renewed comparison between X-73 and most unaccounted-for U.S. personnel.

They established a timeframe between 26 August and 29 August and then cross-referenced all losses in the ETO within the timeframe, 643 ground and 36 air losses; Each record was examined, and then all the ground losses were ruled out leaving only the 36 air losses as possible candidates for identifying X-73. Of those, twenty-five were over open water and six were lost in locations other than France. That left only four individuals, who may have crashed on land, on the dates in question, in or very near France. Of the four, Capt Schlegel was by far the strongest X-73 candidate.

An informed hypothesis developed that it was reasonable that Schlegel's capture, car ride, and death in Valmy, France was possible. After being hit, he had turned toward England, heading back home. Along the way it was surmised his aircraft quit flying and he bailed out. Shortly, later he was captured by the Germans and taken to Valmy to the command post in the railway station.

In January 2016, DPAA researchers determined that if the remains were disinterred it might be possible, to positively identify X-73. They recommended disinterment of X-73 for the purpose of determining if the remains were possibly Schlegel's.

In May of 2016, the X-73 remains were disinterred from the Epinal American Cemetery, France, and transported to the DPAA Central Identification Laboratory (CIL) at Offutt AFB, Omaha NE for scientific analysis.

During initial processing of the remains, a technician at Offutt AFB noted that the X-73 remains had an "Army" ring embossed with eagles. The emblem of the Eagle Squadrons was the American eagle clutching olive branches and arrows, and pilots were known to wear the symbol on patches and rings. In a letter written to the Army Effects Bureau in 1948, Albert Schlegel's mother had specifically asked about a "military Army ring"

that he owned, which had not been returned to her. While not conclusive, the coincidence was noteworthy. To date that ring has still not been returned. Other early data revealed showed that his height, age, and hair color were similar to X-73 upon examination.

Three separate investigatory tracks were used to analyses the X-73 data. The first was the analytical historical investigations.

The analytical historical investigation concluded that careful analysis of mission reports, aircraft data, personnel information, eye-witness accounts, statements, material objects, and other air, ground, and proximity losses provided evidence that to make an association between Captain Schlegel and the X-73 remains.

Shortly after arriving in England, on February 8, 1942, then RCAF Flight Sergeant, Albert L. Schlegel had been seriously injured in a night-time automobile accident. Reacting to a reported movement of a German pocket battleship, the entire RAF went on alert that evening. On the way to the airfield, from the base proper, the vehicle he was riding in hit a bomb crater. He was a passenger in the rear seat, sitting on some parachutes, and was catapulted face-first into the dashboard by the force of the collision. His most serious injuries were a broken right leg and foot. Repair of the leg required four screws to be installed in the bone to pull the leg bone together. He also suffered facial injuries, a concussion and was in severe shock. His injuries put him in a local hospital. The next day, a Dental Surgeon removed four of his upper incisors which were broken off at the gum line.

The remaining two tracks, Dental and Anthropology, were forensic examinations. The details of his 1942 injuries were significant factors in identifying his remains in 2016. The forensic investigators primarily used his RAF and USAAF medical records including those medical and dental records collected following the night-time motor vehicle accident, for

comparison with the X-73 remains. The remains exactly matched his RCAF and USAAFE physical examinations, and his recorded injuries from 1942. Evidence of a severe beating and bullet holes in the torso and forehead gave evidence of his mistreatment when he was captured and roughly interrogated.

The final conclusions of the Dental Analysis established that the dental remains were positively those of Captain Albert L. Schlegel. Anthropology Analysis examined the remains of a nearly complete skeleton. It also concluded that the remains were those of Captain Schlegel. No DNA comparison was needed the final findings of the three separate investigation established the remains as those of Captain Albert L. Schlegel, 0-2044921, U.S. Army Air Forces.

The date of his death based on circumstantial, historical, and laboratory evidence was established as 28 August 1944. The cause of death was certified as "gunshot wounds of the head and torso," and the manner of death: Homicide.

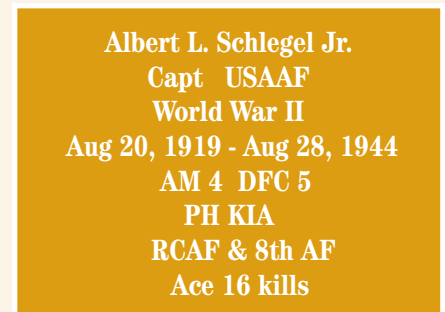
The search for Albert L. Schlegel has ended: the "why" of his death remains a mystery. Why was he murdered by his German captors? Was it because, the US advances had nearly reached Valmy, or was it that the constant, relentless air attacks by the allied fighters caused them to seek instant revenge, or was it just an incidence of war. We will never know for certain.

It has taken 73 years, to identify, honor and bury Captain Albert L. Schlegel, He was honored on March 29, 2017 in a memorial ceremony followed by a missing man flyover by his old squadron, the 335 Fighter Squadron, at the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force.

Captain Albert Schlegel was laid to rest with full military honors at the Beaufort VA National Cemetery, Beaufort, South Carolina on March 30, 2017.

Both events were covered extensively by the media. Public attendance was overflowing. Streets were lined with crowds waving flags as the funeral

procession passed on its way to the cemetery. He now rests in the Beaufort VA National Cemetery, Beaufort, South Carolina, grave site section E, grave 226.



He and the many other American War Heroes, invite you to visit. The DPAA search for the "missing" continues.



Schlegel's flag draped casket Chapel of the Fallen Eagles, National Museum of the Mighty 8th AF, Pooler, GA



Nephew  
Perry Nuhn



## Florida Chapter

Spring Luncheon

By Betty Thomas, Publisher

Photos by Jimmy Shirley

Members of the Florida Chapter Mighty 8th Air Force Historical Society, held their Spring Luncheon on Saturday, April 15th, 2017, at the Gallery Grill in Tequesta. We had excellent turnout of 32 people. Held at the best location we have been to so far!

Pledge of Allegiance, led by Sid Katz, was recited and Air Force Song was robustly sung by the membership, President Bill Uphoff led the toast, and V. Pres. Jim Hart led the prayer. Following lunch, the Board of Directors were introduced and minutes were read by Esther Cheriff. Jim Hart gave the treasurers report.

The keynote speaker, Josh Liller, historian and collections manager at Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and Museum, gave a very interesting talk about how WWII affected Palm Beach County, as well as other areas along the coast of Florida. There were blackout restrictions, including lights from homes, hotels, streets, and parks. This was important because the lights could silhouette allied merchant ships making them a target for German U-boats. The merchant ships were used to carry war supplies and fuel. They were targets of the U-boats carrying torpedoes. In February, 1942, two ships were sunk off Jupiter Inlet.

The Lighthouse Reservation, as it was called, was the site of an important installation, which, along with the U.S. Coast Guard, was called the U.S. Naval Supplementary Radio Station Jupiter. It had the code name of "Station J". When the submarines would surface every night to charge their batteries and send reports back to Germany, "Station J" could pinpoint the U-boats, ID them and transmit their location to US Gulf and Atlantic stations who would deploy aircraft attack the U-boats. These attacks put an end to the German dominance in the Atlantic.

Another fantastic lunch and program!



