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TH AF NEWS

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Shipdham 1943

Home to the Flying 8 Balls [44th BG]





8TH AF NEWS

Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

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Inside this issue

On our Cover:

American GIs grabbing some sun and relaxation between missions at Shipdham Cottages. The tyres (tires) on the bikes were still filled with remnants of straw from WW2 as rubber was scarce then and the British and the GIs filled them with straw as a substitute for non-existent inner tubes! Find the entire story, "A Corner of England..." from Martin Bowman on p. 22.

Editors Message.....	3
The Way It Was	
A "Mission Day" in the Life....	4-5
Liberator Pride.....	6-7
Chapter & BG News.....	8-10
Reunions.....	11
Book Review.....	11
Nominations To The Board.....	12
43rd Annual 8 th Air Force Historical Society Reunion Spotlight...	13
Ordinary Men & Women.....	14-21
A Corner of England.....	22-23
Norfolk Schoolboy.....	24
Sharpe Crew.....	25
Taps.....	26-27
FLOH.....	28-29
The Jubilee of Liberty Medal....	30
How About It?.....	31

Where's Your Stuff?

One of my favorite George Carlin monologues starts out...
 "Actually, this is just a place for my stuff, ya know?
 That's all; a little place for my stuff. That's all I want,
 that's all you need in life, is a little place for your stuff,
 ya know?"

I am hearing from sons and daughters, concerned about what to do with Dad's "stuff"—whether due to downsizing or having flown that 'final mission', the decision can be overwhelming. Some things to consider:

- If you or your loved one is able, do an inventory or assessment about exactly what you have. Determine first if the item(s) should remain with certain family members or close friends. It can be difficult to discuss, but often an item has sentimental value to someone in the family, and others are unaware. Please talk to each other. When possible, involve the veteran in these decisions so there is little doubt as to their wishes.
- Often, veterans and/or their families arrange to gift books and papers to colleges and/or universities where they may have studied, or with whom they have a relationship. Contact the institution directly BEFORE sending them anything.
- Many museums have limited storage and exhibit capabilities these days. It is crucial to make contact with the collections manager prior to sending any artifacts or memorabilia ANYWHERE. Most institutions will NOT accept unsolicited material

so please confirm any donations in advance.

As a reminder, the Historical Society does NOT have physical archives or the ability to store or exhibit artifacts and memorabilia. However, we make every effort to help connect families with museums and organizations in the US and abroad, who ARE accepting and exhibiting artifacts and memorabilia. Our mission will continue to focus on preserving the legacy and memories of the men and women of the 8th Air Force now, and for future generations.

If you have any questions or need information, please give me and/or Nancy Toombs a call or email and we will do our best to help you! Our contact info is located on the inside front cover page [p.2] of this issue.

See you in New Orleans!!!
 Debra D. Kujawa
 Managing Director/Editor

Deb





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8TH AF NEWS

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The Way It Was

A "Mission Day" in the Life

By Jerry McLaughlin

During my twelve years of association with the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, Georgia, I have had the opportunity to meet many WWII Eighth Air Force veterans. One of the most interesting personalities was a country boy from Toccoa, Georgia, who was drafted out of college in February of 1943, and graduated from the United States Army Air Force's officer candidate program as a navigator in April of 1944. This man, Farish C. "Hap" Chandler went on to fly 35 missions with the 489th and 491st Bomb Groups of the Eighth during WWII, and later, 50 night-intruder missions in B-26 bombers in Korea. Hap retired from the USAF in 1970 as a Lt. Colonel and had a successful civilian career as a contract administrator. He was a well-known leader of veterans affairs in the Atlanta, Georgia, area and a founding member, on the Board of Trustees, of what is now the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force. It was my pleasure to talk with Hap when he came to Pooler.

Our friendship developed over the years, and when his health was failing in 2015, at age 94, I was honored when he asked me to help him complete his memoir in the time he had left. We arranged for a publisher and he approved the final manuscript in September of 2016.

Hap didn't live to hold a copy of the memoir in his hands and present it to his family as he had hoped to do, and we did not get to do a book signing together as he had planned, but when he made his last flight on October 10, 2016, he knew that his words had been recorded to mark forever his place in the history of his family and our country.

During more than a decade of hearing veterans describe the anxiety of young men fighting a war with the dichotomy of facing death during the day and sleeping in warm beds after drinking beer with comrades at night, each veteran had a unique view of how that situation had affected him. Hap often spoke of the stress and fear he felt from the minute he

was awakened by a shouting messenger on mission days and how the many challenges of the hours that followed would at times be overwhelming. Since Hap's passing I have often been compelled to look through my copy of his memoir. Several pages have always stood out because of the powerful emotions they send to the reader, describing, in Hap's own words, a "mission day" for a bomber crew in the 8th Air Force in late 1944. This is one of those pages.

"We would be awakened around 4:00 AM and report to the mess hall for breakfast at 5:00 AM, followed by the mission briefing at 6:00 AM. The general Group briefing for all flight crew was often followed by a second briefing for pilots and navigators. After the briefings, we were driven in the backs of trucks to the flight line, where we would begin our preparations for the mission based upon our role in the crew. There was a signal, usually a flare fired from the control tower, to start our engines, and then another flare would signal that we should start to taxi to the takeoff runway. More often than not there would be fog or cloud cover over the base. (Clouds or fog in England would not cancel a mission - clouds over the target would!) Each takeoff of a mission was scary, regardless of the weather. The B-24s were overloaded with four tons of bombs and 2,600 gallons of highly flammable aviation gasoline!

After turning to face the runway, the pilots (who were under pressure from the long line of airplanes behind them to get down the runway as soon as possible) stood on the brakes and firewalled



Hap Chandler 1944



Hap Chandler 2015

the throttles of the four Pratt & Whitney engines. The airplane began vibrating. When the engines were at maximum power, the pilots released the brakes and we began to roll down the runway, which was only 5,600 feet long, 1,500 feet shorter than the minimum length standards in stateside bases. We were instructed to be only 30 seconds behind the B-24 in front of us, and we could expect that there would be another B-24 30 seconds behind us. At this point, everyone was holding their breath. At what appeared to be almost the end of the runway the nose wheel lifted off the ground, followed by the two main gear wheels under the wings. This was a touchy moment because when we reached 100 feet the pilot had to lower the nose in order to pick up speed to 160 miles per hour, which was necessary to keep us in the air. We all had lost friends in airplanes that failed for some reason during the liftoff from the runway, causing a fiery crash at the end of the runway that very seldom left survivors. The pilots worked to attain a climb rate of 300 feet per minute. Many times the cloud cover or fog over our base would be only several hundred feet off the ground. Under those conditions, we would enter the clouds, or fog, without being able to see the B-24s in front of and behind us.

After the challenge of the takeoff, the pilots had to fly the airplane using only instruments for guidance and hope that there was not another B-24 near us in the cloud or fog that had somehow changed their position after takeoff. On several occasions during my tour, we were frightened beyond belief when we would witness a bright flash and rumble that indicated 20 of our friends had just perished when two bombers collided in the heavy clouds. At no specific altitude, we would emerge from the mist - sometimes only temporarily - and then finally to the most welcome sight of all, bright

sunshine! When we finally did emerge from the top cover, we immediately searched the skies in order to determine our location with regard to our group's aircraft. We would also see B-24s from surrounding bases emerging from the clouds and forming their formations. Each group had a beacon signal coming from their control tower and each circled that beacon's signal forming the Group's four Squadrons into the formation that was briefed before takeoff. We all gathered on the multi-colored Group Forming Ship. There would be three levels of our Group formation, by squadron: Lead, High and Low, broken out into elements of three aircraft in a "V" formation.

As all of this was occurring, I would leave my takeoff station on the flight deck and move forward to the nose section of the B-24. This involved crawling through a tunnel and getting past the nose wheel while dragging a bag full of my navigator's gear. Once in the nose, I set up my station or, when flying lead, as I did later in the war, climbed into the nose turret for a good view of the territory in front of the formation. All of this was an exercise in gymnastics which got more difficult as the air became thinner.

After our squadron and the group were formed in proper order we would then form up with the nearby Groups, using the same formation of Lead, High and Low Groups forming a Wing. When this amazing organization was completed we would turn and head for the continent. As we crossed the North Sea our formations would often, in 1945, be 100 miles long. A marvel of power and accomplishment!

The first leg of our journey passed over the North Sea. I developed a fear during my time in the 8th Air Force of coming down in the North Sea, a fear equal to my fear of the German Luftwaffe and flak gunners. The B-24 had a terrible reputation for breaking apart when it hit the water, and leaving few survivors. Because of its high wing, the fuselage almost always collapsed, making survival chances poor, at best. Despite the

relief that we would not have to ditch, it was hard to breathe a sigh of relief as we approached the coast of Holland due to the Kammelhübel Line (an intense wall of German anti-aircraft artillery that stretched from Norway to Switzerland). Further, because the Germans knew we were coming they would be assembling their fighter aircraft, including the new Messerschmitt-262 jets, over Dummer Lake. We felt fairly safe from the Luftwaffe as we were surrounded by hundreds of P-51 fighters escorting us all the way to the target. There was nothing, however, we could do about flak. You just hoped you were not on the receiving end of one of the thousands of shells being hurled into the sky as we flew towards our target. Flak over the targets was the most intense. Then, on the trip home we would have to, once more, pass over the Kammelhübel Line, many times with the airplane having already suffered damage during the mission. One time we returned with only two functioning engines. After crossing the Dutch coast, we would begin our letdown from bombing altitude, eventually arriving at 10,000 feet, where we no longer needed our oxygen masks. Removing the masks was always a welcome moment. I liked to celebrate by taking the Hershey bar from my flight suit that was there for just this occasion and tasting the pure joy of the chocolate.

Then came the second trip over the North Sea before arriving over our base and having to do the letdown through the clouds for a landing, a task that was often almost as difficult as the takeoff. We dropped down through the clouds and, hopefully, lined up on the runway. The tires squealed as we touched the tarmac. As the brakes and flaps slowed the airplane, we reached the end of the runway and taxied to our hardstand, where the ground crew guided us into our parking place.

There was much to do while flying a mission, and it was easy to suppress anxiety, but when we came home my fears began to surface and had to be dealt with in the hours that followed. Even an "easy" mission was a very tough day! After the entire crew had climbed out of the airplane, we were taken by truck to post-mission interrogation. The intelligence officers repeated "time, place, altitude" as we attempted to reconstruct incidents occurring during the mission. When we were done with the interrogation, the mission was complete. We returned, exhausted, to our quarters and welcomed the luxury of our warm bunks. That was the story of a day in the life of a bomber crew in the 8th Air Force in late 1944."

God bless Hap Chandler; and may he rest in peace.

-Jerry McLaughlin





LIBERATOR PRIDE

By Roger Freeman

Most American veterans of the European air war have a pride in the aircraft type in which they flew. This is particularly so with former heavy bomber crewmen who, understandably, feel that their having survived a combat tour is, in part, due to the battle-worthiness of the aircraft in which they served.

Statistics reveal that there was little to choose between the Boeing B-17 Fortress and the Consolidated B-24 Liberator when it came to an individual's chance for survival, although this fact is rarely entertained by veterans. The advocates of one or the other model firmly believe that theirs was the best and are inclined to deprecate the other. Much of this is expressed in good-natured banter and the exchanges now are as forceful as they were during hostilities.

However, the B-24 veterans have a valid complaint that their champion is frequently ignored by the media in any feature on the U.S. bombing campaign. Just as the Spitfire is frequently presented as the Royal Air Force's steed during the Battle of Britain in 1940, despite the Hurricane being more numerous and destroying more of the enemy, so the B-17 is persistently paraded as the bomber conducting the U.S. air offensive from England.

While the B-17 was admittedly more numerous than the B-24 in the 8th Army Air Force, the reason for media preference is most probably the appeal for the name Flying Fortress

in the journalistic mind. Also, the curved line of the Fortress may hold more aesthetic appeal than the utility looking B-24. But, beauty being in the eye of the beholder, there is still no aircraft more attractive to the B-24 veteran than the deep fuselage and the large twin fins of his love.

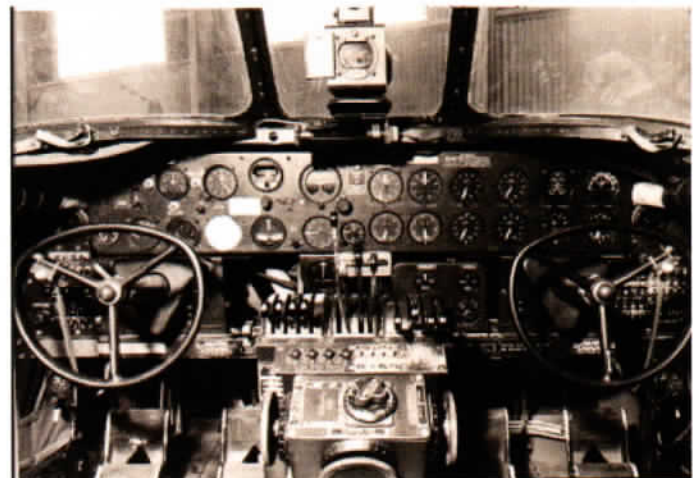
The Liberator was a later design than the Fortress and, apart from having more advanced systems, it could fly faster, further and carry more ordnance than the similarly-proportioned Fortress. The B-24 also was built in larger numbers than any other American-made aircraft in the Second World War. The Royal Air Force favored the Liberator over the Fortress and was the first to employ that type operationally.

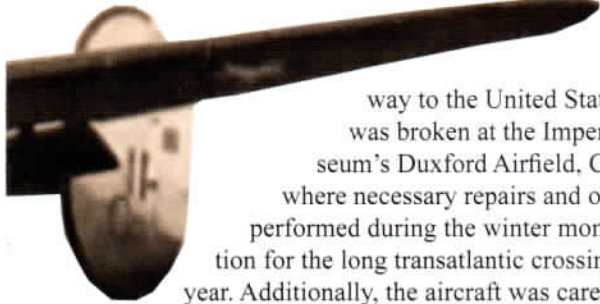
By D-Day, in early June 1944, there was a greater concentration of B-24 Liberator bombers with USAAF combat units in Norfolk and Suffolk than anywhere else in the world.

