



# 8th AF NEWS

VOLUME 98 NUMBER 1 Voice of "THE MIGHTY EIGHTH" FEBRUARY 1998

**GENERAL  
LEON  
JOHNSON**





# AF NEWS

## Magazine of The Eighth Air Force Historical Society

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## Mission Briefing



The Historical Society's newly elected President Norm Grant has been in close touch with all of the Board and Committee members these past months, so when THE call came in mid-December I thought it was just another update as usual. The voice on the telephone from Minnesota said "Walt, we have been looking at proposals from half a dozen printing companies for the Society Newsletter and we have chosen Ambrose Printing in Nashville to publish the 8th AF NEWS. Would you be the local contact for the publication?" It is true that for several years I had been Editor of the Chapter Newsletter, and it is true that I am the newest member of the Board of Directors of the Historical Society; but to try and follow Jim Hill's years of superb publications was a staggering thought. After a brief discussion, I accepted the position as Interim Editor and I consider it an honor to try and follow in the footsteps of Jim Hill and previous editors of the NEWS.

Since that talk with Norm and with subsequent calls of encouragement from other close friends in the Society, I have re-read all of Jim's Newsletters and the recent fine issue by Art and Carolyn Swanson as well as all of the compiled issues back to the founding of the Society. We have the expert services of Donna Neely of Ambrose Printing, who has 22 years of publishing experience herself, to organize and produce layouts for the magazine, and to assure their high quality printing and the mailouts. Donna and I will work together as a "maximum effort" to produce future issues.

It is now that I need your help. Last week the UPS arrived with three big boxes containing the computer, monitor, and files of the HS NEWS from Jim Hill. Art and Carolyn have forwarded mail daily with articles and items of news. I need to receive articles and notices of interest from you and personal stories which may be considered for print, Taps notices, letters, and all the other items which we want to include in the NEWS. Please be sure to put me on your list to get a copy of your Chapter or Unit Newsletter so I can abstract items from them. Send them to the address below. Look for my e-mail address in the next issue. Be sure to forward your Chapter and Unit activities and information to Committee Chairman Jim Erskine.

I am looking forward enthusiastically to the challenge presented and assure you that our Society will continue to have the number one Veteran's Group Newsletter in the country. With your help, together we will Keep 'em Flying!

**Walt Brown, Interim Editor**  
Ewell Farm  
2340 Sugar Ridge Road  
Spring Hill, TN 37174

### ON OUR COVER

#### Last salute to an American legend

*This portrait of General Leon Johnson painted in 1958, hung in the den of his home for many years. He instructed his family to present it for permanent placement in the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in Savannah Georgia. It was presented by his daughter Susan Johnson Vandenberg, wife of Major General Hoyt Vandenberg after the opening of the Museum. General Leon Johnson's death at the age of 93, marks the end of an era. The former commander of the Norfolk-based 14th Combat Wing, who rose to become the first chief of the post-war 3rd USAF responsible for engineering the return of American forces to East Anglia, was the last surviving member of the small band of senior officers who helped establish the "Mighty Eighth" in England in 1942.*

HE WAS A MAN AMONG MEN

# ***PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE***

**By Norm Grant**

**President of Eighth Air Force Historical Society**

The following message is directed to all Chapter Presidents, Unit Contacts, Board of Directors and Committee persons and I would like to share it with all members of the "Mighty Eighth".

The first 120 days of your new administration has been most electrifying. The letters, notes, phone calls, and taped messages, from Coast to Coast and Border to Border, have been heart-warming, and reflect a very positive future for our Society. The offering of cooperation and reunification of many who had stepped aside over the past few years speaks well for the perpetuation of our organization. It is in that perpetuation that I direct this letter.



We, you and I, all of us, chosen to lead and give assistance and direction, are the first line of offense to bring back to our fold those who for many reasons have gone their separate ways either singularly or collectively. First and most important is our personal attitude. We must, as the old song says "Accentuate the Positive, Eliminate the Negative." Let all whom we contact, whether 8th Air Force Historical Society member, potential member, whether 8th Air Force veteran, or possibly associate member, be impressed with our enthusiasm for our "Mighty Eighth." People are usually, "Down on what they are not up on", so communication is important, both verbal and written. Just, "Walk, Talk, and Tell the Truth" about our Society. Why we were formed, why we continue to exist, even into the twilight years of those of us who wrote the history of the "Mighty Eighth."

There are still hundreds of members of units, Bomb Groups and Fighter Groups, who are not members of the 8th Air Force Historical Society; a perfect place to start with our positive picture of the Society. They must be asked to join, they have to be given reasons to join. If you tell the positive of our Society with enthusiasm you will make the sale.

Let me close this communication by encouraging each of you to plan on attending the annual reunions, and encourage members of your Chapter and Units to do the same. The joy of again meeting old friends, sharing remembrances, recalling friends and crew members who are now gone, help us to realize how short the span of life really is. Your attendance will be fun for you, bringing renewal of old acquaintances or creation of new friendships and provide that same opportunity for others who attend. One of the great joys is to see old friends. Crew members meet each other again after a span of time, some covering all of the past 50 plus years. You could be one of those old friends or crew members. Wouldn't that be a thrill?

So join with me and your Board to bring together a more cohesive Society. I want to meet you, shake your hand, be your friend. Will you give me that pleasure? Be in attendance at our annual reunion.

May good health be a constant companion for you and your loved ones all through the year.

In friendship,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Norm".

## **"The Mighty Eighth"**

by Arthur E. Swanson  
Membership Records Manager

We've been busy with the annual dues receipts and especially want to thank all who returned their cards with their payments. It makes the process move along much easier and faster. The response to our request was the best ever.

The contributions to help the Society meet its pledge of \$75,000 made by the Board of Directors for the Memorial Chapel Fund Drive at The Mighty Eighth Air Force Memorial Museum were excellent. We are pleased to report that the donations now exceed the \$75,000. When the Memorial Chapel is completed at the Heritage Museum, the names of all who sent contributions will be inscribed in the Roll of Honor volume to be placed in the Chapel activities.

And a big THANK YOU to those in charge of membership in the chapters and units who forwarded corrections,

address changes, and especially the names of those members who are deceased but who were still on the membership rolls. In most instances we have no way of knowing of a member's death, unless we are advised by the chapter/unit, especially Life Members. If the Member was in Good Standing, we can extend a complimentary membership to the widow, if she requests it, in accordance with our By-Laws. It should be mentioned that Life Membership does not extend to the widow or any other family member, but the widow is eligible for life membership upon payment of the applicable fee based on the deceased Life Member's age, less \$25.00.

Sadly, in the five month period from September 1, 1997 to January 31, 1998, the names of 372 deceased members have been removed from the Roster, and on behalf of the Society we extend our sincerest sympathy to the families.

The Society cookbook has not been for-

gotten. Carolyn has begun work on it and will keep you informed on its progress. We especially appreciate the kind notes and telephone calls complementing us on our efforts in getting the November issue of the 8AF NEWS published. It was time-consuming, but a labor of love for our Editor Emeritus, Jim Hill. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers.



Carolyn and Art Swanson

## LOST LOST LOST!!!!

Mail for the following Life Members has been returned as undeliverable at the last known address.  
DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE?

If so, please contact Arthur E. Swanson, PO Box 340, Strasburg, PA 17579 with information.

Bass, Thomas E., AP Associate  
Behrmann, L/C John M., Coral Gables FL, 93BG  
Bryant, Bert E., Rockford IL 7thPHOTO  
Buckley, Anthony L., Natick MA 305BG  
Burris, M/Gen Rupert H., Mount Holly AR 486BG  
Chase Everett, S., Weare NH 486BG  
Clarac, Edward H., Jr., Galveston TX 351BG  
Cohen, Gilbert G., Indianapolis IN 339FG  
Dean, Fred M., Hilton Head Island SC 31FG  
Driscoll, Roland B., Cape May Court House NJ 08210  
Eabersole, Howard R., Flushing MI 392BG  
Fischer, Frederick G., Fair Lawn NJ Associate  
Fisher, John M., Mt Vision NY 92BG  
Fontaine, George C., Dedham MA 379BG  
Goldsmith, Robert M., Yuma AZ 447BG  
Goodden, Frank, Parkville MO 390BG  
Gregg, E Stuart Jr., Hilton Head Island SC 55FG  
Groover, Darrell B., Savannah GA Associate  
Hale, Dr. Glenn H., Tulsa OK 390BG  
Hale, Kenneth V., Lackawanna NY 100BG  
Halland, Oreal H., Thief River Falls, MN 1AD  
Hampton, Kenneth R., Eatontown NJ 379BG  
Hartman, Richard A., Oakland CA 353FG  
Helm, Cleotis N., Honolulu HI 457BG  
Houghten, Robert L., Bethesda, MD 452BG  
Howe, Robert E., Kirkwood Mo 486BG  
Huber, John O., Los Angeles CA 7thPHOTO  
Karpf, Harry L., Lake Worth FL 92BG  
Kuemmerle, Walter F., Mays Landing NJ 20FG  
Lambert, Hugh N., Cherokee NC 379BG  
Lauridsen, Carl A., Bellevue WA OBD2V  
Lemley, Edwin B., Jr., Bradenton FL 351BG  
Madigan, Thomas, Huntington Beach CA 457BG  
Mc Horse, Claud D., Shreveport LA 398BG  
Mc Laughlin, Alfred R., Torrington WY 7th PHOTO  
Miller, William F., Tucson AZ 303BG  
Murphy, Robert C., Summerfield FL 388BG  
Palmer, H Stanley, North Vassalboro ME 95BG  
Pearson, John M., Lambert MS 95BG  
Petrick, George R., Las Vegas NV 305BG  
Quinton, James R., Dixon IL 452BG  
Rivers, Robert W., Orcutt CA 52FG  
Rudolph, Ed, Atlanta GA 8thVeteran  
Sassaman, Dean, Michigan City IN 447BG  
Schultz, Aaron C., High Point NC 389BG  
Scott, R. Q., Collins MS 04SDV  
Spansel, Kaye M., Palo Alto CA 401BG  
Swift, Jonathan, Kennesaw GA 303BG  
Townshend, George A., Vienna WY 8HQ  
Walker, B/Gen Marshall E., Rock Hill SC 94BG  
Waltzberg, Vincent G., Fresno CA 385BG  
Webber, David D., Seattle WA 95 BG  
Weinberg, Bernard B., Fayetteville NC 457BG  
White, Clifton F., Greenwich CT 390BG  
Winter, Glenn E., New Port Richey FL 390BG

### TREASURER'S REPORT



It is the avowed aim of your Officers and Directors to provide our Society with an administration that is positive in its approach, open and attentive to the interests of all our members. Your Treasurer is certainly prepared to see that the financial affairs of the Society are conducted in that same manner.

Furthermore, it is our intention to provide that the Society has the very best in accounting records, accounting controls to preserve the assets of the Society and reporting which provides full disclosure of Society expenditures and receipts.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Society's auditors, in their report dated March 19, 1997, we have attempted to provide better fiscal controls by separating, insofar as is possible, the handling of funds and the record-keeping for funds. Because of the widespread operations of the Society, this has not been fully achieved. However, you can be sure that every effort is being made to provide good control over the Society's assets.

Please let me hear from you if you have any questions regarding the financial affairs of our Society.

N. Kenneth Nail, Treasurer

### ELECTION NOTICE

Nomination for candidates for election to the Board of Directors of the 8th Air Force Historical Society must be in the hands of the Secretary no later than April 15, 1998. The following information must be included with the nomination:

- \*Full name of person being nominated
- \*8th AFHS membership number
- \*Nominee's complete address
- \*Short resume of nominee
- \*Full name and address of nominator
- \*Nominator's membership number and unit, if applicable

The secretary will send all nominations to the Nominating Committee. Nominations received by the Secretary after April 15, 1998, or any nominations without complete information will not be considered.

Send all nominations to: Richard C. Baynes, Secretary, 8th AFHS 71 Nighthawk, Irvine, CA 92604-3683

### CHAPTER AND UNIT DEVELOPMENT AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Chapter and Unit Development Committee and the Unit Advisory Committee have been combined and are now The Chapter and Unit Development and Advisory Committee. Jim Erskine has been appointed by President Norm Grant to be Chairman. Any correspondence concerning the Units or Chapters should be addressed to him. Also, the Chapter News for the 8th Air Force News will now be sent to him. Due to the limited space for the Chapter News it must be requested that your items be kept to no more than 100 words so they do not have to be edited. Items will be put in the column as they are received and as space allows. Any questions or comments from the units or chapters coming to the committee will be answered by the committee or forwarded to the proper person. If you think something is wrong please state what you think the solution should be. Jim's address is listed under STAFF in the inside front cover of this book.

SEND INFORMATION TO JIM ERSKINE

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

#### WE NEED VOLUNTEERS

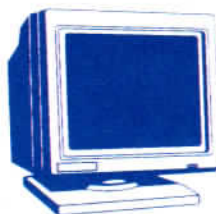
In the By-laws of the 8th AFHS, the first purpose of the Society is: TO PERPETUATE THE HISTORY OF THE 8th AIR FORCE AND MEMORY OF LOST COMRADES

One of the most obvious places for the history of the 8th Air Force to be represented is in the various Air Museums throughout the United States. It would be desirable to have a representative of the 8th Air Force Historical Society in contact with each museum throughout the country. Such a representative could:

- \*Follow-up on information sent or available from our Information Manager.
- \*Seek permission for displaying membership applications for the 8th AFHS.
- \*Make recommendations on ways we could enhance the museum's coverage of the 8th Air Force in WWII.
- \*Be the 8th AFHS contact with that museum.

Those interested, please send your name, address and telephone number, with the Air Museum that you would like cover to: Dick Baynes 71 Nighthawk Irvine, CA 92604-3683

### "FROM THE INFORMATION MANAGER"



The winter months are usually the slowest time of the year, with Thanksgiving, X-mas etc. However, we still average 4-5 pieces of mail each day, with an equal amount of telephone calls. Lately, the mail from overseas has increased, with most coming from Germany. In some cases, their info is better than ours. It has been said that the Germans are meticulous record keepers-I believe it.

On page 28, of the last issue of the Newsletter, an article appeared regarding a P-51 Mustang pilot who dipped his wings to a German on the ground, while on a mission over Germany. Believe it or not one of our members wrote and said he was that pilot. A copy of his letter was sent to Germany.

The 1-800 is active and we now have the cost down to 11 cents per minute. Chapters needing promotional material should contact us. Although as mentioned in the last newsletter, a return should be expected, i.e. new members. Call or write us for hints on how to accomplish this. A Web site, e-Mail and the Internet should be in place by the end of February. We will keep you advised. We have a new supply of applications. If you need some, contact us. We do have a Fax number, 612-222-7781. Don't hesitate to use it. We look forward to 1998.

Ed Kueppers  
Historical Society Information Manager

### CALL FOR CHAPLAINS

This issue features Earl Wassom's column *How About It?* which he has written for several years as Chaplain of the Tennessee Chapter. When Earl was appointed Chaplain, member Clyde White of the 390th BG noted that Earl would make a good chaplain since he flew in B-24's during the war. The NEWS would appreciate any of you who have served as chaplains in Chapters, Units, or on air bases to submit similar material for future issues. Send your articles/photos to the Editor.

## 1998 Big year at Heritage Museum

The new year 1998 will be a busy year at The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum.

"We are looking forward to a big year in 1998," said Lt. Gen. E.G. Shuler, Jr., Heritage Museum Chairman and CEO. "We have just completed several new exhibits and are working on several more, and have scheduled numerous special events. The Heritage Museum will definitely be the place to visit in 1998!"

The museum has added a pristine condition PT-17 Stearman bi-wing trainer aircraft to the Combat Gallery courtesy of Alabama's Ben Russell who flew it to Savannah. Work will soon begin to move a B-47 Stratojet bomber from Florence, S.C. to the Heritage Museum where it will be restored and put on display in the Memorial Gardens. The Museum also plans to add a cine-motion flight simulator which will enable visitors to get a real sense of flying in a bomber or fighter aircraft.