Director Nick Apostol



Director Shawn Reif's daughter Arianne, reciting Preamble to the US Constitution



Sid Katz and Esther chat with attendee



l-r Jim Hart vice president, Josh Liller speaker, Bill Uphoff president, and Esther Cheriff secretary

**Aenchbacher, Arthur E. "Gene"** Colonel, USAF (Ret), Gene passed away Friday, February 24, 2017. Gene was born September 2, 1920, in Atlanta, GA. While attending Georgia Tech in 1940, he joined the Army Air Corps as an Aviation Cadet. He received his pilot's wings in December 1941. In June 1942, he was part of the initial cadre of B-17 bombers to deploy to England and Africa, serving with the 97th Bomb Group. One of his most memorable experiences of WW II was flying General Eisenhower to Gibraltar under difficult circumstances for which Ike wrote him a congratulatory letter that Gene treasured and gave to the Eisenhower Presidential Library in 2014. After returning to the US, he was stationed at Pratt Army Air Field as part of the first unit to train future B-29 crews. While at Pratt, he met and married the former Lida Elizabeth (Betty) Fincham on December 29, 1945. After completing his degree at UNC, Gene continued his military career. He had many distinguished assignments including working for General Curtis LeMay at SAC HQ, being assigned to the NATO HQ in Oslo, Norway, briefing President Kennedy on nuclear war plans while working with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, commanding a C-130 Wing during the Vietnam War and his final assignment as the Director of Airlift at TAC HQ. Retiring in 1970, his distinguished Air Force career spanned three wars. Survivors include his children, Jack (Jodi) of Plano, TX, Cathy Songer, and Jim (Susan) of Trophy Club, TX. Gene has 2 granddaughters, 2 great-grandchildren, nephews and nieces. He was preceded in death by his wife, Betty, his parents, and 2 brothers.

**Beben, Henry Michael**, 95, passed away April 25, 2017. Surviving him are his daughter, Marsha Beben (Fr. Jonathan) Tobias, his granddaughters Marisa Tobias (Zack) Vaskalis and Alexis Tobias (fiancé Jared) and his great-granddaughter, Evelina Vaskalis. Preceding him in death are his wife, Rose David Beben; his mother and step-father, Catherine and John Smedi; his sisters Viola Beben Subject and Phyllis Beben Gentry; and his brothers Walter Binben, Victor Binben and John Smedi. In 1942, Henry joined the Army Air Force, and served as a top turret gunner in the 303rd

Bombardment Group -- known as the original "Hell's Angels" -- stationed at Molesworth. On January 11th 1944, Staff Sergeant Henry Beben and his B17 crew flew in the First Division attack, without fighter cover because of bad weather, on an aircraft factory in Oschersleben, Germany. The First Division engaged enemy aircraft over 400 times while flying through constant flak from anti-aircraft fire, successfully reaching the target and inflicting significant damage. However, in that single raid 42 heavy bombers were lost. Over 430 air- men failed to return to Molesworth: Henry and his crew were among them. The enemy fire that destroyed Henry's B17 immediately killed the captain and co-pilot. The rest of the crew parachuted into enemy territory, and were taken by the Nazi's as prisoners of war. Henry spent the next 16 months as a POW in Stalag XVII-B, in Krems, Austria. After the war, Henry worked as a post- man in Warren, Ohio. During this time he met the love of his life, Rose David

Beben. Married in 1960, they had an only child, their daughter Marsha Beben Tobias. Later, Henry and Rose started Busy Bee Printing on Griswold Avenue, where Henry (assisted by his wife and daughter) produced church cookbooks, stationery and wedding imprints. Henry was foremost a devoted husband, father and grand- father. He was active in the Ohio Chapter of the American Ex-POW association, along with his memberships in the VFW and the DAV. He generously participated in the Holy Cross Polish National Church and the St Nicholas Orthodox Church in Warren, where he worked unfailingly at the weekly ethnic dinners on Thursdays. In his later years, Henry moved to Pittsburgh to be with his daughter Marsha and his son-in-law, Fr Jonathan Tobias.

To the end, Henry remained constant in his dedication to his Christian faith and to his family. His sense of humor never dimmed, and he sang Polish hymns and lullabies in his childhood language. This despite the fact that memories of the war, the disaster of January 11th 1944 and his captivity in Stalag XVII-B never left him. On the first day in Paradise, for Henry, the war was finally over.



**Henry Beben**



**Milford Becker**



**James Belcher**

**Becker, Milford L. (M.L.)**, 94, passed away April 19, 2017.

Mr. Becker was born to Harry B. and Edna L. Becker on Nov. 19, 1922, in Meno. M.L. said his responsibilities before the war "were not much of anything." M.L. was drafted in March 1944 and during this time he was assigned to a ten-man air force combat crew. He was sent to England where he served with the 487th Bomb Group in Levenam, England. He was transferred to the 34th Bomb Group. He then flew the Martin B-26 Marauders. He was shot down on his 23rd mission by Bastogne and marched across Germany as a POW. He was later liberated by American troops. After his discharge, he attended the Spartran School of Aeronautics where he received his Aircraft and Engine Mechanics License. He worked two years for Spartan Aircraft Company in Tulsa and attended Business College. He then returned to Enid to work for Vance Air Force base for five years.

After owning the maintenance shop at Woodring Field in Enid for thirty-seven years, he retired in 1992. He had an incredible knowledge of aircraft.

He was preceded in death by his parents and lifelong companion, Ellen Janes, and survived by a host of loving friends.

**Belcher, James (Jim) Evard Sr.**, 93, passed away March 8, 2017. He went to work at 8 delivering local newspapers, and hand bills from local movie theaters. By the age of 10 he was working at his uncle's restaurant, Camp Comfort. He grew up living in both Princeton, WV and Christiansburg, VA. He graduated Christiansburg High School playing trombone and singing with the school band. As a teen he worked at the local airport helping wash planes in exchange for flying lessons. Jim enrolled in premed studies, however when WWII broke out he joined the Army Air Corps. He served in the ill-fated 492nd Bomb Group as a gunner. They lost so many planes that the group was broken up and he was transferred to the 466th Bomb Group. He received the Purple Heart, the Air Medal with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the European Campaign Medal with 3 Bronze Stars, the Bronze Arrowhead and the World War II Victory Medal. He was honorably discharged and returned home after 25 missions. He remained a devoted and proud member of the 8th Army Air Corps and a true patriot, throughout his life. He graduated college with a degree in accounting and accepted a job as Accountant and Office Manager for the Capitol Frito Co. (now the Frito, Lay Co.) He moved to Bethesda, MD and shared an



apartment with Les Hart. Les and his wife, Caren introduced Jim to his wife, Mary. Jim went to work for the Montgomery County Government as an Accountant in the Finance Department. He retired from that position and then worked part time for King Floor Co in Damascus, MD. Jim joined the Damascus Lions Club and was very active in the club serving on many committees, as Treasurer and President. He received many honors from the club including Lion of the Year, Lion of the Years, and the prestigious Melvin Jones Award. He was a life member and served as Permanent Director. He became involved in the Lions District 22-C serving as Treasurer and became District Governor in 1994. He is also a life member of the American Legion and the VFW. In 1997 he and Mary moved to Crestwood Village where Jim served on Committees and the Board of Trustees as a member and president. He is a member of the Episcopal Church of Transfiguration in Braddock Heights, MD. Jim is survived by Mary, his wife of 63 years, children, James Evard Belcher, Jr. of Mt. Airy, MD; Dorothy (Dottie) Moss of Frederick, MD; and Janet Dermott (Dale) of Lamar, MO. In addition he is survived by four grandchildren: Daniel Moss (Kathleen) of Salisbury, MD; Michael Moss (Megan) of Frederick, MD; Kristin La Rocca and husband Alessandro of Norfolk, VA; Elizabeth O'Hara and husband Edward of Frederick, MD. He is also survived by six great-grandchildren and many nieces & nephews.

**Bergner, Jr., William "Bill"** Joined his loving wife, Audee Tuesday, February 28, 2017, at age 96. Dear father of Patti Ann (Steve) Neibauer and Scott (Laura) Bergner. Brother of Marie Bjarkman. Brother-in-law of Joan (Jack) Amos and Margie (James) Sauer. Further survived by other relatives and friends. Bill was a WWII veteran serving in the Army Air Corps with the 92nd Bomb Group, 327th BS. Bill served August 1942-December 1945, first in the Signal Corps, then joined the 92nd Bomb Group at Podington as a "Mickeyman". His job was to calibrate the radar and work with the Norden Bombsight.

After the war he graduated from Marquette University with a degree in Civil Engineering. Bill was a charter member of the Wisconsin Chapter of the 8th AFHS, serving as president for 22 years and newsletter editor until his passing.