A quarter of a century after the Liberator's brief monopoly of the sky, not more than eight remained. Most of these reposed at Poona, western India, where the Indian Air Force had recently retired the last of 20 Liberator VIs inherited from the Royal Air Force in 1946.

During the early 1970s a few aeronautical museums around the world, aware of the dwindling numbers of this historic aircraft, managed to acquire the better examples of the Indian residue and fly them away into permanent preservation.

In 1973, one such veteran Liberator reached England on its





way to the United States. The journey was broken at the Imperial War Museum's Duxford Airfield, Cambridgeshire, where necessary repairs and overhaul were performed during the winter months in preparation for the long transatlantic crossing the following year. Additionally, the aircraft was carefully repainted to represent a specific USAAF B-24 of the Second Air Division which operated from East Anglia during the Second World War.

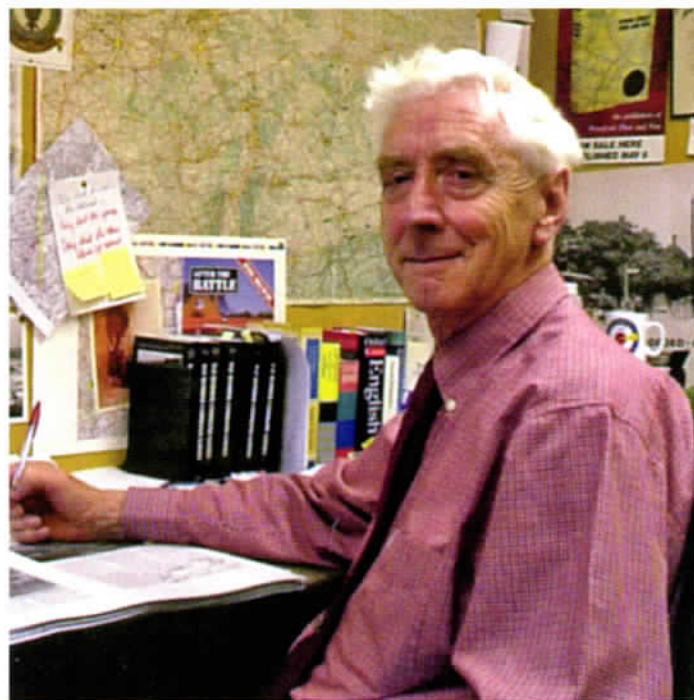
It so happened that before the bomber's departure, a sizable party of American Liberator veterans and their families visited the Duxford museum. They were members of the Second Air Division Association, the largest active B-24 veterans' organization, formed by those who served in England with the 8th Air Force principal Liberator arm during the years 1942-45.

As a memorial to more than 6,000 comrades lost in B-24s during hostilities, the men of the Second Air Division subscribed to the building of a special library room in Norwich, Norfolk, which they still maintain, stocked with books and periodically visit as a group. It was during such an occasion that a visit to Duxford was arranged with the added appeal of an opportunity to inspect a B-24 Liberator, an old friend many of the veterans hadn't seen for 30 years.

I was asked to act as one of the guides for the party who, despite the usual chill of an exposed airfield on an English May morning, found much of interest and appeared to enjoy the occasion. Understandably, to see, hear and touch a B-24 again was an emotional experience for many veterans and certainly the high spot of their visit. There was also the additional attraction in the form of James Stewart, of Hollywood fame and himself a former Norfolk-based Liberator pilot, who had come to see the old bomber.

Parked on a concrete apron out in front of the wartime hangars, the Liberator was not a giant of the surroundings as it would once have been. Compared with more streamlined and meaningful looking warplanes parked nearby, the B-24 seemed squat, ill-contoured and utilitarian. The uninitiated would have been unlikely to suspect that before them stood one of the great champions of air warfare.

When the veterans moved away to inspect other exhibits, I noticed one man detach himself from the party and walk slowly back across the tarmac towards the Liberator. He looked the



archetype of what we British have come to regard as a typical middle-aged American tourist; smart raincoat, loud checkered-pattern suit, colorful soft-brimmed hat over close-cropped hair and an impressive array of camera equipment slung over one shoulder. Shortish, well-rounded at the girth, thickening at neck and jowl, but years hadn't masked facial features I'd seen in many photographs taken nearly a half a lifetime previously. For this man was once a young, slim and tousle haired airman who starred as a B-24 pilot, surviving over 30 combat missions when one in only three did so; who could count Ploesti, Kiel, Wiener-Neustadt and Berlin among his targets and whose uniform carried ribbons that paid tribute to his bravery.

Thinking that the veteran might appreciate some company in his further survey of the bomber and then directions to rejoin the rest of his party, I followed him across the apron. Later, I was to reflect that I should have realized that this man had deliberately sought privacy by his action. On reaching the B-24 and dodging under the rear fuselage, I saw him standing beside the Liberator's nose, slowly running a chubby hand over the shiny skin, as one might a loved one. Keeping a hand pressed against the smooth metal, he turned to me, tears rolling down his cheeks and said with obvious feeling: "They're for her. She did us proud...So *very* proud..."





8th AFHS Oregon Chapter President Bert Campbell (left) with Quilt of Valor recipient James Lettenmaier and his wife, Eileen. The quilt was presented by Chapter Chaplain Sophia Kennedy. [Photo by Tom Philo]

Oregon Chapter

By *Flight Lines* Editor Jerry Ritter
According to Oregon Chapter 8th AFHS member Jerry Ritter, "The Oregon Chapter recently flew a combat mission: this one to the state capital in Salem. The primary targets were two identical bills, one in each chamber of the legislature. Both would ban all leaded aviation fuel in Oregon by 2022. The bills are driven by environmentalists concerned over lead emissions from aircraft engines.

Not only would such a ban drastically affect general aviation in the state, it would also shut out from Oregon the WW II bomber tours of Collings, EAA, Liberty Foundation and CAF with which our chapter works closely. Their high performance, supercharged radials require 100 octane low lead (100 LL). We'd love to have 130 but it's not available in quantity.

The U.S. EPA and FAA, are working on alternatives to leaded avgas, which we know will eventually go away. They are currently evaluating two potential replacement products. However, neither has been certified safe and reliable in all types of piston engines and both are chemically very different than 100 LL.

Some estimates are that it could take a decade or more after certification to complete all follow up testing and resolve production, distribution and marketing issues. We are not aware of

any other state attempting such a ban. EPA has not banned 100LL, nor has the agency issued an endangerment finding for the fuel.

Our chapter joined many aviation professionals at public hearings in testimony against these bills. We all feel this should be a federal matter and that until a safe, reliable alternative, certified for all piston engine types is available, there should be no ban on 100LL.

We believe the Oregon Legislature got the message. We are continuing to follow both bills."

Our February speakers were the President and Founder of Oregon Spirit of '45, Barbara A. Jensen, and the organization's Secretary/Treasurer/IT Director, Terry H. Pilsner. The mission of Oregon Spirit of '45 is "To commemorate the achievements and virtues of the World War II generation, on the 2nd Sunday of every August, so as to inspire future generations". Among their many activities, they have organized the annual Spirit of '45 event at Willamette National Cemetery in Portland, Oregon; participated in Veterans Day parades; and continue to honor WWII Veterans of the "Greatest Generation" by collecting and displaying their military photos.

Terry Pilsner explained, "Upload a copy of a WWII 1940s military photo of your hero to our website and give us an opportunity to put it into a template that



Oregon Spirit of '45
Barbara A. Jensen: Founder and President
Terry H. Pilsner: Secretary, Treasurer, IT Director
[Photo by Tom Philo]

we will contribute to the National Spirit of '45 Wall of Honor."

Barbara added, "On the Spirit of '45 Day in August 2020 in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of V-J Day we will have a banner of these photographs from the 'Capitol Steps' to the Lincoln Memorial and back to the reflecting pool of the national WWII Memorial."

Barbara Jensen's told us about her mother, Joy Beebe, author of *Snapshots of a War Bride's Life*. According to Barbara, "My mom is from England and lived through the bombing in the Blitz of London. She met my dad on the dance floor in 1944 and they were married in 1945. She sailed to the United States in 1948 on a troop ship and made her way to Salem, Oregon."

On video we heard Joy express that she'd like the younger generation to "learn more about what happens in this world... They are the people who are going to run our country in a few years and if they don't pay attention to what has happened in the past they will be unexpected about the future..." Oregon Spirit of '45, "Remember and Be Inspired"!

Learn more about Oregon Spirit of '45 at

<http://www.OrSpiritof45.org/>

We had an excellent turnout for our May meeting, with 35 members in attendance. Six of the members were WWII veterans. Bob Schuberg was presented a "Quilt of Honor", by our Chaplain Sofia Kennedy. Bob was a tail gunner in the 306th B.G. (H). Our featured speaker was George Bickford.

George Bickford's father was born in 1882, and at the age of 16, he moved to Whiteson, Oregon. George was born in 1922, and his dad started a contracting business in 1904. That business would involve George and his siblings for life.

While George's father did not particularly like airplanes, he did take George to a bluff overlooking Portland's Swan Island, in 1927. There, George witnessed Charles Lindbergh dedicate Swan Island Airport, Portland's first commercial airport. George would later be taught to fly by Tex Rankin, and they would become good friends. Tex Rankin is still recognized as one of the finest aerobatic pilots.

George always wanted to meet Charles Lindbergh, but never did. Lindbergh was responsible for innovations and extending the range of the F4U Corsair and P-38 Lightning. While George liked flying the Corsair, he favored the F6F Hellcat. Grumman would build 12,000 Hellcats, all in Long Island, N.Y. The Hellcat took 12 months from inception to production, and would have the best kill ratio of any US fighter. George has over 400 hours in Corsairs and over 600 hours in Hellcats.

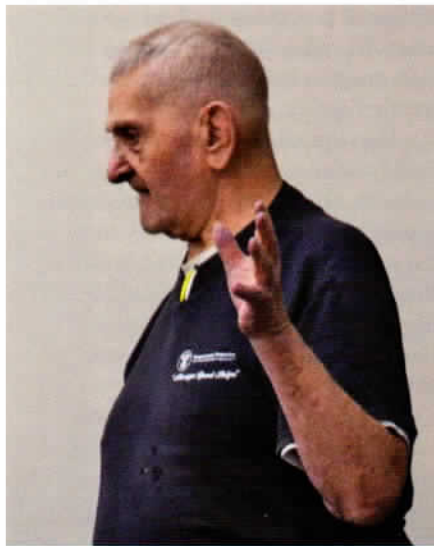
George was already a pilot when he was at Oregon State. He enlisted in the US Navy Officer Training Program. George was in the class ahead of John Glenn and George H.W. Bush. When he returned from graduation leave, he found a change of orders. He became a Senior Instructor in the Instrument Flight Instructor School at Atlanta, Georgia.

The first class consisted of 12 U.S.A.A.F Majors and Colonels, and the rest of the class consisted of boot Ensigns. They became the instructors, teaching cadets to fly, using the new Directional Gyro and Gyro Horizon.

He then went to N.A.S. Corpus Christi, TX, as a Chief Check Pilot. Fresh out of flight school, George did have 600 flight hours logged, before joining the Navy. As an Instrument Instructor, they operated specially equipped SNBs. Two of his ground school students were Robert Taylor and Tyrone Power.

He met his future wife, Edith Ann, at a roller rink, where they were almost professional roller dancers. She was a U.S. Navy WAVE, Aircraft Instrument Technician. After 3 months, he asked her to marry him. They were married

September 2017 (17-3)



George Bickford

on June 17th, 1944.

While George was on leave, the Atomic bomb fell, and the war ended. George received orders to N.A.S. Jacksonville, FL, to fly F7F Tigercats, but was caught in the Navy downsizing. Even though he had F4U and F6F time he never went to sea. He taught ground school to flyers for carrier landings, but he never trapped.

After the war, George returned to the contractor business. Bickford Contracting was involved in many major projects in the Pacific Northwest. He was also the first volunteer for the U.S. Naval Reserve Unit at Oregon State, and became Officer in Charge.

Korea-New War, Old Pilots

When the Korean War broke out, he called the Navy, and a Captain told him that he wasn't needed. In spring, 1952, Orders arrived, telling him he had 15 days to report to the Pacific Fleet. As a Lt. Cmdr., he reported to San Diego, as an instructor. He was sent to N.A.S. Barbers Point, on Oahu, and spent 3 years in the Fleet All Weather Training Unit. They used F6F-5N Hellcats and F4U-5N Corsairs.

He flew with Capt. William, "Capt. Gus," Widhelm. "Capt. Gus" would later be lost in the crash of a TV-2, (USN T-33), which lost electronics and instruments. George racked up hours in F6F Hellcats, F4U Corsairs, Skyraiders, and TV-1 &-2s. Most of his time was spent in the F3D Sky Knight which was a good airplane, but underpowered. In 79 years, George has logged 20,000 hours. He is a firm believer in hard

work, activity, and taking care of your body. The family contracting business completed many large projects, including structures on the campuses of University of Oregon and Oregon State University. But it is a house divided, because George is a Beaver (OSU), while his brother is a Duck (U of O).

Wisconsin Chapter

Cindy Drehmel

Wisconsin 8th AFHS Chapter has devoted 2017 as a year to honor and feature our very own WWII 8th Army Air Corps speakers during our quarterly meetings.

S/Sgt Art Grisa served with the 457th BG, stationed at Glatton Air Base, Conington, England. He flew 30 missions as a gunner, including 2 in the ball turret, and 1 as bombardier when a crew member was killed.