The prisoner of war exhibit area has just been expanded and reconfigured to give visitors a true feel for the crowded spartan conditions in which the POW's lived. The Escape and Evasion exhibit has added more artifacts and will continue to add even more. In addition, the 18th Weather Squadron exhibit is now complete and ready for viewing.

"We will soon begin work to improve the post-war exhibit area," said Shuler, "featuring the Eighth's 46-year history as the cornerstone of the Strategic Air Command. And we will continue to add more plaques and memorials to the Memorial Gardens. We have just added new walls to enlarge the Wall of Valor which now has 1,600 names and will soon add 400 more to complete the original wall."

Just completed in December, 1997 is the African-Americans in Aviation exhibit featuring the Tuskegee Airmen. It will officially open and be dedicated in February. Also in February Astronaut Candidate Dr. Sandra Magnus will speak as a part of the Take Flight Series. She will be followed by two other speakers in March and April.

Perhaps the biggest event of the year at the museum will be the big Second Anniversary Celebration on May 15th and 16th. Plan now to attend this festive weekend celebration among 8th Air Force friends from all over the country.

The Heritage Museum will host at least 23 reunions and meetings of 8AF bomber groups, fighter groups and related organizations, throughout the year. These groups already have reserved their days at the Museum for 1998.

"We also have a few other surprises up our sleeves for 1998," said Shuler, "so no doubt it will be a very busy year at the Heritage Museum and we look forward to everybody coming for a visit!"

## BIG HERITAGE MUSEUM SECOND ANNIVERSARY EVENT IN MAY

Mark your calendars and make your motel reservations!!! The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum will hold its second annual anniversary celebration at the museum on May 15 and 16, 1998, and you need to be there to help celebrate the anniversary.

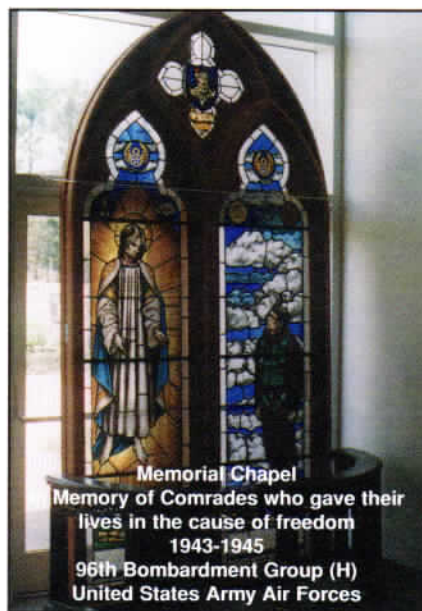
"We are still working the details," said Lt. Gen. E. G. Shuler, Jr., "but we want people to know the dates far enough ahead to plan their trips. Everyone who came enjoyed the first anniversary in 1997 and we want to make this one even bigger and better."

Unlike the 1997 event which started on Thursday the 1998 celebration will begin on Friday with events such as a school open house, reception and a casual dinner. The pace will pick up on Saturday, which coincides with Armed Forces Day to include

demonstration teams from all Military services, drill team and band performances, aircraft flyovers, gala Saturday night banquet. And, of course, everyone will have the opportunity to enjoy the Heritage Museum with many new displays and exhibits being added each week.

"We will get the details out in the next HERITAGE," said Shuler, "plus we will send them to all bomb group and fighter group association newsletter editors and to the 8th AF Historical Society and 2nd Air Division newsletter editors. We are looking for a big crowd to help celebrate the Heritage Museum's second birthday!!"

## 96th BOMB GROUP DEDICATES MEMORIAL CHAPEL GLASS WINDOW



The 96th Bomb Group Memorial Association recently donated this replica of a stained glass window in a church near the 96th base during WWII. Members of the 96th Bomb Group will meet in Savannah on April 16-19, 1998 to present and dedicate their Group stained glass window which will be placed in the Memorial Chapel to be constructed at the Heritage Museum. After successfully completing a year-long 96th BG funding campaign and contracting to have the window completed, the group will celebrate with

a dinner banquet and dedication ceremony with color guard on Friday, April 17th at the Museum. Principal speakers will be Historical Society President Norm Grant and Heritage Museum CEO Lt. Gen. E.G. Shuler. Group headquarters hotel will be the Savannah Days Inn on Bay street.

The beautiful window and its inscriptions are a replica of the window placed by the group to honor members of the 8th Air Force in the chapel near their base at Snetterton Heath. That original window was the only stained glass window approved to be commissioned by the British government during the war because of shortage of wartime materials.

The window will be the first of several which will be special features of honor in the Historical Society Memorial Chapel. Nine months went into its design and completion by Aurora Glass Studio of Savannah, Gerald Schantz proprietor. The design and colors of the original in the chapel at Quidenham, England were faithfully reproduced into the impressive window, shown here. Committee members of the 96th BG who headed up the project were Sherman Small, Stan Peterson, Franklin Berry, John Latham, and Jarl Linden.

**CALL THE HERITAGE MUSEUM AT  
1-800-421-9428  
FOR MORE INFORMATION**



## MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER MONUMENT

Norman Grant (493BG), National President of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society (second from left) and his wife, Margaret (left) visit the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum Nov. 8 and 9, 1997, to take part in the dedication of the Mississippi Chapter monument in the museum's Memorial Gardens. The Grants joined Society board member Ken Nail (457BG) and wife Ethelda (center) and Mississippi Chapter President Homer C. King (490BG) (right) for a photo beside the newly dedicated monument.



The banquet of the Mississippi Chapter at The Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum. Norm Grant at the Podium.



Lt. General E. G. Shuler CEO of the Heritage Museum discussed the Historical Society with President Norman Grant in front of the Museum's PT-17 Stearman bi-wing trainer, which has been donated by Ben Russell of Alabama.

Norm Grant, National President of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society, and his wife, Margaret, visited The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum Nov. 8 and 9, 1997. It was his first visit to the museum since he succeeded Hubert Childress as president of the 20,000 member society in September 1997. Lt. Gen. E.G. Shuler, Jr., Heritage Museum Chairman and CEO, gave Grant a detailed tour and briefing about the Heritage Museum's status and plans for the future. Grant (493BG) was guest speaker at a dinner for about 100 members of the Society's Mississippi Chapter who traveled by bus to the museum for a two-day visit. He also took part in the dedication ceremony of the Mississippi Chapter's monument in the museum's Memorial Gardens. While at the Heritage Museum Grant also talked with other visitors including members of the 389th Bomb Group who were holding their annual reunion in Savannah, with members of the 392nd Bomb Group who had come to the museum to dedicate their Bomb Group monument and with members of the 306th Bomb Group who stopped at the museum enroute home from their annual reunion in Orlando, Fla.

## CHUCK'S LAST MISSION

### CHARLES N. "CHUCK" WILLIAMS

It was a wonderful trip, you might even say "a milk run." There was no flak, no fighter attacks, no engines were lost, no failures of heated suits. The cold wasn't too bad; there wasn't a single case of frost-bite. But, at the Tail-gunner position, the oxygen supply was cut off, and Chuck failed to make it back to base.

At the end of the day, as we go into debriefing, we try to assess the success of our mission. It will go down as one of our outstanding accomplishments, but at terrible loss. We have lost one of our finest. And yet we all agree that Chuck wouldn't have missed this mission for anything and that he didn't go down without a good fight.

The mission was the trip by chartered bus to The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum at Savannah. All the members who went on this mission enjoyed the Museum and a "Banquet in the Art Gallery." The special feature of the trip was the dedication of the Mississippi monument in the Garden of Memories. Chuck obviously enjoyed all these things and our bus trip together very much. Then, just before we were to board our bus for the return

trip to Mississippi, Chuck suffered a heart attack and survived for only a short time.

The obituary in the Tupelo newspaper said that Chuck was 73 years old, he was born in Sheffield, Alabama, that he had served as a Tail-gunner on a B-17 and that he flew 52 missions. He was retired after a career as an engineer for James River corporation of Linden, Alabama.

Chuck's dear wife and companion, Sara, requested that, in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, P.O. Box 1992, Savannah, Georgia 31402. We will all miss Chuck; that goes without saying. We shall remember him as a wonderful friend, a steadfast companion, a great comrade to fly with. He has "mounted up with wings like eagles." He has "held out his hand, and touched the face of God" "At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we shall remember him."

**1924-1997**

*From: Conrails and Propwash  
Mississippi Chapter Newsletter*

## A LOVE LETTER TO A LADY

Yes! you were a Lady. You had a mind of your own. You could be loving and caring. You could be naughty and nice. You could bring me home or leave me cold. You could make me work or let me relax. You were always my love, my hate, and my sorrow, but I always will love you. I know you did care for me.

I liked your name. I called you Liberator, my B-24 Heavy Bomber when you made me happy, but when you made me sad and tried to hurt me I called you aluminum scrap. Though you are gone now I will always think of you.

Your creator was Consolidated and your Dad was General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, when in January 1939 he asked Consolidated to present a design study that would be superior to your Sister the B-17. He set your specifications for the speed to exceed 300 miles per hour, with a range of 3,000 miles, and ceiling of 35,000 ft. They called you XB-24.

Your creators gave you a wing called Davis, designed by David Davis. It would give you high efficiency and allow you to have room for maximum bomb storage and make it easy to load you. They gave you two rolling corrugated doors so you would not drag with your doors open.

They thought you could do everything. You could be a Bomber, a VIP Lady, Cargo, Troop Carrier, Forest Ranger, Sub destroyer, or passenger aircraft. You were Army, Navy, Civilian. You had a sting of ten fifty-caliber weapons, and could hurt with your 8,000 pounds of bombs. Sixty below zero wind blew through you, but you tried to keep me warm. You suffered through flak and bullets.

You were the first to get hurt when war started in Pearl Harbor. Your sister went to war almost a year before you, but you caught up with her and exceeded her in numbers and bombs delivered to your enemies. You out-did her by being in every theater of war during World War II. Your 1,200 horsepower Pratt & Whitney, Twin Wasp engines made you fly through the air like an eagle, even though you were loaded and bounced by the air currents. You were 63 feet long. You reach speeds above 273 mph but you would purr and hum when you cruised at 180 mph. You grunted when you tried to fly over 32,000 ft and liked to fly at 28,000 ft.

Your Creator called you XB-24, and said you were so good that you could do anything. He then called you by many numbers. XB-24, YB-24, B-24A, LB-30A, Liberator II AL503, AL504, AL641, FP685, XB-24, XB-24B, B-24C, B-24D, PB4Y-1, C-87,

AT-22, TB-24, RY-2, C-87 A, RY-1, XB-41, B-24E, B-24D, B-24H, XB-24K, B-24L, B-24J, B-24-11-FO, B-24L-10-FO, B-24M, XB-24P, XB-24Q, XB-24N, PB4Y2, RY3. But whatever they called you, you were always a Lady, and demanded that your crew knew how to handle you and respect you.

In 1944, the Army Force had 6,043 of you B-24 Liberators in service and only 4,543 of your Sister the B-17. Of the 51 heavy bombardment groups activated and sent overseas between March 1942 and June 1944, thirty-seven groups were B-24's and fourteen were B-17's.

Yes! My B-24 was a Mother Hen and tried to be everything to everybody in every part of the world when she was needed. Her Sister the B-17 was a pretty bird and did her job well, and liked to be in the news and make big headlines. Those of us that flew the B-17 loved her too. But the B-17 was not hatched every fifty-five minutes like her sister the B-24 or have as many young men following her as lady did. Together however, the War was won.

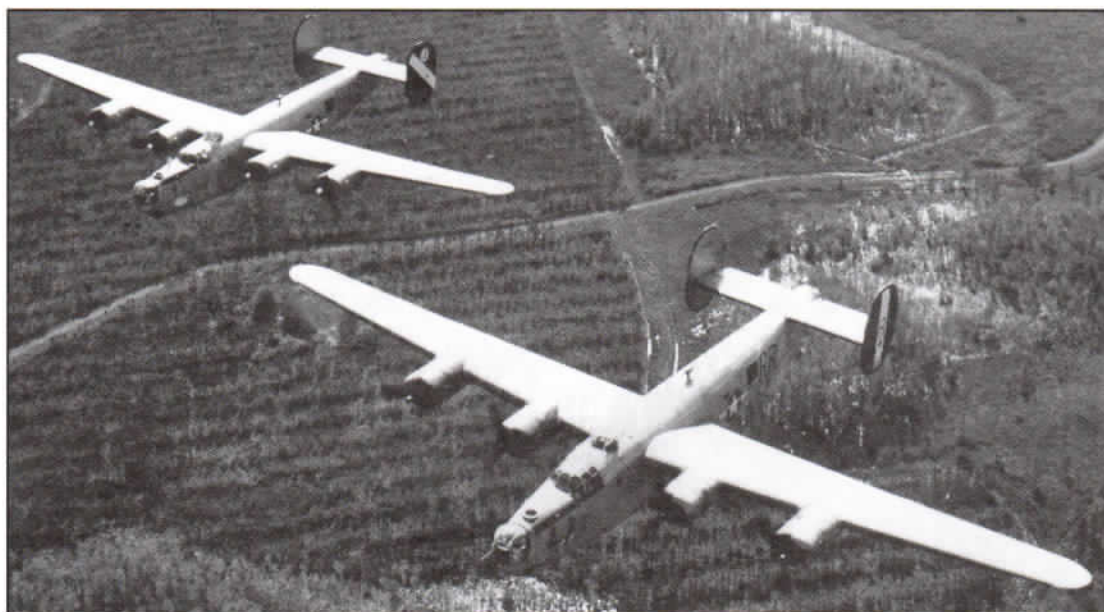
My Love,  
Your Air Crew

by: John Harold Robinson

*John Harold Robinson, 445th BG (H) and his wife Elizabeth reside in Collierville, TN. He is author of "A Reason to Live", an acclaimed story of his war experiences.*



*"Delectable Doris," with its striking nude, was named after the English girlfriend of the crew chief. The bogus "Delectable Doris," one of the few Liberators still flying, became a much photographed attraction at US air shows over the next two decades. This reproduction is of the real "Doris," about autumn 1944.*



*These are the only two flyable B-24's in the United States. Foreground: B-24-J "Joe" previously named "Delectable Doris" now based at Fantasy of Flight Museum in Polk City, Florida. Background: B-24-J "All American" owned by the Collings Foundation. Photo submitted by Fred Breuninger, 446th BG (H)*



# LAST SALUTE TO AN AMERICAN LEGEND

General Leon Johnson was the embodiment of the special relationship between thousands of American airmen and the people of England



It resembled a scene from Dante's *Inferno*. Only worse. The vast oil refineries at Ploesti were a raging cauldron of fire above which hung a grotesque pall of smoke that seemed to suck wave after wave of bombers into its black heart.

So low were the aircraft on that fateful and, for all too many, fatal bomb-run that at least half a dozen B-24's and their crews were cremated by the gigantic blasts of delayed-action missiles. Others had their paintwork blistered and cracked by the searing heat that reached into the very interiors of the bombers, bucking and jinking through the choking holocaust.

"It was so hot the hair on my arms was singed," wrote one American airman. Another watched spellbound as exploding gas tanks shot tongues of flame towards his aircraft. "The fire wrapped us up," he said. "I looked out of the side windows and saw the others flying through smoke and flames. It was flying through hell..." To Leon Johnson, veteran commander of the Norfolk-based 44th Bombardment Group, the famed "Flying Eightballs", the nightmarish images almost beggared belief. "It was more like an artist's impression of an air-battle than anything I had ever experienced," he once reflected. "We flew through sheets of flame and airplanes were everywhere, some of them on fire and others exploding. It's indescribable to anyone who wasn't there."

The losses were horrendous. Ploesti would enter United States Army Air Force annals as one of the most daring yet disastrous raids of the second world war. Of 178 B-24's which took part in the attack on Hitler's Romanian oil refineries on August 1, 1943, 54 were lost, 11 of them from Johnson's battered command.