Our hearts are heavy in the WI Chapter, 8th AFHS. Bill was a man of honor, a comrade, and a true friend.

**Curchin, Kenneth Hayden**, 100 of Fair Haven, passed away peacefully on April 29, 2017. He was a life-long resident of

Monmouth County, born on April 19, 1917 in Fair Haven. His family moved to Red Bank and then Little Silver. He graduated from Red Bank High School in 1935, working many jobs before and after to help support his mother and father during the Great Depression. At 17, he learned to fly beginning his lifelong love of aviation. He was drafted in 1941 before World War II and spent fourteen months in Northern British Columbia and the Yukon building the ALCAN Highway, where temperatures plunged to -70 degrees during winter nights. Fulfilling a dream, he then qualified for the Aviation Cadets and became a B-17 pilot, 487th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force. After the war, he returned to his boyhood home and joined his father at Curchin's Barber Shop on Linden Place in Red Bank, where he cut hair until he retired at age 74.

He is predeceased by his brothers Mortimer, Frank, and Alonzo. He is also predeceased by the love of his life, his wife of 56 years, Thelma Long Curchin, whom he met on a fortunate blind date and married in All Saints Episcopal Church in Navesink in 1951. He is survived by his five adoring children: daughters Judy (Richard Preston) and Linda (Charles Montgomery) and sons Kenneth (Claudia Maist), Thomas (Sarah Kinter), and Lawrence. He was able to live in his own home his entire life thanks to the loving in-home care his son Lawrence provided during his last six years. He also leaves 12 cherished grandchildren, Thomas, Patrick, Andrew, Kenneth, Ashley, Ryan, William, Alice, Emma, Eamon, Jonah, and Grace, and four great-children, Tai, Miriam, Summer, and Hannah.

His entire life was devoted to his family and his country. He and his adored wife Thel were equal partners on a team instilling in their children their core values - get a good education, always try your hardest, be thrifty, be reliable, be responsible, and always do the right thing. He had many oft-repeated sayings, including "Keep on plugging," "Keep the faith," and "It's a great life if you don't weaken." His great devotion to Thel was most evident during

the last ten years of her life, when he spent his days at her nursing home bedside. He taught his children and grandchildren what it meant to be a great husband and father.

**Detro, L. Dwain**, 91, passed away Monday, February 8, 2016. Dwain was born in Verona, OH. He was preceded in death by his wife of 68 years, Betty in 2013, by an infant son, by his parents, Lester D. & Elsie Detro, sister, Patty Eby & grandson Neil Lindsey. A 1942 graduate of Verona High School, Dwain enlisted in the Army Air



**William Bergner, Jr.**



**Kenneth Curchin**



**Dwain Detro**



**William Eisenhart**

Corps on Feb. 22, 1943 and was married to his high school sweetheart, Betty on July 29, 1944. He flew 30 missions as a flight engineer and top-turret gunner in the B-17 "Classy Chassis" with the 351st bomb group, and he remembered his WWII service as "the greatest experience I've had in my life." Dwain worked with his father in the Verona Junk Yard, then moved on to become an NCR Employee, Texaco Man, Stock Car Racer, Insurance Salesman, Health & Building Inspector, Store Manager, Softball Umpire, Dayton Airshow and USAF Museum Volunteer. He was a 32nd degree Mason, a member of Brookville's VFW & AMVETS and he participated in the Veterans to Teach Program at both Brookville & Tri County North High Schools. He is survived by 2 daughters & son-in-laws; Diane & Ronald Boomershine, Janice & Mike Lindsey; 2 sons & daughter-in-laws, Stephen & Vickie Detro, Gary & Ann Detro; 10 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren & 1 great-great-grandchild; special niece, Fran Hinshaw & brother, Darwin Detro; sister, Jean Hemmerich.

**Eisenhart, COL William E.**

"Bill" 97, passed away March 21, 2017.

Bill grew up in Akron, OH and graduated North High School in 1938. He went to Kent State University; worked for Seiberling Rubber Company before the war broke out. He enlisted in March, 1942 and was sent to Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis, MO for basic training. After Basic Training, he went to Airplane Mechanics School at Chanute Field, Illinois. He was in the last phase of Airplane Mechanics, when he was selected for the Pilot Training

program. He graduated as a Flight Officer in April, 1943. He then went onto B-17 training with Flight Officer Thomas J. Quinn's crew, and assigned to the 8th Air Force. This crew was sent to Molesworth, England in August, 1943. He was credited with a total of 43 Combat Missions as Co-Pilot, Pilot, Operations Officer and then Squadron Commander of the 359th Bomb Squadron.

After the war, he returned to civilian life, settling in the Akron, OH area with his wife and daughter. He worked for the Seiberling Rubber Company and then the Firestone Rubber Company. He was recalled to active duty in October, 1948. He served most of his Air Force career in the Strategic Air Command, with a total of 25 consecutive years. He flew forty-three B-52 and KC-135 missions during 1971-72, out of U-Tapao, Thailand, during the Vietnam War. He was the Airborne Commander for two of the "Christmas War" (11 Day), Linebacker II missions; the 3rd and the 6th night missions. He retired as Base Commander from Rhein Main Air Base, Germany in October, 1976 and formally retired from the USAF, as a Colonel at MacDill Air Force Base, in Tampa, FL in January, 1977. He recently received the French Legion of Honor Award.

He is survived by his wife, Pamela "Penny" Gahr-Eisenhart, his four children, Diana Rae Strangio of Oracle, AZ; Linda Marie Eisenhart of Tucson, AZ; John Albert Eisenhart of Colorado Springs, CO and Mary Jane Cooper of Lancaster, CA and 11 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. He was pre-deceased by his parents, Mearle and Marie Eisenhart (nee Dugas); his brother, Mearle Eisenhart, Jr., and his wife of 61 years, Mary M. Eisenhart (nee Shore).

**Fuller, Francis Reginald "Reggie"**, passed away on Saturday, February 11, 2017. Reggie enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force in October 1942, where he served in active combat duty over Normandy during World War II as a B-17 radio operator with the 385th Bomb Group, aboard the "Golden Goose." His WWII decorations included the Good Conduct Medal, EAME Theatre Campaign Ribbon with 2 Battle Stars, an Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

He married Olive M. Estabrook on August 17, 1946. The couple spent most of their 70 years of marriage in Keene. Reggie worked as a department foreman at Kingsbury Machine Tool, retiring in 1984. He loved the outdoors, hunting and fishing. Reg always looked forward to the annual fishing derby on Lake Winnepesaukee and fishing excursions with family and friends

on Lake Champlain and Lake Ontario. He was a member of the American Legion, a life member of the V.F.W., and a dedicated member of the Keene Lodge of Elks No. 927, having served twice as the Lodge's Exalted Ruler and as District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler N.H. South in 1978-79. Reggie is survived by his wife, Olive; four daughters, Linda J. Rajaniemi, Nancy L. Kelly and Joyce E. Gray; Cynthia A. King and her husband, Gary A. King; a son, John M. Fuller and his wife, Hazell, NH; nine grandchildren; thirteen great grandchildren; and one great, great grandchild. He is also survived by two brothers-in-law, James C. Estabrook and Paul L. Estabrook, a sister-in-law, Marjorie Estabrook, and numerous nieces and nephews. Reggie was predeceased by a son and daughter-in-law, Peter T. Fuller and Christine M. Fuller, a son-in-law, David W. Rajaniemi, as well as his sister, Alice L. Wright, and brother, Robert W. Fuller.

**Fennell, James Samuel**, 87, of Butler passed away Thursday, March 22, 2012, at the VA Butler Healthcare. He was born Nov. 24, 1924, in Washington Township, Westmoreland County, near Vandergrift, to the late W.J. Bryan Fennell and Ruth Gilchrist Fennell.