During his 14th mission—a tank manufacturing facility in Magdeburg—stationed in the tail, a 20mm shell from a FW 190 penetrated and blew a hole through the tail the size of a dinner plate. Flak hit his arm, eye, left knee, right thigh, and right elbow, severed his oxygen hose, heat wire, and interphone wire. The waist gunner alerted the radio operator who shared his oxygen with Grisa while they continued dropping their bombs at 30,000 feet. Medics were waiting at Glatton. Twenty-seven men were lost that day. Grisa felt lucky. After 4 weeks recuperating, determined to finish with his crew, he flew an additional 16 missions to complete his 30 before going home.

T/Sgt George Michel was a radio operator/gunner with the 392nd BG out of Wendling. Michel flew his 1st mission on 11 June 44, one day after turning 25. His 10th mission [11 July 44] was Munich—over 1,100 B17s & B24s. Michel's plane lost the #4 engine but dropped their 8,000 lb bomb load over the target, losing their # 3 engine to flak. The plane crashed 200 meters inside Switzerland where Michel's crew became internees of the Swiss military (they would have become POWs or worse had they landed in Germany). After six months they managed to make contact with the French Resistance (AKA 'underground'). Michel escaped in January 1945 by fabricating train tickets and government passes to Berne and eventually to Lausanne, Switzerland. With the help of the French he escaped across Lake Geneva to France. Forty years later, George again met up with his underground friend who helped him escape.

Former secretary/treasurer and founder of Wisconsin's 8th AFHS chapter, 1LT Bob Abresch spoke at our June meeting. Bob was a B17 pilot, 398th BG. He recounted his first B17 flight from Rapid City to Denver. An engine caught fire and they had to make an emergency landing with Bob in the right seat! He flew his 6th mission on D-Day, bombing a French road junction. He recalled the channel brimming with ships just off shore. His most critical mission, though, began along the North Sea, over Denmark and then south to Berlin. As they approached what appeared to be a storm cloud, it was actually flak from 1,000 anti-aircraft batteries that had filled the sky with shrapnel. They lost an engine. Lagging back, they dropped out low, limping back to base. They spotted two enemy fighters approaching but thankfully, they were American P51s!

During Operation Market Garden over Holland, Bob saw C47s, each towing gliders filled with American and Canadian paratroopers. The operation was a tragic failure because the Germans knew they were coming. Most of the men were captured or killed. It was the last attempt to open an invasion front from the air.

After 30 missions, Bob and his copilot Chuck Ballard were then assigned to ferry P47s from England to Paris. A couple of times they got weathered in at Paris. "That was a tough duty day," Bob chuckled. Four months later Bob was shipped back stateside, arriving in Boston, as part of a troop ship convoy. He fondly remembers loud speakers on the docks playing the Andrew Sisters song, "Rum and Coke."

T/Sgt Harvin Abrahamson, our current chaplain, also spoke. Abrahamson was a radio operator on a B17. He recalled a training mission where he watched his co-pilot suck in oxygen to 'sober up' prior to take off. During the flight the plane was pulled into the tail and prop wash of the B17 in front of them. The pilot took the controls and put the plane into a steep dive, throwing Harvin onto the radio room ceiling, and then moments later, he slammed to the floor. He learned later the co-pilot was killed on his first mission. He said it was hard to take, "...but that's the way things go."

Harvin was assigned to the 787th BG, at Attlebridge, Norfolk England. On one night mission, the navigator became lost due to Nazi stations jamming their signals. Abrahamson assisted the panicky

navigator in acquiring a three point fix using the radio, enabling them to confirm their position before being discovered by enemy fighters.

Harvin said his squadron flew 'Tail End Charlie' on their first mission to Dresden. Over Nuremberg, flak hit an engine while returning; luckily they remained hidden within the bomber stream as numerous planes had already flown through. On another mission, Harvin checked to verify all bombs had cleared the bomb bay. He discovered a bomb hung up in the last position far back in the bay with the arming wire on the propeller of the nose spinning—a live bomb! Harvin tried to knock it loose with his hand while balancing on the catwalk, but a shackle was jammed and it would not budge. The bombardier grabbed a screwdriver and they freed the bomb. Had they closed the bay doors with the bomb inside, the aircraft would have blown up.

The crew received new flak helmets just before a mission to Berlin. They stowed their M1 helmets on the floor in the radio room. Harvin was hit with a case of diarrhea just before takeoff and he remembers being perched on a steal pipe sitting in a nearby farmer's privy. During the flight a waist gunner came down with diarrhea and took one of the unused helmets, filled it and tossed it off the plane. Soon the second waist gunner had similar symptoms, filled another helmet

and tossed it. While bombing Berlin, the tail gunner asked for a helmet which he filled and tossed out of the plane. That same trip, near at the Elbe River near Wittenberg they were hit with flak from a previously uncharted flak area. A 6" piece of shrapnel came up from the bottom back of Harvin's swivel chair, passed between his legs and through the ceiling leaving a hole between the post and chair. He could have lost one or both legs or worse. Abrahamson thanked God every day for his legs after that.

During the debriefing back at the base, the interrogation officer ended by asking if there were any complaints. Usually quiet, Harvin mentioned that soapy plates may have contributed to the crew's diarrhea and that the officer should speak to the tail gunner to confirm this story. The officer informed the commander and went to speak with the tail gunner. The next morning, Harvin's crew was allowed to sleep in as their plane was too damaged to fly. At breakfast the results of the previous day's bombing were posted by the mess hall. The mission report featured the following headline, "Tail Gunner Shits on Berlin."

Our past two meetings have featured some of our greatest 8th Army Air Corps gents, full of wisdom, heroism, and humor. It's no wonder they have been nicknamed "The Mighty Eighth!"



WWII vets in attendance at the June Wisconsin 8th AFHS Reunion
Back Row L-R: Harvin Abrahamson, Ralph Windler, Chet Gardeski, Henry Ratenski.
Front Row L-R: Ralph Andertson, Bob Abresch, George Michel, Art Grisa and Al Exner.

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

401st Bomb Group

Rick Kaufman
May 15-18, 2018
Columbus, OH
pres@401bg.org

91st Bomb Group

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

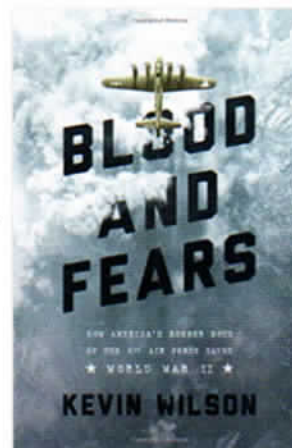
BOOK REVIEW

BLOOD AND FEARS

by Kevin Wilson
ISBN-13: 978-1681773193
ISBN-10: 1681773198

I have had QUITE an enjoyable time with this book (and learned a bunch)! I felt that I was sitting there with the veterans and listening to them personally tell me their first-hand stories. Interspersed are some wonderful reviews of numerous missions from the milk runs to the battles of Berlin, Kassel and Merseburg. The book benefits from the author's well-researched details of war in the

ETO, building on his strong understanding gained working on his other three wonderful books about the RAF. This knowledge of both air forces' strengths and interactions gives an insight not often appreciated by US historians. The author relates the various commanders' positions on strategy and importance of targets and how the approach varied through the war. Yet it never gets dry because the



veterans' stories are there thru-out. The whole book – style, information, readability (and other merits I can't express as I'm not that literary) are GREAT! One of the most enjoyable I have read; hard to put down. Available thru Amazon and other booksellers. Thanks,
Mick Hanou
President 91st BGMA

ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY

Honoring the Accomplishments of the 351st Bomb Group



Location:
National 8th Air Force Museum
Pooler, Georgia

Wreath Ceremony in Memorial Garden



Saturday, November 4, 2017 12:00 NOON

For information contact Bruce Nocera • Phone 718-721-0924 • Email bnocera@nyc.rr.com

NOMINATIONS TO THE BOARD

BRENT BRACEWELL Member # 38250

Brent is Vice President of the Georgia Chapter of the 8th AFHS and a member of the Board of Trustees of the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force. He is a retired U.S. Army Colonel with over 26 years of active duty. He is a helicopter pilot rated in the OH-58 Kiowa, UH-1H Iroquois, C-12 King Air, and UH-60L Blackhawk. During his military career, he was deployed for Desert Storm, Bosnia, and commanded an Army Aviation Task Force flying throughout Kuwait and Southern Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He has been awarded the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Air Medal and several other medals. Brent is the graduate of several Army schools including the Command and General Staff Course and the Army War College. He now works for Petroleum International Helicopter as an off-shore S76 helicopter pilot. In his spare time he is also active in the WWII Roundtable, and volunteers as the Character Development instructor for Cadets in the Griffin Civil Air Patrol Squadron, GA-114.



Nominated by Ed Wexler
Member # 38484

ANNE MAREK Member #11729110

Anne is a next-gen member of the 493rd BG Memorial Association. Her father was a pilot in the 493rd flying both B-24s and B-17s. Anne was elected to the Board of Directors of the 493rd BGMA in 2011 and was appointed Treasurer and Membership Manager in 2015. She joined the 8th Air Force Historical Society in 2013 and has attended all reunions since then. At the 2016 reunion in St. Louis, Anne was prominent at the registration table welcoming and registering attendees. In addition to the 8thAFHS and 493rd BGMA, Anne is also a member of the National WWII Museum, the National Museum of the Mighty 8th Air Force, and the Commemorative Air Force. One of her passions is flying in World War II bombers having flown in a B-17, B-24, B-29, and B-25. She served 17 years as Executive Director of the Morris County, NJ Medical Society from where she retired in 1992 to open her own business, "Mrs. Stitches", a needlepoint and cross-stitch retail business.



Nominated by Dottie Smith
Member #35770

JEFFREY HAWLEY Member # 11728430

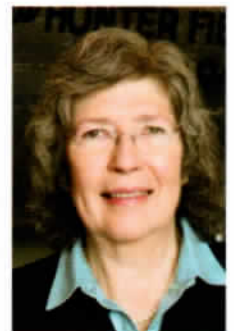
Jeff is currently one of the U.K. representatives of the 8th Air Force Historical Society. In addition he is the founder of the 1st Air Division Headquarters Heritage Society. Other historical memberships include the 401st BG Association, the Ridgewell Airfield Memorial Museum, and the Airfield Research Group. Jeff was involved in trying to obtain historical listing status for Brampton Grange, the home of the 1st Air Division headquarters. Jeff has been actively promoting the 8th AFHS in the U.K. at air shows, museums, and communities. He chaired the first ever Society meeting for U.K. members. He also works to improve relationships and communications with other 8th Air Force groups, museums, and organizations in the U.K., including the American Air Museum in Britain at Duxford, and the Cambridge American Cemetery at Maddingly. Jeff is an 11 year veteran of the U.S. Air Force and currently works as an Occupational Health and Safety Consultant.



Nominated by Ben Jones
Member # 38597

DR. VIVIAN ROGERS-PRICE Member # 34445

Vivian has been on the staff of the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force since 1999. She is currently the Director of the Roger A. Freeman Eighth Air Force Research Center at the Museum. She has also served as the Director of Education, and several positions relating to oral histories. She initiated the oral history program at the Museum to preserve the stories of 8th Air Force veterans. At the 2008 8th AFHS reunion, she participated in the "POW Forum." She earned her undergraduate degree at Georgia Southern University, and MA and Ph.D at the University of Georgia. Academic honors include a Samuel H. Kress Foundation Fellowship and a Fulbright Scholarship. Prior to joining the 8th museum, she had over 10 years of university teaching and 3 years of curatorial museum experience. Vivian has done several presentations and published articles on the 8th Air Force, World War II, and art. She is active with the LeConte-Woodmanston Foundation, Inc. and was elected Board President in 2008.



Nominated by Ben Jones
Member # 38597



REUNION SPOTLIGHT

By Debra Kujawa

By the time this issue reaches you, the 43rd Annual Reunion in New Orleans will be days away. I want to take a few moments to go over a few points and reminders for those of you who will be attending:

☐ **CONFIRM YOUR HOTEL RESERVATION.** Please make sure your reservations are confirmed directly through the Hilton hotel or if you are staying at the Best Western or Comfort Inn, contact Donna Lee with Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. Most everyone in these two overflow hotels were contacted by Donna or her office between mid-August and early September. If that's the case, you are all set.

☐ **WEDNESDAY EVENING'S WELCOME RECEPTION** at the Hilton Hotel is NOT dinner, but light hors d'oeuvres and beverages. The hotel DOES have a spacious restaurant on site.

☐ **THE TOUR(S) OF THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM ENCOMPASSES TWO DAYS:** Thursday and Friday. It is ONE tour which takes place over TWO days and INCLUDES lunch [for one person] BOTH days. The Museum is large and spread out. If you have any physical issues

which are impacted by continuous walking or standing for long periods, PLEASE consider using a wheelchair or other device to assist you. If you cannot bring your own wheelchair, we suggest using ScootAround: (888) 441-7575 or www.scootaround.com. Please make these arrangements PRIOR to arriving at the reunion.

☐ **VOTING AND ELECTIONS DURING THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING:** if you are a member of the 8th Air Force Historical Society and current on dues, you will receive a ballot allowing you to vote during the election of new Board members at the meeting on Saturday morning. ONLY those eligible to vote will receive a ballot. If you plan on attending this meeting and are unsure of your membership status, please look at the address label on the front cover of THIS ISSUE of the 8th A F News. Above your name you will see an expiration date. If that date is 12/31/2017

or LATER, you are current. If it is EARLIER, your membership is expired and you will not receive a ballot unless you bring your membership up current prior to the reunion. Ballots will be placed INSIDE your reunion registration packet! Please remember to bring it to the Saturday morning general membership meeting. *No memberships or renewals will be processed during the reunion.*

☐ **WWII VETERANS GROUP PHOTO.** We have scheduled the annual group photo of our veterans in the ballroom of the Hilton Hotel on Saturday, September 30th, at 6 pm. PLEASE be prompt so that you (if you are a WWII veteran) can be included in this wonderful tradition! Because of transportation and timing concerns, we have arranged for this photo ONLY during this time. If you are accompanying or assisting a vet during the reunion, please make sure they are present for this photo shoot.