The casualties were commensurately high: 310 men killed, 130 wounded, 108 captured and 79 interned in neutral Turkey out of 1620 men who

reached the target.

A little over three months later, Operation Tidal Wave, as the extraordinary mission was officially styled, had a sequel in the heart of rural Norfolk.

On a dank, grey November day streaked with rain, airmen from the 44th Bombardment Group were paraded in front of Shipdham's control tower to witness the presentation of the Medal of Honor, America's highest gallantry award, to Colonel Leon W. Johnson.

It was the only ceremony of its kind ever to be staged in Norfolk and the signal honour helped establish the undemonstrative group commander from Columbia, Missouri, as arguably the greatest of all the American airmen who flew out of the country during the war.

Almost 54 years on to the day, echoes of that proud ceremony resounded again at Fort Myers, Virginia. A distinguished gathering of the old and the bold had come to salute the passing of an American legend, an outstanding wartime leader who came to symbolise an enduring friendly alliance between the men of the US 2nd Air Division Association and the people of Norfolk.

Many fine words were spoken in praise of a life nobly lived, but none finer than those movingly delivered by Colonel Edward K. Mikoloski, who had served on Johnson's staff at Shipdham. Describing him as "the finest human being I have known", he hailed his former chief as "an Air Force icon and a national treasure" who deliberately eschewed the acclaim his deeds deserved.

David Hastings, a trustee of the Norwich-based 2nd Air Division Memorial Library, described him as "one of the outstanding officers of the 8th Air Force". "In the words of the old phrase," he added, "he was an officer and a gentleman." It was an impression endorsed by aviation historian Steve Adams, who has made a detailed study of the 44th Bombardment Group. "He was a man who led from the front," he declared. "He was also a man of great humanity with a human touch. In its time, the 44th had some good COs, but Johnson was just head and shoulders above everybody else."

Leon Johnson's death, at the age of 93, marks the end of an era. The former commander of the Norfolk-based 14th Combat Wing, who rose to become the first chief of the postwar 3rd USAF responsible for engineering the return of American forces to East Anglia, was the last-surviving member of the small band of senior officers who helped establish the "Mighty Eighth" in England in 1942.

The 37-year old, West Point trained aviator turned staff officer scarcely conformed to the popular conception of the brash, young American "friendly invaders" with film-star looks and money to burn. Small, self-effacing, his hair receding at the temples and with a moustache that would not have been out of place in an RAF officers' mess, he hardly cut a dashing figure.

When he arrived at Shipdham, one of the rash of new airfields freckling the countryside, to take over command of the 44th Bombardment Group in January, 1943, the mood was sombre

and the greeting muted.

Colonel Bill Cameron recalled: "Morale was pretty bad. It was a terrible period for us. We'd lost a lot of people and the previous commander had decided, like in the movie *12 O'Clock High*, that it was too rough and we were losing too many men. So he got fired and they brought in Johnson.

"We thought him strange at first. He had a different kind of manner from our previous CO. He was very modest and quiet, but this guy just had an effect on you. He was a leader. He listened to us. We always felt he was one of us, struggling along with the rest of us."

With the 8th Air Force committed to a policy of daylight bombing, despite the absence of effective long-range fighter support, losses continued to mount alarmingly. An attack on the German port of Kiel resulted in almost a third of the 44th's bombing force being shot down.

"It was all pretty grim," said Cameron, who was one of only two men from the original 90 who formed his squadron, to complete a tour of 25 missions. "I don't think it was long before Johnson was writing the same kind of letters to the 8th Air Force staff as our last commander." Johnson, however, did not suffer the same fate as his predecessor. Throughout, he had led the unit by personal example, never shirking the most daunting operations, and in the summer of 1943 the 44th became the first group in the 8th Air Force to be awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

Then came Ploesti.

The massive complex of oil refineries, responsible for supplying a third of the Third Reich's essential fuels, was designated by the American Joint Chiefs of Staff as "the most decisive objective of the war."

Previous, small-scale attacks had barely disrupted the flow of oil, and plans were laid for an all-out strike from Benghazi, North Africa, by no fewer than five bomber groups. They were to include one unit, the 389th (later to be based at Hethel), straight from the United States, and two from Norfolk, the 93rd (Travelling Circus) BG and Johnson's 44th BG.

Protests about using heavy bomber crews trained for high-level bombing on a low-level sortie and on a scale never previously attempted by the American air force were waived away. After an intensive spell of training over the East Anglian countryside, Johnson led his force out to Africa in readiness for the 2300-mile round trip to Ploesti.

The attack carried out on August 1, 1943, forever remembered by the survivors as Black Sunday, was characterised by confusion and extraordinary courage. Woefully optimistic estimates of the strength of the enemy defenses allied to a navigational error on the part of one of the leading formations, resulted in a chaotic, un-coordinated final assault with tragic consequences for Johnson's force.

Leading one of the last groups, he approached his target, on schedule and on the correct course, only to find it already ablaze. Faced with the dilemma of risking destruction from delayed action bombs already dropped or adding to the chaos by seeking alternative tar-

gets, he decided to press on. Bill Cameron, who was leading a second wave behind Johnson, recalled: "It's hard to find the right words to describe it. It was a crazy mission. Or maybe audacious would be a better word. It could have worked, but so many things screwed it up. Having someone else bomb our target may have provided some spectacular pictures, but it didn't help our cause." Nor did a mobile flak defense which ran parallel with the 44th's bomb run. Of the 16 B-24s in Johnson's formation, nine were blasted out of the sky over Ploesti and only the commander's and Cameron's aircraft made it back to Benghazi that night.

"We had no idea of our losses at that stage," said Cameron. "All I wanted to do was to get to bed, but he was just the same as always. Unflappable."

A little over a month later, it was announced that Johnson had been awarded one of five Medals of Honor given to the men who raided Ploesti. "He was extremely modest about it," recalled Cameron. "He always said it belonged to everyone in the group who'd flown that mission, and he genuinely meant it. But there's no doubt he deserved it. He was the man responsible for leading and it was he who had to poke his neck into the flak first with the oil tanks exploding around him."

Shortly after Operation Tidal Wave, Johnson was promoted to command 14th Combat Wing, with his headquarters at Shipdham. He continued to lead with his customary low-key style, unaffected by his many honours, until the war's end. "There was never any distinction of rank with the general," recalled Colonel Roy Owen,

president of the 44th BG Veterans' Association. "Even as Combat Wing commander, he'd be down on the flight line, waiting for the aircraft to return, talking to the crews. He never lost that touch."

The war in Europe was barely a week over when Johnson, by then a confirmed Anglophile, joined Field Marshal Lord Ironside on the steps of Norwich's City Hall to take the salute at a victory parade epitomizing a grand alliance forged in conflict which was soon to be revived in peacetime.

Ordered back to Britain at the height of the Berlin crisis, he was the first commander of the 3rd Air Division and later the 3rd Air Force which established bases in Norfolk and Suffolk. By the time he departed, as a lieutenant general in 1952, Johnson had established a firm foundation for Anglo-American post-war cooperation, an achievement recognized last year when the 3rd Air Force HQ at RAF Mildenhall was renamed the General Leon W. Johnson Hall in his honour.

The most vivid memories, however, remain those of the humane wartime leader, always mindful of the welfare of his men, an officer who abhorred formality and whose modest, straightforward command qualities contrived to act as an inspiration. Aviation historian Martin Bowman believes Johnson deserves to rank as one of the greatest Commanders all time. "He made the 44th into one of the most famous groups in England," he added.

"How does he stand in the history of the 8th?" Bill Cameron repeated. "I think when

he came to take over the 44th, he probably didn't stand very high, but by the end of the war, believe me, he stood very high with us." It was left to Roy Owen to provide the final, fitting epitaph. His voice trembling with emotion, the former Shipdham veteran declared: "He never stopped caring about the men who flew with him, and they never lost their respect for him."

"He was a man among men."

by Steve Snelling

Eastern Daily Press  
Norwich, England



Major Gen. George E. Stratemeyer talks with Col. Johnson, Major Moore and Lt. Brown as they inspect a Consolidated B-24 Liberator of the 67th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group at an 8th Air Force base in England. 21 April 1943 U.S. Air Force Photo

## The Heritage Museum is "Outstanding"

By John (Jack) E. Keller, Sr. 486th BG - 833rd BS

Returning recently from a trip to North Carolina, on our way back to Florida, we decided to drive to Savannah, Ga. to visit The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum. Nostalgia came into play somewhat, because when we flew back to the states after VE Day in 1945, many of us were stationed temporarily at Chatham Field Air Force Base at Savannah. I believe Chatham Field AFB later became Savannah International Airport.

Having said that, I cannot emphasize enough what a wonderful experience it was for me and my wife to spend some time at this beautiful facility. Yes, I was one of those people who read about the Museum, but I never truly realized what an impressive operation it was.

The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum is a fantastic tribute to all 8th Air Force veterans - those living and those who gave their lives during the war in Europe. The families of all these veterans, living or dead, should make it a point to visit this fine Museum.

Beyond any doubts, this Museum is a first class facility, very tastefully and professionally organized. The exhibits are genuine with whole aircraft, engines, weaponry, etc., on display, along with innumerable artifacts and memorabilia. One fantastic state-of-the-art visual display was the film enactment called the "Mission Experience." This was a tremendous combat thriller that brought back memories to me ever so vividly as a combat crew member. But, there is so much to take in as one works his way through the

labyrinth of small theaters, unit displays, and special exhibit rooms.

Additionally, I had both the good fortune and the pleasure to meet and talk with the Chairman and CEO of the Museum, Lt. Gen. E.G. (Buck) Shuler. (I feel certain that he wouldn't mind anyone calling him "Buck" either). I told Gen. Shuler that I was disappointed that there was no B-17 on display. He said they are currently working on this project, but the number of good quality B-17s are very scarce as well as high priced. I'm sure he will be happy if I mention to everyone reading this story, that if you run across a B-17 in your area that possibly could be obtained, please contact Gen. Shuler, because the Museum is in the market for one. Buck is a very cordial gentleman and the perfect 'curator' for such a fine Museum.

Before closing, I do want to mention to those who do not know, that Savannah is a wonderful historic city to visit. There are a host of historical amenities, river front activities, fine restaurants and excellent lodgings available. Families could

spend several days enjoying the city and the Museum. I came away from our Heritage Museum feeling very proud that I was a member of that team of 8th Air Force veterans that helped bring World War II to a close. Furthermore, I do believe we will be visiting The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum again, when we can spend more time and also to see new additions.



## A ROUTINE CRASH LANDING

The target was Saarbrücken. It was the eighth mission for our crew. We were called Chick's Crew and were one of the combat crews assigned to the 303rd Bomb Group, popularly called "Hell's Angels." Chick was our pilot, Lt. Anthony J. Cecchini. From the briefing we knew we would be bombing railway marshalling yards at Saarbrücken in Southwest Germany. It was not supposed to be a difficult target although we were warned that we would encounter moderate flak over the target. For me and my crew the Saarbrücken mission, flown May 11, 1944, surpassed all others in ferocity and white-hot action.

About six hundred aircraft of the First and Third Divisions made up the bomber stream. The Second Air Division (B-24's) was stood down.

The trip into the target was uneventful. Saarbrücken was the major city in the ore-rich Saar Basin of Southwest Germany. I would like to say we were not deceived by the good beginning but the fact is we were still too green to realize that all hell could break loose when things seem to be going good.

The Major who led the mission, Glynn Shumake, was a dauntless flier with an exalted reputation. He was a handsome boy from Carrollton, Georgia, and spoke fluent Southern. He was well-liked by everyone on the base. The combat crews were convinced however that these fearless leaders shared the opinion that combat crews were expendable; like in the "Air Corps Song" it was our destiny to live in fame and go down in flames. But we didn't have a vote in the matter.

According to the Mission Narrative this is what happened to turn a well-planned mission into a disaster. The target area was covered by a dense layer of haze that made it impossible to bomb the marshalling yards on the first run-up to the target, as the lead group did not see the primary target until they were immediately over it. We did not know this. All we knew was that we were turned on the IP and opened the bomb bay doors. We were getting punishing flak. Shrapnel cut off the navigator's oxygen supply and destroyed his radio compass.

Major Shumake in the lead squadron, ordered another bomb run. This tactic was considered a no-no by the air crews. Most of them were of the opinion that only a madman would attempt more than one bomb run on a given target. It gave the people on the ground time to get set for you.

Still Shumake was no eager beaver or war lover. He had led many times and was widely respected both for his wisdom and his valor. I suppose that his was an awesome responsibility; to try to do something that made sense in a rapidly deteriorating situation and to squeeze some profit out of what seemed certain loss.

We made a wide circle and again turned on the IP. Bomb doors came open again. It was not any better this time. The lead squadron was not able to bomb the assigned target on the second bomb run and finally bombed a target of opportunity at Volklingen.

The low squadron led by Major Ken Shayler was more fortunate. Things opened up a bit and we were able to make a bomb run on the primary target. However, deadly anti-aircraft fire knocked out the Automatic Flight Control Equipment which ruined any chance of a successful mission as this is what the lead bombardier used to line up on the target. (The bombs fell in the town).

We were flying at 21,000 feet, too low for safety. This time they really had our range. The flak explosions were deafening and shrapnel was

flying everywhere. You could not hear the flak except when it was close; this was close. Flak knocked out our two outboard engines and blew off one of our bomb doors before we could get them closed. Smoke poured from the two disabled engines which Chick (our pilot) had quickly feathered.



*Molesworth, England March 1944*  
*L-R Back Row: A.J. Cecchini (P), Stan Fisher (CP), Ed Veigel (N), Ted McDevitt (B). L-R Front Row: Cliff Bachmann (E), Clarence Cogdell (LWG), George Kepics (BG), Bob O'Hearn (RWG) Ben Smith (R), Ward Hudson (TG).*

We could also see a B-17 just below and behind us which was also burning. It was Captain John Long's crew.

This was to be the end of their tour. These fellows were our friends and lived in the barracks with us. We could clearly see the waist gunners looking at us through their waist window. They stayed in formation and dropped their bombs. As they dropped they took a direct hit in their number three engine. The engine fell off. The aircraft seemed to be under control as it glided out of the formation. A few seconds later, however, it flipped over on its back and went into a steep dive. It was seen to pull out of this dive and almost immediately went into another. The aircraft was lost in the haze as it went down, and it was not seen to hit the ground. Four

parachutes were seen to open.

We had troubles of our own. Three of the damaged B-17's headed for Switzerland. We were strongly tempted to go there ourselves, but decided against it. We could not stay with the formation, usually a fatal affliction. Slowly we lost altitude and forlornly watched our departing comrades in the bomber formation. We followed them until they were out of sight.

Major Barrett in his mission summary reported our departure to Group Control.

"At 1925 a B-17 was seen smoking and losing altitude. It left the formation and headed for the Coast.

Chick headed us in the general direction of home. We were gradually losing altitude. When we were down to 11,000 feet, we blundered over an enemy airfield. They began firing at us at almost point blank range. Each burst of flak was just behind us. They came within a hair of shooting us down. Our only chance was to get out of there. Chick and Fish (the co-pilot) pushed the big bomber over into a vertical power dive. You are not supposed to do that but we had no choice. We could not move because of the G factor and thought we had "bought the farm" for sure. We could only stare at each other in mute terror.

Chick and Fish were able to pull out of the dive. Now we were flying along just a few hundred feet off the ground. They ordered us to dump overboard everything that would come loose. It all went - ammunition, machine guns, radio units, clothing, anything we could find that was not fastened down. We threw it out the bomb bay, which was still open. At this time we were all in the radio room, my own post. I remember that we did something that seems melodramatic at this distance, but then it made sense. We all shook hands solemnly and bade each other goodbye.

The pilots ordered everybody up in the nose to give us better balance (trim). I stayed in the radio room to man the radio in case we made it out of Germany.