During World War II, Mr. Fennell served in the U.S. Army Air Corps flying 32 missions as radio operator on a B-24, with the 8th Air Force 466th Bomb Group, 787th Bomb Squadron, based at Attlebridge. Mr. Fennell met Paulina Takach of Leechburg on a New Year's Eve blind date and they married on June 26, 1948. A 1950 graduate of Penn State University, Mr. Fennell was an agricultural sales representative and sales manager for Eastern States Cooperative, later Agway, before finishing his work life as a security guard for Allegheny Ludlum Steel. Mr. Fennell loved the outdoors, planting a yearly vegetable garden, hunting, camping, taking long walks and golfing. As a salesman, he enjoyed learning and traveling the back-roads of Western Pennsylvania and meeting with local farmers. Mr. Fennell loved following the news and avidly read the Butler Eagle and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

Mr. Fennell was a member of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, the American Legion, and the Western PA Wing of the 8th Air Force Historical Society.

Surviving are his wife, Paulina T. Fennell; five children, James S. Fennell Jr. (Jeanne) of Beaumont, Texas, John A. Fennell of Butler, Richard B. Fennell (Nancy) of Birmingham, Ala., Marcia Kostic (John D.) of Pittsburgh and Sandra Fennell of Murrysburg; 13 grandchildren; 5 great-grandchildren; his sister, Edwina Pearce; and his brother Richard L. Fennell. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Kathleen Fennell Briggs, and brother, Vernon D. Fennell.

**Goodwin, O. C.**, passed away Oct 4, 2016 at 97. He was born in Durham, NC and graduated from Duke University where he majored in forestry services, working for the state of North Carolina until he retired. O C served in the 8th, stationed in Bassingbourn with the 91st bomb group, 323rd bomb squadron as a waist gunner and gunnery instructor on the B17. That is where he met his wife Gladys [Edwards]. He brought her to the "States" where they were married at Yale University Chapel in New Haven, CT in 1946. O C was pre-deceased by two sons and a grandson. He is survived by his wife Gladys, 2 daughters, a granddaughter and 2 great granddaughters.

**Hollis, Medford E.**, age 96, died March 23, 2017. A veteran of World War II, he was a B-17 Bomber pilot in the 457th Bomb group. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross while flying over Germany on September 1944. At the end of the war, Medford remained in the Air Force and flew missions in Korea and later in Viet Nam. A brave and loyal man as well as a patient loving father, he married Evelyn Marie Fajkus in 1945. He

continued to serve in the Air Force until his retirement in 1967.

He is survived by his wife, Evelyn and his son, John; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

**Hon, Roy C. Sr.**, 92, a resident of Tujunga and Canyon Lake, CA, passed away March 24, 2017 peacefully at home, surrounded by his family. He is survived by his beloved wife of more than 67 years, Dr. Jeanne E. Hon, his son, Dr. Roy C. Hon, Jr., and his daughter, Kathleen E. Hon. Born in Los



**Reginald "Reggie" Fuller**



**Medford Hollis**



**Roy C. Hon, Sr.**



Angeles, Mr. Hon graduated from Canoga Park High School in 1942 and immediately joined the Army Air Corps where he flew in B-17s and B-24s with the 487th Bomb Group, 838th BS of the 8th Air Force, flying out of Lavenham, England. After being shot during a mission (for which he was awarded a Purple Heart) and spending 39 days in a hospital in London, he was reassigned to the 15th Air Force, 833rd Bomb Group 756th BS until his return home to the United States where he continued his education. His life was once again interrupted when he was recalled to fly in B-29s during the Korean War, temporarily assigned to Guam as part of the crew of a B-29 carrying the atomic bomb while President Truman decided whether or not it would be dropped on North Korea. Upon his return home, he resumed his education, graduating from Pasadena Nazarene College (now Point Loma University) and USC, where he studied engineering. He was an electrical engineer in the aircraft industry until his retirement in 1987. Roy was a wonderful husband and father and past Commander of the Disabled American Veterans. He was a kind and caring contributor to his community who made a difference by lending a helping hand and sympathetic ear. He, along with his kind smile and generous spirit will be deeply missed by his family and friends, and by all who knew him.

**Hyatt, John W.**, 92, passed away February 18, 2017. He was born in South Bend, Indiana on April 25, 1924 to Orval and Orpha (DeLong) Hyatt. After graduating from Hesperia High School in Michigan, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in November 1943. As a B-17 pilot John flew 35 bombing missions France with the 385th Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and air medals for his service. He owned and operated Wolf Lake Bus Line in Wolf Lake, MI for 23 years, then moved to Grand Canyon, AZ where he was employed for 25 years and retired as Senior Vice President from AMFAC Hotels and Resorts (Fred Harvey). John was then a school bus driver for seven years for the Flagstaff Unified School District. John is survived by his companion of 20 years, Betty Peck, Flagstaff, AZ, and his five children: John C. Hyatt, Mundelein, IL; Richard O. (Annette) Hyatt, Spring Lake, MI; Marie G. Boese,

Elizabeth, CO; Loretta B. (James) Alvarez, Tucson, AZ; Andrew A. (Gandalf) Hyatt, Berlin, Germany. Three sisters: Mary Mae Banwell, Muskegon, MI; Addalea (Jim) Johnson, Spring Lake, MI; Norma K Hyatt, Grand Haven, MI. Four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

**Lancaster, Orvid V.**, 93, of Normal, passed away Dec. 25, 2016. The son of Clarence and Mary Mammen Lancaster, he married Doris Mason on July 8, 1945, in Armington after his return from Europe as a captain in the Army Air Corps. She preceded him in death on Aug. 24, 2016.

O.V. served from 1941 to 1945 as a decorated pilot in the 385th Bomb Group and 3rd Scouting Force, stationed in England. In 1949, he joined the Masonic Lodge and subsequently the Scottish Rite, York Rite, and Order of the Eastern Star, serving as master, sovereign prince, petition captain, and degree master in these organizations. O.V. received the Masonic 33rd Degree in 1971 at Philadelphia.

O.V. and Doris were members of the American Passion Play door staff for many years. In 1964, he joined the Shrine, serving as president of the McLean County Shrine Club in 1994 and as a founding member and captain of the Tin Lizzie Patrol Unit.

He was a 70-year member of the American Legion. O.V. retired from the Illinois State University Physical Plant in 1983 as supervisor of building trades. He also owned and operated Hilltop Electric for 40 years.

O.V. attained life member status in the Masonic Lodge, Scottish Rite, American Legion, 385th Bomb Group Memorial Association, and 8th Air Force Historical Society.

Survivors include their children: Steven (Jane) Lancaster of Normal; and Susan (Bob) Downen of Gridley; grandchildren, John Lancaster; Sara (Jeremy) Lorange; Jonathan (Jill) Frost; Kenneth (Kristen) Whitesell; Shari (Greg) King and Laura Price; seven great-grandchildren; seven great-great-grandchildren; and a brother, Stanley (Marcia) Lancaster of Minier. He was preceded in death by his parents; five brothers, Kenneth, Milberne, Wayne, Clarence Jr. and Leonard; and one sister, Lavonne.