Ordinary Men and Women Extraordinary Times

Mary Burns Surdy

"With great excitement on October 15, 2010, my husband, Jerry Surdy, and I boarded a jet to Brussels. As we walked off the plane, and I stepped in my father's footsteps, my own life came full circle." Mary Burns Surdy

Joseph Luke Burns

was my father. "Joe" was only 19 years old in October 1942 when he walked into the Recruitment Office in Wyoming, Pennsylvania and enlisted. Although his experience was limited to the mail room at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, after joining the U.S. Army Air Corps he was promoted from the rank of Private to T/Sgt in just nine months.



On November 3, 1943, Joe and his crew were part of the 8th Air Force (401st Bomb Group - 613th Aero Squadron) that arrived at Northamptonshire, England. The crew was assigned to a B17-G Flying Fortress named the "Lopin' Lobo" (Serial #42-39840).

613th BS Group Emblem designed by Walt Disney

On the morning of December 1, 1943, T/Sgt Burns and the crew of the "Lopin' Lobo", piloted by 2Lt Charles Hess, taxied to the end of the runway of Station 128 Deenethorpe, England. This was Joe's third mission as Flight Engineer/Top Turret Gunner interpreting flight gauges and instruments from his seat behind the pilots and adjacent to the top turret gun.

Later that afternoon, after dropping bombs on an aero casting works factory in Solingen, Germany, the "Lopin' Lobo" took a near direct hit by flak on the #4 engine causing shrapnel to rip the fuel, oil and hydraulic lines in the #3 engine. This ignited a fire causing the "Lopin' Lobo" to plunge from the sky from an altitude of 10,000 feet. To quickly lighten the load, Hess ordered his crew to jettison everything not bolted down.

When the aircraft started weaving, Hess ordered the men to bail out. He singled out Joe, because of his proximity between both the cockpit and the men below, to immediately hand out parachutes to the officers; Joe then stepped down and distributed parachutes to the enlisted men:



Standing L-R: Lt. Hess, pilot; Lt. Bryant, navigator; Lt. Rowe, bombardier; Lt. Mitchell, co-pilot
Kneeling L-R: Gibson, armorer/gunner; Miller, armorer/gunner; Burns, eng [1st]; Baur, eng.[2nd]; Tatkins, radio operator. (Nield not pictured)

Joe was left with the last parachute and right away noticed a tire tread left by a jeep that ran over it on the tarmac earlier that morning. Despite the risk of a malfunction, there was no time to waste so he slid his arms through the harness, closed the clasp and bailed.

As the aircraft violently twisted and turned, Hess and Mitchell stood firmly on the rudder and at about 2,500 feet managed to regain control of the plane. The rapid descent extinguished the fire. With Joe and the five airmen bailing over Belgium, the "Lopin' Lobo" was lighter and, therefore, able to make it to RAF Manston in England.

During his descent, Joe was strafed three times by German Me 109 fighters. After hitting the ground between Alken and Sint-Truiden (Province of Limburg) Belgium, he and the airmen quickly regrouped and buried their parachutes. They started running and, a few hours later, were approached by a Belgian, Pierre Leenaers, who identified himself as part of the Resistance network. Pierre explained that the American airmen were in danger of being captured by the Nazis and the network was there to help smuggle them to safety. Joe and the others were taken to a hiding place—the home of Rene Lambrechts—where they slept that night in a haystack inside the property's barn. They were fed a snack of fresh cow's milk and warm pumpernickel bread.

December 2, 1943

The next afternoon, the airmen climbed into a truck and were driven two miles away to a monastery. A priest advised them to head to a retail store where they spend the day. That evening, Albert Van Straelen returned with two local men, George Smets and Eugene Thiery. The American airmen were taken in a wagon pulled by a horse to the home of Rene Carlens where they spent the night.

December 3, 1943

During the evening of December 3, after verification of their identities, the six American evaders were led by steam tram to Herk-de-Stad. They were guided by members of the Witte Brigade (one of the Belgian Resistance groups) and led on bicycles to the home of Adolphe Van Blerckom in Diest, about 12 miles northwest of their landing area. According to Belgian historian Ward Adriaens, Bauer, Nield and Gibson were delivered nearby to the home of pharmacist Paul Vannitsen. Joe, Tatkin and Miller spent the night at the Van Blerckoms. It was apparent that the Belgian Army of the Partisans was well-organized with members embedded throughout the community.

Mariette Baetens, who worked at Boortmeerbeek City Hall, received word from Alfons Verboven that there were six "parcels" to pick up. She, in turn, gave a heads-up to team members who assumed responsibility for getting the Americans safely on their way to Brussels.

Ordinary citizens and members of the Resistance worked in circumstances of great sacrifice and danger to assist the Allied soldiers. They understood the risks: death for the men who had assisted the Allied servicemen; and deportation for the women, many of whom showed courage and resilience in their less-publicized activities.

The history of the Belgian underground (Resistance) is complicated. There were hundreds of small groups, the majority of which ultimately melded into larger organizations. One of these was the "*Front de l'Indépendance/Onafhankelijkheidsfront*" (F.I. and O.F., respectively in French and Flemish). The FI/OF was a national organization and had its sections and sub-sections in the French-speaking part of Belgium (Brussels and Wallonia) and its counterpart in the Flemish region in the North. One of the many groups active inside the FI/OF was the *Armée Bulge des Partisans/Bleich Leger der Partizanen* (in English, the Belgian Army of the Partisans).

According to researcher Edouard Renière, "*René Lambrechts, who aided the men from the "Lopin' Lobo" on their first night as evaders, was shot and killed with four other underground members on June 10, 1944.*"

December 4 – 11, 1943

The following day, Frans Storms (age 17) and Désiré Mertens rode to Diest (Van Blerckom's residence) to deliver bicycles for Bauer, Miller and my father. They escorted the Americans 23 miles to the village of Winksele where they were provided safe harbor by the Vervoort family. During their evasion, the "Lopin' Lobo" airmen were offered refuge in homes, taverns, retail stores, convents, and monasteries.

On December 5, Frans and Désiré escorted Tatkin, Nield and Gibson by bicycle to the "Villa Pergola" in Keerbergen that was vacant at the time. The Villa was used by the Resistance group to stock dynamite and weapons. It also occasionally provided shelter for



Frans and Aline Vervoort



downed Allied airmen. Frans spent the night there with Joe and the two other airmen.

On December 9, Frans and Désiré took Tatkin, Nield and Gibson to the home of the sister of Georges Mertens (from their group) to the town of Mechelen to meet up with guides who would lead them on the next leg of their trip to Brussels en route to Spain.

Finally, on Saturday, December 11, Frans and Désiré accompanied Bauer, Miller and Joe on bicycles from their hiding place in Winksele to the vacant Villa Pergola that Tatkin, Nield and Gibson had recently evacuated, making room for the others. They would stay for two days until being picked up by guides who, too, would lead them to Brussels.

Bauer, Miller and Joe arrived around noon and hid in the empty garage of the Villa Pergola. Désiré left at 2 p.m. when Georges Mertens arrived. An hour later, Rachel Van den Brande, who cycled from Boortmeerbeek, showed up with food. She was visibly upset after spotting a car carrying the Gestapo, some wearing plain clothes. George Mertens sent Frans on a bicycle to check the area but he found nothing.

Later they discovered that the car transported the three-armed Belgian Nazis carrying a riding permit so they could visit a friend who was on guard at the Kazerne Dossin in Mechelen that served as a transit camp for Belgian Jews en route to concentration camps.

When they realized that their friend wasn't there,

the Nazis drove to his home in Keerbergen where they learned that a Jewish man was possibly hiding in an empty bungalow in the village. By the time they arrived, the man had fled towards the garden of the Villa Pergola. Believing he was inside, the Nazis surrounded the villa and knocked on the door. George Mertens, thinking it was Frans, peered through the frosted glass window and recognized a Nazi uniform, then heard an order to open the door. George shouted "Polizei" to the others, then escaped with Rachel through the back door.

Prison de Saint-Gilles, Brussels, Belgium

Bauer, Miller and my father weren't so lucky. They were arrested and taken to the Prison de Saint-Gilles in Brussels which was crammed with political prisoners and Allied servicemen waiting to be transferred to POW camps in Germany.

"On our way to the Prison de St-Gilles in Brussels, we were beaten severely and kicked at the end of the spine," Joe recalled. "Our boots, what was left of them, were removed and we were forced to march barefoot [25 miles] in the snow. We all had frostbitten feet."



He continued, *"I was imprisoned as a spy because the Nazis thought the upper-class clothing I was given looked suspicious combined with the fact that I only spoke English, and was carrying a fake passport under the name of 'Willie Taskin' – a Belgian farmer. My pants were fairly short, as I was 6'2" and the pants that were part of my uniform obviously belonged to a much shorter man. After we arrived at Prison de Saint-Gilles, I was placed on a wooden stool and chained to a wall, received no food or water and was only allowed to defecate and urinate in a bucket for days."* Joe was left behind to endure what would be solitary confinement for a period of more than 30 days.

Telegram to the Burns Family

With the disappearance of the crew of the B-17G "Lopin' Lobo", the U.S. Army Air Corps feared the worst. The next day, Joe's fiancé, my mother Anne Patricia O'Boyle, and her best friend/roommate, Rose Duffy, received a handwritten note from Joe's mother, Marie Amelia Burns.

*Pittston, PA
December 12, 1943*

*Dear Anne & Rose,
I'm addressing this letter to the both of you so in case one isn't home the other can open it. We got a telegram from the War Department yesterday to tell us Joe was missing near Holland. I can hardly write to tell you this, but please pray that he will be found safe.
Love,
Mrs. Burns ~ Joe has been missing since December 1st.*



Joe, his mother and his fiancé Anne O'Boyle.

Back at Prison de St-Gilles

Joe's sentence of solitary confinement ended when several guards came to his cell to inform him that he would go before a firing squad at 5 a.m. the next morning. That evening, a Catholic priest visited him to hear his confession. The priest also granted absolution and offered Joe what he thought would be his last communion.

"The following morning, I was shackled and taken by two guards to the courtyard, blindfolded and strapped to a post," Joe recalled. "Three guards stood ready with rifles aimed. The prison commandant, at that point, stopped proceedings. I was then taken in shackles by three Gestapo officers in an American 1938 Ford to many of the places I had hidden during my escape. They wanted to know if any area was familiar, or if I could describe the persons who had assisted me. I denied all and said I acted alone. All I ever provided was my name, rank and serial number. Of course, I was familiar with all the places they had shown me as I had stayed a short time at many of them."

Joe was returned to the prison where he remained for three more days until being transferred to an Interrogation Center, Dulag Luft, near Frankfurt, Germany; a transit camp for Allied airmen. Treatment for Americans at the Dalug Luft included solitary confinement, little food and threats of physical violence. *"More interrogations and threats took place here,"* Joe said later. *"I was placed in the Civilian Wing and again listed as a spy. Prisoners lived through extreme hardship and torment. Many diseases also plagued the men inside this Interrogation Center."*

Stalag Luft VI

After leaving Dulag Luft, constantly on the move, Joe and 80 other POWs were corralled and loaded into

the boxcar of a train which left Frankfurt en route to Kiefheide (Podborsko, Poland). As the train made its way on the four-day, 546-mile trip to the northern coast of the Baltic Sea, it was strafed by Allied aircraft who incorrectly assumed it was carrying German troops.

The train finally pulled up at Stalag Luft VI in Heydekrug (now Silute) in Lithuania on February 2, 1944, my father's 21st birthday. "We were first held in a field outside the camp for 24 hours in rain and snow," he recalled. "We were then taken individually into an interrogation building, stripped, all orifices searched, slapped around, kicked, spat upon and generally debased and humiliated."

The initial group of 80 POWs soon grew to 7,000. Joe was put in charge of supplies that were shipped to the prisoners by the Red Cross and YMCA. When he could, he assisted with religious services. At one point, Joe was so ill with pneumonia that he was hospitalized.

Joe once participated in a plan to escape with other inmates by stealing a few minutes each day to help assemble a radio. One day, the POWs watched as one of their own outfitted himself in the uniform of a Nazi officer which was made using pieces they had stolen from various officers' barracks, and walked through the gates without incident to freedom. Tunneling to freedom also took place at the risk of being caught by German Shepherds and Doberman Pinchers who were trained military guard dogs. My father was terrified of these two breeds for the rest of his life.

Stalag Luft IV

On July 15, 1944, as the Russian troops were drawing near to Stalag IV, Joe and the other American prisoners were ordered to prepare to evacuate taking only what they could carry. They marched for miles while being led to the port of Memel (Klaipeda), 32 miles northwest of Silute and into the hold of a merchant ship, the *Insterburg*. The men remained in the bowels of the ship for four days and three nights during their journey to Swinemünde (Świnoujście, Poland).

"We had no food or a place to lie down while en route through the mine-infested Baltic Sea," Joe remembered. Later in life, Joe experienced recurring bouts of claustrophobia, a fear of crowds, and dark waters which he attributed to being aboard the *Insterburg*. "There were approximately 600 of us in the hold of the ship," he recalled. "We took turns standing and sitting. There was only one opening, about three feet square, to let in light and air. During this time, we received only buckets of water lowered by rope. After five days, we arrived at the railroad station. We disembarked and were shackled in pairs and forced to march 'double-time' between a solid wall of soldiers, seamen, civilians and dogs to Stalag Luft IV, Gross Tychow, Pomerania (now Tychowo, Poland)." The camp eventually grew to more than 9,000 soldiers.

"During our forced march off the ship, my partner who was shackled to me, fell to the ground," Joe said. "As I looked up, a German officer was about to come

down on me with a bayonet. Another officer put his gun in between his bayonet and myself and said 'Nein'. We were in such poor physical condition that many did not survive. Upon arrival at Stalag Luft VI, we discovered that all the grass was eaten by former Russian inmates because there was no food. I was again placed in charge of Red Cross and YMCA supplies. This allowed me to work in the German Vorlager, which helped me keep my sanity somewhat intact." Dad later explained that the Vorlager was the main entrance to the prison and that included the administrative offices, an infirmary and storage rooms. Joe was crammed in a room with a total of 15 prisoners with windows shuttered from 4 p.m. to 7 a.m. each day. The rooms were several feet above the ground. "At night, Doberman Pinchers and German Shepherds were released to help guard the grounds and prevent escapes," he recalled.