We were now taking a scenic trip through Belgium, dodging church steeples and tree tops. Through the bomb bay I could see people waving at us, and terrorized farm animals were panicking and running away from our sound.

continued from page 11

After our spectacular dive, Chick had added full war-emergency power which gave us about 140 mph airspeed. It was too much. On full power the remaining two engines overheated and threatened to explode. Chick gradually reduced manifold pressure and RPM's which allowed the red hot engines to cool off and kept us airborne at 125 mph just slightly above stalling speed. We were right down on the deck with no room for mistakes, and it was still a long shot as far as I was concerned. Later on, after we were down, Chick said, "Aw! That was a piece of cake." Ha!

We had sort of forgotten about the channel defenses. As we neared the coast I began to see tracers streaking toward the airplane. We must have come out somewhere between Dunkirk and Ostend. Now all the batteries in that area opened on us with a vengeance. We could see barbed wire and gun emplacements. I fancied I could see the coal scuttle helmets of the people who were firing at us. We could not shoot back. We had no guns.

They were hitting us a lot. Explosions in the nose and cockpit wounded Chick, Jasper, the navigator, and Ward Hudson, the tail gunner. A flak tower was trying to depress its guns to finish us off, but Chick dived lower to prevent this. Chick continued to fly the plane although he was in great pain.

Shells were exploding inside the aircraft, and once I leaned forward to see better through the acrid smoke. As I did I was struck in the back of the head by ground fire (a rifle bullet). It creased my scalp. I felt blood and yelled, "I'm hit!" I had seen a lot of war movies and knew that was the appropriate response to my own blood.

We were jinking around a lot of spoil the enemy's aim. At last we saw with relief that the coast was pulling away from us and knew we were safe for the moment.

But we were still in big trouble. I tuned in the distress frequency on the liaison set. The DF station answered us immediately and started tracking us as it looked like we were going to come down in the water. We neared the English coast, actually the Thames Estuary. On the command set Chick was calling 'darky-darky', the military equivalent of 'May Day' or SOS. A fighter field either answered us or we were directed to it by the DF station. I don't remember which. The fighter field was very small and had no runways.

Then an appalling realization came to light. We had no brakes or flaps; our hydraulic system was shot out. How were we going to get down?

We had to land. We came in very hot and had no room to go around again. After touchdown we were quickly running out of field. The big bomber was rolling directly toward a concrete ammo storehouse. Quickly Chick unlocked the tail wheel, kicked the right rudder and gunned the left engine. We careened to the right and narrowly missed the ammo house. A thick barbed wire barrier surrounded the field. We cut a path through it as if it was ticker tape. The landing gear was washed out when we hit an obstruction. We started sliding on our belly. It seemed we would never stop. I was thrown violently around although my seat belt was fastened. The bomber was now completely out of control. We hit a ditch, slewed around and stopped. I jumped up and ran out of the plane. Many times they exploded in such a situation.

The rest of the fellows were out of the plane and getting the wounded out of the nose hatch. There was a three inch piece of flak sticking out of Chick's thigh and he was in great distress. Jasper was still knocked out. The meat wagon and fire trucks came roaring up. In a matter of moments we had drawn a large crowd and RAF chaps were

congratulating us on our narrow escape and stunning performance.

They took us to the Sergeant's mess and began plying us with whiskey. We were exhilarated and hilarious. We were all wound up and talking a mile a minute. The 'Limeys' were smiling at us indulgently. What sweet relief! We were down and we were safe.

Somebody noticed my head was still bleeding, so they took me to the base hospital and cleaned me up. It was only a scalp wound, but I spent the night in the hospital. Next morning I had a pint of tea and a hearty breakfast of bacon and porridge. I considered myself a very lucky boy.

The airfield was at Southend-on-sea in the extreme southeast corner of England. We had no clothes but our flight coveralls. One night we borrowed RAF uniforms from our hosts and went into town to a dance. We looked very smart and military in them. The local lassies were so surprised to find that we were a bunch of bloody yanks. They couldn't understand a word I said but they could dance at least.

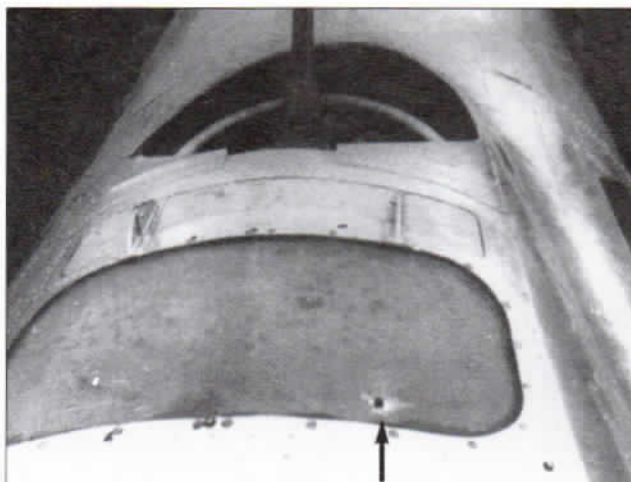
Before we left I visited Chick, Ward and Jasper in the hospital. We didn't see them for a while after that. When we got back to Molesworth everyone was surprised to see us. We were supposed to be dead. Friends had reported that we had gone down. It took days to round up our bicycles, clothes, and other property. Our comrades had already divided our property between themselves.

Chick was awarded the Silver Star. We never flew with him again. Four of us: Chick, Ward, Jasper and I got Purple Hearts. I thought Chick and Fish should have gotten the Congressional Medal of Honor. They did an incredible piece of flying. So far as I knew, no four-engined bomber had ever before survived an 11,000 foot power dive. But the Congressional Medal was usually awarded to heroes who were no longer there to collect them.

Oh, we did another routine crash landing after that--on our twentieth mission, to Nantes - another 'Milk Run.'

by: Benjamin Smith

*Ben Smith flew with the 303rd BG (H) and is now a Judge and practicing Attorney and author of "Chick's Crew." A past-President of the Historical Society. Ben and wife Lynn make their home in Waycross, Georgia.*



*This is the radio hatch where the round that hit Smith's scalp exited*



*The most unfortunate day for our crew.*

## ALABAMA

During December we received 17 new members. Each Wing hosted four meetings in its area and we had two statewide meetings. The attendance for all meetings totaled 508 people. The greatest number of members and guests was for the South Alabama Statewide meeting with 63 people. Our contributions for the Ala. Chapter Memorial Monument for our Heritage Museum total \$7,435.00 with 43 members making a donation for this great project. Many thanks to all who participated. The Monument design is very beautiful and we are anxious to see it installed. During the Nov. 14 Birmingham area meeting, Don Wilson updated us on the History class he teaches at Samford University, where he stresses the role the 8th Air Force had during WWII. While Dr. Wilson's students are in England they visit Duxford in East Anglica, the American Cemetery and Thorpe Abbots, home of the 100th Bomb Group. The Central Ala. Wing met at Troy State University. The speaker, Dot Rowell, was in the British army stationed at Mildenhall and developed film taken on the bombing raids. She told us her family pooled their clothing coupons to purchase new clothes to wear when the boat docked in New York.

## GEORGIA CHAPTER

Under the leadership of Clayton Ridge, the very active Georgia Chapter plans a year's worth of events and meetings to equal their 1997 schedule of over two dozen chapter activities. The most recent was their three-day Reunion at Perry, Georgia where highlights were trips to the Warner-Robins Air Museum, the Masee Lane Camellia Gardens and to the War Between the States prison at Andersonville. The annual banquet on January 25th featured Lt. General E.G. "Buck" Shuler with updates on the Heritage Museum in Savannah, and an expression of appreciation for all of the support given to the museum by members of the Historical Society during the past year. Veterans Day was celebrated by the chapter members participating in the Atlanta Veterans Day parade showing off the huge B-17 model proudly displayed on member Art Fonzo's convertible. This was followed by a visit to Christian Towers in Decatur, Ga to visit some of the elderly and pass out patriotic items and tell war stories. Chapter newsletter *Tall Tales* is a comprehensive volume edited by Saul Kupferman, who has been spending each day for the past 14 years promoting the activities of the Historical Society as Newsletter Editor. The 140 members of the Savannah Wing, Georgia Chapter, boast of being one of the most active in the country! "We have dinner meetings every third Tuesday of the month at the Air Force Museum and invite the public to join us when visiting Savannah." A majority of Wing members serve as volunteers at the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum, submitted by; Frank A. Kaye, Newsletter Editor Savannah Wing.

## KENTUCKY CHAPTER NEWS

The Kentucky Chapter has had an active year centering on their fund drive for the Chapter memorial monument which will be placed in the Memorial Gardens at the Heritage Museum on May 17th, 1998 at 10:00 am. Headed up by Wayne Tabor and other leaders of the chapter, members held sales, raffles, set up booths at air shows, and conducted a capital fund drive across the state to successfully reach their \$9,250 goal. The beautiful monument to honor all 8th AF veterans of Kentucky is over six feet high, and will be flown in with the assistance of Kentucky Air National Guard members. Over fifty Chapter members and dignitaries, an honor guard, a bugler, and presentation materials will also be escorted by the National Guard. The formal dedication service will be held in the Museum Gardens on Sunday May 17th, following the weekend celebration of the second anniversary of the Heritage Museum. The public and all other Historical Society members are invited to attend.

## MINNESOTA CHAPTER

Newly elected Chapter officers are Don Bruns, President; Larry Bachman, Vice President; Don Geng, Scy-Treasurer. Pete Backlund is the Newsletter Editor. The official name of the chapter is now: Eighth Air Force Historical Society of Minnesota. All are welcome to the weekly noon luncheons at VFW Post 5555 in Minneapolis. The Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II history roundtable program schedule is 2nd Thursday of every month, 7:00 p.m. at the Minnesota Historical Society, Fort Snelling History Center on Mississippi River Bluff. The Minnesota Air Guard Museum presents monthly programs at the Fort Snelling History Center. The Air Guard Museum currently is building a Curtiss Jenny from the ground up. Contact: Sanra Forsman at the Museum for details at 713-2513.

## MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER NEWS

Plans are laid for another great Mississippi Chapter meeting to be held at Lake Tiak O'Khata near Louisville, MS on April 24-26, 1998. This follows the recent very successful bus trip to the Heritage Museum where the Mississippi memorial monument was dedicated in the Memorial Gardens at the Museum. The members stopped on the way by the Calloway Gardens, the Little White House of President Roosevelt in Warm Springs, Georgia, and went to the Pine Mountain Animal Park as an added event. President Homer King is expecting over 250 people for the April meeting. Executive Secretary Kenneth Nail wishes to express special appreciation and thanks to National President Norm Grant for attending the memorial ceremony and speaking at the chapter banquet. The dedication honored all 8th AF veterans from Mississippi who served in all wars. The entire trip was such a success that the Chapter leaders are considering another bus trip this Fall - to the National meeting in Cherry Hill, New Jersey in October.

The Chapter newsletter *Contrails and Propwash* will have all the details. Additional Chapter officers are John L. Walker, Vice President; Charles Sanders, Secretary; and Ernest Adcock, Treasurer.

## GENERAL JAMES H. DOOLITTLE CHAPTER NEWS

Editor Dan Raymond says that the Chapter officers have decided to have the next annual meeting in the San Joaquin Valley at Castle Air Force Base. It will be a luncheon meeting with program to accommodate all chapter members. A fund-raiser will also be held at the Western Aerospace Museum in Oakland. The annual membership meeting will be held Saturday, April 25, at the Castle AFB in Merced, CA. The 11:00 a.m. business meeting and the 1:00 p.m. luncheon will be held at the conference and restaurant rooms of the Castle AFB museum. Motel reservations: Holiday Inn Express, Merced, CA 1-209-383-0333.

## NEW JERSEY CHAPTER

This will be an especially active year for the New Jersey Chapter, as their members will play an active role in the annual Reunion of the National Historical Society at Cherry Hill, New Jersey on October 13-18, 1998. The Chapter plans to have its annual meeting in Cherry Hill in conjunction with the national reunion, and the chapter invites all 8th veterans, friends and associates to come enjoy the sights of New Jersey in the Fall! The chapter's next meeting will be held on April 18, 1998 at Doolan's in Spring Lake Heights. New Chapter officers are: Raymond Butler, President; Irving Pliskin, Vice President; Arthur Belkowski, Treasurer. Marv Spidel remains as the able chapter Newsletter Editor/Secretary.

## SOUTHERN WING CHAPTER OF NEW YORK NEWS

Larry Goldstein, newly elected National Board of Directors member is President of the Chapter, with Gus Nathan serving as Vice President; Anthony Zotollo, Secretary; George Grady, Treasurer; and Father Ken Ross is Chapter Chaplain. The Southern Wing will hold three meetings this year with an emphasis on getting WWII era speakers in for presentations. Consideration is being given to holding a meeting at Cherry Hill, NJ at the National Reunion there in October, 1998. The chapter is looking for a location to establish a permanent display of chapter memorabilia and a permanent tribute to the veterans of the 8th AF in New York. The state capitol is being considered as well as the Cradle of Aviation Museum now being developed. Larry is encouraging all members to look for new members to add to the rolls - veterans and associates. He also wants members to plan to make the National Society reunion in October, and also to consider actively supporting the Heritage Museum in Savannah by becoming members of the Museum.

## NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER NEWS

In the North Carolina chapter newsletter First In Flight Scty/Editor Gladys Stenstrom reports that the chapter annual meeting will be held in Greensboro April 18-19, 1998. The three wings of the chapter have enjoyed their gatherings over the holidays. The Eastern Wing, Commander George Hood, recently had an excellent speaker in Mr. Harold Webb, a Tuskegee Airman who spoke on his experiences as an African-American flying cadet and on the combat experiences of his unit. The Metrolina Wing, Commander Harvey Creech, related their experiences of the Chapter's trip to the Heritage Museum in Savannah to dedicate the North Carolina chapter plaque in the museum's Memorial Gardens. He said they were most warmly received by everyone at the museum. The Western Wing Commander Vic Brown held their Christmas meeting and were entertained with a talk by an exceptional female hot-air balloonist - a holder of three world records in Ballooning.

Chapter officers are: James R. Phillips, President; George Hood, Vice President; Lou Baffaro, Treasurer; Gladys Stenstrom, Scty/Editor

## OREGON CHAPTER

The Oregon Chapter celebrated its 5th Anniversary at the recent November meeting. There have been a total of 212 members with 31 Associates. Newsletter staff John Wallace and Ben Russell assist Editor Bob Miller in his task of publishing a fine Chapter newsletter. Chapter meetings are held quarterly at the Beaverton Elks Club, the November meet featuring Walter Groce, a P-47 pilot, as the guest speaker.

Chapter officers are: Joseph E. Chassaing President, Harold Fritzler, Vice President, Clinton Gruber, Secretary, Frank Bueneman, Treasurer.

## PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER

The Pennsylvania Chapter is looking forward to its Seventh Annual Reunion to be held in Lebanon, PA from June 19-22, 1998. Our Chapter has the reputation of ensuring a great time among friendly Pennsylvanians, and we welcome all who would like to attend. For more information, please contact our Chairman, Frank Smoker, at (717) 272-3845 or the Swansons at (717) 687-6257, or you could fax them at (717) 687-0910.

The Delaware Squadron holds their luncheon meetings at Williamson's in Willow Grove approximately every two months, and anyone in that area is encouraged to attend these informal get-togethers. For information, contact Dan Fisher at (215) 722-6578.

And if you are in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton/Clarks Summit area, they, too, have informal luncheons. For further information, contact Armand J. Ferraro at (717) 343-5304 or Shirley Holmes at (717) 587-4420. If you have items of interest for our publication, TALE WINDS, please send them to our Editor, Pete Ardizzi, PO Box 102, Warminster,

PA 18974-0511.