**LAWSON, COL. (Ret.) George A.**, a man who personified the best attributes of the greatest generation passed away on

February 16, 2017 at the age of 98. Col. Lawson was the oldest of six and was raised by his grandparents in Winchester, Tennessee where he attended a one-room school house from the age of five through the eighth grade. He was the first in his family to graduate from high school and went on to attend Tennessee Technological University. Having come from a poor family he financed his college education by working the night shift at a local hotel. In 1941 he graduated with a BS degree in accounting. He was a licensed pilot prior to World War II having discovered his love of flying from the barnstormers. He enlisted in the military in 1941 and rose through the ranks quickly. He served as a photo reconnaissance pilot flying P-38s for the 7th Photo Reconnaissance Group of the 8th Air Force based out of Mount Farm, England. Col. Lawson was the third youngest combat group commander in the 8th Air Force during World War II and rose from Aviation Cadet to Lt. Col. in less than two years. He was one of the limited few entrusted with full briefings of the D-Day invasion which prevented him from flying any further missions. In 1943 he met 1st Lt. Phyllis Morelli a registered nurse serving in Army field hospitals in England and on the battlefields of Europe. They were married in 1946 shortly before Col. Lawson was deployed to serve as Military Governor of Seoul, South Korea, a city that had been devastated by the Japanese occupation. Col. Lawson continued his career in the military and furthered his education by receiving a Masters Degree in Business from the University of Pittsburgh in 1951. He served for over thirty years in the Air Force with his last assignment at MacDill. He visited 110 different countries in his lifetime and was awarded 17 U.S. and foreign medals including the recent award of the French Legion of Honor. After retiring from the military he worked an additional 13 years as the Comptroller for Bayfront Medical Center. He was a charter season ticket holder of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and was still tailgating and attending games at the age of 95. He also served as the President of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society and on the Board of Directors of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in Savannah which he helped to establish. When his wife, Phyllis became ill with Alzheimer's he became her primary caregiver and lovingly attended to her including taking her to Mass at St. Raphael's until her death in 2008. He was a man devoted to his country and to his family and never missed an opportunity to support his children and grandchildren. Col. Lawson is predeceased by his wife, Phyllis,



**John Hyatt**



**Orvid Lancaster**

his granddaughter, Ashley Lawson and five siblings. He is survived by his children, George A. Lawson, Jr., Dr. Mark Lawson, Ceci Shannon, Lori Rutland, nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

**Masters, Orlan Vincent Wade**, 96, died Wednesday, January 18 at home, surrounded by loving family, following a very brief illness. One of the "Boy" Colonels of World War II, Masters earned 22 military decorations to his credit in Europe, including the prestigious Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star, Air Medal, and the French Croix de Guerre.

An Air Commander of the 385th Heavy Bombardment Group, USAF, at the age of 24 Col. Masters completed 28 bomber missions and earned the European Theater of Operations medal with six major battle stars. As lead pilot of his Combat Wing, he led the famous raid on the Regensburg Messerschmitt aircraft factory in the shuttle mission to North Africa, August 1943. He also flew the first successful raid on Berlin in March of 1944 as Air Commander.

Col. Masters' B17 aircraft "Lulu Belle" was damaged by fighter fire over Bordeaux on the return from North Africa and forced to ditch in the Atlantic Ocean. Surviving more than 24 hours in a heavy storm with 30 foot seas, Col. Masters was subsequently chosen to command a P51 fighter squadron for secret weather reconnaissance. Following completion of more than 200 sorties in his P51 Mustang fighter "Masters Mistress," as Commander of the 3rd Scouting Force, Col. Masters was promoted to Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Operations of the 3rd Air Division and sent to Division Headquarters.

Col. Masters was later selected to form and lead a secret weather reconnaissance force in the Pacific for the 20th Air Force. He was assembling his scouting force in Washington, D.C., when the Japanese surrendered. Not wanting a career at the Pentagon, Col. Masters flew commercial aviation DC3s with TWA for two years before returning to college to pursue a medical career. Recently he was awarded the prestigious French Legion of Honor.

Masters returned to California from a career in aviation to further his education. He graduated Stanford University, Palo Alto, undergraduate, then the renowned Stanford Medical School in 1953. Dr. Masters enjoyed a long and very distinguished medical career. Dr. Masters was recognized in Two Thousand Men of Achievement of 1969 and the Royal Blue Book, as well as several editions of both Who's Who and the Dictionary of International Biography.

He was a member of the Society of Medical

Friends of Wine and the Society of Wine Educators as well as an amateur wine maker. He led the new focus on wine appreciation and education in Athens in the '70s. Dr. Masters was a community instructor in wine appreciation, guest lecturer in the College of Home Economics and across campus on responsible wine consumership, and a wine journalist. Readers of the Athens Banner-Herald read Dr. Masters' weekly column "The Wine Press" on Sundays. He continued to contribute wine features to Athens Magazine, Athens Observer Newspaper, Georgia's Good Life Magazine, Georgia Journal, and Lakelife Magazine for many years. Dr. Masters was a recognized wine judge with his wife in regional competitions, including the International Wine Festival and the Wine Summit, Atlanta, and the Southeastern Wine Makers Circle and was awarded the status of Master Knight of the Universal Order Knights of the Vine. With his wife he founded the Athens Wine Society in 1979 which provided monthly tastings and elite tours for members to California, France, and Germany.

Dr. Masters traveled extensively throughout his life, first with the military, then in the pursuit of continuing medical education, and lastly on exotic vacations with his wife, an owner of All Aboard Travel Service of Athens, Inc. He married Judy Jay Alves at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Athens, GA, August 26, 1975, in a candlelight communion service performed by the late Rev. Franklin C. Ferguson.

Dr. Masters is survived by his wife of 41 years, Dr. Judy Jay Alves Masters, and four children: Michael Vincent Wade Masters, Columbia, SC; Martin Wakeman Masters, Shoreview, MN; Susan Lynne Masters Steedman, Columbia, S.C; Matthew Christian Masters, Flowery Branch, GA; and their respective families. He has six grandchildren. Two elder brothers and a sister have predeceased Masters: J. Donald Masters, Los Angeles; Stanley Raymond Masters, Bakersfield; and Frances Marjorie James, Los Angeles; as well as two sisters who died in infancy.

**McCawley, Colonel Francis "Frank" Xavier**, (USAFR, Ret.) 92, slipped the surly bonds of earth on Saturday, November 19, 2016. Frank attended public schools in Scranton and graduated from the city's Central High School in January 1942. He spent a year working for the International Text Book Press before enlisting in the Army Air Corp on December 7, 1942. After basic training in Miami Beach, FL, and advanced ground radio communication training in Missouri, Frank was shipped to

England as part of the 8th Air Force where he volunteered for flight duty. He was assigned to the 385th Bomb Group, 549th BS as a radio operator in a B-17G. Between December 1943 and June 1944 he flew 30 combat missions including 3 missions to Berlin. He was awarded the Air Medal with 4 Oak Clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement. He was cited by his commanders on two occasions for the safe return of his plane and crewmates due to his ability to obtain course information in poor flying conditions. He remained in England through VE Day as an instructor for new flight crews. He was discharged in September 1945. In 1953, he enlisted in the Air Force Reserves with the 459th Troop Carrier Wing stationed at Andrews Air Force Base. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant the same year. He retired from the 459th Tactical Airlift Wing in 1985 as Deputy Commander with the rank of Colonel in 1983.

In 1945, Frank enrolled at the University of Scranton graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in May 1949. While at the University, he also served as manager of the baseball team. After graduation, he moved to the Washington, DC area where he worked briefly for the US Post Office before joining Chicago Development Corporation, an industrial research laboratory based in Riverdale, MD as an electro-metallurgist. In 1958, he went to work for the College Park Metallurgy Research Center of the Bureau of Mines, US Dept. of Interior in College Park, MD. His early work was on the electrodeposition of metal coatings especially titanium and platinum. He later worked on developing anti-corrosive metals for use with geothermal projects in the Imperial Valley, California. He co-authored numerous technical reports and articles in scientific journals and his work produced several patents. He retired from the Bureau of Mines in 1984.

In 1952, Frank married Margaret (Peggy) Ann O'Donnell of Scranton. In 1954 the couple settled in Cheverly, MD, where they raised five children. Frank was a man of many interests and his hobbies included bowling, camping, coin-collecting, gardening, boating, crabbing, and fishing. He collected HO trains and every year would build an elaborate layout to go under the family Christmas tree. Frank could be easily persuaded to run the trains whenever anyone stopped by the house, including the kids, grandchildren or great grandchildren. After retirement, Frank became active in several military organizations; including the Employer Support for Guard and



Reserve, the 385th Bombardment Group Association and the 459th Wing Association. He served for many years as editor of the 385th BGA newsletter. Frank spent many hours fishing on the Chesapeake Bay and local rivers on his boat; eventually buying property in Ocean City, MD. After spending the winter months traveling, Frank and Peggy would spend the summer in Ocean City at Bradley on the Bay, fishing, crabbing, and boating around Assateague Island. He could often be seen on the dock at Bradley checking his boat and his crab pots. Frank was a member of St. Ambrose Catholic Parish for over sixty years. He is survived by his widow, Peggy (O'Donnell) McCawley of Cheverly, daughters Maureen Burke of Cheverly, MD, and Nancy Williams of Hanover, PA, sons Patrick McCawley (Cynthia) of Chapin, SC and Edward McCawley (Lourdes) of Purcellville, VA, brothers James McCawley of Scranton, PA, and Joseph McCawley (Sharon) of Moosic, PA and numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his sons, William and John and daughter, Frances.