The atmosphere at Stalag Luft IV was described as one of "bullying and intimidation". Dad said that the Geneva Convention's rules were broken daily. The camp was under the command of Lt Col Aribert Otto Bombach ("Snaggletooth") and the relationships between the prisoners and guards were tense at best. Bombach's senior men included Capt Walther Pickhardt who oversaw camp security and was known as the "Beast of Berlin" and Sgt Reihard Fahnert, a senior non-commissioned officer who led violent searches within the camp. The most notorious was Big Stoop (Stab Feldwebel Hans Schmidt). All three were devoted Nazis. The guards were physically abusive. Prisoners were sometimes beaten upon arrival at the camp and what few personal belongings they had were usually confiscated. They were slammed against walls, beaten with sticks or guards' fists. Mail from home was withheld to isolate them from their loved ones.

Joe received another jolt while he was there. It was again on a birthday - this time his 22nd. He remembered, "On February 2, 1945 at 3 a.m., guards came in and said we had one hour to evacuate Stalag IV."

Black Death March

Without any warning, Joe and the others became part of the infamous "Black Death March" aka "Black Hunger March" moving around in what he described as



Pencil etching by "Palmer" dated 2/5/45 given to my father as his birthday gift from a fellow inmate that he carried on his person throughout the march.

"ever-diminishing circles" throughout Germany for more than 90 days enduring the chilling winter weather.

"When we were led out of the camp, we were told the march would last for two weeks. We marched at night and slept in fields during the day," Joe recalled. "We were strafed by both Allied and German aircraft, stoned, spat upon and threatened by civilians as we were marched through various towns. We were all quite ill and received food only rarely. The food provided was intended for livestock. Many of us suffered from dysentery and were passing only mucus and blood as bowel movements. We marched in subzero weather with boots that were ill fitting. Clothing was also substandard. We huddled when we stopped and laid on top of each other to help each other's bodies stay warm."

Dad said this was the worst part of his captivity. Prisoners were shot by the guards if they were too tired or sick to march. Food was non-existent at times. Prisoners looked out for one another. One would help another along the way so they were not left to die. The tragedy of the Black Death March brought out the heroism of captive Americans.

After marching more than 500 miles, Joe and his fellow soldiers were liberated near Halle, Germany by the British 2nd Army on May 2, 1945. Their status changed that day from being "prisoners" to "under friendly control." Nazi Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945.

"We proceeded to make our way, unescorted, through the lines as some fighting was still in progress," Joe explained. "After a week at a British Outpost, we were air-lifted to Camp Lucky Strike near Le Havre, France."

"The men who survived the 'Black Death March' lost one third or more of their body weight. Standing 6'2", I weighed in at 127 pounds and had lost approximately 50 pounds. We were given physicals, which simply consisted of taking our blood pressure and temperature, as well as vision and dental exams. We were deloused for we had not been able to wash for over three months. Everyone had developed body lice, along with malnutrition and dysentery. Many of those fellow prisoners died from dysentery. The freed POWs were placed on special diets to regain weight and improve their overall health. The camp was overwhelmed by the surge of POWs, so efforts were stepped up to board them on Liberty Ships and return them to the United States."

More than 1,000 men lost their lives in the Black Death March, yet another war crime. Another 3,000 prisoners were shipped to hospitals in Germany for treatment.

The War is Over

On June 7, 1945, a month after the war in Europe ended, a telegram was sent to Joe's parents advising: *"Joseph Luke Burns is being returned to the United States and within the near future would be given an opportunity to communicate with you upon arrival."*

"We arrived in Fort Miles Standish, Maine and

were then transported to Fort Dix, New Jersey," Joe remembered. "We were issued clothing and sent to our homes for 30 days of R&R. Since I didn't have enough 'points' to be eligible for an early discharge, I was eventually sent to Columbia AFB, South Carolina. I was put in charge of Enlisted Men's records until November 2, 1945 when I was honorably discharged."

For his service during World War II, Joe was awarded the Purple Heart; Prisoner of War Medal; World War II Medal/Ribbon; American Theater Ribbon; European-African-Middle Eastern Medal/Ribbon; Efficiency, Honor and Fidelity Medal; American Campaign Medal/Ribbon, and a Good Conduct Medal along with Congressional Citations.

With the war behind him, Joe returned to Pittston, Pennsylvania to plan a wedding with the love of his life, Anne Patricia O'Boyle. On Tuesday, November 26, 1946, two days before Thanksgiving, Anne became Mrs. Joseph Luke Burns in a ceremony at St. Cecilia's Church where they met as sophomores during high school (and were fierce competitors in stenography, typing and oratory). Anne's sister, Mary Ellen O'Boyle, served as Maid of Honor and Anne's best friend, Rose Duffy, as a Bridesmaid. Joe's brother, William (Bill Burns), as Best Man and his best friend, Neil Dougherty, served as Groomsman and Kay Ann Burns (Simon) was their Flower Girl.



Shortly after their wedding, Joe and Anne moved to an apartment in Newark, New Jersey. When Joe had fulfilled his commitment to the United States Air Force, he returned the Wilkes-Barre V.A. Medical Center where he had worked after high school graduation until his enlistment. Afterwards, he transferred to the East Orange Campus of the VA (New Jersey) where he was Assistant Administrator. Joe was eventually promoted to Chief Administrator in the Philadelphia V.A. Clinic in 1971. Joe worked for 37 years for the Federal Service

(including his years in the military). During his tenure, he was awarded many commendations for helping veterans manage their return to normal life and their PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). One recommendation he received from the VA in East Orange was on October 28, 1957. He was acknowledged for *"calmly and tactfully dealing with a disturbed patient who was carrying a weapon in Admissions. He prevented serious bodily harm to either the patient or the admitting officer that day, himself and others."*

Joe and Anne had three children including my older brother, Joseph Patrick Burns, myself, Mary Catherine Ann Burns Surdy, and my younger sister – Kelly Anne Patricia Burns Shemenski.

My father faced more daunting challenges after my mother, Anne Burns, died in 1968 from cancer. She was only 46. My brother, Joseph, was 18, I was 12 and my sister, Kelly, was just 6 when our father stepped up to be both father and mother to us.

Joe gave Mom the best care he could at home. He was at her side as much as possible when she was a patient in East Orange General Hospital (NJ) for surgeries and treatments. I remember seeing him carry her to various rooms in our home when she was too weak to walk on her own. My father never remarried. He'd say, *"Your mother was the true and strongest love of my life. I could never find that type of love again."* He added, *"I would never again want to go through that sense of loss."*

A turning point in my relationship with my father occurred in a 9th grade history. I was assigned the task of giving an oral report on his service in World War II. Information collected from that interview is incorporated into this article. I had never known until this interview what my father had experienced in his young life and was quite shocked to hear dad's first-hand description.

Over the course of our lifetimes, we would sit and have many discussions about his time as a war veteran. I learned much about the sacrifices and commitments our soldiers made for our freedom. The memories of war haunted my father until the day he died. He had a difficulty sleeping for an hour without waking up. He had nightmares. As with many other members of the Greatest Generation my father was reluctant at times to speak of the trials and tribulations he endured. He spoke with gratitude and deep respect of the men and women of the Resistance in Belgium who helped him evade the Germans for 11 days. He was never able to really thank them in person after the war ended. He did, however, send several families "care packages" and letters of thanks. This was witnessed on a USAF letter where he attested to sending five individuals/families assistance after he returned home to the United States.

In 1978, Joe retired from the Veterans Administration and moved from Westmont, New Jersey to Scottsdale, Arizona. There he volunteered as a Eucharistic Minister at St. Maria Goretti's Church. Dad lived in Arizona for a few years and then moved to La Jolla, California. He again served as a Eucharistic Minister at Mary Star of the

Sea for about 10 years. He served communion to those that were homebound, but he always tried to concentrate on the veterans first.

My father also served at Mother Teresa's Mission in Tijuana, Mexico through Mary Star of the Sea. He worked on their program of providing medicines to the poor that were donated by parishioners. He enjoyed the responsibility of collecting, repackaging and relabeling medicines for those in need. After ten years in La Jolla, he returned to Scottsdale.

Dad was so caring, thoughtful and gracious – always doing things for others. He was a devout man to say the least. There were times when he was very quiet and introspective; however, he also enjoyed a good laugh. He was a member of the following groups: Knights of Columbus - Regina Pacis Council, Newark, New Jersey and St. Maria Goretti's Knights of Columbus in Scottsdale, Arizona; Caterpillar Club (parachuting from planes), American Ex-Prisoners of War, Foreign Prisoners of War and the Association of Military Surgeons. He was also a member of the 401st Bombardment Group and of the American Saddlebred Association.

My father answered his call to duty to defend his country. He was witness to horrible atrocities and endured physical and psychological torture on a regular basis. Many "war crimes," according to the Geneva Convention, were committed during his service, yet he remained steadfast in his beliefs. I have no doubt his deep, religious faith helped sustain him during the many trying times in his life. He had such extraordinary life experiences from the tender ages between 19 through 23.

Later in his life, Joe took one trip to Europe for a visit to Madrid, Spain. He finally wanted to complete the trip that began in 1943 that was interrupted when he was captured by the Nazis. Dad brought home beautiful crosses and souvenirs for my sister and me on that trip. He and I never knew that Frans Storms was still alive and well and living in Belgium. I truly wish they could have met each other.

Trip to Brussels, Belgium in 2010

I came to understand that there are no accidents in this world when researcher Edouard Renière of Brussels contacted me via email in 2009. Edouard found a story I had previously written for a publication that was posted on the Internet about my father T/Sgt Joseph Luke Burns. Edouard explained in an email that he knew Frans Storms. He stated further that Frans (age 17) ushered my father (age 20) and five other crew members through enemy lines for 11 days with various members from the Resistance. Edouard offered to introduce me to Frans Storms if I could attend the annual reunion in Brussels.

With great excitement on October 15, 2010, my husband, Jerry Surdy, and I boarded a jet to Brussels. As we walked off the plane, and I stepped in my father's footsteps, my own life came full circle.

Edouard Renière met my husband and me in the lobby of the Novotel Brussels Centre Hotel. Although Edouard and I had only communicated via email, I

recognized him from a picture he sent. After a quick “hello”, my husband and I went to our rooms and changed clothes. We were back with Edouard in his car driving to Mechelen, Belgium to a meeting with Frans Storms. Upon arrival, we were taken to the recently opened Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance on the premises of the former Belgian Army barracks, the Kazerne Dossin.



Kazerne Dossin Museum

It had been 67 years since Frans aided my father and his crew members. When we arrived at the building, a lift carried all of us to the second floor. The doors opened to the room full of various media. The cameras were rolling and pictures were taken. I looked around and immediately recognized the man in the center to be Frans Storms. Frans, who was 85, and I warmly embraced. I presented him with a photo album on my Dad’s life before and after the war. I wanted him to see that my dad had led a full and happy life. We were then given a presentation by Museum Curator Ward Adriaens, author of the book on Frans Storms (Partisan Storms), about the local Resistance activities during the war and how the Comète Line assisted the Allies during World War II.

That day, Frans handed me one photo that was taken of my father during his stay with them, along with a short history about my father and his crew members that had been kept by the Resistance. Frans also provided me with a picture of the “Villa Pergola” where my dad was hidden and eventually captured. After the initial meeting was over, we accompanied Ward Adriaens, Frans, Bertje and Julien Palma-Ureel and some other members of their “8 Mei Comite” (a patriotic and remembrance association through which the day’s program had been planned and organized) and Edouard to the City Hall of Mechelen where we were hosted on a grand tour. The town Burgomaster welcomed us. Frans and I were interviewed there by a female newspaper reporter. After enjoying lunch at Restaurant Den Bier on the beautiful Mechelen Market Square, we said our thanks and goodbyes to everyone.

In the late afternoon, back in the Hotel Novotel in



Frans, Mary, and Jerry reviewing report on JLB and pic

Brussels, we joined about 150 people who had come to attend the annual Comète weekend. A few relatives of evaders from the UK and Australia were there. We served as the only representatives from the United States who could make the trip. There were a few veteran RAF evaders who had been helped by Comète during the war, as well as a few ladies who served as guides to evaders at the time and many descendants of wartime Comète Helpers. We also met Andrée Dumon (wartime alias “Nadine”), a woman who assisted Allied airmen evade capture during WWII until her own arrest in August 1942. As I stated in an interview with Teri Schultz (Global Post), “I was in awe of what those men and women had done to help others evade the Germans. I was very grateful, humbled and honored to be amongst such fearless volunteers.”



Left to right Julien Palma ,Filip Doms , Erwin Solie , Bertje Palma-Ureel (- wife of Julien), Ward Adriaens, Mary Surdy, Frans Storms



Mary Burns Surdy, Andrée DUMON (Nadine), Ed Reniere, a friend of Monique (name unknown), Henriette HANOTTE ("Monique). Nadine and Monique served as wartime Comete guides

We enjoyed extensive tours for the next three days that included a ride by the Prison de St.- Gilles, the Wings Monument and a very special Sunday Mass at the Basilica of Koekelberg. There is a stained-glass window in the Basilica that is dedicated to the 216 members of the Comète Line that gave their lives. In the window, meant to send a message of peace; the artist represented Christ, walking with a group of disciples. We drove by the former Palace Hotel, now the Crown Plaza that the Nazis used as a military court. We also went to the area where the Battle of the Bulge was fought. In Bastogne, we walked around the Mardasson Monument, a memorial inaugurated on July 16, 1950 in the form of a five-pointed American star. It was built to honor the memory of the 76,890 American soldiers killed, wounded or missing in the Battle of the Bulge. The crown of the memorial has the names of the 50 U.S. states in bronze lettering. Last, but not least, we were provided with a tour of the Chateau de Rolley, in Champs, a few miles north of Bastogne. During the Battle of the Bulge, it served as the Command Post for Lt Col Steve Chappuis' 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment. General George Patton and Brigadier General McAuliffe met there after the Germans lost the fierce battle that occurred in the area. Owned by the Maus de Rolley family, five RAF airmen had been hidden there in the summer of 1943 and two Americans in February 1944 before being turned over to the Resistance.