## TENNESSEE CHAPTER NEWS

The Tennessee Chapter has plans in the works to make their annual Chapter meeting in June an event to remember. Officers will be elected and plans for the upcoming two years will be formulated. The *TENNESSEE FLY-OVER* edited by Ray Zuker is one of the top chapter newsletters in the Society and is published quarterly. An article authored by Ray appears elsewhere in this issue. He is a regular contributor to numerous newspapers and veterans publications. A dinner and roast on January 16th was attended by many chapter members at the Foundry in Knoxville to honor member Jack Westbrook. Jack has for many years been a force in the Military Affairs Council of East Tennessee and has chaired the nationally known Veterans Day luncheon and program featuring nationally prominent guests and speakers each November. The honors bestowed upon him were certainly well-deserved.

On October 30, 1997 Henry Barker, Norman Kratschmer & Ray Zuker conducted a seminar on the role of the 8th Air Force in World War II for the Air Force ROTC at Austin East High School. The program was monitored by ABC Channel 6, Knoxville, Tennessee and shown on Veteran's Day, November 11, 1997. In late December, one of the Tennessee illustrious members, author John Harold Robinson, appeared on national television in a CBS holiday special titled "Life's Greatest Holiday Stories." In a segment on Jimmy Stewart, Harold shared his insight on Stewart's wartime experiences. Harold Robinson served under then-Captain Jimmy Stewart as an Aerial Engineer Gunner in the B-24 Heavy Bombers of the 445th BG during WWII. Harold's writings on his individual and shared experiences have been recognized as a resource for this period of Jimmy Stewart's life. During the conversation, Harold shared in more detail some conversations and events he and Jimmy had shared, while displaying memorabilia he'd collected over the years. Harold Robinson's experiences as a B-24 gunner are related in his book, *A Reason to Live*, available through Castle Books Inc., Charles Goodman, Publisher.

## VIRGINIA CHAPTER NEWS

The Virginia Chapter came into existence in the Fall of 1993 and thus far has developed nicely. The Chapter has had all of the typical startup struggles and will continue to be challenged toward further growth in the years just ahead. The Chapter's founding president's term is concluded. Our Chapter has just elected not only a new first officer, but many others and Board Members as well. In the past four years I have come to know the members of the Virginia Chapter as made of good stuff and having fine hearts. I am sure you will find in them the energy and commitment you call for in moving the Society forward.

I am "passing the baton" to a good man who will lead the Chapter well, and my encouragement is that the 8AFHS Board hear the con-

cerns and needs of the Virginia Chapter with renewed interest.

Newly elected Chapter President Jim Trask reports that the Peninsular Wing had an outstanding program at their recent dinner meeting featuring a presentation by the discussion of documents of General Marshall, General Ira Eaker, General Hap Arnold and others. Officers elected for the upcoming year are: President: James E. Trask, Williamsburg, VA, Vice-president: Lewis E. Burke, Centerville, VA, Treasurer: Edward M. Smith, Gloucester Point, VA, Secretary: John S. Pearson, Richmond, VA.

## WEST MICHIGAN WING

The November meeting held at the Comstock VFW Post 6252 was attended by 32 members. The Veterans Day program included state Senator Dale Sugars, state Representative Don Gilmer, and the 53 piece Comstock High School Band playing patriotic selections to honor veterans of all wars. A donation from the chapter treasury was made as a show of appreciation. New member Jack Blocker sponsored the luncheon served by the Post Auxiliary.

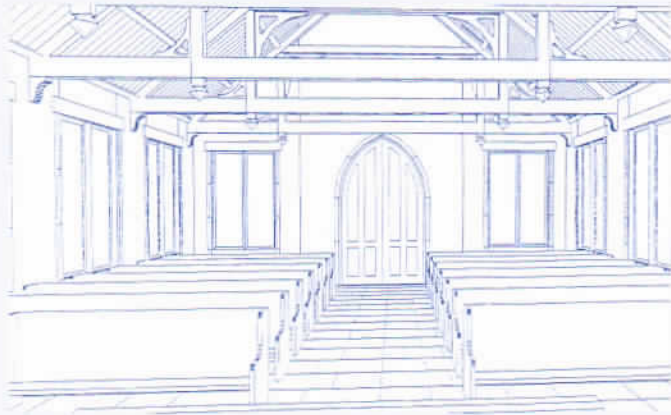
The Wing has a big trip to visit the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah scheduled for April 23 - 28, 1998. Those wishing to travel to the Museum should contact Pres. Sumney at P.O. Box 2527, Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2527.

Wing Officers: Suds Sumney, Commander; Jim Nycum, Vice Commander; Bob Palmer, Secretary; Cleo Rawley, Newsletter Editor.

## WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Donald Kabitze is actively working on picking up new members for the Wisconsin Chapter and was successful in adding 20 new members at the last chapter meeting. Newspaper notices and dozens of postcard mailouts directed towards non-member 8th veterans are just two of his methods. He notes that two things are necessary to attract members to meetings: a good luncheon and a fine speaker. Recently the chapter heard from two soldiers who guarded General Herman Goering and Field Marshall Gerde von Rundstedt at the Nuremberg trials after the war. Also talks from CO's of the National Guard and the Air Reserve who were involved in the Persian Gulf war. Wisconsin Chapter members are active in promoting the 8th AFHS at the EAA annual reunion in Oshkosh (800,000 attendees) and in getting out into school programs across the state. Many younger associate members to the Society are obtained in this manner, and Donald encourages all chapters to accept the challenge to do the same in their areas. The Society is also represented at showings of the B-17 Aluminum Overcast. Wisconsin has ordered and is distributing 8th AFHS decals and window stickers to be used to attract interest and new members to their chapter.

**WE HAVE LIFTED OFF  
WITH THE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY MEMORIAL  
CHAPEL DRIVE!**



The Eighth Air Force Historical Society has pledged to donate \$75,000 to the construction of the Memorial Chapel of the Heritage Museum in Savannah.

"We really appreciate the Historical Society's pledge and support of the Memorial Chapel," said Lt. Gen. E. G. Shuler, Jr., Chairman and CEO. "This will be a great start on raising the \$300,000 we estimate it will cost to build the Memorial Chapel."

This is the second consecutive year that the Eighth Air Force



**"There are many objects of great value to man which cannot be obtained by unconnected individuals, but must be attained, if attained at all, by association."  
Daniel Webster-1833**

Historical Society has made a substantial donation to the Heritage Museum. In 1996 the Society challenged its members to include donations to the museum with their annual Society membership renewals. The Society then matched those contributions dollar for dollar up to \$25,000 and ultimately the Heritage Museum received more than \$86,000.

In 1997 the Society has pledged a firm \$75,000 to the construction of the Memorial Chapel and has given its members the opportunity to donate to that amount by including an appeal for donations with its 1998 annual membership notices. The 1997 appeal for the Memorial Chapel is not a matching fund challenge such as in 1996.

Preliminary plans for the Memorial Chapel have been developed and will be a stone structure, approximately 30 feet by 45 feet. It will be located in the north section of the museum Memorial Gardens and will closely resemble the chapels that were located on or near many of the bases in England during WWII. Several stained glass windows have already been donated for placement in the chapel including a life size replica of the stained glass window at Quidenham donated by the 96th Bomb Group Association.

Shuler said the construction start date will depend on when the estimated cost of \$300,000 is in the bank. "The chapel will be built with funds separate and apart from the museum's normal funds. We must keep the museum property on a sound financial path and that means we must wait until we have enough money in the bank to cover the entire cost of the chapel before we begin to build it."

Eighth Air Force Historical Society members who desire to donate to the Society's pledge drive should send their tax-deductable donations with the mail-in form to:

Mr. Jack Hower  
H.S. Finance Manager  
P.O. Box 1033  
St. Joseph, MO 64502

**LET'S ALL SUPPORT OUR FUND DRIVE!**

*As we go to press we have collected \$80,000 towards our 8th AFHS Chapel Historical Society fund drive to reach our goal so construction can be started this spring! Together we can complete our mission to build the Historical Society Memorial Chapel!!*

**8th AF HS MEMORIAL CHAPEL FUND DRIVE**

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

AMOUNT  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
GROUP OR  
UNIT \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form & make check/money order payable to: 8AFHS Chapel Drive and mail to: Jack Hower (address above)

### Stevenage

"I am inquiring about a collision between two 390th BG B-17 aircraft, one from 569 BS and one from 568 BS, that crashed near Weston village in Hertfordshire in England on 26th August 1944, and would welcome correspondence with anyone who can recall the incident. The source of all information will be acknowledged in a final report. I'm a local historian researching the history of Stevenage and surrounding district (including Weston) and first came across the story of the crash whilst collecting information for a book (published in 1987) about life in the area during the Second World War. Although several military aircraft crashed in the area during war years this particular incident seems to be the one most vividly remembered by local people.

As there is no local memorial to the men who died in the accident I intend that the report I produce will stand as a small tribute to the young airmen who lost their lives that day in the defense of our freedom.

Yours sincerely,

John Amess

5 Headingly Close

Almonds Hill Stevenage Herts

SG1 3RU England

### Time is overdue

The time is overdue to refute the canard that the last American bomber shot down over Germany was the B-24, "Black Cat," a story propagated by Thomas Childers in his book, WINGS OF MORNING. The story might have been credible had he claimed that it was the last "heavy" bomber shot down by "flak."

The truth is that on the 24th of April at least two B-26s of the 17th Bomb Group (M) were shot down in the Schrobenhausen area by Me 262s (jets) and on the 26th four more from the same group were shot down in the same area by Me-262s also. These were from Adolf Galland's JV squadron. Galland was also shot down by the B-26s on the 26th!

One reason that I have considerable first-hand knowledge of these operations is that on 20 April during my 40th mission (our tour was 65!) I lost my right engine and right leg to a 30mm cannon shell from a Me-262. While we worked our way back to friendly territory, alone, my crew shot down two of the jets, with another two probables.

Sincerely,

James L. Vining, Captain USAF (Ret)

Vienna VA

*[Lately of the 323rd BG/455th BS which was once in the 8th Air Force, but before my time. However, that was reason enough for me to sign on as a life member of The Eighth Air Force Historical Society.]*

### Blind Landing Systems

Dear Sir,

I am currently working on a dissertation on the development of blind landing systems for aircraft before 1950. In particular, I'm looking for information on their employment during World War II.

The systems I'm interested in are: SBA, the British Standard Beam Approach system, used until roughly 1944; SCS-51, used during 1944-1945; and AN/MPN-1 (also known as Ground Controlled Approach or GCA), used during 1945.

The biggest problem I'm having in my research is getting information on how well these systems worked in the field. I have records of their installation, pre-deployment testing, and acceptance trials, but what I really need is impressions from flight crews and ground maintenance troops on how effective these were. It isn't clear from my research that these systems were at all effective.

If at all possible, I'd like to be put in contact with people who flew these systems during the war. It would help my research immensely.

Sincerely,

Erik M. Conway

101 G St. SW Apt A714

Washington, DC 20024

(202) 554-6319 Olorin@worldnet.att.net

### Dear Sir,

Could I please have the following entry in THE EIGHTH AIRFORCE NEWS. I would like to hear from anyone who served at Boxted Station 150 Essex England. This was home to 386th BG, 56th FG, 354th FG and Air Sea Rescue Squadron. Stories, memories, photos etc for possible book and small museum. Thanks for your help and keep up the good work of an excellent organization.

Kind Regards,

Richard Turner 11 Dunthorne Rd Colchester Essex England c04 4hz 01206-865275

### Dear Sir,

I am trying to trace a former member of the USAAF BAD2 Company, which was based at Freckleton, near Blackpool, Lancashire, England, in 1945. The person who I am urgently trying to find is called Frank Keyowski. I am not sure of the correct spelling of his second name, it could be Kiowski, Keyoski, Kayoski, Kaofski; it is pronounced Key-off-ski. Frank came from somewhere in Pennsylvania, USA, and presumably returned there after the war finished. The only description I have of him at the time, is that he wrote rimless spectacles, and looked just like an

American band leader of the era called Kay Kaiser.

Sincerely, Brian Terence Atherton 4 Coniston House, Westmoreland Close Penwortham, Preston, Lancashire PR1 OUT, England 011441772743224

### Dear Sir,

My Friends and Helpers are all local residents who helped myself both financially and otherwise to build the Goxhill Airfield Tribute memorial in 1984. We have recorded the airfield history and organize Remembrance Sunday Service, lay a wreath, arrange the Goxhill Liberty Run each year and give tours of the old Base. (it is the most intact wartime airfield in Lincolnshire) all in the memory of the USAAF; also give guided tours to returning veterans free of charge. In early 1995 a man arrived at the airfield called David Copley, claiming he was buying the Base as all the ads shown, under the name of the Historical Aviation Group Ltd and Imperial Aviation as you will see from enclosed literature. Will you please make it clear that the Goxhill Airfield Tribute Group under my letterhead has had no association with this other Group-Hag?

Yours Sincerely,

Ron Parker

Goxhill

North Lincolnshire, UK

### For Sale

46 Back Issues of AF News. 11/75-12/96, '79 on, mostly consecutive. **Make offer.** Dennis Kray, Box 16545, San Francisco, CA 94116.

### Wanted

B-17 VERTICAL FIN AND RUDDER Needed from B-17E, F or G Model, for a memorial to USAAF veterans who gave their lives liberating Europe in WWII. Doesn't have to be "flyable" - fin aft from assembly joint ahead of horizontal stabilizer is desired; rudder need not have fabric covering. Memorial planned in Eastern Poland near site where a B-17 and P-51 were shot down by Me-109's June 21, 1944 on "Mission Frantic II", England-to-Russia. **Contact** Al Lea, (713) 664-1915, PLEASE!

### Regarding the inquiry from L. Million on

401 Bomb Group (97-4). On B-17 and B-24 losses on April 20, 1945, "the last bombing mission the 8th AF flew"; The 8th AF final was No. 968 to the Skodawerke at Pilsen, Czech., on April 25. Our 486 BG's final was April 21 to Ingolstadt. Books such as R.A. Freeman's, Martin Caidin's and Craven & Cate's Vol. 3, are very thin on



the April 20 mission.

**Suggest contact** with the AF Historical Research Center at Maxwell AFB, AL., 36112  
R.H. Hodges, 486 BG

### Looking back

I recall writing my first letter to Mail Call in 1978. How time flies. The 8th AF News is still "oh so good" (when will we see a bound 4th 5 years?). I would like to say how proud my wife and I were to be at the opening of the new museum at Duxford and how my hand ached after shaking the hands of so many veterans, also bumping into many long established 8th AF buddies. We also had the pleasure of making even more new friends, one in particular is the 447BG's Jack and Anne Keller. They came to our house and sampled our daughter Kelly's hot cooking. Jack also showed us his album of photos and his boys. You should have seen Anne in 1943, WOW!!! She should have been painted on the nose of a B-17. Don't get jealous guys, but I had the honor of a big kiss from her when they went back home.

Any veteran, his wife or family are most welcome at my house. The front door is always open for you. The least we can do to say THANK YOU for our freedom.

P.S. Need color representations of group orchestra music stands.

Pete Worby 26  
Woodgreen Rd.  
Luton Lu28BT, England  
Associate and 487th Contact

### Locating Alexander W. Calder II

A Navigator on a B-17 8AF 91st Bomb Group, that was shot down with me in France on August 14, 1944. I have not been able to locate him since our return to the U.S. in 1944. Last addresses were in New Jersey and New York.

**Please write to:** Joe Vukovich, 1792 Garden Drive, Medford, Oregon 97504

### 'Tech Reps'

I am interested in the organization, role and locations of 'Technical Representatives' attached to the 8AF. Can you help with information? **Please write to:** John Cashmore, 'The Uplands', Rookwood Lane, Preston St. Mary, Sudbury, Suffolk. CO 10 9 LY. England.  
Yours faithfully,  
John Cashmore 8 AFHS Member No. 23923

### T/Sgt. Calvin J. Fox

I'm looking for Calvin Fox who was in the 447th BG, 709B/SQD stationed in Rattlesden, England. His hometown was Rangeley, Maine.