**Miller, Vincent Nester**, 94, of Reading, PA passed away Tuesday, September 20th, 3 weeks shy of his 95th birthday. Vincent was born in Reading on October 10, 1921. He was the husband of Jean M. (Stubblebine) Miller. They were married 66 years. Vincent was a long time member of the former First EC Church. Vincent was a 1939 graduate of Reading Senior High School. He was also a graduate of the Wyomissing Polytech Institute.

He served in the US Army Air Force as a Tech. Sgt. of the 379th Bomb Group in WWII. He was a crewmember on the B-17 "Red Dragon" that was shot down on their 17th bombing mission into Germany on August 9, 1944. The entire crew bailed out and were kept safe by the Belgian Underground until the middle of September when that area in Belgium was liberated. Before the war, Vincent was employed by the Glen L. Martin Company, Baltimore, MD, as an airplane inspector. After the war, he worked for WB Miller and Sons, a family owned grocery store. He also worked for the HJ Heinz Company and several food brokers. He last worked for Del Grosso Morrison, retiring in 1986. Vincent was a member of F&AM Lodge #227 for 70 years. He was a past Captain of the Rajah Shrine Arab Patrol. He was a season ticket holder of the Reading Royals hockey team, loved family vacations to Long



Vincent Miller

Beach Island, NJ and attending Reading Senior High School and Albright College sporting events. He also attended many of his grandchildren's school activities. Along with his wife, Jean, he is survived by three daughters: Karen A. Ulrich, wife of James, Carol J. Laureano and Debra L. Baver, all of Reading and a sister, Vivian Reitz. He is also survived by three grandchildren: Lyndsay (Baver) Conforto, Christopher J. Laureano and Katie Ulrich and two great-grandsons.

**Mitchell, Dr. William Grant Jr.**, 91, of Villa Rica, Georgia, died Sunday, April 8, 2012. Bill grew up largely on the Williams family farm, Goldworth Farm, in Villa Rica. He attended Villa Rica High School together with his future wife, Sue. He attended West Georgia College and Emory University, from which he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism. He later earned a Masters of Arts in Journalism and Communications from the University of Florida and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Communications from Michigan State University. During World War II, Bill served as a B-17 bomber pilot in the United States Army Air Corps, serving in the 306th Bomb Group, 368th BS, flying 35 combat missions from England, as well as a radio relay or cycle relay tour and receiving several military honors including the Distinguished Flying Cross, awarded for heroism in combat. Sue also served in England as an Army Nurse. They were married in England in 1944. After returning to Georgia, Bill farmed and wrote free-lance articles for magazines such as Progressive Farmer and Popular Science.

Bill was an innovator in the use of mass media for education. For many years, he worked in agricultural education and extension, first in Georgia and then in Florida. He pioneered the use of television to disseminate techniques and innovations with the University of Florida and as an Assistant Dean with the Florida Institute for Continuing University Studies.

After his Ph.D. work, he became Director of Educational Resources and Professor of Journalism at Northern Michigan University, developing the first major educational television and radio system in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and pioneering the use of



Albert "Bud" Porter

cable television for education. Finally, he was Director of Educational Resources at the University of South Florida, where he extended educational television coverage over most of the west coast of Florida. Bill retired in 1986, returning to Georgia and focused on writing, including regular columns for the Villa Rica newspaper, and on his interests in history, genealogy, rock collecting, and reading. He was an enthusiastic member of the Friends of the Villa Rica Library, the Villa Rica Historic Preservation Commission, the Carroll County Genealogical Society (past president), and was a founding member of the local chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. He worked tirelessly to restore the historic Goldworth Farm house and outbuildings, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. He also worked closely with students and faculty in the Center for Public History at the University of West Georgia to document the property and family history. His efforts were honored with a Historic Preservation award, presented by the Villa Rica Historic Preservation Committee at his 90th birthday. Bill Mitchell is survived by his daughter Patricia Mitchell DeWitt of Rome, Georgia, and son John William Mitchell of Bowie, Maryland, and their spouses Peter Bruce DeWitt and Sally Sawyer Mitchell, and their children Nicholas Peter DeWitt, Sara Elizabeth Mitchell, and John Grant Mitchell. Bill's beloved wife, Mary Sue Sims Mitchell, died on February 16, 1995.

**Myers, Robert F.**, age 92, of Anderson, IN, passed away Monday, August 8, 2016.

He was born on March 17, 1924 in Madison County, the son of the late George and Rhesa (Lutton) Myers and lived his entire life in the area. Robert was a Staff Sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II, with the 385th Bomb Group. He 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.

**Porter, Albert "Bud"**, 96, passed away on March 22, 2017.

"Bud" to everyone who knew him was born in New York City on February 3, 1921. He was raised in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and

# TAPS

graduated from Jefferson High School in 1939. Bud entered the US Army Air Corps as a Cadet in 1942. After the Air Corps decided that being a pilot was not going to be his career area he began a long series of training assignments, starting with radio operator school. After graduation, while going through crew assignment procedures in Tampa, Florida, the Air Corps decided that Bud would begin yet another phase of training, based upon the fact that he was under 5'8" in height. His newly acquired radio operator certification, it turned out, was not as important as the fact that he could fit inside the cramped and claustrophobic interior of a B-17 ball turret. Finally, after graduating from gunnery school, Bud was assigned to a permanent crew, which was transported to England by ship. Upon arriving in England, Bud's crew was assigned to the 95th Bomb Group, 412th BS, located in Horham, England. They flew 11 missions before the war ended in May of 1945.

Bud returned to the U.S. in November of 1945 and immediately enrolled at Rutgers University under the GI bill. He graduated in less than three years with a BS degree in Marketing. He spent his entire professional career working for General Motors Acceptance Corporation, retiring in 1983. Bud married Gertrude Elizabeth "Sis" Cunningham on September 17, 1949, after only a three month courtship. They had a wonderful 50+ year marriage. After Bud's retirement he and Sis retired to Hilton Head Island, South Carolina in 1984. Sis passed away on October 1, 2010. Bud is survived by two daughters, Patricia and Bonnie, four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

After his retirement Bud was a founding member of the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force (NMMEAF), located in Pooler, GA. He was active in the operation of the museum, serving on the Board of Trustees, as well as working with the public as a docent, until shortly before his death. He was also a founding member of the Birthplace Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society and served for four years as its President. Bud was particularly close with the NMMEAF volunteer restoration team that is nearing completion of the restoration of the WWII B-17 bomber City of Savannah. He has been honored with a memorial being placed next to the bomber's ball turret in his memory - the first such honor ever extended to an individual by the restoration team.

**Perry, Joseph Ray**, 92, a lifetime resident of Haskell County, TX, passed away April 28, 2017.

Ray was born in the Paint Creek Community of Haskell County on April 23, 1925. He started 8th grade at the newly formed Paint Creek Independent School, which was named by his grandfather, Wayne Perry, who was a school board member of the new school district. Ray graduated from Paint Creek in May of 1943 and joined the United States Army Air Corps. Serving his country as a tail gunner on a B-17 bomber with the 95th Bomb Group, 336th BS, he flew 35 missions over Nazi Germany. Ray was awarded several medals while in service and was always proud to share his experiences. One story he often told was of his crew's sixth mission when they were hit by heavy enemy fire. Their aircraft was heavily damaged but his pilot still managed to land the plane back in Horham, England with one dead airman on board, one engine out, and part of a wing gone. Ray always said that this was the day he finally grew up-at the ripe old age of nineteen! After an honorable discharge, Ray returned to Haskell to begin his farming career-a life he lived and loved for over fifty years. He lived on the land he had worked and loved until his death.