September 2017 (17-3)

My one and only wish that weekend was that Dad would have lived to share this experience with us.

"Joe" would have been pleased to know that the Patron Saint of Belgium is St. Joseph!

My father died November 22, 1997 at the age of 74 in Scottsdale, Arizona. He is buried at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in East Hanover, New Jersey alongside my mother – Anne Patricia O'Boyle Burns.

Notes from the author:

Frans Storms and Désiré Mertens were members of the "4de Compagnie Schreurs" from Boortmeerbeek, a sub-section of the Leuvense Partizanenkorp. Boortmeerbeek, where Frans was born and lived, is about 12 miles northwest of Leuven. This group/company worked with other Resistance groups and was active in sabotage, intelligence and occasionally helping downed Allied airmen on their way to an evasion network. That is how Frans and some of his comrades in the group came in contact with people connected to the Comète evasion network whose aim was to guide the evaders all the way to neutral Spain (via Gibraltar), where they could return to England.

It was with much sadness that we learned of the passing of Frans Storms, a few days after his 88th birthday in January 2013. He was a very modest, generous man, and he donated his body to science. No funeral, nor ceremony was held. His passing was mentioned in local newspapers. His many friends in Mechelen organized an homage ceremony a few weeks later that was attended by a very large crowd.

I would like to express my deep thanks to Kelly Burns Shemenski for her support and love in writing this article on our father. I'm so glad that you are in my life and that you are my little sister! Love you very much. I would like to thank my husband Jerry Surdy for his love and support through the writing of this article and his love for my dad. My father was responsible for Jerry and I meeting each other 27 years ago and, for that, I am forever grateful.

I would like to acknowledge and deeply thank Edouard Renière for his research and help with this article. Edouard contributed detail including historical names, places and dates. Edouard also offered us what is, to this day, the most exciting and memory-filled trip we have ever taken. I would also like to thank Ward Adriaens for his research on Frans Storms and the book he gave me "Partizaan Storms".

I would like to thank Lillian Cox, a San Diego writer and historian, for her guidance and contribution to getting this article to the goal line.

I relied heavily on interviews and discussions with my father Joseph Luke Burns, as well as his VA records.

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A Corner of England That Will Be Forever 'America'

by Martin W. Bowman.

In the remote and quiet heart of the Norfolk countryside where B-24 Liberators once flew, there is a corner of a 'foreign field' that will be forever America.

In 1942-45 Shipdham airfield was the home to the 44th 'Flying Eightballs' Bomb Group. Just off the main airfield site is Cranworth (can one get more English than this?) where the 14th Bombardment Wing Headquarters controlled the 44th BG, 392nd BG at Wendling nearby and the 466th Bomb Group at Attlebridge near Norwich.

When I was a teenager I investigated the myriad number of airfields (fourteen) in the local areas around my fair city of Norwich, often taking to my motorbike to explore these talked about airfields which had just been featured in a book called *The Mighty Eighth* by one Roger Freeman. Having previously thought that these bases were occupied by the RAF Bomber and Fighter squadrons in WW2, I was intrigued to discover that they had in fact been 'invaded' and taken over by the US



8th Air Force.

At first my friends and I sorted to bases near Norwich as we did not immediately have the 'range' to visit airfields further afield and precious little film in our basic little Kodak 'Instamatic' cameras to record what we saw. My co-conspirators thoughts were of finding machine guns, ammunition and bits of bombs but like Howard Carter, my head was turned in another direction. A sickly child, Carter was sent to live with his aunts in Norfolk. His father worked on a painting for William Amherst of Diddington Hall at Swaffham, a short hop from Shipdham and Wendling and Howard accompanied him. William Amherst was an Egyptologist who collected Ancient Egyptian artifacts

and Howard became interested in this subject. The rest, as they say, is 'history'.

I too soon discovered 'wonderful things' - 'wall art' we now call it; that adorned the walls of the old USAAF buildings. No 3,000 year old tomb of the pharaohs adorned with hieroglyphics or elegant paintings set in amber or slim limbed figures in precisely curled wigs, shining gold necklaces and fresh green fruits and leaves from the field, all arranged in simple harmony, but 1940s American 'Varga girls' and Gil Elvegren 'pin ups', cartoon characters and murals and much more to behold. I was hooked and have been ever since. It led me, in the early 1970s, to begin compiling stories of the young GIs and their aircraft that



Wingate's bar scene



Barrie Lesley & Tom Chilton & a resident on site

populated and flew from, these *Fields of Little America*. Over 200 books on various aviation subjects later, the fascination of those early years has not diminished.

While I tried valiantly to record the wall art images for posterity the majority, ravaged by almost biblical winters and heavy rains have now disappeared forever. Back then businessmen were already using the last remaining buildings as their premises and farmers were ploughing up the runways and taxiways. Few, if any were interested in preservation. But now, there is a time capsule at Shipdham, in the former 14th Combat Wing HQ, where American WW2 art work has been preserved in all its glory and the former quarters will be let as holiday cottages.

Twelve years ago a young couple, Barrie and Lesley Adams, met some people they knew in a local pub. Lesley recalls:

'We got talking about the 'H block'; a property owned by the man we were talking to. He knew we had an interest in old properties and

invited us to have a look. The entire site was overgrown and appeared as a large green tree on Google earth. On further investigation the property seemed a perfect place for us and our family.

'We discovered many gems on the site and finding the American murals was the icing on the cake for us. We were determined that we wanted to preserve the paintings and covered all of them so we could continue to work around them without causing further damage. We decided our first job would be to ensure the properties surrounding the murals was weather proofed so we set about putting a new roof on and changing all the old broken windows. The largest mural, a bar scene, which is in our house, was painted by someone called Wingate and the paints came from Jarrolds department store in Norwich.

As the pictures have been uncovered we have been amazed at how lovely they are and we are in awe of the men that painted them. We have many visitors from America and are always delighted to show them the pictures. Some of our visitors had relatives that served in the war and were stationed here. They have taken photos of the murals and the site.

'We feel very lucky to have been able to preserve this part of Norfolk history and will always do everything we can to ensure they remain as good as possible and are available for people to visit. We have named the Quarters Cottages', appropriately we feel, 'Lemon Drop Cottage' [after the famous Liberator of the same name], 'Leon Cottage' [in honour of General Leon Vance who was awarded the Medal of Honor for leading his group against the Ploesti oilfields on Sunday, August 1st 1943], 'Wingate' and 'Eightball House'. Letting could start in July when we have finished the fence and garden.'

Any 8th Air Force veteran who endured his early years in the primitive, rudimentary and often freez-

ing conditions on base would have difficulty coming to terms with the 'five-star' 'Quarters Cottages' with its hot showers, efficient plumbing and comfortable beds.

In the words of Rupert Brooke,

*Her sights and sounds;
dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends;
and gentleness,
In hearts at peace,
under an English heaven.*

Fields of Little America were never like this!



Quarters Cottages



The 'Cowboy Corral' pictured in the early 1970s - now lost forever



The Rodeo Rider pictured in the 1970s - now lost forever



NORFOLK SCHOOLBOY

By John Gilbert

After our home at Unthank Road, Norwich, was destroyed in the heavy bombing raids on that city in April 1942, my family and I were evacuated to an old cottage at Wendling. At that time my father worked on the construction of Wendling airfield. When it was completed in 1943 he worked for Billy Butcher, a local farmer, at Manor Farm. I was 5 years old when we had to move from Norwich. I attended Wendling village school and my teachers there were Mrs. Eagle and Mrs. Rowles.

When British Air Ministry officials first surveyed the proposed airfield at Wendling before it was built in 1942 by one of this country's leading civil engineering companies, Taylor Woodrow Ltd., Jack Scott lived and worked at Canister Farm, which was located on the airfield itself.

Naturally, the Air Ministry wanted to demolish Jack's farmhouse with the adjacent buildings after relocating Jack and his farm animals elsewhere. However, Jack was a character and one of those individuals who firmly believed in the saying, "An Englishman's home is his castle." Full stop. [Period.]

According to my late father, the officials apparently tried to persuade and convince Jack with all sorts of arguments and dire warnings. But Jack was adamant: "I'm staying here.... I was here long before you arrived on the scene and I'll be here long after you've

gone back to wherever you came from. That's all I have to say. Good day, gentlemen." (Or words to that effect.)

So Wendling Airfield was actually constructed around Jack Scott's small holding. In fact, the control tower was built only 250 yards from his farmhouse, which itself was surrounded by various Technical Site buildings. Jack subsequently stayed on his farm all through the war, with his goats grazing contentedly on the grass around the control tower.

The American airmen however, quickly recognized the fact that here was an ideal source of fresh milk instead of the powdered variety served in the mess halls. Many a time Jack was up at the crack of dawn only to discover that his goats had already been milked: "Those bloody Yanks have milked my goats again," Jack grumbled to my father.

However, Jack got on very well with the American airmen. They looked after his food requirements as and when they could, as they did for our family and many other needy people in the surrounding villages. My mother used to do the laundry for the American airmen. One day my father came home and told her that he had another washing order for her which turned out to be all the muddy shirts and uniforms of the GI's baseball team.

Knowing that my mother had a sister in Manchester, northern England, the Americans told my mother that she deserved a break from all that washing and housework. They generously clubbed together and paid the return [round trip] train fares to Manchester for my mother, young brother David, Joy and myself. It was a very enjoyable holiday, and something which we could never have afforded otherwise.

When we returned to Wendling, Dad and several of the Americans were at the station to greet us. From there we went to the Rose Cottage Pub for a "welcome home" celebration.

My father was friendly with several Americans. On one occasion, one of them known as "Butch" arrived at our cottage one day somewhat bleary-eyed. He'd been to Norwich for a night "on the town," missed the last train back to Wendling and was therefore absent without leave (AWOL).

"What you want to tell them old boys in charge," advised my father, "is that you arrived at Norwich Station last

night, scampering towards your train, when the loudspeaker suddenly started playing our national anthem 'God Save the King.' You, being anxious not to offend, stopped running, stood at attention and saluted.... just as your train pulled out. That's how you missed your train."

Consequently, Butch, reputedly the oldest American on the base, was promoted and given a job in the cook house, which was what he'd always wanted.

But there were also very sad occasions in addition to the occasional crashes and heavy losses suffered by the 392nd Bomb Group. Tony Whales farmed at Beeston. His brother, Eddy Whales, was very friendly with a Sgt. Negus, a tail gunner on one of the Liberator bombers. On one of the missions during the very cold winter of 1944, Sgt. Negus somehow lost communication with his crew, his oxygen and heating systems having failed.

By the time his B-24 landed back at Wendling, Sgt. Negus had died. I recall the V-1 flying bomb which landed and exploded at Fransham. The blast brought one of the ceilings down at Field House Farm. Roger Warnes lived there at that time and the ceiling actually collapsed on his sister, whose injuries were treated by one of the American flight surgeons from Wendling.

The V-1 landed close to a statue of Lord Horatio Nelson, one of our great Royal Navy admirals. The statue had been erected near the site of Curd's Hall, long since gone, but Lord Nelson is said to have stayed at the Hall in days gone by. I also recall the young American airman who was killed, almost at the end of the war, when a low-flying German plane strafed one of the Liberty Run trucks he was driving, near the old council houses approaching Litcham, on its way back to the base from Kings Lynn.

Towards the end of the war, Butch kindly gave me a photograph album, the two covers and the spine of the album were cut and expertly shaped with aluminum from the B-24's bomb bay doors. We then went to several Nissen huts, taking the wartime "pin-ups" off the walls and placing them in my album, which I still have to this day as a souvenir of those dramatic days.



Spring 43 Sharpe Crew 94 BG 331BS

Remembered with Memorial in Castenray The Netherlands 2 POW 8 KIA



Family of Sharpe and Rich crewmembers unveil Monument

Sharpe Crew Honored During Dedication Ceremony

Jacobus de Swart

Six days after the 2nd Schweinfurt Raid, 2Lts Harry W Sharpe (pilot) and William M Miller (co-pilot), 94th BG/331st BS were piloting "Nip & Tuck II" [42-3130] alongside 282 other B-17s and B-24s toward their target: Düren Industrial area near Aachen, Germany. Already damaged by Flak, the ship couldn't keep up with the formation, lost altitude and the waiting Messerschmitts smelled their chances.

Two Luftwaffe pilots, 'Ace' Hauptmann Werner Lucas Jagdgeschwader, III and Oberfeldwebel Helmut Ruffler got the B-17 in their gun-sights with deadly consequences.

Lt. Miller and gunner, Clifford

Horn—both would become POWs—were able to bail out, but witnessed the heavily damaged ship explode in mid-air, killing the remaining 8 crew members instantly; the remains spreading over a large area near the village of Castenray-Leunen in Holland.

Civilians of the small Dutch village never forgot what happened that day. Local historians, lead by Jan Strijbosch, assembled information on the crash and crew with assistance from the Royal Dutch Airforce. They received help from officers of the Dutch and US Air Force from nearby 'Volkel' Nato-Airfield. Former Dutch F-16 pilot, Joop Hendrix helped locate families of the crew members in the US.

On September 24, 2016 a wonder-

ful monument was unveiled by members of both the Sharpe family and the Rich family (William Rich was the ball turret gunner) of the ill-fated crew. Hundreds of people from a wide Dutch area attended. The US Embassy and Air Force sent representatives and school children laid flowers for each crew member who was lost, calling them by name. The 'Last Post' appropriately closed this emotional event, covered by Dutch media, leaving a lasting memorial for present-and future generations—forever remembering those who died for our freedom.