**Contact:** Bruce W. Greenho  
455 Royer Ave. NW.,  
North Canton, OH 44720

### PRESS RELEASE

#### US Army looking for Asian American and Native Pacific Islanders award recipients from World War II

Monterey, Calif. --The U.S. Army is conducting a research project into a little-known aspect of World War II. A team of historians at the Presidio of Monterey, California, is searching for Asian American and Pacific Islander soldiers and airmen who received the nation's second highest award for valor, the Distinguished Service Cross. The DSC is second only to the Medal of Honor.

The 1996 National Defense Authorization Act called for the Army to determine which of the more than 5,000 World War II Army DSC recipients were Asian Americans or Native American Pacific Islanders. This study will also review recipients who served in the Army Air Forces.

The project will encompass American soldiers and airmen of Asian Indian, Pacific Islanders, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Southeast Asian descent.

The commander of the Defense Language Center and the Presidio of Monterey and the chief of the Army's Military Awards Branch have signed an agreement tasking DLIFLC's Command History Office to conduct the review. The installation's command historian, Dr. James C. McNaughton, is heading the Project.

After the review Project is completed, the Pentagon will convene a special awards board to consider those DSC awardees identified by the review team for possible upgrade to the Medal of Honor.

If you have any information regarding Asian-Americans or Native American Pacific Islanders who received the DSC in World War II while serving in the Army Ground or Air Forces, please call Mr. Scott Welch at (408) 242-7864.

You may also send correspondence regarding these DSC recipients to:  
Commandant  
DLIFLC & POM  
ATTN: ATZP-MH(Mr Welch)  
Presidio of Monterey, CA 93944-5006

### A-20 Boston/Havoc Wanted

Wanted an A-20 Douglas medium Bomber "Boston/Havoc" by the RAF Imperial Air Museum at Hendon, London, England. On 29 June 1942 the 8th AF 15th Bomb Squadron flew RAF Boston A-20's in British formation on Bombing mission to Hazebruck, France. The first 8th AF combat mission was flown by the 15th Bomb Squadron, Commander Charles Kegelman in borrowed Bostons hitting airfields in Holland.

**Contact:** Norman Prowse, Liaison RAF 2nd Tactical Air Force Medium Bombers Association, 6 Kenwood Road, Edmonton, London UKN97JD

### Attention To Two Items

I would like to call your attention to two items. **Item number one** appeared in the August 1996 issue, Royal Air Force Training in the South-East Area. Another training location was "War Eagle Field" Lancaster, California. I had my basic B-13A flight



training there. It was really a country club operation, with two swimming pools, surrounded by one story cottages joined together. I understand there may have been other RAF units in the West.



**Item number two**, Bless 'Em All appeared in the February 1997 issue. Another popular song was "Lily From Picadilly" - The answer to the German Ballard "Lily Marlene." This great song was sung at the dances of the 94th Bomb Group at Bury St. Edmunds and may have been popular at other bases.

Bless 'Em All

Sincerely,  
John D MacLeod  
94th Bomb Group 331st Squadron  
Winchester, ME

### ATTENTION: 8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**M**y name is Carrie Haltof and I am studying A-Levels at Braintree College. For my History A-Level I am doing a project on the American involvement in the Second World War in Essex. I am trying to find out about the initial impressions the Americans had on the people of Essex and what their stay was like in Essex. While doing my research I came in contact with Mr. Vic Lewis from Colchester Recalled. He kindly gave me your name and address and suggested that if I ask you very nicely it might be possible to put a copy of the enclosed questionnaire in your magazine to appeal to anyone willing to share their memories of Essex with me.

I have discovered through writing to many veterans that they are linked to E-Mail, if this is also the same with you I have enclosed my college E-Mail address along with my home address for members to contact me with any queries or questions.

Thank you very much for all your help with my project. I am sincerely grateful.

Yours sincerely,  
Carrie Haltof

19 Kenworthy Rd. Braintree Essex CM7 1JJ England  
Tel: 01376 341689 E-Mail: braincol@rmple.co.uk

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

- Name:
- At which Airfield were you stationed?
- How long were you there?
- What was your occupation?
- How did you feel about coming to England?
- What were your initial impressions of the Essex people?
- Did you work closely with any Essex Airmen?
- What was it like to work with them?
- What was your Airfield like?
- Did you learn anything new from the people of Essex?
- Did your opinion on the people of Essex change by the end of the war?
- Did you keep in contact with any of them when you returned to America?

### "FAME'S FAVORED FEW"

92nd Bomb Group 1/11 CCR

REUNION: October 15-20,1998

Hampton, VA. Holiday Inn

CONTACT: Irv Baum

Tel/Fax (707)258-8806/1289

3935 Young Ave.

Napa, CA. 94558-2654

92nd Bomb Wing Types

PLEASE RESPOND!!

### THE FORT or LIB POEM FIX

The poem, titled Fort or Lib - Which Was Best, was not written by Kevin Pearson. It was written by Jim Jones of Tailwinds. Kevin got the story off the internet and traded several e-mails with Jim in the process. Kevin has already e-mailed Jim to let him know that he wasn't trying to take credit for Jim's story and he assured him a correction would appear in this issue of 8th AF News.

### 94th REUNION NOTICE FIX

94th Bomb Group Memorial Association will not have a 1998 reunion as previously listed in the Reunion Information, November 1997 issue. The group's next meeting will be held in Seattle, October 4-11, 1999.

### THE STEEL COVERED BIBLE

A steel covered Bible may have saved the life of 2nd Lt. Robert Turner, 21, bombardier of an 8th AAF Flying Fortress, when flak fragments lodged in the Bible instead of his heart, the piece of flak is shown alongside the Bible. Lt. Turner was on his 14th mission, one of the gigantic U.S. raids on German airplane factories. A piece of flak came up through the plexi-glass nose and grazed his arm, ripping his leather jacket, and lodging in the center of the Bible in his pocket.



Happy New Year everyone!!! We are extremely excited to welcome you to our new PX Order Form format. We have expanded our available line to provide you with the latest in **8th Air Force** related books, videos and specialty items. Please take a moment and look through our new ad. We hope that you will find it to your liking.

We unfortunately have some bad news to report. The entire **8th Air Force** trilogy from author Roger Freeman are now out-of-print: **The Mighty Eighth, Mighty Eighth War Diary**, and the **Mighty Eighth War Manual**. The publisher has discontinued printing them, and there are currently no plans for a re-print. We are out of stock on the **Mighty Eighth** and the **Mighty Eighth War Manual**. However, we do have the **Mighty Eighth War Diary** in stock. If you don't have this volume in your library, we urge you to order now to avoid disappointment.

We have stocked some excellent new books in the PX. One in particular is "**Over Here**" **The Americans in Norfolk during World War II**. This is a nostalgic look at wartime Norfolk. This excellent photo book mainly deals with **2nd and 3rd Air Division** history. We can only offer this book for a very short time because it is now out-of-print in Great Britain. We have a limited number of copies so please don't delay in ordering this excellent piece.

Finally, we are extremely pleased to once again offer the two video tapes that were made by the **8th Air Force Historical**

**Society**. They have been out of stock for a few years, but are very proud to offer them to you once again.

**Start Engines - Plus 50 years** was produced and funded by the Society a number of years ago. It is a general story of the history of the **8th Air Force**.

Simply put....if you haven't seen it....don't cheat yourself...get a copy!!!! The other tape is "**Behind the Wire**," which was also done by the Society. This film deals with the POW Experience. Both tapes are award winning documentaries and are superbly produced. They are also excellent gifts for children and/or grandchildren.



Monica and I look forward to hearing from you very soon. God Bless and all the best for 1998!!! Cheers!!!

Mark and Monica Copeland  
8th Air Force Historical Society PX Managers



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# "THE ENGLISH CHANNEL"

by Ray F. Zuker  
486 (FI) Bomb Group

The crew of Lady Lightnin' saw this most famous of all bodies of water many times between April and August of 1944. We would also see the North Sea that extends beyond the English Channel to the north and west. The Channel itself is three hundred fifty miles long and twenty miles wide at its narrowest point, between Dover and French Calais.

England and its history have always held a fascination for me. Little did I know that one day I would help defend it -- as so many others have done over the centuries. Hundreds of thousands of young American men answered the call. In the month of June, 1944, I took part in an event that sealed the doom of the German military machine and its mad genius and preserved the integrity of the green islands of Britain.

I recall clearly flying out over the Channel on training flights before our first mission and seeing it for the first time. To think that in these waters centuries of history lies hidden. I was deeply impressed.

The Channel below, the result of winds, tides and land mass upheaval, must have had its beginning in the Paleolithic Age. I envisioned ancient ancestors chasing wild game down the valley that is now the English Channel. Theory has it that the Channel we see today has changed very little in its course in the past eight thousand years. It is recorded that the first real invasion of England was launched in 55 B.C. by Julius Caesar, who added the tribes of Britain to the Roman Empire.

The Channel possesses extraordinary tides which are caused by a powerful gravitational pull which begins in the Atlantic Ocean, then pushes the water through this narrow channel up into the North Sea, and only diminishes when it reaches the Arctic Ocean. Tides like these are not found anywhere else in the world.

When we began operations, the crews were briefed carefully on the Channel. Ditching (crash landing on water) was hazardous at best. We were told that the survival rate of air crews forced down in the Channel was a grim 26% for B-24 crews and 37% for B-17 crews. The differing rates of survival

are attributed to the ability of the B-17 to remain afloat long enough to give the crew time to escape. The decision to ditch was not made lightly and only after every alternative to make the British coast was exhausted! Our crew faced the possibility of ditching twice and even though we made the coast, there was no margin for error in either instance.

The 14th century recorded the first battles between sailing ships plying the Channel. These sea skirmishes were fought between the French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese and the English over the very profitable slave trade. The Channel from that time forward became a watery battlefield. Survival for the English at that time depended on the development of Naval men-of-war equipped with heavy cannon which could be used for offense or defense.

The Channel bottom began to fill with the refuse and waste of war. Even those early Men-Of-War possessed impressive firepower. A ship of the line could discharge 350 lbs of hot metal with one broadside, although most of it would end up sinking to the bottom.

It is indeed interesting to see that trade in the Channel created alliances and treaties as well as armed conflict. Most of those agreements were uneasy at best and many were broken. History, unfortunately, teaches few lessons which are remembered when circumstances repeat themselves in the affairs of human beings.

Early in the 17th Century, the British East India Company began commerce on the high seas. Their well built, sturdy merchant ships carried great numbers of heavy naval guns to protect themselves from the Dutch, French and Spanish and the "privateers." A privateer was nothing more than a pirate who was commissioned by government to operate on the seas for mutual benefit. The privateer kept his booty and the government benefitted by the destruction of enemy shipping. There is no way to know how many ships, lives and cargoes were lost in the battles. Many times both ships were sunk with no

survivors.

Twice on returns from hectic combat missions I ordered the crew of Lady Lightnin' to jettison every piece of equipment we could tear loose into the Channel to lighten our load and give us a better chance to make landfall in England. Our discarded guns, ammunition, clothing, radios, etc. stretched our flying distance just enough to allow us to make it to emergency fields. All of this debris would be added to the collection of hundreds of years of war refuse at the bottom of the Channel. I marvelled at the helter skelter appearance of buildings in English coastal villages. There was good reason for this uncharacteristic disarray. Many of the buildings were framed from the curved ribs of wrecked sailing vessels salvaged from the stormy coast.

The 18th Century of the English Channel was dominated by the French wars. It was a French armada that was destroyed by gale force winds in 1744 before it could attack. A much smaller fleet of French ships was destroyed by the British Navy at Quiberon Bay in November of 1759. This action determined British supremacy in the English Channel. The ships of England would not be challenged again in the Channel. Britannia ruled the waves, at least in that part of the world between the sceptered isles and the European mainland.

I was quite shaken by my first sight of the Channel. It is a dark and forbidding body of water. It does not have the phosphorescence of other waters which seem to glow when disturbed. The Channel seems to be lying in wait for the unwary. Even on a calm day it seems something malevolent is waiting just below the waves. Probably the knowledge that so many comrades ended up in a watery grave in the Channel added to my sense of uneasiness. I also knew that I would be flying over those cold waters myself and might have to ditch. It wasn't a reassuring prospect.

In 1823 the British post office commissioned its first steam driven packet. Its duty was to deliver the mail across the

## *The English Channel cont'd.*

Channel from Dover to Calais. Its name would appear again in 1939, and was made famous in the Battle of Britain in 1940.

The name of that humble packet was "Spitfire."

The 20th Century began with some promise of an era of peace and prosperity, although all the while the sun was beginning to fade over the British Empire. The storm of World War I was gathering strength and again the Channel would claim lives, hopes, and dreams in unrelenting measure. The depths would give up some of the dead on the tides borne by the winds, but not nearly all. Some would drift on those terrible tides up and through the North Sea to finally come to rest in the cold silt of the Arctic Ocean. The number of casualties in "the Great War" would astound those staid English islanders. They would not dream that just 23 years later it would start all over again. The "Moat," as some called the Channel, would again serve as a battlefield as well as a deterrent to invasions. The German "U-Boat" wolfpacks would take their toll, once again adding new debris of war to the centuries of accumulation on the channel floor.

World War II came as a surprise to many of the British. In 1940 Germany launched an air armada unparalleled in its numbers and ferocity. In this pitched aerial attack British fighter pilots in their Spitfires and Hurricanes hurled themselves at their ancient enemy over the channel.

The British and German fighters wheeled, turned, and dived on one another, all guns spitting fire and lead. Then, many in flames, they would fall. Often they fell into the ever-waiting waters of the channel. The flames were snuffed out and by the time the combatants reached the depths, all fight and fire had been extinguished. There man and machine would spend eternity.

The Eighth Air Force began flying its first missions in 1942, after America entered the war on December 7, 1941. Our general staff had convinced themselves that strategic daylight bombing would be the role of the Eighth Air Force. American Soldiers in the airplanes, on the ground, and in the fighting ships paid the price, many with their lives.

It has been written that there are fifty centuries of maritime history hidden on the bottom of the English Channel. Sailors for all those centuries have respected and feared these treacherous waters. In the

middle of the 20th century, airmen too would feel this fear and dread. The cold water, tide driven, is more than a match for anyone forced down. It was on those ancient waters I saw the greatest sea drama of World War II unfold -- the invasion of Normandy by the allies in June, 1944.

May 9, 1944, was the date Lady Lightnin' would take her crew on their first combat mission across the English Channel. Our target was an airfield held by German fighter command in occupied France. The water below looked cold and forbidding. All the crew, myself included, commented that we hoped we never had to test the temperature of the water down there. The invasion of the continent was not far off. At 0200 hours, the crew of Lady Lightnin' was awakened. Take off was delayed until 0500 hours. Our target was the railroad yards west of Caen, France, in Normandy.

We flew low because the clouds were at only 5,000 feet, and lower in some places. The rain stopped and the wind abated somewhat in those early hours. The barrage balloons were pulled down to mast height. There were no German fighters to interfere with the action that day. We saw the landings had already begun on all the beaches.

The air was filled with airplanes of every description. The low ceiling made group rendezvous hazardous, so our group swung south with little fuel. We landed on a Royal Air Force base in southern England, near Portsmouth. We loaded on 500 gallons of aviation fuel, more than enough to get us back to Sudbury in East Anglia, with a good margin in case we had to be diverted again.

Hostilities continued in the European Theatre of Operations until mid-1945. The crew of Lady Lightnin' finished their tour of active duty in combat operations and returned stateside. For us the shooting war ended.

At war's end the world was overwhelmed by the cold statistics of the conflict. There are those who seem to take delight in accounting for the myriad details of war that in truth only add up to personal suffering and tragedy. It was only those that profited who were really interested in the shocking statistics. The troops home from the battlefields and high seas could not have cared less about the number of B-24's

manufactured, or ships launched. We were concerned with our own well being.