Ray met his future wife, Amelia June Holt, on a blind date and they were united in marriage at the Haskell Methodist Church on June 29, 1948--June would have marked seventy years of marriage.

Outside of his family, Ray led a busy and productive life. In 1968, Ray was elected to be a County Commissioner and served in that capacity for 28 years. Due to his failing eyesight, he chose not to seek re-election. Additionally, he served on the Paint Creek School Board for ten years; the West Central Texas Council of Governments for six years, two of which he served as President of the board; and he was instrumental in organizing the Paint Creek Water Corporation, all of which was done from his make-shift home office, he then served several years on the Water Board and twice as its President.

Ray was an avid hunter. Amelia once remarked that they could turn their den into a museum because at every turn you were face-to-face with elk, deer, and caribou-with a few pheasants mixed in. One of the highlights of his hunting days was a trip to Alaska where he killed a first-class caribou, which was entered into the Guinness Book of World Records.

Ray Perry is survived by his wife, Amelia, their 2 children: a daughter, Milla Perry Jones of Dallas; and son, former Governor of Texas Rick Perry, and wife Anita, of Round Top and Washington, DC; 3 grandchildren: Griffin Perry, and wife, Meredith, of Dallas; Caitlyn Jones of College Station; Sydney Perry Harrison, and husband Brett, of Las Vegas, Nevada; and 2 great-granddaughters: Ella and Piper Perry of Dallas. Also surviving Mr. Perry are 2 brothers: Gene Perry of Big Spring and Don Perry, and wife, Nanette, of Haskell; sister, Frances Blacklock of Austin; several nieces and nephews; and loving friends.

**Sanders, Alfred M. L.**, 99, passed away February 22, 2017. Preceded in death by Millie, his beloved wife of 71 years, Al is survived by his son, Mike Sanders (Barbara) of Augusta, Georgia, his daughter, Winki (Len Ruiz) of Shoreview, MN, and grandchildren: Susan (Stan Harvell), Trevor Ruiz (Kanesha), Chris Ruiz (Lauren) and great grandchildren Andrew Harvell, Isabella Ruiz and great granddaughter to be, "Miss Ruiz". After graduating from LSU, Al began a twenty-year career in the Air Force beginning in 1942 during World War II. As a B-24 bomber pilot with the 486th Bomb Group, his plane was shot down over Belgium during a mission (Purple Heart recipient); all ten crew members survived. Al was later captured three times by the Germans, but escaped four times. A later highlight of his 20 year AF career was when he was stationed in Ramstein, Germany in 1954. At this time

he was able to locate many of the French, Dutch and Belgian resistance fighters and their families who hid him during the war. He maintained lifelong contacts with these families. After retiring from the Air Force, he obtained his Master's Degree from Florida State University and went on to a second career at Brevard Junior College teaching electronics and engineering. Later, in 2014, he was honored as the first recipient of FSU's Life Time Achievement Award from the College of Education. Al was a member of the First Baptist Church of Cocoa and the Rockledge Country Club, where he excelled in golf, winning several tournaments as a senior player.

**Shumate, Robert "Bob" Wilson**, 92, passed away on March 13, 2017 in Monroe, LA. He was a retired supervisor in gas and oil industry. He served as a Staff



**Joseph Perry**



**Alfred Sanders**



Sergeant with the U. S. Army Air Corp during World War II, with the 447th Bomb Group. He was a member of North Monroe Baptist Church. He loved old cars and traveling. He was preceded in death by his parents, Robert T. and Zettie Shumate, his beloved wife of 63 years, Mary Bell Parker Shumate, one daughter, Linda Kizer; a great grandson, Bailey Jones and 4 sisters.

He is survived by his daughter, Judy Lee of Dekalb, TX; son-in-law, Craig Kizer of Niles, MI; 7 grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren and 6 great-great grandchildren.

**Thorp, Ernest N.**, 95 of rural Clinton, Illinois passed away Tuesday, January 31, 2017. He married Mary Ellen Harris in 1945, she passed away in 1986; Verneal Dunn in 1990, she passed away in 2005; and Helen Hume in 2006.

Ernest lived and thrived on the farm. He attended Thorp Grade School, Wapella High School Class of 1939, Illinois State Normal University for 2 years and then graduated from the University of Illinois in 1943. Ernest obtained his private pilot's license in 1941. He served in the Army Air Corps 1943-1945 as a B-17 pilot



**Robert "Bob"  
Wilson Shumate**



**Ernest N. Thorp**

with the 452nd Bomb Group. He was shot down over the North Sea and was a POW for 9 months. Upon coming home, he joined his brother and father in the family seed business, Thorp Seed Company. He retired from the US Air Force Reserve as a Captain. His community involvement included the Methodist Churches of Prairie Center and Clinton. He was proud to become a certified lay leader of the church and served on district and conference boards of the United Methodist Church.

He served on the Wapella School Board and was able to give all 5 of his children their high school diplomas. Other involvements included being a director of First National Bank of Clinton, the Masonic Orders, Kiwanis, Farm Bureau, DeWitt County Housing Authority,

DeWitt County Building Commission, DeWitt County Conservation Board, DeWitt County Co-op, and the Clinton YMCA. Ernest was an active member of the International Flying Farmers and served through the executive offices. He received great satisfaction in speaking publicly

about his World War II experiences. His passions were flying, accumulating over 7000 hours over 70 years, reading, trees, birds and his beloved Chicago Cubs baseball team. Numerous people had their first airplane ride with Ernest as a pilot. Ernest was recognized by the community for his philanthropic gifts. Survivors include his wife, Helen; son, Nelson I. (Linda) Thorp, rural Wapella, IL; daughters: Carol van Rossum, Lincoln, NE; Marjorie Thorp, Bothell, WA; and Zelda Lewis, Joliet, IL; and son, Lewis A. (Cathy) Thorp, Herndon, VA; 7 grandchildren: Jennifer (Trent) Kломhaus, Natalie (Rory) O'Connell, Jered (McKenzie) Thorp, Emily (Jason) Plourde, Kira (Gabriel) van Rossum, Sarah (Steve) Kaminsky, Doug (Emily) Lewis; 8 great-grandchildren; 3 sisters: Andrea Miller, Winston-Salem, NC; Ruth Lutz, Dewey, IL; and Norma Wedekind, Raymond, IL, and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by a brother, Carl E., 3 sisters, Evalyn, Mary Alice Moberly, and Sarah Jackson, and son-in-law, Charles van Rossum.

Ernest's life was based on his faith, his love of family, flying and community. A man who made a difference to many, in many different ways. "He was just a boy that wanted to be home on the farm."



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# Witchcraft Brings Past Alive

By Dr. Nancy Tombs

On March 27th, the Collings Foundation brought 4 of their WWII war birds to Ft. Smith, Arkansas as part of their 100 city 2017 tour. Collings owns and operates the largest collection of WWII aircraft in the world. They also host a world class staff and the best group of volunteer pilots and support crew to be found anywhere. This foundation has been a long time friend of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, especially their media department, under the supervision of Hunter Chaney. Hunter has made it possible for many WWII veterans to experience flights aboard their B-25, B-24 and B-17 bombers, which, under ordinary circumstances, these flights would not be possible. His generosity once more, made it possible for 2 D-Day veterans to fly again.

My dad, W.C. "Bill" Toombs (engineer, 493rd BG) and John Hildebran (radio, 453rd BG) were the recipients of Hunter's generosity on this day. Dad has been the lucky one who has enjoyed multiple flights aboard bombers, but today was a very special day for John. The last time he flew on a B-24 was on his 30th and last mission with his bomb group, August 9th 1944. So, 73 years and 7 months later, John was once again in the radio compartment of a B-24. This time, he could really enjoy the flight and not be preoccupied with flak and fighters.