This American WWII crew will not be forgotten in The Netherlands.



US family of crewmembers Sharpe and Rich attending unveiling Monument



Flower for each of the members of the Sharpe Crew KIA over Holland 10 20 43



The Netherlands Monument for Sharpe Crew USAAF 94BG 331BS 8 KIA 2 POW WWII, Oct 20 1943

ARNESON, Ary Corvin, age 94, of Spring Valley died Saturday, June 3, 2017. He served as a bombardier in the 94th BG, 331st BS and received the Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters, Distinguished Flying Cross and the French Legion of Honor. He retired from military service as a Major and ran the Arneson Insurance Agency, continuing to work there until the end of his life with his son Jay.

Ary was a devoted husband of 70 years to Elsie, the love of his life, and a dedicated brother to his sister and only sibling, Joan. He was an inspiration to his four children Charlie (Barbara Silberbusch), Sally (Steve Scallon), Jay (Wendy Peterson), and Sarah (Tom Kolar). He was a proud grandfather to Anna, Tim, Paige, and Claire.

Ary had a wonderful sense of curiosity and adventure which he shared with Elsie as they traveled the world together, but he lived his entire life in Spring Valley. He was passionate about his community and was both admired and respected.

He was instrumental in developing the Spring Valley Golf Course, served on the nursing home board, was a member of the Area Association/ Chamber of Commerce and actively recruited doctors and dentists for the local clinics. He was a member of the local Free Masons for 72 years. Ary was happiest spending time with his family at the cottage and mowing hiking trails at "the farm". He was a true steward of the Earth. He will be greatly missed and forever loved by his many friends and family.

BUTNER, Jr., Edward "Ed", 93, served with the 487th BG as a radio operator and waist gunner [the Gentlemen from Hell]. He received the Air Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross, and 3 Battle Stars. He was pre-deceased by his wife of 65 years, Edna Mae, a brother, Richard Butner, and sister, Mary Ann Butner.

After his honorable discharge from the Army Air Force, he enrolled at the University of Connecticut graduating in 1950. While at the University of Connecticut, Ed became a member of Theta Chi Fraternity and sang in a Barber Shop Quartet. In the military reserve he reentered the Marine Corps where he was honorably discharged in May 1951.

Ed graduated from the Bridgeport Engineering Institute with a degree in mechanical engineering and worked for the Nash Engineering Company in South Norwalk, CT until his retirement in 1985.

After retirement, Ed enjoyed playing golf, bridge, and working in his garden. He was a member of the Nantucket Angler's Club

and Nantucket VFW Post 8608. Ed enjoyed watching UCONN Football and Women's Basketball. Ed is survived by three children Laura B. Hardon (Allen) of Gilbert, AZ, Edward J. Butner (Lynn) of Trumbull, CT and Jennifer Anderson (Scott) of Westport, CT and four grandchildren: Jamie Whittendale, Thomas Hardon, Christopher and Margaret Butner.

Ed's sense of humor and quick wit kept everyone laughing and he will be missed by all those he touched.

GILES, Jr., Cornelius Walker, 94 of Florence, Alabama passed away Tuesday, May 23, 2017. He served with the 46th Air Depot Group Supply Squadron. He was a part of the Third Strategic Air Depot stationed at Watton, England during WWII.

He played football for Ramsey High School in Birmingham, Alabama and prior to graduation, he enlisted at Fort McClellan, AL in 1942.

After the war he returned to Birmingham, AL to receive his high school diploma then enrolled at Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University). He retired from the Treasury Department in 1973 then worked at Hargett's Auto Electric Service in Florence.

'Corny' was a founding member of Parkway Methodist Church, an enthusiastic participant in the Civitan Club and an active member of the veteran community including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans.

He worked with church groups including Christian missionary ministries, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and supported numerous charitable organizations.

Grace, "Corny's" beloved wife of 66 years died in January, 2016. He is survived by four daughters, Beth

(John) Hargett, Karen (Terry) Thigpen, Robin Long, and Debbie (Tim) Long, and one son, Cornelius

Giles; 16 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren who will miss him greatly!



**Ary Corvin,
ARNESON**



**Edward "Ed"
BUTNER, Jr.**



**Cornelius Walker,
GILES, Jr.**



Merle, HAYDEN



**Richard F. "Frank",
KNOX**

HAYDEN, Merle, 96, served with the 5th Air Force, 348th FG, 341st FS as an armament mechanic, maintaining the 50 caliber machine guns on the P47 Thunderbolts. Merle met his wife Marjorie O'Connor and they married April 2, 1961 in Michigan. After Marjorie passed away, Merle reunited with his high school sweetheart, Betty Goech. In 1990 Merle moved to Racine where he resided until one week before his passing. Merle walked 5 miles daily to the Racine lighthouse. He also would visit his old farm from time to time bringing grapes back to the residents in his apartment building. Merle would often leave special encouraging messages on the message board in his building for his fellow residents. In 2012, Merle Hayden joined the Wisconsin Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society. He always reminded all of whom he hugged at the end of the meetings, to hug "heart to heart": left side to left side. Merle celebrated his 96th birthday during the Annual Reunion last year in St. Louis. He was always the life of the party at hospitality events. On June 2, 2016 Merle was the star of a documentary entitled "The Last Lawsonist" which premiered in Chicago. He was preceded in death by his mother and father, brother, Richard and sisters: Violet, Fay, and Fern, his wife of 40 years Marge, and his special friend Betty Goachee. He is survived by 2 nieces: Julia Stapleton of Florida and Gail Ashworth of California. He will be greatly missed.

KNOX, Richard F. "Frank", 97, retired from Washington State University as a professor of electrical engineering. Frank served with the 95th BG at Horham Air Base in England as communications officer, earning a Bronze Star and the Air Medal. He retired in 1968 with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Frank spent 25 years as the scoutmaster of Pullman Troop 444 of the Boy Scouts of America retiring from WSU in 1985. He and Helen then moved to a lake

house on Newman Lake, near Spokane. They took numerous trips pulling their Airstream trailer, including one notable trek up the Al-Can Highway to Alaska. They volunteered with the Newman Lake Volunteer Fire Department. Still active in the Presbyterian Church, Frank and Helen were instrumental in the establishment of the East Valley Presbyterian Church in Otis Orchards.

Frank was preceded in death by the love of his life, his wife, Helen; his brothers, Robert Leonidas, Melburn Coe, Joy Allen and Lloyd Edgar; niece, Linda Gayle (Knox) Cole; and nephew, Greg Hildreth. He is survived by his five sons, Robert Allen, David Glen, Gregory Paul, Wesley Michael and Richard Eugene. Five grandchildren, and two great-grandsons, Zayden Amir and Zaccai Aaron, children of Zach and LaWanda (Smith) Knox; nieces, Joann Eleanor (Knox) Schulenberg, Sarah Alice (Knox) Miyazaki and Margaret Nell (Knox) Kountz; and nephews, Melburn Coe Knox Jr., Jeff Hildreth, Theodore Thomas Knox and Kevin Lloyd Knox. Other survivors include son Richard's adopted daughter, Terressa Katherine King, and her children, Julian Teague James, Chloe Irene Bliven and Haven May Nelson.

MOORE, Thomas Joseph, 92, died May 9, 2017. At 17 he volunteered for military service in the Army Air Corps. Tom completed Advanced Pilot Training at Luke Field, Arizona in February of 1944—Cadet Class 44B. At 18, he became the youngest pilot in his fighter squadron. In 1944 he was assigned to the 361st FG, 374th FS. Tom had gone overseas as a P-38 pilot but with advanced training at Goxhill in England he'd switched to the P-51. He returned to the US in 1944 and received a law degree from Santa Clara University. After working for the FBI in New York, Tom returned to Portland, Oregon and opened his own law practice in 1956. In 1963, he partnered with Mervin Brink. Tom retired in 2015 at the age of 90.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and six siblings, George, Pius «Mac», Lawrence, Mary (Caruso), Joseph, and Eileen (Sorensen). Survivors include his wife, Mary Ellen; children, and their spouses, Eileen Reilly (Bill), Tom Moore (Anne), Molly Moore, Anne Moore; brother, John Moore (Josephine); six grandchildren, Alison, Natalie, Matthew, Kathleen, Elizabeth, Caroline; and many nieces and nephews.

MORRIS, Walter E. 95, Died May 18, 2017 surrounded by his children after a short illness. After finishing two years

of college, Walt served in the Army Air Corps during WWII as a B-24 pilot flying 14 combat missions with the 453rd BG. Subsequently, he completed his undergraduate degree, earned a graduate degree, worked for the AAA for 15 years and taught in Fairfax County Public Schools as an Industrial Arts teacher for 20 years. Walt was active in the community, serving in the Mended Hearts Organization providing hope and support to heart disease patients, driving a "Cue" bus for Fairfax City and a long-time member of the "morning coffee club" at the Fairfax Senior Center. He is survived by his children, Jeff Morris (Cecilia Hoppenjans), Jim Morris, Susan Gresham (Bobby H, Gresham Jr.) and Brian Morris; grandchildren, Ashley, Greg, Sarah, Taylor and Allison; and four great-grandchildren.

SPEARMAN, Eugene, 91, passed away on June 19, 2017. His young adult life was spent in WWII with the 384th BG as a radio operator in a B-17. Then, at Mississippi State University, he earned his degree in electrical engineering, enjoying a successful 35-year career at TVA. Along the way, he served his community in a variety of ways, including serving as president of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, president of the Men's Club of Saltillo, Sunday School Director of Euclatubba Baptist Church, and president of the 8th Air Force Historical Society. He is a charter member of Faith Baptist Church of Saltillo.

Many community members have been blessed by his smiling face as he delivered food, cooked by his wife, Ruth, for those experiencing difficulty. During his later years, he spent many hours honoring his fellow veterans who so bravely fought in World War II, as well as teaching young students about the experiences of veterans in that conflict.

He is survived by his wife of 46 years, Ruth Johnson Spearman; sons, Barry Spearman (Sandra) of Monterey, Tennessee, and David Spearman (Jeannette) of Tupelo; three grandchildren, Amber



Thomas Joseph, MOORE



Walter E. MORRIS



Eugene, SPEARMAN



Willard L. "Bill", WARD

Cook (Brandon), Christina Spearman, and Blake Spearman, all of Tupelo; and eight great grandchildren, Rachel Spencer, Harrison and Anderson Cook, Isabella Light, Alexander Spearman, Evan and Mattie Spearman, and Lilly Dillard, all of Tupelo. He was preceded in death by his parents, Creston and Claudine Spearman, and his eldest brother, Creston Hyde Spearman, all of Coffeeville.

WARD, Willard L. "Bill", passed away on June 19th, 2017, at the age of 100.

He was preceded in death by the "love of his life" and wife of 62 years, Bertie Maxine Ward. Bill and Maxine were married in Houston, Texas in 1946 after his return from active duty during WWII.

Mr. Ward joined the Air Force on December 8, 1941. He served with the 305th BG as a "waist" gunner. He served his first tour of 25 missions, only to later return and fly on another 18 missions before the war ended. Bill was wounded over France on July 4th, 1943, and earned 3 commendations on that single mission; including the Silver Star, Purple Heart, and Air Medal. Later he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Distinguished Unit Citation, and 7 more oak clusters for the Air Medal. He continued in the reserves for 13 years. At 26 years of age, he was known as the "the old man" on the crew. After active duty he returned to Palestine, Texas where he worked for Texas Power and Light Company and retired after 35 years of service.

He leaves behind a son, Dennis Ward and wife Charlotte of Fort Worth; daughter, Vicky Letson and husband Steve of Dallas, and daughter, Leisa Kirby and

husband Steve of Palestine. Three grandchildren - Aaron Ward of Austin, Melissa Ward of Palestine, and Kameron Willard of Palestine; along with numerous nieces, nephews, and great grandchildren.

An active member of Calvary Baptist Church, Bill also enjoyed gardening, yard work, and various community service projects.