From a perspective of well over 45 years the scale of the conflict takes on more interest and seems even more remarkable. During the time the 8th Air Force was on operations, 293,599 combat sorties were flown, all routed over the English Channel or the North Sea. Gunners in the bombers of the 8th AF fired 72,339,729 rounds of 50 calibre ammunition during the war with Germany. Going out on missions, each gunner would fire 15 rounds before reaching enemy landfall to clear the guns. This was always done over water. The lead slug from the 50 calibre gun weighs 709 grains (7,000 grains per pound.)

Calculations indicate that we left 2,230.3 tons of lead in the waters off the coast of England just clearing guns. The combined weight of all ammunition expended by the 8th Air Force gunners totaled 3,663.49 tons. In the latter days of the air war there were fewer enemy fighters and less ammunition was expended, much of it being brought back to England to be used again. These statistics are not recorded in most of the books about the war.

This battlefield we call the English Channel has been used for centuries in the conduct of war. It should serve as a reminder and as a monument to the fact that war is not an art or science. It is rather an unglamorous exercise in which so called "civilized" men and women endeavor to kill and maim one another under a political, economic, or religious banner. A poor excuse for such savagery is perhaps better than none. For the millions of young men and women who lie in their graves as a result of war it would make little difference whether they were aggressor or defender. In the case of WWII it is clear that the foe was an evil genius who had a fantastic, distorted vision of a world under his dominion. His destruction was truly a noble cause. Yet, those who became casualties had very little to say about such global consequences.

They simply did their duty. The English Channel will flow into the 21st Century and beyond. Not even a ripple on its waters will mark the time. She will endure.

*Ray Zuker and his wife Naomi, reside in Knoxville TN. Ray is editor of the Tennessee Flyover, and has written 8th AF articles for numerous publications.*



**489th Bomb Group  
April 4, 1998**

Savannah, GA **Contact:** Tom and Betty McQuaid  
23 Surfside Drive Ormond Beach, FL 32176  
904-441-4086

**446th Bomb Group  
April 30 - May 3, 1998**

Savannah Marriott Riverfront, Savannah, GA.  
**Contact:** Link Veazey, 1938 Harbor Oaks Dr.,  
Snellville, GA. 30278 (770) 972-5883

**Second Air Division Association  
50th Anniversary Convention  
May 23-26, 1998**

Oak Brook Hills Hotel & Resort, 3500 Midwest  
Road, Oak Brook Hills, IL 60522 Tel. (630)  
850-5555

**351st Bomb Group  
June 3-7, 1998**

23rd annual reunion Park Tucson Hotel, Tucson,  
Arizona **Contact:** Clint Hammond, PO Box 281,  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

**Freeman Army Air Field  
June 5-7, 1998**

**Hosted by:** City of Seymore, Indiana  
**Contact:** Ted Jordan, Airport Manager or Jane  
Henley, Freeman Municipal Airport, P.O. Box  
702, Seymour, IN 47274

**BAD 2 Association  
June 23-29, Blackpool, England  
August 27-30, Savannah, GA.**

**Contact:** Dick McClune 527 Quarterfield Rd.,  
Newport News, VA 23602 PH: (757) 877-3826

**398th Bombardment Group 8th AF  
August 26-29, 1998**

Annual Reunion in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania  
**Contact:** George R. Hilliard 7841 Quartermaine  
Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45236-2313 Unit  
**Contact:** 398th Bomb Group

**339FG  
August 27-31, 1998**

Desoto Hilton Hotel, Savannah GA **Contact:**  
Richard C. Penrose, 142 SW 17th Street, Bend,  
OR 97702 (541)389-0305 e-mail:

cockshy6@bendnet.com

**398th Bombardment Group 8th AF  
August 26-29, 1998**

Annual Reunion in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania  
**Contact:** George R. Hilliard 7841 Quartermaine  
Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45236-2313 Unit  
**Contact:** 398th Bomb Group

**361st FG WWII  
September 9-13, 1998**

Crown Plaza Hotel, Nashville, TN  
**Contact:** Dave Landin, 8419 Michael Rd.,  
Richmond, VA 23229 804-288-5889

**364th FTR GP (WWII)  
Sept 13-17, 1998**

Honington, Eng, 8th AF, and Support Units  
Reunion, Amerstar Casino Hotel, Council  
Bluff, IA. **Contact:** Dan Leftwich, 6630 Caldero  
Ct., Dayton, OH 45415. PH: 937-890-3641.

**493rd Bomb Group  
October 19-23  
Cherry Hill, NJ**

**MORE REUNIONS ON PAGE 29.**

**Mystery of 8th AF Bomber Formation Flying**



One of the more bewildering observations I noticed during WWII was the large number of poor formations in combat.

Although we all know that a straggling formation was more vulnerable to fighter attacks and precision bombing by a unit required a combat box that was tight: why stay out of position?

Most pilots will agree that close formation was easier to fly, made enemy fighter attacks more difficult and resulted in a better bomb pattern-and the tighter the formation, the better the turns.

Why was it possible for a pilot to hold a position hundreds of feet out of position for hours but would not move into the proper close formation?

My concern was not limited to wingmen only. How about the group, squadron or element leader? You need not be a pilot to have an answer to this question. What do you think? Let me or the editor hear from you.

Lew Lyle  
207 Ridge One  
Hot Springs, AR 71901

*Major General Lew Lyle was group commander of the 303rd BG and 379th BG. He served on the Historical Society Board of Directors, and is President of the Heritage Museum.*



Positioning for the lead of a combat wing, the 303rd Bomb Group formation climbs over England, 16 March 1944. This view from a Fortress in the higher 379th Bomb Group reveals the three-plane elements with which group formations were built.

**LEADER OF LONGEST COMBAT FLIGHT IN HISTORY SPEAKS AT THE HERITAGE MUSEUM**

When young Jay Beard worked in the fields of the family near Grandview, Missouri, in the 1960's he watched the many U.S. Air Force aircraft that came over the farm while landing and taking off from Richards Gebaur AFB. It was there he began to develop a real interest in flying but there was no way he could know that interest would someday cause him to lead the longest combat flight in aviation history - the 1991 bombing mission against Iraq in the Persian Gulf War.

After graduation from the Air Force Academy, Colonial Beard went to Air Force pilot training and became a KC-135 tanker aircraft pilot.

In July 1986 Beard was assigned to the 2nd Bomb Wing at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, flying B-52 bombers. Then in July 1990 he became commander of the wing's 596th Bombardment Squadron. "Two and a half weeks into my term as squadron commander we first learned that we might be called on to fly special B-52 missions in the Gulf War," said Beard. "By January 14, 1991, we knew things were coming to a head so I put my crews and aircraft on alert." Beard and his crews received their final instructions and

orders from a man Beard knew well - Lieutenant General E. G. Shuler, by then the commander of Eighth Air Force at Barksdale AFB.

At 6:36 a.m., January 15, 1991, Beard led a flight of seven B-52's loaded with conventional cruise missiles as they took off from Barksdale AFB headed non-stop for the Persian Gulf and the beginning of Desert Storm. In the first moments of Desert Storm the seven B-52 crews struck key Iraqi command and control facilities, early warning radars, and power generation and distribution stations. The B-52's then turned around and flew all the way back to Barksdale AFB non-stop. When they landed they had been in the air 38 hours. "We had four scheduled mid-air refuelings, all seven B-52's made it all the way to the gulf and back and we got the job done," said Beard.

Colonel Beard flew that mission as a member of the United States Air Force's Eighth Air Force which has a distinguished 55-year history of service to America.

*Colonel John H. "Jay" Beard was awarded the first annual Jimmy Stewart Award by Lt. General Buck Shuler in a presentation ceremony at the 8th AF Heritage Museum in Savannah.*

# •LETTERS•Re the HS Memorial Chapel Fund•

16 November 1997

To: Norman Grant President, SAF Historical Society

Dear Mr. Grant:

Last March, I had the opportunity and good fortune to visit the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia. As I am sure you know, it is a first class facility, beautifully designed and laid out, and very well situated just off Interstate 95. To say the least, I was very impressed, especially because I have been hearing criticism about that museum ever since it was constructed. Foremost among the criticisms is the museum's financial position. I'm told that the museum has a difficult time meeting operating costs, and it is financially hard pressed to pay off the revenue bonds sponsored by Chatham County. In that regard, I understand that the Heritage Museum owes a whopping \$1.2 million annually to Chatham County. Now I have just received my 1998 dues notice card for my annual dues from my friend, Arthur Swanson, Membership Records Manager. With that

notice is an announcement that the SAFHS Board of Directors has pledged \$75,000 toward construction of the Memorial Chapel at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum.

A memorial Chapel would be a splendid addition to that wonderful Heritage Museum. However, in view of the alleged financial difficulties facing the museum, it would seem far more prudent and reasonable to help meet the substantial financial burden of the museum than to incur additional costs at this time by building the chapel.

I hasten to add that I am not on the Board of Directors for the SAFHS, and am not aware of all the inside information to which you are privy. However, I am on the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Chapter, SAFHS and consequently could be called upon by our members to explain this dichotomy, so I want to be able to provide a reasonable explanation.

No matter how this turns out, I will continue to support the Heritage Museum and the SAFHS because I believe both accomplish their missions in an outstanding manner. But, unless I hear a feasible explanation, I will hold off donating to the Memorial Chapel, at least for the time being.

Thanks for your continued service to the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. I look forward to hearing from you.

Frank H. Smoker, Jr.,  
Major General, USAF (Retired)  
Lebanon, PA



6 December 1997

To: Major General Frank H. Smoker, Jr., USAF, Retired

Dear General Smoker:

Norm Grant passed me your letter of 16 November for a response and I am pleased to attempt to explain the Chapel project to you as we see it from The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum perspective.

First, having a Chapel or place of meditation was always an integral part of the museum complex game plan. The Board of Directors debated long on whether it should be inside the overall facility or exterior to the building as a part of the Memorial Gardens. The consensus of the Board determined that it would be more appropriate, more esthetically pleasing and more effective as a part of the gardens. For reasons of budget it was not included in phase one of the project, but would be built at a later date, when money could be raised for that specific purpose.

Secondly, our Board of Directors are keenly aware of our fiduciary obligations to Chatham County and the potential for diluting primary fund raising efforts towards retiring the revenue bond debt. For this reason, while the Chapel remains a goal, The Heritage Museum has purposely not embarked on a fund raising program for a Chapel. This calendar year museum operations reached a position where we are sustaining day to day financial requirements exclusive of the bond debt. The operation will show a positive cash flow and surplus at the end of this calendar year. To date the museum organization has raised about \$1.7 million and placed these funds in a debt service reserve account with the bond agent, Reliance Trust in Atlanta. Those monies are being used to service the bond debt requirements, which began 1 January 1997. This initial money will carry us through mid-year of 1998. We are hard at work at replenishing and adding to this account so that we can continue to meet our fiduciary responsibilities.

Thirdly, one must understand the written agreement between The Heritage Museum and Chatham County regarding the bonds. The Chatham County Commissioners voted unanimously no less than five times back in the 1993-94 time frame to sell revenue bonds after I made a presentation to the Commission requesting Air Force Heritage Museum. Chatham County came up with the idea of selling revenue bonds after I made a presentation to the Commission requesting local option sales tax money to support the museum project, which was not supported. The County must budget for and set aside sufficient money on an annual basis to cover the bond debt service whether we make a contribution to debt service or not. The County's name is on the bonds as the guarantor-not of the lease payments next year, the County has agreed to meet any short-falls in bond debt service, obviously with the understanding the museum will make good on the obligation at a later date. The County has agreed that at any point, where we have raised sufficient money to cover the entire debt service, which runs for twenty years, the facility and twelve acres of land will be deeded to the museum. It is at that point that we become the masters of our own destiny. You are correct in that the annual bond debt service is \$1.254 million, a most challenging number to meet. If the museum could come up with about \$11 million right now the place would be ours!

Lastly, it was the idea of The Eighth Air Force Historical Society to run a fund raising campaign for the Chapel. Apparently after many years of little support for the overall museum project, it was decided to try and help out in a specific way just as they did earlier this year with the matching fund campaign. Our Board of Directors are most grateful for this effort, but view it as separate and distinct from our operations. We have specifically avoided using any revenues we have generated from our operations and fund raising efforts for the Chapel project, keeping all money directed towards our fundamental obligations to Chatham County. The Board also made the decision that no Chapel construction would begin until the entire \$300,000 required to complete the project was in the bank. The Chapel will add value to the overall complex and even serve as a source of additional income from leasing and catering activities for weddings, special services, funerals, etc. Would it be helpful for the Society and other organizations to simply donate money for the purposes of debt service in lieu of the Chapel? Yes, but they do not want to do that, preferring that their money go for a specific purpose. If The Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum is to survive we must meet our fundamental obligations first and that is precisely what our Board of Directors and staff are trying diligently to accomplish.

I trust this lengthy explanation meets with some degree of satisfaction to the issue you raised with Norm Grant. Please feel free to contact me at 1-800-421-9428 extension 101 for additional information or answers to follow on questions. Your interest in and concern for The Heritage Museum is genuinely appreciated.

With kind regards,

Lt. Gen. E.G. Shuler, Jr., USAF, Ret.

Chairman and CEO

Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum



## US AIR MUSEUM WINS TOP BRITISH TOURISM AWARD

The American Air Museum, part of the Imperial War Museum at Duxford in Cambridgeshire, has won the coveted British Guild of Travel Writers silver Unicorn award for best new tourism project. Opened by Her Majesty The Queen on 1 August, the 1 million American Air Museum was designed by Sir Norman Foster and completed with a 6.5 million award from the Heritage Lottery Fund of the National Heritage Fund. The award was received by Ted Inman, Director of Duxford, at the annual ceremony held at the Savoy Hotel in London.

The 70,000 square feet building houses twenty-one historic American combat aircraft from a First World War biplane to Gulf War jets and shows how American air power has been a decisive factor in Twentieth Century history. Eight of the aircraft are suspended from the ceiling as if in flight. Full supporting displays features exhibits including a Cruise missile, part of the Iraqi 'supergun' and a section of the Berlin Wall.

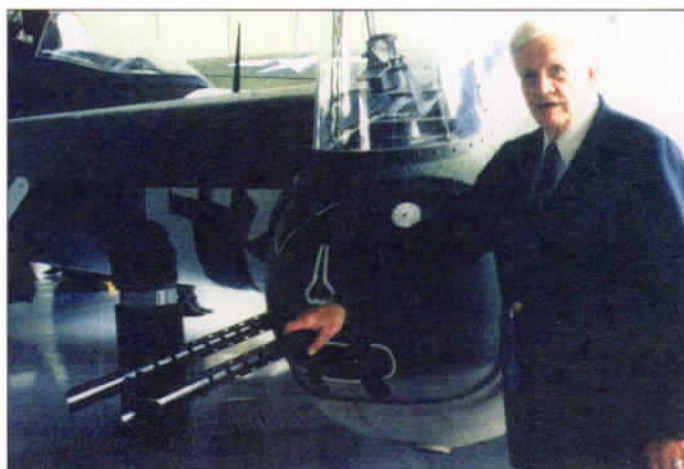
"We are delighted that the American Air Museum project has been acknowledged in this way" and Duxford's Ted Inman. "The American Air Museum has already dramatically boosted our attendance figures and this award is a tremendous accolade for the Duxford team who have made the dream a reality."

Since the opening of the American Air Museum, Duxford attendances have increased by 50% (an extra 65,000 visitors) more than the same period in 1996. Duxford is well on the way to exceeding its target of 400,000 visitors a year.

The American Air Museum is one of eight large exhibition buildings at Duxford, a former RAF base. As well as over 150 historic aircraft on show, Duxford also has impressive displays of tanks, military vehicles, artillery and naval exhibits.

Duxford is open daily from 10am (except 24 - 26 December) and is just south of Cambridge at Junction 10 of the M11. Information line 01223 835000

## NEW AMERICAN AIR MUSEUM IN BRITAIN



At the dedication and opening ceremonies of the new American Air Museum in Britain, Duxford, England, NCAC member and former B-17 tail gunner Byron Schlag, 447th BG, pauses before his old "office."