For those of you who may be unaware, John Hildebran is the last survivor of the original 6 men

who organized the 8th Air Force Historical Society back in 1975. John was living in Pembroke Pines, FL when he answered a notice in the Miami News Herald, placed by a fellow named John Woolnough. John answered the notice and the 2 became fast friends. Eventually, six 8th Air Force veterans began to take turns hosting meetings in each other's homes—laying the ground work for what has become the Society we know today.

*Witchcraft*, the B-24, was the star attraction this day, being the only plane that flew, but that was just fine with Dad and John, as they were both aboard B-24Js on June 6, 1944 when the Mighty Eighth entered D-Day over the beaches of Normandy to participate in the massive liberation efforts.

If the Collings Foundation comes near to your home town, take you family and friends out to see their "flying museums" and get acquainted with the aircraft that helped secure victory in WWII and is responsible for the freedom that we celebrate today.

*The purpose of the Collings Foundation is to organize and support "living history" events and the presentation of historical artifacts and content that enable Americans to learn more about their heritage through direct participation. ~ Collings Foundation Mission & Purpose*

For more information:  
[www.collingsfoundation.org](http://www.collingsfoundation.org)



**Top left: Bill Toombs preparing for take off  
Top right: John and Bill ready to fly  
Middle: Lt to rt Bill Toombs, Pilot Tim Lowe, John Hildebran, and Chief Pilot Rob Pinkerton  
Bottom: Pre-flight briefing**







The world's only flying B-24J Witchcraft



B-17G Nine O Nine



TF-51D Mustang Toulouse Nuts



B-25 Tondelayo

# REUNIONS • MEMORIALS • CEREMONIES

## **43RD ANNUAL 8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REUNION**

New Orleans, Louisiana  
September 27 – October 1, 2017

## **306TH BGHA REUNION**

October 5-8, 2017 in Indianapolis, IN. For info, contact 306th Secretary Barbara Neal at [barb306neal@gmail.com](mailto:barb306neal@gmail.com) or leave a phone message at (435) 655-1500 cell phone, for a return call.

## **100TH BOMB GROUP FOUNDATION**

October 19-22, 2017  
Hyatt Regency Dulles, 2300 Dulles Corner Blvd,

Herndon, VA 20171 (703) 713-1234

See [www.100thbg.com](http://www.100thbg.com) for reunion information, registration & hotel reservations group link  
Contact Nancy at [reunion@100thbg.com](mailto:reunion@100thbg.com) or (414) 339-2818 with questions (email will get quickest reply!)

## **91st Bomb Group**

Dayton OH  
May 16-19, 2018  
Contact: Mick Hanou  
[mhanou@comcast.net](mailto:mhanou@comcast.net)  
925-425-3220  
<http://www.91stbombgroup.com/>



Society Board member, Ed Wexler (pictured center), presents a donation to Heather Thies (left), Director of Youth Education/Volunteer Services, and Henry Skipper, CEO/President (far right), with the National Museum of the Mighty 8th Air Force in Pooler, Ga, on behalf of the 8th Air Force Historical Society.



## UNFRIENDLY FIRE

A small group of WWII veterans stepped from their tour bus to be greeted by a desolate wind-swept scene. A chilling wind blew in fueled by the arctic air from the North Sea. The shore-line and beaches were punctuated with wooden, weather-worn, shell-encrusted timbers, jetties built years ago to help reduce the erosion of the coast-line. Along the beach are ancient small hotels that service the holiday tourists who visit the area during the prime vacation season...visitors from London and other population centers in the south. Small restaurants and snacks-shacks dot the shoreline providing dining for the hungry Brits and the locals who drop-in for a quick lunch, delighting in the standard fare of fish and chips and of course, cream cones to finish up their gourmet meal. Further back from the shore-line about a thousand feet are small drifts, dunes made-up of small pebbles and very fine sand, all covered with the over-growth of sea-weeds and beach grass. Decades of time have almost hidden the relics of World War II that are laying there, almost buried in the undergrowth, mute evidence of war-time preparedness in case of an invasion by the Nazis. Concrete moss-covered pill boxes, gun emplacements and bunkers provided safe quarters for the contingency of British soldiers who manned the high caliber cannon mounted there, ready for action in case the enemy did come.

This was a very lonely assignment. Cromer, this God forsaken outpost, had little strategic value yet the flat beaches would be an ideal spot for an invading army. The soldiers assigned there were bored. There was little to do. They were on duty for twelve hour shifts, the rest of the time was theirs. Playing cards, drinking, visiting the local pub and flirting with the local lassies, the dart board, letter-writing, mail-call, trivial personal chores partially took care of some of the hours. They still had much time on their hands. Morale at this outpost was at an all-time low. Their Commanding Officer and his staff came up with a strategy.

East Anglia, a large geographic area of north-east England was a level, mountain-free area of farm and grazing land with an unlimited possibility for the deployment of aircraft in the war effort. The Royal Air Force (RAF) saw the possibilities and aerodromes were constructed and bomber and fighter air-bases sprung up. With the United States entering the war, many additional bomber bases were needed.

Fourteen B-24 Liberator bases were located in East Anglia to the south of Cromer. The airspace over Cromer and the surrounding area was filled with hundreds of 4 engine bombers. The flight-path of one bomb group was directly over Cromer. Every 30 seconds, a bomber passed over this area. The Commanding Officer asked, "could we not use these aircraft as target practice, add to the skills of our troops and at the same time, give our men some actual experience and relieve them of some of the boredom they are experiencing?" This procedure was studied, approved and was initiated by the Cromer contingency. Gunners were to spot an aircraft and set the fuses of the shells to explode about 1000 feet below the B-24 aircraft they were tracking. The plan had not been authorized nor had been even introduced to the British Command.

In the Fall of 1944 this arrangement was dramatically introduced when crews assigned to the B-24's of the 8th Air Force, 466th Bomb Group, were getting into combat formation. Group Assembly was standard operational procedure for them in preparing for the departure of every mission they flew. This mighty air arsenal had its target assignment. Each aircraft was laden with a full bomb load, topped-off fuel tanks and ten well trained airmen on board who were ready to go! They were on the assigned flight path maneuvering around countless other aircraft who, as they were, also seeking their lead aircraft and the rest of their formation. Suddenly, they were engulfed in flak bursts. "What is this?" Unfriendly fire experienced over friendly territory!!! This naturally, created consternation among the aircrews. Should they have to deal with another emotional crises? Wasn't combat difficult enough?

This is actually very much like life itself. Everyday living is filled with the unexpected and these attacks come in many forms. They are camouflaged in words and actions, often hidden, expressed in "nice terms" but nonetheless lethal to us and mankind. Lying is one of the ten commandments but is excused and brushed aside by labeling it propaganda. Society is plagued with selfishness but we like to tag it as self-interest. Greed is rampant but we like to think of it as self-preservation. License, "getting by" disguising such activity as freedom and liberty. Lust in its many forms masquerading itself as love, and the problem of materialism is excused as security. These are considered to be politically correct and accepted by our enlightened society,



Earl Wassom

but are real threats and our enemy. But in addition, there is also conflict coming from everyday living. Life is filled with the unexpected. We are never fully prepared for the traumas it brings. In preparation for this situation, we must turn to the Almighty and allow His Spirit to enable us to face any situation. Paul, the apostle declares:

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or peril or sword?" (Romans 8:35)*

He further declares "...we are more than conquerors." Regardless of the flak thrown at us, we can make it! Nelson Mandela is a good example of one who took criticism with much grace and forgiveness for the stance he took on racial inequality in his country. For his stance, he served 27 years in prison. He emerged from this lengthy sentence and became the first colored President of South Africa. He declared, "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it." May our faith prepare us and enable us to see our problems for what they are. Though difficulties break some men, they make others. Though faith in God, we can be over comers.

**Earl Wassom**  
**466th Bomb Group**  
**Chaplain, 8th AFHS**





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