FRENCH LEGION

French Legion of Honor Recipients*

Manny Abrams	392nd BG	Thomas L Creekmore	305th BG	Marvin Graham	392nd BG
Stewart Ackerman	303rd BG	Howard Croner	452nd BG	Sidney Grant	493rd BG
J R Akin	95th BG	Robert Culp	100th BG	Wesley Grayer	493rd BG
V G Alexander	493rd BG	John F Curcio	458th BG	Charles J Greenough	379th BG
Jay D Allen	94th BG	Wayne Davis	452nd BG	Robert Gross	34th BG
Andy Anderson	100th BG	Steve de Pyssler VIII Bomber Command		Joseph "Joe" Gualano	493rd BG
Ed Anderson	453rd BG	Victor DeCaria	466th BG	Rudolph "Rudy" Guerrero	493rd BG
Richard Andrews	379th BG	Eddie Deerfield	303rd BG	Milton R Gunther	487th BG
Albert Arreola	100th BG	Louis E Deutsch	446th BG	C Norman Gustafson	384th BG
Albert Audette	385th BG	Harold L Dietz	466th BG	Carl Gustafson	453rd BG
George W Bachmann, Jr	306th BG	Richard Dinning	351st BG	Russell W Gustafson	452nd BG
Orville Baker	445th BG	Jack F Disney	94th BG	Paul C Haedike	452nd BG
Willis Barney	379th BG	Donald A D'Lugos	466th BG	Percival L Hanson	305th BG
William Becker	492nd BG	Jack Dodson	398th BG	Haas M Hargrave	493rd BG
Richard L "Dick" Bedford	353rd FG	John H Doyle	94th BG	Alfred B Harris	390th BG
Sheldon Beigel	306th BG	Norman R Dunphe	448th BG	Glenn Harrison	96th BG
Caesar J Benigno	452nd BG	George Durgin	493rd BG	Robert B Hastie	95th BG
Nelson Berger	100th BG	Peter Durso	493rd BG	Robert Haynes	493rd BG
Tony Bezer	490th BG	Alfred Dusey	447th BG	Robert Hecker	401st BG
Leo S Bielinski	44th BG	Harold Dwyer	34th BG	Walter Hendricks	452nd BG
William D Bodiford	487th BG	Don Echols	458th BG	Lewis E Herron	100th BG
August C Bolino	388th BG	Stanley Edelman	351st BG	John R Hildebran	453rd BG
Bob Bowen	398th BG	Richard J Eiseman	94th BG	Temple Hix Hill	392nd BG
James M Bond	385th BG	William "Bill" Eisenhart	303rd BG	Robert H Hitchcock	303rd BG
Robert L Brandt	452nd BG	James H Eshelman	385th BG	Bill Holden	1st B RNR
Gordon Breeding	34th BG	Dr. James Facos	388th BG	Don Holmes	458th BG
Carl F Brown, Jr	4th FG	Joseph Fischer	94th BG	Dewey A Holst	448th BG
Dudley Brown	94th BG	Clifford J Foss	29th Troop Carrier SQ	Theodore C "Ted" Hood	306th BG
Joe Burdis	388th BG	Donald H Foulk	303rd BG	James Howell	447th BG
Ed Burnham	95th BG	Donald M Frank	389th BG	Jake Howland	Unknown
Donald Casey	379th BG	Herbert Friedlander	351st BG	Jack C Hubbard	306th BG
F C "Hap" Chandler	491st BG	Joel Friedman	34th BG	David Huckabay	489th BG
Clarence F Cherry	100th BG	James E Froking	479th FG	Blaine Hufnagle	94th BG
John Chopelas	452nd BG	Frank Gaccione	7th Photo Recon	Melvin Hurwitz	493rd BG
Samuel Christiano	18th Weather SQ	Henry C Gagnon	385th BG	Albion Kenneth Hutcherson	95th BG
John A Clark	100th BG	Joseph Garber	96th BG	Joseph O Ingram, Jr	96th BG
James O Clemons	484th BG	Ted Gary	493rd BG	Gustave W Jacobson	94th BG
Grayson Cocharo	492nd BG	Robert Genesky	493rd BG	Bennie L Jefferies	306th BG
Murray Codman	447th BG	William Gerecitano	388th BG	Arthur Jenkins	390th BG
Myron Cohen	91st BG	Albert Gese	20th FG	David Johnson	1st B RNR
Paul J Collins	447th BG	Dr. C W "Bill" Getz	491st BG/2AD SF	Martin Jordan	351st BG
Joseph Connaughton	319th BG	Reuben Glazer	445th BG	Jay Karpin	493rd BG
Marbury L Councell, Jr	96th BG	Dallas Godsey	351st BG	John Katsaros	401st BG
Salvatore Cracolici	96th BG	Stanley Goldstein	466th BG	Samuel Katz	389th BG
		Hewitt B Gomez	492nd BG	George H Keating	452nd BG
		George Gorman	96th BG	Victor Keech	1st B RNR

ON OF HONOR



Perry Kerr	466th BG	Kenneth Moulden	448th BG	Robert W Smothers	452nd BG
John Ketzner	92nd BG	Clayton A Nattier	306th BG	Christopher Spagnola	44th BG
Michael D Kindya	385th BG	William J "Bill" Nevitt	353rd FG	George W Starks	92nd BG
James King	1st B RNR	John W Newman	94th BG	Robert J Starzynski	306th BG
Jack Kleinsorg	92nd BG	Art Nystrom	445th BG	Willard Stelling	34th BG
Russell A Knudson	303rd BG	William J O'Leary	384th BG	Colin D Storey	94th BG
Carroll F Knutson	447th BG	Allen G Ostrom	398th BG	William E Stovall	390th BG
Donald L Koons	401st BG	Frank D Perez	401st BG	Herman Stroupe	390th BG
Donald F Kremper	94th BG	LaVerne Peters	389th BG	Walter Sturdivan	34th BG
Ralph J Kurka	93rd BG	Stanley Peterson	96th BG	John S Swarts	351st BG
Herbert J Kwart	381st BG	Anthony W Pircio	7th PRG	John Roger Swihart	388th BG
Dean C Larson	401st BG	Wilmer "Will" Plate	489th BG	Henry E Tessien	96th BG
William G Lathrop	94th BG	Howard Polin	352nd FG	William Thacker, Jr	457th BG
George A Lawson	7 PRG	Steven Politis	97th BG	William M "Bill" Thorns	96th BG
John Lemons	445th BG	Michael H Prestia	452ndBG	William C "Bill" Toombs, Sr	493rd BG
Mathias J Leupold	385th BG	Vincent J "Bill" Purple	379th BG	Robert Tuchel	392nd BG
Donald D Levine	453rd BG	Walter "Mike" Quering	487th BG	William "Bill" Varnedoe	385th BG
Richard B "Dick" Lewis	493rd BG	Albert Rapvano	466th BG	Rudolph Villalobos	96th BG
George R Leyva	351st BG	Lauri Rautio	447th BG	Robert H Voss	94th BG
Robert M Littlefield	55th FG	Lester Reekers	490th BG	Jay Walker	384th BG
James L Livingston	44th BG	Edward G Reuland	379th BG	James H Walston, Jr	466th BG
Robert "Bob" Livingston	351st BG	Joseph H Reus	445th BG	Douglas J Ward	305th BG
Stan Loftsgard	493rd BG	James A Rich, Jr	96th BG	Charles Warren	351st BG
Malcolm J Magid	303rd BG	George Roberts	306th BG	Earl E Wassom	466th BG
Ken Mason	1st B RNR	William L "Bill" Roche	452nd BG	Billy D Welch	361st FG
Ellis McClintick	390th BG	J Warren Roundhill	379th BG	Charles Wheelwright	392nd BG
Robert McCormack	389th BG	Robert Rowland	398th BG	John M Williams	448th BG
Elmer "Lucky" McGinty	95th BG	Jack Rude	493rd BG	Paul Willson	305th BG
Hugh McGinty	379th BG	John Rumancik	392nd BG	Frank A Wiswall	96th BG
Jay McIntosh	94th BG	Peter "Rupy" Ruplenas	486th BG	Lawrence Wolfson	493rd BG
B/GEN Seth McKee	370th FG	Al Sadowsky	34th BG	Richard P Woodson, III	96th BG
Russell Madsen	100th BG	Bradford Saivetz	305th BG	James Zographos	388th BG
Elmo Maiden	466th BG	Jesse Sandlin	447th BG		
David Marshall	381st BG	Frank N Schaeffer	44th BG		
Richard Martin	398th BG	Walter Schattel	487th BG		
William Massey	401st BG	Carmen Schiavoni	447th BG		
Samuel Mastrogiacomio	445th BG	Robert Schuberg	306th BG		
Walter M "Boots" Mayberry	388th BG	Bob Schuh	398th BG		
Seward M Meintsma	466th BG	Donald Seesenguth	457th BG		
Julius M Micek	381st BG	Horace Seyster	457th BG		
James Mikusi	447th BG	Horace Shankwiler	445th BG		
Donnell "Don" Miller	493rd BG	Marvin Silbersher	447th BG		
Charles Mills	492nd BG	Taffe Simon	445th BG		
Rex Mills	453rd BG	Harold W Smith	448th BG		
E E "Mitch" Mischler	94th BG	Heber H Smith	94th BG		
Lloyd Mitchell	96th BG	Samuel W Smith	303rd BG		

* List current as of press time...

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

**Please contact:
Dr. Nancy Toombs
(501) 681-3126 or
Chase221@SWBell.net**

Application information is also available on our website:

8thAFHS.org

The Jubilee of Liberty Medal

By Dr. Nancy Toombs

By now, most of you are very familiar with the French Legion of Honor Medal, awarded to veterans who participated in the one of the four French campaigns during the liberation of France in WWII. I have had the immense pleasure and privilege of assisting many of you in gathering your documents, filling out the application, and following up with the various consulates in order for you to receive this well-deserved honor.

Now, I want to make all of you aware of another medal which many of you may be eligible to receive: The Jubilee of Liberty Medal.

The Jubilee of Liberty Medal was first awarded in June 1994 to American servicemen for their participation in the Battle of Normandy. The medals were minted at the request of the Regional Council of Normandy to be presented to veterans attending the 50th anniversary of the D-Day landing on June 6, 1994. Eligible veterans included all who served in Normandy from June 6 to August 31, 1944, comprising land forces, offshore supporting personnel, and airmen flying cover overhead. The only stipulation was that the medal be presented during an official ceremony, and the veteran be present to accept. On the front of the medal is inscribed, "Overlord 6 Jun 1944" on the upper part of the medal, with the flags of the allied nations and the names of the landing beaches completing the face of the medal. On the reverse side is the Torch of Freedom surrounded by the device of William the Conqueror 'Diex Aie' ("God is with us" in Norman French).

Unfortunately, these medals are no longer being awarded by the French government. All medals to commemorate the 50th anniversary ceremony on June 6, 1994, have been distributed by the French government. Additional medals for those veterans who were unable to attend the anniversary ceremony were later distributed through the *Association Debarquement et Bataille de Normandie 1944* in France, which is now defunct.



However, through our relationship with the French government and their consulates, the Society has received approval to award this beautiful medal to our eligible veterans and/or the families of those veterans who are now deceased but who qualify for this award.

HERE IS WHAT WE NEED:

- Copy of your separation papers showing "Normandy" under the block indicating "Battles and Campaigns"
- If you do NOT have a copy of your separation papers, please list ANY missions you flew over French targets between 6 Jun 44 and 31 Aug 44.
- Include your name, mailing address, and contact information



That's it. No complicated proposal memory forms or additional documents. We ask that any hand written information please be legible!

This medal CAN BE AWARDED POSTHUMOUSLY!!! If the veteran in question is deceased, we just need the above information from a family member.

We are very proud to be able to extend this award—including the medal and citation—to our eligible veterans and their families. Please do not wait. Send the information requested as soon as possible.

Send information to:

Dr. Nancy Toombs
5213 North Cedar Street
North Little Rock, AR 72116
(501) 681-3126
Chase221@swbell.com

(Documents and/or information may be scanned and emailed to me. Please do NOT send original documents.)

EXPECTATIONS

I had just completed a lecture to a class of high school history students. The teacher had invited me to speak on World War II and to give me, a veteran of that conflict, the opportunity to tell the “air-war” side of the war as I saw it. The plan was to conclude the class session with a question and answer period. When it was their time to respond, the students were slow to speak but eventually asked some interesting queries. The questions were rather standard. But one bright-eyed little guy asked, “Sir, what did the war do specifically for you?” This was one question I had never faced before and frankly one that I had not even thought about. I suppose my answer would have something to do with my age at the time. When I was a teen ager as this youngster was, the war had made it possible for me to be a pilot. That was my goal and ambition. But, once I had reached that objective, there were other ‘hills to climb’ as my life choices, benefits and circumstances emerged as my age changed.

In living my more than nine decades, I have been blessed to live in the greatest nation in the world. I am an American and I define my roots outside the normal boundaries of ancient ancestry. Not many of us can trace our ancestors back to more than five or six generations. We are a people who have come from every corner of the globe. We came together with a noble calling, we would be a people who would live in freedom and liberty within our God-given rights and convictions. It is a common creed, not ancestral ties, that bind us together. The Declaration of Independence clearly declares that “..... all men are created equal and that they, by their Creator, are endowed with certain unalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”. As Americans, we have reason to be filled with gratitude to God at all times who gave us opportunity to live in freedom and liberty. What did the war do specifically for me? For one thing, we won that conflict and I continue to live a full and abundant life. It was because of the patriots of the past and up to and including those ‘friends of ours’

in the present that make this possible. That’s it, an answer to give to the student who asked me what I gained from being in the war. **Friends**, but to expand it a bit more, **Friendships**. God puts a high premium on friendships when He declares: “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” Proverbs 18:24 (NIV). Life is full of experiences and interpersonal relationships, each filled with our interactions with people. When a relationship develops and flourishes, a meaningful friendship emerges and thrives even more as time passes. One act of friendship enhances and grows into more meaningful friendships. For example, an experience that comes out of a war-time association, a heavy bomber crew of ten airmen illustrates this point. At some time in their training, they are brought together through a military edict. They are an aircrew. They are by military pronouncement a crew, but they are a very inexperienced team. And, why wouldn’t they be? Ten men (boys) all having different personalities, backgrounds, intellects, interests, families, skills, likes and dislikes, nationalities and race are thrown together. When they started out, they had in common the following: they were all males, they were American citizens, they were members of an aircrew and they were headed to a nasty war. After weeks of training, they got acquainted, learned about each other’s assignment, their responsibilities, and gained respect for one another. Then came combat..... together they learned fear, the possibility of harm or even death. They worked together as a team for the preservation of each other’s life and well being of all of their crew buddies. They became friends. Very close friends. And that relationship has lasted a life-time. It has especially endured through the post-war years. Jesus understood the true meaning of fellowship and trust when He spoke to his Children... “My command is this; love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”. John 15:12-13 (NIV). Over the hostile skies of occupied Europe, England and other war-torn areas of the world, comrades, companions, and friends literally



Earl Wassom

gave their lives for their friends when in battle. This love has endured among the warriors in the post-war era as well. This includes their children as well!

This relationship crosses other nations as well. Friendships have been forged and citizens of England and other European nations caught in the conflict of World War II. together they attend reunions, share their research, sponsor tours, honor the victims of war. foster friendships, build museums, erect memorials and maintain them. National Cemeteries have been built on their soil and the local citizens help maintain these sacred shrines, some sponsor the grave of ‘one of ours’ and maintain it. Many fly the American flag on their home premises along with the flag of their country. Why? We helped to defeat our common war-time enemy. They love us and are our friends.

I summon all of us, all patriotic men and women, next generation family members and children and generations to come to stand together as friends. God helping us, we will not fail each other. We must not fail them and they in turn will console and sustain us!

Earl Wassom
466th Bomb Group
Chaplain, 8th AFHS





8th AF News
8th Air Force Historical Society
68 Kimberlys Way
Jasper, GA 30143

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