Also at the dedication and opening ceremonies of the new American Air Museum in Britain, a happy Colonel Bob Morgan, 91st Bomb Group, pilot of the "Memphis Belle," pauses before the Museum's B-17G "Mary Alice."

### TO MY BOOMERANG

From placid fields of green you rise,  
Thrust armored nose into the skies,  
Your legs tucked into each nacelle  
Thus transformed, a queen from hell.  
With throttles set, turbos turning,  
Synchronized propellers churning,  
Higher still I've watched you soar,  
Marvelled at your muffled roar.

Around you now come kindred tribe,  
As mounting arc your wings inscribe,  
Element, squadron tucking tight,  
Your groups are formed in early light.  
Wing control points, division too  
Are mere routine to me or you  
Departure point and zero hour  
Demanding more of your great power.

Channel crossed, we're on our way;  
"Fortress hit the Hun today."  
"Bandits high at nine o'clock."  
Fifties roar and turrets rock.  
Through flak and fighters lumbering on,  
Staccato bursts and steady drone,  
Nothing stops the steady stream  
Of Boeing's Baby, Airman's dream.

Oh, I have seen you loop and roll,  
Silken chutes from you unfold.  
I've watched you dive and spin in flames.  
Seen the mounting list of names.  
Ah, but others have returned,  
Feathered props and engines burned.  
Full of flak holes, rudder shorn.  
Not the sleek war-queen of morn.

Red flares pop and chaplains pray,

Bring them safely home today.  
Miracles, or flying skill  
Call it anything you will,  
I offer thanks to my Creator  
That I don't fly a Liberator.

By Capt. Roland L. McRae  
Pilot of the Flying Fortress, "Carolina Boomerang"  
Alconbury, England; December 1943

Mac McRae, 96th BG; 482nd BG of Colorado Springs CO, submits this "Ode to a B-17 Flying Fortress" in response to Jim Jones's poem which appeared about B-24's in our November issue. Mac states "After a mission briefing just before a bombing mission I wrote this poem in about 20 minutes. My friends say: "Yes, we know."

# BOOK REVIEWS

## ZOOT-SUITS and PARACHUTES

Our Fellow Member

Doris Brinker Tanner has done it again. "Who were the WASP," and "Zoot Suits," are excellent books that Doris Tanner authored, but now Doris has done the impossible.

Zoot - Suits and Parachutes is the ultimate book in nostalgia, young girls in search of wings, dedication and love for their Country, and the longing for their loved ones. Yes, there are plenty of photos of pretty girls too.

Zoot - Suits and Parachutes is the true story of the many pretty and talented young girls that Doris (A pretty young girl herself) served with and became close friends with while learning to fly the Army Air Corps way in WWII. There are actual letters of these young girls, and from their loved ones. The letters are put together in the story in a way to form a feeling that the reader is there with them in the WASP. Her husband's letters of his experiences in the Army ground forces in Europe makes the book complete.

It all actually happened, the emotions and feelings are all true, and it does read like a good novel.

The Woman's Air Force Service Pilots was a pioneering venture for women in air power.

Zoot - Suits and Parachutes really leaves you feeling and thinking what a success it was.

This is a must reading for men, young and old. When you women read it you will burst with pride, stick your heads up and will say, "I told you so."

### Zoot - Suits and Parachutes

Hard bound 8-1/2" x 11 1/2" table top book. You will be tickled with the logo it displays so brilliantly on its blue front cover. Lots of pictures within.

#### ORDERS CAN BE PLACED FOR AUTOGRAPHED COPIES

Send Check for \$39.00 + S&H \$3.50 + tax if applicable to:

DORIS BRINKLEY TANNER, AUTHOR  
PO BOX 280

UNION CITY, TN 38261

Phone 901-885-3010

Review by John Harold "Robbie" Robinson

## "Citizen Soldiers"

The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the surrender of Germany By Stephen E. Ambrose - Simon and Shuster \$27.50

Like most of Ambrose's books, this one is dynamite.

While it is in chronological order, each chapter is a story on its own. Chapter 12 is about the Air War and of course, the Mighty 8th is discussed.

There are a few errors, i.e. Willow Run turned out B-17's and the misspelling of a few terms doesn't detract from the overall impact. The many oral histories make this book different than most WWII books. You get the real story from the people who were there.

Gerald Astor's book, *The Mighty 8th: The Air War in Europe As Told By the Men Who Fought It* stands out, as several of the men interviewed for that book are members of our organization.

I have heard Ambrose speak and he knows his stuff. He has done several books on World War II.

This is his last book on WWII. As he says, he has had enough of Blood and Guts.

After reading this book, you'll know why.

I highly recommend it.

Reviews by: Ed Kueppers

## BRONZE B-24 STATUE

In December 1997, a bronze statue of a B-17 was installed at the Air Force Academy as part of the 50th anniversary ceremonies of the creation of the U.S.A.F. The 2nd Air Division Association is now conducting a fund drive to raise \$170,000 to place a bronze statue of a B-24 on the same site. The wooden pattern from which the bronze statue will be cast will be installed at the Heritage Museum in Savannah. Those who wish to contribute to this worthy endeavor should send their contributions to Neal Sorensen, 132 Peninsula Rd., Medicine Lake, MN, 55441-4112. Make your check payable to B-24 Groups Memorial.

## HERITAGE MUSEUM WEB SITE ADDRESS

The Heritage Museum has a web site on the internet. The site was activated in August 1997 and is available with the latest information about events and developments at the museum. The web site address is:

<http://www.mighty8thmuseum.com>

Please send 8th AF related website addresses for publication to the NEWS Editor

## ADVERTISING

We will only accept advertising that has to do with the 8th Air Force, 8th Air Force units or personnel, 8th Air Force memorabilia, or the Air War over Western Europe. To do otherwise would subject us to tax problems with the I.R.S. We do not want to jeopardize our non-profit status in any way.

### OUR RATES ARE:

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The print run is 20,000 copies per issue

# ••REUNIONS••REUNIONS••REUNIONS••

## 489th Bomb Group April 4, 1998

Savannah, GA Contact: Tom or Betty McQuaid  
23 Surfside Dr. Ormond Beach, FL 32176 904-441-4086

## 56th FG Reunion April 4, 1998

Savannah, GA Contact: Mr. William Hartshorn  
804 Crown Point Rd. W.  
Signal Mtn., TN 37377

## 96th BG April 17, 1998

Savannah, GA Memorial service for the window dedication

## 446th BG May 1, 1998

Savannah, GA Contact: Mr. Link Vezzey (770) 972-5853

## 2nd Bomb Wing May 2, 1998

Savannah, GA Contact: Col. John Connor  
598-1414

## 303rd BG (H) August 21-26, 1998

Savannah Marriott Hotel, Savannah, GA. Contact:  
R.C. Dick Baynes, 71 Nighthawk Irvine, CA  
92604-3683 (714)552-3889 FAX (714)551-2151

## BAD-2 Association August 27-30, 1998

Savannah, GA. Contact: President Charlie Phillips, 23417 St. Andrews Street Mission Viejo, CA. 92692-1536

# WALL OF VALOR

As a part of The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, there is a sanctuary called The Memorial Gardens. It is a place to reflect - a place to pray - a place to pay tribute to those who served in The Eighth Air Force and to those we loved and lost.

In these Gardens near the long reflecting pool, there is The Wall of Valor, much like the impressive Memorial Wall in the American Cemetery in Cambridge, England. It is constructed of stone with beautiful dark green inscription panels for each name.

Eighth Air Force veterans may have permanent recognition inscribed on this Wall of Valor by contributing a donation of \$100 to the continuing development of the beautiful

Memorial Gardens. Each person's name, rank, unit number will be carved on an individual 4x12 inch panel.

A second line is also included for a significant message, aircraft name, crew name, or slogan up to 24 letters.

All names are placed in the order of receipt - All on the Wall are equal status. Sections of the Wall are numbered so veterans and families may easily locate them. Join your fellow veterans on the Wall of Valor - A most fitting memorial.

The museum staff is ready to assist you with your order. You may order by phone: 1-800-544-8878

Our goal is to see that every person of the 8th Air Force has a chance to share in this great memorial. You may send your information on the form with check or mastercard/visa if you wish. All donations are tax deductible.



President Norm Grant at the Wall of Valor.

## THE WALL OF VALOR AT THE HERITAGE MUSEUM

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

### 8 AF Information

Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Station Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Sgdn. \_\_\_\_\_ Bomb Gp. \_\_\_\_\_ Ftr.Gp. \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_ KIA [ ] POW [ ]

### TO MAKE A DONATION:

Enclose \$100. minimum for 4" x 12" panel.  
Add \$1. per letter for each additional letter above 24.  
Total number of letters \_\_\_\_\_

Please send donation and selection form with check or money order payable to:  
**Mighty 8AF "Wall of Valor"**

P.O. Box 1992 • Savannah, Georgia 31402-1992

For Phone donations and information:

Local: 912-283-9966 or Toll Free: 1-800-544-8878

[ ] Mastercard [ ] Visa

Acct. No. \_\_\_\_\_

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# BULLETIN BOARD

### Promote your Historical Society

From Frank Frison of the Minnesota Chapter, a note encouraging the 8th AF NEWS to ask all Historical Society members to take advantage of the opportunities presented them by becoming active in Chapter activities and other air organizations such as the Confederate Air Force, your local Air Force Association Chapters, the EAA, et al. He also follows President Norm Grant's suggestions that all members contact their Units to encourage unit members to become members of the Historical Society. Many of us meet younger enthusiasts who have a genuine interest in learning the story of the Mighty Eighth and would like to be active in helping preserve our heritage. Frank sees our upcoming annual reunions as great opportunities to show new members of the Society who we are and show them a great time too!

### Prisoner of War Museum to Have Grand Opening in Andersonville

Andersonville National Historic Park, Andersonville, Georgia announces the Grand Opening of its Prisoner of War Museum with ceremonies to be held on April 9th, 1998 at the site. Andersonville was the site of one the Confederate prisons. The Museum will present exhibitry in honor of all POW's of all American wars, and special events will be held throughout the day. The day before, April 8th, will be a day devoted to the patrons of the museum. The 8th Air Force had more prisoners of war in World War II than any other unit, and many of them have taken part in the twelve-year drive to get this museum established. Many have said they will be in attendance at the opening. Further information may be obtained by calling the park at Andersonville, area code 912.

### LONE STAR MUSEUM

This photo was taken at the Lone Star Museum in Galveston Texas. It was taken during a seminar - American Women in Aviation, featuring Linda Finch, around the World Aviatrix and her Lockheed Electra 10E.

Linda seemed amazed to learn that we 1st Fighter Group pilots in our single seat P-38's were roaming across the North Atlantic in July 1942, Bolero Mission, the then fledgling 8th AF's first big push.

This was only 15 years after Lindbergh and 10 years after Amelia Earhart.

Woody Wilkinson  
20th Ftr. GP;  
Assoc. Linda Finch and Jack Ilfrey 1st and 20th Ftr. GP P-38 ace WWII.



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## HOW ABOUT IT?

Someone had said, "Character is what we are in the dark." The writer who penned these words didn't know the half of the story if he had never been on a dark, night-mission over war-time England with everything blacked out. In a situation like this, the navigator is indispensable in directing the mission to the target and then, getting the crew and aircraft back to that almost invisible piece of English countryside that we called "home."

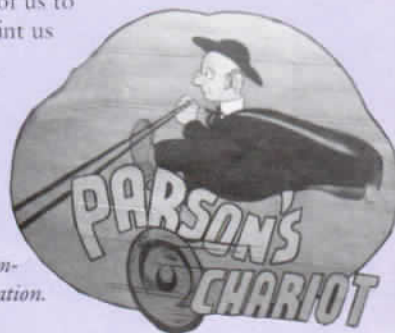
The trip to the target was successful, so successful that Nazi night fighters came out in full force to intercept us. We eluded them. However, when they followed us home in the dark and began flying over English soil, our principal navigational aids, the Radio Bunchers and Splasher beacons were suddenly and deliberately turned off. There were no visible landmarks below, all lights on the ground were extinguished. There was an overcast sky which eliminated the possibility of celestial navigation, and all of our directional radios were silent. There were no clues! We droned on following the same heading for awhile and then the navigator's message on the intercom broke the silence. "Chief," he said, "we're lost!" This was indeed, very disturbing news. Then he came through again...he remembered hearing of an emergency system the R.A.F. used for helping "lost" and crippled bombers find their way home. It was known by the code name "Darkee." But what was the frequency? As if by Divine inspiration it came, 4,200 kilocycles! The radio knobs were quickly turned to 4,200. "Hello Darkee, Hello Darkee." We waited, then repeated our call, "Hello Darkee, Hello Darkee, this is Eglan B. Baker, 'over.'" Silence...then a response, "Eglan B. Baker, this is Darkee... how may I help you?" The accent was distinctively British but sounded like the voice of an angel. "Darkee, this is Eglan B. Baker, we are lost...please direct us to Station 120." (This was our home base). "Roger, this is Darkee. Circle and I will give you directions." In a few moments, this unseen subject of the King of England down on the ground came back on the radio, "Eglan B. Baker, this is Darkee, take up a heading of 345 degrees. We will be in touch." "Roger, Darkee, and thank you."

We settled down with our directional instructions, not knowing our exact location but feeling some assurance. Again the English accent, "Hello Eglan B. Baker, this is Darkee. Keep your heading of 345 degrees and follow the lights." We acknowledged but that phrase 'follow the lights' was puzzling. Then, as if by magic, two vertical shafts of light from flood lamps below appeared, then slowly they scanned downward towards our heading. Then once again, vertically and sweeping downward toward our compass heading of 345 degrees. As we moved towards our base, repeatedly different shafts of lights came on, directing us homeward. Darkee informed us we were near and suddenly, a beautiful green flare burst into the sky from almost directly below. Darkee reported, "circle to the left, you are over the field," the faint runway lights were turned on for us. We lowered our landing gear, dropped the flaps, and we found home in darkness.

Hundreds of years ago, David the King of Israel spoke these words, "Unto the upright, there ariseth a light in the darkness." Back in 1944 we were guided home because we asked. We followed the simple instructions of a subject of the King. He wasn't a key military figure; he didn't get his name in headlines; he just patiently waited, silent and alone at his station with the knowledge that he and his radio transmitter were the answer to someone's survival. Today, if we ask, there is still light available for all of us to direct us away from the enemy and to point us toward home.

Earl E. Wassom  
Chaplain, Tennessee Chapter

*Earl Wassom has written a Chaplain's column for The Tennessee Flyover for several years. He was a pilot with the 466th BG and is the incoming President of the Second Air Division Association.*



## Thank You!

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the men and women of the 8th Air Force Historical Society. I was honored at your last reunion as a recipient of the Ira C. Eaker Award. My wife and I were truly impressed with the accommodations provided and the sincere warmth and hospitality of all the members we met. A special thanks to the members of the 392nd Bomb Group, who hosted the award winners.

To receive such an honor from men who put their lives on the line daily to achieve victory in Europe was truly humbling. The men who flew the missions into hostile territory have always awed me. The fact that the Mighty 8th was never turned back by enemy action speaks volumes about true heroism.

I still do not believe you were standing to applaud our actions, when it was we who should have applauded you. My fellow crewmembers and I were all in awe. We felt we were lucky to be there when the call came in to participate in a rescue mission that resulted in saving a life.

I am honored to be a member of this organization of great people, and hope to be able to actively participate in future events. Once again, I would like to say "THANK YOU" for this great honor.

Robert W Bartee, MSgt, USAF

## Temple of Hatshepsut

This is a recent picture of Tom Parsons outside the Temple of Hatshepsut at Luxor on the Nile. It's precisely the site of the recent massacre, and exactly 24 hours before its occurrence. The 6 terrorists are thought to have been here for two or three days prior to their assault (70+ dead, including themselves), awaiting a "good opportunity." "I've never been so glad to be considered a bad opportunity!"

By: Tom Parsons 44th Bomb Group

